

“An Intertextual Reading of the Narratives of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:4b–3:24) and the
Creation of Humans (Gen 1:26-31) with the Hebrew Wisdom Literature, including an Analysis
of the Phrase ‘Knowing Good and Evil’”

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This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes. I certify that this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

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Abbreviations:

Bible Books

Gen
Ex
Lev
Num
Dt
Josh
Judg
Ruth
1, 2 Sam
1, 2 Kgs
1, 2 Chron
Ezra
Neh
Esth
Job
Ps (pl. Pss)
Prov
Eccl
Song
Is
Jer
Lam
Ezek
Dan
Hos
Joel
Amos
Obad
Jonah
Mic
Nah
Hab
Zeph
Hag
Zech
Mal

Theological Journals, Series, and Reference Works:

- AB Anchor Bible
ANET J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*
AYBD Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary
ATR *Anglican Theological Review*
BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
BDB F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
Bib *Biblica*
BSac Bibliotheca Sacra
BZAW Beihefte zur ZAW
CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
GTJ *Grace Theological Journal*
HALOT The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
HDR Harvard Dissertations in Religion
Her Hermeneia
HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
IBC Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC International Critical Commentary
Int *Interpretation*
ITC International Theological Commentary
IOS *Israel Oriental Society*
ITC International Theological Commentary
JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBR *Journal of Bible and Religion*
JETS *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JJS *Journal of Jewish Studies*
JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup JSOT-Supplement Series
JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*
NAC New American Commentary
NICOT New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NJPS New Jewish Publication Society Version
NovT *Novum Testamentum*
OTL Old Testament Library
RevExp *Review and Expositor*
SBLDS Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT Studies in Biblical Theology

SJT *Scottish Journal of Theology*
ST *Studia theologica*
TDCH *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, ed. D.J.A. Clines
TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
TrinJ *Trinity Journal*
THOTC *The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary*
TOTC Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TS *Theological Studies*
TWOT *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
TynBul *Tyndale Bulletin*
VT *Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup *Vetus Testamentum, Supplements*
WBC *Word Biblical Commentaries*
WEC *Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary*
WTJ *Westminster Theological Journal*
ZAW *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Abstract

This study examines the Garden of Eden narrative presented in Gen 2:4b-3:24 and the narrative of human creation in Gen 1:26-31, and attempts to read them intertextually and canonically with the Hebrew Wisdom books of Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes.

The phrase “knowing good and evil” provides a starting point for linking the concept of wisdom in the first chapters of Genesis with the Wisdom books later in the canon.

Following a discussion of the meaning of that phrase, the thesis discusses its methodology, which is a final form, canonical, intertextual reading. It proceeds with a discussion and intertextual reading of the account of the creation of humans in Genesis chapter 1 with the Garden account of Genesis chapters 2–3. It then moves to the intertextual reading of Genesis with the Wisdom books of Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the Garden of Eden narrative presented in Gen 2:4b–3:24 and the narrative of human creation in Gen 1:26-31, and attempts to read them intertextually and canonically with the Hebrew Wisdom books of Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. Following this Introduction chapter, we will begin with a discussion and intertextual reading of the Genesis passages in chapter 2 before undertaking the intertextual reading of them with the Wisdom books in chapters 3–5.

The phrase “knowing good and evil” represents a fundamental concept for comprehending Hebrew wisdom literature. It initially appears in the book of Genesis and continues to be significant throughout the Hebrew Bible. This study will examine the phrase as it is presented in Gen 2:4b–3:24 and its implications in Gen 1:26-31, noting that the term ידע, meaning “to know”, also has sexual connotations within relationships (see Gen 4:1; 1 Kgs 1:4).¹ Therefore, we will explore its importance in Genesis and its contribution to interpreting the Hebrew wisdom literature.

1.1 Knowledge in the Hebrew Bible

We start by broadly examining the concepts of “know” and “knowledge,” as well as the phrase “הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע”. It may also refer to immoral behaviour (Gen 6:5; 19:5). The term נָכַר “to investigate” or “to recognise,” is usually associated with the term יָדַע referring to experiences or careful observation (Gen 31:32; Ruth 3:14).

¹ *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew: Volumes I–VIII* (ed. D. J. A. Clines; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, Vol. 4, 1993-2011), 99-100; know, realise, be aware–1. possess knowledge derived from experience (e.g., Gen 3:5, 7; 8:11; 12:11)–2. have knowledge (of) (e.g., Gen 9:24; 27:2; 30:26; Ex 3:7)–3. know to do, be skilful (e.g., Gen 25:27; Ex 36:1; 1 Sam 16:16; 1 Kgs 5:20; Is 7:15, 16)–4. find out, discover.

Other Hebrew terms, such as **דַעַת**, are used for general knowledge (Prov 24:4) or technical knowledge (Ex 31:3, 35:31 and 1 Kgs 7:14, where it refers to the ability to perform skilled tasks). In Proverbs and Job 12:2 and 42:3, **דַעַת** is linked with **חָכְמָה**, “wisdom”. It can also refer to knowledge about a particular characteristic (Job 10:7).

In the Hebrew Bible (HB), the term **דַעַת** is crucial for conveying moral understanding, especially in the Garden of Eden narrative (Gen 2:17) and its connection to God’s knowledge (Num 24:16). The HB carefully differentiates between God’s profound knowledge, which transcends time and enables him to foresee events, as shown in passages such as Gen 45:4-8 and Jer 1:5. This knowledge includes his awareness of individuals (Gen 4:3-7, 6:8, and 18:19; see “the Knowledge of God” in Ps 139) and his deep insight into his chosen people (Amos 3:2). This divine understanding enables God to dispense justice and enhances his relationship with humanity by applying blessings and curses (punishment/retribution) in a balanced way, thus establishing a divine framework for moral comprehension that guides both individuals and societies.

Another term from Genesis to consider in relation to wisdom is **לְהַשְׁכִּיל**, which is found in Gen 3:6 and means “to make one wise”.² Eve believed that eating the fruit from the tree would give her wisdom, which she thought was the same as the promise made by the serpent to gain divine knowledge (3:5).

Prov 21:11

² *HALOT* (eds. Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J.; E.J. Brill, 1994-2000), 1328-9 (electronic ed.): 1. to understand, comprehend (cf. Deut 32:29 Pss 64:10; 106:7; abs. Dan 9:25 (parallel with **דָעַע**); 2. abs. to have insight: a. finite verb— Isa 41:20; Jer 10:21; Pss 2:10; 94:8; 119:99 (מִן more than); b. inf. **הַשְׁכִּיל** Isa 44:18; Ps 36:4, **הַשְׁכִּיל** Jer 9:23; c. pt. **מְשַׁכִּיל** Amo 5:13; Pss 14:2; 53:3; Prov 10:5, 19; 14:35; 15:24; 17:2; Job 22:2; **אִשָּׁה מְשַׁכִּילָת** an insightful woman Prov 19:14, pl. **הַמְשַׁכִּילִים** Dan 11:35; 12:3, 10; **מְשַׁכִּילֵי עַם** Dan 11:33; d. adverbial inf. **הַשְׁכִּיל** with insight Jer 3:15; inf. abs. insight, cleverness Prov 1:3; 21:16; Job 34:35; Dan 1:17 (parallel with **מְדַעַע**); 3. to make wise, insightful Gen 3:6; Prov 16:23; 4. to achieve success: Josh 1:8; 1 Sam 18:15; Isa 52:13; Prov 17:8; Jer 10:21; 20:11; 23:5; 50:9 (var. **מְשַׁכִּיל**); with **בָּ** Josh 1:7; 2Kgs 18:7, with **לְ** 1 Sam 18:14; 5. with **שְׂכֵל-טוֹב** to show good understanding 2 Chron 30:22.

בַּעֲנֹשׁ-לֵץ יִהְיֶה כֹּחַם־פִּתִי וּבְהַשְׁכִּיל לְחָכָם יִקְחֵה־דַעַת:

“With a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.” (ESV)

The term שָׂכַל “wisdom” varies in meaning with meanings such as חָכָם יִשְׁכִּיל פִּיהוּ “the wise makes his mouth judicious” in Prov 16:23 and אֶשְׁכִּילֶךָ “I will instruct/give insight to you” in Ps 32:8. The Book of Proverbs considers the pursuit of wisdom as a top priority for the godly (לְשֹׂכֵל מִלִּידָה “the wisdom of your words” in Prov 23:9; Dan 11:33 מְשַׁכְּלֵי עַם “those who make the people have insight”; Dan 11:35 הַמְשַׁכְּלִים “those who have insight”; 12:3, 10).³

The concepts of “know” and “knowledge” that I just examined can, in our canonical reading, help us to understand the phrase הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע “the knowledge of good and evil” in Gen 2:9, 17 and 3:5, 22. The word הַדַּעַת is modified by the adjectives טוֹב וְרָע, which emphasises their significance.⁴

The narrative of the Garden of Eden reveals that while humans can gain divine knowledge (Gen 3:5, 22), they can only attain the life of a divine being (3:22, 24) by obeying the word of YHWH *’ēlōhîm* (2:16-17; hereafter, YHWH refers to YHWH *’ēlōhîm*, especially when in the context of Gen 2–3). This suggests that the Garden narrative incorporates the significant literary themes of “life” and “knowledge of good and evil”.

Thus, to understand the meaning of the terms טוֹב and רָע together with דַּעַת we must consider the context of the creation story in Gen 1–3, specifically within the Garden of Eden narrative.⁵ Understanding the meaning of each of these terms and the phrase הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע are

³ *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew: Volumes I–VIII*, 291. See also *HALOT*, 1328-9.

⁴ John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2nd ed., 1930), 58: In the phrase עֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”, the word הַדַּעַת is understood as an infinitive construct with the definite article. As a result, טוֹב וְרָע are in apposition, not in construct, literally meaning “the knowing, good and evil”.

⁵ Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010), 61-5.

crucial to understanding its role in context. As for the term טוב, it is: 1) according to Gen 2:9 וַיִּזְהַב הָאָרֶץ הַהִוא טוֹב שָׁם “good for food”, useful in the creation; 2) a functional usage “the gold of that land is good”; and 3) an occurrence in 2:18, where YHWH declares, “it is not good (לֹא־טוֹב) that the man is alone. I will make for him a helper as his counterpart”. The term טוב used in this semantic range is functional and beneficial and expresses the view of the Creator. However, the term רע can encompass different aspects of negativity in various contexts. It can refer to things like bad decisions, misfortune, and wicked, even evil acts, for example,

Gen 6:5

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ וְכָל־יִצְרָר מִחֻשְׁבֹת לִבּוֹ רַע כָּל־הַיּוֹם:

“And YHWH saw that the evil of humankind was great upon the earth, and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was always only evil.”

Gen 8:21b

לֹא־אֶסְפָּר לְקַלֵּל עוֹד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה בְּעִבּוֹר הָאָדָם כִּי יִצְרָר לֵב הָאָדָם רַע מִנְעֻרָיו

“Never again will I curse the ground for the sake of humankind because the inclination of the heart of humankind is evil from his youth”.

In this lexical study of the Garden of Eden narrative, the phrase הדעת טוב ורע suggests that the primeval pair's decision to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in terms of הדעת טוב ורע, was, morally, an act of evil rather than an action of good. This could imply moral autonomy. In Gen 6:5a, “And YHWH saw that the evil of humankind was great upon the earth”, it is evident that the disobedience of the primeval pair to YHWH’s command in the Garden led to great evil among humankind. This is in contrast to God’s statement in Gen 1:31 וַהֲבֵינָהּ טוֹב מְאֹד “Behold, it was very good.”

The phrases “Behold, it was very good” in Gen 1:31 and “the evil of humankind was great upon the earth, and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was always only evil” in 8:21 convey the judicial evaluation of YHWH. The evaluation of YHWH implies that in the HB, YHWH might initiate retribution for human wickedness/evil (עָרָא, see Gen 6:17; 2 Sam 14, 19 and 1 Kgs 1). This refers to the consequences of evils that may befall kings, rulers, and individuals due to their actions, as well as calamity or disaster resulting from retribution by YHWH (Mic 2:3).⁶

Ps 146:3-6

³ Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. ⁴ When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish ⁵ Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in YHWH his God, ⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; (ESV, modified)

Psalms contain allusions and references linked to the creation narratives and the Garden of Eden in Gen 1-3. For instance, in Ps 18:3 [ET v. 2], “YHWH is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (ESV, modified), David calls for help from YHWH to save him from his adversaries. His plea emphasises dependence on YHWH due to humanity’s tendency to trust in people rather than in God (Ps 146:3-4), a failure rooted in the disobedience of the primal pair in the Garden. This text firmly establishes trust as a central theme. The link between the Hebrew words אָדָם “men” and אֲדָמָה “ground” in Ps 146:3-4 references Gen 3:19.

Moreover, Ps 146:6 may be influenced by Gen 1. This passage underscores the fleeting nature of human life and questions the value of helping others. In Ps 18:5 [ET v. 4], the term

⁶ Patrick D. Miller, *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis* (SBL 27; Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 30.

יִבְעָתוּנִי “terrified, assailed (ESV, NRSV)” implies that death is unavoidable (cf. Job 3:5). Even those with power and wealth – referred to as “prince, noble” – will ultimately return to the earth (see Gen 3:19, Ps 104:29; Eccl 3:20). Their plans may not come to fruition and may end on the same day. In Ps 146:4, the text illustrates the repercussions of the primeval pair’s disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Their punishment entailed a return to the earth, indicated by the term אֲדָמָה “earthling” going back to אֶרֶץ “earth”. This punishment resulted from YHWH’s rule and his prescribed order of life.⁷ This is a caution against trusting human leaders because of their temporary essence (vv. 3-4); thus, verse 5 encourages dependence on YHWH.

The contrast between God and humankind highlights a way of dealing with the problem of fear before human threats: to trust God and not be afraid of mortals (Pss 118:9-10; 56:3-4; 124:1-2; cf. Is 51:12-13). This takes readers back to the Garden of Eden, where the primeval pair’s failure to trust YHWH resulted in their expulsion from the Garden. Human issues revolve around the problem of trusting those “rulers, princes”, or “leaders” to solve human predicaments. The difficulty with humanity lies in the fact that their plans and projects often perish along with them. The expectations of individuals who have vested their trust in them are ultimately shattered by their limited lifespan.⁸

I intend to explore the narratives surrounding human creation and the Garden of Eden. This exploration encompasses an analysis of the concept of הדעת טוב ורע and its correlation to wisdom as articulated in the texts of Job, Qohelet, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs in the HB.

⁷ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101-150* (Hermeneia; ed. Klaus Baltzer; trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 613.

⁸ James Luther Mays, *Psalms: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Interpretation; eds. James Luther Mays and Patrick D. Miller Jr.; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 440.

In Gen 1:26-28, God blesses both male and female and instructs them to fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over his other creations where the knowledge of good and evil is required. In order to meet this requirement, it is necessary to have the wisdom and knowledge that are found in Prov 1:4 “דַעַת”, 7 “דַעַת הַכְּמָה”; Eccl 1:16 “דַעַת הַדְּמָה”; 2:21, 26; 12:9 “דַעַת”; 2 Chron 1:10 “דַעַת וְיִמְדַעַת”, 11, 12, and more in the HB. King Solomon serves as an example of this, as he sought the ability to judge and distinguish between good and evil with a “listening heart to judge, to discern between good and evil” in 1 Kgs 3:9.

Accordingly, I will analyse the concept of “the knowledge of good and evil” in relation to Gen 1:26-31 and the Garden narrative. Then, I will pursue the concept of knowing good and evil in the Wisdom books. However, first, I examine past interpretations and understandings of the concept of good and evil, as reflected in scholarship. After my analysis, I will relate my findings to past interpretations, showing how they support or argue against each interpretation.

In Gen 2:4b-3:24, God explicitly commands Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but they consume it in disobedience to the command of YHWH. After eating from the tree, Adam and Eve become aware of their nakedness and are ashamed. For some scholars, the phrase “the knowledge of good and evil” does not denote moral knowledge. However, the primeval pair demonstrate that they have the capacity to differentiate between good and evil: something which has greatly influenced human existence, that is, to live outside the Garden. Additionally, Gen 1–3 outlines the creation of humanity in the image of God while acknowledging the differences between humans and their Creator. It explores the differences between male and female, human and animal, and the distinctions between the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and between

knowledge that is accompanied by death and life that is prohibited. Though the first humans acquired knowledge of good and evil that made them somewhat divine (Gen 3:22), their lack of access to the tree of life makes them different from divine beings.

It is worth noting that the primeval pair's supposed moral incapability is questionable because of God's commandment in Gen 2:17 ("but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die") which presupposes that they already have the ability to exercise moral discernment, which may lead to either blessings or curses on their lives. Holding the primeval pair responsible for taking actions before acquiring moral discernment or the knowledge of good and evil is illogical. It seems unreasonable for YHWH to have prohibited the primeval pair from exercising such knowledge under the threat of death when they had not yet obtained it. Furthermore, it is hard to imagine that the primeval pair could have understood how this knowledge would raise a person to the level of divine beings (3:22), especially without eternal life.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the themes of life and knowledge are pivotal to the Garden narrative. It indicates that although humans can attain divine knowledge, they are forbidden from obtaining divine life (3:5-7, 22-24). Life is more profound than merely being a choice between suffering and death. Acquiring insight into good and evil would be advantageous with a prolonged or eternal existence. However, as stated in Gen 3:22, while humans have obtained this wisdom, they are barred from accessing the tree of life, suggesting that a mortal lifespan may result in a limited and transient understanding. In the pursuit of knowledge, the investigation of good and evil should commence with the idea of טוב ורע, which deepens the author's intended meaning with echoes from texts beyond the Garden narrative

Eden. Before analysing the connection between good and evil in the Garden narrative and Wisdom literature, it is essential to establish a foundation for comprehending the significance of the knowledge of good and evil, its connection to the human mandate in the creation narrative, and its relevance in the Wisdom literature in the HB.

1.2 History of Research on the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Qohelet draws attention to the relationship between human existence and God in Eccl 3:11, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end” (ESV).⁹ Humans were created to live (Gen 2:16-17 and 3:22) according to God’s plan of blessings on human creation (1:26-28). As a result, humans have sought a fulfilling life (Dt 6:2; 32:47) within their hearts.

There are numerous interpretations of the phrase הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע in the Garden of Eden story that have been explored in the literature over time. To understand the Garden of Eden narrative and its focus on “the knowledge of good and evil” helps us grasp the context for the narratives of human creation and how the Garden relates to the Wisdom books in the HB, which we will examine later in this thesis. This is suggested by a canonical reading of the creation and Eden narratives, along with other texts, especially the Wisdom books. Their intertextuality enables us to analyse the language used in these texts and how it can lead to a new understanding of

⁹ In Eccl 3:11b, מְבַלִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא, “but still one is unable” indicates that the presence of הָעֶלְמִים ensures that humans will not understand what God is up to. This is due to the nature of time, which is under God’s control (Gen 8:22) and not subject to human understanding. This passage serves as a reminder of the limitations of human knowledge, particularly when it comes to divine matters such as the creation of the world. The word הָעֶלְמִים, which means “eternity,” can also refer to a long period of time. Specifically, it can signify the distant past or “time immemorial, of old,” and even the time before the creation of the world (Mic 5:1 [ET 5:2]). See Craig G. Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes* (BCOT; ed. T. Longman III; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 166-7; James Bollhagen, *Ecclesiastes* (CC; ed. D. O. Wenthe; St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2011), 145-7; Philip Graham Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 91-2.

reality. The main focus should remain on the text itself. There are four substantial interpretations that numerous scholars and commentators widely acknowledge as pertinent to this thesis: 1) Sexual Knowledge, 2) Maturity, 3) Moral Discrimination/Discernment, and 4) Wisdom.

1.2.1 Sexual knowledge

One way to interpret the idea of the knowledge of good and evil is that eating the fruit from the tree marked the beginning of sexual desire. It is thought that the Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra was the first to propose this view during the Middle Ages. Evidence supporting this interpretation is that after eating the fruit, Adam and Eve covered their nakedness and “Adam knew (יָדַע) his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain” (Gen 4:1). According to this approach, the significance of sexual knowledge being described as good and evil is that טוב refers to natural sexual expression, while רָע indicates an unnatural sexual deed (Gen 19:5-8; Judg 19:22-25).¹⁰

Gen 19:5-8a

⁵ And they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know (וְנִדְעָה) them.” ⁶ Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, ⁷ and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly (פְּרַעוּ). ⁸ Behold, I have two daughters who have not known (לֹא־יָדְעוּ) any man. (ESV)

Judg 19:22-25

¹⁰ Robert Gordis, “The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls,” *JBL* 76 (1957): 123-138, 124; see Robert Gordis, “Significance of the Paradise Myth,” *AJSL* 52 (1935-36): 86-94, 90-1; David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5-7; For this subject of human sexuality and the role of women in depth, see Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (OBT; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 132-4, 144-5, 165; Catherine L. McDowell, *The Image of God in Eden: The Creation of Mankind in Genesis 2:5–3:24 in Light of the mīs pī pīt pī and wpt-r Rituals of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt*, 169.

²² As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And they said to the old man, the master of the house, “Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him (וַיִּדְעֻהוּ).” ²³ And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly (אַל-תַּרְעוּ); since this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing. ²⁴ Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Violate to them and do with them what seems good to you, but against this man do not do this outrageous thing.” ²⁵ But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them. And they knew her (וַיִּדְעוּ) and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go. (ESV)

The word ידע in Genesis 19:5 is frequently used in Genesis to refer to sexual intercourse. This interpretation appears to be the most probable in this context (cf. 4:1, 17, 25; 24:16). Lot’s response reinforces this interpretation, as he describes his daughters as “virgins” who have not known a man. Many commentators acknowledge that ידע is intended to mean sexual intimacy in this instance.

It is seen that Sodom’s sexual immorality was predominant when the Sodomite men, young and old, virtually all the people in the city, surrounded and disturbed the house of Lot. This tactic of surrounding a home and demanding the visitors of Lot be handed over was also used by the wicked men of Gibeah, as told in Judges 19:22 and 20:5. They make no pretence about their detestable intention. They unashamedly make known their intentions to assault the visitors sexually. The reason such behaviour is considered unnatural is that it contradicts the primary purpose of human existence, which is to procreate. God’s concern about the seriousness of Sodom’s sin is evident when he tells Abraham about their sin (Gen 18:20-21).

The story later explains in 19:4-11 that this sin was a combination of two offences: unnatural lust (cf. Lev 18:22) and the violation of the right of guests or strangers to protection.¹¹

Some have interpreted its use in the Garden of Eden narrative as having a strong sexual connotation because of the use of the word “knowledge”, which is associated with fig leaves, nakedness, and shame. Schmid argues that this interpretation is incorrect as the text refers to the phrase *הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע* “the knowledge of good and evil”, which does not solely have sexual implications. He argues that the role of sexuality in the text is minimal, as the issue of human reproduction is not resolved until after the primeval pair’s disobedience.¹² The further development of the narrative shows clearly that human reproduction can take place as a consequence of the “knowledge of good and evil” – to the degree that it is “good” to have offspring (the acquisition of knowledge does not necessarily lead to reproduction).

However, YHWH’s statement in Genesis 3:22 that humans have now become like divine beings in that they know good and evil (*הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאֱלֹהִים מִמְּנוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וְרָע*) does not refer to human sexuality in any way. Moreover, the concept that sexual awareness only emerged after consuming the fruit is unconvincing. It should be noted that sexual knowledge already existed before consuming the fruit, specifically within the marriage established by YHWH in Genesis 2:24-25. The text implies sexual unity (Gen 2:25; cf. 1:26-28).¹³

¹¹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (CC; ed. John J. Scullion S.J.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 301; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC 2; eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1994), 55; G. J. Wenham, “Attitudes to Homosexuality in the OT,” *ExpTim* 102 (1991) 359-63.

¹² Konrad Schmid, “The Ambivalence of Human Wisdom: Genesis 2–3 as a Sapiential Text,” in *“When the Morning Stars Sang”: Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (BZAW 500; eds. Scott Jones and Christine Roy Yoder; Boston, MA: de Gruyter, 2017), 275-86.

¹³ Sam Dragga, “Genesis 2–3: A Story of Liberation,” *JSOT* 55 (1992): 3-13, 4-5.

The use of terms “leave” and “cling” in Genesis 2:24 indicates marriage and is described with “they became one flesh”; in a way that refers to universal practice. Its presence is also suggested in the immediate juxtaposition of the Gen 2:24 comment about a man clinging to his wife with what follows in 2:25 and 3:7 (naked without/with shame). Thus, sexual knowledge is suggested before any acquiring of the knowledge of good and evil, which is divine knowledge (Gen 3:22 “And YHWH God said, “Look—the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil”).¹⁴

Additionally, the concept of good and evil cannot be explained through human sexuality. Sexuality is intimately related to human mandates, “And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’” in Genesis 1:28a. Human sexuality without the ability to distinguish between good and evil is insufficient in aiding human survival. Since humans’ expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the knowledge of good and evil has become essential for human survival. In Genesis 4:2, Cain and Abel begin to subdue the earth and rule over God’s other creations, “And Abel became a keeper of sheep, and Cain became a tiller of the ground.”

Also, marriage is depicted as a covenant relationship shared by a man and a woman. The terms “leave” (עזב) and “cling” (דבק) are commonly used in the context of the covenant in the HB, indicating either a breach of the covenant (cf. Dt 28:20 and Hos 4:10) or faithfulness.¹⁵ Thus, sexual intimacy has been a part of human existence since the beginning of time, as

¹⁴ Andre LaCocque, *The Trial of Innocence: Adam, Eve, and the Yahwist* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2006), 77; Jacob Milgrom, “Sex and Wisdom: What the Garden of Eden Story is Saying,” *BAR* 10 (1994): 21, 52; Ronald A. Veenker, “Forbidden Fruit: Ancient Near Eastern Sexual Metaphors,” *HUCA* 77 (1999): 57-73, 70; P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel* (AYB 9; New York, NY: Yale University Press, 1984), 422; McCarter understands that sexual awareness comes with the knowledge of good and evil; see Gilgamesh 1.4, 29, 34 (*ANET3*, 75), where wisdom and understanding come with sexual experience.

¹⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 222; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 233-4.

described in Genesis 1:26-28 and the marriage covenant relationship in 2:18-25.¹⁶ This fulfils the human mandate to procreate, which is a blessing from the Creator God.

This intimacy complements the previous intimate knowledge that God had of them, as mentioned in 2:21-25. It is related to the human mandate to procreate described in 1:26-28.¹⁷ I contend that a crucial difference exists between the knowledge one can gain from sexual experiences and the knowledge that can be described by “become as one of us, to know good and evil” (Gen 3:22). So, even though the pain of childbirth and the struggle for food could be seen as consequences of human sexuality, the expulsion of Adam and Eve cannot be interpreted in the same way. Although the expulsion from the Garden is due to the primeval pair’s disobedience, the blessings of the Creator God continue in the human mandate (Gen 1:26-28). Thus, sexual activity itself is not considered a part of the punishment for their disobedience, but the pain of childbirth is.

Reading Genesis 1–3 in its final form, it becomes evident that according to Gen 1:26-28, YHWH created humans as fully mature beings with the capability to partake in sexual activities. This fact is later substantiated when Eve conceived and bore Cain in Gen 4:1.

Gen 4:1

Now Adam knew (וַיִּדַע) Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of YHWH (הַיְהוָה).” (ESV, modified)

¹⁶ Jacob Milgrom, “Sex and Wisdom: What the Garden of Eden Story is Saying,” *BR* 10 (1994), 21, 52. Milgrom suggested that the phrase “knowing good and evil” is “often a Biblical code phrase for sexual experience.” For the nuance of sexual perception in human knowledge, see Bernhard Lang, “The Forbidden Fruit: An Ancient Myth and Its Transformation in Genesis 2–3,” in *Hebrew Life and Literature: Selected Essays of Bernhard Lang* (SOTSMS; Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 111-26; Edmund Leach, *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (CE 39; London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), 14.

¹⁷ Susan E. Gillingham, *The Image, the Depths and the Surface: Multivalent Approaches to Biblical Study* (JSOT Sup 354; London; New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 13-15; J.A. Soggin, ‘The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis’, in *idem, Old Testament and Oriental Studies* (BibOr 29; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1975), 88-111; Karen R. Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament: A Linguistic, Archaeological, and Literary Study* (Haddonfield, NJ: Haddonfield House, 1974), 11-2.

On the one hand, this punishment was a result of their disobedience, but on the other hand, it was also a blessing that enabled them to carry out their duty found in the human mandates and fulfil God's plan for humanity and other creations.

1.2.2 Maturity

According to the early Church Fathers, Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyon, the condition of Adam and Eve in the Garden was regarded as one characterised by a deficiency in experience and maturity.¹⁸ For Cassuto, the acquisition of knowledge, beginning with the awareness of nakedness, is the awareness of disobedience to the command of YHWH.¹⁹ This signifies a deficiency in awareness, akin to that of Adam and Eve in their infancy, and is distinctly removed from the notion of equality with divine beings. George W. Buchanan views Adam and Eve as children in the Garden, where they learn to serve God, grow in wisdom and maturity, and move toward perfection.²⁰ The evidence for this view is that the ability to distinguish between good and evil indicates maturity in the Bible (cf. Dt 1:39 and Is 7:15-16).²¹

¹⁸ For an exhaustive discussion about the early Church Fathers, see Peter C. Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 71, 79; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (second edition; New York/Evanston/London: Harper & Row, 1960), 168; see early Christian writers, Theophilus, *Ad Autolycom*, 2, 24f., 27, Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.38.1; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1–11*, 75-6; Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012), 88-9.

¹⁹ Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah, Genesis 1-6*:8, 112-3.

²⁰ George W. Buchanan, "The Old Testament Meaning of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," *JBL* 75 (1956):114-20, 115-6.

²¹ Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part 1 From Adam To Noah 1–VI* 8, 113; von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 78-81; Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 26-27; see Robert Davidson, *Genesis 1–11* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 34-40. For Gunkel, knowing good and evil is an image of maturation. See Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (GHAT 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 7-17, 22-9. Lyn M. Bechtel, "Genesis 2.4b–3.24: A Myth About Human Maturation," *JSOT* 67 (1995):3-26, 12; see also John Day, "Wisdom in the Garden of Eden," in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. John Jarick; London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 339; Konrad Schmid, "The Ambivalence of Human Wisdom: Genesis 2–3 as a Sapiential Text," in *When*

Dt 1:39

וּטְפָכֶם אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם לְבָזוּ יִהְיֶה וּבְנֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ הַיּוֹם טוֹב וָרָע הִמָּה יָבֹאוּ שָׂמָּה וְלָהֶם אֶתְנַנֶּה וְהֵם יִירְשׁוּהָ:

And as for your little ones, who you said would become a prey, and your children, who today have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in there. And to them I will give it, and they shall possess it. (ESV)

Is 7:15-16

לְכֵן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הַנֶּהָה הַעֲלֵמָה הָרָה וְיִלְדֶת בֶּן וְקָרְאת שְׁמוֹ עֲמִנוּ אֵל:

חֲמָאָה וּדְבַשׁ יֹאכַל לְדַעְתּוֹ מֵאוֹס בָּרַע וּבַחֲזוֹר בְּטוֹב:

¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. (ESV)

From this viewpoint, an absence of the knowledge of good and evil, as cited in Deuteronomy 1:39, may be viewed as a shortcoming similar to that of a child. This idea suggests that the “knowledge of good and evil” referred to in Genesis 3:5 and 3:22 is gradually obtained by humanity (2 Sam 19:35; 1 Kgs 3:9; Is 7:15-16).²²

According to Numbers 14:29 (“your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled

the Morning Stars Sang”: *Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (BZAW 500; eds. Scott Jones and Christine Roy Yoder; Boston, MA: de Gruyter, 2017), 286.

²² Ackerman, “knowing Good and Evil: A Literary Analysis of the Court History in 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2,” 41-2; Samuel R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1904), 44; Howard N. Wallace, *The Eden Narrative* (HSMS 32; Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1985), 126-9; John Day, *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1–11* (LHBOTS 592; London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 43; Peter Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” in *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism* (ed. Beate Pongratz-Leisten; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 213. Gunkel, in his work (*Genesis*, 32), called the humans’ action “a child’s sin”; see Iain Provan, *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 113; Johnson T. K. Lim, *Narrative Artistry and Theological Meaning in Genesis 1–11* (Singapore: Word N Works, 2016), 175; Duane E. Smith “The Divining Snake: Reading Genesis 3 in the Context of Mesopotamian Ophiomancy,” *JBL* 134 (2015): 31-49, 42-3.

against me”), those under the age of twenty were not considered accountable.²³ If we define the “age of accountability” as the ability to distinguish good from evil, then the reference in Deuteronomy 1:39 relates to individuals under the age of twenty who can be regarded as “children”.²⁴ It is a reminder that only Caleb, Joshua (Num 14:38), and those who were under twenty years old in Israel (14:39 “אֶל-כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל”) were considered innocent of rebelling (cf. 14:29 “from twenty years old and above who grumbled against me”).²⁵

The primeval pair intended to gain divine knowledge by eating the forbidden fruit from the tree. However, instead of gaining wisdom, they became aware of their own nakedness. This interpretation does not explain how the knowledge of good and evil, as mature adult knowledge (as per Dt 1:39 and 2 Sam 19:36), makes one resemble divine beings (Gen 3:22).

For example, in 2 Samuel 19:36 [ET 35], Barzillai mentions losing this knowledge and becoming like a child in his old age.

2 Sam 19:36 [ET 35]

בְּנֵי-שָׁמָנִים שָׁנָה אָנֹכִי הַיּוֹם הָאֵדַע בֵּין-טוֹב לְרָע אִם-יִטְעַם עֵבֶדְךָ אֶת-אֲשֶׁר אֶכֶל וְאֶת-אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁתֶּה אִם-אֶשְׁמַע עוֹד בְּקוֹל שָׁרִים וְנִשְׁרוֹת וְלִמָּה יִהְיֶה עֵבֶדְךָ עוֹד לְמִשָּׂא אֶל-אֲדָנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

³⁵ I am this day eighty years old. Can I discern what is pleasant and what is not?

Can your servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voice of

²³ Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 182; Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21:9* (WBC 6A; eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, Glen W. Barker; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 32; Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 105; J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 5; ed. Donald J. Wiseman; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1974), 103; Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 5; ed. D. G. Firth; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 85.

²⁴ S. R. Driver, *A critical and exegetical commentary on Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 2nd edition, 1902), 28. Here the meaning is, “children” who are morally irresponsible, and consequently, no parties in the guilt of their fathers.

²⁵ Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 5; ed. D. G. Firth; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 85; J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 5; ed. Donald J. Wiseman; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1974), 103.

singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? (ESV)

Barzillai rhetorically elaborates on what is pleasant and unpleasant rather than moral knowledge. His comment does not imply a loss of moral judgment but reflects a natural decline in sexuality due to old age, which also impacts his sense of taste for food and drink.²⁶ It can be interpreted that, because of his age, Barzillai refers to the simplicity of a child that leads to obeying the word of God by knowing good from evil.

In verse 36d [ET 35d], Barzillai made a wise inquiry asking, “Why should your servant be a burden any longer to my lord the king?” This shows Barzillai’s insightful perspective, based on the Hebrew word ידע, which conveys the idea of personal experience and knowledge, implying that he considers the mentioned individual as having the potential to impede rather than support King David. At the age of eighty, Barzillai carried out his most significant service for the Kingdom of God. He had remained loyal to YHWH’s appointed king (2 Sam 17:27-29), which was the most important thing to him. He was content to return to his hometown and spend the rest of his days there. This indicates that he valued (19:38 [ET 37]) a serene passing and reuniting with his parents over the prospect of a new life in the royal court. This choice reflects his ability to distinguish between good and evil, which ultimately led to blessing not curse. For him, nothing else mattered.²⁷ The passage in 2 Sam 19:39-41 [ET 40-42] sheds light on Barzillai’s choice to not accompany King David. This decision can be viewed as a

²⁶ I. Höver-Johag, “טוב,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; trans. David E. Green; Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, vol 5, 1986), 308-9; A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC 11; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 238-40; McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel*, 422.

²⁷ Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity* (Christian Focus; Ross-shire: Britain; Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 246-7; John Woodhouse, *2 Samuel: Your Kingdom Come* (PtW; ed. R. K. Hughes; Wheaton: IL; Crossway, 2015), 465-6.

reflection of the unsettled social and political circumstances in Israel at that time. It is possible that Barzillai, being a wise and experienced individual, may have taken his age and capacity to adapt to the current social, political situations into account when making his decision.

Enns describes the process, “Adam’s first lesson in moving toward spiritual maturity is the command to keep away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:15-17).²⁸

According to Isaiah 7:15, being mature is important in recognising the difference between good and evil. The passage 2 Samuel 19:36-42 [ET 35-41] states that one who has experience and maturity “knows to reject the evil and choose the good.” This underlines the significance of having this fundamental understanding. The phrase “choose the good” implies that one is mature enough to make moral decisions and take responsibility for their actions. This is evident in the expulsion of the primeval pair from the Garden of Eden for disobeying the command of YHWH,²⁹ which is later repeated in the punishment of Israel being expelled, young and old, male and female, from the Promised Land in the HB.³⁰ In addition, it is important to consider the prayer of Solomon after his “thousand burnt offerings” in 1 Kgs 3:1-15.

In 1 Kings 3:5-9, in a dream of Solomon, God appears to him, saying, “Ask what I should give to you.” Solomon asks for a listening heart to discern between good and evil.

1 Kgs 3:9

וְנָתַתְּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לֵב שֹׁמֵעַ לִשְׁפֹט אֶת-עַמֶּךָ לְהִבִּין בֵּין-טוֹב לְרָע כִּי מִי יוֹכַל לִשְׁפֹט אֶת-עַמֶּךָ הַכֹּכֵד הַזֶּה:

²⁸ Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Origins*, 88.

²⁹ Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 28

³⁰ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11: a new translation with introduction and commentary* (AYB 5; ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 151; Telford Work, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009), 37.

Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people? (ESV)

According to 1 Kings 3:9, biblical maturity is not solely based on age but on having a receptive heart that listens and obeys the word of God. This is particularly important in a king's court, where a fair verdict is essential.

The concept of maturity in the Garden of Eden is derived from the painful experiences of the primeval pair, such as the pain of childbirth and acquiring food, together with their understanding of good and evil, which was gained through the pain of death. It seems that their inexperience or naivety could be a contributing factor.

D. J. A. Clines takes notice of the connection between wisdom terms in Psalm 19 and the Garden of Eden narrative and understands the psalmist's portrayal to mean Adam and Eve were in a state of innocence (see Prov 22:3 "The clever sees danger and hides, but the simple go on and suffer").³¹ Clines finds allusions to Genesis 2–3 in Psalm 19: מְהִימָה פְּתִי "making wise the simple" (Ps 19:8 [ET 7]). He argues that this phrase describes the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden as "desirable to make one wise" (Gen 3:6). Mark S. Smith also sees the term for פְּתִי "simple" in Psalm 19:8 ([ET 7]) as one of the wisdom terms in the Wisdom books (Prov 1:4; 8:5; 9:13; 19:25).³² Nevertheless, the "simple" in wisdom generally means lacking in knowledge and sense, a person who can be deceived easily, similar to the woman in the Garden (Gen 3:1-5 and cp. Prov 7:7 "the simple" here refers to "the

³¹ David J. A. Clines, "The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh (Psalm XIX)," *VT* 24 (1974): 8-14. Solomon expresses himself "to be inexperienced as a young child" (1 Kgs 3:7-9).

³² Smith, *The Genesis of Good and Evil: The Fall(out) and Original Sin in the Bible*, 38-40; Clines, "The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh," 9. Clines also equates the motif of "opening the eyes" in Genesis 3:7 with "enlightening the eyes" in Ps 19:9 ([ET] 19:8). Clines recognises that some of the verbal comparisons are suggestive of shared motifs.

youth”; 9:4, 16; 10:13; 17:18; 24:30 תִּסְרֵר־לֵב “who has no sense/deficit”; and 9:13 “A woman of foolishness loud, simple, and does not know it”).³³ The question is, does it make sense to think of הָאִשָּׁה and הָאִדְמָה “the woman” in the Garden as “simple” פְּתִי, persons lacking in discernment? The woman demonstrated a keen sense of awareness as she acknowledged that the fruit from the tree had the potential to bestow wisdom upon her. She knew it was forbidden, but her desire for knowledge compelled her to consume it. This shows that she may have lacked a clear sense of good and evil, and there would be consequences to pay for their death, which they never experienced, although it is declared by YHWH in Genesis 2:17b: “... for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”

The Garden narrative prompts us to consider whether our grasp of the knowledge of good and evil signifies true wisdom – a mark of maturity and fear of YHWH in Wisdom literature – or if it is simply knowledge that culminates in suffering and death, stemming from the disobedience of the primeval pair. Essentially, the “knowledge” gained from the forbidden fruit would make them like divine beings (Gen 3:22), while adhering to God’s commandments and abstaining from the fruit would have the same effect. This implies that individuals must take responsibility for their actions and choices, navigating between death and life according to the command of YHWH. This perspective may be regarded as a conduit for personal development, experiential learning, maturation, and independence in relation to YHWH.

³³ “Among the youth” in Prov 7:7 carries a meaning of the intimate relationship one must have with his father (cf. 1:8; 4:3), which fails the transition from one generation to the next. See Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1:1–15:29* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 372; John Day, “Wisdom in the Garden of Eden,” in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. John Jarick; London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 340.

Upon examining the previous scholarship regarding the knowledge of good and evil, we have identified that interpretations linking this concept to sexuality and maturity possess specific merits. Thus, each theory and its supporting evidence need to be contextualised and clarified to validate their significance through the wisdom presented in Wisdom literature. It is important to note that further exploration of this finding is also necessary to understand the phrase “Look – the man has become like one of us,” as found in Genesis 3:22.

1.2.3 Moral Discrimination and Discernment

The suggestion that the phrase *הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרָע* can be interpreted as the divine knowledge of moral discrimination that centres on the moral quality of “good and evil” is not too different from the idea that it means distinguishing between “helpful (beneficial) and harmful.” One important point to note against the moral interpretation is that God’s commandment in Genesis 2:17 (“but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die”) presupposes that the primeval pair already possess the ability to exercise moral discernment, which may lead to either blessings or curses on their lives. Holding the primeval pair responsible for taking actions before acquiring the moral discernment needed to understand those actions (the knowledge of good and evil in this interpretation) is illogical. Moreover, it is hard to imagine that the primeval pair, without such knowledge, could have understood that possessing this knowledge would elevate a person to the level of divine beings (3:22).

As discussed above, citing Deuteronomy 1:39 and 2 Samuel 19:36, one without the knowledge of good and evil is considered a child in the HB. Thus, Adam and Eve, prior to

eating the fruit, could be considered such under this interpretation.³⁴ According to Delitzsch and Asselin, the process of human maturation does not simply involve a child growing into an adult. Rather, it encompasses the development of moral discernment through gaining experiential knowledge and progressing from innocence to maturity in decision-making.

However, the primeval pair in the Garden would then be like young people with no prior experience or knowledge to rely on, acting against their best interests without truly understanding what was beneficial or harmful by disobeying what was said in Gen 2:16-17. According to Wellhausen, the phrase “the knowledge of good and evil” should be interpreted as functional, meaning helpful and harmful rather than good and evil.³⁵ Looking at it this way, eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil grants humans the ability to distinguish between beneficial or detrimental actions without explaining why eating the forbidden fruit can lead to either outcome. However, this fails to explain why *הַדְּעַת טוֹב וָרָע* is forbidden on pain of death.

In 2 Samuel 19:36-42, the passage describes that Barzillai, who has experience and is morally mature, “knows to reject the evil and choose the good”, as the blessed one (v. 39 “the king crossed and kissed Barzillai and blessed him”). The phrase “choose the good” implies that making moral decisions accompanies responsibility for actions. For instance, in 2 Samuel 19:25-31, David is faced with a decision between Mephibosheth and Ziba. Specifically, in verse 28 [ET v. 27], David must make a choice. It is unclear whether Mephibosheth or Ziba is

³⁴ Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis* (trans. Sophia Taylor, New York: Scribner & Welford, 2 vols., 1889), 1:138; David T. Asselin, “The Notion of Dominion in Genesis 1-3,” *CBQ* 16 (1954): 277-294; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1970), 556; Carly L. Crouch, “הַטָּעַת as Interpolative Gloss A Solution to Gen 4,7,” *ZAW* 123 (2011): 250-258; 256 (“moral responsibility”).

³⁵ Wellhausen, *A Historical-Critical Inquiry into the Origin and Composition of the Hexateuch* ((trans. H. P. Wicksteed; London: Macmillan, 1886), 301, 306; van Wolde, *Stories of the Beginning: Genesis 1–11 and Other Creation Stories*, 46. See Seizo Sekine, *Transcendancy and Symbols in the Old Testament: A Genealogy of the Hermeneutical Experiences* (BZAW 275; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 236; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 241; Roland K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1970), 556.

being truthful, and as the king, David must find a way to uncover the truth. Instead, David divides the property between the two supplicants. There are sufficient narrative hints for the readers to discern whether Mephibosheth or Ziba is in the right, but David has failed to discern good and evil.

In comparison, Solomon proposed dividing the living baby to uncover the truth rather than splitting the object between two mothers. Solomon was pressured to divide to discern good from evil. However, David divides the estates without making such moral distinctions. Additionally, in his rapidly approaching death in 1 Kings 1, David is in his chamber with Abishag (vv. 3, 15), who is in “his bosom”. The narrative highlights that David לא ידע “did not know” Abishag.³⁶ David no longer recognises her. This recalls David’s earlier plots to kill Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, against the commandments of YHWH. Then Bathsheba, prompted by Nathan, approaches David and Abishag in the chamber to plead for her son Solomon. She exclaims that “Adonijah has seized the kingship. And now, my lord the king, you do not know (לא ידעת)” (1 Kgs 1:18). David does not know, whereas Barzillai demonstrates his moral discernment with the phrase האדע בין-טוב לרע “Can I know between good and evil?”

Referring to the use of knowledge of good and evil in Deuteronomy 1:39, S. R. Driver points out that little children do not have moral discrimination.³⁷ Commenting on Genesis 3:6, Westermann suggests that the woman’s decision to eat the forbidden fruit challenged the idea

³⁶ Danny Mathews, *Royal Motifs in the Pentateuchal Portrayal of Moses* (LHBOTS 571; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2012), 70-2; James S. Ackerman, “Knowing Good and Evil: A Literary Analysis of the Court History in 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2,” *JBL* 109/1 (1990): 41-64, 51-4.

³⁷ Samuel R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (London: Methuen & Co., 1904), 41.

that only divine beings possess the knowledge of good and evil.³⁸ It indicates that the knowledge of good and evil as wisdom is not gained by disobeying the command of YHWH. Thus, the knowledge of good and evil, whether construed as sexuality or moral discernment, cannot be obtained. Instead, in this view, the woman in the Garden demonstrated not just her ability to distinguish between what was beneficial or harmful on her own but also to take responsibility for the pain of death. Therefore, the primeval pair's choice to disobey YHWH's prohibition in Genesis 2:17 resulted in the punishment of expulsion from the Garden.

It is crucial to note that disobedience can turn blessings into curses, as seen in Israel's history in the HB. The understanding of divine judgment leads to the concept of blessing and cursing. However, as a consequence of the primeval pair's expulsion from the Garden, judgment turns into blessings, since the blessings stated in the human mandates (Gen 1:28) were ultimately realised in Genesis 9–11.

1.2.4 Wisdom

Many commentators interpret the phrase “to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge” as the sin committed by the first humans, a sin that brought death to all humanity. While some scholars argue that “the knowledge of good and evil” represents wisdom, Genesis 3:6 clearly states that the fruit from the tree has the ability לְהַשְׁכִּיל “to make one wise”.³⁹ The resulting interpretation still depends on how the commentators understand the meaning of “wisdom”.

³⁸ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 248; Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 203; MacDowell, *The Image of God in Eden: The Creation of Mankind in Genesis 2:5-3:24*, 169; see Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford Basil Blackwell, 1966), 209.

³⁹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (trans. John J. Scullion; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 109, 276; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 190; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 23; Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 25. Sarna sees that *le-haskil* is the capacity for making decisions that lead to success.

For instance, the eventual pain of death on humans becomes a guiding principle in the wisdom tradition as a source of wisdom in the Wisdom books, “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death” (Prov 14:12; Eccl 2:16; 12:7; cf. Gen 3:19). If the primeval pair did listen to what YHWH commanded (Gen 2:17), the knowledge of good and evil could have had the outcome of a life of obedience, namely, divine life.

Also, other scholars, including Roland E. Murphy, suggest that the phrase *הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע* is better understood in relation to the concept of “blessing” (Gen 1:28; 2:3; Ex 20:11; Dt 7:13). The concept presented here acknowledges the fact that YHWH is the originator and the source of blessings that come to fruition. This interpretation provides a fresh perspective on the significance of the phrase *הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע* in the Bible.⁴⁰ Thus, the knowledge of good and evil is wisdom in that it provides humans with the power to live blessed lives (Prov 3:13-17; 4:5-9) and prosper in the world (9:1-6; 24:3-4).⁴¹ The concept of divine blessing is closely related to human obedience and God’s reward. This is evident in accounts such as Saul and David in 1-2 Samuel and Solomon in 1 Kings 3:9-14 and Proverbs 26:27 (cf. 10:4;). Additionally, Psalm 7:9-18 [ET 8-17] provides further insight into this connection. On the other hand, human disobedience is linked to God’s punishment, as seen in the accounts of David in 2 Samuel 13-20 and Solomon in 1 Kings 11:9-25 (see Prov 10:30; 11:21; 13:25).

⁴⁰ Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2nd ed., 1996), 117; Stephen B. Chapman, “Reading the Bible as Witness: Divine Retribution in the Old Testament,” *PRSt* 31 (2004): 171-190, 182; Lennart Boström, *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs* (CBOT 29; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990), 94-5.

⁴¹ Michael C. Legaspi, *Wisdom in Classical and Biblical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 61-3; Lennart Boström, *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs*, 94-5; Stephen B. Chapman, “Reading the Bible as Witness: Divine Retribution in the Old Testament,” 176; Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 3rd ed., 2002), 115-8; Johanness Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture I-II* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), I 194-6.

The path to life begins with the fear of the Lord, and those who delight in his laws will thrive (Ps 1:1, “Blessed is the man (אַשְׁרֵי־הָאִישׁ) who does not walk in the council of the wicked”). Conversely, relying solely on moral autonomy will lead to death (Prov 14:12; 16:25). Wisdom, which involves the ability to discern between good and evil, is a sign of maturity based on moral discernment.

Clines suggests that the language used in the latter half of Psalm 19 is similar to that of the tree of life in Genesis 2:9, 16 and 3:22b “What if he stretches out his hand and takes also from the tree of life and eats, and lives forever?” He argues that Psalm 19:7-10 highlights the superiority of the command of YHWH and the tree of life over the tree of knowledge in Genesis 2–3, presenting it as a more effective way of gaining wisdom.⁴²

In Psalm 19:8 [ET v. 7], Clines sees מְשִׁיבַת נַפְשׁ “reviving the life” as obedience to the command of YHWH in Genesis 2:17 that restores a person’s life (נָפֶשׁ). This term is also used metaphorically in other passages, such as Psalm 23:3, where it says נָפְשִׁי יְשׁוּבֵב “he restores my life”, Proverbs 24:14 כֵּן דַעַה חֲכָמָה לְנַפְשֶׁךָ “Thus know wisdom for your soul,” and Isaiah 55:3 שְׁמַעוּ וְיַחַי נַפְשְׁכֶם “Hear, that your soul may live.”

However, eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge did not produce the wisdom hoped for, but the tree of life, that is to obey the command of YHWH, brings true wisdom. For Carr, in order to determine what is good and what is evil in the Garden, it must be compared to other similar passages in the HB that relate to wisdom experiences, like 1 Kings 3:9, 11 and 2 Samuel 14:17, 20.⁴³ In his analysis, Carr explores the Hebrew word עָרוּם, which means “crafty” and is used to describe the serpent in Genesis 3:1. This word is also commonly translated as

⁴² D. J. A. Clines, *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967-1998* (JSOT 293; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 708-15.

⁴³ David Carr, “The Politics of Textual Subversion: A Diachronic Perspective on the Garden of Eden Story,” *JBL* 112 (1993): 577-95, 588.

“prudent” in the book of Proverbs (see 10:5, 19; 12:16; 15:5; 19:14). Carr argues that understanding “the knowledge of good and evil” requires a thorough examination of its context within the HB, including both immediate and far-reaching references in Wisdom literature.⁴⁴

We should not miss the crucial point that the fruit of the tree of life was there accessible for consumption while the primeval pair was obedient to the command of YHWH and understood its true meaning. The prolonged life or divine life like divine beings entails the knowledge of good and evil as depicted in YHWH’s statement in Gen 3:22, “Look—the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil. What if he stretches out his hand and also takes it from the tree of life and eats and lives forever?”

James Barr suggests that “knowledge of good and evil” refers to distinguishing between knowledge that supports life and knowledge that harms it.⁴⁵ Children do not have this knowledge yet (Dt 1:39-40), and the elderly may lose it (2 Sam 19:36). However, this knowledge is not related to anything that humans can avoid. It appears that this knowledge is not within the realm of human control. Instead, this is a trait that humans depend on daily, and it is uniquely human. Michaela Bauks sees this as the nature of the knowledge of good and evil that relates to wisdom in the Wisdom books.⁴⁶

The primeval pair in the Garden, by eating the tree of life, could have attained immortality; it was a missed opportunity. The phrase *הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרָע* is, in fact, wisdom that encompasses knowledge necessary for survival, as human exile implies a life severed from

⁴⁴ David Carr, “The Politics of Textual Subversion: A Diachronic Perspective on the Garden of Eden Story,” 587-8; Konrad Schmid, “The Ambivalence of Human Wisdom: Genesis 2–3 as a Sapiential Text,” in *When the Morning Stars Sang”: Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, 275-86.

⁴⁵ James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); Triggve N. D. Mettinger, *Eden Narrative*, 99-122.

⁴⁶ Michaela Bauks, “Sacred Trees in the Garden of Eden and Their Ancient Near Eastern Precursors,” *JAJ* 3 (2012): 269-303;

God. The consequence is that humans can no longer access the tree of life, which would grant them both knowledge and immortality, resembling a god-like status (Gen 1:26). As a result, humans were expelled from the Garden of Eden and separated from the presence of YHWH *'ēlōhîm*.

In the Garden narrative, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is said to have the power to bestow wisdom (3:6). This implies that the primeval pair gained wisdom, but it also brought upon them the judgment of mortality. This suggests that knowing good and evil, without the life of immortality, is an incomplete form of wisdom.⁴⁷ The HB recognises the reality and power of wisdom as depicted in Genesis and the Succession narratives, which depend solely on human resources and self-governing reason, leading to divine retribution. It is a wisdom that works, but these narratives also reflect the anxious knowledge that is alienated from YHWH. Qohelet concludes by considering what he finds in Ecclesiastes 2:26a כִּי לְאָדָם ׀ שְׂטוּב לְפָנָיו נָתַן חֵכְמָה וְדַעַת וְשִׂמְחָה “For to the human who is good to the face of him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy” (LEB). The concepts of wisdom, knowledge, life, and death have been intertwined in the HB since the primeval pair’s disobedience in the Garden. In Proverbs, fools are seduced into “death” (7:27), similar to how the serpent led Adam and Eve. This provides a valuable perspective, with the word “life” contrasted with “death” in Proverbs 8:36, similar to Genesis 2:16-17 and 3:22 and 24.

⁴⁷ David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 63, 70; David M. Carr, “Politics of Textual Subversion: A Diachronic Perspective on the Garden of Eden Story,” 577-95; Daniel E. Fleming, “The Heavens Were Not Enough: Humanity and God’s Home in the Book of Genesis,” in *Reconstructing a Distant Past: Ancient Near Eastern Essays in Tribute to Jorge R. Silva Castillo* (eds. D. A. Barreyra Fracaroli and Gregorio del Olmo Lete; Barcelona: AUSA, 2009), 104-5; Jan Christian Gertz, “The Formation of the Primeval History,” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (VT Sup 152; eds. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David Petersen; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), 126.

The punishment given to the first humans for disobeying YHWH *'ēlōhîm*'s command did not halt God's plan for humanity to multiply and fill the earth and have dominion over the rest of creation; a plan that requires knowledge and wisdom. This plan remained intact and continued to progress.

From my evaluation, previous research has overlooked multiple limitations to their interpretations. If we consider good and evil as signs of maturity or wisdom, it seems contradictory that the primeval pair would be prohibited from attaining it. After all, another text in the HB encourages the acquisition of wisdom and insight (Prov 4:7, "The beginning of wisdom: Get wisdom! With all that is in your possession, gain insight"). This raises questions about the reasoning behind such prohibitions and challenges us to consider the nuances of these concepts in different contexts. This is an example of how, when examining texts, intertextuality can be utilised to compare and analyse them. This approach involves identifying shared key terms, themes, phrases, and allusions as evidence to interpret the texts in the given context.

1.3 Methodology

This thesis will intertextually read the canonical Wisdom books with Genesis Chapters 1–3. I will briefly cover the main methodologies that I will use below.

1.3.1 Literary Approach

The "literary approach" to interpreting the Bible refers to reading the Bible from the perspective of any literary theory, whether contemporary or traditional, mainstream or

unconventional. This is a broad and non-technical term used by Bible interpreters.⁴⁸ On the other hand, “literary criticism” refers to a specific consideration and analysis of a literary text using a literary method. Thus, a literary approach is a general way of referring to some literary criticism using a literary technique.

Numerous studies show the techniques used in the HB.⁴⁹ Barton’s analysis of the HB highlights the effective use of persuasive techniques. He acknowledges the use of rhetorical questions to rationalise divine retribution, the employment of literary structures to create persuasive effects, the incorporation of poetic justice, and the establishment of connections to nature. Some scholars categorise rhetorical criticism into two types - one that emphasises persuasive techniques and another that emphasises artistic techniques.⁵⁰ Yehoshua Gitay uses Aristotelian rhetorical categories to analyse Second Isaiah. He explores the dialogue between Second Isaiah and the Jewish exiles in Babylon and examines Isaiah’s rhetorical methods to engage with his audience, express themes, and identify literary devices used.⁵¹ An author or speaker who wants to convince others often pays attention to the way they present their ideas, while those who criticise artistic expression use their analysis to reveal the speaker’s intentions. Thus, what matters is how a writer or speaker persuades their audience and how their arguments are interconnected. It usually ends with a discussion of the key features of the text.

⁴⁸ Douglas Estes, *Literary Approaches to the Bible* (eds. D. Mangum & D. Estes; Bellingham, WA; Lexham Press, 2016, Vol. 4), 4-5.

⁴⁹ John Barton, “History and Rhetoric in the Prophets,” in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility* (WSPL; ed. Martin Warner; London: Routledge, 1990), 51-64; J. P. Fokkelman, “Genesis,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, (eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode; Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1987), 40.

⁵⁰ Yehoshua Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion: A Study of Isaiah 40-48* (Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1981), 40-8; Phyllis Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 41-4, 101-8.

⁵¹ Suzanne Smith, “Old Testament Rhetorical and Narrative Criticism,” In *Literary Approaches to the Bible* (Eds. D. Mangum & D. Estes; Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, Vol. 4, 2016), 86.

Regarding the above, Robert Alter approached the analysis of Hebrew narrative as a work of art with complex characters and impactful dialogue. He perceives that the Bible uses imagery of God's relationship with humanity in a precise manner. Alter suggests using a literary approach to understand the Bible's language, including historical scenes, narration, dialogue, repetition, and character development.⁵² The narrator rearranges, omits, shifts perspectives, and evaluates events in the story.

For example, literary criticism has been the primary approach to understanding the interpretation of Gen 1–3. This includes historical and form criticism, closely connected to the sources the author or editor may have drawn from, whether written or oral. In other words, literary criticism involves implementing some form of literary theory in practice.⁵³ The significance of the literary approach to the Bible lies in the fact that the Bible is a form of literature. However, the term “literature” has expanded to include any text that can be read and interpreted and is not limited to a specific category of writings. This broadening of the term has important implications for understanding and analysing texts.

When it comes to the literary approach, there is not one definitive answer or endpoint in interpretation. Many different interpretations have been present since the creation of any biblical text. For instance, the literary approach differs from the historical approach. Critics of the literary approach often note that it avoids historical concerns, but this is only sometimes the case. While many literary approaches to Scripture may overlook historical questions, they are not necessarily anti-historical. Similarly, when an interpreter employs the historical approach,

⁵² Robert Alter, “Psalms,” In *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1987), 244-62; *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 2011, Revised), 22, 101-2; Tremper Longman III, “Literary Approaches to Old Testament Study,” in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 1999), 97.

⁵³ Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 234-43.

they are not necessarily ignoring literary questions. Biblical scholars use the literary approach to examine the text but also integrate historical concerns and questions into their interpretive goals as appropriate.⁵⁴ The significance of the literary approach to the Bible lies in the fact that the Bible is a form of literature.

Literary theorists acknowledge that a text's meaning can come from sources beyond the author's intentions. The text-oriented approach focuses on the "materiality" of texts, such as manuscript editions, language and style analyses, and formal literary structure. When interpreting literature using a text-focused approach, only the text is considered.⁵⁵ One of the most appealing aspects of the text-focused approach is that it enables the interpreter to feel precise by closely reading the text without making assumptions about the author's intent or the reader's perspective. Accordingly, literary analysis can be divided into author-oriented, reader-oriented, and contextual approaches.

The postmodern literary approach utilises the context-focused approach for text interpretation. The context-focused approach cannot be easily categorised as a distinct method but should be seen as a broad term encompassing a range of related approaches. Therefore, the techniques that comprise the context-focused approach are a collection of various methods with similar strategies for engaging with the text. These shared strategies are what unite the different methods under this approach. When we refer to context-focused approaches, we are not talking about the background of a text. Instead, we are often referring to the parameters that give a text its meaning. These approaches aim to discover the meaning of a text through the limitations imposed on it by its surroundings rather than relying on the author's intent, the

⁵⁴ T. A. Perry, "A Poetics of Absence: The Structure and Meaning of Genesis 1:2," *JSOT* 58 (1993): 3-11.

⁵⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; London: Continuum, 2004), 176-8; E. D. Hirsch Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 2-5.

words used, or the reader's response. Contextual approaches aim to classify literary texts according to genres and historical periods and place them within the context of historical, social, or political developments.

For example, Ps 104 is a hymn with an unknown author that praises the God of creation. With poetic freedom, the psalm parallels the creation accounts in Gen 1 and the Garden of Eden in Gen 2-3 as it relates in order the various parts of the psalm to the days of the creation.⁵⁶

Ps 104:29-30, 35

מִסְתִּיר פָּנָיִךְ יִבְהַלֵּוּן תִּסְרֵף רוּחֶם יִגְנֹעוּן וְאֵל־עֲפָרָם יִשׁוּבוּן:

תִּשְׁלַח רוּחֶךָ יִבְרָאוּן וַתַּחַדֵּשׁ פְּנֵי אֲדָמָה:

יִמְמוּ חַטָּאִים מִן־הָאָרֶץ וּרְשָׁעִים עוֹד אֵינָם בְּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה הַלְלוּ־יָהּ:

²⁹ When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. ³⁰ When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

³⁵ Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more! Bless YHWH, O my soul! Praise Yah! (ESV, modified)

In Ps 104:29-30, as with the animals in the preceding verses, when YHWH takes their breath, they die and return to the dust from which they were created. This relates to the primeval pair's disobedience in the Garden and the subsequent judgment (Gen 3:16-19). New life comes when YHWH sends his "spirit" or "breath", and life is יִבְרָאוּן "created" (1:26-31)

⁵⁶ Peter A. Steveson, *Psalms* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2007), 356.

where YHWH blessed his creation of humanity (1:28). He renews the face of the earth as he provides food for mankind to gain (Gen 2:9) in verse 30.

Further, in Ps 104:31-35, as in Gen 2:1-3, the seventh day was set apart to recognise YHWH to note what he has done.⁵⁷ Psalm 104 parallels the creation account in Gen 1–2 as a hymn that follows the order of creation days but as a reflection (v. 34) set within a beginning and ending that makes it a psalm of praise. The psalmist ponders creation and its providential work of God. It begins and ends (see Ps 103 and 105) to show YHWH as creator with the sun and moon as season markers and as lamps designed by God to give the earth light (vv. 19-23; cf. Gen 1:16-18). In Ps 104:29-30, as with the animals in the preceding verses, when YHWH takes their breath, they die and return to the dust from which they were created. This relates to the primeval pair’s disobedience in the Garden and the subsequent judgment (Gen 3:16-19). New life comes when YHWH sends his “spirit” or “breath”, and life is יִבְרָאֵיִן “created” (1:26-31) where YHWH blessed his creation of humanity (1:28). He renews the face of the earth as he provides food for mankind to gain (Gen 2:9) in verse 30.

Psalm 104 praises the creation work of YHWH as described in Genesis 1. It includes references to the first two days of creation (vv. 1-4), and the third day (vv. 5-18), and also mentions creatures from later stages of creation, particularly those from day 5 (vv. 5-9). A notable section in verses 5-9 of the Psalm discusses the waters that the “deep” stood over, which were under the complete control of the creator. This echoes Gen 1:9-10 and the postdiluvian promise in Gen 8:21-22 and 9:8-17. In verse 24, the psalmist praises God’s power, wisdom, and creation.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Peter A. Steveson, *Psalms* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2007), 396-401; Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms* (THOTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 172-6.

⁵⁸ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (CC; trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1978),

Psalm 104:31 may reference the evaluation formula the phrase of כִּי־טוֹב “it was good” in Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31. In Genesis 1:31, the phrase וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים וַהֲגֵה־טוֹב מְאֹד is used as “And God saw... that it was very good”. The immediate contexts of Ps 104, beginning from Ps 103 and ending in Ps 105, allude the readers to the context of the creation of God in Gen 1 and the Garden of Eden in Gen 2–3. Ps 104:35 alludes to the disobedience of the primeval pair, who were commanded by YHWH “not to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil”. In verse 35a, the Psalmist recognises the existence of sin in the world and expresses their wish for it to be eliminated by saying, “Let sinners perish completely from the earth, and the wicked not remain alive.” The Psalmist hopes for a godly world. To this end, he prays that sinners may be consumed and that the wicked would exist no more, which recognises the Creator in Gen 2:1-3.

The idea of blessing in Psalm 104 is reminiscent of the way God blessed humans in Genesis 1:26-28 “And God blessed them.” The psalmist closes the psalm by urging humans to “bless” YHWH, repeating the same response as before (cf. Ps 103). In verse 35b, the final phrase בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה הַלְלוּ־יָהּ, he says, “Bless YHWH, o my soul. Praise Yah” - similar to the opening of Ps 105, which implores us to “Praise YHWH”.⁵⁹

Author-oriented schools emphasise the author’s biography and attempt to establish connections between the author’s life and their work of art. Interpretation approaches that prioritise the author assume the author has the ultimate authority over textual meaning.⁶⁰

303-4; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalm 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101-150* (Hermeneia; ed. Klaus Baltzer; trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 56-7.

⁵⁹ Peter A. Steveson, *Psalms*, 401; James Luther Mays, *Psalms: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Interpretation; ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1986), 331-2; G. W. Grogan, *Psalms* (Eerdmans, 2008), 173-5.

⁶⁰ Robert H. Stein, “The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,” *JETS* 44/3 (2001): 451-466; Rex Mason, “The Use of Earlier Biblical Material in Zechariah 9–14: A Study in Inner Biblical

Reader-oriented approaches concentrate on how texts are perceived by their audiences and their effect on the general public. Rather than emphasising the author's intention or the words in the text, reader-oriented approaches give importance to the meaning that the reader interprets to the extent that the objective is to make "the text disappear".⁶¹ This approach argues that during the process of reading and interpretation, it is not the author or the text that speaks to the reader but the reader who speaks to themselves. Reader-oriented theorists and critics became prominent in literary and biblical interpretation circles. Reader-focused methods, such as reader-response criticism, are mainly concerned with answering three questions:⁶²

1. Can different reader responses lead to different interpretations of the text?
2. Is the range of valid interpretations determined solely by the number of valid readers?
3. Is there a hierarchy of validity among interpretations, or are they all equally valid?

It is important to note that all three questions are significant and should be given different priority levels depending on the text. However, the first question is used as an initial approach. The other questions can be applied if related questions are answered appropriately. For instance, who are the valid readers? What is the hierarchy of validity? Who decides on them based on what factors?

Exegesis." In *Bringing Out the Treasure: Inner Biblical Allusion in Zechariah 9–14*, (eds. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd; London: T & T Clark, 2003), 245-59.

⁶¹ Jane P. Tompkins, *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), x; Stanley E. Fish, "Interpreting the 'Variorum,'" *Critical Inquiry* 2/3 (1976): 468-485; Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (trans. Richard Miller; Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 151.

⁶² Douglas Estes, *Literary Approaches to the Bible*, 15-6; Jane P. Tompkins, *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, x;

As stated above, in this thesis, it is essential to take a literary approach when studying the HB because it is a work of literature.⁶³ The Bible contains different literary forms such as prose (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:1-38), poetry (Ex 15:1-5; Song 5:10-16; Psalms; Mic 4:2-5), and prose history (1-2 Kgs). The literary approach can provide a clear and systematic method for examining the narrative of Genesis within the HB as its context.

1.4 Intertextuality as Methodology

1.4.1 Final Form

Acknowledging that the HB is present in various forms, such as the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch, this thesis focuses exclusively on one final form: the traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text, which serves as the textual foundation for contemporary Bible translations. The HB is a literary and theological unit in its final form that has been examined over long periods and used in critical and historical studies of the texts: the Torah, the Nevi'im, and the Kethubim. As any textual unit requires, it has an introduction, e.g., Gen 1-4 as the theological introduction (or Gen 1–11 as a historical introduction to the Scripture), which connects and networks the Scripture with different passages and texts at multiple levels.⁶⁴ This indicates that specific finalised texts, specifically the traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text, can be understood within the context of other scriptures.⁶⁵

⁶³ Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* in *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation* (Vol 3; ed. Moisés Silva; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 35, 101; T. A. Perry, "A Poetics of Absence: The Structure and Meaning of Genesis 1:2," *JSOT* 58 (1993): 3-11; Stephen Moore, "A Modest Manifesto for New Testament Literary Criticism: How to Interface with a Literary Studies Field That Is Post-Literary, Post-Theoretical, and Post-Methodological." *BI* 15 (2007): 1-25.

⁶⁴ Paul Morris, "Exiled from Eden: Jewish Interpretations of Genesis," in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden* (JSOT Sup 136; eds. Paul Morris and Deborah Sawyer; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 117-66, (119-21); Brian G. Toews, "Genesis 1-4: The Genesis of Old Testament Instruction," *Ninth Annual Wheaton Conference Biblical Theology Paper* (2000): 1-33 (1).

⁶⁵ M. Saebo, *On the Way to Canon: Creative Tradition History in the Old Testament* (JSOT Sup 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 21-33.

1.4.2 Canonical

This thesis adopts a canonical approach, considering the interconnected nature of the books of Scripture when examined collectively within the HB. It engages in a dialogue between texts from one part of the canon, specifically the early chapters of Genesis, and those from another part, namely, the Wisdom books.

Canonical criticism regards the HB as a cohesive text and employs a literary approach to analyse its intertwined form and content.⁶⁶ In his scholarly work, Brevard S. Childs investigates the intertextual relationships within Scripture, emphasising the links between varied texts that incorporate contributions from earlier and later texts. He encompasses narratives and contributions from prophets, psalmists, and sages in the HB.⁶⁷ As an example of this canonical approach, James Luther Mays contends regarding Psalm 118 that interpreters should prioritise the psalm's role as "Scripture". This implies that readers must consider the context: the HB, the Book of Psalms, and the context of this psalm's co-texts.⁶⁸ Much of Mays'

⁶⁶ James A. Sanders, "The Canonical Process," in *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (The Cambridge History of Judaism 4; ed. Steven T. Katz; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 230-43; "Canonical Context and Canonical Criticism," *Horizon Biblical Theology* 2 (1980): 173-97; Külli Tõniste, *The Ending of the Canon: A Canonical and Intertextual Reading of Revelation 21-22* (London-New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 8-10; Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 32-5, 196-8, and 226; *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 570-1; Will Kynes, "Qohelet as Solomon: 'For What Can Anyone Who Comes after the King Do?'" in *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually* (LHBOTS 587; eds. Katharine Dell and Will Kynes; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 42-56; Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 282; Iain Provan, *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 105-32; Norbert Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 96; Jerome T. Walsh, "Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach," *JBL* 96 (1977): 161-77;

⁶⁷ Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 53, 210-2, 214-8; James D. Nogalski, "Intertextuality and the Twelve" In *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* (eds. James W. Watts and Paul R. House; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 102-24.

⁶⁸ James Luther Mays, *Psalms: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Interpretation; ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr.; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 367-8.

analysis relies on utilising texts from other parts of the canon to clarify the context and importance of Psalm 118. This includes comparisons with other psalms, links to the language in Exodus 15—known as the Song of Moses following the crossing of the Red Sea—and the parallel of Ps 118:17, which recounts “the deeds of YHWH”, along with specific prophetic declarations.⁶⁹

In a canonical approach, the study of the Bible is comprehensive and informed by various literary approaches, such as structuralism, inner-biblical interpretation, and intertextual analysis. Understanding the canonical reading of the HB is essential for grasping how earlier texts function within a larger framework. Canonical approaches offer vital insights into the scriptural context of the HB and provide reasons to view diverse traditions as mutually enlightening.⁷⁰

For example, in Proverbs 3:13-17, Solomon emphasises that “wisdom” (חָכְמָה) is more valuable than the benefits derived from the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. Furthermore, in verse 3:18, those who find wisdom are described as בְּרָכָה “blessed” (see Ps 72:17; Job 29:11; Prov 31:28; Song 6:9; cf. Dt 33:29; Ps 41:3). He also compares “the fruit of a righteous person,” “fulfilled desire,” and “a tongue that provides healing” to “a tree of life” (Prov 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4). YHWH is referred to as the Creator of the world in Prov 3:18-20 and 8:22-31. The connection between wisdom and creation is further explored in Prov 3:19-20, which depicts God creating the world through wisdom (חָכְמָה; see also Jer 10:12; 51:15; Ps 104:24). The theme of creation as a form of building appears frequently in Proverbs, particularly

⁶⁹ Mays, *Psalms: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 374-9.

⁷⁰ G. T. Sheppard, *Canonical Criticism* (ed. D. N. Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* Doubleday: Yale University Press, Vol. 1, 1992), 862-66; Roberto Ouro, “The Garden of Eden Account: The Chiastic Structure of Genesis 2-3,” *AUSS* 4/2 (2002): 219-243; Robert Ouro, “Linguistic and Thematic Parallels Between Genesis 1 and 3,” *JATS* 13 (2002): 44-54; David Jobling, “The Myth Semantics of Genesis 2:4b-3:24,” *Semeia* 18 (1980): 41-59; Terje Stordalen, “Man, Soil, Garden: Basic Plot in Genesis 2-3 Reconsidered,” *JSOT* 53 (1992): 3-26; John L. McKenzie, “The Literary Characteristic of Genesis 2-3,” *TS* 15/4 (1954): 541-72.

through the verb בָּנָה in 9:1; 14:1; 24:3. Moreover, the verbs “found” and “establish” in 3:19-20 share a similar meaning to “build.”⁷¹ This passage resembles 24:3-4, as both mention “wisdom, understanding, and knowledge” in that same sequence. Additionally, both use the verb “establish” (כִּוֵּן) in relation to “understanding” (תְּבוּנָה); cf. Prov 3:19; 24:3.

In Proverbs 3:13-18, Solomon links wisdom to the promises mentioned in verse 5, which states, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” He indicates that the rewards of wisdom greatly exceed those of agricultural produce, as illustrated in verses 14 and 9-10. Wisdom is connected to longevity in the book of Proverbs (3:16a and 3:2), and it brings honour (3:16b and 3:4) that God bestows.⁷² Solomon stresses to his son that wisdom comes from the divine, tying it to the creation narrative in Prov 3:18 and 3:19-20.⁷³ This intertextual viewpoint prompts readers to rethink the concept of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden narrative, suggesting that it resides not in the forbidden fruit but in trusting YHWH’s word.⁷⁴ In Gen 3:17, it is stated: “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.”

Furthermore, Prov 3:18-20 highlights the concept of “a tree of life” (v. 18), which resonates with the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9; 3:22). The fruit of the tree of life is believed to grant life to those who partake in it, serving as a testament to their obedience to

⁷¹ Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation and Commentary* (AYB 18A; New Haven & London: Yale University Press), 159-60; Andrew E. Steinmann, *Proverbs: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture* (CC; Saint Louise, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 118-9.

⁷² Leo G. Perdue, *Proverbs: A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (eds. James Luther Mays, Patrick D. Miller; Interpretation; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2000), 96-7; Ernest C. Lucas, *Proverbs* (eds. J. Gordon McConville and Craig G. Bartholomew; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 64.

⁷³ Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1-15:9* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 255-6

⁷⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation and Commentary*, 148. Fox states that “Trust” is the antonym of “fear” (Prov 14:16; 28:1; 29:25)—except when the object is God.

YHWH's command, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden" in Gen 3:16. However, after Adam and Eve chose to disobey, they faced banishment from the Garden (3:22, 24), which denied them access to the tree of life and ultimately led to their return to dust. Examining the book of Proverbs alongside the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden emphasises the crucial role of obedience and the blessings that come with wisdom.⁷⁵

Prov 3:19-20 not only compares wisdom to the created "tree of life" (3:18) but also presents it as the way God formed the earth and the heavens. The parallelism of "earth ... heavens" in Prov 3:19 mirrors Gen 1:1, which is further elaborated upon in the subsequent verse 3:20, where the division of "the deep waters" (תְּהוֹמוֹת) alludes to the "deep" (תְּהוֹם) in Gen 1:2 and the separation of the sea from the dry land (Gen 1:9-10). This provides habitats for fish (1:20-23), land plants (1:11-13), animals (1:24-25), and humans (1:26-28), referencing back to the original creation that affirms God's wisdom. The word "curse" מְאַרְרָה in Prov 3:33 is derived from the verb אָרַר "to curse"; although this word is absent from Proverbs, it appears in Gen 3:14, 17; 4:11.⁷⁶ These are antonyms of the noun בְּרָכָה "blessing" and the verb בָּרַךְ "to bless." In the creation narrative, God is the subject who blesses animals (Gen 1:22), human beings (1:28), and the seventh day (2:3; see also Ex 20:11). In Prov 3:33, the word מְאַרְרָה is in construct with its agent: יְהוָה מְאַרְרָה "the curse of YHWH," indicating that the house of the wicked man—and by metonymy the wicked man himself—is cursed by YHWH. YHWH pronounced curses

⁷⁵ Perdue, *Proverbs*, 98-9; Daniel J. Treier, *Proverbs & Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids, MI; Brazos, 2011), 26-7; Lindsay Wilson, *Proverbs* (TOTC 17; eds. David G. Firth and Tremper Longman III, Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017), 81-3.

⁷⁶ Steinmann, *Proverbs: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture*, 128-9; Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1-15:9*, 271-2.

upon the serpent (Gen 3:14) and creation (רָצַח in Gen 3:14, 17), as well as upon Cain, the first murderer (רָצַח) in 4:11.

God not only creates but also fills and sustains, a concept linked to wisdom in Proverbs (cf. 8:22-31; 9:1-6). This filling and provision are depicted in Genesis 1, where God first creates the heavens, seas, and dry land in three days, then populates them with birds, fish, and animals on the fifth and sixth days. Notably, God also creates humanity, blesses them, and commands them to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth (Gen 1:22, 28). This creation and filling are mirrored in the construction of the Tabernacle (Ex 37–38) and the temple (2 Chr 2:1, 12; 3:17; 4:7-8, 22). God provides wisdom, knowledge, and skill for these buildings (Ex 35:30-35; 36:1; 1 Chr 28:11), and when they are consecrated, he fills them with his glory (Ex 40:34-35; 1 Kgs 8:10-11; 2 Chr 5:13-14; 7:2). Additionally, the wise woman in Proverbs 31 fills her home with the fruits of her work and investments (31:10-31), reflecting divine qualities in her roles as a wife and mother, reminiscent of Eve in the Garden of Eden yet contrasting with her.

In our canonical reading of the narratives of Creation and the Garden of Eden, we therefore find a strong interconnection with the themes of wisdom and creation presented in the book of Proverbs. The similarities in language, literary style, and thematic elements highlight these connections. This canonical, intertextual perspective invites readers to engage with the texts and their contexts, fostering a deeper understanding without necessitating an exhaustive exploration of historical backgrounds.

1.5 Intertextuality as Main Methodology

Intertextuality refers to the relationships between various texts, a concept initially articulated by Julia Kristeva. Using a synchronic interpretive approach, Kristeva highlights intertextuality, emphasising the interconnectedness of language and narrative as forms of communication.⁷⁷

The example discussed above illustrates how intertextuality can significantly enhance readers' understanding of the interconnected layers of texts, whether spoken or written, regardless of their chronological order. Intertextuality challenges the historical boundaries often imposed by interpreters. These limitations encourage discussions about a text's established meaning, the author's identity, the intended message, the specific creation date, and the deeper reasons for its existence. In my canonical and intertextual analysis, less emphasis is placed on historical context and origins, allowing for a synchronic reading of the final form of biblical texts in relation to one another.⁷⁸

Additionally, intertextuality urges readers to recognise that the authors of these interconnected texts employ rhetorical devices known since antiquity, such as citations and allusions to prior works. This practice acknowledges these texts as vital contributors to meaning, enriching and sometimes altering their original significance and weaving various texts into a cohesive narrative of shared images and themes. Referring to a text as an intertext suggests that meaning resides within the text itself rather than in its origins. This perspective situates the text within a broader literary landscape, influenced by other texts connected

⁷⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (ed. Leon S. Roudiez; trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 36, 59-66.

⁷⁸ G. Geoffrey Harper, "I Will Walk Among You": *The Rhetorical Function of Allusion to Genesis 1-3 in the Book of Leviticus* (BBRS 21; ed. Richard S. Hess and Craig L. Blomberg; University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018), 43. Harper suggested that there are sufficient, though not definitive, grounds to assume that the authors of the final text of Leviticus were aware of Gen 1 and Gen 2-3. See further discussion below in this section.

through literary patterns, linguistic connections, or thematic similarities. Instead of limiting the potential interpretation of a single text to a narrow understanding based on its original significance, this network of related texts forms a more intricate web of interconnectedness, allowing the contemporary reader to enrich their multifaceted grasp of the text's meaning. As previously noted, biblical authors are recognised for interpreting the texts and stories of their Scriptures in ways that widen from the original authors' intentions for their initial audiences. Consequently, each historical period and context enables various applications of hermeneutical principles rather than adhering to a singular, uniform methodology.

This thesis explores intertextuality as a method, analysing the relationships among diverse texts to provide fresh insights and interpretations in final-form readings. It emphasises the significance of texts that contain allusions, references, shared structures, and thematic links, whether these connections are intentional or unintentional, explicit or implicit. This complexity enhances its overall significance, as intertextuality encompasses a broad range of relationships among texts, including allusions, direct quotations, references, and genres.⁷⁹

In order to comprehend this intertextual relationship, the following connections are employed.

1. Shared Structure: pertains to structural similarities between genres and narrative patterns.

⁷⁹ Patricia Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures," *CRBS* 8 (2000): 59-90; Robert Carroll, "The Book of J: Intertextuality and Ideological Criticism," in *Troubling Jeremiah* (ed. A. R. P. Diamond, K. M. O'Connor, and L. Stulman; JSOT Sup 260; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 220-43; Fewell, ed., *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992); Robert Carroll, "Intertextuality and the Book of Jeremiah: Animadversions on Text and Theory," in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOT Sup 143; ed., J. C. Exum and D. J. A. Clines; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 55-78; Patricia Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," in *To Each its Own Meaning* (eds. S. McKenzie and S. Haynes; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 156-80.

2. Common motifs represent recurring elements, symbols, or concepts that contribute to the main point the text aims to communicate to readers, such as court narratives (cf. Gen 1:26-28; 3:22-23; 11:5-9; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; 1 Kgs 22:19-23; 2 Chr 18:16-22). Do the texts strengthen their link by using similar contexts or structures?
3. Doublets refer to parallel accounts of a single event. Does one text engage with another through interpretation, addition, or polemics?
4. Instances where a text offers commentary on, explains, or applies another text. To what degree do the proposed themes demonstrate alignment with one another?
5. Allusion: This technique subtly implies another work to enhance the meaning. In my approach to intertextual analysis, it is not essential that all connections made between texts were intentionally intended or recognised by the authors.
6. When evaluating quotations, whether explicitly stated or referenced intertextually, it is crucial to consider their integration into various literary contexts. Does this suggested interpretation fit logically within the context?

Additionally, the textual prompts that exemplify a shared structure, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, or stylistic features underscore the significance of comprehensive analysis and reflection in understanding these associations.⁸⁰ Using a common language is a vital aspect of establishing textual connections. Textual references emerge through thematic elements and syntax. Consequently, recurring phrases and themes signify a stronger textual relationship. These connections can reveal intertextual relationships.

⁸⁰ Benjamin D. Sommer, "Functional Interpretation and Biblical Theology: Reflects on "Judaism as a Civilization" in Relation to Scriptural Hermeneutics," *JSS* 122 (2006): 143-57; Bernard M. Levinson, "The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History's Transformation of Torah," *VT* 70 (2001): 511-34; Bruce Wells, "What is Biblical Law? A Look at Pentateuchal Rules and Near Eastern Practice," *CBQ* 70 (2008): 223-43.

As mentioned, one could argue that the author did not intentionally create intertextual links in some or many instances. Rather, within our canonical reading, these links are more likely shaped by readers who associate two or more texts that may not have been originally connected.⁸¹ This thesis employs a reader-oriented approach to intertextuality to establish connections among various texts.

This thesis explores the intertextual connections among the previously mentioned texts. It examines the narratives in Gen 1-3 in conjunction with the Wisdom literature from the Hebrew Bible (HB). The methodology includes a comprehensive analysis of motifs, vocabulary, imagery, allusions, structures, and other relevant categories, such as inter-biblical and inner-biblical interpretations, which can provide valuable insights into the meanings of the texts.

As an example of intertextual reading, we may return to Prov 3:18. Marcus points out that in this verse, wisdom is referred to as עֵץ חַיִּים, or “a tree of life,” echoing Gen 3:22.⁸² This intertextual connection suggests that the long and fulfilling life lost due to the primeval pair’s disobedience to the command of YHWH may be regained through wisdom.⁸³ In Genesis, the identical construct phrase with the definite article indicates “the tree of life” in Eden (Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24). It also appears in Prov 11:30 (“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and

⁸¹ Will Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature": The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus* (Published online 18 Oct 2018; Published in print 3 Jan 2019), 121-4. Kynes conveys the notion of intertextuality, emphasising the dynamic nature of textual proximity and showing how variations in each text occur across different eras and locations. Much like individual people, texts resist being confined to a single category. Depending on the cultural context, a text can belong to various genres. Furthermore, each reader, shaped by their unique interests and cultural backgrounds, may interpret the same text in diverse genres.

⁸² Ralph Marcus, “The Tree of Life in Proverbs,” *JBL*/62 (1943): 117-20.

⁸³ Steinmann, *Proverbs: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture*, 113.

whoever captures souls is wise”) and 15:4 (“A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit”), relating to the life and words of the righteous.

A potential example of an unintentional intertextual connection is found in Lev 11 (vv. 8, 24, 46-47), which regulates clean and unclean foods and animals.

Lev 11:8, 24, 46-47

מִבְּשָׂרָם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ וּבְנִבְלָתָם לֹא תִגְעוּ טְמֵאִים הֵם לָכֶם:

וְלֹאֵלֶּה תִטְמְאוּ כִּלְהִנְגַע בְּנִבְלָתָם יִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב:

זֹאת תֹּוֹרַת הַבְּהֵמָה וְהָעוֹף וְכֹל נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הַרְמֵשֶׁת בַּיָּמִים וְלִכְלֵ־נֶפֶשׁ הַשְּׂרָצָת עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַטְּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר וּבֵין הַחַיָּה הַנֹּאֲכָלֶת וּבֵין הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תֹאכַל:

⁸ You must not eat from their meat, and you must not touch their dead body—they are unclean for you. ²⁴ And by these you shall become unclean—anyone who touches their dead body shall become unclean until the evening,

⁴⁶ “This is the regulation of the animals and the birds and all living creatures that move along in the water and concerning all the creatures that swarm on the land, ⁴⁷ to distinguish between the unclean and the clean and between the animal that is to be eaten and the animal that must not be eaten.” (LEB)

Gen 2:16-17

וַיִּצְוֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל־עֵץ־הַגָּן אָכַל תֹּאכַל:

וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בַיּוֹם אָכַלְתָּ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת:

¹⁶ And YHWH God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (ESV, modified)

3:3, 6

וּמִפְרֵי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹךְ־הַגָּן אָמַר יְהוָה לֵאמֹר לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא תִגְעוּ בּוֹ פֶן־תָּמוּתוּן:

וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמֵאֲכָל וְכִי מְאֹה־הָיָא לְעֵינָיִם וְנֹהֵמַד הָעֵץ לְהִשְׁכִּיל וַתִּקַּח מִפְרִיָו וַתֹּאכַל וַתִּתֵּן גַּם לְאִישָׁהּ
עִמָּהּ וַיֹּאכַל:

³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (ESV)

The opening passages of Genesis and the laws in Leviticus 11 can be connected based on their shared theme of “eating”. In the creation narrative, God provides food for both humans and animals in Gen 1:29. This is emphasised by the concluding evaluation formula, i.e., “And it was so” and “behold, it was good”, which appear in Gen 1:30-31. Humans are permitted to consume plants and trees (see 1:29), while animals are to eat green plants. Moreover, Adam received a specific dietary prohibition regarding the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” in 2:17. The theme of eating is prominent in Gen 2-3 and Lev 11. Gen 3 revolves around the act of eating, and the command concerning food in Gen 2:16-17 is direct and unmistakable. The primeval pair disobeyed the command (3:6) and ate from the tree of knowledge, which can be understood intertextually to have subsequently led to the imposition of dietary laws for the Israelites outlined in Leviticus.

In Gen 3 and Lev 11, similar to the woman’s wording in Gen 3:3 that YHWH had indeed said, “You shall not eat from it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die”, YHWH commands in Lev 11:8, “You must not eat from their meat, and you must not touch their dead body—they are unclean for you.”⁸⁴ Gen 2-3 and Lev 11 demonstrate that YHWH, as the creator, has authority over all things edible or inedible. Compliance with dietary regulations, whether edible or

⁸⁴ Harper, “*I Will Walk Among You*”: *The Rhetorical Function of Allusion to Genesis 1-3 in the Book of Leviticus*, 133-4.

otherwise, is a critical matter of life and death. Adhering to YHWH's dietary principles served as a test for the primeval pair in the Garden and for the Israelites throughout their sojourn in the wilderness. Disobeying YHWH's command led to the primeval pair's expulsion from the Garden of Eden and barred them from accessing the tree of life. In Lev 11:8 and 24, contact with unclean animals or carcasses results in being banished from YHWH's presence until evening and being prohibited from entering the Tabernacle (15:31). It is crucial to note that anyone expelled from the Israelite camp in the wilderness may face potential risks from both people and animals, as well as harsh weather conditions in the wilderness.

The consequences of disobedience in these passages lead to expulsion from YHWH and life itself. In every instance, exclusion from God's presence relates to animals, such as the serpent, prohibited animals, and their demise. These texts establish intertextuality in how YHWH's commands regarding food link to the primeval pair in the Garden of Eden and Israel in the wilderness through shared motifs, characters, and terms.

In Job 2:4, "the satan" (הַשָּׂטָן) demands in response to YHWH, "Skin for skin! (עוֹר בְּעוֹד-עוֹר) All that a man has he will give for his life". It is the satan who asks YHWH to remove the protection he has provided, which includes Job's wife and children, thereby nullifying the blessing of "be fruitful and multiply" bestowed through the human mandates in Gen 1:28. Conversely, when Adam could not find a suitable companion among God's other creations in Gen 2:20 ("But for Adam there was not found a helper as his counterpart"), YHWH chose to create (יצר) woman from Adam's own body instead of the dust (עפר) from which Adam was made and from which YHWH formed the animals.⁸⁵ Thus, Adam states in 2:23, "This, finally, is

⁸⁵ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 1-14; Michael A. Lyons, "I also could talk as you do" (Job 16:4): The Function of Intertextual Quotation and Allusion in Job: in

the bone of my bones (עצם) and the flesh of my flesh (בשר), this one shall be called woman because from man this one was taken.” This passage portrays Eve as a helper (עזר) and an equal counterpart (נגד), further emphasising her significance when Adam names her Eve, “the mother of all living” (היא היתה אם כל־חַי) in Gen 3:20, immediately following their disobedience to YHWH’s command.

In our canonical intertextual reading, it aligns with what the satan in Job 2:4 requested when he asked YHWH to remove protection, specifically Job’s wife and their children. This suggests that the most significant aspects of human existence involve fulfilling God’s blessing to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over...” in Gen 1:28.

While procreation is a shared duty for both animals (Gen 1:30) and humans, it carries a unique significance for humans that aligns with God’s blessing (1:28). Humans are given the human mandates to tend to and rule over God’s other creations, including the serpent in the Garden.⁸⁶ From the outset, the primeval pair not only disobeyed YHWH’s command in Gen 2:17a: “but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat”, but they also neglected the command in Gen 1:28b to “have dominion over... the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth”. The primeval pair failed to exercise authority (1:28b) over the serpent, one of God’s creations.

Subsequently, the serpent who tempted the woman was cursed (Gen 3:14-15). Following the punishment, YHWH declared that the primeval pair would suffer “pain in childbearing and

Reading Job Intertextually (LBHOTS 574; ed. Katherine Dell and Will Kynes; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 169-77; Greg K. Beale, “Seeing the Old Testament in the New: Definitions of and Criteria for Discerning Old Testament Quotations and Allusions,” in *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 23-59; Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 34-44.

⁸⁶ J. Blenkinsopp, “Genesis”, in *NIB*, I, 364; James McKeown, *Genesis*, 36.

toiling for gaining food until they return to the ground” (3:16-19). Nevertheless, the punishment does not cancel the blessing of procreation, but it introduces עִצְבוֹן “pain” into the process (3:16 “... I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children ...”).⁸⁷

Analysing shared motifs, allusions, lexical data, and characters within a literary framework enables a canonical reading of Gen 1–3, Job 1–2, and Job 42, fostering intertextuality that enhances our understanding of these texts.⁸⁸ Given the uncertainty surrounding the chronological order of the composition of the texts in the HB, it remains unclear whether these authors referenced or built upon each other’s works. In my synchronic reading, I find it unnecessary to address these questions. Consequently, this approach can uncover new interpretations and meanings, shedding light on previously overlooked insights in these texts. By examining them collectively, we can gain valuable perspectives and deepen our comprehension. This method illustrates that connections and intertexts can be found intricately woven throughout the biblical texts.⁸⁹

As previously mentioned, the canon represents a comprehensive body of literature that utilizes complex characters and significant dialogue. The literary methodology for comprehending the language of the Bible encompasses narration, dialogue, repetition, and

⁸⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Interpretation; James Luther Mays and Patrick D. Miller, Jr.; Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 50.

⁸⁸ Triggve N. D. Mettinger, *Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 2-3* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 5-11, 75; Katharine Dell and Will Kynes, *Reading Job Intertextually*, 8-9; Tremper Longman III, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms: Job* (ed. Tremper Longman III; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 250.

⁸⁹ Ron Haydon, “*Seventy Sevens Are Decreed*”: *A Canonical Approach to Daniel 9:24-27* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 107-10, 116-7; William John Lyons, *Canon and Exegesis: Canonical Praxis and the Sodom Narrative* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 37; Childs, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*, 59.

character development. These literary techniques facilitate persuasive effects, including shifts in perspective and evaluations of events within the narrative.

For example, readers infer that the woman and the serpent in the Garden of Eden knew about the prohibition not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Gen 2:17 before their conversation, even though it is not directly mentioned in the story. Biblical scholars understand this as “gap filling,” where a reader would supply information to understand a text, one of the techniques commonly found in the HB.⁹⁰

The primary objective of this thesis is to thoroughly analyse the texts, using intertextual and canonical reading as the primary method. The analysis will begin with a canonical reading of Gen 1 and Gen 2–3, followed by an examination of Gen 1–3 in relation to the book of Job and other Wisdom literature. This thesis explores the themes, references, phrases, and motifs within the Wisdom books concerning the narratives of human creation and the Garden of Eden. These connections encompass various elements, including creation by God, human likeness to God, knowledge of good and evil, life and death, male and female, caring through dominion over God’s creation, and obedience to God’s word.

1.6 Summary of Thesis Chapters

Chapter 1 analysed previous interpretations and intertextuality as methodologies for reading the Wisdom literature and its connections with the creation accounts, including reading good and evil in the HB. This analysis establishes the essential foundational work required to continue the study.

⁹⁰ See under 1.2.1.

Chapter 2 examines the findings in Chapter 1 that relate to the two key themes: the human mandate in the narrative of creation (Gen 1:26-31) and the command not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2–3).

In Chapter 3, this analysis establishes a connection between the narratives of human creation and the Garden of Eden with the book of Job, specifically concentrating on chapters 1-2 and 42 of Job.

Chapter 4 explores how the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden narrative manifests in the real world, particularly examining the connections between Gen 1:26-28, the book of Proverbs, and the Song of Songs. Throughout the biblical text, the history of Israel demonstrates that blessings can transform into curses due to disobedience. In this context, the book of Proverbs emphasises the importance of men seeking wisdom, as failing to do so could result in dire consequences (Prov 1:32, 8:36). Additionally, by examining both male and female figures in Proverbs and the Song of Songs, we gain insights into the creation in Gen 1:26-31 and the dynamics between man and woman in Gen 2–3. This also mirrors the connection between the Creator God, and humanity. Both male and female were created through divine intervention, and after their disobedience in the Garden by gaining knowledge of good and evil, humanity inherited both blessings and curse.

Chapter 5 of the thesis conducts a thorough analysis of the narratives found in Gen 1–3 and the book of Ecclesiastes, utilising the insights of Qohelet, a sage and teacher of wisdom referenced in Eccl 1:13, 17; 2:12; 7:25; and 8:16. This chapter explores how these literary compositions depict the notions of good and evil. The analysis yields significant insights into the theme of mortality. It highlights the stark contrast between a life characterised by blessings

attained through obedience to God's words and the consequent curses resulting from disobedience. These themes are prominently featured in the creation narratives and the Garden of Eden and are further expounded upon in the Wisdom literature, with particular emphasis on the book of Ecclesiastes.

CHAPTER 2

An Intertextual Reading of the Narratives of Human Creation and the Garden of Eden in the Context of Gen 1–3

As articulated in Chapter 1, the aim of this chapter is to present an intertextual analysis of Gen 1:26-31 in conjunction with Gen 2-3, and subsequently to engage with the Wisdom literature in the following chapters. This analysis will explore the creation of humans in Gen 1 and 2–3, seeking to understand the connection between human mandates and the death that results from the primeval pair’s disobedience. In this context, we can observe how intertextuality operates in our canonical reading, and how the narratives of human creation and the Garden of Eden work together, thereby illuminating the significance of Gen 1 to 3 within the HB.

Before applying the intertextual approach in this chapter and the subsequent ones, three key points need consideration. First, I will argue that “the knowledge of good and evil” (הַדַּעַת (טוֹב וְרָע) is divine knowledge linked to human creation, which is owned by YHWH and the divine beings (Gen 3:5 and 22). Second, there is an interpretation that reveals how the terms טוֹב and רָע in the Garden narrative relate to YHWH *’ēlōhîm*’s judgment, specifically blessings and curses, within its broader context (e.g., Gen 1:26-30; 3:14-19; 4:7; 6:5) and the overall framework of the Wisdom books. This second aspect highlights a crucial difference between this research and what is found in prior research; thus, it is necessary to understand how intertextual reading is carried out in this thesis. The third point of concern is whether the human acquisition of knowledge of good and evil is forbidden under the threat of death (Gen 2:16-17) because it poses a risk to YHWH (Gen 3:22-23), or if it actually aligns with YHWH’s intentions. This question is clearly one I will examine more closely than the previous two.

2.1 Brief Overview of the Creation of Humans

Gen 1:26-28

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדֹמוֹתֵינוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

וַיִּבְרָךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וּכְבִשְׁתֶּהּ וְיִרְדּוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל־חַיֵּי הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (ESV)

We start our examination of the origin of humanity by considering: what does it signify to state that אָדָם, in the phrase “Let us make adam,” is created in the image (צֶלֶם) and likeness (דְּמוּת) of God? The concept of humans being made in God’s image enriches the discussion surrounding their relationship with him, laying the groundwork for the narrative of the Garden of Eden.⁹¹ How are humans differentiated from animals by being made in the image and likeness of God? Do the words “image” and “likeness” imply more than mere physical resemblance to God?⁹² Is the phrase נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם “Let us make adam” associated only with

⁹¹ G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC: Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 32; Clines “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyn Bul* 19 (1967): 53-103, 54-61; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I*, 55-7.

⁹² David Cairns, *Image of God in Man*, 110. The concept of “Likeness of God” appears in numerous works influenced by Plato’s studies, spanning from the early Church Fathers to Thomas Aquinas. Augustine’s analysis of *imago Dei* characterises the image as intellect, emotion, and will.

spiritual qualities, physical characteristics, or both?⁹³ More specifically, does the expression בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים “in the image of God” signify both a physical and spiritual resemblance or perhaps another quality altogether?

Gen 1:26-27 describes the creation of humans in God’s image and likeness. Gen 1:27 records the actual creation of Adam using the main verb “ברא” in three clauses. However, in Gen 2:7, YHWH forms the man from the dust of the earth using the verb “יצר”; there is no mention of image or likeness. The term “דְּמוּת” reappears in genealogical contexts in Gen 5:1.⁹⁴ In Gen 5:3, the terms “image” and “likeness” are used together to describe the relationship between children and parents, similar to the combination of these terms in Gen 1:26, but in reverse order. Specifically, the passage describes Seth’s likeness to his father, Adam, and more explicitly, a human being’s likeness to God in Gen 5:1 (cf. 1:27 and 9:5).⁹⁵ Seth resembles Adam, but he is not Adam; similarly, Adam and Eve resemble God, yet they are not God.⁹⁶ Humans resemble their parents not only due to their creation but also through their relationship with them. Similarly, Adam and Eve were not merely created by God; they also embody the relationship with God that they represent. Therefore, the connection is essential to human identity: parents are created in the image of God, and children inherit their parents’ likeness,

⁹³ Marc Shapiro, *the Limits of Orthodox Theology* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 45-70. Talmudic studies show that rabbinic literature suggests that “the creation of humans in God’s image” relates to human corporeality and their belief in God’s corporeality.

⁹⁴ Anne Lapidus Lerner, *Eternally Eve: Images in the Hebrew Bible, Midrash, and Modern Jewish Poetry* (MA: Brandis University Press, 2007), 34.

⁹⁵ Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 33; J. Maxwell Miller, “In the ‘Image’ and ‘Likeness’ of God,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 289-304, 301-2; D. J. A. Clines, “Humanity as the Image of God,” in *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967-1998*, vol. 2 (JSOT Sup 293; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 468-70; G. von Rad, *The Theology of Israel’s Historical Tradition* (London: Oliver & Boyd, vol. 1, 1962), 144-5; John F. A. Sawyer, “The Meaning of בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים (*In the Image of God*) in Genesis I-XI,” *JTS* 25 (1974): 418-426, 421: In contrast to Miller’s view, Clines, von Rad, and Sawyer argue that דְּמוּת clarifies צֶלֶם by emphasising the notion of correspondence and likeness rather than physicality, without altering דְּמוּת with צֶלֶם in Gen 9:6.

⁹⁶ Zainab Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 125.

embodying that relationship. This suggests that the uses in Gen 1:26, 27 and 5:1, 3 are equivalent in meaning.⁹⁷ What Gen 1:26-28 implies is that being human involves not only bearing the image of God and resembling him but also embodying a holistic nature, namely “glory and honor” in his image (בְּצַלְמֵי אֱלֹהִים), as seen in an intertextual reading of Ps 8:5 with Genesis.⁹⁸ In other words, humanity serves as a vice-regent of God to all of creation (cf. Gen 1:28) and is bestowed with “glory and honor” (Ps 8:5), explains the relationship between God and humanity, which is essential to understanding being created in God’s image and likeness.

Ps 8:4-9

⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? ⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. ⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, ⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. ⁹ O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (NRSV)

Psalm 8 reflects on the glory of God as revealed in his creation of the heavens and humanity, a theme also found in the book of Proverbs (cf. 3:19-20; 8:22-31). One purpose of the psalm is to express wonder at the exalted position of humanity within God’s created order. God has bestowed upon humanity dominion over the rest of creation (Gen 1:28). Ps 8:2 [ET 1] begins and concludes (v. 10 [ET 9]) with a declaration of divine majesty that encompasses the whole earth, commencing with an invocation of YHWH (יְהוָה) and referring to him as the Lord (אֲדֹנָי), the sovereign of his people.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Pentiuć, “‘Holding Sway in Companionship’: Genesis 1:26 Revisited,” 227.

⁹⁸ Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*, 174-176; A.R. Millard and W.G. Lambert *Atra-hasis*, 22, 59; Andreas Schüle, “Made in the Image of God: The Concepts of Divine Images in Gen 1-3,” *ZAW* 117 (2005): 1-20, 5:

⁹⁹ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 15-16; ed. D. G. Firth and Tremper Longman III; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 79.

The psalmist addresses the question raised in verse 5 [ET 4]. The reason God pays attention to and cares for humans is their exalted status within the created order. Although humans are certainly less than God, they remain the closest to him in this order. Additionally, examining Psalm 8 underscores the moral aspect of humanity’s rule by demonstrating humans’ ability to distinguish between good and evil.

Ps 8:5-7 [ET 4-6]

מִה־אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרוּנוּ וּבְיַדְכֶם כִּי תִפְקְדֵנוּ:
וּתְחַסְרֵהוּ מִעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים וְכְבוֹד וְהָדָר תִּעֲטֹרֵהוּ:
תִּמְשִׁלֵּהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיךָ כֹּל שִׁתָּה תַחַת־רַגְלָיו:

The word אֱלֹהִים, which translates as “God” or “gods”, appears in verse 6 [ET 5], where the magnificent YHWH bestows glory upon humanity.¹⁰⁰ This suggests that humans hold a specific role in creation, appointed by God, along with the heavenly beings surrounding YHWH’s throne (cf. 1 Kgs 22:19; Job 1:6; Isa 6:1-3).¹⁰¹ Glory (וְכְבוֹד) and majesty (וְהָדָר) rest upon them like a crown (תִּעֲטֹרֵהוּ). The phrase וְהָדָר וְכְבוֹד signifies the marks of a king (Ps 21:6 [ET 5]), suggesting that Ps 8:5-7 [ET 4-6] refers to the “primeval man” as a “primeval king,” as Ps 8:8-9 [ET 7-8] relates to Gen 1:28. Similarly, God is depicted as appearing in כְּבוֹד וְעֹז “glory and majesty” (Pss 29:1; 104:1). Consequently, Ps 8 emphasises the royal and divine splendour bestowed upon humanity through the mandates given in Gen 1:28.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms* (THOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 53; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (CC; trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 181-3

¹⁰¹ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions* (OTL; trans. D.M.G. Stalker; Louisville, Ky: John Knox Press, vol.1, 2001), 146.

¹⁰² Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 183; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 139.

Genesis 1:27 emphasises that humans are made in God’s image, indicating that more than any other creature, they reflect and embody his essence, namely, glory (כְּבוֹד) and magnificent dignity (וְהִדָּר).¹⁰³ Like God’s glory, humanity represents it because they are created in his image. In Gen 1:28, God commands humanity to rule over all living creatures. Psalm 8:7 [ET 6] clarifies that they are established as rulers over God’s creation. This glory is logically derivative in this intertextual reading, similar to how the lesser reflects the greater, much like the moon reflects sunlight.

Conversely, in Job 7, an intertext of Psalm 8, Job expresses that his suffering stems from God’s punishment despite his integrity. He questions in Job 7:17, “What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him?” (ESV). This underscores the significant attention God gives to humanity. Unlike the psalmist’s grateful admiration, Job mourns that God’s attention seems harsh (7:18-21). Job may overlook the deeper reason for his suffering by focusing too much on himself. The true focus should be on God, particularly on God’s glory, as depicted in Ps 8:5 [ET 4]. This should be contrasted with 8:6 [ET 5].

Humanity is viewed as a divine representation, a concept reflected in Ps 8, which draws an analogy to Gen 1:26-28.¹⁰⁴ The representation of humanity highlights the notion found in the HB that humans are created in the image of God.¹⁰⁵ In other words, it is humanity’s

¹⁰³ Peter A. Steveson, *Psalms* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2007), 35-8; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (CC; trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis, Mn: Fortress Press, 1993), 180; James Luther Mays, *Psalms: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Interpretation; ed. Patrick D. Miller and James Mays; Louisville, Ky: John Knox Press, 1994), 65-70; Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 51-4.

¹⁰⁴ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 184; Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 15; ed. Donald J. Wiseman; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1973), 84-5. Kidner claims this relates to a concept of ancient Near Eastern “royal ideology”. Although the verb “to crown” (Ps 8:5) doesn’t have to be interpreted strictly, the terms כְּבוֹד and הִדָּר still pertain to the context of the language used in the ancient Near Eastern king’s court (Pss 21:5; 110:1).

¹⁰⁵ Herring, “A ‘Transubstantiated’ Humanity: The Relationship between the Divine Image and the Presence of God in Genesis I 26f.”, 480-9; Thorkild Jacobsen, “The Graven Image” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of F. M. Cross* (eds. P. D. Millers, Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987), 15-32; Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, “The Mesopotamian God Image, from Womb to Tomb,” *JAOS*

relationship with the Creator that specifies the meaning of “the creation of humans in God’s image and likeness”.

In Genesis 1:26, the term *וַיִּרְדּוּ* meaning “Let them have dominion over...” clearly indicates the role of all humans in the plural— both male and female— in the *weyiqtol* form (i.e., the *waw*-consecutive plus imperfect), which means “in order that they might be”. In analysing 1:27, we observe that it contains three lines, each with four stresses, which is poetic. The term *בָּרָא* “create” in verse 27 appears twice for emphasis. The first instance refers to humanity as a whole, while the second highlights explicitly being created in God’s image. The third line addresses the creation of both male and female.¹⁰⁶ The third line addresses the sexual distinctions within humanity and anticipates the blessings of the human mandate articulated in Gen 1:28.¹⁰⁷ Overall, 1:26-27 highlights the importance of human creation and emphasises the Creator, God. The text explicitly states that God created humans in the plural. This is reiterated later in Gen 5:2, where it says, “Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created” (ESV).

123 (2003): 147-157.

¹⁰⁶ Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I, From Adam to Noah (Genesis I-VI 8)*, 57-8.

¹⁰⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 32-3; E. J. van Wolde, “Rhetorical, Linguistic and Literary Features in Genesis 1” in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (eds. L.J. de Regt, J. de Waard & J.P. Fokkelman; Van Gorcum: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 134-51; Arthur Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God: Essays in Anthropomorphism* (London: Oxford, vol. 2, 1927-37), 204.

2.1.1 Function of אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו “man in our image according to our likeness” in Relation to רָע וטוב לְדַעַת מִמֶּנּוּ מֵאֵתָּה הָיָה כְּאִתְּךָ מִמֶּנּוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וְרָע “the man has become like one of us to know good and evil”

Unlike other beings, as noted in Gen 1:11-12., 21, 24-25.; 6:20; 7:14, humans were not created לְמִינֵהוּ, which means “after/according to its (their) kind”. What distinguishes humans from other creatures is their ability to recognise themselves as their own kind (מִיָּן). Additionally, it is important to mention that the suffix נו “we” appears in the term אֲנָקְנוּ (cf. Gen 13:8; 29:4; 37:7; Jer 42:6, or “with us” even “we” in Dt 5:3). Moreover, it is crucial to highlight that in the construct state of “image” and “likeness”, the first-person plural pronoun (בְּ + דְמוּת + אֲנָקְנוּ) used in 1:26 and 3:22 refers to God, not to humanity. Thus, the terminology used to describe humans in 1:26-27 is different from that applied to other creatures.

This chapter primarily aims to examine references to the image (בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים) and likeness (דְמוּת) of God in human creation as mentioned in Gen 1:26-28, along with their connection to YHWH’s statement in 3:22: “Behold, the man has become like one of us.” This research also explores the disobedience of the primeval pair through intertextual reading, employing both diachronic and synchronic approaches to clarify the connections between Gen 1:26-28 and Gen 2-3, thereby enhancing the subject matter. The analysis will explore themes, shared references, and terminology, enhancing the discussion of Wisdom literature in the later chapters of this thesis.

To ascertain the significance of the term **צֶלֶם** as presented in Gen 1:26-27, it is imperative to first analyse its application within the immediate context of Gen 2-3. This term has a positive connotation when referring to the creation of humanity, as evidenced by the phrases (**בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים**) appearing in 1:26 and 1:27 (2×), 5:3, and 9:6.¹⁰⁸

Gen 1:27

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God, he created him, male and female he created them. (ESV, modified)

In the HB, the term **צֶלֶם** generally signifies a statue, an inscribed column, or an image and figure (e.g., Num 33:52; 1 Sam 6:5a and 11; 2 Kgs 11:18; 2 Chron 23:17; Ezek 7:20).¹⁰⁹

Notably, in Gen 1:26-28 and 5:3, **צֶלֶם** refers to a human being, as demonstrated by the description of Seth as the **צֶלֶם** and **דְמוּת** of his father, Adam.

Gen 5:3

וַיְהִי אָדָם שָׁלִשִׁים וּמֵאָת שָׁנָה וַיֹּלְדֵד בְּדְמוּתוֹ בְּצַלְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שֵׁת:

And when Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image, and he called his name Seth. (ESV, modified)

The term **צֶלֶם** signifies the image as a representation of the deity, which is strictly prohibited (cf. Ex 20:4; Dt 5:8). Thus, the use of the word **צֶלֶם** is deliberate when referring to humanity created in (**בְּ**) God’s image. The emphasis lies not in defining the term **צֶלֶם**, but in understanding what it means to be “in” the image of God. The terms “image” (**צֶלֶם**) and

¹⁰⁸ Jenni, E. & Westermann, C., 1997. *Theological lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1080. The word **צֶלֶם** occurs 17 times in the HB (Gen 5x, 1 Sam 3x, Ezek 3x, Ps 2x, Num 33:52; 2 Kgs 11:18; 2 Chron 23:17; Amos 5:26). Additionally, in Aramaic portions of the Bible, there are 17 occurrences in Dan 2:31-32., 34-35.; 3:1-19.

¹⁰⁹ Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria*, 123. Bahrani notes that the term *Salmu* is found in Assyrian and Babylonian texts, referring to a representation.

“likeness” (דְמוּת) in Gen 1:26-27 imply that God’s image can be replicated. This shared characteristic of being “in” the image of God connects both the theological and anthropological aspects, merging the spiritual and physical dimensions of divine and human creation.

In Gen 1:26-28, God creates humans in the image and likeness, designating them to rule over his creation with “glory and honor” as responsible representatives. This suggests that humans, made in God’s likeness, are of the divine kind (referred to as “little lower than God” in Ps 8:6 [ET 5]) alongside heavenly beings, as noted in Gen 3:22, where YHWH remarks, “Behold, the man has become like one of us, to know good and evil...”.

In the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden, it is clear that God created humanity in his image and entrusted them with the responsibility of making judgments based on their understanding of good and evil. This responsibility encompasses matters concerning the union between male and female, as established by YHWH in the Garden of Eden (2:22-25), which will further the human mandates. Consequently, humans are tasked with fulfilling the commands in Gen 1:28 and exercising dominion over God’s other creations.¹¹⁰ As royal representatives of God or in a kingly capacity, his presence in heaven is expressed through humanity, who are created in his image, leading to a theophany. Even though the primeval pair failed to obey YHWH’s command in the Garden of Eden, this divine manifestation was nonetheless realised.

¹¹⁰ Meredith G. Kline, “Creation in the Image of the Glory Spirit,” *WTJ* 39 (1977): 250-272.

2.1.2 How Humans Resemble God

According to Gen 1:26-27, man's quality falls into at least two categories: (1) man resembles God; (2) man's unique relationship to God defines man's standing as God's royal representative over other creatures on earth.¹¹¹ In what follows, these categories act as a guide to the interpretations of צֶלֶם and דְּמוּת in Gen 1:26-27.

2.1.2.1 Humans as God's Kind

Upon examining humans as God's kind, we must analyse God's address in Gen 1:31: "and behold, it was very good" at the outset. The pronouncement and blessing that creation was "good" appears throughout the creation story at the various stages of creation (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 17, 21, 24, and 31). Therefore, the creation narrative demonstrates God's deliberate act of bringing the world into existence. Further, the seventh use of the phrase וַהֲרַגְהוּ טוֹב מְאֹד "and behold, it was very good" in 1:31 emphasises the inherent goodness of the world and affirms the harmony between God's own goodness and his creation. This suggests that the world God created is inherently good, which means beneficial that is beyond human understanding and reason (cf. Job 42:3; 37:15-16).

The book of Genesis, chapter 1, verses 11-12 and 21-25, emphasises the creation and procreation of each kind according to its type. This process is accompanied by God's judgment in the total of seven proclamations of goodness throughout the entire creation narrative, which is repeatedly described as "good" (בְּיִי-טוֹב) in verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31 (when "God saw it was very good" וַהֲרַגְהוּ טוֹב מְאֹד). The term "good" signifies that creation exists in harmony,

¹¹¹ Clines, "The Image of God in Man", 53-5.

as seen in the command to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth” in Gen 1:22.¹¹²

In the creation account in Gen 1, we also find the creation of humans (1:26-27), which holds a special place within the created order. For instance, in Gen 2:15, Adam is formed and placed in the Garden to cultivate it, while the naming of the animals in 2:19 illustrates the dominion over other creations. This role, assigned to humans in Gen 1:28, reflects the unique position of אָדָם as humanity enters into a relationship with God’s other creations.¹¹³

God blesses animals (1:22), humanity (1:28), and the Sabbath (2:3), followed by Adam (5:2), Noah (9:1), and consistently the patriarchs (e.g., 12:3; 17:16, 20). Despite the initial infertility of the patriarchs, the gift of children is the clearest representation of God’s blessings in the HB, as this is usually coupled with “being fruitful and multiply” (see also Ruth 4:11-15, 19-22). This blessing encompasses all aspects of human life: offspring, land (cf. Dt 28:1-14; cf. Gen 12:1-3; 24:35), and crops, which are seen as results of God’s blessings.¹¹⁴ Thus, the commands “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” found in verses (Gen 1:28; 2:3; 5:2; 9:1, 7) and אָדָם “rule ” over God’s creations carry the promise that must be upheld.¹¹⁵ This remains true despite the primeval pair’s eating of the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which led to YHWH punishing humanity with pain in childbirth and a return to dust after toilsome labour.

¹¹² Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part 1 From Adam to Noah, Genesis I-VI* 859-60.

¹¹³ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta, GA: Westminster John Knox, 1982), 31-4.

¹¹⁴ Mathews, *Genesis I-11:26*, 175-6; Westermann, *Genesis I-11*, 165; Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1978), 34.

¹¹⁵ Allen P. Ross, *Genesis* (CBC 1; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 40; McKeown, *Genesis*, 27; Reno, *Genesis*, 57. Reno understands that human creativity, seen as a blessing from God, is truly a profound act of submission (Gen 1:28-31; 2:9a, 15).

In the Garden narrative, YHWH interacts with Adam and the serpent in 3:14-15. He speaks to Adam in 3:9-12 and 17-19 and addresses the woman in verses 13 and 16. This interaction is particularly notable as it marks the initial moment when YHWH's communication with Adam was verbalised.

For example, when YHWH commands to **הָאָדָם** in Gen 2:16-17.

Gen 2:16-17

וַיִּצַו יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ־הַגָּן אָכַל תֹּאכַל:

וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב נָרַע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכָלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת:

¹⁶ And the YHWH commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (ESV, modified)

The term **אמר** “say” first appears in Gen 1:3, “And God said”, with a total of 10 other occurrences in Gen 1, while **צוה** “command” is found in 2:16, and **קרא** “call” in 2:23 and 3:19. All these instances are used in the Garden narrative and seem to represent simple acts of communication. It is essential to consider that when humans begin to fulfil the mandates, their relationship with God's other creations follows their relationship with YHWH. This leads humanity to develop a distinctive relationship with their Creator, initiated by YHWH through communication, as depicted in the Garden of Eden narrative.

Despite the primeval pair's disobedience, humanity's unique relationship with YHWH is highlighted in the statement from Gen 3:22: “See, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” This verse addresses two essential aspects of divinity: knowledge and eternal life. It implies that humans have the potential to be of God's kind in discerning good from evil. It suggests that eating from the tree of life would enable them to resemble God

further, fulfilling these two aspects of divinity since they were created in his image and likeness. Subsequently, as humans were expelled from the Garden, they underwent a maturing process as they gained knowledge of good and evil (Dt 1:39; Is 7:14-16).¹¹⁶ This shows that despite the curse, they could still attain God’s blessings in fulfilment of the word of YHWH in the Torah, such as blessings for offspring, land, and crops (see Dt 28:1-14; cf. Gen 12:1-3; 24:35).¹¹⁷ This unique distinction of humans, compared to other creations, is unmatched. As recorded in the HB, YHWH expresses this both verbally (cf. Gen 18; Dt 1:1-8) and in written forms (see Ex 32:15-16, which notes, “The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets”).

The phrase “created in the image and likeness of God” in 1:26-27 and “Look, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil” in 3:22 is similar to saying, “according to God’s kind (מִיּוֹן)” yet man is not divine, nor is he an angel. Nevertheless, humankind is God’s kind who was created in the image and likeness of God, distinct from God’s other creation.

2.1.2.2 Kinship in Gen 1:26-27

Gen 1:26-27

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוֹתֵנוּ וְנִרְדּוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

¹¹⁶ Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 132; Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 105; Craigie argues that the wilderness phase serves as a maturation process for God’s people, emphasizing that understanding good and evil is essential before entering the promised land; J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 5; Donald J. Wiseman; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1974), 103.

¹¹⁷ Mathews, *Genesis 1:11:26*, 307-8; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 356; Kline, *Genesis: A New Commentary*, 29; Kissling, *Genesis*, 250.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them. (ESV)

In Gen 1:26-27, the phrase “in the image of God” signifies that God intended to create human beings with specific attributes that reflect his own nature. This implies that God carefully considered what it means to be made in his image and how this would be evident in the creation of humans.¹¹⁸ The terms *צֶלֶם* and *דְמוּת* in Gen 1:26 denote humans’ dominion over God’s other creations, both by nature (1:26) and by kinship (3:22; 9:4, 6).

The fulfilment of God’s commands to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over...” in 1:28 are the most significant aspects of human existence. Although procreation is an obligation for both animals (Gen 1:30) and humans, procreation for humans corresponds to God’s blessing (1:28) differently. The difference is found in the words “God said to them” (1:28). It draws our attention to “the personal relationship between God and man” that God established in Gen 1:26-28.¹¹⁹ Humanity is exalted to a higher relationship with God. God has a unique relationship with the humans made in his image, which is the blessing’s context. From this perspective, humans have a responsibility towards God to exercise caring rulership over God’s creation, keeping watch over the world on behalf of God. This responsibility arises from the fact that humans are created in the image and likeness of God, and it is intrinsic to the relationship between the Creator and the created. The order of

¹¹⁸ Paul Joüon, S.J., - T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (sb 27; E.P.I.B: Roma, 2006), §114e. It is the verbal form (plural of deliberation with oneself) found in Gen 1:26, the term *נַעֲשֶׂה*— meaning “let us make man” (see also 11:7— “let us go down”); Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part 1, From Adam to Noah (Genesis 1-VI 8)*, 55.

¹¹⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 33

creation is divided into categories to prepare for the elevated human relationship with God, which is not just a mere helper or counterpart relationship but a unique kinship relationship.

We have examined the kinship of humans to God thus far; man is a divine kind at some level, implied metaphorically in sonship to God. Gen 1 uses the terms *צֶלֶם* and *דְמוּת* to stress this intimate filial relationship, similar to Gen 5:1-3. Yet it is obvious that Adam (*אָדָם*) is not divine as indicated by the prepositions *ב* and *כ* in Gen 1:26-27 (*בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ*) and in 5:3 (*בְּדְמוּתוֹ כְּצַלְמוֹ*).¹²⁰

This indicates that the image and likeness of God given to Adam during creation were also inherited by his descendants. This suggests that, despite Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, the divine image and likeness were not obliterated but continued to be present in his lineage. In Gen 1:28, God's command to humans, both male and female, to fill the earth and subdue it clearly conveys this notion while granting them dominion over creation. The term to rule (*הָרָה*) in Gen 1:26 and 28 refers to a divinely appointed human king tasked with governing creation and maintaining the earth and humanity within his realm of law and justice, as mentioned in Gen 9:6 ("Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image").

The plural *נַעֲשֶׂה*, meaning "let us make," can be interpreted in various ways. It may refer to God addressing his heavenly court, the angels (Gen 3:22; Is 6:8; Job 38:7),¹²¹ or it could signify the plurality within the Godhead. While it is possible that God is addressing the spirit

¹²⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 125-7.

¹²¹ McKeown, *Genesis*, 26; B. K. Waltke & C. J. Fredricks, *Genesis: a commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 64-5.

present and active during the creation process mentioned in Gen 1:2, this interpretation becomes less plausible if the Hebrew word “רוח” is translated as “wind”.¹²² Nonetheless, the HB depicts God in diverse postures, moods, and attitudes, making it difficult for readers to form a singular interpretation and providing a multifaceted understanding of God’s nature.¹²³ Thus, some scholars interpret the phrase רוח אלהים as “a mighty wind” instead of “the spirit of God.” They base this on the understanding that רוח translates to “wind” and that אלהים can signify the superlative.¹²⁴ Additionally, the representation of God’s breath as wind is supported by the flood narrative, where Sarna translates: “God sent a wind over the earth, and the water subsided” (Gen 8:1).¹²⁵

Conversely, some argue that translating רוח אלהים as “spirit of God” is likely more accurate. To differentiate between these interpretations, one can examine the actions associated with רוח אלהים to determine whether “spirit” or “wind” better corresponds to those actions. However, interpreting רוח as “spirit” in Gen 1:2 seems more suitable, especially since God created heaven and earth—not merely by wind.¹²⁶ The action linked to רוח אלהים is illustrated through a verb in Deuteronomy 32:11, which describes an eagle hovering over its young, and in Jeremiah 23:9a, the term רָחַפוּ כָּל-עַצְמוֹתַי (root רחף) in the phrase רָחַפוּ כָּל-עַצְמוֹתַי, translated as “all my bones tremble (or shake),” occurs in the Qal, though the Piel appears in Gen 1:2 and Dt 32:11 to indicate an action similar to that of a bird hovering over its nest.¹²⁷ While both instances

¹²² Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 27-31; Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 161-2.

¹²³ D. J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *TynBul* 19 (1968): 53-103; 68-9; G. F. Hasel, “The Meaning of ‘Let Us’ in Gen 1:26,” *AUSS* 13 (1975): 58-66; 65-6;

¹²⁴ von Rad, *Genesis*, 49; Speiser, *Genesis*, 3-5; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (The JPSTC; eds. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok; Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 6.

¹²⁵ Henson, *Genesis 1-11*, 111-2.

¹²⁶ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 108.

¹²⁷ John L. Mackay, *Jeremiah: An Introduction and Commentary: Chapters 21-52* (Mentor; Fearn, Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, Scotland: Christian Focus, vol 2, 2004), 59; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 21B, Doubleday; NY: Yale University Press, 2004), 182; McKeown, *Genesis*, 21.

suggest movement, neither implies the force of a mighty wind. This interpretation aligns with the imagery of the spirit hovering over the waters like an eagle “to sway like the wings of a bird hovering over its nest,” a meaning that the Piel conveys in Gen 1:2 and Dt 32:11.

As noted in our intertextual analysis above, it is evident that God shifts נַעֲשֶׂה “let *us* make” from the first-person plural in 1:26 to his own image in 3:22. This is exemplified in the Garden of Eden when “the man becomes like one of *us*... if he stretches out his hand and takes also of the tree of life, and eats, and lives forever.” In this context, humans become more similar to God’s kind rather than possessing God-like characteristics. Therefore, humans are not God-like but rather God’s kind, as they are forbidden from eating the fruit of the tree of life, which prevents them from obtaining eternal life. Consequently, they were ultimately expelled from the Garden.¹²⁸ The terms צָלַם and דְּמוּת in Gen 1:26 signify human dominion over other creations by nature (1:26-27) and kinship (3:22; 9:4, 6).¹²⁹

In the Garden, humans faced judgment and expulsion for disobeying YHWH’s command “not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil” to “be like God, knowing good and evil” (3:5). This consequence stems from the fact that “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (1:27). The notion that humans bear resemblance to God, as articulated in 1:26-27, implies a royal mandate to govern (רדה) and subdue (כבש). From the beginning, humanity, male and female, is created in God’s

¹²⁸ W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 158-66. Garr states “Rather, the Sethite human race is created with an attribute that intimately participates in divinity yet only approximates that of one’s own father.”

¹²⁹ Lyke Eslinger, “The Enigmatic Plurals Like “One of Us” (Genesis I 26, III 22, and XI 7) in Hyperchronic Perspective,” *Vetus Testamentum* 56/2 (2006):171-184. The story of the Tower of Babel is similar yet distinct from the concept of God-kind. In Babel, the builders aimed to reach the heavens, demonstrating a god-like power rather than the true power or authority of God-kind.

image (וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ) and is bestowed with dominion over all creation throughout the cosmos, whereas other creatures are limited to specific domains, like the sea, earth, and sky. However, the primeval pair, male and female (1:28), embody a divine-human kinship that reflects God's image, yet they are not God.

2.2 Separation and Gathering: Life-Good in the Narratives of Creation and Disobedience as Death-Evil in the Garden of Eden

In Genesis 1, God continues to shape the world by forming separations in verses 4-8. In verse 4: “ God separated the light from the darkness, “ verse 6: “let it separate the waters from the waters,” verses 7-8: “and God separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse... Heaven”. The emphasis then shifts to the theme of gathering depicted in verses 9-12: “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place... God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together... Seas” (NRSV) and the theme of the filling (vv. 11, 12), which will become prominent in the remainder of the chapter. Specifically, verses 11-12 also describe God's acts of separation, but in a new context; it is not only God who separates but also fills as well. As stated, “God said, let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it” (NRSV). The earth is commanded to produce according to its kind. Through the Creator's command, vegetation emerges as a subdivided whole. Just as creation itself is a subdivided and defined whole, the plants must align with their species within this structure, corresponding to the animal kingdom (vv. 20-25).

Likewise, it is noteworthy that in verses 20 and 24, the earth is empowered to bring forth what is fitting for it. As stated in verse 20, the waters are to “swarm with a swarm of living

creatures” (לִשְׂרָצוֹת הַמַּיִם שָׂרָץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה), and in verse 24, the earth is to תּוֹצֵא “bring forth” living creatures.¹³⁰ Verse 25 reinforces this by indicating that God created the beasts of the earth. The term יָצָא refers to the earth’s ability to yield plants, as shown in Gen 1:12.

This demonstrates that God has interconnected all creatures in a shared reliance on their native elements while giving each a unique identity. Each has an origin that is, from one perspective, natural and, from another, part of God’s creation; the natural process is designed to be self-sustaining and, under God, independent. In other words, these are the boundaries within which we exist as natural beings, as established by God. Another consideration is that fertility is a divine capacity to create or reproduce, inherently bestowed by God the Creator.¹³¹

Moreover, a significant aspect of the man’s (הָאָדָם) original calling was to “cultivate and keep” (לְעַבְדָּהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ) (Gen 2:15) his immediate environment, as well as to “subdue” (וּכְבֹּשָׁהּ) and “fill” (וּמְלֵא) the earth (1:28). These terms, which reflect the earth’s rich fertility mentioned in 1:11-12 and its abundant mineral resources highlighted in 2:11-12, indicate that humanity was entrusted with vast creative responsibilities from the beginning, alongside the idea of “separation” that is prominent in the creation narrative (1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18) and later in the law (e.g., Lev 10:10; 20:25). Although this was a desirable prospect, the primeval pair’s disobedience and the curse from YHWH transformed it into a burden, with death as the inevitable outcome (Gen 3:17-19). However, work itself was not a byproduct of disobedience; rather, it was the toil that redefined its new nature.

¹³⁰ Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1-11*, 125; *HALOT*, 1656. The subject of the verb שָׂרָץ, as seen in Gen 1:20, 21; Ex 7:28 [8:3]; Ps 105:30, refers to the act of swarming. It does not refer to the creatures themselves, but rather to the environment in which these teeming creatures live, such as water.

¹³¹ Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 52-3.

In 1:9, God created הַיַבֻשָה, meaning “dry ground” on the earth, which facilitated the subsequent creation of plants in verse 11, as they naturally require water to sprout and grow (cf. 2:5, 9). God creates these elements on the third day (1:13) and the fifth day (1:23), declaring them to be good (1:12, 18, 25). This act was evaluated as טוב “good”, by God in the subsequent verses, 1:10 and 12. The term טוב denotes “an advantage or benefit” that can be obtained, whether material or immaterial, and is also desirable in both character and value, thus representing “good” in the order of creation. Therefore, God considered the creations in Genesis 1 to be “good”.

Gen 1:9-12

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקְוּוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־מְקוֹם אֶחָד וַתֵּרָאָה הַיַבֻשָה וַיְהִי־כֵן:

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לַיַבֻשָה אֶרֶץ וּלְמַקְוֵה הַמַּיִם קָרָא יַמִּים וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תִּדְשָׂא הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מְזֵרִיעַ זֶרַע עֵץ פְּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְּרִי לְמִינֹו אֲשֶׁר זָרְעוּבֹו עַל־הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי־כֵן:

וַתּוּצֵא הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מְזֵרִיעַ זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה־פְּרִי* אֲשֶׁר זָרְעוּבֹו לְמִינֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב:

⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. (NRSV)

Gen 1:29

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־כָּל־עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־בֹּו פְּרִיעַ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָה:

God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. (NRSV)

Examining the narratives of the creation and the Garden of Eden intertextually enables us to view Gen 2:5, which depicts an initial image of a desolate and unproductive landscape, devoid of plant life, as “for YHWH God had not caused it to rain... and there was no one to till the ground” like the scene described in 1:9. In contrast, Gen 2:9-10 states, “Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”¹⁰ A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches,” along with verses 16-17, “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’” These passages emphasise that life flourishes as long as one remains obedient to YHWH’s command, underscoring the critical link between human obedience and the vitality of existence.

Gen 2:5

וְכָל-שִׂיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם וְהָיָה בְּאֶרֶץ וְכָל-עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם יִצְמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אֵין לְעֹבֵד אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה:

when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the YHWH God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; (NRSV, modified)

In Gen 2:5, “when no plant ... had yet sprung up (עֵשֶׂב),” the term הִמְטִיר (“to cause it to rain”) and the mention of דָּא (“underground water”) in 2:6 effectively underscore the vital role

of water in sustaining life.¹³² This text illustrates the interdependence of humanity and vegetation, highlighting the essential nature of water in this relationship. This concept of water also extends to the creation of animals (cf. 2:19-20) and human creation (2:7-8). YHWH “formed a man from the dust of the ground” and distinctively “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (נְשַׁמַת חַיִּים), and the man became a living creature (לְנַפֵּשׁ חַיָּה).” Following this, it is notably illustrated as YHWH creates a helper, that is, a woman (cf. 2:18, 21). This emphasises the profound interconnectedness of all living beings within the creation narrative.¹³³

Gen 2:8

וַיִּטַע יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים גֶּן־בְּעֵדֶן מִקְדָּם וַיִּשֶׂם שָׁם אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצָר:

And YHWH God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. (NRSV, modified)

YHWH planted a garden in Eden (גֶּן־בְּעֵדֶן), marking the moment when life entered the world. Following this, Gen 2:9 states that YHWH caused fruit trees to sprout from the ground. This passage evokes Prov 3:19-20 (see also 8:8-11), which emphasises that YHWH employed his wisdom and knowledge in the creation of the heavens and the earth. This intertextual connection implies a link between the principles of wisdom and the understanding of good and evil as foundational elements of creation, underlining the significance of grasping the words of YHWH.

¹³² Mark Futato, “Because It Had Rained: A Study of *Gen 2:5-7* With Implications for *Gen 2:4-25* and *Gen 1:1-2:3*,” *WTJ* 60 (1998): 1-21, 4.

¹³³ David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOT Supple 39: Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 20.

In Gen 2:17, it is evident that man and woman were created as mortal beings subject to physical death. YHWH commanded them to eat from the tree of life and other fruit trees in the Garden but prohibited them from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹³⁴ The implication is that man will not die if he obeys YHWH's command, even though death is introduced as a possibility in Gen 2:17. Death for humans enters the world after the primeval pair disobeys YHWH's command not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden provide profound insights into the relationship between life and death, especially emphasising death as a consequence of disobeying YHWH's command in Gen 2:16-17.

The narrative of the Garden of Eden concludes with the notion of death, as stated in Gen 3:19: "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return." This outcome stems from the disobedience of the primeval pair. In Deuteronomy 30:15-16, it is noted that following God's commandments leads to life and prosperity, whereas disobedience results in death and hardship.

Dt 30:15-16

רָאה נַתַּתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַטּוֹב וְאֶת־הַרָע:

אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְכָּיו וּלְשַׁמֵּר מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְחַיִּיתָ וּרְבִיתָ וּבִרְדָּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה בָּאֲשַׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:

¹⁵ "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ What I command you today, by loving YHWH your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his

¹³⁴ Jan Christian Gertz, "The Formation of the Primeval History," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (VTSup 152; eds. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, Leiden: Brill, 2012), 107-35; Konrad Schmid, "Loss of Immortality? Hermeneutical Aspects of Genesis 2-3 and Its Early Receptions," in *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and Its Reception History*, ed. Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg (FAT 2/34; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 58-78, 64; Cynthia R. Chapman, "The Breath of Life: Speech, Gender, and Authority in the Garden of Eden," *JBL* 138 (2019): 241-262, 243-4.

commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and YHWH your God will bless you in the land that you are going to take possession of it. (ESV, modified)

In Gen 2:17, humans are reminded of the importance of obeying God's command.¹³⁵ By doing so, they can fulfil the mandates in 1:28 more naturally and effectively, reflecting on life rather than death. The idea behind this is that pursuing wisdom, in the form of the knowledge of good and evil, without obeying the command of YHWH could lead to death, as discussed above (Dt 30:15; see also Gen 20:7; Ex 31:14; Lev 24:16).¹³⁶ It is crucial for readers to note that the tree of life and all other fruit-bearing trees are more significant than the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which pertains to human life rather than mortality. This connects to the expulsion of the primeval pair from the Garden due to their prohibition from eating from the tree of life, as indicated in 3:22.

Gen 2:17 emphasises death as a fundamental limit of human existence, highlighting its connection to knowledge. YHWH warns that disobedience leads to death, suggesting that the pursuit of knowledge through obedience can result in life and wisdom.

2.2.1 Human Mortality and the Human Mandate

YHWH's conditional verdict to Adam in Gen 2:17 is introduced with the phrase **בַּיּוֹם** אֲכָלְךָ מִפְּרִי מִוֶּלֶת תָּמוּת “for on the day of your eating from it, you will die”. When YHWH made this declaration, Adam had not yet committed disobedience. In other words, the statement implies that he will die if he eats from the tree. Thus, this places the man in an administrative position,

¹³⁵ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 41-2.

¹³⁶ Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1-11*, 240.

serving as a subordinate to YHWH and obeying the prohibition from YHWH not to eat from the tree of knowledge, which he failed to keep.

However, the primeval pair continue to fulfil the God-given mandates in 1:28 after their expulsion from the Garden. The expulsion of the primeval pair was followed by a significant time gap before their eventual death, as seen in Gen 4-6, indicating a delayed execution.¹³⁷ This allows the primeval pair to fulfil their responsibilities (Gen 1:28) despite their disobedience.

To gain “life” or immortality, the primeval pair needed to follow the command by eating from the tree of life (עץ החיים) rather than from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they adhered to YHWH’s instruction “not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”, they would attain immortality, embodying a more divine nature; consequently, this would enhance their potential to acquire the knowledge of good and evil (Prov 3:13, 16, 18; 8:10-11), thereby fulfilling the image and likeness of God in which they were created (3:21-22).

2.3 An Intertextual Analysis of the Evaluation Formula in the Creation Narrative and Its Connection to the Garden of Eden Narrative

Examining the creation narratives and the Garden of Eden through an intertextual lens enhances the stories, which are mutually enriched by specific themes and theological connections.

¹³⁷ Mark S. Smith, *The Genesis of Good and Evil: The Fall(out) and Original Sin in the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2019), 41, 59, 62; Ellen A. Robbins, *The Storyteller and the Garden of Eden* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 96, 103;

For example, the creation of humanity on day six represents the pinnacle of creation (Gen 1:26-31).¹³⁸ At this peak, two abnormalities are evident: the typical phrase וַיְהִי־כֵן “And it was so” (see Gen 1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24) is absent. This usually follows immediately after the separation and gathering highlighted by the evaluation formula,¹³⁹ וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב “And God saw that it was good” (see 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), which is also missing. Instead, there is a comprehensive statement regarding the creation activities from the first day to the sixth day in 1:31: וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה־טוֹב מְאֹד “And God saw everything that he made, and behold, it was very good”. This is paired with the preceding “And it was so” in 1:30.¹⁴⁰ It raises the question of why there is no final evaluation formula for the creation of humanity.¹⁴¹ The absence of the evaluation formula for the creation of humankind can be clarified when the two creation narratives are examined together in an intertextual reading. Specifically, what has been stated above is closely relevant to the primeval pair’s disobedience.

2.3.1 The Absence of the Evaluation Formula for Human Creation

When analysing the creation account in Gen 1:1-2:4a, it is common to interpret the final evaluation in Gen 1:30-31 as an indication that God’s creation was perfect and complete without any imperfections. The phrase וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב “And God saw that it was good” in

¹³⁸ Sarna, *Genesis*, 13-4; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 141; see also Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 34; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 165; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I From Adam to Noah: Genesis I-VI* 8, 59; Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 160; David Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaokampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 34; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 31.

¹³⁹ Hulisani Ramantswana, “Humanity not pronounced good: A re-reading of Genesis 1:26-31 in dialogue with Genesis 2-3,” *OTE* 26 (2013): 425-44; Ramantswana refers to the phrase “And God saw that it was good” as the ‘evaluative formula’ within the creation narrative 1:1-2:4a; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 34; In 1:31, Wenham uses the appreciation formula as an evaluative method, implying the excellence of the completed work of God; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 165; Westermann states the formula as the formula of approval.

¹⁴⁰ Ramantswana, “Humanity not pronounced good: A re-reading of Genesis 1:26-31 in dialogue with Genesis 2-3,” 425-44.

¹⁴¹ Ramantswana, “Humanity not pronounced good: A re-reading of Genesis 1:26-31 in dialogue with Genesis 2-3,” 425-6.

verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 along with וַיְהִי־כֵן “And it was so” in verses 7, 9, 11, 15, 24 appears throughout the narrative of creation from day one to day six. The only deviation from the norm is the absence of an evaluation for the creation of the firmament (heaven) on the second day in Gen 1:6-8.¹⁴²

Day one: one work: light (v. 4) [<i>single evaluation formula</i>]	Day four: one work: luminaries (v. 18) [<i>single evaluation formula</i>]
Day two: one work: firmament (vv. 6-8) [<i>no evaluation formula</i>]	Day five: one work: birds, fish (vv. 21, 22) [<i>single evaluation formula</i>]
Day three: two works: earth and vegetation [<i>indicated by the double use of the evaluation, vv. 10, 12</i>]	Day six: two works: <u>land animals</u> [<i>evaluated as good</i>] <u>and man</u> [<i>omission of evaluation as good; however, overall creation evaluated as very good</i>] [<i>indicated by the double use of the evaluation formula, vv. 25, 31</i>] ¹⁴³

As many commentators point out, there is a discernible pattern in God’s creation activities from day one to day six. Within this pattern, the sixth day of creation appears to align harmoniously with the third day of creation, as both utilise a double evaluation formula (compare vv. 9-13 with vv. 24-31). The third day involved two distinct processes of creation and evaluation: one for the formation of dry land and the sea (vv. 9-10), and the other for the creation of vegetation (vv. 11-12). On the sixth day, the earth is meant to produce land creatures (vv. 24-25). The earth serves as an instrument to fulfil divine announcements, acting

¹⁴² The term עֲרֶכְוּ in Gen 1:6 is translated as “firmament, expanse”; it is the dome of the sky that separates the heavens from the earth.

¹⁴³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 125; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 7; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 1; ed. Donald J. Wiseman; Nottingham; Downers Grove: IVP, 1967), 50.

as the subordinate source in the creation of living creatures. Thus, the וַיְהִי־כֵן “and it was so” formula functions as a connection between divine announcement and fulfilment.¹⁴⁴ However, the manner of humanity’s creation (vv. 26-30) differs from that of domesticated animals, creeping things, and beasts. It is crucial to note that while humans share the earth with other animals, they are not regarded as part of the animal world.¹⁴⁵ The וַיְהִי־כֵן formula in the creation of humanity, distinct from all other creation structures, is placed at the conclusion of the creation without any subsequent fulfilment.

Typically, the וַיְהִי־כֵן formula acts as a linking mechanism, but in Gen 1:30, it serves as a concluding statement. Placing the evaluation formula before the blessing (v. 28) would create a clear sequence linking the creation of sea and flying creatures with human creation. However, the provision of food, which is not limited to humans, follows instead (1:29-30). This includes both animals and birds.¹⁴⁶ In the creation narrative, God supplies food for both humans and animals. Humans are permitted to eat from plants and trees (vv. 11-12), while animals are given green plants to consume. God grants humanity dominion over the earth (v. 29), addressing them as “you (plural)”.

In the final evaluation formula found in Gen 1:31, humanity is not explicitly described as “good”. Moreover, the dietary restriction regarding the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” in 2:17 is missing from this passage; however, it is transgressed by the primeval pair later in the Garden narrative (3:6).¹⁴⁷ The phrase וַיְהִי־כֵן concludes the creation process in Gen 1:30.

¹⁴⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 7-8; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 170: Westermann focuses on the word מְלָאכָהוּ, which appears three times in 2:2-3, regarding the creation of heaven and earth. He explains that the word מְלָאכָה is commonly used for routine work, as illustrated by the phrase, “... Joseph went into the house to do his work” (Gen 39:11). The emphasis on the conclusion of the work in 2:1-3 is aimed at humans, but not in the usual sense of work, as evidenced by echoes of the language found in the Sabbath command within the Decalogue. Thus, the conclusion of creation encompasses the entirety of God’s creation.

¹⁴⁵ Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis: Genesis 1:1-25:18*, 83-4.

¹⁴⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 6-7; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 162.

¹⁴⁷ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 175.

Although the creation is complete, instead of providing a direct evaluation of humanity in the verses between 1:28 and 1:30, the phrase וַיַּרְא יְהוָה כִּי טוֹב מְאֹד “and saw it was very good” is used in 1:31. This indicates that the word כֹּל “all” in the evaluation of 1:31 refers to the entirety of the creation process, rather than solely to humanity.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, the assessment of humanity as “good” represents only a portion of the broader “very good” creation, with a direct evaluation of humanity only emerging in the Garden of Eden narrative.

Examining the creation and Garden of Eden narratives (Gen 1:1-2:4a and Gen 2:4b-3:24) in our intertextual approach reveals that specific themes and theological connections enrich these narratives.¹⁴⁹ One notable connection is how the disobedience of the primeval pair to YHWH’s command not to eat from the tree of good and evil (Gen 2:17) explains the absence of the evaluation formula between 1:28 and 1:30.¹⁵⁰ Humanity is not explicitly declared to be good, as this foreshadows its disobedience to YHWH’s command in 2:17: “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” This disobedience is further illustrated by the harm it inflicts on creation, as addressed in 3:17b and 18a: “cursed is the ground because of you,” and “thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you”. Thus, humanity is not said to be good because it foreshadows its disobedience and the resulting damage to creation. The absence of the evaluation formula between 1:28 and 1:30 is explained in light of the above.

¹⁴⁸ Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 67; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 176.

¹⁴⁹ Ramantswana, “Humanity not pronounced good: A re-reading of Genesis 1:26-31 in dialogue with Genesis 2-3,” 425-6; Wenham, *Gen 1-15*, 35.

¹⁵⁰ Ramantswana, “Humanity not pronounced good: A re-reading of Genesis 1:26-31 in dialogue with Genesis 2-3,” 440-4; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 14; Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1-11*, 164-5.

Nevertheless, despite the primeval pair's disobedience, God's blessings persisted through the command to multiply and subdue the earth, as further explained in Genesis.

2.3.2 The Narratives of the Creation and the Garden of Eden as a Whole

The omission of an evaluation regarding the creation of humanity is perceived as meaningful in our canonical reading. This absence of evaluation in the text implies that the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden are interdependent.¹⁵¹ Consequently, the omission of evaluation introduces a sense of suspense.¹⁵² The creation narrative (Gen 1:1-2:4a) not only reveals the tension but also alludes to another aspect of creation that unfolds in the Garden of Eden narrative, Gen 2:4b-3:24.

According to the Documentary Hypothesis, the two creation narratives (Gen 1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-3:24) are from separate sources and are therefore read independently by many scholars. However, the two narratives are integrated into our intertextual analysis. Examining the Garden narrative in relation to the creation account demonstrates that human creation occurs on the sixth day (1:24-31). Analysing the book of Genesis in its final form shows that the final author structured both narratives to complement each other.

For instance, the creation story concludes in Gen 3:24, where YHWH expels humanity, the primeval pair, male and female, Adam and Eve, from the Garden of Eden. In turn, they multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it in fulfilment of Gen 1:28. In this intertextual reading of

¹⁵¹ Meir Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (ISBL; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 247; see Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 286.

¹⁵² Sternberg defines "suspense" as a "temporal displacement by way of foreshadowing." See Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, 259.

the two creation accounts, the creation narrative is viewed in relation to and intertwined with the Garden of Eden narrative.

2.3.3 A Paradox of Human Disobedience and the Human Mandate

The creation narrative (Gen 1:1-2:4a) recounts a story of a “very good” creation, preceding the twists found in Gen 3. This narrative (1:1-2:4a) aligns with Gen 2:4b-25 in an intertextual reading. In 2:23, the poetic acclamation of הָאָדָם indicates the completion of humanity’s creation through wordplay on אָדָם/אֲדָמָה and אִשָּׁה/אִישׁ, which use etymologies to illustrate the conceptual link between human and earth, as well as woman and man. Furthermore, Gen 2:25 marks the culmination of creation with humanity in a state of innocence.¹⁵³ Verse 25 clarifies, using the verb בּוֹשׁ “to be ashamed,” that nakedness was not always a source of shame for humans.¹⁵⁴

וַיִּהְיוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם עָרוּמִים הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ:

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

The clause וְלֹא יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ, translated as “and (they) were not ashamed,” is imperfect and iterative. Therefore, the humans’ response to their nakedness was not a one-off discovery. In the subsequent narrative, their knowledge of good and evil is clearly shown to precede their understanding of shame (3:7, “and they knew that they were naked”; compare with 2:25,

¹⁵³ Zdravko Stefanovic, “The Great Reversal: Thematic Links Between Genesis 2 and 3,” *AUSS* 32 (1994): 45-56; Hamilton, *Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 181.

¹⁵⁴ Andrew B. Davidson explains the nuances of the imperfect, יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ meaning “they were not (at any time) ashamed,” in his work (Introductory Hebrew Grammar: Hebrew Syntax, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 3rd ed., 1901, p. 44b); *HALOT* 116: hitpal: impf.: יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ, which denotes being ashamed in front of one another (Gen 2:25).

“and... were both naked and were not ashamed”). Thus, the experience of shame or guilt becomes apparent with knowledge.¹⁵⁵ Verse 25 wraps up the creation of woman by employing the term עָרוּמִים, meaning “naked” (cf. Job 1:21; 26:6; Eccl 5:14; 1 Sam 19:24). It also introduces the primeval pair’s disobedience with the term עָרוּם meaning crafty or cunning, which describes the serpent in Gen 3:1. The two opposing qualities, innocence (2:25, וַיְהִי) “And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed”) and עָרוּם “cunning” (3:1), are heightened through wordplay, linking chapters 2 and 3 as a cohesive whole.¹⁵⁶

The prohibition (Gen 2:17, לֹא תֹאכַל “you shall not eat”) is specifically directed at הָאָדָם, just as the food provision (2:16, אָכַל תֹּאכַל “you may eat freely”) is.¹⁵⁷ The primeval pair experiences shame for the first time after gaining knowledge of good and evil, right after eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹⁵⁸ The text suggests that Adam and Eve did not feel guilty or ashamed of their nakedness until after they ate the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6-7).

¹⁵⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 224-5. Noah’s nakedness was exposed by his son, leading to humiliation (Gen 9:22-23). In Leviticus, “nakedness” (e.g., Lev 18:6, 10; 20:17) and the phrase “make naked” pertain to sexual relations viewed as offences (20:18-19). However, the translation of Gen 2:25, “And they felt no shame,” does not clearly express the contrasting notion of “but they felt no shame.” Many English versions utilise “but” or “yet” (HCSB, NAB, NET, NJB, NJPS, REB) rather than “and” (NIV, ESV, NASB, NRSV); Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 181; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 71-2.

¹⁵⁶ Jack M. Sasson, “Welo yitbosasû” (Gen. 2:25) and its Implications,” *Biblica* 66 (1985): 418-21; Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis: Genesis 1:1-25:18*, 114; see also Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 234: “And the man and his wife, both of them, were naked, and they were not ashamed,” describes Gen 2:25 as the state before the sin of man, serving as preparation for 3:7.

¹⁵⁷ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 210-11: Mathews highlights the divine-human relationship. The verb וַיִּצְוֶה “commanded” (Gen 2:16) is the first instance and introduces a divine command with the phrase וַיִּצְוֶה אֱלֹהִים וַיִּצְוֶה “And YHWH commanded” (cf. 3:11, 17). In Genesis, the direct discourse formula by YHWH consistently features a human subject (e.g., 12:20; 26:11; 28:1). This is prevalent where Israel, “commanded” by God through Moses as a mediator, received the “commandments of YHWH ’ēlōhīm” for their way of life. Refer to David Atkinson, *The Message of Genesis 1-11: The Dawn of Creation* (BST; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1990), 63.

¹⁵⁸ Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part 1, From Adam to Noah (Genesis I-VI 8)*, 137; McKeown, *Genesis*, 35; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 72.

Gen 3:14-16, 21

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵימָהּ אֶל-הַנָּחָשׁ כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת אָרוּר אַתָּה מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה עַל-גִּחְזֹנְךָ תֵּלֵךְ וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל כָּל-יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

וַאֲיֵכָה אֲשִׁית בֵּינְךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה וּבֵין וְרַעְךָ וּבֵין וְרַעְךָ הוּא יִשׁוּפְךָ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה תִּשׁוּפֶנּוּ עָקֵב:
אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר הִרְבָּה אֲרַבָּה עֲצָבוֹנְךָ וְהִרְבָּה בְּעֲצָב תֵּלְדִי בָנִים וְאַל-אִישׁ תִּשְׁוֹקֶתָ וְהוּא יִמְשָׁל-בְּךָ:

וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כִּתְנוֹת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם:

¹⁴ YHWH God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” ¹⁶ To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

²¹ And YHWH God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. (ESV, modified)

While death is a certainty mentioned in verses 15-16, life persists. This story is not merely about disobedience and punishment; it also highlights God’s blessings on humanity to procreate and fill the earth. Despite the proclamation of death, YHWH continues to provide life.¹⁵⁹ With the sentence given, YHWH clothes (Gen 3:21, “And YHWH God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them”) the primeval pair, doing for them what they could not do for themselves (3:7), suggesting that they are unable to confront the shame. The shame reflects the primeval pair’s disobedience to the command of YHWH, and only YHWH can deal with their disobedience. In biblical terms, being clothed often signifies being granted life and authority (cf. Gen 37:3, 23, 32; 39:12-13; 41:42). It is noteworthy to compare

¹⁵⁹ Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 49-50. Brueggemann interprets life through verses 3:16 and 20, where death is suggested. While death is justified, God is active in life for humanity, created in his image.

them to the serpent, which is condemned to crawl on its belly, that is, naked, in the dust (3:14; cp. Lev 11:42) for leading the woman astray. In this context, creatures cannot clothe themselves; it can only be accomplished by the Creator.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, being clothed by YHWH in Gen 3:21 protects the primeval pair and serves as a reminder of life; whether inside or outside the Garden, humans are to live according to God's terms, as outlined in the human mandate.

Moreover, while the serpent, the ground, and the primeval pair are judged and punished, only the serpent and the ground receive curses. The serpent is not questioned, and the narrator does not clarify its intentions. This is illustrated by the subsequent verses about punishment (2:14-15) concerning the serpent, which highlight the significant human responsibility associated with the command to have dominion over God's creatures. The aspects of human life impacted by divine judgment underscore a pronounced emphasis on blessings. In terms of procreation and authority, the blessing declaration created clear connections between the primeval pair and their relationship with animals (1:22-30; cf. 2:18-25). Additionally, the idea of blessing is framed within the context of the reciprocal relationships between humanity and their Creator (1:26-28).¹⁶¹

Unlike the serpent, the woman is not pronounced "cursed," but she loses some of the benefits of God's earlier blessing. Her punishment relates primarily to her role in procreation. Procreation is the foundation of all the other blessings and life itself (Gen 1:22, 28). The punishment does not cancel the blessing of procreation. Still, it introduces pain (עֲצֻבוֹן) into the process (3:16). Just as the blessing is associated with the idea of being "fruitful and

¹⁶⁰ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 50.

¹⁶¹ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 256; McKeown, *Genesis*, 37.

multiplying”, YHWH says, הַרְבָּה אֲרִבָּה “I will increase, increase your pains.”¹⁶² The serpent’s diet of dust is also an anticipation of YHWH’s pronouncement of Adam’s death (3:19), who returns to the “dust”. This event is considered a punishment from God towards humans. Still, it fulfils the blessings God bestowed upon humanity in Gen 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply.

2.3.4 Humanity’s Transgression Links the Creative Process to Gen 3

Gen 2:4b-3:24 should be considered a creation narrative. This passage, recognised as the account of the Garden of Eden, primarily extends into the sixth day of creation mentioned in Gen 1. Moreover, it serves as a creation narrative that details how the fulfilment of the human mandate to populate the earth and exercise dominion over it (Gen 1:26-28) began.¹⁶³ Similar to the divine blessing given to the fish and birds, this divine “blessing” pertains to fertility (see 1:22, 28). The emphasis on the phrases “male and female” provides a foundation for understanding the nature of God’s blessing as presented in Gen 1:28.¹⁶⁴ This verse is the second of three blessings in the creation narrative (1:22; 2:3). It highlights how Genesis 3 is an essential part of this narrative, marking a continuation from the sixth day of creation. This interpretation is particularly relevant due to the lack of affirmation of humanity as “good,”

¹⁶² McKeown, *Genesis*, 36.

¹⁶³ Roberto Ouro, “The Garden of Eden Account: The Chiasmic Structure of Genesis 2-3,” *AUSS* 4/2 (2002): 219-243; David Jobling, “The Myth Semantics of Genesis 2:4b-3:24,” *Semeia* 18 (1980): 41-59; Terje Stordalen, “Man, Soil, Garden: Basic Plot in Genesis 2-3 Reconsidered,” *JSOT* 53 (1992): 3-26; John L. McKenzie, “The Literary Characteristic of Genesis 2-3,” *TS* 15/4 (1954): 541-72; Jerome T. Walsh, “Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach,” *JBL* 96 (1972): 113-29; Bruce D. Naidoff, “A Man to Work the Soil: A New Interpretation of Genesis 2-3,” *JSOT* 5 (1978): 2-14; Thomas E. Boomershine, “The Structure of Narrative Rhetoric in Genesis 2-3,” *Semeia* 18 (1980): 113-29; Robert C. Culley, “Action Sequence in Genesis 2-3,” *Semeia* 18 (1980): 25-34; Alan J. Hauser, “Genesis 2-3: The Theme of Intimacy and Alienation,” in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (JSOT Sup 19; eds. David J. A. Clines, David M. Gunn and Alan J. Hauser; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 20-36; David Jobling, “Myth and Its Limits in Genesis 2:4b-3:24,” in *Structural Studies in the Hebrew Bible: The Sense of Biblical Narrative* (JSOT Sup 39; ed. David Jobling; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 17-40; David Jobling, “A Structural Analysis of Genesis 2:4b-3:24,” *SBLSP* 1 (1978): 61-9. There are many evident doublets regarding the linguistic, literary, structural, and thematic correspondences between the creation narrative (Gen 1:1-2:4a) and the Garden narrative (2:4b-3:24).

¹⁶⁴ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 173.

which is not declared until 1:31: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good,” a statement that encompasses all of God’s other creations. The two narratives, Gen 1:1-2:4a and Gen 2:4b-3:24, are interdependent, as illustrated by their shared linguistic, literary, structural, and thematic correspondences.¹⁶⁵

How does the absence of the declaration of humanity as “good” connect to the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden and lead to human procreation despite the primeval pair’s disobedience?¹⁶⁶ We observe that humans acquire divine knowledge but are prohibited from attaining divine life (3:5-7, 22-24), resulting in humanity being barred from eating from “the tree of life”. Had the primeval pair listened to what YHWH commanded (Gen 2:17), the knowledge of good and evil could have emerged from a life of obedience, specifically, divine life. Therefore, the blessing for human multiplication in Gen 1:28 is not revoked because of the primeval pair’s transgressions; ironically, the blessing is confirmed in the divine pronouncement of judgment.

In this context, we examine the structure of Gen 2:7–3:24, which largely aligns with the framework found in Gen 1:24-30, despite some minor differences (such as the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden portraying events differently, among other aspects). Refer to the suggested pattern below.¹⁶⁷

Gen 1:24-30	Gen 2:7-3:24
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¹⁶⁵ Robert Ouro, “Linguistic and Thematic Parallels Between Genesis 1 and 3,” *JATS* 13 (2002): 44-54: Ouro, in his work, highlights several contrasting and nearly identical parallelisms between the two chapters that stem from the linguistic and literary dependence of Gen 3 on Gen 1.

¹⁶⁶ Richard M. Davidson, “The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1-2,” *AUSS* 26 (1988): 5-24: Davidson suggests that human sexuality and the sexual bonding between husband and wife are regarded as “very good” (1:31) by God and should be honoured as the divine ordinance for men and women (see 2:18-24).

¹⁶⁷ Ramantswana, “Humanity not pronounced good: A re-reading of Genesis 1:26-31 in dialogue with Genesis 2-3,” 434-5.

A Creation of land animals (vv. 24-25)	Creation of animals (2:19-20)
B Creation of humanity in the image of God, and the likeness of God (vv. 26-27) (בְּצַלְמֵהוּ) B ₁ Creation of the human (בְּצַלְמֵהוּ) B ₂ Creation of the male and female	Creation of the human being (בְּצַלְמֵהוּ) (2:7) Creation of the male and female (2:21-25) Becoming like God (3:5 “כִּצְלַתְהִים”, 22)
C Creation mandate (v. 28) C ₁ Multiplication of humanity C ₂ Dominion and subduing of creation	Child-bearing (3:16, 20) To work the ground (3:23-24)
D Food Provision: plants and trees (vv. 29-30)	Trees and plants (2:9, 3:17-19, 22)

An intertextual analysis highlights the structures in Gen 1:24-30 and Gen 2:7-3:24. The Garden of Eden narrative shows that the creation of animals (Gen 1:24-25) and humans (1:26-28; 2:7) took place on the sixth day, marked by the repeated phrase “And God said” (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, culminating in vv. 29-31).¹⁶⁸ Our intertextual study of the Eden narrative (2:18-20), alongside the creation accounts of animals (1:24-25) and humans (1:26-28 and 2:7), supports the idea that these creations occurred on the sixth day, deepening the understanding of the creation process. Furthermore, the account in Gen 2:18-20 suggests that animals were

¹⁶⁸ Andrew E. Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 1; ed. David G. Firth; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 56; McKeown, *Genesis*, 25-6; Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 53-4; Kenneth, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 159; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 142; Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 56; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 131-2; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 25-6.

created to be presented and named by the human. In the process, the human realises he is alone, indicating that humanity was not whole until a suitable helper was found (vv. 21-23).¹⁶⁹ Additionally, in the creation narrative (1:24-30), verses 29-30 outline the order of the creation of land animals, mentioning their food provision and intertwining the two sequences.¹⁷⁰

Gen 2:7, 18-20

⁷ then YHWH God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

¹⁸ Then YHWH God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ¹⁹ Now out of the ground YHWH God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper as his counterpart. (ESV, modified)

Gen 3:20

The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

In Gen 2:7, YHWH created man (אָדָם) from the dust of the earth. Analysing Gen 2:19-20 indicates that YHWH involved the man in the creative process. Gen 2:19 further illustrates

¹⁶⁹ Robert V. McCabe, “A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Week,” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth* (eds. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury; Green Forest: Masters Books, 2008), 233-40; McCabe argues that the chronological process in verse 19 extends beyond the pericope of 2:4-25 and revisits the earlier pericope in 1:1-2:3. See Umberto Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah: Genesis I-VI* 8, 129; Hamilton, *Chapters 1-17*, 176.

¹⁷⁰ McCabe, “A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Week,” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, 238; C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: Linguistic, Literary and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2006), 19-20; C. John Collins, “The Wayyiqtol as ‘Pluperfect’: When and Why,” *TynBul* 46 (1995): 117-40; Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., “From Chaos to Cosmos: A Critique of the Non-Literal Interpretations of Genesis 1:1-2:3,” in *Did God Create in 6 Days?* (ed. Joseph Pipa Jr. and David Hall; Taylors: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999), 153-98.

that YHWH engages the man by allowing him to name every beast and bird that he created from the earth. As stated in 2:19-20, when naming the creatures, the man recognised that there was no suitable helper for him, a situation that YHWH anticipated in 2:18. This consequence emphasises two key aspects of man's awareness: his capacity to name the creatures demonstrates his considerable knowledge. At the same time, his realisation of the lack of a counterpart signifies a unique insight that sets him apart from other earthly beings.

In Gen 2:22, God took a rib from the man and used it to make (וַיִּכְרֶן) the woman, and the man called her woman (2:23). After they disobeyed YHWH's command, "the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living" (Gen 3:20).¹⁷¹

In this intertextual reading, the creation of הָאָדָם (Gen 2:7) and the creation of אָדָם (1:27), considered together, male and female (1:27, "וַיִּכְרֶן וַיִּקְרָה"), man and woman (2:23, "אִשָּׁה/אִישׁ"), represents the fulfilment of God's proclamation regarding the creation of humanity as stated in 1:26-28.¹⁷²

Accordingly, the creation of אָדָם takes place in two distinct narratives. The term אָדָם (cf. Gen 1:26 and Gen 2:5d) is employed without the definite article to signify humanity in general. The term אָדָם refers specifically to the first human being created. The human being אָדָם is created alone before there are two, וַיִּכְרֶן וַיִּקְרָה in Gen 1:27, or אִשָּׁה/אִישׁ in Gen 2:23. Gen 2:7-25 elaborates on and specifies what Gen 1:27 announces. In the creation narrative, human creation is ongoing in 1:27; more precisely, the process continues until 1:30. Correspondingly, in the Garden of Eden, only the creation of humans (i.e., man and woman) is fulfilled in Gen 2:25.

¹⁷¹ Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 57-8; Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1-11*, 165; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 35; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part 1 From Adam to Noah: Genesis I-VI* 8, 59.

¹⁷² Cynthia R. Chapman, "The Breath of Life: Speech, Gender, and Authority in the Garden of Eden," *JBL* 138 (2019): 241-262, 247-8.

However, the creation process does not conclude merely with the creation of humanity but must also include the creation mandate and blessing of human multiplication (Gen 1:28; 3:16), which is intimately connected to the knowledge of good and evil.

Through their transgression, human beings aspire to be like God (Gen 3:22; cf. 1:26-27), as they are created in the image of God and his likeness (1:26-27; cp. 3:22), which are integral to the creation process outlined in Gen 1:26-28. Therefore, the creative process carries on into Gen 3. Gen 1:28 presents a twofold creation mandate and blessing: the multiplication of humanity and its dominion over creation, which continues in Gen 3 despite humanity's transgression. In this context, humans acquire the knowledge of good and evil as a consequence of their transgression.

Gen 3:22a,

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאֵסֶד מִמֶּנּוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע

Then YHWH said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.” (ESV, modified)

Ironically, human transgression in the Garden of Eden can, in one regard, be viewed as a catalyst for the fulfilment of the creation mandate and the blessing of human multiplication, as well as humanity's dominion over other creations. Furthermore, for any members of humanity, such as kings, to govern other creations or people and fulfil this mandate in the future, they require wisdom and understanding. Despite humanity's disobedience to the command of YHWH, they ultimately realise God's declaration in Gen 1:26-28.

Also, human procreation is affirmed in Gen 3:16 and 20 on two levels: one from God and the other from man. Initially, YHWH's words to the woman (Gen 3:16) within the judgment

sentence (3:14-19) indicate that the woman “shall bear children” in human procreation.¹⁷³ This also highlights the painful experience (3:16 עֲצַבֶּנָּךְ בְּעֲצָבָה “your pain... in pain”) that women endure during childbirth. In other words, the increase of pain signifies the increase of humanity (cf. Gen 1:28).¹⁷⁴ Then, the man speaks of human procreation when naming the woman, חַוָּה [ET: Eve], “because she was the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20).¹⁷⁵ Procreation through painful childbirth signifies the hope of life and serves as a constant reminder of sin and the woman’s role in it.¹⁷⁶

In Genesis 1:27, both male and female are created. In 2:23, the man and woman are given the responsibility to multiply and fill the earth, even as they face the consequence of death in 3:19 (cf. Gen 2:17).¹⁷⁷ The human being, referred to as אָדָם, is placed in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it, as noted in Gen 2:15. This emphasises humanity’s purpose

¹⁷³ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 202-3. Hamilton also sees the pain as connected to childbearing, while a man’s pain is associated with food, which encompasses the concept of anguish (see Gen 6:6, God’s anguish; 45:5, the distress of Joseph’s brothers; 1 Sam 19:3 [ET v. 2], David in grief; Eccl 10:9, for physical pain).

¹⁷⁴ Ouro, “Linguistic and Thematic Parallels Between Genesis 1 and 3,” 50-1: Ouro observes that there is synonymous parallelism between Gen 1:28 and Gen 3:16. He states that God blesses the couple in Gen 1 with three Qal imperatives: “be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth.” These threefold blessings indicate that humans will have children in abundance. In Gen 3:16, YHWH God tells the woman that he “will greatly (lit. many) increase (multiply, thus make great/numerous)” and “in pain, you shall bring forth children.” When YHWH God conveys this to the woman, it pertains not only to her conception but also to her sorrow; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 261-2; James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 36; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 1; ed. Donald J. Wiseman; Nottingham; Downers Grove: IVP, 1967), 76; see Sarna, *Genesis*, 27-28; Mathews, *1-11:26*, 249-50.

¹⁷⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68; Michael Bauks, “Text- and Reception-Historical Reflections on Transmissional and Hermeneutical Techniques in Genesis 2-3,” in *The Pentateuch* (eds. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 139-68, 145; Ellen van Wolde, *Words Become World: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 28.

¹⁷⁶ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 250; Mark S. Smith, *The Genesis of Good and Evil: The Fall(out) and Original Sin in the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 26; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 90-1; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 210-2; Paul Kissling, *Genesis* (CPNIVC 1; Joplin, MO: College Press, 2004), 207-9; Russell R. Reno, *Genesis* (Brazos; Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010), 97; McKeown, *Genesis*, 38; Robert Kolb, “The Lutheran Doctrine of Original Sin,” in *Adam, the Fall and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical and Scientific Perspectives* (eds. Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 109-27; Donald Macleod, “Original Sin in Reformed Theology,” in *Adam, the Fall and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical and Scientific Perspectives*, 129-46; Oliver D. Crisp, “On Original Sin,” *IJST* 17 (2015): 252-66; Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 50.

¹⁷⁷ Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 49-50. Brueggemann interprets life through verses 3:16 and 20, where death is mentioned. While death may be justifiable, God acts on behalf of humanity, creating life in his image.

expressed in Gen 1:28 to subdue the earth and the command to “be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth”. Their subsequent expulsion from the Garden underscores the continuation of this human mandate beyond the Garden, which is reflected in Gen 10:1: “These are the descendants of Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; children were born to them after the flood.”¹⁷⁸

The blessings of the human mandate declared in the council of God have not been revoked, even after the disobedience of the primeval pair.¹⁷⁹ However, this now occurs within the context of woman’s pain in childbearing and man’s toilsome labour. Eating the fruit from the forbidden tree in a desire to become god-kind (Gen 3:5, 6, 22; cf. 2:9; Prov 21:20; Ps 19:11 [ET 10]) does not end with their expulsion from the Garden; instead, it continues to fulfil the human mandate with the blessing of human procreation (Gen 3:16-20).

2.3.5 To Eat or Not to Eat: Fulfilling the Mandate of God

Gen 1:29-30 addresses food provision for both human beings and animals. This topic is also explored in Gen 2-3, which discusses the condition placed upon humanity to refrain from eating the forbidden fruit from the tree. In Gen 2:16, the focus is on the abundance of God’s provision: מִכָּל עֵץ הַגָּן אָכַל תֹּאכְלוּ “from every tree of the garden, you may freely eat”. The phrase “from every tree of the garden” illustrates God’s extensive food provision as mentioned in Gen 1:30. The subsequent Hebrew phrase, “you may eat freely”, further emphasises the generosity of God’s food provision.¹⁸⁰ God created various trees in the Garden, and he established the Garden of Eden to finalise the creation process.

¹⁷⁸ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 222; Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 209; Terence E. Fretheim, *God and the World in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 53.

¹⁷⁹ Ian Hart, “Genesis 1:1-2:3 as a Prologue to the Book of Genesis,” *TynBul* 46 (1995): 315-36, 323; Daniel Patte and Judson Parker, “A Structural Exegesis of Genesis 2 and 3,” *Semeia* 18 (1980): 55-75; James Barr, “Man and Nature: The Ecological Controversy and the Old Testament,” *BJRL* 55 (1972-73): 9-32; Laurence A. Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis* (JSOT Sup 96; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 35.

¹⁸⁰ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 211.

Humans are created in the image of God with the purpose of fulfilling God’s will. In this process, sexuality is intended to reflect God’s goodness and is meant for procreation, demonstrating his creative power. According to Genesis 1:27 and 2:22-25, God created humans as male and female, highlighting sexual identity as a vital part of his creation. This is evidenced by the blessings and mandate recorded in the Bible, which persist despite the disobedience of the primeval pair to YHWH *’ēlōhîm*. This situation reflects God’s inherent goodness.¹⁸¹

In Gen 1:29, humans are given two types of plants for food (עֵשֶׂב and פְּרִי־עֵץ), the same kind of vegetation that humanity is allowed to eat in the Garden of Eden narrative.¹⁸² The Garden features all sorts of trees (פְּלִי־עֵץ), which are suitable for food (Gen 2:9) and from which humanity may freely eat. Outside the Garden, humanity will also “eat the vegetation, וְאָכַלְתָּ אֶת־הָעֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה” (Gen 3:18). However, the one exception to YHWH’s command concerns the two trees in the middle of the Garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹⁸³ Following their expulsion, there was also an exclusion; humanity was forbidden to eat from “the tree of life” (Gen 3:22, 23). Humanity had the freedom to eat “from the fruit of the trees in the Garden,” except for the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Yet, they chose to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree regardless. The text in Gen 2:17 provides a clear warning that death will come after eating. There is no contradiction between this explicit

¹⁸¹ It is God here who gives instruction and command. However, it is the serpent who uses the command to deceive הָאִשָּׁה and אִישָׁהּ without God’s authorisation (Gen 3:14-15). Nonetheless, it is not exceptional in the Bible for God to take credit for acts that he did not implement in person. For example, in the prologue of Job, God not only allows the satan to execute his cunning suggestion against Job, but he also takes credit for it (Job 2:3; 1 Kgs 22:19-23; cf. 2 Chr 18:18-22; Is 6).

¹⁸² Ramantswana, “Humanity not pronounced good: A re-reading of Genesis 1:26-31 in dialogue with Genesis 2-3,” 439.

¹⁸³ Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 67-8. Kidner argues that “the tree plays its part in the opportunity it offers, rather than the qualities it possesses.” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 63; McKeown, *Genesis*, 33; Mark S. Smith, *The Genesis of Good and Evil: The Fall(out) and Original Sin in the Bible*, 58. Smith points out that desire is noted in Genesis 2:9 and 3:6, yet it is neither condemned nor judged in Genesis 3.

warning (2:17) and the serpent's remarks (3:4). The text clearly emphasises the promptness of action (e.g., see 1 Kgs 2:37, 42; Num 30:6, 8, 9). The serpent had no grounds to dismiss the divine warning since the command in 2:17 is so explicit and emphatic.¹⁸⁴

The similarities between Gen 1:24-30 and Gen 2:4b-3:24 (notably Gen 3) are not opposing parallels indicating a major decline in creation; rather, the Garden of Eden story enriches the creation account. Consequently, as the Garden narrative unfolds, the creative process concludes with humanity having transgressed the command against eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as stated in Gen 2:17. This narrative explains why humanity is not deemed “good” immediately after Gen 1:28, as per the consistent evaluation formula found in the creation narrative: “And God saw that it was good” (1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25).¹⁸⁵

In the absence of a clear evaluation formula, a woman's desire (תְּשׁוּקָתָהּ) and her pain during childbearing (Gen 3:16) emerge as essential elements of human life following the disobedience of the primeval pair. This disobedience ultimately results in the realisation of God's command to “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and dominion over...” as stated in Gen 1:28.¹⁸⁶ While procreation is a duty for both animals (Gen 1:30) and humans, for humans, it distinctively represents God's blessing (1:28) in a unique way. The distinction lies in how this blessing is articulated, conveyed through the phrase “God said to them” (1:28). The understanding of good and evil from consuming the forbidden fruit of the tree in the Garden is closely related to the blessings and curses in both the divine and human realms.¹⁸⁷ It is essential

¹⁸⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68.

¹⁸⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 24-5.

¹⁸⁶ Russell R. Reno, *Genesis*, (BTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010), 75.

¹⁸⁷ Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000): Stordalen has noted the symbolic and thematic associations of the Garden of Eden throughout the HB; Dexter E. Callender, *Adam in Myth and History: Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 39-75; Carr, “The Politics of Textual Subversion: A

to recognise that the intricate desires and regulations in Gen 3:16 influence the relationship between males and females, resulting in the proliferation of life.¹⁸⁸ The concept of human procreation illustrates the realisation of God’s promise of blessing to humanity in Gen 1:28, even in the context of the curse.

Thus, the phrase טוב מְאֹד in Gen 1:31 is progressively fulfilled as a result of God’s blessings (see Gen 1:31; 4:1; 5:1-3). The gift of offspring, despite the initial infertility of the patriarchs (e.g., Gen 12:3; 17:16, 20), stands out as the most visible blessing from God in the Bible since it is consistently linked with “being fruitful and multiplying” (Gen 1:31; 4:1; 5:1-3; see Ruth 4:11-15, 19-22). This blessing encompasses all facets of human life, including offspring, the land (Dt 28:1-14; cf. Gen 12:1-3; 24:35), and crops; all are viewed as outcomes of God’s blessing, even though they come with the challenges of pain in childbirth and rearing, hard work for food, and cultivating the land amid thorns and thistles.¹⁸⁹ The three imperatives “be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth” in Gen 1:22, 28 (see also 2:3; 5:2; 9:1, 7) are endorsed by God’s promise.¹⁹⁰

2.3.6 Humanity made in the Image of God becomes One Like Divine Beings

In the creation narratives and the Garden of Eden, humanity’s resemblance to God plays a role in the human creative process. As stated in the creation narrative, humans were made כְּדִמְיוֹתֵינוּ כְּצֶלְמֵנוּ “in our image and according to our likeness” in Gen 1:26 and given the

Diachronic Perspective on the Garden of Eden Story,” 577-95: Carr finds opposition to sapiential reworking here.

¹⁸⁸ Irvine A. Busenitz, “Woman’s Desire for Man,” *GTJ* 7 (1986): 203-12; Reno, *Genesis*, 76; Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 251; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 81.

¹⁸⁹ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 175-6; see also Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 165; Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1978), 34; see for further discussion J. Scharbert, *TDOT* 2:279-308.

¹⁹⁰ Allen P. Ross, *Genesis* (CBC 1; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 40; McKeown, *Genesis*, 27; Reno, *Genesis*, 57. Reno understands that human creativity as the blessing of God is, in fact, a profound submission (Gen 1:28-31; 2:9a, 15).

responsibility to populate and rule over the earth.¹⁹¹ In the Garden of Eden narrative, human likeness to God is a key aspect of Gen 3 and is foreshadowed in Gen 2:16-17 by YHWH's command regarding what the humans may eat and may not eat. This implies that the primeval pair already have the ability to make moral choices.¹⁹² Subsequently, it relies on the human being's moral choice in disobedience to YHWH as initiated by Adam and Eve. The freedom to choose does not come without restrictions. In this instance, the limitation refers to one tree, and the penalty for noncompliance is clearly stated emphatically: מוֹת תָּמוּת מִן הָאֵץ “for in the day that you eat from it, you shall surely die.”

The narratives regarding creation and the Garden of Eden highlight two aspects of the divine image that humanity embodies. Firstly, although humanity is created from “the ground” (הָאֲדָמָה, Gen 2:5d, 9; 3:23), which corresponds to “the earth” (הָאָרֶץ, cf. Gen 1:10, 24, 26, 28), the pathway to eternal life is provided through the fruit from the tree of life, which is among other fruit trees. Secondly, humanity is depicted as becoming “one of us, to know good and evil” (Gen 3:22) after eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Both qualities are characterised in Gen 3:22-23 and are the reason for the expulsion of the primeval pair from the Garden of Eden. The disobedience of the primeval pair in eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil resulted in their return to the earth from which they were made, thereby signifying death.

¹⁹¹ Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (CBET 25; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 301; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 215-6.

¹⁹² Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 223-4; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I From Adam to Noah: Genesis I-VI* 8, 124-5; Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 211.

Humans were created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26); the phrase טֹרֵף גָּאֵד in 1:31 refers to humans progressively being made in God's image (cf. 3:22). The ultimate purpose of the creation narratives and the Garden of Eden is to convey the word of YHWH regarding divine beings living a divine life. Through God's image imprinted on human nature (cf. Gen 1:26-27), humanity is inherently elevated to a higher relationship with God. This unique relationship, shared by God with humans made in his image, sets the context for the blessing. From this perspective, humans are accountable to God for exercising responsible rulership over creation, aligned with their obedience to the word of God. Humans are of godkind (Gen 3:22), tasked with overseeing the world on behalf of God, which demands knowledge and wisdom. This highlights the personal relationship between God and man established in Gen 1:26-28.¹⁹³

Humanity's aspiration to become like God by eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil continues to affect them outside the Garden, as they face pain in childbirth, the struggle to obtain food, and the reality of death (see Prov 14:12; 16:25). Despite being expelled, humanity endures as a tiller of the ground (Gen 3:22-23; cf. 2:5, 15) and, by filling the earth, they fulfil the command of subjugation in 1:28.

Examining the intertextual links between Genesis 1 and 2-3 and Wisdom literature indicates that God's purpose remains unchanged despite human choices, whether obedient or not. In the Garden of Eden, obedience was not a prerequisite for human expectations; rather, it served as a pathway to divine life, particularly through partaking of the tree of life (cf. Prov 3:18; 10:17a, 27a; 11:30) as stated in 3:22, "Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also

¹⁹³ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 33.

of the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” YHWH desires that the people of God learn to serve him and grow in wisdom to fulfil their aspirations in accordance with the word of YHWH, i.e., to live a life of eternity. For the primeval pair, the initial step toward wisdom was to avoid the forbidden tree to live, as instructed by YHWH (Gen 2:15-17).

CONCLUSION

This intertextual reading of Gen 1 and Gen 2-3 examines the absence of the evaluation formula in the human creation narrative and highlights the nature of the Garden of Eden narrative as a singular, cohesive story, primarily centred on the sixth day of creation. The Garden of Eden narrative provides extensive details on what is briefly outlined in the creation narrative across a few verses.

Had the primeval pair followed YHWH’s command (Gen 2:17), their knowledge of good and evil could have led to a divine life as they ate from the tree of life. The fear of YHWH initiates knowledge (see Job 1:8; 2:3; Prov 1:7; Dt 8:6; Ps 25:12; 1 Kgs 18:3), directing one towards a divine life.¹⁹⁴ Conversely, their disobedience caused the forfeiture of specific privileges, especially the right to eat from the tree of life in the Garden.

However, the acquisition of knowledge about good and evil is initially forbidden under the penalty of death (Gen 2:16-17) but later becomes fulfilled within the will of YHWH. Specifically, the blessing of human procreation – rather than being undermined by death, arising from the primeval pair’s disobedience – has been realised through death. Thus, it does not threaten YHWH’s plan (Gen 3:22-23). These two motifs illustrate that while humans can acquire divine knowledge, they are restricted from attaining divine life (3:5-7, 22-24), which

¹⁹⁴ Martin A. Shields, *The End of Wisdom: A Reappraisal of the Historical and Canonical Function of Ecclesiastes* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 179.

can only be achieved by beginning with a reverence for YHWH (cf. Prov 1:7; 19:23; 21:21; Eccl 12:13; Job 28:28).

CHAPTER 3

An Intertextual Reading of Job with the Narratives of the Creation and the Garden of Eden

3.1 Reading Job with Gen 1:26-28 and 2–3

A canonical, intertextual reading of Job alongside the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden reveals both thematic similarities and contrasts. For example, Job’s setting resembles the Garden of Eden, located in the east (אֲדָמָה), as mentioned in Job 1:3, echoing the reference in Gen 2:8 (אֲדָמָה). This geographical similarity suggests shared symbolic significance. Moreover, the book of Job delves into divine wisdom related to human existence, a theme that aligns with the divine wisdom found in the creation narrative. It also references the primeval man (Job 15:7; 20:4; 31:35), a concept derived from the account of creation. Therefore, examining these intertextual references can enhance our understanding of the creation narrative and the primeval human as depicted in the book of Job.

The book of Job begins with a narrative that resembles the court narratives of YHWH found in Gen 1:26-28, 3:22-24, and 11:7-9. Additionally, this narrative does not connect directly to Israel’s history; rather, it carries broader implications for humanity across both time and space.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Lindsay Wilson, *Job*, 51-395; John H. Walton with Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *Job: From biblical text... to contemporary life* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 57, 211, 400-19; Yohan Pyeon, *You Have Not Spoken What is Right about Me: Intertextuality and the Book of Job* (SBL 45; New York-Washington, D.C.: Peter Lang, 2003), 87-91; Manfred Oeming, *Reading Job Intertextually* (eds. Katharine J. Dell and Will Kynes; New York: Bloomsbury T&T CLARK, 2013), 20-4; S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray, *The Book of Job* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T CLARK, 1921), lxxv; Choon-Leong Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*, 271-6; J. Gerald Janzen, *Job: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 273; Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 14; ed. Donald J. Wiseman; England: IVP, 1976), 317; Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*, 23-46; Longman III, *Job*, 121-46, 218, 451-68.

The name Uz, where Job is located (Job 1:1), holds significance not in its geography but in its mundanity. This aligns with the opening line of Job, which states, אִישׁ שָׁמָיִם “a man there was”, emphasising the character’s ordinariness, yet his endurance ultimately reveals his extraordinary nature (Job 42). This suggests that the events in Uz are not limited to any one nation, culture, or society. Job, the story’s central figure, embodies the notion that any human experience can manifest in unexpected ways, as people from varied backgrounds frequently connect and interact beyond established boundaries. Therefore, Job’s journey symbolises the universal experiences of humanity.¹⁹⁶

Through a close examination of the connection between the Garden narrative and the book of Job, we can observe its intertextual relationship with both earlier and later chapters.¹⁹⁷ By exploring the relationship between the creation of humanity (Gen 1:26-28) and the Garden narrative, alongside the book of Job—particularly chapters 1-2 and 42—readers can establish connections among these texts. This approach allows readers to identify shared themes, structures, allusions, and key terms, thereby enhancing their understanding of these works. In other words, the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden are intricately tied to both earlier and later chapters of the book of Job.

¹⁹⁶ Sam Meier, “Job I–II: A Reflection of Genesis I–III,” *VT* 39 (1989): 183-93.

¹⁹⁷ Michael V. Fox, “God’s Answer and Job’s Response,” *Biblica* 94.1 (2013): 1-23 (3-4); Michael Fishbane, “Jeremiah IV 23-26 and Job III 3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern,” *VT* 21.2 (1971): 151-167 (151-5); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 1-14; Michael A. Lyons, “I also could talk as you do” (Job 16:4): The Function of Intertextual Quotation and Allusion in Job: in *Reading Job Intertextually* (LBHOTS 574; ed. Katherine Dell and Will Kynes; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 169-77.

3.2 The serpent in the Garden and in Job 26 regarding the satan in Job 1–2

Gen 3:1

וַהֲנִיחַ הָיָה עָרוֹם מִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה אַף כִּי־אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל עֵץ הַגָּן:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other animal of the field that YHWH *'ēlōhîm* had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?” (ESV, modified)

Job 1:6-7

וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים לְהִתְנַצֵּב עַל־יְהוָה וַיָּבֹאוּ גַם־הַשָּׁטָן בְּתוֹכָם:
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־הַשָּׁטָן מֵאֵין תָּבֹא וַיַּעַן הַשָּׁטָן אֶת־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר מִשּׁוּט בָּאָרֶץ וּמִהַתְהַלֵּךְ בָּהּ:

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before YHWH, and the satan also came among them. ⁷ YHWH said to the satan, “From where have you come?” the satan answered YHWH and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it. (ESV, modified)

In Gen 3:1, the serpent is presented as הַנְּחָשׁ הָיָה עָרוֹם, indicating that “the serpent was crafty” through the use of the definite article. The presence of the definite article before “serpent” and the verb “was” in the past tense suggests that this serpent was not a general representative of its kind but rather unique, being “more crafty than any other animal”. This could imply that snakes are not as crafty as the serpent. Thus, it can be inferred that the serpent in the Garden was unique in its craftiness; for instance, the serpent approached the woman, not Adam, with the question, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”

As we explore our canonical reading through an intertextual approach, it is essential to recognise the thematic link between the serpent in the Garden of Eden and the Satan in the narrative of the court of YHWH in Job 1-2.

Undoubtedly, the thematic connection between the serpent in the Garden of Eden and the Satan in the narrative of the court of YHWH in Job 1-2 is profoundly significant. It not only sheds light on the narrative but also reveals the fulfilment of the human mandate that the Creator God declared in Gen 1:28.

The fulfilment of God's commands to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over..." as stated in Gen 1:28 is the most crucial aspect of human existence. While both animals (1:30) and humans share the same obligation of procreation, it reflects God's blessing (1:28) differently for humans. Notably, among all of creation resulting from God's eight acts in the creation, God communicates directly only with human beings. Other creatures do not receive any direct communication. The distinction lies in the blessing bestowed upon humanity, as indicated by the phrase "God said to them" in 1:28, where the term "you" is specifically used twice in verse 29.¹⁹⁸ This signifies humanity's unique and intimate relationship with the Creator, highlighting humans as beings capable of expressing thought. God has made a profound commitment to humanity through speech, granting them exceptional freedom to respond (cf. Gen 3:10, 12, 13), which occurs before the judgment of the primeval pair (3:16-19) and the serpent (3:14-15).

From this perspective, humans are accountable to God to exercise caring rulership over his creation, a Godkind that watches over the world on behalf of God, as God creates them in

¹⁹⁸ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 31.

his image and likeness. This is articulated through the terms **צלם** and **דמות**, indicating that humans' dominion over God's other creations (Gen 1:26-28) is both inherent (1:26) and based on kinship (3:22; 9:4, 6). The relationship between the Creator and the created is fundamental. The order of creation is designed to prepare for a more elevated human relationship with God.

The serpent aims to disrupt the relationship between the Creator and humanity through the woman, who is made from Adam's bones and flesh in the Garden. In Job 2:5, the satan attempts to hinder the blessings of human mandates, resulting in enmity between "you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15), as YHWH judged the serpent.

In analysing the book of Job alongside the accounts of creation and the Garden of Eden, we uncover a deeper complexity in the human relationship with God's creatures (see Gen 1:21-23 and Job 26). This insight appears to confront the human mandate, particularly in the satan's challenge in the prologue of Job, yet ultimately provides reassurance of blessings at the end (Job 42:10-16).

Job 26, where Job eloquently mentions some of the most stunning phenomena of creation that showcase the mightiest works of God, is pertinent here:

Job 26:12-13

בְּכֹחוֹ רָגַע הַיָּם וּבְתַבּוּנָתוֹ מָחַץ רַהַב:
בְּרוּחוֹ שָׁמַיִם שִׁפְרָה חִלְלָה יָדוֹ נָחַשׁ בְּרִית:

¹² By his power, he stilled the sea, and by his understanding, he shattered Rahab. ¹³ By his breath, the heavens were made clear; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent. (ESV, modified)

In Job 26:12, God stills the sea with his breath or wind.¹⁹⁹ He also shatters Rahab using his breath or wind. Questions encircle verse 13: “By his breath, the heavens were made clear; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.” Many commentators interpret this verse as depicting a storm where a chaotic creature is subdued by God’s overwhelming sovereignty as the Creator.²⁰⁰ This text implies a connection between the chaos described in Gen 1:2, “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep,” and the serpent in Gen 3, which can be seen as a tamed version of the chaotic serpent in Job 26:12-13.

In Job 26:12, God stills the sea, and in verse 13, he clears the heavens from the churning storm. So, this is an act of bringing order out of chaos as mentioned in Genesis 1:2-3 (cf. Prov 3:19), which fits with the parallel defeat of נָחֵשׁ בָּרִיחַ “the fleeing serpent”. The term used for שֶׁנָּחַשׁ “the serpent” in Genesis 3:1 is also used in connection with Isaiah 27:1, where Leviathan is described as a נָחֵשׁ בָּרִחַ and נָחֵשׁ עֲקָלְתוֹן “twisting serpent” and associated with the sea “dragon” in Is 59:1. This also illustrates that these beings are God’s creatures under his control, as described in Gen 1:1–2:3.²⁰¹ On the fifth day of creation, following the Creator’s command, the waters abound with life, and birds soar through the skies. “God created the great sea monsters” (1:21 NRSV). Notably, God does not simply “make” sea creatures; he “creates”

¹⁹⁹ Clines, *Job 21–37*, 623: Clines interprets the verb “to still” in 26:13, while the same verb denotes churning up the waves in Isa 51:15 and Jer 31:35.

²⁰⁰ Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, 234; Tremper Longman III, *Job* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 316-7; Clines, *Job 21–37*, 639; Samuel Rolles Driver & George Buchanan Gray, *The Book of Job*, 224; Marvin Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, 185-6; John H. Walton & Vizcaino Kelly Lemon, *Job*, 259. Commentators in this section of the book of Job discuss the mythological creatures found in the ancient Near Eastern mythic tradition.

²⁰¹ John H. Walton & Vizcaino Kelly Lemon, *Job*, 258-9. The form is akin to the verb מָחַץ in Job 26:12, which means “crush.” The cognates of these two verbs appear in parallel in Ugaritic, particularly in the Baal cycle, regarding Anat’s battle against Mot, the god of death. (*CTA 3/KTU* 1.3 II.5-6, 29-30); Simon B. Parker (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBLWAW; Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1997), 107-8 *UT*, 67.I:1-4 or *COS*, 1.86, 250; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, 196-7. Childs observes, “As is evident from Is 27, the imagery still carries a residual intensity and serves to address the basic ontological problem of primordial evil”; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 491: Oswalt observes that Job asserts that the terrible Leviathan is only under the sovereign power of God (42:2).

them. This is the second occurrence of the verb בָּרָא “to create”. The verb בָּרָא, used deliberately as the first word in Genesis, makes its application to “sea monsters” (הַתַּיִמִּים הַיָּמִיִּים) compelling at crucial points in the narrative.²⁰² It underscores the importance of this aspect of creation, suggesting that a crucial message is being conveyed.

The creation of sea monsters is significant enough to merit special emphasis. The Hebrew word for sea creatures is תַּיִם (cf. Ps 74:13 “dragons (NRSV)/monsters (ESV)”; 148:7 “monsters (NRSV)/creatures (ESV)”). In Isa 27:1, the תַּיִם is identified as God’s enemy, and he will slay it. Genesis 1:21-23 highlights their creation to show that they are creatures. The emergence of the תַּיִם at such a late stage in the creative process implies that their divine status requires examination, thereby necessitating a thoughtful consideration of their role within the narrative.

On the fifth day, God blesses creation for the first time (Gen 1:22). In our intertextual analysis, the theme of blessing emerges as a key concept, particularly within the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden, as well as in the prologue and epilogue of Job. Within these canonical texts, the term “blessing” is either explicitly defined or inferred from the surrounding context. In the creation account, the three phrases – “be fruitful,” “multiply,” and “fill” – clearly indicate that the intention behind this initial blessing is abundant procreation. With the power of his creative words, life is initiated, and God speaks once more to further this process with words of blessing on human creation. On the fifth day, living creatures in both the seas and the skies are blessed.²⁰³

²⁰² McKeown, *Genesis*, 24-5.

²⁰³ McKeown, *Genesis*, 24-5.

The above also relates to the idea in Job 27:3, which applies to the human realm: “For as long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nose” (כִּי־כָל־עוֹד נְשָׁמְתִי בִי וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּאַפִּי). It refers to “breath” within Job (cf. Job 4:9; 26:4; 32:8; 33:4; 34:14). The “spirit” (רוּחַ) of a human being represents the life or vitality of that person (cf. Job 6:4; 10:12); by calling his life-breath the spirit of the Almighty in his nostrils, Job undoubtedly alludes to the creation narrative of God breathing into the nostril (אָפִים, in Gen 2:7 “רוּחַ אֶפְיִנִי”) of Adam, the first human, the “breath of life” (נְשַׁמַּת חַיִּים; here רוּחַ). The parallel with “the spirit of the Almighty” (“נְפֹשִׁי...וְשָׂדֵי”) in Job 27:2 implies a similar meaning for נְשָׁמָה “breath”, which refers to Job’s life.

In Job 27:2-5, Job asserts his integrity, declaring that his words are completely truthful and that he has committed no wrongdoing throughout his life.²⁰⁴ For Job, maintaining his integrity is not merely a personal virtue but essential to his relationship with God, the Creator and the creation.

According to the judgment pronounced by YHWH in Gen 3:15, the enmity between the serpent and the woman is evident in the conflict between the satan and Job. Notably, in the book of Job, unlike the disobedience of the primeval pair in the Garden of Eden, Job does not sin against the Almighty.

In our intertextual analysis, the serpent from the Garden of Eden, much like the satan in the Court narrative of Job 1-2, was governed by the will of YHWH, as shown through the councils of YHWH. Through God’s creative words in Genesis 1:21-23, as tamed in Job 26:12-13, life is initiated, and God speaks to further this process by blessing human creation. The satan in Job 1–2, akin to the serpent in the Garden, sought to undermine God's will, but this

²⁰⁴ Longman III, *Job*, 317-8; Alden, *Job*, 262-3.

attempt was ultimately unsuccessful, as demonstrated in Job 42, which details the significant increase in the number of Job’s family and livestock.

3.3 The serpent in the Garden of Eden and the satan in the Court of YHWH

It is also beneficial to explore connections or parallels between the narratives of the Garden of Eden and the Court of YHWH in Job 1–2. Similar to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, the satan’s appearance in YHWH’s court in Job 1–2 raises a comparable question about his identity: whether he is one of the sons of God in Job 1:6, or if he is distanced from them and used as an agent of YHWH. The term שָׂטָן refers to an accuser, which can be either earthly or heavenly. When the definite article שָׂטָן הַזֶּה is added, it describes the role of the accuser or adversary rather than indicating a specific person’s name.²⁰⁵

The question regarding the serpent in Genesis 3:1—Did it become the tempter because it was “more crafty than any other beast of the field that YHWH had made”?—connects to the question concerning the satan in Job 1–2: Did the satan become an accuser due to being an outcast for some reason (Job 1:7), or is his role as the accuser an instrument of God (1:9-10)?

As noted above, the questions related to God evoke inquiries that consider the nature of God and emphasise the human relationship with him. The challenge posed by the satan in Job 1:6-12 stems from Job’s uprightness and blamelessness, which are fundamentally linked to his

²⁰⁵ In the HB, שָׂטָן is first used as a proper noun in the late text 1 Chron 21:1. See Ralph W. Klein, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary on 1 Chronicles* (Hermeneia; ed. Thomas Krüger; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 418; Ryan E. Stokes, “The Devil Made David Do It ... Or *Did* He? The Nature, Identity, and Literary Origins of the *Satan* in 1 Chronicles 21:1,” *JBL* 128 (2009): 91-106; Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings* (WBC 12; eds. Bruce M. Metzger, John D. W. Watts; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2nd ed., 2003), 268; Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; eds. James L. Mays, Carol A. Newsom, David L. Petersen; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 374-5.

existence as a human.²⁰⁶ In this context, the portrayal of the court of YHWH in heaven suggests that the satan is a legitimate participant, rather than merely another member of the sons of God.²⁰⁷ The issue of uprightness and blamelessness that Job faces, without prior knowledge of the events in the court of God (compare the court scene in 1 Kgs 22:19-23), raises a significant question for him that can also apply to any human. A similar dynamic is evident in the Garden of Eden, where the serpent is portrayed as a unique and crafty creation of YHWH, distinct from other creatures. In Genesis 3:1 (also verses 4-5), the serpent questions the woman, asking, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” This inquiry prompts reflection on how YHWH is perceived by the woman while tempting her in the Garden. Our canonical reading of Job alongside the Garden narrative reveals that the challenges posed by the satan in the prologue of Job confront both YHWH and Job, questioning the character of YHWH.²⁰⁸

Our intertextual analysis reveals a dialogical matrix at the beginning of the two canonical texts: Job 1–2 and 42, and Genesis 1–3. In the book of Job, the satan acts as an instrument of God, testing Job, as YHWH initiated an examination of the satan regarding Job’s righteousness and integrity, presented not once but twice (1:8 and 2:3). Unlike the serpent in the Garden of Eden, who confronts the primeval pair without preamble and appears self-driven, the satan’s appearance in the court of YHWH in Job 1–2 is introduced by the opening words (1:7, 8, and 12).

Job 1:7-8, 12

²⁰⁶ Janzen, *Job*, 38-40.

²⁰⁷ Wilson, *Job*, 32-3.

²⁰⁸ See section 3.4 for further discussion.

⁷ YHWH said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” the satan answered YHWH, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” ⁸ YHWH said to the satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil.”

¹² YHWH said to the satan, “Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!” So the satan went out from the presence of YHWH. (NRSV, modified)

In the prologue of the book of Job, events unfold sequentially in heaven and on earth, specifically in the land of Uz to the east (1:3). This sequence begins in a parallel way in the Garden narrative, situated to the east (Gen 2:8), initiated by the serpent (3:1) in the Garden and is subsequently followed by a heavenly council scene involving YHWH (3:22).

Each scene can be read in dialogue with the other. Through this dialogical approach, we notice a difference between what the serpent did to the primeval pair and what the satan did to Job, his wife, and his children. In Job, the satan’s actions were initiated and limited by YHWH, under his permission, with the condition, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand” (Job 1:12). In contrast, the serpent’s actions in Genesis were neither explained nor limited. In Gen 3:1-5, the serpent deceived Eve and Adam, the man, by distorting YHWH’s command in Gen 2:16-17 without hesitation. This self-motivated act of the serpent led to a curse upon the kind (3:14b).

On the other hand, the difference in the court of YHWH in the book of Job is that YHWH initiates the situation by describing Job in 1:8: “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” This time, it is the satan, an instrument of God, the accuser, who must respond to the words of YHWH, not humans. There is no record of punishment or judgment on the satan from YHWH as a result.

The Bible does not specify where or when the serpent’s superior intelligence, mentioned in Gen 3:1, originated or was given. It is important to note that, unlike the satan in Job 1–2, the serpent in the Garden of Eden narrative is not shown to have entered or exited the scene. Instead, the serpent seems to have always been present. Even after Adam and Eve’s eyes were opened, the serpent remained there, watching them hide. This is suggested by the fact that the serpent was present during YHWH’s cursing of him and his seed.

In our intertextual reading, we may suggest that the serpent believed that by tempting the primeval pair to disobey, he could thwart the human mandate to be fruitful, ultimately leading to their death. This also suggests that the serpent was aware of the human mandates in Gen 1:28. A contrast appears in the court of YHWH in Job 2–3, where the satan asks YHWH to “touch” Job, “his bones and flesh”,²⁰⁹ hoping to undermine the human mandates. However, both attempts were in vain, as humans continued to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.

3.3.1 The Human Mandate and the Blessings in the Epilogue of Job

Job 1:6-12

וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים לְהִתְנַצֵּב עַל־יְהוָה וַיָּבֹאוּ גַם־הַשָּׁטָן בְּתוֹכָם:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־הַשָּׁטָן מֵאֵין תְּבֹא וַיַּעַן הַשָּׁטָן אֶת־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר מִשׁוּט בְּאָרֶץ וּמִהִתְהַלֵּךְ בָּהּ:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־הַשָּׁטָן הֲשִׁמְתָּ לְבָדָּךְ עַל־עַבְדִּי אִיּוֹב כִּי אֵין כְּמֹהוּ בְּאָרֶץ אִישׁ תָּם וַיִּשֶׁר יְרֵא אֱלֹהִים וְסָר מִרְעוֹ:

וַיַּעַן הַשָּׁטָן אֶת־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲחַנּוּם יְרֵא אִיּוֹב אֱלֹהִים:

הֲלֹא־אֵת שְׂכָתְךָ בִּעָדוֹ וּבְעַד־בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעַד כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ מִסָּבִיב מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו בְּרַכָּתְךָ וּמִקְנֵהוּ פָּרִץ בְּאָרֶץ:

²⁰⁹ See under 3.3.1.

וְאוֹלָם שְׁלַח־נָא יְדָדָה וְגַע בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ אִם־לֹא עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם יִבְרַךְךָ:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־הַשָּׁטָן הִנֵּה כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ בְּיָדְךָ רַק אֵלָיו אֶל־תִּשְׁלַח יְדָדָה וַיֵּצֵא הַשָּׁטָן מִעַם פְּנֵי יְהוָה:

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before YHWH, and the satan also came among them. ⁷ YHWH said to the satan, “From where have you come?” the satan answered YHWH and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” ⁸ And YHWH said to the satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” ⁹ Then the satan answered YHWH and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” ¹² And YHWH said to the satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So the satan went out from the presence of YHWH. (ESV, modified)

Gen 2:23-24

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הַפֶּעַם עָצָם מִעֲצָמֵי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרֵי לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לִקְחָהּ זֹאת:

עַל־כֵּן יִעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד:

²³ Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (ESV)

It is evident that in Job 1–2, the figure known as the satan attempts to destroy Job’s bone and flesh, just as the serpent in the Garden of Eden attempted to destroy the man’s “bone and flesh”: his wife, as the woman is described in Gen 2:23-24. The key difference between the narrative of the Garden of Eden and the court narrative of Job 1–2 is that Job’s children are affected instead of his wife.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 93; Lindsay Wilson, *Job* (THOTC; Grand Raids; Cambridge, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 100; Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 44-54; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 275;

Furthermore, the satan exists to thwart the fulfilment of the blessings bestowed upon humanity in Gen 1:26-28. According to this interpretation, the serpent's deception in the Garden seduced the woman into inducing YHWH's judgement, which could hinder the blessings related to the human mandates addressed in Gen 1:26-28.²¹¹ However, the serpent's attempt to undermine the human mandates ultimately ended up fulfilling the mandate by causing the primeval pair to be expelled from the Garden of Eden, leading to the scattering of humanity over the surface of the earth (cf. Gen 9:18-19).

In Job 1–2, the satan provokes God to test Job by removing the protection of YHWH over Job, including his children and possessions. However, this occurs only with YHWH's permission, unlike the serpent who tempted Eve without YHWH's permission in the Garden of Eden.

Contrary to the satan's intention, Job's understanding of God's blessings remains unchanged despite his great struggle through the tests (Job 1:13-22; 2:7-10), as he did not curse YHWH with his lips (2:9 “בָּרַךְ”; 31:30 “בָּרַךְ לֵה”). Job's perspective appears to be rooted in the knowledge of the Creator God (cf. Job 1:21; chapters 26-28). This helps the reader understand that Job remains unaware of God's actions in the heavenly court, unlike the court of YHWH in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:22-23), where the primeval pair were directly confronted by God's judgment.

Concerning the serpent that crawls on its belly and eats dust (Gen 3:14), the curse imposed upon it, for tempting Eve, includes: “you will be cursed,” “on your belly you shall

Michael Fishbane, “Jeremiah 4:23-26 and Job 3:3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern,” *VT* 21 (1971): 151-167.

²¹¹ J. Blenkinsopp, “Genesis”, in *NIB*, I, 364.

go,” “and dust you shall eat all the days of your life,” and “the woman’s offspring will strike you on the head.” In relation to this context, Isaiah 65:25 mentions, “but dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall do no evil, and they shall not destroy on all my holy mountain”, says YHWH. Metaphorically, the notion of eating dust appears multiple times in the Bible: Ps 72:9, “May those who dwell in the wilderness bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust”; Is 49:23, “and lick the dust of your feet”; Mic 7:17, “they shall lick the dust like a serpent.”

The details in Isaiah 65:20-25 highlight the consequences of the serpent’s actions in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3). The serpent’s offspring will strike at the heel of Eve’s offspring, and that offspring will crush the serpent’s head (Gen 3:15). Isaiah 65:25 emphasises that the serpent is ultimately destined not only to crawl in the dust but to eat only dust forever, as YHWH condemned him in the Garden of Eden, declaring that the serpent will crawl in the dust forever, or “all the days of your life” (Gen 3:14).²¹²

On that day, when the final judgment occurs, the curse on man and animals will be lifted; as YHWH states, there will be no one to cause harm or perish on his holy mountain.²¹³ Thus, there will be peace between humans and animals (cf. Is 11:1-5), and humanity will possess wisdom and knowledge in the blessings of God (cf. Gen 1:26-28; Is 11:6-9), with animals living in peace (Is 66:7-13, YHWH delivers Zion; 66:14-24, YHWH’s final judgment), reminiscent of a return to the Garden of Eden before God’s punishment fell on humankind. God’s new work, a new earth and new heavens, will influence all aspects of the world.

²¹² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 79; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1975), 70.

²¹³ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 662; J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 20; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999), 451-2; Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes: Chapters 40–66* (Vol. 3; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 517; John Day, *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1–11*, 40: Day points out that קַיִם in Gen 3:5 can mean not only “on that day” but also can be rendered as “for when you eat of it you will surely die”.

However, there is no indication of peace between humans and the serpent, nor between the serpent and other animals.²¹⁴

In our intertextual reading so far, the serpent in Gen 2–3 acts as the tempter, much like the satan in the book of Job 1–2. All of these figures are clearly governed by the will of YHWH, as revealed in the councils of YHWH. Therefore, the serpent, whether for good or evil, according to the knowledge of God, remains subject to God’s judgment.

Job struggled to comprehend why these incidents happened to him and his children (Job 30:26). It is more challenging to feel grateful when God takes things away than when he gives. Job did not recognise that enduring suffering was essential for gaining the ability to discern good from evil in human experience until he reached Job 42:7-16. Thus, God lets him know what God is doing to him so that Job can view his suffering as purposeful or just. The resolution to this dilemma becomes clear only when the reader arrives at Job 42:12-17.

Because of God’s judgment, a woman’s desire and suffering (עֲצָרָת) in childbirth (Gen 3:16), as decreed by YHWH after the disobedience of the primeval pair, become fundamental aspects of human existence: to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over...”. Our intertextual analysis of Job alongside the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden provides readers with a cohesive understanding that procreation is a duty for both animals (Gen 1:30) and humans. This is particularly emphasised by the mention of children in Job 1 and the conclusion in Job 42. In Job 42:10, YHWH “restored” Job, and verse

²¹⁴ Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, (NAC 15B; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009), 724; see also Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, 538; Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66* (WBC; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 250.

12 highlights that YHWH “blessed” Job with more children, reinforcing the notion that Job’s restoration comes from God’s blessings.

Job 42:10-13

¹⁰ And YHWH restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and YHWH gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that YHWH had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. ¹² YHWH blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. ¹³ He also had seven sons and three daughters. (NRSV, modified)

A careful examination of the reference to his children and the doubling of livestock in 42:10b-13 reveals its alignment with the number of animals attributed to Job in 1:3. Furthermore, 42:13 indicates that YHWH bestowed upon Job a new family consisting of ten children, thereby replacing the previous set of ten and emphasising the restoration of what was lost. It is noteworthy that Job’s wife is absent in this context, as she does not require restoration.

Specifically, the emphasis on the three daughters of Job in 42:14-15 is distinctive in Hebrew narratives, as it omits mention of the restored sons. Instead, the focus is on the daughters, whose names reflect beauty and adornment. Verse 15 highlights their exceptional beauty and affirms that they received an inheritance equal to that of their brothers, underscoring their significance. Similarly, Job 42:16-17 narrates Job’s lengthy life as evidence of his righteousness (cf. Prov 3:1-2),²¹⁵ indicating he lived for at least 140 years. Remarkably, he observed the lives of his sons and their descendants, likely across multiple generations. This

²¹⁵ See under 3.4 and 3.4.1 for further discussion.

enables readers to relate Job's restored family to the human mandate. The book concludes with Job's death after a life filled with prosperity and fulfilment. Job's long life and the blessings from God affirm that he fulfilled this mandate.

Thus, analysing the primeval pair's failure to heed the command "not to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" suggests it does not prevent the fulfilment of the mandate. However, by contrasting the primeval pair's disobedience with Job's uprightness and blamelessness, we observe that Job's restored existence and his protection of his wife safeguard both their lives and those of future generations (Job 42:10-17; cf. Num 6:24-26; Ps 121:7), demonstrating a lavish fulfilment of the mandate. Notably, the name of YHWH, combined with the word שָׁמַר "keep or spare (his life)" in Job 2:6, along with "And YHWH restored" שָׁבַּ וַיְהִינָהּ שָׁב in 42:10, corresponds to Num 6: יְבָרְכֶךָּ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָּ "YHWH bless you and keep you," which encompasses descendants, fertile land, good health, long life, protection from adversaries, and presence amongst his people.

In Job, the satan, in the court of YHWH, initially aims to eliminate Job's children, not his wife. This is related to Gen 3:15, when YHWH says to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel". The serpent's temptation of Eve, described as Adam's "bone and flesh," with the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden, can be seen as closely related to the satan's challenge against Job and his "bones and flesh" in the book of Job. Job faces trials that involve the loss of his possessions and physical afflictions, but

these hardships ultimately result in greater blessings in Job 42:12-17 than he experienced in his earlier state, discussed in Job 1–2.

3.4 Blessing and Curse: Bones and Flesh in Job 1–2 and the Garden Narrative

In the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden, YHWH creates a woman from Adam’s side while he is in a deep sleep. This indicates that Adam (הָאָדָם) cannot take credit for his counterpart’s existence or for fulfilling the plan of God in Gen 1:26-27, “Let us make man (אָדָם) in our image, after our likeness...²⁷ So God created man (הָאָדָם) in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female (זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה) he created them”.

In Genesis 2:23, Adam recognises the equality between himself and his helper, counterpart, before YHWH. By naming her “Woman”, he emphasises that she is part of him, underscoring their mutual need for completeness.²¹⁶ This designation also symbolises the unity and equality of male and female in fulfilling the human mandate. Adam declares she is, עֲצָם וּבְשַׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”²¹⁷ This phrase is echoed in various passages in the Bible, including 2 Samuel 19:13, where it states, אַחֵי אֶתֶם עֲצָמֵי וּבְשַׂרִי אֶתֶם “you are my brothers, my bone and my flesh.”²¹⁸

In Gen 2, the connection between God and humans in Gen 1 is reflected in the relationship between husband and wife.²¹⁹ When studying the terms צְלָמַי and דְמוּתִי in Gen 1:26-27, we examined intimate filial relationships, similar to their use in Gen 5:1-3.²²⁰ In Gen 1:28,

²¹⁶ McKeown, *Genesis*, 34.

²¹⁷ See under 3.2 for mentions of “bones and flesh.”

²¹⁸ David Shepherd, “‘Strike his bone and his flesh’: Reading Job from the Beginning,” *JSOT* 33 (2008): 81-97, 82. Shepherd agrees that עֲצָמֵי and בְשַׂר should be considered as a pair of words.

²¹⁹ See my study under 2.1.4.2.

²²⁰ See under 2.1 for a discussion of צְלָמַי and דְמוּתִי.

this idea is expressed clearly by God’s commission to the male and female humans to fill the earth and subdue it while exercising dominion over creation. In Gen 1:26-28 and 2:3, humans are not considered equivalent to God. Instead, the terms אָדָם and זָמִיָּה refer to Adam (אָדָם), made “from the ground” (מִן־הָאָדָמָה) in 2:7. Thus, the terms “male” and “female” do not denote divinity but are rather given to humankind by the Creator God in Gen 1 for the purpose of procreation.

In Gen 1:26, the term אָדָם appears without the definite article, while in 1:27, it is presented as הָאָדָם, indicating that humanity encompasses both male and female, rather than referring to a single individual. Therefore, the fulfilment of God’s commands to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over...” in 1:28 represents the most significant aspects of human existence. These aspects also highlight the intimate kinship between the man and the woman in Gen 2:23.

In this connection, analysing the relationship between Job and Genesis as interconnected texts in a canonical reading can enhance our understanding of both. For example, Gen 2:23-25 and Gen 3:1-19 are worth considering when examining Job 2:4-5, where the satan’s expression of “bone and flesh” occurs (where the satan suggests that YHWH should strike Job (2:4-5), “the first man” (הָרִאשׁוֹן אָדָם) in 15:7):

Gen 2:23

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפַּעַם עָצָם מֵעֲצָמֵי וּבָשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לָקַחְתָּהּ זֹאת:

Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this was taken.” (NRSV)

Gen 3:21

וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לָאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כִּתְנוֹת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם:

And YHWH God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and he clothed them. (NRSV, modified)

Job 2:4-5

וַיַּעַן הַשָּׂטָן אֶת־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר עֹר בְּעַד־עֹר וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְאִישׁ יִתֵּן בְּעַד נַפְשׁוֹ:
אוּלָּם נְשַׁלְּחֶנָּה יָדְךָ וְגַע אֶל־עַצְמוֹ וְאֶל־בְּשָׂרוֹ אִם־לֹא אֶל־פָּנֶיךָ יִבְרַךְךָ:

⁴ Then the satan answered YHWH and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵ But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse/bless you to your face.” (ESV, modified)

Job 15:7

הֲרֵאִישׁוֹן אָדָם תִּגְלַד וְלִפְנֵי גְבְעוֹת הוּלָלְתָּ:

“Are you the first man who was born?
Or were you brought forth before the hills?” (ESV)

In Gen 2:23, Adam states that Eve was not only a helper (עזר) and a counterpart (נגד) but also Adam’s biologically related kin. In the Bible, kinship is affirmed by acknowledging someone as their bone and flesh. For example, in Gen 29:14, when Jacob and his uncle Laban initially met, Laban said to Jacob, “Surely, you are my bone and my flesh...” (אָךְ עַצְמִי וּבְשָׂרִי) (אֶתָּה).

Also, in most biblical kinship cases, relationships and their duties are defined by flesh and bone. The elders of Judah were connected to King David through biological kinship in 2 Sam 19:11-13, “¹¹ King David sent this message to the priests Zadok and Abiathar, “Say to the elders of Judah, ¹² You are my kin, you are my bone and my flesh; ...’ ¹³ And say to

Amasa, ‘Are you not my bone and my flesh?’” (cf. Gen 2:23; also Judg 9:2).²²¹ Becoming “one flesh” in Gen 2:24 signifies Adam and Eve’s biological and filial relationship, alluding to sexual intimacy – “be fruitful and multiply” in Gen 1:28. Adam names his wife חַוְוָה in Gen 3:20, after their disobedience and before their expulsion from the Garden, as “the mother of all living”, indicating that male and female humans are prepared to fulfil the mandate.

An intertextual reading of Job 1–2 in relation to the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden reveals that the satan attempts to challenge YHWH by targeting Job’s wife and children, who are the bone and flesh of Job. This action frustrates the command to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...” in Gen 1:28.

The satan in the Court of YHWH in Job 1–2 claims that Job owes his birth, success, and uprightness to God. The satan’s accusations are based on phrases that describe someone blameless and upright in Job 1:8. In 1:9, the satan also argues that Job fears God and turns from evil due to the prosperity God grants (cp. Prov 4:25-27 where uprightness relates to turning from evil). This suggests equating “blameless” with “fearing God” in the Torah, highlighting Job’s piety, which reflects his integrity. This prompts the question of the relationship between Job’s fear of YHWH and his prosperity, connecting to the blamelessness and uprightness of Job in 1:1, similar to what is described in Dt 6:24-25, 9:4-6, and the Wisdom books (cf. Prov 11:5, 13:6, 28:10, cp. 29:10).

In Job 1:6-9, YHWH initially asked the satan if he had seen Job’s uprightness and blamelessness in 1:8 and 2:3.²²² The satan responds to YHWH’s question by affirming Job’s

²²¹ A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC 11; ed. John D. W. Watts; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 75.

²²² Janzen, *Job: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 39; Frances I. Andersen, *Job: An*

piety, attributing it to God's blessings of prosperity on Job's family and possessions. The passage demonstrates the satan's knowledge of Job, his children, that is, his bone and flesh, and his success.

In Job 1:9-11, the satan confidently asserts that Job will curse God "to his face" if YHWH removes the hedge that he put around Job, his household, and all his possessions. It seems that the way the satan perceives Job is a deliberate distortion meant to blame YHWH by accusing Job. Similarly, the serpent distorted the prohibition concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. In Gen 3:4, the serpent said, "When you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil", instigating the primeval pair to blame God for misleading them and making them feel that God was hiding something from them.²²³

In the book of Job, the satan also attempts to provoke YHWH by mentioning Job's concern for his children's well-being (1:5) and suggesting that YHWH is unaware of what goes on in the human heart and mind (1:11; 2:5). Conversely, the serpent in the Garden reveals to the woman that they do not know YHWH and induces her to eat the forbidden fruit by saying, "4 ... You will not surely die. 5 ... and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:4-5).

Introduction and Commentary, 88; John Walton with Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *Job* (NIVAC; ed. Terry Muck; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 68.

²²³ John Walton with Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *Job*, 68-9; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 74.

In Job 1:4, the children of Job rejoice, “each one on his day,” referring to “the day of his birth,” a phrase used in 3:1 when Job cursed his day of birth.²²⁴ Celebrating one’s birthday with a feast is typically significant, as it acknowledges the blessings God bestowed upon humans in creation. Yet, Job expresses bitter feelings toward the day of his birth rather than blessing it. He curses the day with the words “Let the day perish” (3:1). In Job 1:11, the word “bless” (vv. 5 וַיְבָרֶכֶה and 11 וַיְבָרֶכֶה) is used indirectly for “curse,” as in verse 1:5.

In Job 42:7, YHWH acknowledges that Job has spoken the truth about YHWH, contrasting with Job’s three friends. This praise reflects Job’s honesty regarding God and concludes the satan’s false accusation against Job in the court of YHWH in Job 1–2. It shows that the satan’s challenge in Job 2:4, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face”, has dissipated. The belief of the satan that Job would curse God if he suffered ended in futility. Instead, in Job 1:22 and 2:10c, it is stated, “In all this Job did not sin with his lips”, as it is observed in Prov 18:4, “The lips express a person’s deepest thoughts”.

Furthermore, the satan’s attempts only served to increase Job’s prosperity, as mentioned in Job 42:12-17. Job’s offspring multiplied, his livestock doubled what he had at the beginning (1:3), and he was blessed with a long and fulfilling life, thus fulfilling the human mandates in Gen 1:28.

²²⁴ This phrase is translated as “the day of his birth” (ESV, NRSV, and NASB95). The Hebrew text literally states “his day”, yet the intended meaning in context is apparent.

3.4.1 The Touch that Belongs to God or The Touch that Belongs to Humans

In the Garden, Adam delights in his “corresponding helper,” as expressed in “... bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (עצם מעצמי וברֶשֶׁר מברֶשֶׁרִי) in Gen 2:23. Additionally, in Gen 2:24, Adam identifies this helper with the name “woman” to show that she was created from man. Within the special bond he shares with his “corresponding helper,” the woman, Adam enters into the marriage covenant established by YHWH, described as the human “leaving and cleaving”, which is accompanied by the mention of their nakedness ערוּמִים in Gen 2:25.

The text indicates that the man and woman are physically able to unite in Gen 2:24, as the words are arranged consecutively and are followed by לְבֶשֶׁר אֶחָד “one flesh”, which suggests a connection to the human mandate “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...” in 1:28. In our canonical reading, the text in Job 1:1-3 can be understood as reflecting the events of creation in Gen 1:1–2:3. In this intertextual reading, there is also a close link between Job’s wife (“אִשְׁתּוֹ”) in Job 2:9 and the woman (“אִשְׁתּוֹ”) in Gen 3:20.²²⁵

Job 1:2-3

² There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. ³ He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. (ESV)

42:12-13, 16-17

¹² And YHWH blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. ¹³ He had also seven sons and three daughters. ... ¹⁶ And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons’ sons, four generations. ¹⁷ And Job died, an old man, and full of days. (ESV, modified)

²²⁵ Meier, “Job I–II: A Reflection of Genesis I–III”, 189. The *Targum of Job* and Pseudo-Philo name Dinah as Job’s wife, cited from Celine Mangasn, “The Targum of Job,” in *The Aramaic Bible: The Targums* (ed. Kevin Carthcart; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 1-98.

The above passages apply to both humans and animals: As satan observed, YHWH blessed the work of Job (Job 1:10; 42:12-17). This blessing is linked to the mandates in Genesis 1:26 and 28, which are presented in the interplay of sevens and threes. From a literary perspective, the concepts of three, seven, or doubling can enhance our comprehension of Genesis and Job via intertextual reading, especially concerning human mandates.²²⁶

For example,

- Phrases occurring ten times in Gen 1:1-31:
“God said” (three times regarding humans and seven times regarding other creations)
- Regarding creative commands (three times “Let there be...” and seven times “Let,” to create, “according to their kind”)
- Phrases occurring seven times: “and it was so”, “and God saw that it was good”
- Three times, it is said that God created mankind in his image; (2) God made mankind “male and female”; (3) God blessed them.²²⁷

The repeated numerical values mentioned above pertain to both humans and animals within the creation narrative, which proclaims them to “be fruitful and multiply.” As noted in Gen 1:22, the phrase “be fruitful and multiply” refers to water creatures and every winged bird. In Gen 1:24-28, it collectively states “be fruitful and multiply” primarily for humanity and for

²²⁶ Meier, “Job I–II: A Reflection of Genesis I–III”, 186-8; McKeown, *Genesis*, 306-7; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 277-9; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 10, 121-3.

²²⁷ McKeown, *Genesis*, 308-9; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 279. Hamilton observes that one recurring phrase in the book of Genesis is “These are the generations (variant: ‘book’) of...”. This phrase occurs ten times in the book (cf. 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2); Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 124. Wenham states that one other pattern from Gen 5:1-32, which consists of ten patriarchs: a) A lived for x years, and then fathered B; b) A lived for y years after he had fathered B, and during that time he fathered sons and daughters; c) A’s entire lifespan was x + y years, then he died.

all living, moving creatures on earth. Finally, in Gen 1:26-28, this theme aligns with the human mandates found in Job 1–2 and 42.

By examining Job 1–2 and 42 in conjunction with the creation narratives and the Garden of Eden, we see that when the satan asks God to touch Job’s “bone and flesh,” it serves a dual purpose: to inflict severe physical suffering on Job and to request that God harm Job’s children (1:19) and possessions (1:14-18). Still, in Job 2:5, the satan insists that YHWH touch Job’s wife even after Job has already lost his ten children and possessions (Job 1:13-19). In this context, the attempt to provoke YHWH to touch Job’s wife and children and all his possessions would frustrate the human mandate to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth, which includes subduing and keeping God’s other creations, such as animals.

In Gen 3:15, YHWH pronounces a curse on the enmity between the serpent and the woman, saying, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”. The role of the satan as the accuser in the court of YHWH is not clearly defined, either in terms of his identity or as a successor to the serpent. This ambiguity persists in the book of Job, but in our canonical reading, it still reflects the enmity between the offspring of the woman and the serpent’s offspring.

In Gen 3:1, the serpent appears suddenly, sophisticated and poised to strike the primeval pair. Moreover, the serpent is aware of what YHWH has commanded Adam, forbidding him from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This knowledge is

confirmed to Eve as he initially engages her in conversation with the question, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” in Gen 3:1.

The serpent clearly knew about YHWH’s command to Adam in Gen 2:17 and about the human mandates in Gen 1:28. This parallels the satan in the court of YHWH in Job 1–2, who, when questioned by YHWH in 1:8, demonstrated prior knowledge about Job in detail, as seen in 1:9-11. He asked YHWH to touch Job, his bones and flesh, and all his possessions, represented by animals.²²⁸

However, it is important to note that in all the instances mentioned above, it is YHWH who takes the initiative in speaking when he pronounces the curse in Gen 3:15. In Job 1:7, YHWH again initiates a dialogue with the satan.

As stated above, the word נגע “touch” (Gen 3:3; Job 1:11, 19) is worth examination. If Eve touches the tree (Gen 3:3), she believes death will occur.

Gen 3:3

וְלֹא תִגְעוּ בּוֹ פֶּן־תָּמוּתוּן

“nor shall you touch it lest you shall die”

Job 1:11

וְאִוְלָם שְׁלַח־נָא יָדְךָ וְנָגַע בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ אִם־לֹא עַל־פְּנֶיךָ יְבָרְכֶךָ:

“And touch all that belongs to him (and see) whether he will curse/bless you on your face”

Job 2:5

²²⁸ Meier, “Job I–II: A Reflection of Genesis I–III”, 191.

אֵלֶּם שְׁלַח־נָא יָדְךָ וְגַע אֶל־עַצְמוֹ וְאֶל־בְּשָׂרוֹ אִם־לֹא אֶל־פָּנֶיךָ יִבְרַכְךָ:

“But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse/bless you to your face.”

As Job begins, the satan responds twice to YHWH regarding the multitude of Job’s blessings (1:9-11). Then, the satan focuses on what Job has left: his wife. In Job 2:5, the satan suggests that God stretch out his hand and touch Job’s bone and flesh, implying that Job’s wife is all he has remaining. The passage makes an intentional allusion to the fact that Job’s “bone and flesh,” his wife, along with his children who have already been struck, are spared, and Job’s “life” (Job 2:6). This suggests that both man and woman need each other’s company to be whole and fulfil the human mandates of God’s plan for humanity.

The satan aims to undermine human wholeness with various schemes, such as persistently challenging Job’s appearance of godliness. The satan’s motive is evident. In Job 1:11, the phrase “touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face” and in 2:5, “touch his bone and flesh,” suggest doubts about Job’s upright blamelessness. By stating this, the satan attempts to interfere with God’s plan and the mandate for humans to be fruitful and multiply.

3.4.2 Skin for Skin: All that a Man Has

In Genesis 2:25, it states, “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed, ” whereas in 3:7a, it continues, “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.” This portrayal of Adam and Eve’s nakedness can be viewed as a sign of vulnerability that necessitates protection.

When considering this perspective, our canonical reading of the book of Job, alongside the creation and Garden of Eden, helps us understand the physical security of the primeval pair, particularly Eve in Gen 3:16: “To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” This reflects that their blessings and need for protection should be recognised.

In Job 2:4, the satan stands out with the phrase, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life”. The satan intends to prove to YHWH that Job and his wife fear God only because they are blessed and protected by God. Job 2:4 clearly illustrates the connection between Job, his wife’s safety, and his skin. Notably, “skin for skin” עֹרַ בְּעַד־עֹרַ in Job 2:4 has been studied by many scholars because its meaning and its source are unclear. It is difficult to determine which interpretation would be most widely accepted.

For example, Jerald G. Janzen understands the phrase עֹרַ בְּעַד־עֹרַ “skin for skin” in Job 2:4, strengthened by the repetition of the preposition בְּעַד, to mean “all that he has”. According to Janzen, the phrase implies that one’s family and possessions surround and are attached to one like layers of skin.²²⁹

In his study, David Clines translates it as “skin for skin” and argues that the meaning of “skin for skin” is evident from the rest of 2:4-5. He suggests that “one skin for another skin” represents the world’s idea of a fair exchange.²³⁰ It does not refer to past events (such as the

²²⁹ Janzen, *Job*, 45-7; Wilson, *Job*, 37; see also Longman III, *Job*, 88.

²³⁰ Clines, *Job 1-20*, 3-5, 44-5; Wilson, *Job*, 37-8; Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (TNIB 4; ed. L. E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 329-32. Newsom translates it as “skin up to skin”, meaning a person would be willing to trade anything up to the value of a skin for another skin.

loss of children or livestock) but to the future. If YHWH were to touch Job’s skin, which means life, then Job would curse YHWH for his life. According to Job 1:11-12, the satan is portrayed as the appointed agent of YHWH to carry out a test. He is allowed to touch Job’s bone and flesh, but his life must be preserved.

It is worth reiterating that Job 1:10 (שָׂכַף בְּעֵדוֹ “to put a fence around him”) and 2:4 (“Then the satan answered YHWH and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life”) should be analysed to understand what the phrase “skin for skin” refers to in our intertextual reading of Job alongside the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden. In Job 1:10, the term בָּעֵד suggests that YHWH is protecting Job. This is comparable to how YHWH protects by covering Adam and Eve’s nakedness with animal skins in Genesis 3:21, where it states, “And YHWH God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins (כְּתָנוּת עוֹר) and clothed them”. This interpretation sheds light on the satan’s relentless efforts in Job 1–2, which are perceived as an attempt to undermine God’s protection (“to put a fence around”).

Job 1:10-12

הֲלֹא־אֵת שָׂכַף בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעַד־בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעַד כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ מִסָּבִיב מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו בְּרַכָּת וּמִקְנֵהוּ פָּרִץ בְּאֶרֶץ:
 וְאֹלָם שָׁלַח־נָא יָדְךָ וַיַּגַּע בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ אִם־לֹא עַל־פְּנֵיךָ יִבְרָכְךָ:
 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־הַשָּׁטָן הִנֵּה כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ בְּיָדְךָ רַק אֵלָיו אֶל־תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ וַיֵּצֵא הַשָּׁטָן מֵעַם פְּנֵי יְהוָה:

¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and around his house and around all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” ¹² And YHWH said to the satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against

him do not stretch out your hand.” So the satan went out from the presence of YHWH. (ESV, modified)

Upon examining specific words in Genesis and Job, the hidden motives of the satan can be uncovered. The term שָׂחַץ “put a hedge/fence” in Job 1:10 serves for the benefit of (בְּעֵד) “around” x 4; cf. 1:10; 3:23; 9:7; conjectural reading 37:7) Job, that is his household, and his possessions (וּמִקְנֵהוּ “livestock”). In Job 1:10, the satan sneers at YHWH, asking, “Have you not put a hedge/fence around him and his household ...?” His argument is cunning, as he suggests to YHWH that Job’s piety is insincere since testing has never verified it. YHWH has secured Job’s integrity by rewarding and protecting him. The repeated “You (YHWH)” in Job 1:10 is an accusation. The hedge is a fence (cf. Hos 2:6) intended to protect Job.

As stated above, it is important to note that the phrase “all that he has” is repeated in 1:10, 11, and 12. Furthermore, in 1:10, the threefold use of the preposition should be noted: “Have you not put a hedge around (בְּעֵדוֹ) him and around (וּבְעֵדוֹ) his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and around (מְסָבִיב) his livestock have increased in the land.” (ESV, modified)

The threefold repetition of the word “בְּעֵד” in 1:10 intensifies the surrounding phrase “hedge... on every side”, as the satan complains to YHWH, first targeting Job, then extending to his household and encompassing all his livestock.

In Job 1:10 (2:4; 3:23; 9:7), the word בְּעֵד suggests something that is “around” Job, as examined above.²³¹ Based on this, the phrase “עוֹר בְּעֵד-עוֹר” in 2:4 can be interpreted to mean

²³¹ Shepherd, “‘Strike his bone and his flesh’: Reading Job from the Beginning,” 90; Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, 89; Claire Mathews McGinnis, “Playing the Devil’s Advocate in Job: On Job’s Wife” in *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutical and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse* (JSOT Sup 336; eds. Stephen L. Cook, Corrine L. Patton, and James W. Watts; New York; England: Sheffield Academic Press,

“skin surrounding skin”. This connects to the notion of covering “animal skin surrounding the naked skin” to protect their skin as stated in Genesis 3:18 in our intertextual reading, particularly from thorns and thistles in the transformed environment where God’s people will reside in the future. However, interpreting the phrase “skin around” more accurately, Job’s skin represents his wife and children, followed by the animals (Job 1:2-3; 2:9). In the epilogue of the book of Job, it is revealed that Job’s wife, his flesh and bone, symbolises his future in 42:13 and 14, playing a vital role in restoring their family: three named daughters and seven unnamed sons. Thus, Job’s wife plays a crucial role in his ability to be fruitful and multiply. This reflects Adam’s words, “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” from Genesis 2:23, expressing his admiration for his wife. Later, in Genesis 3:20, Adam names his wife חַוָּה, “Eve, the mother of all living”, which is noted in the book of Job’s epilogue.

Job is not alone (cf. Eccl 4:9-10 “Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. ...”; Prov 31:10-31, “the valiant woman”) as he is united with a suitable helper. She serves as Job’s helper (cf. Gen 2:18 “עֵזֶר”). Moses uses the term עֹזֵר to describe God’s deliverance from Pharaoh (Ex 18:4) and his help (עֹזֵר) for the people, acting as a protective shield (cf. Dt 33:29; Ps 115:9, 11). Likewise, the woman, as a helper, achieves what the man cannot accomplish by himself.

The satan initially takes away Job’s material wealth and subsequently seeks to destroy his bones and flesh. By assaulting Job’s bones and flesh in a manner reminiscent of the events from the Garden of Eden, the satan also aims at Job’s children and attempts to eliminate Job’s wife (cf. Gen 3:15). Nevertheless, Job’s wife endures and persists through their offspring (Gen 3:20).

2001), 121-41, 124-5; Choon-Leong Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*, 275.

In Job, the satan is not merely goading and afflicting Job and his possessions but is extending Job's suffering to his wife, which is a direct result of the curse of Gen 3:15: "and I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed..." The satan's hidden agenda emerges from the two heavenly court narratives in Job 1–2. The satan moves from merely suggesting to touch (נגע) Job and his possessions, family, and "his bone and his flesh" (or the part of him that is his wife since they are "one flesh"). Once again, the word "touch" in Gen 3:3b "..., God said, 'You shall not eat from it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die'" that Eve mistakenly understood as a death sentence is now used deliberately for "death" by the satan's demand. This assertion is supported by the satan's declaration in Job 2:5 that "surely he will curse/bless you (YHWH) to your face" (אַם-לֹא אֶל-פְּנֵיךָ יְבָרְכֶךָ), emphasising what would occur if God touches or strikes "one flesh", which is "his bone and flesh". The satan knows that Job's life is intertwined with his wife's future (cf. Job 42:13, "And he had seven sons and three daughters").

The text notes that the satan desires to destroy Job's flesh and bone, which symbolise his life, similar to how Adam refers to Eve as "the mother of all living" in Genesis 3:20. Nevertheless, Job ultimately escapes the curse, and his wife remains unharmed. Consequently, the preservation of Job's life and the protection of his wife serve as a protective measure for them and future generations (Job 42:10-17; cf. Num 6:24-26; Ps 121:7). The name of YHWH, combined with the term שָׁמַר "keep or spare" in Job 2:6, indicates the blessings detailed in 42:10-17, which include descendants, fertile land, health, longevity, safety from adversaries, and God's presence among his people.

In our canonical reading, an intertextual analysis of Job 1–2 and 42 alongside Gen 1–3 reveals that the phrase עוֹר בְּעַד-עוֹר "skin surrounding skin" in Job 2:4 refers to Job's unnamed

wife, who embodies the woman as a wife and a corresponding helper, and echoes Eve, the “mother of all living”. This unnamed wife of Job plays a crucial role in fulfilling the human mandate following the expulsion from the Garden.

3.5 Fearing YHWH is the Knowledge of Good and Evil

The earlier discussion in this study analysed the connections between the creation narratives and the Garden of Eden, as well as the prologue and epilogue of Job in our canonical reading. This section explores insights gained by juxtaposing Job’s statements in 2:9-10 with Genesis 1-3, while considering the Wisdom literature within the canonical tradition.

Job 2:9-10

⁹ Then his wife said to him, “Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die.”
¹⁰ But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (ESV)

The theme of YHWH’s judgment and actions toward the righteous is expressed in the book of Job and in Gen 18:25: “Far be it from you doing such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”

The fear of God is a significant theme in Wisdom literature throughout the Bible.²³² For instance, Job is portrayed as *מָרַע וְיָשָׁר וְיָרָא אֱלֹהִים וְסָר מִרָע* “that man [who] is blameless and upright and fearing God and turning away from evil” in 1:1 by the narrator, and in 1:8 and

²³² Janzen, *Job: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 24; see also Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1985), 40-2; Martin A. Shields, “Malevolent or Mysterious? God’s Character in the Prologue of Job,” *TynBul* 61 (2010): 255-70.

2:3 by YHWH (cf. Prov 3:7; 14:16; 16:6; Eccl 5:7; 8:11-14; 12:13).²³³ Indeed, to “fear God” is a central theme in Job (chaps. 1–2; 28:28; 37:24; Job’s expression of fear of God in his repentance in 42:1-6).

In Job 1:9, the satan poses the question: הֲהִנָּם יִרָא אֱלֹהִים “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (Job 1:9). What is the significance of this question? It pertains to the nature and foundation of Job’s blamelessness. The satan distorts Job’s reverence for God, suggesting that it stems from a dependence on the Creator who offers him blessings and sustenance (cf. Gen 1:26-28), reducing it to mere material wealth and family.

From the outset in the book of Job, the issue is not Job’s genuine acknowledgment of God’s existence, but rather that his reverence for God reflects his piety, which acknowledges God’s intrinsic goodness. A recurring theme emerges: the hedge representing protection and safety is highlighted, as seen in Job 1:10, 11, and 12, reflecting Israel’s defence against threats (cf. Ps 80:12; Is 5:1-7; also see 2 Sam 7:1, 10). This theme is rooted in creation language from Gen 1:6-9 (see Job 38:8-11; cf. Ps 104:5-9; 148:6), where the firmament acts as a safeguard, restraining chaotic waters and allowing humanity to thrive.²³⁴ In essence, the book of Job presents YHWH as the Judge who gives blessings to the righteous and blameless, as mentioned in Gen 18:25.

The fear of God is a traditional concept often mentioned by wisdom teachers. For example, it is prominent in Proverbs (1:7; 9:10). In Job, Eliphaz warns against forsaking the

²³³ Proverbs 3:7 says, “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.” (NRSV) This verse discusses admonitions and prohibitions regarding loyalty, specifically blamelessness and placing trust, which are analogues to Job’s righteousness before YHWH. See Leo G. Perdue, *Proverbs: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Interpretation; eds. James Luther Mays and Patrick D. Miller; Louisville, Ky: John Knox Press, 2000), 95-6; Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 110.

²³⁴ Janzen, *Job*, 39-49

fear of God in Job 4:8-11 and 5:2-7, describing it as עָרוּמִים “crafty” in 5:12-13, and therefore evil, with sayings reminiscent of Proverbs. Sooner or later, all Job’s friends will conclude from Job’s suffering, beginning with his skin disease, that he has sinned (4:6; cf. Dt 24:8; 28:22). Fearing YHWH is the place where knowledge (דָּעַת) begins (Prov 1:7), where wisdom (חָכְמָה) and instruction/discipline (מוֹסֵר) (3:11; 4:13; 5:12, 23; 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1; Job 5:17) reside, and by this, Job’s life is judged whether good or evil.²³⁵

The book of Job discusses living a righteous and blameless life as a guiding principle for human existence, while also alluding to the primeval man (Job 15:7; 20:4; 31:35). In most cases, the term אָדָם in Job refers to the general essence of humanity.²³⁶ Therefore, an intertextual analysis within our canonical reading can serve as a framework for exploring the creation narrative and the primeval human depicted in Job.

In Job 7:20, God is referred to as the “watcher of humanity” (NRSV), which reminds us of human disobedience to YHWH’s command in the Garden of Eden when YHWH looks and calls for the man, saying, “Adam, where are you?” (Gen 3:9).

Job 7:20-21

²⁰ If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind? Why have you made me your mark? Why have I become a burden to you? ²¹ Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I shall lie in the earth; you will seek me, but I shall not be.” (ESV)

²³⁵ Wilson, *Job*, 48, 120; Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, 120.

²³⁶ The word אָדָם in Job, with an anthropological emphasis (“human/Adam”, Job 11:12; 14:1,10; 15:7; 16:21; 20:4, 29; 21:33; 25:6; 27:13; 32:21; 33:17; 34:11, 29, 30; 35:8; 36:25, 28; 37:7; 38:26). Hebrew Lexicon confirms the word אָדָם in the HB as follows: in Gen 1-11(×46); Ex (×14); Lev (×15); Num (×24); Job (×27); Prov (×45); Eccl (×49); Is (×27); Jer (×30); Ezek (×132): *HALOT* 14, under the word אָדָם mentions that it occurs 540 times in an absolute state of a noun. Instances counted based on *BHS*.

In 7:20-21, Job struggles to understand his relationship with God.²³⁷ Although he acknowledges his sins and the resulting suffering, he feels his hardships are disproportionate to his transgressions. This suggests that there may be an explanation beyond mere guilt and punishment, as mentioned in 7:21.²³⁸ Job experiences his life as difficult labour and sees his suffering in the context of humanity's disobedience in Gen 3 rather than in the ideal state depicted in Gen 1–2.²³⁹ Through his own suffering, he gains a fresh awareness of the human condition. This emphasises the significance of the relationship between YHWH and humanity, as illustrated in Gen 3:9. When YHWH God called to the man, “Where are you?”, it suggests that the primeval pair had wanted knowledge over obedience or trust, yet YHWH continues to seek them. Adam's response in 3:10b, “I was afraid, because I was naked ...”, conceals the root of the disobedience; however, the initial mention of fear (i.e., “afraid”) is significant: this avoidance of God continues to be a part of our fallen condition.²⁴⁰ This sheds light on the questions raised in Job 4:7 regarding “who” and אָנוֹשׁ “mortals” in Job 4:17 regarding “human beings or man”, which refer to a human being as a mortal involved in the primeval pair's transgression.

Job 4:7, 17

זָכַרְנָא מִי הוּא נָקִי אֶבֶד וְאֵיפֶה יִשְׁרִים נִכְחָדוּ:

הָאָנוֹשׁ מֵאֱלֹהִים יִצְדֵק אִמָּ* מַעֲשֵׂהוּ? טְהִר־גְּבֹר:

⁷ Remember: who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?

¹⁷ Can a mortal man be right before God? Or can a human be pure before his Maker?

(ESV, modified)

²³⁷ Wilson, *Job*, 62-3.

²³⁸ Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, 150.

²³⁹ Longman III, *Job*, 149-50.

²⁴⁰ Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 74.

Job complains about his mortality (cf. Gen 3:19) and inability to control chaos, such as the sea monster or the Leviathan (cf. 7:20-21; cp. Gen 1:2, then 3-5). Job uses the imagery of death to express his feelings of being confined. In Job 7:15-16, “so that I would choose strangling and death rather than my bones. ¹⁶I loathe my life; I would not live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are a breath”. Job expresses a stronger inclination towards death rather than life.

The contrast between the Job depicted in the prologue and 7:7 and 17 above and the one described in 3:1-16 is remarkable.

¹ After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. ² And Job said: ³ “Let the day perish on which I was born, ...⁴ Let that day be darkness! ... ¹⁰ because it did not shut the doors of my mother’s womb, ... ¹¹ “Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire? ¹⁶ Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light? (ESV)

The earlier Job states, “In all this did not sin or charge God with wrong” (1:22), whereas this version of Job expresses deep frustration in Chapter 3 by cursing his own life. Does Job sin with his words? Given that God created humanity and life is considered a divine gift (Gen 2:7) in the creation narrative, to curse life would imply a rejection of that gift and an offence against God, the Creator. Instead, Job voices his anguish over his suffering into a desire for death and a curse on the day of his birth (3:1, 11). Despite enduring immense pain from the loss of family, possessions, and health, he never curses God or attempts to take control of his fate. Job does not curse God.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Wilson, *Job*, 42-6.

It is also worth noting that Job’s curse on his birth in 3:1 initiates a similar yet counterproductive sequence that aims to reverse the stages of creation associated with his birth, which are thought to reflect the seven-day creation as follows.²⁴²

Hartley presents the comparison of the two patterns:²⁴³

	Job 3:3-13	Gen 1:1–2:4
Day 1	let it be darkness (v. 4a)	let there be light (v. 3b)
Day 2	let not God above attend to it (v. 4b)	and (God) divided between the waters below the firmament and the waters above the firmament (v. 7b)
Day 4	that night ... let it not be counted in the days of the year (v. 6b)	let there be light ... to divide between the day and the night and let them be signs ... for years (v. 14)
Day 5	those prepared to stir up Leviathan (v. 8b)	and God created the great sea monsters (v. 21a)
Day 6	Why did I not die from the womb? (v. 11a)	let us make man (v. 26a)
Day 7	for now I would be lying down and quiet, I would be asleep and at rest (v. 13)	and (God) rested on the seventh day from all his work ... he sanctified it, because in it he rested (2:2-3)

To reverse the creation of a specific day, every stage of its sequence must be negated. This connection explains why the counter-cosmic structure of Job 3:3-13 closely corresponds with the creation narrative (Gen 1:1–2:4). Although the absence of reference to the third day of creation within this curse is puzzling, the reason may stem from the significance of numbers;

²⁴² Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 88-102.

²⁴³ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 102-3. Hartley contends that in Job 3:13, 17, 18, and 26, the term “trouble” (לְצָרָה) implies “toil”.

for example, seven symbolises the complete order of creation, while six represents the incomplete.²⁴⁴ The significance of Job’s curse, particularly the last day, designated as the day of rest in the creation order, must not be disregarded, since this rest represents the ultimate aim of Job’s lamentation. It is also significant that “rest” in Job 3 alludes to the toil “pain and sweat” mentioned in Gen 3:17-19 and serves as a focal point in Job 3:11-26 (vv. 13, 17, 18, and 26).

If this curse were effective, Job would have vanished without a trace. Therefore, he could not have endured such a painful fate or profound agony. While Job may see this approach as his only quick way out of despair, it is evident that he shows neither repentance nor confession of any wrongdoing. Instead, his statements in this text emphasise the extent of Job’s profound suffering.²⁴⁵

Importantly, beyond verses 1-13 until the end of Job 3:26, Job does not curse God; rather, he curses the day of his birth. It is also noteworthy that the terms “day” and “night” in verse 3 echo the “morning” and “evening” of creation, which are referenced subsequently: “that day” in Job 3:4-5 and “that night” in verses 6-9 identify each day, for instance, analogous to “there was evening and there was morning, the first day” (Gen 1:5b).

As discussed above, Job’s desire for “rest” relates to human sin, as reflected in Job 7:17, “What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him,” (ESV). This conveys the sinner’s plea for relief. Additionally, Job 25:6 states, “how much less a mortal,

²⁴⁴ See 3.4.1 for an explanation of the significance of the numbers in Job 1 and 42.

²⁴⁵ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 88-102.

who is a maggot, and a human being, who is a worm!” (NRSV), which acknowledges human sinfulness. In Job 10:9, the speaker reminds God that he was made from clay (עָשִׂיתָנִי “you made me” of clay) and dust (בְּעָפָר “in the dust”) in the context of Genesis 2:7a (“then YHWH God formed the man of dust from the ground”) and 3:19b (“for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”), highlighting human fragility and mortality, particularly against the backdrop of the disobedience of the primeval pair (Job 4:19; 10:9; 27:16; 30:19).

The book of Job starts by describing Job as “blameless and upright” (Job 1:1), similar to Adam in the Garden of Eden before the events of Gen 3:1. Adam could be seen as blameless since he had not yet disobeyed God, but the serpent was already present in the Garden prior to Gen 3:1. In contrast, Job is described by the narrator as “blameless and upright” in Job 1:1, and in 2:10, the narrator notes that “In all this Job did not sin with his lips,” even after the satan appeared.

The question is whether a person can be sinless before God, similar to how Adam was in the Garden of Eden. Job’s friends argue that no human is without sin, but Job consistently claims to be free from sin. These claims are connected to concepts in Gen 1–3 and have sparked a discussion initiated by YHWH in Job 1:8, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” The satan disagreed with this, responding to YHWH and saying in 1:9-11, “Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face”.

In this instance, in the court of YHWH, YHWH presented Job, a human being, highlighting his integrity. For instance, when God created the heavens, the earth, and all things in them, it was deemed good (“And God saw that it was good” Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) for God and humanity. Nevertheless, the primeval pair disobeyed YHWH by eating the fruit from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”, desiring to become wise (Gen 3:6). According to God’s plan, human beings were meant to understand what was permissible for their lives and what was forbidden, as stated, “for in the days that you eat of it you shall surely die” from the outset (Gen 2:16-17). Even after the primeval pair's disobedience, God’s plan was not hidden; the human mandate was meant to persist even if it comes with “pain” (cf. 3:16).

Isaiah 46:10 says, “declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose’”. As in creation (cf. Ps 33:9), God’s plan cannot be frustrated or disputed, nor can its fulfilment in history be thwarted. In Isaiah 46:10a (cf. 40:21; 41:4, 26), the term מְרֵאשִׁית is a compound of רֵאשִׁית with מִן. Within its historical context, it signifies “from the beginning” and carries a similar meaning to בְּרֵאשִׁית “in the beginning” (Gen 1:1).²⁴⁶ This verse demonstrates the unique connection between the distant past, such as the creation in Gen 1, and the future. It shows that God’s plan, declared from the creation, will be carried out through his wisdom and action. This reflects the unchangeable will of God, as stated in Is 46:10b, “My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose”.²⁴⁷ The entire history, from its beginning to ongoing events

²⁴⁶ R. Reed Lessing, *Isaiah 40–55* (CC; ed. D. O. Wenhe; St. Louise, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 402, 409.

²⁴⁷ Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: a commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (Hermeneia; ed. Peter Machinist; trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 263; J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 20; ed. Donald J. Wiseman; Downers Grove, IL, 1st printed 1999; reprinted 2009), 34.

and to the end, is under his sovereign rule. Likewise, the epilogue of the book of Job also upholds this canonical teaching: “YHWH blessed the end of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:12).

Job 15:7-8

הָרִאִישׁוֹן אָדָם תִּנְגַּד וְלִפְנֵי גְבוּלוֹת חוֹלְלָתָּ:

הַבְּסוּד אֱלֹהִים תִּשְׁמָע וְתִגְרַע אֵלַיִךְ הַקְּמָה:

⁷ “Are you the first man who was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills? ⁸ Have you listened in the council of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself? (ESV)

As stated above, it can be interpreted that the phrase הָרִאִישׁוֹן אָדָם “the first of man” (Job 15:7) refers to the primeval human hearing the council of God (15:8). The question הַבְּסוּד אֱלֹהִים תִּשְׁמָע, which asks, “Have you listened in the secret discussion of God?” recalls the heavenly council of God in Job 1–2 that is unseen by human eyes. This council also appears in Gen 1:26-28, 3:22 and 11:6-7 (cp. Is 6), and it is a council of the holy ones in Ps 89:8. The meaning of the word סוּד is “confidential”,²⁴⁸ which applies to the “secret counsel” of YHWH (Jer 23:18).²⁴⁹

On the other hand, when comparing Job 15:7-8 and 38:21 with Gen 3:8-14, it is evident that Adam and Eve had a special and direct connection to God and his council in the Garden of Eden. This suggests that Job is not in the same position as Adam, as indicated by God in Job 38:21.

²⁴⁸ HALOT 745, סוּד: 1. Confidential discussion: a) in the assembly of YHWH (Jer 23:18, 22); b) convened by people (Gen 49:6; Ps 64:3; Jer 6:11; 15:17; Ps 111:1); 2. secret, scheme (as consequence or result of a discussion) of God toward people, among people; 3. circle of confidants: a) council of the holy ones/angels (Ps 89:8); b) council of the people (Ezek 13:9); c) council of individuals from the people (Job 19:19; 29:4).

²⁴⁹ Longman III, *Job*, 226.

Job 38:21

יְדַעְתָּ כִּי־אָז תִּנְלָד וּמִסְפַּר יָמֶיךָ רַבִּים:

You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great. (ESV)

Job recognised his limitations and let God be God, as he never claimed to have such knowledge.²⁵⁰ The passage above suggests that “knowledge” goes beyond just knowing facts that one has learned. It also involves understanding one’s situation and the ability to apply that understanding to real-life situations. Job’s three friends had to learn that not every truth is suitable for every person or every situation. They also recognised that the wise are not too quick to judge (cf. Job 32:6-9, 18, 19; Eccl 3:7; Amos 5:13). In Job 4:19, humanity is portrayed as those who “dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust,” illustrating that God’s sovereign actions transcend human comprehension. This emphasises humanity’s limitation in understanding God’s purposes. This concept is reflected in Job’s response to YHWH in 42:2-3: “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.³ ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ...⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job admitted that he had no joy but pain because he lacked the knowledge to understand that YHWH can do everything. This can be seen as his acknowledgment of fearing YHWH from the opening of the book of Job, where it is presented as being integrated into his life. Job

²⁵⁰ Janzen, *Job*, 237; Longman III, *Job*, 430-1. Job does not “know it all” (Job 31:18b); Alden, *Job*, 375; Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, 298; Wilson, *Job*, 185; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 499. Hartley sees “the number of your days is so many” as a sign of Job’s or humanity’s limited understanding.

1:1 reveals, “There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil”.

Despite all that has been mentioned, it is important to note that the human mandate has not been revoked. In Genesis 3:16a, the judgment of YHWH on Adam and Eve clearly states, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.”

Humans should find joy in the knowledge imparted by God (Job 42:7-17). Knowing good and evil is essential to all that exists and reflects the goodness of creation, as illustrated in Genesis 1–2 (see 1:29; 2:9), reminding humanity to live in fear of YHWH.

However, it is difficult to claim that human suffering or pain is directly connected to an individual’s disobedience or lack of faith. This is because, in the case of the primeval pair, their disobedience to the command of YHWH was explicitly tied to their painful suffering and labour, which ultimately led to their return to dust. In contrast, Job’s suffering is not directly associated with any explicit disobedience or wrongdoing against YHWH. Rather, his suffering begins with the loss of his bones and flesh, as well as his livestock, prompted by YHWH’s presentation of Job’s blamelessness and uprightness before the satan and the sons of God in the court of YHWH.

3.6 The Divine Council of YHWH in the Books of Job and Genesis

The relationship between the prologue to Job and the opening of Genesis is examined in our canonical reading. Specifically, the phrase “Let *us*” from Gen 1:26 and 3:22 resonates in the book of Job. In Genesis, God announces, “Let *us* create humankind (אֱלֹהִים)” to the first

heavenly court mentioned in the Bible, eliciting responses from the divine beings regarding the creation of humankind. However, in the Bible, God is portrayed as being without a partner or competitor, particularly in Gen 1. He alone is sovereign, and his word is supreme; his command suffices to bring something into existence.²⁵¹

The word “God” is represented by the Hebrew term אֱלֹהִים, a plural noun that appears in the Bible with a singular verb.²⁵² It is essential to understand that in Gen 1:27, the use of the singular verb “create” signifies that God created humankind alone, even though the discussion occurs within the council of heaven (Gen 1:26-28).

Job 38:4, 7

אִיפֹה הָיִיתָ בְּיִסְדֵי-אָרֶץ הַגֹּד אִם-יָדַעְתָּ בִּינָה:
בְּרִן-יָסֵד פּוֹכְבֵי בָקָר וְנִרְיָעוּ כָּל-בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים:

⁴ “Where were you at my laying the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you possess understanding.”

⁷ “When the morning stars were singing together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (ESV)

In Job 38:1-2, it is written that “YHWH answered Job from the storm (הַסְעָרָה), and he said, ‘Who is this darkening counsel by words without knowledge (בְּלִי-דַעַת)?’” It is important to note that YHWH addresses Job specifically, not the audience at large. God challenges Job’s understanding by questioning his knowledge of the creation of the world, suggesting that Job has no comprehension because he was not present at the time of creation (Job 38:4, “Where

²⁵¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 37-8.

²⁵² Joel S. Burnett, *A Reassessment of Biblical Elohim* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 2001), 57-60; Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 56.

were you at creation?”). This implies that humans cannot claim to fully understand or argue about the creation (Gen 1–3), especially in front of the Creator.

Although Job 15:7 carries a sarcastic tone, Eliphaz questions whether Job’s insights align with divine wisdom—the primal man, not Adam, as described in Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Proverbs 8. Notably, Clines suggests this man was likely “born” from a divine being rather than created like Adam, citing the phrase “brought forth before the hills,” which echoes Proverbs 8:25b (“before the hills, I was brought forth”) and Psalm 90:2a-b (“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world”), indicating an origin and connection to Wisdom.²⁵³ However, Psalm 90:2 emphasises God’s eternity, which implies the primeval man was “brought forth”.²⁵⁴ Clearly, since Job was not present at the time of creation, he cannot claim to have *בִּינָה*, which means “understanding or insight” (see Job 38:4 and Prov 4:1). The term *בִּינָה* is equivalent to *חָכְמָה*, or “wisdom”, as shown in Prov 4:5 and 7. The question, “Where were you during creation?” implies that “understanding” was with God at the time of creation.²⁵⁵

This study reveals two main points: (1) Chapter 38 raises the question of Job’s ability to understand creation, considering his integrity and knowledge. The relationship between wisdom and creation is further highlighted in verses 38:34-38 (see also Prov 3:19-20); (2) The biblical accounts of creation and the Garden illustrate God as the Creator, consistent with Israel’s monotheism. This aligns with the depiction of God in the heavenly council (Gen 1:26-31; 3:22).

²⁵³ Clines, *Job 1–20*, 349-50. Clines indicates that the portrayal of the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:11-19 was shaped by the concept of ‘the first man’s creation’—his perfect wisdom and beauty, his participation in God’s council, and possibly the divine wisdom he took.

²⁵⁴ The term “*הִבְרָאָה*” in Ezekiel 28:13 and 15 is translated as “were created” in the NRSV, NASB, NIV, ESV, and other translations.

²⁵⁵ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 494-5; Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 291-2; Alden, *Job*, 370; Wilson, *Job*, 183-90

Job 1:22 In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

2:10 In all this Job did not sin with his lips.²⁵⁶

Regarding point (1): While we recognise Job's integrity and his knowledge of God as described in Job 1:22 and 2:10, it is evident that Job knows YHWH as the Creator and the creation, but has no knowledge of the satan or the sons of God in the court of YHWH, as this information is not revealed to Job in the book of Job.

Our intertextual analysis indicates that Genesis 1:26-28 portrays the first divine council where God discusses creating humans—both male and female—in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:22, a second council takes place after the serpent tempts Eve, leading to Adam and Eve's disobedience of YHWH's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This results in their expulsion from the Garden, a council never revealed to the primeval pair, similar to how YHWH's councils in the book of Job were not disclosed to Job.

Regarding point (2), our canonical reading of Job alongside the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden indicates that in the words Job uses, the name "YHWH", appears three times in Job 1:21: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. YHWH gave, and YHWH has taken away; blessed be the name of YHWH", which reflects his affirmation of God the Creator. For Job, in Job 1:21, the sovereignty of YHWH over the world is evident, as shown in the Wisdom tradition in the book of Proverbs (16:9; 20:24; Eccl 5:15).

²⁵⁶ Janzen, *Job*, 51-2.

Since Job, a non-Israelite, uses the name YHWH in his statement, this suggests that the book of Job is intended for the people of God to read and understand. In Job 1–2, it is clear that Job is familiar with the Creator God, known as YHWH, and is knowledgeable about priestly traditions related to the distinction between the holy and the common, clean and unclean, and sin (cf. Lev 4:3 regarding “unintentional” sin offerings; cp. Lev 10:10). For example, Job would “send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them” after each of his sons and daughters’ day of gathering (Job 1:4-5).

However, it is unclear whether Job is understood to be familiar with the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden from the Torah or from some other source.

In Job 1:22, the narrator underscores the aspect of Job’s response that shows him blameless and upright as YHWH described Job to the satan in 1:8. This will be further emphasised by having YHWH reiterate and amplify his assessment of Job (2:3). Job’s response is not just acceptable to God, but it is a brief endorsement of his righteousness in 1:22: “In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong” (ESV).²⁵⁷

The divine council of YHWH is depicted twice in both the creation and Garden narratives (Gen 1:26-31; 3:22), occurring before and after the primeval pair’s forbidden fruit incident. This mirrors the two heavenly councils in the book of Job’s prologue (Job 1:6; 2:1). Additionally, the gatherings of Job’s children, who were eating and drinking (Job 1:13, 18), take place between these councils, with Job’s friends assembling later in Job 2.

²⁵⁷ Wilson, *Job*, 36.

Later, all the people who knew him before the calamities, including his brothers and sisters, gathered (Job 42:11-14). In this third example, the gatherings respond to “the evil that YHWH brought upon Job” in 42:11, which carries the reality of God’s sovereignty to bring both good and evil from suffering. Job talks about his unexpected sufferings in 2:10 in this way: “Should we receive the good from God, but not receive the evil?”

It is God who freely contributes to both good and evil, and humans have no knowledge of and no control over the reasoning behind God’s sovereign will.

Additionally, when we examine the books of Job and Ecclesiastes in our canonical reading, it becomes clear that humans are encouraged to actively seek knowledge and understanding (Eccl 7:25), even though they may not be able to fully comprehend “the work that is done under the sun” (Eccl 8:17). Humans are responsible for discerning what is good and where true knowledge resides. Qohelet acknowledges the sovereignty of God, whose plans and actions surpass human understanding. In Job 1:1, the narrator introduces a man who is “blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” and “did not sin with wrong” (Job 1:22; cf. 2:10).

Job’s epilogue answers the question posed by the satan in Job 1:9, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Job seeks to comprehend God’s will. After encountering God (Job 42:5), Job repents by admitting his own ignorance and shame. He sits naked in ashes and dust (Job 2:8; 42:6), which mirrors Adam and Eve’s shame when they realise their nakedness after disobeying in the Garden of Eden. This is followed by YHWH’s words of punishment: “for out of [the ground] you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:19b).

YHWH then clothes the primeval pair with animal skins (Gen 3:21), while Job is implied to be clothed by YHWH's command to Job's friends to provide animals. This describes Job's priestly office with prayer and burnt offerings for his friends, performed while clothed in appropriate garments (Job 42:7-9). In both instances, the outcome fulfils the human mandate to be fruitful and multiply.

Job recognises that only God controls events, including allowing an innocent person like Job to suffer. He accepts the pain God has inflicted without further complaint.²⁵⁸ In Job 42:5b, when Job states, "Now my eye sees you", he admits his limited understanding of good and evil. Job is aware of the boundaries of his knowledge and wisdom regarding divine plans and the divine and the workings, which are beyond his grasp. This allusion emphasises similarities with the primeval pair, who might have understood the plans of YHWH had they feared YHWH instead of eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge. Additionally, Job's response reveals his failure to בִּין "comprehend" and יָדַע "know" the divine speeches (42:4-6) that have governed and upheld YHWH's creation.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Clines, *Job 38–42*, 1224; Alden, *Job*, 408-9; Longman III, *Job: Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms*, 449.

²⁵⁹ Clines, *Job 38–42*, 1224; Samuel R. Driver and George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job: Together with a New Translation* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T CLARK, 1986), 372-3; Janzen, *Job: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 254. It is implicit that Job makes himself known to God through questions of his case, which he drops in his repentance in dust and ashes; Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, 291-2: Andersen draws attention to the knowledge of God that can be gained through the creation of God itself, as it is a part of Job 38–41 describing YHWH speeches and Job's responses. William J. Dumbrell articulates this in his conclusion (*The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 2002], 258; Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job* (NSBT 12; ed. D. A. Carson; Downers Grove, IL; England: IVP; Apollos), 53-4.

The entry of the satan into the council of YHWH and his responses to YHWH's words reflect Job's suffering, leading Job to gain a new understanding of God, creation, and humanity's role in that creation through his suffering.

The reactions of Job and Adam to YHWH's questions highlight a clear contrast. In Job 2:3, YHWH questions the satan about Job, describing him as "a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil," and emphasises that Job remains committed to his integrity despite YHWH allowing the satan to provoke him without reason. Conversely, Genesis 3:11 shows God questioning Adam about eating from the forbidden tree, asking, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" indicating that Adam has failed to demonstrate the reverence of YHWH without an apparent reason.

In the book of Genesis, Adam gained a new understanding of God's judgment (3:17-19, "...for you are dust and to dust you shall return") and curse (3:16, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing..."). The judgment contained blessings and explained humanity's role to be fruitful in the creation, as stated in Genesis 1:28. This came after Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent and succumbed to its distortion of God's words.

The connection between the book of Job and the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden in our canonical reading reveals the outcomes of human mandates and how they unfold following the expulsion of the primeval pair. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden was a result of their disobedience to the command of YHWH and their desire to gain "the knowledge of good and evil" (הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע). This desire stemmed from their wish to be "like God", as tempted by the serpent in Gen 3:5, "... when you eat of it your eyes will be

opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”. In Gen 3:22, YHWH acknowledges that “the human has become like one of us in knowing good and evil”, similar to Gen 1:26 where it is stated, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”. This suggests that God’s plan and actions have brought about both good and evil and that the knowledge of good and evil represents the boundary between the divine and human realms.

Gen 3:22a,

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאַחַד מִמֶּנּוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע

And YHWH said, “Behold, the human has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.” (ESV, modified)

Gen 1:26-28

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (ESV)

Humans recognise the ideas of good and evil through their disobedience. The disobedience of the primeval pair is judged by YHWH, who states, “for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:19). This act of disobedience relates to the creation of humanity, male and female, in God’s image and likeness, as described in Gen 1:26-28. These concepts are vital for humans to be fruitful, multiply, and govern God’s other creatures, fulfilling the mandates.²⁶⁰ In this context, the first divine council in Job 1:6-12 describes Job as “a blameless

²⁶⁰ See my study ‘INTRODUCTION.’

and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil”, endorsing Job. In contrast, there was no such assurance for the primeval pair in the Garden before or after their disobedience, until Seth’s appearance. Notably, Genesis 4:26 states, “To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of YHWH” (ESV, modified), linking the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden, and suggesting that the name of YHWH God and the stories of the expulsion were passed to Seth by Adam and Eve.²⁶¹

Furthermore, in God’s second council in Job 2:3, “YHWH says, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who is God-fearing and turning away from evil. And he still persists his blamelessness...’” It is noticeable that Job’s response to his losses (1:9-10) reveals that he genuinely fears God, and his fear extends beyond his possessions. In 2:3, the comment “He still persists in his blamelessness” suggests that he fears God “for nothing”, which includes the term לְרִיבָה that the satan references in 1:9: “Does Job fear you for nothing?” However, there is no record of Adam repenting or being upright in Genesis 4, except for the allusion in verse 26.

Between Job’s wife and Eve, as an analogy, the role of Job’s wife is to persuade Job of the satan’s counsel (Job 1:11; 2:5) in her words, “Are you still persisting in your blamelessness? Curse (bless) God, and die” (2:9).²⁶² In contrast to how Eve in the Garden was created as the man’s helper, she becomes the serpent’s helper tempting the man for a

²⁶¹ The son born to Adam and Eve after Abel’s death (Gen 4:25). Adam was 130 years old when he became Seth’s father (5:3), and Eve named him Seth, saying “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him” (4:25).

²⁶² The word can be interpreted as a theological euphemism for the verb קָלַל “curse.” Some may see it as “bless God,” while others might translate it as “speak well of God,” which offers a potential resolution for understanding that God accepts it in 42:7-8 following Job’s double confession of having spoken wrongly of God (40:3-5; 42:1-6). See further discussion for the term בָּרַךְ : Kenneth Numfor Ngwa, “Did Job Suffer for Nothing? The Ethics of Piety, Presumption and the Reception of Disaster in the Prologue of Job,” *JSOT* 33 (2009): 359-380.

moment.²⁶³ To understand this more, it is necessary to understand the council of YHWH (cf. Gen 1:26; 3:22; 11:6-7; see Job 1–2; see 1 Kgs 22; cp. Is 6; Dan 7; Zech 3).

Ellen White contends that the council does not suggest that “where there are two or more deities with El present, there the general divine assembly meets”. In modern terms, she explains, “When two or more Senators are gathered together, there is not a meeting of the Senate”.²⁶⁴ White defines God’s assembly as a gathering of councillors that can include “the sons of God” (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים), such as those mentioned in Job 1–2, who are under “subjection to YHWH”. These councillors constitute his “advisory council”, echoing Micaiah’s vision of the council of YHWH in 1 Kings 22:15-19.²⁶⁵ This council assembles with those in “subjection to YHWH” in “the temple palace or heavenly court of YHWH”.²⁶⁶ Moreover, a council serves as a governing body that decides the fate of its subjects. White asserts, “the divine council resembles the earthly royal court that operates as a formal advisory board for the king regarding matters of state, and as a formal legal court.”²⁶⁷ Thus, it is understood that YHWH oversees the council (Gen 1:26-27; 3:22-23; 11:1-9), ensuring that the court acts righteously and is legitimate as “the community of God” (בְּעֵדֹתֵי אֱלֹהִים, Ps 82:1).²⁶⁸

²⁶³ Clare M. McGinnis, “Playing the Devil’s Advocate in Job: On Job’s Wife” in *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse* (JSOT Sup 336; eds, S. L. Cook, C. L. Patton, & J. W. Watts; London; New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001):121-41, 131; Ngwa, *The Hermeneutics of the ‘Happy’ Ending in Job 42:7-17*, 139.

²⁶⁴ Ellen White, *Yahweh’s Council: Its Structure and Membership* (Forschungen Zum Alten Testament 65; eds. Konrad Schmid, Mark S. Smith, and Hermann Spieckermann; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 11-7.

²⁶⁵ White, *Yahweh’s Council: Its Structure and Membership*, 42-5; Wenham, *1–15*, 141.

²⁶⁶ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 257: Mathews explains that Gen 3:24 shares the imagery of Moses’ tabernacle by allusion to the “cherubim” at the “east side” of the Garden. The easterly direction of the tabernacle and temple faced, placed west of the altar. The cherubim guard the entrance of the Garden of Eden (or methods of locomotion, 2 Sam 22:11; Ps 18:11 [ET 10]). YHWH sits enthroned upon them (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15; Isa 37:16; Ps 80:2 [ET 1]; 99:1); Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 86; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah: Genesis I–VI* 8, 174: Cassuto notes that evidently, the entrance to the Garden was at the east that parallels with the tabernacle and temple, which were entered from the east.

²⁶⁷ White, *Yahweh’s Council: Its Structure and Membership*, 13; David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC; Dallas Word, 1989), 21; Tremper Longman III, *Job*, 92.

²⁶⁸ עֵדָה appears 149× in the Hebrew Bible and 83× in the book of Numbers alone. It means the national/legal and cultic communities (Judg 20:1; 21:10, 13, 16; 1 Kgs 8:5 // 2 Chron 5:6; Jer 6:18; 30:20; Ps

Upon reflection, it becomes clear that Job's suffering is not caused by the satan acting as an instrument of YHWH. Instead, it stems from YHWH's own words, the Creator, as demonstrated in the book's epilogue (42:7-17), which details God's blessings upon Job. This parallels the account of human creation in Gen 1:26-28, where the disobedience of the primeval pair led to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, yet the narrative continues with God blessing human endeavours.

In the book of Job, the epilogue lists Job's material wealth first, which is the opposite of the prologue. This is done so that the narrator can explain the blessing that Job's family later received.²⁶⁹ God answers Job's supplications, and the judge distinguishes what is right from evil in Job's suffering.²⁷⁰ Despite his hardships, Job's fear of God (1:1, 8; 2:3) was not dependent on any rewards. He feared YHWH because YHWH had instilled that fear in his power and wisdom.²⁷¹ In the book of Job, it seems that Job fears YHWH "for nothing".

However, in Job 42:12, it is mentioned that "YHWH blessed Job's latter days more than his

111:1; Prov 5:14); The heavenly assembly in Ps 7:8 and Ps 82:1, the word *בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים* is cognate with Ugarit *'bn ilm'* meaning 'sons of god' (Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (revised, reprint in 1998)), UT 19.1816. See John H. Walton, "Interpreting the Bible as an Ancient Near Eastern Document," in *Israel: Ancient Kingdom or Late Invention?* (ed. Daniel I. Block; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 128-130, 298-327: Walton sees that it is essential to understand the first commandment that there are no other gods in the presence of YHWH. So, there is no other authority but YHWH alone; Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God," *BibSac* 158 (2001): 52-74; Michael S. Heiser, "Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible," *BBR* 18 (2008): 1-30. Heiser sees the terms *בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים*, the "sons of God" (Job 1:6; 2:1) or *בְּנֵי עֶלְיוֹן*, the "son of Most High" (Ps 82:6) hold no independent divine authority. In Psalm 82, God presides over the divine assembly to judge gods (*אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט* Ps 82:1). Also, it seems that these sons of God have been apportioned the nations that they represent (*בְּהַגְדֵיךָ עָלְיוֹן גֹּוֹתִים* Dt 32:8).

²⁶⁹ Wilson, *Job*, 210: Wilson explains that the closing verses 16-17 of the book portrays Job's long life that is relevant to his righteousness (Prov 3:1-2); Hartley, *Book of Job*, 544: Hartley observes the final verses (Job 42:16-17) is the epitaph of the faithful servants of God, for example, Abraham (Gen 25:8), Isaac (Gen 35:29), Moses (Dt 34:5-7), David (1 Chron 29:28), and Jehoiada the priest (2 Chron 24:15), that underlines Job; Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 238.

²⁷⁰ Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job*, 54.

²⁷¹ Ngwa, "Did Job Suffer for Nothing? The Ethics of Piety, Presumption and the Reception of Disaster in the Prologue of Job," 377.

beginning”. This is interesting because it reverses the sequence of events in the creation account, where God blesses humans with “ברך” (Gen 1:28) and then curses them with “אָרוּר” (3:14-19). This demonstrates that knowing good and evil comes with obedience to the words of YHWH, in other words, it signifies fearing YHWH.

CONCLUSION

Job 1–2 reveals the cause of his suffering, which he can never have known. In 13:22, Job offers to speak to God and hear his reply. Although Job’s initial approach may seem rejected, it is accepted with an introduction in 38:2, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” God then proceeds to educate Job about the foundation of the earth (38:4-7) and the dimensions of the universe (vv. 8-11), moving from the creation of the world to its maintenance of the world inanimate (38:12–39:30), which means it was beyond the ability of humans to understand the complexity of the universe.

In the midst of a storm, God asks Job if he knows who the father of the rain is (38:28) and challenges him to witness the creation of the world and take responsibility for providing food for all living creatures (38:39-41). Job must have the knowledge and power to govern the world and learn about procreation through observation (39:1-4), which corresponds to the human mandates, as stated in Gen 1:26-28.

In Job 42:5-6, Job responds to God’s call and acknowledges that he had only heard of God before, but now, with his own eyes, he truly sees the Creator God. This leads him to

repent in dust and ashes, realising that humans come from the earth and then return to it. Job recognises that he could not have known these answers without God's revelation.

God questions Job in a rhetorical manner, leading him to realise his ignorance and to speak without understanding (38:2). Following this, Job acknowledges that nothing is beyond God's capability, whether in thought or action (42:2). This understanding serves as a logical and existential turning point for Job (v. 3). Job recognises this because "Now his eye sees". This goes beyond simple visual perception; it signifies a personal encounter. It implies a bond between Job and God similar to that which existed in the Garden between YHWH and the primeval pair. This same connection is evident in the relationship between God and his people, including figures like Abraham (Gen 18:17-21, 23-33), Moses (Ex 3, 32-34), and the prophets, who convey God's will to his people in the Bible. This marks the beginning of knowledge derived from communion with God, a knowledge that the primeval pair failed to attain in the Garden of Eden.

On one hand, it is uncertain whether the serpent in the Garden acted independently from God's sovereign will and purpose. Nevertheless, it can be argued that without the transgression in the creation narratives and the Garden of Eden, the fulfilment of the creation mandate—the blessing of human multiplication and humanity's dominion over the rest of creation (e.g., the serpent)—would not become a reality. The blessing of human multiplication mentioned in Genesis 1:28 is not nullified by the primeval pair's trespasses; rather, the blessing is assured in the divine proclamation of the judgment (3:16-22). This blessing encompasses all aspects of human life: offspring, the land (see Dt 28:1-14; cf. Gen 12:1-3; 24:35), and crops, which are regarded as the result of God's blessings. Thus, the words of the command are sustained in the

curse, sustaining God's blessing, just like the knowledge of good and evil causes blessing and curse. Similarly, it is evident that in the case of Job, YHWH allowed the actions of "the satan" solely to affirm the further advancement of the blessing of the human mandate (Job 1:12; 2:3-6; cp. 1 Kgs 22:20-22).

Consequently, in the book of Job, the satan cannot claim that Job serves God merely for material gain. Despite Job losing his children and possessions, he remained faithful in his service to God. Likewise, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were only aware of God's command concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17). Both Job and Adam and Eve were unaware of God's ultimate plan and purpose.²⁷²

In the book of Job, he is portrayed as responsible for his own decisions, much like Adam and Eve, who were accountable for their choices driven by desires in the Garden of Eden. Job's decision not to curse YHWH led to him being rewarded "twice as much" in Job 42:7-17, while Adam and Eve faced the consequence of waiting for their descendants (Gen 3:15) after their expulsion from the Garden. Job illustrates the ability to discern between good and evil by responding to the word with fear of God.

²⁷² Josh Carney, "Holding the faith: Lessons on suffering and transformation in the book of Job," *R&E* 111 (2014): 281-6.

CHAPTER 4

An Intertextual Reading of the Creation and the Garden Narratives with Proverbs and Song of Songs

4.1 The Book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs as Wisdom Literature

The Song of Songs is the final of five wisdom compositions in the canon (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and certain psalms, e.g., Psalms 1, 2, 14, 25:12-14; 34:11-14; 49; 72; 104).²⁷³ Childs considers the canon, comprising wisdom books such as Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, and also includes the Song of Songs as part of wisdom literature.²⁷⁴ Traditionally, Solomon is regarded in the Bible as the primary source of wisdom, with the books of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes attributed to him, as indicated by the superscriptions of these books. The Song of Songs, attributed to Solomon, is mentioned in Song 1:1 (see KJV, ESV, NRSV, NASB, and other translations). It is widely accepted that the heading “Song of Songs” should be understood as a superlative, meaning it is the greatest of songs (cp. “the Holy of Holies” in Exodus 26:33 or “Lord of lords” in 1 Kings 8:6).

Additionally, Solomon’s name appears five more times in the book (1:5; 3:9, 11; 8:11; 8:12), suggesting that Solomon is the author and the male character in the book, the ideal lover. If Solomon authored the Song, despite having many wives and concubines (see 1 Kgs 10 and 11), his personal failure to follow YHWH’s command in Genesis 2:24 (“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”)

²⁷³ James L. Mays, *Song of Songs: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (IBC; eds. J. L. Mays and Patrick D. Miller; Louisville, Ky: John Knox Press, 2005), x-4; Christopher W. Mitchell, *The Song of Songs: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture* (CC; St. Louise, MO: Concordia, 2003), 34-8; Richard S. Hess, *Song of Songs* (BCOT; ed. T. Longman III; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 38-9.

²⁷⁴ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 574; Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011), 187; see Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (trans. James D. Martin; London: SCM, 1972), 573-8.

could have enabled him to give practical marriage advice and direct readers toward a biblical husband whose love is complete.²⁷⁵

The content of the Song notably differs from other wisdom texts and most other biblical writings. Unlike Psalms, the Song does not demonstrate reflection or praise the Creator, the sovereign God, nor does it, like Job, exemplify a life of blamelessness and uprightness found in the fear of YHWH as wisdom. Also, unlike Proverbs or Ecclesiastes, the Song lacks sayings of sages. Instead, the Song presents poetry that celebrates physical love, portraying sexual desire and fulfilment in an open tone, free from moral judgment or societal and legal constraints.²⁷⁶

Also, Proverbs 25:1, “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied” (ESV) indicates that officials in King Hezekiah’s court (721-693 B.C.) compiled and documented the Song.²⁷⁷ They also collected Solomon’s proverbs, as 1 Kings 5:12 [ET 4:32] states Solomon was the author of 1,005 songs and 3,000 proverbs (cf. 5:9-12 [4:29-34]). The repeated mention of “Solomon”—more than six times (RSV)—in the Song parallels other biblical references such as Psalms 72 and 127, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Just as biblical authorship is often identified through genre classification, such as law to Moses or psalms to David, songs and proverbs are attributed to Solomon.²⁷⁸

These wisdom texts link the Song to Solomon, as seen in passages like שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשֹׁלֹמֹה, which means “The Song of Songs, to Solomon” or “belonging to Solomon”, both

²⁷⁵ Iain M. Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 19; ed. D. G. Firth; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 19-24

²⁷⁶ Mays, *Song of Songs*, xi-1; Hess, *Song of Songs*, 7-9; 39.

²⁷⁷ Mitchell, *The Song of Songs: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture*, 35-6; Hess, *Song of Songs*, 39; Keel Othmar, *A Continental Commentary: The Song of Songs* (CC: trans. Frederick J. Gaiser; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 38-9.

²⁷⁸ Katharine J. Dell, “Does the Song of Songs Have any Connections to Wisdom?” in *Perspectives on the Song of Songs* (BZAW 346; ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn; Berlin, N.Y.: De Gruyter, 2005), 10; Othmar, *A Continental Commentary: The Song of Songs*, 1-11; Longman, *Song of Songs*, 87-8; Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, 37-8.

explicitly and implicitly. Also, Proverbs 1:1: מְשָׁלֵי שְׁלֹמֹה בֶן-דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, is translated as “The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel” (ESV). Thus, the phrase “of Solomon” indicates the author or source, while the name שְׁלֹמֹה punningly references the word מְשָׁלֵי, meaning “proverbs”.²⁷⁹

The book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs use the metaphor of taking a bride to illustrate the pursuit of wisdom.²⁸⁰ In Wisdom literature, wisdom is often personified as a female figure called Woman wisdom, which also provides insights into womanhood. On the other hand, the woman in the Song of Solomon is complex and not clearly a symbolic figure. It remains uncertain if she should be seen as a metaphor or an allegory. Despite this, it is clear she is a character within the narrative, similar to Woman wisdom.

As stated above, the Song is part of the wisdom tradition, where interactions between man and woman symbolise the relationship between humans and the wisdom as YHWH addressed in Genesis 3:22a, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil”, since the creation of the primeval pair in the Garden of Eden. For example, Proverbs 1–9 compares Woman wisdom with the strange woman, portrayed as a seductress or temptress, similar to the serpent in Eden or the Satan in Job. In the Song, the “Solomon” figure, through the “Shulammitte”, portrays a bride guided by wisdom (see 1 Kgs 3:3-14, especially vv. 11-12, where God tells Solomon, “... you have asked for understanding to discern what is right...”).²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 19-24; Hess, *Song of Songs*, 39; Mitchell, *The Song of Songs: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture*, 17.

²⁸⁰ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 575-6; von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 168.

²⁸¹ Hess, *Song of Songs*, 39. The first two words of Song 1:2 link physical love, in the form of passionate kisses, to the title, pointing to the song’s theme: love and its connection with Solomon; Daniel C. Fredericks & Daniel J. Estes, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs* (AOTC 16; eds. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham; Nottingham, England: Apollos and Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 302-3; G. Lloyd Carr, *The Song of Solomon: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 19; ed. Donald J. Wiseman; Nottingham, England and Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1984), 21-2.

However, God does not explicitly appear in the Song, unlike in the books of Wisdom, where he is portrayed as a pervasive influence affecting the characters. While reading the Song, we can see that the Shulammitte's desire for Solomon is comparable to the love between God and his people. This brings to mind YHWH and the primeval pair in the Garden of Eden, where the primeval pair's failure to obey the command "but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" in Genesis 2:17 results in the woman's desire for her husband (Gen 3:16 "Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you"). This reflects Israel's desire for God, and her love is entirely and explicitly for God; later in the Song 8:6-7, we also see the Lord desires Israel as shown in the phrase *אש שלהבתיה* in verse 6, meaning "fire, a blazing flame".

A distinct feature of the Song compared to other Wisdom literature is its focus on individual experiences and personal issues faced by characters. Consequently, the Song does not mention major Israelite institutions, such as the temple, the sacrificial system, or the law.²⁸²

Our intertextual analysis of Genesis 1–3 and Wisdom literature, including the Song of Songs, provides insights into broader canonical themes. If readers separate the Song of Songs from its context within Wisdom literature, their understanding of knowledge concerning good and evil, wisdom, and the relationships between the Creator and humanity, as well as between male and female, may be limited. The canonical approach broadens readers' comprehension of Genesis 1–3 and Wisdom literature, including the Song, framing them not as isolated parts but as components of an interconnected whole.

²⁸² Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 19-20, 71-2; Duane Garrett, *Song of Songs, Lamentations* (WBC 23B; John D. W. Watts; Thomas Nelson/Word, Incorporated, 2004), 82.

The books of Proverbs and the Song of Songs use the image of a bride to symbolise the pursuit of wisdom. This should not be overlooked in our intertextual reading of the creation and Garden of Eden stories, particularly regarding the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These narratives begin with woman, Eve, the bride of Adam, through the serpent's temptation.²⁸³

In Wisdom literature, wisdom is personified as a female figure called Woman wisdom, representing different aspects of womanhood. In contrast, the female character in the Song of Solomon is more complex and lacks a clear identity. In my canonical reading, I see the woman in the Song as a metaphor for a woman with a significant role in the text, similar to Woman wisdom in Proverbs (see 1:20-33; 8:1-36; 9:1-12), drawing from Solomon's real-life experiences of marriage with many wives and concubines, as recorded in 1 Kings 11:3 ("He had 700 wives who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart" (ESV)).

This chapter examines the connections between the book of Proverbs, the Song, and the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden as presented in our canonical readings. A close comparison reveals notable thematic similarities and differences from an intertextual viewpoint. These relationships cover male and female dynamics, love, sexuality, marriage, and the understanding of good and evil, informed by an intertextual approach. These themes are vital to understanding humanity's role in creation as outlined in Gen 1:26-28.

²⁸³ Hess, *Song of Songs*, 27. Hess notes that both the Garden of Eden and the Song are connected through their deliberate references to the judgment in Gen 3:16, which are contrasted by the transformative power of love in Song 7:11 [ET 7:10]. As a result, the woman serves as a crucial element for close reading of both texts.

4.1.1 The Locked Garden in the Song as the Restoration of the Lost Garden

Gen 2:23

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפְעַם עֵצָה מֵעֵצָמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי לְזָאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לְקָחָהּ זֹאת:

Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” (NRSV)

Song 4:12

גֶּן נְעוּלָה אֲחֹתִי כְּלֵה גַל נְעוּלָה מֵעֵינַן הַתּוֹמִים:

A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed. (NRSV)

The phrase “my sister, my bride” appears four times in the Song (4:9a, 10a, 12, and 5:1a). In Song 4:12, Solomon addresses his Shulammitte bride, using the expressions “my sister, (my) bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed” to describe her. This section (4:9-5:1), set in a lush garden filled with trees, orchards, frankincense, and flowing waters, serves as the climax and midpoint of the Song. It references Genesis 2:23, where Adam tells the woman YHWH God created, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken,” in the Garden of Eden. The garden imagery here symbolises the woman as a reflection of the “Woman, out of Man” – her lover. It also represents her environment and the path for her lover (Song 5:1), who invites her to come and eat there, contrasting with the eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden (Gen 3:6).

In Song 4:12, he does not directly address her with second-person pronouns such as “you” or “your,” but he does so in earlier verses (4:8-11, 13). The phrase גֶּן נְעוּלָה “a garden

locked”) in Song 4:12 serves as a metaphor for the Shulammitte (see 1:14, 16; 2:3, 12-13), which relates to the garden being filled with plants and fruits. Thus, the locked garden depicts a peaceful setting with no other beings present, contrasting with the Garden of Eden, where, in Genesis 3:1, the serpent is introduced as “Now, the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that YHWH God had made” (ESV). This imagery emphasises the garden’s significance in Song 4:12–5:1, symbolising the bride and the premarital experience, reminiscent of Eden when Adam meets the woman YHWH created—since they had not yet had children until Genesis 4:1a, “Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain”.

In the Song’s references to a “garden” found in 4:12–5:1 (גַּן in 4:12, 15, 16 [x2]; 5:1), the term primarily serves as a metaphor for the Shulammitte. Although some of these mentions may later pertain to actual gardens, they could also evolve into symbols for her (גַּן in 6:2 [x2]; 8:13). Other segments of the Song utilise garden imagery to depict the joy experienced by the lovers together (1:13-17; 2:10-13; 7:12-14 [ET 7:11-13]). The term גַּן in the Garden of Eden narrative was used to describe the Garden (Gen 2:8–3:24), and various Biblical passages occasionally refer to the primeval “garden of God” (cf. Ezek 28:13; 31:8-9) or the “garden of YHWH” (cf. Gen 13:10; Is 51:3; also see Ezek 36:35 and Joel 2:3). These scriptures collectively support the interpretation of the garden motif in the Song as being reflective of the Garden of Eden.²⁸⁴

The Song of Songs alludes to the Garden of Eden, but the lovers portrayed are not merely a repetition of the primeval pair who defied YHWH’s command there. Scholars such as Francis

²⁸⁴ Hess, *Song of Songs*, 27; Phyllis Trible, *God and The Rhetoric of Sexuality* (ed. Walter Brueggemann and Christopher R. Seitz; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1978), 22.

Landy and Phyllis Trible have extensively examined the connection between Genesis 2–3 and the Song of Songs.²⁸⁵ Both the creation account and the Garden narrative demonstrate that the male and female are created equally as husband and wife in the image of God. This suggests that a marriage based on love and unity, as depicted in the Song, evokes the joy and happiness found in the Garden of Eden. However, although the Song references the Garden of Eden, its lovers cannot be entirely identified with the primeval pair before their disobedience.

Wilfred G. E. Watson highlights that this interpretation of love, based on the marital imagery in the Song, reflects a reality beyond the Garden of Eden by reversing the themes and motifs found in Genesis 2–3.²⁸⁶ The Song takes place after the exile of the primeval pair from Eden, where human thoughts were only evil (see Gen 4:5-7; 6:1-5). This in the Song also depicts a world corrupted by sin, indicated by the presence of angry brothers (1:6), which could explain the woman’s dark or burnt (תַּחֲהָרָה) skin. Despite this, they continue to receive God’s love (see the adjurations in Song 2:7; 3:5; 5:8; 8:4), which is also referenced throughout the Bible (cf. Gen 24:12, 27; Ex 34:6; 1 Kgs 8:23; 10:9; Ps 36:7; Jer 32:18).

Understanding דעת reflects knowledge of the Creator of the universe and highlights the relationship between the Creator and his creation. It entails experiencing a relationship with the Creator and obeying him.²⁸⁷ For instance, some terms linked to יְדִידְיָהּ, “Jedidiah” in the Song might serve as nicknames for Solomon, which is evident in Hebrew. In 2 Samuel 12:24-25,

²⁸⁵ Francis Landy, *Beauty and the Enigma: And Other Essays on the Hebrew Bible* (JSOT Supple 312; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 35-91; Trible, *God and The Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 7-8, 22-3.

²⁸⁶ Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (JSOT Supple 26; Sheffield: Sheffield JSOT Press, 1986), 241-2; Phyllis Trible, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” 42-7; Jill M. Munro, *Spikenard and Saffron: The Imagery of the Song of Songs* (JSOT Supple 203; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 105-6.

²⁸⁷ Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea* (Hermeneia; ed. Paul D. Hanson; trans. Gary Stansell; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1974), 67-8.

following the death of Bathsheba's firstborn son with David, the king comforted her and fathered another son through her.

2 Sam 12:24-25

וַיִּנְחֵם דָּוִד אֶת בַּת־שֶׁבַע אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּהּ וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שְׁלֹמֹה וַיְהִי הָאֱהָבוֹ:
וַיִּשְׁלַח בְּיַד נָתָן הַנָּבִיא וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יְדִידְיָהּ בְּעִבּוֹר יְהוָה:

²⁴ Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And YHWH loved him,²⁵ and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of YHWH. (ESV, modified)

In 2 Samuel 12:24, David named his second son שְׁלֹמֹה וַיְהִי הָאֱהָבוֹ “Solomon, and YHWH loved him”. This reference links divine love with the name. In 2 Sam 12:25, God spoke through Nathan the prophet and called Solomon “Jedidiah on account of YHWH” (יְדִידְיָהּ בְּעִבּוֹר יְהוָה). That nickname, given by YHWH, links divine love and Solomon's name. In Jedidiah, the theophoric part -iah stands for יָהּ, a short form of יהוה. The word יְדִידְיָהּ means “beloved” and refers to someone loved by God or who loves God (see Is 5:1).²⁸⁸

The Hebrew wordplay in the Song highlights the similarity among the terms “lover” (יְדִידְיָהּ), “love” (דֹּדִים), and “David” (דָּוִד). Solomon understood that God's promises to his father, David, played a key role in his successes, implying that God's love for him was partly a fulfilment of these divine promises. As the Shulammitte's “lover”, he also exemplified God's love through his relationship with his beloved wife.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ In Isaiah 5:1, Isaiah begins his song about YHWH's vineyard, calling God “my beloved” (יְדִידְיָהּ) twice and “my lover” (דֹּדִי). The verse links these Hebrew synonyms, with God's people represented as a vineyard.

²⁸⁹ Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, 111-3. The Song of Songs features a garden motif. Although it does not use יְדִידְיָהּ, it refers to Solomon as the “lover” דָּוִד thirty-three times, and also uses the abstract plural דֹּדִים, meaning “love,” six times. Both terms are etymologically connected to “David,” Solomon's father, mentioned in Song 4:4.

Bálint Károly Zabán regards Wisdom’s house as containing all of creation’s goods, such as fruits, yields, meat, and wine crafted by God’s wisdom (Ps 104:24).²⁹⁰ These themes are also depicted in the Song of Solomon. The Garden of Eden functioned in perfect harmony, and the primeval pair lived in harmony before their disobedience. The relationship between the man and woman in the Song reflects a reversal of the curse in Gen 3:16. Analysing the Garden of Eden narrative in the context of the Song of Solomon suggests that the Song acts as a counterbalance to that narrative, revealing the renewal of human marriage.

Edmée Kingsmill examines the Song’s references to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:9, which depicts a garden filled with trees that are both attractive and edible (Gen 13:10; Is 51:3; Ezek 28:13; 31:8, 9).²⁹¹ The woman in the Song is portrayed as the garden, resembling water flowing onto the ground and nourishing it (Song 4:12, 15).²⁹² Solomon uses water imagery to strengthen the garden motif by referencing *תַּיָּם* “fountain” and *גַּן* “garden” in 4:12.

Song 4:15, 16

¹⁵ a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon. ¹⁶ Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden that its fragrance may be wafted abroad. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits. (NRSV)

5:1 I come to my garden, my sister, my bride; I gather my myrrh with my spice, I eat my honeycomb with my honey, I drink my wine with my milk. Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love. (NRSV)

²⁹⁰ Bálint Károly Zabán, *The Pillar Function of the Speeches of Wisdom: Proverbs 1:20-33, 8:1-36 and 9:1-6 in the Structural Framework of Proverbs 1-9* (BZAW 429; eds. John Barton and F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp; Berlin & Boston; Walter De Gruyter, 2012), 332-3.

²⁹¹ Edmée Kingsmill SLG, *The Song of Songs and the Eros of God: A Study in Biblical Intertextuality* (OTM; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 50-1.

²⁹² These words are ‘cypress’; Lebanon’; ‘mountain’; ‘Hermon’; ‘En-gedi’; ‘field’; ‘cinnamon’; ‘spice’; ‘scent’; ‘myrrh’; ‘frankincense’; ‘tent’ or ‘tabernacle’; ‘honey’; ‘to eat’; ‘to drink.’

The context in Song 4:15, 16 and 5:1 (also 6:2; 8:13) implies that מְצִינָה מְרִינָה, meaning “a garden fountain ... flowing streams”, suggests the fountain is abundant enough to irrigate multiple gardens (מְצִינָה).²⁹³ This references Genesis 2:10-14, which describes four rivers stemming from a single water source in the Garden of Eden.²⁹⁴ Wells, including those in Eden, are vital for sustaining life, as exemplified in various parts of Genesis, Wisdom literature, and the Song of Songs. In Song of Songs 4:15, the well is described as a source of “living waters”, using מְצִינָה, a term that is always plural when referring to water in the Bible.

In Song of Songs 4, the bride is depicted as Woman wisdom, possessing characteristics beyond those of an ordinary woman. She embodies beauty, fertility, fruitfulness, satisfaction, sanctuary, and purity, and perceives herself as a bride. The poem describes her as a walled garden, akin to the sanctuary where YHWH dwells, filled with gardens and flowing streams. This imagery helps readers understand love, the central theme of the Song. The woman is comparable to Eve in the Garden of Eden when God blessed the primeval pair, as noted in Genesis 1:28. Similarly, the bride, representing Woman wisdom in Proverbs (e.g., 3:13-18; 4:7-9; 9:1-6; and 5:18-19), invites her lover into her sanctuary to share in her abundance. An intertextual approach reveals how interactions in Eden between YHWH and humans symbolise the marital relationship. The use of creation language in the Song and Wisdom literature (Prov 1:7; 3:19; 9:1, 10) underscores the importance of creation wisdom for humanity.

²⁹³ HALOT 612.

²⁹⁴ HALOT 1164-7 מְצִינָה cognate from ראש means: 1) “head of a person” (Gen 3:15; 48:14; Judg 9:53; 1 Sam 17:54; comparative description Song 5:11; 7:6); 2) head, this is the sense in Gen 2 (THAT 2:708f.) (Ezek 40:1; Ex 12:2; Judg 7:19; Is 40:21; 41:4, 26; 48:16; Prov 8:26); 3) leader (tribal, or clan elder, 1 Sam 15:17; Dt 33:5; Judg 10:18; 11:8, 9, 11), chief (Num 25:4; Ex 18:25; Dt 1:13ff; Josh 23:2; 24:1).

4.1.1.1 Bone (עצם) and Flesh (בשר) – My Sister and Bride

An intertextual analysis of Genesis 1–3, Proverbs, and Song of Solomon can deepen our understanding of the concepts of “Woman wisdom” and “Woman folly” in Proverbs, as well as the Shulammitte in Song of Songs and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Like Woman wisdom in Proverbs, the Song of Solomon begins with the Shulammitte expressing her desire for the man. These women often take the lead, whether their actions embody wisdom or folly. This mirrors Eve in Eden, who expressed her interest in eating the forbidden fruit to gain the knowledge of good and evil. This act caused her pain in childbirth and the pains of giving birth, and her prompting Adam to eat the fruit led to human death—the return to dust.

However, in Genesis 3:22, YHWH states in his council, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—,” making the “knowledge of good and evil” similar to wisdom and folly in the Wisdom literature, thus suggesting Eve is wise to know good and evil and foolish to disobey YHWH’s command not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Importantly, Adam named his wife “Eve” because she was the mother of all living, reflecting the human mandate in Genesis 1:26-28, though no human can avoid death.

Analysing Proverbs and the Song from our canonical perspective reveals both similarities and differences. Themes such as the Garden narrative, including male-female relationships, love, sexuality, and marriage, emerge prominently. The portrayal of royalty and kingship is also a common motif in both texts. Considering these elements of divine creation helps to see the Song of Songs as a wisdom text.

Additionally, since the Song of Songs is part of the Writings (כְּתוּבִים) within the HB, placed after Job as the first book of the Megilloth,²⁹⁵ this placement underscores the significance of key female figures in Proverbs, Ruth, and the Song of Songs. Positioned between Job and Qohelet, the Song of Songs is categorised among wisdom literature, as we discussed above.

The first two chapters of the Song highlight the Shulammitte's passionate and unwavering devotion to King Solomon. Our primary interpretation sees the male lover as a king who is also believed to be the book's attributed author. In the Song chapters 1–2, the narrative describes how he led her to a place where they could unite in love (cf. Gen 2:24-25), emphasising the depth of her feelings (Song 1:2-4; 2:1-4). Both chapters begin with sections where the beloved Shulammitte praises the intoxicating love of her husband and lover Solomon, and this admiration is mutual (1:2-4; 2:1-4).²⁹⁶ In Genesis 2:18a, it mentions God creating a helper (עֵזֶר) because he sees that it is “not good for the man to be alone” (לֹא־טוֹב הָיְוֹת הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ). This contrasts with Genesis 1:26-28, which commands humanity to “be fruitful and multiply” so the earth can be filled, presupposing that there must be both male and female.

The Shulammitte is portrayed as a woman who speaks and acts like a real woman. Some believe she could be a real person, such as Pharaoh's daughter (cf. 1 Kgs 3:1; 7:8; 9:24), Abishag the Shunammite (cf. 1 Kgs 1:17-22), or one of Solomon's brides, likely the Shulammitte, while some see her as a personification of Israel.²⁹⁷ This woman is called “You

²⁹⁵ The Megilloth is a collection of five books - Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther found in the “Writings” section of the HB.

²⁹⁶ Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, 688.

²⁹⁷ Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs: A Continental Commentary*, 39; Hess, *Song of Songs*, 37-8; Robert W.

are my sister” in Proverbs 7:4 and “my sister, my bride” in Song 4:9-10, 12; 5:1-2, and 8:8.

This imagery echoes Genesis 2:23, “Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.”

4.1.1.2 Wise King and Wisdom Bride

Although the interpretation of the Song’s structure remains unresolved, literary analysis can aid our understanding. In the canonical approach of this thesis, we interpret the text as a unified whole, with the male and female voices representing Solomon and the Shulammitte, respectively. The composition of the book appears balanced, since Solomon’s name is used in 1:1 and five other instances, once in the first section (1:5), twice in the last section (8:11, 13), and thrice in the central section (3:7, 9, 11).

The Song of Songs is regarded as a wisdom text due to several features that suggest this. Its structure displays traits typical of wisdom literature. For example, the woman’s warning to the daughters of Jerusalem (Song 1:5-6; 2:7; 3:5; 5:8-6:3; 8:4) resembles the advice given to the son in Proverbs 1–9 (cf. 1:8, 10, 15-19; 2:1-15; 3:1-12; 4:1; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1). The Shulammitte in the Song uses wisdom-related vocabulary and imagery to communicate wisdom, much like Solomon in Proverbs. The term *הַשׁוֹלֵמִית* in Song 7:1 ([ET 6:13]) is rare as a name and instead indicates her role as Solomon’s female counterpart in wise teaching.²⁹⁸

The designation of the Shulammitte as Solomon’s counterpart in wisdom reflects the female personification of wisdom seen in Proverbs 1–9. The woman in the Song may

Jenson, *Song of Songs: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Interpretation; ed. James L. Mays and Patrick D. Miller; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2005), 4-5.

²⁹⁸Kenton L. Sparks, “The Song of Songs: Wisdom for Young Jewish Women,” 287.

symbolise wisdom, as wisdom is often depicted as a female figure, and Solomon is regularly linked with wisdom. This supports the Song's focus on wisdom. Dell explains, "It is an expression of intimacy from the man to the woman, and likewise with Wisdom, it is an expression of intimacy".²⁹⁹ In Proverbs, Woman wisdom and Woman folly are connected through imagery of love, with Woman wisdom inviting sons (1:20; 9:1-6) and Woman folly calling on the streets (5:3-6; 9:13-18).

The Song of Songs explores the connection between human love and wisdom, suggesting they can overcome death, as stated in Song 8:6.

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of Yah. (ESV, modified)

The Song of Songs examines the link between desire and death, a theme connected to the knowledge of good and evil, reflecting the primeval pair's disobedience, which led Eve to long for her husband to exercise his authority over her (Gen 3:16b, "yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you"). However, by seeing human mandates as a fundamental part of God's creative plan from the beginning, and connecting them to life as shown in Genesis 3:20 ("The man called his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living") and "till you return to the ground" in Genesis 3:19b, as well as understanding the idea of knowing good and evil (see 3:22) to "have dominion over ... every living thing ..." (1:28) before "to dust you shall return" in 3:19c. In this canonical perspective, we can gain a clearer understanding of what wisdom truly involves, which is life in obedience to the words of YHWH.

²⁹⁹ Dell, "Does the Song of Songs have any connections to wisdom?", 20.

Accordingly, the images of “bone (עצם) and flesh (בשר)” in the Garden of Eden narrative, along with the depiction of “my sister and bride” in the Song, symbolise a wise king who chooses wisdom as his bride. In our canonical interpretation, this reflects not only the harmony between an ideal man and woman but also the relationship between Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:24, viewed in the context of the mandate in Genesis 1:26-28.³⁰⁰ Our intertextual reading of the Song of Songs and Proverbs, alongside the creation narratives and the Garden of Eden, also emphasises the connection between wisdom and kingship, viewing the primeval pair as the foundation of authority (Gen 1:26-28), with Solomon serving as a royal example. Solomon as king is frequently highlighted in the Song (1:4 and 12 מלך “king”; 3:9, 11; 7:6 [ET 7:5]) and is also referenced in Ecclesiastes (see 1:1, 12; 2:8, 12) and Proverbs (1:1; 8:15; 14:28; 16:13; 21:1; 24:21). Additionally, Solomon’s father, King David, contributed wisdom and authored numerous psalms. The references to Solomon and David in Song 4:4 (“Your neck is like the tower of David, built in courses; on it hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors”) help us understand the significance of wisdom and the Wisdom literature.³⁰¹

Proverbs also reflects on romance leading to sexual love (30:18-19), emphasising the journey of a man with a young woman. The Hebrew MT states וַדְרֵךְ גַּבֵּר בְּעַלְמָה, which the NRSV translates as “and the way of a man with a girl”, while the KJV, NASB, NIV, and ESV translate it as “maid,” “maiden,” and “virgin” respectively. The Hebrew word עַלְמָה generally

³⁰⁰ Philis Tribble, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” *JAAR* 41 (1973): 30-48.

³⁰¹ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 573-9; Roland E. Murphy וּבִשְׁרָה, *The Song of Songs* (Hermeneia; ed. S. Dean McBride, Jr.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 120-22.

means “virgin”, but also refers to a young woman or girl prepared for marriage (see Gen 24:43; Ex 2:8; Ps 68:26).³⁰²

The Song begins with a woman inviting her lover to seek her and claim her as his own, much like wisdom invites those who love her to seek her: “I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me” (Prov 8:17).³⁰³ In this context, loving and seeking lead to discovering wisdom, a common theme especially in Prov 1 and Song 8:6. Although 8:6 does not contain the same warning found in wisdom’s speech in Prov 1, there is an ultimate result where only love can conquer death, echoing wisdom’s statement that “all who hate me love death” (Prov 8:36). It is a rhetorical expression implying that the Song of Songs should be regarded as part of Israel’s scripture, offering guidance for wisdom.³⁰⁴

In the Song of Solomon, the didactic instructions (2:7, 3:5, 5:8) are intentionally embedded as elements of wisdom. The song opens with the woman expressing her desire for the man, a common pattern where women often take the initiative. In Wisdom literature, only the Woman wisdom and Woman folly are given voices.

³⁰² Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja (Biblicher Kommentar: Altes Testament 10)*; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1972), 10:290f; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* (CC; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 304-5; *HALOT* 835-6; Brevard S. Childs, 66; J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, 88-9; Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 203-5.

³⁰³ André LaCocque, *Romance She Wrote: A Hermeneutical Essay on Song of Songs* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998), 41; Athalya Brenner, “Women Poets and Authors,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs* (ed. A. Brenner; trans. A. Brenner; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993): 86-97, 88; S. D. Goitein, “The Song of Songs: A Female Composition,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs* (ed. A. Brenner; trans. A. Brenner; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 58-66.

³⁰⁴ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 578; Mark McGinniss, “Preaching the Song of Songs,” *JMT/18* (2014): 120-142, 134.

4.1.1.3 Relationship between the Man and the Woman

In Genesis 2:21-25, it is described how YHWH created woman from man and established a close relationship between them. This bond mirrors the relationship between a king and Woman wisdom in Proverbs, as well as the king and the bride or הַשׁוֹלֵמִית in the Song of Songs. It symbolises the intimacy between a man and a woman, where they become one flesh (Gen 2:24). This serves to link the Creator God and humanity, made in God’s image and likeness in Genesis 1:26-28, with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It also extends to the covenant between God and his people. Such parallels can be drawn between the woman in the Song and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In the Eden narrative, Eve desired the fruit from the tree of knowledge, which was said to grant wisdom. This connection supports the interpretation that the Shulammitte woman in the Song of Solomon is portrayed as wise.³⁰⁵ Also, in the Book of Proverbs, it is the son (1:8; 2:1; 3:1, 11; 4:1, 20, “sons” in verse 10; 5:1, “sons” in verse 7; 6:1, 20; 7:1) who hears and remembers the father’s teaching. He hears Woman wisdom who speaks openly in public to anyone willing to listen, while the woman in the Song speaks privately to select groups.

Additionally, Woman wisdom is portrayed as having no parents to teach her, whereas the woman in the Song learns from her mother (Song 8:2a, “I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother—she who used to teach me”). It is not identical, but in the Garden of Eden, YHWH *ēlōhîm* speaks to Adam (אָדָם) in Gen 2:16-17, then with Adam and Eve in 3:9-13, 16-19.

³⁰⁵ Katharine J. Dell, “Does the Song of Songs have any connections to wisdom?”, 19-21.

4.1.1.4 Love in the Song and Proverbs

In the Song, the female character speaks in more personal situations, addressing her women (Song 1:2-4, 5-6; 2:7; 3:1-5; 5:2-8, 10-16; 6:2-3) and her lover (1:7, 16-17; 4:16; 7:11-13; 8:1-2, 6). For example, the first words of the female character in Song 1:2 are, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth”, as wisdom invites those who love her to seek her out (Prov 8:17). The verb “love” (אָהַב) encompasses the idea of choosing, as seen in Song 8:6b: “for love is strong as death,” a concept not present in the word for “hate” (אָנְטֵן). However, the verb “love” (אָהַב) is used in Prov 8:36b to express wisdom’s claim that “all who hate me love death.”³⁰⁶

In Song 8:6-7, the theme of love is shown as inseparable from hate.³⁰⁷ In Song 8:6, the woman expresses her strong desire for the man by asking him to “allow” her to “own” him. This act of ownership underscores her profound affection for him and illustrates the depth of her love. She states, “For love is strong as death” (8:6c), implying that love is as powerful as death itself.³⁰⁸ Additionally, in Song 8:6-7, the theme of “love” with “jealousy” is linked to the certainty of death, as also referenced in Genesis 3:19 and Ecclesiastes 12:7. These lines depict a struggle between love and death, jealousy and the grave.

In this context, the phrase שֶׁלֵּהֶבְתַּיָּהּ “flame of Yah” in 8:6 serves as the key term in the Song. It emphasises the main focus of the book (Song 8:6 “for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of YHWH” (ESV, modified)). This is the only direct reference to God in the Song, specifically mentioning “Yah”, the shortened form of “Yahweh”. This helps interpret שֶׁלֵּהֶבְתַּיָּהּ as “the flame of Yah”, since

³⁰⁶ See for a study of the verb “love” (אָהַב) in section 4.1.1.

³⁰⁷ M. Sadgrove, “The Song of Songs as Wisdom literature,” *Studia Biblica 1978* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), 245.

³⁰⁸ Keel, *The Song of Songs*, 272.

love in the Song essentially refers to “the flame of Yah”. Like the book’s title “Song of Songs” shows a superlative, which conceptually presents love as a superlative, the love’s flame is the flame of flames—a superlative.³⁰⁹ As a result, the “jealousy” in 8:6 dismisses ideas of death or the grave. These ideas are also reflected in the “Ten Words” of the Sinai covenant, where YHWH is called “a jealous God” (Ex 20:5; Dt 4:24; see also Ex 34:14). In fact, YHWH can display a “Jealous” nature similar to that of a jealous spouse; YHWH will not allow his people to be shared with any other power. In this context, the word “love” refers to “the flame of Yah” (אֵשׁ שֶׁלֵּהֶבֶתֶיָהּ) in 8:6d. The word “אֵשׁ” suggests “supernatural fire, attending theophany”, as seen in Gen 15:17 אֵשׁ וְלֶפֶיד אֵשׁ עֶשֶׂן תְּנוּרָה meaning “a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch” (see also Ex 3:2; 13:21; 14:24, especially 19:18 and 24:17; Num 14:14; 2 Chron 7:1-3, and Neh 9:12).

The phrase קִנְיָהּ, meaning “jealous passion”, in Song of Songs 8:6, along with “the flame of Yah”, depicts an aspect of God’s love. This jealous love emphasises the link between desire in Song 6:12 and 7:10 and the idea of death, vividly illustrating Eve’s desire for her husband in Gen 3:16b and humanity’s return to dust in Gen 3:19b. It shows how love is connected to mortality.³¹⁰

In our canonical reading, since Solomon is identified as the author of the Song (1:1), the mighty fiery theophany (אֵשׁ) at the dedication of the temple, which inspired Solomon’s passionate or fiery (קִנְיָהּ) prayer (1 Kgs 3:3-15), may also be linked to 8:6 alongside Proverbs.

³⁰⁹ Mays, *Song of Songs*, 90-3; Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, 1175-92.

³¹⁰ Keel, *The Song of Songs*, 27-31; Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 366; Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (trans. James D. Martin; London: SCM, 1972), 166; William I. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 108; Cephas T. A. Tushima, “The Paradigmatic Role of Genesis 3 for Reading Biblical Narratives about Desire,” *IJORTL* 5/1 (2019): 87-102, 91-3.

This comparison emphasises the lovers in the Song; their intense longing signifies the pursuit of wisdom that mirrors Solomon’s fervent prayer to God.

4.1.2 The Desirable Woman as Wisdom

Examining the characters in the Song, such as the Shulammitte woman and the beloved, along with those in Proverbs like Woman wisdom, reveals their link to Wisdom literature in our canonical reading, alongside the creation stories and the Garden of Eden.³¹¹ In Proverbs 1, Woman Wisdom confidently and unexpectedly claims her space; she is depicted as a desirable woman in the subsequent chapters. Her many virtues are apparent, and men are encouraged to follow her path, which leads to happiness and peace (Prov 3:17-18: “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed” (ESV)).

Proverbs 3:18 compares wisdom to the “tree of life” (עֵץ חַיִּים), implying that wisdom can restore what was lost through the disobedience of the first humans in Eden—namely, a long and meaningful life.³¹² Proverbs 11:30 and 15:4 refer to the lives and speech of the righteous. Genesis also employs a similar expression with the definite article to describe the tree of life in Eden.³¹³

Wisdom holds high value, often likened to precious metals and jewels, as seen in Proverbs 3:14-15 and 8:11, 18-19 (3:14a טוֹב טַהֲרָה מִסֶּהֶר־כֶּסֶף, “for the gain from her is better than gain from silver”). The use of מִן ... טוֹב (“better ... than”) in Prov 3:14 highlights that

³¹¹ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 366; Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 574; James L. Crenshaw, *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer, reprint in 1995), 90-140; Roland E. Murphy, “Wisdom and Creation,” *JBL*/104 (1985): 3-11.

³¹² R. Marcus, “The Tree of Life in Proverbs,” *JBL*/62 (1943): 117-20.

³¹³ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 113.

wisdom is not only desirable but also far superior to silver or gold, due to the blessings of “wisdom and understanding” (Prov 3:13-18; 4:7-9; 4:13; 8:10-11). This comparison emphasises the immense worth of wisdom. Additionally, the connection between wisdom and the desirable woman in Proverbs is echoed in the Song of Songs, where the Shulammitte woman is likened to valuable metals and precious jewels (Song 7:2 [7:1], 8:7), paralleling the depiction of wisdom. Furthermore, she (wisdom) offers many benefits to those who seek her, including longevity, wealth, honour, peace, happiness, knowledge, and understanding. These benefits, called the rewards of wisdom, can enrich a person’s life (Prov 8:19). However, the rewards for pursuing wisdom are as significant as the risks of death and ruin for those who ignore her (Prov 4:14-19; 9:13-18).

The woman’s desirability in the Song is shown similarly. She is portrayed as attractive, with her beauty being unmatched (Song 2:15; 6:10), and her scent exceeds the finest fragrances known to humans (4:10). In our canonical interpretation, it might be considered one of the gifts brought by the Queen of Sheba to Solomon (1 Kgs 10:2, 10, 25). This spice also played a role in Esther’s beauty regimen (מְרִיקֵיהָ in Est 2:12), preparing her to be summoned by the king.

The verb יָפָה means “to be beautiful” and is used again in Song 7:2, 7 [ET 7:1, 6] to describe the Shulammitte’s beauty and her desirability to her husband.³¹⁴ She is compared to valuable metals and precious jewels (Song 7:2 [7:1], 8:7), much like wisdom. The blessings linked to the Shulammitte are depicted as fruits in the Song of Solomon (4:10-16; 6:9; 7:2-14 [ET 1-13]), bringing peace, especially to her husband (8:10).³¹⁵ These blessings could imply

³¹⁴ It is found in Ezekiel 16:13. Jerusalem is the woman whom YHWH pities, marries, cleanses, and adorns, and she is exceedingly beautiful (יָפִי).

³¹⁵ Longman III, *Song of Songs*, 218. Longman reads the word מְצַא as a hiphil participle and translates it as “she brings peace” instead of שְׁלָמָה, Solomon, the king who finds this “peace”; Keel, *Song of Songs*, 277-9; Hess,

that the Shulammitte offers “peace, favour” (שְׁלוֹם) to Solomon.

4.1.3 Nakedness and Desire in the Song with the Garden Narrative

It is generally accepted that awareness of sex emerged after Adam and Eve disobeyed YHWH’s command in the Garden of Eden. This interpretation is based on Genesis 3:7, which states that “Adam and Eve knew that they were naked”, and that their shame about nakedness only arose after their disobedience—an idea also implied by Genesis 2:25.³¹⁶ The Hebrew word עָרָם used in Genesis 3:7 and 10-11 indicates that Adam and Eve were naked and that their nakedness was inherently shameful (cf. Ezk 16:7, 22, 39; 18:7, 16; Dt 28:48; and Hos 2:12).³¹⁷ In Genesis 3:10, Adam tells YHWH, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid myself.” This account suggests that Adam and Eve were not only ashamed of their nakedness but also afraid of YHWH’s punishment, as warned in Genesis 2:17, “you shall surely die.”³¹⁸

The judgment pronounced by YHWH applies to the serpent, the woman, and the man. In Genesis 3:16, the punishment for the woman is not solely disciplinary but also connected to the

Song of Songs, 245.

³¹⁶ C. John Collins, “What Happened to Adam and Eve? A Literary-Theological Approach to Genesis 3,” *Presbyterian* 27/1 (2001): 12-44; Elaine A. Phillips, “Serpent Intertexts: Tantalizing Twists in the Tales,” *BBR* 10/2 (2000): 233-45; 237.

³¹⁷ Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 66-7. Davidson also considers Ps 8:6 [ET 5 “Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor”] in this understanding; Gary A. Anderson, “The Punishment of Adam and Eve in the Life of Adam and Eve” in *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays* (ed. Gary Anderson, Michael Stone, and Johannes Tromp; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 57-81; William Wickes, *A Treatise on the Accentuation of the Twenty-One So-called Prose Books of the Old Testament, with a facsimile of a page of the Codex assigned to Ben-Asher in Aleppo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), 35.

³¹⁸ There are two meanings for the word עָרָם used in the HB: 1. “completely naked,” Gen 2:25; Job 1:21; 26:6; 1 Sam 19:24; Eccl 5:14; being stripped as a punishment in Hos 2:5; 2. “lightly dressed”, that is in undergarment only such as in Isaiah 20:2-4; 58:7; Mic 1:8; Job 22:6; 24:6f, 10. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament*, 56-7; Peter A. Steveson, *Psalms* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2007), 396, 400-2.

divine command to פרו ורבו (“be fruitful and multiply”), which is directed at humanity in 1:28 (see also 9:1, 7; 35:11; Jer 3:15).³¹⁹ Additionally, this judgment alters the relationship between the man and the woman, requiring her to be submissive to her husband, as reflected in והיא ימשלהו (“and he will rule over you”) (3:16).³²⁰

The passage states that the husband is meant to “rule” (משל) over the wife, but it clarifies that this term differs from the one describing humanity’s rule (רדה) over animals in Gen 1:28. These two words for “to rule” show that humanity, created in God’s image, was supposed to represent the Creator by caring for and governing creation according to the Creator’s law. This emphasises that humanity reflects God but is not identical to God. The term רדה, used in Gen 1:26, 28, for “to rule”, refers to a divinely appointed human king, as seen in Psalm 72:8 “May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth” (NRSV).³²¹

By comparing the marriage in Genesis 3:16 to the Song of Songs, we can explore the qualities of a united and harmonious relationship. For instance, the Song of Songs employs תשוקה to convey a profound and meaningful longing for intimacy. Janson Condren suggested that a more accurate translation of תשוקה in Genesis and the Song is “devoted attention” or “focus on”.³²² Interestingly, in Gen 3:16, this same desire appears as a blessing concealed within divine judgment.³²³ A wife’s natural, intimate yearning for her husband can be a

³¹⁹ Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah (Genesis 1-6:8)*, 161-2.

³²⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 156-7, 202-3. Hamilton notes that והיא modifies the feminine תשוקתה, “your desire”. The word והיא is a masculine pronoun that refers back to the masculine איש (Adam), indicating that the husband will “rule”.

³²¹ More verses for the term רדה “to rule” include 1 Kgs 5:4, 30; 9:23; Is 14:2; Ezk 29:15; 34:4; 2 Chron 8:10; Ps 110:2.

³²² Janson Condren, “The End of Desire: On the Meaning of תשוקה in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 24 (2024): 1-24.

³²³ Joe M. Sprinkle, “Sexuality, Sexual Ethics,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (ed. T. D. Alexander and David W. Baker; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003): 741-53, 742; Joachim Azevedo, “At the Door of Paradise: A Contextual Interpretation of Gen 4:7,” *BN* 100 (1999): 45-59. He advocates the positive use

positive force, helping to repair ruptured relationships caused by sin and strengthen the bond of marriage.³²⁴

The term תְּשׁוּקָה, meaning “desire” or “longing”, appears in Gen 3:16, 4:7, and Song 7:11 [ET 10]. As noted, the Song is widely regarded as referencing the Garden of Eden within our canonical understanding. When read alongside Gen 3:16, it is clear that in the Song, תְּשׁוּקָה primarily refers to sexual longing, mainly symbolising Solomon’s desire for the Shulammitte. In Gen 3:16, תְּשׁוּקָה does not mean sinful desire, which is also mentioned in Gen 4:7: “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire (תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ) is contrary to you, but you must rule over (תִּמְשַׁלְּ-בּוֹ) it.”

A sinful man yearns to dominate and reject. The noun “desire” refers to a craving to control. This craving to control later becomes linked with sin, as illustrated by Cain. The use of an imperfect verb form indicates an ongoing, unfinished action. Surrendering control can be difficult, but sin can be overcome by following the word of YHWH.

Our canonical reading of Gen 3:16 and Song of Songs suggests that the woman’s desire for her lover or husband can resemble sin. This longing might disrupt the balance of partnership, turning it into a relationship rooted in dominance and submission, similar to the desire that led to Cain’s downfall. This contrasts with the positive portrayal of desire in Song 6:13 [ET 7:1] and Gen 2:23.

of תְּשׁוּקָה to represent harmony in 3:16 and in man-woman relationships in Song 7:11. Azevedo focuses on grammar, dialogue, context, and literary structure.

³²⁴ The context clearly shows her desire for her husband rather than for children. However, in Genesis 4, it is suggested that Eve sought children or happiness through childbirth, which could only be realised within a relationship with her husband. This clarifies the meaning of תְּשׁוּקָה in Genesis 3:16 and Song 7:11 [ET 7:10].

In the Hebrew text of Gen 2:23-24, there is a wordplay between the words “woman” (אִשָּׁה) and “man” (אָדָם). These two words are combined to form the phrase “one flesh” (אֶחָד בָּשָׂר), signifying a profound, intimate bond between the two individuals. This unity is later questioned in the story of Eve’s temptation in Gen 3:6, which contains two terms, “desire” and “to become wise”, related to the wisdom tradition and the Garden narrative.

The desire to “see” (רָאָה) is shown in Song 2:14, 3:3, and 11. In Gen 3:6, the word רָאָה “see” means a desire to gain knowledge. However, in Song 8:10b, the phrase “then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace” uses the word שָׁלוֹם, which provides valuable insight. This word appears 18 times in the Song and 237 times in the HB with different meanings. The word שָׁלוֹם is often seen as meaning completeness, wholeness, intactness, good health, success, and inner peace. In Song 8:10b, it specifically relates to inner peace, which matches its use in other parts of the Bible (cf. Gen 26:31; Jer 9:7; Mal 2:6). Different versions of the English Bible translate it as “*peace*”: RSV, ESV, ASV, NASB, NKJV, JPS; “*favour*”: KJV; “*contentment*”: NIV.

The concept of peace is a fundamental aspect of the mutual love depicted in the Song. This love can only exist between equals and emphasises that the relationship between Adam and Eve is a renewed union of love after they disobeyed YHWH’s command. Despite their disobedience, they find shared possession in love and become one. Additionally, the phrase “this at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” in Gen 2:23, along with the word זֶה “this”, is interpreted as the “formula of relationship” (cf. Gen 29:14, Jdg 9:2-3, 2 Sam 5:1, 19:13-14), signifying a lasting relationship.³²⁵

³²⁵ Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1–11*, 232.

The Song alludes to the Garden of Eden, but the lovers depicted in the Song are not entirely the same as the primeval pair in the Garden before their disobedience. In the Eden narrative, both male and female were created as equals, as husband and wife, reflecting the image of the Creator. Conversely, in the Song, the woman takes the initiative in pursuing the man, who is portrayed as a king or wise figure from Wisdom literature. This implies that love-driven unity in the Song could lead to a marriage filled with happiness, similar to that of the Garden of Eden.

4.2. Women in the Wisdom Literature and the Garden Narrative

In the Garden of Eden, Eve's desire to be like God led her to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This resulted in her desire for her husband, who listened to her, and ultimately caused their return to the ground. However, humans can transcend death within the human mandate to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" after being expelled from the Garden. In this light, the primeval pair's desire for the forbidden fruit, love, and death can be seen as echoing the desire, love, and death described in Song 8:6. This comparison, within our canonical reading, deepens our understanding of how desire, love, and death connect in the narratives of human creation and the Garden of Eden, and Wisdom literature.

The Wisdom literature presents various female characters and archetypes, providing important context for how women are depicted in the Song of Songs. In the book of Proverbs, women are often categorised as either faithful wives (Prov 12:4a; 18:22; 19:14; especially 31:10) or unfaithful ones (21:9; 25:14; 27:15 "quarrelsome wife"), with the latter sometimes portrayed as prostitutes (6:26a). Additionally, Wisdom literature uses personification as a literary device to represent wisdom and its opposite, folly, as female figures. These

personifications are further distinguished by sexual faithfulness, with wisdom shown as a loyal wife and folly as an unfaithful one.

The book of Proverbs presents “Woman wisdom”, who is assertive and resolute in her speech. Conversely, the woman in the Song of Songs is loving and caring towards her beloved. While Woman wisdom speaks in public places to anyone willing to listen, the woman in the Song speaks privately to a select few. Furthermore, like Eve in the Garden, Woman wisdom does not have a father or mother to teach her, but the woman in the Song learns from her mother (Song 8:2).

Notably, the women featured in the book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs are shown taking the initiative to seek out men. These women confidently venture into the city to find their men (Prov 1:20-21; 8:1-3; 9:3; Song 3:2; 5:7), and they also involve other women in their quest (Prov 9:3, Song 5:8-6:3). The text indicates that their actions are praiseworthy. The narrator of Prov 1–9 encourages young men to seek wisdom (2:4), love her (4:6), and make her their bride (7:4).³²⁶ Additionally, the word *רֵמְזֵי חֵן* “treasures” in Proverbs 2:4 highlights that one must actively pursue, seeking wisdom as passionately as seeking *רֵמְזֵי חֵן* (Job 3:21), because they are hidden or buried, making them difficult to access. Similarly, the woman in the Song of Songs is pursued (2:8-9) and loved by her man (1:15, 2:16, 7:10), who makes her his bride (3:11, 5:1).

³²⁶ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 89; Leo G. Purdue, *Proverbs*, 89; Lucas, *Proverbs*, 59; Martin, *Proverbs*, 84; Longman III, *Proverbs*, 124. Longman considers the son to be seeking wisdom with a sense of urgency. The pursuit must be persistent because wisdom is a hidden treasure.

4.2.1 Long Life And the Blessed Are Like a Tree of Life

Prov 3:13-18

¹³ Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, ¹⁴ for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. ¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed. (ESV)

This passage begins with two proverbs that depict a state of life called “blessed” or “happy” (Ps 1:1-3). In Wisdom literature, “blessed” refers to people who follow the teachings of the wise (Prov 8:32, 34; 14:21; 16:20; 29:18). To achieve a state of blessedness, one must seek wisdom, which is within human reach, unlike in Job 28, where it is shown as beyond human grasp. Blessed individuals can attain wisdom, which is considered more valuable than silver and gold (Prov 8:18-19; and 19:11 [ET 10]).

In Proverbs 3:1-12, the father teaches his son that wisdom is the most valuable thing a human heart can desire.³²⁷ Longevity is a blessing highly valued in Wisdom literature, and those who seek and embrace wisdom are considered blessed (Prov 3:2; 22:4; Ps 1:1-3; cp. 1 Kgs 3:3-15, particularly in verses 10-11).

Prov 3:5, 7

⁵ Trust in YHWH with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes; fear YHWH, and turn away from evil. (ESV, modified)

Our canonical reading of Proverbs aligns with the narratives of Creation and the Garden of Eden, deepening our understanding of the link between the primal pair and YHWH.

³²⁷ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 114-5.

Proverbs 3:1-12 features six sayings from a father to his son, each highlighting the benefits of wisdom. Verses 3:5 and 7 specifically contain the father's advice to trust YHWH. He underlines that the son should not see himself as wise but should fear YHWH, echoing YHWH's command to Adam about not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). Instead, they should enjoy other fruits, including the fruit from the tree of life (2:16).

In Prov 3:17-18, Woman wisdom is portrayed as guiding individuals towards peace and life, symbolised by a "tree of life". Pursuing Woman Wisdom is more than just acquiring knowledge; it reflects a deep, heartfelt desire for a meaningful life. The book of Proverbs often uses the "tree of life" imagery (Prov 11:30; 13:12; 15:4) to depict wisdom as leading to a fulfilling life (3:17). These portrayals highlight the significant influence wisdom can have on those who embrace it.

Proverbs 3:19-20 states that YHWH created the universe through his "wisdom", encompassing "understanding" and "knowledge". This wisdom surpasses all human desires and is demonstrated in the life YHWH granted to humanity from the beginning (Gen 1:26, 28). Additionally, this same wisdom is used by God to establish and rule the world with justice (Pss 104:24; 136:5; Jer 10:12; 51:15).

4.2.2 An Intertextual Analysis of the Women in Proverbs and the Woman in the Song

Prov 1:1-2, 7

משלי שלמה בן-דוד מלך ישראל:

לדעת חכמה ומוסר להבין אמרי בינה:

רְאֵת יְהוָה רֵאשִׁית דַּעַת חֵכְמָה וּמוֹסֵר אֲוִילִים בְּזוֹ:

¹ The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: ² To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight,

⁷ The fear of YHWH is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (ESV, modified)

In Proverbs 1:1, the first Hebrew noun, masculine and plural, translated as “proverb” comes from the root מָשַׁל, which means “likeness”. An example of this word’s use elsewhere is in Job 41:25 [ET 33], where it states: “On earth there is not his like (מְשָׁלוֹ), a creature without fear”.³²⁸ The focus is on the various personal qualities associated with חֵכְמָה, including passages that depict females embodying wisdom (Prov 3:13-18; 4:5-9; 7:4; 8:1-36; 9:1-12).

Prov 3:13 and 8:1

אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם מְצָא חֵכְמָה וְאָדָם יִפְיֵק תְּבוּנָה:

הֲלֹא־חֵכְמָה תִּקְרָא וְתְבוּנָה תִּתֵּן קוֹלָהּ:

Prov 3:13 Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding,

Prov 8:1 Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? (ESV)

These examples of personification illuminate various facets of wisdom, such as human understanding, divine wisdom, and worldly knowledge.³²⁹ The portrayal of wisdom as a woman in Proverbs is particularly significant due to its close connection to the Song of Solomon.

³²⁸ HALOT 648, s.v. מָשַׁל I (Arabic *mitl* “the same, similarity”): BDB: 605; II מָשַׁל (Prov 1:1, 6).

³²⁹ The term חֵכְמָה is used in the Bible a total of 140 times: 32× in Prov; 28× in Qoh; 18× in Job, appearing as the pious wisdom of Israel (Prov 1:2; Job 12:2; Ps 90:12), God’s wisdom (1 Kgs 3:28; Jer 10:12; 51:15; Ps 104:24; Prov 3:19; 2 Sam 14:20; Deut 34:9; Isa 11:2), personified wisdom (Job 28:12, 18, 20, 28; Prov 8:1, 36; 9:1-6 in contrast with verses 13-18). Wisdom also reveals human experience, shrewdness (2 Sam 20:22; 1 Kgs 2:6; Isa 10:13, and the worldly wisdom of כְּדָם בְּנֵי קְדָם (of Egypt 1 Kgs 5:10; of Babylon Isa 47:10; of Edom Jer 49:7).

In Wisdom literature, wisdom is often portrayed as a female figure symbolising wisdom itself. In our canonical reading, the Song of Songs presents Woman wisdom as a character who takes the lead and expresses her desire for the man. Just as Woman wisdom and Woman folly are allowed to speak, the woman in the Song also has her voice heard.³³⁰ Throughout the Song, the female character engages in personal conversations, addressing her fellow women in sections like Song 1:2-4, 5-6; 2:7; 3:1-5; 5:2-8, 10-16; and 6:2-3, as well as her lover (such as in 1:7, 16-17; 4:16; 7:11-13; 8:1-2, and 6).

In Proverbs 8:1-2, the speaker invites her beloved to claim her, echoing the wisdom in Proverbs that encourages those who love wisdom to pursue it (verse 17, “I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me” (ESV)). Here, אָהַב “love” signifies a choice. The preceding verse, 8:13, states, “The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. I hate pride and arrogance, evil behaviour, and perverse speech”. By choosing to love and seek wisdom, one can find it. Similarly, אָבַד “hate” also indicates a deliberate choice in this context.

As noted earlier in Song 8:6, the woman pleads with the man to give himself to her, showing her intense desire to possess him. She emphasises love’s power by declaring it is more powerful than death.³³¹

4.2.3 Woman Folly and Woman Wisdom in the Garden Narrative

In the context of Prov 1–9, Woman folly stands in stark contrast to Woman wisdom. The term אִשָּׁה זָרָה (KJV, NASB: “strange woman”; RSV: “the loose woman”; ESV: “forbidden

³³⁰ LaCocque, *Romance She Wrote: A Hermeneutical Essay on Song of Songs*, 41; Brenner, “Women Poets and Authors,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs*, 88. She divides it down by verse: 61½ are by the woman, 40 by the man, 11 by various choruses, and 9, she considers to be ambiguous; S. D. Goitein, “The Song of Songs: A Female Composition,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs*, 58-66.

³³¹ See 4.1.1.2 for more details on this study.

woman”) in Prov 2:16, which refers to foreigners, is a key element in this contrast. It is derived from נָר “to be a stranger”, indicating an ethnic foreignness to Israel (Is 1:7; Hos 7:9; 8:7).

Also, the term often refers to what is morally separate from God or his covenant people (Pss 58:4; 78:30). When referring to a woman in the book of Proverbs, it can mean adulteress or prostitute (cf. Prov 2:16; 5:3, 20; 7:5; 22:14; 23:33). In Prov 6:24, she is referred to as אִשָּׁת רָע “a woman of evil”.³³² When the term is translated as “strange or unfaithful wife”, the implication is that she is a stranger to the son being instructed in divine wisdom.³³³ She is outside the framework of the covenant community, even though she seems to dwell in it. Paradoxically, she may be an Israelite woman, or even Israel, because her marriage is referred to as אֶת-בְּרִית אֱלֹהֵיָהּ “the covenant with God” in Prov 2:17.³³⁴

The passages all describe the same idea – Woman folly. On one hand, Woman wisdom promises blessings to those who listen to her and patiently await eternal life and divine favour (8:35). On the other hand, those who are ignorant and gullible face death and Sheol (cf. 2:18; 7:27). Woman folly is portrayed as a seductress who uses her deceitful tongue as her most powerful tool. Her words are smooth (Prov 2:16), and her lips are dripping with honey (5:3).

The concept of Woman folly in the book of Proverbs (4:11b; 5:3b; 7:10a) is compared to the woman in the Song of Songs (4:11a). Both have seductive, honeyed lips, described as “to drip with honey” (תִּטְפְּנָה) in Prov 5:3 and “your lips drip with honey” (נִפְתָּ תִטְפְּנָה שִׁפְתֹתַיִךְ) in Song 4:11. In Proverbs, a seductive woman is described as having these lips, while in the Song of Songs, the man praises the sweet lips of his “bride” instead of a stranger. The contrast is that

³³² Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 134-141. Fox suggests the “strange woman” identified as “another man’s wife”.

³³³ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 96.

³³⁴ L. A. Snijders, “The Meaning of נָר in the Old Testament: An Exegetical Study,” *OTS* 10 (1954): 85-6.

while the lips of the strange woman flow with honey, they ultimately lead to death and Sheol (שְׁאוֹל) (Prov 5:5-6; cf. 2:18-19).³³⁵

The imagery in Song 4:11 depicts wisdom, similar to the father's wisdom in Prov 24:13-14. In Prov 8:6-7, Woman wisdom asserts that she speaks נְיָיִן “noble things”, which, in our intertextual reading, can be interpreted as to “correspond”, to “oppose”, or to “stand before”- both to confront the wicked and to symbolise a helper that corresponds to the man in Gen 2:18, “Then YHWH God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him’”. This same term is employed later in Gen 2:20b, “But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him”, emphasising that no suitable helper, as his counterpart (עֵזְרָא), was found for the man. Although Eve was created and presented to the man as a helper, she did not speak noble things, such as YHWH's command; instead, she listened to the serpent's deception.

In Wisdom literature, men are presented with a choice between Woman wisdom and Woman folly. Although these two women may appear similar, their speech reveals their fundamental differences. Woman wisdom offers knowledge and understanding, leading to a virtuous life. Conversely, Woman folly speaks deceptive and seductive words, which ultimately lead to death. This is illustrated by the woman (Gen 3:4), Eve, who desired to be wise, listened to the serpent's tempting words (3:5) instead of the command of YHWH “not to eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”, and consequently encountered

³³⁵ Gale A. Yee, “I have perfumed my bed with myrrh’: the Foreign Woman (*iššāzārā*) in Proverbs 1–9,” *JSOT* 43 (1989): 53-68, 59.

death instead of wisdom (3:19). For men, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits” (Prov 18:21).³³⁶

As mentioned earlier, this recounts the story of Adam and Eve. It describes the moment when Eve ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and then gave it to her husband, Adam. Even though Eve did not use persuasive words, Adam chose to eat the fruit to be “like God”, induced by the cunning lies of the serpent, who was with Eve when she offered the fruit (Gen 3:6). This desire for the forbidden fruit, instead of obeying YHWH’s commands, led to human mortality, and thus the ultimate return to dust.

In the Song of Songs, the woman depicted is as alluring as the Woman folly in Proverbs. The word “milk” is used to describe the woman’s lips as tasting like honey (Song 4:11). She also invites the man to spend the night with her (Song 7:12 [ET 11]) and promises that he will be satisfied and delighted in her garden, which is a metaphor for her body (Song 7:13 [ET 12]; 8:2).

However, unlike the consequences of falling for the seductive words of Woman folly, the consequences of falling for the sweet words of the woman in the Song are not death or destruction. Instead, she becomes a seal on his heart, as the power of love is stronger than death (Song 8:6-7).

Our canonical reading of the passages from the Song of Solomon and Proverbs, in relation to the narratives of the creation and the Garden, enhances our understanding of the themes of the human mandate and the judgment of death, as reflected in the phrase “to dust

³³⁶ Carole Fontaine, *Smooth Words: Women, Proverbs, and Performance in Biblical Wisdom* (JSOT Supple 356; Sheffield: Sheffield, 2002), 47.

you shall return” (Gen 3:19c). These narratives provide a rich context for intertextual analysis, deepening our understanding of these fundamental concepts.

It is worth noting that the Creator God’s declaration of the mandate to humanity in Gen 1:28 was given before the disobedience of the primeval pair in the Garden. From this perspective, humans can conquer death by fulfilling the mandate to “be fruitful and multiply” through the power of love, as described in the Song as stronger than death (Song 8:6-7). This allows humans to persist in existence through their offspring, fulfilling the mandate beyond death through love.

4.3 Relationship in the Garden of Eden and the Locked Garden in the Song

The creation account in Genesis 1:27-28 emphasises the equality of men and women while also pointing out their differences. Both are created in God's image, making each uniquely valuable. Jeremiah 18:4-6, when read alongside Genesis 1:26-27, depicts God as a personal and relational potter, highlighting humans’ potential to develop a meaningful relationship with him.

Gen 2:21, 22

וַיִּפֹּל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים תְּרִדָּמָה עַל־הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצְלָעֹתָיו וַיִּסְגֶּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתְּנָהּ:

וַיָּבֶן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַצֶּלַע אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח מִן־הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיִּבְרָא אֶל־הָאָדָם:

²¹ So YHWH God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that YHWH God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. (ESV, modified)

In Gen 2:19, YHWH brings the animals to Adam to be named and sees that there is no helper for him. The verb *מָצָא* in Gen 2:20 indicates that *לֹא-מָצָא* “it was not found for *adam*/human.” Accordingly, God causes Adam to fall into a deep, almost lifeless sleep *וַתִּרְדָּמָה* (cp. Gen 15:12). The combination of the words *וַיִּפֹּל*, *וַתִּרְדָּמָה* in Gen 2:21 (“fall” and “deep sleep”, often implying death, see Ps 45:6 and 1 Sam 4:10) and *וַיִּשְׁנָתִי* in Job 3:13 to “fall asleep” often inferring death *יָנוּחַ* “be at rest” (cp. Ps 13:4 [ET 3]; Jer 51:39, 57), suggests Adam is in a state of deep unconsciousness while the woman (*אִשָּׁה*) is created “וַיִּבְרָן” (i.e., built from Adam’s “side”, “rib”, or “beam”). The word *וַתִּרְדָּמָה* is used in the HB to describe a sleep made by God for his purposes (1 Sam 26:12; Is 29:10; Job 4:13; 33:15). In this instance, *אִשָּׁה* is crafted by YHWH *’ēlōhîm*.

The creation of man in the Bible is often described using the word *צָרַח* “formed”, which is repeatedly found in Gen 2:7, 8, and 19. However, when it comes to the creation of woman, the word *בָּנָה* “built” is used in Gen 2:22. This distinction is significant because it emphasises that woman is not created from the ground like man, nor is she formed by the breath of YHWH God. The term *וַיִּבְרָן* “and he built” in Gen 2:22 is used when describing the creation of Eve. This is the only instance in the Bible where the word “build” is used in the context of creation. In my intertextual reading, the verb *בָּנָה* can be related to the word *בִּינָה*, which means “intelligence, skill, and understanding” (cf. Ex 31:3; Dt 32:28; Prov 3:13). This suggests that Eve is not inferior to Adam, but rather, she was created with a sense of understanding or knowledge. Additionally, the use of the word *אִשָּׁה* “woman” to describe her and the fact that she is taken from *אִישׁ* “man”, highlights her “gendered existence from the very beginning”.³³⁷

³³⁷ Kraus, *Gender Issues in Ancient and Reformation Translations of Genesis 1–4*, 25.

Eve was created as a fitting helper for Adam, providing him companionship and family. Their relationship is based on equality, highlighting a harmonious and intimate bond between husband and wife that reflects the sexual and marital connection described in Genesis 2:23-24. These themes are central to the HB, particularly in relation to the purpose of the mandate.³³⁸ The story of Adam and Eve in the Bible represents human marriage and the covenant between YHWH and his people in ancient Israel. In this understanding, their disobedience—that is, Adam and Eve or the covenanted people to YHWH—has consequences that affect all aspects of human life, including the relationship between man and woman.

After the judgment of YHWH, this relationship became distorted, giving rise to a new desire mentioned in Gen 3:16b: “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” This desire first emerged in 3:6, where there was an aspiration to “be like God in knowing good and evil”. This change in the relationship coincided with a change in location.³³⁹ The blessed marriage was established in the Garden of Eden, but the relationship continued outside the Garden in the human mandates.

The link between the Garden narrative and the Song starts with the word גַּן (“garden”) in Song 4:12 (see also 4:15). The garden setting in the Song resembles the Garden of Eden and symbolises marriage. It reflects a scene of joy rather than tragedy. The male and female characters in the Song correspond to Adam’s creation in Genesis 1:27 and illustrate the relationship between man and woman in Genesis 2:24. When they marry, the phrase “one

³³⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah* (Genesis I–VI 8), 134; Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 219-20.

³³⁹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990, reprinted paperback edition in 2012), 123-5; Dexter E. Callender, “The Primal Human in Ezekiel and the Image of God,” in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (eds. Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2000), 175-93; Callender, *Adam in Myth and History*, 109-11.

flesh” is explained through verse 23: to be Adam’s “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” signifies being related by blood.³⁴⁰ Thus, “one flesh” suggests they become “kin”, either legally or symbolically. This first marriage creates a model for understanding later marriages.

The Song of Songs interacts with Genesis 3 by challenging the narrative and reversing the consequences of disobedience. This is demonstrated in the refrain of Song of Songs 7:11: “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.” The term תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ “his desire” appears three times in the Bible: Genesis 3:16, 4:7, and Song of Songs 7:11.³⁴¹ In Genesis 4:7b, YHWH says to Cain, “And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it”, assuming a personified sin as the subject, sin’s devoted focus is towards Cain, which he needed to rule over but failed to recognise. In this context, we can gain a deeper understanding of Genesis 3:16b, “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you,” which conveys the meaning more clearly.³⁴² However, the link between Genesis 3:16 and Song of Songs 7:11 highlights a strong connection between the two passages, centred on “a devoted attention or focus upon” their male partners, as seen in the word “desire”. Song 7:11, the phrase וְעָלַי suggests that the lover’s or Solomon’s desire is “over me,” indicating his focus on the Shulammitte, his wife. This desire reflects love and is pleasing to his wife, as shown in Adam’s exclamation in Genesis 2:23.

In Genesis 3:16, the woman’s desire is directed toward her husband, symbolising a struggle or conflict between them, as reflected in God’s judgment. The woman will have a

³⁴⁰This term appears in relationships such as between Laban and Jacob (Gen 29:14); Abimelech and the Shechemites (Judg 9:2); David and the Israelites (2 Sam 5:1); David and the elders of Judah (2 Sam 19:12); and David and his nephew Amasa (2 Sam 19:13; cf. 2 Sam 17:2; 1 Chron 2:16-17).

³⁴¹Condren, “The End of Desire: On the Meaning of תְּשׁוּקָה in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *JHS* 24, 1-2, 4; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81-2; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17*, 201.

³⁴²Condren, “The End of Desire: On the Meaning of תְּשׁוּקָה in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *JHS* 24, 24.

desire to rule over her husband, as expressed in “Your desire for your husband, but he shall rule over you” (3:16b). This desire is present from her actions in Genesis 3:6 and manifests after the disobedience in Eden. Conversely, the man is depicted as dominating her, revealing his corrupted and sinful nature. However, in Song of Songs 7:11, the man shows a positive desire for the woman (the Shulammitte), acknowledging their mutual belonging. This love and desire are evident throughout the Song, especially when the refrain appears (8:4, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases” (ESV)).

In the book of Proverbs, wisdom is often compared to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Prov 3:18a; 8:35a).³⁴³ “A tree of life” in Proverbs 3:18 symbolises Wisdom itself (also 11:30 and 15:4), representing the righteous person’s life and words that help others within the context of 3:13-20. In Proverbs 13:12, it signifies a person who fears God and desires to do so. The same phrase with the definite article refers to “the tree of life” in Eden (Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24).³⁴⁴ Conversely, the Song depicts the orderly functioning of creation in the Garden of Eden, where the primeval pair lived in harmony. The relationship between man and woman in the Song is seen as a reversal of the judgment from Gen 3:16. From our canonical perspective, the Song appears to reverse that story, showing the restoration of human marriage.

CONCLUSION

The Song of Solomon references the Garden of Eden, where every tree is good for sight and food (Gen 2:9; 13:10; Isa 51:3; Ezek 28:13; 31:8, 9). The woman in the Song is likened to

³⁴³ Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25-27* (SBL 96; Atlanta: SBL Press, 1988), 103-4.

³⁴⁴ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 113.

a garden, depicted as water streaming down on the ground, making the garden fertile (Song 4:12, 15). The water imagery strengthens the garden imagery, and Solomon refers to both מַעְיָן “fountain” (Song 4:15, 6; 5:1; 6:2; 8:13) and “garden” (גַּן) in 4:12. In Gen 2:10-14, it is mentioned that in the Garden of Eden, four rivers were formed by the heads of water, each of which watered a vast area. Such wells, called בְּאֵר “well”, are also mentioned in other parts of Genesis (16:14; 21:19, 25, 30; 24:11, 20; 26:15-32; 29:2-10), Wisdom literature, and the Song of Solomon. These wells are essential for sustenance. The well mentioned in Song 4:15 is a source of “living waters”.

As the above states, the use of creation language in the Song and Wisdom literature highlights the importance of recognising the wisdom of creation for humanity. In our canonical reading, the “bride” in the Song of Songs represents Woman wisdom from Proverbs, a key figure who openly expresses her longing for the man, much like Eve in the Garden of Eden, but still distinct from her. Throughout the Song, this female figure engages in personal dialogues, as Woman wisdom promises blessings to those who listen and patiently wait for eternal life (Prov 8:35). This indicates an understanding that “The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil”, which encompasses evil deeds and perverse speech (8:13), echoing the serpent in the Garden and the failure of the primeval pair to heed YHWH and their subsequent failure by eating from the tree of life.

In Song 4, the bride is portrayed as a woman of exceptional wisdom, possessing qualities beyond those of an ordinary woman. The Woman wisdom in Proverbs also sees herself as a bride since she encompasses all these qualities. In our canonical reading, the bride in the Song is compared to a walled garden, symbolising protection, similar to Job 1:10, “to

put a fence around” and the Garden of Eden in Gen 2:8. As Woman wisdom in Proverbs, the bride in the Song invites her lover into her sanctuary to partake of her fruits.

When examining the Song in the context of Wisdom literature and Gen 1–3 in the Bible, one can see parallels to the story of the Garden of Eden. The Song depicts the divine interactions between YHWH *ělōhîm* and humans in the Garden, where the primeval pair failed to show love to their Creator by not obeying the words of YHWH *ělōhîm*, which should have been an expression of love by revering their Creator.

In the Song and Wisdom literature, the human marriage relationship is seen as a reflection of the relationship between God and his people. Through it, the woman and the beloved in the Song resemble Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden, as God blessed them in Genesis 1:28.

CHAPTER 5

Ecclesiastes: Life Outside the Garden of Eden

5.1 Intertextual Reading of Ecclesiastes and Genesis 1–3

In our canonical reading, chapters 2–4 explored how Genesis 1–3 narratives relate to Job, Proverbs and the Song of Songs. This includes examining themes of knowing good and evil in the Garden of Eden and the human mandate. The connection between Genesis 1–3 and Wisdom literature is evident in the text, theology, literal meaning, and overarching themes.

To establish a connection between Genesis and Ecclesiastes, certain keywords can be identified to create a thematic link. One such word is **הֶבְרֵל** (“breath, vanity, vapour”), which appears in Eccl 1:2 and is repeated 38 times throughout the book.³⁴⁵ The term **הֶבְרֵל** conveys the idea of something that is “vain or futile”. This word might be related to Abel’s name, as he was the first to face the judgment of death on humans in Genesis 3:19, “for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”. Abel’s death resulted from Cain’s anger towards his brother Abel after his offering to God was “looked with favour” by YHWH (see Gen 4:4), whereas Cain’s offering was “not looked with favour” (4:5). This rejection led Cain to kill Abel (see 4:6-8), although YHWH commands Cain sternly in 4:6, “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it”. This sequence appears to stem from Adam and Eve’s disobedience in the Garden, which then escalated after the expulsion from the Garden (see also Gen 6:5). Accordingly, it is possible in

³⁴⁵ The word **הֶבְרֵל** occurs 40 times in the MT, including eight times as the name **הֶבְרֵל** in Genesis (4:2 (×2), 4 (×2), 8 (×2), 9, 25). It is used as a noun, meaning “breath,” “wind,” or “vanity” in Isaiah 41:16, where it parallels **רוּחַ**. It is used as “wind” in Gen 3:8, 8:1, and Eccl 1:6; 8:8; 11:4 (see Isa 57:13; Ezek 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5; Job 37:21; Pss 1:4; 103:16).

our canonical reading to understand that Qohelet refers to humanity and Adam in Eccl 1:2, employing the name of Abel.

By reading Genesis and Ecclesiastes in a canonical way, we can observe a synchronic relationship between them. This chapter examines the connections between Genesis 1–3 and Ecclesiastes. Much scholarship agrees that there are clear links between Ecclesiastes and the early chapters of the book of Genesis.³⁴⁶ For instance, commentators on Ecclesiastes explore common themes in both texts.³⁴⁷ Through observations and analytical intertextual reading of Genesis, particularly chapters 1–3 and 4, alongside the book of Ecclesiastes, the themes of Wisdom literature are reflected, demonstrating God’s governance through his wisdom (cf. Prov 3:19-20; 8:22-31; Ps 104:8-13; Job 38:8-12). In Ecclesiastes, Qohelet emphasises the idea of enjoyment and the toil of life, along with the inevitable human mortality related to the knowledge of good and evil, although it does not explicitly address the latter.³⁴⁸

The books of Ecclesiastes and Job are often viewed as sceptical types of Wisdom literature. In this chapter, I will present a canonical reading where Qohelet realises that human wisdom cannot lift the curse of God on Adam and humanity. Therefore, Qohelet believes a happy ending cannot be expected. This could be the point of divergence between the books of

³⁴⁶ Bollhagen, *Ecclesiastes*, 36; William P. Brown, *Ecclesiastes: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Interpretation; ed. James Luther Mays; Louisville, Ky: John Knox Press, 2000), 24-5; Norbert Lohfink, *Qohelet: A Continental Commentary* (CCS; trans. Sean McEvenue; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 50; Craig G. Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes* (BCOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 41, 91-2; Peter Enns, *Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 3, 139; Michael V. Fox, *Ecclesiastes: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPSBC; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 13-4; William H. U. Anderson, “The Curse of Work in Qoheleth: An Exposé of Genesis 3:17–19 in Ecclesiastes.” *EQ* 70 (1998): 99-113.

³⁴⁷ Thomas Kruger, *Qohelet: A Commentary* (trans. O. C. Dean Jr. ed Klaus Baltzer; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 72-3; James L. Crenshaw, *Qohelet: The Ironic Wink* (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina, 2013), 14-6, 64-6; Norbert Lohfink, *Qohelet: A Continental Commentary*, 50, 67.

³⁴⁸ Bollhagen, *Ecclesiastes*, 16; Mark R. Sneed, *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies* (SBL; ed. Mark R. Sneed; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 3.

Ecclesiastes and Job, although both acknowledge pain and sorrow as part of the human experience. In Eccl 1:17, “And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind”, the author reflects on the idea of contemplating the opposite of wisdom and knowledge, which he describes as “madness and folly”. The book of Ecclesiastes uses wisdom and knowledge interchangeably, as it does with madness and folly. The text suggests that indulging in immoral pleasures is the same as embracing madness and evil.

Qohelet tried to find the purpose of life by seeking both wisdom and pleasure, but he was unsuccessful. Instead, he discovered that pursuing both wisdom and foolishness only deepened his sorrow. Being aware of evil is a heavy burden, and Qohelet is troubled by all he has endured in life. Despite his achievements and life experiences, he remains unable to uncover the true meaning of life.

However, Ecclesiastes shows that remembering one’s Creator is essential. This is a straight statement in Eccl 12:1, where Qohelet states, “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth”. The book of Ecclesiastes expresses Qohelet’s frustration with the fact that no one knows the answer to the question by using the phrase “Who knows?” (Eccl 2:19; 3:21; 6:8, 12; 8:1; 10:14). The passage states that even a foolish person can inherit the work, projects, and outcomes of others (2:19-20). However, the reference in this and other parts of the text gives the impression that everything is ultimately meaningless.

The phrase “Who knows?” has an enigmatic meaning and appears several times in Ecclesiastes, indicating a shift from the enjoyment of life before the primeval pair disobeyed the command of YHWH “not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”. After their

disobedience, the phrase “Who knows?” uttered by Qohelet takes on a new meaning: a life characterised by pain, toil for food, and ultimately returning to dust.

Eccl 11:9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

12:13-14¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. ¹⁴For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. (NRSV)

In the final form of the book, Eccl 12:13-14 confirms and addresses this sceptical enigma positively. In Eccl 11:9, Qohelet introduces the idea that God judges humans at any time and in any manner. The context of this statement is a call to enjoy life while possible, but it also suggests that people should be mindful of their actions because they will be held accountable by God. From this perspective, enjoyment is also a divine imperative for which one is responsible. Although the language in 12:14 is partly similar to that in 11:9, the content is quite different. In 12:14, the accountability specifically relates to obeying God’s commandments. The passage indicates that anything hidden will eventually be uncovered, regardless of whether it is positive or negative. It can be argued that the perspective in 12:13-14 is not contradictory to the rest of Ecclesiastes, which stresses the importance of “fearing God” (3:14; 5:6 [ET 7]; 7:18; 8:12). Likewise, Proverbs also underscores the importance of obeying divine commandments.³⁴⁹ Furthermore, Ecclesiastes offers a unique and comprehensive interpretation of the Bible. By examining the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden, alongside Ecclesiastes, we can gain valuable insights into the knowledge of good and evil and the human mandate.

³⁴⁹ Seow, *Ecclesiastes: a new translation with introduction and commentary*, 395; Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 282; Norbert Lohfink, *Qoheleth*, 144; Enns, *Ecclesiastes*, 115.

5.1.1 The Term הַבָּל in Ecclesiastes and the Judgment in the Garden of Eden

The word הַבָּל is a key term in the book of Ecclesiastes, carrying multiple meanings such as “futility”, “vanity”, “meaninglessness”, “uselessness”, and “wind”. Qohelet employs the metaphor of הַבָּל to convey the complexities and uncertainties of life. In Ecclesiastes, הַבָּל has two primary meanings—temporal brevity and existential absurdity.³⁵⁰ It often appears in the phrase הַבָּל הַבָּלִים, which means “vanity of vanities”. This phrase reflects the unknowable and unanswerable aspects of the human predicament. The word הַבָּל does not have a single definition that applies in every case, making its precise meaning in each context difficult to determine.

Ecc1 1:2 and 1:14-18

1:2

הַבָּל הַבָּלִים אָמַר קִהְלֵת הַבָּל הַבָּלִים הַפֶּל הַבָּל:

Vanity of vanities, says the Qohelet, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. (ESV, modified)

1:14-18

רְאִיתִי אֶת-כָּל-הַמַּעֲשִׂים שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִנֵּה הַפֶּל הַבָּל וְרַעוּת רוּחַ:

מַעֲנֵת לֹא-יִיכַל לְתַקֵּן וְחֶסְרוֹן לֹא-יִיכַל לְהַמְנוֹת:

דִּבַּרְתִּי אֲנִי עִם-לִבִּי לֵאמֹר אֲנִי הִנֵּה הַגְּדֹלְתִי וְהוֹסַפְתִּי חֲכָמָה עַל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה לִפְנֵי עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַם וְלִבִּי רָאָה הַרְבֵּה חֲכָמָה וְדַעַת:

וְאֶתְנֶה לִבִּי לְדַעַת חֲכָמָה וְדַעַת הוֹלְלוֹת וְשִׁכְלוֹת יְדַעְתִּי שֶׁגַּם-זֶה הוּא רַעְיוֹן רוּחַ:

כִּי בָרַב חֲכָמָה רַב-כְּפֶעַס וְיוֹסִיף דַּעַת יוֹסִיף מְכָאוֹב:

¹⁴ I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. ¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted. ¹⁶ I said in my heart, “I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over

³⁵⁰ James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes* (OTL: Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 57.

Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.”¹⁷ And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow. (ESV)

Qohelet repeatedly uses the word הֶבֶל “vanity” and pairs it with וְרָעוּת רִוּחַ “chasing the wind” throughout the book of Ecclesiastes (1:14; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 16; 6:9).³⁵¹ This pairing suggests that there is no real chance or value in achieving success (1:14). Connecting Gen 3–4 with Eccl 1:2, the five uses of הֶבֶל in 1:2 are particularly noteworthy.³⁵²

According to Ecclesiastes 1:18, Qohelet states that “much wisdom is much vexation and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow”. Qohelet believes that true wisdom can only be attained through significant frustration and pain, and that pursuing it can also lead to increased sorrow.³⁵³ The dilemma in 1:15, “What is crooked cannot be made straight”, can be interpreted intertextually as suggesting that life contains imperfections and gaps due to the disobedience of the primeval pair in the Garden of Eden, which occurred before they knew good and evil. This indicates that what matters is not the outcome of becoming like God but rather the decision to disobey. This is the perspective Qohelet adopts in reading Gen 1–3, which leads him to “fear God and keep his commandments” in Eccl 12:13 (see 3:14; 5:7; 8:12-13). This view also explains why it is impossible to correct what has already been done. It is important to note that Qohelet does not completely reject the concept of meaning but finds it difficult to fully understand it. This difficulty is expressed through the use of the term “vanity” or “absurdity”. In verse 1:17, the phrase “I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind” is used, with “striving” being translated from the Hebrew רָעָיוֹן. This is because gaining knowledge of good

³⁵¹ Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 102.

³⁵² McKeown, *Genesis*, 39-40.

³⁵³ It is also to be noted that the Vulgate renders it as *afflictio spiritus*, “affliction/torment of the spirit,”

and evil results from disobedience to the word of YHWH, leading to hard work and toil, and ultimately returning to dust (Gen 3:16-19).

In the context of the idea of “vanity, absurdity,” life under the sun cannot be fully understood, much like trying to steer the wind. While there might be some meaning to life, it remains an enigma that cannot be grasped entirely. Qohelet seeks wisdom, but sadly, his search results in frustration and pain. The term מִשְׁלֵי “proverb” in Prov 1:1-6 refers to wise sayings presented as enigmatic or allusive, with the words מְלִיצָה “enigma” and or חִידוֹת “riddles” indicating how they appear to those who do not understand wisdom.³⁵⁴

Prov 1:2, 6

לְדַעַת חֲכָמָה וּמוֹסֵר לְהַבִּין אִמְרֵי בִינָה:
לְהַבִּין מִשְׁלֵי וּמְלִיצָה דְבָרֵי חֲכָמִים וְחִידוֹתָם:

² To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight,
⁶ to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. (ESV)

Fools are unable to understand wisdom or the teachings because they intentionally refuse to learn and reject knowledge. These fools are unteachable and despise the word of God (cf. Prov 1:7; 3:11; 6:30; 18:3; 23:9, 22; cp. 2 Sam 12:9-10; Pss 31:18 [ET 19]; 123:4).³⁵⁵ Nonetheless, Qohelet concludes that pursuing wisdom is futile and as painful as trying to catch the wind.

³⁵⁴ Steinmann, *Proverbs*, 53;

³⁵⁵ Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1:1-15:29*, 181.

The above can also be seen in the pairing of Cain (קַיִן) and Abel (הָבֶל) in the immediate context of their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Cain was עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה, meaning “a tiller of the ground” (Gen 4:2b), and his name in Gen 4:1 is explained as meaning “to acquire” or “to possess”, which can be linked to his gaining and settling in the land of Nod (בְּאֶרֶץ-נוֹד, “the land of wandering”) in verse 16, after killing his brother Abel.³⁵⁶

Gen 4:1-2, 11-12

וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת-חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת-קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת-יְהוָה:
וַתִּסַּף לְלֵדָת אֶת-אָחִיו אֶת-הָבֶל וַיְהִי-הֶבֶל רֹעֵה צֹאן וְקַיִן הָיָה עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה:

וַעֲתָה אָרוּר אַתָּה מִן-הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר פָּצְתָה אֶת-פִּיהָ לְקַחַת אֶת-דַּמִּי אֶחָיו מִיָּדְךָ:
כִּי תַעֲבֹד אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה לֹא-תִסַּף תִּתֶּן-לָהּ לֶחֶם וְנָדָד תִּהְיֶה בְּאֶרֶץ:

¹ Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have produced a man with the help of YHWH.” ² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground.

¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” (ESV, modified)

Genesis 4 has many intertextual connections with the narrative of creation presented in Genesis 1–3. Therefore, it is more accurate to see the curse on Cain in Genesis 4:11-12 as a consequence of his disobedience to God’s command. This curse is similar to the one given to the serpent in Genesis 3:14 and to Adam in verses 17-19.

Although he was cursed by YHWH and declared to become “a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth” (Gen 4:10-12), Cain travelled east of Eden and “built a city, and he called the

³⁵⁶ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11*:26, 275; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 327-8. The term קנה primarily means “to acquire or possess” (cf. 25:10; 33:19), rather than “to create” (e.g., 14:19, 22).

name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch” (4:17).³⁵⁷ This passage shows that Cain deliberately defied YHWH by settling down instead of wandering, which suggests that he did not fear God. Cain disobeyed YHWH’s instructions, and as a result, he acquired land and built the city of Enoch, naming it after his son. This city lasted for seven generations until it was inhabited by Tubal-cain before the Flood. It also brought about hard work, toil, and ultimately, returning to dust with no sign of the human mandate to procreate in Genesis 1:28 (cp. Gen 9:7 Noah was told to “be fruitful and multiply” as a wanderer; 12:1-2 and 17:1-8 Abraham was also instructed as a wanderer that YHWH would “multiply you greatly”).

In Genesis 4:12, it is noted that Cain was cursed to wander; however, he settled in the land of Nod, defying the command of YHWH. In 4:16, it states that “Then Cain went away from the presence of YHWH and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden”. Conversely, the Israelites were granted cities by God as a gift, not due to their own efforts, in Deuteronomy 6:10, after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness following their salvation from slavery in Egypt: “And when YHWH your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build.”

In contrast to Cain, Abel (הַבֶּל) signifies a brief and fleeting life (Gen 4:25) after his offering is deemed acceptable and pleasing to God (4:4). He is the first to exemplify כָּל־חַוְלַת־אָדָם “the whole duty of man” (Eccl 12:13) in the Bible. The phrase וְנִתְּנוּ מִרְעָה אֶחָד, meaning “given by one shepherd” in Ecclesiastes 12:11, echoes Abel’s role as a shepherd (Gen 4:2) and his offering of the firstborn of his flock to God, which led to him being killed by Cain.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁷ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 306; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 232; McKeown, *Genesis*, 41.

³⁵⁸ The term מִנְחָה “offering” is a common word for tribute, a gift, or an offering (the main word for the offering in Lev 2). The content of the offering in Lev 2 is vegetables, as opposed to animals.

Ecc 1:2

הַבָּל הַבָּלִים אָמַר קִהְלֵת הַבָּל הַבָּלִים הַפֶּל הַבָּל:

“Vanity of vanities,” Qohelet says, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” (my translation)

12:11, 13-14

דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים כְּדֹרְבָנוֹת וְכַמְשֻׁמְרוֹת נְטוּעִים בְּעֲלֵי אֲסָפוֹת נִתְּנוּ מֵרֵעָה אֶחָד:

סוֹף דְּבַר הַפֶּל נִשְׁמַע אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יִרְא וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו שְׁמֹר כִּי־זֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם:

כִּי אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים יָבֵא בְּמִשְׁפָּט עַל כָּל־נֶעְלָם אִם־טוֹב וְאִם־רָע:

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.

¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (ESV)

In Ecc 12:11, the phrase *בְּעֲלֵי אֲסָפוֹת* or “the collected sayings” (i.e., *דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים* “words of the wise”), is said to be “given (*נִתְּנוּ*) by one shepherd”.³⁵⁹ In the context of 12:9-14, the metaphor of God as a shepherd is used. The passage then progresses to seeing God as the shepherd who is the source of life over death, wisdom over folly, and good over evil (cf. Ps 23). Therefore, verse 11 indicates that God is the one shepherd who is the origin of wisdom.³⁶⁰

The passage references God in 12:14 and concludes in verses 13-14 that one should fear God and keep his commandments, as reflected in the phrase *כִּי־זֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם* “for this (is) all (duty of) the adam” which is considered wise in this context. This can refer to Abel and his offering to YHWH, who “looked with favour”, whereas Adam failed to keep the commandment in Gen 2:17 – “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you

³⁵⁹ Bollhagen, *Ecclesiastes*, 427, 431-2; Fredericks & Estes, *Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs*, 248-9.

³⁶⁰ Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 124-5.

eat of it you shall surely die” – in the Garden narrative.³⁶¹ Nevertheless, whether humans “with every secret thing” are “good or evil” (Eccl 12:13-14), Qohelet stresses that humans are constantly under judgment in life (see also Eccl 3:17) after the Garden of Eden.

Eccl 3:17

אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְּלִבִּי אֶת־הַצְּדִיק וְאֶת־הַרְשָׁע יִשְׁפֹּט הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי־עַתָּה לְכָל־חַפֵּץ וְעַל כָּל־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה שָׁם:

I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work. (ESV)

Wisdom and fear of God are also connected to his commandments in Eccl 3:14 and 5:6 [ET 7], which reflect YHWH’s instructions to Adam in the Garden of Eden.³⁶²

Eccl 3:11, 14 and 5:6 [ET 7]

אֶת־הַכֹּל עָשָׂה יְפֶה בְּעֵתוֹ גַּם אֶת־הָעוֹלָם נָתַן בְּלִבָּם מִבְּלִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִמְצָא הָאָדָם אֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים מֵרֵאשִׁית וְעַד־סוֹף:

יָדַעְתִּי כִּי כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה הָאֱלֹהִים הוּא יִהְיֶה לְעוֹלָם עָלְיוֹ אֵין לְהוֹסִיף וּמִמֶּנּוּ אֵין לְגָרַע וְהָאֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה שְׂרָאוֹ מִלְּפָנָיו:

כִּי בָּרַב חַלְמוֹת וְהַבְּלִים וּדְבָרִים הַרְבֵּה כִּי אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יִרָא:

¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

¹⁴ I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.

5:7 For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but God is the one you must fear. (ESV)

³⁶¹ The ambiguity over the omitted word has led to various translations that “this is the duty of all men” (ASV, RSV), “this applies to all men” (NASB), “this is the whole duty of all men”, (NRSV, ESV).

³⁶² Fredericks & Estes, *Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs*, 249.

Qohelet uses the word עֶלְמָה “eternity” in verse 11, and in verse 14, he notes that the meaning of עֶלְמָה “forever” has been ingrained in the human heart since creation and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:7-9 and 3:22). Qohelet emphasises the importance of God’s words and actions being inseparable. For example, just as the disobedience of the primeval pair to YHWH’s command led to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the human mandate to procreate, as stated in Gen 1:28, has been consistently fulfilled.

In this light, Qohelet in 3:14 emphasises that God’s actions are consistent with his word (cf. Dt 4:2: “You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of YHWH your God with which I am charging you”; 13:1 [ET 12:32]; cp. Prov 30:6). The phrase “fear of YHWH” is frequently used in Wisdom literature to describe a life of reverence and awe towards God (Eccl 12:13; Prov 10:27; 14:27; 19:23). This idea recurs throughout Proverbs, where it is associated with knowledge, wisdom, evil, and life (e.g., Prov 1:7, 29; 2:5; 3:7; 9:10; 15:33); the phrase links to knowledge and wisdom in some verses and to evil in others (3:7, 8:13; 10:27).

The book of Ecclesiastes strongly emphasises this concept, as Qohelet suggests that God’s actions are mysterious and beyond human comprehension (7:13; 8:17; 11:5). According to Qohelet, humans have been caught between the times that God controls and the incomprehensible work of God since the primeval pair failed to keep the word of YHWH in the Garden. Qohelet recognises that fearing God is the right response both in the Garden and today.³⁶³

It is noticeable that there is a link between the fear of God and the themes of Qohelet’s teachings (3:14; 5:6 [ET 7]; 7:18; 8:12-13). A canonical reading of these verses also shows a

³⁶³ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 35-6.

close connection between the fear of God, the disobedience of the primeval pair and the judgment in the Garden of Eden narrative.

Ecc1 2:24-26

אין־טוב בְּאָדָם שִׁיאֲכַל וְשָׁתָה וְהִרְאָה אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ טוֹב בְּעֵמְלוֹ גַּם־זֶה רְאִיתִי אֲנִי כִּי מִיַּד הָאֱלֹהִים הִיא:

כִּי מִי יֵאָכֵל וּמִי יִחְוֶשׁ חוּץ מִמֶּנִּי:

כִּי לְאָדָם שְׂטוֹב לְפָנָיו נָתַן חֵקְמָה וְדַעַת וְשִׂמְחָה וְלַחֹטֵא נָתַן עֲנָנִים לְאֶסּוּף וְלַכְנוּס לְתַת לְטוֹב לְפָנָי הָאֱלֹהִים גַּם־זֶה הִבֵּל וְרַעוּת רוּחַ:

²⁴ There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, ²⁵ for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? ²⁶ For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. (ESV)

The phrase לְפָנָי הָאֱלֹהִים is translated as “(to one) who pleases God” and expands on the understanding of הִבֵּל. Qohelet observes that God’s rewards are just, not based on punishment or reward for good behaviour.³⁶⁴ The phrase “good before [God]” (טוֹב לְפָנָיו) means to be pleasing to God or to be one whom God favours. In Ecclesiastes, Qohelet acknowledges that humans alone cannot do good (cf. 6:12; 9:2). Any goodness in humans comes from what God provides in his deeds and words (2:26; 3:11, 14; 7:16-18). Qohelet’s message in 2:24-26 reinforces this idea. Qohelet suggests that a person should strive to please God through fear of YHWH, as God is the one who grants wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him. From the beginning of Ecclesiastes, Qohelet presents the common dilemmas of human existence: “All things are in vain” (7:15; 9:9), but these things are also “God has given” (1:13).

³⁶⁴ Peter Enns, *Ecclesiastes*, 50.

It is apparent that there is both a thematic and a literal linguistic connection between the books of Genesis and Ecclesiastes. The common themes, words, and thematic structures found in Ecclesiastes resonate with the narratives of the creation, the Garden of Eden, and the early chapters of Genesis.

5.1.2 From Dust to the Dust

Gen 2:7

וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

then YHWH God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (ESV, modified)

Gen 3:19

בְּזַעַת אַפְיֶךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם עַד שׁוּבוֹךָ אֶל־הָאֲדָמָה כִּי מִמֶּנָּה לָקַחְתָּ כִּי־עָפָר אַתָּה וְאֶל־עָפָר תָּשׁוּב:

“By 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.”

Ecc 3:20

הַכֹּל הוֹלֵךְ אֶל־מְקוֹם אֶחָד הַכֹּל הֵינָה מִן־הָעָפָר וְהַכֹּל שָׁב אֶל־הָעָפָר:

All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.

Ecc 12:7

וַיָּשׁוּב הָעָפָר עַל־הָאָרֶץ כְּשֶׁהָיָה וְהַרוּחַ תָּשׁוּב אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר נָתַנָּה:

and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

In Gen 2:7, it is written that “YHWH formed the human (from the) dust of the ground,” and “he [blew] the breath into his nostrils and the human [became] a living being”. The word נְשָׁמָה “breath” in the HB refers to God and the life imparted to humans rather than animals.³⁶⁵ Its use in the Bible signifies more than just breathing and being alive; it connotes a נִשְׁמַת הַיָּהּ, or “living soul”. In Gen 2:7, it is stated that man was not merely a “living creature” but a “living soul”. The phrase נִשְׁמַת הַיָּהּ “living soul” also signifies a difference between a living and a dead person (cf. Num 5:2; 6:6, 11). In the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden, the term נִשְׁמָה focuses on physical life rather than spiritual or metaphysical qualities. It simply means “possession of life”, whether in humans or animals. Modern translations usually interpret נִשְׁמָה as “living being” (NIV, NJB) or “living creature” (RSV) to avoid confusion. While having נִשְׁמָה does not set humans apart from animals, the unique act of Adam receiving divine breath is never given to animals. In the creation narrative (Gen 1:26), being made in the image of God distinguished humans, and the breath of God created a unique relationship exclusive to humans.³⁶⁶ This breath, נְשַׁמַת הַיָּהּ, or “breath of life”, was used in the canon only in reference to YHWH or humankind.³⁶⁷ This limited usage indicates a special link between humans and God, as the man becomes a living being only after receiving the divine breath.

Therefore, humans only became living beings when God breathed life into them. This is evident from using the term “living creature” in various passages (cp. “living being” in Gen 1:21, 2:19, 8:21, 9:10, 12, 15, and 16). God brought the first human to life by breathing into an inanimate body made from dust. This suggests that the unique quality of being a “living being”

³⁶⁵ T. C. Mitchell, “The Old Testament Usage of *Néshama*,” *VT* 11 (1961): 177-87.

³⁶⁶ McKeown, *Genesis*, 32.

³⁶⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 159.

that distinguishes humanity from animals is not innate but intentionally bestowed by the Creator.³⁶⁸

Thus, the source of the man's life in Gen 2:7 was God's breath as it was breathed into his nostrils. This implies a unique relationship of human life with God. The correspondence between humanity, male and female, and God is expressed through the terms "image" and "likeness" (Gen 1:26-28) and the "breath" (2:7).

The breath of life, which comes directly from YHWH *'ēlōhîm*, transforms the "man of the ground" (אָדָם) into a unique living being that reflects God's image. The Bible conveys the idea that human beings are created in God's image through the use of the terms צֶלֶם and דְמוּת (Gen 1:26-27). This means that humans are unique in their God-likeness, which is why they are given dominion over the animals. The breath of life from YHWH not only enables humans to have physical life but also gives them spiritual understanding (Job 32:8; 33:4) and a functioning conscience (Prov 20:27).

Job 32:8-9, 33:4

אֲכֵן רוּחַ־הַיָּהוָה בָּאֲנֹשׁ וְנִשְׁמַת שְׂדֵי תְבִינִים:
לֹא־רַבִּים יִחְכְּמוּ וְזִקְנִים יִבִּינוּ מִשְׁפָּט:
רוּחַ־אֵל עָשָׂתַנִּי וְנִשְׁמַת שְׂדֵי תַחִינִי:

⁸ But truly it is the spirit in a mortal, the breath of the Almighty, that makes for understanding. ⁹ It is not the old that are wise, nor the aged that understand what is right.

33:4 The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. (NRSV)

Prov 20:27

גֵּר יִהְיֶה נִשְׁמַת אָדָם חֶפֶשׁ כָּל־חֲדָרֵי־בֶטֶן:

³⁶⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 60-1.

The human spirit is the lamp of YHWH, searching every innermost part. (NRSV, modified)

The breath of the Almighty (Job 32:8) and the spirit within a person (33:4) that is breathed into humanity at its creation (Gen 2:7) can grant an individual specific wisdom and abilities, such as skill in artisan’s work (Ex 31:2-5; 35:30-36:1; cp. 1 Kgs 3:9, 12; 5:9 [ET 4:29]) or the ability to govern justly with fear for YHWH (Is 11:2-4).³⁶⁹ It is important to note that the same spirit may work towards different ends with varying degrees of intensity. However, it is worth noting that every person possesses the same spirit. Although all humans rely equally on the divine breath for their lives, not everyone has the same level of wisdom needed for making wise judgments. Walking on the path of righteousness is wise (Prov 2:6-8; 8:20). In Job 32:9, the notion that the elderly have a unique insight to make just judicial decisions is questioned.³⁷⁰ The length of one’s life does not determine one’s character. It is the fear of YHWH (Eccl 3:14; 5:7; 8:12; 12:13; “related to knowledge and wisdom” Prov 1:7, 29; 2:5; 9:10; 15:33) gained through listening to his words that sets the wise apart from the foolish.

In this context, a human’s spirit enables them to assess ideas, actions, and attitudes. This is illustrated in Genesis 2:7, 15, and 19-20a, where Adam’s authority over animals is demonstrated by his ability to name them. Ecclesiastes 1:16-18 features Qohelet examining wisdom, madness, and folly, but he ultimately concludes that seeking wisdom is like chasing wind (רוּחַ, v. 17), resulting in frustration and pain. Conversely, Proverbs 1:1-6 highlights the

³⁶⁹ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 433-4; Alden, *Job*, 318-9; D. J. A. Clines, *Job 21-37* (WBC 18a; eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 718; Longman III, *Job*, 382; Wilson, *Job*, 158-9.

³⁷⁰ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 434.

value of wisdom by listing its benefits. However, Qohelet views the pursuit of wisdom as sorrowful and painful.

Similarly, the word עָפָר “dust” holds significance in Gen 3:19 because it refers to humans and animals, who are made from dust and will eventually return to it. Qohelet explores this concept and teaches that returning to dust does not signify the end; instead, the “breath/spirit” (רוּחַ) of humans returns to God (12:7), since הָרוּחַ comes from YHWH *’ēlōhîm*. On the other hand, the “breath” (רוּחַ) of animals might dissipate. This reminds readers that humanity is mortal, created from dust (Gen 2:7), and will return to it (3:19).

Death is what God had forewarned (Gen 2:17) and what the serpent had denied (3:4). Death comes as a result of man’s God-given nature, that of a “living being” (2:7). These verses speak of the body’s inevitable return to dust, from which it was formed (Job 10:9 “... that you have made me like clay; and will you return me to the dust?”; Ps 104:29 “... when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust”). As Eccl 12:7 explains, “and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it”.

However, even though the first humans disobeyed, death will not be the ultimate end. This is because YHWH stated that life would continue after death, as mentioned in Gen 3:16, “To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children” (NRSV). Later on, Adam named his wife Eve, meaning “the mother of all living” in Gen 3:20. This fulfilled the blessing of human fruitfulness mentioned in Gen 1:28.

The concept of death has been present since the beginning of the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden. In the same way, procreation was a part of the human mandate at the

end of the creation story, just as death was mentioned at the end of the Garden narrative, signifying it as a natural part of the creation process.

Gen 2:9-10, 15-17

⁹ Out of the ground YHWH God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

¹⁵ YHWH God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶ And YHWH God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” (NRSV, modified)

Ecc 1:9-11

⁹ What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun. ¹⁰ Is there a thing of which it is said, “See, this is new”? It has already been, in the ages before us. ¹¹ The people of long ago are not remembered, nor will there be any remembrance of people yet to come by those who come after them. (NRSV)

Ecclesiastes 1:9-11 suggests that the concept of human life’s eternity is connected to God granting Adam and Eve access to the tree of life, not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, the verses also present an alternative view of life outside the Garden of Eden, that is, “⁹ ...there is nothing new under the sun ... ¹¹ ... no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things ...” highlights the transient nature of human existence. The same problems that faced Adam and Eve are still faced by humans today. The root cause of human death was the desire to be like God, knowing good and evil. This desire is reflected in various terms such as הַבָּל (“vanity”), רוּחַ (“breath, spirit”), עָפָר (“dust”), עֲמָל (“toil”), הַחֵמָה וְהַדָּעָה (“wisdom and knowledge”) (cf. Ecc 1:16-18; 2:24-26), and רָעָה (“evil”). The book of Ecclesiastes illustrates God’s judgment, as seen in the toil (Ecc 2:4-8) that people endure while seeking food and wealth. This toil continues until they return to the dust from

which they were made (Gen 2:7; Eccl 1:2; 2:10-11, 18-22, 24 and 17 more verses). Though the main message of Ecclesiastes is about the tragic results of the primeval pair's disobedience in the Garden, it also reveals that God's grace is freely given to "the one who pleases him" in Eccl 2:26. Yet, verse 2:26 concludes with "This also is vanity and a striving after wind".

This suggests that, despite their efforts, humans have not succeeded in solving the problem and may need divine intervention from God. It underscores the necessity for an unprecedented solution. It is about discussing things that are genuinely needed, described as "new under the sun" (cf. Ezek 11:19-20; 36:26-27; Ps 51:12 [ET 10]).

Ezek 11:19-20

¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (ESV)

36:26-27

²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Eccl 12:7, 11-14

⁷ and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it. ¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. ¹² My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. ¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (ESV)

Isaiah 43:19 prophesies about God initiating a "new" thing: "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" which intriguingly corresponds to the

theme of “nothing new” in Ecclesiastes 1:9-10. This link between the two passages allows readers to delve into the deeper meanings within the HB. The question posed in Ecclesiastes, “Who knows?” (6:12; 8:1, 8; 10:14), can be connected to the human experience of uncertainty and unavoidable mortality after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The same question, “Who knows?” also reflects humanity’s longing for life, which was lost by the primeval pair when they disobeyed the command of YHWH and ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, the question “Who knows?” captures the uncertainty of life that humans face until they return to dust.

In Eccl 12:13-14, it states that God will judge every deed, whether good or evil, in the afterlife. This judgment will include even the secret things, making it the ultimate judgment for humanity. The first judgment for humanity, given in the Garden of Eden, has already been imposed, as reflected in 12:7, stating that “for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”.

Thus, verse 12:13, “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”, can be understood as a reminder that humans will be judged after their death for their actions during their lives as “living beings”.

If the above is the case, their judgment will determine their existence in eternity, much like that of God.

This perspective indicates that the conclusion of Qohelet’s search for wisdom and purpose, which starts at the beginning of the book, is that humans cannot go back to a time before their birth or before creation, as Job lamented (3:3), nor can they pass beyond death, but

only return to dust, as YHWH told Adam in Gen 3:19, “for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”.

Ecc 12:8

הָבֵל הַבְּלִים אָמַר הַקּוֹהֵלֶת הַפֶּל הַבֶּל:

Vanity of vanities, says the Qohelet; all is vanity. (ESV, modified)

Thus, Qohelet sees “all are from the dust, and to dust all return” (3:20) as indicating that humans are temporary and fleeting while they breathe in the flesh (12:7). Nevertheless, the human mandate continues to be fulfilled (Gen 1:28 and 3:16). This is because, in Gen 2:7, YHWH breathed his spirit into Adam, making him a “living being”

5.1.3 The Term טוב in Ecclesiastes and the Garden of Eden

The word “good” is used 51 times in various contexts throughout Ecclesiastes, with senses such as “pleasant” (Ecc 2:26b), “desirable” (Ecc 11:7; cf. Gen 2:9; 3:6), “qualitatively good and beautiful” (Ecc 2:3; cf. Gen 26:7; Ex 2:2; 1 Kgs 20:3), “good in terms of character and value” (Ecc 7:1; cf. Gen 2:12; Ex 3:8), and “what fortune there would be” (Ecc 2:3). The word טוב occurs more frequently in Ecclesiastes than other keywords related to the Garden narrative, such as יתרון “what comes of, result”, and עמל “toil”.³⁷¹

The above exploration highlights the goodness and beauty of God (Ecc 3:11). God has made everything beautiful in its time; now, what is beautiful is the “portion” (2:10; 3:22

³⁷¹ Particularly, the term עמל, when used with ב in the book of Ecclesiastes (2:13; 1:3, בעמלו “in his toil”; 2:11; 3:9; 5:8, 15; 7:12; 10:10).

“חֵלְקוֹ”) that comes to an individual as a divine gift. The text suggests that the punishment given to Adam and Eve in Gen 3:16-19 could be viewed as a gift from the perspective of Qohelet’s understanding of God’s goodness and creation. Qohelet considers that everything has its own time of beauty, and God can even use Adam and Eve’s disobedience in the Garden of Eden to bring blessings to humanity through the human mandate. Throughout Ecclesiastes, the idea that a life of toil is a gift from God is present, although it is expressed in slightly varied ways.

Ecc1 5:17 [ET 18]

הִנֵּה אֲשֶׁר־רָאִיתִי אֲנִי טוֹב אֲשֶׁר־נָפְהָ לְאֹכֹל־וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִרְאוֹת טוֹבָה בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ שֶׁיַּעֲמַל תַּחַת־הַשָּׁמֶשׁ מִקִּפְרֵי מִי־אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן־לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי־הוּא חֵלְקוֹ:

Look, what I have seen that is beautiful and good is to eat and drink and see good in all his toil under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him for this is his lot. (ESV, modified)

8:15

וְשִׁבְחֹתִי אֲנִי אֶת־הַשְּׂמֵחָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־טוֹב לְאָדָם תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ כִּי אִם־לְאֹכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמֹחַ וְהוּא יִלְוֶנוּ בְּעֲמָלוֹ מִי חֲזִיוֹ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן־לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:

And I commend joy, for man has nothing good under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun. (ESV, modified)

Qohelet recognises the sovereign work of God, whose ways surpass human understanding. Therefore, human wisdom has limitations, and God is the source of both good and evil.³⁷² For instance, God grants different people wisdom, knowledge, and joy. As a result, Qohelet believes that toil and frustration are also part of God’s plan and remain beyond human

³⁷² Martin A. Shields, *The Ends of Wisdom: A Reappraisal of the Historical and Canonical Function of Ecclesiastes* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 179.

comprehension. He views the activity of toil as an absurd (הַבְּל) aspect of God's creation that humans cannot fully grasp. Yet, Qohelet concludes this in Ecclesiastes 12:7, saying, "and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it". This indicates that all creation from the Creator eventually returns to him. The word עֶפֶר "dust" is significant in Gen 3:19, and similarly, the "breath/spirit" (רוּחַ) of humans returns to God, as הָרוּחַ "breath" comes from YHWH *'ēlohîm*.

The book of Ecclesiastes uses the word טוֹב to signify joy and pleasure, which are regarded as inherently and morally "good". It describes actions like "to see good" (2:3), "to do good" (3:12), and "to be good" (5:18). Notably, the phrase "for who knows what is good for man" (כִּי מִי יֵדָע מַה־טוֹב לְאָדָם) appears in 6:12 ("For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?" (ESV)). According to Eccl 2:24-26, especially in verse 26a, "For the one who pleases him ...", a person who has gained wisdom, knowledge, and understanding of the fear of God is considered to be someone who "knows what is good for man" before God. However, in verse 26b, "to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God". It is important to note in the text that the terms טוֹב "good" and וְלַחֹטֵא "but to the sinner" should not be given a moral connotation. In Eccl 2:1-11, Qohelet asserts that pleasure has no ultimate significance. Instead, Qohelet recommends that readers "enjoy what is good" (2:1), a broad and positive expression also present in Eccl 2:3, 24, and 26. As seen in other parts of Ecclesiastes (cf. 4:1-3, 7:15, 8:10-14, and 9:1-3), it is clear that there is no difference between the fate of the righteous and the wicked.

Therefore, there is no reason to interpret verse 26 in a way that conflicts with this understanding. For example, the terms “righteous” and “wicked”, used in 2:26 and 7:26, are usually understood as “pleasing to God” and “displeasing” or “successful” and “futile”.³⁷³

In Ecclesiastes, Qohelet observes that life outside the Garden of Eden holds a different meaning for humans concerning good and evil. Inside the Garden, knowing good and evil is to be like God (Gen 3:1-6), as the serpent tempted the woman, saying, “⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate”. While Genesis focuses on humans, in Ecclesiastes 2:26, Qohelet shifts the focus to highlight God’s sovereignty by mentioning the final judgment of “vanity”. To Qohelet, one of the main messages in the book of Ecclesiastes is that all humans will eventually return to dust.

The above also prompts Qohelet to reflect on the joy that God has given humanity, which exceeds any pain or hardships they may face in life. This joy outshines wealth, which Qohelet in 2:4-10 tried to acquire through grand buildings (Eccl 2:4; cp. 1 Kgs 3:1; 7:1), gardens, parks (Eccl 2:5-6), slaves (Eccl 2:7), wives (1 Kgs 11:3), and concubines (Eccl 2:8). In Eccl 12:1 and 2:1-3, the phrase *וַיִּרְאֶה בְּטוֹב* “to see what is good” is a key phrase in Ecclesiastes, which Qohelet uses to explore whether enjoyment holds any real value for man.

³⁷³ Thomas Krüger, *Qoheleth: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; ed. Klaus Baltzer; trans. O. C. Dean Jr.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 72-3; Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 141; Harold Louis Ginsberg, “The Structure and Contents of the Book of Koheleth,” in Martin Noth and D. Winton Thomas, eds., *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East: FS H. H. Rowley* (VTSup 3; Leiden: Brill, 1955), 138-49; Bollhagen, *Ecclesiastes*, 120-24.

The form of the word טוב with ב is not simply “good” as one can see, but rather the “good of” something, which indirectly relates to 2:1, where it says, “I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this also was vanity”. This pairing of רָאָה “to see” and טוב “good” echoes the language used in the creation narrative in Genesis 1, where God sees his creation as “good” (וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב) “And God saw that it was good” Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31). Being “good before God” (טוֹב לְפָנָיו) means pleasing God, or being someone whom God favours. According to Qohelet, pleasing God (Eccl 2:26) is not the result of human effort or actions but the outcome of God’s will. As a result, God grants wisdom, knowledge, and joy to whomever he chooses, showing that no human can attain “good” purely through their own efforts since the primeval pair’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Eccl 2:24-26

אֵין-טוֹב בְּאָדָם שִׂיאֵכֶל וְשִׂתָּה וְהִרְאָה אֶת-נַפְשׁוֹ טוֹב בְּעֵמְלוֹ גַּם-זֶה רְאִיתִי אֲנִי כִּי מִיַּד הָאֱלֹהִים הִיא:

כִּי מִי יֵאָכֵל וּמִי יִחַוֵּשׁ חוּץ מִמְּנִי:

כִּי לְאָדָם שְׂטוֹב לְפָנָיו נָתַן חֵכְמָה וְדַעַת וְשִׂמְחָה וְלַחֹטֵא נָתַן עֲנָן לְאֶסּוֹף וְלַכְנוּס לְתַת לְטוֹב לְפָנָי הָאֱלֹהִים גַּם-זֶה הִבֵּל וְרַעוּת רוּחַ:

²⁴ There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and see good in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God ²⁵ for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? ²⁶ For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. (ESV, modified)

The phrase אֵין-טוֹב “nothing good” appears in Eccl 2:24, 3:12, 3:22, and 8:15 in reference to what is good. In Eccl 2:24, the phrase אֵין-טוֹב is followed by בְּאָדָם (“לְאָדָם” in 8:15) and כֹּל- (כָּל-הָאָדָם) (3:13). The question being asked in Eccl 2:3 is existential: if there is no profit from

painful labour, what good is there for humanity in living?³⁷⁴ In Eccl 2:1-23, all good things and enjoyment a person experiences come from God, even if they are achieved through hard work.³⁷⁵

In Genesis 3:6, Eve desired the fruit of the forbidden tree because it looked pleasing to the eye and seemed like it would make her wise. Similarly, Qohelet explores whether seeking pleasure and enjoyment holds any value for humans. Qohelet concludes that human endeavours to find pleasure are ultimately pointless and lead to vanity. Rather, true goodness comes from wisdom, knowledge, and joy given by God since God is the Creator of everything (Eccl 2:24).

In Ecclesiastes 3:10-15, there is a clear focus on the significance of time in human lives, emphasised through multiple repetitions within the broader passage (3:1-15). The text stresses that all times and seasons are determined by God (see Gen 1:14-19), and that humans have no control over time. It is beyond human understanding to fully grasp God's plans and purposes (Eccl 3:11).³⁷⁶ For instance, it is hard for humanity to identify the right time for birth, death, or loss "under the sun" (3:3).

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 ends with the idea that God makes everything beautiful in its appointed time. This is reflected in the creation narrative, where everything was created in its proper time—for instance, "In the beginning..." in Genesis 1:1, and from the first day to the seventh in Genesis 2:3, which states, "So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation".

³⁷⁴ Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 226.

³⁷⁵ Eccl 3:22, "So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work", Qohelet uses טוב with מן for "better than" here and in 4:3, 6, 9, 13; 5:4 [ET 5]; 6:3, 9; 7:1-3, 5, 8, 10; 9:4, 16, 18 with טובה + מן. See James Bollhagen, *Ecclesiastes*, 157.

³⁷⁶ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 31-2; Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 114.

It emphasises that God controls all events, and humans have no influence over them. This concept is common in the Bible (Amos 3:6; Is 45:7). Every event takes place at the time God determines, as seen in the creation narrative. Time is filled with events, and everything that happens, even human actions, fits into God's plan (Ps 31:16 [ET 15], "my times are in your hand"). These define the boundaries of human existence (Eccl 3:2), including the limits of life and death, as Qohelet notes in this canonical reading.³⁷⁷

Time holds great significance in Wisdom literature, as demonstrated by Qohelet's questioning of time in 3:17; 8:5-6, 9, or the ideal of speaking the right word at the right time (cf. Prov 15:23; 25:11).³⁷⁸ This shows that every activity is deliberately linked to a specific time, and they exclude one another, as seen in the antitheses in 3:2-8.³⁷⁹ Therefore, time is a mystery ordained by God, and humans are only involved in the present. Since the primeval pair's disobedience—being expelled from the Garden of Eden, which meant losing access to the fruit from the tree of life—they had no part in pursuing a life of eternity.

In this statement, Qohelet refers to God's actions as part of עולם "eternity". This signifies that God's actions are permanent, unchangeable, and belong to the realm of the everlasting. The purpose of this text for Qohelet is to teach people about the importance of having a "fear of God" (Eccl 3:14) in their lives. This passage indicates that people should enjoy the simple pleasures of life and engage in good deeds throughout their lifetime (3:12). This does not contradict verse 3:11, which emphasises the innate human desire for eternity ("עולם"). Through our intertextual reading, the human longing for eternity can be traced back to the disobedience

³⁷⁷ Krüger, *Qoheleth*, 78; Peter Enns, *Ecclesiastes*, 51-60. Enns observes, "The uncertainty of what happens after death remains a mystery to all".

³⁷⁸ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 33.

³⁷⁹ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 34-37.

of the primeval pair in the Garden of Eden narrative. The primeval pair disobeyed God's command by eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This led to their loss of access to the tree of life, resulting in their return to dust and expulsion from the Garden.

The text concludes in verse 17 within the context of 3:16-22, "I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work", linking it to God's judgment in the Garden narrative (Gen 3:16-19) and emphasising the phrases of "pleasure in all his toil" in Eccl 3:13 and "from dust to dust" in Eccl 3:16-22. In Ecclesiastes 3:12 and 14, Qohelet begins with יִדְעָתִי "I perceived" that there is "nothing better" than "doing good", which entails finding purpose and joy in life, a gift from God. In verses 12-13, Qohelet gains two crucial insights: the phrases וְלַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹב "to do good" and בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ "in his toil".

Eccl 3:9-15

מה־יִתְרוֹן הָעוֹשָׂה בְּאֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹמֵל:

רְאִיתִי אֶת־הָעֹנֵן אֲשֶׁר נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לְבַגֵּי הָאָדָם לַעֲנוֹת בּוֹ:

אֶת־הַכֹּל עָשָׂה יָפָה בְּעֵתוֹ גַּם אֶת־הָעֹלָם נָתַן בְּלִבָּם מִבְּלֵי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִמָּצָא הָאָדָם אֶת־הַמַּעֲשֶׂה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים מֵרֹאשׁ וְעַד־סוֹף:

יִדְעָתִי כִּי אֵין טוֹב בָּם כִּי אִם־לְשִׂמּוֹחַ וְלַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹב בְּחַיָּו:

וְגַם כָּל־הָאָדָם שָׂיֵאכֹל וְשָׂתֶה וְרָאָה טוֹב בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ מִתַּת אֱלֹהִים הִיא:

יִדְעָתִי כִּי כָל־אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה הָאֱלֹהִים הוּא יִהְיֶה לְעוֹלָם עָלְיוֹ אֵין לְהוֹסִיף וּמִמְנוֹ אֵין לְגַרֵעַ וְהָאֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה שְׂרָאוֹ מִלְּפָנָיו:

מִה־שִׁהְיָה כָּבֵד הוּא וְאֲשֶׁר לִהְיוֹת כָּבֵד הִיא וְהָאֱלֹהִים יִבְקֹשׁ אֶת־נַרְדָּף:

⁹ What gain has the worker from his toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. ¹² I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; ¹³ also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man. ¹⁴ I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him. ¹⁵ What is, it already was; what will be, it already is; and God will do what he has driven away. (ESV, modified)

Qohelet recognised God’s sovereignty in his perfect timing. In Eccl 3:11, the word יָפֶה, meaning “beautiful”, is a visual term describing something pleasing to the eye. It also describes Job’s daughters as the most attractive women (נָשִׁים יְפֹת) in the land (Job 42:15).³⁸⁰ In the Bible, beauty is associated with goodness, appropriateness, and righteousness through the word יָפֶה. God is always on time, from the beginning of creation and in the Garden of Eden, which indicates the timing of creation from Day 1 to Day 6, each followed by “it was so” (Gen 1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30) paired with the evaluation phrase “God saw..., it was good” (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31), including “God saw ..., it was very good,” followed by the seventh day in Gen 2:3, “God blessed ..., and hallowed it, ... rested...”.

After eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness, which they had not realised before. As a result, they covered themselves with fig leaves, which was inappropriate for presenting themselves before YHWH, causing them to hide.³⁸¹

Gen 3:8

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מְתַהַלְלִים בְּגִן לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם וַיִּתְּסְבֹּא הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים בְּתוֹךְ עֵץ הַגֵּן:

³⁸⁰ See “beautiful” with יָפֶה Gen 39:6; 1Sam 16:12 17:42 2S 14:25; Song 1:16; אִשָּׁה Gen 12:11.

³⁸¹ The verb “knew” in verse 7, which refers back to the “tree of knowledge”. As a reminder of their unclothed state, the word “naked” was used by the crafty serpent (cf. Gen 3:1 and 2:25).

And they heard the sound of YHWH walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of YHWH among the trees of the garden. (ESV, modified)

In Gen 2:25, “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed”.

However, in Gen 3:7, they become aware of their nakedness and feel ashamed.

When Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they gained knowledge but also faced the first consequence of their actions. They were ashamed of their nakedness. In Gen 3:10, Adam describes that he was afraid because: “I was naked, and I hid myself”. However, they sewed fig leaves to cover themselves, but still felt inadequate and hid from YHWH when they heard the sound of YHWH walking in the Garden in the cool of the day.³⁸² They knew that YHWH was coming to judge them for their disobedience (Gen 3:16-19) as YHWH had warned them (2:17).

After the judgment of Adam and Eve, YHWH provides them with garments made from animal skins to cover them effectively when they stand in YHWH’s presence (Gen 3:8-10, 21-22) and offers protection for their lives outside the Garden of Eden. Their realisation of their nakedness shifts them from ignorance to conscience and awareness of guilt before YHWH, as well as understanding of life outside the Garden of Eden, until they return to dust. The expulsion of the primeval pair from the Garden marks the start of God’s time to fulfil the blessings he addressed to humanity in Genesis 1:28, both male and female (“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over ...”). This theme recurs throughout Genesis with the phrase “the generations of (Name)” (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2).

³⁸² Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 239-40. Mathews observes, “the linkage between act and consequence is found in the wordplay between תָּאֵנַן “delight” in verse 6 and similar תָּאֵנַן “fig” in verse 7”.

According to Qohelet, considering the Garden narrative above, whether in reward or judgment, breaking down or building up, keeping or casting away, waging war or making peace, God's timing is perfect. As a result, God's timing can be regarded as beautiful. When Qohelet states in Eccl 3:11 that God "has made everything beautiful in its time", he is not just referring to how God created the world initially but also to how he has governed it ever since, such as "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, ... the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night" (Gen 1:3-5, 14-19; cp. 8:22).

As the above states, in Genesis 9:1 and 7 ("¹ God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" and "⁷ And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound on the earth and multiply in it"), after the Flood, God affirms his sovereignty to govern all creation, including human life, existence, and death. This also includes God's declaration of fulfilling the human mandate at the appropriate time, first given at human creation (Gen 1:26-28).

In Ecclesiastes 3:11, Qohelet expresses his frustration with his inability to understand the extent of God's actions, stating that he "cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end". In Ecclesiastes 3:11b ("... yet so that he (אִי־יִדְעֶנּוּ) cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end"), Qohelet is referred to as אִי־יִדְעֶנּוּ, meaning "the man", and as himself a king in Eccl 1:1. Therefore, he is expected to possess knowledge and wisdom like Adam demonstrated when naming the animals in the Garden of Eden. As Adam showed the ability to name the first animals he saw in the Garden (Gen 2:19-20), Qohelet, King Solomon, also possessed similar knowledge (cf. 1 Kgs 4:29-34).

However, humans, whether Adam or Solomon, have limited perspectives that prevent them from fully understanding God’s plan. This has been part of Qohelet’s frustration: “vanity” from the start. Qohelet is on a quest to find meaning in life, but finds it impossible to grasp. Qohelet recognises that humans are existential beings, living only for a limited time and facing the unknown after death.

Therefore, Qohelet encourages young people to find joy in life, recognising that it also comes from God. As a result, people should seek joy, knowing that God has given it.³⁸³ This reflects the status of Adam and Eve in the Garden before they disobey the command of YHWH.³⁸⁴ In Ecclesiastes 3:13, the phrase “כָּל־הָאָדָם” refers to all humans as a collective, despite using singular verbs; it still conveys a singular meaning, meaning “every man”. In Ecclesiastes 3:13, the phrase רָאָה טוֹב “to see good”, is translated as “enjoy or take pleasure”. This reflects Qohelet’s belief that understanding a meaningful life involves embracing a good and God-pleasing purpose and finding joy in one’s toil. This also comes from recognising that the difference between good and evil is a crucial part of wisdom. It demands life experience and the ability to consider social, cultural, and political contexts when making choices.

In Ecclesiastes 11:9, the imperative term יָדַע “know” is used with the כִּי “that” clause. In this clause, הָאֱלֹהִים “God” is the subject who will bring you to judgment, whether young or old. This is repeated in a similar form in 12:14.

Eccl 11:9

שָׂמַח בְּחַוֵּר בְּיִלְדוּתוֹ וְיִטִּיב לֵבָד בְּיָמֵי בְחֹרֹתוֹ וְנִלְוָה בְּדַרְכֵי לֵבָד וּבְמַרְאֵי עֵינָיו וְדַע כִּי עַל־כָּל־אֲלֹהֵי יְבִיאָה הָאֱלֹהִים
בְּמִשְׁפָּט:

³⁸³ Peter Enns, *Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 107.

³⁸⁴ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 116.

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. (ESV)

There are many reasons why Qohelet mentions life's brevity and its enigmatic, paradoxical nature. The brevity of human life highlights human fragility and is a key theme found in הַבָּל (cf. Gen 4:1-8; cp. Ex 1:15-16, 21; 2 Sam 12:15-23). Humans cannot understand what the future holds or what comes after leaving this earth, like shadows under the sun. In 6:12, questioning life before death, Qohelet asks מִי יֵדַע מֶה טוֹב “Who knows what is good (for a man in life)”.³⁸⁵

When Qohelet asks, “Who knows?”, he indicates a lack of knowledge, implying a negative assertion, and expects a negative answer—“No one knows”. This links to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, where they were unaware of their nakedness until they disobeyed YHWH's command. For the primeval pair, knowing good and evil and choosing disobedience to YHWH's command led to their acknowledgment of nakedness, which became clear when YHWH clothed them with animal skins (Gen 3:21a: “And YHWH God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (ESV, modified)), followed by “Then YHWH God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil”” in 3:22a. However, this is incomplete knowledge without eternal life, “Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—”²³, therefore YHWH God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken” in 3:22b-23.

³⁸⁵ This construction is repeated in 7:1-12, particularly in verses 1-6 and 3:22.

Ecc 12:8

הַבַּל הַבְּלִים אָמַר הַקֹּהֵלֶת הַכֹּל הַבַּל:

Vanity of vanities, says the Qohelet; all is vanity. (ESV, modified)

Nonetheless, the human mandate still stands to be fulfilled (Gen 1:28; 3:16; also 9:1, 7).

5.2 Qohelet's Experiment as King and Adam in the Garden of Eden

The word קֹהֵלֶת in the book of Ecclesiastes may represent either a personal name or an official title for the author.³⁸⁶ This term is mentioned seven times, twice in the first two verses and five other times throughout the book (1:12; 7:27; 12:8-10). The word קֹהֵלֶת is unique to the Bible and is not found in any other form. In verse 12:8 and possibly 7:27, the appearance of קֹהֵלֶת is with the definite article, which suggests that it is a title. However, in other verses where the article is absent, it may be interpreted as a personal name or a nickname.

The phrase דְּבַרֵי קֹהֵלֶת “the words of Qohelet” in Eccl 1:1 serves as the title of the book. When used in the opening title of a work, the word דְּבַר often refers to the prophetic “Word” of God given through a divine spokesman. This can be either in the singular (e.g., Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1) or the plural (Jer 1:1; Amos 1:1). When used in plural, it can denote individual oracles of a prophet or, as is the case in Ecclesiastes, collected wisdom sayings.³⁸⁷ However, it does not detract from the prophetic force or authority of the message whether Qohelet presented these words in a royal setting, an ecclesiastical ceremony, or some other venue.³⁸⁸ The only clear

³⁸⁶ Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 95; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 1; Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 58; Garrett, *Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs*, 282; Craig G. Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes* (BCOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 102-3.

³⁸⁷ Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 57; Bollhagen, *Ecclesiastes*, 31; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 1.

³⁸⁸ Seow, “Theology When Everything is out of Control,” 249.

mention of a religious setting in the book is the instruction regarding “the house of God” in Ecclesiastes 4:17-5:1 [ET 5:1-2] (cf. 1 Kgs 5:3, 5; 8:17, 20). The following description of קהלת closely matches Solomon, which makes it logical to identify him as the author, as is usual in a canonical reading of the book.³⁸⁹

In Ecclesiastes 1:1, the phrase בן־דָּוִד “the son of David” likely refers to a first-generation male offspring. In the following prepositional phrase, Qohelet identifies himself as the current מֶלֶךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַם “king in Jerusalem”.³⁹⁰ The main point is that Solomon was a wise and wealthy ruler of Jerusalem, surpassing any who came before him. He was also dedicated to gaining knowledge and wisdom (Eccl 1:16; cf. 1 Kgs 3:28; 4:29-30, 34).

Eccl 2:4

הַגְדַּלְתִּי מַעֲשֵׂי בְנִיתִי לִי בָתִּים וְנִטְעַתִּי לִי כַרְמִים:

I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. (ESV)

The three consecutive verbs in 2:4 are first-person singular perfects, ... הַגְדַּלְתִּי ... בְּנִיתִי ... נִטְעַתִּי, rendered as “I made great ... I built ... I planted ...” with the direct object following the first word מַעֲשֵׂי “my works, projects”.³⁹¹ This passage, starting from verse 2:4, contains a repetition of the verb “to increase” (גָּדַל) at the beginning (2:4) and end (2:9). From these occurrences, Qohelet identifies with Solomon in 1:12-2:26 but extends that connection to experiments with wisdom (1:12-18; cp. 1 Kgs 3:16-28; 4:29-34) and pleasure (2:1-11).

³⁸⁹ Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 57; Bollhagen, *Ecclesiastes*, 31; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 2.

³⁹⁰ Schoors, *Historical Commentary on the Old Testament: Ecclesiastes*, 36.

³⁹¹ This clause indicates that Solomon acted on his own behalf, as it is followed by the word “לִי”, meaning “for myself”. This word refers to the noun “houses, vineyards, gardens, and parks” mentioned earlier in verses 1:12-2:26. The phrase “I did my great projects” is a common expression found in ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions written in West Semitic and Akkadian languages. It serves as a formulaic introduction starting with a royal first-person pronoun. The phrase originates from an idiom with a causative verb, “I expanded/enlarged my projects”, which is expressed adjectivally. See K. A. D. Smelik, “The Literary Structure of King Mesha’s Inscription,” *JSOT* 46 (1990): 21-30.

The study above provides insight into Solomon’s resources. This intertextual reading of the book alongside Genesis suggests that it depicts him as Adam in the Garden of Eden (cf. 1 Kgs 4:32-34; see Gen 2:4-9). In Eccl 2:4, the term “vineyards” (פְּרָדִים) implies a paradisiacal setting, further reinforced by the vocabulary in Eccl 2:5-6, which echoes the Garden of Eden. For instance, in 2:5, Solomon built “gardens” (גִּנּוֹת) and “parks” (פְּרָדִים), expanding upon the “houses” and “vineyards” mentioned in 2:4. The feminine noun “garden” (גִּנָּה), similar to the masculine noun “garden” (גַּן), refers to a cultivated plantation where herbs, plants, or fruit trees could be grown for personal or royal enjoyment. This atmosphere evokes the Garden of Eden (גִּן־עֵדֶן) in Gen 2:15 (cf. “garden in Eden” (גִּן־בְּעֵדֶן) in Gen 2:8). The noun פְּרָדִים is considered a Persian loanword, which also led to the Greek noun παράδεισος and the English term “paradise”.

Eccl 2:5-6

עָשִׂיתִי לִי גִנּוֹת וּפְרָדִים וְנִטְעַתִּי בָהֶם עֵץ כָּל־פְּרִי:

עָשִׂיתִי לִי בְּרִכּוֹת מַיִם לְהִשְׁקוֹת מֵהֶם יַעַר צֹמַח עֲצִים:

⁵ I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶ I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. (ESV)

Gen 2:10

וַיֵּצֵא מֵעֵדֶן לְהִשְׁקוֹת אֶת־הַגֵּן וּמִשָּׁם יָפְרַד וְהָיָה לְאַרְבָּעָה רְאשִׁים:

A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. (ESV)

In Ecclesiastes 2:5, the term עָשִׂיתִי with וְנִטְעַתִּי translates to “I made . . . , and I planted . . .”. This phrase evokes the image of fruit trees in the Garden of Eden from Genesis 1:11-12, 29; 2:9; 3:2. These trees are connected with the tree of life in Genesis 3:3 (cf. Gen 3:6) and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Additionally, the word בְּרִכּוֹת, the plural form of בְּרִכָּה in Ecclesiastes 2:6, refers to a reservoir for catching and storing water. In Ecclesiastes 2:6, the term הַשְּׁקוֹת (ל) means “to water; irrigate; give to drink”. The infinitive construct used here appears in Gen 2:10, which explains the purpose for which God created the river in the Garden of Eden: “to water the garden.”

The term מֵהֶם “from them (the pools)” uses (מֵהֶם) מִן to indicate the source of the irrigating waters. The word “to water” in Ecclesiastes 2:6 takes the phrase יַעַר צוֹמֵחַ עֵצִים “a forest sprouting trees” as its object. The participle צוֹמֵחַ “sprouting” is from the same verb צָמַח “to sprout,” which appears twice in the Garden of Eden narrative (Gen 2:5, 9). This choice of words reveals part of the judgment spoken after the primeval pair’s disobedience: וְקוֹץ וְדַרְדָּר תִּצְמָח “and it will cause thorns and thistles to sprout” (Gen 3:18).³⁹² There is a group of words that appear both in Ecclesiastes 2:4-6 and Genesis 1–2, which confirms a literal link between the two texts. This connection presents Qohelet as a king similar to Adam in the Garden of Eden, who becomes like Adam in an environment where Qohelet built “gardens” (גִּבּוֹת) or “parks” (פְּרִדְסִים) like the Garden of Eden.³⁹³

³⁹² Arian Verheij, “Paradise Retried: On Qohelet 2:4-6,” *JSOT* 50 (1991): 113-4. He remarks that these words, which occur in Eccl 2:4-6, also occur in Gen 1–2. For instance, “to plant” in Eccl 2:4 occurs in Gen 2:8, “garden” in Eccl 2:5 occurs in Gen 2:8, 9, 10, 15, 16. “All kinds of fruit trees” in Eccl 2:5 occurs in Gen 1:11, 12, 29; 2:9, 16, 17. “To irrigate” in Eccl 2:6 occurs in Gen 2:5, 9. “To sprout” in Eccl 2:6 occurs in Gen 1:7, 16, 25, 26. The verb עָשָׂה “to make/do” in Eccl 2:5, 6 occurs in Gen 1:7, 16, 25, 26, 31; 2:2, 3, 4, 18; 3:21; 8:6.

³⁹³ Arian Verheij, “Paradise Retried: On Qohelet 2:4-6”, 113-5.

Nevertheless, based on the references in Ecclesiastes 2:3 and 9, Qohelet initially considers his approach to life meaningful but later finds it in vain. This is because Qohelet concludes in Eccl 2:10-11 that all his attempts in toil are “vanity and chasing after the wind”.

Eccl 2:10-11 ¹⁰ Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. ¹¹ Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. (NRSV)

This may pertain to Qohelet’s role as Israel’s king, leading the people, as referenced in Deuteronomy 17:14. It highlights his failure to follow the instructions in verses 14-17, such as acquiring many horses (v. 16) and collecting wives, silver, and gold (v.17). Additionally, it considers whether he recognised any violations of God’s commandments for kings, outlined in Deuteronomy 17:14-20, within our canonical reading.

Dt 17:14-17, 19

¹⁴ “When you come to the land that YHWH your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ ¹⁵ you may indeed set a king over you whom YHWH your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. ¹⁶ Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since YHWH has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ ¹⁷ And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear YHWH his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, (ESV, modified)

In Ecclesiastes 2:10, Qohelet seeks pleasure without limits, which ultimately leads to futility. Essentially, Qohelet argues that all human pursuits are pointless and hollow, regardless of the successes and achievements they bring. He likens human accomplishments to chasing

the wind, which he considers futile. Similarly, the Garden of Eden story depicts the primeval pair as representatives of humanity and their pursuit of knowledge, even though they disobey YHWH's command, resulting in their expulsion from the Garden.

Qohelet emphasises that all human actions under the sun are vanity, arising from the primeval pair's failure to fear YHWH and obey his command "not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". This is clear in his conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12:13: "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone." (NRSV)

5.3 Women in Ecclesiastes and the Woman in the Garden of Eden

Ecc1 2:26

כי לאדם שטוב לפניו נתן חכמה ונדעת ושמחה ורחוטה נתן ענין לאסור ולכנוס לתת לטוב לפני האלהים גם זה הכל ורעות רוח:

For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. (ESV)

Ecc1 7:26-28

ומוצא אני מר ממנות את-האשה אשר-היא מצודים וחרמים לבה אסורים ידיה טוב לפני האלהים ימלט ממנה וחוטה ילקד בה:

ראה זה מצאתי אמרה קהלת אחת לאחת למצא חשבון:

אשר עוד-בקשה נפשי ולא מצאתי אדם אחד מאלף מצאתי ואשה בכל-אלה לא מצאתי:

²⁶ And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. The one who is good before God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her. ²⁷ Behold, this is what I found, says Qohelet, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things—²⁸ which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found. (ESV, modified)

Eccl 9:7-9

לֶךְ אֲכַל בְּשִׂמְחָה לַחֲמֶךָ וּשְׂתֵה בְּלִבְיָטוֹב יִינֶה כִּי כָּבֵד רָצָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂיךָ:

בְּכָל־עֵת יִהְיוּ בְּגָדֶיךָ לְבָנִים וְשֶׁמֶן עַל־רֹאשְׁךָ אֶל־יִחָסֵר:

רְאֵה חַיִּים עִם־אִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ כָּל־יְמֵי חַיֵּי הַבְּלִיָּה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַשׁ כֹּל יְמֵי הַבְּלִיָּה כִּי הוּא תִּלְקַח בְּחַיִּים וּבְעַמְלָה אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה עֹמֵל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:

Eccl 9:7-9

⁷ Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. ⁸ Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. ⁹ Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. (ESV)

The encouragement to enjoy life in Eccl 9:7-10, viewed from Qohelet’s perspective, begins with a series of imperative commands. God’s approval of eating and drinking is affirmed in Eccl 9:7. Qohelet sees enjoyment as part of God’s will, based on the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden, where God is the one who provides them (cf. Gen 1:11-12, 24-25, 29; 2:9; 3:18-19).

Furthermore, in Ecclesiastes 9:7-10, Qohelet encourages enjoying life through eating, drinking, and celebrating marriage with the wife “אִשָּׁה” (v. 9), as well as working hard (v. 10).

In accordance with the above, in our canonical reading, the passage about the enjoyment of life is rooted in the narratives of creation and the Garden of Eden. These stories serve as a foundation for understanding human life outside the Garden and its purpose. This idea is also supported by Ecclesiastes 9:9, which mentions “enjoy life with *the* woman whom you love” (רָאֵה חַיִּים עִם־אִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־אַהַבְתָּ).³⁹⁴

Indeed, Ecclesiastes 9:9 is a positive affirmation of marriage, emphasising the importance of enjoying life and working together before death. The exhortation to enjoy life is not presented as the solution to the problem of death. Therefore, the question of death remains unresolved and is linked to the themes of time and mortality, which are beyond human knowledge or control, but accessible only through experience.

Qohelet consistently references women in a way that echoes the women of wisdom or folly in Wisdom literature and, in our intertextual reading, evokes Eve in the Garden narrative. In Ecclesiastes 9:9a, Qohelet advises to “enjoy life with *the* wife you love”. This guidance calls to mind Eve, who was created as a helper to Adam in the Garden (Gen 2:20-25). He then mentions “your portion in life and in your toil” in Ecclesiastes 9:9b, which can be linked to Adam and Eve’s life outside the Garden after their expulsion due to disobedience.

Qohelet observed that in human marriage, God ordained the original orders of creation to remain intact for the mandate to multiply. As Adam and Eve were charged with subduing the earth together (Gen 1:28), husband and wife remained united through the toil (Gen 3:16-19). Eve was created as a helper for Adam (Gen 2:18). Additionally, in Gen 1:29, it is stated that both Adam and Eve were given fruit trees and other plant life for their use and enjoyment.

³⁹⁴ Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 305. Bartholomew states that the word אִשָּׁה, without the article, may well refer to one’s wife when the context demands it (cf. Gen. 30:4, 9; 1 Sam 25:43; Dt 22:22).

From the beginning, God provided these resources for humans to enjoy, and they should be part of everyday life.

Qohelet also warns about women in Ecclesiastes 7:26 and 28 when describing the woman “who is snares and nets” and the elusive “a woman among all these”. The women warned about in the book of Ecclesiastes share similarities with the woman folly in Proverbs (9:13; 14:1b) or the strange (loose) woman (2:16; 5:3; 7:5; 22:14) mentioned in the same book of Proverbs.

In Genesis 3:1, the woman (“הַאִשָּׁה”) desires the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which would make her like God in terms of knowing good and evil as she is tempted by the serpent, leading her to disobey YHWH’s command “not to eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Likewise, in the book of Proverbs, two types of women are depicted—one wise and obedient, and the other foolish and disobedient, “who is a trap”. The desire for the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolises Eve’s desire for wisdom, even if it risks disobeying YHWH’s command. This desire to know good and evil while ignoring God’s words is exemplified in Woman wisdom and Woman folly in Proverbs. Essentially, the stories of Woman wisdom and Woman folly in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (7:26-28 and 9:9) illustrate Eve as embodying both qualities simultaneously.

The woman described in Eccl 7:26-28 is depicted as representing any woman similar to Eve in the Garden of Eden. The latter part of verse 26 indicates that Qohelet refers to more than just adultery or sexual misconduct. The phrase “the one who escapes her” (see Prov 9:13-18) implies that living to please God results in escape, whereas the sinner becomes trapped by

her. This echoes Eve’s temptation in the Garden, where her pursuit of wisdom outside of pleasing God—by disobeying YHWH’s command—led to bitterness, suffering, toil, and ultimately death. Eve’s conflicting desires—seeking wisdom but disobeying YHWH’s word—ultimately caused her and Adam to be expelled from the Garden and return to dust. The phrase “something more bitter than death” in 7:26 indicates that Solomon is experiencing something remorseful as a man encounters a woman who ensnares him.³⁹⁵ In 7:27-29, the phrase מָצָאתִי “I found” occurs five times, which draws the reader’s attention to the fact that Solomon’s discovery of “the woman” (הַאִשָּׁה) is an ongoing process that is by no means concluded.³⁹⁶

In Ecclesiastes 7:26, “the woman” mentioned could, in our intertextual canonical reading, be one of King Solomon’s many wives or concubines recorded in 1 Kings 11:3 “He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart”, similar to how אִישׁ “one man” in 7:28 is referred to Solomon himself.³⁹⁷ However, since the expulsion of the primeval pair from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, as male and female, have exhibited general traits, as shown by the word אָדָם, which appears 48 times in Ecclesiastes. The word אָדָם can refer to anyone, meaning humanity.³⁹⁸

The main point is not whether Qohelet can find a good person, though it is indeed difficult. The focus is on the act of searching and the difficulty in discovering wisdom (see Prov 1–9, “Woman wisdom”). Considering Ecclesiastes 7:28, the woman described in

³⁹⁵ Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 263-4; Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 200-7; Lohfink, *Qohelet*, 100-4. Lohfink sees 7:23-8:1a as a unit; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 74-8; Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 566-90. Murphy and Schoors see 7:25-29 as a unit.

³⁹⁶ O. Loretz, “Poetry and Prose in the Book of Qohelet (1:3-3:22; 7:23-8:1; 9:6-10; 12:8-14)”, *Verse in Ancient Near Eastern Prose* (ed. J. C. de Moor, W. G. E. Watson; AOAT 42: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1993), 183; Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 566-90. Schoors suggests that Eccl 7:26 could read, “Something more bitter than death: the woman” as “Something more bitter than death is the woman”.

³⁹⁷ See also the discussion in section 5.2.

³⁹⁸ Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 262.

Proverbs 31:10 (“An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels”—ESV) is difficult to find because she is more valuable than jewels. Consequently, despite his efforts, Qohelet cannot find her. This irony arises from Qohelet’s misunderstanding in his search. In Proverbs 1–9, Woman wisdom presents herself freely, but Qohelet views his pursuit of wisdom as akin to Eve’s quest to “know good and evil”.

Thus far in the study, Qohelet’s observation and experiments, a wise woman is unattainable (Eccl 7:28; cp. Prov 31:10), while a wise man is rare as “one [good] man out of a thousand” (7:28). When he draws this conclusion, he refers to both male and female, which is identified in בְּכָל־בְּרִיָּה “humankind” (7:29). Qohelet searches for wisdom and knowledge among all of humanity, both male and female, “under the sun” (Eccl 9:9). He finds that the human pursuit of knowledge often leads to misguided inventions (Eccl 1:15 and 7:13), just as the serpent misled Eve and Eve misled Adam. Qohelet’s exploration highlights only the vast disparity between God and humans (7:29). So, Qohelet admonishes the festive use of clothing and oil (Eccl 9:8) to “enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun” (9:9a). A man’s wife is “his portion in life” in Eccl 9:9 (cf. Gen 2:21-25).

5.4 Human Time in the Timing of God

Life and death are intertwined within the span of time, especially in the book of Ecclesiastes. Eccl 3:1-15 explores the theme of time and its significance in God’s plan for humanity.

The phrase אֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה, meaning “the work which he (God) has made”, in Eccl 3:11 highlights the verb עָשָׂה, which means “to make”, and it is repeated in verses 11 and 14. It indicates that he has עָשָׂה, or “made”– or “foreordained”– everything in his sovereign timing (3:11a), and all that he has “foreordained” will come to pass (3:14).³⁹⁹ This shows that God governs everything and that his plans will ultimately be fulfilled. In verse 3:14, the first clause, יָדַעְתִּי כִּי כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה הָאֱלֹהִים הוּא יִהְיֶה לְעוֹלָם, “I know all that God does, it will endure forever”, clearly explains God’s sovereign actions. The second clause, “there is nothing to add to it, and nothing to take from it”, permanently affirms God’s sovereignty.

This is similar to Deuteronomy 4:2 and 13:1 [ET 12:32], which stress that God’s word stands forever. The verb עָשָׂה, meaning “(God) has done (it)”, highlights God’s deeds and shows that his sovereign actions reflect what he foreordains in his word. The phrase “from beginning to end” in the temporal clause (Eccl 3:11) suggests that God controls the seasons and times (see Gen 1:3-2:3, particularly verses 14-19), which even a wise king like Qohelet, through his experiments, could never imitate. The phrase וַיְהִי־כֵן, meaning “And it was so” (Gen 1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24, and 30), indicates that something has been established or founded by God, signifying that the event occurred and remained unchanged over time. This supports the belief that God plans events at the right time (Eccl 3:1-10) and highlights that humans do not know their future (3:11b). It is important not to confuse the above discussion with everyday human experiences or events. For example, man (אָדָם) was created to tend the earth (Gen 1:26, 28) and the Garden (2:15), but his original purpose was not to work constantly, as food was provided freely through fruit trees (1:29; 2:16). When humans begin to toil for food, it is a result of disobedience, not a change in God’s plan for seasons or times.

³⁹⁹ Scott B. Noegel, “‘Word Play’ in Qoheleth,” *JHS* 7 (2007): 2-28, 6.

In Ecclesiastes, Qohelet contends that humans cannot precisely predict the future (8:7, 17). This aligns with the idea that God has granted humans the ability to perceive time as past and future through the term עוֹלָם “eternity”, used in 3:11.⁴⁰⁰ The plural form עֲלָמִים (“ages”) is employed to refer to past ages in Eccl 1:10 (cf. 1 Kgs 8:13, 2 Chron 6:2, Pss 61:5 [ET 4], 77:9 [ET 8], 145:13, and Dan 9:24). This usage suggests that God has given humans the capacity to perceive the duration of time and its effects on their actions. The passage indicates that human knowledge is limited, and humans cannot fully comprehend all aspects of God’s plan. The broader plan of God concerning time remains a mystery (cf. Eccl 8:7-8).⁴⁰¹

Despite the knowledge given to them, humans cannot fully understand what God has done or will do.⁴⁰² Therefore, it is unwise to spend time trying to gain more knowledge, as human understanding will always be incomplete (cf. Eccl 11:8).⁴⁰³ Eccl 3:11 uses the phrase אֵיךְ יִשְׁׁלֵם “he cannot find out”, which suggests that although God has made humans aware of the idea of eternity, they still cannot fully grasp God’s actions.

⁴⁰⁰ This is the most common approach among English translations: “the timeless” (NAB), “eternity” (RSV, NASB, NIV, NJPS), “a sense of time past and time future” (NEB), and “a sense of past and future” (NRSV).

⁴⁰¹ Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 163.

⁴⁰² C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, (Reprint Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers; from Edinburgh: T&T Clark), 686.

⁴⁰³ Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 167. In Eccl 8:1-9, a double negative can create a positive statement in Greek, English, and many other languages. However, this grammatical construction does not apply in Hebrew. In Hebrew, a double negative emphasises a negative meaning, as seen in Eccl 3:1-8 where the phrase “thus far” could be a suitable translation for verse 1.

The word עשה in Eccl 3:11 suggests that God’s past actions continue to have an active effect on current events.⁴⁰⁴ The word עשה can also refer to both creation and God’s ongoing sovereignty.⁴⁰⁵ Therefore, this word indicates that throughout history and at any given time, humans cannot fully understand all that God does. In other words, mankind cannot see what God did during creation or what he will do at the end of the age. The word סוף “end”, which also appears in Eccl 7:2 and 12:13 (cf. 2 Chron 20:16), can be understood in our canonical reading to emphasise the end of the age because Qohelet is certainly not considering that in these verses in his first context, that is, the creation of God.

Qohelet’s problem is that he cannot fully grasp the broader concept of “duration” in Eccl 3:10-15, which describes God’s divine involvement in human affairs “under heaven” as seen in 3:1. Qohelet, like Adam in the Garden of Eden, believes that searching for wisdom and knowledge involves understanding what it means to be human, made in the image of God.

However, Qohelet teaches that even if humans cannot understand God’s ways, they should still find joy in life. Paradoxically, enjoying life and fearing God are intrinsically linked to humans’ inability to grasp and control what God is doing.

Humans experience eating, drinking, working, and pleasure within human time, but all are subject to God’s sovereignty (Gen 2:7-25).⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 256; Leo. G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: the theology of Wisdom literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 217; Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 167; James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction: Revised and Enlarged* (Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 121.

⁴⁰⁵ Kamano, *Cosmology and Character*, 99:

⁴⁰⁶ Ryan P. O’Dowd, “Epistemology in Ecclesiastes: Remembering What It Means to Be Human,”: *The Words of the Wise are Like Goats: Engaging Qohelet in the 21st Century* (ed. Mark J. Boda, Tremper Longman III, and Christian G. Rata: Winona Lake, IN.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 195.

Ecclesiastes 3:9-15 discusses God’s sovereignty over the timing of events. The word **תַּי** “time” can mean different things depending on the context and what qualifiers are used. For instance, in Ecclesiastes 9:12, **תַּי** “time” refers to an “uncertain time”, which might suggest that “no human knows his destined time”, his destiny.⁴⁰⁷ In other texts, **תַּי** “time” may be classified as “usual time” (2 Sam 11:1; 1 Chron 20:1), “suitable time”, or “time of judgment” (Eccl 8:5, 6; 9:12; Dan 8:7; cf. 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9), as well as “uncertain” (Eccl 9:11). This idea aligns with **תַּי** “appointed time” in 3:1. Ecclesiastes 9:12 also supports the concept of destiny, stating it can fall suddenly and unexpectedly upon a person. Additionally, 7:17 mentions untimely death, not as the specific date of someone’s death, but as the appropriate moment when a person should die.⁴⁰⁸ Qohelet emphasises in 9:11 that references to time highlight human limitations, because no one knows what God has planned in any moment or situation.

In Ecclesiastes 2:13, Qohelet reflects on his search for wisdom and concludes that it only offers temporary maturity since both the wise and the foolish ultimately face death (2:14). Genesis 1–3 uses the words “dust”, “return”, and “breath/spirit/wind” to describe death, and this same language appears in various passages throughout Ecclesiastes (1:6, 14, 17; 3:19, 20, 21; 4:16; 5:15; 7:9; 8:8; 11:4; 12:7).⁴⁰⁹ The similarity between humans and animals may arise because both are mortal and cannot achieve immortality. This loss of immortality is symbolised by humans’ inability to access the tree of life (Gen 3:22-24).

⁴⁰⁷ HALOT 901 under the word **תַּי** 6. b. “destined time” (Dt 11:14; Jer 5:24; Hos 2:11; Pss 1:3; 104:27 Eccl 7:17; Isa 60:22).

⁴⁰⁸ Richard Alan Fuhr Jr., *An Analysis of the Inter-Dependency of the Prominent Motifs Within the Book of Qohelet* (SBL 151; New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2013), 111-2.

⁴⁰⁹ HALOT 1197-1201 under the word **תַּי**.

In Ecclesiastes 3:21, Qohelet expresses hope in an afterlife. In Eccl 12:7, Qohelet clarifies that death is an inevitable part of the natural cycle of life, just like any other human process. The term “all” in Eccl 3:20 refers to humans and animals returning to dust after death. Qohelet recognises the universality of death’s effects on all living things. In Eccl 3:21, the phrase *מִי יוֹדֵעַ* “Who knows?” implies that no one truly knows, although it assumes a basic understanding of the difference in what happens to people and beasts after death.

As previously highlighted, God’s sovereignty over timing underscores human limitations. In Ecclesiastes 9:11, references to time stress that no one can foresee God’s plans at any moment, since the loss of immortality in the Garden of Eden, according to our canonical reading, can be seen as emphasising humanity’s uncertainty about their spiritual state after death. Similarly, no one knows the state of animals after death. Still, a clear distinction between humans and animals is made by using different word pairs to contrast *לְמַעַלָּה ... לְעֵלָּה* “going upwards” and *לְמַטָּה ... הֵי־רִדָּת* “going downwards” (cf. Job 34:14-15; Ps 104:29-30).⁴¹⁰ The term *לְעֵלָּה* might be contextually interrogative (ה); despite its initial appearance as the definite article. This suggests that “the breath/spirit of the sons of man goes up above”. However, the second pair of words contradicts this: “The breath/spirit of beasts goes down into the earth.” Qohelet, like Adam in the Garden, could not fully attain knowledge; instead, he contemplated death and the return to dust.

The passages of Ecclesiastes 12:7, Genesis 2:7 and 3:19 share similar themes. Ecclesiastes states that “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it”. In Eccl 12:7, the word *רוּחַ* denotes the “wind” (1:6, 14 and 3:19), which could

⁴¹⁰ Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 178; Belchir, Jr., *Ecclesiastes*, 163.

point to the life force that God has placed in humans, the human “spirit” seen in Eccl 3:21a, which relates to the life-giving nature of the Spirit (Gen 1:2) and God’s breathing life into the man (2:7). Together, the verbs יָשַׁב and תָּשׁוּב in Eccl 12:7, along with the noun for the human “spirit”, are used in conjunction with the final word נְתַנָּה meaning “(the spirit returns to) God (who) gave it.”⁴¹¹

In Ecclesiastes 9:11, Qohelet observes that humans are unaware of what lies ahead and cannot avoid death, regardless of their traits or deeds, whether they are good or evil, wise or foolish, offer sacrifices, or sin; all will face death in due time.⁴¹² Further, the dead take nothing with them (5:15) and are quickly forgotten (1:11; 2:16). Indeed, humans return to the dust from which they were created (Gen 2:7; cp. Ps 49:3,13 [ET 2, 12]). Despite their wealth, humans will die just as animals do. After the disobedience of the primeval pair, death becomes an unavoidable curse (Gen 3:19). The time of death comes to everyone, and it is the time appointed by YHWH *’ēlōhîm*.

Eccl 9:3

זֶה רָע בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-נַעֲשֶׂה תַחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי-מִקְרָה אֶחָד לְכֹל וְגַם לֵב בְּנֵי-הָאָדָם מִלֹּא-רָע וְהוֹלֵלוּת בְּלִבָּם בְּחַיֵּיהֶם וְאַחֲרָיו אֶל-הַמֵּתִים:

This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. (ESV)

⁴¹¹ Bollhagen, *Ecclesiastes*, 408-9.

⁴¹² Rudman, *Determinism of the Book of Ecclesiastes*, 139; Robert Gordis, *Koheleth, the Man and His World: A Study of Ecclesiastes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 339; Douglas Sean O’Donnell, *Ecclesiastes* (REC; eds. R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & I. M. Duguid; Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2014), 172.

Fearing YHWH and obeying the Torah cannot protect humanity from the judgment on the primeval pair beginning in the Garden of Eden.⁴¹³ Thus, both the righteous and the wicked are subject to mortality. According to Ecclesiastes 9:3, death is regarded as an “evil” event on earth. Qohelet understands that death is not a natural part of life but an evil resulting from the disobedience of the primeval pair, who desired the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil instead of the fruit from the tree of life.

Ecclesiastes 9:3, within our canonical reading, resonates with the narrative of the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve disobeyed YHWH’s command. In their case, **וְגַם לֵב בְּנֵי־הָאָדָם מְלֵא־רָע** translates to “the hearts of mankind are full of evil.” Ultimately, they physically return to dust—their earthly origin—and their breath or spirit returns to YHWH, their divine source.

However, this intertextual link highlights the ongoing human journey, from earthly origins in the image of God to the ultimate purpose of fulfilling the mandate on earth in God’s time, as stated in Genesis 1:26-28.

CONCLUSION

In Ecclesiastes 9:9, the reference to the “woman whom you love” is understood within the context of creation (Gen 2:24-5 and 3:22; cf. Gen 30:4, 9; 1 Sam 25:43; Dt 22:22), referring to one’s wife. Therefore, the woman in Eccl 9:9 should be seen as one’s wife, who is to be thoroughly enjoyed in all aspects (Gen 2:24-25; cp. Song 7:11).

⁴¹³ O’Donnell, *Ecclesiastes*, 173.

However, it is important to recognise that some things are beyond human understanding, no matter how hard people try to find them. Qohelet talks about not knowing the “time of death” (9:11), which man cannot discover. Even the wisest person, when claiming to have knowledge, cannot understand everything (see Job 11:7-8, when Zophar asks Job, “What can you know?”). This agrees with the statement in Deuteronomy 29:29, “the secret things belong to YHWH our God”.

In the Garden of Eden, the primeval pair disobeyed the command of YHWH; they sinned, and its effect was depicted in Gen 6:5-8:

⁵ YHWH saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And YHWH regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷ So YHWH said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of YHWH. (ESV, modified)

Ecc 9:3

This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. (ESV)

Ecc 1:2-4

² Vanity of vanities, says the Qohelet, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. ³ What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? ⁴ A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever” (ESV)

Qohelet begins the book of Ecclesiastes with the word “vanity” repeated five times in 1:2, along with “toil” twice in 1:3. This reflects the judgment of YHWH in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:16-19), which paradoxically echoes God’s initial command for man to be fruitful,

multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over it (Gen 1:28). There is much that humans cannot know with limited life spans, but one thing humans do know for certain is that death is inevitable and can occur suddenly.

In Ecclesiastes 12:7, Qohelet says, “and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it”. In Ecclesiastes 12:13, it states, “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil”. This leads humans to understand good and evil, where all things originate, bringing humans back to the beginning in the end.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this study, I aimed to analyse the connection between the stories of creation, the Garden of Eden, and Wisdom literature. In this thesis, I have demonstrated the value of intertextual reading by showing the following.

These texts share common themes and connections that link the narratives of creation and the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden within our canonical reading. Intertextual analysis is a valuable tool for readers to enhance their understanding by comparing and contrasting different texts within the canonical framework. A comprehensive study of Genesis 1–3 and Wisdom literature can provide readers with a more detailed and nuanced perspective. Examining the relationships between various texts through an intertextual approach can lead to a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

In Genesis 2–3, the story of Adam and Eve shows them being expelled from the Garden of Eden for disobeying YHWH's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After their expulsion, the entrance to the Garden was guarded by cherubim and a flaming sword, preventing humans from returning and accessing the tree of life. As a result of their actions, humans are destined to return to dust because they were made from dust of the ground.

However, this does not prevent human beings from fulfilling their duty to “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over...everything that moves on the earth”, which is addressed in Genesis 1:28 before the Garden of Eden. This requires humans, in

the image of God, as representatives of the Creator, to seek knowledge and wisdom to carry out the mandate beyond the Garden of Eden.

The story of the Garden of Eden illustrates this well, as the primeval pair gained knowledge of good and evil by disobeying God's command. This knowledge is incomplete according to Qohelet, as shown in the phrase "Who knows?" in the book of Ecclesiastes.

In Job 15, the passage examines human wisdom and its challenges in understanding and applying it. Eliphaz argues that if even the holy ones, קְדוֹשֵׁי (the sons of God), cannot be trusted by God (Job 15:15-16), then should humans be trusted by God? This prompts both Job and Qohelet to realise that God's actions and plans are hidden from humans, as demonstrated by the court of אֱלֹהִים in Job 1:1. However, in our canonical perspective, throughout all his trials, Job's faith in YHWH remained unwavering. Job's story illustrates that knowledge is not gained through suffering but through recognising the human loss of a relationship with YHWH caused by the disobedience of the primeval pair in the Garden of Eden. This relationship can be restored by submitting to and worshipping YHWH (see Job 42:7-9; cp. Ex 4:23; 7:16; 8:20; 40:13).

According to Qohelet, humans can differentiate between good and evil by fearing the Lord (Eccl 12:13), though no one knows what happens after death (3:21). These texts highlight that the breath of life comes from God (Job 4:9; 33:4; Eccl 12:7) and declare that it originates from God (Gen 2:7; 6:17; 7:22).

My research on the texts Genesis 1–3 and the Wisdom literature through a canonical reading highlights God’s power and sovereignty in creating the world. While the creation and Garden of Eden narratives in Genesis are not specifically categorised as Wisdom literature, there are parallels between these stories and Wisdom literature (cp. Prov 8:1-21, 22-36). Similarly, Proverbs 3:13-26 links wisdom with life and its fullness, an allusion to Genesis 3:22. Understanding the connection between wisdom and a long, fulfilling life, as emphasised in Proverbs 3:13-26, is crucial. This connection suggests that the harm caused by Adam and Eve’s disobedience can be remedied through the pursuit of wisdom and a long, fruitful life.

As we examined in this study, the idea that the primeval pair sought knowledge and were created in God’s image is significant. These concepts importantly bring humans closer to YHWH and wisdom, as illustrated by the analogy of sexual union through marriage in the Song (8:1-9, 10), which was established in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:20-25).

In conclusion, protection and restoration can only be achieved by finding and holding on to the beloved, as shown in the Song. Likewise, the people of God, Israel, can only be safeguarded and redeemed by clinging to YHWH.

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