

The Genesis of Good and Evil

The Fall(out) and Original Sin in the Bible

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How Common in the Scriptures Is the Fall?

The Fall is actually quite rare in Scripture, a fact that I find very intriguing given its immense importance to Christians. The twentieth-century giant of biblical theology, Gerhard von Rad, observed this omission in the Old Testament: “The contents of Gen. ch. 2, and especially ch. 3 are conspicuously isolated in the Old Testament. No prophet, psalm, or narrator makes any recognizable reference to the story of the Fall.”¹ Other important biblical scholars agree. The great biblical theologian Brevard S. Childs wrote: “It is striking that the ‘fall tradition’ plays virtually no role in the rest of the Hebrew Bible until it was revived in the Hellenistic period (e.g., IV Ezra).”² More recently, the learned historian of biblical religion Ziony Zevit has offered a similar assessment: “What is not reflected in the Hebrew Bible and what was not known in ancient Israel was a Garden story that expressed the myth of a Fall.”³ As these remarks suggest, biblical scholars are largely in agreement about the lack of witnesses to the Fall in the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures.⁴

In this chapter we will take a look at the few passages in the Hebrew Bible that might seem to refer to the Fall in Genesis 3.⁵ Then we will examine references in Jewish literature between the Old and New Testaments (called intertestamental literature or Second Temple literature). Finally, we will look at New Testament references. This exploration will take a few unexpected twists and turns.

The Fall in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible?

There are two passages in the Hebrew Bible that at first glance might seem to allude to the Fall.⁶ The first is Ezekiel 28 (verses 11–19). This

passage has been viewed as a reference to Adam in the Garden, especially since verse 2 uses the Hebrew noun *'adam* (“a mortal” in NRSV), which is the same as the word for Adam.⁷ Verses 11–19 refer to “Eden, the garden of God” (verse 13). This passage also refers to a “cherub” (verses 14 and 16), a figure similar to the familiar “cherubim” (literally, “cherubs”) at the end of Genesis 3 (verse 24). The cherub in Ezekiel 28:16 “drove out” the human because of his iniquity. Initially the human had been “the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (verse 12). This human was “blameless in your ways . . . until iniquity [*'awlatah*] was found in you” (verse 15), and “you sinned” (verse 16). As a result, this human was “cast . . . from the mountain of God” (verse 16).⁸ These details sound like the Garden of Eden story in Genesis 2–3.

At the same time, this does not mean that Ezekiel 28 was referring back to Genesis 2–3. In fact, Ezekiel 28 departs in significant ways from Genesis 2–3. Ezekiel 28 does not describe the first woman. It is not about Adam and Eve. Instead, it is about an individual male. As “the prince of Tyre,” he is also located in historical time (Ezekiel 28:2).⁹ Unlike Genesis 2–3, the scene in Ezekiel 28 does not take place early in the history of the world, as verse 7 refers to the nations and verse 17 refers to kings. Ezekiel 28 also assumes the existence of trade in verses 16 and 18 and sanctuaries in verse 18. It is not like Adam and Eve in the Garden at the beginning of human history.¹⁰ This royal figure is also “covered” in verse 13, unlike the first human couple before their eating the fruit in Genesis 2–3.¹¹

Ezekiel 28 shows a vocabulary of sin (“iniquity was found in you,” verse 15) and other faults (“Your heart was proud,” verse 17); contrary to many Christian readings, these are absent from Genesis 3. Other details in Ezekiel 28 also differ from anything seen in Genesis 2–3. In Ezekiel 28, God is said to have “cast you to the ground” in verse 17. This punishment does not happen in Genesis 3. Thus Genesis 3 and Ezekiel 28 differ in significant respects.¹² If one of these passages served as a model for the other, it may have been Ezekiel 28 that informed Genesis 2–3, and not the other way around. I am going to suggest below that Ezekiel 28 stands closer to the basic, traditional story that also informed Genesis 2–3. In any case, Ezekiel 28 is not a reference to the Fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.

Like Ezekiel 28, Ezekiel 31 shares some features with Genesis 2–3. It, too, differs in some notable ways.¹³ Like Ezekiel 28, Ezekiel 31 applies a constellation of themes resembling the Fall to foreign royalty. In this chapter, Assyria (verse 3) is compared with a tree in the “garden of God” (see verses 8–9), explicitly located in the Lebanon (verse 3).¹⁴ Eden is named in verse 16. In the end, this tree is destroyed, and “its branches

have fallen” (**npl*) in verse 12, along with “its fallen trunk” (*mappalah*) in verse 13 (see also verse 16, with the verb of **yrd* also in verses 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18). So this chapter might seem to refer back to the Garden of Eden story in Genesis 2–3. Still, there are problems with this view.

Like Ezekiel 28, Ezekiel 31 does not relate the Fall of Assyria to the Fall of humanity’s first parents or to humanity more broadly. Like Ezekiel 28, Ezekiel 31 does not refer to a “primeval era”¹⁵ like Genesis 2–3. Ezekiel 31 refers explicitly to Assyria (verse 3), and it is addressed as an object lesson to the king of Egypt (verses 2 and 18). Only by removing such historical referents could one reconstruct any primordial figure in these passages.¹⁶ Ezekiel 31 also refers to the “uncircumcised” and those “killed by the sword” (verse 18). In other words, the passage is set in historical time marked by the cultural practice of circumcision and the military reality of war. This is no Eden of primordial times.

Neither Ezekiel 28 nor Ezekiel 31 envisions an ancient Garden of Eden as the home of the first humans. Instead, they depict the divine home to which privileged humans over the course of history could be admitted by divine permission. If any older myth were to be reconstructed behind these witnesses, it would not be the Fall of Adam and Eve, but the demise of a royal or priestly figure. I would take this point further. The scenario or type-scene about royal figures in Ezekiel 28 and 31 looks as if it has been adapted in Genesis 2–3 to describe the early history of God and humanity.¹⁷ In its adaptation, Genesis 2–3 added a number of significant features. It shows its own take on humanity, compared with Ezekiel 28 and 31: it adds Eve to the story, as well as the idea of Adam and Eve as the first humans. Genesis 2–3 further develops the characters of Adam and Eve, compared with their human counterparts in Ezekiel 28 and 31. The character of God is also an important innovation. In Genesis 2–3, God is developed as a somewhat mysterious character to consider and to get to know. Genesis 2–3 also shows a change in scenery from the Lebanon to a location vaguely to the east, probably Mesopotamia, which is set up by the reference to the four rivers ending with the Tigris and Euphrates (Genesis 2:10–14). Finally, where Ezekiel 28 and 31 speak of sin and fall about their human figures, Genesis 3 does not. Its aim is evidently different, an issue that we will explore in chapter 4.

Another passage from the Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament to consider is Psalm 82. The Harvard professor emeritus Peter Machinist, who has offered many rich insights over the past four decades, has highlighted some themes shared by Psalm 82 and Genesis 2–3.¹⁸ Most pertinent for this discussion, Machinist suggests that Psalm 82:7 refers to the Fall of

Adam.¹⁹ My translation of this verse reads somewhat literally, with the words relevant for our discussion enclosed in brackets:

Thus like a human/humanity/Adam [*ke'adam*] you [plural] will
die [**mwt*];
like one of the princes you [plural] will fall [**npl*].

The language of death in the simile (“like”) here with the word *'adam* might sound like the Fall of Adam. After all, this Hebrew word is also the word for Adam. Echoing some traditional Jewish and Christian sources,²⁰ Machinist suggests that the word has a double sense here involving both humanity and Adam. The terms that match in the two lines of this verse (in other words, its poetic parallelism) are “Adam/humanity” and “princes” or “officials” (as the word is sometimes translated). For Machinist, the first line could allude to Adam and the prospect of his mortal death to illustrate the Fall of the gods denounced by this psalm, while the second line could be a different way to refer to the Fall of these gods. Machinist also notes other themes in Psalm 82 that seem to echo Genesis 3, including the same verb form for “you will die” (*temutun*, in Genesis 3:4 and Psalm 82:7) and the same verb for “walking about” (Genesis 3:8 and Psalm 82:5).²¹ Machinist concludes by asking: “when Elohim [God in NRSV] in our psalm (v. 6) sentences the elohim [‘gods’ in NRSV] to ‘fall like one of the officials’ (*ke'ahad bassarim*), can we not hear an echo of Gen 3:22, in which God admits that eating of the tree of knowledge has made the man *ke'ahadmimmenu* ‘like one of us’?”

The question is very reasonable. Certainly modern readers familiar with the Bible could hear an echo of Adam of Genesis 2–3 in this verse of Psalm 82. This would be especially true for Christian readers accustomed to associating the word “fall” with Adam. The question is whether this would be true also for a biblical writer for whom such references or allusions to Genesis 2–3 were rare at best. The scope of modern readers who know the Fall as a fact of Scripture is different from the scope of the ancient author who composed Psalm 82. There is another problem with reading Psalm 82:7 as an allusion to Adam. Machinist reads the parallelism in the verse somewhat loosely.²² Most examples of biblical parallelism show matching words or phrases that belong to the same—albeit a larger—semantic field.²³

Modern translations seem to regard the parallelism in Psalm 82:7 more narrowly. The NJPS translation reads: “but you shall die as men do, / fall like any prince.” Similarly, the NRSV renders: “nevertheless, you shall die like mortals, / and fall like any prince.” In these translations the simile

would be made with humanity and human rulers. Here we may compare the first half of Psalm 82:7 with the same idiom in Numbers 16:29: “if like the death of all humanity they die” (author translation). This verse also has the longer form of the verb found in both Psalm 82:7 and Genesis 3:4.²⁴ This line in Numbers 16:29 is broadly expressive of human mortality and not Adam. Similarly, the second half of Psalm 82:7 compares with one line in Hosea 7:16, the only other verse in the Hebrew Bible where the verb “to fall” (**npl*) applies to “officials” or “princes”: “their officials [‘officers,’ NJPS; ‘princes,’ NABRE] shall fall by the sword.” Other parallels cited by scholars also apply to humanity or human princes/officials more generally,²⁵ and Ezekiel 28 itself is one of those putative parallels.²⁶ The upshot of these comparisons is that the idioms in Psalm 82:7 look like expressions for death, the first for humanity in general and the second for human leaders and not necessarily for Adam in the Garden. If the parallelism in Psalm 82:7 were read more narrowly, then it wouldn’t work very well for the idea of the Fall being drawn from Genesis 3, as this chapter shows no language of “fall” (as we note in detail in chapter 4). Still, in Machinist’s defense, there are no other examples of this particular parallelism as we find in Psalm 82:7. An unusual psalm such as this could have encompassed a wide thinking about foreign divinity and its demise. With this sense of the psalm, Machinist’s view of the parallelism in verse 7 would make sense. In the end, an allusion to Adam in Psalm 82:7 cannot be ruled out.

Before moving to Second Temple/intertestamental references to the Fall, I would like to comment on the ancient background to the passages that we surveyed in this section, as it serves to add to our perspective on Genesis 2–3. The biblical depictions in Ezekiel 28 and 31 are at home in the traditions of the Levant (a term covering modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine). This is suggested by their references to the divine mountain (Ezekiel 28:14, 16) and the cedars of Lebanon (Ezekiel 31:3).²⁷ The tradition of such a divine garden in Lebanon is known also in the Mesopotamian story of Gilgamesh. The older version of the Gilgamesh story²⁸ refers to “the secret abode” of the gods located in the Cedar Mountains,²⁹ which in turn was incorporated in the later “Standard Version” of Gilgamesh. This later version paints the scene about Gilgamesh and his heroic buddy, Enkidu, in this way:

They were gazing at the Cedar Mountain, the dwelling of the gods,
the throne-dais of the goddesses,
[on the] very face of the mountain the cedar was proffering its abundance,
sweet was its shade, full of delight.³⁰

These lines parallel the description of the garden of God in Ezekiel 28 and 31. You may recognize the famous cedars of the Lebanon known in the Bible (for example, the cedars of Lebanon supplied for building the Temple in 1 Kings 5:20–24 Hebrew; 5:6–10 English). The word “delight” in the last phrase echoes the meaning of the word “Eden.”

This picture of the divine garden was not native to Babylonia.³¹ Rather, the garden setting represented in Ezekiel 28 and 31 was an old western tradition³² about the mountains of the Lebanon that made its way into the Mesopotamian story of Gilgamesh.³³ There is more to the comparison. The hero Gilgamesh discovers this “secret abode” of the gods while tramping through the forest of the Cedar Mountains. The narrative focuses on the “tall cedar,” a central image for Ezekiel 31. Like the monarchs of Ezekiel 28 and 31, Gilgamesh is a royal figure, and he belongs to historical time. Cities already exist in his lifetime. In these respects, he is not like Adam and Eve. Instead, Gilgamesh gains temporary access to this divine abode,³⁴ rather like the figures described in Ezekiel 28 and 31 that we discussed above. Human access to the garden on the deity’s mountain furnished with wonderful cedars was an older tradition lying in the background of Ezekiel 28 and 31.

The Gilgamesh tradition seems to reflect a positive variant of this tradition, compared with the negative expulsion of the human figures in Ezekiel 28 and 31. In other words, these traditional stories vary in their outcomes. In the case of Gilgamesh, he leaves on his own power, victorious over the monster Humbaba. Ezekiel 28 and 31 instead have a negative outcome issuing in the expulsion of the human. In Ezekiel 31, it is the cherub who performs the task of removing the human. We can see that the tradition informing Genesis 3 includes this older Garden tradition as found in these two passages from Ezekiel. Thus the scope of Genesis 3 includes not only the tradition of these two Ezekiel passages but also a series of wider ancient Near Eastern motifs likewise seen in the story of Gilgamesh. To anticipate the discussion that follows, Genesis 3 shows what we call a different “scope” of texts and traditions that informed its perspectives, compared with the later deuterocanonical writings that refer to Genesis 3.

The Fall in Deuterocanonical Literature?

Two deuterocanonical works provide the first indications of the idea of the Fall. One appears in Wisdom of Solomon 2:24 (dating sometime between 250 and 150 BC/BCE):

but through the devil's envy death entered the world,
and those who belong to his company experience it.

The verse takes up the question of the devil and death as well as their effects on humans. Like the later Christian idea of the Fall, this verse presupposes the identification of the snake with the devil in the Garden, and it also sees death resulting from the sin that was committed. While the Fall is not explicit here, still the devil "was the motivator of the events of the fall."³⁵

Another reference appears in Sirach, also known as Ben Sira or Ecclesiasticus (written between 200 and 180 BC/BCE). In Sirach 25:24 we read:

From a woman sin had its beginning,
and because of her we all die.

The first line of this verse provides the explanation (or etiology) for sin's "beginning." The second, parallel line implies that death for "all" humanity is the result of her sin ("because of her"). While the term "fall" does not occur here, it does seem that the sin in the Garden is the reason for the death of all humans. In this manner, the main outlines of the Fall are expressed in this verse, even if its full implications as understood in later sources are not.³⁶ Wisdom of Solomon 2:24 and Sirach 25:24 also sound as if they are expressing ideas already known to the author and audience; in this case, these were not the first texts to express them.

Jewish tradition also witnesses to the negative effects of Adam's disobedience in a number of Second Temple texts. For example, according to 4 Ezra 7:11–15 (late first century AD/CE) paralleled in 2 Esdras 7:11–15 (second century AD/CE), Adam's sin resulted in humanity receiving "the evil inclination," an internal human disposition attested also in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls that we will discuss later.³⁷ Other Second Temple passages that suggest negative fallout from Adam's act include 4 Ezra 3:21, 26//2 Esdras 3:21, 26; Pseudo-Philo (*Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* [LAB]) 13:8 (first century CE/AD); and 2 Baruch 17:3; 19:8; 23:4; 54:15–19; and 56:6 (second century CE/AD). Many of these texts are not familiar to people today, but they were among the Jewish religious writings in circulation around the time of the New Testament and later. They show that what happened in Genesis 3 was a topic of ongoing interest and concern.³⁸ These Second Temple texts also suggest that the concept of the Fall apparently came to Christian tradition from Jewish tradition. Just as ancient Near Eastern tradition informed Genesis 3, Jewish tradition influenced Christian interpretation of Genesis 3.

Where Did the Idea of the Fall Come From?

Many Christians are well versed in a second fall story that became a cornerstone in Christian interpretation of Genesis 3. I am talking about the Fall of the angels from heaven before the Fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis. This angelic fall provided a backstory for the story in Genesis 3. The angels' fall was lined up with the Garden story through the identification of the snake with Satan, understood as the leader of the fallen angels. This idea of the angels fallen from heaven informed Jewish tradition during the Greco-Roman period (from the death of Alexander the Great on), as seen in the books of 1 Enoch and Jubilees, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and other sources.³⁹ We won't enter into an examination of all these Second Temple texts. Instead, I just want to offer some general comments about their relevance for understanding the background for the idea of the Fall of humanity in Genesis 3.⁴⁰

The Fall of the angels in Second Temple literature was woven out of a number of older threads. The basic idea can be traced back to an old tradition of gods competing for authority and power in heaven. As a result of this competition, one god is expelled from heaven, or in later language he "falls" from heaven. This idea of conflict between competing deities in the divine realm is found as early as the Middle Bronze Age letters from the ancient site of Mari located on the Euphrates River.⁴¹ It also appears in a Late Bronze Age text (known as the Baal Cycle), discovered at the site of Ugarit on the coast of Syria.⁴² These cases of divine conflict are set in the divine council that meets in heaven; they end in the demotion or expulsion of the defeated deity. This traditional motif also informs the death of the gods denounced by God in Psalm 82:7 that we noted earlier.

The motif of fallen gods can also be seen in two other biblical passages that would come to play a prominent role in the idea of the fallen angels in intertestamental literature. Isaiah 14 refers to the "fall" of the god, "Day Star," or possibly the Sun⁴³ (literally, "Shining One," Helel), who is also identified as "son of Dawn."⁴⁴ The passage (verse 12) is satirizing the king of Babylon (see verse 4), characterized in terms of this god fallen from heaven:

How you are fallen from heaven,
O Helel [NRSV "Day Star"], son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground,
you who laid the nations low!

For this verse, this deity is the antecedent to the king of Babylon. In other words, the divine figure is the model for the human figure. Verse 13 shows Helel planning his ascent to kingship in the divine council in heaven:

I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne
above the stars of God;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
on the heights of Zaphon.

In verse 15, Helel is told: “you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit.” In later Christian theology, Isaiah 14 would play a role in the story of the “fallen angels,” as Helel son of Dawn came to be interpreted as Lucifer.⁴⁵

Like Isaiah 14, Genesis 6:1–4 came to be viewed as a reference to the angels’ fall from heaven across a wide body of Second Temple texts, including the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁴⁶ This biblical passage was particularly central to the narrative of the fallen angels in 1 Enoch 6–11 (around 160 BC/BCE), which in turn influenced Jubilees 5 (around 100 BC/BCE).⁴⁷ For these intertestamental texts, Genesis 6 provided a Scriptural “explanation” for human evil and sin in the world (verses 5–8) in conjunction with the fallen angels (verses 1–4).⁴⁸ These texts operated with the assumption that the fallen angels were the Nephilim in verse 4: “The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.”⁴⁹ At the same time, the biblical verse itself is not clear. For many scholars the Nephilim resulted from sexual relations between divine males (“sons of God”) and human women (“the daughters of men”).⁵⁰ The Nephilim themselves are not described as fallen, although the Hebrew word *Nephilim* literally means “fallen ones” (derived from the root **npl*, “to fall”). Although their name may have referred originally to them as warriors “fallen” in battle (as in Ezekiel 32:27), the Nephilim in Genesis 6:1–4 might have evoked the idea of a fall from heaven for later intertestamental texts. Apart from their name, it is hardly evident that the Nephilim in Genesis 6:1–4 were originally part of a myth of fallen gods or angels.⁵¹ Yet, for the later reading in Second Temple literature, Genesis 6:1–4 and 6:5–8 together offered a picture combining fallen angels and evil humans, seen to be two parts of a single Fall narrative. Given the separate evidence for the divine

fall of the angels, it apparently came from its own tradition of divine competition and fall, but it was secondarily lined up with what was emerging as the idea of the Fall in the Garden. We will come back to these two fall traditions after we review the evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Fall in the Dead Sea Scrolls?

Like the absence of clear references to the Fall in the Hebrew Bible and its rarity in deuterocanonical literature, the few references in the Dead Sea Scrolls found at the site of Qumran are notable.⁵² As far as I am aware, there are only three pertinent passages in the scrolls, and out of the entire corpus of scrolls, perhaps two passages know Adam's sin. Before we take a look at these three texts, we should observe that several other works among the scrolls concerned with human sin do not name sin in recounting Genesis 3.⁵³

The first relevant text is what is called 4Q Paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus (also given the number 4Q422).⁵⁴ Line 11 of its first fragment may narrate how "he [the man] rose against him" [*yqwm 'lyw*].⁵⁵ This sounds like human rebellion. Line 12 then attributes an evil tendency or "evil inclination" (*ywtsr r'š*)⁵⁶ to the man as part of the events narrated in Genesis 3.⁵⁷ This idea of the "evil inclination" in people is a hallmark of Second Temple literature,⁵⁸ and it is rather extensive in rabbinic accounts.⁵⁹ Here the Qumran fragment is echoing the same vocabulary (though not the identical phrase) found in Genesis 6:5 and 8:21; it is not in Genesis 2–3. So this Qumran fragment retrojects the negative language of "inclination" as found in the Flood story in Genesis 6:5 and 8:21 back to its account of Adam in Genesis 3.⁶⁰ In other words, this Qumran fragment shows a "retrospective reading" in drawing on the language of Genesis 6 for its retelling of Genesis 3.⁶¹

The second Qumran text referring to the Garden of Eden story is 4Q423. This is one copy of what is called Sapiential Work A. In column I, fragments 1 and 2,⁶² this text refers to the tree "desirable to make one wise," in Genesis 3:6. Echoing Genesis 2:15, these lines further state: "He has given you authority to tend it and keep it."⁶³ Line 3 mentions the hardship of "thorns and thistles," a reference to Genesis 3:18.⁶⁴ Line 4 uses the phrase "in your being unfaithful" (*bmw'lkh*). It would appear that the condition of the earth in line 3 represents a divine response to human "unfaithfulness," in short the notion of "disobedience" well known in Christian theological literature about Genesis 3. Line 7 echoes the tree of knowing good and evil in its expression, "[rejecting] the evil and knowing

the good.” While this Qumran fragment does not speak about the Fall, still it holds a negative view of the man’s actions that would accord with the later idea of the Fall.

The third Dead Sea Scrolls text relevant to this discussion is fragment 8 of 4Q504, a text also known as the Words of the Luminaries.⁶⁵ It has been claimed that “disobedience and punishment” lurks in the broken lines of this fragment.⁶⁶ To give you a sense of what this text says, I provide a standard translation of this fragment (the square brackets mark the words reconstructed by scholars):⁶⁷

- line 1 [Re]member, O L[o]r[d,] that [. . .]
- line 2 [. . .] and it is You who lives for[ever . . .]
- line 3 [You have done] wonders of old, and awesome deeds
 [long ago].
- line 4 You fashioned [Adam,] our [fa]ther, in the image of
 [Your] glory;
- line 5 the breath of life] you [br]eathed into his nostrils, [and
 filled him] with understanding and knowledge. [. . .]
- line 6 [. . .] Y[ou] set him to rule [over the Gar]den of Eden that
 You had planted. [. . .]
- line 7 [. . .] and to walk about in a glorious land [. . .]
- line 8 [. . .] he guarded it. You enjoined him not to turn
 as[ide. . .]
- line 9 [. . .] flesh is he, and to dust h[e
- line 10 [. . .] It is *vacat* You who knows [. . .]
- line 11 [. . .] for the generations of eternity [. . .]
- line 12 [. . .] the living God, and Your hand [. . .]
- line 13 [. . .] humankind in the ways of [. . .]
- line 14 to fill the earth with wro]ngdoing and to she[d blood]

The language of “disobedience and punishment” is notably lacking from this text. While the fine Dead Sea Scrolls scholar Esther Chazon sees this idea in lines 8–9,⁶⁸ these lines do not speak to any disobedience or punishment. The commandment in line 8, if violated, is posed in negative terms, “not to turn as[ide]” (*lbtly s[wr]*), assuming the reconstruction is correct. Line 9 recalls the end of Genesis 3:19, which Chazon takes as punishment, though line 9 does not really say that. Line 8 cannot be discounted; it does sound negative, and it is not impossible that such negative terms may have been originally in these damaged lines. Still, we have no such language preserved. In sum, this Qumran fragment is missing

not only the language of “disobedience and punishment,” but also any clear vocabulary of sin or language of humanity’s sin or sinful state.

In the end, it may seem odd that the idea of the Fall is so rare in the literature of a movement⁶⁹ that was otherwise so concerned with sin. At the same time, the texts show concern with sin in the world without reference to Genesis 3. The first is the idea of an evil inclination in humanity, a notion based on two verses in the Flood story that we noted above, Genesis 6:5 and 8:21.⁷⁰ We will discuss this idea later. Before we turn to the New Testament, I’d like to make an observation about retrospective reading that we have seen in two of our sources. The first Dead Sea Scroll text that we examined above, 4Q Paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus (also known as 4Q422), connects an “evil inclination” with the account of events in Genesis 3. As noted above, this fragment reads this language as first known from Genesis 6 back to the events of Genesis 3. In this text, we see the outlines of an ancient interpretive strategy that pushed the sin of Genesis 6 back to Genesis 3. We have also noted how some Second Temple texts “found the backstory” to the Fall of Genesis 3 in what they thought was the tradition of the “fallen angels” in Genesis 6:1–4. This, too, is a good example of retrospective reading.

All in all, pre-Christian literature attests the Fall rather rarely. At the same time, in its few references back to Genesis 3, this intertestamental literature shows the emergence of an interpretive strategy of retrospective reading that views Genesis 3 as a narrative about human sin and divine punishment, in short, the Fall. In other words, the idea of the Fall of Adam and Eve was largely a creation of the Greco-Roman period drawing on various strands of biblical tradition, including some of the passages describing divine “falls” (Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 and 31). The Fall of gods and then angels (including the fallen Satan)⁷¹ may have been more prevalent than the Fall of humanity. As a speculation, the historical critic in me suspects that it was in the Greco-Roman period that the idea of the Fall known about the “fallen angels” started to be applied to humanity. Together, the divine and human falls generated an interlocking, general explanation for the origin of sin in the world.⁷²

The Fall in the New Testament?

The earliest explicit New Testament references to the Fall appear in two letters of Paul.⁷³ Both passages compare Adam and Christ. Adam is called “a type” (*typos*) for Christ in Romans 5:12 and 14: “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and

so death spread to all because [*eph' bō*, inasmuch as]⁷⁴ all have sinned—sin was indeed in the world before the law. . . . Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were like the transgression of Adam, who is a type [*typos*] of the one who was to come.” The initial part of this passage is alluding to Genesis 3 (verses 3 and 19).⁷⁵ With all the continuity and antithesis implied by the term *typos*,⁷⁶ Romans 5 understands the figure of Adam with a very different scope compared with the scope of Genesis 3 itself. Romans 5 correlates its interpretation of the human figure in Genesis 3 with the figure of “the one who was to come,” in other words, Jesus Christ. For Romans 5, it is the story of Jesus Christ that defines or redefines Adam, an element clearly absent from the scope of Genesis 3 itself. The human author of Genesis 3 did not know Christ.

The interpretative scope found in Romans 5 also informs another passage from Paul’s letters, 1 Corinthians 15:21–22: “For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (RSV). The correlation made here between Adam and Christ offers a contrast between the two figures.⁷⁷ With Jesus identified as the basis for the resurrection of the dead, the death of Adam in Genesis 3 is lifted up here as a theme emphasizing the general human condition of death “in Adam.” The typology of this passage generalizes consequences for “all.” The scope of this passage explicitly names Christ, clearly not part of the scope of texts and traditions informing Genesis 3 itself. The Fall is not prominent elsewhere in the New Testament. We may note the representation of Eve in 1 Timothy 2:14: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” It is striking how little the Fall appears in the New Testament, given how large it has loomed in Christian imagination.⁷⁸

Was the Serpent in the Garden Satan or the Devil?

I leave this question for now and mention a related problem: when did the snake come to be understood as Satan or the devil? Wisdom of Solomon 2:23–24 is the first text known that identifies the serpent with the devil.⁷⁹ This view was generally “canonized” by Western Christianity in the wake of New Testament passages such as Revelation 12:9 and 20:2.⁸⁰ As a result, readers today commonly read the snake in the Garden of Eden as Satan or the devil.⁸¹ The role of the snake’s speech in Genesis 3 may remind readers of the devil as the tempter of Jesus in the Gospels (Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13).⁸²

However, there is a problem with this interpretation. The idea of the devil or Satan as a fallen angel is not in the Hebrew Bible. Instead, Satan (or mostly the *satan*, really a title and not a name) is a member of the heavenly council of God, in Job 1–2 and Zechariah 3; he serves God as his “prosecuting attorney.”⁸³ Apart from Wisdom of Solomon, the identification of the snake as the devil or Satan is absent from the Old Testament. It evidently developed during the Greco-Roman period. Like the idea of the Fall, the later identification of the devil with the snake is so dominant in Christian tradition⁸⁴ that it seems indispensable to the Christian story. However, this did not pose a difficulty for the Old Testament writers who only rarely (if at all!) referred to the story of Genesis 3.

This difficulty was clear even to a traditional interpreter like John Calvin. He accepted the “testimonies of Scripture” beyond Genesis 3 identifying the snake with Satan, but he also conceded the problem with this identification based on “this place alone” (namely, Genesis 3):

I acknowledge, indeed, that from this place *alone* nothing more can be collected than that men were deceived by the serpent. But the testimonies of Scripture are sufficiently numerous, in which it is plainly asserted that the serpent was only the mouth of the devil. . . . The question, however, is not yet solved why Moses has kept back the name of Satan. I willingly subscribe to the opinion of those who maintain that the Holy Spirit then purposely used obscure figures, because it was fitting that full and clear light should be reserved for the kingdom of Christ.⁸⁵

In other words, the revelation of Satan in the Garden is corollary to the revelation of Christ.

Let’s hold these thoughts for the moment, and turn to different views about the nature of the sin that took place in the Garden, beginning with Scripture down to John Calvin.

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