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**Eating from the Tree That Causes Insight:
An Investigation of the Presence of Wisdom in the Paradise and
Fratricide Narratives**

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submitted by

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1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

The fact that so much material has been written about the early chapters of Genesis requires the one wishing to join the discussion to clarify how they can add to the ongoing conversation about these texts. The aim of what follows is not a comprehensive analysis of Gen 2:4–4:26, but rather it is an attempt to (1) consider claims of language, symbols/motifs, and themes related to wisdom within the Paradise Narrative (hereafter, “PN”) and (2) to examine whether these wisdom elements also play a role in the following Fratricide Narrative (hereafter, “FN”). The conclusions of these analyses will be used to suggest whether these chapters give evidence of a connection to the broader discussion on wisdom within the Hebrew Bible, a common claim regarding the PN. The initial chapter will begin with a review of literature written on the topic of the PN/FN and wisdom, and it will end with conclusions regarding gaps in the research that need to be addressed. This will be followed by a statement of thesis, a definition of key terms, and an explanation of the methodology that will be used to support the stated thesis.

1.1. Survey of Literature

1.1.1. The Paradise Narrative and Wisdom

The following literature review will focus on works that discuss the concept of wisdom within the Paradise Narrative. Many interpreters have seen a connection to wisdom in this narrative in its terms, symbols/motifs, and overarching themes.¹ This section will survey research for each of these categories and, secondly, review two significant challenges

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Verses from the Hebrew Bible are cited from the *Hebrew Masoretic Text with Westminster Hebrew Morphology*, copyrighted 1991–2016 by The J. Alan Groves Center for Advanced Biblical Research, used with permission in Accordance Bible software, version 2.2.

¹ See 1.3 regarding the definitions adopted for these terms.

that have been raised regarding the connection of this passage to so-called “wisdom literature.”² It will not be possible to cover every comparison to wisdom that has been made in the history of research, but an attempt will be made to mention those connections most often identified by interpreters.

1.1.1.1. Terminology

Perhaps easiest to identify, but also least decisive in terms of making a conclusive connection between texts, is overlap of terminology.³ Scholars have noted that certain words within the PN also appear within the wisdom literature texts of the Hebrew Bible. The table below summarizes terms noted by George E. Mendenhall⁴ and Eckart Otto.⁵

Terms in the PN/FN	Total # of Occurrences in the Hebrew Bible	Total # of Occurrences in Wisdom Literature	References in Wisdom Literature
דא in Gen 2:6	2x	1x	Cf. Job 36:27
חמד (<i>niph</i>) in Gen 2:9; 3:6	21x (<i>qal, niph, piel</i>)	6x ⁶	Cf. Job 20:20 (<i>qal</i>); Prov 1:22 (<i>qal</i>); 6:25 (<i>qal</i>); 12:12 (<i>qal</i>); 21:20 (<i>niph</i>); Song 2:3 (<i>piel</i>)
ערום in Gen 2:25	16x ⁷	7x	Cf. Job 1:21 (2x); 22:6; 24:7, 10; 26:6; Eccl 5:14

² When this term is used in what follows, it refers to Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs (certain Psalms will occasionally be mentioned as well). See 1.3.2.2 for further discussion. This is not a claim that this genre classification is accurate, but this designation is adopted in order to describe what most scholars mean when they use the term (cf. the critique of Will Kynes, summarized in 1.1.1.4.1).

³ See the summary of Walter Bühner’s critique of this methodology (1.1.1.4.2).

⁴ George E. Mendenhall, “The Shady Side of Wisdom: The Date and Purpose of Genesis 3,” in *The Shady Side of Wisdom: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers*, ed. H. N. Bream, et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 328.

⁵ Eckart Otto, “Die Paradieserzählung Genesis 2–3: Eine nachpriesterschriftliche Lehrerzählung in ihrem religionshistorischen Kontext,” in *Jedes Ding hat seine Zeit...: Studien zur israelitischen und altorientalischen Weisheit*, ed. A. A. Diesel et al., BZAW 241 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 175. Otto also points to the use of paronomasia, which is frequently exploited in wisdom literature, particularly Proverbs (ibid., 175 n. 44).

⁶ See also Psa 19:11.

⁷ This term is written defectively in four occurrences (ערם).

ערום in Gen 3:1	11x	10x	Cf. Prov 12:16, 23; 13:16; 14:8, 15, 18; 22:3; 27:12; Job 5:12; 15:5 ⁸
תאווה in Gen 3:6	21x	9x	Cf. Prov 10:24; 11:23; 13:12, 19; 18:1; 19:22; 21:25, 26; Job 33:20 ⁹
שכל (<i>hiph</i>) in Gen 3:6	60x (<i>qal</i> , <i>hiph</i>)	16x	Cf. Job 22:2; 34:27, 35; Prov 1:3; 10:5, 19; 14:35; 15:24; 16:20, 23; 17:2, 8; 19:14; 21:11, 12, 16 (<i>all hiph</i>)
תפר (<i>qal</i>) in Gen 3:7	4x	2x	Cf. Job 16:15; Eccl 3:7 ¹⁰
שוף (<i>qal</i>) in Gen 3:15	2x	1x	Cf. Job 9:17 ¹¹
עצב in Gen 3:16	6x	4x	Cf. Prov 5:10; 10:22; 14:23; 15:1 ¹²
תשוקה in Gen 3:16	3x	1x	Cf. Song 7:11

Many scholars draw upon these connections in terminology in their interpretation of the PN. For example, Tova Forti compares the use of תאווה and שכל (*hiph*) in the PN with their use in Proverbs, suggesting that the occurrences in Proverbs add further insight to the use of these words in the PN. Specifically, she believes that the affinities between these writings make it clear that the PN is addressing the tension between “human intellectual curiosity and fear of God.”¹³ Terje Stordalen points to the word נשמה (Gen 2:7), which he claims refers to a late sapiential motif of “the breath of God residing in humankind, producing intellectual or spiritual capacity which distinguishes between animals and humankind (Prov 20:27; Job 32:8).”¹⁴ Other interpreters point more generally to the language as suggestive of wisdom.

⁸ This term also occurs as a substantive in Prov 1:4; 8:5, 12.

⁹ Note also Psa 10:3, 17; 78:29, 30; 112:10.

¹⁰ See also Ezk 13:18.

¹¹ See also Psa 139:11.

¹² See also Psa 127:2.

¹³ Tova Forti, “The Polarity of Wisdom and Fear of God in the Eden Narrative and in the Book of Proverbs,” *BN* 149 (2011): 45–7.

¹⁴ Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 210.

This is exemplified by David Carr’s description of the discussion between the woman and the snake:

Themes of wisdom and knowledge appear already in the introduction of the snake as ‘more clever than all the animals of the field’ (3:1a) and are reinforced by general references to the ‘knowing’ of God in 3:5 and of ‘humans’ in 3:7 along with more specific allusions to wisdom in the ‘opening of the eyes’ in 3:5, 7 and the ‘wisdom’ that the woman sees will come from eating of the forbidden fruit in 3:6.¹⁵

These connections in terminology are rarely seen as decisive for proving a proposed connection to wisdom literature but are typically contributing evidence to arguments that are grounded in similarities in the other two categories listed above: symbols/motifs and themes.¹⁶

1.1.1.2. Symbols/Motifs

1.1.1.2.1. The Knowledge of Good and Bad

Scholars have noticed that the PN reflects an “interest in knowledge and ignorance” that is typical of wisdom thought.¹⁷ This is seen most clearly in the tree of the knowledge of good and bad (עץ הדעת טוב ורע),¹⁸ whose fruit is “to be desired to cause insight”¹⁹ (Gen 3:6).²⁰ There has been much debate among scholars as to the precise definition of the phrase עץ

¹⁵ David Carr, *The Formation of Genesis 1–11: Biblical and Other Precursors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 41. He discusses the “opening of the eyes” as an expression in the ancient Near East that referred to gaining wisdom (idem, *Genesis 1–11* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2021], 29). See also idem, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 466, and idem, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31.

¹⁶ E.g., Konrad Schmid, “Die Unteilbarkeit der Weisheit: Überlegungen zur sogenannten Paradieserzählung Gen 2f. und ihrer theologischen Tendenz,” *ZAW* 114 (2002): 22.

¹⁷ Stordalen, *Echoes*, 210. On the term “wisdom thought,” see 1.3.2.2.

¹⁸ See 3.3.1 regarding the translation of this phrase as “the tree of the knowledge of good and bad,” rather than the more traditional translation, “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

¹⁹ This represents my own translation of the phrase (see 3.3.4).

²⁰ Carr writes, “In the Eden story, the humans eat from a ‘tree of knowledge of good and evil,’ whose fruit is good for ‘gaining insight,’ and have their ‘eyes opened’ – all expressions current in Israelite and/or non-biblical wisdom literature” (*The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 466).

הדעת טוב ורע. In the 19th century, Julius Wellhausen had already described the phrase as related to wisdom (although without directly mentioning the term *Weisheit*):

Vielmehr die Erkenntnis, die hier verboten ist, ist die eigentliche, die allgemeine Erkenntnis, das Klugwerden wie es hinterdrein genannt wird. Das ist es, was nach des Verfassers Meinung über die Schranken unserer Natur hinausgeht, das Geheimnis der Dinge, das Geheimnis der Welt zu ergründen, Gott gleichsam in die Karten zu gucken, wie er es bei seinem lebendigen Wirken anfängt, um es etwa ihm abzusehen und nachzumachen. Denn Wissen ist in der alten Welt immer zugleich auch Können, keine blossе Metaphysik.²¹

More recently, Rainer Albertz concludes similarly; after examining the use of this phrase elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, he proposes that this knowledge refers to “praktizierte Weisheit.”²² Eckart Otto sees it as “moral judgment” but considers this an aspect of the hidden wisdom of God that is discussed by late wisdom texts.²³ Tryggve N. D. Mettinger asserts that the tree gives “wisdom”²⁴ and defines this wisdom as “universal knowledge.”²⁵ John Walton calls the knowledge of good and bad, “discerning or discriminating wisdom.”²⁶ John Day says it is “the wisdom of a mature adult.”²⁷ Nathan French’s recent work provides a survey of different interpretations of this phrase, one of which is that it describes wisdom.²⁸

²¹ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 5th ed. (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1899), 306.

²² Rainer Albertz, “‘Ihr werdet sein wie Gott’: Gen 3,1–7 auf dem Hintergrund des alttestamentlichen und sumerisch-babylonischen Menschenbildes,” *WO* 24 (1993): 94. See further discussion of Albertz’s argument in 1.1.1.3.3.

²³ Otto, “Die Paradieserzählung,” 176–77, translation my own.

²⁴ Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 2–3* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 60.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁶ John Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 171.

²⁷ John Day, “Wisdom and the Garden of Eden,” in *From Creation to Abraham: Further Studies in Genesis 1–11*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Supplement Series 726 (London: T&T Clark, 2022), 66.

²⁸ Nathan French, *A Theocentric Interpretation of הדעת טוב ורע: The Knowledge of Good and Evil as the Knowledge for Administering Reward and Punishment* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 35ff. For himself, French concludes that this is not a fully convincing explanation of the phrase because (1) it is unclear why wisdom would be prohibited and (2) commentators do not clarify in what sense the wisdom they refer to is divine knowledge (*ibid.*, 39). He concedes, however, that there is a “‘sapiential’ quality to the knowledge dispensed by the tree” (*ibid.*, 39). The definition of this phrase will be further considered in 3.3.

This interpretation of the phrase often leads scholars to see wisdom as a key theme within the narrative, although there is debate as to the precise stance of the narrative when it comes to wisdom (see 1.1.1.3).

1.1.1.2.2. The Trees

The trees in the garden are one of the most commonly referenced connections to wisdom in the PN.²⁹ This is understandable, because, as David Carr notes, wisdom literature makes liberal use of the tree as a symbol of wisdom.³⁰ Wisdom connections to the tree of life were already proposed by Hermann Gunkel: “Hebrew proverbs often refer to this tree (Prov 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4). It must have been a well-known concept.”³¹ In more recent interpretation, Michaela Bauks also names the tree of life as a wisdom motif,³² and Jean-Louis Ska describes it as a “known motif, common in many of the traditions of the ancient Near East.”³³ Stéphanie Anthonioz compares the tree of life in the PN with the tree of life in Proverbs, stating, “the tree is a well-known metaphor for wisdom itself (Prov 3:18) or for the fruit of the life of the righteous (Prov 11:30; 15:4).”³⁴ She also refers to Jer 17:7–8, where the tree is used “to describe the happiness of the wise,” and Sir 24:12–21, “where personified

²⁹ The following connections relate to the tree of life. The tree of the knowledge of good and bad does not appear in wisdom literature (or anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible or in other ancient texts); however, the epithet, “knowledge of good and bad,” is suggestive of wisdom, as already discussed (1.1.1.2.1).

³⁰ David Carr, “The Politics of Textual Subversion: A Diachronic Perspective on the Garden of Eden Story,” *JBL* 112 (1993): 589.

³¹ Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, trans. Mark Biddle (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 8.

³² Michaela Bauks, “Erkenntnis und Leben in Gen 2–3 – Zum Wandel eines ursprünglich weisheitlich geprägten Lebensbegriffs,” *ZAW* 127 (2015): 24.

³³ Jean-Louis Ska, “Genesis 2–3: Some Fundamental Questions,” 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), 18.

³⁴ Stéphanie Anthonioz, “A Reflection on the Nature of Wisdom: From Psalm 1 to Mesopotamian Traditions,” in *Tracing Sapiential Traditions in Ancient Judaism*, ed. Hindy Najman, et al., JSJSup 174 (Brill: Leiden, 2016), 47.

Wisdom compares herself to a life-giving tree.”³⁵ Further, Anthonioz calls the difference in perspective on wisdom in Proverbs versus Genesis, “striking”: “Wisdom [in Proverbs] is sought and found, honors and is honored, gives herself as fruit to be eaten, and makes happy those who reach out to take and eat her fruit.”³⁶ For Anthonioz, this perspective is markedly different from the PN, in which wisdom is forbidden and is seen as a divine, rather than human, prerogative.³⁷

Cautions have been raised regarding the connection between wisdom and the tree of life. Significantly, after considering the appearance of the tree in Mesopotamian iconography, Anthonioz concludes that this image is not limited to “the sapiential corpus,” but rather “should be understood in [its] wider context as traditions transmitted and reinterpreted (or recontextualized) rather than as devices pertaining only to a particular genre.”³⁸ In other words, one cannot assume a connection to wisdom literature merely based on the appearance of the tree of life motif. Peter Lanfer raises another issue: “the ‘life’ of wisdom literature is fundamentally different from the eternal life that is prominent...in the expulsion narrative.”³⁹ This is also discussed by Roland Murphy, who notes that the “life” discussed in wisdom literature is typically understood to be connected with quality of life and “length of days”

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 47–48.

³⁷ It will be argued below that it is not wisdom (in the sense that Proverbs defines “wisdom”) that is forbidden (see 3.3., especially 3.3.4).

³⁸ Ibid., 51.

³⁹ Peter Lanfer, *Remembering Eden: The Reception History of Genesis 3:22–24* (New York: Oxford University, 2012), 90.

rather than eternal life.⁴⁰ This warns against the uncritical importation of a symbol or motif's meaning from one passage into another passage.⁴¹

1.1.1.2.3. The Snake

The snake, one of the key players in the action of the PN, is also often mentioned in connection to wisdom thought. It is commonly asserted that snakes appear as a symbol of wisdom in ancient Near Eastern iconography and literature.⁴² Bill T. Arnold asserts, “serpents were noted for their wisdom, protection, healing, and knowledge of death.”⁴³ As with terminology and other motifs, the snake is typically noted as part of a broader argument regarding wisdom within the PN.⁴⁴ A few interpreters have focused on the snake as a symbol of wisdom in Egyptian religion and on this basis have suggested that it is used in the PN to criticize Solomon's openness in his dealings with foreign nations.⁴⁵

A very different argument is offered by Blenkinsopp, who compares the “‘wise’ snake” with three of the “‘wise’ counsellors” in the Succession History: Jonadab (2 Samuel 13), the wise woman of Tekoa (2 Samuel 14), and Ahithophel (2 Samuel 16). Like the snake, each of these counsellors gives advice that leads to damaging and violent consequences for

⁴⁰ Roland Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of the Bible's Wisdom Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 87. Murphy contrasts this with the Wisdom of Solomon, in which eternal life is in view (ibid., 86–87).

⁴¹ On the study of symbols and motifs, see 1.3.1.

⁴² See, e.g., Carr, “Politics,” 589. See further discussion of the use of snakes as a symbol/motif in 3.4.2.2, where it will be suggested that examples of snakes symbolizing wisdom are not as common as is often thought.

⁴³ Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, NCBC (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 62. See also Luis Alonso-Schökel, “Sapiential and Covenant Themes in Genesis 2–3,” in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw (New York: Ktav, 1976), 472–73.

⁴⁴ E.g., Carr, “Politics,” 589; Schmid, “Unteilbarkeit,” 22.

⁴⁵ Representative of this view are the following studies: Manfred Görg, “Die ‘Sünde’ Salomos: Zeitkritische Aspekte der jahwistischen Sündenfallerzählung,” *BN* 16 (1981): 42–59; idem, “Das Wort zur Schlange (Gen 3,14 f.): Gedanken zum sogenannten Protoevangelium,” *BN* 19 (1982): 121–40; Knut Holter, “The Serpent in Eden as a Symbol of Israel's Political Enemies: a Yahwistic Criticism of the Solomonic Foreign Policy?,” *SJOT* 1 (1990): 106–12.

the recipients of the advice.⁴⁶ Blenkinsopp explains, “the situation is basically identical in Genesis 3, though with different actors: the woman and the ‘wise’ snake following whose advice leads to expulsion from the garden and loss of immunity from death.”⁴⁷ He notes these parallels as part of a broader argument regarding similarities between the PN and the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel 11–20; 1 Kings 1–2), which he notes has “features in common with late wisdom.”⁴⁸

1.1.1.2.4. The Woman

The fact that it was the woman who took the fruit and gave it to the man has led some to connect her with the adulterous woman of Proverbs (e.g., Prov 7:10–23; 9:13–18), making this another potential connection to wisdom thinking. Calum M. Carmichael also discusses this parallel between the PN and Proverbs: “In the book of Proverbs, the frequent interplay between the admonitions to acquire wisdom and the warning about the attractions of loose women (or, less often, advice about faithfulness to one woman) suggests that the sages work with the assumption that there is no separating a man’s desire for knowledge from his desire for a woman.”⁴⁹ This motif and its relationship with Proverbs is also mentioned by Otto, although he notes that the intention of the motif in Proverbs relates to warnings against adultery, which is not in focus in the PN.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 59.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 58–60. He claims that “reading [the Succession Narrative] in tandem with the story of the man, the woman and the snake will, despite the difference in genre and length, place in higher and clearer relief themes common to both and help the reader to get a sense of the tone of the Genesis narrative” (ibid., 58). See further comments on Blenkinsopp’s interpretation in 1.1.1.3.3.

⁴⁹ Calum M. Carmichael, “The Paradise Myth: Interpreting without Jewish and Christian Spectacles,” in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden*, ed. Paul Morris and Deborah Sawyer, JSOTSup 136 (Sheffield: JSOT Press 1992), 50.

⁵⁰ Otto, “Die Paradieserzählung,” 178. He also suggests that Prov 14:15 provides a helpful background for understanding the conversation between the woman and the snake (ibid., 178 n. 60).

Carr connects the figure of Eve with Proverbs in a different way: as a “prominent primal female connected with wisdom,” along with Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8.⁵¹ The treatment of wisdom is, of course, different: “Proverbs depicts the search for wisdom as producing long life, riches, and honor. In contrast, Genesis 2–3 depicts the human striving for wisdom as contradicting Yhwh’s imperative and ultimately producing suffering.”⁵²

Walter Bühler discusses whether there is a connection between the woman of Proverbs 31 and Eve. Along with overlap in terminology, there is the theme of praise of a (married) woman, which is also reflected in the portrayal of the woman in Genesis 2:18–24, where she is celebrated as the desired and much-needed helper of the man.⁵³ He concludes, however, that the comparison adds little when it comes to interpreting the narrative, as the similarities are not substantial and the two women have differing functions.⁵⁴ The connection between the woman and wisdom is thus quite tentative and in what follows other possibilities for understanding her role in the narrative will be considered (see 3.4.3).

1.1.1.2.5. The Dust

Otto notes both the concept of man’s return to dust (Gen 3:19; cf. Job 10:9; 34:15) and creation from dust (Gen 2:7; cf. Eccl 3:20; 12:7) in wisdom literature.⁵⁵ Ska also references the “creation from dust” motif in the PN as having its closest parallel in Job and Ecclesiastes,⁵⁶ and P. Joseph Titus states that “the ideas of Gen 2:7 seem to be echoed in the

⁵¹ Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 466.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Walter Bühler, *Am Anfang...: Untersuchungen zur Textgenese und zur relativ-chronologischen Einordnung von Gen 1–3* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 302.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Otto, “Die Paradieserzählung,” 174.

⁵⁶ Ska, “Genesis 2–3,” 17.

sapiential texts.”⁵⁷ In a discussion of the connections between Genesis 2–3 and Job, Beverly J. Stratton notes that “dust is a prominent word in the book [of Job].”⁵⁸ “The return of humankind to dust” is also named as a “sapiential theme” by Stordalen.⁵⁹

1.1.1.2.6. The Man as Sage

Scribal list making, a motif associated with wisdom literature, is sometimes mentioned in connection with Adam’s action of naming the animals (Gen 2:19–20) and the woman (2:23). Through this process of naming, Alonso-Schökel suggests that Adam is presented as a sage: Adam “was the first to make up lists or classifications of reality, such as were prized in Egypt and Babylon and in Solomon’s case (1 Kg 5). The sage’s art of coining maxims or proverbs is not far from the dexterity Adam showed in naming his wife (*isha* from *ish*, Gn 2:23).”⁶⁰ Otto agrees with Alonso-Schökel that Adam’s naming of the animals is reminiscent of scribal list making.⁶¹ Additionally, Stordalen describes Adam’s statement in 2:23 as “a sapiential proverb.”⁶²

1.1.1.3. Themes

As noted above, many authors have pointed to wisdom as a primary lens through which to understand the PN. Some of these significant contributions are briefly summarized below. They are organized based on their interpretation of the narrative’s stance towards wisdom, whether negative, positive, or ambivalent.

⁵⁷ Joseph Titus, *The Second Story of Creation: A Prologue to the Concept of Enneateuch?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 177–78.

⁵⁸ Beverly J. Stratton, *Out of Eden: Reading, Rhetoric, and Ideology in Genesis 2–3*, JSOTSup 208 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 225.

⁵⁹ Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 210.

⁶⁰ Alonso-Schökel, “Sapiential and Covenant Themes,” 473.

⁶¹ Otto, “Paradieserzählung,” 176.

⁶² Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 236.

1.1.1.3.1. Negative Stance Towards Wisdom

George E. Mendenhall (1974) believes that Genesis 3 is a *mashal* deriving from the “‘wisdom tradition’ of ancient Israel” in exilic times:⁶³ “it stems from a wisdom tradition that had been chastened by calamity and that was forced to the conclusion that the old religious tradition was, after all, in the right.”⁶⁴ He cites linguistic evidence for the connection to wisdom: specifically, the words ערום, ערום, תאוה, נחמד, שכל (*hiph*), and תפר (*qal*).⁶⁵ For him, the knowledge of good and bad is representative of the type of wisdom in vogue during the time of Jeremiah and Zephaniah; this “wisdom” questioned and minimized the role of God in the events of life (e.g., “Yhwh does not do good, nor does he do evil” [Zeph 1:12]).⁶⁶ He claims that “this attitude...underlies the words of the serpent to Eve: ‘You will surely not die.’”⁶⁷ There are negative consequences to the humans’ adoption of this attitude in the PN, and, through this, the narrator intends to show that this attitude leads to destruction.⁶⁸ In this way, the narrative provides an explanation for the exile of Judah.⁶⁹

Nicolas Wyatt (1981) proposes two strands in the PN: an original etiological story contained in Gen 2:4b–7, 18–24; 3:20–21 and another layer in 2:8–17, 25; 3:1–19, 22–24 that was added by an exilic writer.⁷⁰ He points to the use of the words עֵדֶן and מִקְצֶה (in the geographic sense) in primarily exilic or postexilic contexts and also refers back to

⁶³ Mendenhall, “Shady Side,” 320. Notably, Mendenhall does not cite many other scholars and seems to be primarily responding to the tendency of certain groups (specifically in the United States in the 1970’s) to take the story out of context. For example, he expresses frustration several times towards the women’s liberation movement (ibid., 319, 331–33).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 328.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 330.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 331.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 329.

⁷⁰ Nicolas Wyatt, “Interpreting the Creation and Fall Story,” *ZAW* 93 (1981): 11–12.

Mendenhall's conclusions regarding the use of exilic/postexilic vocabulary in the PN to support the exilic date of the redaction.⁷¹ The purpose of this exilic addition is explained in relation to wisdom — the narrative's negative stance on wisdom is intended as “a parody of the wisdom schools.”⁷² The humans' acceptance of the “wisdom” of the serpent and their disobedience of Yhwh's commandment shows “the dire consequence of [the wisdom schools'] overreliance on wisdom and failure to observe the direct ordinances of Yhwh.”⁷³ The tree of the knowledge of good and bad is added by this redaction for polemical purposes.⁷⁴ He connects this tree to the Oak of Moreh, which he believes was “an accessory of the pre-Israelite cult of El at Shechem, and if such a cult is being studiously ignored in the allusion to the tree of Dtn 11:30 and Jos 24:26, it is reasonable to see it as a cult which stands condemned by orthodox Yahwism.”⁷⁵

Walter Brueggemann (1986) asserts that the narrative is “a reflection on what knowledge does to human community” and states that it appears to have been influenced by “wisdom teachers who are preoccupied with understanding life and probing its mysteries.”⁷⁶ He cites Mendenhall's study and goes on to speculate that there is a critique of Solomonic wisdom in the narrative.⁷⁷ Specific evidence for this suggestion is not offered, but he does note comparisons with passages that discuss hidden knowledge (Prov 25:2–3) and uses of

⁷¹ Ibid., 12.

⁷² Ibid., 19.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 15–16.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 17. Overall, he takes the story as “explaining the rise and fall of the northern monarchy” (ibid., 20). Later it was incorporated into the Priestly history because of its applicability to the Judahite monarchy (ibid., 20–21).

⁷⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, IBC* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 51.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

knowledge for immoral means (2 Samuel 11–12; Isa 10:13–14; Ezekiel 28).⁷⁸ He says the narrative “asks if there are boundaries before which one must bow, even if one could know more. It probes the extent to which one may order one’s life autonomously, without reference to any limit or prohibition.”⁷⁹

Carr (1993) contends that “Genesis 2–3 is an anti-wisdom story,” in which the original version of the story has been reworked, added to, and subverted by a later editor.⁸⁰ He builds on Mendenhall’s observations, noting certain wisdom elements in the account, including the knowledge of good and bad, the tree, the snake, and terminology related to “the woman’s perception of the desirability of the fruit” (i.e. תאוה, נהמד, and השכיל).⁸¹ These elements suggest to Carr that the addition of the “crime and punishment” story to the original creation story was intended as a polemic “against the wisdom tradition — more specifically, against the kind of independent human determination of good and evil characteristic of that tradition.”⁸² Carr has since revised his position on wisdom in the PN, as discussed below.

For Otto (1996), the PN combines motifs from wisdom, deuteronomistic, and priestly thought. He discusses the ancient Near Eastern perspective that the negative aspects of human existence originate from the gods.⁸³ Misfortune was only avoided by cultic means and had no

⁷⁸ Ibid., 51–52.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁸⁰ Carr, “Politics,” 577. Similar to Wyatt, Carr argues that certain incongruities within the text point to the existence of an early creation text used by the author of the current form of Gen 2:4–3:24. These include the description of the “spring” (אָר) in 2:6 and the four rivers in 2:10–14, which interrupts the narrative flow and contradicts the statement regarding a lack of water in v. 5 (לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים); “Yhwh God had not caused it to rain”) (ibid., 577–79). The addition of a “story of crime and punishment” to the creation account in chapter 2 formed a new narrative that describes “an idyllic state that has been lost” (ibid., 585). The original story is found in 2:6, 9*, 10–14, 15abα, 16 (ibid.).

⁸¹ Ibid., 589.

⁸² Ibid., 590. He suggests that this viewpoint is characteristic of the chaotic times in the late preexilic and early exilic periods (ibid., 593).

⁸³ Ibid., 168–71.

connection with morality.⁸⁴ Otto speculates that this resulted in a sense of helplessness in the face of unrelenting fate (as seen, for example, in “The Dialogue of Pessimism”).⁸⁵ The PN counters this by presenting a world in which humans themselves are responsible for the undesirable aspects of life (see Gen 3:16–19).⁸⁶ He acknowledges that at the beginning of the account the human was already in possession of the reason needed “to pragmatically order his life-world” (see, e.g., Gen 2:19), but he does not yet have “moral judgement” (i.e., the knowledge of good and bad).⁸⁷ This kind of wisdom should have been reserved for God.⁸⁸ In this sense his interpretation can be said to have a “negative” stance towards wisdom, because he sees the account as presupposing “the late-wisdom knowledge of the limits of human cognition,” as seen in Job 28 and Ecclesiastes.⁸⁹

Markus Witte (1998) notes the overlap in terminology between the PN and wisdom literature that has been pointed out by others (e.g., Otto; see 1.1.1.1 above) and adds further to this list.⁹⁰ In terms of theme, he agrees with Otto that the PN has affinities with wisdom texts that question the extent of human cognitive ability⁹¹ and he also includes a long list of wisdom related motifs from the PN. These motifs include: “die Begründung der Sterblichkeit

⁸⁴ Ibid., 169–170.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 171. “The Dialogue of Pessimism” can be found in Wilfred G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 139–149.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 190.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 176–77.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 177. Contra Schmid and Bühner, who sees no bounds in the wisdom referred to in the account, because there is no distinction between the wisdom (or “knowledge” [*Erkenntnis*], as stated by Bühner) that the humans obtain and the wisdom of God (Gen 3:22) (“Die Unteilbarkeit,” 30; *Am Anfang*, 296).

⁹⁰ Markus Witte, *Die biblische Urgeschichte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 201–2. He goes beyond just the PN into the following non-P narratives and lists vocabulary from these passages as well. He does note that the vocabulary is not “exclusively” (“ausschließlich”) from wisdom literature or wisdom-influenced postexilic texts (ibid.).

⁹¹ Ibid., 200. Note, however, that Witte disagrees with Otto’s redaction historical model in which the non-P primeval history is an addition to P (ibid., 200 n. 224).

mit dem Hinweis auf die Geschöpflichkeit” (Gen 2:7; 3:19),⁹² “die Einsamkeit des Menschen als Mangelersfahrung” (Gen 2:18, 20b, 23f.),⁹³ “die Verbindung von Klugheit und Leben” (Gen 3:1ff.),⁹⁴ and “das Streben nach einem דעת טוב ורע” (Gen 3:5f.).⁹⁵ He believes that these affinities with wisdom texts help with locating the “‘jahwistischen’ Urgeschichte,”⁹⁶ and he ultimately concludes that it is likely that the PN (along with Gen 4:1–24*; 6:5–8* and 8:20–22) stems from postexilic wisdom circles of the 6th/5th century at the earliest.⁹⁷

Gerda De Villiers (2008) argues against the traditional Christian understanding of the PN as providing the origin of sin.⁹⁸ Her article focuses on pointing out “symbolic and mythological concepts attached to objects in the garden.”⁹⁹ Like Otto, she argues for Deuteronomic themes in the account,¹⁰⁰ with the tree of life representing the possibility of

⁹² Cf. Job 1:21; 7:7ff.; 10:9; 34:15; Psa 90:3, 12; 103:14; Eccl 3:20f.; 12:7; Sir 40:11; 41:10 (ibid., 201).

⁹³ Cf. Eccl 4:9–11 (ibid.).

⁹⁴ Cf. Prov 11:30f.; 13:12; 14:15; 15:24; 19:16 (ibid.).

⁹⁵ Cf. Job 15:7f.; 28:1–4, 15–19, 20–28; Prov 16:22; 19:14; 30:2; Psa 111:10; Eccl 6:12; 8:5; Jon 4:11; Sir 17:6ff.; 39:4d; Deut 4:6–8; 30:15; Jer 8:8f. From Genesis 4, the motifs listed include: “Wohlergehen und Freude,” “Unglück und Zorn” (Gen 4:6f.; cf. Job 4:2ff.; 11:13–15; 22:21–30; Prov 15:13; 21:29; Jon 4:4f.; Eccl 8:1; Sir 13:25); “an der Tür lauende Sünde” (Gen 4:7; cf. Prov 5:8; 9:14f.; Job 31:33–34 [?]); “das Zetergeschrei *des Blutes*” (Gen 4:10; cf. Job 16:18); “die Kraft der אדמה” (Gen 4:12; cf. Job 31:39f.); “die Furcht vor Jahwe” יהוה (מלפני) (Gen 4:12; cf. Jon 1:3) (ibid., 203–4)

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 204.

⁹⁸ Gerda De Villiers, “Sin, Suffering, Sagacity: Genesis 2–3,” in *Exile and Suffering: A Selection of Papers Read at the 50th Anniversary Meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa OTWSA/OTSSA: Pretoria August 2007*, ed. Bob Becking and Dirk Human, OtSt 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 3.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁰ She points to the significance of the snake’s and the woman’s words; the snake “radicalizes God’s prohibition to eat from one tree, suggesting to the woman that God had forbidden them all trees (Gen. 3:1), while the woman responds that “the humans are not only prohibited from eating from the tree (Gen. 2:16–17), but also from touching it (Gen. 3:3)” (ibid., 8). This taking away and adding from what God said is compared to the words of Deuteronomy 4:2: “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it.”¹⁰⁰ She also notes the later prohibition against eating and touching unclean food (Lev 11; Deut 14:8b), suggesting that the tree of knowledge itself may have been regarded as unclean (ibid.). The snake is compared to a false prophet (Deut 13:1–3), and it should be remembered that the giving of a sign by a false prophet (“you will not die” in the PN) must not lead one astray: “They should notice that this is a test: the prime commandment is to love the LORD God with heart and soul” (ibid., 9.).

choosing “life,” in line with Deut 30:15–19.¹⁰¹ The wisdom aspect of her article relates to the snake. She notes evidence of belief in the healing properties of snakes (e.g., Num 21:6–11) as well as in their divine attributes (e.g., 2 Kgs 18:4).¹⁰² Regarding the word עָרוּם, she describes the positive associations of this word in wisdom literature (e.g., Prov 12:16, 23; 13:16; 14:8, 15) and in the New Testament (Mt 10:16), suggesting that “the wisdom of serpents represents ‘the power to succeed, the ability to survive, resourcefulness, shrewdness.’”¹⁰³ Before obtaining the knowledge of good and bad humans lived harmoniously in the garden, but this is complicated by the fact that life in the garden was also an “uncivilised existence.”¹⁰⁴

In terms of the type of knowledge expressed in the PN, she picks up on Brueggemann’s focus on the importance of recognizing limits: the wisdom advocated by the snake and obtained by the humans is a wisdom apart from Yhwh, because it is a wisdom that fails to acknowledge proper boundaries.¹⁰⁵ In line with Otto, De Villiers believes that this reflects late-sapiential thought, which portrayed “the dark side of wisdom and knowledge,” as seen, for example, in Eccl 1:18: “For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.”¹⁰⁶ She explains, “This narrative urges the reader to take God seriously ... The call for wisdom in this narrative is rather to accept that life holds many secrets. These secrets are sacred, and not to be trampled upon by human power, nor to be

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 10.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 15. She explains that “civilisation for Ancient Near Eastern imagination meant to conquer nature by tilling the soil, building activities, and so forth. The Genesis-garden thus represents the pre-civilised unreal world of an artificial—even mythical—past” (ibid.).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 15–6.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 15.

exposed insensitively and ridiculed.”¹⁰⁷ In her interpretation wisdom is “negative,” not in the sense of its quality, but in the lack of its full availability for humans.

Tova Forti (2011) focuses on “the motif of divine prohibition...from the perspective of biblical wisdom and, in particular, as a polemic that sees human wisdom as a threat to the fear of God.”¹⁰⁸ She views the tree of knowledge “as embracing the broadest meaning of wisdom,” which is a perspective that “is embedded in the teaching of the Book of Proverbs which recommends applying *ḥokmāh* ‘wisdom’, *‘ormāh* ‘cunning’, *m^ezimmāh* ‘shrewdness’, and *‘ēṣāh* ‘planning’ in choosing the correct way of life in both the ethical and pragmatic sense.”¹⁰⁹ Unlike many interpreters, she sees “fear of Yhwh” (cf. Prov 1:7; 2:4–5; 9:10; 15:33) as having a role in the PN and suggests that in both Proverbs and the PN “the fear of Yhwh” is in tension with “human intellectual curiosity.”¹¹⁰ She aims to prove this through “conceptual and linguistic affinities between the Genesis story and Proverbs.”¹¹¹

First, she notes that Yhwh God’s concern in terms of the humans having obtained the knowledge of good and bad has to do with its connection to eternal life — now the human “might uncover the divine secret of long life and even eternity.”¹¹² She observes that in Proverbs, wisdom and long life are also linked (e.g., Prov 3:16).¹¹³ Regarding Eve’s observations of the tree in Gen 3:6, she suggests that the “qualities of the tree of knowledge

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰⁸ Forti, “The Polarity of Wisdom,” 46.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ She explains, “Although the Book of Proverbs approves humans’ use of mental abilities, discernment, or prudence for understanding practical matters and for making beneficial decisions, it still maintains the conceptual tension of human search for wisdom and the fear of God as in the paradise narrative: ‘The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge’ (Prov 1,7; 2,4-5; 9,10; 15,33)” (ibid., 47).

¹¹¹ Ibid., 47.

¹¹² Ibid., 48.

¹¹³ Ibid., 49. She notes, “The concept of the tree of life in Proverbs attaches to the personified figure of wisdom the idea of granting longevity to those who internalize her benefits” (ibid.).

are described more in terms of visual perception and intellectual discernment than simply through the senses of smell and taste.”¹¹⁴ This is compared to Proverbs, where “verbs related to visual experience [are used] to describe a cognitive process of observation, reflection and finally practical conclusions and applications” (e.g. Prov 24:30–32; Psa 37:35–36).¹¹⁵ She then discusses the positive use of the word תאווה in Proverbs, connecting the statement in 13:19 about תאווה being “sweet” (תעורב) to other statements in Proverbs relating wisdom to a sweet taste (e.g., 16:21, 24; 24:13–14). This is linked to the tree of knowledge in the PN, which she calls “a metaphor for desire realized on a cognitive, value-laden level, as befits the wise person.”¹¹⁶ She also discusses השכיל, “to cause insight” in Proverbs in comparison to its use in the PN, concluding that “it is precisely Eve’s natural human eagerness to gain divine-like wisdom that clashes with the ideal of fearing God, thereby putting Eve in the position of a transgressor.”¹¹⁷

She ends the article by comparing and contrasting the relationship between fear of God and human wisdom in the PN and in Proverbs. Ultimately, she concludes that there is a significant difference between the PN and Proverbs regarding their treatment of wisdom. Despite wisdom’s subordination to the “fear of Yhwh” in Proverbs, it is not delegitimized.¹¹⁸ The situation is different in Genesis 2–3, which “is a story of the beginning of the fear of God that brooks no compromise”; it presents a conflict between human and divine wisdom that is left unresolved.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 50.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 50–51.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 53.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 53–55.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 55.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 55.

Like Wyatt (1981) and Carr (1993), Lanfer (2012) posits two strands within the PN: an original narrative, which is sapiential and characterized by the pursuit of knowledge (unconnected to hubris or desire for eternal life), and the “expulsion narrative,” which was inserted later and is characterized by deuteronomic concerns, including affirmation of the act-consequence connection.¹²⁰ He suggests that “the expulsion narrative presented an alternative to the individual pursuit of wisdom.”¹²¹ He references Mendenhall, stating that it is impossible to prove his arguments about dating, but that he agrees with his suggestion that the story is pitting knowledge of wisdom against obedience to Yhwh.¹²²

Like Forti, Lanfer references the connection between wisdom and long life in Proverbs as a parallel to the pairing of life and the knowledge of good and bad in the PN; however, he argues that the passages from Proverbs used to support this connection “are primarily focused (as in the expulsion narrative) on obedience to the commandments.”¹²³ As mentioned above, he agrees with Murphy that “life” in the passages from Proverbs refers to “length of days” rather than eternal life as it does in the PN.¹²⁴ The PN thus makes use of this motif in a different way: “the expulsion narrative reorients the pursuit of wisdom in the earliest version of the myth, suggesting that individual wisdom leads not to life or blessing, but to exile and death.”¹²⁵ Lanfer cites several other somewhat speculative motifs to support his argument about a polemic against wisdom in the PN, including the “ways of Yhwh” (e.g., Prov 8:32; Ps 18:22)¹²⁶ and the “fashioning” of man (in connection with acquiring

¹²⁰ *Remembering Eden*, 67.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*, 70.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹²⁶ He connects this to the “way” that the cherubim guard in the PN (Gen 3:24) (*ibid.*, 92).

wisdom/knowledge in Psa 119:73 and 4Q511, fragment 28–29; cf. 4Q418, fragment 69 2:6–9).¹²⁷

1.1.1.3.2. Positive Stance Towards Wisdom

Mettinger (2007) appeals to other ANE literature to illustrate the common belief in a “traditional line of demarcation between gods and humans,” a concern noted within the PN by other interpreters as well (e.g., Stordalen; see below).¹²⁸ He discusses the myth of Adapa and the south wind, in which the hero is specifically given wisdom but not immortality from his god, Ea.¹²⁹ He also notes Adapa’s connection to scribal work, as well as to the *apkallu*, who were semi-divine prediluvian sages associated with wisdom in some Mesopotamian traditions.¹³⁰ On the basis of these connections Mettinger concludes that wisdom is “one of Adapa’s most prominent characteristics.”¹³¹ The combination of the emphasis on wisdom in Adapa’s character and the importance of immortality as a theme in the story leads Mettinger to suggest that “wisdom and immortality appear together in a stable thematic ‘marriage’ in the myths as understood in the centuries before the PN was composed.”¹³² He also looks at the epic of Gilgamesh, noting Gilgamesh’s quest for immortality¹³³ alongside the focus on wisdom that the new introduction in the Standard Babylonian version of Gilgamesh gives to the epic.¹³⁴

¹²⁷ Ibid., 94.

¹²⁸ Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*, 99.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 102.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 103.

¹³¹ Ibid., 104.

¹³² Ibid., 107.

¹³³ Ibid., 118. He concludes that the epic conveys that “the proper destiny of man is death, not immortality. Only gods are immortal” (ibid.).

¹³⁴ Ibid., 112–14. He argues that Gilgamesh’s wisdom is cast as godlike and antediluvian (ibid., 115).

As in these stories, Mettinger suggests that wisdom and immortality, as divine qualities, would be the most fitting aspirations for humans in an ancient Near Eastern story, and, since the author wished to portray “a test with immortality as the potential reward,” it was natural that wisdom would figure as part of the test.¹³⁵ This raises the question, “Could it be that the prohibition in Gen 2:17 is, so to speak, just the result of the ‘mechanics’ of the plot?”¹³⁶ This would speak against any negative assessment on wisdom in the text.¹³⁷ In the way Mettinger construes the story, humanity would have eventually obtained both immortality and wisdom, had they remained obedient.¹³⁸ Wisdom is thus positive in the PN in the sense that Mettinger believes God desired the humans to eventually eat from both trees.¹³⁹ The negative consequences that result from obtaining the knowledge of good and bad are connected to the humans’ disobedience and are not related to a negative perspective on wisdom.¹⁴⁰

Peter Enns (2012) presents a different take on an important element of the PN. Rather than connecting wisdom to the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, he connects wisdom with the tree of life. He draws from Proverb’s description of wisdom as “a tree of life to those who lay hold of her” (Prov 3:18; cf. 11:30).¹⁴¹ On this basis he suggests that “wisdom” in the PN would have been “maintaining access to the tree of life.”¹⁴² To explain the events of the

¹³⁵ Ibid., 130.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ This proposed connection between wisdom and the tree of the knowledge of good and bad will be problematized in the following chapter.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn’t Say About Human Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012), 90.

¹⁴² Ibid.

PN, he points to Proverbs and its description of the “way” of wisdom and the “way” of foolishness. He describes Prov 9:1–18: “Folly mimics Wisdom’s call but tempts the naïve one to partake of stolen food taken in secret (vv. 16–17). Folly’s mimicking of Wisdom’s words parallels the snake’s enticement of Eve to eat: ‘Did God say ...?’ (Gen. 3:1). But listening to Folly leads only to death, Sheol itself (Prov. 9:18), just as listening to the serpent leads to death.”¹⁴³ For Enns, then, the story presents wisdom positively: the humans should have chosen “wisdom” by responding in obedience to God and maintaining access to the tree of life.

1.1.1.3.3. Ambivalent Stance Towards Wisdom

Rainer Albertz (1993) forms his argument regarding the PN around a significant point: in the whole of the Hebrew Bible, it never mentions that man wanting to be wise and striving for the knowledge of good and bad is the “original sin.”¹⁴⁴ He examines the outcomes of the knowledge of good and bad: 1. Opening of the eyes; 2. Recognizing good and evil; 3. Gaining knowledge/becoming wise; 4. Being/becoming like God.¹⁴⁵ In other contexts of the Hebrew Bible, these actions are all either neutral or positive.¹⁴⁶ On this basis, he raises a question: why would God prohibit the humans from obtaining this quality?¹⁴⁷ Albertz claims that the author creates this prohibition to express, in contrast to many other ancient Near Eastern traditions, that “Gott hatte nach seiner Konzeption dem Menschen die negativen Grundbedingungen seiner Existenz keineswegs eingeschaffen, sondern als Strafe für sein

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ “Ihr werdet sein wie Gott,” 89. “Original sin” is a translation of the German, “Ursünde.”

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 91

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 91–96.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 98.

Vergehen erst im nachhinein auferlegt.”¹⁴⁸ Still, although wisdom is gained by disobedience, it is not portrayed as sin; instead it is a positive development, leading to maturity in the humans.¹⁴⁹ Albetz sees wisdom in the PN as being an ambivalent element of human life, for, though it is a positive trait, “die Weisheit konnte vom Menschen nur um den Preis einer gewissen Trennung von Gott errungen werden.”¹⁵⁰

Blenkinsopp (1995) comes to a similar conclusion regarding the procurement of knowledge (i.e., independent human wisdom): it results in distance from God.¹⁵¹ He determines this by comparing the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel 9–20, 1 Kings 1–2) with the PN, noting overlaps in theme. He concludes that both accounts describe the efficacy of independent human wisdom: “Both the court history in Samuel and the story in Genesis acknowledge the reality and the power of a wisdom which relies exclusively on human resources and autonomous reason. It is a wisdom that really works, but these narratives also reflect the anxious knowledge that to follow it is to risk alienation from the God who called Israel into existence and gave her her destiny.”¹⁵² When comparing the Succession Narrative and the PN in *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-creation* (2011), Joseph Blenkinsopp describes the influence of wisdom in both narratives as ambiguous, saying, “the theme of ambiguous

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 108. He surveys the presentation of wisdom in a number of texts, demonstrating the ambiguous characteristics of wisdom in a number of these accounts. For example, in the epic of Gilgamesh, Enkidu’s civilization brings him trouble and eventually death (ibid., 104). In the epic of Atrahasis, the wise hero saves humanity, but his actions are also followed by a host of negative measures placed against humanity so that they do not multiply too much (“Die Weisheit...gefährdet das menschliche Leben, aber sie rettet es auch”) (ibid., 105–6).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 100.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 109.

¹⁵¹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament: The Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism*, rev. ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University, 2003), 8.

¹⁵² Ibid. Blenkinsopp notes some dubious connections to wisdom in the PN: “the sapiential character of the narrative is apparent; suffice it to note the interest in ancient geography (the four rivers, 2:10-14) and the Man’s naming of the animals (2:19-20), an anticipation or reflection of Solomon’s onomastic wisdom, that is, his skill in naming, and therefore ordering, things (1 Kgs. 4:33). As in Ezekiel’s poem, the Man who is to lose his innocence forever starts out ‘full of wisdom, perfect in beauty’” (ibid., 8). This evaluation is questionable on a number of levels (see 3.4.5).

wisdom [is] represented by the counsel of wise, or seemingly wise, counsellors whose advice leads to ruin and death” (e.g., Jonadab; the wise woman of Tekoa; Ahithophel). These advisors are compared to “the ‘wise’ snake following whose advice leads to expulsion from the garden and loss of immunity from death.”¹⁵³

Despite this use of the word “ambiguous,” his comparison of the consequences of the advice of the snake with the disastrous consequences elicited by the various advisors in the Succession Narrative suggests a more negative than an ambiguous stance on independent human wisdom.¹⁵⁴ He is even more explicit about this in his earlier work, *The Pentateuch* (1992): “Both the Eden story and the Succession Narrative...exhibit the same deterrent attitude to a kind of wisdom which not only promises more than it can deliver but also leads away from traditional religious resources, resulting in disaster and death.”¹⁵⁵

In *Echoes of Eden* (2000), Stordalen suggests that a primary concern of the PN is the boundary between human and divine. In continuity with Albertz and Mettinger, he looks at other mythology of the ancient Near East, such as the stories of Atrahasis and Adapa, in which life and wisdom are considered the property of the gods.¹⁵⁶ From the epic of Atrahasis, he discusses humanity’s possession of *tēmu*, “the element of divine knowledge or ability in humankind,” which he understands as causing “humankind to undertake autonomously more than the gods had intended.”¹⁵⁷ In the epic of Adapa, he argues against the interpretation that

¹⁵³ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Recreation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1–11* (London: T & T Clark International, 2011), 59. He also notes that the story told by the wise woman from Tekoa has the same plot (along with some overlap in vocabulary) as the FN (*ibid.*).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 58–9.

¹⁵⁵ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2007), 67.

¹⁵⁶ Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 244–246.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 244. Cf. Wolfram von Soden, “Der Mensch bescheidet sich nicht, Überlegungen zu Schöpfungserzählungen in Babylonien und Israel,” in *Bibel und Alter Orient: Altorientalische Beiträge zum Alten Testament*, ed. Wolfram von Soden and Hans-Peter Müller (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), 165–73.

Ea intentionally tricks Adapa, claiming that Ea “is usually sympathetic to his human protégés.”¹⁵⁸ He reads the episode in heaven as a test: “Adapa in fact passes by rejecting and accepting in the appropriate manner.”¹⁵⁹ Stordalen thus suggests that a similar test is behind the PN. God determined that humanity could only eat from one of the trees mentioned in the PN in order to maintain the proper distance between humans and gods.¹⁶⁰ Although the humans’ disobedience leads to negative consequences, Stordalen notes that obtaining knowledge “also secured appropriate conduct and helped in coping with the situation after the calamity.”¹⁶¹ Thus the attainment of knowledge, in the end, is ambiguous, like many other elements of the world discussed in this account: “childbirth is a curse, and yet allows the human race to multiply; death comes from his exile from Eden, but human beings multiply; plants emerging from the soil are a curse, but humans use it to produce food.”¹⁶²

Schmid (2002) sees the wisdom that is obtained by the humans when they eat the fruit as “notwendiges, lebenspraktisches Wissen.”¹⁶³ This form of wisdom is no less than divine wisdom, because the text states that it is a wisdom that makes them “like God” (Gen 3:22).¹⁶⁴ In its portrayal of the “Unteilbarkeit” of wisdom, the narrative stands apart from classic late wisdom texts in which wisdom is unattainable for humans (e.g., Job 28, Proverbs 8, Sirach 1).¹⁶⁵ Schmid summarizes the meaning of the narrative as “ein Protest gegen den mit eigener

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 245.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 246. He asks, “Is it not conceivable that this food was reserved for those in heaven, and that Anu tests Adapa for his inclination towards divine usurpation precisely by offering him bread of the gods?” (ibid.).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 247.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 468.

¹⁶² Ibid., 248.

¹⁶³ “Die Unteilbarkeit,” 29.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 30.

Entscheidungskraft und Weisheit begabten Menschen, gekoppelt mit einem Lamento über das verlorene ewige Leben.”¹⁶⁶ He points out that the “pre-Fall” human couple never ate from the tree of life, although it was allowed; presumably they were too naïve.¹⁶⁷ The account is, therefore, not the story of a “fall” from a positive to a negative state. Instead, the humans’ original state of immaturity shows that their situation was already ambivalent.¹⁶⁸ They then move into another ambiguous state: their disobedient action results in punishment but also leads to cultural developments.¹⁶⁹

James Atwell (2004) also discusses the ambiguity of wisdom in the PN. Looking first to other ancient Near Eastern accounts, he notes the ambiguity of wisdom already expressed within the epic of Gilgamesh in, for example, the character of Enkidu and in Gilgamesh’s loss of the plant of eternal rejuvenation.¹⁷⁰ Adapa’s missed opportunity to gain eternal life is also mentioned.¹⁷¹ Like Albertz, Atwell connects this with the desire of the PN’s author to emphasize humanity’s responsibility for the negative aspects of existence.¹⁷²

Martin Arneth (2007) argues that the non-P primeval history was written from the outset as a response to P. He sees non-P as characterized by sapiential interests, manifest in a redefining of P’s concept of imago Dei in reference to the knowledge of good and bad.¹⁷³ The

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 32.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 33.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 35. Schmid summarizes this same position in English in a newer article entitled “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, ed. Scott C. Jones and Christine Roy Yoder, BZAW 500 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 275–86.

¹⁷⁰ James Atwell, *The Sources of the Old Testament: A Guide to the Religious Thought of the Hebrew Bible* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 137.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 138–39.

¹⁷³ For Martin Arneth, the purpose of non-P is “die Vertiefung und auch Korrektur der priesterschriftlichen Anthropologie, die sich mit der Vorstellung von der Gottebenbildlichkeit verbindet. Um der

focus of his examination of the PN is to define the nature of its relationship to the creation account in Genesis 1.¹⁷⁴ He takes the “Verfluchung” (Gen 3:14–19) as his starting point, which he sees as a key text both within the non-P primeval history itself and in terms of understanding its connection to the P primeval history.¹⁷⁵ Thorough explanation of his very detailed examination of the text is not possible here, but his methodology can be observed in his analysis of Gen 3:18b versus 1:29. He compares the chiasmic structure of both verses, the keywords they have in common (עֵשֶׁב and אֲכַל), and their similar genre (blessing [1:29] and cursing [3:18]). Noting that 3:18 appears to pick up on *both* 1:29 and 2:5aß, he suggests that 3:18 was probably written after 1:29.¹⁷⁶ The conclusion of his analysis of the rest of the non-P primeval history is the same: non-P was written after P and was never independent of P.¹⁷⁷ Overall, the PN functions as a correction to the godlikeness of humanity declared in 1:27; in the PN, godlikeness is achieved through disobedience, and the results of obtaining the knowledge of good and bad are decidedly ambivalent.¹⁷⁸

In his newer work (2011), Carr revises his earlier position regarding the two strands in the PN and the proposed “anti-wisdom” polemic. Rather, he sees the attainment of wisdom as

Ätiologie seiner ambivalenten Verbundenheit mit dem Ackerboden sowie seines Todesschicksals willen, wird der Mensch zunächst aus dem Ackerboden geformt. Sein eigentliches Menschsein ist darüber hinaus durch die Gottähnlichkeit in der Erkenntnis von Gut und Böse bestimmt. Diese — deutlich dem weisheitlichen Vorstellungshorizont entstammende — Konzeption wird indes narrative zugespitzt“ (*Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt...: Studien zur Entstehung der alttestamentlichen Urgeschichte* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007], 234).

He defines the knowledge of good and bad not as “Urteilkraft” but rather, “Sie liegt vielmehr auf der Linie von Gen 2,25; 3,7.21, die anhand der Scham paradigmatisch das Bewußtsein der statusbezogenen Differenziertheit, aber auch der Verantwortlichkeit der Menschen voreinander und nicht zuletzt mit Blick auf Gott einführt (Gen 3,8-11), also tendenziell in der Entdeckung ihrer ethisch-religiösen Personalität besteht” (ibid.).

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 97.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 98.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 106–7.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 146. He suggests that non-P consists of two strata; for Gen 2:4b–4:26, the original is contained in 2:4b–8.16–25; 3:1–23; 4:1–5.8–26 (ibid., 230).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 233–34.

“part of a broader, bittersweet process of human maturing toward civilization — gaining clothes (Gen 3:8, 21), beginning reproduction and farming (Gen 3:16–19), and other aspects of civilized life (e.g., Gen 4:20–22; 9:20).”¹⁷⁹ In his 2020 commentary on Genesis 1–11, he agrees with Schmid regarding the nature of the knowledge described in the PN: “Genesis 2-3 seems to presuppose that humans are capable of possessing a wisdom that is godlike, in this case godlike ‘knowledge of good and evil’ (3:5, 22).”¹⁸⁰ Like Stordalen, he sees this as a reflection of the concern for the crossing of divine-human boundaries: humans cannot have *both* wisdom and immortality (cf. Gen 3:22) or they will become too godlike.¹⁸¹

John Day (2015) argues against the presence of an anti-wisdom theme in the PN.¹⁸² He summarizes the arguments of a number of scholars who connect the account with wisdom, beginning with Alonso-Schökel, whose arguments based on word plays he rejects, stating “word plays are common all over the Old Testament, not merely in wisdom, and are a particular love the J source, including in many places with no obvious wisdom connection.”¹⁸³ He also rejects Mendenhall’s view regarding late terminology in the narrative, suggesting that some of the supposed parallels in Proverbs could be preexilic.¹⁸⁴ Regarding Otto’s argument for “wisdom influence,” he grants the connection in vocabulary but finds the evidence for paronomasia and list wisdom unconvincing.¹⁸⁵ He also argues

¹⁷⁹ David Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 466.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² John Day, “Wisdom and the Garden of Eden,” in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom. Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Jarick (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 347.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 346.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 347. He also disagrees with Otto’s argument regarding the probability of Deuteronomistic influence, for he notes that “the theme of sin and divine punishment is surely too widespread in the thought of the Old Testament to require specifically Deuteronomistic influence” (*ibid.*).

against Carr's 1993 article, noting his lack of acknowledgement that ערום can have negative connotations even in wisdom literature and suggesting that the failure of God in carrying out the death threat is less connected with late wisdom speculation regarding "the problem of the discrepancy between religious belief and observed reality" than it should be seen as a manifestation of divine mercy.¹⁸⁶

In the end, Day sees knowledge in the PN as a quality that God intended for the humans to obtain, but they should have gained it through "humble obedience to God" (cf. Prov 1:7; 9:10).¹⁸⁷ God's disapproval is based on the human's assertion of their autonomy against the divine command.¹⁸⁸ Day thus argues for an "apparently ambiguous attitude of the story to wisdom."¹⁸⁹ Like others, he notes vocabulary that leads one to expect a connection to wisdom thought, and yet, the humans are punished when they eat from a tree that symbolizes wisdom.¹⁹⁰ He concludes that from the author's perspective it is not wisdom itself that is a problem but the fact that the humans pursue it autonomously.¹⁹¹

Jan Christian Gertz (2021) agrees to defining the wisdom gained by the humans in the PN as inseparable from divine wisdom, as well as to seeing the nature of wisdom in this account as ambiguous.¹⁹² He considers this theme to be characteristic of the non-P primeval history in general, whose author he terms the "weisheitlicher Erzähler."¹⁹³ The accounts following Genesis 2–3 confirm this point: though gaining the knowledge of good and bad

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 348.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 340.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 340.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 349.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 348–49.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 349.

¹⁹² Jan Christian Gertz, *Das Erste Buch Mose (Genesis). Die Urgeschichte Gen 1–11* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 17.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

does truly lead to advancement and enlightenment,¹⁹⁴ the first use of this knowledge leads to murder (Gen 4:8), closely followed by the statement that “every intention of the thoughts of [humankind’s] heart was only evil continually” (כל־יצר מחשבת לבו רק רע כל־היום) [6:5]).¹⁹⁵ Like Albertz and Schmid, Gertz determines that the narrative explains this ambiguity of human existence as the result of the first humans’ disobedience.¹⁹⁶

1.1.1.4. Challenges

There are others who remain skeptical regarding the presence of connections to wisdom literature in this narrative. Two recent and significant challenges will be summarized below.

1.1.1.4.1. Will Kynes

Will Kynes’s monograph, *An Obituary for “Wisdom Literature”: The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus*, consists of a broader argument regarding the existence, or, in his opinion, lack thereof, of a genre called “wisdom literature.” Although Kynes does not discuss the PN in depth within this work, his argument is worthy of serious consideration in regards to the discussion about wisdom in Genesis 2–3. Kynes calls into question the traditional criteria that have been used to define “wisdom literature,” which he believes involves unexamined assumptions.¹⁹⁷ Certain books and passages are determined to be “wisdom literature” based on loosely defined similarities (e.g., “‘didactic emphasis’ or ‘humanistic interest’ or ‘focus on creation’”¹⁹⁸). Then the other traits of these books/passages

¹⁹⁴ According to Gertz, the knowledge of good and bad is about “die alle Lebensbereiche einschließende Fähigkeit, eigenverantwortlich zwischen dem Lebensförderlichen und Lebensabträglichen zu unterscheiden und entsprechend zu handeln” (ibid., 119).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 135.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 134. All three agree that the issue of pride is *not* involved (Albertz, “Ihr werdet sein wie Gott,” 97; Schmid, “Die Unteilbarkeit,” 35; Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 133).

¹⁹⁷ Will Kynes, *An Obituary for “Wisdom Literature”: The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2019), 18.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 104.

are said to be characteristic of “wisdom literature,” and these traits are used to justify the initial classification of these texts as “wisdom literature.”¹⁹⁹ Finally, the features of these texts that were pre-determined to be “wisdom literature” through a circular process are used to identify other texts in and outside the canon as “wisdom literature.”²⁰⁰ According to Kynes, the growing tendency to find “wisdom literature” throughout the canon (“pan-sapientialism”) speaks to the lack of clarity in the definition of the genre and has created a situation in which the term “wisdom” has lost much of its meaning.²⁰¹

Kynes maintains that interpreters must avoid uncritically importing assumptions regarding the genre of “wisdom literature” into their understanding of the concept of wisdom within a particular passage of the Hebrew Bible. He encourages recognition of a text’s broader “intertextual network,” by which he refers to other texts that have influenced the interpretation of the text over time.²⁰² This methodology would involve recognizing the impact of multiple genres within a given text.²⁰³ Wisdom would be understood as merely one theme that appears in different and unique contexts throughout the Hebrew Bible, rather than being bound to a particular genre.²⁰⁴ For the interpretation of Genesis 2–3, this would mean that one might discuss the presence of wisdom as one of many thematic elements of the account, but interpreters should avoid labeling the text as a “wisdom text.”

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 26–7.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 47.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 32–3.

²⁰² Ibid., 112–13. He further explains, “‘Like the stars in a constellation,’...the significance of any given text depends on its perceived relationship with other texts” (ibid., 115).

²⁰³ Ibid., 129.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

1.1.1.4.2. Walter Bühler

Bühler urges caution when assessing texts for supposed wisdom influence or connections.²⁰⁵ Regarding making a connection based on lexical similarities, he puts forth some rules:

The word/phrase should be neither too common nor too rarely attested; it should be used with the same semantic meaning in both texts (and any exception to this rule requires explanation); and only when several significant words, preferably in a specific syntactic unit, appear in both texts compared can an intertextual reference be assumed. Otherwise, mere coincidence or pure chance cannot be excluded.²⁰⁶

Bühler suggests that the significance of the overlap in vocabulary between the PN and wisdom literature (see, e.g., 1.1.1.1) is in reality quite minimal: “Die angeführten Lexeme sind entweder statistisch nicht auswertbar wegen ihrer zu geringen Belegdichte oder führen nicht ausschließlich in die Weisheitsliteratur.”²⁰⁷ For words that do not occur frequently, coincidence cannot be ruled out; other words are more likely basic Hebrew vocabulary rather than specific “wisdom” vocabulary.²⁰⁸ He is similarly skeptical of claiming a connection between texts based on similarity in motifs, pointing to the tree of life and the image of turning to dust (as a metaphor for death), which are not exclusive to wisdom literature.²⁰⁹ He concludes that no connection between the PN and wisdom literature can be determined through the proposed comparisons in style and motifs.²¹⁰

Regarding thematic similarities, he appears to find more potential for fruitful analysis, but he disagrees with the many interpreters who suggest a connection between the PN and

²⁰⁵ Walter Bühler, “The Relative Dating of the Eden Narrative Gen *2–3,” *VT* 3 (2015): 365–376.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 369. Similar reservations regarding using vocabulary to identify wisdom in a text are expressed by Marc Vervenne, “Genesis 1,1–2,4. The Compositional Texture of the Priestly Overture to the Pentateuch,” in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History*, ed. André Wénin (Leuven: University Press; Sterling, VA: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2001), 62–3.

²⁰⁷ *Am Anfang*, 291.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 294.

late works of wisdom. While acknowledging that in its discussion of knowledge Genesis 2–3 addresses a “specifically sapiential subject,”²¹¹ he suggests that the understanding of wisdom in late sapiential texts is quite different from the portrayal of wisdom/knowledge in the PN.²¹² This point is described in more detail by Bühner elsewhere, where he explains that the PN fails to participate in the debate surrounding humanity’s ability to access wisdom, which is a discussion that is characteristic of late wisdom texts.²¹³ He also sees the view of the act-consequence connection as different than its portrayal in later sapiential texts: its validity is assumed in Gen 2–3 and yet disputed in late wisdom texts.²¹⁴ This suggests, in Bühner’s opinion, that Genesis 2–3 probably predated these later works of wisdom.²¹⁵ At the same time, its perspective also differs from earlier “wisdom” texts that it has been compared to, like the Succession Narrative (here, the comparisons are too general), Proverbs 31 (here, the compared elements have different contextual functions), or the many proverbs dealing the conception of wisdom/foolishness.²¹⁶

1.1.1.5. Summary and Conclusions

From the survey of literature above, it is clear that any thorough exegesis of the PN must consider the connections to wisdom that so many interpreters have found in the text. The nature of this wisdom is not completely clear; however, the arguments of many recent

²¹¹ Bühner, “Relative Dating,” 371.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 371–72.

²¹³ Bühner, *Am Anfang*, 297–305.

²¹⁴ Bühner, “Relative Dating,” 372.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Bühner, *Am Anfang*, 300ff. He concludes: “Nicht mit der älteren Weisheit, aber mit einer früheren Datierung passen auch die relevanten Vergleichsstellen für den Begriff der ‘Erkenntnis von Gut und Schlecht’ zusammen (vgl. etwa 2Sam 14,17; 19,36; 1Reg 3,9; Jes 7,16). Mit der älteren Weisheit teilt Gen 2 f. weiter auch das bäuerliche Milieu (vgl. etwa Prov 12,11; 28,19) und die Rede von der Menschenschöpfung (vgl. etwa Prov 14,31; 17,5; 22,2 u. ö.) – während in der jüngeren Weisheit die Welterschöpfung in den Vordergrund tritt (vgl. Prov 3,19 f.; 8,22–31; Hi 28; 38–42 u. ö.). Beide Textbereiche haben aber auch für diese Gedankenwelten bzw. Themen keinen Ausschließlichkeitscharakter” (*ibid.*, 303–4).

interpreters that the account features an ambiguous attitude towards wisdom are particularly compelling and will be further evaluated in what follows. There is a need for further analysis in two main areas.

First, there is a tendency in many of the studies listed above to equate the knowledge of good and bad with wisdom. It will be suggested here that it is not a foregone conclusion that the knowledge of good and evil refers to the type(s) of wisdom that appear(s) elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Lexical study of the phrase, including the study of relevant collocations within the Hebrew Bible and outside Jewish literature, *along with* a close reading of the text that observes the way that the knowledge of good and bad functions in the PN itself, is necessary to form a more specific definition of this knowledge.

Second, there is a need for closer examination of the symbols/motifs from wisdom literature that are claimed as evidence of wisdom in the PN. These symbols/motifs must be studied in regards to their use and function in the PN, as well as in comparison to their use in wisdom literature and other contexts. This analysis will determine whether it is likely that the PN picks up on outside associations in its use of these symbols/motifs. The results of studying these symbols/motifs should shed further light on the arguments regarding wisdom as a theme in the PN, for these arguments are largely based on assumptions about the use of these symbols/motifs.

Lastly, the cautions raised by Kynes and Bühler in regards to identifying connections to wisdom must be heeded. The advice of Kynes will be followed: wisdom will be studied as an important theme within the PN, but this text will not be identified as a part of “wisdom literature” as a genre. Additionally, a concerted effort will be made to avoid importing preconceived notions about wisdom from other parts of the Hebrew Bible into the text. Bühler’s caution regarding assuming connections based on similar vocabulary and motifs will also guide the exegesis that follows. Furthermore, his contention that the PN presupposes

both humanity's ability to access wisdom and the validity of the act-consequence relationship will be significant to forming conclusions about the relationship between the PN and so-called wisdom texts. Before moving to an analysis of the PN, research that has been done on the relationship between the closely related FN and wisdom will be surveyed.

1.1.2. The Fratricide Narrative and Wisdom

This section will follow up on the previous survey of the PN and wisdom by summarizing research connected with the FN and wisdom. The FN (Gen 4:1–16) follows immediately after the PN (Gen 2:4–3:24),²¹⁷ and the two accounts are strongly connected by parallels in structure, terminology, and themes.²¹⁸ In light of these associations and the fact that so many interpreters have seen a connection to wisdom in the PN, it is reasonable to wonder whether wisdom might figure significantly as a theme within this narrative as well. There is a lack of significant scholarly engagement with this question, as will be reflected in the brief survey that follows. In many commentaries, it is ignored entirely.²¹⁹ On occasion, a wisdom connection is assumed because of the FN's parallels with the PN or its inclusion in the non-P primeval history.²²⁰ This gap in research will be addressed in what follows.

²¹⁷ The boundaries of the PN and FN will be discussed in 2.4.1 and 2.5, respectively. For now, it is sufficient to note that 4:1 is typically attributed to the Cainite genealogy rather than the fratricide narrative, and 2:4a is often thought to be a later redactional addition.

²¹⁸ See further discussion of the connections between these two narratives in 2.3.

²¹⁹ This is the case in many English language Genesis commentaries; see, e.g., Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987) and Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990).

²²⁰ E.g., Gertz, who attributes the narrative to a “weisheitlicher Erzähler” (*Das Erste Buch*, 155), along with the rest of the non-P primeval history (*ibid.*, 16). Similarly, Helge Kvanvig states, “the non-P texts are ordered according to a history of culture and inventions. . . . This basic trait gives the texts a mark of wisdom reflection” (*Primeval History: Babylonian, Biblical, and Enochic: An Intertextual Reading*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 149 [Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2011], 266). He sees an overarching theology in the non-P primeval history that “is neither optimistic nor pessimistic, but rather, in a kind of wisdom mode, resigned” (*ibid.*, 267). James Atwell contends that the wisdom tradition is present in “all of the Yahwist's individual narrative units which, like pearls on a string, articulate different ways in which humans, as primal couple, as brothers, as a whole generation or in highly organized society, are responsible for creation's disorder” (*Sources*, 139).

As a foundation for this investigation of the theme of wisdom in the FN, the scant number of scholarly comments related to this connection will be summarized below.²²¹ The same basic structure utilized in the previous survey will be followed, including sections on connections to wisdom that are supported through (1) terminology, (2) symbols/motifs, and (3) overarching themes. The section that summarized challenges will not be reprised, as there has not been enough research in this area for significant challenges to be raised.

1.1.2.1. Terminology

One interesting feature of the FN that has been connected to wisdom thinking is the name of Eve's second son, הבל (*hebel*, or "Abel"). This is a prominent and significant word in Ecclesiastes, where it appears five times in the opening verse: "'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'Vanity of vanities. All is vanity'" (הבל הבלים אמר קהלת הבל הבלים הכל הבל). Stratton mentions this connection, but she does not further explore its exegetical implications for Genesis 4.²²²

1.1.2.2. Symbols/Motifs

1.1.2.2.1. Knowledge

Human acquisition of knowledge is an issue of obvious interest in wisdom literature and is clearly a theme within the PN. Interestingly, a few scholars have argued that this focus carries over into the following narrative in Genesis 4. Dominic Rudman suggests that the genealogical note in 4:1 may play into this emphasis: "The newfound 'knowledge' of the first humans is expressed in the fact that Adam 'knew' (יָדַע) his wife, who then claims divine

²²¹ As the primary focus of comparison will be between the PN and the FN, possible connections to wisdom in the genealogical notes of Genesis 4 will not be addressed here. Nevertheless, as the genealogy and narrative are tightly interconnected (see 2.5.1), chapter 4 will include some remarks on how the perspective on wisdom (or "knowledge of good and bad," as will be argued) in the narrative may carry on into the genealogy (see 4.4).

²²² Stratton, *Out of Eden*, 224–25.

creative power, as she earlier did divine knowledge.”²²³ He further suggests that the use of the verb יָטַב in Gen 4:7 is an intentional allusion to the gaining of the knowledge of good and bad that occurred in Genesis 3 and a challenge for Cain to use this knowledge.²²⁴ Cain’s building of a city in 4:17, within the genealogy that follows the FN, is suggested as a further connection to the theme of knowledge, functioning as “an ironic contrast...between divine knowledge and the uses to which human beings put it.”²²⁵

Two recent German studies also see knowledge as a key issue within the FN. Jörn Kiefer’s monograph (2018) studies the terms “good” (טוֹב) and “bad” (רָע) within the primeval history with the goal “die theologisch brisanten Texte der Urgeschichte aus der Umklammerung der Dogmatik zu lösen.”²²⁶ He reads the woman’s statement that the serpent deceived her (Gen 3:13) as indicating that the knowledge that the humans obtained was *not* the godlike insight that the serpent suggested it would be.²²⁷ It is also not an ambivalent knowledge that moves humans from immaturity to maturity, a reading that he claims is unfitting to the PN’s context, but, rather, its consequences are undeniably negative: the autonomy it brings is associated with “Verunsicherung und Entfremdung.”²²⁸ The consequences of this are carried on into the FN. Regarding the humans in the narrative in Genesis 4, he states, “Von nun an waren sie dazuverurteilt, die von Gott von Anfang an

²²³ Dominic Rudman, “A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing: Crossing Forbidden Boundaries in Gen 3–4,” in *Studies in Genesis: Literature, Redaction, and History*, ed. André Wénin (Leuven: University Press, 2001), 462. So also, Carr, who states, “the particular word chosen to describe the human’s sex with his wife, יָדַע (“know”), continues the focus of Gen 2–3 on human acquisition of knowledge, indeed knowledge of good and evil that is somehow linked to sexual maturation (3:6–7; cf. 2:25)” (*Genesis 1–11*, 157).

²²⁴ Ibid., 464.

²²⁵ Ibid. 462.

²²⁶ Jörn Kiefer, *Gut und Böse: Die Anfangslektionen der Hebräischen Bibel* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2018), 14. His work is a biblical theological attempt to close the gap between the many close readings of particular texts from Genesis 1–11 and more recent redaction historical work on the structure of Genesis 1–11 (ibid., 15).

²²⁷ Ibid., 164. See also his description of the human’s new condition on p. 169–70.

²²⁸ Ibid., 165.

(2,5.15) übertragene und vor der Ausweisung erneuerte (3,23) Verantwortung als Mitarbeiter der Schöpfung unter en schwierigen Bedingungen jenseits von Eden wahrzunehmen.”²²⁹

Kiefer suggests that in the story of Cain one can see the development of a moral sense of what is good and bad: these terms are no longer subjectively defined, but what is “bad” in Jhwh’s eyes is specifically described as “sin” (חטאת).²³⁰ The narrative thus shows the catastrophic results of humanity’s first attempt to choose between good and bad.²³¹

Jakob Wöhrle (2021) also interprets the FN specifically in light of humanity’s obtaining of the knowledge of good and bad.²³² He sees Gen 4:7 as being part of the revision that took the FN from a freestanding narrative to being integrally connected to the PN,²³³ which is supported by the fact that the central message of God’s speech in this verse picks up on the key theme of the previous narrative.²³⁴ He offers an untraditional translation of טו (4:7) as “to want/desire to do the good” (“das Gute [nicht] tun willst”),²³⁵ arguing, “Gegenstand der in Gen 4,7 belegten Jhwh-Rede ist somit nicht das Tun des Guten als solches, sondern vielmehr die grundlegende Bereitschaft, das Gute zu tun, sowie die Konsequenz, die aus der Bereitschaft bzw. der Ablehnung, das Gute zu tun, folgt.”²³⁶

²²⁹ Ibid., 229.

²³⁰ Ibid., 243.

²³¹ Ibid., 244.

²³² Jakob Wöhrle does not give a detailed description of his understanding of the knowledge of good and bad but merely states that the humans gain “ein autonomes Leben mit der gottähnlichen Fähigkeit zwischen Gut und Böse zu unterscheiden” (“Von der Fähigkeit des Menschen, das Gute zu tun. Die Kain und Abel-Erzählung im Kontext der nichtpriesterlichen Urgeschichte,” *EvT* 81 [2021]: 204).

²³³ Ibid., 197.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ A different option will be supported in 4.3.3.2.1. Wöhrle cites P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, vol. 2 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2003), §113n in support of the grammatical possibility of his translation (Wöhrle, “Von der Fähigkeit,” 204 n. 46).

²³⁶ Wöhrle, “Von der Fähigkeit,” 204.

The understanding of both Kiefer and Jörn regarding the knowledge of good and bad differs from what is suggested below (see 3.3.3.2.6 and 3.3.4), and their conclusions regarding the translation of the critical verse, Gen 4:7, are also different from what will be argued in the later exegesis of the FN (see 4.3.3.2).²³⁷ That being said, their attempts to read the knowledge of good and bad as a central theme within the FN are commendable and a similar path will be pursued below.

1.1.2.2.2. Instruction

The giving of instruction features widely in wisdom literature and has been identified by several scholars as a significant aspect of the FN, particularly in God's speech to Cain in Gen 4:6–7. According to Carmichael, the statement consists of two options for Cain: “you may do well” (תִּיטִיב), or “you may not do well” (לֹא תִיטֵב).²³⁸ He describes the instruction to Cain in this verse as being conducted “in typical Wisdom fashion.”²³⁹ Carr, likewise, calls it “a brief, wisdom-like instruction.”²⁴⁰ Further describing the connection to wisdom, he explains, “In a mirror of the way that wisdom and folly are often presented as alternatives to the student of wisdom literature, Yhwh reminds Cain of two options that he already should know are available to him in this moment.”²⁴¹ The choice between wisdom and folly is a motif that is also discussed in Enns' interpretation of the FN (see 1.1.2.3).

²³⁷ Wöhrle's translation of Gen 4:7 reads as follows: “Ist es nicht so? Wenn du das Gute tun willst, heb's an! Wenn du das Gute aber nicht tun willst, dann lagert die Sünde am Tor; ihr Verlangen ist auf dich gerichtet, du aber sollst über sie herrschen” (“Von der Fähigkeit,” 201). Kiefer suggests, “Ist es nicht so: wenn du es gut machst – Erheben. Aber wenn du es nicht gut machst – an der Pforte, ein Lagerer. Und auf dich ist sein Verlangen, du aber herrsche über ihn” (*Gut und Böse*, 232).

²³⁸ According to Carmichael's translation of תִּיטֵב (*hiph*).

²³⁹ Carmichael, “Paradise Myth,” 58.

²⁴⁰ Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 166.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

1.1.2.2.3. The Act-Consequence Connection

The act-consequence connection²⁴² refers to a worldview in which the righteous are consistently rewarded, and the wicked are consistently punished. This concept is a prominent topic of discussion within much of wisdom literature and is sometimes mentioned in connection with the narrative in Gen 4:1–16. E. A. Speiser suggests that the theology described in Gen 4:7 (which he reads as describing that good action will cause a good result for Cain, and bad action will cause a bad result for him) is a “wisdom motif,” but he does not draw out this connection out further.²⁴³ Stratton purports that the FN reflects negatively on the connection between act and consequence (and God’s role in this system), suggesting that in the rejection of his offering Cain learns “the arbitrariness of God’s interactions with humans.”²⁴⁴ She sees this as contributing to a broader theme in the primeval history about the nature of God and his relationship to Israel: “the inexplicable God, the God who poses unmotivated commands from the outset, the God who accepts and rejects at God’s whim, this God of all the earth, who destroyed the world and vowed never to destroy it again, who scattered the people and created their languages, this God chose us, Israel.”²⁴⁵ Although the stance that God’s action towards Cain was arbitrary will be argued against below (see 4.3.2.2.2), the presence of the act-consequence connection as an important element of this account is well-noted and will be considered further in chapter 4 (see 4.5.1).

1.1.2.2.4. Fraternal Discord

Tension resulting from the preference of a younger son over an older son features prominently in the book of Genesis and appears for the first time in the account of Cain and

²⁴² Peter Hatton argues very reasonably that the term “Zusammenhang” in this phrase is better translated as “connection” rather than the common translation of “construct” (“A Cautionary Tale: The Acts-Consequence ‘Construct,’” *JSOT* 35 [2011]: 380).

²⁴³ E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB (Garden City, NT: Doubleday, 1964), 33.

²⁴⁴ Stratton, *Out of Eden*, 222.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

Abel in Genesis 4.²⁴⁶ Judah Goldin briefly mentions the appearance of this theme in wisdom literature of the ancient Near East. The passages he lists are from the “Babylonian Theodicy,” in which the reversal of fortunes between an older and younger son is listed as a sign of crisis, and a sign that the speaker’s deference to his god has not been rewarded by positive action towards him on the part of the god:

I have looked around in the world, but things are turned around. The god does not impede the way of even a demon. A father tows a boat along the canal, while his son lies in bed. The eldest son makes his way like a lion, the second son is happy to be a mule driver. The heir goes about along the streets like a [peddler], the younger son *has enough* that he can give food to the destitute.²⁴⁷

Goldin does not go into detail about this connection to wisdom. The relation of this motif in Genesis 4 to wisdom (or lack thereof), as well as other options given by scholars for how to understand this motif, will be discussed in 4.5.2.²⁴⁸

1.1.2.3. Themes

Unlike most interpreters, Carmichael (1992) sees wisdom as a key theme within the FN. He boldly states, “Only in relation to the Adam and Eve story can the story of Cain and Abel be properly appreciated; and only in the wider context of wisdom can the many

²⁴⁶ Andre LaCocque summarizes the motif of the preference of the younger son over the older in J (as he defines J): “Repetitively J emphasizes the transfer of the right to someone who is born later, so Japhet (Gen 9:18-27, rather than Ham); Isaac (Gen 21:9-10, rather than Ishmael); Jacob (Gen 27:19, 22, rather than Esau); Perez (Gen 38:27-30, rather than Zerah); Ephraim (Gen 48:14-19, rather than Manesseh); Joseph (Gen 49:3; 1 Chron 5:2, rather than Reuben); Judah (Gen 49:8, rather than his elder brothers)” (*Onslaught Against Innocence* [Eugene: Cascade Books, 2008], 61).

Benedikt Hensel’s important monograph on this subject (see further discussion in 4.5.2.3) does not connect this motif to wisdom, but describes it as a key structuring unit within Genesis whose purpose is to support Israel’s claim of being Yhwh’s “firstborn” (*Die Vertauschung des Erstgeburtsegens in der Genesis: Eine Analyse der narrative-theologischen Grundstruktur des ersten Buches der Tora* [Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2011]).

²⁴⁷ “The Babylonian Theodicy,” trans. Robert D. Biggs, *ANET*, 603. The second paragraph gives the response of the friend of the “Sufferer,” who describes the same phenomenon regarding a reversal of fortunes between older and younger sons. He suggests that this appears to be a contradiction to humans because “the mind of the god...is remote” (*ibid.*, 604). Cf. Judah Goldin, “The Youngest Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 30 n. 22.

²⁴⁸ Most scholars do not connect this theme directly to wisdom. Goldin alone is discussed here from among the many studies on this theme because he suggests a potential connection to wisdom. Other important studies will be addressed in 4.5.2.

connections be explained.”²⁴⁹ For him, the guiding theme of both accounts is the proper maintenance of distinctions. The PN emphasized the distinction between human and divine, and, in order to maintain that difference, the humans were required to make a distinction between one particular tree and other trees.²⁵⁰ In Genesis 4 the point of God’s differing reactions to the brothers’ sacrifices was to help humanity learn to recognize and deal with the various distinctions of life (“animals and vegetables, shepherd and tiller, men and animals, god and men”).²⁵¹ Building upon this, he suggests that there was *no distinction* in kind between humans, and thus there was no warrant for Cain’s slaughter of Abel.²⁵² Cain is consequently punished, but “his punishment produces discernment and God in response protects him.”²⁵³ Carmichael describes this process as “something close to the disciplinary correction that is associated with the human acquisition of wisdom.”²⁵⁴ Though the connections he makes are vague at numerous points, the possibility that the acquisition of knowledge (identified as wisdom) is a key theme within the narrative will be a crucial aspect of the investigation in chapter 4.

Enns (2012) provides what he calls a “wisdom reading” of Genesis 4.²⁵⁵ After a comparison between the “paths” offered in Proverbs (i.e., wisdom vs. folly) and the choice that the humans are given in the PN, he extends the comparison to the FN.²⁵⁶ By murdering his brother, Cain continues down the “path” that his parents chose, in other words, the path of

²⁴⁹ Carmichael, “Paradise Myth,” 54.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 58.

²⁵² Ibid., 56.

²⁵³ Ibid., 59.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Enns, *The Evolution of Adam*, 91.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 90–1.

folly.²⁵⁷ Enns connects Cain's action, the first recorded sin in the Hebrew Bible, with the first warning given to the son in Proverbs. The son is exhorted not to be enticed by sinners who say, "let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason" (Prov 1:10–11). Enns remarks, "This seems to be a rather random way of beginning Proverbs until we read it in conjunction with the story of Cain. The taking of an innocent life captures well the ultimate outcome of an unwise life, for which every human is directly responsible."²⁵⁸ Although Enns' conclusions are based more on loose theological similarities rather than exegetically based connections between the texts, his suggestion that wisdom plays a crucial role in Genesis 4 will be carefully considered in chapter 4.

1.1.2.4. Summary and Conclusions

This brief survey reveals the paucity of research that exists regarding the theme of wisdom in the FN. In light of the strong connection between the PN and the FN, it will be argued in what follows that the perspective on wisdom presented in the PN should be seriously considered for its possible significance in the FN. For this reason, the PN will be examined first (ch. 3), and a proposal regarding its perspective on wisdom will be offered.²⁵⁹ This will be followed by an analysis of the FN that considers whether the proposal regarding the PN's perspective on wisdom could be helpful for better understanding the FN (ch. 4).

1.1.3. Implications of the Literature Review and Expression of Goals

This survey has highlighted the many connections to wisdom found in the PN. There is no consensus on the nature of the wisdom presented in this account; this is reflected in the varied arguments regarding wisdom as a theme within this narrative. As the proposed connections to wisdom through symbols/motifs in the PN are the basis for the various

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 91.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ It will be argued that the wisdom presented in the PN is not wisdom at all, or, at the least, not "wisdom" in the sense that it appears elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

understandings of wisdom as a theme with the account,²⁶⁰ thorough consideration of the function of these symbols/motifs in the PN and their possible associations is necessary. Regarding Genesis 4, relatively little has been said about a possible wisdom theme in the account despite the strong connection between the PN and FN. Going forward, then, there will be two primary goals: (1) to offer a more precise definition of the nature of the wisdom (as a theme) presented in the PN through further study of the proposed wisdom symbols/motifs and (2) to explain in what manner this theme from the PN may continue into the FN.²⁶¹

1.2. Statement of Thesis

In continuity, then, with the two goals described above, the thesis to be supported in what follows will also be stated in two parts. It will be argued that (1) the connections to wisdom that have been identified within the PN (and FN) through symbols/motifs are not specifically connected to the discussion regarding wisdom that takes place elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible but, rather, they are related to the PN's very specific presentation of the knowledge of good and bad, and (2) this theme from the PN is further developed in the FN.

1.3. Definition of Key Terms

Before providing an overview of the methodology and approach that will be undertaken, it is essential to define a few terms that have a critical bearing on the thesis stated above and the arguments that follow.

1.3.1. Motif, Symbol and Theme

“Motif” is a term often used when discussing a symbolic literary device that repeats within a particular text or group of texts. The use of this word has a complicated history and

²⁶⁰ See further discussion of the concept of theme and its connection to symbols/motifs in 1.3.1.

²⁶¹ Following from the recommendation of Kynes, wisdom will be studied in these chapters as a theme and not as a genre of literature or even as a particular stream of thought within the Hebrew Bible (see 1.1.1.4.1).

there is a lack of scholarly consensus concerning its precise definition.²⁶² Its many different nuances in the history of interpretation within various fields of study (e.g., art, literature, folklore studies, religious studies) need not be reviewed here,²⁶³ but the demonstrable fluidity of the term does highlight the need for a specific definition when this term is used, particularly when it comes to the distinguishing between a motif and a symbol, and between a motif and a theme.²⁶⁴

A critical aspect of the term “motif” is that it refers to a repetitive element.²⁶⁵ Thus, a symbolic literary element that appears once is not rightly termed a motif. In biblical studies, motifs often repeat within a particular genre,²⁶⁶ and thus, the use of a motif is intended to call to mind a particular symbolic meaning carried across the various uses of the motif: “Motifs are effective only as long as they evoke a clear echo in the listeners’ or readers’ minds. Unless an author could expect that his audience would grasp instantaneously, or at least without excessive mental effort, the intrinsic signification of a motif or topos which he introduced into his discourse, this convention would lose its very *raison d’être*.”²⁶⁷

²⁶² James M. Morgan explains, “The study of motifs belongs primarily to the fields of thematology (or thematics) and aesthetics. In these fields, scholarly consensus has not been reached concerning the definition of motifs” (“How Do Motifs Endure and Perform? Motif Theory for the Study of Biblical Narrative,” *RB* 122 [2015]: 196). A historical survey of the uses of the term in modern scholarship (with particular reference to its use in folklore studies) is given in Dan Ben-Amos, “The Concept of Motif in Folklore,” in *Folklore Studies in the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the Centenary Conference of the Folklore Society*, ed. Venetia J. Newall (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 1980), 17–36.

²⁶³ See the survey in Ben-Amos, “The Concept of Motif,” 17–36.

²⁶⁴ A caveat is needed here: the following proposed definitions of motif, symbol, and theme are not suggested as conclusive definitions of these terms but are merely provisional definitions adopted to guide the discussion that follows.

²⁶⁵ Morgan lists two main criteria for identifying a motif: (1) frequency (does the motif repeat?) and (2) avoidability (“in some way, the occurrences need to attract the reader’s attention, not only by their repetition but also by their uses”) (“How Do Motifs Endure?”, 202).

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

²⁶⁷ Shemaryahu Talmon, *Literary Motifs and Patterns in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 5.

The question regarding the PN/FN, then, is if a symbolic element appears only once within the narrative (e.g., the serpent) but appears as a motif (a *repeating* symbolic element) elsewhere within the Hebrew Bible, is its use as a literary device within the PN/FN rightly called a motif? To the extent that the use of the serpent as a symbolic element within the PN/FN concurs with the use of the serpent as a repeating symbolic element elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, it is suggested here that it could be termed a motif in the PN/FN. If the snake is used in the PN/FN in a way that does not relate to its repetitive symbolic use elsewhere, then the term symbol is probably more appropriate.²⁶⁸ This distinction is significant for the discussion that follows, for it is on the basis of an assumed continuity between a symbol in the PN and a motif in wisdom literature that a connection to wisdom in the PN has been proposed by many scholars. Therefore, part of the investigation below will involve examining whether the function of a particular symbol/motif within the PN/FN is in continuity with its use as a motif elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.²⁶⁹

Motif must also be distinguished from theme. According to Morgan, there is overlap in the way these two terms have been used by scholars; however, “There is growing consent...that the primary difference between these concepts — when discussing single literary works — is that motifs are normally concrete (e.g., repeated objects, expressions) and themes are abstract (e.g., concepts, main ideas, values).”²⁷⁰ In reference to theme, the definition of Robert Alter will be adopted here: a theme is “an idea that is part of the value-system of the narrative — it may be moral, moral-psychological, legal, political, historiosophical, theological — [that] is made evident in some recurring pattern. It is often associated with one or more Leitwörter but it is not co-extensive with them; it may also be

²⁶⁸ A symbol will be defined here quite broadly as a figurative element of the narrative (cf. Morgan, “How Do Motifs Endure,” 199). A symbol that repeats would be understood as a motif.

²⁶⁹ See especially the discussion of the proposed “wisdom motifs” in the PN (3.4) and FN (4.5).

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 198.

associated with a motif.”²⁷¹ A theme, then, could be said to be that which certain symbols and motifs point to. An element of the PN/FN will be termed a “theme” rather than a “motif” if it goes beyond being a repetitive, figurative literary device to being a critical aspect of the worldview presented by the narrative to which other elements of the account point.²⁷² On this basis, it will be argued that the knowledge of good and bad, sometimes referred to as a motif, is better understood as a theme (see 3.3.3.2.6).

1.3.2. Wisdom

1.3.2.1. חכמה

A central point in supporting the thesis proposed above will be to demonstrate that the wisdom described by the PN and FN is of a different nature than the kind of wisdom discussed in wisdom literature. This will be a central topic of discussion in chapter 3. An entry into this topic is to study occurrences of the word חכמה, the Hebrew word most often associated with the concept of wisdom. A general definition is as follows:

The term *hokmā* designates, first, technical knowledge of a craft (cf. Exod. 31.1-11;35.30-31). In an expanded meaning, it stands for a capacity for differentiation and orientation based on experience by means of which a person manages life. In this sense, wisdom aims at a successful life and is manifest in life skills. Its starting point is the observation of phenomena in nature and culture. Its horizons are all areas of human life in family and society. Its theoretical background is the notion that God incorporated a just order (*ṣēdāqā*, Egyptian → *Ma ‘at*) into this world. Adherence to it promises both individuals and communities the ‘way of life’ (Prov. 6.23), i.e. good fortune in every respect. Central is the conviction that a person’s deeds and their consequences are contingent upon one another...who observe themselves and their environment carefully, who heed the instruction of their predecessors, and who orient their lives according to the just world order are considered wise (*hakam*).²⁷³

²⁷¹ *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Baker Books, 2011), 120. Alter lists some examples: “the reversal of primogeniture in Genesis; obedience versus rebellion in the Wilderness stories; knowledge in the Joseph story; exile and promised land; the rejection and election of the monarch in Samuel and Kings” (ibid.).

²⁷² This is not to argue that there is one singular theme of a particular narrative and that all symbols and motifs must point to that particular theme. Generally, however, it can be said that a narrative’s figurative elements are used to give expression to one or more themes within an account.

²⁷³ Markus Witte, “The Book of Proverbs (The Sayings of Solomon/Proverbs),” trans. Mark Biddle, in *T&T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament*, ed. Jan Christian Gertz., et al. (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 572.

As this definition clarifies, the concept of wisdom in the Hebrew Bible is quite broad, and includes such diverse characteristics as having skill in a particular area (e.g., Ex 28:3), acting in a morally upright manner (e.g., Prov 4:11), being able to judge well (e.g., 1 Kgs 3:28), and living in the “fear of Yhwh” (e.g., Psa 111:10; Job 28:28). As will be discussed further below, sometimes wisdom appears personified as a woman (e.g., Prov 8:1). The connection between these conceptions of wisdom and what is portrayed in the PN will be explicitly analyzed in 3.3.4, as well as within the discussion of the various motifs that have been associated with wisdom (3.4.1.2; 3.4.2.2; 3.4.3.2; and 3.4.4.2).

1.3.2.2. Wisdom Literature

The argument of this thesis with respect to wisdom is mainly concerned with responding to claims already made by scholars regarding supposed affinities between the PN/FN and wisdom in the Hebrew Bible. These arguments have tended to focus on the books traditionally ascribed to the “wisdom literature” genre: Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. For this reason, when the term “wisdom literature” is used here, it will be used to refer to these books unless otherwise specified.²⁷⁴ “Wisdom thought” will be used to refer to ideology (or, better, ideologies) considered to be represented by these books.²⁷⁵

A brief mention of other passages that have been related to wisdom literature will be included (e.g., the Succession Narrative). Study of the motifs will also refer to other significant Jewish texts (outside the canon of the Hebrew Bible) that have been connected to wisdom, such as works in the Apocrypha and the Qumran scrolls. That being said, the primary focus of the argument will be on considering the connection between the type of wisdom presented in the PN/FN and wisdom as it is presented in Proverbs, Job, and

²⁷⁴ It is acknowledged that the genre classification is problematic (see 1.1.1.4.1), and it is only preserved here to express arguments that have been made about the PN/FN in relation to this so-called genre.

²⁷⁵ As with the term “wisdom literature,” this term is only used here in reference to arguments that *have been made* about the connection between the PN/FN and wisdom, and it is not an argument that this terminology should be maintained in future discussions of these books.

Ecclesiastes, as that has been the main area of focus in the connections made by the scholars discussed above (1.1).

1.4. Methodology

In an acknowledgment of the texts of the Hebrew Bible as both “unique works of art” and also “the product of (at least some) creative processes of composition and editorial shaping,”²⁷⁶ the method used to support this thesis will necessarily involve several steps.²⁷⁷ The thesis will begin by surveying literary historical questions related to the PN and FN (along with the genealogy in Genesis 4). The preliminary conclusions of this chapter will provide a starting point for analyzing the text by supporting the chosen boundaries for the literary units to be studied and by providing reasonable evidence that the PN and FN should be read together. Decisions regarding uncertain literary historical issues will be postponed until the relevant sections have been analyzed as part of the exegesis in chapters 3 and 4.

The symbols/motifs possibly associated with wisdom will be analyzed in two main ways. First, the function of the symbol/motif within the specific unit under discussion (the PN or FN) will be considered. This will involve a close reading of the texts, including lexical/grammatical discussion of word(s)/phrase(s) that are essential to understanding the

²⁷⁶ William A. Tooman, “Literary Unity, Empirical Models, and the Compatibility of Synchronic and Diachronic Reading,” in *Ezekiel: Current Debate and Future Directions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 1. The methodology proposed here assumes the necessity of integrating diachronic and synchronic analysis of the text. See the important discussions of these issues in Alexander Samely, “Literary Structures and Historical Investigation: The Example of an Amoraic Midrash (Leviticus Rabba),” in *Rabbinic Text and the History of Late-Roman Palestine*, ed. Martin Goodman and Philip Alexander (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by University Press, 2010), 185–215; Erhard Blum, “Von Sinn und Nutzen der Kategorie ‘Synchronie’ in der Exegese,” in *David und Saul im Widerstreit — Diachronie und Synchronie im Wettstreit: Beiträge zur Auslegung des ersten Samuelbuches* (Göttingen: 2004), 16–30; Ed Noort, “‘Land’ in the Deuteronomistic Tradition — Genesis 15: The Historical and Theological Necessity of a Diachronic Approach,” in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 129–44.

²⁷⁷ Concerning the “tri-lectic” of author, text, and reader (as described, e.g., in Koog P. Hong, “Synchrony and Diachrony in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation,” *CBQ* 75 [2013]: 530; cf. Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998]) the methodology described here takes a primarily historical critical position that deals with both the final form of the text (described by Hong as “Final-T”) and proposals regarding its literary history (“Pre-T,” for Hong), with focus on the intent of the implied author. Regarding “implied authors,” see Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in this Text?*, 68–9.

symbol/motif in its context.²⁷⁸ Literary analysis will emphasize context as a determining factor for interpretation²⁷⁹ and also highlight the causal chain of events that is initiated when the humans obtain the knowledge of good and bad.²⁸⁰ Secondly, the associations of the motif in its other appearances will be reviewed and it will be considered whether these other associations could be reasonably applied to the use of these motifs in the PN/FN.²⁸¹ This analysis of symbols/motifs will allow for conclusions to be made regarding each of the two parts of the thesis proposed above: (1) the study of the use of the symbols/motifs in their context, along with the consideration of possible associations from other usages of the motif, will show that the proposed “wisdom symbols/motifs” are largely unconnected with “wisdom” in the Hebrew Bible, but, instead, they generally revolve around the concept of the knowledge of good and bad, and (2) the key function of the knowledge of good and bad as a theme within the PN will be shown to be essential to understanding the FN. This method will guide the analysis in the following chapters and is reflected in the following overview.²⁸²

²⁷⁸ The study of these motifs will primarily focus on the Hebrew Bible but will also include some reference to the appearance of these motifs in literature and iconography outside the Hebrew Bible. On the legitimacy of a comparative (or, better yet, “contextual”) approach, see, e.g., William Hallo, “Biblical History in its Near Eastern Setting: The Contextual Approach,” in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. William W. Hallo, et al., 77–97 (Pittsburgh, PA: This Pickwick Press, 1980).

²⁷⁹ Note that the results of literary historical criticism strongly impact the identification of what “context” applies for which verses and thus on interpretation of meaning.

²⁸⁰ This borrows language from narrative criticism: “An isolated incident receives its significance from its position and role in the system as a whole. The incidents are like building blocks, each one contributing its part to the entire edifice, and hence their importance” (Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* [London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004], 93; cf. Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001], 47). It will be argued that in the PN and the FN the author relates a series of events that build on one another.

²⁸¹ This analysis will deal primarily with the appearance of these motifs in the Hebrew Bible and related Jewish texts but will also make mention of parallels in other ancient Near Eastern works when it is relevant.

²⁸² This loosely follows the methodology proposed in Eep Talstra, *Oude en nieuwe lezers: een inleiding in de methoden van uitleg van het Oude Testament* (Kampen: Kok, 2022), which argues for linguistic analysis, followed by literary analysis, and, lastly, diachronic conclusions. Talstra’s methodology is exemplified in his article (written with Carl J. Bosma), “Psalm 67: Blessing, Harvest and History. A Proposal for Exegetical Methodology,” *CTJ* 36 (2001): 290–313. Cf. Samely, “Rabbinic Literary Structure in Modern Academic Historiography,” 189; Blum, “Von Sinn und Nutzen,” 8.

1.5 Overview

Following the introductory matters discussed in this chapter (ch. 1), the next chapter will begin with a look at proposals for the literary history of the text under study (ch. 2). The context of Gen 2:4–4:26 will be considered, followed by evaluation of the relationship between the PN and FN. Possibilities for understanding the literary history of the PN/FN will then be reviewed, and preliminary conclusions will be cautiously proposed. More definitive support for these conclusions will be offered within the analysis of the PN/FN in ch. 3 and 4.

Chapter 3 will analyze the presentation of wisdom in the PN by using the knowledge of good and bad as a starting point. First, lexical analysis of this phrase (along with similar phrases) will be completed for the purpose of offering a proposed definition of the phrase. The description of the phrase in the PN will then be analyzed to determine a list of necessary qualities that define the phrase within the narrative. This will then be followed by a review of these necessary qualities in comparison to the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad. The following section will analyze other potential “wisdom motifs” by using a similar method: (1) analysis of the use of the symbol/motif within the PN (including lexical/grammatical considerations), (2) consideration of possible associations with other uses of the literary device as a motif, and (3) conclusions about the use the symbol/motif within the PN. Finally, some concluding remarks regarding wisdom in the PN will be offered.

Chapter 4 will assess the proposed wisdom motifs in Genesis 4. As with the PN, the analysis will begin by studying the role of the knowledge of good and bad in the narrative. It will use the same process of lexical study followed by literary study, but as the consequences of the humans obtaining the knowledge of good and bad are less obvious in this narrative, the chapter will begin with a verse-by-verse analysis of the text. Within discrete units of the text, significant words and phrases will be given proper lexical analysis, followed by consideration of their place within their narrative context. Based on of the conclusions of this lexical and

literary analysis of the text, connections to the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad will be demonstrated. The literary analysis will pay particular attention to the causal sequence initiated when the humans obtain the knowledge of good and bad.²⁸³ This will be followed by an analysis of other proposed “wisdom motifs” in Genesis 4, which will use the same method as was used for the analysis of motifs in the previous chapter.

Chapter 5 will provide a summary, a statement of conclusions and implications, and a list of areas for further research. This list suggests further investigation into the impact of the stated conclusions for (1) dating the PN/FN, (2) defining the non-P primeval history, and (3) the possible connection of the knowledge of good and bad to wisdom as it is expressed in ancient near Eastern texts outside of the Hebrew Bible.

²⁸³ In other words, the analysis will highlight the aspects of the FN that are specifically results of the events of the PN (particularly the obtaining of the knowledge of good and bad).

2. THE LITERARY HISTORY OF GENESIS 2:4–4:26

2.1. Introduction

As the explanation of the formation of a given text has a strong influence on one's interpretation of that text, this chapter will consider various ways of understanding the literary history of Gen 2:4–4:26. The intention is not to provide a novel interpretation of the literary history of these chapters, but, instead, to investigate claims of a wisdom theme in the PN and consider the impact of these conclusions for interpretation of the FN. For this reason, the discussion of the literary history of these two narratives will lean heavily upon the conclusions of experts in the field of Pentateuchal literary criticism, and suggestions will be offered regarding which interpretations among these may be most likely. The chapter will start with a look at the broader context of Gen 2:4–4:26, followed by a discussion of the probability of a literary connection between the PN and FN. It will conclude by looking specifically at proposals regarding the literary history of the PN and then of the FN (including the subsequent genealogy).

2.2. Genesis 2:4–4:26 in Its Context

2.2.1. The So-Called “Yahwist”

Gen 2:4–4:26 is part of the primeval history that begins the Hebrew Bible and includes the first eleven chapters of the book. According to the once well-established (“Newer”) Documentary Hypothesis,²⁸⁴ the PN and FN were attributed to the source referred to as the “Yahwist (J).”²⁸⁵ Although for some time this view remained relatively

²⁸⁴ In contrast to the earliest documentary explanations, starting with Jean Astruc, which functioned as attempts to support Mosaic authorship by casting Moses as the compiler of various ancient source documents written by eyewitnesses to the events (see Jean Astruc, *Conjectures sur les mémoires originaux dont il paroît que Moïse s'est servi pour composer le Livre de la Genèse* [Brussels: Fricx, 1753; repr., Paris: Noësis, 1999; ed. Pierre Gibert]).

²⁸⁵ E.g., Julius Wellhausen attributes this unit to J: Genesis 2–3 and 4:16–24 are part of the original layer of text, while 4:1–15 and 4:25–26 stem from a redactor working before J was completed and combined with Q (=P) (*Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der Historischen Bücher des Altern Testaments* [Berlin:

unchallenged,²⁸⁶ scholars have always had a variety of concepts in mind when they spoke of J.²⁸⁷ It is Gerhard von Rad's understanding that has carried the most influence for the modern conception of J.²⁸⁸ He saw the Yahwist as the one who "gave the entire Hexateuch its form and function."²⁸⁹ In contrast to the rest of the Hexateuch, in which J can be understood as the "collector of the countless old traditions which until then had circulated freely among the people,"²⁹⁰ the primeval history represents an addition composed more directly by the Yahwist himself.²⁹¹ He located the Yahwist in the time of Solomon, writing to legitimize David and Solomon's state through the theological perspective presented in his formation of the Hexateuch (Genesis–Joshua).²⁹² His view influenced Martin Noth; however, Noth did not believe that the Yahwist had composed the connections between the major themes in the Pentateuch, as von Rad had, but rather believed that "the work of J and E consisted to a large

Georg Reimer, 1889], 15). So also Hermann Gunkel, who further divides the unit into Jⁱ, J^e, and J^r (*Genesis*, [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997], 4, 40).

²⁸⁶ See, e.g., George W. Coats, *Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, FOTL (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 57–58, 61, and Claus Westermann (*Genesis 1–11*, trans. John J. Scullion S.J. [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984], 190–196, 284–287, 323–326), who continued to classify the PN and FN as part of J in the 1980's. They both acknowledge a complicated "pre-history" in the PN. Westermann advocates the theory that J combined what were originally two separate narratives to form the PN (*ibid.*, 193–4), contra Coats (*Genesis*, 51).

²⁸⁷ Some saw J as a fairly unified source (Bernhard Luther, Heinrich Holzinger, and Samuel Rolles Driver), while others saw a lack of unity within it (Julius Wellhausen, Charles Bruston, Karl Budde, Rudolf Smend senior) and attempted to locate the documents behind J (Otto Eissfeldt; Georg Fohrer; Robert H. Pfeiffer) (see the summary of these interpretations and developments in Thomas Christian Römer, "The Elusive Yahwist: A Short History of Research," in *A Farewell to the Yahwist?: The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006], 14). Along with this, the overall conception of J as an author was often markedly different (*ibid.*, 14).

²⁸⁸ As noted in Römer, "The Elusive Yahwist," 15. See Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, rev. ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1972); *idem*, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. Eric William Trueman Dicken (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966; repr. London: SCM, 1984), 1–78.

²⁸⁹ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 16.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 23–4. It is "constructed from elements of a very different kinds" (*ibid.*, 24). See also *idem*, "The Form-Critical Problem," 63–7.

²⁹² Von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem," 71ff.

extent only in the formulation of the narratives handed down.”²⁹³ Frank Moore Cross later defined J and E more specifically as “variant forms of an older, largely poetic epic cycle.”²⁹⁴

What had become the generally accepted view of the Yahwist, namely, that he was an author writing in the tenth century B.C.E., began to be challenged in the 1970s.²⁹⁵ Some interpreters entirely rejected the traditional Yahwist, including Rolf Rendtorff, who posited a late redactor that connected larger literary units of the Hexateuch together using passages characterized by Deuteronomistic influence.²⁹⁶ Erhard Blum revised the entire concept of the Yahwist, arguing instead for two *Großkompositionen*, labeled K^P and K^D, both exilic or postexilic.²⁹⁷ K^P largely corresponds to what was typically assigned to P, and K^D (a layer running from Abraham into the Deuteronomistic history) incorporated K^P from the outset.²⁹⁸ Others, such as David Carr, prefer to speak of a “non-P” source rather than J, a source that Carr describes as growing “from preexilic Northern Jacob and Joseph compositions to later Southern extension of those materials into a promise-centered proto-Genesis.”²⁹⁹ He has suggested that this source was revised during the exilic or early postexilic period, at a time when the Deuteronomistic history was also being updated.³⁰⁰

²⁹³ Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), 229. As for von Rad, J’s most significant contribution for Noth was the addition of the primeval history (*ibid.*, 236–38).

²⁹⁴ Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University, 1998), 31.

²⁹⁵ Römer, “The Elusive Yahwist,” 18.

²⁹⁶ See Rolf Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 89 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 178. According to Rendtorff, “the documentary hypothesis proves itself to be extremely contradictory, especially in what concerns its chief source, the ‘Yahwist’” (*ibid.*, 178).

²⁹⁷ Erhard Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuchs* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990).

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5, 9ff. Note that the primeval history is considered an independent composition (*ibid.*, 278ff.).

²⁹⁹ David Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 151.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

Others continued to advocate for a Yahwist but in a revised form. For Martin Rose, the source traditionally labeled the “Yahwist” was a second Deuteronomist who added Genesis–Numbers to the already existing Deuteronomistic History.³⁰¹ Van Seters also considered the Yahwist “an ancient historian”³⁰² who “wrote his history as a suitable prologue to the DtrH.”³⁰³ According to Christoph Levin, the Yahwist is both a collector and an anti-Deuteronomic redactor who made use of older traditions but also incorporated new material.³⁰⁴ He suggests that this redactor worked during the exilic period (prior to the writing of the Deuteronomistic material).³⁰⁵

Some continue to hold to the traditional view of a Jahwist from the monarchic period. Ernest Nicholson finds “no convincing reasons” to reject the traditional view, namely, that “J and E are earlier than Deuteronomy and derive from the preexilic period, that their combination and redaction likewise preceded the work of the authors of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History, though this stage of redaction (R^{JE}) may have continued into the period in which they wrote.”³⁰⁶ David Noel Freedman also adheres to the traditional dating of J in the monarchic period.³⁰⁷ The date continues to be debated: “today one may find proposals for virtually each century between the tenth and the sixth centuries BCE.”³⁰⁸ Indeed,

³⁰¹ Martin Rose, *Deuteronomist und Jahwist: Untersuchungen zu den Berührungspunkten beider Literaturwerke* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1981).

³⁰² John Van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 2.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 332.

³⁰⁴ Christoph Levin, *Der Jahwist* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ Ernest Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 247–48.

³⁰⁷ David Noel Freedman, “The Pentateuch,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John William Rogerson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 26.

³⁰⁸ Römer, “The Elusive Yahwist,” 22.

disagreements continue to exist over nearly every aspect of J: its date, nature, and its very existence.³⁰⁹

2.2.2. The Primeval History and J

Adding to the confusion is that, even if J can be defined as an independent source, the existence of J within the primeval history is now questionable. The view that the call of Abraham in Gen 12:1–3 functions as both the conclusion and “key” to understanding the primeval history³¹⁰ was disputed by Frank Crüsemann in his influential article, “Die Eigenständigkeit der Urgeschichte,” which argued against any connection between the J material in the primeval history and the J material in the patriarchal narratives.³¹¹ A variety of theories are now offered, with some scholars still believing that (most of) the non-P texts in Genesis 1–11 can be attributed to J³¹² and some suggesting that the non-P texts in the primeval history come from several different sources or layers of redaction.³¹³ The exact

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 9–27. Regarding the nature of J, there is no current agreement as to whether J is a redactional process, a school, or an author (ibid., 21–2).

³¹⁰ A view promoted by von Rad (*Genesis*, 24).

³¹¹ Frank Crüsemann, “Die Eigenständigkeit der Urgeschichte. Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion um den ‘Jahwisten’,” in *Die Botschaft und die Boten, Festschrift für H. W. Wolff zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Jörg Jeremias und Lothar Peritt (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 11–29.

³¹² E.g., Van Seters, *Prologue to History*; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*; Christoph Levin, “Die Redaktion R^{JP} in der Urgeschichte,” in *Auf dem Weg zur Endgestalt von Genesis bis II Regum*, ed. Martin Beck, et al., 15–34 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006); Ronald Hendel, “Is the ‘J’ Primeval Narrative an Independent Composition? A Critique of Crüsemann’s ‘Die Eigenständigkeit der Urgeschichte,’” in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 181–206. While Crüsemann sees the cross-references between different units of the primeval narrative as the work of a late redactor, Hendel argues that they are not later, but rather “an essential part of J’s Leitwort style” (ibid., 185). He argues that these verbal connections continue into the patriarchal narratives (ibid., 186).

³¹³ In what follows, Jan Christian Gertz’s model will generally be followed: he argues that the non-P primeval history consists of creation (including Genesis 4) and flood, but the other non-P passages were later added (“The Formation of the Primeval History,” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Peterson [Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012], 107–136). A number of other models are possible. For Reinhard G. Kratz the “alien body” within the non-P primeval history is the flood account (this was also argued earlier; e.g., Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 309 [although he differentiates between J1 and J2]), while the rest of the non-P passages stem from the same source (*The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament*, trans. John Bowden [London: T&T Clark International, 2000], 251–52). David Carr, argues for “the multistage growth of the non-P primeval history, starting from an early independent primeval history without a flood narrative and extending to the expansion of

designation of the different sources and/or layers of redaction is not agreed upon.³¹⁴ The relationship between the P and non-P texts is also debated.³¹⁵

What is not disputed is the existence of two groups of texts in the primeval history: the priestly texts (including Gen 1:1–2:3; 5:1–27, 28*, 30–32; a version of the flood in 6:9–9:17 [18a, 19]*, 28; one table of nations in 10:1–7, 20, 22–23, 31–32; and the Shem genealogy in 11:10–26) and the group of texts formerly referred to as J (including Gen 2:4b–3:24; 4:1–26; 5:28–29*; 6:1–4; a version of the flood in 6:5–8:22*; 9:[18–19]20–27; a table of nations in 10:8–19, 21, 24–30; and 11:1–9).³¹⁶ The uncertain nature of the texts formerly attributed to the Yahwist makes it reasonable, though admittedly imprecise, to refer to them as “non-P.” Furthermore, the arguments for the independence of the non-P primeval history from the non-P material in the patriarchal narratives are quite convincing.³¹⁷ Especially important is the lack of any reference in the patriarchal narratives to the non-P narratives within Genesis 1–11 and vice versa, particularly considering the many references that connect the primeval narratives to one another.³¹⁸

that primeval history through the addition of a flood narrative and other materials in the Gen 9:18–11:9 postflood section” (*The Formation of Genesis 1–11*, 223).

³¹⁴ Gertz, “Formation,” 127. He notes the influential work of Karl Budde in regards to the distinction between a *Grundschrift* and a “later reworking” of a text (*Die Biblische Urgeschichte (Gen 1–12,5)* [Giessen: Rickersche Buchhandlung, 1883]). Regarding Genesis 2–3, Gertz himself believes this distinction “creates more problems than it will solve” (“Formation,” 128).

³¹⁵ For example, some scholars see the non-P passages of the primeval history as the work of a post-P redactor; e.g., Joseph Blenkinsopp, “A Post-Exilic Lay Source in Genesis 1–11,” in *Abschied vom Jahwisten: Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion*, ed. Gertz, Schmid, and Witte [Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2002], 49–61; and Otto, “Die Paradieserzählung,” 167–92; Martin Arnoeth, *Durch Adams Fall*, 230ff. Contra Gertz, “Formation,” 132–33.

³¹⁶ Gertz, “Formation,” 113.

³¹⁷ Further arguments are given in Jan Christian Gertz, “The Partial Compositions,” in *T&T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Literature, Religion and History of the Old Testament*, ed. Jan Christian Gertz, Angelika Berlejung, Konrad Schmid, and Markus Witte (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 326. In his argument for the independence of the non-P primeval history, Carr leans heavily on the distinction between “the one-sided negative picture of the non-Israelite world in the non-P ancestral story” versus “the more multisided picture of the world outside Israel in the non-P primeval materials” (*Fractures in Genesis*, 235).

It is not disputed that the passages under focus in this thesis, the PN and FN, are included within this group of non-P texts. Numerous themes and motifs connect the narratives of non-P, including (but not limited to) an etiological focus, a concern for the boundary between human and divine, the experience of human reality as ambivalent, a recognition of mortality, and a complex view of God. This thesis will discuss whether a wisdom-related theme should be added to this list, particularly within the PN and FN. Whether this theme continues into the other units of the non-P primeval history would be an important topic for further study, especially given the uncertain boundaries of a possible original, unified, non-P primeval history (cf. 5.3.2).

2.3. The Relationship between Genesis 2–3 and Genesis 4

2.3.1. Connections

In light of the goals and thesis expressed above, it is essential to determine the connection between Genesis 2–3 and Genesis 4. According to the structure in Genesis created by repetitions of the *toledot* formula,³¹⁹ the FN in Genesis 4 falls within the same unit that begins in Gen 2:4*³²⁰ and ends with the beginning of the genealogy in 5:1 (זה ספר תולדת אדם, “This is the book of the generations of Adam”). Gertz points out that it would be more logical for the Adam *toledot* formula to come before 4:1 since that is where the story of his

³¹⁸ Gertz notes, “Especially striking is the lack of such an allusion in Gen. 12:1–3 — the supposed climax and goal of the non-priestly Primeval History” (“The Partial Compositions,” 326).

³¹⁹ One’s understanding of the origin of these *toledot* formulas in Genesis is naturally connected to one’s conception of the literary history of Genesis as a whole. Many believe there was a “toledot book,” which was then used by the author of P, an idea originating with von Rad (see Konrad Schmid, “Genesis in the Pentateuch,” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evens, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 31; Robin B. ten Hoopen, “Genesis 5 and the Formation of the Primeval History: A Redaction Historical Case Study,” *ZAW* 129 [2017]: 183–4). Another view is that the *toledot* structure was added by the final editor (Kvanvig, *Primeval History*, 190).

³²⁰ The exact demarcation of this *toledot* is questionable because of disagreement over the two clauses in Gen 2:4a and 2:4b. See further discussion below.

descendants is found, but instead the *toledot* comes in 5:1.³²¹ This could be evidence that 2:4*–4:26 was already a unit when an editor added the *toledot* formula.³²²

In addition to being contained within the same *toledot* unit that extends from Gen 2:4* to 5:1, the two accounts are also united by similar vocabulary, motifs, and narrative arches.³²³ Most apparent are the striking structural similarities. Carr provides a helpful summary of these parallels:

The story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 almost exactly follows the contours of the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. Both include a divine prohibition and warning (Gen. 2:17; 4:7), misdeed (3:1–6; 4:8), divine interrogations of humans (Gen. 3:8–13; 4:9–10), punishment involving alienation from the ground (3:17–19; 4:11–12), softening of condition (3:21; 4:13–15), and the final expulsion of the human eastward (Gen. 3:24; 4:16).³²⁴

Heyden explains that both narratives follow the same structure, which she outlines as follows: “Exposition” (2:4b–15; 4:1–5); “Warnung” (2:16; 4:6f.); “Verbotene Tat” (3:1–7; 4:8); “1. Frage Jahwes: Wo?” (3:9; 4:9); “2. Frage Jahwes: Was?” (3:13; 4:10); “Verfluchung” (3:14; 4:11); “Folge” (3:15–19; 4:12f.); “Jahwes Fürsorge” (3:21; 4:15); “Ausweisung” (3:23; 4:16).³²⁵ Craig also notes the similarity between the pattern of questioning and accusation in Genesis 3 and 4, stating that the “accusation-sentencing pattern” in the FN, “recalls events narrated in ch. 3: the ‘where are you?’, ‘who told you?’, ‘have you eaten?’ series was followed by ‘cursed are you among all animals’, ‘I will greatly increase your pangs in

³²¹ Jan Christian Gertz, “Von Adam zu Enosch. Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Gen 2–4,” in *Gott und Mensch in Dialog. Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Markus Witte (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 217.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ On these parallels, see the chart in Katharina Heyden, “Die Sünde Kains. Exegetische Beobachtungen zu Gen 4,1-16,” *BN* 118 (2003): 103–4. See also Witte, who lists many correspondences between Genesis 2–3 and Genesis 4 (*Urgeschichte*, 158–70), as well as Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 318–21; Jan J. Hauser, “Linguistic and Thematic Links Between Genesis 4:1–16 and Genesis 2–3,” *JETS* 23 (1980): 297–305; and Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture: A Literary Reading of Selected Texts* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998), 24.

³²⁴ Carr, *Fractures in Genesis*, 70.

³²⁵ Heyden, “Die Sünde Kains,” 103–4.

childbearing’, ‘by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread’ (3.9-19).”³²⁶ In addition to these structural similarities, Gordon Wenham and Umberto Cassuto note “numerical symmetry” that suggests an author took care to design the narrative from 2:4* to 4:26 in a way that highlighted its unity.³²⁷ Another unifying factor is the use verb יָדַע (“to know”) in 4:1, 9 (cf. 4:17, 25), which picks up on the function of this word in the Paradise account (see Gen 2:9, 17; 3:5, 7, 22).³²⁸

In addition, there are certain thematic similarities between the PN and the FN. For example, Edenburg cites the direct confrontation of “the wrongdoers” by Yhwh, “implying a personal relationship that is not characteristic of the divine-human relationship elsewhere in the Primeval History.”³²⁹ She also points out that “both stories together make the point that exile and alienation from YHWH is the inevitable consequence of violating YHWH’s commandments and of failure to maintain essential social norms.”³³⁰ Her argument is that these concepts are not paralleled elsewhere in the Primeval History.

Bernd Janowski also notes connections between the two stories. In addition to the humans ending up “east of Eden” in both accounts, the brothers’ names look back to the PN. Eve’s explanation of Cain’s name (“I have created”; Gen 4:1) picks up on the explanation of

³²⁶ K. M. Craig, “Questions Outside Eden: Yhwh, Cain and Their Rhetorical Interchange,” *JSOT* 86 (1999): 127.

³²⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 96. These statistics include, in Gen 4:1–17, “Abel” and “brother” (7x) and “Cain” (14x). Within the whole of 2:4–4:26, he notes the following: “earth” (7x), “land” (14x), and “God”/“the LORD”/“LORD God” (35x – exactly the same as in 1:1–2:3) (ibid.). Finally, “the last verse of chap. 4, ‘At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD,’ thus contains the seventieth mention of the deity in Genesis and the fourteenth use of the key word ‘call’” (ibid.).

Umberto Cassuto notes more statistics regarding the words in ch. 2–4: “name” (7x), “field” (7x), “garden” (21x), “Eden” (21x), and “east” (21x). There are 14 members in Cain’s family counting from Adam and Eve to Naamah (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part I: From Adam to Noah* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961], 192).

³²⁸ Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 154–55.

³²⁹ Cynthia Edenburg, “From Eden to Babylon: Reading Genesis 2–4 as a Paradigmatic Narrative,” in *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch: Identifying Literary Works in Genesis*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, et al. (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 161. She also sees a commonality in the occurrence of what she calls “divine testing.”

³³⁰ Ibid., 162.

her own name in Gen 3:20 (“mother of all the living”), while Abel can be seen as embodying the transitoriness of life described by 3:19.³³¹ Furthermore, Cain carries on the work for which man was created (2:5, 15b) and parallels his father also in being sent away by Yhwh (4:16; cf. 3:23).³³²

Though there are certainly discontinuities between the chapters (see 2.5.2), the cumulative weight of these structural, numerical, linguistic, and thematic arguments makes a strong case for the literary unity of the PN and FN.³³³ This evidence suggests that these two narratives were either written by the same author or that one account was written as an addition/parallel to the other.³³⁴ Which one of these options is more likely will be considered below.

2.3.2. Discontinuities

In deciding a direction of influence (or lack thereof) between these two texts, points of apparent incongruity must be identified. Despite all their connections, there are elements of the FN that are inconsistent with the PN. Most obviously, the FN assumes an already populated world: aside from his parents, Cain has no one to be afraid of in the context of the PN (see Gen 4:14).³³⁵ The sense of the existence of a broader population is also present in 4:17, when it is suddenly reported that Cain has a wife. Van Seters notes a further inconsistency in that Cain and Abel’s professions are “treated as typical and not as initial

³³¹ Bernd Janowski, “Jenseits von Eden. Gen 4,1–16 und die nichtpriesterliche Urgeschichte,” in *Die Dämonen. Demons. Die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt*, ed. Armin Lange, et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 153–54.

³³² *Ibid.*, 155.

³³³ Whether the genealogy following the account should also be included within this unit will be briefly discussed below.

³³⁴ The question, then, as Walter Dietrich puts it, is whether these parallels are “vorredaktionellen Parallelen,” or “redaktionellen Bindegliedern” (“‘Wo ist dein Bruder?’ Zu Tradition und Intention von Genesis 4,” in *Beiträge zur Alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walter Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Herbert Donner et al. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977], 162). See further discussion of the literary history of Genesis 2–4 below.

³³⁵ Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 136.

inventions.”³³⁶ Barmash describes other “nonprimordial” elements of the account: “the institution of offerings to God in two varieties, grain and first-born animals (Gen 4:3–4),” as well as the fact that “the text does not present the punishment of Cain as the practice to be established for all time (Gen 4:11–12).”³³⁷ Overall, it is claimed that the FN (as well as the genealogy of Genesis 4) lack much of the “primordial valence” of the Paradise account.³³⁸ However, it would overstate the case to say that Genesis 4 is completely unfitting within its context, as the FN and the following genealogy do contain certain aspects that appear in other ancient accounts of origins (e.g., two brothers,³³⁹ violence,³⁴⁰ city building,³⁴¹ and the

³³⁶ Ibid. Regarding their professions, Gunkel also points out, “That Abel tended livestock does not entirely fit the Paradise narrative, according to which man is suited for farming and only for farming, an indication that this story was not originally intended as a continuation of the Paradise myth” (*Genesis*, 42). He furthermore notes, “Indeed, farmland, where according to J^c (3:23) the man was exiled, is regarded here (4:14) as Yhwh’s abode” (ibid.). See also Pamela Barmash, *Homicide in the Biblical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005), 17.

³³⁷ Barmash, *Homicide*, 17.

³³⁸ According to Edenburg, “The story of Cain, as either an etiology or a morality story about a fratricide, does not require a setting at the beginning of the saga of humankind” (“From Eden to Babylon,” 162). Barmash notes that in contrast to the FN, “the narrative of Gen 2:4b–3:24 assumes a tone of primeval time and origins. Enmity, for example, is established between the descendant of Eve and the descendants of the serpent (Gen 3:15)” (*Homicide*, 17). See also Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 136.

³³⁹ Though the appearance of two brothers in a narrative is not exclusive to primordial contexts, it is notable that many origin accounts involve a pair of brothers: “It is attested for the origins of Crete (Sarpedon and Minos), Troy (Dardanus and Iasius), Mycenae (Atreus and Thyestes), Athens (Lycus and Aegeus) and of course Rome (Romulus and Remus)” (Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation*, 90). There is, furthermore, the Phoenician tale of Hypsouranios, the founder of Tyre, and his brother, Ousōos, with whom he fought (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.*, 1.10.10, trans. Karl Mras in *Die Praeparatio Evangelica*, vol. 8 of *Eusebius Werke* [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982–83], 45). Interestingly, Ousōos is also credited with offering the first sacrifices (ibid.).

³⁴⁰ E.g., the killing of Qingu in “Enuma Elish” (“Enūma Eliš,” in *Babylonian Creation Myths*, ed. and trans. Wilfred J. Lambert [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013], 110–13, tablet VI, lines 29–34), and the killing of Ilawela in the epic of Atrahasis (“Atrahasis,” trans. Stephanie Dalley, in *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 15, tablet I). Scott B. Noegel contends that in “ancient Near Eastern cosmological or ‘theological’ systems” there is “a striking correlation between ... depictions of divine violence and conceptions of divine order. And, because these conceptions of divine order were shaped by beliefs concerning the creation of the cosmos, these violent representations employ mythological and ritual idioms associated with creation” (“Dismemberment, Creation, and Ritual: Images of Divine Violence in the Ancient Near East,” in *Belief and Bloodshed: Religion and Violence Across Time and Tradition*, ed. James Wellman [Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007], 15–16). As with the literary trope of the two brothers, it should be noted that violence within origin accounts is not exclusive to primordial contexts.

³⁴¹ See, e.g., “The Founding of Eridu”: “All the lands were sea; The spring which is in the midst of the sea was only a water-pipe; Then Eridu was made... Babylon was made...” (William W. Hallo, *The World’s*

development of the arts of civilization³⁴²). So, although the lack of consistency on certain points may suggest that the PN and FN (or at least the traditions that lie behind them) did not originate in the same context, these other aspects of the chapter represent further points of connection between the two narratives and suggest that the discontinuity may not have been as strong for an ancient reader/hearer as it seems to a modern interpreter.³⁴³

2.3.3. Defining the Relationship

In seeking the original context of the FN and its relationship to the PN, it is helpful to consider the genealogies that follow it. A critical point is that in ancient Near Eastern literature there are several examples of narratives attached to genealogies (or king lists).³⁴⁴ It is thus logical to assume, as many scholars do, that the tradition of Cain and Abel found its beginnings in connection to an already existing Cainite genealogy.³⁴⁵

It would be possible, then, that the FN and its corresponding genealogy already existed when the author(s) of the PN wrote Gen 2:4*–3:24, incorporating similar vocabulary, motifs, and narrative arch.³⁴⁶ Although he speaks of the tradition that the account was based

Oldest Literature: Studies in Sumerian Elles-Lettres [Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010], 556). It is also notable that in “Enuma Elish,” “its etiology of the founding of Babylon puts this event almost immediately after creation” (ibid., 559). Cf. Hallo, *COS* 1:402–404.

³⁴² See discussion in John Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 98–9.

³⁴³ The above-listed elements are not exclusive to primeval contexts and the mention of them is not intended to prove that Genesis 4 was originally part of a primeval context. They merely suggest that the content of the chapter may not be as out of place in its context as it initially appears.

³⁴⁴ Daniel D. Lowery makes this point in his discussion of ancient Near Eastern king lists. Regarding the Sumerian King List, he explains that the antediluvian section was a later addition (*Toward a Poetics of Genesis 1–11: Reading Genesis 4:17–22 in Its Near Eastern Context, BBRSup* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013], 190). He gives the Lagaš King List as another example of a king list that had an account of origins attached to it (ibid., 196).

Kvanvig makes a similar point: “In the growth of the Mesopotamian traditions about primeval time the styles of lists and narrative were combined. This feature is already to some extent extant in the Eridu Genesis, which combines narrative with the list of cities. The list of cities is combined with the list of kings ruling before the flood in the Antediluvian King List. This may have been the case also in the Eridu Genesis, but there are no traces of such a list in the known fragments. In the Royal Chronicle of Lagash and the Dynastic Chronicle, there are marked combinations of chronography and narrative” (*Primeval History*, 241).

³⁴⁵ See n. 398.

upon rather than the narrative that appears now in the Hebrew Bible, Carr also believes that there are elements of the FN that suggest the PN was modeled after it:

God’s indignation in responding to Cain’s murder of Abel seems more obviously understandable than God’s outrage around eating the fruit of knowledge in Genesis 3 (“knowledge” usually being a good thing), an aspect of the story that has puzzled many interpreters. This may be a locus where the author of Genesis 2-3 appropriated a motif of human transgression from a Cain-Kenite tradition (behind Gen 4:2-16) and secondarily adapted it to focus on themes of knowledge and mortality.³⁴⁷

Another aspect that favors this interpretation, in Carr’s opinion, is that God’s provision for Cain fits with a focus on the special status of the Kenites and is given in response to a request from Cain, while the clothing of the humans in Genesis 3 could more easily be seen as “an adaptation of the corresponding motif in the precursor tradition to Gen 4:13–15.”³⁴⁸

This is plausible, but if the PN was written to correspond to the already existing tradition behind the FN, the tradition has been thoroughly reworked to correspond back to the PN. First, as mentioned above, the way the verb *עָדָה* is used in Genesis 4 appears to pick up on the theme of knowledge in Genesis 3, rather than the theme of knowledge in Genesis 3 being based on the usage of this verb in Genesis 4. Secondly, though the murder of the FN is certainly more obviously reprehensible than the actions of the humans in the PN, it will be argued below that Yhwh God’s expulsion of the humans is in line with one of the primary concerns of the narrative: the maintenance of the divine-human boundary (see 3.3.3.2.5). Lastly, the clothing of the humans by God in Gen 3:21 also fits quite well within its context in the PN. This event occurs after the humans have gained maturity (i.e., the knowledge of good and bad³⁴⁹), and, significantly, there is evidence that the wearing of clothing was seen in

³⁴⁶ This is the contention of Robert Karl Gnuse, who argues that Genesis 2–3 was written in response to Genesis 4 (*Misunderstood Stories: Theological Commentary on Genesis 1-11* [Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014], 145).

³⁴⁷ Carr, *The Formation of Genesis 1–11*, 57.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 57–8.

³⁴⁹ See discussion regarding the definition of this phrase in 3.3.

the ancient world as a symbol of the move from an animal-like existence to a civilized state.³⁵⁰ If this represents an adaptation of what is found in the FN, it has been thoroughly integrated into its current context. Given the extensive nature of the overlaps between the two accounts, it seems most likely that one author was responsible for the composition of both accounts,³⁵¹ with the FN being loosely based on an already existing tradition about Cain³⁵² and having been connected to a genealogy written on the basis of an existing *Vorlage*.³⁵³ The

³⁵⁰ E.g., Enkidu in the epic of Gilgamesh, who is clothed as a part of his process of maturation (*The Epic of Gilgamesh*, ed. and trans. Benjamin J. Foster, 2nd ed. [New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019], 14, tablet II, line 42). Cf. Friedhelm Hartenstein, “‘Und sie erkannten, dass sie nackt waren...’ (Gen 3, 7). Beobachtungen zur Anthropologie der Paradieserzählung,” *EvT* 65 (2005): 292. Hartenstein discusses the social implications of nakedness and being clothed: “‘Nacktheit’ kann dabei oft über Kulturgrenzen und Zeiten hinweg soziale Statuslosigkeit anzeigen. Kleidung hingegen stellt Status her und repräsentiert Beziehungen” (ibid., 279). See 3.3.3.2.3.2 and 3.3.3.2.3.3 for further discussion.

³⁵¹ This is the view of Westermann (*Genesis 1–11*, 285); Van Seters (*Prologue to History*, 140); Wenham (*Genesis 1–15*, 96); and Hauser (“Linguistic and Thematic Links,” 297–305). Though they acknowledge the probability of certain later additions, Carr (*Fractures in Genesis*, 70) and Gertz (*Das erste Buch*, 155) also argue that Gen 2:4*–4:26 is basically a literary unit. Alternatively, Kratz posits multiple layers with both the PN and FN and sees the “same textual stratigraphy — a basic stratum, a first revision and additions” in the PN as in the FN (*Composition*, 253).

³⁵² Aside from the likelihood of this tradition growing out of the Cainite genealogy, details about this previous tradition are unclear. Much has been made of the possible connection between Cain and the Kenite tribe, resulting in the hypothesis that the story was originally an etiology providing an explanation for the nomadic way of life of the tribe (see, e.g., Wellhausen, *Composition*, 11; Budde, *Urgeschichte*, 192 n. 1).

Gertz’s points against this are reasonable. First, Cain as the builder of the first city is difficult to explain with this interpretation. Secondly, it is unclear who would have been motivated to describe the Kenites in this negative way, and they certainly would not have described themselves this way. Finally, the nomadic background of Israel (i.e., the patriarchs) is not expressed negatively (Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 185–86). Cf. Westermann, who also has reservations about the so-called “collective interpretation” related to the Kenites (*Genesis 1–11*, 282–284).

Barmash also argues convincingly against this collective interpretation: “there is a basic incoherence at the heart of this analysis. ... Which figure represents the pastoral and which the agricultural? At the start, Cain is the farmer, that is, the one leading a settled existence, and Abel the pastoralist. Then Cain is condemned to wander but settles in the land east of Eden. Furthermore, there is no indication that Cain’s progeny wanders like Cain. His eldest son founds a city. (Cain himself may be the founder of this city if the name Enoch is a misreading for Irad.) Cain’s condition is confined to him alone. He is not emblematic of any nomadic or agricultural group” (*Homicide*, 14 n.5).

³⁵³ This point regarding the genealogy is controversial and is connected to one’s understanding of the relationship between the genealogy in Genesis 4 and the genealogy in Genesis 5. Gertz proposes the view advocated above: the two genealogies are based on a common *Vorlage* (“Formation”). An alternative option is given by ten Hoopen, who suggests that Genesis 5 responds to Genesis 4 (“Genesis 5”). D.T. Bryan posits, against the more popular views, that these were originally two distinct genealogies, which became similar as a result of what he calls “fluidity” in closely associated documents (“A Reevaluation of Gen 4 and Gen 5 in the Light of Recent Studies in Genealogical Fluidity,” *ZAW* 99 [1987]: 180–88). He gives examples from extrabiblical ancient Near Eastern literature of situations in which two separate lists “eventually became associated together and thereby partially conflated” (ibid., 183). However, it is not clear why the variations in the genealogies (which he cites to prove his point) could not also be the result of two authors using the same *Vorlage* in somewhat different ways.

discussion below will consider whether this understanding of the relationship between the PN and the FN is supported by a closer look at the literary history of the accounts themselves.

2.4. The Literary History of Genesis 2:4–3:24

Having suggested that the PN and FN could be part of an independent non-P primeval history and composed by the same author, further analysis must be conducted to decide what view of the literary history of the PN itself is most likely. In recent decades there have been two main suggestions: (1) the current narrative is the result of at least one layer of expansion to the original story; or (2) the account is (except for a few short units/verses) unified. Added to this is the question of the boundaries of the PN, which is especially difficult in regards to Gen 2:4. This section will start with assessing this last question and then move to determining whether it is more likely that the account is unified or not.

2.4.1. The Boundaries of the Paradise Narrative

Much has been written about Gen 2:4. In the past, this verse was often thought to be a conclusion to the P account of creation in Gen 1:1–2:3.³⁵⁴ A convincing argument against this is that the *toledot* formula always introduces the following unit (Gen 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2; outside of Genesis, cf. Num 3:1; Ruth 4:18; 1 Chr 1:29).³⁵⁵ The use of the compound divine name, “Yhwh Elohim,” in this verse is also unfitting with the Priestly creation account. A simple solution would be to see the verse as introducing the PN; however, there are several peculiarities about the verse that complicate the situation. First, the sequence “the heavens and the earth” (הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ) in the first half of the verse is reversed to

³⁵⁴ See the history of this view in Gertz, “Formation,” 114.

³⁵⁵ Gertz, “Formation,” 114. That Gen 2:4a is forward-looking is also confirmed grammatically by Barry Bandstra, who concludes that 2:4a is its own clause complex that looks forward to the following texts (up to 4:26): “The primary evidence is the word *‘eleh* these. Elsewhere in Genesis 1–11 it is used in attributive relational clauses joined with *toledoth* outcomes as a cataphoric (forward-looking) pronoun referring to the following clause complex; se 6:9(a), 10:1(a), 11:10(a), 11:27(a)” (*Genesis 1–11: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008], 117).

Another suggestion is that Gen 2:4a originally served as the heading of the priestly creation account (Witte, *Urgeschichte*, 55). This is not likely, as “Gen 1:1 is a perfectly valid superscription” (Gertz, “Formation,” 115).

“earth and heavens” (ארץ ושמים) in the second half of the verse. Secondly, these nouns are determinate in v. 4a, but indeterminate in v. 4b.³⁵⁶ These unusual aspects have led many to believe there is a literary critical separation between the two halves of the verse.

Gertz argues convincingly that Gen 2:4a is a redactional addition that was added to create a transition from the P creation account into the non-P Paradise narrative. Evidence for this includes: (1) the mention of the “Book of Toledot” (ספר תולדות) in 5:1, which suggests that what comes before this in the non-P primeval history was written as an introduction to “the history of the Toledot of Israel”;³⁵⁷ (2) 2:4b–7 seems to be a self-contained unit;³⁵⁸ (3) the lack of determination on “earth and heavens” can be explained as a result of a redactor who was influenced by Genesis 1 (see Gen 1:1, 15, 17, 20, 26, 28, 30; 2:1);³⁵⁹ (4) the occurrence of the name “Yhwh Elohim” in this verse is in keeping with the focus in the PN on the distinction between divinity and humanity.³⁶⁰ On the basis on these arguments, it seems most likely that 2:4b is part of the following PN, while 2:4a is a redactional bridge connecting the PN to the P creation account.³⁶¹

The ending of the PN in Gen 3:24 is not controversial. As a narrative, the story concludes here, and the genealogical note in 4:1, beginning with a disjunctive *vav* (והאדם), clearly signals the beginning of a new unit. This verse will be further discussed within the section on the literary history of the FN below.

³⁵⁶ For reasons that this is unlikely to be a stylistic variation, see Gertz, “Formation,” 117.

³⁵⁷ Gertz, “Formation,” 115.

³⁵⁸ Gertz, “Von Adam zu Enosch,” 220.

³⁵⁹ Gertz, “Formation,” 117–18.

³⁶⁰ This is convincingly argued by Carr: “In this case, the expression stresses Yhwh’s status as ‘God,’ much like the expressions regarding the special status of various humans, e.g. Pharaoh Necho, king David, etc. This is part of the broader focus of the following narrative in Gen 2:4b-3:24 on the distinction between mortal humans on the one hand and divine beings like Yhwh on the other” (*The Formation of Genesis 1–11*, 11–12).

³⁶¹ In agreement with Carr, *The Formation of Genesis 1–11*, 11; Bühner, “Relative Dating,” 375; and Gertz, “Von Adam zu Enosh,” 220.

2.4.2. The Composition of the Paradise Narrative

There are certain commonly noted tensions within the PN. These include:

1. The appearance of a “spring” (אָד)³⁶² in Gen 2:6 is seemingly a contradiction of the statement regarding a lack of water in v. 5 (לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים); “the LORD God had not caused it to rain”) and represents a sudden shift from “not yet” statements to a positive declaration.³⁶³
2. The tree of life appears to have no role in the main body of the narrative in Genesis 3. It is introduced near the beginning of the story (2:9) and then disappears until the end (3:22, 24).³⁶⁴
3. The “river section” (Gen 2:10–14) is commonly thought to interrupt the flow of the narrative.³⁶⁵ This supposition is supported by the *Wiederaufnahme* in v. 15 (cf. v. 8), which is also often considered secondary.³⁶⁶
4. The naming of the woman in Gen 3:20 seems unnecessary, given her naming in 2:23. Furthermore, the naming in v. 3:20 seems to be an odd response to the punishments handed out in 3:14–19.

³⁶² The meaning of this word is uncertain. Outside this verse, it only occurs in Job 36:27, where it may refer to a “cloud” or “fog” (Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 99). This does not match the context of Gen 2:6, in which there has been no rain, and the ground is dry. See Gertz’s discussion, in which he concludes that the author is speaking of rising water, which the author of v. 10–14 (added later) seems to have understood as rivers (ibid., 99–100).

³⁶³ See, e.g., Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 200; Levin, *Jahwist*, 92.

³⁶⁴ See, e.g., Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 88–90.

³⁶⁵ See, e.g., Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 113; Carr, “Politics,” 577–78.

³⁶⁶ See, e.g., Bühner, “Relative Dating,” 368, who also sees 2:15 as part of the addition.

5. Some also see a conflict in the presentation of the garden. Is it a place that must be worked by a divinely appointed “garden worker” (Gen 2:15), or is it “a well-watered (2:6, 10–14) orchard with edible fruit (2:9)?”³⁶⁷
6. Gen 3:24 has been identified as a potential doublet of 3:23.³⁶⁸

These tensions have led many scholars to suggest that the PN consists of at least two different narrative strands that have been combined.³⁶⁹ Typically, it is thought that one narrative strand represents an account of creation (contained primarily in Genesis 2), and another strand relates the humans’ transgression (contained primarily in Genesis 3).³⁷⁰

However, this solution to the apparent tensions creates more problems than it solves. Blum’s convincing critique points out numerous questions that are raised if the creation story jumps from Gen 2:22 (“Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.”) directly to 3:20 (“Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.”). These questions include the following: 1. What is the function of the garden?; 2. What explanation can be given for the difference in reality between the garden of Eden and the reality of the reader?; 3. What is the purpose of the creation of animals?; 4. Why is the woman created after the animals and “built” from the man’s rib?; 5. How does the person in 3:20 know that the woman is the

³⁶⁷ Carr, “Politics,” 579–80. Carr’s contention in this article was that the end of the Paradise account describes work as a punishment (Gen 3:23), in contrast to the positive view of work given in the reconstructed early creation account (*ibid.*, 580).

³⁶⁸ See, e.g., Bühner, “Relative Dating,” 369.

³⁶⁹ See, e.g., Budde, *Urgeschichte*; Carr, “Politics,” Levin, *Der Jahwist*; Witte, *Urgeschichte*; Kratz, *Composition*.

³⁷⁰ The exact delineation of the verses varies. See Erhard Blum, “Von Gottesunmittelbarkeit zu Gottähnlichkeit: Überlegungen zur theologischen Anthropologie der Paradieserzählung,” in *Gottes Nähe im Alten Testament*, ed. Göнке Eberhardt and Kathrin Liess (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2004), 19, for a summary of the approaches of Levin, Witte, Kratz, Pfeiffer, Carr, Hermann Spieckermann, and Dirk U. Rottzoll (although Blum himself argues for the literary unity of the PN). Typically, the account of transgression is thought to have been written as a response to the creation account and is not thought to have existed as an independent account (e.g., Kratz, *Composition*, 252). See also Wyatt’s delineation of the verses above (1.1.1.3.1).

“mother of all living”?³⁷¹ Blum suggests that these questions are better answered when the narrative is read as unified.³⁷²

While Blum’s critique of the theory of two narrative strands within the PN is convincing, the tensions cited above still require further comment:

1. The “spring” (78): Whatever the mysterious term 78 means, it is certainly different than rain and could easily be present in a situation in which there was not yet any rain.³⁷³

Furthermore, the mere fact that the text switches from negative to positive statements at this point is not a decisive argument in support of the secondary nature of the verse, as a similar juxtaposition of “not yet” statements and positive descriptions of the primeval world can be found in “Enuma Elish.”³⁷⁴ Another relevant example can be observed in “The Founding of Eridu”:

³⁷¹ Blum, “Gottesunmittelbarkeit,” 12.

³⁷² Blum, “Gottesunmittelbarkeit,” 9. Contra Gertz, who argues that the tree of life (Gen 2:9b; 3:22, 24) is a later addition, having the same “entstehungsgeschichtlichen Zusammenhang” as several other sections that have secondary characteristics: the rivers section (2:10–15), the “dust motif” (2:7 [only עפר added], 3:19b), and the expulsion notice (3:24) (*Das erste Buch*, 89). The fact that “the tree of the knowledge of good and bad” is only mentioned by name along with the tree of life in 2:9b and in the command in 2:17 is cited as further evidence that there was originally only one tree (ibid.). This may also suggest that the designation of the “tree in the middle of the garden” as the “tree of the knowledge of good and bad” was a later addition (added for clarification after the tree of life was introduced) (ibid.). Gertz also notes that the conception of the “world tree” is behind both of the trees but is expressed in different ways in each tree; it is unlikely that one author would double the motif in this way (ibid.). Regarding the intention of this redaction layer, Gertz suggests: “Diese beinahe midraschartige Kommentierung fragt nach den Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten des Urstandes und trägt so eine vertiefte Reflexion über die Sterblichkeit des Menschen in die Paradieserzählung ein. Zugleich korreliert sie symbolisch-geographisch das ‘Paradies’ mit dem Jerusalemer Tempel und verschränkt so schon die mythische Urzeit mit der gegenwärtigen Erfahrungswelt der ursprünglichen Adressaten (s.u. zu Gen 2, 10–14, 3, 24)” (ibid., 90).

Along with the discussion about the tree of life below, it will be suggested in ch. 3 that the tree of life, in combination with the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, fits the intentions of the account and need not be seen as secondary (see especially 3.4.1.3; as well as n. 380 and n. 522). On the “world tree,” see sec 3.4.1.2.4. The “dust motif” is discussed in 3.4.4.

The rivers section (2:10–15) and the expulsion notice (3:24) will be suggested to be secondary (cf. Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 89–90; 112–17; 146–49; although 3:22 is considered original here); cf. also Bühner, who considers 2:10–15 to be secondary and leaves 3:24 as possibly secondary (*Am Anfang*, 214–20; 258–61).

³⁷³ Primeval water is also present before the beginning of creation in the Priestly account (see Gen 1:2). Gertz suggests, “Mit Blick auf die im folgenden Vers geschilderte Menschenschöpfung ist schließlich zu erwägen, ob sich in der Verwendung des seltenen und in den mesopotamischen Raum weisenden Wortes *’ēd* eine ferne Erinnerung an sumerische und akkadische Schöpfungsmythen erhalten hat” (*Das erste Buch*, 100).

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 99 (cf. “The Epic of Creation,” trans. Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 233–77). Gertz, furthermore, points out that the moist ground is a practical necessity for the formation of humans that will occur next.

No holy house, no house of the gods, had (yet) been made in a holy place;
 No reed had sprung up, no tree had been created;
 No brick had been laid, no brick-mold had been built;
 No house had been made, no city had been built;
 No city had been made, no living creature had been placed (therein);
 Nippur had not been made, Ekur had not been built;
 Uruk had not been made, Eanna had not been built;
 The Apsu had not been made, Eridu had not been built;
 No holy house, no house for the gods, its dwelling, had been made;
 All the land were sea³⁷⁵

Here again is a list of “not yet” statements, followed by a positive statement describing pre-creation water, which suggests that the switch from negative to positive statements in the PN does not necessarily point to a literary break.³⁷⁶

2. The tree of life: The presence of the tree of life alongside the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is best explained by parallels to other ancient Near Eastern texts, in which wisdom and eternal life, as a pair, play a key role.³⁷⁷ These characteristics were described as divine prerogatives and were traits that humanity strove to obtain, but failed to attain as a pair. This is seen, for example, in the story of Adapa, “the wise one,” who misses his chance for eternal life when he refuses the food of the gods.³⁷⁸ In the epic of Gilgamesh, the wise hero also misses a chance at eternal life (or at least a return to youth) when he loses the “plant of rejuvenation” to a snake.³⁷⁹ These examples show that the potential for eternal life is not a side issue in the PN, but rather an integral part of a scenario set up to

³⁷⁵ Hallo, *The World's Oldest Literature*, 549.

³⁷⁶ This is not to argue that “Enuma Elish” or the “Founding of Eridu” express the same conception of pre-creation conditions as is expressed in the PN, but merely to note that there are other examples of creation accounts with statements of what has “not yet” come about followed abruptly by statements of “what is.”

³⁷⁷ According to Carr, “texts such as Gilgamesh and Adapa can help us appreciate the combined focus on wisdom and mortality in the Eden story (‘the tree of knowledge’ and ‘tree of life’), along with the role that snake characters played in these earlier narrative explorations of human mortality. In these pre-biblical traditions, certain early heroes can border on godlikeness with wisdom, but godlike immortality ends up being unattainable even for them” (*The Formation of Genesis 1–11*, 52).

³⁷⁸ See, e.g., Albertz, “‘Ihr werdet sein wie Gott,’” 105, and Blum, “Von Gottesunmittelbarkeit,” 24.

³⁷⁹ See Foster, *Gilgamesh*, 100, tablet XI, lines 329–30. “Plant of rejuvenation” is the term given to this plant by Foster in his summary of this section of the epic (*ibid.*, 98) based on its ability to restore youthfulness (*ibid.*, 99, tablet XI, lines 310, 319–324).

highlight the distinction between divinity and humanity.³⁸⁰ Furthermore, the importance of death and life as a theme throughout the narrative will be highlighted as another reason to read the tree of life as original to the account (see 3.3.3.2.4.3).³⁸¹

3. The river section: Here, it will be argued that a literary critical separation is warranted. As noted above, in addition to the *Wiederaufnahme* in 2:15, “Die Folge von Partizipialsätzen unterbricht den Erzählfluss durch eine statische Zustandbeschreibung. Auch wird zumindest mit der Nennung von Tigris und Euphrat der urgeschichtliche Kontext aufgegeben und der in mythischer Ferne (*miqēdām*)(‘ēdān)...nur um diese gleich wieder zu verlassen.”³⁸² Bühner suggests that the grammar and style differences could be deliberate, but concludes, convincingly, that there are decisive reasons for reading it as secondary:

Jedoch unterbricht der Abschnitt die Erzählung von YHWH Elohim, der im gepflanzten Garten, in dem sich auch der Mensch befindet, verschiedene Bäume wachsen lässt (2,8f.) und über diese Bäume dem Menschen ein Gebot erteilt (2,16f.). Und während die restliche Erzählung die Lage des Garten Edens offen lässt und mit der Angabe ‘in Eden im Osten’ besonders die Unerreichbarkeit dieses Ortes betont, ist 2,10–14 ein Exkurs zur Lage des Gartens, der durch die genannten Flüsse und Gebiete genauer lokalisiert werden soll.³⁸³

³⁸⁰ Further evidence for the tree of life being original to the account is that removing the occurrences of the tree of life results in further inconsistencies in the narrative: Bühner points out that “the singular pronoun in וישלחהו (‘and he sent *him* forth’) at the beginning of 3:23 requires a reference point in the singular, i.e., man/mankind, which occurs in 3:22” (“Relative Dating,” 369). Furthermore, “a direct succession of 3:21, 23, as some redaction-historical models have proposed, is hardly probable since v. 21 not only differentiates between man and woman expressly but also concludes with a plural pronoun: וילבשם (‘and he clothed them’)” (ibid.).

Regarding the (alleged) grammatical awkwardness in the description of the trees in Gen 2:9, see Paul Joüon and Tamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 3rd reprint of the 2nd ed. (Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011), 614: “A chain of coordinated terms may be split by an intruding element, as at Gn 2.9 ... where both of the trees must have been situated in the center of the garden; Josh 10.28.” Cf. Andreas Michel, *Theologie aus der Peripherie: Die gespaltene Koordination im Biblischen Hebräisch*, BZAW 25 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 1–22.

³⁸¹ As noted above, the “dust motif” (Gen 2:7 [עפר], 3:19b) is sometimes also considered secondary (Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 89–90). This is also part of the *Lebensthematik* discussed in 3.4.1.1.1.1. Cf. Bühner, *Am Anfang*, 208–9.

³⁸² Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 108.

³⁸³ Bühner, *Am Anfang*, 215.

He also notes that vv. 10–14 provide an explanation for the rare word אד (see ישקה).³⁸⁴ In relation to the secondary nature of these verses (Gen 2:10–15), the possibility of a connection to the Jerusalem Temple (cf. 3:24) is discussed in 3.4.1.2.2.³⁸⁵

4. The naming of the woman (Gen 3:20): Here again, Blum’s observations are key. It is only at this point in the narrative that it makes sense for the man to call the woman “the mother of all living,” for it is only in light of the humans’ mortality that the concept of future generations and descendants has meaning: “Reproduktion des Lebens hat nur einen Sinn unter der Bedingung seiner Begrenzung!”³⁸⁶ The naming also functions as a defiant response to the humans’ now inescapable mortality — yes, they will die, but they will also create life.³⁸⁷
5. The differing presentation of the garden: As suggested above, the description in Gen 2:15 of the man’s task in the garden, “to work it and keep it” (לעבדה ולשמרה), is likely secondary. Bühner notes the contrast between this verse and 2:6, which describes the need for someone to work the “ground” (אדמה) rather than the “garden” (גן).³⁸⁸ Another point in favor of this being secondary is the use of the verb נוה, which may suggest a more

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Contra Carr, who argues that these verses are not secondary. He points out that irrigation is an issue of significant interest within ancient Near Eastern cosmologies (*The Formation of Genesis 1–11*, 53–4). For him, this suggests that this section is not a digression or interruption but is addressing what, in all likelihood, would have been an important issue in the minds of the author’s audience. It answers a question naturally raised by the narrative: how will the garden be watered in light of the absence of rain (Gen 2:5)? (ibid.) This addresses the issue of coherence but does not address the other problematic features of the verses. Regarding 2:15, Carr notes that the verse differs from the usual form of *Wiederaufnahme*, in which the preceding element is more exactly reproduced (*Genesis 1–11*, 57). Be that as it may, the verse has other features that suggest it is secondary, as was argued in this section. The fact that irrigation was significant and the section would have answered a question in the audience’s mind could also be argued to be the motivation for a redactor to add the section.

³⁸⁶ Blum, “Gottesunmittelbarkeit,” 16.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 16–17.

³⁸⁸ *Am Anfang*, 217.

temporary placement. This seems to have the expulsion at the end of the PN already in mind, while the rest of the narrative leaves the ending of the account open.³⁸⁹

6. The possible doublet in Gen 3:24: Against defining this as a doublet, Bühner notes, “cherubs form part of the iconographic inventory of stylized or sacred trees throughout the ancient Near East...and the succession of the two verbs for expulsion, *גָּרַשׁ* and *שָׁלַח* (3:23 and 3:24), is attested frequently in the Hebrew Bible.”³⁹⁰ On the other hand, he also points out that the verse “show[s] a similar connection to temple and cult, as does the secondary geography of Eden.”³⁹¹ Arneth also mentions this connection, and he observes that Yhwh Elohim is specifically mentioned as the subject in 3:21, 22, and 23, while he is not mentioned by name in v. 24 (though he is obviously the subject of the action). Instead, v. 24 mentions the man (*הָאָדָם*) specifically, while in v. 23, he is referred to only in a suffix.³⁹² Although these stylistic differences would not be decisive on their own, along with the doubling of the content from v. 23 and the connections to the temple (seen also in 2:10–15; further discussed in 3.4.1.2.2), they tentatively support the suggestion that this verse is also secondary. The verse also functions to clarify why the humans could not simply wander back into the garden and eat from the tree of life, which provides a plausible motivation for the redactor.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ “Relative Dating,” 368–69.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 369.

³⁹² Arneth, *Von Adams Fall*, 143.

As a whole, these arguments suggest that there are good reasons to view the PN as a largely unified account, but with additions in Gen 2:10–15 and probably 3:24,³⁹³ and with the acknowledgment that it certainly picked up on existing traditions.³⁹⁴

2.5. The Literary History of Genesis 4

Having offered a proposal for understanding the literary history of the PN, the discussion will now turn to the literary history of the following unit, the FN. This will also include a discussion of the genealogical notes that appear in Genesis 4 with which the narrative is tightly integrated (see 2.5.1 below). The discontinuities that have been noticed in Genesis 4 are of two main types: 1. discontinuities relating to the genealogies (both in their relationship to Genesis 4 and within themselves); and 2. discontinuities within the narrative itself. Therefore, the literary historical issues related to these two types of discontinuities will be addressed in turn in this section. This section will focus primarily on identifying, rather than solving, the various literary critical issues raised within this chapter. A few preliminary assessments on the most reasonable way to understand the makeup of this chapter will be proffered, and further conclusions will be included within the exegetical analysis in ch. 4.

2.5.1. The Relationship between Genealogy and Narrative in Genesis 4

Many of the discontinuities noted in ch. 4 relate to the relationship between specific genealogical notes and other parts of the chapter. For example, Abel is a shepherd (Gen 4:2b), and yet Jabal (4:20) is said to be the first shepherd;³⁹⁵ Cain is doomed to wander (4:12,

³⁹³ The phrase *נפש חיה* in 2:19 is also likely secondary (see Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 81 n. 9; Bühner, “Relative Dating,” 369).

³⁹⁴ Others who argue that it is a literary unit include Albertz, “Ihr werdet sein wie Gott”; Blum, “Gottesunmittelbarkeit;” Bühner, “Relative Dating;” Carr, *Genesis 1–11*; Gertz, *Das erste Buch*; Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*; and Otto, “Die Paradieserzählung.”

³⁹⁵ As noted by Gunkel (*Genesis*, 41). Furthermore, “If Jabal were the first to discover animal husbandry, the progenitor Cain cannot have built a city. The natural sequence is the reverse: first animal husbandry, then, many generations later, city building” (ibid.). See also Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 136.

14) but then settles and builds a city (4:17).³⁹⁶ The various genealogical verses of ch. 4 will be reviewed below, and their proposed connection to each other and to the narrative portion of Genesis 4 will be considered.

2.5.1.1. *Genesis 4:1–2*

The initial issue to consider is how to understand the first two verses of this unit (Gen 4:1–2): are they genealogical notes or part of the following narrative? Many scholars have understandably suggested that 4:1–2 (or parts of these verses) was part of a preexisting genealogy that can also be found in vv. 17–22 [23–24].³⁹⁷ V. 17 would then pick up where these verses leave off, continuing the genealogy by describing Cain’s progeny. The description of professions is also resumed, though not until v. 20. Following from this

³⁹⁶ See, e.g., Gunkel, *Genesis*, 41: “The account of Cain’s fratricide does not conform to the genealogy of Cain. The former regards nomadic life as a curse, the latter as a natural profession. The Cain cursed and driven out by Yhwh is destined to become lost in the wide world and cannot become, among other things, the progenitor of humanity...Cain as founder of a city conforms even less to the Cainite genealogy.” Wellhausen also noted the contradictory presentation of Cain: v. 16ff do not assume the FN (*Composition*, 10).

³⁹⁷ Dietrich agrees with Gunkel that v. 1 originally led into the genealogy, while he sees v. 2 as an addition by a pre-Jahwist redactor. Vv. 1 and 2 have replaced the beginning of the narrative, which has been removed or lost. He sees the genealogy of 4:1, 17–22 (4:23–24 added later) as part of a Kenite tradition (“Wo ist dein Bruder?,” 159–72).

Coats concurs that v. 1 belongs to the genealogy, although he includes v. 2 as well. He notes that the fact that v. 1 begins with a nominal construction is unusual compared to the beginning of other “genealogical units” and sees this as evidence that these verses have been altered to fit the narrative (*Genesis*, 61). He points out the brevity of v. 2a, as have many others, but he adds, “If one considers ... v. 2b to be a part of the genealogy, then the pattern more closely approximates the entries of the genealogy, at least the entries in vv. 20–21” (Coats, *Genesis*, 61; cf. Westermann, *Genesis*, 439–40).

Kratz labels vv. 1abα and 17–22 as originally part of the Cainite genealogy and sees this genealogy as a continuation of 2:5–3:21. He explains, “Adam, the farmer, and Eve, the mother of all things living (all human beings), produce Cain, and the rest of humankind proceeds from him, those who live in cities and tents and all the itinerant professions. The genealogy is not viable in itself, but together with the creation story in 2.5–3.21 forms a closed narrative complex, a kind of anthropogony” (*Composition*, 253). The narrative of Cain murdering Abel (more precisely vv. 1bβ, 2–5, 8–12, 16) is then an insertion. He includes v. 2 as a part of this later addition: “Genesis 4.2 takes the cultivation of the ground from Gen. 2–3 and the rearing of cattle from 4.20, constructs an artificial opposition between them, and thus anticipates the differentiation of forms of life in 4.17ff.” (ibid.).

In *Fractures in Genesis*, Carr includes Gen 4:1–2, 17–24 in what he calls “the first portion of the genealogy in Genesis 4” and asserts that most of this genealogical material is not original to non-P (*Fractures in Genesis*, 69 n. 41). More recently, he further explains that “the bulk of Genesis 4, the Cain-Lamech tradition seen in Gen 4:1–24, represents a literary adaptation of a likely oral tradition about the Kenites” (*The Formation of Genesis 1–11*, 78).

assumption of a preexisting genealogy, many suggest that the fratricide account either grew out of this genealogy or was inserted into it.³⁹⁸

As noted above, the combination of genealogy and narrative was not unusual in ancient Near Eastern literature.³⁹⁹ That being said, even if it is acknowledged that the author made use of an earlier genealogical tradition, it is difficult to trace this tradition with any level of certainty to a hypothetical previous form.⁴⁰⁰ This is because in their present form the genealogical notes are impossible to separate from the surrounding narratives. An example of this is the unique way in which the author has woven the verb יָדַע into both the genealogy and narrative in chapter 4. Gertz makes the significant point that it is only in Gen 4:1, 17, and 25 that the verb יָדַע , “to know,” is used in a genealogy to describe sexual intercourse.⁴⁰¹ In addition to connecting this account to the PN, “somit fällt es schwer, Gen 4,1.17 und Gen 4,25 in ihrer vorfindlichen Gestalt voneinander und von der Paradieserzählung zu trennen und jeweils als Beginn einer originären Genealogie anzusprechen.”⁴⁰² Additionally, the

³⁹⁸ E.g., Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 285, and Gunkel, *Genesis*, 41. Gertz also sees the narrative as having been written in light of an already existing genealogy: “the transformation of Cain into the son of Adam and brother of Seth became necessary because the Cain and Abel story was added later” (“Formation,” 124).

Dietrich explains chapter 4 as originally a combination of the genealogy (traditional Kenite material) and the narrative (an anti-Kenite tradition), which was transformed by the Jahwist into an etiology “des zu Neid, Haß und Mord fähigen Menschen” (“Wo ist dein Bruder?,” 171).

Kratz sees a three-step process of development both in the PN and in this text: “The basic stratum consists of the cultural historical genealogy of the Cainites in 4.1ab, 17–22 ...and continues the creation story of Gen. 2.5-3.21 ... The genealogy is not viable in itself, but together with the creation story in 2.5-3.21 forms a closed narrative complex, a kind of anthropogony” (*Composition*, 253).

³⁹⁹ See n. 344 above.

⁴⁰⁰ Regarding the origin of the genealogical material in Genesis 4, Carr suggests that most of it is not original to the non-P strand. This is likely because “the primary focus of this material is on locating the origins of various present institutions and groups, with no apparent knowledge of the following flood narrative. These indicators suggest that this genealogy existed before its use as a bridge from creation to flood, and was only later adapted for this purpose by the author of the broader non-P strand” (*Fractures in Genesis*, 69 n. 41). The FN would have been composed along with this adaption of the genealogical material (ibid.). See further discussion regarding the inclusion of the flood narrative in an original non-P primeval history in 5.3.2.

⁴⁰¹ Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 154.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 154–55.

mention of Eve giving birth in 4:1 connects back to her naming in 3:20.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, rather than being an interruption, the naming of Cain forms an important contrast to the naming of Seth in 4:25.⁴⁰⁴ In Eve's description of her firstborn, *she* is the focus of the creative activity ("I have gotten a man with Yhwh" [4:1]) while the note regarding Seth switches the subject to *God* ("God has appointed another offspring" [4:25]). The peculiarities of this phrase in 4:1b, as well as the following clause in v. 2a, will be further addressed below, but for now, it can be said that the brevity of v. 2a is not a sufficient reason for a literary critical separation,⁴⁰⁵ and it may have important thematic significance (see 4.3.1.2.2).⁴⁰⁶ Additionally, the designation of professions connects this verse to the rest of the genealogy that follows the FN (see 4:20f.).

2.5.1.2. *Genesis 4:17–24*

Gen 4:17–22 [23–24] presents a Cainite genealogy. The relationship between this non-P genealogy (and the following Sethite genealogy in vv. 25–26) with the P genealogy in Genesis 5 is not easy to define. Even a cursory reading reveals the repetition of some names (e.g., Adam, Seth, Enoch, and Lamech) and similarity in many of the other names (e.g., Cain [קין] in 4:1 and Kenan [קנין] in 5:9; Methushael [מתושאל] in 4:18 and Methuselah [מתושלה] in 5:21). This inevitably leads one to ask whether these are two versions of the same genealogy.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 156. The mere fact that a woman is named in a genealogical note is significant, as this is not common.

⁴⁰⁴ Witte, *Urgeschichte*, 152.

⁴⁰⁵ See Gertz, "Von Adam zu Enosh," 234: "Andererseits kann sich die Abtrennung von v. 2ff als sekundär nicht auf die gegenüber der Geburt Kains in V. 1 weniger ausführliche Darstellung der Geburt Abels in v. 2ff berufen: V. 1 stellt die mit dem ersten Sohn einsetzende Generationenfolge heraus, was sich für den zweitgeborenen Abel erübrigt, dann jedoch nach dem Brudermord und dem Ausscheiden der Kainiten aus der Generationenfolge in v. 25 in Gestalt des betonten Neuanfangs mit Set seine dem Erzählfortschritt geschuldete Korrektur erfährt."

An example of an interpreter who sees a literary break in this verse is Witte, who attributes v. 2b to the genealogy source and sees v. 2a as an interruption of the natural progression from the report of Cain's birth to the explanation of his profession (*Urgeschichte*, 152).

⁴⁰⁶ See 4.3.1.2.2.

There is a general consensus that these genealogies are related, but whether one was written in light of the other or they are both based on a common *Vorlage* is not agreed upon.⁴⁰⁷

As noted above, Cain's designation as a city builder in Gen 4:17 seems to represent a contradiction of the fate assigned him in 4:11–12.⁴⁰⁸ It is significant that this may represent a parallel to Adam's naming of Eve. In 3:20, the giving of the name "life" (חַיָּה) forms an opposing response to the sentence of death.⁴⁰⁹ Cain's sentence of a life of wandering (4:12) also receives an opposing response: "settling" (יָשַׁב). The subject of the action in this verse is also an issue for further inquiry.⁴¹⁰

The following verses have their own literary critical difficulties.⁴¹¹ The "song of Lamech" (Gen 4:23–24) in particular is often considered to have an independent prehistory.⁴¹² Regardless of its prehistory, in its current form, it clearly presupposes the FN (by mentioning Cain), as well as v. 19 of the previous genealogy, and thus stands unified with its present context. When considering the genealogical section as a whole, what is most significant about the Cainite genealogy is that it sets up the contrast that will be made

⁴⁰⁷ See n. 353.

⁴⁰⁸ Regarding Cain's city building, Witte separates vv. 17a and 17b: "Somit dürfte 4,17b auf die Hand zurückgehen, die 4,12-15 gestaltet und die Brudermörderzählung durch die Einlagen in 4,6-7 und 4,9-16* theologisch geprägt hat" (*Urgeschichte*, 154). This is based on its relation to 4:12–15 ("insofern der Städtebau Kains den Versuch darstellt, dem Schicksal 'flüchtig und unstat' zu sein (V. 14)") (*ibid.*, 153–54).

⁴⁰⁹ Blum, "Unmittelbarkeit," 24.

⁴¹⁰ The statement "he built a city" (וַיִּבֶן בְּנֵה עִיר) must be further examined in the following text analysis as to whether the original "builder of a city" in this verse may have been Enoch rather than Cain (see Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 326–28; Kvanvig, *Primeval History*, 248).

⁴¹¹ These include the fact that v. 18 is different from the other genealogical notes in this section because it merely lists progenitors and their descendants with no further elaboration (e.g., Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 328). Furthermore, v. 20 mentions Jabal as "the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock," which, as mentioned above, seems contradictory to the portrayal of Abel as the first shepherd.

⁴¹² Dietrich, "Wo ist dein Bruder?," 160: "Dem Kainitenstammbaum dürfte das Lamechlied v.23f erst auf einer späteren Stufe zugewachsen sein." Cf. Coats: "In its genealogical context, the poem belongs to the Yahwist. The poem is nonetheless earlier than J and reflects life among the folk as a piece of popular poetry. Indeed, it seems inappropriate to tie this poem directly to any one of the several Pentateuchal sources. It is more likely that this early piece represents one of the sources for J, and that in its structure it preserves a kernel of folk tradition" (*Genesis*, 67).

between the two family lines — that of Cain and that of Seth — leading up to the flood.⁴¹³ The “song of Lamech,” then, also fits thematically with the theme of increasing violence within the line of Cain. A further issue is that the advancement of knowledge and culture described in these verses happens pre-Flood, and, thus, is seen by some as evidence that these verses came from a primeval tradition that did not include a flood.⁴¹⁴ That it is common in Mesopotamian tradition for these types of cultural advancements to happen before an account of a flood speaks against this theory.⁴¹⁵ More specifics about this section will be considered in the text analysis of ch. 4, particularly whether the cultural advancements described in these verses build upon the theme of the knowledge of good and bad from Genesis 2–3.

2.5.1.3. *Genesis 4:25–26*

Gen 4:25–26 begins a new genealogy that will function as a foil to Cain’s line. The repetition in the mention of a child being born to the first humans serves the purpose of emphasizing this contrast.⁴¹⁶ It has often been suggested that these verses stem from a formerly independent genealogy,⁴¹⁷ probably written before 4:1–2, 17–24.⁴¹⁸ Some argue that this addition happened when the P and non-P strands were joined, and others believe it

⁴¹³ Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 153–54.

⁴¹⁴ See Wellhausen, *Composition*, 8, 10; Levin, *Jahwist*, 98; Kratz, *Composition*, 251–52.

⁴¹⁵ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 325; Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 181. Other accounts from the ancient Near East explicitly addressed this problem: in the epic of Gilgamesh “all types of skilled craftsmen” were brought on board the ark (*Gilgamesh*, trans. Foster, 91, tablet XI, lines 101–2) and, according to Berossus II, ii, writings containing essential knowledge are buried prior to a flood (the fragments of Berossus are edited and compiled in Felix Jacoby, *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, vol. 3C [Leiden: Brill, 1958], 364–95).

⁴¹⁶ Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 183.

⁴¹⁷ Gunkel concluded that the genealogy of Seth was originally independent but was added to the genealogy of Cain by a later redactor, who connected the two using the words אחר תחת הבל כי הרגו קין and עוד. He also points out that Enosh is said to be the first that calls on the name of “Yhwh;” therefore, this genealogy must belong to what he labels J^c and the genealogy of Cain to Jⁱ (Gunkel, *Genesis*, 41). Coats also explains the verses as part of an originally independent genealogy, but he believes it would be impossible to reconstruct this original genealogy (although it may have extended to Noah) (*Genesis*, 68).

⁴¹⁸ See Carr, *Fractures in Genesis*, 69 n. 41.

happened during the growth process of non-P on its own.⁴¹⁹ In terms of its function, it is likely transitional material moving into the *toledot* Adam in 5:1 or an attempt by an editor to connect the fratricide account to the Cainite genealogy.⁴²⁰ The beginning of “calling on the name of Yhwh” in 4:26b, coming *after* the narrative of the two brothers giving offerings, is likely a late addition.⁴²¹ These verses may go back to a variant of the same genealogy upon which ch. 5 is based.⁴²²

As with the other sections of this chapter, when considering Genesis 4 as a whole, it becomes clear that it is difficult to definitively separate these verses out of their present context in which they are connected to both the Cainite genealogy and the FN. The fact that the FN is both introduced by vv. 1–2 and presupposed by v. 25, according to Gertz, “spricht schon gegen ihre literarkritische Herauslösung aus dem Werk des weisheitlichen Erzählers.”⁴²³ Cotter also notes the repetition of the birth formula in 4:25, where “Seth takes the place of Abel, and YHWH’s name is mentioned” and sees this as an example of how the entire chapter is bound together.⁴²⁴ As with the rest of the chapter, if there was an outside source involved, the author has transformed this source material so that it is tightly connected to its context.

⁴¹⁹ Carr, *Fractures in Genesis*, 69 n. 41. Carr lists examples of the former (Philip R. Davies, “Sons of Cain,” in *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane*, JSOTSup 42 [Sheffield: JSOT, 1986], 40–42) and the latter (Gunkel, *Genesis*, 54–55; John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 2nd ed., ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930], 99–100; Levin, *Der Jahwist*, 99).

⁴²⁰ Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 153.

⁴²¹ Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 155; Carr, *Fractures in Genesis*, 216.

⁴²² See n. 353 above.

⁴²³ *Das erste Buch*, 184. Gertz thus sees the entire unit as originating from the narrator of the PN, with the only exceptions being Gen 4:6–8a and 4:26b (*ibid.*, 155).

⁴²⁴ David W. Cotter, *Genesis*, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 41.

2.5.2. Discontinuities within the Narrative

Within the narrative further discontinuities have been noticed. The most significant of these are found in the following verses.

2.5.2.1. *Genesis 4:6–7*

First of all, there is repetition in Gen 4:5b (ויפלו פניו) and 4:6 (ולמה נפלו פניך). Some see this repetition as an indicator of a literary break while others do not.⁴²⁵ More significantly, it is noted that vv. 6–8a interrupt what would be an otherwise smooth transition in the narrative from v. 5 to v. 8b.⁴²⁶ This interruption is felt all the more strongly because the content of v. 7 is so challenging to interpret.⁴²⁷ Some interpreters see a personification of sin in this verse (רבץ לפתח הטאת), while others believe this kind of personification is unfitting to this context.⁴²⁸ Furthermore, the way in which v. 7c picks up on the language of 3:16 is deemed “artificial and mechanical,” as it appears to give the language an entirely different meaning in this new context.⁴²⁹ Westermann calls this a “sure sign” that the vv. 6–7 are secondary.⁴³⁰ Lastly, there is no acknowledgement of God’s warning in what follows these verses: “Der Brudermord geschieht, als wäre der Täter nicht gerade erst gewarnt worden.”⁴³¹

⁴²⁵ E.g. Dietrich, for whom Gen 4:5 is part of an anti-Kenite tradition, while v. 6 was added by the Jahwist, who combined the two traditions. The repetition of v. 5b in v. 6b in question form was one of the Jahwist’s ways of connecting the two accounts (“Wo ist dein Bruder?,” 162). In contrast, Van Seters sees the repetition as unproblematic: “One can hardly fault the author for the repetition in v. 6 of 5b in the form of the divine question: ‘Why are you angry?’” (*Prologue to History*, 137).

The repetition may be a means of forming a tight connection to the previous verse rather than a sign of a literary break. In this vein, Witte reads both the second half of v. 5 and v. 6 as part of the same layer of redaction (*Urgeschichte*, 152 n. 4).

⁴²⁶ Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 166.

⁴²⁷ See the extensive discussion of this verse in 4.3.3.

⁴²⁸ Levin, “Die Redaktion Rjp,” 20. Note that not all interpreters see a personification of sin in this verse (see further discussion below in 4.3.3).

⁴²⁹ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 300. As with the rest of the verse, this interpretation hangs on one’s interpretation of v. 7c. See 4.3.3 for further discussion.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ Dietrich, “Wo ist dein Bruder?,” 162.

Most literary historical evaluations of the text continue to see both of these verses as secondary to the narrative, but there is a multitude of different explanations for their origin.⁴³²

The extent to which the named challenges determine that Gen 4:6–7 is secondary hangs heavily upon one’s interpretation of these challenging verses. A proposal for their literary historical designation will therefore be postponed until after analyzing the text in ch. 4. For now, it can be said that the verses are highly problematic and that the vast majority of experts on literary criticism consider them secondary.

2.5.2.2. *Genesis 4:8*

In light of the absence of any content following the signal phrase, “And Cain said” (קין ויאמר), this verse is considered by many to be corrupt.⁴³³ This supposition is supported by the attempts of various ancient versions to fill in the content of the quote with the phrase, “Let us go into the field.”⁴³⁴ Regarding the second half of the verse, Dietrich makes the interesting observation that the style of Gen 4:8b matches that of 4:2b in being enigmatic and brief.⁴³⁵ He concludes that v. 2 and v. 8b (along with v. 25f) stem from a pre-Jahwist redactor

⁴³² Dietrich’s analysis leads him to believe that the Jahwist transformed an earlier combined account of Kenite and anti-Kenite traditional material by adding Gen 4:6f., 11, 13–15. He defines the Kenite traditional material as 4:1, 17–22; later 4:23–24a and 4:24b, and the anti-Kenite traditional material as 4:3b–5, 8*–10, 12, 16*. This material was combined by a pre-Jahwist redactor, who put the material together and also added 4:2, 8b, 25f. (“Wo ist dein Bruder?,” 159–72).

Frank Crüsemann sees the verses as an interruption written by the Jahwistic historian into an older source narrative of Cain and Abel which he used (“Autonomie und Sünde: Gen 4,7 und die ‚jahwistische‘ Urgeschichte,” in *Traditionen der Befreiung*, ed. Willy Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, 60–77 [Kaiser: Methodische Zugänge, 1980], 63).

Levin designates vv. 6–7 as a post-redaction expansion (R^S) (*Der Jahwist*, 100).

Witte finds an imbalance between the dialogue and narrative sections in ch. 4 and concludes that the dialogue in these verses and vv. 9–16 constitute a “eine umfassende theologische Deutung des Geschehens,” in parallel with the “theologischen Dialogen in 3,7-19” (*Urgeschichte*, 152).

Gertz suggests that there were ambiguities already present in the original form of the narrative (which did not include 4:6–8a). Like the additions, expansions, and later interpretations of this story in the LXX, NT, Quran and Targum, which respond to unclear aspects in the text, the addition in vv. 6–8a clarifies a potential confusion regarding Yhwh’s role in the events: it functions to exonerate him of responsibility for the following murder (“Variations autour du récit de Caïn et Abel,” *RHPR* 94 [2014]: 34).

See further discussion in 4.3.3.2.3.

⁴³³ See, e.g., Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 332.

⁴³⁴ The LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac Peshitta, and Vulgate versions add, “Let us go into the field.”

⁴³⁵ Dietrich, “Wo ist dein Bruder?,” 168.

who was aware of both the FN and the genealogy and combined them.⁴³⁶ This contrasts with Witte, who places v. 8b in the *Grundschrift* of the FN⁴³⁷ and Kratz who places all of v. 8 in the *Grundschrift*.⁴³⁸ Gertz suggests that 4:8a is an addition, along with vv. 6–7, and that in its present form it acts as a literary link.⁴³⁹ As with 4:6–7, the origin of this verse will be further considered in what follows.⁴⁴⁰

2.5.2.3. *Genesis 4:9–15*

Some see the dialogue in the FN as a theological addendum.⁴⁴¹ Given the parallels between this section and the dialogue with God in the PN, this section is sometimes attributed to the same “hand” who produced the corresponding sections in the PN.⁴⁴² Whether all or some of this section is an addition is then largely related to one’s interpretation of the unity of the PN, as well as the relationship between the PN and FN. Given the reading of the PN and its relationship to the FN that is advocated above (see 2.4.2 and 2.3.3), it is suggested that these verses are original to the FN.

2.6 Preliminary Conclusions

Within the analysis in ch. 4, further consideration will be given to the potential literary breaks in Genesis 4 that were discussed above. Overall, if the PN can be said to be a literary unit, there is less reason to separate out much of the FN as secondary, considering the many parallels to the final form of the PN. That being said, the issues raised in the diachronic

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Witte, *Urgeschichte*, 151–52.

⁴³⁸ Kratz, *Composition*, 259.

⁴³⁹ Gertz, “Variations,” 34.

⁴⁴⁰ See discussion in n. 871.

⁴⁴¹ See e.g., Witte, *Urgeschichte*, 168. For Kratz, Gen 4:6–7, 13–15, and 23–24 are additions (either glosses or additions of the R^{PJ} redactor) to the narrative (consisting of 4:1bβ, 2–5, 8–12, 16, 25–26) that was written into the genealogy in 4:1abα, 17–22 (*Composition*, 253–54).

⁴⁴² Witte, *Urgeschichte*, 168. See also Kratz, *Composition*, 254.

analysis of this section, particularly in regard to 4:6–8a, will be seriously considered in the verse-by-verse exegesis of the FA in ch. 4. Before moving to this analysis of Genesis 4, the PN must be addressed first. The following chapter will consider the nature of “wisdom” in the PN, first by careful consideration of the meaning of the knowledge of good and bad in this narrative, and secondly by considering the other proposed “wisdom motifs” within this narrative.

3. WISDOM IN GENESIS 2:4–3:24

3.1. Introduction

The present chapter will consider the evidence for a wisdom theme in the PN. This will involve, first, a review of the various types of connections that are related to wisdom in the PN and their relevance for this investigation. This will be followed by a closer look at the various motifs in the PN that have been connected to wisdom, beginning with what is, arguably, the most important one: the knowledge of good and bad.⁴⁴³ The grammar and semantics of this phrase will be considered, and relevant occurrences of similar terminology outside the PN will be reviewed. This data will be combined to form a proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad. The accuracy of this proposed definition will then be examined in relation to the qualities of the knowledge of good and bad as described in the PN. Finally, in light of the proposed understanding of the knowledge of good and bad, other potential “wisdom motifs” in the PN will be considered. It will be suggested that most of these motifs are not related to wisdom *per se*, but instead they contribute to a theme related to the knowledge of good and bad. The chapter will conclude by looking forward to Genesis 4 and considering what impact these conclusions regarding the PN might have on the FN and genealogy that follow it.

3.2. Relevance of the Categories

The survey of literature in ch. 1 gave an overview of vocabulary, symbols/motifs, and themes that have been connected to wisdom in the PN. In order to clarify the focus of this chapter, the relevance of each of these categories must be reviewed. First, as already noted, overlap in vocabulary between the PN and works that have traditionally been defined as wisdom literature does not carry much weight in terms of establishing an “author intended”

⁴⁴³ On translating the phrase הדעת טוב ורע as “knowledge of good and bad” rather than the more traditional “knowledge of good and evil,” see 4.3.1.3.

connection between texts.⁴⁴⁴ It may point to similar areas of focus between the two passages, but, particularly when the words cited occur frequently in biblical Hebrew, the overlap in language may be accidental and insignificant. Therefore, for the present purposes, overlap in vocabulary will only be mentioned as a contributing point to an already established connection in motif(s) and/or theme(s), rather than as a determining factor in the argument.

Symbols/motifs that appear in connection to wisdom elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible *may* be of significance but cannot be assumed to be so. The snake, for example, could be associated with wisdom, but, given the fact that it is used in so many other ways both in the Hebrew Bible and in the wider ancient Near East, interpreters must carefully consider whether the author really intended to make a connection to a wisdom motif or not.⁴⁴⁵ The function of each symbol/motif must be carefully examined within the context of the particular narrative that is under consideration.

Regarding themes, the question of whether wisdom is part of an overarching theme within the PN is the key issue under analysis. As discussed in the survey of literature, many scholars agree that wisdom is an area of focus in this account, but their perspective on what is being said about wisdom varies. Whether wisdom is involved as a key theme in the narrative, and in what way it is involved, mainly depends upon the interpreter's interpretation of the motif of the knowledge of good and bad. The tree not only has the word "knowledge" (דעת) as part of its title (Gen 2:9, 17), but the effect of eating from this tree is described in the narrative as להשכיל, or "to cause insight" (3:6).⁴⁴⁶ This is the clearest, most unambiguous connection to wisdom within the PN, and, therefore, the most appropriate starting point for

⁴⁴⁴ See Bühner, *Am Anfang*, 291. He discusses the value (or lack thereof) of these connections in regards to dating, but the same principles apply to suggesting that an author used or responded to a particular motif from another text.

⁴⁴⁵ See 3.4.2.

⁴⁴⁶ See further discussion of the translation of להשכיל below (3.3.4).

considering the perspective on wisdom in this passage. As noted by Westermann, “from the point of view of construction it occurs in the exposé, 2:9, 17; at the climax, 3:5; and in the final survey, 3:22. Its meaning then must color the whole narrative.”⁴⁴⁷ The analysis of this chapter will therefore begin with considering how to define this particular type of knowledge.

3.3. Defining the Knowledge of Good and Bad

3.3.1. Grammar and Lexical Issues

3.3.1.1. עץ

The tree of the knowledge of good and bad (עץ הדעת טוב ורע) is introduced in Gen 2:9. עץ stands as the “head noun” of this construct chain and is a masculine singular noun that can be translated simply as “tree.”⁴⁴⁸ It is made definite by the definiteness of the following word, הדעת, which is an absolute noun (and probably a substantivized verb; see 3.3.1.2 below).

3.3.1.2. דעת

דעת is a feminine noun that refers to “knowledge” or “discernment.”⁴⁴⁹ Here, it seems to act both as a noun in construct with עץ (i.e., “the tree of the knowledge”) but also as a substantivized verb with the object טוב ורע (i.e., “the knowing of good and bad”).⁴⁵⁰ It is related to the same triconsonantal root as the verb ידע, which plays an important role both in

⁴⁴⁷ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 242.

⁴⁴⁸ There is no apparent reason why the traditional understanding of this as a tree would be questioned, although the semantic range of עץ is broader than that of the English word, “tree,” including 1. “collective trees, copse, timber”; 2. “(an individual) tree”; 3. plural “trees”; 4. “species of tree” or “type of wood”; 5. “wood (as material)”; 6. “wood for building” or “object made of wood”; 7. “pieces of wood, sticks”; and 8. “stem of flax” (*HALOT* 2:863–64).

⁴⁴⁹ *HALOT* 1:229. דעת encompasses a range of types of knowledge, including general knowledge (e.g., Prov 24:4), technical knowledge or ability (e.g., Ex 31:3; 35:31; 1 Kgs 7:14), knowledge about a particular subject (e.g., Deut 4:42), and discernment/understanding (e.g., Psa 119:66) (*HALOT* 1:228–29). *HALOT* also lists particular types of knowledge, such as “knowledge of God” (e.g., Num 24:16) and “knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9, 17) (*ibid.*).

⁴⁵⁰ Nathan French’s argument is adopted here. He decides (in agreement with Ellen van Wolde) that דעת is doing “double duty” in this context; i.e., it is functioning with both noun and verb qualities (*A Theocentric Interpretation*, 108; cf. Ellen van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1–11* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994], 36; see also Mettinger, who notes that “verbal nouns used as full nouns may take an object” [cf. Gen 2:9, Jer 22:16] in *The Eden Narrative*, 62). This suggestion makes sense of what is otherwise an awkward phrase and matches its substantivized form in 3:22. *HALOT* agrees with the verbal force of the word in this context (1:228).

the PN (3:5, 7, 22) as well as in the FN and genealogy in the following chapter (4:1, 9, 17, 25). The verb “signifies not only ‘to know,’ but more especially ‘to experience, to come to know’.... In other words, the verb describes both the process and the result.”⁴⁵¹ As described by Gertz, “Das Leitwort der Paradieserzählung umfasst wie in anderen semitischen Sprachen das ganze Begriffsfeld einer zumeist durch konkrete Wahrnehmung erlangten Erkenntnis, wozu auch die Sexualität gehört.”⁴⁵²

Not infrequently, דעת appears with other words connected to understanding and wisdom,⁴⁵³ and its semantic range overlaps with some of these other terms. For example, like חכמה, דעת can be used to express that a person has skill in a particular area (Ex 31:3; 35:31, 1 Kgs 7:14). In Proverbs, acceptance of God’s righteous order is represented in the concept of the fear of the Yhwh (יראת יהוה), which is connected with both חכמה and דעת (see Prov 1:7, 29; 2:5–6; 9:10; see also Isa 11:12 [“the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Yhwh”]).⁴⁵⁴

Although the state of having דעת in general or in a particular area is typically presented as either positive or neutral,⁴⁵⁵ there are a few cases in which דעת appears with negative connotations. Eliphaz, in the book of Job, accuses Job of speaking with “windy knowledge” (Job 15:2), further described as talk that is “not useful” (לא יסכון) or words that

⁴⁵¹ Speiser, *Genesis*, 26.

⁴⁵² Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 157. The question of how sexuality is related to the knowledge of good and bad will be taken up below (3.3.2).

⁴⁵³ For example, בין (Isa 40:14; Prov 8:9; 14:6; 15:14; 18:15; 19:25); תבונה (Isa 40:14; Prov 2:6; 3:19–20; 17:27); חכם (Isa 44:25; Prov 12:14; 15:7; 18:15; 22:17); חכמה (Isa 47:10; Prov 1:7; 2:6, 10; 3:19–20; 8:12; 9:10; 14:6; 30:3; Eccl 1:16, 18; 2:21, 26; 7:12; 9:10; Dan 1:4); טעם (Psa 119:66); שכל (Job 34:35); ערמה (Prov 1:4); בינה (Prov 9:10).

⁴⁵⁴ Another nuance of this word that is perhaps significant for its use in the PN is that having דעת can be related to doing an action with intention: an unintentional killing is referred to as being done “without knowledge” (בבלידעת) in Deut 4:42; 19:4 and Josh 20:3,5.

⁴⁵⁵ For some examples of positive references, see Ex 31:3; 35:31; 1 Kgs 7:14; Isa 11:2; 40:14; 53:11; Jer 22:16; Hos 4:1; 6:6; Mal 2:7; 19:1; 94:10–12; 119:66; 139:6; Prov 1:4, 7; 2:5–6, 10; 3:20; 5:2; 8:8–10, 12; 9:10; 10:14; 11:9; 12:1, 23; 13:16; 14:6–7, 18; 15:2, 7, 14; 17:27; 18:15; 19:25, 27; 20:15; 21:11; 22:12, 17, 20; 23:1224:4; 29. There are also a few neutral reference (see Job 10:7; 13:2; 21:22; 33:3). Many references imply that דעת is positive by showing that it is negative not to have it (e.g., Deut 4:42; Josh 20:3, 5; Isa 5:13; 44:10; Jer 10:14; 51:17; Hos 4:6; Job 21:14–15; 34:35; 36:11–12; 38:2; 42:3; Prov 1:22, 29; 19:2).

“do no good” (לא־יועיל) (15:3). In Isa 44:25 the “knowledge” (דעת) of “wise men” (חכמים) is made “to be foolish” (ישכל) by Yhwh.⁴⁵⁶ Isa 47:10 portrays Babylon as having been led astray by its wisdom (חכמה) and knowledge (דעת). In Isa 58:2, Yhwh claims that the people “delight to know my ways” (יהפצון) ודעת דרכי; however, as the rest of the chapter makes clear, religious observances are considered worthless when they are merely a façade for oppressive and wicked actions. The teacher in Ecclesiastes pessimistically claims, “In much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge (דעת) increases sorrow” (1:18; cf. 2:21). Though these occurrences that give a negative slant to the word דעת are rare in comparison to occurrences with positive connotations, they nevertheless demonstrate that it should not be assumed *prima facie* that gaining knowledge is a positive event.

This brief survey gives a sense of the semantic domain of דעת. It must be kept in mind that this background is not entirely conclusive for the use in the PN, because the author could be using the word in a unique way in this account. That being said, these conclusions add background for interpreting the knowledge of good and bad in the PN, a topic that will be taken up in the sections that follow (see 3.3.2 and 3.3.3).

3.3.1.3. טוב ורע

The construct chain continues with two adjectives: טוב and רע. The typical English translation of these words, as “good” and “evil,” respectively, makes it very tempting read a moral sense into the terms. Though morality is an aspect of their meaning in certain cases,⁴⁵⁷ they refer more broadly to what is “life promoting” (טוב) and what is “life debilitating”

⁴⁵⁶ Likely a reference to the “wisdom” of foreign nations (cf. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66, Volume 25*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005], 512).

⁴⁵⁷ Speiser notes the moral sense of טוב ורע in 1 Kgs 3:9 and Isa 7:15, 17, as well as possibly in Deut 1:39 (*Genesis*, 26).

(רע).⁴⁵⁸ Genesis 1 provides a prime example of this (in regards to טוב), in which statements of God’s creative activity are punctuated by the statement, “And God saw that it was good (טוב)” (see, e.g., Gen 1:3–4). What is called “good” is not “morally” good; rather, it is “good” in the sense that it is well-functioning or “in order.”⁴⁵⁹ What is “not good” is thus not ordered and demands to be corrected, as in Gen 2:18 when Yhwh God declares it “not good” that the man is lacking a “helper-counterpart” (עוזר כנגדו) and then takes decisive action to address this lack.⁴⁶⁰ The “good-ness” of the man having a “helper-counterpart” is not related to morality but functionality. So then, to pronounce something “good” was (generally) not to make a statement about an abstract moral quality, but often used to describe something as well-functioning and fitting within the established order. What is רע is the opposite of טוב: it is what does not contribute to function and order. This is understood broadly and can include many different nuances, including referring to something poor in quality (e.g., Gen 41:3; Jer 24:2), socially displeasing or unacceptable (e.g., Gen 28:8; Deut 22:14), *or* morally “bad” according to Yhwh’s standard (e.g., Deut 1:35).⁴⁶¹ While the term “good” in English is sufficiently broad to convey the concept described for טוב above, רע is better translated as “bad” than “evil” in order to avoid narrowing the meaning to only a moral sense of the word.⁴⁶² The phrase טוב ורע will therefore be translated as “good and bad” in what follows.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁸ For further discussion of this conception of טוב and רע, see Gertz, *Das erste Buch Mose*, 118–19; cf. John Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 170–72; French, *A Theocentric Interpretation*, 114f.

⁴⁵⁹ See *HALOT* 2:371.

⁴⁶⁰ John Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 187.

⁴⁶¹ See further description of רע in *HALOT* 3:1250–53.

⁴⁶² See discussion in French, *A Theocentric Interpretation*, 114f.

⁴⁶³ This will also be reflected in the biblical quotes containing the word רע that are cited in this paper.

These two terms are found together in several specific collocations.⁴⁶⁴ When they occur with the verb שמר (“to hear”) the phrase “means to listen with discernment to the details of a case so as to judge the legitimacy of a claim” (e.g., 2 Sam 14:17).⁴⁶⁵ In cases where they appear with the verb דבר (“to speak”), the phrase refers to a judgment or decision being made (e.g., Gen 24:50; 31:24, 29).⁴⁶⁶ What is most significant for interpretation of the PN are instances in which the phrase טוב ורע is used with ידע or related words.⁴⁶⁷ This is the case in 2 Sam 19:36; 1 Kgs 3:9; Isa 7:15–16; and Deut 1:39.⁴⁶⁸ 2 Sam 19:36 occurs in the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel 9–20 and 2 Kings 1–2) and describes how a loyal subject of David, named Barzillai, declines David’s offer for him to come with him to Jerusalem on account of his age. He equates his age with the inability to “know/discern good from bad” (האדע | בין־טוב לרע). 1 Kgs 3:9 is part of Solomon’s request to Yhwh: he asks for “an understanding mind to govern [Yhwh’s] people, that I may discern between good and bad” (ונתת לעבדך לב שמע לשפט את־עמך להבין בין־טוב לרע).⁴⁶⁹ Isa 7:15–16 states that certain events will not come to pass until a particular child has reached the age at which he “knows how to

⁴⁶⁴ Some have suggested that these terms form a merism (two extremes used to express a totality) and have thereby understood this as a reference to “all knowledge” (e.g., Walton, *Genesis*, 257). Michaela Bauks suggests on this basis that “the knowledge of good and evil thus denotes all-embracing knowledge” (“Sacred Trees in the Garden of Eden and Their Ancient Near Eastern Precursors,” *JAJ* 3 [2012]: 268). This is quite unlikely, given the fact that this expression is used elsewhere in situations where it is clear that it does not refer to omniscience (e.g., 2 Sam 19:35, Isa 7:15–16). Furthermore, there is nothing in the events that follow the human’s eating of the fruit in the PN to suggest that the humans have gained omniscient knowledge (see below for a further discussion of the consequences of the gaining of this knowledge in 3.3.3.2.3 and 3.3.3.2.4).

⁴⁶⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 256.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid. It is this meaning that French seems to mainly focus on in his definition of the knowledge of good and bad, but he pushes the meaning of this specific collocation into other occurrences of טוב ורע that are not connected with the verb דבר (see French’s conclusions in *A Theocentric Interpretation*, 291–93). This is not methodologically sound; the collocation טוב ורע + דבר functions as an idiom in the Hebrew Bible, and the meaning of the sum is not equal to the meaning of each of the parts.

⁴⁶⁷ The exact phrase, “the knowledge of good and bad” (הדעת טוב ורע), is not attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible or other ancient sources.

⁴⁶⁸ Deut 1:39 lacks the preposition before טוב and רע that appears in the other occurrences (either ב or בין). It is also lacking in the occurrences in the PN.

⁴⁶⁹ Note that this verse uses the related word בין rather than ירע.

refuse the bad and choose the good” (לדעתו מאוס ברע ובחר בטוב). Deut 1:39 speaks of the children of the current generation of Israelites, who “today have no knowledge of good or bad” (לא־יִדְעוּ הַיּוֹם טוֹב וְרַע) but in the future will be allowed to enter the land promised to them. Added to these is an occurrence found in the Qumran scrolls (1QSa 1.9–11), which states that one should not have intercourse with a woman until one knows good and bad וְלֹא יִגַּשׁ אֶל [גִּישׁ] אֵל (ולא יגש אל [גש] אֵל).⁴⁷⁰ These occurrences will be analyzed further in the following section.

3.3.1.4. Conclusions Regarding Grammar and Lexical Issues

Based on the occurrences cited above, a few initial observations about the phrase “the knowledge of good and bad” can be suggested. First, this is a knowledge that is connected to age and maturity.⁴⁷¹ It is a quality that children do not have but is gained by a certain age (Isa 7:15–16; Deut 1:39; 1QSa 1:9–11) and that is lost in old age (2 Sam 19:35). Second, other than the age restrictions, there does not seem to be any other restriction on obtaining it. Instead, it is assumed that by a certain age every person could possess this knowledge.⁴⁷² Third, the occurrence in 1QSa suggests that there is some connection between sexuality and this knowledge, though given the lateness of the source it is possible that this meaning developed at a later date. Nevertheless, in light of the relative paucity of data that exists regarding this phrase, the meaning of the phrase in this occurrence will be seriously considered in relation to its use in the PN along with the other cited occurrences.

⁴⁷⁰ Text from Yigal Bloch, Jonathan Ben-Dov, and Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, “The Rule of the Congregation from Cave 1 of Qumran: A New Annotated Edition,” *REJ* 178 (2019): 15. They translate, “He shall not a[pproach] a woman, knowing her by sexual intercourse, until he reaches (the age of) tw[en]ty years, when he knows [good] and evil” (ibid., 17). Instead of גִּישׁ, Robert Gordis suggests יָקַרְבַּ (“The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls,” *JBL* 76 [1957]: 124). The sense of the statement is not significantly changed either way.

⁴⁷¹ Regarding 1 Kgs 3:9, where knowledge is not explicitly in view, see the further discussion below in 3.3.2.

⁴⁷² The perspective in 1 Kgs 3:7 differs somewhat; see further discussion below in 3.3.2.

The semantic domain of the words in the phrase “the knowledge of good and evil” and the relevant occurrences cited above generally lead interpreters to connect the knowledge of good and bad with the ability to autonomously discern or make judgments.⁴⁷³ In the next section, a more nuanced definition of the knowledge of good and bad will be offered, followed by an examination of whether this proposed definition is coherent with the use of the phrase in the context of the PN.

3.3.2. Proposed Definition of the Knowledge of Good and Bad

It is proposed here, and will be supported through the analysis of relevant occurrences below, that the knowledge of good and bad refers to a quality that includes two elements: (1) a mental process and (2) a resulting creative or destruction action.⁴⁷⁴ As regards a mental process, it refers to the ability of a person to make an independent judgment call about what is “good” (טוב) or “bad” (רע). This is then followed by purposeful action on the basis of that judgment call to either maintain what was determined to be “good” or correct what was determined to be “bad.” This action is creative or destructive in the sense that it influences the created order in a way that either promotes or debilitates life. The possession of the knowledge of good and bad thereby confers a power of influence over the world. It implies

⁴⁷³ See, e.g., Westerman, who defines it as “mastery of one’s own existence” (*Genesis 1–11*, 248); Carr, who describes it as “a basic recognition of what was good or bad for life, a recognition that marked the movement from childhood to adulthood” (*Genesis 1–11*, 110) and Walton, who says it “refers to a human capability to be discriminating” (Walton, *Genesis*, 171). Gertz explains, “Ausweislich der übrigen alttestamentlichen Belege...geht es bei beim Erkennen und Unterscheiden von ‘gut und schlecht’ um die alle Lebensbereiche einschließende Fähigkeit, eigenverantwortlich zwischen dem Lebensförderlichen und Lebensabträglichen zu unterscheiden und entsprechend zu handeln” (*Das Erste Buch Mose*, 119).

Regarding the knowledge of good and bad in its occurrence in 1QSa specifically, Dominique Barthélemy suggests that it is connected with reason (Dominique Barthélemy and Joséf Tadeuza Milik, *Qumran Cave 1. Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, I* [Oxford: University Press, 1955], “La Règle de la Congregation” (1QSa), 108–18) and George Wesley Buchanan relates it to maturity (“The Old Testament Meaning of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,” *JBL* 75 [1956]: 114–20). Robert Gordis contends that it has to do with sexual knowledge (“The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls,” *JBL* 76 [1957]: 123–38).

⁴⁷⁴ This is not to argue that an ancient author and his listeners/readers necessarily would have thought of this process as comprised of two distinct parts. It is distinguished in this way only to clarify for a modern audience what is implied within the phrase.

that a person is a mature, aware adult with the mental capabilities to begin to participate actively in human society.⁴⁷⁵

This proposed definition is supported by the occurrences of the collocation טוב + דעת ורע outside the PN. It describes precisely what the children in Deut 1:39 have *not* yet done: they were not an active part of the Israelite community that made their own determination about what seemed “good.”⁴⁷⁶ Based on their lack of active, mature participation (i.e., lack of the knowledge of good and bad) in the cited rebellion, the children are exempt from the punishment given to their parents’ generation (Deut 1:39).⁴⁷⁷

In Isa 7:15–16, the time when a certain child “knows to refuse the bad and choose the good” (לדעתו מאוס ברע ובוחר בטוב) is used to refer to the time frame in which a certain prophecy will occur. This is primarily a temporal reference regarding the prophesied destruction of Judah (7:16–17). If this child should be connected with other passages in Isaiah that speak of a royal Davidic heir (9:6–7; 11:1–5),⁴⁷⁸ then his knowledge of good and bad would also allude to the time at which he is able to take on his important political position. Whether the child should be connected to this figure or not,⁴⁷⁹ the statement can be seen as suggesting that

⁴⁷⁵ This is not an entirely new definition: e.g., Westermann asserts that the knowledge of good and bad “is concerned above all with the life of the group, with existence in community” (*Genesis 1–11*, 242), but he does not draw out the implications of this in the PN or in the other occurrences of the knowledge of good and bad.

⁴⁷⁶ This refers to the Israelites’ unwillingness to “go up” (Deut 1:26) as commanded by God.

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 30.

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, WBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 533; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary*, trans. John Bowden, 2nd ed., OTL (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1983), 163ff.

⁴⁷⁹ Some interpreters do not connect this child with the future David heir. Gary V. Smith claims, “The name of this son suggests a general hope for an heir who will be a godly Davidic ruler to replace Ahaz at some point in the future, but the name Immanuel is not applied to any specific situation until a later message (8:8, 10; 9:1–7)” (*Isaiah 1–39: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NIVAC [Nashville, TN: B&H, 2007], 213). Cf. Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Isaiah*, rev. ed., The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), ch. 1, EPUB.

the cited events will take place before this particular child has taken on any significant role within the Israelite community.

In 2 Samuel 19, Barzillai lists three specific (and different!) modes of perception to explain his lack of ability (or possibly willingness) to accompany David to court: he states that he does not “know” (יָדַע), “taste” (טָעַם), or “hear” (שָׁמַע) (v. 35).⁴⁸⁰ The exaggerated description of a total lack of sensory functioning conveys powerlessness to be discriminating and make determinations. On this basis, Barzillai’s lack of knowing good and bad (described by a loss of sensory function) would be a claim that he is unfit to be a participating member of David’s court — in other words, rather than actively contributing to the political system, he would be a burden (מִשָּׂא) (2 Sam 19:35).⁴⁸¹ Like Isa 7:15–16 and Deut 1:39, then, this occurrence emphasizes the social element of the knowledge of good and bad, speaking to a person’s ability to influence society.

Knowledge of good and bad in 1 Kgs 3:9 can also be understood in light of the proposed definition. This verse contains Solomon’s request to God for “an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and bad” וְנָתַתְּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לֵב שֹׁמֵעַ (לִשְׁפֹּט אֶת־עַמְּךָ לְהַבִּין בֵּין־טוֹב לְרָע).⁴⁸² Discernment to make autonomous choices and act with influence should have come with age, so Solomon’s request is not a request for this kind of

⁴⁸⁰ A common suggestion is that Barzillai is referring to his inability to distinguish between what is pleasant and what is not pleasant: see, e.g., Arnold Anderson, *2 Samuel, Volume 11*, WBC (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 239; Henry Preserved Smith, *Samuel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 366. Ronald Youngblood suggests that “Barzillai may be implying that he is too old to appreciate the good life at David’s court” (*1 and 2 Samuel*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017], “13. Kindness to Ziba,” EPUB). So also, Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 431–32. Daniel Durken offers a different speculation: “perhaps [Barzillai] wishes to maintain a certain independence from the Jerusalem establishment” (*The New Collegeville Bible Commentary. Old Testament* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015], 502). As explained below, the reference is probably broader than these suggestions imply.

⁴⁸¹ To some extent, this picks up on French’s interpretation of the knowledge of good and bad as connected to retribution. Regarding this verse, he claims, “Barzillai is unfit in his old age to participate in the knowledge of retribution as it pertains to David’s court ... it is discernment in the whole of the retributive process expected of a member in the court” (*A Theocentric Interpretation*, 282).

⁴⁸² Note that this verse uses the related word בֵּין rather than יָדַע.

maturity, but rather it is a specialized request for knowledge related to his ability to govern (שפט). In 3:7, he calls himself a “child,” or נער, presenting himself as though he was without the knowledge of good and bad, as a part of his request for a higher level of discernment and maturity to operate well in the exalted social status he has received.

Finally, the connection to sexual experience, as described in 1QSa I, 9–11, must be considered.⁴⁸³ As will be discussed further below in the context of the PN and the FN, sexual intercourse brings with it the potential to create new life and thus is a key way in which the knowledge of good and bad, and the creative/destructive power inherent within it, is embodied in the world. Furthermore, the beginning of sexual experience was sometimes seen as a marker of maturity and entrance into society in the ancient Near East. This can be seen in the epic of Gilgamesh, in which the civilization of Enkidu, a “wild man” who lives with animals, is initiated by his sexual encounter with the prostitute Shamhat.⁴⁸⁴

These are general considerations, but what makes this interpretation far more likely is the context of 1QSa I, 9–11. The one who is described in lines 9–11 is supposed to have been instructed in the “law[s] of the covenant (line 7) ... and at the a[ge] of twenty ye[ars] he shall pass over] [into] those commissioned to enter the lot within his fam[i]ly, to join the Holy congrega[tion] (lines 8–9).” This describes the knowledge of good and bad as a part of the process by which the young man becomes an active member of his community (lines 9–11). After this, when he reaches twenty-five years of age, the initiate “shall come to take a st[a]nd in the main body of the holy congregation to perform the work of the congregation” (lines 12–13). The process continues until he is thirty and he is able to take on even more weighty responsibilities (such as deciding legal cases [lines 13–14]). To summarize, this section of the document can be described as follows:

⁴⁸³ Bloch, et al., “The Rule of the Congregation,” 23.

⁴⁸⁴ Foster, *Gilgamesh*, 9, tablet I, lines 196–200.

Lines 6–22 recount the stages of growth, education and maturity of a male community member. His matriculation is attuned in such a way as to render him a functional and productive member of the community, who maintains a family and takes leadership roles when he is ready. The main intention of this textual unit was to declare the responsibilities of the male member of the community at the age of thirty — the longest section in the unit (lines 13–18).⁴⁸⁵

This context makes the connotations of the knowledge of good and bad with maturity and the beginning of active involvement in one's community quite clear.

Thus, it will be argued that when the humans gain the knowledge of good and bad, they are launched into maturity and into an existence in which they will create and destroy on the basis of what is good/bad in their own eyes. Prior to this, they are acting upon Yhwh God's stage within Yhwh God's order; now, they will actively create and destroy within human society according to their own determination of what is good and bad. The following section will demonstrate this understanding of the knowledge of good and bad by analyzing the use of the phrase *הדעת טוב ורע* in the PN.

3.3.3. The Knowledge of Good and Bad in the Paradise Narrative

3.3.3.1. *Qualities of the Knowledge Based on Usage in the Paradise Narrative*

The tree of the knowledge of good and bad is mentioned explicitly only twice in the PN (Gen 2:9, 15); however, it is also implicitly referred to in 3:3 when Eve speaks of the tree “in the midst of the garden”⁴⁸⁶ and in 3:5–6 when the results of eating from the tree are discussed by the snake (“you will be like god[s],⁴⁸⁷ knowing good and bad” [*והייתם כאלהים*]

⁴⁸⁵ Bloch, et al., “The Rule of the Congregation,” 23.

⁴⁸⁶ The fact that Eve only refers to one tree “in the midst of the garden” is not necessarily evidence that there was originally only one tree in the narrative (see especially the discussion above in 2.4.2 and below in 3.4.1.1.1). Bühner notes, importantly, that the later hiding of humans “in the midst of the garden” suggests that *בתוך הגן* does not refer to a single point (or “geometrische Mitte”) (*Am Anfang*, 213). Day argues that only one tree is mentioned here because “it is the tree to which God has specifically drawn attention as forbidden” (“Wisdom in the Garden of Eden,” in *From Creation to Abraham* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 62 n. 5). Similarly, Ska refers to “the law of thrift”: “popular stories always use the minimum number of characters and elements to develop action. They mention only those elements which are indispensable for the progress of the action” (“Genesis 2–3,” 12). Cf. Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*, 5–11; Blum, “Von Gottesunmittelbarkeit,” 13–14.

([ידעי טוב ורע]). This is followed by the woman's observations of the tree. Then, in 3:11–13 Yhwh God asks if the man ate from the tree, and both the man and woman confirm that they did. Finally, the results of eating from the tree are mentioned again in 3:22 when Yhwh God refers to the man as having become “like one of us, knowing good and bad” (כאחד ממנו לדעת) (טוב ורע).

Based on these occurrences, specific characteristics of this knowledge can be stated:⁴⁸⁸

1. It is *a divine quality*. Obtaining this knowledge will make the humans “like god(s).” This is first suggested by the snake in Gen 3:5, which might lead one to question its truthfulness, but it is then confirmed by Yhwh God in 3:24.
2. It is *a new quality* that the humans did not previously have. In Gen 3:6, the woman perceives (ראה) that the tree is “to be desired to make one wise” (ונחמד העץ להשכיל). Her desire for the tree suggests that it offers her something she does not currently have. The idiom of “eyes being opened” (cf. 3:5, 7) confirms this, as it describes receiving knowledge of something previously hidden (e.g., Gen 21:19, 2 Kgs 6:17, 20; see 3.3.3.2.3.1 below).

⁴⁸⁷ Whether the word אלהים in this verse is singular or plural is ambiguous, but, either way, it refers to becoming like a heavenly being (cf. Yhwh God's use of the first-person plural in the statement in Gen 3:22: “the man has become like one of us” [האדם היה כאחד ממנו]).

⁴⁸⁸ French similarly offers a list of necessary qualities for an accurate interpretation of the knowledge of good and bad. He suggests that the definition must address how this knowledge is both divine and forbidden by God (*A Theocentric Interpretation*, 69–71), two qualities of the knowledge that will also be addressed below. He includes only one other necessary quality of the definition: it must address “the function of טוב and רע in relation to YHWH” (ibid., 66–68). To address this last quality, he analyzes occurrences of טוב and רע (in isolation) with YHWH as “subject or causation” (ibid., 72). This methodology ignores the idiomatic function of the specific words from the PN when they occur together (טוב ורע), as well as the idiomatic function of phrases containing a word relating to knowledge (particularly ידע and רע), טוב ורע. Furthermore, he does not have a good explanation for the sexual connection to this knowledge (he suggests that sex is prohibited until a certain age in 1QSa “for the purpose of provision and discipline in the rearing and raising of children” [ibid., 317–18], but does not give solid evidence for this). This makes his conclusion regarding knowledge of good and bad ultimately unconvincing, although his work contains interesting and helpful insights regarding these words when they occur outside of idiomatic use.

3. The definition must match *the immediate consequences* of obtaining this knowledge. Several specific events occur directly following the eating of the fruit. First, the eyes of the humans are opened (Gen 3:7a). Second, they know they are naked (3:7a). Third, they sew leaves together to make a primitive type of clothing (3:7b). Whatever the knowledge of good and bad is, it must be clear how gaining this knowledge results in these specific consequences that directly follow this action.
4. The definition must match *the other consequences* of obtaining this knowledge that develop in the course of the narrative. These include the hiding of the humans (Gen 3:8); their conversation with Yhwh God (3:9–13); the resulting curses/consequences (3:14–19); the naming of Eve (חווה) (3:20); God’s clothing of the humans (3:21); and the explanation and carrying out of expulsion (3:22–24).
5. Lastly, there should be a reasonable explanation for the *literary choice to withhold this particular tree*. “Literary choice” is stated here rather than “Yhwh God’s choice” because the explanation may not provide a “reasonable explanation” (in the mind of the modern reader/listener) for Yhwh God’s action. That being said, it is realistic to think that the author had a motivation in mind when he described Yhwh God’s action in this narrative, and thus a reasonable motive for Yhwh God’s prohibition will be sought.

3.3.3.2. Review of the Proposed Definition of the Knowledge of Good and Bad

A review of these necessary qualities should support the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad. Below each quality will be examined in the context of the PN, and its coherence with the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad (3.3.2) will be assessed.

3.3.3.2.1. A Divine Quality

The definition of the knowledge of good and bad must describe a quality that is divine in nature. Within the PN, Yhwh God explicitly demonstrates knowledge of the type described

in the proposed definition. In Gen 2:18 Yhwh God declares, “It is not good (לא טוב) that a man should be alone.” Having identified a situation that is not sufficiently in order, he then performs a creative act to correct the issue: he forms (יצר) animals and then brings them to the man (2:19). When this does not rectify the problem, he initiates another creative act, this one resulting in the creation of the woman (2:21–22), which successfully orders the situation (2:23). This sequence of identifying something as “good” or “not good” and then taking creative/destructive action to correct it is the quality that will be gained by the humans from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, as will be highlighted below. Whether the consequences of obtaining this knowledge also match with identifying this knowledge as a divine quality will be assessed further below.

3.3.3.2.2. A New Quality

The knowledge of good and bad must also be a new quality that the humans did not have before. This requirement must be carefully examined because there are two instances in which the humans display some level of knowledge before eating from the tree. The first is when the man names the animals and then names his wife for the first time (Gen 2:19–20, 23), and the second is when the woman perceives certain qualities about the tree of the knowledge of good and bad (3:6). Each of these will be considered in turn.

3.3.3.2.2.1. Adam Naming the Animals and the Woman. By naming the animals, the man partners in Yhwh God’s creative activity. Yhwh God is the subject of all the creative action: he is the one who “forms” (יצר) the animals and brings them to the man, as he also does with the woman. In this creative activity that Yhwh God has already begun, the man participates by naming the animals and then the woman. This is no small role; “naming” in the ancient Near East was almost akin to giving something existence and could certainly be

understood as a creative act.⁴⁸⁹ Nevertheless, this is not a creative action initiated by the man; his action is part of a process already initiated by Yhwh God.⁴⁹⁰

3.3.3.2.2.2. The Woman’s Observations. The second incident worthy of examination is when the woman makes certain observations about the tree in Gen 3:6. Eve sees three things: (1) the tree is good for food, (2) it is “desirable to the eyes” (תאוה־הוא לעינים), and (3) it is to be “desired (נחמד)...to cause insight (להשכיל).”⁴⁹¹ Each of these things was already mentioned within the course of the narrative before it is perceived by the woman at this moment. First, that all the trees of the garden were good for food was stated as a quality given by Yhwh God in 2:9, followed soon after (in the original narrative) by the command to the man that he should not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad (2:16).

It was also stated previously that the trees were created beautiful — they were described as “desirable to look at” (למראה נחמד) in 2:9. Interestingly, although the concept is the same in 3:6, the wording about the tree of the knowledge of good and bad is slightly different: “it is a delight to the eyes” (תאוה־הוא לעינים). This small change may signify a shift in the woman’s perspective. The alternative worldview of the snake is causing a shift in what was the previously assumed truth: rather than noticing that all the other trees are appealing

⁴⁸⁹ See Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 188; Gebhard J. Selz, “‘The Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp,’ Towards an Understanding of the Problems of Deification in Third Millennium Mesopotamia,” in *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations*, ed. Irving Finkel and Markham J. Geller (Groningen: Styx, 1997), 178. Karla G. Bohmbach also discusses the significance of naming: “With considerable weight placed on people’s names, those who actually give the names should be regarded as significant. ... Perhaps in some cases, the name-giver, by virtue of the name given, may actually be *determining* the named person’s eventual character or future destiny” (“Names and Naming in the Biblical World,” in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Carol Meyers, Toni Craven, and Ross S. Kraemer [New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000], EPUB, Perlego). Interestingly, “in the Hebrew Bible, women outnumber men as name-givers. Of the approximately forty-seven instances in which a name-giver is specified twenty-nine involve women. In all except one, a mother names a child” (ibid.).

⁴⁹⁰ This also makes it unlikely that the account is referencing the tradition of the first man being supremely wise (see further discussion below [3.4.5]).

⁴⁹¹ This is against the interpretation of Jack Sasson, who argues that Eve’s perception “makes it impossible to deny that, even before she had taken one bite from any fruit, the woman’s capacity to reason was fairly sophisticated, potentially even a match for God’s” (“‘The Mother of All...’ Etiologies,” in *A Wise and Discerning Mind’: Essays in Honour of Burke O. Long*, ed. S. M. Olyan and R. C. Culley [Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2000], 207).

for the food that they provide, the woman is drawn to what is offered by the one tree that is forbidden. Furthermore, the word used regarding the appearance of the trees in 2:9 (נחמד) is now used to describe the effect of eating the tree's fruit: the woman perceives that the tree of the knowledge of good and bad is "desirable (נחמד)...to cause insight (להשכיל)" (3:6). The fact that this represents a critical shift in perspective is confirmed by recognizing the source of this final observation: the information that the tree can give insight was just relayed to the woman by the snake (3:5).

That the woman's observations here represent a different kind of knowledge than that described by the knowledge of good and bad is also supported by the fact that the woman's "seeing" (ראה) occurs before her eyes "are opened" (פקח, *niph*). In other instances in the Hebrew Bible in which someone's eyes are opened, and they perceive something that they were formerly unable to recognize, the "seeing" follows the "opening of the eyes" (see, e.g., Gen 21:19; 2 Kgs 6:17, 20). A similar sequence occurs in the PN as well, although the narrator uses "know" (ידע) rather than "see" (ראה): the human's eyes are opened, and then they "know" (ידע) that they are naked. The visual perception that the woman has before this (regarding the tree) should not be understood as evidence of a specialized kind of knowledge but rather as basic perception of qualities already determined to be true within the course of the narrative.

Furthermore, the proposed definition requires that a person's definition of something as "good" or "bad" should be followed by creative or destructive activity. It is not the mere recognition of "good" or "bad" that characterizes this knowledge: it is the power to follow this recognition with action that affects the created order. In this sense, too, the woman's observations prior to eating the fruit do not match, for the action that follows (the eating of the fruit) cannot be said to be a creative or destructive act. The first creative act of the

humans, as further discussed below, will be the sewing of clothing (Gen 3:7). This follows the eating of the fruit and the “knowing” of their nakedness.

In conclusion, the man indeed has the cognitive reasoning skills to name the animals and to recognize what is and what is not a fitting counterpart to him *as part of the creative action of Yhwh God*, and Eve has the reason to recognize certain qualities about the tree that *were already determined by others* (3:6). What they had not done yet is independently determine something to be good or bad and exert creative/destructive influence into the created order based on this determination. That kind of power only comes after they eat the fruit.

3.3.3.2.3. Fitting the Immediate Consequences

3.3.3.2.3.1. Opening of the Eyes. The immediate result of the humans’ eating is passive: “their eyes were opened” (Gen 3:7).⁴⁹² In other instances of a person’s eyes figuratively “being opened” in the Hebrew Bible, it is typically related to obtaining knowledge: it refers to deeper insight and better assessment of a situation.⁴⁹³ For example, God opens Hagar’s eyes in Gen 21:19, and she sees a well of which she was previously unaware, one that will save her and her son’s life. Num 22:31 describes the opening of Balaam’s eyes, which allows him to see an angel standing in front of him. In 2 Kings 6, opening and closing of eyes is a key element of the divine intervention that saves Elisha from being captured by the Arameans. First, in v. 17, the eyes of Elisha’s servant are opened to see horses and chariots of fire around Elisha. Then the following verses describe God closing the

⁴⁹² French suggests that the “opening of the eyes” is connected to passages in the Hebrew Bible when God’s eyes are used in conjunction with *טוב* and *רעע*. In these passages, God’s eyes “roam” the earth, identifying the faithful and unfaithful and then meting out reward and punishment on the basis of his findings (*A Theocentric Interpretation*, 130–33). Again, this ignores what is clearly an idiom. A more accurate understanding of the meaning of the “opening of the eyes” in the PN can be found by analyzing other occurrences of this same idiom.

⁴⁹³ According to Gertz, “Vom ‘Öffnen der Augen’ wird im Alten Testament stets neutral oder positiv gesprochen, sei es in wörtlicher (vgl. 2Kön 4,35; 19,16; Hi 27,19; Spr 20,13) oder in übertragener Bedeutung, wonach es um eine tiefere Einsicht und richtige Einschätzung der Situation geht (vgl. Gen 21, 19; Num 22, 31; 2Kön 6, 17.20) (*Das erste Buch*, 132).

eyes of the Arameans (v. 18) and later opening them (v. 20), only for them to discover that they have been led into Israel's capital city.⁴⁹⁴ Thus, the "opening of the eyes" of the humans in the PN is a clear indication that they have acquired the knowledge that the serpent claimed they would obtain.⁴⁹⁵ Considering that these other figurative occurrences of the phrase refer to gaining knowledge that was divine in nature, this phrase also matches the assertion of the snake that the knowledge they will gain will be divine knowledge (making them "like god(s)" by obtaining it).

3.3.3.2.3.2. Recognition of Nakedness. The first thing the humans recognize with their newfound knowledge is that they are naked. In the history of interpretation, this recognition of nakedness has often been construed negatively: it is connected with a *negative* inner sense of shame as humans become aware of their immodesty, which contrasts with their previously *positive* state of "childlike innocence."⁴⁹⁶ However, this view that the former lack of awareness of their nakedness should be considered positive is quite unlikely in light of what can be inferred about Israelite culture from the Hebrew Bible and evidence from the ancient Near East. Instead, "lack of shame or modesty at nakedness would have been thought shocking and improper in ancient Israelite culture."⁴⁹⁷ Zevit describes the situation similarly:

⁴⁹⁴ An occurrence that does not appear to have to do with obtaining knowledge is Isa 35:5, in which the eyes of the blind are miraculously opened on the Day of Yhwh. Interestingly, to "open the eye on" can be used as "an idiom meaning to prepare to judge someone" (*The NET Bible Notes*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998, 2019), Job 14:3, n. 7, Accordance Bible edition. See also Isa 37:17; Jer 32:19; Dan 9:18.

⁴⁹⁵ Contra Kiefer, *Gut und Böse*, 164.

⁴⁹⁶ See Sarah G. Turner-Smith, "Naked but Not Ashamed: A Reading of Genesis 2:25 in Textual and Cultural Context," *JTS* 69 (2018): 425–46, which surveys many of the modern interpretations of this verse. Representative commentators/interpreters who see the nakedness of 2:25 as a positive state are Gunkel, *Genesis*, 12, 14; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 91; Cassuto, *Genesis*, 137; and Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 47.

⁴⁹⁷ Turner-Smith, "Naked but Not Ashamed," 436. Cf. Walter L. Moberly, "Did the Serpent Get It Right?" *JTS* 39 (1988): 8–9; James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (London: SCM, 1992), 11, 62–4; and Alexandra Grund, "'Und sie schämten sich nicht ...' (Genesis 2,25)," in *Was ist der Mensch, dass du seiner gedenkst? (Psalm 8,5): Aspekte einer theologischen Anthropologie. Festschrift für Bernd Janowski zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Mikaela Bauks, et al. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008), 118–19.

Turner-Smith's interpretation is influenced by her reading of Gen 2:25 as the beginning of the following account. It introduces a situation of disorder that will be corrected in the course of the narrative: "a

“From the author’s perspective, the couple’s behavior in the Garden is not innocently naïve but atypically odd, quite indecent by the Israelite standards of his day, certainly noteworthy, and in need of explanation.”⁴⁹⁸ Contexts in which nakedness appears in the Hebrew Bible include “defeat and captivity” (e.g., Deut 28:48; Isa 20:2–4; Amos 2:16), “mourning” (e.g., Mic 1:8), “punishment for adultery” (e.g., Hos 2:3; Ezek 16:39; 23:29), “poverty and need” (Job 22:6; 24:7, 10; Isa 58:7; Eccl 5:15; Ezek 18:5–9, 15–17) and in descriptions of the “condition of newborn infants” (Job 1:21; Ezek 16:7, 22, 39).⁴⁹⁹

Based on its use in these other passages, it is unlikely that the nakedness of the humans in Gen 2:25 expresses a condition of prelapsarian innocence and happiness. Although the more negative associations with punishment are unfitting to the context of Genesis 2, the associations of nakedness with the immaturity of childhood and a situation of lack are apt. Building on this, in the PN, nakedness likely expresses the humans’ lack of specified social status, which is absent also in the immaturity of childhood.⁵⁰⁰ In other words, the humans inhabit a space that is pre-civilization and lacks the social hierarchies and customs that would lead them to experience shame in their nakedness.⁵⁰¹

negative evaluation [of the humans’ lack of awareness of their nakedness] fits well with the evidence from narrative form, syntax, and semantics, raising curiosity about outcome, that drives the narrative forward” (“Naked but Not Ashamed,” 436). Though her observation of a situation of lack in 2:25 that is corrected in the course of the narrative (paradoxically, by disobedience to God’s command) is helpful for understanding the connection between the two chapters, Hebrew grammar would suggest that 3:1 begins a new narrative unit (note the non-consecutive *vav* on וַהֲרָאָה).

⁴⁹⁸ Zevit, *What Really Happened in the Garden of Eden* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), ch. 14, EPUB.

⁴⁹⁹ Turner-Smith, “Naked but not Ashamed,” 439.

⁵⁰⁰ Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 128; Friedhelm Hartenstein, “Und sie erkannten, dass sie nackt waren...’ (Gen 3, 7). Beobachtungen zur Anthropologie der Paradieserzählung,” *EvT* 65 (2005): 292.

⁵⁰¹ See the discussion of Hartenstein regarding the importance of clothing to social status in ancient Israel (“Und sie erkannten,” 289–292). According to Helga Weippert, more clothing signified a higher social status in the ancient world (“Textilproduktion und Kleidung im vorhellenistischen Palästina,” in *Pracht und Geheimnis: Kleidung und Schmuck aus Palästina und Jordanien. Katalog der Sammlung Widad Kawar anlässlich einer Ausstellung im Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology der Yarmuk Universität Irbid vom 3. Oktober 1987 bis 27. März 1988*, ed. Gisela Völger, et al. [Köln: Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum der Stadt Köln, 1987], 140).

Correspondingly, what is experienced by the humans after receiving the knowledge of good and bad is “an appropriate shame” and “a sign of culture.”⁵⁰² The negative evaluation given to their new condition by Yhwh God is not a result of this condition being bad in and of itself, but rather a result of the human’s disobedience to his command and their trespassing past the appropriate divine-human boundary. Their shame implies a new understanding of the social expectations of civilization. This consequence of the knowledge of good and bad is thus in keeping with its connection to maturity and creative/destructive involvement in society. The obtaining of this knowledge signals the humans’ entrance into society and all the responsibilities that come along it.

Their sudden awareness of the expectations inherent to this new reality is clear in that they immediately try to correct their “disordered” state by covering themselves. The fact that their recognition of nakedness is followed by a creative act represents a major difference between the humans’ observation that they are naked and the woman’s observations about the tree in 3:6. This attempt at correction through a creative act will be further discussed in the next section.⁵⁰³

3.3.3.2.3.3. Making Clothing. The proposed interpretation of the knowledge of good and bad suggested that by obtaining this knowledge the humans gained the ability to pronounce something as “good” or “bad” and then to take creative or destructive action on the basis of that pronouncement. The first consequence clearly fits the first step of this definition: the humans determine that their nakedness is “bad” (or perhaps, “not good” [cf. Gen 2:18]). Their next action conforms to the second step of the definition: they perform a

⁵⁰² Turner-Smith, “Naked but Not Ashamed,” 446.

⁵⁰³ Zevit also picks up on this sense of the events: “As verse 7 makes clear, their first experience with the new wisdom was linked to a *social convention*. They perceived their nakedness as unacceptable, undesirable, and inappropriate (bad – *ra*). They resolved the situation inventively, improvising appropriate garments from fig leaves ... the cover-up led to the most human of inventions – clothing” (*What Really Happened*, ch. 16, emphasis mine).

creative act to rectify what they have identified as “not ordered.” The creative act is described with the verb עשה: “And they made (עשה) loincloths⁵⁰⁴ for themselves” (3:7). This is the first time in the PN (and in the Hebrew Bible!) that the verb עשה is used for anyone except for God. The described creative act is precisely the sort of outcome that would be expected after the humans gained the knowledge of good and bad: they make a judgment regarding a situation and then take creative action to correct it. That their creative action involves clothing is significant in and of itself, as clothing was seen as an important symbol of human maturity and also as a distinguishing marker between humans and animals.⁵⁰⁵

The analysis above thus demonstrates that the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad fits the immediate consequences of the humans obtaining this knowledge. Below, the other consequences that are laid out as the narrative continues will also be considered in light of the proposed definition.

3.3.3.2.4. Fitting the Other Consequences

A number of other consequences to obtaining the knowledge of good and bad occur in quick succession. These consequences can also be shown to fit with the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad.

3.3.3.2.4.1. Hiding. The fact that the humans hide from Yhwh God (Gen 3:8) likely has to do with their shame, not regarding guilt for eating the fruit, but regarding social expectations for being clothed or naked (see 3.3.3.2.3.2 above). Zevit notes that their failure to meet these expectations would have been felt deeply when the context shifted from the

⁵⁰⁴ “Girdle” is another possible translation of חגורה (*HALOT* 1:298; see also the discussion of Walter Bührer, *Am Anfang*, 244 n. 341).

⁵⁰⁵ Note that putting on clothing is part of the process of Enkidu’s civilization (Foster, *Gilgamesh*, 14, tablet II, line 42). Prior to this, his liaison with Shamhat causes him to be rejected by the animals who were formerly his companions (*ibid.*, 9, tab. I, lines 204–6).

husband and wife being alone together to their presence with a third party.⁵⁰⁶ That the third party was deity adds additional requirements when it comes to proper behavior and attire (cf. Exod 20:26).

This is clear in the man's response to God's question, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9). He does not suggest that he is concerned because of his disobedience or (supposed) loss of innocence; rather, he is *afraid* because he is naked (3:10). The concepts of fear and shame appear together in other Hebrew Bible passages. In these occurrences, the potential for shame can be a cause for fear (see, especially, Isa 54:4: "Fear not, for you will not be ashamed"; cf. Zech 9:5). There is also a connection between nakedness, shame, and military defeat, as can be seen, for example, in Amos 2:16: "'he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day,' declares Yhwh."

These associations between shame, fear, and nakedness make the humans' response more understandable. Knowledge of good and bad has brought them an awareness of expectations in the context of social relationships, and their hiding highlights their perception of their attire's inadequacy for their current context. They, accordingly, adjust their situation in an attempt to address this situation of disorder by relocation — either an attempt to remove themselves from Yhwh God's presence (if they cannot be found) or modify their surroundings so that the element of the situation that is causing shame (their nakedness) is not visible.

3.3.3.2.4.2. Conversation with Yhwh God. The shifting of blame in the conversation with God is striking: first, the man blames the woman (Gen 3:12), and then the woman

⁵⁰⁶ Zevit gives a detailed discussion of "appropriate attire" in Israelite culture, including the necessity of private parts remaining covered, even when alone (cf. Gen 9:20–27). The fig leaf coverings of the man and woman in the PN provided the minimum coverage needed between the man and his wife. Thus the man "hid himself from God's presence because he was naked. The presence of a third party, God, made it impossible, for reasons of modesty, to come out of hiding for a meeting, confrontation, or comeuppance. ... God supplied the proper body covering for this situation later, in 3:21, when he gave Adam and Hawwa tunics of leather ... garments that cover both the upper and the lower body" (*What Really Happened*, ch. 16). Cf. Hartenstein, "Und sie erkannten," 289.

blames the serpent (3:13). Interestingly, God does not dispute their explanation of the events. Zevit explains this with the suggestion that the humans have gained some of the “cleverness” (ערום) of the serpent: “confronting an implicit accusation of wrongdoing which they recognized as undesirable...they tried to avoid its consequences by clever argumentation.”⁵⁰⁷

This may be true, but the shifting of blame also demonstrates that the humans are now operating as individual entities. They each highlight something about the episode that is true, but it is a piece of information that conveniently shifts the focus away from their own action (3:12, 13). In other words, the knowledge of good and bad allows them to shape reality in a way that will benefit them individually. This leads to the next point: conflict is destined to increase because it is now clear that each person will have their own perspective on what will benefit them individually. This is an unavoidable consequence of the fact that it is no longer only Yhwh God who determines what is “good” or “bad.”

3.3.3.2.4.3. Curses/Consequences and Further Outcomes. The content of the curses/consequences makes it clear that life characterized by the knowledge of good and bad will involve conflict in all the significant relationships that have been described in the narrative so far.⁵⁰⁸ This begins with the curse on the snake, which describes conflict between humans and the animal world (Gen 3:15). Though a specific conflict between humans and snakes is in view here, the description may also hint at a furthering of the distinction between humans and animals.⁵⁰⁹ The knowledge of good and bad brings humans a step closer to divinity and a step further away from the animal world. This shift is more starkly defined

⁵⁰⁷ Zevit, *What Really Happened*, ch. 16.

⁵⁰⁸ Note that out of the three parties involved in the misdeed, it is only the serpent who is explicitly cursed (Gen 3:14). Yhwh God lays out certain undesirable consequences for the woman, but no curse is mentioned (3:16). Yhwh God also does not curse the man; rather, the ground is cursed (3:17) and he experiences undesirable consequences as a result (3:17–19). On the significance of cursing in the context of these verses, see 4.5.1.1.1.4 and 4.5.1.1.2.

⁵⁰⁹ Perhaps the snake may be seen as a representative figure for all animals, similar to the man and woman representing all humanity.

when God makes clothing for the humans in 3:21; the clothing is specifically made from animal skins, suggesting animals had to die for them to be made. This action not only highlights the difference between humans and animals in the roles they will now play within the created order but may also describe a new level of conflict in which the interests of humans will contrast with the interests of animals.

Conflict between the genders is described in Gen 3:16b: “your allegiance⁵¹⁰ shall be to your husband, but he shall rule over you” (ואל־אִישׁךָ תִשְׁקָתְךָ וְהוּא יִמְשֵׁל־בְּךָ).⁵¹¹ In order to understand the shift that has happened, it is important to look at how the woman is initially described: she is the sought after “helper-counterpart”⁵¹² (עֹזֵר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ, 2:18). This definition announced that her identity, from the beginning, was defined by her relationship to the man. Her identity in connection to the man is underlined when she is created by using material from his body (see 2:22; cf. 2:23). It is also confirmed by her name (as noted above, names are often seen as determinative for one’s existence and future in the world), which is explained in relation to the man (אִישׁ and אִשָּׁה in 3:23).

Although defined in relation to the man, the woman’s role as “helper” (עֹזֵר) is not by definition subservient. The noun עֹזֵר is a term that is frequently used to describe God and is often used in contexts that employ military language and imagery. An עֹזֵר can be a deliverer who fights against a person’s enemies (Ex 18:4, Deut 33:7; Psa 20:2; 89:19; 124:8), an aspect of military imagery (Deut 33:29), a section of military troops (Ezek 12:14), or an intended military ally (Isa 30:5⁵¹³). In Hos 13:9, military destruction falls on Israel because they are

⁵¹⁰ See the argument for this translation of תִּשְׁקָתְךָ in 4.3.3.2.1.

⁵¹¹ Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 132.

⁵¹² Regarding “counterpart” (or “counterpartner”) as a translation of כְּנֶגְדּוֹ, see Walton, *Genesis*, 266. Another similar option is “corresponding to him” (Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 112).

⁵¹³ In Isa 30:5, the supposed “helper” fails in their function as an עֹזֵר and brings shame upon the one they should have helped: “everyone comes to shame through a people that cannot profit them, that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace.”

against Yhwh, their עוזר. Yhwh's action as עוזר in Psalm 121 is described as protective (שמר, see v. 5, 7–8). Psalm 70 refers to God as עוזר in the first and last verse, with the middle verses describing what the psalmist wants God to do as עוזר: namely, bring his enemies to shame.⁵¹⁴ In other words, an עוזר may prevent a person from being put to shame by instead putting one's enemies to shame.

It is noteworthy that the first “other” human is called an עוזר, a word used for one who defends another person and prevents them from being put to shame. It is also significant that an עוזר is defined in relation to someone else: they are the helper *of* someone. Again, this is not necessarily meant in a subservient sense, but it *is* a role that is defined by relationship to an “other.” The relationship implied is one of vitally needed support and defense from opposing forces. As will be further explained below, this is a role that the woman loses in obtaining the knowledge of good and bad: now, each individual will define *for themselves*, rather than for any other, what is good (and not) and will seek to mold reality based on their individual determinations. The removal of the couple from the garden confirms that the woman has failed in her protective, defensive function as עוזר. This clarifies what is meant in the consequences laid out for the woman in Gen 3:16. When Yhwh God asserts, “your allegiance shall be for your husband, but he shall rule over you,” it expresses a new reality in which the desires of these two individuals will not be fully aligned — they will no longer be working as “counterparts” to one another.⁵¹⁵ She will attempt to make autonomous decisions

⁵¹⁴ The psalmist uses four different words that are related to the concept of shame in these three verses (v. 2–4): בוש, חפר, כלם, בשת.

⁵¹⁵ That there is a conflict expressed in the verse is generally agreed upon, but the exact meaning of the word תשוקה is uncertain. It is often translated as “desire.” Walton argues that this “desire” for the man may refer to the woman's yearning to have children (in spite of it being painful) while being dependent on the man to realize this desire (*Genesis*, 345–47). Carr's interpretation is that it refers to Eve's sexual desire: “This desire on her part makes clear one way that this text views her future of ‘toil’ in pregnancy as unavoidable. She will be drawn to the man from whom she was made” (*Genesis 1–11*, 132).

More discussion of תשוקה follows in 4.3.3.2.1, where it will be argued that “allegiance” is a better translation of the word. Here, תשוקה would imply the woman's continued sense of attachment, obligation, and dependency in her relationship to the man, which *should* be mutually felt but is impacted by a new power dynamic in the relationship (והוא ימשל בך).

about what is “good” and “bad” in her eyes, which will not necessarily correspond to the man’s determinations.

No longer defined as an עוזר, the focus of the woman’s future role is brought to light in this verse: procreation. The negative impact on fertility and childbearing that is pronounced in this verse is related to this new function,⁵¹⁶ as is the new name that she receives: “Eve” (חווה), “mother of all living” (אם כל־חיי) (Gen 3:20). Although the name is given by the man, it is not etymologically connected to the man and may speak to the ambivalent new autonomy she has gained, which is both the basis for conflict but also the beginning of her role as a bearer of new life.

A further conflict emerges between humans and the “ground” (אדמה). As both the man’s source and the site of his occupation, the ground plays a key role in both the PN and the FN. The cursing of the ground represents a fundamental shift in the human’s identity and manner of life. The man was created specifically “to work the ground” (לעבד את־האדמה, Gen 2:5). With the curse, there is now a fundamental conflict creating tension between what the man was destined to do and his ability to do it. One could say the same thing for the woman,

Regardless of the translation of תשוקה, it is clear that there is a contrast between this characteristic of the woman and her husband’s rule over her. This is emphasized in the grammar of the text by “the placement of an explicit subject at the outset of the following clause” (Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 132).

⁵¹⁶ Christine Curley and Brian Peterson make an interesting argument that עֲצֹבוֹן in Gen 3:16a refers to emotional rather than physical pain. The evidence they cite includes other occurrences of the word עֲצֹבוֹן and words from the same root that appear to have an emotional aspect to them (see, e.g., Gen 6:6; 34:7; 45:5; Psa 16:4; Prov 15:13) (“Eve’s Curse Revisited: An Increase of ‘Sorrowful Conceptions,’” *BBR* 26 [2016] 157–72; see especially p. 161). The phrase הרבה ארבה עֲצֹבוֹןךָ וְהִרְבֵּיךָ is then translated: “I will greatly increase your sorrowful conceptions” (ibid., 158). These “sorrowful conceptions” would refer broadly to “emotional toil” related to the various misfortunes and tragedies that can accompany the process of bringing a child into the world, ranging from infertility to miscarriage to maternal/fetal mortality (ibid., 158–59). The authors also argue that this provides the background for the struggles experienced by the matriarchs later in Genesis (ibid., 167–70). Their translation and understanding of this verse are plausible (and allow for הָרִיוֹן to be translated more correctly as “conception” rather than “childbearing”), but the data for the argument is not entirely conclusive. Many of the examples they use are ambiguous (the reference could be to either physical or emotional pain), and the ones that are clearly emotional are the verbal forms rather than the substantives.

whose new destiny is connected to procreation, but the accomplishment of this task will be marked by toil and pain (עצב and עֲצִבוֹן, 3:16).⁵¹⁷

This ambivalent state of existence is, of course, also related to the knowledge of good and bad. In obtaining autonomy, the humans lose the roles that Yahweh God gave them in the context of the garden. They have lost the life maintained by Yhwh God's conditions, and now they will have to use their own creative powers to find/make food, provide for themselves, and even create new life.⁵¹⁸ The increase in conflict in all these areas is the inevitable result of gaining the knowledge of good and bad, for each human now has the knowledge necessary to declare what is "good" and what is "bad" in their own eyes and to take measures to create their desired reality based on this determination. In the words of Crüsemann, "In alle Beziehungen, die Gen 2 als gute Schöpfung Jahwes geschildert hatte, kommt ein tiefer Riß. Er prägt das Verhältnis zu den Tieren, zum anderen Geschlecht, zu Gott. Gute Schöpfung und selbstverschuldete Negativitäten liegen für den Menschen untrennbar ineinander. Das Leben ist von einer tiefen Ambivalenz bestimmt."⁵¹⁹ In other words, the relational dynamics of the world no longer work together as an ordered whole. Instead, the struggle for mastery among humans, as well as between humans and the forces around them, will replace the (presumably) harmonious existence set up by God within the garden.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁷ This also clarifies that there is "a note of punishment" on the woman rather than just a straightforward list of consequences (Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 132). See n. 516 regarding another possibility for translating עֲצִבוֹן.

⁵¹⁸ Note, though, that the birth of the first human is accomplished "with Yhwh" (אֶת־יְהוָה) (see 4.3.1.2.1). Regarding the man's gained autonomy: "Der Mensch ist, so stellt es Gen 2f dar, dem unwiederbringlich ausgesetzt, er hat nach der Autonomie gegriffen, er muss autonom sein und die Konsequenzen tragen" (Crüsemann, "Autonomie," 72).

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 68.

⁵²⁰ The focus given to relational conflict adds an interesting possibility for understanding Yhwh God's concern for the divine-human boundary. It appears that he is determined to preserve this boundary and the dynamics of this relationship despite the breakdown in every other area. In the worldview of the narrator, perhaps it is this distinction, the existence of an "other" who is above the competing interests of individual humans, that gives hope that the world will not *ultimately* descend into complete disorder (even if it does temporarily [Gen 6:5]).

In the midst of conflict, the new reality of the humans will be marked by their ability to create new life; however, this new life will also include negative aspects. The process of bringing a child into the world was already described as difficult and painful in Gen 3:16.⁵²¹ In addition, the ability to create life will be balanced with the reality of death: “For you are dust, and to dust you will return” (כִּי־עֵפֶר אַתָּה וְאֶל־עֵפֶר תֵּשׁוּב [3:19]). Man is created mortal, but the existence of the tree of life had left open the possibility that they could attain eternal life.⁵²² The curse in 3:19 speaks of a new reality in which death is assumed. This also

⁵²¹ The difficulty, pain, and potential for death that characterized pregnancy and birth in the ancient world was an aspect of life for which an explanation was sought. In the epic of Atrahasis this suffering is planned and initiated by the gods as a necessary method of population control (see “Atrahasis,” trans. Dalley, 35, tablet III). In the PN, it is the consequence of the actions of humans who chose to go against what God wanted. This focus on human responsibility for the ambivalent state of the world is a particular emphasis of the author of the PN and FN, and this will be further considered below. Regarding this and other comparisons and contrasts between the PN and the epic of Atrahasis, see Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9,” *BA* 40 (1977): 147–55. See also the discussion in Kvanvig, *Primeval History*, 75.

⁵²² There is a lack of consensus on this point. The present paper accepts the argument of Blum that the threat of death is actually carried out in what is described in Gen 3:19. For Blum, it is decisive to recognize that in other ancient Near Eastern narratives, humans could not have both immortality and wisdom; thus, when the humans in the PN eat from the tree that gives them “wisdom,” they must die (i.e., lose the chance for immortality) (“Von Gottesunmittelbarkeit,” 25). This is also an argument for the tree of life as an original element of the account, for it reads the loss of access to the tree of life as indispensable to the logic of the narrative.

Walton suggests that maybe the humans were eating from the tree of life before, temporarily extending their life, but now they lose access. He compares the threat of death with Jeremiah 26: “In Jeremiah 26, the prophet delivers a scathing message to the people of Judah to the effect that the temple will be destroyed (26:4–6). The response of the people and priests is not repentance but antagonism toward Jeremiah as they seize him and pass sentence: ‘You must die!’ (26:8). The explanation is given a few verses later, ‘This man should be sentenced to death because he has prophesied against this city’ (26:11). Jeremiah 26:8 uses the same phrase as we have in Genesis 2:17, but it is Jeremiah 26:11 that shows us exactly what the people mean by using that phrase in verse 8. When they say, ‘You will surely die,’ they are talking about the eventual outcome of the behavior. The sentence will be passed, the doom will be fixed (Gen. 20:7; Num. 26:65; 1 Sam. 14:39, 44; 1 Kings 2:37, 42). The resulting paraphrase of Genesis 2:17 then is: ‘When you eat of it, you will be sentenced to death and therefore doomed to die.’ Consequently, death will be a certainty” (*Genesis*, 174–75).

In regards to the present argument, this reading fits the contrast between life and death that was discussed as one of the consequences of eating the fruit and also fits the focus on the divine-human boundary, which is a key element of the narrative. Carr summarizes the argument: “Certainly the human’s eating of the fruit did not lead to immediate death. In that sense, the snake was right in 3:5. Nevertheless, YHWH’s response in 3:22–24 clarifies how human acquisition of knowledge from the tree was connected to death: it led to an expulsion from the garden and resulting loss of immortality” (*Genesis 1–11*, 141). John H. Sailhamer agrees: “In the present narrative the verdict [of death] is carried out by expulsion from the garden and denial of access to the ‘tree of life’ (3:22–24)” (*Genesis*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008], ch.1, EPUB, Perlego). See also Robert P. Gordon, “The Ethics of Eden: Truth-Telling in Genesis 2–3,” in *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament: God and Humans in Dialogue*, ed. Katharine J. Dell (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 28.

That the death threat is truly carried out is by no means accepted by all (see, e.g., Gertz, who sees Gen 3:22, 24 as additions that address the apparent inconsistency in Yhwh God’s action [*Das erste Buch Mose*,

functions to temper humanity's creative abilities and reaffirm the divine-human boundary: they may be godlike in their ability to creatively/destructively influence the world, but only a divine being has the ability to avoid death.

The inescapability of death is reaffirmed at the end of the chapter with the barring of access to the tree of life (Gen 3:22–24), bringing a stamp of certainty to humanity's mortality.⁵²³ The image of “the cherubs” (הכרובים) and “the flame of the rotating sword” (להט החרב המתהפכת)⁵²⁴ ends the narrative with an image connected to the presence of God. “Cherubs” are mentioned elsewhere as being part of the ark of the covenant (see Exod 25:18–22; 37:7–9; Num 7:89); specifically, they are where Yhwh “dwells” or “is enthroned” ((ישב) 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2).⁵²⁵ Bauks notes other potential associations: “In their role as guards, they are reminiscent of the keepers that guard the temple- and palace-entrances in ancient Near Eastern imagery. There is also talk of a cherub in Ezek 28:14,16 who sends the sinful king out from the holy mountain.”⁵²⁶ “The flame of the rotating sword” (להט החרב המתהפכת) strikes a retributive note. There are no other occurrences in the Hebrew Bible of להט + חרב, but חרב appears several times with a similar adjective (ברק) in passages describing judgment (Deut 32:41; Ezek 21:15, 28; Nah 3:3).⁵²⁷ As a whole, then, this image along with the cherubs emphasizes the separation of the humans from the presence of Yhwh God and the

121]). Schmid suggests that immortality was never really an option, because the humans were too naïve to take advantage of the opportunity to eat from the tree of life (Schmid, “Die Unteilbarkeit,” 32–33). See also 3.4.1.1.1.

Another point in favor of the argument that the threat was carried out is the language of cursing used in this passage (see discussion in 4.5.1.1).

⁵²³ For further discussion of the tree of life as original to the narrative, see 3.4.1.1.1.

⁵²⁴ See Bandstra, *Genesis 1–11*, 225. Regarding the translation of “rotating,” note that “in the case of the sword here, [the *hithpael* stem] may suggest either rotation or a back-and-forth oscillating motion” (ibid.).

⁵²⁵ Note also the strange image of Yhwh “riding” on a cherub in 2 Sam 22:11; Ps 18:11.

⁵²⁶ Bauks, “Sacred Trees,” 297.

⁵²⁷ Regarding the precise interpretation of להט החרב המתהפכת, Ronald Hendel suggests that it is “an independent fiery being, a divine being in service to Yhwh, in precisely the same mythological category as the cherubim” (“The Flame of the Whirling Sword’: A Note of Gen 3:24,” *JBL* 104 [1985]: 672).

impossibility of regaining the manner of life (characterized by Yhwh God's order) that they had experienced in the garden.⁵²⁸ Without access to the tree of life, now or in the future, their mortality is confirmed.

The potential to shape their reality creatively and destructively points to another aspect of the death predicted in Gen 3:19. It is not just that they will die without access to the conditions God had established in the garden: with the knowledge of good and bad allowing them to impact the creative order destructively, they will also cause death. It only takes one generation for this to begin (see 4:8). They will also begin to bring death into the animal world, a condition that may be hinted at when animal skins are provided for the humans by Yahweh God (3:21). Thus, the life-giving potential that humanity gains when the man and woman eat the fruit is tempered by the certainty of experiencing and causing death.

3.3.3.2.5. God's Withholding of the Tree

For those who interpret the knowledge of good and bad as wisdom, it is difficult to explain why (in the perspective of the narrative) God would want to withhold this knowledge from the humans, for, as Albertz definitively proves, the qualities gained by eating the fruit are either neutral or positive in their occurrences throughout the Hebrew Bible.⁵²⁹ However, the proposed definition allows for a reasonable explanation as to why the narrator describes God as withholding this quality from humans.⁵³⁰ The most sensible way to explain the prohibition is by noting that, in the perspective of many ancient Near Eastern authors, wisdom and eternal life are divine traits. Humans may obtain wisdom, but they are consistently denied immortality,⁵³¹ presumably in order to maintain a boundary line between

⁵²⁸ See also the discussion of the literary critical implications of this imagery in 3.4.1.2.2.

⁵²⁹ Albertz, "Ihr werdet sein wie Gott," 91–6.

⁵³⁰ Mettinger argues that it is not, strictly speaking, reasonable that the fruit is prohibited, but it is denied simply for the purposes of setting up a test in the narrative — it is "the result of the 'mechanics' of the plot" (*The Eden Narrative*, 130).

the categories of “human” and “divine.”⁵³² In the epic of Gilgamesh it is stated, “When the gods created mankind they assigned death to mankind, but life in their own hands they retained.”⁵³³ In the epic of Adapa, it is explicitly stated that the god Ea bestows the hero with wisdom, but not eternal life.⁵³⁴

Wisdom is associated both with deity and semi-divine characters who receive their wisdom from the gods. Sumerian and Akkadian literature held that “wisdom was transmitted from reign to reign by the seven sages (*apkallu*), who got their information directly from the gods, especially from Enki-Ea, the god of wisdom.”⁵³⁵ The new introduction to the Standard Babylonian version of Gilgamesh puts particular emphasis on wisdom: “Gilgamesh’s wisdom is associated with the god Ea and is of antediluvian origin, being communicated to him by the survivor of the Flood, Uta-napishti.”⁵³⁶ The hero Atrahasis is also associated with wisdom; his name means “exceedingly wise,” and his patron god is Ea, the god of wisdom.⁵³⁷ These examples clarify that there was a cultural association between divinity and the traits of

⁵³¹ Ibid., 99. See also Gordon, “The Ethics of Eden: Truth-Telling in Genesis 2–3,” 27.

⁵³² Kvanvig discusses how concern regarding the divine-human boundary is expressed in the epic of Atrahasis (*Primeval History*, 57).

⁵³³ Foster, *Gilgamesh*, 78, tablet X, lines 79–81.

⁵³⁴ “To him he [Ea] gave wisdom but he did not give eternal life” (“Adapa,” in *Myths from Mesopotamia Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*, trans. Stephanie Dalley [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 184).

⁵³⁵ Anthonioz, “A Reflection on the Nature of Wisdom,” 53.

⁵³⁶ Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*, 112–13, 121. Depending on how one understands a missing word in the text, Enkidu may also be associated with wisdom after his sexual experience with Shamhat (see Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 462). Cf. Foster, *Gilgamesh*, 10, tablet I, line 215, where the critical word is translated as “handsome” rather than “wise.”

⁵³⁷ Cf. “Atrahasis,” trans. Dalley, 1–38. Kvanvig suggests that defining “humanity” versus “divinity” is a significant theme in the epic of Atrahasis as a whole, starting from the first line of the narrative, which begins with the enigmatic phrase, “when the gods were human” (*enūma ilū awēlum*). According to him, “It is the story as a whole that unfolds this enigma: the interplay between gods and humankind, the changing roles between gods and humankind, and the fusion of the divine and human” (*Primeval History*, 43).

However, it should be kept in mind that the meaning of this first line is disputed: “Most scholars opt for either ‘When the gods were man’ or ‘When the gods like man’” (A. R. George and F. N. H. Al-Rawi, “Tablets from the Sippar Library VI. Atra-ḥasīs,” in *Iraq* 58 (1996) 147–190; see also “Adapa,” trans. Dalley, 36 n. 1).

wisdom and eternal life. Of the two traits, humans might gain wisdom but could not obtain eternal life.

The knowledge of good and bad in the PN, then, might be seen as analogous to wisdom in these other ancient narratives.⁵³⁸ It is not banned because there is something inherently wrong with humans having this kind of knowledge, but rather because it represents a trait that was considered the possession of divinity. The proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad makes the divine aspect even more apparent because the knowledge of good and bad specifically leads to creative/destructive action in the world. The obtaining of this knowledge by humans is a threat to the preservation of the divine-human boundary, a concern that Yhwh God explicitly expresses at the end of the narrative (Gen 3:22).⁵³⁹ In this sense, the story is etiological — it clarifies that the present reality (of the implied author), which is combined of elements of joy and pain, life and death, is not the result of unknowable fate. It is the failure of the humans to abide by the conditions that would maintain the proper divine-human boundary within the garden that results in their expulsion and puts the responsibility for unfavorable life conditions squarely on humanity's shoulders.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁸ The *nature* of the wisdom spoken of in some of these accounts may be more similar to the knowledge of good and bad than the wisdom spoken of in much of the Hebrew Bible. This will be suggested as a topic for further research (5.3.3).

⁵³⁹ This is a concern of the non-P primeval history as a whole: “Non-P is occupied with the problematic boundaries between the human and the divine. The tree of knowledge gives access to divine wisdom. This places humans too close to the divine and God expels them from the garden (3:23). In a similar way, humans try to build a temple so high that it reaches heaven; also this attempt to encroach into the divine encounters a divine reaction (Gen 11:4–7). ... non-P is here closer to Atrahasis’ description of the unstable relationship between the human and the divine, as the underlying reason for the flood” (Kvanvig, *Primeval History*, 268).

⁵⁴⁰ In contrast to many other accounts in the ancient Near East, which attribute these negative life conditions to fate (see, e.g., Otto, “Die Paradieserzählung,” 167–92, and Albertz, “‘Ihr werdet sein wie Gott,’” 89–111). Albertz notes numerous texts that exemplify this view, including “Enki and Ninmah,” “Enuma Elish,” the “Babylonian Theodicy,” and “Ludlul-bēl-nēmeqi” (ibid., 106–7).

3.3.3.2.6. Conclusions of the Review of the Proposed Definition

In conclusion, each of these consequences supports the proposed interpretation of the knowledge of good and bad. This interpretation fits with the knowledge being *a divine quality*, as the narrative gives a specific description of Yhwh God defining a situation as “not good” and then taking creative action to fix it (Gen 2:18–23). It is also *a new quality*, as the man’s naming of the animals and the woman’s observations about the tree do not represent the kind of knowledge described in the proposed definition. The definition also fits *the immediate consequences* in which the humans determine their situation to be “not good” (recognition of their nakedness [3:7a]) and then take creative action to fix this situation (the making of clothing [3:7b]). It also fits *the other consequences* that follow — their hiding, their conversation with Yhwh God, the curses/consequences, and the further outcomes that follow. The humans’ newfound maturity, implying their ability to impact the world negatively and positively and thus take on the roles demanded by members of human society, clarifies the reason for their hiding from Yhwh God. That they operate from a new position of autonomy and self-interest is apparent in the shifting of blame and the conflict described in the conversation with Yhwh God and in the following curses/consequences that Yhwh God lays out for the humans (3:14–19). The ability to create new life contrasted with the fate of experiencing/causing death matches the potentials of the knowledge of good and bad described in the proposed definition. Yhwh God’s withholding of the tree is comprehensible by understanding the knowledge of good and bad as a divine quality (as already determined) that causes the humans to infringe on the divine-human boundary by obtaining it.

As a key aspect of the worldview proposed by the narrative, the knowledge of good and bad will be referred to in what follows as a “theme” rather than a “motif” (see definitions in 1.3.1). It will be shown in 3.4 that the other proposed “wisdom motifs” in the PN are primarily related to the knowledge of good and bad, which also supports defining this

concept as a theme rather than a motif. The following section will briefly address the distinction between wisdom and the knowledge of good and bad, before examining the knowledge of good and bad in relation to the proposed “wisdom motifs” in the PN.

3.3.4. Wisdom and the Knowledge of Good and Bad

Although “knowledge” (דעת) and “wisdom” (חכמה) are related and appear together in many verses in the Hebrew Bible,⁵⁴¹ their equivalency should not be assumed. The word חכמה does not appear in the PN (or anywhere in the primeval history), but other words connected with wisdom do (see 1.1.1.1). A crucial word to consider as a part of this discussion is the verb שכל in the *hiphil* stem, as this is what the woman perceives as being offered by the tree of the knowledge of good and bad: it is desirable “for causing insight” (להשכיל) (Gen 3:6). This verb is translated in most English translations in a way that suggests that what the humans gain is “wisdom”: “[it was] desirable for gaining wisdom” (NIV); “she wanted the wisdom it would give her” (NLT); “[it was] to be desired to make one wise” (ESV; KJB); “[it was] desirable to make one wise” (NASB).⁵⁴² These translations betray a particular interpretation of the knowledge of good and bad, because in other occurrences the verb שכל (*hiphil*) is not translated in this way. Although the fact that it does often occur with other words of knowledge, wisdom, and perception gives some legitimacy to the traditional translation (e.g., Isa 41:20; Deut 32:39). Very often, this verb is translated as “to be successful” or “to prosper” (cf. Deut 29:8; Josh 1:7; 1 Sam 18:5, 14, 30 [*qal*], 1 Kgs 2:3, 2 Kgs 18:7, Jer 10:21; Isa 52:13). It occurs in a similar context to the PN in Isa 44:18, where

⁵⁴¹ They occur many times in parallel clauses in Proverbs (e.g., 1:7; 2:6, 10; 8:12; 9:10; 14:6) and also in a list of the traits of skillful craftspeople in Ex 31:3, 31; 1 Kgs 7:14; cf. Isa 11:2; 33:6; 47:10.

⁵⁴² The German translations of Luther and Elberfelder avoid the term “wisdom” (*Weisheit*): “weil er klug machte” (*Lutherbibel* [1912], Accordance Bible Software, version 1.5); “daß der Baum begehrenswert wäre, um Einsicht zu geben” (*Elberfelder* [1905], Accordance Bible Software, version 1.5).

covered eyes are equated with a lack of knowledge. שָׂכַל is consistently used in a positive sense in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁴³

Despite the unambiguously positive nuance behind the verb שָׂכַל in the Hebrew Bible, there are occasions in which חָכְמָה, חָכַם, and synonyms are used to describe an action that is morally questionable (or downright evil) but gives evidence of intelligence (sometimes translated with words like “clever,” “shrewd,” or “crafty”).⁵⁴⁴ This use is especially evident in the Succession Narrative, in which shrewd but morally questionable advisors influence the course of the events:

“Jonadab, ‘a very wise man’ (2 Sam. 13:3) — wise in the same way as the snake in the garden was wise — advises Amnon how he may by deceit have his will with his half-sister Tamar, but the advice leads to Amnon’s death at the hands of Absalom and other ruinous consequences. David is persuaded to allow Absalom to return from exile by the skillful speech of the wise woman of Tekoa, but returning is the prelude to his rebellion and death (2 Sam. 14). In the course of the rebellion, Absalom follows the advice of his counsellor Ahithophel to occupy David’s harem, an act which leads to his death and Ahithophel’s suicide (2 Sam. 16:20–23).”⁵⁴⁵

It is this kind of “cleverness” leading to disaster that is often associated with the עָרוֹם of the snake (see further discussion regarding the snake below [3.4.2]). The problem of wisdom leading to pride also appears in some passages (e.g., Isa 47:10;⁵⁴⁶ Ezek 28:1–19⁵⁴⁷).⁵⁴⁸ The existence of these references in which wisdom is not unambiguously positive suggests that

⁵⁴³ E.g., Deut 29:8; 32:29; Josh 1:7; 8; 1 Sam 18:5; 14; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 18:7; Isa 41:20; 44:18; Isa 52:13; Jer 3:15; 9:24; 10:21; 20:11; 23:5; Amos 5:13; Psa 2:10; 4:2; 32:8; 36:3; 41:1; 53:2; 64:9; 94:8; 101:2; 106:7; 119:99; Job 22:2; 34:27; 34:35; Prov 1:3; 10:5, 19; 14:35; 15:24; 16:20, 23; 17:2, 8; 19:14; 21:11, 12, 16; Dan 1:4, 17; 9:13, 22, 25; 11:35; 12:3, 10; Neh 8:13; 9:20; 1 Chr 28:19; 30:22. Cf. Albertz, “Ihr werdet sein,” 94.

⁵⁴⁴ The verb form of חָכַם is used to describe the action that is recommended by the king of Egypt in Ex 1:8–11: “let us deal shrewdly with [the Israelites].” Another example, again using the verb form of חָכַם, is when Tyre and Sidon are referred to as wise but in the context of a passage of judgment against them (Zech 9:2). See also Isa 47:10 and Ezekiel 28.

⁵⁴⁵ Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Uncreation, Re-creation*, 59.

⁵⁴⁶ This verse uses both חָכְמָה and דַּעָה.

⁵⁴⁷ This chapter includes חָכַם, חָכְמָה, and תְּבוּנָה.

⁵⁴⁸ Passages dealing with wisdom and pride in connection to tree imagery will be further considered below (3.4.1.2.3).

some authors in the Hebrew Bible viewed wisdom in a more general sense: as a characteristic that gave its possessor powers that could result in either positive and negative consequences.

This is the nature of the “wisdom” that is given by the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. If “gaining insight” in the PN was more akin to how wisdom is described in the majority of passages in the Hebrew Bible, in which it is positively assessed, then possessing the knowledge of good and bad would lead to something more than merely having the ability to discern and creatively/destructively act — it would also lead to increased morality, or at least to evidence of successful living in the world. The increase in conflict and violence that results from obtaining the knowledge of good and bad, eventually necessitating the flood, precludes this as a possibility.

Therefore, given the fact that *שכל* (*hiph*) is not typically understood to refer specifically to wisdom in its other occurrences and the fact that the knowledge received in the PN does not correspond to wisdom in the sense that it most often appears in the Hebrew Bible, but rather its sense in more rare occurrences, it is better to translate *לִהְיוֹת שִׂכִּיל* in Gen 3:6 as “to cause insight.”⁵⁴⁹ This translation would help to avoid the importation of positive concepts of *חכמה* from other sections of the Hebrew Bible that do not appear to be intended in the PN.

To conclude, it can be said that the knowledge of good and bad in the PN is associated with maturity. This maturity implies an increased ability to make autonomous determinations and to act within the world on the basis of these judgments. As will be discussed in the next chapter, humanity’s newfound maturity results in various skills associated with the development of culture (Gen 4:17–22).⁵⁵⁰ These developments all accord with concepts

⁵⁴⁹ It is possible that the author intentionally avoids using the word *חכמה* in order to avoid the positive associations of this word.

⁵⁵⁰ This has some parallels with the concept of wisdom in Sumerian and Akkadian literature (see 5.3.3).

broadly associated with wisdom.⁵⁵¹ However, the knowledge of good and bad is “wisdom” only in a very basic sense; it does not refer to wisdom that is characterized by moral uprightness and “the fear of Yhwh.”⁵⁵² Rather, it is a “wisdom” that *places one in the position* to make choices that could be associated with moral uprightness or with foolishness. The humans do not gain discernment to distinguish between what is objectively (in the perspective of God) life-promoting and death-promoting. Instead, they know the *concept* of טוב ורע: the concept of assigning/declaring an entity as life-promoting or death-promoting from one’s individual perspective *and* taking creative/destructive action based on that judgment. To the extent that one does this with reference to the order established by God, one would have “wisdom” in a moral sense. The accuracy and further implications of this definition of the knowledge of good and bad and its connection to wisdom will be further assessed below in relation to other proposed “wisdom motifs” within the PN.

3.4. Other Potential “Wisdom Motifs”

The fact that the knowledge of good and bad is a central theme in the PN justifies considering whether other proposed connections to wisdom in the narrative can add to the understanding of this theme and further clarify the perspective on wisdom in this narrative. The intention of the following section will be to analyze each of the proposed “wisdom motifs” named in 1.1.1.2 in three steps: (1) discussion of the specific descriptions given in the PN related to each symbol/motif, (2) analysis of the use of the symbol/motif outside of the

⁵⁵¹ See the definition of “wisdom” above from Witte, “The Book of Proverbs, 572 (see 1.3.2.1).

⁵⁵² What is portrayed in the PN is quite different from the way wisdom (and knowledge! [cf. Prov 1:22]) is described in Proverbs 1–9, where wisdom is set in opposition to folly (9:1–12 vs. 13–18). The entire section is set in the context of advice from a father to a son (1:8), as the father urges his son to choose Lady Wisdom over Lady Folly. In other words, it is assumed that the son has the knowledge of good and bad: he can determine what is “good” and make an autonomous action that could have significant consequences for himself and his community (e.g., 1:16, 18, 31–33; 2:21–22; 3:2, 4, 10, 23–26, 33–35). The father in this passage seeks to influence his son’s determination about what is “good,” noting the long life and prosperity that come from choosing wisdom, equated here with “uprightness” (ישר [4:11]) and “fear of Yhwh” (יראת יהוה [9:10]). Unlike Proverbs, where the choice for wisdom is equivalent to the choice of living an upright life, in the PN and FN, this kind of wisdom is not under discussion. Rather, the discussion revolves around the knowledge of good and bad, which has the potential to lead one down *either* a morally “good” or a morally “bad” path (cf. the first occurrence of “sin” [חטאת] in the Hebrew Bible in Gen 4:7).

PN, and (3) formation of conclusions regarding the function of the symbols/motifs within the PN on the basis of the evidence gathered.

3.4.1. The Trees

3.4.1.1. *The Trees in the Paradise Narrative*

The description of the trees in the PN will be considered in the following section. This analysis will begin with a look at the vocabulary and phrases used to describe the tree of life, followed by a similar discussion of the descriptions of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

3.4.1.1.1. The Tree of Life

The phrase עץ החיים occurs three times in the PN (Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24). The referent of the word עץ is not unclear (see 3.3.1.1), but the word חיים (from the noun חי) requires some comment. That the word conveys the concept of “life” is not disputed, but it is important to note that there are several possible nuances to the word “life,” including (1) “lifetime, lifespan,” (2) “life (existence),”⁵⁵³ (3) “(good things in) life, joy of life,” and (4) “maintenance” of life.⁵⁵⁴ Thus, the kind of “life” that characterizes the tree must be understood through context and should not be assumed to be the same in all occurrences of the phrase עץ החיים in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁵⁵ The PN clarifies the type of life that is related to this tree, for the statement in 3:22 connects eating from the tree of life specifically with the possibility that the man could “live forever” (חיי לעולם). The (likely secondary) statement in 3:24 further builds on this definition, clarifying in what way access to the tree of life will be prevented in the future.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵³ As opposed to death (מות).

⁵⁵⁴ HALOT 1:308. On “maintenance,” see Prov 27:27 (ibid.).

⁵⁵⁵ Or עץ חיים, as is found in Proverbs.

⁵⁵⁶ As argued in 2.4.2, this likely represents the addition of a redactor. See also n. 610 below.

Prior to the end of the PN, the tree of life appears to play a somewhat tangential role. Outside of Gen 3:22, 24, it is only mentioned in 2:9, where it is specified along with the tree of the knowledge of good and bad out all of the trees of the garden that are “pleasant to the sight and good for food” (נהמד למראה וטוב למאכל). Directly following this,⁵⁵⁷ 2:16 clarifies that the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and bad should not be eaten, but here the tree of life is not mentioned. Nevertheless, despite the apparent lack of prohibition on eating from this tree, Yhwh God’s statement in 3:22 implies that the humans have not eaten from it.

There are at least three possibilities for understanding this apparent contradiction: 1. The tree of life was available to be eaten from, but, in their immaturity, the humans miss their opportunity to eat and gain eternal life;⁵⁵⁸ 2. The humans did eat from the tree of life, but sustained access to the tree was required to continue to live forever;⁵⁵⁹ 3. The tree of life was a later addition to the narrative. Option #2 is unlikely, as the statement in Gen 3:22 suggests that the humans have not yet eaten from the tree of life. Option #3 is possible but perhaps less likely than option #1, especially in light of the indispensable nature of the “Lebensthematik” throughout the PN (cf. 2:7b, 17; 3:3, 4, 14–19).⁵⁶⁰ Option #1 seems most likely, in particular

⁵⁵⁷ Gen 2:10–15 is considered secondary (see 2.4.2).

⁵⁵⁸ See, e.g., Schmid, “Die Unteilbarkeit,” 31–2. In this reading, the woman’s identification of the tree “in the midst of the garden” is a sign of a naïve misunderstanding that Yhwh God’s prohibition applies to both trees, rather than a sign that that the original account contained only one tree.

⁵⁵⁹ If the fruit is similar to the plant from the epic of Gilgamesh, then it would return the eater to their youth (Foster, *Gilgamesh*, 99, tablet XI, lines 310, 319–324). Nothing is said about keeping the eater in perpetual youth, so perhaps the person would need to have to continual access to the plant (or, in the PN, the fruit) in order to live forever (cf. Walton, *Genesis*, 170).

⁵⁶⁰ See especially Bühner, who discusses the importance of the “Lebensthematik” throughout the narrative: “Die Lebensthematik endet nicht am Baum des Lebens und an der Schöpfungsmaterie Staub. Die ganze Erzählung handelt davon, dass die Menschen sterblich sind — im Gegensatz zu YHWH. Die Lebensthematik zeigt sich bereits in 2,7b wieder mit der Einhauchung des Lebensodem. Leben und Sterben begegnen wieder explizit im Verbot YHWHs, vom Baum der Erkenntnis zu kosten (2,17), und auch der Dialog zwischen der Schlange und der Frau spielt, unter Aufnahme von 2,17, mit dieser Thematik (3,3.4). Ebenso sprechen die Strafworte YHWHs in 3,14–19 von Leben und Sterben der Menschen auf Erden, genauer von den *Lebensminderungen*, denen die Menschen unterworfen sind bei ihrer Arbeit und beim Erlangen von Nachwuchs — und das heißt: bei der Hervorbringung weiteren Lebens —, bis sie wieder zurückkehren zum Ackerboden, von dem sie genommen sind — und das heißt: bis sie sterben. Die Lebensthematik ist also *integraler Bestandteil der Erzählung* und kann als solche nicht plausibel für sekundär betrachtet werden” (*Am Anfang*, 208–9). See also the discussion and arguments presented in 2.4.2.

given the argument that the move from immaturity to maturity is an important theme of the PN (see, e.g., 3.3.3.2.6). In the logic of the narrative, there is no need for Yhwh God to be concerned about the humans eating from the tree of life prior to gaining the knowledge of good and bad. Now that they have the knowledge of good and bad and the maturity inherent to this characteristic, the possibility of them eating from the tree of life becomes a real threat to the proper maintenance of the divine-human boundary.

3.4.1.1.2. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Bad

As noted above, the phrase “the tree of the knowledge of good and bad” (עץ הדעת ורע) does not appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible or ancient literature. This absence has led to suggestions of other possible parallels (e.g., the cosmic/world tree), which will be considered below. Most important for understanding the phrase, however, is the way the tree functions in its context. In the PN, the tree is first mentioned along with the tree of life in Gen 2:9, and it is then forbidden for the human to eat from it in 2:17. As was argued above (3.3.3.2.5), this prohibition is related to the divine nature of the knowledge of good and bad and Yhwh God’s desire to maintain the divine-human boundary. The tree is discussed at length in the conversation between the snake and the woman in 3:1–5, where the woman refers to it not as the tree of the knowledge of good and bad but simply as “the tree that is in the middle of the garden” (3:3).⁵⁶¹ Her inaccurate restatement of Yhwh God’s command, “nor shall you touch it” (ולא תגעו בו), which tightens the original restriction, may support Schmid’s suggestion that her reference to the tree “in the middle of the garden” represents a misunderstanding of God’s command that unnecessarily broadens the restriction to include both trees.⁵⁶²

The woman’s observations of the tree (Gen 3:6) were discussed above (3.3.3.2.2.2). It was determined that the slight variation in the wording of her observations (in comparison to

⁵⁶¹ Regarding this phrase, see additional comments in n. 486 above.

⁵⁶² Schmid, “Die Unteilbarkeit,” 31–32. Also important for this argument is that עץ is a collective noun (idem, “Ambivalence,” 283 n. 24).

previous descriptions of the tree) and her acceptance of the assertion of the snake might signal a shift away from previously assumed truths. Furthermore, the fact that the woman acts on the snake's assertion, in which it states that the humans can become "like god(s)," raises the question of whether there is an issue of pride involved in the woman's decision. This will be further considered below (3.4.1.2.3).

3.4.1.2. *The Tree Motif*

As trees appear symbolically elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible and other ancient literature (and iconography), it is worthwhile to consider whether the presentation of the trees in the PN picks up on any of these associations. An association between trees and wisdom will be considered first, a connection that was suggested in 1.1.1.2.2. The trees in the PN also represent divine qualities (eternal life and knowledge of good and bad), so associations between trees and divinity will also be considered. Additionally, consideration will be given to the connection between pride and trees, as pride is a potential motivation for the woman's actions. Finally, the association between trees and sacred space will be observed, particularly concerning the probable addition of Gen 2:10–15 and 3:24 to the PN. It is important that whatever the tree motif is intended to convey, it would need to apply to both trees if the tree of life is to be maintained as original to the account.⁵⁶³

3.4.1.2.1. Wisdom

The observations above do not suggest a strong connection between either of the trees in the PN and the tree motif that is found in Proverbs. As noted in 1.1.1.2.2, the connection to wisdom in the PN is sometimes assumed because a "tree of life" is mentioned several times in Proverbs, though with slightly different wording than in the PN (עץ החיים in Prov 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4). Despite the fact that a similar phrase is used for this motif in both the PN and in Proverbs, the tree motif in Proverbs has a markedly different function than the trees in

⁵⁶³ Gertz notes the unlikelihood of a single author using the same motif in two different ways for the different trees (*Das erste Buch*, 89). This leads him to suggest that the tree of life motif in the PN is secondary.

the PN. First, as noted above, the tree of life in the PN is associated specifically with eternal life.⁵⁶⁴ This is different from the “life” described by the tree of life in Proverbs, which refers not to eternal life but to a prosperous existence in the present.⁵⁶⁵ So, for example, in Prov 3:16, wisdom gives “length of days” (אָרְךָ יָמִים).⁵⁶⁶ In Prov 13:14, “the teaching of the wise is a fountain of life” in the sense that it helps one to avoid death, rather than in the sense of eternal life. The tree of the knowledge of good and bad is also not connected with wisdom, at least not in the sense that wisdom appears in the book of Proverbs (see 3.3.4 above).

There are a few other instances in late Jewish works of trees related to wisdom.⁵⁶⁷

One example is 1 Enoch 32:3, which refers to an end-time tree as “the tree of wisdom.”⁵⁶⁸

Additionally, Sirach uses extensive tree imagery to describe personified wisdom:

I took root in an honored people,
 in the portion of the Lord, his heritage.
 I grew tall like a cedar in Lebanon,
 and like a cypress on the heights of Hermon.
 I grew tall like a palm tree in En-gedi,
 and like rosebushes in Jericho;
 like a fair olive tree in the field,
 and like a plane tree beside water I grew tall.

⁵⁶⁴ Note that Enns argues for a connection between the tree of life and wisdom, though without strong justification from the text (see 1.1.1.3.2).

⁵⁶⁵ Murphy states, “According to Proverbs, life is the goal of the wisdom enterprise (Prov. 8:35). Wisdom is a ‘tree of life’ (3:18), not merely in the sense of ‘length of days’ (although the sages’ teaching provided this also — cf. Prov 3:2), but qualitatively, the kind of life that came to the wise person: ‘favor and good esteem’ (3:4), ‘honor’ (3:35). This was, however, limited by the reality of Sheol, the inevitability of death” (*The Tree of Life*, 87).

⁵⁶⁶ Wisdom is described as “a tree of life” in v. 18. Bauks explains that “The tree of life in the hymn or wisdom text (Prov 3:13–18; Persian period) refers to knowledge as life-giving power” (“Sacred Trees,” 284).

⁵⁶⁷ In addition to the cited literature, the use of trees in ancient Near Eastern iconography was common (see further discussion in 3.4.1.2.2 below). A connection between these images and wisdom is not obvious but is argued by some, especially since no textual explanation of the symbolism is given (see, e.g., John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015], ch. 13, EPUB, Perlego). See also Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 290, who Walton cites.

⁵⁶⁸ It is called the “tree of wisdom” (‘*ada ṭabab*) in the Ethiopic translation, while the Greek translation describes it as “the tree of knowledge (τὸ δένδρον τῆς φωνήσεως), whose holy fruit they eat and know great wisdom” (*The Book of Enoch*, trans. R. H. Charles [Oviedo, Asturias, Spain: Entrecacias, SL, 2021]). This difference highlights the close association between the concepts of “wisdom” and “knowledge” and their overlapping semantic domains. It is notable, however, that the terms used here are different from those that describe the tree of the knowledge of good and bad in the LXX, where it is translated τὸ ξύλον τοῦ εἰδέναι γνωστὸν καλοῦ καὶ πονηροῦ (i.e., “the tree for knowing what is knowable of good and evil” [NETS]).

Like cassia and camel's thorn I gave forth perfume,
 and like choice myrrh I spread my fragrance,
 like galbanum, onycha, and stacte,
 and like the odor of incense in the tent.
 Like a terebinth I spread out my branches,
 and my branches are glorious and graceful.
 Like the vine I bud forth delights,
 and my blossoms become glorious and abundant fruit.
 Come to me, you who desire me,
 and eat your fill of my fruits (Sir 24:12–19).

While these examples demonstrate an association between the trees in the PN and wisdom in later reception of the text, the type of wisdom represented in these texts diverges from what is found in the PN. In Proverbs, wisdom is represented positively. The tree in 1 Enoch 32:3 occurs within a visionary context in which Enoch describes “places of eschatological significance for humanity — both the righteous chosen and the sinners (the place of the dead, the mountain of God, and Jerusalem), as well as primordial Eden.”⁵⁶⁹ In its context there is little to suggest a particular view on wisdom (other than confirming that it was forbidden for the first humans), but if the rest of the work is considered, wisdom is considered a gift that will eventually be given to the chosen. Unlike the knowledge of good and bad in the PN, wisdom is connected to moral uprightness: upon receiving wisdom the chosen “will sin no more through godlessness or pride...And they will transgress no more, nor will they sin all the days of their life” (1 Enoch 5:8–9). Furthermore, in contrast to obtaining the knowledge of good and bad, which brought death, when the righteous gain wisdom, “they will all live...they [will not] die in the heat of <God's> wrath. But the number of the days of their life will be complete” (5:8–9).⁵⁷⁰ The difference in perspective on wisdom is seen in Sirach as well. The statement, “Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of

⁵⁶⁹ George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. Vanderkam, *1 Enoch* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 3. Cf. Veronika Bachmann, who makes the argument that the tree in 1 Enoch 24–25 also refers to wisdom (“Rooted in Paradise? The Meaning of the ‘Tree of Life’ in 1 Enoch 24–25 Reconsidered,” *JSP* 19 [2009]: 83–107).

⁵⁷⁰ The translation of these verses comes from Bachmann, “Rooted in Paradise,” 99.

my fruits” (Sir 24:19), represents the polar opposite of the prohibition on eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad in the PN. In short, these passages do not accurately represent the perspective on wisdom expressed within the PN itself.

3.4.1.2.2. Divinity

The characterization of the trees in the PN associates them with divine qualities. As noted above, the knowledge of good and bad is specifically described as a divine quality in the PN (see 3.3.3.1 and 3.3.3.2.1). Eternal life is also associated with divinity (3.3.3.2.5). Given the concern expressed in the PN regarding the divine-human boundary (3.3.3.2.5), the association between trees and divinity is an important aspect of tree symbolism to assess.

There is a common association between trees and divinity in ancient Near Eastern iconography, in which “drawings of a stylized tree were widespread.”⁵⁷¹ Although there is a tendency to label these trees with an “umbrella” term that encompasses all of them (e.g., the “sacred tree,” “the tree of life,” “cosmic tree”), they occur in a variety of settings.⁵⁷² The

⁵⁷¹ Numerous examples of these stylized trees can be cited, often in association with divine beings. See, e.g., from Egypt, an image of the temple of Amon (1349–45 B.C.E.) surrounded by a park containing many trees (Keel, *Die Welt der Altorientalischen Bildsymbolik*, 109, image 162a), a tree with a feminine breast from which the king drinks (ibid., 165, image 253 [from the tomb of Thutmosis III]), a tree goddess feeding a man and woman (ibid., 165, image 254 [from the tomb of Sennedjem]), the goddess Nut (her name emblazoned on a large tree behind her) feeding a person (ibid., 166, image 255 [from the Nespakashuty papyrus]), a date palm presenting food with its human arms and hands (Silvia Schroer, “Ancient Near Eastern Pictures as Keys to Biblical Metaphors” in *The Writings and Later Wisdom Books*, ed. Christl Maier and Nuria Calduch-Benages [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014], 149, fig. 26 [relief from Abusir in Egypt, 13th c. B.C.E.]), a deceased person being offered sustenance by a goddess who appears to be part of a tree (ibid. 149, fig. 27 [painting from the tomb of Pashedu in Der el-Medineh, ca. 1100 B.C.E.]).

Examples from elsewhere in the ancient Near East include: a relief from the palace of Ashurbanipal showing a wooded hill with an altar in the midst of it (Keel, *Die Welt*, 132, image 202); an ivory from Nimrud (9th/8th c. B.C.E.) showing cherubs (associated with divine presence) and goats touching stylized trees (ibid., 124, image 189); a wall painting from the time of Hammurabi (palace of Mari, 1800 B.C.E.) shows the temple of Ishtar within a park of stylized trees and date palms (Keel, *Die Welt*, 125, fig. 191; Schroer, “Ancient Near Eastern Pictures,” 147, figure 24); an image of Ur-Nammu of Ur (2060–1955 B.C.E.) shows him making an offering to the god Nanna, who is represented by a tree (Keel, *Die Welt*, 136, image 180); a gold lamella shows two cherubim on either side of a stylized tree (ibid., image 190); a scaraboid from Ekron (7th c. B.C.E.): “a worshiper, clothed in a long robe, touches a tree with one hand while he seems to carry a donation in the other hand” (Schroer, “Ancient Near Eastern Pictures,” 146, figure 22); and a cylinder seal of the Akkadian period (ca. 2300–2200 B.C.E.) shows the following scene: “A praying person is led in front of the enthroned goddess Ishtar. Left of this ‘initiation scene’ are two women plucking dates from a palm” (ibid., 147, figure 23).

⁵⁷² See n. 571 above. Bachmann notes the problematic nature of defining these different trees with the same “umbrella” term: “the fact that these labels tend to impose one concept on very disparate phenomena raises

variety of contexts can make the iconographic evidence difficult to interpret. Bauks gives a list of various options for the interpretation of these stylized trees: a symbol of fertility,⁵⁷³ a representation of a “king’s rule and power to bless,”⁵⁷⁴ a “marker of a holy place,”⁵⁷⁵ or a sign of blessing.⁵⁷⁶ Bachmann also notes a number of different symbolic emphases that trees could have in ancient Near Eastern iconography, including the expression of a “nourishing aspect”⁵⁷⁷ or a depiction of “welfare and prosperity linked to the king and kingship.”⁵⁷⁸

Though the settings and symbolic value of the motif are diverse, an element that many of the images have in common is that they feature gods or goddesses beside the tree or even inside the tree.⁵⁷⁹ The images of tree goddesses found in Egyptian tombs are clear examples of this combination of trees and divine beings.⁵⁸⁰ Pithoi A from Kuntillet Ajrud could also be mentioned, which includes reference to Yhwh in an inscription alongside drawings of deities

problems and make it somehow arbitrary to what an examination of the ‘sacred tree’ or the ‘tree of life’ refers to in each case” (“Rooted in Paradise,” 94 n. 24).

⁵⁷³ After surveying many examples, Bauks concludes, “the plant symbolism – attached to female goddesses – could be used in different ways: in the ancient Near East in the sense of eroticism and fertility, in Egypt in the sense of nutrition and continuous supply” (“Sacred Trees,” 275).

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 275–79.

⁵⁷⁵ Trees were “a place where God and humans meet...they represent a sacred space and may be imbued with a sacral character. In them the existing world is shown *en miniature* in an ideal way or is paradigmatically recreated” (ibid., 280).

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 281.

⁵⁷⁷ Seen, e.g., in tomb paintings of Egyptian goddesses depicted as trees who provide the dead with food and drink (Bachmann, “Rooted in Paradise,” 94–95) and images of “the tree flanked by caprids or other animals” (ibid., 95). See the examples listed in n. n. 571 above.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 96–97.

⁵⁷⁹ See n. 571 above.

⁵⁸⁰ See n. 571 above. Schroer describes these images: “In tomb paintings of the New Kingdom starting with Thutmose III, various goddesses appear as tree goddesses that nourish and offer shade and recreation. They lean out of treetops in order to feed the dead. In the oldest paintings, they even present their breast; yet a dominant later variant has them offering food and drink and, as the epigrams reveal, words of invitation. Tree goddesses are often depicted as sycamore or date palms” (“Ancient Near Eastern Pictures,” 149). These tree goddess paintings in tombs are also noted by Fox (*Proverbs 1–9*, 158) and William R. Osborne (*Trees and Kings: A Comparative Analysis of Tree Imagery in Israel’s Prophetic Tradition and the Ancient Near East* [University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2017], 37ff).

and a stylized tree on the opposite side.⁵⁸¹ An overarching significance to the inclusion of divine beings in these and many other tree images is summarized by Bauks as a thematic reference to “divine life-giving and guarantee of blessing.”⁵⁸²

Further connections between trees and divinity are found in written sources. In the Hebrew Bible, “tree”⁵⁸³ language was often used as part of polemical statements regarding the worship of idols. In Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic usage, wood is frequently referenced in exhortations against the worship of idols and Asherah poles (cf., e.g., Deut 4:28; 12:2; 16:21; 28:36, 64; 29:16; Judg 6:26; 1 Kgs 14:23; 2 Kgs 16:4; 17:10; 19:18/Isa 37:19; Isa 44:13ff.; 45:20; 57:5; Jer 2:20, 27; 3:6, 9, 13; 10:3, 8; 17:2; Ezek 6:13; 20:28, 32; Hos 4:12f.; Hab 2:19; Dan 5:4, 23).⁵⁸⁴ The many occurrences of the word in this sense combined with the general knowledge that wooden idols were worshipped in the ancient world confirms this association.

These connections with divinity continue to be emphasized in references to trees in later works, in which trees become associated with a future time when Yhwh will act dramatically to restore justice and be present among his people. Ezekiel describes trees that grow as a result of a river flowing out of the presence of God in an eschatological temple:

⁵⁸¹ See Judith Hadley, “Some Drawings and Inscriptions on Two Pithoi from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud,” *VT* 37 (1987): 180–213. The inscription on pithos A reads (according to Hadley’s translation): “X says: say to Yehal[le’el] and to Yo’asah and to [to Z]: I bless you by Yhwh of Samaria and by his asherah.” An inscription (on pithoi B) reads: “Amaryaw says: say to my lord: Is it well with you? I bless you by Yhwh of Teman and by his Asherah. May he bless you and keep you and be with my lord...” (ibid., 182–85). Cf. the very similar translation of Nadav Na’aman in “The Inscriptions of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud Through the Lens of Historical Research,” *UF* 43 (2011): 302–3.

⁵⁸² Bauks, “Sacred Trees,” 281.

⁵⁸³ Or “wood,” which is another possible translation of the word עץ.

⁵⁸⁴ Silvia Schroer describes the development of this line of thinking: “The earth and vegetation goddess of Middle Bronze Age Palestine/Israel (1750–1550 B.C.E.) is characterized by twigs. This main attribute would play a role in the country’s iconography and history of religion for centuries. The mighty tree is named in Hebrew, אלה, ‘goddess’” (“Ancient Near Eastern Pictures as Keys to Biblical Metaphors,” 145). She notes a pitcher from the end of thirteenth century B.C.E. on which “the inscription reads ‘donation, a gift for my mistress *’elat* [i.e., the goddess]’; the word *’elat* is written directly above a tree that is flanked by horned animals” (ibid., fig. 20).

“On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing” (Ezek 47:12). In similarity to the depictions of trees and gods in iconography, the trees here are symbolic of divine blessing — the ready availability of food (without the “pain” [עצבון] prescribed by Gen 3:17) combined with the healing properties of the trees creates an image of vitality and abundance whose source is Yhwh’s presence in the temple. 2 Esdras also describes a tree within an eschatological setting: “I will give to these others the everlasting habitations, which I had prepared for Israel. The tree of life shall give them fragrant perfume, and they shall neither toil nor become weary” (2:11b–12).⁵⁸⁵ The imagery appears again in 2 Esdras 8:52 in a similar eschatological setting: “paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand.”⁵⁸⁶ In the New Testament, Revelation mentions the “tree of life” twice: once it is stated that eating from it will be a reward for the righteous (2:6), and once it appears within imagery of the eschatological city (22:1–3). In this latter reference, the author picks up on the imagery of Ezekiel in its description of the tree: “On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Rev 22:2). The imagery of trees as part of a future reality in which

⁵⁸⁵ The section (chs. 1–2) where these verses occur is also referred to as 5 Ezra. In it, “The author argues for a judgment on Israel and claims that the punishment will be that they will be replaced by the Christians” (Hugh G. M. Williamson and John J. Schmitt, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: First and Second Esdras* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021], “2 Esdras – Introduction,” EPUB, Perlego).

⁵⁸⁶ This verse is from a different section, 2 Esdras 3–14 (or 4 Ezra), which is earlier and Jewish in origin (Williams and Schmitt, *First and Second Esdras*, “2 Esdras – Introduction”).

God's presence will be manifest shows the connection between tree imagery and the divine.⁵⁸⁷

In some texts outside the Hebrew Bible, examples of trees with extraordinary properties associated with divinity can be observed. Egyptian literature, for example, attests the phrase *het.n. 'nch*, “tree of life.”⁵⁸⁸ “The Great Cairo Hymn of Praise to Amun-Re” describes the Amun-Re as follows: “UNIQUE ONE, LIKE WHOM AMONG the gods? Goodly bull of the Ennead, Chief of all the gods, Lord of Truth, Father of the gods, Who made mankind, who created the flocks, Lord of what exists, *who created the tree of life*, Who made the herbage, who vivifies the herd.”⁵⁸⁹ The tree in Egyptian literature is a positive motif — it is provided by the gods as “the basis of existence for humans and the dead in the netherworld.”⁵⁹⁰ Osbourne notes that “the divine tree seems to serve an immense role in one's transition from the realm of the living to the realm of the dead, or perhaps, from the realm of the dead to a state of new life beyond the grave.”⁵⁹¹ The tree appears in connection to divinity and the food associated with it is dispensed at the will of the gods.⁵⁹² Although the consistently positive quality of the tree motif in Egyptian sources is not matched in the PN, where both trees function as a “line of demarcation” between humanity and divinity,⁵⁹³ the

⁵⁸⁷ Also notable is the use of trees within the descriptions of iconography in the temple (1 Kgs 6:29, 32, 35; cf. Ezek 41:17–20, 25) (Bührer, *Am Anfang*, 371).

⁵⁸⁸ Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 158.

⁵⁸⁹ “The Great Cairo Hymn of Praise to Amun-Re,” trans. Robert K. Ritner, *COS* 1: 38, emphasis mine.

⁵⁹⁰ Bauks, “Sacred Trees,” 298–99. She suggests that a similar concept could be behind the tree in Gen 2–3, “but in an altered form that is this-worldly in focus” (*ibid.*). Note the example of a dead person being fed by a tree goddess in n. 571 above.

⁵⁹¹ Osbourne, *Trees and Kings*, 42.

⁵⁹² See, e.g., the examples given in n. 571 above.

⁵⁹³ Bauks, “Sacred Trees,” 299.

broad associations with divinity are reflected in the trees as an embodiment of divine qualities that are desired by humans.⁵⁹⁴

In Mesopotamian writings, there are examples of plants, rather than trees, that bestow divine properties on humanity.⁵⁹⁵ In the epic of Gilgamesh, the hero finds Utanaphishtim, a man who has joined “the ranks of the gods” by obtaining eternal life and has knowledge of a plant that will allow Gilgamesh to regain youthfulness.⁵⁹⁶ This plant (*šamme balāṭi*) is “a cure for heartache, whereby a man can regain his vitality...I myself [Gilgamesh] will eat it and return to how I was in my youth.”⁵⁹⁷ The existence of this plant is associated with divine knowledge; Utanaphishtim describes it as “a secret matter, and a mystery [of the gods].”⁵⁹⁸ There is a “plant of birth” (*šammu ša alādi*) in the epic of Etana, for which Etana elicits a bird’s help to obtain, as it is located in heaven.⁵⁹⁹ A “plant of life” is also found in Mesopotamian medical texts.⁶⁰⁰ The medicinal properties of this kind of plant are observed in the tale of the Sumerian king Lugalbanda (deified king of Uruk and father of Gilgamesh),

⁵⁹⁴ This is one of the generalizations about these trees that Bauks reaches: “they are not fully available to humans and instead are delegated from God” (ibid., 298).

⁵⁹⁵ Bühner, “Relative Dating,” 371. The significance of the difference between trees with divine properties and plants with divine properties is not discussed by Bühner. In the PN, it is the *fruit* of the tree that bestows extraordinary properties, and perhaps the difference between a fruit and an edible plant or herb with magical properties is negligible.

⁵⁹⁶ *Gilgamesh*, trans. Foster, 87, tablet XI, line 7.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 99, tablet XI, lines 319–20, 24.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 99, tablet XI, lines 305–6.

⁵⁹⁹ Cf. from Adapa, “‘the meal of life,’ ‘water of life,’ ‘meal of death,’ or ‘water of death’” (Bühner, “Relative Dating,” 371; cf. “Adapa,” trans. Dalley, 182–87).

⁶⁰⁰ Relevant examples are listed and translated in part in Kazuko Watanabe, “Lebenspendende und Todbringende Substanzen in Altmesopotamien,” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 25 (1994): 589–91; cf., e.g., Erich Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*, WVD OG 28 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1919), 73:30–1.

who recovers from illness with the help of a plant of life; it appears as a result of his supplication to the gods and grows by divine power.⁶⁰¹

In deciding whether the PN engages in these connotations between trees (or, more accurately stated, “plant life”) and divinity, it is essential to notice that the trees in the PN are characterized most often by their placement *within the garden*:

- Gen 2:8–9: And Yhwh God **planted a garden** in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 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 bad.**
- Gen 2:16: And Yhwh God commanded the man, “**You may freely eat of every tree of the garden**; but of the **tree of the knowledge of good and bad you shall not eat**, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”
- Gen 3:1–3: Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that Yhwh God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from **any tree in the garden**?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of **the trees in the garden**; but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of **the tree that is in the middle of the garden**, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.”
- Gen. 3:8 They heard the sound of Yhwh God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yhwh God **among the trees of the garden.**

These occurrences suggest that the meaning of the tree motif in the PN must be tightly connected to the fact that the trees are located in a *garden*.

The presence of beautiful and productive trees in a garden setting calls to mind imagery from the ancient Near East depicting temple and palace gardens.⁶⁰² According to Bauks, “Palaces and temples contained artificially arranged gardens, whose deeper cultic

⁶⁰¹ See lines 148ff. of “The Lugalbanda Poems,” in *Epics of Sumerian Kings: The Matter of Aratta*, trans. Herman L. J. Vanstiphout (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2003), 113ff. One might also note “the trees of the gods” in *Gilgamesh*, which are found at the grove at the western end of the world and described with the language that connotes precious gems (Foster, *Gilgamesh*, 74, tablet IX, line 124ff.). Cf. Ezek 24:11–9, which also features jewels in “the garden of god.”

⁶⁰² See, e.g., the examples cited in n. 571, especially the image of the temple of Amon surrounded by a park containing many trees, the relief from the palace of Ashurbanipal showing a wooded hill with an altar, and the wall painting showing the temple of Ishtar within a park of stylized trees and date palms.

meaning symbolized the fertility of the land as a whole.”⁶⁰³ Stordalen discusses the concept of cultic gardens at length, surveying the names of ancient Near Eastern temples for any reference to gardens, as well as looking at epigraphic evidence (such as wall reliefs from the palace of Assurbanipal).⁶⁰⁴ He concludes that cultic gardens existed but probably were not as common as is sometimes suggested.⁶⁰⁵ From the Hebrew Bible, he notes some examples of cult depictions within gardens (or groves of trees), both positive (Gen 12:6f.; 18:1–16; Judg 6:11–24, cf. 6:25–32) and negative (Hos 4:11–15a; 1 Kgs 14:23; Isa 1:29–30; 57:5 [56:9–57:13]; 65:3; 66:17).⁶⁰⁶ Perhaps most significant for the present context is the description of the inner court of the Solomonic Temple (1 Kings 6–7), for which “there are reports of extensive vegetation symbolism for doors and wall decoration” (cf. 1 Kgs 6:18ff; Ezek 41:18ff).⁶⁰⁷

The connection between the garden in the PN and the temple (i.e., “sacred space”) appears primarily in verses that are likely secondary. For example, it is supported by the description of the man’s role in the garden in Gen 2:15, which is probably a *Wiederaufnahme* (see 2.4.2). The man is intended “to work it and keep it” (עבדה ולשמרה), verbs that are also used together in the context of priestly work in the tabernacle (Num 3:8–9; 8:26; 18:7). Other possible parallels to tabernacle/temple imagery include the cherubim (3:24; cf. Exod 25:18–22; 26:31; 1 Kgs 6:23–28, 29); the eastern entrance to the garden (3:24); the clothing of the humans by God (3:21;⁶⁰⁸ cf. Moses clothing the priests in Exod 28:41; 29:8; 40:14; Lev 8:13, as well as the regulations regarding proper modesty in the context of cultic duties in Exod

⁶⁰³ Bauks, “Sacred Trees,” 295. See further description in *ibid.*, 296.

⁶⁰⁴ *Echoes of Eden*, 111–38.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 116. He also notes that they overlap with the “royal garden” motif (*ibid.*).

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 122–34.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁶⁰⁸ This is the only verse cited here that was not argued to be secondary in 3:21.

20:23; 28:42); the mention of “good gold” (Gen 2:12; cf. the covering of tabernacle furniture in gold in Ex 25:11) and precious stones (Gen 2:12, cf. Exod 25:7; 28:9, 20; 1 Chr 29:2).⁶⁰⁹ Some of these parallels would be insignificant on their own, but the presence of so many is suggestive.⁶¹⁰

The known connotations between trees and the divine then serve to further emphasize the garden as a place where Yhwh God is present. Furthermore, as noted, the fact that one tree is forbidden from the outset and the other is made unavailable at the end of the account again portrays a concern to emphasize the contrast between humanity and divinity.⁶¹¹ The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, then, might be said to be connected to divinity in the sense that they are embodiments of the ontological boundary between human and divine.⁶¹²

3.4.1.2.3. Pride

Pride is an issue sometimes expressed using the imagery of a tree, typically a “felled tree.”⁶¹³ Because pride has often been associated with the action of the humans in the PN in

⁶⁰⁹ Observations noted by Gordon Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies (Division A: The Period of the Bible; Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986)*, 19–25. The garden is also described as sacred space by Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, ch. 13, and Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 110. Further evidence for this view may be found in Jubilees 3:5–9, which describes Adam and Eve purifying themselves before they can enter the garden after having intercourse (noted by Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, ch. 13).

⁶¹⁰ The fact that the majority of these references are from either the rivers section (Gen 2:10–14) or the expulsion statement at the end of the story (3:24) suggests (in line with what was already suggested in 2.4.2) that they reflect the hand of a redactor interested in emphasizing this connection to the temple/tabernacle in the PN. As regards the original account, it may be that this author also intended connotations between trees and divinity, but it was done in a more subtle way. Either way, the addition serves to emphasize this connection.

⁶¹¹ Interestingly, Stordalen argues that the garden in Eden parallels gardens in ancient mythic stories that are located between the human and the supernatural world (*Echoes of Eden*, 161). This concept of the garden as a “boundary” location is quite fitting to a story in which the divine-human boundary is of prime importance.

⁶¹² The connection between creation and temple building may also be pertinent: “in view of temple building throughout the ancient Near East, creation was equated with building a house for the gods, or God, in a steady pattern of forming, or building, and filling, or provisioning” (Ingrid Faro, *Evil in Genesis: A Contextual Analysis of Hebrew Lexemes for Evil in the Book of Genesis* [Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021], 107).

⁶¹³ Bauks notes this as a theme that unites many of the occurrences of the tree motif (“Sacred Trees,” 298).

the history of this passage's interpretation,⁶¹⁴ it is important to address this connection briefly. This association can be seen, for example, in Ezekiel 31, in which trees are compared to powerful nations (v. 3), and the pride that the Pharaoh of Egypt takes in his greatness is stated as the cause his nation's downfall: "Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, I will give it into the hand of a mighty one of the nations ... I have cast it out."⁶¹⁵ The king's dream in Daniel 4 also features a towering tree that is felled (v. 4–17). In Daniel's explanation, it represents the king and his downfall if he does not modify his ways (v. 20–27).⁶¹⁶ Psa 37:35 depicts a "wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree," whose existence is blotted out (v. 36, "But he passed away, and behold, he was no more" [ויעבר והנה איננו]). Similar to this is a (satirical) description of the unrighteous in Job, whose "wickedness is broken like a tree" when they eventually die (24:20).

Although the connection to pride is common in tree imagery, it is unlikely that this association was intended in the use of the motif in the PN.⁶¹⁷ In this motif, the tree typically represents the person or entity that is judged (e.g., Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4; Pharaoh in Ezekiel 31). This is not the case in the PN, where there is no indication that the tree represents the humans. While the issue of pride does not seem to be in focus in the PN (the woman desired the fruit for its ability "to cause insight" [להשכיל]), the humans do overstep a

⁶¹⁴ See, e.g., the very influential interpretation of Augustine that pride was the cause of the "fall": "But it is most truly said... 'Pride is the beginning of all sin'" ("On Nature and Grace" 29.33, from *Genesis 1–11*, ed. Andrew Louth, ACCSOT [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001–2002], 77) and "For we who have fallen through pride could only return to God through humility" ("On Faith and the Creed" 4.6, from *ibid.*, 78).

⁶¹⁵ Note the overlap in this imagery with the Tower of Babel: this tree has "its top among the clouds" (cf. Gen 11:4, "a tower with its top in the heaven").

⁶¹⁶ Note that pride is not specifically mentioned in this passage, but the king's misdeeds can easily be understood as a result of pride: "atone for your sins with righteousness, and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that your prosperity may be prolonged" (v. 24 [English v. 27]). Note also the statement for which the king is judged in the following section ("Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" v. 27 [English: v. 30]).

⁶¹⁷ Contra Bauks, "Sacred Trees," 299.

boundary in their action, which represents a point of commonality with the prideful/unrighteous ones described by the “felled tree motif,” whose actions also cross a boundary when they claim an exalted status not authorized by Yhwh.

3.4.1.2.4. The Cosmic/World Tree

The concept of a “cosmic tree” or “world tree” with roots that reach into the netherworld is sometimes mentioned by interpreters in connection with trees in the garden in Eden.⁶¹⁸ This terminology is not without problems, as “world tree” or “cosmic tree” are not phrases that are evident in any ancient Near Eastern language.⁶¹⁹ Nevertheless, the concept seems to exist in the mythology of this region (e.g., the black *kiškanu* tree⁶²⁰ and *meš* tree⁶²¹). Also notable is the tree in Dan 4:7–13: “The powerful tree — around which the description of

⁶¹⁸ De Villiers interprets “the tree of life” in the PN as a cosmic tree (“Why on Earth? Genesis 2–3 and the Snake,” OTE 20 [2007]: 633), as does Gertz (*Das Erste Buch Mose*, 118).

⁶¹⁹ Bauks, “Sacred Trees,” 282.

⁶²⁰ This tree (the *giš-kin* tree in Sumerian; the *kiškanū* tree in Akkadian) is mentioned in a Sumerian-Babylonian incantation, which describes it growing in “a holy place” in Eridu and “stretching out above the Deep” (see CT 16.46, lines 183–86; English translation from “The Kishkanu of White Magic,” in *Most Ancient Verse*, ed. and trans. Thorkild Jacobsen and John A. Wilson [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963], 3; cf. the German translation and commentary in Volkert Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion* [HdO 15; Leiden: Brill, 1994], 145). Cf. Henrik Pfeiffer, “Der Baum in der Mitte des Gartens. Zum überlieferungsgeschichtlichen Ursprung der Paradieserzählung (Gen 2,4b–3,24), Teil II: Prägende Traditionen und theologische Akzente,” *ZAW* 113 (2001): 1–16.

There is also mention of this tree in lines 578–90 of “The Building of Ningirsu’s temple (Gudea, cylinders A and B)”: “They made the house grow as high as the hills, they made it float in the midst of heaven as a cloud, they made it lift its horns as a bull and they made it raise its head above all the lands, like the *gišgana* tree over the *abzu*. As the house had been made to lift its head so high as to fill the space between heaven and earth like the hills, it was like a luxuriant cedar growing among high grass (?); E-ninnu was decorated most alluringly among Sumer’s buildings” (J. A. Black, G. Cunningham, E. Fluckiger-Hawker, E. Robson, and G. Zólyomi, *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* [Oxford: 1998–], online: <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.7>).

⁶²¹ Another attested mythological tree is the *mes* (or *meš*) tree. This tree appears in “Enki and the World Order” (lines 166–81): “The noble captain of the lands, the son of Enlil, holds in his hand the sacred punt-pole, a *mes* tree ornamented in the Abzu which received the supreme powers in Eridu, the holy place, the most esteemed place” (J. A. Black, G. Cunningham, E. Fluckiger-Hawker, E. Robson, and G. Zólyomi, *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* [Oxford: 1998–], online: <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr113.htm>).

the reign is composed and the fall of a foreign king is threatened in Dan 4:7 — is drawn as the center of the world and, with this, the center of the former political power.”⁶²²

Certain qualities of the so-called “world tree” match with the trees of the PN. Gertz notes: “Hierzu fügen sich auch das Motiv der plötzlich auftauchenden Schlange (Gen 3, 1), die nach einem Teil der Gilgamesh-Tradition in den Wurzeln des Weltenbaums wohnt, sowie die Vorstellung vom Garten als Lebensraum der Vögel des Himmels und aller Wildtiere (Gen 2,19f*; vgl. Ez 17, 23; 31,6; Dan 4,7–9).”⁶²³ In addition, the association with fertile waters (cf. Gen 2:10–14) and sacred space (see 3.4.1.2.2) are other points in favor of this connection.

However, if this association was intended by the author, it is not made explicit in the way the tree is characterized in the PN. There is nothing mentioned about the roots of either tree or anything about birds and animals being sheltered by the trees. Though the snake has often been pictured as coiled among the branches of the tree in later artistic depictions of Genesis 3, there is no mention of its precise location in the text. The connections to fertile water and sacred space are from passages that are probably secondary (see 2.4.2 and 3.4.1.2.2). Therefore, rather than the tree(s) being specifically connected to a cosmic/world tree motif, it is better to understand them as more generally conveying the notion of the presence of divinity and embodying desirable divine qualities, as will be further argued below based on an analysis of the tree’s description within the PN.

3.4.1.3. *Conclusions*

Based on this analysis, a few significant conclusions can be stated regarding the symbolic use of trees in the PN. First, a specific relationship to the concept of wisdom is unlikely. The use of a tree motif to refer to wisdom, as it appears elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, is too different in its contexts and meanings to add significantly to the understanding of

⁶²² Bauks, “Sacred Trees,” 288.

⁶²³ *Das erste Buch*, 118.

the trees in the PN. Second, a connection to pride is also unlikely, given the difference in the referent behind the symbolism. Third, based on both evidence within the Hebrew Bible and outside of it, as well as observations about the PN itself, it is best to understand the trees in the PN in two ways: (1) they originally expressed a connection to divinity, and (2) this connection to divinity was further emphasized through secondary additions that depict the garden as “sacred space” (Gen 2:10–15; 3:24).

Possibly, the wide-ranging appearance of a tree motif connected to divinity was adopted by the author of the PN to create the “scenery” for his narrative in a way that emphasized the tension between the human and divine. This may be hinted at in the repeated mention of the trees being located in a “garden,” a site known to have connections with cultic activity (in certain settings).⁶²⁴ The trees embody divine qualities that represent markers between human nature and divine nature. This accords with Bauks’ comment: “Often the tree-motif deals with the *experience of difference between humans and God*...with the tree situated in a border area or in a location to which God can refuse human entrance.”⁶²⁵ The fact that the trees were commonly associated with gods, and, as Bauks suggests, with the knowledge of the distinction between humans and gods, makes them the perfect choice of symbol to underscore the ontological tension permeating the narrative. By eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, humans are one critical step closer to crossing the boundary between human and divine, a boundary that is necessary to maintain (within the understanding of the non-P primeval history). The trees embody desired divine qualities and underscore the reality of difference between gods and humans; in this way, they function in the PN less as a “wisdom motif,” than as a “divinity motif.”⁶²⁶

⁶²⁴ See, e.g., n. 571 for examples of this in the iconography of the ancient Near East.

⁶²⁵ Bauks, “Sacred Trees,” 300, emphasis mine.

⁶²⁶ The fact that these two qualities function as a theme of the narrative makes it less likely that the original account did not contain the tree of life, as argued above (see 2.4.2; 3.4.1.1.1 and n. 522).

3.4.2. The Snake

The snake, like the tree, was used as a motif in the ancient world in a broad range of contexts, making it difficult to narrow down the possibilities and suggest what the author of the PN meant to convey in his use of this animal. In the following section, significant aspects of the snake as it is described in the PN will be considered first. Based on the conclusions of this analysis, various possibilities for understanding the snake motif in the PN will be considered, including the possibility that it is a wisdom motif. The section will conclude with a suggestion on how to understand the symbolic value of the snake in the PN.

3.4.2.1. *The Snake in the Paradise Narrative*

The following section will analyze descriptions of the snake in the PN. Three notable aspects will be considered: (1) the designation of the snake as ערום, (2) its comparison to the “beasts of the field” (חית השדה), and (3) the woman’s statement that the snake “deceived” (נשא) her.

3.4.2.1.1. ערום

The snake (נחש)⁶²⁷ is introduced with a *vav* non-consecutive and is described as ערום (“crafty, shrewd, clever”) through a grammatical construction that expresses a situation that *has been* the case and *continues to be* the case (Gen 3:1).⁶²⁸ In other words, the serpent “‘had been (and still was) more shrewd than every animal of the field’ ... He was by nature

⁶²⁷ Charlesworth, in his very comprehensive survey of the symbolic meanings of the serpent in the ancient world, gives no less than sixteen negative meanings of the serpent and (at least) twenty-nine positive meanings (*The Good and Evil Serpent*, 196–264). He asserts that “positive serpent symbolism was much more prevalent in the ancient Near East (although not in the religion of Israel, especially after Hezekiah). The examples of positive serpent symbolism markedly outnumber those of negative symbolism” (*ibid.*, 220).

Regarding serpent symbolism in the Hebrew Bible, Stordalen explains, “Biblical Hebrew literature features two snakes as particular symbols – the copper serpent (Num 21:6.7.9; 2 Kgs 18:4) and the serpent staff of Moses (Exod 4:3; 7:15)” (*Echoes of Eden*, 238), neither of which seem to match the symbolism of the snake in the PN. The copper snake is associated with healing in Numbers (and maybe with magic; see Victor Hurowitz, “Healing and Hissing Snakes – Listening to Numbers 21:4–9,” *Scriptura* 87 [2004], 278–87) and with divinity in 2 Kgs 18:4. The references in Exod 4:3; 7:15 seem to have either a magical connotation or a divinity connotation (Yhwh’s power displayed as supreme over the gods of the Egyptians), or both.

⁶²⁸ Zevit, *What Really Happened*, ch. 15 (the formula is *vav* + new subject + past tense הִיָּה + participle).

preeminent among the animals with regard to a particular virtue highly esteemed by Israelites who appreciated ‘wisdom.’”⁶²⁹ This description of the snake begins a new section and provides a contrast to the previous statement about the humans being “naked and not ashamed” (2:25). The wordplay between ערום and ערומים emphasizes the distinction between the immaturity of the humans (symbolized by their nakedness) and the knowledge of the snake.

As is well-known, the word ערום carries a mixture of connotations. In its appearances in Proverbs, it is used in a positive sense to describe someone who is “sensible, prudent, resourceful, or clever ...contrasted with the foolish or simple individual.”⁶³⁰ The word “is used to positively depict the mature knowledge of the wise one.”⁶³¹ However, given the way previous motifs (i.e., wisdom, the tree) have been shown to appear in different ways in Proverbs than they appear in the PN, one must be cautious about adopting this positive definition.

The use of the word in some of its other occurrences carries a less overtly positive connotation. In Job, “ערום seems to designate something more like craftiness (e.g., 15:5) that God can frustrate (5:18).”⁶³² Carr concludes, “the ערום /‘cleverness’ of the snake can be understood to be an adult sophistication that, at times, can be viewed negatively.”⁶³³ If the verb form of the word (ערם) is considered as well, further negative connotations are possible. It appears in Ex 21:4 to describe the “cunning” of a murderer. The deception of the Gibeonites (Josh 9:3–13), which results in them being cursed by Joshua (9:23), is described

⁶²⁹ Ibid.

⁶³⁰ Day, “Wisdom in the Garden of Eden,” 116. See, e.g., Prov 12:16; 12:23; 13:16; 14:8, 15; 14:18; 22:3; 27:12.

⁶³¹ Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 117.

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ Ibid., 117–18.

by using this word (ויעשו גם־המה בערמה) (9:4). Saul’s negative characterization of David in 1 Sam 23:22–23 describes him “very cunning” (ערום יערם). As there are both positive and negative associations with this word, a final determination on the sense intended in this passage must wait until other aspects of the snake have been considered.

Either way, the fact that the snake is ערום marks it as an influencer — one who can use carefully chosen words to impact the actions of others. Although Zevit overemphasizes the positive connotations of the word from Proverbs as applying to the use of the word in PN,⁶³⁴ his suggestion that this characterization of the snake implies complexity and indirectness in the speech that follows is insightful: “By referring to the serpent in this way, the author is saying ‘Reader, beware! Listener, beware! Attend carefully to the use and misuse of language in the story that is about to follow. Scrutinize closely what is said and what is omitted.’”⁶³⁵

As noted by Zevit above, the serpent’s characterization as ערום would suggest that its words are chosen very carefully and with a particular intention in mind. The serpent’s words in Gen 3:5 suggest it has divine knowledge; it knows (at least in regards to the prohibition on the tree) what “God knows” (ידע אלהים). God’s motivation for prohibiting the tree of the knowledge of good and bad is unclear up until this point in the narrative, but now the serpent reveals what was a divine mystery. Rather than denying the serpent’s words, Yhwh God confirms the truth of the serpent’s words later in the narrative. It was right both in the sense of the humans gaining a godlike quality (3:22a, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and bad”) and also in the sense that Yhwh God was concerned about the

⁶³⁴ Zevit suggests that those with ערום “conceal what they feel and what they know (Prov 12:16, 23). They esteem knowledge and plan how to use it in achieving their objectives (Prov 13:16; 14:8, 18); they do not believe everything that they hear (Prov 14:15); and they know how to avoid trouble and punishment (Prov 22:3; 27:12). In sum, they are shrewd and calculating, willing to bend and torture the limits of acceptable behavior but not to cross the line into illegalities. They may be unpleasant and purposely misleading in speech but are not out-and-liars (Josh 9:4; 1 Sam 23:22). They know how to read people and situations and how to turn their readings to advantage. A keen wit and a rapier tongue are their tools” (*What Really Happened*, ch.15).

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

divine-human boundary. This concern is made explicit when the humans are expelled from the garden in order to keep them from gaining a second godlike quality, eternal life (3:22b: “Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever...”). In line with this, Charlesworth notes, “The supernatural knowledge of the serpent, reflected in Genesis 3, aligns it with the gods.”⁶³⁶ Although its possession of this specialized knowledge is clear, the serpent’s motivations in his discussion with the woman are not apparent. Whether his intentions are positive or negative is better apprehended by looking further into the narrative (see 3.4.2.1.3).

3.4.2.1.2. A Beast of the Field?

Further complicating the description of the snake is that, while it is distinguished by its intelligence, it is said to be wise “*in comparison to the beasts of the field*” (מכל חית השדה) [Gen 3:1].⁶³⁷ The text specifies this description even more: these are the animals “that the Yhwh God made” (אשר עשה יהוה אלהים [3:1]), implying that they are also the animals that were named by the man.⁶³⁸ This statement functions to connect this next episode to what already happened (2:19–20) and also seems to imply that the snake is one of the animals created in the previous unit. It is a reminder of the snake’s status: it may possess a certain measure of cleverness, but it is not divine. It was created by God and named by the man.⁶³⁹ Further, perhaps the fact that the snake is specifically described as created by God may be a subtle hint that the humans should not be accepting its alternate version of reality (“you will

⁶³⁶ Charlesworth, *The Good and the Evil Serpent*, 294.

⁶³⁷ See discussion of how to translate the מן in n. 879, n. 891 and 4.5.1.1.2.1.

⁶³⁸ This implied subordination to the man is the basis of Stordalen’s contention regarding the snake’s motivation. As the animal closest to being a human counterpart, it is jealous of the human who took the role it might have had (*Echoes of Eden*, 239). While there is a certain logic to this suggestion, the text states nothing specific regarding the snake’s motivations.

⁶³⁹ The contradictory nature of the snake’s characterization is also noted by De Villiers: “In Jewish monotheism, Gen 3 deprives the snake from its divine-like powers ... by calling it an ‘animal of the field that the Lord God made’, yet it maintains supernatural abilities, especially its insight into God’s plan. ... The serpent appears to be natural and supernatural simultaneously. However, when it is cursed, it becomes less than a creature, the most despised of all” (“Why on Earth?”, 636).

not die” [3:4, לא־מות תמתון]) over Yhwh God’s statement (“you will surely die” [2:17, מות תמות]).

3.4.2.1.3. נשא

It is also important to consider the woman’s description of what the serpent has done: “the serpent deceived me” (הנחש השיאני [Gen 3:13]). This statement is tacitly affirmed by Yhwh God in that he does not contradict her description (3:14–15). The verb used here, נשא, is used in other contexts in which someone is caused to be deceived (note the causative sense of the *hiphil* stem) by an attitude or statement that stands in direct contradiction to the statement or action of another entity.⁶⁴⁰ For example, the Assyrian delegation’s message to Hezekiah: “Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria” (2 Kgs 19:19/Isa 37:10; see also 2 Kgs 19:10; 2 Chr 32:15; Isa 36:14).⁶⁴¹ In Obadiah, it is said of Edom, “Your proud heart has deceived (נשא) you...you say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’” (v. 3). In the next verse God contradicts this statement: “‘Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down,’ declares Yhwh” (v. 4, cf. Jer 49:16). Opposing statements are also apparent in Jer 37:8–9: “And the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against this city. They shall capture it and burn it with fire. Thus says Yhwh, Do not deceive (נשא) yourselves, saying, ‘The Chaldeans will surely go away from us,’ for they will not go away.” In other words, this verb describes the competition of two contrasting realities.

This same kind of contradiction is found in the PN when comparing God’s statement to the snake’s statement: God says, “You will die” (מות תמות [Gen 2:17]), and the serpent says, “You will not die” (לא־מות תמתון [3:4]). The characterization of the snake’s action with

⁶⁴⁰ Cf. *HALOT* 2:728.

⁶⁴¹ Note also the use of the verb in connection to false prophets in Jer 29:8.

the word נשא suggests that it was *this statement* (regarding the humans dying or not dying) that was a lie, for its other statements proved true (see 3.4.2.1.1) and therefore could not be considered deception by the woman. This supports the argument that death really *was* a consequence of eating the fruit.⁶⁴² It is part of the portrayal of the snake’s “cleverness” that its words are a mix of truth and lies and that, at least initially, its statement regarding the (lack of a) death penalty seems to be confirmed.⁶⁴³

The alternate version of reality presented by the snake to the woman (and, as is implied, the man who is “with her” [Gen 3:6]) called into question the correctness (the “good[טוב]-ness”) of the world order established by Yhwh God in the context of the garden. This view of the serpent concurs with Blenkinsopp’s connection of the snake to the “wise counsellors” in the Succession History.⁶⁴⁴ “Wise” characters in this narrative seem to have the ability to formulate alternatives to open up new “ways” of approaching situations. Their advice is shown to be questionable when it leads to the ruin of those who listen to them. For example, Amnon gets what he wants in the short term by following the advice Jonadab, a “very wise man” מאד (איש חכם), but his despicable actions result in pain for himself and others, not to mention eventually leading to his death (2 Sam 13:1–29).⁶⁴⁵ Similarly, the woman accepts the serpent’s interpretation of eating from the tree as “good” and then takes an action upon this basis to create a new, desired reality. The consequences of her choice show that she did indeed gain the “insight” she desired (positive results include an advance in the maturity

⁶⁴² See 3.3.3.2.4.3 above (especially n. 522), where it is argued, with Blum and Walton, that death *was* a consequence of eating the fruit, contra Schmid, “Die Unteilbarkeit,” 34.

⁶⁴³ Note, however, that the woman speaks of the serpent deceiving her even before the curses/consequences are given, suggesting that Yhwh’s arrival made his intention to judge the humans clear (see n. 667 below).

⁶⁴⁴ Blenkinsopp describes, “Not only does [the Succession Narrative] share with the Genesis text the literary characteristics mentioned above, including brief and vivid dialogue, but the same themes recur impressively in both. Perhaps the most prominent of these is the theme of ambiguous wisdom represented by the counsel of wise or seemingly wise counsellors whose advice leads to ruin and death” (*Creation, Uncreation, Re-creation*, 59).

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid. Other examples listed above in 3.3.4.

of the humans and the development of culture), but the expulsion of the humans from the garden sends them out of the presence of Yhwh and causes them to lose the opportunity to gain eternal life.

The fact that the serpent's action is intended to be evaluated negatively is confirmed when it is cursed as a direct result of its action. Note what precedes the curse and the curse itself: "The woman said, 'The serpent *deceived me*' (Gen 3:13, הַנָּחָשׁ הִשָּׂאֵנִי, emphasis mine), followed by Yhwh God's statement: "*Because you have done this*, cursed are you" (Gen 3:14, כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת אֹרֵר אֶתְּךָ, emphasis mine). Yahweh God curses the snake as a direct result of its deception, confirming the narrator's negative evaluation on its action. By applying this conclusion to the discussion of עָרוֹם above, it becomes clear that the serpent's "cleverness" is not presented as unambiguously positive.

The fact that the snake's action is described negatively does not suggest that the story also reflects negatively on the knowledge of good and bad as a quality. As previously discussed, the knowledge of good and bad, made available by the human's acceptance of the serpent's statements, is not inherently positive or negative; instead, the one who obtains it has the power to make decisions that can result in both positive and negative outcomes for the created order. It is only prohibited to humans in order to preserve the divine-human boundary. The implications of these observations for a more comprehensive understanding of the snake as a motif in the PN will be further considered below.

3.4.2.2. *The Snake Motif*

The observations above suggest that although the snake is cast somewhat ambiguously as "clever" (עָרוֹם) in the PN, further analysis of the description of its actions suggests a negative slant on it as a character. This will be further considered in light of possible associations with a "snake motif" from other works. As with the analysis of the tree motif, possible connections to wisdom will be considered first. This is certainly warranted,

given the description of the snake as ערומ. Connotations with immortality will also be considered, for, although the PN does not directly connect the snake with immortality, it is the cause (in the sense of initiating the course of events) of the humans' loss of eternal life (cf. the snake in the epic of Gilgamesh). Finally, the snake's possession of divine knowledge suggests that possible associations with divinity should also be considered.⁶⁴⁶

3.4.2.2.1. Wisdom

The connection between snakes and wisdom is commonly noted. John Day, for example, asserts, “snakes themselves are seen to represent understanding in the ancient world.”⁶⁴⁷ Although some examples of this conception of snakes in the ancient world exist, the evidence from the ancient Near East is far from overwhelming. The association appears to be the strongest in Egypt.⁶⁴⁸ For example, in the Coffin Texts from Egypt a primeval serpent says, “I extended everywhere, in accordance with what was to come into existence, I knew,

⁶⁴⁶ Two other uses of a “snake motif” are commonly mentioned but will not be assessed below in light of a lack of sufficient evidence within the PN itself to support the connection:

1. Divination: The association of the snake with divination is mainly based on other Hebrew words with the same root as נחש (“snake”) that refer to divination (there are also associations between snakes and magic more broadly; see the discussion of Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent*, 244). Zevit notes this connection in reference to Gen 44:5 (נחש) and Num 24:1 (נחש) but makes no further speculations about its significance (*What Really Happened*, ch. 15). Duane E. Smith devotes an article to this topic. On the basis of this lexical connection and the prominence of the snake in Mesopotamian omen texts, he determines that the knowledge of good and bad refers to knowledge of good and bad *fortune* (“The Divining Snake: Reading Genesis 3 in the Context of Mesopotamian Ophiomancy,” *JBL* 134 [2015]: 31–49). However, there is little contextual support for this argument. Smith does not discuss how the accuracy of this definition is shown in the events that follow the obtaining of the knowledge of good and bad, and there is nothing in the consequences that come after eating the fruit to suggest that the humans now know anything about divination.
2. Fertility: According to Heinz-Josef Fabry, “In Mesopotamia the serpent was one of the chthonic deities and therefore is depicted frequently on boundary stones (*kudurru*). This use already suggests an association with fertility, an aspect that becomes totally dominant in the motif (found from Ur I on) of the twining serpent” (“נחש,” *TDOT* 9:362). Fabry also notes evidence of the connection between snakes and the fertility-goddess of Canaan (idid., 363). In addition to this evidence from Mesopotamia and Canaan, Charlesworth lists numerous examples from Greek mythology and archaeology that connect serpents to fertility (*The Good and Evil Serpent*, 222–24). John Day, rightly, rejects this connection outright, stating, “there is no particular reason to find that meaning in Genesis 3; the knowledge of good and evil which the serpent tempts the first humans to acquire is quite unrelated to the fertility cult” (“The Serpent in the Garden of Eden,” 47).

⁶⁴⁷ Day, “Wisdom in the Garden of Eden,” 116.

⁶⁴⁸ See Heinz-Josef Fabry, “נחש,” *TDOT* 9:364. For an argument that the serpent of the PN as a symbol of Egyptian wisdom, see Knut Holter, “The Serpent in Eden as Symbol of Israel’s Political Enemies: a Yahwistic Criticism of the Solomonic Foreign Policy?,” *SJOT* 1 (1990): 106–12. See also n. 45 above.

as the One, alone, majestic, the indwelling Soul, the most potent of the gods.”⁶⁴⁹ Although the Hebrew Bible makes no specific connection between serpents and wisdom outside of the PN, one can note Jesus’s famous instruction to his disciples in the New Testament to be “wise as serpents” (Matt 10:16). Charlesworth has a section on serpents and wisdom, but he focuses mainly on anatomical and behavioral aspects of the snake that have led it to be associated with wisdom without much discussion of particular texts or iconography.⁶⁵⁰ In an earlier section of the book he does mention that, in Greece, Athena’s wisdom and might in battle was often represented through a depiction of serpents on her armor.⁶⁵¹

In the PN there is no explicit connection between wisdom and the snake. The snake is introduced as one who possesses knowledge in contrast to the immature humans (ערום [Gen 3:1] vs. ערומים [2:25]) and it is the herald of the availability of new knowledge for the humans — specifically, a knowledge that will make them “like god(s)” (3:5). In this sense, it is connected to wisdom in a tangential way because this knowledge provides the opportunity for humanity to act with wisdom (3.3.4), but this knowledge cannot be said to be wisdom itself. In being identified as ערום and promoting the obtaining of knowledge to the humans, the snake is more directly associated with the knowledge of good and bad than with wisdom.

⁶⁴⁹ Coffin Texts, IV, Spell 321, trans. R. T. Rundle Clarke, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* [New York: Grove Press, 1960], 51. Cf. Karen Joines, “The Serpent in Gen 3,” *ZAW* 87 (1975): 4. There is also a pyramid text (Utterance 510, §1146) in which the creator spirit says, “I am the overflow of the Primeval Flood, He who emerged from the waters. I am the ‘Provider of Attributes’ serpent with its many coils, I am the Scribe of the Divine Book which says what has been and effects what is yet to be” (trans. R. T. Rundle Clarke, in *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* [New York: Grove Press, 1960], 47). Cf. the translation of Samuel A. B. Mercer: “N. is the pouring down of rain; he came forth as the coming into being of water; for he is the *Nḥb-kꜣ.w*-serpent with the many coils; N. is the scribe of the divine book, who says what is and causes to exist what is not” (*The Pyramid Texts* [New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1952], 195). This text is also summarized, though not fully translated, in James P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, ed. Peter Der Manuelian (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 352, where it is categorized as Spell 360 (Pepi I’s Spell 449).

⁶⁵⁰ Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent*, 246–47.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 228 (see figure 52).

3.4.2.2.2. Immortality

Immortality is another notable association with the snake:⁶⁵² the ability to shed their skin and (seemingly) rejuvenate is a natural reason for this association. The “plant of life” was famously stolen from Gilgamesh by a snake, who then sheds its skin as it slides away.⁶⁵³ The connection is also apparent in the epic of Adapa, in which a serpent god, Ningishzida, (along with one other god) offers Adapa “the bread of (eternal) life” and “the water of (eternal) life.”⁶⁵⁴ From Egypt, “in the Pyramid Texts, the dead king is awakened and his odor is like that of a special serpent; he does not rot.”⁶⁵⁵ In support of this connection, the snake in the PN is the cause of the human’s loss of the potential for immortality, which mirrors the use of the snake motif in the epic of Gilgamesh. However, this connection is somewhat tangential, for the snake itself is not directly related to immortality and does not mention anything regarding immortality in his speech with the woman.

3.4.2.2.3. Divinity

Like trees, snakes were associated with divinity. Archeological finds from ancient Palestine support the assumption that snake worship was prevalent in this region across many time periods.⁶⁵⁶ From texts, the Sumerian snake god Ningishzida, already mentioned above,

⁶⁵² See, e.g., Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 118.

⁶⁵³ Foster, *Gilgamesh*, tablet XI, lines 329–31.

⁶⁵⁴ See “Adapa,” trans. Stephanie Dalley, 187.

⁶⁵⁵ Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent*, 261. See Utterance 576, §1502b–1504a, in *The Pyramid Texts*, trans. Samuel A. B. Mercer, 237.

⁶⁵⁶ The evidence for this is covered in detail in Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent*, ch. 3. To give a few of many examples, he mentions a clay vessel with an attached serpent that suggests a serpent cult at Shechem (see Ernst Sellin, “Die Ausgrabung von Sichem,” *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 50 [1927]: 205–11, plate 20:e); a plaque with what seems to be a serpent goddess on it (also from Shechem) (see description in James B. Pritchard, *Palestinian Figures in Relation to Certain Goddesses Known Through Literature* [New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1943], 27, no. 240); a small bronze serpent found at Gezer that is thought to be a “votive model” of a larger snake idol (R. A. Stewart Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer* [London, 1912], vol. 2, 399, fig. 488); snakes pictured with the goddess Asherah on a plaque at Gezer (Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer*, vol. 3, plate 221:9), and a cult stand with two snakes on either side of a goddess at Hazor (Yigael Yadin, et al., *Hazor II: An Account of the Second Season of Excavations, 1956* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1960], plate 181).

is noteworthy. F. A. M. Wiggerman argues that this god was part of a group of several other gods associated with “Transtigridian” region who all share an association with snakes.⁶⁵⁷

Speculating on the development of this association between snakes and the divine, De Villiers states, “snakes were observed as being ‘different’ from other creatures: they could live under the ground, they were quick, humans could not stop them, and they (seemingly) rejuvenate. Consequently, snakes came to be regarded as chthonic deities, their almost supernatural attributes making them suitable par excellence to protect the interests of the gods.”⁶⁵⁸ The association with divinity is also found in the development of the bronze snake from Num 21:8–9 into a cult object (2 Kgs 18:4) and may also be behind the symbolism of the serpent staff of Moses (Exod 4:3; 7:15).

An association with divinity for the snake in the PN could be argued on the basis of it possessing divine knowledge (see 3.4.2.1.1 above). If a connection to divinity is intended for the snake in the PN, it would not suggest that the snake is divine in and of itself;⁶⁵⁹ rather, as a symbol that was often connected to the gods, it would contribute to the author’s creation of this scenario in which the divine-human boundary is considered.

3.4.2.3. Conclusions

In its tangential connection to knowledge and (probably) divinity, the snake is similar to the trees in pointing to qualities possessed by divinity that are lacking in humanity. This

Karen Randolph Joines also describes bronze serpents that have been discovered (similar to the bronze serpent in 2 Kgs 18:1ff) (“The Bronze Serpent in the Israelite Cult,” *JBL* 87 [1968]: 245). These include two from Megiddo (Gordon Loud, *Megiddo II, Seasons of 1935–39: Plates* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948], pl. 240: 1, 4), one at Gezer (R. A. S. Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer, 1902–1905 and 1907–1909*, vol. II [London: John Murray, 1912], 399, fig. 488), and two in the “‘holy of holies’ of the Area H temple at Hazor” (Yigael Yadin, et al., *Hazor III–IV: Plates* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961], pl. 339: 5–6). Schroer also gives an example of a goddess pictured with a snake on a golden pendant from Ugarit, ca. 1400 B.C.E. (“Ancient Near Eastern Pictures,” 150, fig. 30).

⁶⁵⁷ F. A. M. Wiggerman, “Transtigridian Snake Gods,” in *Sumerian Gods and Their Representatives*, ed. Irving L. Finkel and Markham J. Geller (Groningen: Styx Publications, 1997), 33–54.

⁶⁵⁸ De Villiers, “Why on Earth?,” 636.

⁶⁵⁹ This is especially unlikely given that the snake is compared to other animals and not to gods (Gen 3:1).

clarifies why many questions about the snake's background and motivations are not answered (e.g., How can it talk? Why does it want the humans to disobey Yhwh God?): the story is not concerned with the snake as an individual but rather as a symbol.⁶⁶⁰ Its association with divine traits made it the perfect choice for the character who would invite the woman to attempt to cross the divine-human boundary. Its "clever (ערום)-ness" contrasted with the human's "naked (ערם)-ness" highlights the difference between divinity and humanity, and the role that it plays in the story is negative in the sense that it encourages the humans to cross this forbidden boundary.⁶⁶¹

It should be noted that the negative portrayal of the snake and its role in deceiving the humans does not take away from the emphasis on human responsibility. In other texts that use the verb נשא to describe a human (or entity) contradicting a statement made by God, there is a call to the listener to adhere to what they have been told by Yhwh God (e.g., 2 Kgs 18:29; 19:6; Jer 29:8; 37:9). The humans do not do this, but, instead, they listen to the call of the serpent to enter a new reality in which they will steer the world on the basis of their own interpretation of good and bad.⁶⁶² The consequences of this decision and the many unfortunate ways that humans use their new power are made clear in the continuation of the non-P primeval history.

3.4.3. The Woman

The woman is another potential wisdom motif. To what extent this accurately describes the function of the woman as a character within the PN will be considered in the following section. This analysis will begin with observations regarding the woman's role in

⁶⁶⁰ A connection to the serpent as a "motif" elsewhere is not clear enough to claim that this is a true motif.

⁶⁶¹ Furthermore, its negative action results in it being cursed and creates the opportunity for the author to add an etiological explanation for the fact that snakes lack legs (Gen 3:14).

⁶⁶² Cf. Albertz, "Ihr werdet sein wie Gott," 97.

the PN, followed by consideration of possible “wisdom motif” associations. On the basis of this analysis, conclusions will be drawn about the woman as a character in this narrative, particularly about her role as the *main* character in the conversation with the snake.

3.4.3.1. *The Woman in the Paradise Narrative*

A prominent issue in determining the significance of the woman within the PN is to understand why she is the one who converses with the snake. Up until this point, the man has been on center stage. Although the previous section described the creation of the woman, it is only the man’s perspective on this that is reported (Gen 2:23). Furthermore, as noted above, the role the woman fulfills is defined in relation to the man (עֶזְרָא כְּנִגְדּוֹ [2:18, 20]; see 3.3.3.2.4.3). Following the dialogue with the serpent, the focus returns to the man; he is the one whom Yhwh God looks for and the one whom he converses with first in the garden (3:9).⁶⁶³ When the woman’s new name is revealed, it is not determined by her, but rather by her husband (3:20). None of this is surprising given the cultural norms out of which the text came, but it does beg the question of why the woman is given such a prominent role at the beginning of Genesis 3. The reader is informed that her husband was “with her” (עִמָּהּ, 3:6), presumably throughout the conversation with the snake, and yet he does not participate at all in the dialogue. The lack of an obvious reason for her role in this scene causes one to wonder whether she is featured merely as an attempt by the author to shift the responsibility for eating the fruit away from the male protagonist.

While the shifting of blame may be part of the reason for the author’s choice, there are probably other reasons why the female is at the forefront in this moment. As was shown in the analysis of the tree and the snake, it is important to observe the specific characterizations given in the narrative. The woman’s initial designation is as the “helper

⁶⁶³ Zevit notes the similarity with Ruth 2:7: “when Boaz comes to his Bethlehem field to check on the progress of his harvesters during the late afternoon, he speaks only with his appointed headman” (*What Really Happened*, ch.16).

counterpart” of the man (עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ [Gen 2:18]). She is not just a “helper counterpart,” but *the* “helper counterpart” (i.e., the only one to be found in created order [cf. 2:20]). As stated above, she is defined in relation to the other human, the one whom she was created to help. The intended help seems to be of a protective, or even “military,” nature.⁶⁶⁴ In the context of the man’s assignment from Yhwh God (“to work [עָבַד] the ground” [2:5]; cf. 2:15 [secondary]), it is likely that she was intended to provide essential assistance in this task. Although her role does not necessarily indicate a subservient status, as discussed above, the fact that she is named by the man implies that she is not only defined in relation to him but also that he has some level of authority over her.

It is then all the more striking that the woman is the one who converses with the snake. This conversation contains many confusing and notable elements,⁶⁶⁵ but what is most significant for the present purposes is that the woman accepts the snake’s explanation of Yhwh God’s command (and the implicit suggestion to take the fruit). Her desire for fruit that can “cause insight” (הַשְׂכִּיל) may not be problematic, but, in her acceptance of the serpent’s words, she rejects the words of Yhwh God and essentially opts for a different world order. The man joins her in this choice, tacitly eating the fruit that must not be eaten if the order set up by Yhwh God in the garden, with its clear divine-human boundary, is to be maintained. The consequences of the woman’s action — recognition of a shameful state (“nakedness”) (Gen 3:7), the curses/consequences (3:16–19), and expulsion from the garden (3:22–24) — are the opposite of what would be expected from the actions of a “helper” who is intended to guard and keep one from shame.⁶⁶⁶ In her desire for knowledge the woman makes a choice

⁶⁶⁴ See 3.3.3.2.4.3 above.

⁶⁶⁵ See the many questions elicited by this conversation (as well as the rest of the narrative) in Carr, *The Formation of Genesis 1–11*, 30–2.

⁶⁶⁶ It could be argued that listeners/readers of this account in the ancient world would have seen it as a positive change that the humans recognized their state of shame (Turner-Smith, “Naked but not Ashamed,” 445–46; see 3.3.3.2.3.2). Be that as it may, it is an ironic shift for a “helper” to instigate the experience of shame.

that causes her to lose the role of “helper counterpart,” her assigned role (for better or worse) in the order established by Yhwh God in the narrative.

That a problem in roles has occurred is further emphasized when the humans are confronted by Yhwh God. First, in Gen 3:8, 10, “they hear the sound/voice” (וישמעו את־קול) of God in the garden, and they are afraid.⁶⁶⁷ Using similar language, God confronts the man with the fact that he obeyed his wife (i.e., “because you listened to the voice of your wife” כִּי־אָשְׁתְּךָ [שמעת) לקול] (3:17). The fact that this is the first charge against the man suggests that a key issue in what happened had to do with a problem of hierarchy. The man obeyed the woman — he listened to the new version of reality that originated with the “clever/crafty” snake rather than “listening to the voice” of Yhwh God. The humans’ hearing of Yhwh God coming in the garden is described with similar terminology (קול + שמע) and calls to mind that they have not obeyed (שמעת לקול) Yhwh God’s command. Instead of accepting the regulations laid out by the one who created him, the man accepts an alternative plan from those who should not have had authority over him: the woman and the snake, who were both created by Yhwh and named by the man.⁶⁶⁸

The man’s obedience to his wife, and, correspondingly, to the snake, is a disruption of the order established in the garden.⁶⁶⁹ In the new order of existence, the woman will be

⁶⁶⁷ There is a good argument to be made that what is portrayed here is a storm theophany. The popular translation “in the cool of the day” follows ancient translations like the LXX and the Vulgate, but it is more of a guess than an actual reflection of the Hebrew text (Jeffrey Niehaus, “In the Wind of the Storm: Another Look at Genesis III 8,” *VT* 44 [1994]: 263). A cognate word to ׀ from Akkadian (*ūmu*) suggests that ׀ could be read here as “storm” (ibid., 264). See another more recent argument for this translation in Douglas K. Stuart, “‘The Cool of the Day’ (Gen 3:8) and ‘The Way He Should Go’ (Prov. 22:6),” *BSac* 171 (2014): 259–73.

⁶⁶⁸ In this way, the woman may parallel later women of the ancestral narratives who offer their husbands “alternative” courses of action. Note also other examples of the idiom שמע + preposition + קל: Gen 16:2 (Abram listens to Sarai’s plan to have children through Hagar [שמע + ל + קל]); Gen 21:12 (Abraham listening to Sarai regarding sending Hagar and Ishmael away [שמע + ב + קל]); and Gen 27:8, 13 (Rebekkah convincing Jacob to trick Isaac [שמע + ב + קל]). Contrast this with God’s blessing on Abraham because he “obeyed” his “voice” in Gen 22:18 (שמעת בקלי; cf. Gen 26:5).

⁶⁶⁹ This matches J. T. Walsh’s description of the situation, in which the order “God, man, woman, animals” was established in ch. 2, but then ch. 3 “introduces a serious disturbance to that order” (“Genesis 2:4b–

characterized in a different way — as the “mother of the living” (see 3.3.3.2.4.3 above). Her new name confirms her new role, a role that will come with pain and suffering (Gen 3:16a) but also a certain amount of power. Jaime Clark-Soles makes an interesting observation in this vein: “when cursing the serpent, God speaks not of enmity between the serpent and the man’s seed, or between the serpent and the man and woman’s seed, but patently between the serpent and Eve’s seed...In antiquity (and today), seed is typically associated with male generative power; yet in Genesis, Eve has seed, conceives, bears, and sustains life.”⁶⁷⁰

Further confirming this measure of independence and authority given to the woman is the fact that, when she gives birth to a child, she becomes a “name giver” herself (4:1, 25).⁶⁷¹ The polarity of the consequences for the woman — both subjugation to the man (3:16b), but also a new measure of independence (e.g., her name, no longer defined in relation to the man) and power (e.g., creative power and [some] authority over her children) — is yet another example of how the PN expresses the ambivalence of the human condition.

3.4.3.2. *The Woman Motif*

Possible connections to instances of a woman motif will be considered in the following section. Connotations between women and wisdom will be considered first, in accordance with the woman desiring fruit that will give her “insight.” Ironically, her role as the one who decides to disobey the command of Yhwh may also align her with “anti-wisdom” connotations, like the adulterous woman in Proverbs, as will also be considered below. Finally, associations with fertility and maturity will be assessed. The conclusions of these analyses will inform broader conclusions about the role of the woman in the PN.

3:24: A Synchronic Approach,” *JBL* 96 [1977]: 176): “The snake invites the woman to accept him as her guide and familiar, and, under his influence, to dismiss the authority of God” (ibid.).

⁶⁷⁰ Jaime Clark-Soles, *Women in the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2020), 109.

⁶⁷¹ See n. 489 regarding the significance of naming.

3.4.3.2.1. Wisdom

As with the tree, the suggestion that the woman represents a “wisdom motif” in the PN is often based on feminine images in Proverbs that are connected to wisdom (or the lack of wisdom).⁶⁷² Wisdom is feminine in Hebrew and Greek, and its personification in Proverbs is also feminine.⁶⁷³ It is generally agreed that this image of wisdom is “a poetic personification” rather than an allusion to an ancient goddess or “a hypostasis of God.”⁶⁷⁴ Again in similarity to the tree, the motif in Proverbs functions in a different way than the motif in the PN. “Wisdom” (חכמה) personified in Proverbs is an image of “just order,”⁶⁷⁵ and the effects of choosing חכמה in Proverbs are wildly different than the effects of gaining the knowledge of good and bad in the PN. Bühner summarizes the differences between the presentation of wisdom in these texts (as well as in Job 28, where wisdom is also personified):

Die personifizierte Weisheit aus Prov 8, Erstling der Schöpfung (8,22ff.) vor allen Menschen, verschafft Leben dem, der sie findet (8,35) – ganz anders in Gen 2f., wo die Zweiheit von Erkenntnis und Leben, symbolisiert in den zwei Bäumen inmitten des Gartens, ein Entweder-Oder darstellt. Auch das offenbarungstheologische und erkenntnistheoretische Gepräge von Prov 8 (die חכמה ist zugleich חַבִּינָה und בְּיָנָה und ruft aktiv nach ihren *männlichen* Anhängern, damit sie Klugheit erlangen und ihren

⁶⁷² See 1.1.1.2.4.

⁶⁷³ Gerlinde Baumann argues for a connection between the feminine conception of wisdom in the Hebrew Bible and the existence of female goddesses: “That Wisdom can be imagined as a feminine figure at all undoubtedly has to do with the fact that in the ancient Near Eastern world of ancient Israel there were a large number of goddesses, to some of whom an enormous amount of power was attributed. As a figure of the heavenly sphere, personified Wisdom certainly integrates facets of ancient Near Eastern goddesses; it is not possible, however, to explicitly identify them” (“Personified Wisdom. Contexts, Meanings, Theology,” in *The Writings and Later Wisdom Books*, ed. Christl Maier and Nuria Calduch Benages, *The Bible and Women* 1.3 [Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2014], 61). This is not a particularly helpful connection when one considers that there were male gods connected to wisdom as well (e.g., Ningishzida, Enki/Ea, Markduk) (cf. Douglas R. Frayne and Johanna H. Stuckey, *A Handbook of Gods and Goddesses of the Ancient Near East* [University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2021]).

⁶⁷⁴ Baumann, “Personified Wisdom,” 58, 60, contra the argument that Lady Wisdom was originally a female deity (see, e.g., Bernhard Lang, “Lady Wisdom: Poetry, Polytheism, and Psychology: A Pilgrim’s Progress,” in *Hebrew Life and Literature: Selected Essays of Bernhard Lang* [London: Routledge, 2016], 165).

⁶⁷⁵ Silvia Schroer, *Wisdom has Built her House: Studies on the Figure of Sophia in the Bible*, trans. Linda M. Maloney and William McDonough (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 3. Schroer further describes Woman Wisdom: “She pleads untiringly in the book of Proverbs for faith that the path of righteousness, communal loyalty, and truthfulness is the better way, even if the ‘godless’ with their unscrupulous intrigues profit in the short run and live in prosperity” (ibid).

Lippen lauschen, die nur Rechtes und Wahres verkünden; דַעַת und הַכְמָה sind besser als alle Schätze; der הַכְמָה wird die עֲרֻמָה an die Seite gestellt; sie erteilt עֲצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָה – Machthabern sowie allen, die sie suchen – und ruft letztlich zu Gottesfurcht auf) findet in Gen 2f. keinerlei Entsprechung. Dasselbe gilt für das erkenntniskeptische „Lied der Weisheit“ in Hi 28, in dem der Ort von הַכְמָה und בִּינָה innerhalb der erschaffenen Welt unbekannt ist (28,12.20). Einzig Gott kennt (יָדַע; הִבִּין) den Weg zur Weisheit (28,23). Dem Menschen wird als weises Verhalten die Gottesfurcht und das Vermeiden von Üblem genannt (Hi 28,28; vgl. Prov 8,13). Demgegenüber haben die Menschen im Garten Eden göttliche Erkenntnis erlangt (Gen 3,22), und das Thema der Gottesfurcht spielt in Gen 2f. keine Rolle: Es wird zwar tatsächlich Gott gefürchtet (יָרָא), jedoch nicht im Sinne einer Reverenz oder Achtung, sondern im Sinne eines ängstlichen sich Fürchtens *vor* Gott (3,10). Dies entspricht weder weisheitlicher Erkenntnistheorie noch deuteronomisch-deuteronomistischer Bundestheologie.⁶⁷⁶

These clear conceptual differences laid out by Bühner suggest that the PN does not allude to the image of Woman Wisdom in Proverbs. The case is similar in other instances of personified wisdom, such as Sirach 24, in which wisdom is unambiguously positive.

3.4.3.2.2. Anti-Wisdom

More common is a connection to another woman in Proverbs — the “adulteress,” more literally translated as “strange woman” (אִשָּׁה זָרָה or זָרָה) (Prov 5:3, 20; 7:5) or “foreign woman” (נְכַרִיָּה) (5:20).⁶⁷⁷ In contrast to “Woman Wisdom,” this figure might be termed the “Anti-Wisdom.”⁶⁷⁸ The concept of the woman (supposedly) causing the man to disobey God’s command in the PN is thought to parallel the temptation to men embodied by this “Anti-Wisdom” figure (e.g., 7:10–23). This interpretation tends to be validated by a long-held

⁶⁷⁶ Bühner, *Am Anfang*, 296–97.

⁶⁷⁷ Regarding the development of this motif, Gail Corrington Streete writes, “Female adultery, from the perspective of the exilic and postexilic writers and editors of the Tanakh, ...represents a dangerous subversion of the hegemony of familial, ethnic, and religious male authorities and of the male God of Israel. Even when Israelite males are themselves charged with committing adultery, it is because they are seduced by powerfully alluring ‘strange’ or ‘outsider’ women. When they commit apostasy, the religious crime often spoken of as adultery, the same ‘foreign’ or ‘strange women’ are again responsible. Temptation to do evil, to stray from the path indicated by the scribes and other interpreters of the legal and moral covenant between YHWH and Israel, proceeded, in the form of sexual temptation, from women not legitimately possessed by any man, husband or deity. These are outsiders who are most wholly ‘other’: female rather than male, non-Israelite rather than Israelite, worshipers of ‘other’ gods and goddesses than YHWH” (*The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Hebrew Bible* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999], 8).

⁶⁷⁸ Streete suggests that it represents “post-exilic warnings against the ‘foreign woman’” and/or “adulterous Israel” (ibid., 107).

tendency in the history of interpretation “to condemn the woman for her role in eating the forbidden fruit.”⁶⁷⁹ However, the woman’s action in eating the fruit is much more ambiguous than the actions of the so-called “adulteress” in Proverbs, who is described as overtly tempting the man to come into her bed (see again 7:10–23, especially v. 21: “With much smooth words she persuades him; with her smooth lips she leads him astray”⁶⁸⁰).

In contrast, if the woman’s motivation in the PN is truly negative it is much less clear: she desires the tree’s fruit so it can “cause insight” (Gen 3:6), which is typically a positive trait.⁶⁸¹ That she functions as the “temptress” of the man is also not clear in the narrative. She merely gives the fruit to her husband, and he eats: there is no dialogue or persuasion on her part included in the text.⁶⁸² The consequences that are laid out by Yhwh God also suggest an ambiguity to her action: “God’s speech to the woman leaves out any reference to punishment or curse, and this stands in contrast to the speeches to both the snake and the (hu)man.”⁶⁸³ The ambiguous nature of the woman’s action contrasts with the clear condemnation of the action of the “Anti-Wisdom” woman in Proverbs (e.g., Prov 5:22–23; 6:27–35; 7:25–27; 9:18). In the end, it seems that the way Proverbs understands both wisdom and these images

⁶⁷⁹ Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 131.

⁶⁸⁰ Translation from Nancy Nam Hoon Tan, *The ‘Foreignness’ of the Foreign Woman in Proverbs 1–9: A Study on the Origin and Development of a Biblical Motif* (Berlin: de Gruyter GmbH & Co, 2008), 97.

⁶⁸¹ See the references in n. 543 for occurrences of the verb שָׁכַל (all in a positive sense).

⁶⁸² Although it should be noted that later on Yhwh God charges the man with “listening to the voice” of his wife (Gen 3:17), so this may hint that there was persuasion involved. Either way, the fact that it is not included in the text keeps it out of focus and limits the intensiveness of the condemnation on the woman’s action.

⁶⁸³ Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 131. Carr makes a good point here, but he may state the situation a bit too strongly, for God’s emphatic statement that he will “greatly increase” (הָרַבָּה אֲרַבְּהָ) the woman’s pain in bearing children (explicitly with God as the subject of the verb) surely expresses punishment to some extent.

of women associated with wisdom is too different for the perspective of Proverbs to influence the interpretation of the woman as a symbol in the PN.⁶⁸⁴

3.4.3.2.3. Fertility

Once thought most apparent, perhaps, is the connection between women and fertility/procreation. The connection of ancient Near Eastern goddesses with fertility and sex was once assumed, and, along with this, the existence of fertility cults throughout the ancient Near East.⁶⁸⁵ These beliefs were reflected onto the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, in which the polemic against “pagan fertility rites” supposedly suggested that these practices were common in ancient Israel (in the Law [Deut 23:18], prophets [Hosea 1–3, 14:14; Jeremiah 2; Ezekiel 23; Num 23:1ff.] and historiographic material [1 Kgs 14:23; 15:12; 22:47; 2 Kgs 23:7]).⁶⁸⁶

This interpretation of the data is now strongly questioned.⁶⁸⁷ The emphasis on fertility as the primary way to interpret the female goddesses of the ancient Near East cannot be

⁶⁸⁴ Other women connected with wisdom in the Hebrew Bible could be noted (e.g., the skillful women in Ex 35:25; Abigail in 1 Sam 25; the wise woman of Tekoa [2 Sam 14:1–20]; the wise woman in 2 Sam 20:16), but these have no clear connection to the woman in the PN. Though the woman desires to gain knowledge, it is the snake who is actually characterized with a term related to wisdom/knowledge (ערום) and who is more comparable to some of these figures, particularly the ones whose “wisdom” is ambiguous.

⁶⁸⁵ See Izak Cornelius’s excursus on the “Canaanite cult of lust,” exemplified in the views of William Albright and his followers (*The Many Faces of the Goddess: The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Astarte, Qedeshet, and Asherah c. 1500–1000 BCE* [Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004], 11ff.

⁶⁸⁶ Reflecting the older understanding, see, e.g., Athalya Brenner-Idan, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), ch. 7, EPUB, Perlego. The shift in understanding is reflected in the difference in definitions for the term קדשה, which is defined as a “cult prostitute” or “shrine prostitute” in some dictionaries (see, e.g., “קדש,” *HALOT* 3:1075; “קדש,” in *Kohlenberger/Mounce Concise Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. John Kohlenberger and William Mounce [William D. Mounce, 2012], Accordance Bible Software; “קדש,” in *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Francis Brown, et al. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907], Accordance Bible Software edition). See also James Strong, *Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Accordance Bible Software edition), who defines קדשה as “a female devotee.” In contrast, see *Concise Dictionary*, which says of קדשה, “doubtfully, cult prostitute.”

⁶⁸⁷ See Mayer I. Gruber’s commentary on Hosea, in which he describes a primary purpose of his commentary as “demolishing the myth of cult prostitution” in the Hebrew Bible (*Hosea: A Textual Commentary* [London: Bloomsbury, 2017], 4). He understands the passages from Hosea that were traditionally thought to refer to cult prostitutes as referring to the infidelity of married men (*ibid.*, 5).

maintained from the evidence available.⁶⁸⁸ Note, for example, the caution of Izak Cornelius regarding the overemphasis on fertility and sex in interpreting naked images of goddesses. According to him, Anat and Astarte should be seen as more than “goddesses of love,” for they were also warriors.⁶⁸⁹ Analyzing the iconography associated with Qedeset, Cornelius concludes that Qedeset stood for healing power and a good life; she is “not merely a ‘fertility goddess’ or ‘sacred prostitute.’”⁶⁹⁰ It is also significant that male gods, like Enlil, were associated with fertility as well.⁶⁹¹

Nevertheless, the depiction of women in much of the Hebrew Bible is marked by their ability to procreate.⁶⁹² That women are very often (though not solely) defined by their ability to bear children is seen throughout the Hebrew Bible: “Although...many important social and cultural roles were played by women in ancient Israel, it must be acknowledged that

⁶⁸⁸ Julia Assante asserts, “I see no evidence for fertility cults, sacred prostitution, or orgiastic cults in Mesopotamia’s primary sources, visual or textual. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that Assyrians perceived Ishtar as the goddess of sex during the Middle Assyrian period. Royal inscriptions from Tukulti-Ninurta I envision her in strictly martial terms...Similarly, the Hurrian Ninevite Ishtar was associated with healing, not sex” (“The Lead Inlays of Tukulti-Ninurta I: Pornography as Imperial Strategy,” in *Ancient Near Eastern Art in Context: Studies in Honor of Irene J. Winter by Her Students*, ed. Jack Cheng and Marian H. Feldman [Leiden: Brill, 2007], 372).

⁶⁸⁹ Cornelius, *Faces of the Goddess*, 92–4.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶⁹¹ Alberto Ravinell Whitney Green notes “Hymn to Enlil” as evidence that “the Storm-god is an important player in the fertility process,” as well as the “Myth of Enlil and Ninlil” in which “Enlil’s importance to the fertility process must be mythopoetically understood: Ninlil, the grain, is impregnated by Enlil, the wind actively bringing pollination and rain” (*The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 38). See “Hymn to Enlil,” in Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once...: Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 108–9, lines 117–30, and “Enlil and Ninlil,” in *ibid.*, 171–80.

⁶⁹² Carol Meyers importantly points out that the experience of women in the ancient world was multi-dimensional. While under the control of men in some ways (particularly when it came to sexuality), they had leadership roles in other aspects of their lives: “In short, depending on their age and experience, Israelite women had managerial roles, supervising the assignment of tasks and the use of resources in their own households and, in certain circumstances, across households...They were hardly oppressed and powerless. Nor were they subordinate to male control in all aspects of household life” (“Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?,” *JBL* 133 [2014]: 21–3; regarding women’s managerial role and measure of authority within the household, Meyers points out Exod 21:15, 17; Prov 20:20; Judges 17; 1 Samuel 25; 2 Kgs 4:8–37; 8:1–6; Prov 31:10–31).

procreation was a central role.”⁶⁹³ One need only think of the struggles of characters like Sarah, Rachel and Leah, Tamar, and Hannah to recognize the central importance of childbearing in woman’s lives. The defining nature of this role partly explains why it was so disastrous for women to be infertile.⁶⁹⁴

This must be taken into account in understanding the woman in the PN, particularly since procreation is something that is specifically highlighted about her in Yhwh God’s response to her eating of the fruit (Gen 3:16). The new name given to her also focuses on her role as “mother” (3:20). Furthermore, the only references to her in the following FN are related to her role as one who progenerates (see 4:1, 25). This aspect of her character will be incorporated into the conclusions regarding her function in the PN below.

3.4.3.2.4. Maturity

The motif of a woman as an initiator of the transition from immaturity to maturity may also be significant to understanding the woman in the PN. In the epic of Gilgamesh, it is Enkidu’s encounter with the prostitute Shamhat that results in his entrance into civilization. Formerly a wild man living with the animals,⁶⁹⁵ he is approached by Shamhat and has sex with her for “six days, seven nights.”⁶⁹⁶ After this encounter he is rejected by the wild

⁶⁹³ Katherine Southwood, “The Social and Cultural History of Ancient Israel,” in *The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Companion*, ed. John Barton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 71.

⁶⁹⁴ Lisa Wilson Davison lists two possible underlying motivations for the focus on “open” and “closed” wombs in stories in the Hebrew Bible: “First, given the precarious nature of life in the ancient Near East...people were fearful of dying out or being exterminated by a famine, plague, or war. These stories can reflect this preoccupation with death and the future...Another possible function of these stories...might have been to prop up the pronatalist ideals of those who told, repeated, collected, or perpetuated the texts. Not only are offspring seen as necessary for survival, but they are also viewed as a means to build up one’s power and importance” (*More Than a Womb: Childfree Women in the Hebrew Bible as Agents of the Holy* [Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021], “The Quest for Childfree Women,” EPUB, Perlego).

⁶⁹⁵ *Gilgamesh*, trans. Foster, 7, tablet I, lines 113–20.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9, I, 196–200.

animals,⁶⁹⁷ but it is said that “he had gained [reason], broadened his understanding.”⁶⁹⁸

Afterwards, he announces his intention to head to Uruk and challenge Gilgamesh.⁶⁹⁹ He is subsequently clothed and taught the ways of civilization (eating, drinking, clothing, grooming, etc.),⁷⁰⁰ confirming his entrance into human (rather than animal) society.

There are several elements of this account that relate to the PN: (1) the female as an initiator of a significant transformation in identity and role; (2) clothing as an indicator of this transition; (3) concern regarding the distinction between humans and animals (note God’s hunt for a “helper counterpart,” who is not found in the animal world [Gen 2:18–23]); (4) intercourse as having a connection to the transition from immaturity to maturity (4:1),⁷⁰¹ and (5) connection between maturity and knowledge/wisdom.⁷⁰² Especially considering other motifs that are shared between the epic of Gilgamesh and the PN (wisdom; lost immortality connected to a plant/tree and snake; concern for the divine-human boundary),⁷⁰³ it is suggested that the woman in the PN has similar associations to Shamhat.⁷⁰⁴

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., 9, I, 205–209. There are differences here between the Old and the Standard Babylonian version of the epic of Gilgamesh. In the Old, “we can establish that...the wild man did not attempt to rejoin the animals after his sexual encounter with the courtesan; for in that version, after their lovemaking, the courtesan asks Enkidu why he wants to go back to nature, and in fact he does not. It is not the animals that reject Enkidu; rather, it is Enkidu who immediately turns his back on nature as a consequence of his experience with an urbane woman. He rejected the natural world in favor of civilization, for lovemaking caused him to forget the place of his birth. Animals are unimportant in this early recension” (Tzvi Abusch, *Male and Female in the Epic of Gilgamesh: Encounters, Literary History, and Interpretation* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015], 192).

⁶⁹⁸ *Gilgamesh*, trans. Foster, 9, tablet I, line 210.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., tablet I, lines 224–231.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., 13, tablet II, line 17ff.

⁷⁰¹ The chronology of this is different than in the PN — first, the humans obtain the knowledge of good and bad; secondly, the emphasis on procreation and fertility appears (Gen 3:16, 20), followed by an explicit statement that intercourse has taken place (4:1). The emphasis in the PN is not on the act of intercourse itself, but rather it is described as part of the process leading to procreation.

⁷⁰² As noted in 3.3.3.2.5 above, this is a particular emphasis in the Standard Babylonian version of Gilgamesh.

⁷⁰³ Note also the flood account included in both the epic of Gilgamesh and the non-P primeval history.

⁷⁰⁴ In some ways, the motif of the female initiating the process of maturity may underlie the choice that the father asks the son to make in Proverbs: his choice is imagined as choosing between two women, and his choice of woman will symbolize the course of life he will take (cf. 3.4.3.2.1 and 3.4.3.2.2).

3.4.3.3. Conclusions

In light of these other possible associations and the way that the woman is characterized in the PN itself, speculations can now be made regarding the symbolic value that should be assigned to her character. First, the choice of a woman as the instigator for the man receiving the knowledge of good and bad makes sense, given the association between women and the move from immaturity to maturity (as noted in the epic of Gilgamesh). Secondly, the association with fertility and procreation is significant. Relating this to the proffered interpretation of the knowledge of good and bad, Eve, as a character, encapsulates the creative and destructive potentials gained by this knowledge. On the one hand, her action ensures that the humans will both experience and cause death (Gen 3:19, 22–24; 4:8), while, on the other hand, it is through her that humans begin to create life (4:1).⁷⁰⁵ The experience of giving birth, a uniquely feminine experience, also portrays these extremes: pain, suffering, and potential death on the one hand, and the creation of life on the other (3:16).⁷⁰⁶ In conclusion, then, it can be suggested that the use of the woman in the PN as the main actor in the scene with the snake relates not to wisdom, but to maturity and fertility.⁷⁰⁷ Considering the strong parallels to the woman as an initiator of the transition to maturity in the epic of Gilgamesh, it might even be said that this is motif.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁵ To be fair, this is still expressed from a patriarchal perspective: “Biblical narrators are not interested in mothers for themselves. Rather mothers serve androcentric purposes that center on male characters” (Susanne Scholz, *Introducing the Women’s Bible* [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2007], 26), with reference to the argument of J. Cheryl Exum, “‘Mother in Israel’: A Familiar Figure Reconsidered,” in vol. 10 of *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985], 73–85).

⁷⁰⁶ The ability to create may suggest that associations with divinity are also present. However, this is not highlighted significantly by the text, at least at this juncture (whether these associations are present in Eve’s enigmatic statement in 4:1 will be considered in the following chapter).

⁷⁰⁷ Fertility in this context would connote an emphasis on the ability to procreate rather than an emphasis on sexual activity in and of itself.

⁷⁰⁸ Although other repetitions of the motif would be helpful to strengthen the claim. See n. 704 on the possibility of this motif underlying the conception of women in Proverbs.

3.4.4. The Dust

This section will consider whether dust as a motif in the PN is rightly considered a “wisdom motif.” The symbolic use of dust in the PN will be considered first, and then possible wisdom associations will be analyzed. Based on this analysis, suggestions about the use of this motif in the PN will conclude the section.

3.4.4.1. Dust in the Paradise Narrative

“Dust” (עפר) first appears in the narrative in Gen 2:7, when God uses it as the material out of which to create the man; thereby symbolically associating it from the outset with creation.⁷⁰⁹ It then reappears within the curse on the man as a reference to the fate of humans: “dust you are and to dust you will return” (3:19).

There may be a connection between “dust” (עפר) and “earth, ground” (אדמה) in the PN. The earth/ground (אדמה) features prominently in the PN: God forms the man of “dust from the ground” (Gen 2:7); the trees also come “from the ground” (2:9); and animals are formed “from the ground” (2:18).⁷¹⁰ Dust and ground appear in conjunction in 3:19 (“until you return to the ground...for you are dust”). “Dust” and “ground” thus appear to work together in this passage as the material (“dust”) and source/destination (“ground”) of both creative activity and death.⁷¹¹

From the beginning, the man was created to fill the lack of one who would “work the ground” (אין לעבד את־האדמה [Gen 2:5]). Within the garden, his activity is imagined as a

⁷⁰⁹ The Hebrew in the verse would read more smoothly without עפר, leading to the suggestion that it is a later addition added alongside the tree of life motif (see, e.g., Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 208). Against this, Bühner argues that the *Lebensthematik* occurs throughout the entire narrative, also appearing in 2:7b, where Yhwh God breathes the breath of life into the man (*Am Anfang*, 208). See discussion above, especially n. 560.

⁷¹⁰ The “ground” seems to be the source of all creative activity, *except that of the woman* (Gen 2:22). It may be that the creation of the woman from the man’s “rib/side” (2:21–22) rather than “from the ground” merely serves to support the author’s etiology of marriage (“bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” [2:23]). It is also possible that this serves to underscore the woman’s identity as the עזר כנגדו, one who is fundamentally defined in relation to the man (at this point in the narrative).

⁷¹¹ The similar “semantic realm” of עפר and אדמה is noted in G. Wanke, “עפר,” *TLOT* 2:940.

partnership in God’s creative activity, as he fills the lack of one to work the ground (2:5; cf. 2:8, 15) and then names the animals and the woman that Yhwh God created (2:19–20, 23). When the man is sent out of the garden “to work the ground from which he was taken” (3:23), it signifies that his independent creative activity over the world will begin: now, he will attempt to creatively (or destructively) influence the world outside the confines of the garden.⁷¹² The ground is a constant reminder that the same location that is the source of his creative activity is also the location to which he will return as nothing more than dust. So then, “dust from the ground” (עפר מן־האדמה) in the PN functions as both a sobering reminder of man’s mortality and a symbol of the potential for new life.

3.4.4.2. *The Dust Motif*

The connection between dust and wisdom stems from the association between dust and mortality, for dust as a symbol of mortality appears commonly in texts that are considered part of the wisdom genre.⁷¹³ First, it must be noted that there are multiple Hebrew words associated with the concept of dust.⁷¹⁴ These include:

1. עפר – “dust;⁷¹⁵ loose earth, soil; rubble; the grave”⁷¹⁶
2. אבק – “dust, soot”⁷¹⁷

⁷¹² The significance of the ground as a symbol will continue into the FN: Cain is a “worker of the ground” (Gen 4:2); Abel’s blood cries out “from the ground” (4:10); Cain is cursed “from the ground” (4:11). The significance of this as a continuing motif will be further considered in ch. 4.

⁷¹³ See examples in n. 716, 718, and 719.

⁷¹⁴ The list below and their definitions come from *HALOT*: עפר (*HALOT* 2:861); אבק (*HALOT* 1:9); דבא (*HALOT* 1:221); רָגַב (*HALOT* 3:1182).

⁷¹⁵ Zevit contends that translating עפר as “dust” is not accurate: “Examination of how this word is used in biblical Hebrew indicates clearly that [it] refers to compacted lumps or clumps of earth, or to coagulated and concentrated burnt animal remains or vegetable matter and the like (Lev 14:41–42, 45; 17:13; Num 5:17; 2 Sam 24:3; 1 Kings 18:31; 2 Kings 23:6, 13; Job 7:5). It refers to something people can handle, wrap their fingers around, squeeze, and shape, like a mud ball” (*What Really Happened in the Garden of Eden*, ch. 6). Zevit’s analysis and assertion here are questionable because there are several passages in which a translation of “clump” would not be logical. For example, 2 Sam 22:43 (“I beat them fine as the dust of the earth”) and Josh 7:6 (“And they put dust on their heads”). A more likely word for “clod” is רגב (see Job 21:33; 38:38).

⁷¹⁶ See, e.g., Job 2:12; 4:19; 5:6; 7:5, 21; 8:19; 10:9; 14:8, 19; 16:15; 17:16; 19:25; 20:11; 21:26; 22:24; 27:16; 28:2, 6; 30:6, 19; 34:15; 38:38; 39:14; 40:13; 41:33; 42:6 Prov 8:26.

⁷¹⁷ See, e.g., Deut 28:24; Isa 29:5. There are no occurrences in Job, Psalms, Proverbs or Ecclesiastes.

3. דכא – “crushed, dust”⁷¹⁸
4. רגב – “clods of earth”⁷¹⁹

Other words that are sometimes used in connection with the idea of “dust” include חמר or טיט (“clay”); חול (“sand”); אדמה (“ground”); and ארץ (“earth”).

Dust as “suggestive of the grave”⁷²⁰ can be seen in its use in Gen 3:19 (“for you are dust [עפר], and to dust [עפר] you shall return”), and a similar symbolic use occurs in many other verses in the Hebrew Bible (see, e.g., Job 4:19–20, 10:9; 33:6; 34:15; Psa 31:12; 90:3; 104:29). Outside the Hebrew Bible, “dust is used as synonymous for the realm of the dead also in an Ugaritic text (17[2 Aqht].I.29), but it is Akkadian literature which provides the closest parallels for the image under discussion.”⁷²¹ One can observe, for example, the description in “The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld” of the place of the dead “where dust is their food, clay is their bread...over the door and the bolt, dust has settled.”⁷²² In some of its occurrences in the Hebrew Bible dust connotes not merely death, but utter destruction. In these retributive contexts, someone/something is described as being destroyed to the point of being “like dust” (e.g., Psa 18:42 [enemies]; Deut 9:21 [idols]; 2 Kgs 23:6 [idols]).⁷²³ Hilliers

⁷¹⁸ See, e.g., Job 4:19; 5:4; 6:9; 19:2; 22:9; 34:25; Prov 22:22.

⁷¹⁹ See, e.g., Job 21:33, 38:38.

⁷²⁰ Janet Smith, *Dust or Dew: Immortality in the Ancient Near East and in Psalm 49* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 173.

⁷²¹ Delbert R. Hilliers, “Dust: Some Aspects of Old Testament Imagery,” in *Poets Before Homer: Collected Essays on Ancient Literature*, ed. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 82. Regarding the Ugaritic poem 17[2 Aqht].I.29, see “The Tale of Aqhat,” trans. H. L. Ginsberg, *ANET* 149–155; the mention of dust appears in AQHT A, i, line 29. Cf. Chloe Sun, *The Ethics of Violence in the Story of Aqhat* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgiaspress, 2013), 82.

⁷²² “The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld,” trans. Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 155. Cf. the mention of dust in a similar sense in *Gilgamesh*, trans. Foster, 61, tablet VII, lines 148–53.

⁷²³ Similarly, an Akkadian text states, “Should I say yes, Shamash would treat me as if I were the dust upon which you have stepped” (see “eperu,” *CAD*, 186 c.3).

notes that in these instances עפר may appear as “a B-word” with ארץ as “A-word” (cf. Psa 7:6).⁷²⁴

The occasional occurrence of this motif of dust in relation to mortality/death (sometimes in the sense of death by complete destruction) in contexts that are not explicitly “wisdom” (e.g., Isa 26:19, Dan 12:2) makes it possible that this is not exclusively a “wisdom motif.” That being said, its appearances are highly concentrated in works that have been labeled wisdom texts.⁷²⁵ This will be kept in mind in the analysis that follows.

Along with its connotations with death, dust is also used as a symbol of creation (often the creation of humanity). This can be seen, for example, in Eccl 3:20: “All go to one place. All are from dust, and to dust all return” (cf. Gen 3:19). Eccl 12:7 uses similar symbolism (“the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it”). The connection between “dust” and the creation of humans is also found in Job 10:9; 33:6; and Psa 103:14. The concepts of dust and creation (though not necessarily the creation of man) are also combined in Prov 8:26 (“Before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world”). Interestingly, this is in a context in which wisdom is discussed as well (8:1ff).

Regarding the understanding behind this symbolism of creation from dust, Zevit concludes that “Israelites...thought that a clod provided the necessary critical mass of inert substance into which ‘personality’ could be infused. Genesis 2:7 reflects this. God molded a wetted clod, a malleable clump of soil, into the shape that he desired and animated it by infusing his breath.”⁷²⁶ A similar conception of the human body being formed from clay is found in important ancient Near Eastern sources from outside of the Hebrew Bible, such as

⁷²⁴ Hilliards, “Dust,” 80. A similar structure appears in a statement from the Ugaritic “Poem about Baal and Anath”: “We’ll thrust my foes into the earth, To the ground them that rise ‘gainst thy brother!”

⁷²⁵ See, in particular, the references to Job in n. 716, 718, and 719 above.

⁷²⁶ Zevit, *What Really Happened*, ch. 6.

the epic of Gilgamesh, “Enuma Elish,” and the epic of Atrahasis.⁷²⁷ Zevit also notes that the understanding of a “clod” as representative of a person in certain ritual texts.⁷²⁸

This evidence suggests that there was a fundamental duality in the symbolic value given to dust in the ancient Near East. As the substance out of which human life was formed, it represented creative potential. At the same time, this substance is also a reminder of the reality of death: it points to both the beginning and the end of human life. This juxtaposition of life and death in the symbolism of dust is also an aspect of the use of dust as a motif in the PN.⁷²⁹

3.4.4.3. Conclusions

To conclude, it is argued that the connotations of dust in texts outside of the PN (especially in wisdom texts) are also present in the PN: dust carries both the potential for life and marks a once-living entity as having died and decomposed. This symbol that is connected to both life and death contributes to the sense of ambiguity already noted in the PN. It also connects well to the proposed interpretation of knowledge of good and bad, which suggested that this characteristic carries along with it the potential for both promoting and destroying

⁷²⁷ See, e.g., the creation of Enkidu from clay in *Gilgamesh*, trans. Foster, 7, tablet I, line 110; the fashioning of humans from clay in “Enuma Elish,” 111–12, tablet VI, lines 29–24); and the creation of humans from clay in “Atrahasis,” trans. Dalley, 15–16. There are references to a similar concept from Egypt: e.g., the god Khnum creates using a potter’s wheel (“A Morning Hymn to Khnum,” in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, vol. 3 [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006], 112; cf. the reference to humanity as “clay” in idem, “The Instruction of Amenemope,” in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, vol. 1 [Oakland: University of California Press, 2019], 490, XXIV, line 13).

⁷²⁸ E.g., it is seen in “thirteen legal texts dated circa 1550–1500 B.C.E. from Nuzi in northeastern Iraq,” in which, “in part of a ritual disinheriting an adopted son or daughter, an actual clod was perhaps squished between the fingers and cast to the ground” (Zevit, *What Really Happened*, ch. 6; see text and translation in Me’ir Malul, *Studies in Mesopotamian Legal Symbolism*, AOAT 221 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag; Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker, 1988], 95).

A similar interpretation is found in a text “prescribing a remedy for nightmares”: “He addresses a clod of earth thusly: ‘O clod. In your substance my substance has been mingled, in my substance your substance has been mingled’. Then he tells all the (bad) dreams which he dreamt to the clod (and says): ‘Just as I throw you, clod, into the water (and you dissolve) so may the evil consequences of my dreams’ (Zevit, *What Really Happened*, ch. 6; see text and translation in Malul, *Studies in Mesopotamian Legal Symbolism*, 91–2).

⁷²⁹ Other associations of the dust motif that are not in play in the PN include its use to describe “a vast quantity”; that which is “easily swept away by the wind” (e.g., Isa 29:5); and “vileness and low worth” (e.g., 2 Kings 13:7) (Hilliers, “Dust: Some Aspects,” 79).

life. Gen 3:19b encapsulates these concepts. On the one hand, humans were created through dust: the statement, “dust you are” links this verse to God’s creation of man in 2:7. It calls to mind the miracle of dust coming alive. Not only that, but now that same dust has creative potential itself and will create new life. On the other hand, dust is a reminder that death is a reality: “to dust you will return.” The fragility of life is thereby assumed, and the creative power of humanity is tempered by future death as an unavoidable fact (cf. 3:22–24).⁷³⁰

Out of all the motifs discussed so far, it might be said that this is the one most likely to be a wisdom motif. This is suggested by the prevalence of this concept within Job and the similar wording of Gen 3:19b (“for you are dust and to dust you will return” ואל־תָּשׁוּב אֶתְּךָ עִפְרָא) in comparison to Job 34:15 (“man would return to dust” [וְאָדָם עַל־עִפְרָא יָשׁוּב]); Eccl 3:20 (“all are from the dust, and to dust all return” [הַכֹּל הֵיחָד מִן־הָעִפְרָא וְהַכֹּל שׁוֹב אֶל־הָעִפְרָא]); and Eccl 12:7 (“and the dust returns to the earth as it was” [וְיָשׁוּב הָעִפְרָא עַל־הָאָרֶץ כַּשְּׁהִיָּה]). Possibly the similarities in this motif are due merely to common cultural conceptions about dust or to the knowledge of a well-known proverb,⁷³¹ but it is also possible that Job and Ecclesiastes pick up on the language of the dust motif from the PN.⁷³² As argued above, the symbolic connotations of dust match well with the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad and with the life and death potentials that it carries with it, making it likely that the dust

⁷³⁰ Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns suggest, “Clay and dust provide powerful metaphors for the insignificant and fragile human existence marred by sin and under divine judgment” (*Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Writings, and Poetry* [Nottingham: IVP, 2018], 432).

⁷³¹ As argued by Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 263–64. The cited connections to other verses/concepts regarding dust in the PN suggest that it is well-integrated into its context, whether or not the author was utilizing another source.

⁷³² On the use of the early chapters of Genesis by Ecclesiastes, see Sung-Jin Kim, “An Analysis of the Literary Allusion in Ecclesiastes 2 to the Creation Narrative in Genesis 1–2: Rhetorical Role of the Creation Motif in Ecclesiastes 2,” *ACTS Theological Journal* 41 (2019): 9–40; Matthew Seufert, “The Presence of Genesis in Ecclesiastes,” *WTJ* 78 (2016): 75–92; and David M. Clemens, “The Law of Sin and Death: Ecclesiastes and Genesis 1–3,” *Themelios* 19 (1994): 5–8.

The quote from Job, which comes from the speeches of Elihu, could also conceivably draw from the language of the PN. Regarding the dating of this section of Job, see Markus Witte (*Vom Leiden zum Lehre: Der dritte Redegang (Hiob 21–27) und die Redaktionsgeschichte des Hiobbuches* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994], 193), who logically suggests that the Elihu speeches were added to the original Job poem sometime in the 4th or 3rd c. B.C.E. See suggestions regarding the dating of the PN in 5.3.1.

motif was used to point to the knowledge of good and evil as an overarching theme within the narrative.

3.4.5. The Man as Sage

The motif of the man as a sage will be addressed less extensively than the other symbolic devices assessed above, as the evidence important for understanding this motif has already been reviewed (see 3.3.3.2.2.1). The argument for the man as a quintessential wise man has been suggested on the basis of his naming of the animals, which is alleged to be akin to the making of scribal lists (see 1.1.1.2.6). The tradition of the first man as superlatively wise is also significant to this proposed motif. This tradition appears in certain Mesopotamian texts, such as the epic of Adapa: “In the Mesopotamian tradition, Adapa, sometimes considered the first man, was given as a model for mankind by Ea, the god of wisdom....[He] was considered first in a line of seven sages who passed the arts of civilization on to mankind.”⁷³³ From the Hebrew Bible, this tradition can be seen in Job 15:7–8: “Are you the first man who was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills? Have you listened in the counsel of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself?” A similar conception is also found in Ezekiel 28, where the wisdom (see, e.g., חכמה in 28:3, 4, 5) and resulting pride (see, e.g., 28:2, 6) of the first man is an important theme.

Despite the existence of this motif in the ancient world, it does not appear to be related to the first man in the PN. As discussed above, the man’s creative activity in naming the animals was done in partnership with Yhwh God and does not reflect a superlative kind of knowledge (nor the kind of knowledge that is later received through the knowledge of good and bad) (see 3.3.3.2.2.1). Also significant is that the man (and woman, for that matter) is never described as wise; rather, it is the serpent who is ערום. John Day also argues against this connection, stating that the concept of the man being superlatively wise “would be out of

⁷³³ John Walton, et al., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 502. See “Adapa,” trans. Dalley, 184–88.

keeping with everything else that transpires in Genesis 3, where aetiologies are provided of the state of humanity as the Israelites actually knew it, which was not at all omniscient.”⁷³⁴

These observations suggest that the motif of the man as sage is not contained in the PN.

3.5 Conclusions Regarding Wisdom in the Paradise Narrative

The main intention of this chapter has been to consider whether a theme related to wisdom exists in the PN and, if so, what nature of wisdom is presented by the narrative. This was first considered in relation to the knowledge of good and bad (הדעת טוב ורע). It was proposed that this knowledge could be defined as the knowledge that is necessary to make an independent judgment call that could then influence the world in positive or negative ways. This is considered to be a quality of a mature adult and obtaining it is synonymous with one’s ability to enter and participate in human society. This definition was shown to match the various ways that this knowledge is described in the PN. In terms of wisdom, the knowledge of good and bad can only be correlated with wisdom in the sense that it describes the maturity necessary to make autonomous decisions and to influence the world on that basis, but it is not related to wisdom in the sense of implying moral uprightness or successful living in the world.

This understanding of the “wisdom” described by the PN was then considered in light of the various motifs from the narrative that have been suggested to be connected to wisdom literature or wisdom thought within the Hebrew Bible. An assessment of the trees, the snake, the woman, the dust, and the man as sage revealed that these literary elements are symbols⁷³⁵ that point to the theme of the knowledge of good and bad, showing that the PN engages in a topic that broadly relates to wisdom (i.e., in the sense of the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad), but its engagement with wisdom does not appear to be in

⁷³⁴ “Wisdom in the Garden of Eden,” 65.

⁷³⁵ With the exception of dust, which might be described as a wisdom motif (see 3.4.4 above).

dialogue with other wisdom-related texts in the Hebrew Bible. Rather, in similarity to other noted ancient Near Eastern accounts of origin, the concern of the PN is on key markers of the divine-human boundary and the consequences of humans overstepping this boundary. The author masterfully combines the noted symbolic elements to create a scene in which the possibility of obtaining a divine quality is laid before the humans.

In this sense, the prime motivation of the PN is etiological, for it essentially offers a background for how humans are even in a position in which they have the possibility to choose a wise or a foolish path. As noted, this new reality that is entered by the humans has both positive and negative aspects: they gain knowledge that leads to maturity, creation, and life, but this knowledge also leads to death and separation from the divine presence. The next chapter will consider whether the long(er)-term consequences of receiving the knowledge of good and bad, as seen in Genesis 4, match with the definition of this knowledge provided above and provide further clarity as to the nature of the “wisdom” presented in these chapters as a whole.

4. WISDOM AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND BAD IN GENESIS 4

4.1. Introduction

The following chapter will analyze the FN as a continuation of the PN, particularly in terms of its continuity with the proposed understanding of the knowledge of good and bad (see 3.3.2). It was suggested in the previous chapter that what has been often posited as a connection to wisdom in the PN does not actually reflect “wisdom” (חכמה) as it appears in the so-called “wisdom literature” of the Hebrew Bible but, rather, these proposed “wisdom motifs” generally relate to the theme of the knowledge of good and bad. Considering the strong connection between the PN and FN (see 2.3), it is reasonable to consider whether this theme continues into the following narrative and genealogy in chapter 4.⁷³⁶

The present chapter will begin with an exegesis of Gen 4:1–16, focused on whether the further consequences of the humans’ obtaining of the knowledge of good and bad are apparent in this narrative. As the presence of the knowledge of good and bad as a theme is less self-evident in this narrative than in the PN and as several issues in translating the Hebrew can be further clarified in light of this proposed theme, this chapter will give a full translation of 4:1–16 and a close reading of each verse. This will demonstrate that reading this narrative in light of the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad clarifies some of the ambiguities of the account. The exegesis will focus primarily on the FN itself, as this unit contains the most substantial parallels to the PN. Nevertheless, the FN is inextricably connected to the genealogy with which it appears (see 2.5.1), so the genealogy of Genesis 4 will also be briefly considered, and examples of the consequences of the knowledge of good and bad within these verses will be noted. Lastly, an analysis of other potential “wisdom motifs” identified in the FN (see 1.1.2.2) will be included. The suggestion that Gen 4:7 has

⁷³⁶ The question of whether a similar perspective is seen in the non-P flood narrative and other non-P passages of the primeval history will not be taken up in the present work but will be recommended as a topic for further study (see 5.3.2).

affinities with proverbial instruction will be considered within the exegesis of that particular verse (see 4.3.3.), while the other two possible “wisdom motifs” (“the act-consequence connection” and “fraternal discord”) will be analyzed after the exegesis (see 4.5). The chapter will end with a conclusion regarding wisdom and the knowledge of good and bad in Genesis 4. Before beginning the exegesis of 4:1–16, this chapter will begin with a consideration of the overall intent of the FN.

4.2. The Intent of the Fratricide Narrative

When surveying analyses on the intent of the account of Cain and Abel, one finds a significant shift in the interpretation of the narrative beginning in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Until this point, the story was generally read as referring to a real or symbolic conflict between individuals in the primeval period. This traditional interpretation was overturned by a theory developed through the work of scholars like Heinrich Ewald, Julius Wellhausen and Bernhard Stade, who suggested that the story of Cain and Abel is an etiology describing the origins of the ancient tribe known as the Kenites.⁷³⁷ The result of this interpretive shift was that study of the text became less focused on a conflict between individual brothers than on conflict between ancient people groups.⁷³⁸ This interpretation predominated in the first half of the twentieth century,⁷³⁹ but in more recent scholarship there has been a shift back to interpreting the account individually, though the brothers are more

⁷³⁷ See Heinrich Ewald, “Erklärung der biblischen Urgeschichte. I, 4. Die geschlechter des ersten Weltalters,” *JBW* VI (1853–54): 5–6; Wellhausen, *Composition*, 11; Bernhard Stade, “Das Kainszeichen,” *ZAW* 14 (1894): 250–318. See also Budde, *Urgeschichte*, 192 n. 1. See also n. 352 above.

⁷³⁸ Such as conflict between “semisedentary shepherds” and nomads, as suggested in Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 48.

⁷³⁹ See, e.g., Eduard Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1906), 219, 394–99; Wilhelm Vischer, *Jahwe der Gott Kains* (Munich: Kaiser, 1929), 1–28; Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Two Sources of the Predeuteronomiac Primeval History (JE) in Gen 1–11*, Avhandlingar Utgitt av det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo. II. Historisk-Filosofisk Klasse (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad ikomm., 1937); von Rad, *Genesis*, 107–9.

commonly seen as typical figures rather than historical individuals.⁷⁴⁰ However, there is not unanimity on this point: John Day has advocated for a return to the Kenite approach,⁷⁴¹ and others, such as Brueggemann, would assent that the narrative referred to a collective conflict at some point in its literary history, even if it does not in its final form.⁷⁴²

Another etiological interpretation that has been suggested is that the account relates to the concept of blood feuds. Wenham argues that the terminology describing Cain's punishment is too extreme to describe a "Bedouin-like existence," as the Kenite argument would hold. Alternatively, he suggests, "it seems likely that the curse on Cain reflects the expulsion from the family that was the fate in tribal societies of those who murdered close relatives." He notes that expulsion was an "alternative punishment" when the murder was not avenged by a family member (cf. 2 Sam 13:34–14:24). For Cain, then, "'To be driven away from the land' ... is to have all relationships, particularly with the family, broken."⁷⁴³ The concept of blood feuds in relation to the murder of Abel will be further considered below, and, though it will not be understood as the primary purpose of the account, it will be argued that understanding Cain's punishment as related to his exclusion from society is very important for interpretation.

⁷⁴⁰ E.g., Speiser, *Genesis*; Coats, *Genesis*; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*; Gertz, *Das Erste Buch*. On the argument against the collective view, see n. 352 and Mark William Scarlata, *Outside of Eden: Cain in the Ancient Versions of Genesis 4:1–16* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 21.

⁷⁴¹ John Day, "Cain and the Kenites," in *From Creation to Babel, Studies in Genesis 1–11* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 51–60. See also John J. Scullion, *Genesis: A Commentary for Students, Teachers, and Preachers*, OT Studies 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 52, as well as the social-scientific approach of Paula M. McNutt, who interprets the story collectively in light of "the social status of artisans and smiths in traditional African and Middle Eastern societies" ("In the Shadow of Cain," *Semeia* 87 [1999]: 45).

⁷⁴² According to Brueggemann, "There is no doubt that in some stage of the story, it dealt with the conflict and relation between farmers and shepherds. ... Now, however, the story has no interest in such differences. It focuses on the individual persons" (*Genesis*, 56). Gertz admits the likelihood of a "stammesgeschichtliche Hintergrund" but claims that, in terms of the present form of the text, Cain is not an ethnological but a moral type (*Das erste Buch*, 156).

⁷⁴³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 108.

Despite countless attempts at explicating the text, there are significant exegetical questions regarding the account of Cain and Abel that continue to be debated.⁷⁴⁴ This chapter will attempt to address some of these exegetical conundrums through an analysis that focuses on the FN as the continuation of the PN.⁷⁴⁵ It will be demonstrated that a key issue in both accounts is the humans' obtaining of the knowledge of good and bad.⁷⁴⁶ The exegesis that follows intends to demonstrate that, rather than having a fully separate intention, Genesis 4 continues the emphasis on the knowledge of good and bad and its consequences that began in the PN.

4.3. The Fratricide Narrative and the Knowledge of Good and Bad

This section will highlight ways in which the FN builds upon the PN, particularly concerning the knowledge of good and bad. It will offer a translation of the Hebrew text, some general summarizing comments regarding the verses, followed by a description of the

⁷⁴⁴ Various other approaches to the text have been proposed in the last two decades. Final form approaches are popular in many English language commentaries and articles. For example, Walter Moberly's *The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) accepts certain established theories on the literary history of the text but primarily examines the narrative in its final form. Similarly, Bruggemann asserts, "Our best approach is to follow where that story takes us, to retell rather than explain," claiming that "What interests the story-teller (and therefore us) is the destiny of the murderer, a destiny haunted by a skewed relation with God" (*Genesis*, 55).

Karolien Vermeulen uses a narrative approach to argue that the apparent "gaps" in the text are intentional and, actually, integral to the message of the account ("Mind the Gap: Ambiguity in the Story of Cain and Abel," *JBL* 133.1 [2014]: 29-42; cf. Gertz, "Variations," 27-50). Kenneth M. Craig, Jr. focuses on the dialogue within the narrative, arguing that the narrator uses these exchanges to artfully develop the plot ("Questions Outside Eden (Genesis 4.1-16): Yhwh, Cain and their Rhetorical Interchange," *JSOT* 86 [1999]: 107-128). Joseph Blenkinsopp's commentary also focuses primarily on the final form of the text; although mentioning the possible literary history of the genealogy, he decides, "our task is to deal with the text as we have it" (*Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*). In addition to the aforementioned studies of the final form, see also the sociological approach of John J. Allen, "The Mixed Economies of Cain and Abel: An Historical and Cultural Approach," *CBW* 31 (2011): 33-52.

There have also been many lexical-grammatical approaches. Based on a close lexical-grammatical analysis of the text, Matthew Schlimm suggests that the account of Cain and Abel conveys "the devastating power of anger within families" (*From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Language and Ethics of Anger in Genesis* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011], 139). Regarding the controversial verse, Gen 4:8, see Chris Burnett, "A Sin Offering Lying in the Doorway? A Minority Interpretation of Genesis 4:6-8" *MSJ* 27 (2016): 45-55, and Pamela Tamarkin Reis, "What Cain Said: A Note on Genesis 4.8" *JSOT* 27 (2002): 107-113.

⁷⁴⁵ The accounts are also connected through many parallels in content, as noted in 2.3 and further explicated below.

⁷⁴⁶ Cf. Wöhrle, "Von der Fähigkeit," and Kiefer, *Gut und Böse*. See the summary of their arguments in 1.1.2.2.1.

connections to the knowledge of good and bad in the verses under study. This section will end with conclusions regarding the knowledge of good and bad in the FN as a whole.

4.3.1. Verses 1–2

והאדם ידע את־חווה אשתו ותהר ותלד את־קין ותאמר קניתי איש את־יהוה:
ותסף ללדת את־אחיו את־הבל ויהי־הבל רעה צאן וקין היה עבד אדמה:

Now the man knew Eve⁷⁴⁷ his wife. And she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have created⁷⁴⁸ a man with Yhwh.” And she again gave birth, to his brother, Abel. And Abel was⁷⁴⁹ a shepherd of the flock, but Cain was a worker of the ground.⁷⁵⁰

4.3.1.1. Summary

The narrative begins with a standard birth announcement followed by an incredibly enigmatic statement describing the naming of the firstborn child (Cain).⁷⁵¹ This is followed by an abbreviated birth announcement for the second child (Abel) and a description of the occupations of the two brothers. There are several elements of these verses that connect back to the PN and build upon the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad.

4.3.1.2. Connections to the Knowledge of Good and Bad

4.3.1.2.1. Cain’s Birth

The first hint that the theme of knowledge of good and bad from the PN is carried on in the fratricide account is the description of intercourse and procreation in Gen 4:1. As suggested by the description of the knowledge of good and bad in 1QSa 1.9–11, reaching a level of maturity at which one has knowledge of good and bad is correlated with the proper

⁷⁴⁷ The usual English translation for חווה (*havvah*) is adopted here.

⁷⁴⁸ See further discussion regarding the translation of קנה below.

⁷⁴⁹ Is it also grammatically possible to translate this “Abel *became*” (and the following, “Cain *became*”) (cf. Gen 3:22) (see, e.g., Wenham’s translation of this verse [*Genesis 1–15*, 93]). There is little in the context to suggest one sense over the other.

⁷⁵⁰ Translated word-for-word to make the connection with Gen 2:5, 15 more apparent.

⁷⁵¹ The problems of the statement can be summarized as follows: “Rather than the expected ‘She gave birth to a son and called his name Cain,’ the text says ‘She gave birth to Cain.’ ... There are no other instances of the reason being given for the name without the inclusion of the naming formula” (Walton, *Genesis*, 260–61). There are two further problems: the ambiguity of (1) קנה (“to acquire” or “to create,”) and (2) את־יהוה, the last two Hebrew words (*ibid.*, 261). Cf. Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 157.

time for sexual experience to begin. This connection is emphasized by intercourse being described with the verb “to know” (עָדָה), a verb from the same triconsonantal root as the word “knowledge” (דַּעַת). The pattern here is thus the same as in the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad: “knowing” (here, intercourse) is followed by a creative act (here, giving birth to a child). The woman’s newfound ability to create life will be contrasted in the course of the narrative with humanity’s equally powerful new ability to cause death (Gen 4:8). This contrast connects back to the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad, which predicted that these powers would be evident after the humans ate the fruit.

The woman’s creative potential is realized through the birth of her first son, “Cain” (קַיִן), whose name may allude to these connotations of creation when understood in light of Eve’s statement in Gen 4:1b.⁷⁵² The verb Eve uses, קָנָה, most often has the nuance of “acquire” (sometimes “purchase” [e.g., Gen 33:19, 39:1]), but the same verb form can also

⁷⁵² The significance of Cain’s name is not readily apparent, for the connection with the verb קָנָה is only one of alliteration: the root of the noun קַיִן would be קָנָה, not קָנָה (Cassuto, *Genesis*, 201–2; cf. Heyden, “Die Sünde Kains,” 85–6). His name differs from the other characters in the PN and FN, who have names that directly relate to their function in the story: “Humanity” (אָדָם), “Life” (חַיָּה), and Cain’s doomed brother, “Breath,” or “Meaningless” (הַבֵּל). Perhaps there is significance to his name based on wordplay with other similar-sounding Hebrew words. For example, קָנָה sounds similar to the Hebrew word for “jealousy” (קִנְיָה) (Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness*, 146). Schlimm also notes other possible associations for the name: “First, while Cain’s name initially refers to the gaining, acquisition, and creation of life (see 4:1), he ironically is responsible for the losing, taking, and destruction of life. Second, his name is quite similar to both the verb קָנָה, which in the Polel means ‘sing a funeral song,’ and its related noun קִינָה, which refers to a ‘dirge.’ ... Finally, it may not be accidental that Cain’s name has a homonym used in 2 Sam 21:16 to describe one of the weapons with which Ishbi-benov intends to kill David. Although readers are never told the means by which Cain strikes down his brother (Gen 4:8), the fact that Cain’s name sounds like an instrument of death does not bode well for Abel” (ibid., 136 n. 4). Cf. Nissim Amzallag, who connects Cain’s name to metal working (“Why is the Cain Genealogy [Gen. 4:17–24] Integrated into the Book of Genesis?,” *ANES* 55 [2018]: 23–50) and Manfred Görg, who suggests it means “strong,” on the parallel with Egyptian *qny* “strong” (“Kain und das ‘Land Nod,’” *BN* 71 [1994], 12), although this parallel has not been accepted by others. Karl Budde questions whether the name saying always must refer to the child it is named after. He rightly claims that Gen 29:31ff. proves that the opposite can be true (“Die Erklärung des Namens Kajin in Gen 4,1,” *ZAW* 31 [1911]: 147–51).

Most probable may be that the root קָנָה refers to “gestalten, formen,” or “to shape, form” (which would be paralleled with the meaning of the Arabic root *qyn*), in accordance with the noun form referring to a weapon that has been “formed” by a craftsman (cf. 2 Sam 21:16) (see Wellhausen, *Composition*, 306; Cassuto, *Genesis*, 199–201.; Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 157; Hendel, “Die Sünde Kains,” 86). This would fit its use in Gen 4:22 as well (Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 157).

It is also possible that the lack of obvious meaning in Cain’s name is the result of the narrative being composed on the basis of an already existing genealogy, meaning that Cain’s name was already predetermined (this would support the view that Gen 4:2 is the beginning of the narrative, although v. 2b may have originally been part of the genealogy [see 2.5.1.1.]). Cain’s name is explained then by Eve in such a way that it connects back to the new powers of creation obtained by humans in the PN (see further explanation below).

mean “create” or “produce” when God is the subject.⁷⁵³ This meaning is more fitting to the context and may invite a comparison between Eve’s creative activity in this verse and God’s creative activity in Genesis 2.

It is not only the translation of קנה that is difficult but also the understanding of the words that follow it. First of all, אִישׁ (“man”) is not typically a word used to describe a child.⁷⁵⁴ Furthermore, when the verb קנה is followed by אֶת it is typical for אֶת to be a direct object marker attached to whatever was “bought” or “acquired” (קנה).⁷⁵⁵ Ancient translations of the verse tend towards translating אֶת־יְהוָה as a prepositional phrase; for example, the LXX translates it as διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.⁷⁵⁶ This sense of the phrase, suggesting that Eve’s creation of this human was done “through” or “with” Yhwh, also makes the most sense of the unusual use of the word אִישׁ.⁷⁵⁷ Eve describes (possibly with an air of surprise) the creation of a male human out of her own body, implicitly responding to Yhwh’s creation of a female human out of a male body (Gen 2:21–23).⁷⁵⁸ As this former creative act was performed by Yhwh, so Eve

⁷⁵³ Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 157.

⁷⁵⁴ See *HALOT* 1:44.

⁷⁵⁵ See, e.g., Gen 33:19; 47:19; 47:22; Lev 25:28; 25:30; 2 Sam 24:21, 24; 1 Kgs 16:24; Is 11:11; Jer 13:2; 32:7, 8, 9; Ruth 4:9, 10; Neh 5:8.

⁷⁵⁶ See Gen 4:1 in the LXX. Cf. Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 158.

⁷⁵⁷ Older interpretations include Alexander Geddes’ suggestion that the phrase אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה be read, “a god-like man,” for he claims that this fits the style of Scripture and “oriental idiom” (*The Holy Bible, Or the Books Accounted Sacred by Jews and Christians, otherwise called the Books of the Old and New Covenants*, vol. 1 [London: J. Davis, 1792]). For a different interpretation, see Budde, who suggests that the statement “I have acquired a man” is the feminine equivalent of the Hebrew “He has taken a wife” (Budde, “Die Erklärung,” 148). He cites Gen 26:34, 1 Kgs 16:31, and 2 Chr 11:18 as examples and claims on this basis that Eve is saying, “I have gotten Yhwh as husband” (ibid.). According to him, this expression represents Eve’s feelings metaphorically — it is as though Adam was Yhwh himself (ibid.). However, this is not in congruence with anything the author has said up to this point.

⁷⁵⁸ This is similar to LaCocque’s argument that this is a reversal of what Adam says in Gen 2:23, though the contention that it is a “retort” is questionable (*Onslaught*, 47). The sense of defiance is possible but seems rather unlikely considering the fact that Eve specifically says the action was done “with Yhwh.” In other words, she is not claiming this creative act as her sole property. This is in agreement with Blenkinsopp, who suggests, “Her speaking of *creating* a child... is clearly intended as a play on the name Cain (*qayin*), but it also reinforces, and is reinforced by, the affirmation that the birth came about with the co-operation of Yhwh, the deity who created the first male as she has now been instrumental in creating the second” (*Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 84). Cf. Heyden, “Die Sünde Kains,” 86; Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 158).

describes this later creative act as being accomplished through Yhwh (את־יהוה). However, it is significant that all the action related to the creation of the woman in the PN was described with Yhwh as the subject of the verbs (Yhwh “caused to fall” [נפל], “took” [לקח], “closed” [סגר], “built” [בנה], and “brought” [בוא]), while here Eve is the unambiguous subject of the verb קנה. This may pick up on the new level of autonomy given to the woman as a result of obtaining the knowledge of good and bad (see 3.4.3.1). As noted in the previous chapter, having lost the role of “helper” (עזר), her new role related to procreation comes with pain but also with power (see 3.3.3.2.4.3). In a reversal of the איש receiving an אשה from Yhwh in Gen 2:21–23, now the אשה obtains an איש, with Yhwh in an ambiguous supporting role. The statement could therefore be translated as follows: “I have *created* a man with Yhwh,” thereby expressing the creative power gained by the woman through obtaining the knowledge of good and bad.

4.3.1.2.2. Abel’s Birth

Immediately following the birth of Cain, the birth of “his brother, Abel” (אהיו את־הבל) is announced (Gen 4:2a). There may also be significant connotations associated with Abel’s name: הבל.⁷⁵⁹ This word can have the sense of “(transitory) breath,” “vanity,” and “idols.”⁷⁶⁰ It appears five times in the very first statement of Qoheleth in Eccl 1:2 הבל הבלים אמר קהלת הבל and is at the heart of his musings throughout the book. These and other occurrences of this word in the Hebrew Bible suggest that the author is using this name to

⁷⁵⁹ Van Seters notes that “the significance of Abel’s name, ‘futility,’ lies in the story itself and cannot derive from any other source, such as a genealogy” (*Prologue to History*, 137). This fits with the argument above, that verse 2 is part of the narrative that the author added to the genealogy.

⁷⁶⁰ HALOT 1:236.

hint at the brevity of Abel's life and perhaps also the meaninglessness of his death.⁷⁶¹ In a sense, the narrator dooms him from the moment he is born and given the name הבל.⁷⁶²

This shadow placed over Abel's life is deepened by the brevity of the description of his birth: it lacks both a statement of intercourse and conception, as well as the name explanation that is given to Cain.⁷⁶³ Abel is merely designated as Cain's brother (אָהֵב, "his brother," in Gen 4:2a; cf. 4:8, 9, 10, 11), a fact that is mentioned even before his own name is given.⁷⁶⁴ This contributes to a sense that Abel barely has his own personhood; rather than being a fully developed character, he is nothing more than his name suggests, הבל, an empty symbol.⁷⁶⁵ Abel's name thus begins the fratricide narrative with a nod to the senselessness that sometimes marks the mortal human life. The tragedy of a brief and seemingly insignificant existence starkly contrasts with the joy that should result from the creation of two new human beings. In this way, the narrator again points to the ambivalence inherent to the human experience, as was also described in the PN.

4.3.1.2.3. The Professions of the Brothers

The brothers' professions are given next: "And Abel was a shepherd of a flock, but Cain was a worker of the ground (Gen 4:2b).⁷⁶⁶ Kratz suggests that this statement is the

⁷⁶¹ See, e.g., Psa 39:11: "surely all mankind is a mere breath (הבל)!"

⁷⁶² Cf. 1.1.2.1.

⁷⁶³ From early on, interpreters have taken the syntax here as an indication that Cain and Abel were twins (John Byron, *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition: Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the First Sibling Rivalry*, TBN [Leiden: Brill, 2011], 20–24). This may be the case, but if it is, the author does not emphasize it.

⁷⁶⁴ Abel is referred to as Cain's brother seven times in the narrative (Gen 4:2, 8 [2x], 9 [2x]; 10, 11). This may point to the significance of "roles" within this account, as will be further discussed below (see 4.3.4.2.2).

⁷⁶⁵ Heyden raises the interesting point that the two brothers each express something fundamental about mankind: a human is a formed being (Cain) but is also transient (Abel) ("Die Sünde Kains," 36).

⁷⁶⁶ Some see this explanation as describing jobs that were already typical, implying a wider population (see, e.g., Iain Provan, *Discovering Genesis: Content, Interpretation, Reception* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015], 96). This may be another indication that an older tradition about Cain was adapted to form the present

narrator's way of anticipating "the differentiation of forms of life in 4:17ff."⁷⁶⁷ However, there may be more behind this statement. V. 4:2b begins a series of chiasmic phrases, in which a phrase with normal word order is followed by a phrase with inverted word order.⁷⁶⁸ This particular phrase emphasizes an equivalence between the brothers, with each grammatical element of the first clause reproduced in the second (see diagram below [4.3.2.2.2]).⁷⁶⁹ Though the verse points to the equivalence of the brothers in their professions, it is also notable that Cain has the specific profession for which mankind was destined in the PN: he is a "worker of the ground" (עבד אדמה [4:2b; cf. 2:5, 15]).⁷⁷⁰ Thomas Willi notes that this is suggestive of Cain's role in the family: he is the firstborn, the one who carries on his father's profession and the one who is responsible for his family as a whole.⁷⁷¹ This may also be another hint at ambivalence in human life: the very profession for which man was destined produces an offering which God does not prefer.⁷⁷²

4.3.2. Verses 3–5

ויהי מקץ ימים ויבא קין מפרי האדמה מנחה ליהוה:
והבל הביא גם־הוא מבכרות צאנו ומחלבהן וישע יהוה אל־הבל ואל־מנחתו:

account. Those who champion a collective interpretation of this passage see Cain and Abel as representing two distinct groups: farmers and herders. See n. 352 regarding this interpretation.

⁷⁶⁷ Kratz suggests, "Genesis 4.2 takes the cultivation of the ground from Gen. 2–3 and the rearing of cattle from 4.20, constructs an artificial opposition between them, and thus anticipates the differentiation of forms of life in 4.17ff" (*Composition*, 253).

⁷⁶⁸ Heyden, "Die Sünde Kains," 87.

⁷⁶⁹ Heyden also notes the effect that this chiasmic structure has on the presentation of Cain as a character: he is the protagonist, but the chiasm causes Abel to be included right alongside him (*ibid.*).

⁷⁷⁰ Cf. Janowski, "Jenseits von Eden," 254.

⁷⁷¹ Thomas Willi, "Der Ort von Genesis 4:1–16 innerhalb der Altherbräischen Geschichtsschreibung," in *Non-Hebrew Section*, vol. 3 of *Isac Leo Seeligmann Volume: Essays on the Bible and the Ancient World*, ed. Alexander Rófe and Yair Zakovitch (Jerusalem: E. Rubinstein's Publishing House, 1983), 100.

⁷⁷² Cf. Frank Anthony Spina, "The 'Ground' for Cain's Rejection (Gen 4): 'ādāmāh in the Context of Gen 1–11," *ZAW* 104 (1992); Mari Jørstad, "The Ground That Opened Its Mouth: The Ground's Response to Human Violence in Genesis 4," *JBL* 135 (2016): 705–15. Against the ground being the *primary* problem in the rejection of Cain's offering (and convincingly so) is the fact that this would imply that the curse of God in Gen 3:17–19 only applies to farming work. This is clearly not the intention of these verses — rather, the curse applies to all of human life (Hee-Sook Bae, "Bin ich Hüter meines Bruders? Eine Überlegung zur Stellung Kains in Gen 4,1–16," *VT* 66 [2016]: 368).

ואל-קין ואל-מנחתו לא שעה ויחר לקין מאד ויפלו פניו:

And it happened after some time⁷⁷³ that Cain brought from the fruit of the ground an offering to Yhwh. But Abel, he also, brought from the firstborn of his flock and from their fat portions⁷⁷⁴. And Yhwh was responsive towards⁷⁷⁵ Abel and his offering, but towards Cain and his offering he was not responsive. And Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

4.3.2.1. Summary

These verses describe the beginning of cultic practices, as the two brothers each bring an offering, in turn, to Yhwh. Abel and his offering elicit a response from Yhwh, but Cain and his offering do not, a situation to which Cain responds with anger. In continuity with the first two verses, this unit also connects back to the PN and its themes, as will be demonstrated below.

4.3.2.2. Connections to the Knowledge of Good and Bad

4.3.2.2.1. Conflict Resulting from Contrast

An important connection back to the PN and to the knowledge of good and bad may be seen in the developing conflict between the brothers, shown in the manner of their offerings and the difference in Yhwh's response. That the scene of offering is critical to the message of the account is shown in its occurrence at the beginning of the narrative.⁷⁷⁶ Despite the fact that Cain is both the (typically) privileged firstborn and the one who takes the initiative to offer,⁷⁷⁷ Yhwh is not responsive (שאה) towards his offering in the way that he is

⁷⁷³ Cf. 1 Kgs 17:7 (Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 150). This phrase could also be translated, "after a year" (see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 103).

⁷⁷⁴ On the apparently defective writing of this plural form, see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 94; cf. Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 150.

⁷⁷⁵ This translation of שעה will be further discussed below. See n. 778.

⁷⁷⁶ Susan Zeelander points out that it is striking for the offering to occur at the beginning of the narrative, as it often occurs at the end of narratives and brings closure to the account: "in this narrative [Gen 4:1–16] the ritual contributes to the destabilization of the equilibrium and helps set the events of the story in motion" (*Closure in Biblical Narrative* [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 159).

⁷⁷⁷ It is noteworthy that it is Cain who takes the initiative to offer. His action likely would have been considered fitting, as he is the firstborn son (see n. 1061), and this may also show Cain's recognition of social

towards Abel and his offering. It is difficult to capture the essence of the verb *השא* in a single term; a definition that encompasses the various nuances in its occurrences within the Hebrew Bible could be “to relate with active responsiveness towards someone or something.”⁷⁷⁸

It is not clear in what way Cain knew that Yhwh had not been responsive towards his offering. There are a few examples of God sending fire from heaven to consume an offering, but this is the exception rather than the rule.⁷⁷⁹ Looking to the next instance of offering in Genesis (post-Flood [Gen 8:20–22]), there is no consumption of the offering by fire, but it is clear that God has accepted the offering because he decides never to curse the ground or destroy all living creatures again (8:12). In other words, the acceptance of the offering is made clear through the positive events that follow the sacrifice. This attitude is also reflected in the cultic practice of the broader ancient Near Eastern culture. Within this system, sacrifices were crucial: “As the food of the gods, it is arguably the most important provision to sustain their presence, favor, and the smooth operation of the cosmos.”⁷⁸⁰ In return for

expectations, as would be expected of one who has the knowledge of good and bad. LaCocque suggests that Abel may have been presumptuously taking on Cain’s role as the firstborn son by giving his own offering and that this may have been an implicit claim to the birthright of his brother (*Onslaught*, 60). This is possible but is not clarified by the narrator in any specific way. The dynamic of fraternal conflict that plays out in this account will be further analyzed below in 4.5.2.

⁷⁷⁸ See, e.g., Ex 5:9: “Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard (*השא*) to lying words.” Here, the implication is that no active response should be given to the men’s words. Another example is 2 Sam 22:41–42: “You made my enemies turn their backs to me, those who hated me, and I destroyed them. They looked (*השא*), but there was none to save; they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them.” Here, the verb describes how the enemies acted in a responsive way towards Yhwh that they believed would result in rescue (see the following clause, which repeats the same idea through synonymous parallelism). See also Isa 17:7–8: “On that day people will regard (*השא*) their Maker, and their eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel; they will not have regard (*השא*) for the altars, the work of their hands, and they will not look to what their own fingers have made, either the sacred poles or the altars of incense.” Here again, the verb implies active responsiveness to the object of worship.

Walton gives the translation, “looked with favor” (*Genesis*, 259). Against this, and rightfully so, Hendel argues that it refers to the *neutral* notice of God (cf., e.g., Job 7:19; 14:6; and Ps 39:14, in which the word does not have a positive connotation). In accord with this, Wenham suggests the more neutral expression, “paid attention” (*Genesis 1–15*, 103), similar to the suggestion above.

⁷⁷⁹ See 1 Kgs 18:38; 1 Chron 21:26; and 2 Chron 7:1.

⁷⁸⁰ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 130. See also Jan Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 205, regarding Egyptian thinking on this concept. See, e.g., the gods descending upon a post-Flood offering in “Atrahasis,” trans. Dalley, 33, tablet III, §v, as well as the mentions of this system in “Enūma Eliš,” trans. Lambert, 87, tablet IV, line 11; tablet V, line 115; and tablet VI, line 8, 34ff.

providing food, worshippers hoped that their deity would ensure their protection and bring them success in their ventures. It seems likely, then, that Abel experienced prosperity following his sacrifice in ways in which Cain did not. Perhaps Cain's next crop failed, while Abel's flock increased.⁷⁸¹

Regardless of how God's reaction was manifest, the differing results of the brothers' offerings set the stage for the violence that follows. The very possibility of this kind of distinction is the result of obtaining the knowledge of good and bad, for it allows each person to make autonomous decisions to influence the world around them (in this case, different determinations regarding what to offer). The decisions that humans make after obtaining the knowledge of good and bad not only have differing effects on the physical world and other living beings, but, as the FN makes clear, they also elicit different reactions from God. This dynamic is described in the FN through the giving of offerings because this functioned as a common method of communication with the divine.⁷⁸²

4.3.2.2.2. The Reason for Yhwh's Choice

In the FN, conflict ensues not only because two individuals make different decisions about what to offer but also because it is not clear *why* God ignores Cain's offering of "fruit of the ground" (מפרי האדמה).⁷⁸³ On the one hand, Cain's initiative to offer appears commendable, and there is no obvious reason to see his choice of offering as problematic. The word used for "offering," מנחה, is quite general and can describe a wide variety of

⁷⁸¹ Mark McEntire, *The Blood of Abel: The Violent Plot of the Hebrew Bible* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1999), 20.

⁷⁸² Christian Eberhart, "A Neglected Feature of Sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible: Remarks on the Burning Rite on the Altar," *HTR* 97 (2004): 492.

⁷⁸³ Alan J. Hauser points out another interesting connection to the Paradise narrative: "'fruit' again plays a significant role in the offense committed" ("Linguistic and Thematic Links," 300). Whether Cain's action should truly be understood as an "offense" is considered further in what follows.

offerings, whether vegetable/grain or meat, first fruit or not first fruit.⁷⁸⁴ In Leviticus, a מנחה is a perfectly acceptable form of offering (see Lev 2:1–16; 6:7–16) and could even function as a substitute for a sin offering (see 5:11–13).⁷⁸⁵ In the FN, Yhwh had not specifically required an offering of first fruits (as far as the reader is told). This all suggests that the word מנחה, on its own, does not suggest that Cain’s offering was problematic.⁷⁸⁶

That being said, starting far back in the history of interpretation, it has been suggested that Abel’s offering was better because he specifically offers, “from the firstborns” (מבכרות) of his animals.⁷⁸⁷ The mention of certain details about Abel’s offering is certainly suggestive, particularly in light of the structure of the verses. As with the description of the professions of the brothers, the description of the offerings of the two brothers is presented in chiasmic structure. Important deviations in this structure can be observed in v. 4a, as demonstrated by the chart below:

ויהי הבל רעה צאן	2ba
	2bβ
וקין היה עבד אדמה	
ויבא קין מפרי האדמה מנחה ליהוה	3
	4a
והבל הביא גם הוא מבכרות צאנו ומחלבהן	

⁷⁸⁴ See HALOT 2:601. Importantly for this story, it is not required to be a meat offering (see Lev 23:13) and can also refer to a “gift” in general (see Gen 32:14). Significantly, Eberhart mentions evidence from Elephantine of the “interchangeability of grain offerings and animal offerings” – during a period in which no animal offerings could be made temple practice still continued through the use of grain offerings (“Sacrifice,” 489; see A. E. Cowley, ed., *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1923; repr., Osanbrück: Zeller, 1967], 113 [30:25], 123 [32:9–10], 125 [33:10–11]).

⁷⁸⁵ Eberhart, “Sacrifice,” 489.

⁷⁸⁶ Cf. Heyden, “Die Sünde Kains,” 93.

⁷⁸⁷ See Bryon, *Cain and Abel*, 39–62. Bryon describes the reasoning of many interpreters, who connect this passage to the regulations regarding offerings elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible: “The care used by the author to describe Abel’s offering as being from among the choice of his flock echoes biblical mandates for such (Exod. 22.28-29; 34.19-20; Lev. 3.16; Deut. 32.38; Ps. 147.14). A possible conclusion, based on the descriptions offered, is that Cain’s sacrifice was defective since, unlike Abel, it was not taken from the choicest part of the harvest” (John Byron, “Cain’s Rejected Offering: Interpretive Approaches to a Theological Problem,” *JSP* 18 [2008]: 5). He notes that this is a standard Jewish and Christian interpretation (*ibid.*, 5–6). See, e.g., Philo, *Confusion* 124; Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 3.2.1; *Gen. Rab.* 22:5; and *Pirque R. El.* 21.

וישע יהוה אל־הבל ואל־מנחתו ↙ ↘ ואל־מנחתו לא־שעה ↘ ↙	4b
ואל־מנחתו לא־שעה ↙ ↘ ואל־מנחתו לא־שעה ↘ ↙	5a

V. 2b α + 2b β and v. 4b + 5a exhibit a very basic chiasmic structure: three elements in the first clause are paralleled by three corresponding elements in the second clause (note the words/phrases connected by solid arrows in the table above).⁷⁸⁸ The brevity of expression and tight correspondence of the elements makes the divergences in v. 3 + 4a all the more notable. As with the first chiasmic pair, three parallel elements are evident: the subjects (Cain in v. 3 versus Abel in v. 4a), the verb (בוא [hiphil] in both v. 3 and v. 4a), and a prepositional phrase (“from the fruit of the ground” [v. 3]; “from the firstborn of his flock” [v. 4]⁷⁸⁹). Thus far, the structure is quite similar to the first chiasmic pair.

Matters are complicated, however, by the appearance of a fourth element in these verses. Gen 4:3 contains a direct object (מנחה) and an indirect object (ליהוה), stating that Cain brought “an offering to Yhwh.” In the spot in v. 4a where one might expect corresponding direct and indirect objects, the phrase גם־הוא (“he also”) appears instead (see the dotted line arrow connecting these phrases in the chart above). This conveys the same idea as the corresponding element in v. 3 (i.e., Abel also brought a מנחה ליהוה), but the lack of corresponding wording in a literary unit that clearly favors repetition and correspondence in phrasing must be significant. One possibility is that this is intended to draw further attention to Abel’s מנחה.⁷⁹⁰ The narrative avoids a straightforward statement about the content of what

⁷⁸⁸ Cf. Arneth, *Von Adams Fall*, 151.

⁷⁸⁹ It may be significant that Abel’s offering is from the “firstborn of his flock” (מבכרות צאנו), but this would also be suggestive only in retrospect (i.e., after noticing the conspicuous addition of ומחלבהן to the phrase). Without the addition of ומחלבהן, the significance of which is discussed further below, Abel’s offering could be read merely as equivalently corresponding to Cain’s offering: Cain offers from the produce of his work of the ground, and Abel offers from the produce of his shepherding work.

⁷⁹⁰ Contra Arneth, who sees the absence of ליהוה in v. 4a as emphasizing a particular connection between Cain and Yhwh (*Durch Adams Fall*, 151 n. 153). This seems unlikely, given that the narrative makes it quite clear that Abel’s offering was also a מנחה ליהוה and one that specifically catches Yhwh’s attention.

Abel “brought,” hinting that there is something significant about his offering and prompting the reader to look ahead for clarification.

This suggestion is supported by looking ahead and observing that a fifth element was added to v. 4a (see the circled element in the table above), for which no corresponding element in v. 3 exists: וּמַחֲלֵבֶהֱן (“and fat portions”). Not only does this increase what Abel “brought,” but the mention of חֵלֶב in the context of a sacrifice is highly significant. As is attested elsewhere, the issue of offering the fat to Yhwh was no small matter: the failure to offer this part of the meat was a critical factor in the condemnation of the sons of the priest Eli (1 Sam 2:15–16). Heyden also discusses this point, noting the connection between blood and fat in Lev 7:22–27 (where there are prohibitions against eating either one):

“Das Blut gilt als Träger des Lebens. Wenn in Lev 7, 22ff. beides parallel nebeneinandergestellt erscheint, so wird die hohe Bedeutung, die auch dem Fett zugemessen wird, deutlich. Einige Stellen im AT deuten auf die Vorstellung hin, daß im Fett die Kraft ist [2 Sam 1:22; Isa 34:6]. Fett und Blut sind als Träger der Kraft und des Lebens die allein Jahwe vorbehaltenen Anteile eines Opfers.”⁷⁹¹

The mention, then, of fat in regards to Abel’s offering must not be overlooked.

Furthermore, other instances of rejected offerings in both the Hebrew Bible and other ancient texts suggest that an ancient author and his readers would have assumed that an offering was rejected for one of two reasons: “either there [was] something wrong with the sacrifice or there [was] something wrong with the offerer.”⁷⁹² One can look, for example, to the execution of Aaron’s sons in Lev 10:1–2 (a problematic offering, see 10:1b), or to God’s rejection of the Israelite’s offerings in Isa 1:11 (a problem with the offerer [see 11:16–17]).

⁷⁹¹ Heyden, “Die Sünde Kains,” 94.

⁷⁹² John Day, “Problems in the Interpretation of the Story of Cain and Abel,” in *From Creation to Abraham* (London: T&T Clark, 2022), 82. Cf. Heyden, “Die Sünde Kains,” 91; J.C. de Moor, “The Sacrifice Which Is an Abomination to the Lord,” in *Loven en geloven. Opstellen van collega’s en medewerkers aangeboden aan Prof. D. Nic. H. Ridderbos* (Amsterdam: Bolland, 1975), 211–26.

There is no hint of wrongdoing on Cain's part prior to the offering incident,⁷⁹³ but the stark difference in the description of the offerings suggests Heyden's explanation is reasonable: "Der Eindruck wird erweckt, als habe Kain eher gleichgültig geopfert, indem er etwas von seinem Ertrag gab. Abel hingegen sucht seine Gabe sorgfältig aus — zunächst die Erstlinge, aber selbst von ihnen nur die besten Teile, die Fettstücke."⁷⁹⁴ Yhwh's response, then, indicates his acceptance (or lack thereof) not just of the offering itself, but of the offerer as well: Yhwh responded to *Abel* and his offering, but he did not respond to *Cain* and his offering (see Gen 4:4b–5a, emphasis mine).⁷⁹⁵

The view that there is a specific reason for Yhwh's differentiation between the two brothers and their offerings is supported when one looks at other instances of rejected offerings in the Hebrew Bible, which typically clarify the reason behind a rejected offering.⁷⁹⁶ This is clear in the two examples cited above (Isa 1:11, 16–17; Lev 10:1–2), as well as in Malachi: "You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor at your hand. You ask, 'Why does he not?' Because the LORD was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless" (11:13–14).⁷⁹⁷ This suggests two things: (1) there is

⁷⁹³ Contra ancient interpreters who suggest moral fault on Cain's part even before the murder (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 1.2.1; *Tg. Neof.*, Gen 4:8; Matt 23:35; Heb 11:4; 1 John 3:12; *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.12.21). See also Day, "Cain and Abel," 82.

⁷⁹⁴ Heyden, "Die Sünde Kains," 94.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid. Cf. Moor, "The Sacrifice," 220–26.

⁷⁹⁶ See Moor, "The Sacrifice," 211–26, who categorizes the reasons for rejected offerings in the Hebrew Bible and elsewhere in the ancient Near East: 1. Imperfection of the sacrifice (see, e.g., Lev 22:18–22; Deut 17:1; Mal 1:7–8, 14); 2. Improper conduct of the offerer (see, e.g., Ex 20:26; 28:42ff; 1 Sam 2:12–17, 22, 27–36; 3:14); 3. Disobedience of the offerer (see, e.g., Hos 6:6; Amos 5:22, 24; Isa 1:10; Jer 6:20; 7:21–26); 4. Unfaithfulness of the offerer (see, e.g., Jer 44:4; Hos 5:6ff; Mal 2:11ff). In light of the evidence, he finds it unlikely that Cain's offering was rejected without reason, for, barring one of the reasons given above, it was generally expected that sacrifices would be accepted: "in actual fact the offerer had every reason to expect that as a rule the gods would readily accept his gifts. According to both Egyptian and Babylonian traditions the gods needed their regular meals and man was created to provide the food" (ibid., 213).

⁷⁹⁷ See n. 796 above for more examples.

probably a specific reason for the rejection of the offering in the FN, but also (2) the fact that the reason is not specified to Cain (as it is in other situations of rejected offerings) may have been done intentionally to make a point.⁷⁹⁸ Intentional ambiguity on this would highlight the reality into which Cain was born, outside the confines of the garden of Eden. The way of living in the garden, which included the security of working within a system set up by Yhwh God (with its defined roles and creative activity accomplished by Yhwh God), is no longer an option, and now humans must make their own autonomous decisions about how to act.⁷⁹⁹ Having failed to achieve the response from Yhwh that he desired, Cain's anger presents him as having deemed the present situation "not good;" now he has the option of taking creative or destructive action to address the situation. The following verses will demonstrate which route he chooses.

4.3.2.2.3. The Beginning of Cultic Practice

Another aspect of these verses that connects back to the PN (specifically as an account of creation) is the beginning of cultic practices, which also occurs in other ancient near Eastern accounts of creation and primeval times. For example, the "Eridu Genesis" (or the Sumerian Flood Story) describes,

"[Nintur] was paying [attention]: Let me bethink myself of my humankind...May they come and build cities and cult places that I may cool myself in their shade...She gave directions for purification, and cries for clemency, the things that cool divine

⁷⁹⁸ Cf. the Babylonian Theodicy, in which the righteous sufferer gives offerings and sacrifices, but his circumstances have not improved: "[Have I] withheld offerings? I have prayed to my god, I have pronounced the blessing over the goddesses's regular sacrifices" ("The Babylonian Theodicy," trans. William G. Lambert, *ANET*, 602, lines 54–55). The conclusion of the "Friend" in the dialogue is not that the gods have no reason to treat the "Sufferer" poorly, but that people are unable to figure out the will of the gods (*ibid.*, 604, lines 254–64).

⁷⁹⁹ A possibility mentioned by numerous interpreters is that God is intentionally testing Cain: "God consciously tests Cain with the rejection of his sacrifice, in which he himself is to find and perceive his own place and the task associated with it. Thus, the seemingly unjust refusal of the divine acceptance of sacrifice aims at a trial of human responsibility" (Bae, "Bin ich der Hüter," 371); cf. Emanuel Pfoh, "Genesis 4 Revisited: Some Remarks on Divine Patronage," *SJOT* 23 (2009): 40. This is not impossible, but, as with so many possibilities suggested for this narrative, it is not clarified by the narrator. Unlike the PN, no specific command is given. What is significant for the present purposes is that the ambiguity regarding the rejection of Cain's offering contributes to the overall sense of ambivalence towards the results of the humans obtaining the knowledge of good and bad.

wrath, perfected the divine service and the august offices, said to the surrounding regions: Let me institute peace there!”⁸⁰⁰

Another example is found in “Enuma Elish,” in which Ea’s establishment of himself (following the killing of Apsu) includes founding shrines.⁸⁰¹ Similarly, when Marduk is victorious in the end, he establishes the practice of giving food offerings for the gods and goddesses and also founds his temple.⁸⁰² Gilgamesh is described as “Restorer of holy places that the deluge had destroyed, Founder of rites for the teeming peoples.”⁸⁰³ The Memphite Theology from Egypt mentions the establishment of offerings in the context of creation.⁸⁰⁴ It is also notable that the first thing that Noah does following the flood is to offer a sacrifice and thereby reestablish cultic practice (Gen 8:20).

These texts support the concept that the establishment of regular sacrifices for the gods was considered an essential element of life, for the gods were dependent on these sacrifices for nourishment.⁸⁰⁵ Beyond merely being mentioned in these primeval accounts, the beginning of cultic practice may be considered a “rite of civilization,” similar to other

⁸⁰⁰ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, eds., *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 13. Here, kingship is connected with the establishment of the cult: “When the royal [specter] was [coming] down from heaven, the august [crown] and the royal [throne] being already down from heaven, he *the king* [regularly] performed to perfection the august divine services and offices” (ibid.).

⁸⁰¹ “Enūma Eliš,” trans. Lambert, tablet I, line 76.

⁸⁰² See ibid., tablet VI, lines 51ff. (temple building) and lines 116–17 (providing food for the gods).

⁸⁰³ *Gilgamesh*, trans. Foster, 4, tablet I, lines 45–6. Note also the Phoenician tale of Hypsouranios and Ousōos (see n. 339). Examples exist outside the ancient Near East as well: in Sanskrit “manu means a man, or mankind, and Manu(s) is a mythical divine ancestor. ... He was considered to have been the first sacrificer and the establisher of the fire-cult” (Martin West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 376).

⁸⁰⁴ It states, “Thus it is said of Ptah: ‘He who made all and created the gods.’ And he is Tatenen, who gave birth to the gods, and from whom every thing came forth, foods, provisions, divine offerings, all good things ... He gave birth to the gods, He made the towns, He established the nomes, He placed the gods in their shrines, He settled their offerings, He established their shrines” (“The Memphite Theology,” in *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East*, ed. Christopher B. Hays [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014], 60).

⁸⁰⁵ Note that after a period without any sacrifices (during the flood), the gods descend hungrily on the sacrifices: “[The gods sniffed] the smell, they gathered [like flies] over the offering” (“Atrahasis,” trans. Dalley, 33, tablet III, §v).

advances in cultural knowledge that are described in the following Cainite genealogy. The fact that Cain and Abel give offerings is, therefore, an example of the creative side of the consequences of the knowledge of good and bad, for it represents a development in knowledge and the progression of human culture.

4.3.3. Verses 6–7

ויאמר יהוה אל-קין למה חרה לך ולמה נפלו פניך:
הלוא אם-תיטיב שאת ואם לא תיטיב לפתח חטאת רבץ ואלריך תשוקתו ואתה תמשל-
בו:

*And Yhwh said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your face fallen?
Is it not [true] that if you judge the situation ‘good,’⁸⁰⁶ [there will be a] lifting up?
But if you do not judge the situation ‘good,’ at the door⁸⁰⁷ of sin [you are] lying down.⁸⁰⁸
His [i.e., Abel’s] allegiance is towards you, but you will rule over him.”*

4.3.3.1. Summary

To explain how Gen 4:6–7 fits within its context and also connects back to the PN it is necessary to discuss the above translation. V. 6 is unproblematic, but v. 7 poses a host of difficulties for the translator, resulting in the Talmud deeming it one of “five verses in the Torah whose meaning cannot be decided.”⁸⁰⁹ In light of the fact that the syntax and lexical obscurities of this verse have confounded interpreters for time immemorial, it must be admitted that any proposed translation is provisional.⁸¹⁰ Nevertheless, what follows will be an attempt to provide reasonable evidence for the translation above. Based on the proposed

⁸⁰⁶ The verb is translated somewhat woodenly here to convey the proper sense. See further discussion below in 4.3.3.2.1.

⁸⁰⁷ The translation reads תַּתֵּן (MT) rather as תַּתֵּן (a construct form). See 4.3.3.2.1.

⁸⁰⁸ On this translation, see 4.3.3.2.1.

⁸⁰⁹ *b. Yoma 52b*; this is noted in Byron, “Cain’s Rejected Offering,” 14.

⁸¹⁰ The LXX’s translation uses the difficulty of the Hebrew as an opportunity to clarify why Cain’s offering was rejected (οὐκ, ἐὰν ὀρθῶς προσενέγκῃς, ὀρθῶς δὲ μὴ διέλῃς, ἡμαρτες; “If you offer correctly but do not divide correctly, have you not sinned?” [NETS]).

translation, it will be suggested that v. 7 encapsulates the possibilities offered by the knowledge of good and bad in a single verse.

Regarding the form of Gen 4:7, some have suggested that God’s statement here has a “proverbial” character, which would be a potential connection to wisdom thought.⁸¹¹ There is no clear-cut definition of a proverb, but Gen 4:7 does have some of the commonly suggested characteristics of this form of speech. John M. Thompson lists common proverbial characteristics: “(1) an arresting and individually inspired form... (2) a wide appeal and endorsement... and (3) content which commends itself to the hearer as true (‘wisdom’).”⁸¹² This conclusion is subjective, but it could be argued that Gen 4:7 has a striking, individually conceived form with content that would be both relatable and deemed wise to many (in its delineation of the consequences of good versus bad behavior).⁸¹³

Other elements of the verse may further this connection. The fact that the statement begins with הלוֹא (“Is it not so...?”) may be significant:

Insbesondere in der Weisheitsliteratur leitet die Wendung הלוֹא Worte und Sprüche mit objektiven oder gar allgemeingültigen Aussagen ein. Die in Gen 4,7 folgenden Darlegungen sind somit nicht nur als individuelle Einschätzung der konkreten Situation des Kain zu verstehen. Es wird hier vielmehr eine allgemeine, ja, allgemeingültige Aussage über das menschliche Tun und Verhalten vorgebracht.⁸¹⁴

Furthermore, the two conditional statements of Gen 4:7 could be compared to Prov 2:1–2, which contains a series of “if” statements offering the conditions by which a person would

⁸¹¹ See 1.1.2.2.2. See also the discussion below regarding Gen 4:7c and its “citation” of Gen 3:16 (4.3.3.2.1).

⁸¹² John M. Thompson, *The Form and Function of Proverbs in Ancient Israel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 18. He adds, “the proverb is usually short, easy to remember and most frequently transmitted orally” (ibid.).

⁸¹³ For another summary of the traits of a proverb, see Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Proverbs in Israeli Folk Narratives: A Structural Semantic Analysis* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1982), 11, 18–19, 53; cf. Susan Zeelander, *Closure in Biblical Narrative* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 121. Hasan-Rokem’s definition, too, can be understood to match the form of Gen 4:7, which (1) conceptualizes the problematic situation that Cain finds himself in; (2) expresses the situation (arguably) poetically; (3) expresses two conflicting choices and relieves it through elaboration of the results of each choice; and (4) its meaning is only understood adequately through recourse to its context (the PN and FN).

⁸¹⁴ Jakob Wöhrle, “Von der Fähigkeit,” 202.

“understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.” Lastly, the metaphor of a door to represent a particular way of life overlaps with the imagery found in some proverbs (see 4.3.3.2.1).

That being said, while it is true that Gen 4:7 expresses (through Cain) what is a general pattern in terms of human behavior, the other connections may be less strong. The conditional statements of Prov 2:1–5 form a series of conditionals, all leading to one result, while Gen 4:7 delineates two options with differing results, a form which may have stronger similarities with certain legal statements than with proverbs.⁸¹⁵ In addition, the conception of a doorway as a metaphor for the choice of a particular way of life was a general poetic image and likely does not represent a specific allusion to wisdom thinking.⁸¹⁶ More than being connected to wisdom, the content of the verse is strongly connected to both the rest of the FN, as well as to the PN. It appears that the author of 4:6–7 made use of a form of speech in v. 7a and v. 7b that contributed to the emphasis on contrasts and conflict that is in focus in this account. As will be further explained below, in v. 7 the possibilities for Cain’s action are described in connection to the overarching theme of humans’ obtaining the knowledge of good and bad.

⁸¹⁵ Some proverbs also describe two alternatives, with one option considered “better” than the other; Prov 19:1, for example, states, “Better the poor walking in integrity than one perverse of speech who is a fool” (טוב־רשׁ) הולך בתמו מעקש שפתיו והוא כסיל” (Prov 19:1). Cf., e.g., Prov 12:9; 15:16, 17; 16:8, 19, 32; 17:1, 12; 21:9, 19. In its presentation of two alternatives, Gen 4:7 can be said to be similar in content, but its use of conditional statements is not matched in these proverbs.

Certain legal statements do contain a similar pair of conditional statements, following the pattern of “If [certain action is committed], then [legal ruling on the situation].” See, e.g., Ex 21:3 (“If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him”). See also Ex 22:2 (“If a thief is found breaking in, and is beaten to death, no blood guilt is incurred; but if it happens after sunrise, bloodguilt is incurred”), which discusses bloodguilt, an issue that arises in the consequences of Cain’s actions (see Gen 4:10–11) (discussed below in 4.3.5.2). See also Exod 22:8; 22:15; Lev 5:1, 17; Lev 27:20. Note that Jonathan P. Burnside argues against a strong disjunction between “Law” and “Wisdom” based on the many overlaps between the two categories (“Law and Wisdom Literature,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Book*, ed. Will Kynes [New York: Oxford University Press, 2021], 423–440).

⁸¹⁶ See further discussion below in 4.3.3.2.1 (especially n. 839 and 840).

4.3.3.2. Connections to the Knowledge of Good and Bad

4.3.3.2.1. Discussion of Translation

The many difficulties within this unit necessitate an in-depth discussion of its translation. Gen 4:6 relates back to v. 5, where it was stated that Cain was very angry (ויחר) (לקין מאד) and “his face fell” (יפלו פניו),⁸¹⁷ basically restating this as a question from Yhwh. The interpretive problems start with v. 7, where Yhwh asks another question, beginning with an interrogative ה + לא (“Is it not...?”). This type of question signals that the following statement should be assumed to be true, and, based on the previous question, the statement should offer a reason why Cain should not respond in anger.

The clauses in Gen 4:7a and 7b are two parallel contrasting clauses, both containing the verb יטב in the *hiphil* stem. Notably, this word is the verb form of the noun טוב, which is part of the phrase, “the knowledge of good and bad” (הדעת טוב ורע). The occurrence of the verb in this verse is often translated with the sense of “to do good,” but a causative sense of the verb is more plausible here. Since יטב (*qal*) refers to passing a positive judgment on a person, activity, or fact, then יטב (*hiphil*) refers to *causing* oneself or someone else to pass a positive judgment about a person, activity, or fact.⁸¹⁸ This would imply that Yhwh asks Cain to use the knowledge of good and bad to accept his judgment on the offerings (i.e., to determine it to be “good”), rather than using the knowledge of good and bad to determine the situation “not good,” leading to destructive action to correct the undesirable situation. Accepting Yhwh’s judgment will bring him “a lifting up” (4:7a; i.e., a correction to the

⁸¹⁷ There is a similar expression (but using the *hiphil* stem) in Job 29:24 and Jer 3:12 (cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 104).

⁸¹⁸ Willi, “Der Ort,” 133 n. 11; so also Heyden, “Die Sünde Kains,” 97, and Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 163.

“falling” of his face) while failing to accept the judgment will result in further lowering (or “lying down” [4:7b]; i.e., a further compounding of Cain’s present condition).⁸¹⁹

The “lifting up” (תָּאָרַם) described in Gen 4:7a contrasts with the falling of Cain’s face in v. 5, suggesting that the object of the “lifting up” will be Cain’s face and, by extension, Cain himself.⁸²⁰ These terms may be understood relationally;⁸²¹ in other words, the lack of Yhwh’s notice and the “falling” of Cain’s face describes a relational barrier between Cain and Yhwh. The acceptance of Yhwh’s actions would result in a lifting, implying restoration of his relationship with Yhwh. When God lifts the face of a person (the collocation פָּנָה + נִשָּׂא it indicates granting of favor or acceptance of that person.⁸²² A late but relevant example of this concept in the Hebrew Bible is found in Malachi 1–2, where God will not show favor (“lift the face” [Mal 1:9]) to those who offer polluted offerings. In an interesting parallel to the events in the FN, the failure of the priests to offer appropriately results in God cursing them (Mal 2:1). For Cain, then, a “lifting” of his face would imply a restoration of relationship. If he does not accept Yhwh’s judgment, further lowering will occur, symbolized by the action of “lying down” (רָבַץ [Gen 4:7b]; see further discussion below), and the consequence will be a deepening of the relational chasm. This conclusion is supported by the results of Cain “not judging the situation good” — he goes from a mere “lowering” of the

⁸¹⁹ Regarding “lying down” as the translation of the verb רָבַץ (Gen 4:7b), see below.

⁸²⁰ The expression can refer to the lifting of one’s own face (e.g., Job 22:26) or that of another person (Willi, “Der Ort,” 102 n. 12). As noted above, the position of this statement shortly after Cain’s face has fallen, the context would suggest that the object of the “lifting” would be Cain’s face. The subject of the lifting could be understood to be either Yhwh or Cain himself.

⁸²¹ Carol Newsom explains that the expression can refer to relationship: “Although this idiom has a number of nuances, here it seems to refer to the way in which the orientation of the face up or down in the presence of another signals the nature of the relationship, as when Abner seeks to avoid killing Asahel. For how, Abner asks, ‘could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?’ (2 Sam 2:22; see also Gen 4:6–7)” (*The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 111). A similar nuance fits the use of the expression in Gen 4:7 (נִשָּׂא, with the word פָּנָה implied).

⁸²² See, e.g., the ESV translation of Gen 19:21: “I grant you this favor (נִשְׂאֵתִי פָנֶיךָ) also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken.” See also, Gen 32:20; Deut 28:50. In Lev 19:15 it even seems to imply partiality (“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor [לֹא־תִשָּׂא פְּנֵי־דָל] or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor”). See also Deut 10:17.

face (a temporary relational barrier) to being “hidden” from Yhwh’s face (4:14) and destined for separation from Yahweh’s presence (“Cain went out from the presence of Yhwh” [4:16]).

This leads to a discussion of the second option presented by Yhwh (Gen 4:7b): what if Cain judges the situation “not good”? In accordance with the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad, it would be assumed that he would next take destructive action to correct the perceived injustice. This is exactly what happens (v. 8). That much is clear, but the exact details of what Yhwh describes in v. 7b are obscured by difficulties in the Hebrew. The problem involves a mismatch in the gender of the (presumed) subject, הַטָּאָה (a feminine noun), and the (presumed) verb, רָבַץ (a masculine singular participle). Furthermore, although many translations view “sin” (הַטָּאָה) as the antecedent of the pronominal suffixes on תְּשׁוּקָה and בּוֹ, this would be grammatically peculiar, as both suffixes are masculine singular and thus do not match the feminine gender of הַטָּאָה. The problem is further complicated by a dispute over the precise meaning of the participle רָבַץ.

Innumerable solutions have been proposed to solve these translation difficulties.⁸²³ Here, it will be argued that the key to understanding this phrase is recognizing the contrasting nature of the first two clauses in Gen 4:7. The “lifting up” of Cain if he accepts Yhwh’s actions (v. 7a) should therefore be the opposite of (or, at the least, a contrast to) whatever element of v. 7b is the result of Cain not accepting Yhwh’s actions (see the table below).

⁸²³ See a survey of options in Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC [Waco: Word Books, 1986], 104–106, and Carly L. Crouch, “הַטָּאָה as an Interpretive Gloss. A Solution to Gen 4,7,” *ZAW* 123.2 (2011): 250–58. Crouch herself suggests that it makes far more sense that there is a problem with one word, הַטָּאָה, than that there is a problem with all of the masculine pronouns (ibid., 256). She then proposes that הַטָּאָה was not originally in the text. If this was the case, then רָבַץ would be the subject, and the idea would be that if Cain does not “do what is good” (Crouch’s translation of יָטַב), then he is surrendering to this רָבַץ. Crouch connects the רָבַץ to the Akkadian word *rābiṣu*, a word which in a particular stage of its development referred to a demon who lurked around doorways (ibid.). In her view, then, Cain is reversing what his mother did: he is giving up the responsibility of knowing what is good and what is bad, and putting himself at the mercy of the רָבַץ (ibid.). She suggests that a later scribe was shocked at the suggestion that Cain was not morally culpable for the murder (because he had surrendered to the רָבַץ), and, therefore, this scribe added the word “sin” (הַטָּאָה) to make Cain’s moral responsibility explicit (ibid., 257). However, this suspicion of a scribal emendation is mere conjecture. Furthermore, there is no reason to think that Cain gives up the responsibility inherent to having the knowledge of good and bad; rather, he wields this responsibility improperly (see further argument below). Cf. Matthew Schlimm also argues against Crouch in “At Sin’s Gateway (Gen 4,7): A Reply to C. L. Crouch,” *ZAW* 124 (2012): 412.

Furthermore, as Cain is the one who is “lifted” (שָׂאָה), he should also be the implied actor in whatever action is opposite to this “lifting.”⁸²⁴ This is summarized in the table below:

Action	→	Result
יָטַב	→	נִשָּׂא (“lifting up” of Cain)
לֹא יָטַב	→	? (not “lifting up” of Cain)

Therefore, the question becomes, amidst the confusing syntactical elements of v. 7b, is there a word or words that express(es) a contrasting idea to the “lifting up” (נִשָּׂא) of v. 7a?

Interestingly, there is such a word: the mysterious participle רָבַץ.⁸²⁵ Setting aside for a moment the arguments that this word alludes to an Akkadian demon,⁸²⁶ at a more basic level, this verb has the sense of “lying down.”⁸²⁷ When used with humans as the subject, it typically refers to “the happy state of humans resting securely” (cf. Isa 14:30; Ezek 34:14, 15; Zeph 2:7, 3:13; Ps 23:2; Job 11:19), which seems unfitting to the context of the warning in 4:7.⁸²⁸

⁸²⁴ It is not argued that the parallelism here *must* operate this mechanistically, but, given the tightly structured features of the narrative up until this point, it should at least be considered.

⁸²⁵ Bae also argues that the phrase לַפְתַּח חֲטָאת רָבַץ is in semantic opposition with שָׂאָה, and therefore Cain should be considered the subject of both (“Bin ich der Hüter,” 373–74).

⁸²⁶ An interpretation originally suggested by Hans Duhm (*Die bösen Geister im Alten Testament* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1904], 7–10) and subsequently adopted by many. Barmash gives a detailed description of the word *rābiṣu*, noting that it did not always have negative connotations” (*Homicide*, 15–16).

⁸²⁷ Robert P. Gordon gives a very thorough survey of the uses of the verb in the Hebrew Bible: “The noun subjects used with *rbṣ* can be divided into several groups. The first category concerns domestic animals, namely flocks (Gen 29:2; Isa 17:2; Zeph 2:14; cf. Isa 13:20; Jer 33:12; Song 1:7), donkeys (Gen 49:14; Exod 23:5; Num 22:27 [‘lay down under Balaam’]), and calves (Isa 27:10). *rbṣ* is also used of a bird sitting upon fledglings (Deut 22:6). The second main group comprises wild animals: Judah crouching and lying down like a lion that has returned from the prey (Gen 49:9), the leopard that in the vegetarian future lies down with the young goat (Isa 11:6), lions settling down in their lairs at sunrise after a night’s prowling (Ps 104:22), a lioness lying down among her cubs (Ezek 19:2), desert animals, instead of flocks, resting among the ruins of Babylon (Isa 13:21; cf. v. 20), and Pharaoh *sub figura* a great monster lying among the streams of the Nile (Ezek 29:3). In Isa 11:7 *rbṣ* describes the peaceful ‘ecoexistence’ of the young of animals both domesticated and wild. It also describes the happy state of humans resting securely (Isa 14:30; Ezek 34:14, 15 [Israel compared to a flock]; Zeph 2:7, 3:13 [‘they shall feed and lie down’]; Ps 23:2; Job 11:19). Other occurrences without human or animal subject have already been noted: the great deep that lies beneath (Gen 49:25; Deut 33:13), curses falling/resting upon someone (Deut 29:19[20]). Finally, *rbṣ* is used in the Hiphil for laying down stones during construction work (Isa 54:11)” (“‘Couch’ or ‘Crouch’?: Genesis 4:7 and the Temptation of Cain,” in *On Stone and Scroll: Essays in Honour of Graham Ivor Davies*, ed. James K. Aitken, Katharine J. Dell, and Brian A. Mastin [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2011], 202).

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

The verb is attested in a seemingly negative sense in Deut 29:19[20], where it is used to describe the covenant curses “descending,” or, better, “laying upon,” the disobedient.⁸²⁹

Contextually, the sense of downward movement is the most fitting understanding of the verb within Gen 4:7. This proposal is tentative, given that the negative connotation of “lying down” (particularly with a human subject) would be unusual.⁸³⁰ *However*, this proposal has a distinct advantage over translating the verb in an aggressive sense,⁸³¹ for this other sense of the verb is not attested at all.⁸³² One other notable occurrence of the verb is in Gen 49:9, where רבץ and קום (*hiphil*) are used as opposites: “[Judah] crouches down, he stretches out (רבץ) like a lion, like a lioness — who dares rouse him up (קום)?” This imagery, comparing a lion lying down to a lion rising up, is comparable to the use of נשא and רבץ as opposites in the poetic language of Gen 4:7 (in which Cain “lying down” would be compared to Cain’s “lifting”).⁸³³ Given that this fits the contrasting nature of the clauses, this sense of the word is preferable over the oft-cited suggestion that it refers to the Akkadian *rābiṣu* demon.⁸³⁴

To summarize, this interpretation would take שאת as a substantive infinitive construction (a “lifting”) with Cain (“you”) as the implied object and רבץ as a predicate

⁸²⁹ See *HALOT* 3:1181.

⁸³⁰ Note also that the verb is followed by the preposition ב in Deut 29:19[20], which is not the case in Gen 4:7.

⁸³¹ As is often the case when personified שאת is understood as the subject. Cf. Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 163ff.; Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 152–54.

⁸³² See Gordon, “‘Couch’ or ‘Crouch’?”, 202.

⁸³³ This is similar to the translation suggested, but ultimately rejected, by Heyden: “Wenn du es aber nicht gut sein läßt, lagerst du an der Tür zur Verfehlung” (“Die Sünde Kains,” 98). She lists a few problems: 1. The verb רבץ is not fitting for Cain (while it would be quite appropriate to the shepherd Abel); 2. The third masculine singular suffixes in v. 7c could not refer back to Cain (*ibid.*). Against her rejection, though the verb could be fitting to Abel, this does not mean it could not be used for Cain if this fits the context better. The issue of the suffixes in v. 7c will be further discussed below.

⁸³⁴ This would require the verb to refer to “crouching” (in an aggressive stance, ready to pounce), but this is not an attested use of the verb (see Gordon, “‘Couch’ or ‘Crouch’?”, 202; Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 138).

participle with Cain as a subject (“[you are] lying down”). That רבץ is a participle rather than an infinitive like שאת is not necessarily problematic, as participles can be mixed with other types of verbs even in parallel statements (see Hab 2:12; Amos 8:14).⁸³⁵ Admittedly, it is rare that the subject would not be expressed for a predicate participle,⁸³⁶ but perhaps it was assumed that the contrast with “lifting up” would make it clear to whom the action refers.⁸³⁷

This leaves לפתח הטאת as an expression that modifies Cain’s “lying down.” Matthew Schlimm proposes that rather than amending the consonantal text, it is better to reposit the preposition on פתח (“door”) from ל to לָ, so that פתח is in construct with הטאת (“sin”).⁸³⁸ This fits the way that the noun פתח is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, for in its other occurrences “the immediate context always specifies the type of entryway that is envisioned.”⁸³⁹ This interpretation would yield the translation, “at the door of sin.”

⁸³⁵ Cf. *IBHS*, 631.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*, 623.

⁸³⁷ That being said, it is an awkward expression, and the suggestion of Ronald S. Hendel is intriguing: “an original sequence, חטאת תרבץ, became רבץ חטאת by a simple haplography of חת. This simple and elegant solution requires no grammatical or mythological inconcinnities and yields the apt and memorable admonition, לפתח חטאת תרבץ, ‘sin crouches at the door’” (*The Text of Genesis 1–11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 46). The problem is that this still includes the unusual personification of sin, which is not common, although Num 32:23 seems to be an exception: ודעו חטאתכם אשר תמצא אתכם (“know that your sin will find you”); cf. Job 11:14 (Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 138–39). Even more problematically, רבץ is not used in a way that matches its other uses in the Hebrew Bible (see n. 827).

A preferable option may be to argue for the same haplography but to read the subject as second masculine singular (“you,” i.e., Cain) instead of third feminine singular. This would give the translation “you are lying down” in contrast to the “lifting” that will happen if Cain does what is good. The “lifting” in Gen 4:7a then functions both as a contrast to the “falling” of Cain’s face in 4:6 as well as to the statement of his “lying down,” which suggests a continued lack of recognition from Yhwh. This would result in a smoother original text, but, without any textual evidence that this haplography occurred, it remains a conjecture.

⁸³⁸ Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness*, 137 n. 7. See also, *idem*, “At Sin’s Gateway,” 410.

⁸³⁹ See, e.g., Ex 35:15; Num 11:10; Ezek 40:40. Schlimm explains: “It usually appears in construct form (139 times), followed by either an absolute noun or a possessive suffix that identifies the type of entryway at hand ... In the cases where פתח appears as an absolute term, the context leaves no doubt about the structure to which the door is attached. While פתח is occasionally employed metaphorically in the Hebrew Bible, these metaphors speak of an entryway into something specific, such as a ‘door to hope’” (“At Sin’s Gateway,” 410–411).

Notably, he says that “[t]here are no clear examples in the Hebrew Bible where פתח is used by itself to speak idiomatically about a door to one’s heart, the right of primogeniture, the womb, a path, or a course of action,” (*ibid.*, 411.) but it was used metaphorically in post-Biblical Hebrew, which might be why the Masoretes pointed it like they did (*ibid.*).

Problematically, the use of “door” (פתח) in construct with an abstract noun would be unique to this verse.⁸⁴⁰ However, though not attested as a phrase, the imagery of a door in association with an abstract concept does occur in the Hebrew Bible. Take, for example, Prov 8:34, in which the one who listens to wisdom is described as “guarding” wisdom’s door (לשמר מזוהת פתחי), in contrast to Prov 9:13, in which the woman “Folly” (כסילות) waits beside the door of her house (לפתח ביתה), trying to lure in those who pass.⁸⁴¹ These passages suggest that proximity to a particular “door” can be used as a poetic image to express one’s acceptance of that which the door represents. “Lying down” at “the door of sin” would thereby symbolize that Cain is persisting in his state of “fallen face” — continuing the rupture in the relationship between Cain and Yhwh (i.e., his face will not be “lifted”). His choice to judge Yhwh’s decision as “not good” leads him to take destructive action to correct the perceived injustice, and his murderous action confirms the break in the relationship that had already begun. His action is a “sin” (חטאת) in the sense of a decisive violation of his social relationships both with fellow man and with Yhwh.⁸⁴² This is confirmed by his consequent social ostracization

His understanding of רבץ focuses less on the proposed connection with the Akkadian *rābiṣu* demon and more on the use of the verbal form to describe the crouching of dangerous animals, like lions (see, e.g., Gen 49:9). Specifically, he notes its use with regard to lions: “This verb appears in conjunction with leonine vocabulary several times in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 49,9; Ez 19,2; Ps 104,22; cf Isa 11,6; Hos 13,7). Furthermore, in the ancient Near East, lions were portrayed in iconography as crouching beside the doors of temples, palaces, and city gates” (ibid., 412). Although his suggestions regarding “the door of sin” are adopted here, his understanding of רבץ cannot be upheld in light of Gordon’s conclusions regarding the meaning of this verb (“‘Couch’ or ‘Crouch’?”, 202).

⁸⁴⁰ A possible example of פתח in construct with an abstract noun occurs in Hos 2:17: “From there I will give her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor into a door of hope (לפתח תקוה).” However, Gertz argues that this reference is not conclusive: “La mention de la vallée d’Achor en Os 2,17 comme porte de l’espérance semble être abstraite, mais pourrait être dérivée de l’emplacement géographique de la vallée comme passage vers le pays cultivé promis” (“Variations,” 43–4). That being said, as noted above (n. 837), the personification of sin (necessary to the more traditional translation) is also problematic, so it is a matter of choosing what appears less problematic.

⁸⁴¹ Rüdiger Bartelmus also notes this parallel, although his interpretation assumes that חטאת (“sin”) is the subject of רבץ: “Just as the seductress lurks inside the door in Prov. 5:8, so also does sin lurk before the ‘door of the heart’ waiting to get control of a person” (“פתח,” *TDOT* 12:186).

⁸⁴² This has similarities to Crüsemann’s definition of “sin” as what violates community relationships (“Autonomie,” 67). Cf. Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 163.

and “hiddenness” from Yhwh (Gen 4:11–14).⁸⁴³ The whole clause could thus be rendered, “But if you do not judge the situation ‘good,’ at the door⁸⁴⁴ of sin [you are] lying down.”⁸⁴⁵

Again, this sense fits well if the verb is picking up on the proposed sense of the knowledge of good and bad, which gives the one who obtains it the ability to make autonomous judgments that can cause good and bad consequences. Yhwh would then be acknowledging Cain’s ability to judge his current circumstances (i.e., Yhwh’s differentiation between him and his brother and their offerings) as “good” or “not good.” If he accepts Yhwh’s choice (i.e., he causes himself to judge the situation “good”), the result will be a “lifting up” (שׂאת). If not, he persists in the relational rupture that he has begun, which is a choice in favor of “sin.”

This leaves the final clause, which has interpretive difficulties of its own. As noted above, there are third masculine singular pronouns on תשוקה and ב for which there is no clear antecedent. What is most important for interpreting this clause is to note that it has remarkable similarities with the final clause of Gen 3:16: ואל־אִישׁךְ תִּשְׁקֶתְךָ וְהוּא יִמְשַׁלְּבֶךָ (3:16) versus ואלִיד תִּשְׁקֶתְךָ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשַׁלְּבוּ (4:7c). The only difference between the two phrases are the subjects and pronouns. It appears that one verse is citing the other, and the awkwardness of

⁸⁴³ It is argued below that Yhwh’s responsiveness to Cain suggests that he is not truly hidden from Yhwh’s face (see 4.5.1.2).

⁸⁴⁴ The translation reads לַפֶּתַח in the MT rather as לִפְתָּח (a construct form). See 4.3.3.2.1.

⁸⁴⁵ If the suggestion of this being legal language (see n. 815) is upheld, this could help explain the reason that “sin” appears in this verse. In a legal sense, the first line would suggest that Cain has the opportunity to be avoid wrongdoing and be restored to his firstborn status if he “judges the situation good.” The second line then gives the legal ruling that would result for Cain “not judging the situation good.” The “sin,” then, that is spoken of here could refer to the potential for a legal ruling of bloodguilt upon Cain if he acts destructively (cf. Ex 22:2). This is also similar to the concept behind Judah’s words to Jacob regarding Benjamin: “If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame [i.e., “sin”] forever [וְהָיָה לִי כְלִי-חַיִּים]” (Gen 43:9; 44:32). This interpretation would match with the following conversation between Yhwh and Cain, which begins with the charge of bloodguilt upon Cain (Gen 4:10–11).

If Gen 4:7 was original to the narrative it would be odd that “sin” is not mentioned again in the non-P prelude to the flood (Gen 6:5ff.) (cf. the prelude to the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, where חַטָּאת is specifically cited [Gen 18:20]). See the discussion of the literary historical conclusions on this verse in 4.3.3.2.3.

4:17 suggests that it was written on the basis of 3:16 rather than the other way around.⁸⁴⁶ In 3:16, the relationship between the man and the woman is described: the woman's "desire" (תשוקה) is said to be for her husband, but he (her husband) will "rule" (משל) over her. In the FN, it has been made abundantly clear up to this point that the relationship between Cain and "his brother," Abel, is in focus in the narrative. In 4:7, it would therefore be necessary for the author to switch the object of the preposition אל from the man to Cain ("you") and change the subject of משל from הוא to אתה. In 3:16, the woman is described in relation to the man, but in the FN, the relationship between Cain and his brother is highlighted. The third masculine singular pronouns derive from this switch: the pronouns referring to the woman are switched so that they refer to Abel. This is shown in the chart below:

בך ↓	ימשל-	והוא	תשוקתך ↓	ואל-אישך	Original phrase (Gen 3:16)
בו	תמשל-	ואתה	תשוקתו	ואליך	Transformed phrase (Gen 4:7)

The ambiguity of the pronouns could therefore be the result of the phrase being transferred almost verbatim into the FN, with the author merely switching the subject and pronouns to match the two principal characters of the FN (Cain and his brother, Abel). The awkwardness of the grammar would then be a consequence of the author attempting to make this verse parallel the corresponding phrase from the PN as closely as possible.

This argument is speculative but not wholly without precedent. The existence of a wrongly gendered pronoun in a text as the result of a switch in antecedent when one text adapted another text can also be seen in the use of Ezra 9:9 and 1 Esdr 8:78 in 2 Esdr 9:9.⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴⁶ This does not necessitate that they were written by the same author; however, it would be in keeping with the theory that the FN was based on an already existing tradition about Cain, which was then rewritten by the author of the PN as an extension of the story of the man and the woman (see 2.3.3).

⁸⁴⁷ As explained by Siegfried Kreuzer in *The Bible in Greek: Translation, Transmission and Theology of the Septuagint* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 91. The following translations of the Greek text come from his interpretation.

Ezra 9:9 reads לתת־לנו מחיה לרומם את־בית אלהינו ולהעמיד את־חרבתיו (“in order to erect the house of our God and [re]establish its ruins”), which 2 Esdr 9:9 reproduces as τοῦ ὑψῶσαι αὐτοῦς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἀναστῆσαι τὰ ἔρημα αὐτῆς (“that they [the Persian kings] reerected (caused to be erected) the house of our God and out of *her* devastation to reerect it”). The αὐτῆς in this clause “presupposes a feminine antecedent, one that is not present in the text.”⁸⁴⁸ This is likely clarified by the parallel passage in 1 Esdr 8:78 where the city Ζίωv, a feminine noun, is the focus of the rebuilding.⁸⁴⁹ Though the process these texts went through is different from Gen 4:7, this example demonstrates that the use of one text by another could create situations of mismatched pronouns and antecedents.

For this translation of Gen 4:7c to be considered reasonable, the word תשוקה must be explained.⁸⁵⁰ The fact that this word only occurs three times in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 3:16; 4:7; Song 7:10) makes interpretation difficult. Though תשוקה is often interpreted in the sense of romantic or sexual desire as a result of its occurrence in Song 7:10 (“I am my beloved’s and his desire [תשוקה] is for me”) and its use in the context of a husband/wife relationship in Gen 3:16, this understanding of the word is not certain even in the Song of Songs reference⁸⁵¹ and in the present context is clearly unfitting.

Considering the paucity of references in the Hebrew Bible, a look at the occurrences of תשוקה in the Qumran scrolls is certainly worthwhile.⁸⁵² There is one occurrence in the

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁰ See comments on the use of this word in the PN in n. 515.

⁸⁵¹ A. A. Macintosh argues that it is about “devotion” rather than “desire”: “The first clause (‘I am my beloved’s) expresses *tout court* her confession that she is exclusively possessed by and belongs to her lover. The second clause...voices in varied and amplified tones her assurance that he bestows upon her a complementary devotion. It is varied because in 2:16 and 6:3 the mutual sentiment is expressed with exact symmetry: ‘My beloved is mine and I am his’” (“The Meaning of Hebrew תשוקה,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* LXI [2016]: 366).

⁸⁵² It occurs seven times in the Dead Sea Scrolls: 1QS 11:22; 1QM 13:12, 15:10, 17:4; 6Q18 2:4; 4QPoetic Text A; 4QInstr^d 168:3. It is also a suggested reading for a lacuna in 4QInstr^b 2.4 (ibid., 365). Cf. F. G. Martínez and E. J. C. Tigchelaar, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

Community Rule, referring to the creation of humans, that states, “for dust is his תְּשׁוּקָה” (1QS 11:22).⁸⁵³ All the other references (that have enough legible text to be interpreted) are from the War Scroll and are used to characterize those who oppose the “Sons of Light.” These include:

- 1QM 13:12: “All spirits of his lot are angels of destruction, they walk in the laws of darkness, towards it goes their תְּשׁוּקָה.”
- 1QM 15:10 – “they are a wicked congregation and all their deeds are in darkness and to it goes their תְּשׁוּקָה.”
- 1QM 17:4 – “and you shall strengthen yourselves and do not fear them, for their תְּשׁוּקָה is for תְּהוּ וְבָהוּ and they lean (וּמְשַׁעֲנָתָם) on that which is not.”⁸⁵⁴

Macintosh suggests that a fitting gloss for both the occurrences in the Qumran scroll and the MT is “concern, preoccupation, (single-minded) devotion.”⁸⁵⁵ This is plausible, although if תְּשׁוּקָה is meant to parallel וּמְשַׁעֲנָתָם (“and they lean” or “and their support”⁸⁵⁶) in the following clause of 1QM 17:4, this might better support Deurloo’s translation of “dependency.”⁸⁵⁷ At the same time, “dependency,” in the sense of an unequal relationship, is somewhat unlikely in the reference in Song 7:10.⁸⁵⁸ The term “allegiance” better describes both the strength of the implied bond, as well as the sense of belonging and responsibility to another person, or, in the case of the War Book references, to a particular manner of life. The reference from the

⁸⁵³ Macintosh notes that emendations of this word have been suggested (*ibid.*, 376f.).

⁸⁵⁴ Translations by Macintosh (*ibid.*, 378–79). See Hebrew text in Martínez and Tigchelaar, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 113–144.

⁸⁵⁵ This may not be far from the Septuagint’s translation of the word, ἐπιστοφή, if understood as Macintosh suggests (“Meaning,” 375). For other ways that this word has been understood, see *ibid.*, 374–75.

⁸⁵⁶ This second option is the translation of Martínez and Tigchelaar (*The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 141).

⁸⁵⁷ Karel A. Deurloo, “תְּשׁוּקָה ‘dependency’, Gen 4,7,” *ZAW* 99 (1987): 405–6.

⁸⁵⁸ Ellen Davis’s interpretation would take care of this issue, for she suggests that Song of Songs reinterprets the Genesis account on this point by making the man’s “desire” (תְּשׁוּקָה) towards the woman (*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000], 294). Duane Garret posits that the dynamic is not portrayed as entirely equal at this point and that the change in language from Song 2:16 to 6:3 is significant: “The locus of love and desire here is woman’s body; all possessiveness and desire are directed toward her. While it is still true that the man and woman mutually possess one another, it is the woman’s body that is the domain of their love” (*Song of Songs/Lamentations*, WBC [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004], “Tenor and Soprano: The Second Song of Mutual Love,” EPUB, Perlego). Both of these commentaries assume a translation of “desire,” which, in light of the other references noted, should be reconsidered. The interpretation of Macintosh is preferable (see n. 851 above).

Community Rule would also be more understandable with this translation, as it would express the man's inherent "belonging-ness" to dust.

Regardless of the exact sense, there is probably a contrast between the first and the second phrase: the relational dynamic from the perspective of one member of the pair is contrasted with the statement of an unequal power dynamic from the perspective of the other member of the pair.⁸⁵⁹ In both Gen 3:16 and 4:7, the second line functions as an etiology for the later situation of relationships. In Gen 3:16, it describes *the subordination of women to men*, and in 4:7, it describes *the subordination of the younger brother(s) to the older*.⁸⁶⁰ "You will rule over him" (וְאַתָּה תִּמְשַׁל־בּוֹ) is a reference to Cain's position as the older brother and seems to express a negative outworking of the sibling dynamic, as was also the case in Gen 3:16 regarding the man's "ruling" over the woman. So then, 4:7c connects back to what Yhwh laid out in the previous clause (v. 7b) — as the humans' disobedience to God's command led to a new, undesirable dynamic in the woman and man's relationship (3:16), so Cain's refusal to accept Yhwh's notice of his brother will result in a new undesirable dynamic in the relationship between the brothers.⁸⁶¹ In this light, תְּשׁוּקָה as referring to Abel's "allegiance" to Cain is understandable: Abel's natural disposition towards Cain (and Cain's towards Abel!) should be one of fraternal bond and mutual support (cf. the woman as the "helper" of the man), but Cain's unwillingness to accept Yhwh's preference for Abel and his

⁸⁵⁹ The two lines could also express parallel ideas: Macintosh notes that this is the understanding of Ibn Ezra and Jerome ("Meaning," 369–70).

⁸⁶⁰ The etiological element of Gen 4:7 is also noted by Macintosh, "Meaning," 368–69. Cf. M. Ben Yashar ("Zu Gen 4,7," *ZAW* 94 [1982]: 635–37), who also sees the verse as referring to the social positions of the brothers (like 3:16): "here the younger is subordinated to his older brother" (*ibid.*, 636). Note also, Deurloo, who explains, "Gen 2,18–3,24 is being narrated within the relation אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה; Gen 4 in a similar way, describes the relation אִישׁ וְאָחִיו" ("תְּשׁוּקָה," 405). However, neither Ben Yashar nor Deurloo sees the statement of Cain's position as indicative of a new, negative shift in roles, as will be argued below.

⁸⁶¹ It is striking how the relational dynamics in the PN and FN provide an explanation for many of the relational conflicts outside of the primeval history in Genesis. As noted in ch. 4 (section), 3:16 could be seen as providing the background for disharmony in the marital relationship; similarly, 4:7 could be seen as providing the background for conflict in sibling relationships (e.g., Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers).

offering will shift their relationship. As he emphatically declares to Yhwh, he is not Abel's "keeper" (4:9); rather, he takes on a "mastering" role in the most devastating sense.

4.3.3.2.2. Conclusions on the Interpretation of 4:6–7

It was argued above that some of the difficulties of Gen 4:7 could be explained more satisfactorily with recourse to the theme of the knowledge of good and bad. The verse clarifies that there will be different and distinctly positive or negative outcomes depending on whether Cain chooses to accept the undesirable outcome of his offering or not.⁸⁶² The contrast described in these verses builds upon the contrast between the brothers that has been building in the narrative up to this point. Understanding the first two clauses as having a parallel structure and describing two contrasting alternatives helps to clarify that the ambiguous *רָבַץ* is antithetical to *שָׂאת*. The importance of the conflict in the relationship of the brothers and its paralleling of the relationship between the man and the woman in the PN also helps explain the ambiguities of 4:7c. Importantly, the verses suggest that Cain could have avoided sin because acceptance of his situation would have resulted in a restoration of relationship to deity ("a lifting up" to correct his fallen face). Failing to accept the situation lands him at "the door of sin" (*לַפֶּתַח חַטָּאת*), with an ever-deepening rift between himself and his deity (i.e., further lowering, or "lying down" [*רָבַץ*]). The decision to use destructive activity to correct the situation he has deemed "not good" results in a horrifying "sin": the murder of his brother.

4.3.3.2.3. Conclusions Regarding the Literary History of 4:6–7

These conclusions have important implications for understanding the literary history of these verses. Several challenges regarding these verses were described in 2.3.3; these difficulties often lead interpreters to suggest that these verses (or parts of them) are secondary. Several factors make this secondary designation difficult. First, in regards to the

⁸⁶² "Causing good" results in positive relationships (cf. Gen 12:13, in which Abram seeks a positive relationship with Pharaoh) and well-being (cf. Gen 12:16, in which Pharaoh causes Abram to prosper).

verse being an interruption, a diagram of the parallels between the PN and FN demonstrates that the two narratives follow a similar series of events.⁸⁶³ This verse, in particular, parallels the prohibition given to the humans in Gen 2:16–17. In order to maintain the matching narrative arch of the PN, these verses appear to be necessary, for speech from God to a human is a key element of the structure.⁸⁶⁴ 4:6–7 also provides a logical parallel to God’s speech in 2:16–17, for while a simple command was given in the PN (pre-knowledge of good and bad), a warning to make the right choice in the FN highlights the shift that has occurred (post-knowledge of good and bad).⁸⁶⁵ Notably, the command in 2:17 receives no response from the man, making the lack of response from Cain to Yhwh’s speech somewhat less problematic. Lastly, the thematic focus of 4:7 (if the above interpretation can be maintained) is strongly connected to the rest of the FN and the PN.

However, other factors may lead in a different direction. First, the way that Gen 4:7c quotes the material from 3:16 is out of keeping with the other parallels to the PN in the rest of the account,⁸⁶⁶ so that it is difficult to see it as original. 4:6–7 as an addition would also function nicely to exonerate Yhwh of apparent responsibility for the fratricide in the original account.⁸⁶⁷ The striking appearance of the word “sin,” חַטָּאת, which is not found elsewhere in the non-P primeval history, may be another clue that the original narrative did not contain these verses.⁸⁶⁸ Lastly, the elements cited above (suggesting coherence between these verses

⁸⁶³ See Heyden’s chart in “Die Sünde Kains,” 103–4.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid., 103.

⁸⁶⁵ Hensel, *Die Vertauschung*, 47.

⁸⁶⁶ The other parallels avoid extended direct quotations (see, again, Heyden’s chart in “Die Sünde Kains,” 103–4).

⁸⁶⁷ See Gertz, “Variations,” 35. V. 8a may have also been added as a transition (see *ibid.*, 34).

⁸⁶⁸ See further comments in n. 845. For those who adopt a different understanding of Gen 4:7 than the one advocated above and understand חַטָּאת as describing personified sin, it must be said that a conflict between this personified sin and Cain is not in keeping with the focus on the dynamic between the brothers in the narrative up until this point. The citation of Gen 3:16 in 4:7c would give the cited material a completely

and the rest of the narrative) could also be signs that a later redactor crafted and inserted this speech carefully into the narrative to create a better narrative flow. It will therefore be tentatively suggested that verses 6–7 are secondary, but this is stated with a low level of certainty.⁸⁶⁹

4.3.4. Verses 8–9

ויאמר קין אל-הבל אחיו ויהי בהיותם בשדה ויקם קין אל-הבל אחיו ויהרגו:
ויאמר יהוה אל-קין אי הבל אחיך ויאמר לא ידעתי השמר אחי אנכי:

And Cain said to Abel his brother And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. And Yhwh said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” And he said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

4.3.4.1. Summary

Cain fails to respond or react to Yhwh’s pronouncement,⁸⁷⁰ and the fratricide happens quite suddenly, even if one accepts the explanatory content given to the phrase “Cain said” (ויאמר קין) that is added by the Septuagint, Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac Peshitta, and Vulgate.⁸⁷¹ The detail that the murder happened in a field is significant, for it could suggest

different meaning in its new context. This is not in keeping with the parallels to the PN elsewhere in the FN, which maintain clear thematic parallels with the PN. Therefore, even if this other interpretation of 4:7 is adopted, it would still be likely that 4:6–7 is a later addition.

⁸⁶⁹ Cf. Würhle, who argues that Gen 4:6–7 was added when the FN was revised and taken from a free-standing narrative to being connected to the PN (“Die Fähigkeit,” 197).

⁸⁷⁰ This may be further evidence that Gen 4:6–7 is secondary; although note the comments about this above (4.3.3.2.3).

⁸⁷¹ These versions add, “Let us go into the field.” Though this insertion has explanatory value, it is not a grammatical necessity. Some scholars have noticed that there are other passages in which the verb אמר is used without speech following it. Karel A. Deurloo notes 2 Chr 1:2; 24:8 and Psa 105:31–34 (*Kain en Abel. Onderzoek naar exegetische method inzake een ‘kleine literaire eenheid’ in de Tenakh* [Amsterdam: W. ten Have, 1967], 116), and Benno Jacob notes Exod 19:25 and 2 Chr 32:24 (*Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis* [Berlin: Ktav, 1934], 140; cf. Ed Noort, “Genesis 4:1–16 from Paradise to Reality: The Myth of Brotherhood,” in *Eve’s Children: The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 94; Bühner, *Am Anfang*, 269). See also Jonah 2:11. On the other hand, if there was really nothing unusual about the text, it would be strange that so many ancient versions felt the need to amend the text.

Other creative solutions have been suggested. Edenburg suggests that “the author of Gen 4:1–6 may have deliberately omitted Cain’s words to Abel so that readers would weigh alternative characterizations of the crime — was it premeditated murder or overly violent reaction to a provocation?” (“From Eden,” 160). This is possible but cannot be proven. Pamela Tamarkin Reis suggests that Cain spoke “against” his brother (“What

that Cain's action was premeditated (cf. Deut 22:25–27).⁸⁷² Directly following the murder, Yhwh questions Cain regarding Abel's whereabouts, and Cain denies both knowledge of Abel's location (using the important verb ידע) and responsibility for his brother (using the verb שמר). Here Cain takes on the mantle of determining between "good" and "bad," an ability made possible by the events of the PN. God's failure to "notice" him seems unfair ("bad"), at least from his individual perspective, and he goes to extreme measures to correct a situation that he finds unacceptable through using the destructive power of the knowledge of good and bad.

4.3.4.2. Connections to the Knowledge of Good and Bad

4.3.4.2.1. The Taking of Life

As already noted, a key aspect of the consequences of obtaining the knowledge of good and bad is the ability of humans to have both creative and destructive impact in the world around them. The FN exemplifies this contrast, for the demonstration of the humans' ability to create life (Gen 4:1) is quickly followed by a demonstration of the humans' ability to take away life (4:8). As the giving of life is connected to divinity, so is the taking of life (cf., e.g., Deut 32:39; Psa 104:29).⁸⁷³ The inappropriateness of a human taking another human's life is also emphasized later in the account when Yhwh prevents Cain's life from

Cain Said: A Note on Genesis 4.8," *JSOT* 27.1 [2002] 107–113). Other solutions have been proposed: e.g., Gunkel suggested emending אמר to מרה ("to quarrel, begin a fight") or מרר ("to be bitter, angry") (*Genesis*, 44).

Gertz suggests that Gen 4:8a is a transition added to connect the addition of v. 6–7 to the rest of the narrative ("Variations," 34; Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 166). He points to the various expansions of the passage in other versions and the growth of the MT passage itself as evidence of ambiguity present in the original narrative.

Perhaps the simplest solution is that a portion of the text was lost in the process of scribal copying. Wenham's logical suggestion is that "the clause may have been omitted in the MT because of homoeoteleuton with 'in the field'" (*Genesis 1–15*, 94). He also notes, however, that "the difficulty of MT may have prompted the expansion found in other texts (*ibid.*).

⁸⁷² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 106. This is more likely if the addition, "let us go into the field," is accepted; as the text stands, it may only imply that it was not an accident (cf. Ex 21:13) (Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 166).

⁸⁷³ Pfoh, "Genesis 4," 40. Ben Yashar relates the murder to the older brother/younger brother dynamic: "[Cain] has...eliminated Abel, thereby relieved himself of his responsibility for him. and also regained the dignities and offices of firstborn" ("Zu Gen 4,7," 637).

being taken by others (Gen 4:15). The first act of violence will be followed by others (4:23–24; 6:5–6), initiating a downward spiral as it becomes clear that the humans’ wielding of the knowledge of good and bad will have disastrous consequences for the created order.

4.3.4.2.2. An Issue of Roles

Cain’s statement that he does not “know” (יָדַע [Gen 4:9]) again points to the knowledge of good and bad and may also suggest an interest in roles, as was demonstrated in the PN (3.3.3.2.4.3). His denial of knowledge about his brother is indicative of the autonomous focus of the knowledge of good and evil, which leads Cain to prioritize his individual determination of what is good and bad. In this sense, Cain’s “allegiance” (תְּשׁוּקָה) is not towards Abel, as Abel’s “allegiance” is towards him; rather, Cain has “mastered” Abel by killing him. This might be understood as an attempt to ensure that his younger brother never again impinges on his status as older brother. In light of 4:6–7, this further demonstrates Cain’s refusal to accept Yhwh’s decision; instead, he makes his own determination about the situation and acts destructively to rectify it.

Cain’s statement about not being Abel’s “keeper” (שָׁמַר) points to a failure in his intended role.⁸⁷⁴ The verb “to keep” (שָׁמַר) also appeared two times in passages proposed to be secondary within the PN. Its first occurrence was in the *Wiederaufnahme* that describes the role given to man in the garden: “to work it and to keep it” (Gen 2:15). This adds emphasis, then, to Cain’s adamant rejection of his role as “keeper” (שָׁמַר), for he is the same one whose very identity as a “worker of the ground” (4:2) is a continuation of the man’s role in the garden (“to work the ground” [2:5]).⁸⁷⁵ Later in the narrative, this role of “working the

⁸⁷⁴ Stratton suggests that Cain implies that Yhwh had some responsibility here: “Perhaps God, rather than Cain, should have been the brother’s keeper” (*Out of Eden*, 221–222). This is less likely than the concept that Cain is rejecting the role he should have towards “his brother” (the title that is so often repeated in the account).

⁸⁷⁵ The verses in the PN surely have in mind *all* human work rather than just the work of a farmer (Bae, “Bin ich der Hüter,” 368). All the same, the play on words connects Cain specifically back to these verses and their fulfillment.

ground” will be specifically denied to him when he is “cursed from the ground” (ארור אתה מן־האדמה [4:12]). As a representative figure, his life demonstrates the struggles for humans that have resulted from the acquisition of the knowledge of good and bad. The ability to make individualized and autonomous decisions about what is “good” and “bad” has created a situation in which undesirable outcomes increase the potential for violent action. Cain’s story shows both the possibility that humans can act rightly and also their tendency not to do so.

שמר also appeared in Gen 3:24 in the description of the cherubim guarding the tree of life. The transfer of responsibility for guardianship from the man to the cherubim represented a loss of the man’s intended role within the garden in Eden. Here, Cain’s role of “keeping” his brother is not forcibly taken from him; instead, he intentionally refuses it. This may insinuate more broadly that Cain has given up his role as the older brother, the protector, and advocate for the family.⁸⁷⁶ As Cain is the firstborn, Yhwh’s answer to his question could have been, “Yes, you are your brother’s keeper.” In reaction to Yhwh’s slight, Cain rejects this role and the responsibility that comes along with it.⁸⁷⁷

4.3.5. Verses 10–12

ויאמר מה עשית קול דמי אחיך צעקים אלי מן־האדמה:
ועתה ארור אתה מן־האדמה אשר פצתה את־פיה לקחת את־דמי אחיך מידך:
כי תעבד את־האדמה לא־תסוף ת־תִּכְחַח לך נע ונד תהיה בארץ:

⁸⁷⁶ On the probable responsibilities and privileges of the firstborn, see n. 1061 and 1064.

⁸⁷⁷ The verb שמר is common in Hebrew, making it possible that these connections are a coincidence. What makes the connection more substantial is Cain’s use of the verb ידע within the very same statement (Gen 4:9). Since these other occurrences of the verb שמר are all in verses of the PN that are suggested to be secondary (see 2.4.2), perhaps the redactor who added them to the PN was interested to further solidify connections to the FN (this may also be the case for the use of גרש in 3:24; cf. 4:14). This is uncertain, for it is also quite possible that the connection was unintentional. Cf. Carr, *Genesis*, 166 and Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 168, who note that Cain’s statement may pick up on Abel’s role of “guarding” his sheep (see שמר in Gen 30:31, 1 Sam 17:20, Jer 31:10, Hos 12:13).

And he said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying out⁸⁷⁸ to me from the ground. And now, you are cursed away from⁸⁷⁹ the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will not continue⁸⁸⁰ to give its strength to you. You will be a fleeing wanderer⁸⁸¹ on the earth.”

4.3.5.1. Summary

In a parallel to God’s question to the woman in Gen 3:13 (“What is this you have done?” [מה־זאת עשית]), God questions Cain in 4:10 (“What have you done?” [מה עשית]). The mixing of imagery through the use of personification involving “blood” (דם) and “ground” (אדמה) in the two verses is striking: the blood cries out from the ground (4:10) and the mouth of the ground swallows the blood (4:11). This focus on Abel’s blood and its pollution of the ground seems to imply a legal situation involving “bloodguilt” (see 4.3.5.2 below). Cain’s culpability in this sense necessitates his removal from the ground, which he has desecrated,⁸⁸² and from his community, which will now be responsible for avenging the death of Abel.

⁸⁷⁸ The plural participle צעקים does not match the singular subject קל but rather דמים (Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 94).

⁸⁷⁹ This Hebrew phrase has yielded some different interpretations, as the מן could also signal a comparison. For example, “the JPS translation follows the rendering of Ramban: ‘Therefore you shall be more ‘cursed (‘arur) than the ground’” (Zeelander, *Closure*, 5 n. 9). Another possibility is that the מן expresses agency, in which case the ground itself would be cursing Cain (ibid.). David Cotter accepts this interpretation: “Cain’s punishment completes the process of human alienation from the earth begun in Genesis 3:17–19 but with a subtle nuance. Where before the ground was cursed, it is now the cursed ground which curses Cain” (*Genesis* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003], 43). Like JPS, Todd Berger also makes a case for a comparative מן (“cursed are you *more than* the ground”) (“The Curse of Cain Reconsidered: A Study of the Translation of *min ha’adamah* in Genesis 4:11a,” *STR* 8 [2017]: 41–53). This is probably less likely than the above translation, which is supported by the description of Cain’s wandering life in the verse that follows (4:12; see further discussion below, especially n. 892).

⁸⁸⁰ This is probably a rare jussive (*GK* §109d+h; cf. Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 151 n. 5). Wenham argues that it is a third feminine singular imperfect form, as found in Num 22:19 and Joel 2:2 (*Genesis 1–15*, 94).

⁸⁸¹ This expression picks up on the connotation of “fleeing” that appears in some occurrences of נוּד (e.g., Jer 50:3), which seems particularly appropriate for the judgment of Cain. However, other options exist, such as “roaming wanderer,” “aimless wanderer,” or “homeless wanderer.” Translated word-for-word, the expression is “one who roams (נוּד) and one who wanders (נוּד)”; the translation above conveys that the expression is a hendiadys and thus “one constituent unit” (Bandstra, *Genesis 1–11*, 253).

⁸⁸² Wenham comments on the basis for this: “Life is in the blood (Lev 17:11), so shed blood is the most polluting of all substances. Consequently, unatoned-for murders pollute the holy land, making it unfit for the divine presence” (*Genesis 1–15*, 107).

4.3.5.2. Connections to the Knowledge of Good and Bad

Regarding the imagery of blood crying from the ground (Gen 4:10), Barmash notes that “the image plays on a technical legal term for responsibility for homicide, דם, ‘bloodguilt.’”⁸⁸³ This reference is explained by Noort: “The statement that ‘life is in the blood’, the presupposition of the role of the blood, comes from the Holiness Code in Lev 17:11, whereas the juridical reflection of the unatoned blood of a victim found in a field, which pollutes the ground of the neighboring settlement, is worked out in Deut 21:1–9.”⁸⁸⁴ In Deut 21:1–9 it is clear that the whole community (kinship group) takes responsibility for the innocent bloodshed.⁸⁸⁵ Noort then explains the fratricide account in light of the so-called “Avenger of Blood” (גאל הדם): “The idea behind this is that spilt blood, in which is life, belongs to the group, to the family ... to the clan... , and had to be returned in the event of a member of the family or clan being killed.”⁸⁸⁶ In the Cain and Abel narrative, the avenger is Yhwh: he is the one to whom the spilt blood cries.⁸⁸⁷

This concept suggests that the punishment on Cain may have been somewhat mitigated from what would be expected. Provan explains:

“Typically in the OT, blood is ‘removed’ in respect of illicit killing in three ways: by monetary compensation, by execution or by exile. The first is not common in the OT (note Exod. 21.29–30; 2 Sam. 21.1–9; Prov. 13.8), and the third appears only as a temporary solution in the case of accidental homicide (note Exod. 21.12–14; Num. 35.9–34; Deut. 19:1–6). In cases of premeditated homicide, neither exile nor monetary compensation is regarded elsewhere in the OT as a sufficient remedy (note Num. 35.31–34; Deut. 19.11–13). Genesis 9.6 will shortly say the same thing, and give a reason for it: ‘Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be

⁸⁸³ Barmash, *Homicide*, 17.

⁸⁸⁴ Noort, “Genesis 4:1–16,” 97.

⁸⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 98.

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Noort further explains, “The crying blood with its magical connotations is often understood as a very old concept in the religion of Israel. That these concepts had a very long life, however, is shown by Ezek 24:8 ... The most direct parallel with Gen 4, however, is the outcry by the post-exilic Job, in Job 16:18: “O earth, cover not my blood and let my cry ... find no resting place” (*ibid.*). This idea of blood vengeance is also vividly demonstrated in the Succession Narrative” (*ibid.*, 99.).

⁸⁸⁷ Cain later fears that other “Avengers of Blood” will kill him (Gen 4:14).

shed; for in the image of God has God made man.’ Human life is precious, and its loss must be marked by another loss. So in cases of premeditated murder, the murderer should be handed over to ‘the avenger of blood’ (as Deuteronomy calls him) — a near relative of the victim, who can avenge his death.”⁸⁸⁸

In spite of this, Cain does not die for Abel’s death; rather, his punishment is limited to banishment.⁸⁸⁹ Yhwh’s motivation may have had more to do with a desire to stem the tide of violence than to lessen Cain’s suffering (see 4.3.7.2 below). The point of Cain’s punishment is not that he is condemned to the lifestyle of Bedouins, as is sometimes inferred, and that therefore the life of nomadic tribes is a cursed life.⁸⁹⁰ Rather, his punishment is the severing of his ties with his family and his god, an appropriate punishment for one who has committed the ultimate betrayal of a family member.

This concept of bloodguilt and Yhwh’s response to Cain’s actions reveal that Cain’s use of the knowledge of good and bad has been so damaging that he must be completely removed from his community. The punishment of the man in Genesis 3 was cast in relation to the “ground” (אדמה), and this is also the case here. Cain is charged with polluting the ground with Abel’s blood and is consequently cursed “away from the face of the ground” (מעל פני האדמה).⁸⁹¹ His separation from the ground also implies a separation from other humans (i.e.,

⁸⁸⁸ Provan, *Discovering Genesis*, 101.

⁸⁸⁹ Whether the author truly intended this as mitigation of punishment is not clear, as expulsion was sometimes used to punish murderers: Wenham notes that expulsion was an alternative punishment for those who murder relatives, citing 2 Sam 13:34–14:24 (Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 108). See also the quote above from Provan.

⁸⁹⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 108.

⁸⁹¹ Grammatically, the מן here can be understood as indicating “detachment,” in the sense of “movement from a space, person or situation” (Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jacobus A. Naudé, Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017], §39.14.1a). The concept of Cain being cursed “away from the ground” may sound awkward in English, but it is understandable in light of the significance of the ground for Cain (as well as for his parents). Cursed to a nomadic life, Cain will be sent away from the life of “working the ground” that was his destiny and his father’s.

Todd Borger gives a summary of the variety of English translations of this phrase as well as the different grammatical options for understanding the phrase מן-האדמה ארור (Gen 4:11a) and the phrase ארור אתה מכל-הבהמה (3:14) (“The Curse of Cain Reconsidered,” *Southeastern Review of Theology* 8 [2017]: 41–53). However, his conclusion that 4:11a should be translated “you are cursed *more* than the ground” does not match with the description of Cain’s life in the following phrases, which describes a future wandering lifestyle. Cain says explicitly in 4:14 that Yhwh has “driven” (גרש) him “from the face of the ground” (מעל פני האדמה). The

from human society), paralleling the separation of the snake who is cursed “from” all the other animals (in the sense of being “separated out” or “distinguished”).⁸⁹² His removal from the ground, the source of the creative activity of Yhwh God in the PN, represents the end of any possibility for his creative influence over the ground (effectively ending his farming career),⁸⁹³ in similarly to the man who lost his role of “keeping” the garden in the PN.

4.3.6. Verses 13–14

ויאמר קין אל־יהוה גדול עוני מנשא:
הן גרשת אתי היום מעל פני האדמה ומפניך אסתר והייתי נע ונד בארץ והיה כל־מצאי יהרגני:

And Cain said to Yhwh, “My punishment is too great for a lifting.⁸⁹⁴ See, you have driven me today away from the face of the ground and from your face I will be hidden. And I will be a fleeing wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

4.3.6.1. Summary

In these verses Cain responds to the punishment meted out by Yhwh. He describes it with a phrase that invites a number of different translation options (see further below), but generally it can be agreed that he finds the punishment harsh. The rest of his speech basically restates what Yhwh stated in Gen 4:11–12 with a few additions, the significance of which will be discussed below.

following descriptions speak in favor of the more traditional translation, “you are cursed *away from* the ground,” in the sense of detachment, as suggested above. See also n. 879.

⁸⁹² The sense of the מן in the curse on the snake would then be a partitive use (“detachment from a source as a bigger unit”): “The most typical instances [of this use] are those where a countable (#a) or uncountable part x (#b) is taken...from countable bigger units or an uncountable bigger mass y respectively” (Merwe, et al., *Biblical Hebrew*, §39.14e). The snake is detached (“distinguished”) from the larger unit of “all animals.”

The use of מן in both Gen 3:14 and 4:11 is clarified by the line that follows the מן. In 3:14, it states, “Because you have done this, cursed are you from all the animals and among all wild creatures; *upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.*” In other words, the snake will be distinguished (separated out) from other animals in terms of sliding on the ground rather than moving on legs. 4:11 states, “And now you are cursed from the ground ... *When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.*” Cain will be sent *away from* the ground, unable to effectively farm any longer and forced to live a wandering rather than a settled life.

⁸⁹³ “The crime of Cain against his brother was not the only [crime], he has also polluted the land, forcing the *adamah* to drink the slain person’s blood ... Cain cannot be a farmer any longer” (Noort, “Genesis 4:1–16,” 101).

⁸⁹⁴ See n. 896 regarding another option for translating this phrase.

4.3.6.2. Connections to the Knowledge of Good and Bad

Cain describes his “punishment” (עון) as “greater than I can bear” (גדול עוני מנשא) [Gen 4:13]), as it is usually translated. As reflected above, it may be better to translate the verb נשא in a similar sense to its use in v. 7.⁸⁹⁵ If this is read as an intentional parallel to v. 7, it could be read, “My punishment is too great for ‘a lifting.’” In other words, Cain sees his punishment as definitively preventing the restoral of his position (both in terms of his relationship to Yhwh and his social standing). Though it has been suggested that עון refers to “iniquity” here and that Cain is expressing some form of repentance,⁸⁹⁶ considering that Cain has shown no signs of remorse or repentance up to this point and shows none after, it is more likely that עון refers to punishment. This is supported by Yhwh’s response, in which he mitigates the “punishment” (עון), because, as it stands, Cain has no chance of restoral to community life.⁸⁹⁷

Cain restates what Yhwh told him regarding his punishment in terms of being “cursed from the ground” (here, “you have driven me away from the ground”⁸⁹⁸) and being a “fleeing wanderer” (נע ונד). One concept he adds is “I shall be hidden from your face” (ומפניך אסתיר). Fugitives are described with a similar phrase in Deut 7:20 as “ones who have been hidden from your [Israel’s] face” (הנסתרים מפניך). An instance of God’s face being hidden as a result of sin is described in Isa 59:2: “Your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not

⁸⁹⁵ Cautiously contra H. G. M. Williamson, who argues that the different form of the infinitive is used to signal that a different meaning is intended (“On Getting Carried Away with the Infinitive Construct of נשא,” in *Shai le-Sara Japhet: Studies in the Bible, its Exegesis and its Language*, ed. Moshe Bar-Asher, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, Emanuel Tov and Nili Wazana [Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007], 357–67).

⁸⁹⁶ Another translation that has been suggested is “my iniquity (עוני) is too great to be forgiven (נשא),” since נשא can also be translated as “to forgive” (e.g., Ex 10:17). Sailhammer argues for this understanding of the statement, claiming that Yhwh’s response (giving of protection) implies that Cain had repented (*The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992], 114).

⁸⁹⁷ Edenburg argues that there is no mitigation of the punishment (“From Eden,” 159). See further comments below regarding the “sign” of Cain and Yhwh’s motivations for protecting Cain (4.3.7.2.).

⁸⁹⁸ The driving out (גרש) of Cain functions as another parallel to the PN, where the man and his wife are also “driven out” (גרש [3:24]). Again, this parallel is in a verse that is likely secondary. See comments in n. 877.

hear.” The hiding of God’s face in Deut 31:17, 18 causes the vulnerability of the people (“they will become easy prey, and many terrible troubles will come upon them”),⁸⁹⁹ which fits with Cain’s concern that he will be killed in the latter half of the verse. It is ironic that Cain’s anger was a result of failing to get God’s notice; now, after attempting to correct the situation through his own methods, he becomes afraid that he will *never* have the attention he desires, as he will be hidden from Yhwh’s face.⁹⁰⁰ Additionally, it is interesting that in Gen 3:8 the man and the woman intentionally hide from the “face” of Yhwh God; now Cain states that he is forcibly hidden. If this narrative was written alongside the PN, as was suggested, then the parallel may be intentional and perhaps adds a heightening to the tension in the relationship between man and deity.⁹⁰¹

A sticking point in interpretation of the FN has been the question of who Cain is afraid of in these verses.⁹⁰² This may indeed point to the account being based on an earlier tradition about Cain, in which the setting was not in primeval times. On the other hand, the point of the narrative is not specifically about the existence of other people, but rather the exclusion of Cain from community in a general sense. His rejection of the role of brother and his destructive use of the knowledge of good and bad has placed him outside the bounds of ordered society, whether it is composed of many people or just a few.

4.3.7. Verses 15–16

ויאמר לו יהיה לכן כל־הרג קין שבעתים יקם וישם יהוה לקין אות לבלתי הכות־אתו כל־מצאו:
ויצא קין מלפני יהוה וישב בארץ־נוד קדמת־עדן:

⁸⁹⁹ When God is the one hiding his face, the phrase often refers to someone being given over to an enemy or being destroyed (e.g., Deut 32:20; Isa 54:8, 64:7; Ezek 39:23; Psa 13:1–2).

⁹⁰⁰ God’s responsiveness to Cain suggests that ultimately his face is not hidden from him (see 4.5.1.2).

⁹⁰¹ In agreement with Wenham: “[Cain] seems to be suggesting that he is being driven even further from the divine presence symbolized by the garden than his parents were” (*Genesis 1–15*, 108).

⁹⁰² To take one example of a solution to the problem, Geddes claimed, “He feared that some of his own brethren would avenge the death of Abel; especially on one who was now to be considered as an outcast of his family” (*The Holy Bible*, 8).

And Yhwh said to him, “So then,⁹⁰³ anyone who kills Cain will receive sevenfold vengeance.” And Yhwh set a banner⁹⁰⁴ for Cain, so that anyone who found him would not attack him. And Cain went out from the presence of Yhwh, and he settled in the land of Nod⁹⁰⁵, east of Eden.

4.2.7.1. Summary

In response to Cain’s complaint, Yhwh (unexpectedly) responds favorably, and, in another example of legal language,⁹⁰⁶ asserts that if anyone kills Cain “sevenfold”⁹⁰⁷ judgment will fall on that person. He then gives Cain a “sign” (אֹת) to prevent anyone who finds him from killing him (לבלתי הכות־אתו כל־מצאו). Gen 4:16 relates Cain’s movement away from the divine presence (“east of Eden”; [cf. 3:24]), as well as the odd fact that he “settles” (ישב) directly after being cursed to a wandering life. The site of his settling is in the (perhaps very appropriately named) “land of Nod” (ארץ־נוד).⁹⁰⁸ Important and confusing aspects of these verses will be further discussed below in relation to the knowledge of good and evil, starting with the mysterious “sign” (אֹת) in 4:15.

4.2.7.2 Connections to the Knowledge of Good and Bad

In Gen 4:15 Yhwh prevents blood vengeance from occurring and instead offers protection to Cain,⁹⁰⁹ in a parallel to the act that he took in Gen 3:21 when he provided

⁹⁰³ לֹא כֵן (“Not so!”) is read here in the LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate. This is adopted by many (e.g., Gertz, *Das Erste Buch*, 151 n. 7; Walton, *Genesis*, 259). Cf. Hamilton, who translates it as “on the contrary” (*The Book of Genesis*, 229). This reading fits the context but could also be understood as an attempt to make sense of the original לָכֵן, found in the MT and SamP (Carr, *Genesis 1–11*, 150–51).

⁹⁰⁴ See the explanation for this translation given below.

⁹⁰⁵ Probably, the place name is a creation of the FN, used to describe the type of place where Cain was relegated to settling — i.e., a “land of wandering.” Contra Görg, who suggests it refers to the Egyptian *t3 ntr* (“God’s land”) (“Kain,” 10).

⁹⁰⁶ “For this type of case-law construction, cf. Exod 22:18[19] (cf. also 21:12, 15–17)” (Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 109).

⁹⁰⁷ According to Wenham, “Most probably it is a poetic turn of speech meaning full divine retribution; cf. Ps 12:7[6]; 79:12; Prov 6:31” (ibid.).

⁹⁰⁸ The name of the place (נוד) is associated with the verb נוד, “to wander” (see Gen 4:12, 13).

⁹⁰⁹ Some argue that the mark of Cain does not represent real mitigation of punishment (Edenburg, “From Eden,” 159). Eric Peels argues convincingly against this view: “The problem with this explanation is that

clothing for the man and woman. This “sign” that God “sets” is another aspect of the FN that has received more than its fair share of interpretations with no real scholarly consensus.⁹¹⁰

Despite the difficulty of defining the nature of the “sign,” its protective function is clear

(לבלתי הכות־אתו כל־מצאו, “lest any who found him should attack him,” v. 15).

Picking up on its function as a marker of God’s protection, an interesting possibility is that the “sign” was an ensign or banner (see the use of אֹת in Num 2:2 and 1QM 3:13–17; 4:1) that identified Cain as under Yhwh’s protection. Some of the banners described in the Qumran War Scroll specifically describe the judgment that will be enacted on the enemies of the congregation *in writing on the banner itself*. For example, “And on the banner of the tho[us]and they shall write: ‘God’s Fury unleashed against Belial and against all the men of his lot so that no remnant (is left).’”⁹¹¹ In the case of Cain’s אֹת, the banner would describe God’s statement of judgment on Cain’s would-be killer (“Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance”), which was announced in the directly preceding clause.⁹¹²

the way in which verse 15 is connected to the previous verse is insufficiently taken into account. Cain complains of his dire fate, culminating in the decree that, as an outlaw, he can now be slaughtered by anyone. The mark that Yhwh gives him is a response to this. The structural parallelism with Gen 3 as well points in a different direction: in 3:21 we read how Yhwh, after the condemnation and cursing of man but still before his expulsion..., makes clothes for him. This suggests that the mark of Cain after his condemnation and cursing, but before his expulsion, has a positive function” (“The World’s First Murder: Violence and Justice in Genesis 4:1–16,” in *Animosity, the Bible, and Us: Some European, North American and South African Perspectives*, ed. John Fitzgerald, Fika J. van Rensburg, and Herrie F. van Roo [Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009], 31–32).

⁹¹⁰ To name just a few of the many interpretations, LaCocque proposes that the “mark” is Cain’s humanity (“the image of God”) (*Onslaught*, 67), while Walter Moberly suggests that it is the content of God’s statement, “Whoever kills Cain will suffer sevenfold vengeance” (“The Mark of Cain – Revealed at Last?” *HTR* 100.1 [2007]: 11–28). Brueggemann admits “there is no consensus on its meaning” and focuses on the function of the mark within the narrative (*Genesis*, 60). Carr notes the parallel to Ezek 9:4–6, where those who are marked on the forehead are protected, and proposes that the sign was a mark of a certain ethnic identification that would have been well known to the author’s audience (*Genesis 1–11*, 172). Gertz suggests that interpreting it as a *Feldzeichen* (a military standard) is possible (cf. Ps 94:4), as is argued below (*Das erste Buch*, 172).

⁹¹¹ Translation from Martínez and Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 117. There are many other statements given to put on banners; a few other relevant ones are “From God is the hand of the battle against all degenerate flesh,” “No longer do the wicked rise, [due to] God’s might,” “God’s justice,” “God’s judgment,” and “God’s slaughter” (*ibid.*).

⁹¹² Though the account uses the word נֹס for banner rather than אֹת, the story of an Israelite battle against the Amalekites provides an example of a “banner” symbolizing God’s protection: “Moses held up his hand, thus becoming a living banner symbolizing God’s presence to help His people win the victory (Ex. 17:8–

Whether this is correct or not, the motivation for God's sudden willingness to protect Cain seems inexplicable.⁹¹³ As with other ambiguous points in this account, perhaps the best way to view the mark is to understand it in light of its parallel in the PN. The most likely parallel to the giving of the mark is the giving of clothing to the humans in Gen 3:21. As argued in 3.3.3.2.3.3, clothing functions as an important element of participation in human society. The inadequacy of the initial clothing that was made by the humans (3:7) is corrected by Yhwh God in 3:21. It is often argued that this is a sign of protection, and certainly this is part of the function of clothing; in the PN, however, the significance of the act of clothing the humans has more to do with their newfound maturity and ability to join (or, rather, form) human civilization. Clothing is a necessary element of adult participation in society.

God's protection of Cain can be read similarly. Although on the surface the "sign" has to do with protection ("so that no one who came upon him would kill him," 4:15), the larger issue has to do with Cain's removal from society. The results of what God has done to Cain (being driven from the soil and hidden from God's face) is that Cain will be a fugitive and wanderer on the earth, and he may be killed by anyone who comes upon him. The prospect of being killed intensifies his banishment: either he completely shuns society and loses all chance to be part of human community or he risks being murdered by an "Avenger of

16)" (Ronald F. Youngblood, ed., *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary: New and Enhanced Edition* [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2014], 139). Afterwards, Moses builds an altar called "Yhwh is My Banner" (יהוה אֱנֹכִי) (ibid.).

The proposed definition fits Moberly's contention: "No conventional mark can serve the purpose of preventing people from killing the person upon whom it is displayed unless there is a frame of reference within which such a mark means, in one way or other, 'Do not kill'" ("The Mark of Cain," 20).

⁹¹³ The sense that Cain's punishment was not strong enough is reflected within the history of interpretation in traditions describing his death (see James Kugel, "Why was Lamech Blind?", in *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994], 159–72; John Byron, "Who Killed Cain? Interpretive Solutions to a Theological Problem," *Biblical Reception* 3 (2014): 96–111).

Shubert Spero finds the inventiveness stemming from Cain's line problematic if he is an unrepentant murderer: "I wish to propose that there is here a positive relationship between Cain's tragic experience and the outburst of inventiveness and the appearance of new social forms that follow. This approach is in line with the approach found in *Genesis Rabbah* (22:28) that Cain regretted his deed and sought to do penance" ("Was Cain the Father of Civilization?," *JBQ* 48 [2020]: 111).

Blood.” The “banner” adjusts this punishment: he does not have to fear being killed, allowing him to form human bonds and reestablish human community to some extent.

Further support for this interpretation can be seen in the events that follow Cain’s receiving of the “banner.” Cain leaves “the presence of the LORD,” but then he “settles” (ישב). He is not killed or completely removed from society; his line goes on to exert impressive influence over the world through both positive cultural advances and negative violent acts. The fact that he settles in a place called Nod (“wandering”) may be an indication by the author that he continues to lead a nomadic life.⁹¹⁴ Be that as it may, Cain is able to marry, have at least one child, and be associated with the building of a city (whether it was him or his son who built the city is unclear — see further discussion below). Thus, the “banner” was not something that separated him from others, but rather it allowed him the possibility to settle (to some extent) and to go on to have descendants.

Like the clothing (Gen 3:21), the “banner” enabled its possessor to function within community. Both of these instances show Yhwh’s efforts to reorder a world that is rapidly being disordered by humans, who have a tendency to use the knowledge of good and bad in ways that cause destruction and alienation from other humans.⁹¹⁵ Clothing allows the man and the woman to begin to create ordered human society. The “banner” prevents further bloodshed on account of Cain, and, like the clothing, allows the continued progression of human civilization. However, Yhwh’s efforts on this score will eventually prove insufficient to stem the tide of violence, and he will determine that a re-creation is necessary.

⁹¹⁴ ישב can also have the sense of a more temporary living arrangement (see e.g., Gen 24:55; 27:44; Judg 19:4).

⁹¹⁵ Peels explains it as Yhwh putting a halt “to the downward spiral of violence. The increasing violence of Gen 4:1–16 threatens to escalate and carry others away. Yhwh, however, puts limits to the spirit of violence: look to the mark of Cain!” (“The World’s First Murder,” 32).

4.3.8. Conclusions Regarding the Knowledge of Good and Bad in the Fratricide Narrative

The argument of this section was that potential solutions to many of the ambiguities of the FN are discovered when the account is read in light of the results of the knowledge of good and bad.⁹¹⁶ This can be observed through a brief summary of the conclusions regarding each section of verses in Gen 4:1–16.

Verses 1–2 show the humans using their creative powers for the purpose of procreation, demonstrating the same pattern of “knowing” followed by a creative act (as seen in the PN). The association with Eve’s newfound powers of creation and the parallel to the creation of the woman in Gen 2:21–22 was found to be helpful in understanding the strange birth announcement that accompanies Cain’s birth. The ambivalence inherent to human existence was noted in connection with the description (or lack thereof!) of Abel’s birth. The report of the brothers’ professions was shown to initiate the beginning of a conflict that would only deepen as the narrative continues. In addition, the characterization of Cain as a “worker of the ground” אדמה (עבד) connects back to the work of the man in the PN (cf. Gen 2:5, 15 [likely secondary]).

Verses 3–5 narrate the giving of offerings; the inciting event for the drama that unfolds. Language that highlights similarity and contrast between the brothers was noted, and the reason for Yhwh’s choice was suggested to be the superiority of Abel’s offering in terms of quality (specifically including “fat portions”), which pointed to Abel’s attentiveness in offering. The lack of specific clarification to Cain on this issue (when the reason for rejected offerings is usually specified in the Hebrew Bible) was said to contribute to the sense of ambiguity in the humans’ lives outside the garden, in which they must use the knowledge of good and bad to make their own determinations, rather than living within the system of clearly defined roles that Yhwh set up in the garden. Lastly, the beginning of cultic practice

⁹¹⁶ This is also Wöhrle’s argument (“Von der Fähigkeit”), although his argument is more focused on showing that the purpose of the narrative is not primarily about the spread of sin.

was noted as another point of connection between the FN and the PN, for the beginning of offering/worship is noted in other primeval narratives and origin stories from the ancient Near East. The start of cultic worship represents an advancement in culture that is indicative of the creative potentials of the knowledge of good and bad.

Verses 6–7 were said to be strongly related to the PN, a connection that is more important than the proposed connection to proverbial language. Verse 7 portrays Yhwh giving Cain the opportunity to “judge the situation good” (i.e., to accept Yhwh’s response to the offerings). If he determines the situation “not good” and chooses to fix it through destructive means, “sin” will enter the picture. The contrast between the two clauses in 7a and 7b helped clarify some of the difficulties in translating the second clause, which should be translated to reflect the antithetical terms “lifting” (נשא) and “lying down” (רצץ). The final line was suggested to be best understood in parallel to the similar line in Gen 3:16. The lack of a clear antecedent for the two third masculine singular pronouns occurred because the line was adopted from the PN: to adjust the phrase to fit the context of the FN, which focuses on the relationship between Cain and Abel instead of the man and woman, the author (or, more likely, redactor [see 4.3.3.2.3]) simply switched the pronouns to match Abel. In accord with this focus on the brotherly relationship, the rare word תשוקה was said to refer to Abel’s brotherly “allegiance” is towards Cain. Cain does not reciprocate this “allegiance” and instead abuses his power over his brother. A final important note on the verse is that it promotes human responsibility — Cain clearly has the opportunity to choose how to respond to the undesirable circumstances that he finds himself in.⁹¹⁷

Verses 8–9 relates the murder itself and the initial aftermath. The taking of life is noted as a quality of divinity (a destructive power) that humanity takes on as a result of obtaining the knowledge of good and bad. Verse 9 suggests that a problem in roles has

⁹¹⁷ As regards the literary history of this verse, it was tentatively suggested that Gen 4:6–7 is secondary to the original narrative (see 4.3.3.2.3).

occurred, as Cain denies any responsibility for the younger brother to whom he should have allegiance (“Am I my brother’s keeper?”). His denial of “keeping” is another connection back to the role of man in the garden in Eden, where the man has the job of “working” (Gen 2:5, 15) and “keeping” (2:15).⁹¹⁸ As noted, this suggests that the story of Cain describes, in a representative way, the outworking of the humans’ loss of the roles they had in the garden and the consequences of the knowledge of good and bad in the world outside the garden.

The discussion on verses 10–12 involved clarifying the connection to the concept of “bloodguilt” as it occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. The requirements of bloodguilt mandate Cain’s removal from society, which in his case means removal “away from” the ground. As the source of Yhwh’s creative activity in the PN, this signals the end of Cain’s constructive, creative activity as a “worker of the ground,” paralleling the end of his father’s position of “working the ground” in the PN.

Verses 13–14 describe Cain’s reaction to his punishment. It was argued that an important aspect of his punishment was his complete removal from human society. It is to this problem that Yhwh responds in verse 15 by giving a “sign” (possibly a banner detailing the prescribed punishment for Cain’s killer), which then allows Cain to participate in human society to some extent, as seen in his “settling” in v. 16 (followed by marriage, procreation and a long list of influential descendants in Gen 4:17ff.). This mitigation of punishment was suggested to be motivated by a “reordering” desire on the part of Yhwh; this desire, however, will ultimately prove ineffective for preventing an increase in violence.

This summary clarifies that the theme of the knowledge of good and bad is key to understanding the events of the FN. The consequences of humanity’s newfound ability to make autonomous decisions that creatively and destructively influence the world are powerfully portrayed in the account of Cain’s conflict with his brother. The theme of the

⁹¹⁸ See 4.3.4.2.2 regarding the fact that the references to “keeping” (שמר) occur within (likely) secondary material.

knowledge of good and bad is significant for understanding Yhwh's actions as well. In both the PN and FN, Yhwh corrects human attempts at creative and destructive influence in the world: the man and woman are given new clothing to replace the inadequate coverings they made; Cain is warned and then punished for his attempt to correct his lowered status through murder; the potential future avenger of Abel's death is prevented from enacting revenge. Each of these instances represents attempts by Yhwh to move humanity towards the life-promoting side of the knowledge of good and bad. This holds true for the conclusion of Cain's story as well — he is cursed to a wandering life, but the “banner” makes it possible for him to remain in society and contribute in creative ways (i.e., through procreation and city building). Further evidence that humans will continue to act destructively (e.g., Lamech [Gen 4:23–24]) and inappropriately cross boundaries (e.g., the sons of God and the daughters of men episode [6:1–4]) leads to a de-creation (i.e., the flood). The following section will observe further developments of the theme of the knowledge of good and bad in the genealogy that is connected to the FN.

4.4 The Cainite and Sethite Genealogies and the Knowledge of Good and Bad

This section on the genealogies in Genesis 4 will be briefer than the analysis of the narrative portion, as the main parallels to the PN are in the narrative section of the chapter. Nevertheless, this section will point out some key examples which show that the consequences of obtaining the knowledge of good and bad are also seen in these verses.⁹¹⁹

⁹¹⁹ Note that technically Gen 4:1 belongs to the genealogy, but as it so strongly relates to the narrative section, it will be analyzed along with the narrative portion of the text.

4.4.1. The Purpose of Genealogies

Genealogies in the ancient world could have several different purposes, and these purposes are often expressed through their form. The so-called “linear”⁹²⁰ or “vertical”⁹²¹ type of genealogy details one line of descendants from a particular ancestor, while “segmented”⁹²² or “spread-out”⁹²³ genealogies describe multiple lines of descendants from a particular ancestor. Genesis 4 contains both linear (4:17–18; 25–26) and segmented (4:19–22) genealogical sections. While a linear form merely narrates the passage of generations, segmented genealogies function differently: “segmentation, with its wide range of primary and secondary lineages, is the foremost concept in the genealogical positioning of the individual and in the ascertaining of kinship, whether on a broad ethnographic plane or within a more restricted tribal circle.”⁹²⁴ The segmented genealogy in Gen 4:19–22 is “functioning, in a sense, as a technogony (a history of culture, or of the civilized arts), and the segmented form it is in helps communicate this effectively.”⁹²⁵

The genealogical portions in ch. 4 also serve a purpose that is strongly related to the obtaining of the knowledge of good and bad, for they describe a descent into violence that culminates in Yhwh’s assessment of humans in Gen 6:5: “every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually” (כל־יצר מחשבת לבו רק רע כל־היום).⁹²⁶ With the influential power to create and destroy, humanity displays a tendency towards destruction. This

⁹²⁰ Robert Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Books on Demand), 9; Thomas Hieke, *Die Genealogien der Genesis* (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 19–20.

⁹²¹ Abraham Malamat refers to genealogies as “linear” and “spread-out,” respectively (“King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and Biblical Genealogies,” *JAOS* 88 [1968]: 163).

⁹²² Wilson, *Genealogy*, 9; Hieke, *Die Genealogien*, 19–20.

⁹²³ Malamat, “King Lists,” 163.

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁹²⁵ Lowery, *Toward a Poetics*, 80.

⁹²⁶ Cf. the epic of Atrahasis, in which the reasoning for the flood involves the “noise” of humanity (“Atrahasis,” trans. Dalley, 18, tablet I, §vii).

inclination is described, however, as stemming specifically from the line of Cain, while the line of Seth (implied to be righteous by the mention of the beginning of the worship of Yhwh in Gen 4:26) is connected with the flood hero, Noah (see 5:29).⁹²⁷ The advancement of violence is thus narrated alongside the advancement of creative and constructive aspects of human civilization. This points to the power of choice inherent to the knowledge of good and bad, as well as the burden of responsibility that comes with this power. This further develops the tension between the positive and negative outcomes of the humans' obtaining of the knowledge of good and bad. The genealogies also, on a more basic level, point to the miracle of new life contrasted with the inevitability of death, another key element in the obtaining the knowledge of good and bad (see 3.3.3.2.4.3). This correspondence in purpose between the genealogy and the narrative is further confirmed through a closer look at some of the key aspects of the genealogy related to the knowledge of good and bad.

4.4.2. Humans Using Creative Power

Certain elements of the genealogies describe humanity involved in constructive and innovative activity in the world. In Gen 4:17 the first city is built: “And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city, and named it Enoch after his son Enoch” (וידע) קין את־אשתו ותהר ותלד את־חנוך ויהי בנה עיר ויקרא שם העיר כשם בנו חנוך” Enoch). Although it is typically assumed that Cain was the builder of this city, is not entirely clear which human did the building. The syntax of the sentence could easily imply that Enoch built it: ותלד את־חנוך עיר ויהי בנה עיר (“And he bore Enoch, and he (i.e., Enoch) was the builder of a city”). This also fits with the meaning of Enoch's name, as it comes from a root which means “to initiate, found”⁹²⁸ and would parallel the genealogical notes of Cain and Abel, in which their name was given, followed by a participle describing their activity (Cain...עבד; Abel...רעה [4:2];

⁹²⁷ Gen 5:29 is considered part of the non-P text (Gertz, “Formation,” 123).

⁹²⁸ Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 208–9.

also, Tubal-cain... לִטַּשׁ [4:22]; cf. 4:20, 21). Enoch as the city builder would also make for a less confusing end to the account of Cain, who, as the text stands, is cursed to a wandering life, but then goes on to build a city. Enoch's son, Irad, as the namesake of the first city would also concur with Mesopotamian literature in which Eridu, a similar sounding word, is often understood as the first city.⁹²⁹ In light of this, it seems more likely that Enoch was the builder of the first city.⁹³⁰

The mention of city-building is significant, as it appears in other ancient Near Eastern cosmogonic myths: “Cities were held to be primordial, with gods having first created and dwelt in them in the distant past; they were created initially for the gods, not humans.”⁹³¹ An example is found in the Eridu Genesis, in which, “after kingship had descended from heaven and after the divine rights and *me* were distributed five *me*-endowed cities were founded.”⁹³² There is also an interesting account of disobedience against divinity followed by city building: “In the ‘Weidner Chronicle,’ now seen to constitute a (fictitious) letter from a king of Isin to a king of Babylon (or Larsa?), we read, ‘he (Sargon) [neglected] the word which Bel (?) spoke; he took earth from his pit ... and built a city opposite ... Agade; and called its name Babylon.’”⁹³³ The primordial association with city building serves as a further connection back to the PN. In contrast to these accounts, it is clear here that a human built the

⁹²⁹ Lowery, *Toward a Poetics*, 152.

⁹³⁰ The reason that the name Enoch appears at this point in the text is not clear. Cassuto suggests it is a misplaced gloss (*Genesis*), or it may be a copyist's error (Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 111).

⁹³¹ Lowery, *Toward a Poetics*, 138. He further explains, “the city was foundational to the Mesopotamian concept of civilization. The Order of all things, brought about by the *me*, found its fullest expression in the parallel order of the city” (ibid.).

⁹³² Ibid., 146. See “The Deluge,” trans. Samuel N. Kramer, *ANET*, 42–44, lines 90–8.

⁹³³ Hallo, *The World's Oldest Literature*, 555. Furthermore, “In a fragmentary passage of the neo-Assyrian omen collection, we read: ‘Omen of Sargon who by this ominous sign ... [exercised] power [and] Babylon [...] to him and he dug up the [earth] of xxx and [next to/opposite?] Agade built a city and called its name Babylon’” (ibid.).

first city.⁹³⁴ As the negative aspects of human existence were attributed to the humans' choice to take the knowledge of good and bad, so cultural developments like city-building and the inventions of Lamech's sons (Gen 4:20–22) are considered the outcomes of this choice. Furthermore, the fact that the building of cities was considered a divine task marks this accomplishment as yet another godlike creative ability that humans are able to take on as a result of obtaining the knowledge of good and bad.

Regarding Lamech's sons, these innovators have been paralleled with the *apkallu*, the semidivine prediluvian Mesopotamian sages who were responsible for passing on divine knowledge to humanity: "Like the *apkallu* who built the early cities and those who brought the civilized arts to men, the line of Cain performed the same service (or dis-service, in the biblical view)."⁹³⁵ Wenham agrees: "by linking urbanization and nomadism, music and metalworking to the genealogy of Cain, [the author] seems to be suggesting that all aspects of human culture are in some way tainted by Cain's sin."⁹³⁶ It is, however, questionable whether these advances are really understood negatively. Rather, they could be read as creative, positive outworking of the knowledge of good and bad, despite the fact that they appear in a genealogical line marked by a proclivity towards violence. The names of Lamech's children

⁹³⁴ Cf. Lowery, *Toward a Poetics*, 139 n. 81.

⁹³⁵ A. D. Kilmer, "The Mesopotamian Counterparts of the Biblical NĒPĪLĪM," in *Perspectives on Language and Text: Essays and Poems in Honor of Francis I. Andersen* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 42. On the *apkallu*, see also Wenham, who explains, "The older texts are not explicit about the precise skills of these *apkallus*, but the oldest *apkallu* was called Adapa and is associated with Eridu, generally regarded in Mesopotamian tradition as the first city to be founded. The later writer Berossus claims that the first sage, Oannes (Adapa), rose from the sea and taught man the arts of writing, agriculture, and city-building. He was followed by six others who also rose from the sea. Phoenician tradition preserved by Philo of Byblos also knew of a number of gods or supermen who brought to earth various technical and magical skills" (*Genesis 1–11*, 110; see Jacoby, *Fragmente*, 364–95). See also the list and description of sages on tablet III of the incantation series *bīt mēseri*: "the pure *purādu*-fishes, the *purādu*-fishes of the sea, the seven of them, the seven sages, who originated in the river, who control the plans of heaven and earth" (translation from Rykle Berger, "The Incantation Series Bīt Mēseri and Enoch's Ascension to Heaven," in *I Studied Inscriptions From Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumera, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 4 [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 230).

⁹³⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–11*, 111.

suggest their association with the creative side of the knowledge of good and bad — all their names appear to be connected to the word יבול, “produce.”⁹³⁷ The fact that their cultural advances occur within the violent line of Cain does not mean that the advances in and of themselves are problematic. What is expressed, rather, is the ambivalence of life: that which is creative, outwardly focused, and life-promoting coexists alongside what is destructive, self-focused, and death-promoting. As has been the case with the description of the consequences of the knowledge of good and bad up to this point, it is clear that this trait implies possibilities on both ends of the spectrum from “good” to “bad.”

4.4.3. Humans Using Destructive Power

Other elements of the genealogy describe humanity involved in destructive activity, as is most clearly seen in Lamech. Lamech occupies a key space within the structure of the genealogies, as it is with him that the linear genealogy ends, and a segmented genealogy begins (see Gen 4:19ff).⁹³⁸ He is also distinguished by the number of verses devoted to him: “The six verses devoted to Lamech, his two wives, and his four children ... contrasts with the terse mention of the four previous generations (4:17–18).”⁹³⁹ These features mark him out as particularly significant to the message of this section.

The song spoken by Lamech in this section begins by addressing his two wives, calling them to “listen to his voice” (Gen 4:23). This phrase urges the listener to adopt the speaker’s perspective. In the PN, the man “listened to the voice of his wife” (3:17) rather than

⁹³⁷ Wenham says this is “presumably alluding to their inventiveness. However, the precise difference between the different names is obscure” (ibid., 112).

⁹³⁸ His is the only name mentioned in both genealogies (Richard S. Hess, “Lamech in the Genealogies of Genesis,” *BBR* 1 [1991]: 22). Hess argues, “From the perspective of the poetic parallelism, Lamech is a new Cain. He brings Cain’s line to an end and begins his own” (ibid.). Contra Amzallag, who has a stronger argument that “Lamech, his two wives, and his four children symbolize the completion of the Cain genealogy” (“Cain Genealogy,” 27). Note also that the shift from a linear to a segmented genealogy is not unusual (Hedda Klip, *Biblical Genealogies: A Form-Critical Analysis, with a Special Focus on Women* [Leiden: Brill, 2022], 53).

⁹³⁹ Amzallag, “Cain Genealogy,” 26.

the command of Yhwh God, choosing to adopt the alternative reality offered by the snake. Here Lamech describes his violent ethic for “ordering” the world, proclaiming himself the judge of what is right and wrong. He calls his wives to consent to his version of reality and accept him as the arbitrator of justice. His perspective is in accord with the consequences of the humans obtaining the knowledge of good and bad: the opportunity for autonomous determination of what is “good” and “bad” has resulted in an emphasis on the individual’s perspective.

Lamech’s song refers back to Cain (“If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold” [Gen 4:24]), explicitly inviting a comparison between Lamech and his ancestor. In terms of the magnitude of violence, Lamech goes beyond the fratricide of Cain, a fact that is made clear by the poem’s composition:

Had the present couplet, therefore, been fashioned after this pattern of Syro-Palestinian number parallelism the sequent of ‘sevenfold’ would of necessity have been ‘eightfold,’ or, conversely, the correspondent of ‘seventy and seven’ appearing in the second colon would have had to be ‘sixty and six’ in the first colon. But, had either of these parallelisms been employed, Lamech’s meaning would have been that his claim to revenge was as great as that of Cain. And this is the point of the poem and of its nontraditional final couplet: Lamech pretends to an even greater – an exaggerated – measure of revenge and is made to do so through a disproportionate parallelism of numbers.⁹⁴⁰

The exaggerated revenge that Lamech promotes suggests an acceleration of violence in the world, as humans individually seek to set right what they determine is “not good.”

What began with Cain’s refusal to accept God’s assessment of his and his brother’s sacrifices continues here with Lamech’s “war-boast,” in which he announces his intention of bringing vengeance on any who might harm him.⁹⁴¹ His statement that he would kill a ילד (sometimes translated “child” or “boy”) for “a blow/wound” (חבורה) is surprising, but not

⁹⁴⁰ Stanley Gevirtz, “Lamech’s Song to his Wives,” in *I Studied Inscriptions Before the Flood*, ed. Richard S. Hess (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 410.

⁹⁴¹ Modern scholars are in agreement that this is a threat rather than a statement of an action already done (Kugal, “Why was Lamech Blind?”, 160–1; Geula Twersky, “Lamech’s Song and the Cain Genealogy: An Examination of Gen 4,23-24 within its Narrative Context,” *SJOT* 31:2 [2017]: 277).

because it implies an extremely young age for the one he threatens to kill.⁹⁴² What is strange is that in parallel clauses it is typical that the word איש is paired with בן-אדם, not ילד.⁹⁴³ So, for example, Num 23:19 states, “God is not man (איש), that he should lie, or a son of man (בן-אדם), that he should change his mind.”⁹⁴⁴ This deviation from the norm may emphasize the all-encompassing nature of the threat: Lamech will personally enact vengeance on *any* person, young or old, who wrongs him. Beyond this, it is notable that איש also occurred in an unusual context in direct speech in Gen 4:1 (והאמר קניתי איש את-יהוה). Perhaps there is a parallel between Lamech’s killing of an איש and a ילד and Eve’s creating of an איש that was also implicitly a ילד. Lamech’s declarations speak to the destructive power of a human over a fellow human, while Eve’s speech describes the creative power of humans to create more humans.

4.4.4. Conclusions Regarding the Knowledge of Good and Bad and the Genealogy

The genealogy can thus be understood to represent the advancement of *both* humanity’s destructive influence *and* their creative influence in the world.⁹⁴⁵ Cain murders his brother but then goes on to have a child who builds a city (Gen 4:17). Lamech promotes murder on a grander scale than Cain but also has three sons who instigate key developments in the growth of civilization.⁹⁴⁶ In contrast to Yhwh halting vengeance to prevent more

⁹⁴² ילד is better translated as “youth,” as it “covers a person up to about forty years of age (1 Kgs 12:8, 10; cf. 1 Kgs 14:21; Dan 1:4)” (Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114). Contra Alter, *Genesis*, 20.

⁹⁴³ According to Hamilton, this pair is attested nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible (*The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990], 240).

⁹⁴⁴ See also Job 35:8; Psa 80:17; Jer 51:43; cf. verses that use אנוש instead of איש (Job 25:6; Psa 8:4; Isa 51:12; Jer 50:40) or אדם (Psa 144:3). See discussion in Gevirtz, “Lamech’s Song,” 410–15. This unusual parallelism contrasts with the parallelism of the words used to describe the act done against Lamech — פצע and הבורה — which are frequently paired in the Hebrew Bible (Twersky, “Lamech’s Song,” 280–81).

⁹⁴⁵ Both Cain’s and Lamech’s stories feature attempts to correct perceived injustice through violence, i.e., destructive action in the world. The concept of vengeance is one way in which humans try to “order” their environment as a response to a perceived injustice. In this sense, Lamech essentially takes on the role of Yhwh.

⁹⁴⁶ Perhaps Lamech’s two wives hint at an increase in potential conflict in the marital relationship while also representing an increase in procreation.

bloodshed after the murder of Abel, Lamech’s song promotes vengeance on top of vengeance (seventy times seventy [4:24]). As becomes evident in the prologue to the flood account, the destructive results of humanity’s use of the knowledge of good and bad become so extreme that Yhwh finds it preferable to start over.

It is important to note again that Cain’s line functions as a foil for the line of Seth.⁹⁴⁷ In contrast to the cultural achievements of Lamech’s children, the innovation associated with Seth’s line is the beginning of the worship of Yhwh (although it is not specifically stated that the initiator was Seth’s son).⁹⁴⁸ The speech of Lamech stands in stark contrast to the speech (of Enosch?) describing Noah in Gen 5:29: “Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one [i.e., Noah] shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands.”⁹⁴⁹

Nachman Levine points out the contrast between these two speeches:⁹⁵⁰

Lamech’s speech (Genesis 4)	Enosch’s speech (Gen 5:29)
No mention of Yhwh	Mentions Yhwh
“About killing a man/boy”	“About a son’s <i>birth</i> ”
Self-focused	Communally focused ⁹⁵¹
Killing for an affront	Bringing comfort

Levine also points out that Lamech’s rhymes are “about himself and his dominance over individuals,” while the rhymes in the speech about Noah “are about compassion, comfort and

⁹⁴⁷ Comparing the genealogy in Genesis 4 to the one in Genesis 5, ten Hoopen notes that “By changing Cain’s name to Kenan and deriving Noah from the line of Seth, Gen 5 shows that while Cain’s line spread violence, the line of Adam continuing in Seth did not” (“Genesis 5,” 182).

⁹⁴⁸ The ambiguous *hophal* verb (ללח) in Gen 4:26 makes it difficult to know who exactly was calling on the name of Yhwh (Robert P. Gordon, “Who ‘Began to Call on the Name of the LORD’?,” in *Let Us Go Up to Zion: Essays in Honour of H.G.M. Williamson on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Iain Provan and Mark Boda [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 57–68). See also Lowery, “Toward a Poetics,” 93.

⁹⁴⁹ Likely Gen 5:28–29 is a misplaced piece from non-P that was originally attached to a birth notice following Gen 4:25f. (Gunkel, *Genesis*, 55; Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 199).

⁹⁵⁰ All the quotes and observations within the chart are from Nachman Levine, “Lemekh’s Song: Narrative Context and the Poetry of Violence,” *Milim Havivin* 2 (2006): 141–42. Levine somewhat imprecisely compares the speeches of the Lamech in Genesis 4 and the Lamech in Genesis 5 without distinguishing 5:29 as originally part of non-P.

⁹⁵¹ Note the use of the first common plural in Gen 5:29.

empathy with the communal lot and industriousness of all his generation.”⁹⁵² The speeches thus embody the contrasting realities available through the knowledge of good and bad. As part of the line that will survive the flood and continue into the new order that follows the flood, Noah represents the continuing availability of the possibilities laid before Cain in Gen 4:7. Despite humanity’s inclination towards the destructive possibilities of the knowledge of good and bad, they can still have the choice to act creatively within the world.

4.5. Other Potential “Wisdom Motifs”

Outside the theme of the knowledge of good and bad, a few topics in Genesis 4 were mentioned in ch. 1 as possibly having a connection to wisdom. These included the act-consequence connection, fraternal conflict, and instruction. The possibility that Gen 4:7 represents wisdom instruction was already discussed above (see 4.3.3.1), and the function of the other two topics in the FN will be considered below. This analysis will be followed by a conclusion that suggests whether these motifs are connected to wisdom or not.

4.5.1. The Act-Consequence Connection

The following section will consider whether the relationship between act and consequence in the PN/FN relates to the discussion of this topic in wisdom literature. The connection between a person’s actions and the consequences of their actions is a topic that is frequently considered within Hebrew and Jewish wisdom literature (see 4.5.1.3).⁹⁵³ Scholars traditionally thought of this concept in retributive terms; in other words, God intervenes in

⁹⁵² Ibid., 141.

⁹⁵³ This is also a subject that is discussed at significant length in works from other cultures in the ancient Near East, but the present context cannot do justice to the full scope of this theme in these other works. Significant texts addressing the question of theodicy in Mesopotamian wisdom literature include “A Man and His God,” the “Dialogue between a Man and His God,” the “Sufferer’s Salvation,” *Lud-lul bēl nēmeqi* (“Let me praise the Lord of Wisdom”) and the *Babylonian Theodicy* (see Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “The Social and Intellectual Setting of Babylonian Wisdom Literature,” in *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*, ed. Richard J. Clifford [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007], 8). The concept of *ma’at* within Egyptian works is also important (see Jan Assmann, *Ma’at: Gerechtigkeit and Unsterblichkeit im Alten Aegypten* [München: C.H. Beck, 1990] and the brief discussion of this concept below). Regarding act and consequence in Egyptian literature, see also Adams, *Wisdom in Transition*, 15–49.

human affairs to bless the righteous or punish the wicked.⁹⁵⁴ Another way of understanding this interplay was championed by Klaus Koch and is referred to as the *Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang* (“the act-consequence connection”).⁹⁵⁵ Koch suggested that the Hebrew Bible presents actions as having corresponding consequences that are not specifically connected to the meting out of divine retribution or blessing.⁹⁵⁶ The righteous one *naturally* “prosper,” while the wicked “are like chaff that the wind drives away,” as Psalm 1 puts it. Or, as Prov 17:20 says, “A man of crooked heart does not discover good, and one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity.” In other words, there is an order present in the world, ensuring that a person’s actions receive a corresponding outcome. For Koch, God does not independently invent the outcomes of events but is involved in the sense that he puts the already established connection between act and consequence into effect.⁹⁵⁷

Koch’s concept was (and is) considered an important development in understanding act and consequence in the Hebrew Bible, but it has also been critiqued in numerous ways. Micah D. Kiel rightly points out that Koch is quite selective in the passages that he uses to support his theory: “It would be much more difficult for him to make his case in Deuteronomy, where God sometimes plays a more active role (e.g., Deut. 32.20) and judgments are made according to a previously established norm (Deut. 4.1-2, 23).”⁹⁵⁸ Regarding Genesis, Peter Hatton suggests that Koch’s theory may hold true for some

⁹⁵⁴ This was considered a belief connected to the preaching of the prophets (Ezekiel, in particular) (see Bernhard Stade, *Die Religion Israels und die Entstehung des Judentums*, vol. 1 of *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments* [Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1905], 285).

⁹⁵⁵ See “Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?,” *ZTK* 52 (1955): 1–42, and the abbreviated English version of this article, “Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?,” trans. Thomas H. Trapp, in *Theodicy in the Old Testament* (ed. James L. Crenshaw; IRT 4; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 57–87.

⁹⁵⁶ Koch “Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?,” 7.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁵⁸ Micah D. Kiel, *The “Whole Truth”: Rethinking Retribution in the Book of Tobit* (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 28.

passages, but “this judgment needs qualification because Genesis also contains examples of God acting in ways which can only be described as interventionist; for example, the flood narrative, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire, the opening of the womb of Sarah when her childbearing days should have been long over.”⁹⁵⁹ It is thus important to note that not *every* case of act and consequence featured in the Hebrew Bible would fit Koch’s paradigm.

Also significant for the discussion of act and consequence is Bernd Janowski’s analysis of this topic. He notes that the basic issue raised by Koch is that in the Hebrew Bible consequences are not always conceived of as coming from a deity acting from outside the cosmos, but rather there (often) appears to be an internal relationship between act and consequence in which the deed itself seems to produce the consequence (e.g., Prov 29:6; 25:21).⁹⁶⁰ Janowski argues that this phenomenon is not the result of an internal relationship between actions and their consequences (as Koch argued), but it is caused by social/communal norms that influence the outcome(s) of an individual’s action.⁹⁶¹ He argues that reciprocity, in the sense of social “payback” for one’s actions, is inherent to the concept of retribution.⁹⁶² This also appears in Egyptian thought in the concept of *ma’at*, or “connective justice,” as Jan Assman understands the term.⁹⁶³ According to Assmann, “Der Zusammenhang von Tun und Ergehen... ist kein Automatismus, sondern vollzieht sich in der

⁹⁵⁹ Peter Hatton, *Contradiction in the Book of Proverbs: The Deep Waters of Counsel* (London: Routledge, 2021), 378. Cf. the critique of Suzanna Millar, *Genre and Openness in Proverbs 10:1–22:16* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 111ff.

⁹⁶⁰ Bernd Janowski, “Die Tat kehrt zum Täter zurück: Offene Fragen im Umkreis des Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhangs,” *ZTK* 91 (1994): 252–53.

⁹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 255–66.

⁹⁶² In other words, the members of one’s community will cause a good action to be repaid with good and a bad action to be repaid with bad (Janowski, “Die Tat kehrt,” 265, 257). Cf. the so-called “Golden Rule” or “royal law” in Lev 19:18, 34; Tob 4:15; Sir 31:15; Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31; 10:25; Jas 2:8.

⁹⁶³ See Jan Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*, trans. Andrew Jenkins (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 127–28. “Connective justice” is a translation of the German phrase, “konnektive Gerechtigkeit.”

Form gesellschaftlicher Interaktion, nicht auf der Basis von ‘Naturgesetzen’, sondern von gesellschaftlichen Normen, die als göttliches Gebot interpretiert werden.”⁹⁶⁴ Janowski builds on the argument of Assmann by analyzing several verses from Proverbs that contain passive formulations, creating an ambiguity regarding who exactly will carry out the named consequences (e.g., Prov 28:18; 11:31; 13:13, 21).⁹⁶⁵ He argues that the implied entity who enacts the consequences in these cases is probably not God, but rather members of the community.⁹⁶⁶

Some of the elements discussed in these conceptions of the relationship between act and consequence are significant for considering this topic in the PN/FN. For example, the issue of God’s role in bringing about consequences will be discussed, for in the PN/FN his role is quite explicit and actually dramatized. The social component of consequences suggested by Assmann and Janowski will also be noted as helpful for interpretation, particularly for understanding the consequences in the FN.

That being said, it will be suggested that the PN and FN generally do not show a strong engagement with the discussion found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible regarding act and consequence, particularly in many works considered wisdom literature (see 4.5.1.3). Instead, the fact that Yahweh (God) responds to objectionable actions with either direct curses or consequences that strongly resemble those of a curse (see further discussion below in 4.5.1.1.1) makes it clear that the PN/FN assume a strong correlation between action and consequence without exhibiting a need or desire to support this connection.

⁹⁶⁴ Jan Assmann, “Vergeltung und Erinnerung,” in *Studien zu Religions und Sprache Ägyptens* (Göttingen: Hubert & Co., 1984), 700–701.

⁹⁶⁵ Janowski, “Die Tat kehrt,” 262ff.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid., 264–65. Janowski summarizes the act-consequence connection: “Die Tat kehrt also zum Täter zurück – aber nicht von selbst, sondern dadurch, daß dem Handelnden durch andere widerfährt, was (Gutes oder Böses) dieser an ihnen getan hat. Auch die Spruchweisheit kennt also die ‘Vergeltung’ als eine Kategorie der sozialen Interaktion” (ibid., 266).

Below, an analysis of the specifics of the main consequences described in the PN and FN will be undertaken to support this point. This section will begin by turning back to the PN before analyzing the FN. For both the PN and FN, the following analysis will look specifically at the consequences named by Yahweh (God) for the condemned act (in the PN, eating the fruit; in the FN, the killing of Abel) to determine the extent to which the relationship between act and consequence is affirmed or denied in these narratives. The analysis of this issue in the PN will require a more extended discussion in order to address the issue of whether the death threat stated in Gen 2:17 was actually carried out or not.

4.5.1.1. Act and Consequence in the Paradise Narrative

4.5.1.1.1. Analysis of the Death Sentence in Genesis 2:17

In the PN, a very clear statement regarding an action and its corresponding consequence is given: the humans are told that if they eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, they will die (Gen 2:17). In terms of understanding act and consequence in the PN, then, obviously the first matter to consider is whether this stated consequence of death actually occurred. In addition to the evidence previously cited (see. 3.4.1.1.1 and n. 522), it will be argued here that the curse on the snake, along with the use of language of that is *typically* used in curses to describe the consequences on the woman and man, suggests that the death penalty *was* actually carried out.

4.5.1.1.1.1. A Conditional Verdict. In Gen 2:17, Yhwh God says, “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” (ומעץ) הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות. The phrase “in the day you eat of it you shall die” (כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות) is a conditional verdict: “if a particular condition is fulfilled (eating from the tree), then the verdict (death) will take effect.”⁹⁶⁷ Conditional verdicts are found elsewhere both in the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near

⁹⁶⁷ Bruce Wells, “Death in the Garden of Eden,” *JBL* 139 (2020): 646.

Eastern texts.⁹⁶⁸ From the Hebrew Bible, Bruce Wells notes examples such as Exod 10:28 (“on the day you see my face you shall die”) and 1 Kgs 2:36–37 (“on the day you go out, and cross the Wadi Kidron, know for certain that you shall die”), which have some interesting commonalities with Gen 2:17:

Each conditional verdict communicates the consequences of an action that might take place in the future, even the very near future. Each contains an implicit prohibition of that action. Each essentially declares the addressee to be guilty should he carry out the action. Each comes from a very high-level authority figure. The consequence in each case is formulated as a death sentence for wrongdoing. The syntax in each text is similar: **כִּי־יִם** introduces the dependent clause that sets forth the condition, while an imperfect or *yiqtol* verb form govern the main clause, which contains the actual verdict. Finally, the context is one of administration in each case.⁹⁶⁹

Wells suggests that when a sentence is given based on a conditional verdict, it is carried out either immediately or not long after the sentencing.⁹⁷⁰ On this basis, although the penalty given in Gen 2:17 may not happen immediately, Wells concludes that it would not have been “significantly delayed.”⁹⁷¹ This contention will be further considered below through analyzing the protasis of the conditional verdict in Gen 2:17: the collocation **מוֹת** (*qal* infinitive absolute) + **מוֹת** (*qal* imperfect).

4.5.1.1.1.2. מוֹת תָּמוּת. Further examination of the phrase “you shall die” (מוֹת תָּמוּת) suggests there may be more flexibility than Wells suggests in terms of the time frame in

⁹⁶⁸ Wells, “Death in the Garden,” 649–50. A few representative texts that include conditional curses include “The First Soldier’s Oath,” trans. Billie Jean Collins (*COS* 1.66:165–66); “The Aramaic Inscriptions from Sefire,” (see Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, “The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire I and II,” *JAOS* 81 [1961]: 178–222); the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014], 45–49, 51–52, 55, 58); “The Laws of Hammurapi,” trans. Martha Roth (*COS* 2:131:352), and *kudurru* (boundary stone) curses (L. W. King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones and Memorial Tablets in the British Museum* [London: The British Museum, 1912]). These texts will be included in the discussion below. For other examples outside the Hebrew Bible, see “Conditional Cursing,” ch. 4 in Kitz, *Cursed Are You!*, 96–133, and Gerhard Ries, “Altbabylonische Beweisurteile,” *ZSS* 106 (1989): 56–80.

⁹⁶⁹ Wells, “Death in the Garden of Eden,” 649–50.

⁹⁷⁰ Wells uses the example of Shimei, who is executed shortly after his infraction (2 Kgs 2:36–46) but gives no other examples showing the length of time between sentencing and the carrying out of the sentence (*ibid.*, 650).

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

which the death sentence would have to be fulfilled.⁹⁷² Num 26:65 describes Yhwh’s punishment on the wilderness generation using the same grammatical construction of מוֹת in the infinitive absolute followed by מוֹת in the imperfect, saying, “they will die in the wilderness” (מוֹת יָמָתוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר). In this situation, the punishment began right away (wandering in the wilderness and being prevented from entering into the desired land), but the death of each individual in the group only occurred over a period of forty years (Num 26:65).

Likewise, the timing of the consequences on Abimelek, and, in particular, his family, if he fails to return Sarah to Abraham in Gen 20:1–18 is also not entirely straightforward. Like Gen 2:17, God gives a seemingly straightforward conditional verdict: “if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all that are yours” (Gen 20:7). The conclusion of the passage makes it clear that the effects of the threatened consequences have already begun: Abimelek himself has fallen ill, and all the women in his household are unable to bear children (whether this is a consequence of failure to conceive, miscarriage, stillbirth, or all of the above is not made clear) (Gen 20:17). The situation regarding the women in his household is particularly intriguing because it does not appear to match with the stated punishment: according to v. 7, “all” who belong to Abimelek would die along with him. However, rather than the women in his household becoming ill like Abimelek, they become infertile. In other words, it appears that the “death” of “all” who belong to Abimelek in v. 7 refers *metaphorically* to the discontinuation of Abimelek’s line as a result of infertility. The “death,” then, would be a slow process by which all of the living members of Abimelek’s family die off, and no new children are born. Although some other occurrences of the collocation מוֹת (infinitive absolute) + מוֹת (imperfect) describe the death of the sentenced

⁹⁷² Occurrences of the collocation מוֹת (qal infinitive absolute) + מוֹת (qal imperfect) occur in Gen 20:7; Num 26:65; Judg 13:22; 1 Sam 14:39; 1 Sam 14:44; 1 Sam 22:16; 2 Sam 12:14; 2 Sam 14:14; 1 Kgs 2:37; 1 Kgs 2:42; 2 Kgs 1:4; 2 Kgs 1:6; 2 Kgs 1:16; 2 Kgs 8:10; Jer 26:8; Ezek 3:18; Ezek 33:8; Ezek 33:14. The statements in the examples that follow are not all in the form of a conditional verdict, but they will nevertheless be considered relevant because they all express a sentence of death using the same collocation as occurs in Gen 2:17.

person soon after the sentencing (1 Sam 22:16; 2 Sam 12:14; 1 Kgs 2:37, 42; 2 Kgs 1:4, 6, 16; 2 Kgs 8:10), Num 26:65 and Gen 20:7 suggest that this does not happen without exception. It can be concluded, then, that the “death” spoken of in the collocation מוֹת (infinitive absolute) + מוֹת (imperfect) can be flexible in the timing of its occurrence.

A second important point is that the specifics of the “death” envisioned by the collocation מוֹת (*qal* infinitive absolute) + מוֹת (*qal* imperfect) are of various types. There are some situations of a more “classic” death penalty. For example, after assisting David, the priest Ahimelech and all his family are executed on Saul’s orders (1 Sam 22:16). In this case, the phrase “you will surely die” (מוֹת תָּמוּת) refers to execution, and the sentence is immediately carried out. Similarly, Shimei is told “you will surely die” and is speedily executed after disobeying Solomon’s order to remain in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 2:37). Saul’s declaration that anyone who eats before the battle will die clearly has execution as its intended outcome (1 Sam 14:24). Though not involving execution per se, Elisha says that the King of Aram “will surely die” and he is murdered the very next day (2 Kgs 8:10).

However, the “death” spoken of in the collocation מוֹת (*qal* infinitive absolute) + מוֹת (*qal* imperfect) can also take other forms. King Ahaziah is told that he will surely die, but he is not executed; rather, he dies from an injury that happened before the “sentence of death” was ever pronounced (2 Kgs 1:4). As noted above, in Gen 20:7, God says that Abimelek and all that belong to him will die if he does not return Sarah. There was an immediate consequence of illness for Abimelek (Gen 20:17), which suggests that the “death” spoken of in Gen 20:7 would not have been a sudden execution for Abimelek, but *eventual* death, brought upon by disease. As also discussed above, in terms of the death of his family, it does not seem to have referred to their literal death but rather to an end to any increase of his descendants — in other words, it was a threat to the enduring of his name and his line after his death. Again, in Num 26:65, the death is not sudden execution, but a long, miserable

process as each member of the generation slowly passes away over the next forty years, either from natural causes or as a result of the various dangers and hardships inherent to living in the wilderness.

It is suggested on the basis of the data above that the death sentence in Gen 2:17 could refer to a coming experience of misfortune in a broader sense than merely immediate execution. First, the time frame in which the death could occur is flexible: it could happen suddenly or over a long period. Secondly, the type of death predicted by the phrase varies and includes a range of punishments, including such events as immediate (or at least speedy) execution/murder (1 Sam 14:39; 22:16; 1 Kgs 2:37, 42; 2 Kgs 8:10; Jer 26:8), sickness/injury leading to death (Gen 20:7; 2 Sam 12:14; 2 Kgs 1:4, 6, 16), death resulting from an inhospitable environment (Num 26:65), and the metaphorical death of one's line as a result of infertility (Gen 20:7).

4.5.1.1.1.3. Commutation of the Sentence? A further important point is that analysis of the occurrences of מוֹת (*qal* infinitive absolute) + מוֹת (*qal* imperfect) clarifies that when the sentence is given, at least in certain situations, there is the possibility of it being commuted. David fasts and prays to spare his child's life after the death sentence is passed (2 Sam 12:14, 16–17), showing that he viewed it as possible to change the outcome of the sentence. The priests and prophets and all the people tell Jeremiah, “You shall die!” (Jer 26:8), but he is tried and ultimately acquitted (26:16). Jonathan is “ransomed” (פָּרָה) by Saul's troops (1 Sam 14:45), even though (based on Saul's earlier declaration) he should have been killed (14:39). This raises the question, is it possible that God commuted the sentence in Gen 2:17 without informing the humans (or the readers of the story)?⁹⁷³

⁹⁷³ Wells suggests that certain texts outside the Hebrew Bible describe changes to prescribed punishments: “Several texts record what appear to be follow-up hearings on such matters, while others demonstrate that authorities were willing to reduce the severity of the penalty or do away with it altogether if they believed that circumstances warranted such an action” (Wells, “Death in the Garden,” 648). Two texts that he cites, AnOr 8 79 and BIN 1 113 describe situations in which there was no standard penalty set (for an

A consideration of situations in which a sentence is commuted in the Hebrew Bible reveals that the sentence is typically changed following repentance by the one who was sentenced (in cases in which an offense against Yhwh has been committed).⁹⁷⁴ Ezekiel is explicit about this:

Again, though I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die,” yet if they turn from their sin and do what is lawful and right — if the wicked restore the pledge, give back what they have taken by robbery, and walk in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity — they shall surely live, they shall not die. None of the sins that they have committed shall be remembered against them; they have done what is lawful and right, they shall surely live. (Ezek 33:14; cf. Ezek 3:18; 33:8)

Although he is unsuccessful, David’s attempt to reverse the death sentence on his child also involves repentance — he fasts and prays with such intensity that his staff becomes concerned for him (2 Sam 12:16–18). Although not involving the specific collocation מוֹת (*qal* infinitive absolute) + מוֹת (*qal* imperfect), the events of the book of Jonah are another good example. Jonah announces Yahweh’s sentence on the city of Nineveh: “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (עוד ארבעים יום ונינוה נהפכת) (Jonah 3:4). The sentence is never carried out, *specifically* as a result of the Ninevites’ repentance (Jonah 3:5–10). These examples speak against the idea that the sentence given in Gen 2:18 would have been changed without any explicit repentance on the part of the humans.⁹⁷⁵

administrative offense), so hearings were required so that a proper penalty could be assessed (see Magdalene, Wunsch, and Wells, *Fault, Responsibility, and Administrative Law*, 148). In the situation described in YOS 6 225 (see Magdalene, Wunsch, and Wells, *Fault, Responsibility, and Administrative Law*, 148), no penalty is assessed because the defendant is able to offer a suitable defense for his behavior. Although these involve conditional verdicts like Gen 2:17, the circumstances described are quite different. For these administrative offenses, there was no standard penalty, and further details/evidence were needed to establish the right penalty. In the case of Gen 2:17, a specific penalty was already set, and there was little chance of the penalty being changed after the fact, considering the humans are explicitly described as committing the forbidden action. See further discussion below about the importance of repentance in the changing of a death sentence in the Hebrew Bible.

⁹⁷⁴ One other situation in which a sentence might be commuted is when new information comes to light, as in the case of Jeremiah. Here, repentance is not needed on the part of the one condemned, but rather the fact of his innocence is made clear to the officials responsible for determining his fate (Jer 26:12–16).

⁹⁷⁵ There is also no new information given that would suggest that the humans are innocent (as in the case of Jeremiah).

4.5.1.1.1.4. Connection to Cursing. A final observation is that there is sometimes a connection between the giving of a death sentence and the action of cursing.⁹⁷⁶ 1 Samuel makes this connection explicit. In 1 Sam 14:24, Saul says, “*Cursed* (ארור) be anyone who eats food before it is evening and I have been avenged on my enemies,” and then, referring to the same event in v. 39, he says, “As Yhwh lives who saves Israel, even if [the sin] is in my son Jonathan, *he shall surely die* (ימות מות)!” This suggests that when Saul says that the one who eats will be “cursed,” he means that they will be sentenced to death (מות ימות). The possible association between cursing and a death sentence is very significant for the PN, where the result of the humans’ action is a series of consequences that includes two curses (one on the snake [Gen 3:14] and one on the ground [3:17]). These curses, as well as the other consequences in the broader context of these curses, will be considered more closely below. Ultimately, it will be argued that these curses (on the snake and the ground) and the associated consequences (on the man and the woman) are the fulfillment of the sentence, “you will surely die” (תמות מות [2:17]). Although the consequences do not describe execution, they describe a severely diminished form of life that, in the context of explicit curses and consequences typical of cursing, would have been understood to lead inescapably to an endpoint of death.

This connection to cursing warrants further examination of the context of statements using the verb ארר (Gen 3:14, 17; 4:11), as this could shed further light on the outcome of the death sentence in 2:17.⁹⁷⁷ Not every ארר curse explicitly announces the death of the one who is cursed.⁹⁷⁸ It is often used to describe one’s status in comparison to another entity. In Gen

⁹⁷⁶ Disease and infertility, as found in the account of Abimelek (Gen 20:1–18), for example, are consequences that are also associated with a person being cursed, as will be further explored below.

⁹⁷⁷ The verb ארר, which occurs here and in Gen 3:17, occurs 63 times in the Hebrew Bible, and, in the *qal* stem, it can be defined as “to bind with a curse” (*HALOT* 1:91). For more description of what it means to be “cursed,” see *TLOT* 1:180.

⁹⁷⁸ Although it will be argued below that all curses *implicitly* lead the cursed one towards death (see Anne Marie Kitz, “Curses and Cursing in the Ancient Near East,” *Religion Compass* 1 [2007]: 619).

9:25, Canaan is cursed (אָרר) by becoming the “lowest of slaves...to his brothers.” In Gen 49:7, the anger/wrath of Simeon and Levi is cursed, with the result that they will be “divided” (חלק) and “scattered” (פּוּץ) in Jacob/Israel, implying loss of status, likely through the dissipation of their tribe among the other tribes.⁹⁷⁹ The covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28 include the statement, “Aliens residing among you shall ascend above you higher and higher, while you shall descend lower and lower. They shall lend to you but you shall not lend to them; they shall be the head and you shall be the tail” (v. 43–44). As a result of their deception of the Israelites, the Gibeonites are told, “Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall always be slaves, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God” (Josh 9:23). In other words, they are destined to a lowered social status. To be “cursed,” then, does not speak of individual misfortune in isolation but rather in connection to one’s social position (see also 4.5.1.1.2 and 4.5.1.2 and n. 1013 below).⁹⁸⁰ In the case of the snake in the PN, this is further confirmed by the stark contrast between its new “cursed” status and the initial description of it, which distinguished it from the other animals on account of its “cleverness” (ערום [Gen 3:1]). Now, what distinguishes it is no longer its cleverness but its “cursed-ness” (אָררוּר). The consequences of its action have changed the nature of its relationship with other creatures.

In addition to impacting social position, being “cursed” also affects one’s relationship with deity. Cursing results in the removal of protection from deity, leaving one vulnerable to enemies. For example, Jer 11:3, 11 states, “Cursed be anyone who does not heed the words of this covenant...Therefore, thus says the LORD, assuredly I am going to bring disaster upon

⁹⁷⁹ See Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), “The Last Days of Jacob and Joseph (48:1–50:26),” EPUB, Perlego.

⁹⁸⁰ This concept also works in the other direction for the opposite of אָרר, the verb בָּרַךְ (“to bless”). Statements of blessing often describe the privileged position of the blessed one in comparison to others. For example, in the blessing that Isaac gives to Jacob (thinking he is his firstborn Esau), he says, “Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you” (Gen 27:29). Cf. *TLOT* 1:180.

them that they cannot escape; though they cry out to me, I will not listen to them.” Cursing implies that God is no longer responsive to them (see further below regarding Cain [4.5.1.2]). In many cases, the removal of the deity’s protection is paired not merely with unresponsiveness or indifference but outright hostility: “And just as the LORD took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so the LORD will take delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess” (Deut 28:63).⁹⁸¹ These aspects of cursing will be considered below in relation to the man, the woman, and Cain.

Thirdly, cursing can have an impact on one’s relationship to the natural world. This could, for example, involve removal from productive land and exile in an inhospitable environment. A description in Jeremiah of those who are cursed typifies this impact of cursing: “Thus says the LORD: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the LORD. They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land” (Jer 17:5–6). Another example comes from Deuteronomy:

You shall carry much seed into the field but shall gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off . . . All your trees and the fruit of your ground the cicada shall take over. (Deut 28:38–40, 42)

These curses in Deuteronomy clearly describe the impact of curses on the productivity of the natural world.

These observations suggest that cursing affects one’s position within an interconnected network, including society, deity, and the natural world. To be cursed is to

⁹⁸¹ See also Jer 20:15–16.

find oneself in a subservient, estranged, or damaged relationship with these entities. This relates to the fact that cursing is fundamentally associated with separation — the cursed one is separated out in some way from a category (or categories) of which he/she/it was formerly included.⁹⁸² One who is cursed is distinguished in a negative way, damaging or breaking the ties connecting him/her/it to the ordered world.

Importantly for considering the death threat in the PN, Anne Marie Kitz argues that the ultimate goal of the separation accomplished by cursing was death. Although cursing appears in various contexts and forms, she suggests, “In the end, the ultimate goal of all curses is separation from life. This can be achieved through varying degrees of intensity: (i) a hard, arduous existence; (ii) premature death; and (iii) extinction.”⁹⁸³ She relates the statements in Gen 3:16–19 to the type of curse that involves “a hard, arduous existence” leading to death: “The aim of these kinds of curses is the cumulative effect of the malediction’s many injuries. They seek to erode a person’s confidence so as to eventually overwhelm and diminish any hope in life. While the person may not die immediately, his path on the way to death is paved with extreme hardship and tribulation.”⁹⁸⁴ In other words, although the person is not immediately executed, the assumption would be that the long-term effect of *the series of consequences* listed would be death.⁹⁸⁵ A further look at the series of

⁹⁸² See “Curses and Cursing,” 619.

⁹⁸³ Ibid., 620.

⁹⁸⁴ Kitz, “Curses and Cursing in the Ancient Near East,” 620. Another example of this kind of cursing in the Hebrew Bible is 2 Sam 3:29. From other ancient Near Eastern texts, a similar kind of curse is found in Esarhaddon’s succession treaty (“May Anu, king of the gods, let disease, exhaustion, malaria, sleeplessness, worries and ill health rain upon all your homes” [Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, 45, line 418a]).

⁹⁸⁵ In other words, it is the cumulative effect of a list of curses that is significant: “Even though each affliction has its own set of repercussions, the harm envisioned here is not really their individual consequences. It is rather the overwhelming, cumulative effect of all their ailments together. In the end, it doesn’t really matter if the adversities occur sequentially or all at once, for there is only one possible conclusion to such a relentless onslaught of calamities: death” (Kitz, *Cursed Are You!*, 200). She later states, however, regarding curses leading to “a difficult life” (ibid., 201) that “an unspoken turn of fortune is always possible with these maledictions, and none describe a condition of life that is utterly irretrievable to the point of death. This quality makes their injury the least destructive of all the types of curses. See also Ps 109:11” (ibid., 203 n. 13).

consequences on the snake, the woman, and the man will demonstrate that the concept of cursing resulting in death clarifies the purpose of the consequences placed upon each of the characters. It will be suggested that Gen 3:14–19 describe consequences with an *implied endpoint of physical death* for the snake, the man, and the woman (despite the fact that only the snake is explicitly cursed). Mortality is left unclarified at the beginning of the PN, as the tree of life leaves the possibility of immortality open,⁹⁸⁶ but once the humans have obtained the knowledge of good and bad their mortality is confirmed. The curses and consequences in 3:14–19 express this new reality in which death is unescapable, thereby affirming that the consequence laid out in 2:17 was actually performed.⁹⁸⁷ Below, it will be explained in what way the curses/consequences in 3:14–19 are in accord with the language of cursing and how they lead to an implied endpoint of death.

4.5.1.1.2. Analysis of the Curses/Consequences in the Paradise Narrative

In order to support this proposition regarding the fulfillment of the “death” spoken of in Gen 2:17, a closer look at the specifics of the consequences described in 3:14–19 is necessary. The two curses involved will be considered, especially in light of the connection (noted above) between cursing and the death sentence described by מוֹת (qal infinitive absolute) + מוֹת (qal imperfect). In addition, the series of consequences named for the three characters involved in the action of eating the fruit (the snake, the woman, and the man) will each be addressed separately. The implications of the lack of an explicit curse on the man and the woman will be considered, as well as the implications of the fact that the “non-curse” consequences are precisely the type of consequences that would be expected from an explicit curse.

⁹⁸⁶ Cf. Schmid, “Die Unteilbarkeit,” 21–39.

⁹⁸⁷ To be clear, the argument is not that all curses ultimately cause death but that the *intended* endpoint is death. If, for any number of reasons, the curse is later commuted or changed, this does not change the fact that the intended endpoint of the original curse was death.

4.5.1.1.2.1. The Snake. God speaks to the snake first. On the basis of its deception of the woman (Gen 3:13; see 3.4.2.1.3), the snake is “cursed (אררוך)...from among all animals and among all wild creatures” (3:14). The understanding of cursing discussed above (4.5.1.1.1.4) brings further clarity to the intention of this curse on the snake. In being cursed, the snake is separated out, or distinguished, in a particular way “from” (מן) other animals. There are various options for how to understand this phrase grammatically,⁹⁸⁸ but the point is that the snake is *negatively distinguished* from the other creatures.⁹⁸⁹ The snake is marked out by its lack of legs and is very literally “lowered” in terms of its social status among the other animals by being forced to move on its belly. Significantly, it is also described as “eating dust”: this refers to its position on the ground but also associates the consequence on the serpent with death, for, as noted above, in ancient Near Eastern literature, it was the dead who ate dust.⁹⁹⁰ This description of the serpent eating dust supports the conception that curses are intended to bring death, in one form or another, upon their recipients.

In addition to the separation between animals, there is also a new separation between animals and humans, which is dramatized in v. 15 by the description of an ongoing conflict between the snake and the woman, as well as between their offspring. This may refer beyond just the snake and the woman to a continuing conflict between the human and animal world in general (see 3.3.3.2.4.3 above and n. 509). Again, the result of cursing is separation, which, in this case, results in an ongoing conflict between these two groups.

The curse on the snake also serves an etiological function: it both explains the snake’s unusual manner of moving and gives a reason for the disharmony between humans and

⁹⁸⁸ See discussion of the translation of מן in Gen 4:11 above (n. 879 and 891). The superlative is also an option in Gen 3:14, as the מן is followed by כל (*IBHS* §14.5d).

⁹⁸⁹ Cf. Kitz, *Cursed Are You!*, 238–39. See also, Hebert Chanan Brichto, *The Problem of ‘Curse’ in the Hebrew Bible*, Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series XIII (Philadelphia, PA: Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1963), 83–4.

⁹⁹⁰ On dust as the food of the dead and a symbol of mortality, see 3.4.4.2.

snakes/animals. In this sense, it is an attempt to make sense of what appears to be “unnatural” or what does not fit as part of the ordered whole. By framing it within the curses/consequences that result from the humans’ action, these issues are suggested to be caused by human action rather than fate or an arbitrary determination by deity (see 3.3.3.2.5 above). This fits the primeval character of the account, which is a form that often includes etiological elements as it seeks to explain present conditions through stories of the past.⁹⁹¹

Overall, then, the curse on the snake conforms to other instances of cursing in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East in the sense that it describes the snake’s separation from a group. As regards act and consequence, a kind of “death” (“eating dust”) is conferred upon the snake. The following sections will consider whether the consequences on the woman and the man support similar conclusions.⁹⁹²

4.5.1.1.2.2. The Woman. The next statement of consequences is directed at the woman. Notably, no “cursing” is mentioned. However, the increase of pain in childbirth is stated specifically with God as the agent of the increase (the verb רבה, with God as the subject), so there is no question of whether God truly provides a consequence for the woman’s action. Furthermore, the consequence itself, which negatively impacts the woman’s fertility and the opportunity to produce progeny (see 3.3.3.2.4.3), is similar to many curses both in the Hebrew Bible and in the ancient Near East in general, which also affect the cursed

⁹⁹¹ Kvanvig explains in the introduction to his examination of primeval histories, “[the authors of these accounts] were eager to dig into the past to see whether there were signs left that could enable them to interpret the present and the future. This eagerness led them also to enter the ultimate past, the primeval time. ... This was the time when the gods, or God, according to the myths of origin, created the foundations of the cosmos and human life. ... When humans are placed into the very beginning of the cosmos, not only as recipients of the acts of gods, but as actors themselves, the understanding of the cosmos is changed. The divine and the human world intersect and humans become actively involved in their own fate. How they behave has consequences for the creation” (*Primeval History*, 1, 2).

⁹⁹² It can also be noted that God is the agent of the consequences — the first-person verb אֲשִׁית (“I will put”) (v. 15) makes Yahweh God’s role clear. On the other hand, note that the passive form of the verb עָרַר may be used in order to place a respectful distance between Yahweh and the specific act of cursing (as argued in Karolien Vermeulen, “The Art of Blessing and Cursing in Genesis 1–11,” in *Doubling and Duplicating in the Book of Genesis: Literary and Stylistic Approaches to the Text*, ed. Elizabeth R. Hayes and Karolien Vermuelen [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016], 119, 127).

one's progeny, either through impacting fertility or through a direct assault on the cursed one's children.⁹⁹³ One example is the Hittite Text, "The First Soldier's Oath," which states, "just as salt does not (produce) its seed, for that man, may his name, his progeny, his household, his cattle, and his sheep perish in the same way."⁹⁹⁴ Threat to fertility and progeny also appears prominently on many *kudurru* (boundary stones) inscriptions, which curse those who violate the property boundaries described on the stele. The following statements provide a representative sample of statements related to fertility and progeny that are found in the curses within these inscriptions:⁹⁹⁵

- "...his seed may they snatch away."⁹⁹⁶
- "... may they not let him, nor his name, nor his seed endure..."⁹⁹⁷
- "His seed may they snatch away!"⁹⁹⁸
- "May Ninib, the king of heaven and earth, and Gula, the bride of Esharra, destroy his boundary-stone and obliterate his seed!"⁹⁹⁹
- "...as long as heaven and earth remain may his seed perish!"¹⁰⁰⁰
- "His name, his seed, his offspring, (and) his posterity may they destroy in the mouth of wide-spread peoples!"¹⁰⁰¹

⁹⁹³ Kitz notes, "Fertility curses occur frequently throughout the ancient Near East and are a staple feature of Hittite and Akkadian treaties" (*Cursed Are You!*, 142).

⁹⁹⁴ Trans. Bille Jean Collins, *COS* 1.66:166. A similar curse occurs in a Hittite treaty: "Then may these Thousand Gods eradicate your person, together with your wife, your sons, your land, your house, your threshing floor, your orchard, your fields, your oxen, your sheep and all your possessions" (Gary M. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 2nd ed., SBLWAW 7 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008], 112, §9).

⁹⁹⁵ In the following statements, the ones requested to accomplish the cursing include a wide variety of different deities.

⁹⁹⁶ L. W. King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones and Memorial Tablets in the British Museum* (London: The British Museum, 1912), 6, from "Kudurru Rubbed Down and Re-Used in the Time of Kurigalzu," no. 102588, plates 2–5 and CVII, face B, lines 9–17.

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23, from "Kudurru of the Time of Meli-Shipak," no. 90829, plates XXIII–XXX, lines 5–11.

⁹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28, from "Kudurru of the Time of Marduk-Aplu-Iddina I," no. 90850, plates XXXI–XLII, 33–44.

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35, from "Stele in the Form of a Kudurru Inscribed with a Charter of the Time of Nebuchadnezzar I," no. 90858, plates LXXXIII–XCI, lines 37–40.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 36, from "Stele in the Form of a Kudurru Inscribed with a Charter of the Time of Nebuchadnezzar I," no. 90858, plates LXXXIII–XCI, lines 59–60.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 42, from "Kudurru of the Time of Marduk-Nadin-Akhê," no. 90841, plates LIII–LXVI, col. II, lines 38–39.

- "...may they tear away his offspring, may they carry off his descendants!"¹⁰⁰²
- "May Ninib, the lord of boundary-stones, tear out his boundary-stone, and his name, his seed, his offspring, and his progeny from the mouth of men, may he destroy, and may he let him have no son nor pourer of water."¹⁰⁰³
- "...may they destroy his [post]erity!"¹⁰⁰⁴
- "...his name and his seed may he cause to disappear!"¹⁰⁰⁵
- "...may his name perish, may his seed be destroyed"¹⁰⁰⁶

Another similar example comes from the Aramaic treaty I of Sēfire: "May the gods overturn th[at m]an and his house and all that (is) in it; and may they make its lower part its upper part! May his scio[n] not inherit a name!"¹⁰⁰⁷ The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon describe the violent death of the cursed one's children: "Just as young sheep and ewes and male and female spring lambs are slit open and their entrails roll down over their feet, so may the entrails of your sons and daughters roll down over your feet."¹⁰⁰⁸ A final example comes from the Treaty between Suppiluliuma I of Hatti and Shattiwaza of Mittanni, which states to that the violator of the treaty, "[you,] together with your wives, your sons, and your land, shall thus have no progeny."¹⁰⁰⁹

In the Hebrew Bible, this manner of consequence appears, as was already discussed, in the conditional curse on Abimelek and his family (Gen 20:7, 17; see 4.5.1.1.1.2). Various

¹⁰⁰² Ibid., 46, from "Kudurru of the Time of Marduk-Nadin-Akhê, no. 90840; plates XLIII–LII, col. III, lines 26–30.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid., 62, from "Kudurru of the Time of Nabû-Mukîn-Apli," no. 90835; plates LXVII–LXXIX, col. II, lines 14–19.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid., 108, from "Stone Tablet Engraved with a Deed Probably of the Time of Nabû-Aplu-Iddina," no. 90936; plates CIV and CV, column II, lines 13–15.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibid., 116, from "Commemorative Stele in the Form of a Kudurru," no. 90834; plate XCII, lines 17–18.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid., 127, from "Stone Tablet Engraved with the Record of Nabû-Aplu-Iddina's Re-Endowment of the Sun-Temple at Sippar," nos. 91000–91002 and 91004, plates XCIII–CII, col. VI, lines 50–51.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, "The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire I and II," *JAOS* 81 (1961): 183–84; 187, face C, section IX.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, 52, line 554.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 48, §15.

negative impacts on descendants are also found in the covenant curses, where it is described how the children of the ones who violate the covenant will be taken away or even grotesquely eaten by their own parents (Deut 28:32, 41, 53–57).¹⁰¹⁰ One can also look to Psa 109:13 (“May his posterity be cut off; may his name be blotted out in the second generation”) and Isa 14:20b–21a (“May the descendants of evildoers nevermore be named! Prepare slaughter for his sons because of the guilt of their father”).¹⁰¹¹ These examples demonstrate that loss of descendants (or loss of the opportunity to bear descendants) who would carry on one’s “name” is a common feature of curses in ancient Near Eastern literature.

This has important implications for understanding the consequences on the woman. Although it is not directly stated that the woman is cursed, she experiences consequences typical of cursing when she is told that she will experience difficulty in the process of having children (Gen 3:16). This does not mean that she is cursed: the author’s avoidance of the term ארר suggests he is careful to avoid this implication. Nevertheless, her new reality will be one accompanied by the trauma brought on by infertility, miscarriage, stillbirth, labor pain, maternal mortality, and other childbearing complications.¹⁰¹² The experience of producing life is now tainted by death. In this sense, the sentence of death is fulfilled, and the fact that the consequences on the woman are similar to the consequences for one who is cursed (and implicitly led towards death) highlights this point.

Furthermore, this negative impact on the woman’s fertility is connected to death in another way, for there is a “death” that results from being unable to have descendants or having one’s descendants killed or taken away. The nonexistence/loss of descendants imbued

¹⁰¹⁰ Note also the experience of Job, who arguably experiences misfortunes that mirror some of the covenant curses and whose children are all killed as the climax of a series of dramatic losses (Job 1:18–19). See, e.g., Walton, *Job*, NIVAC, “Devastation of Job (1:13–22).”

¹⁰¹¹ Josh 6:26 provides another example: “Joshua then pronounced this oath, saying, ‘Cursed before Yhwh be anyone who tries to build this city—this Jericho! At the cost of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates!’”

¹⁰¹² See Curley and Peterson, “Eve’s Curse Revisited,” 157–72.

a finality to the end of a person's life: in the absence of the expectation of eschatological reward, children represented one of the main opportunities for a person to "live on," so to speak, after death. In Genesis 3, the complications added to the process of bearing children work with the other consequences to emphasize the uncertainty of establishing an ongoing lineage and the inescapable finality of death. These experiences play a role in fulfilling the sentence of death for eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad (Gen 2:17).

In addition to the impact on fertility, the woman also experiences consequences in connection to her relationship with the man (Gen 3:16). As discussed above (3.3.3.2.4.3), instead of working in cooperation with one another, now the man and the woman will make choices based on their own understanding of what is good and bad. As with the conflict between the woman and the snake in 3:15, this conflict is rooted in separation. No longer co-workers, the woman and man will be negatively distinguished from one another by means of an unequal power dynamic, with the man ruling over the woman (see 3.3.3.2.4.3). The woman also loses her former role as the "helper" (עֲזָרָה) of the man; the loss of one's previous social role is also an element of many curses.¹⁰¹³

Once again, an etiological element is crucial to these consequences, for they provide an explanation for the existence of certain "unordered" and unavoidable elements of life. Limits on fertility frequently appear in the ancestral narratives and represent a distressing situation for the ones involved (e.g., Gen 11:30; 25:21; 29:31). These concerns are also evident in the epic of Atrahasis (see n. 521). Understanding this as a result of the humans' choice to obtain the knowledge of good and bad gives a reason for what appears

¹⁰¹³ Kitz gives many examples of curses resulting in a change in social position, including curses from Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, and Hebrew texts (*Cursed Are You!*, 233–38). For example, a treaty of the Hittite king Suppiluliuma I (ca. 1350) states, "May these deities, the lords of the (oath's) conditional curse, give you the life of a commoner and a tenant farmer" (translation by Kitz, *Cursed Are You!*, 234, based on the autograph copy in H. H. Figulla, *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*, vol. 1, WVDOG 30/1 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1921], plate 8, tablet 1, lines 63–64a).

unreasonable. Gen 3:16b also provides an etiology for the situation of male dominance as well as conflict within marriage.

In summary, although the woman is not cursed, the consequences named for her describe experiences that were noted above as characteristic for one who is cursed: decreased fertility, relational separation, and the loss of her former social role. These outcomes have clear etiological functions, for they are an attempt to explain the state of the world (in the author's time).¹⁰¹⁴ In their similarity to the consequences of curses, they also serve to reaffirm the reality of death and the enactment of the death threat, for they are experiences that were assumed to lead towards an endpoint of death. This continues to confirm that the PN assumes a strong correlation between act and consequence. Further support for these conclusions will be demonstrated through an examination of the consequences on the man.

4.5.1.1.2.3. The Man. In similarity to the woman, the man is not cursed directly; rather, the ground is cursed (Gen 3:17–19). This is an example of curses affecting one's relationship to the natural world (4.5.1.1.4). In a sense, this is analogous to the consequence limiting the woman's fertility, for the negative impact on the ground also represents a limit on fertility. The concept of futile toil and inability to produce food is another negative consequence that is associated with curses. For example, the Aramaic treaty I of Šēfire states, "For seven years may the locust feed (on Arpad) and for seven years may the worm eat and for seven [years may] TWY come up upon the face of its land! May the grass not come forth so that no green may be seen, nor may [be seen its] vegetation!"¹⁰¹⁵ Another Akkadian example comes from the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon: "May Adad, the canal inspector of heaven and earth, cut off flooding from your land. May he deprive your fields [of water]."

¹⁰¹⁴ The author's reasoning for not including a direct curse on the man and the woman is not clear, but perhaps it is significant that a direct curse on the man and woman would presumably bring their descendants under this curse as well, making it impossible to preserve a distinction between a "righteous" line (i.e., Seth's) in contrast to the cursed line of Cain (see also 4.4).

¹⁰¹⁵ Fitzmeyer, "Aramaic Inscriptions," 185, from stele I, face A, section III, lines 27–29a.

May he [drench] your land in a powerful downpour. May the locust who deplete the land devour your harvest; may there be no sound of the mill stone or oven in your houses. May the grain for grinding disappear from you.”¹⁰¹⁶ In the Hebrew Bible, a negative impact on plant/crop production appears within the covenant curses:

You shall carry much seed into the field but shall gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off ... All your trees and the fruit of your ground the cicada shall take over. (Deut 28:38–40, 42).¹⁰¹⁷

This struggle to produce what is necessary for life from the ground is comparable to the curse on the ground described in Gen 3:17–19 and aligns the man’s experience with those who are cursed.

Again, the cumulative effect is most important: the life of physical and mental anguish described for the man leads to the natural conclusion of death. This is made explicit 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.” Although describing the natural return of the made-from-dust humans back to their source, the placement of this statement *within* the statements of consequences and, more importantly, *as their explicit conclusion*, casts the man’s return to dust not as the course of events that would have happened regardless of whether they ate the fruit or not, *but as one of the outcomes* of their action of eating the

¹⁰¹⁶ Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, 46, lines 440–44. The curses impacting the fertility of the earth continue in a similar manner: “May they make your ground like iron (so that) nothing can sprout from it. Just as rain does not fall from a brazen heaven so may rain and dew not come upon your fields and your meadows; instead of dew may burning coals rain on your land. May your streams and your springs make their waters flow backwards. (Ditto, ditto;) may they cause locusts, ..., may lice, caterpillars and other field pests devour your towns, your land and your district” (ibid., 45–49, 51–52, 55, 58]).

See also the Laws of Hammurapi, lines xlix.18–li.9: “O May the god Adad, lord of abundance, the canal-inspector of heaven and earth, my helper, deprive him of the benefits of rain from heaven and flood from the springs, and may he obliterate his land through destitution and famine; may he roar fiercely over his city, and may he turn his land into the abandoned hills left by the Flood” (“The Laws of Hammurabi,” trans. Martha Roth, *COS* 2.131:352).

¹⁰¹⁷ Note also Deut 28:23: “And the heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. Yhwh will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed.”

fruit. This is actually quite logical considering what has been discussed regarding the nature of curses: the cumulative effect of a series of consequences is meant to lead to the inevitable end of death.¹⁰¹⁸ Therefore, the statement, “For dust you are and to dust you will return” should not be read as incongruent with its present context: this statement of impending death is the natural conclusion to which the entire series of consequence has been leading.

As with the snake and the woman, the consequences on the man are etiological: they provide an explanation for humanity’s difficulty in providing sustenance for themselves. The “cursed-ness” of the ground results in it operating in an out-of-order manner in which it does not offer up food easily. The outcome is an out-of-order relationship between man and the very source of his creation, the ground. Again, these consequences affirm that the death threat in Gen 2:17 actually occurred. The man, like the snake and the woman, is now destined to experience life under conditions that resemble the consequences of a curse. While prior to eating the fruit, the tree of life presented the opportunity for immortality, the consequences listed in Gen 3:14–19 (in particular, Yahweh God’s final statement to the man, “to dust you will return”) makes it clear that now the humans will be trapped in this death producing “flow” that will lead without exception to their demise. This suggests that the consequence laid out in Gen 2:17 occurred and that the connection between act and consequence is upheld by the PN.

4.5.1.1.2.4. The Expulsion. A last consequence that must be briefly considered in connection to the relationship between act and consequence is the expulsion of the man and woman from the garden (Gen 3:22–24), for this is also a consequence that is similar to the experience of one who is cursed. The concept of banishment (related to separation) is a feature found in other curses. An inscription on the statue of the Sumerian ruler Gudea reads, “May Innana the lady of the Lands cut-(off) from his (the offender’s) person the condition of

¹⁰¹⁸ Kitz, *Cursed Are You!*, 201.

his existence in the assembly.”¹⁰¹⁹ Other examples are found in the Akkadian *šaharsubbû* (or *Sîn*) curses, in which the person who was cursed becomes the victim of a skin ailment (*šaharsubbû*) that then requires their banishment.¹⁰²⁰ From the Hebrew Bible, a relevant example is Jer 17:5: “Thus says the LORD: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the LORD. They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.” Mal 2:2–3 is also relevant: “I will send the curse on you...I will put you out of my presence.” These examples demonstrate that the expulsion of the man and the woman from the garden is another element of the consequences that mirrors the results of cursing.

4.5.1.1.3. Conclusions on the Act-Consequence Connection in the Paradise Narrative

It is suggested, then, that the sentence of death in Gen 2:17 is fulfilled through the “death” described by the curses/consequences of 3:14–19. The serpent is cursed to a life of “eating dust,” associating the consequences on it with death. As noted above, the woman and the man are not directly cursed. However, the imposition of consequences that are in accord with the language of cursing elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible and in other ancient Near Eastern literature implies that these consequences, like a curse, lead one towards death. The fact that the passage culminates in a statement referring to the mortality of humans further supports this, for it demonstrates that the consequences build towards the inevitable outcome of death. The exile of the man and woman is also in accord with the consequences of cursing. Thus, the consequences experienced by the snake, the woman, and the man support the theory that they did experience the death predicted by Gen 2:17 when “death” is understood as the implicit endpoint of the cursing/consequences laid out in 3:14–19. If this conclusion is

¹⁰¹⁹ Translation from Kitz, *Cursed Are You!*, 233.

¹⁰²⁰ A similar situation of curse resulting in skin disease and banishment is found in Num 12:1–9; 2 Kgs 5; 2 Chr 26:19–21 (noted in *ibid.*, 236–37).

accepted, then it can be asserted that the PN supports a strong correlation between act and consequence.¹⁰²¹ Below, the FN's perspective on act and consequence will be considered to determine whether it is in accord with the perspective in the PN.

4.5.1.2. *Act and Consequence in the Fratricide Narrative*

Like the PN, the FN does not appear to engage in the debate on the efficacy of the connection between act and consequence but rather assumes that the connection is valid. Also, in accord with the PN, consequences that correspond to the committed action are meted out through the language of cursing. The similarities between the cursing in the two narratives begin with the statement, “cursed are you from...” (ארור אתה מן) in Gen 4:11, which is the same phrase used for the curse on the snake in Gen 3:14.¹⁰²² Yhwh states that Cain is cursed “from the ground” (Gen 4:12). As with many other statements of a curse (including the curses in the PN), the context further clarifies how to best understand the nature of the curse,¹⁰²³ and in this case clarifies that this is a reference to Cain's *separation* (or detachment [see the translation in 4.3.5 and n. 879 above]) from the ground and, by implication, his social group.¹⁰²⁴ Like the snake, which is negatively distinguished from other animals and humans, for Cain to be cursed “from the ground” marks him out in a negative sense in terms of his relationship to the ground. Rather than having a productive (or

¹⁰²¹ Even if the death sentence was commuted, it could be suggested that the act-consequence connection is supported, for it would be hard to argue that there are not very serious consequences for the humans' action.

¹⁰²² Regarding God's agency in the cursing, see n. 992. See also the discussion in Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 169–70. Note, above all, that Cain describes the punishment with Yhwh as the subject of the verbs (cf. *ibid.*, 170).

¹⁰²³ A few representative examples of curses that are clarified by their context include the following (the explanation for the curse is italicized): Gen 9:25 (“Cursed be Canaan; *lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers*”); 49:7 (“Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! *I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*”); Josh 6:26 (“Joshua then pronounced this oath, saying, ‘Cursed before Yhwh be anyone who tries to build this city—this Jericho! *At the cost of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates!*’”); 9:23 (“Now therefore you are cursed, and *some of you shall always be slaves, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.*”). See also Jer 11:3; 17:5; 20:14–16; Deuteronomy 27–28.

¹⁰²⁴ Kitz, *Cursed Are You!*, 215.

“ordered”) relationship in which he works the ground, and it provides a yield for him, the ground will no longer cooperate with him (“When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength” [Gen 4:12]).¹⁰²⁵ In addition to this (or possibly as a consequence of it¹⁰²⁶), Yhwh tells him that his life will no longer be one of settled agrarian life (“you will be a fleeing wanderer on the earth” [4:12b]). Thus, he also will be literally separated from the ground in the sense of being unable to permanently settle in any one spot. As discussed above, the concept of banishment/expulsion is prominent in cursing (see 4.5.1.1.2.4). As the man and the woman were expelled from an ordered life within the conditions established by Yahweh God in the garden, Cain is expelled from the land he once cultivated and from his social context. These circumstances (initially) suggest that he has lost all opportunity to participate in community life, build a family, and establish a name for himself that would extend beyond his own lifetime.

This understanding of the curse is evident in Cain’s response to Yhwh (Gen 4:13–14). He first restates the consequences already stated by Yhwh (“You have driven me from the ground” and “I will be a fleeing wanderer”), but then adds two more: “From your face I will be hidden” and “Anyone who finds me will kill me” (4:14; cf. 4:12). That Cain draws these conclusions from being cursed makes sense, for to be cursed was “to be deprived of God’s favor, blessing, and protection.”¹⁰²⁷ Those who were cursed could not expect responsiveness from Yhwh, as noted in Jeremiah: “Cursed be anyone who does not heed the words of this covenant...though they cry out to me, I will not listen to them (Jer 11:3, 11). The covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28 express a similar idea: to those who are cursed, Yhwh says, “there

¹⁰²⁵ The ground being polluted by the blood is an example of a curse causing a broken relationship with the natural world, as already noted in regards to Gen 3:17–19.

¹⁰²⁶ Grammatically, the phrase, “you will be a fleeing wanderer on the earth” (נע ונד תהיה בארץ), is not stated as a result of the first phrase, “When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength” כי תעבד (את-הָאָדָמָה) לא־תִסַּף תִּתְכַּחֵה לָךְ. Logically though, it seems that Cain’s inability to cultivate the ground would necessitate the life of a wanderer.

¹⁰²⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 229.

shall be no one to help you” (v. 29).¹⁰²⁸ As noted earlier, being hidden from God’s face also suggests vulnerability to enemies (see 4.3.6.2), so it is also understandable that Cain would pair the concept of being hidden from God’s face with being killed by his enemies (i.e., those wishing to avenge Abel’s death).¹⁰²⁹

The statement predicting that he will be killed by anyone he comes in contact with is grounded in the social impact of being cursed (Gen 4:14). According to the rules established by society, the bloodguilt that Cain has incurred demands a response. In this case, Yhwh acts as the avenger, providing an appropriate punishment for Cain’s transgression (see 4.3.5.2). This concurs with the argument of Assmann and Janowski that retribution is connected to social expectations.¹⁰³⁰ Cain’s total ostracization from society implies that he will be unable to be a part of a community and unable to achieve any sort of social status. It would probably also imply that he would be unable to marry and produce descendants, which would have been a fate on the order of death.

In Yhwh’s response (Gen 4:15) the original punishment is not removed: Cain is still removed from the ground and his settling in “Nod” seems to suggest that he must continue to “wander” in some sense (see n. 905 and 908). But Yhwh does deal with the additional issues that Cain brought up, and the fact that he addresses these issues suggests that Cain does not experience the full effects that would be expected for one who is cursed. First, regarding being hidden from Yhwh’s face, Yhwh’s responsiveness suggests that Cain is *not* ultimately

¹⁰²⁸ Examples can be found from outside the Hebrew Bible as well: “With a curse that cannot be loosed may they curse him! ... may he come to an end, and when to Shamash and Marduk he cries, may they not hear him!” (King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones*, 28 from “Kudurru of the Time of Marduk-Aplu-Iddina I,” no. 90850; plates XXXI–XLII, lines 33–44).

¹⁰²⁹ Regarding the loss of God’s protection, Walton explains, “To bless someone is to put that person under God’s protection, enjoying God’s favor. To curse is to remove from God’s protection and favor. ... One of the clearest examples is in David’s speech to Saul in 1 Sam 26:19. If men have incited Saul against David, David declares them ‘cursed’ (i.e., to be deprived of God’s favor, blessing, and protection) because they have deprived him of God’s favor (share in the Lord’s inheritance) and protection (his Presence), thereby sending him to other gods to find protection and favor” (*Genesis*, 229).

¹⁰³⁰ See 4.5.1.

hidden from his face. Yhwh is receptive to Cain's entreaties and even takes action on the basis of his concerns. This is not the typical reaction of Yhwh (or any deity) towards someone who is truly hidden from his face. Secondly, Cain's concern that he will be killed is addressed through the "banner" (see 4.3.7.2). The explicit protection of one who is "cursed" is very unusual and seems to be done here for the purposes of allowing Cain to rejoin human society to a certain extent — this is an "ordering" action that seeks to stem the tide of violence that threatens to overwhelm the created order, at least for this generation (see 4.3.7.2).

Despite these concessions on the part of Yhwh, the FN still upholds a strong correlation between act and consequence. As described above, Cain is given appropriate consequences for his actions (the original punishment is upheld; see 4.3.7.2), which, like the consequences in the PN, are administered in the context of cursing. Although Yahweh is portrayed as the agent of the judgment that falls on Cain (see also n. 992 and 1022 above), the nature of the judgment can also be connected to Janowski's description of act and consequence, in which the consequences of a particular action are connected to social expectations and the reaction of one's community to the action (see 4.5.1 above). Essentially, God's action in the FN embodies society's demand for vengeance in response to the taking of human life (i.e., bloodguilt [Gen 4:10]; see 4.3.5.2). This frames the retribution of God (i.e., the following curse in 4:11) as working in conjunction with the social consequences of human action, showing how closely the retributive action of God can be intertwined with other conceptions of how consequences occur.

It can be concluded, then, that the PN and FN uphold a strong connection between act and consequence. It is important that these narratives do not just uphold the act-consequence relationship, but they *assume* it to be true. The following section will assess whether this

perspective has similarities with what is found in the books considered to be wisdom literature: Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes.

4.5.1.3. Comparison to the Act-Consequence Connection in Wisdom Literature

The connection between act and consequence is an issue of importance in many of the works considered to be wisdom literature. Certain texts raise obvious challenges to the act-consequence connection.¹⁰³¹ The poetic section of the book of Job, for example, focuses heavily on this issue:¹⁰³² Job himself bases the arguments of his innocence on his expectation that this principle *should* hold true,¹⁰³³ but he argues that God has not acted according to this standard.¹⁰³⁴ His friends repeatedly contend that God's actions affirm the act-consequence connection and that God is just. Although their responses are not univocal, each one, in his own way, finds a way to affirm this principle in spite of the theological difficulty that the

¹⁰³¹ These texts epitomize the so-called *Krise der Weisheit* — a response to what was considered an overly mechanistic view of act and consequence, most notably found in the book of Proverbs (see, e.g., Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit: Eine Untersuchung zur altorientalischen und israelitischen Weisheitsliteratur* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1966], 74ff). This theory probably reads the perspective in Proverbs on act and consequence as more consistently mechanistic than it really is; see n. 1040 below.

¹⁰³² Analyzing this theme, or any theme, within the book of Job is made more difficult by the shifts in perspective and varying genres present in this work. The current prevailing view is that the poetic section existed first, and the narrative portion was added later, happening in a process that involved at least two stages (Urmas Nömmik, "Thinking of Water in the Book of Job: A Fluvial Introduction to the Job Literature," in *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christopher Levin, BZAW 461 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014], 283–84; cf. Wolf-Dieter Syring, *Hiob und Sein Anwalt: Die Prosatexte des Hiobbuches und ihre Rolle in seiner Redaktions- und Rezeptionsgeschichte*, BZAW 336 [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013], 168). The poetic section has a number of different redactional layers in and of itself (see Witte, *Vom Leiden zur Lehre*).

¹⁰³³ According to J.A. Loader, "Job clings to the doctrine of retribution. What he combats, is not the doctrine, but the application of it by God" ("Different Reactions of Job and Qoheleth to the Doctrine of Retribution," OTWSA 15 [1972]: 45).

¹⁰³⁴ This is shown by his contention that God acted unjustly by punishing him when no punishment was merited and by his request that God explains how he has sinned (Job 6:24). He asserts that if his "case" (יָדַי) was brought to court he *should* be vindicated (23:3–7). It should be noted that Job's position on act and consequence is not uniform: while he mounts challenges suggesting that the act-consequence connection does not always hold in Job 21 and 24:1–12 (see, e.g., 21:4 and 24:12), in 27:13–23 he advocates that it does hold (Witte explains this change in perspective by positing the presence of various layers of composition; see *Vom Leiden zur Lehre*, 192). Although possibly including later additions, Job's oath of innocence in ch. 31 concludes his speeches by highlighting his absolute innocence and further implicating God for allowing him to suffer when he has done nothing wrong; in other words, he charges God with not upholding the relationship between act and consequence (Witte suggests that Job 31:1–3, 11f, 15[?], 18, 23, 28, 33f, 38–40 were added by the "Majestätsredaktion" (*Vom Leiden zur Lehre*, 192; cf. Nömmik, "Thinking of Water," 293).

suffering of the presumably righteous Job provides (see, e.g., Eliphaz in Job 22; Bildad in 8:4, 21–22; Zophar in 11:11; ch 20).¹⁰³⁵ In contrast to the tacit acceptance of the act-consequence connection in the PN/FN, the specifics of understanding this relationship and its connection to God's justice requires significant consideration and debate in the book of Job.

Ecclesiastes is also representative of wisdom texts that mount challenges against the relationship between act and consequence.¹⁰³⁶ Like the author of the book of Job, the author of Ecclesiastes wrestles with the issue of God's justice versus the perceived injustice of life, rejecting the solution of other wisdom writers who solved the issue by positing eternal life (e.g., Wisdom 3:4). The author seems to imply that some order in the world does exist, as this

¹⁰³⁵ Elihu's speeches (Job 32–37) are typically held to be a later addition to the book ("The Authors of Job and Their Historical and Social Setting," in *Scribes, Sages, and Seers: The Sage in the Eastern Mediterranean World*, ed. Leo G. Perdue [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008], 168; cf. Jürgen Van Oorschot, "Die Entstehung des Hiobbuches," in *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretation. Beiträge zum Hiob-Symposium auf dem Monte Verita vom 14.–19. August 2005*, ed. Thomas Krüger, et al., ATANT 88 [Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2007], 180) and provide a slightly more nuanced take on the topic. While still affirming the connection between act and consequence, Elihu highlights that God may use suffering for purposes other than punishment (e.g., 33:16–17, 19–28). He speaks against confidence in human knowledge, warning, "Beware lest you say, 'We have found wisdom'" (32:13a). In spite of the alternative perspective he provides, Elihu still affirms that God could choose to act within the act-consequence connection: "For according to the work of a man he will repay him, and according to his ways he will make it befall him" (34:11). As Nömmik put it, "Even if the author of Elihu's speeches lets him fiercely protest against Job and the three friends, he does not change the basic presupposition of correlation between one's behavior and fate" ("Thinking of Water," 291).

¹⁰³⁶ Sometimes, its perspective is seen as a critical response to the (supposedly) naïve acceptance of the act-consequence connection in Proverbs (e.g., Adams, *Wisdom in Transition*, 6). This reading is based on an overly simplistic understanding of Proverbs' conception of act and consequence. Probably more accurate is the description of Katherine J. Dell, who argues that there are "clear links between Proverbs and Ecclesiastes that indicate that they are on a *continuum* of forms and ideas that make up the central core of canonical 'wisdom literature'" ("Ecclesiastes as Mainstream Wisdom [Without Job]," in *Goochem in Mokum/Wisdom in Amsterdam: Papers on Biblical and Related Wisdom Read at the Fifteenth Joint Meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study and the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap, Amsterdam July 2012*, ed. George J. Brooke and Pierre Van Hecke, *OtSt* 68 [Leiden: Brill, 2016], 44, emphasis added).

The book gives evidence of a strong connection to the wisdom tradition, particularly in regard to its use of forms. However, Qoheleth finds traditional wisdom unsatisfactory and contradictory, and he makes use of the traditional forms of wisdom for the very purpose of undermining them. Dell notes, for example, that in Eccl 7:1–6, "the positive nature of the wisdom in these verses is nullified in v. 6b, when the author makes the adverse verdict that 'this also is vanity.'" This is then followed by vv. 7–12, which go back to a traditional wisdom style and conclude by praising wisdom. This technique is repeated in other sections (e.g., 8:12–13 vs. 8:11 and 14). In this way, the author uses the traditional form ironically, "showing its shortcomings by a 'reflection' of his own." However, the mere fact that the author makes use of these traditional forms may suggest that he has not completely rejected the wisdom enterprise ("Reading Ecclesiastes with the Scholars," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, ed. David G. Firth and Lindsay Wilson [London: APOLLOS, 2016]). Cf. Edward L. Greenstein, "Sages with a Sense of Humor: The Babylonian Dialogue Between a Master and His Servant and the Book of Qoheleth," in *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*, SBLSymS 36, ed. Richard J. Clifford (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 65.

is clear in the patterns of the realm of nature (e.g., Eccl 1:5–7), but these patterns add nothing to his understanding of meaning in human life (1:2). Furthermore, in spite of the acknowledgment of the natural order, numerous passages claim that life defies human expectations (e.g., 8:14), suggesting that humans cannot determine a clear connection between act and consequence.¹⁰³⁷ One might expect that God will judge the righteous and wicked, and perhaps that will happen (3:17),¹⁰³⁸ but who can be certain about what will follow death (3:22)?¹⁰³⁹ Lack of “remembrance” after death for both the righteous and wicked deepens the ambivalence (Eccl 2:16; 9:5).¹⁰⁴⁰ Like Job, Qoheleth sees the act-consequence connection as requiring extensive consideration and discussion, again contrasting with the *unquestioning* affirmation of the act-consequence relationship in the PN/FN.

Other texts are more similar to the PN/FN in the sense that they do not mount any sustained debate about the efficacy of the act-consequence connection. Proverbs falls into this

¹⁰³⁷ A plethora of contradictory statements underline the author’s pessimistic outlook when it comes to human understanding. Eccl 7:3 (“Anger is better than laughter”) seems to contradict the view on anger found in 7:9 (“Anger abides in the breast of fools”). Eccl 7:26 (“I find a woman more bitter than death: she is all traps, her hands are fetters, and her heart is snares”) would need a lot of qualification for it to be forced into agreement with 9:9 (“Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the fleeting days of life that have been granted to you”) (Kugel, “Ancient Israelite Pedagogy,” 50). Further examples are Eccl 2:17 (“So I hated life”) versus 9:4 (“But whoever is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion”), and Eccl 8:12–13 (“I know that it will be well with those who fear God . . . but it will not be well with the wicked”) versus 9:2 (“the same fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil”) (Katherine J. Dell, “Reading Ecclesiastes with the Scholars,” in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, ed. David G. Firth and Lindsay Wilson (London: Apollos, 2016), EPUB, Perlego). Elsewhere, Dell argues that these opposing statements are better seen not as examples of contradictions but rather as evidence of the author “weighing” (or assessing/trying out) various proverbial statements: “Qoheleth often uses proverbs as a starting point for a wider ‘interpretive’ discussion, or as a means of airing more than one view, which he can then expound upon” (idem, “A Wise Man Reflecting on Wisdom: Qoheleth/Ecclesiastes,” *TynBul* 71 [2020]: 140).

¹⁰³⁸ As for Job, beneath Qoheleth’s pessimistic statements is “an assumption that the system *should* be rational, which, for Qoheleth, means that actions should invariably produce appropriate consequences” (Michael V. Fox, “The Meaning of Hebel for Qoheleth,” *JBL* 105 [1986]: 426).

¹⁰³⁹ It may be that the author sees the disparity between this expectation and reality not so much as a result of the way the world works but as a consequence of human inability to make sense of life (Stuart Weeks, *Ecclesiastes 1–5*, ICC [London: T&T Clark, 2020], 26). According to Weeks, “What [Qoheleth] actually seems to believe . . . is simply that humans try to live meaningfully in a world that is itself meaningful, but are prevented from aligning themselves properly to that world by the limits of their own perception — a belief, that . . . leads him to emphasize the limits of human wisdom” (ibid., 27).

¹⁰⁴⁰ Dell, “A Wise Man,” 147.

category: the order presupposed by a tight connection between act and consequence is generally affirmed in this work.¹⁰⁴¹ Perhaps part of the thought behind the “generally predictable” world of Proverbs has to do with the role of society: naturally, those who do what is considered “moral” are generally rewarded by their respective society, while those who commit immoral acts face punishment and may be ostracized.¹⁰⁴² Although Proverbs may subtly acknowledge some of the complexities of life,¹⁰⁴³ the book generally suggests that there is a strong correlation between act and consequence. This perspective is not entirely unlike the perspective on the relationship between act and consequence in the PN/FN.¹⁰⁴⁴

However, these similarities must be balanced by extensive differences between the two works. The difference in genre alone makes comparison difficult. Furthermore, while knowledge is obtainable to humans in both Proverbs and the PN/FN (in a way that is problematized in other texts, e.g., Job 28), the *results* of obtaining knowledge are very

¹⁰⁴¹ Frequently, explanations of act and consequence in Proverbs have tended to oversimplify the material. The book is often seen as *unequivocally* supporting the notion that the righteous will prosper and the wicked will be punished (e.g., Lennart Boström, “Retribution and Wisdom Literature,” in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, ed. David G. Firth and Lindsay Wilson [London: APOLLOS, 2016], EPUB). This perspective is problematized by the presence of contradiction within Proverbs (e.g., Prov 26:4, 5) (cf. James L. Kugel, “Ancient Israelite Pedagogy and Its Survival in Second Temple Interpretations of Scripture,” in *Pedagogy in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Karina Hogan, Matthew Goff, and Emma Wasserman [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017], 50). While there is a general order described in Proverbs, there are certainly exceptions to this order: for example, Prov 30:21–23, which lists apparent paradoxes (cf. John Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2017], 115). The point in this passage is that these contradictions *do* sometimes occur in real life. Furthermore, Philip J. Nel notes that numerous verses in Proverbs point out “the limitations and incapability of man,” suggesting limits on humanity’s cognitive abilities (see, e.g., Prov 14:2; 21:2; 20:9; 16:2; 16:9; 16:1; 16:33; 17:3; 20:27; 21:31 and 24:12) (*The Structure and Ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs*, 113). Murphy explains these contradictions and exceptions as inherent to the use of generalization in Proverbs: “The possibility of exception is always present in any generalization. The comparison points to similarity, not identity. If one fails to attend to limitations that are intrinsic to a saying, an injustice is done to the sages (*The Tree of Life*, 11). Cf. Philip J. Nel, *The Structure and Ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), 112–13; Millar, *Genre and Openness*, 116.

¹⁰⁴² Boström, “Retribution and Wisdom Literature;” cf. Janowski, “Der Tat kehrt zum Täter zurück,” 255–66.

¹⁰⁴³ See n. 1041 above. Janowski concludes “Die so verstandene ‘Vergeltung’ ist aber nicht eine Bestimmung des Seins, sondern des Sollens” (“Die Tat kehrt zum Täter zurück,” 271).

¹⁰⁴⁴ The concept of “cursing” (and its opposite, “blessing”) in relation to act and consequence appears in Proverbs as well: “The LORD’s curse (מֵאֲרָת) is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the abode of the righteous” (see also Prov 11:26; 28:27; 30:10). In this case the consequence for wicked action is meted out in the form of a curse, in similarity to the PN/FN.

different. As explained in both ch. 3 and the exegesis above, the PN and FN lay out both positive and negative consequences for obtaining knowledge (תּוֹרָה), while obtaining knowledge is consistently portrayed positively in Proverbs.¹⁰⁴⁵ The role of God is also different: Yhwh plays a very clear role in bringing about the consequences of the actions on the man, the woman, and Cain. Although God's role in the process of bringing about consequences is mentioned occasionally in Proverbs (e.g., Prov 3:12, 26; 10:3; 15:25), his role is certainly not as overt as it is in the PN/FN. So, while it is possible that the generally unproblematized acceptance of the correlation between act and consequence suggests a similar time period for the composition of parts of Proverbs and the PN/FN, it is difficult to claim this with much certainty when other factors speak against a strong connection. The similarities are not extensive enough to claim that there is evidence of conversation or engagement between the PN/FN and Proverbs when it comes to this issue.¹⁰⁴⁶

¹⁰⁴⁵ Note the positive occurrences of תּוֹרָה cited in n. 455.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Looking beyond Proverbs, there are a number of late Jewish works that also support the act-consequence connection. In Sirach, adherence to the law and “the lasting power of a good name” (Adams, *Wisdom in Transition*, 158) are important features of his reaffirmation of act and consequence: “Even if the divine plan is obscure, Ben Sira insists on the goodwill of God toward those who are virtuous and sure punishment for the wicked” (ibid., 211). A text from Qumran, 1QInstruction, has commonalities with Ben Sira in that it “teaches that the nature of God and his creation is not fully attainable through empirical observation” (cf. Sir 43:32) (Matthew J. Goff, *4QInstruction* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013], 21). However, in contrast to Ben Sira, this work shows the influence of apocalypticism through a focus on supernatural revelation (note the frequent mention of the “mystery that is to be” [רִזְוֹ נְהִיָּה]) (Matthew J. Goff, *Discerning Wisdom: The Sapiential Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls* [Leiden: Brill, 2007], 10). It also “exhibits a belief in eschatological reward for the righteous and eternal punishment for the wicked” (Adams, *Wisdom in Transition*, 216). Wisdom of Solomon also understands retribution in light of eschatological reward: “the author of Wisdom depicts the assault on the righteous as leading to martyrdom through death (3:1–9). However, this death is ‘full of hope for immortality’ (Wis 3:4; 5:15–16) (James K. Aitken and Ekaterina Matusova, “The Wisdom of Solomon,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible*, ed. Will Kynes [New York: Oxford University Press, 2021], 604). Although similar in regards to the general affirmation of act and consequence, the PN/FN cannot be said to espouse the same perspective as these other late Jewish texts. The certainty of blessing for the righteous and punishment for the wicked in connection with observance of the law is not matched in the PN or FN (Sir 1:26; 2:15; 6:37). Neither is the concept of ultimate vindication (as opposed to in the present) found in the PN/FN, as it is expressed in Sirach (e.g., Sir 5:7–8). The PN and FN also lack the eschatological overtones of the perspective on act and consequence in 1QInstruction and Wisdom of Solomon.

4.5.1.4. Conclusions on the Act-Consequence Connection in the Paradise Narrative and the Fratricide Narrative

In summary, it can be said that the presentation of act and consequence in the PN/FN does not show signs of engagement with the broader discussion on this issue that takes place in other works considered wisdom literature. It is best, rather, to understand act and consequence in the PN/FN in terms of its emphasis on etiology and its use of curses (and consequences similar to those of a curse), as has been demonstrated above, rather than in comparison to the presentation of act and consequence in wisdom literature, with which it has less in common. Highlighting the consequences in the PN and FN as typical of curses is helpful in understanding the nature of the punishment brought upon the humans in these two passages and also makes the bond between act and consequence in these texts more obvious, for cursing provides a clear, retributive response to an undesirable action. It can be concluded, then, that the presentation of act and consequence in the PN/FN does not support a specific connection between these passages and wisdom literature.

4.5.2. Fraternal Discord

4.5.2.1. Fraternal Discord in the Fratricide Narrative

The rival brothers motif was noted as another possible connection to wisdom literature. As observed above, the relational dynamics between the brothers are highlighted from the beginning of the account, with Abel referred to as the “brother” (אָדָם) of Cain no less than seven times in the account. It was also noted how the chiasmic structure of Gen 4:2b–5a generally points to an equivalence between the brothers, but v. 4a raises a key difference in the otherwise parallel statements, pointing to a superior element (the “fat”) of Abel’s offering (see 4.3.3.2.1). The care that Abel takes in offering results in responsiveness from Yhwh towards him and his offering, but no response towards Cain and his offering. This was the inciting incident for Cain’s anger and the “falling” of his face, which was discussed above in relation to the break in relationship with Yhwh that it implies, but it probably refers more

broadly to his other relationships as well, including his relationship with his brother (see 4.3.3.2.1, especially n. 821). V. 7 calls for Cain to accept Yhwh's decision regarding the offerings,¹⁰⁴⁷ but Cain's refusal to accept Yhwh's decision leads him to take matters into his own hands; he kills his brother in a destructive attempt to right the perceived wrong.¹⁰⁴⁸ His statement in v. 10 constitutes an outright rejection of his role as Abel's brother, as was already confirmed by the murder in v. 8. Cain's punishment is fitting to the fact that distorted relationship formed the foundation of his crime: he is expelled from society and estranged from Yahweh (v. 11–12).

The appearance of fraternal discord within the FN speaks to the new reality brought about by the events of the PN. Although there is no compelling reason to see this literary device as specifically connected to wisdom, it certainly connects back to humans obtaining the knowledge of good and bad, for it again emphasizes the conflict that results from autonomy and the reality of difference in human action. Furthermore, it continues the description of familial conflict that began in the PN. In the PN, conflict was described between husband and wife (Gen 3:16); now, conflict is described between siblings (4:7, 8). Interestingly, there is a similar evolution in the relationships: as the woman was defined by her relationship with the man, so Abel was defined by his relationship with his brother.¹⁰⁴⁹ Cain should have been his brother's keeper, as the woman was the man's helper, but, despite the repeated refrain that Abel is "his brother," Cain does not treat him as such.¹⁰⁵⁰ Their

¹⁰⁴⁷ Hensel discusses this in relation to the concept of the "Erstling" versus the "Erstgeborener": "Auf die rechte Praxis des Erstlings kommt es demnach an, will er sich als Erstling positionieren, nicht auf seine Disposition als biologischer Erstgeborener. Kain scheitert genau an dieser Aufgabe und versagt damit in seiner Rolle als Erstling. Sein Fehler lag letztlich auch darin, dass er Gottes Entscheidung in der Abweisung seines Opfers und der Annahme des Opfers Abels nicht anerkennen konnte" (*Die Vertauschung*, 49). This may also point towards the concept of election that appears along with this motif in other texts of the Hebrew Bible (*ibid.*, 331; see also further discussion below).

¹⁰⁴⁸ Possibly, the desire to regain his "rightful" position is behind his destructive action (*ibid.*, 49).

¹⁰⁴⁹ The man (אָדָם) is also defined by the woman (אִשָּׁה) (Bae, "Bin ich Hüter meines Bruders?," 371). This parallels Cain (described as an אָדָם), who is defined by his relationship with his brother (אָדָם) (*ibid.*, 371).

¹⁰⁵⁰ Hensel, *Die Vertauschung*, 48.

independent determinations of what is “good” leads them to give offerings that differ in quality, resulting in differing reactions from Yhwh and, ultimately, violence. There is a strong correspondence between the brotherly dynamic in the FN and the appearance of the fraternal discord motif elsewhere. This suggests that it is worthwhile to consider the use of this motif in other works to see if this can further clarify its use in the FN.

4.5.2.2. Fraternal Discord as a Motif

Interestingly, this motif appears in other ancient accounts of origin. J. J. M. Roberts remarks that the FN may be “loosely paralleled by a Mesopotamian account of a debate between the shepherd and the farmer as to which of the two professions was superior.”¹⁰⁵¹ Armin Ehrenzweig sees a connection to the story of Romulus and Remus, a parallel that Mowinckel also picks up on.¹⁰⁵² Gunkel notes other stories in world literature that depict fratricide, including Osiris and Seth,¹⁰⁵³ the brothers in 2 Sam 14:6ff, Ousōos and Hypsouranios,¹⁰⁵⁴ and Eteocles and Polynices.¹⁰⁵⁵ After noting other accounts of fratricide in

¹⁰⁵¹ J. J. M. Roberts, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 52. The story referred to is the Sumerian myth of Enkimdu (the farmer god) and Dumuzi (the shepherd god), who vie for the hand of the goddess Inanna. See “Dumuzi and Enkimdu: the Dispute between the Shepherd-God and the Farmer-God,” trans. Samuel N. Kramer, *ANET* 41–2.

Cassuto notes that the motif of fratricide occurs in “pagan mythology” but claims that “these parallels are remote and, apart from the motif mentioned, they have nothing else in common” with Genesis 4 (Cassuto, *A Commentary*, 179). He concedes, “The motif of fratricide does, it is true, occur in pagan mythology. There is an Egyptian legend, for instance, about Seth who slew Osiris; there is, likewise, a Canaanite story, to quote another example, concerning Môt, who murdered Baal. But these parallels are remote and, apart from the motif mentioned, they have nothing else in common with our section” (*ibid.*, 179).

¹⁰⁵² Armin Ehrenzweig, “Kain und Lamech,” *ZAW* 35 (1915): 1–11. Although he may push the connection points between Genesis 4 and the legend of Romulus and Remus too far, his article provides a helpful contribution to the study of this theme of fratricide in both biblical and extrabiblical literature of the ancient world. He sees Genesis 4 not as providing an etiology for the Kenite tribe but rather as an etiology for this practice of offering “foundation sacrifices” (*Bauopfert*).

¹⁰⁵³ See, e.g., references to the enmity between Osiris and Seth in the Pyramid Texts (e.g., Utterance 219, §173a and Utterance, 606 §1698d–1699a in Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts*, 63 and 257). There are not many direct references to the killing of Osiris by Seth; see, however, Utterance 545, §1339a in *ibid.*, 218. See also the reference to Osiris being drowned in “The Theology of Memphis,” trans. Samuel N. Kramer, *ANET*, 4.

¹⁰⁵⁴ See n. 339 above.

¹⁰⁵⁵ On these brothers (sons of Oedipus), see Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays: Antigone; Oedipus the King; Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Books, 1982, repr. 1984), 360ff.

the ancient world, and, in particular, the parallel from Phoenicia of Ousōos and Hypsouranios,¹⁰⁵⁶ Gnuse suggests that “the Cain and Abel story as a ‘founding myth’ might have been the narrative of human beginnings before Genesis 3 might have been added to it.”¹⁰⁵⁷ In terms of specific ancient Near Eastern accounts that include this kind of fraternal conflict, Samuel N. Kramer cites the myth of Emesh and Enten as “the closest extant Sumerian parallel to the Biblical Cain-Abel story, although it ends with a reconciliation rather than a murder.”¹⁰⁵⁸ It tells the story of a conflict between the two gods Emesh (god of vegetation) and Enten (god of fertility), brothers who are given (somewhat ambiguous) agriculturally-related duties by Enlil. They then quarrel, and Enten comes out on top, being declared “the farmer of the gods.”¹⁰⁵⁹ Jan Bremmer claims that “fratricide and hatred between brothers is ... the typical characteristic of the breakdown of society in Oriental and Jewish

Regarding these stories of fratricide, see Gunkel, *Genesis*, 44. He seems to see the prevalence of this motif mainly as a psychological phenomenon rather than evidence of any true connection between the stories, claiming, “This legend motif excited the imagination: Those who should love another most become engaged in the most destructive struggle with one another” (ibid). Westermann gives an impressive overview of extrabiblical parallels but seems primarily concerned with using the comparative material to support his reading of the text as individual rather than collective (*Genesis 1–11*, 315–17).

¹⁰⁵⁶ “The latter killed the former and subsequently founded the city of Tyre” (Gnuse, *Misunderstood Stories*, 142). Cf. n. 339 above. This parallel is also noted by Lowery: “Indeed, if we expand our comparative scope to include Gen 2–4, both stories do mention the first worshippers, wearers of animal skins, iron workers, shepherds, and villagers. It is also interesting to note that a very early set of brothers in the genealogy, Hypsouranios and Ousōos, also quarreled with each other” (*Toward a Poetics*, 100). On the other hand, “the overall length and level of detail in Philo’s cultural history is much more similar to other Hellenistic accounts of primeval history than to Gen 4” (ibid.).

¹⁰⁵⁷ Gnuse, *Misunderstood Stories*, 142. Blenkinsopp makes a similar suggestion (*Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 90–1). It was argued above that the direction of influence is more likely to go the other direction, with the FN having been written to match the PN (though probably based on an earlier tradition about Cain) (see 2.4.2).

¹⁰⁵⁸ Samuel N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of the Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C.*, rev. ed (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1972), 49. See also his translation of the story in *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 218–20. He writes, “The rivalry motif in the undoubtedly much abbreviated Cain-Abel episode was a high favorite with the Sumerian writers and poets” (ibid., 293).

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid., 220.

prophecies of doom.”¹⁰⁶⁰ While none of the parallels of fraternal discord can be specifically connected to the FN, the existence of this motif in other ancient accounts of creation/origin makes it more understandable that this narrative of fratricide appears alongside an account of creation.

In biblical literature, this motif of conflict between brothers frequently appears in situations in which a younger son triumphs over an older son. LaCocque summarizes this motif in J (as he defines J): “Repetitively J emphasizes the transfer of the right to someone who is born later, so Japhet (Gen 9:18-27, rather than Ham); Isaac (Gen 21:9-10, rather than Ishmael); Jacob (Gen 27:19, 22, rather than Esau); Perez (Gen 38:27-30, rather than Zerah); Ephraim (Gen 48:14-19, rather than Manesseh); Joseph (Gen 49:3; 1 Chron 5:2, rather than Reuben); Judah (Gen 49:8, rather than his elder brothers).”¹⁰⁶¹ The appearance of the specific

¹⁰⁶⁰ Jan Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible, and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 65. See, e.g., “The Prophecy of Nefer-rohu,” trans. John A. Wilson, *ANET*, 445, lines 44–5; “The Admonitions of Ipuwer,” in *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, ed. Miriam Lichtheim (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), EPUB. See also the discussion of the “Babylonian Theodicy” below.

A further interesting insight is the preference for pairs of brothers within Greek literature: “Not only in Homer but also in Attic tragedy and comedy there is a clear preference for pairs of brothers. The preference must be old, considering the Indo-European usage of the dual for brothers, such as Aiante for Aiax and Teukros or Castores for Castor and Pollux. The ‘simplification’ also enabled the storytellers to picture contrasting brothers, such as Epimetheus and Prometheus: Hesiod’s depiction of a ‘dumb’ and a ‘clever’ brother. This oscillation between ‘realistic’ and ‘symbolic’ portraiture can also be found in the older traditions of Israel with its many pairs of brothers: Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Simeon and Levi..., Joseph and Benjamin, Moses and Aaron” (ibid., 60).

¹⁰⁶¹ LaCocque, *Onslaught*, 61. The evidence regarding the significance of the firstborn in the Hebrew Bible is somewhat mixed. The narrative of Esau and Jacob suggests that there was an expectation that the firstborn would receive his “birthright” (בכרה; Gen 25:31) but also that circumstances could override this (note other stories of younger sons rising above their brothers — e.g., Isaac, Joseph, David, Solomon). In terms of the patriarchal narratives, “in their present form, these narratives are written for an audience which considers the laws of the firstborn to have full weight, and which, therefore, is fully aware of the tension between sacred history and present responsibility” (M. Tsevat, “בְּכוֹרִית,” in *TDOT* 4:127). By presenting these stories with a strong sense of primogeniture (even when there were other views on this in the ANE), “the OT chooses that of the privileged position of the firstborn in the law and in the ritual of daily life in preference to the principle of equal prospects for the great lines of history. This principle makes possible a historical presentation of the early period when (in a very natural way) there was no permanent position of leadership or privilege of one tribe over another. This makes it possible for the narrative to bestow on Israel, which was still in the process of being constituted and which was the youngest of the nation, the title of firstborn — see Ex 4:22, Jer 31:8f” (ibid., 127). Cf. Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

Regarding the presumed obligations and privileges of the firstborn, see Jacob Milgrom, “First-born,” in *IDBSup* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976), 337–38. He notes the position of prominence given to the male first-born in genealogies, their (typically) larger inheritance (cf. Deut 21:15–17), and (solely in Israel) their presumed sanctity (cf., e.g., Exod 13:1–2; 13:12a; 34:19a; Num 18:15) (ibid.). In addition, it is considered likely

situation (a younger brother triumphing over an older brother) in other ancient Near Eastern literature¹⁰⁶² is sometimes used to suggest that it would *not* have been a surprising thing for the younger son to be favored over the older (for a reader/hearer of the Hebrew Bible).¹⁰⁶³ This is unlikely, as it is never portrayed as the “norm” in the Hebrew Bible for the younger son to be favored, and it is sometimes portrayed as an unusual turn of events in extrabiblical works as well.¹⁰⁶⁴ One example of this is in the “Babylonian Theodicy,” in which the reversal of fortunes between the older and younger son is listed as a sign of crisis, and an indication that the speaker’s deference to his god has not been rewarded by positive action towards him on the part of the god:

I have looked around in the world, but things are turned around. The god does not impede the way of even a demon. A father tows a boat along the canal, while his son lies in bed. The eldest son makes his way like a lion, the second son is happy to be a mule driver. The heir goes about along the streets like a [peddler], the younger son *has enough* that he can give food to the destitute. What has it profited me that I have bowed down to my god? I must bow even to a person who is lower than I, the rich and opulent treat me, as a youngest brother, with contempt.¹⁰⁶⁵

that “the firstborn’s function includes caring for his widowed mother and unmarried siblings in the household, ensuring the proper burial of the parents, and performing cultic rituals after their death, all duties that justify the firstborn’s extra inheritance” (Jonathan S. Milgram, *From Mesopotamia to the Mishnah: Tannaitic Inheritance Law in its Legal and Social Contexts* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016], 68; cf. Bruce Wells “The Hated Wife in Deuteronomic Law,” *VT* 60 [2010]: 132). One example is found in the story of King Idrimi. Although not born a firstborn, he takes on the role of the firstborn by seizing the throne and consequently takes on the responsibility for the familiar cultic obligations, which he then passes on to his (firstborn?) son: “As to the cultic regulations which the gods of Alalakh had established, and the sacrifices and offerings which our forefathers had performed for them, I have constantly performed them exactly as they had performed them and now I have entrusted (the responsibility for) them to my son Adadnirari” (“The Story of Idrimi, King of Alalakh,” trans. A. Leo Oppenheim, *ANET* 558).

¹⁰⁶² Texts that describe a younger son favored over an older son include the Tale of Appu (see Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, 63–5); the Ugaritic epic of Keret (“The Legend of King Keret,” trans. H. L. Ginsberg, *ANET* 142–149); as well as some omens (see examples in “šihru,” *CAD*, 16.181–82). Younger brothers who became kings include Idrimi and Esarhaddon (see “Esarhaddon [680-669],” trans. A. Leo Oppenheim, *ANET* 289 and “The Story of Idrimi, King of Alalakh,” trans. A. Leo Oppenheim, *ANET* 557). See also the discussion in n. 1061 above. Cf. John W. Waters, “Who Was Hagar?”, in *Stony the Road We Trod. African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2021), 224.

¹⁰⁶³ Van Seters argues that the reversal of primogeniture was not unusual (*Abraham in History and Tradition* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975], 88–95).

¹⁰⁶⁴ Although primogeniture was not always upheld in the ancient Near East (see n. 1061 above), Fox rightly points out that it is very clear in the biblical text that primogeniture is expected, for the characters are shocked when it does not happen (Fox, “Stalking,” 48). Goldin makes a similar point (“The Youngest Son,” 36).

¹⁰⁶⁵ Bill T. Arnold, and Bryan Beyer, *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 181.

This text demonstrates that, at least in certain circles, there was an expectation that the gods should preserve the culturally expected family roles regarding the older and younger brother(s). The favoring of a younger brother is used as an example of a situation in which the categories by which humans understand the world have been turned upside down. It portrays an ambiguity in human life, in which humans are unable to anticipate that their deity's actions, and the course of their life in general, will conform to an expected system.

Various explanations have been offered for why this theme frequently appears in the Hebrew Bible: there was an actual ancient practice in which the younger son was the chosen heir;¹⁰⁶⁶ it is a way of expressing frustration at a system that gave the firstborn all the benefits;¹⁰⁶⁷ or it is as an image of Yhwh's choice of Israel as his "beloved son."¹⁰⁶⁸ This last suggestion, that the theme relates to Israel's "election" as Yhwh's "firstborn son," may be significant for understanding its use in the FN, as will be further discussed below.

4.5.2.3. *Conclusions on the Fraternal Discord Motif in the Paradise Narrative and the Fratricide Narrative*

This fraternal discord motif may be a situation in which the FN *does* truly incorporate the sense of a motif from elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. In the adoption of this motif, the FN may be in continuity with other texts in the Hebrew Bible that support Israel's claim to firstborn status by demonstrating Yahweh's choice of a younger son over (an) older son(s). Hensel describes this motif in Genesis by using the terms "Erstgeborener" (the firstborn

¹⁰⁶⁶ Joseph Jacobs, *Studies in Biblical Archaeology* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1894), 46–63.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Goldin, "The Youngest Son," 40.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Jon Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son*, 67; see also Hensel, *Die Vertauschung*. The appearance of this theme within the Hebrew Bible is also analyzed by Everett Fox, who surveys six different methods by which interpreters have approached this motif ("Stalking the Younger Brother: Some Models for Understanding a Biblical Motif," *JSOT* 60 [1993]: 45–78). He assesses the comparative method's usefulness, noting that "occurrences of the motif in the ancient Near East make it clear that the biblical authors did not invent the motif as such" (ibid., 47). He concludes, however, that "originality aside... one is left wondering what light is shed on the biblical text as a result" (ibid.). See also Frederick E. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together: The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

brother) versus the “Erstling” (the brother preferred by Yhwh).¹⁰⁶⁹ He suggests that the concept of the preferred “Erstling” was used to provide legitimization for Israel’s role as an “Erstling” itself (the one chosen by Yhwh out of other more prominent nations). The *toledot* formulas/genealogies that follow these “Vertauschung” episodes function to emphasize what has occurred (see, e.g., Genesis 5; 22; 25) — situations of a preferred brother are followed by a genealogy that confirms the switch and narrates the continuing progression of God’s plan for Israel.¹⁰⁷⁰ These same elements of a narrative about an “Erstling” and an “Erstgeborener,” followed by a genealogy that confirms the transfer of preference from the older to the younger, are found in the FN and the following genealogies.

In addition to its connection to the use of the motif elsewhere, the appearance of this motif in the FN continues the emphasis on the ambivalence of human life and the consequences of the knowledge of good and bad. The quality of Abel’s offering provides the reason for Yhwh’s choice of him as “Erstling,” but it is not clear that Yhwh’s reasoning is apparent to Cain (see 4.3.2.2.2).¹⁰⁷¹ On a certain level, his resulting anger is understandable, for, like the so-called “sufferer” in the Babylonian Theodicy, it is likely that Cain would have assumed that his god would favor him, not only on the basis of his initiative to sacrifice but

¹⁰⁶⁹ He picks up on Buber’s shift from translating בכור as “Erstgeborener” to “Erstling,” which he suggests is an acknowledgment that the biblical concept of בכור is not identical with the concept of a biological firstborn child. He explains, “In einigen Fällen scheint sich der Segen Gottes ja gerade nicht im natürlichen Erstgeborenen zu verwirklichen, sondern in demjenigen, der sich erst als solcher erweisen muss, und eben erst zum Erstling wird.” (*Die Vertauschung*, 42).

Cf. LaCocque, who explains that through the theme of the triumph of the younger son over the older, “the reader is invited to reflect on the priority of the covenantal election over the natural accident” (*Onslaught*, 61). He further explains, “The ‘first-born’ in the eyes of God is not always the ‘opener of the womb’ (see Gen 29:31; 30:22; Exod 13:2, 12; 34:19). In other words, J destroys all natural determinism” (*ibid.*).

¹⁰⁷⁰ Hensel, *Die Vertauschung*, 245–49. Regarding the “Vertauschungsprozess,” the following can be said: “dass die genealogischen Teile wesentlich zur Grundstruktur einer Vertauschungserzählung dazu gehören, indem sie regalmäßig über einen genealogischen Vergleich und eine genealogische Weiterführung die Qualifizierung bestätigen und die vollzogene Vertauschung dadurch legitimieren” (*ibid.*, 254).

¹⁰⁷¹ Cf. Hensel, who argues that Cain’s actions lead to his disqualification as the “Erstling” (*ibid.*, 45–50). This seems unlikely, given that Yhwh has already chosen Abel over Cain in v. 4b–5a. It is better to acknowledge that Abel was marked out as the “Erstling” (based on his offering) before there is any clear indication that Cain acted to disqualify himself.

on the basis of being the firstborn son. Disregarding this expectation, Yhwh's exhortation in Gen 4:7 urges the less favored brother (the "Erstgeborener") to accept the situation as it stands. Cain may not be the "beloved son," or "Erstling," but in spite of this there is no reason he could not enjoy a prosperous life if he avoids taking action that will result in a decisive break in his relationship with God and man.¹⁰⁷² Cain will not accept Yhwh's choice and instead uses the knowledge of good and bad to assert his own influence over the world, resulting in tragic results for all involved and initiating a pattern of violence that will lead to Yhwh's decision to "un-create" the world (Gen 6:5–7).

4.6. Conclusions Regarding Wisdom and the Knowledge of Good and Bad in the Fratricide Narrative

Looking at Genesis 4 as a whole, it can be said that the chapter has strong affinities with the PN and continues the emphasis on the knowledge of good and bad that was a key theme within the PN. The creative and destructive power available through this knowledge and its connection to entrance into society are described in the PN. The FN and the associated genealogy continue to relate the consequences of gaining this trait by showing the creative and destructive potentials of this knowledge.

Regarding the motifs that were suggested to have a potential connection to wisdom, these do not appear to be an attempt by the author to be in conversation with a particular branch of wisdom literature. It was suggested within the exegesis of Gen 4:7 that this verse has some parallels to proverbial forms but nothing to support a strong connection. In terms of the correlation between actions and consequences, it was shown that the PN and FN generally assume the act-consequence connection and do not show engagement with wisdom texts (like Job and Ecclesiastes) that overtly question the correlation between actions and their consequences.¹⁰⁷³ Lastly, the fraternal conflict motif is not used to promote a connection to

¹⁰⁷² Cf. the case of Ishmael (Gen 17:20).

¹⁰⁷³ It was shown to have more in common with Proverbs on this issue in particular.

wisdom thought but rather it connects to the use of this motif elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible and further develops the results of humans obtaining the knowledge of good and bad.

All this demonstrates that the supposed signs of a connection to wisdom literature in the PN and FN generally stem from the prominence of the theme of the knowledge of good and bad rather than an attempt by the author to connect the texts to wisdom thought in the Hebrew Bible. This conclusion was borne out in the above analysis of the FN and its surrounding genealogy. The final chapter will summarize the perspective on wisdom suggested by the description of the knowledge of good and bad in these narratives and suggest avenues for further research.

5. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING WISDOM IN THE PARADISE NARRATIVE AND THE FRATRICIDE NARRATIVE

5.1. Summary

The above investigation assessed whether the PN and the FN are influenced by wisdom thought. Chapter 1 surveyed literature related to this topic, concluding that two major topics require further investigation: (1) the nature of wisdom in the PN, as expressed through the supposed “wisdom motifs” in this narrative, and (2) the possibility that a similar expression of wisdom (as a theme) continues from the PN into the FN. The proposed thesis responded to these two topics. Regarding the nature of wisdom in the PN, it was argued that the “wisdom motifs” in this narrative generally do not reflect “wisdom” as it appears in “wisdom literature” of the Hebrew Bible. Instead, they generally point to the knowledge of good and bad, which can be identified not just as a motif but as a key theme within the PN. It was argued that the same conception of the knowledge of good and bad (see the proposed definition in 3.3.3.2) continues into the FN and is critical for understanding some of the more ambiguous aspects of the account. The methodology for supporting this thesis was also outlined in ch. 1: namely, to begin with a look at the literary historical issues of Genesis 2–4, followed by linguistic and literary analysis of the motifs within the units under discussion,¹⁰⁷⁴ and ending with a comparison to the use of these motifs in other literature. Conclusions were then made regarding the use of the symbols/motifs in the PN/FN. Verses and units identified as problematic by the initial literary historical discussion were readdressed in light of the conclusions of this synchronic analysis.

The literary historical analysis in ch. 2 began by discussing the evolution of thought regarding the J source and its connection to the non-P primeval history, concluding that non-P was likely composed independently of J. The connection between the PN and FN was then

¹⁰⁷⁴ For the FN this required a more comprehensive look at the individual verses, as the relationship of the knowledge of good and bad to the events of this narrative is less obvious.

discussed, and, in spite of certain discontinuities, it was suggested that the two narratives were composed by the same author, although the FN was probably based upon an earlier tradition. An assessment of the literary history of the PN suggested that the account is largely unified, with a few later additions (including Gen 2:10–25 and probably 3:24). Regarding Genesis 4, it was concluded that there are few definitive literary breaks in the chapter, with the possible exception of Gen 4:6–8a, which was left for further analysis in the exegesis of ch. 4, and 4:26b, which was suggested to be a late addition. These conclusions on the literary history of these narratives necessarily awaited further confirmation from the exegesis of the PN and FN in ch. 3–4.

The analysis of the PN in ch. 3 began by defining the knowledge of good and bad, as this was argued to be critical for understanding the use of the other “wisdom motifs.” It was argued that the knowledge of good and bad refers to a mental process by which a person makes an autonomous determination about what is good or bad, followed by creative or destructive action on the basis of this determination. The use of each proposed “wisdom motif” (the trees, the snake, the woman, the dust, and the man as sage) was then addressed in turn, first by analyzing its appearance within the PN and then by considering whether the motif is used in comparable ways elsewhere. It was concluded that, in certain cases, the PN picks up on associations of these motifs that are found in other texts but that it uses the motifs primarily to highlight the knowledge of good and bad (as defined in the proposed definition) as an overarching theme within the narrative.

The investigation was then continued in the FN with the intention of considering whether this overarching theme of the knowledge of good and bad continued in this narrative. A closer examination of the text revealed that this theme is also essential to understanding the FN and is helpful for clarifying some of the exegetical peculiarities of the text. Proposed “wisdom motifs” within this narrative were considered as well, including instruction, the act-

consequence connection, and fraternal discord. It was argued that there is not a clear connection to proverbial instruction (in Gen 4:7 specifically) and that the FN does not engage in the debate on the act-consequence connection that appears in some wisdom texts of the Hebrew Bible. The fraternal discord motif did not display any explicit connection to wisdom, but it was suggested that the FN does use this motif in a similar way to its appearance elsewhere within Genesis, namely, to highlight the importance of “election” to the identity of Israel. At the same time, the motif also connects back to the PN by highlighting the new potential for conflict and violence as a result of the humans gaining of the knowledge of good and bad.

5.2 Conclusions and Implications

The conclusions of the above analysis of the PN and FN support the proposed thesis (see 1.2). The supposed “wisdom motifs” of the PN were shown to be generally unconnected with “wisdom,” per se, but rather to support the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad as knowledge that provides the ability to act creatively and destructively in the world. It was also demonstrated that the knowledge of good and bad is carried on as a key theme in the FN, where the further consequences of obtaining of this knowledge are demonstrated in the story of Cain.

The purpose of highlighting this theme within the account appears to be primarily etiological. The creative abilities of humans (e.g., to create new life [Gen 4:1–2, 17–18, 20, 22, 25–26], sew [3:7], build [4:17], make music [4:21], make tools [4:22]) provide a stark contrast to their destructive abilities (e.g., relational conflict [3:15, 16; 4:3–5]; violence [4:8, 22–24]). Humans gain powers that border on the divine, and, yet, despite humanity’s power to influence the world, every person eventually dies. The PN/FN attempts to explain how these fundamental contradictions of life came about.

There are two primary implications of this study. First, the PN/FN should not be called wisdom literature or literature influenced by wisdom; these narratives do not appear to be in conversation with the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible. The claim of “wisdom” in the narrative is imprecise at best. The most that can be said is that some of the PN/FN’s symbols/motifs appear are similar to what is found in wisdom literature, but the literary devices are used for very different purposes in these narratives, and they do not engage with the concept of *הכמה* as it appears in wisdom literature.¹⁰⁷⁵ Secondly, the conclusions of this study provide strong support for reading the PN and FN as tightly connected and even as a continuous narrative. Though a new literary unit begins in Gen 4:1, the narratives are united by the theme of the knowledge of good and bad, and the FN should be interpreted as narrating the further consequences of humans obtaining this knowledge. These conclusions also lead into several other important areas of research, as will be addressed below.

5.3 Topics for Further Research

5.3.1. Dating

The proposed connections to late, skeptical wisdom literature have sometimes been used to argue for a late date of the PN.¹⁰⁷⁶ The conclusions of this study suggest that connections to wisdom cannot be used to argue for a late date of the PN because these connections do not exist. The PN does not discuss the kind of wisdom that appears in works like Job and Ecclesiastes. The knowledge of good and bad is also not the same as what is described in the Succession Narrative: the “craftiness” of these characters is not found in the humans after they obtain the knowledge of good and evil. Although similar assumptions regarding the relationship between act and consequence in Proverbs could be argued (see

¹⁰⁷⁵ The closest connections can be found in the dust motif, which is used as a symbol of both mortality and creation. This is in keeping with the theme of the knowledge of good and bad, but it is also comparable to its use within wisdom literature (see discussion in 3.4.4).

¹⁰⁷⁶ Note especially the interpreters who see the PN as exhibiting a negative stance towards wisdom (1.1.1.3.1).

4.5.1.3.2 and 4.5.1.4 above), no other significant connections were observed. That being said, the fact that the PN/FN shows no engagement with the significant debate on this issue that is featured in many later wisdom texts *may* be an indicator of an earlier date.¹⁰⁷⁷ Furthermore, the absence of references to the Priestly composition probably suggests that it was written prior to that work.¹⁰⁷⁸

However, further narrowing the possibilities for the date of composition is difficult, as the evidence goes in different directions. On the one hand, certain elements of the PN/FN are suggestive of an exilic or even postexilic date, such as the fact that no other work in the Hebrew Bible makes a clear reference to these narratives until the time of Ezekiel (Ezek 28:13; 31:9, 16, 18; 36:35; see also Isa 51:3; Joel 2:3).¹⁰⁷⁹ The theme of exile as punishment in both the PN and FN is also alleged to point to an exilic or postexilic setting.¹⁰⁸⁰

Other aspects of the account point in another direction. Certain lexical elements, such as the use of a final ה for the third masculine singular suffix (Gen 2:15), the use of אנכי instead of אני (3:10), the use of the *qal* passive (3:19, 23), and the use of the *qal* form of לך instead of the *hiphil* (3:16; 4:1, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25, 26) could be indicative of a preexilic date.¹⁰⁸¹ The unquestioning perspective of the PN/FN when it comes to the act-consequence

¹⁰⁷⁷ Admittedly, this is an argument from silence, so it cannot be stated with any level of certainty, but the combination of the lack of engagement on the later act-consequence debate and the lack of other key indicators of a late date (eschatological thought, the distancing of wisdom) suggests it pre-dates texts like Job and Ecclesiastes (also note the use of Genesis by Ecclesiastes [see n. 732]). This is not entirely conclusive, for sophisticated consideration of the connection between act and consequence also occurs in some earlier works outside the Hebrew Bible (e.g., the Babylonian Theodicy).

¹⁰⁷⁸ Bühner, "Relative Dating," 374–75. Contra Joseph Blenkinsopp, "A Post-Exilic Lay Source," 49–61; Arneth, *Durch Adams Fall*, 230–36; Otto, "Die Paradieserzählung," 167–192.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 468. Carr ultimately argues that the narratives are likely preexilic and that the lack of references prior to the exile is merely a result of the narratives being circulated in very limited scribal circles until that point in time.

¹⁰⁸⁰ See, e.g., Wyatt, "Interpreting the Creation and Fall Story," 10–21.

¹⁰⁸¹ See Carr, *Genesis I–II*, 32; Day, "Problems in the Interpretation," 49; Ronald S. Hendel, "'Begetting' and 'Being Born' in the Pentateuch: Notes on Historical Linguistics and Source Criticism," *VT* 50 (2000), 38–46.

connection (see 4.5.1.4) is another point in favor of an earlier date. Carr also draws attention to non-P's anthropomorphic characterization of Yhwh, which "contrasts with trends in later biblical literature (cf. P, e.g.) to emphasize Yhwh's transcendent character."¹⁰⁸²

Initially, the thematic similarities to ancient Near Eastern literature from outside of Israel do not seem to provide a clear reference point in either direction, as many of the relevant works for this account were known throughout the time periods in question.¹⁰⁸³ It is, however, notable that these traditions were received positively (or at least as worthy of imitation), without any hint of the anti-foreign perspective and polemic that is characteristic of many exilic and postexilic texts.¹⁰⁸⁴ Regarding exile as punishment, this theme is not expressed in the same way as it appears in Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic texts.¹⁰⁸⁵ Furthermore, the evidence suggests that the concept of exile (or "expulsion") as punishment was widespread, making it less convincing that the expulsion of the man and the woman from the garden must necessarily refer to the exile of Judah in 586 B.C.E.¹⁰⁸⁶

The question of dating is also impacted by one's understanding of the extent of the posited originally independent non-P primeval history (see 2.2.2 and 5.3.2). If the flood story should be included within this history (see 2.5.1.2), then the clear use of the Mesopotamian

¹⁰⁸² Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 468.

¹⁰⁸³ Regarding the evidence for knowledge of the epic of Gilgamesh, "Enuma Elish," and the Old Babylonian epic of Atrahasis in the Levant, see Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 19–21.

¹⁰⁸⁴ It contrasts, for example, with Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic texts, which show the influence of Assyrian texts but exhibit a strong desire to privilege the Judean perspective in contrast to what was considered foreign (Gertz, *Das erste Buch*, 16). See also Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 469.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 469. The expulsion in the PN as referring to the Babylonian exile is an issue that is discussed by Day, who argues against this point as evidence of an exilic/postexilic date: "Nowhere does the Old Testament represent the fall of Judah as being due to seeking after forbidden wisdom ... Moreover, the expulsion from Eden sounds final and irreversible, which is in contrast to what the Old Testament elsewhere says about the Babylonian exile" ("Problems in the Interpretation of the Story of the Garden of Eden," in *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1–11* [London: Bloomsbury, 2013], 46–7).

¹⁰⁸⁶ See, e.g., the examples in 4.5.1.1.2.4, which confirm that the consequences of curses from various time periods included expulsion.

flood story from Atrahasis would suggest a date in the seventh century at the earliest.¹⁰⁸⁷ It may be tentatively suggested that a date during the reign of Manasseh is plausible, as suggested by Gertz,¹⁰⁸⁸ but the deeper analysis necessary for establishing a solid argument regarding dating is not possible here.

5.3.2. Defining the Non-P Primeval History

The conclusions here could also have implications for understanding the non-P primeval history. The key theme of the knowledge of good and bad has been traced through the PN and Genesis 4, which leads to the question of whether this theme continues into the rest of the non-P primeval history. Whether this theme is also essential for understanding some or all of the other non-P narratives could be significant for establishing the boundaries, layers, and characteristics of non-P (see 2.2). This would involve a thorough analysis of the passages involved, which cannot be attempted here.¹⁰⁸⁹ It should be noted that the non-P flood account would be extremely important to assess in light of its contested position within the (posited) original non-P primeval history.¹⁰⁹⁰

5.3.3. “Wisdom” Outside of Hebrew/Jewish Literature

A final topic worthy of further perusal is a possible connection between the knowledge of good and bad in the PN/FN and “wisdom” as it appears in other literature from the ancient Near East outside the Hebrew Bible. The words for “wisdom” in Sumerian (*nam-kù-zu*) and Akkadian (*nēmequ*), “in their primary meaning...describe a specific skill such as a

¹⁰⁸⁷ Jan Christian Gertz, “Noah und die Propheten. Rezeption und Reformulierung eines altorientalischen Mythos,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 81 (2007), 503–22.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Gertz posits that extensive contact with Neo-Assyrian overlords during this period could be reflected in the knowledge of extrabiblical Mesopotamian texts in the non-P primeval history, suggesting that the text could be associated with court writers from this period or those who succeeded them (*Das erste Buch*, 16).

¹⁰⁸⁹ This has been attempted by Jörn Kiefer in *Gut und Böse: Die Anfangslektionen der Hebräischen Bibel*, but his interpretation is quite different than the one proposed here (see 1.1.2.2.1).

¹⁰⁹⁰ Against its exclusion, see 2.5.1.2 above.

craft, and by extension all the skills and knowledge necessary to civilized life.”¹⁰⁹¹ Wisdom as “skill” in a particular area is also found in certain texts of the Hebrew Bible (see 1.3.2.1), but this does not fit the context of the PN/FN, where obtaining the knowledge of good and bad cannot be said to result in the humans increasing in “skill” in a particular area.

That being said, the broader part of the definition given above, in which wisdom is connected to the “knowledge necessary to civilized life,” is particularly intriguing in relation to the proposed definition of the knowledge of good and bad. This kind of wisdom is related to the *apkallu*, who passed on divine knowledge to humans,¹⁰⁹² and it may also be related to the attribution of wisdom to Gilgamesh. According to “The Death of Gilgamesh,” the hero was the recipient of “the revelation of the rites of Sumer, which he brought back to Uruk in order to restart civilization after the flood.”¹⁰⁹³ There may also be a connection between wisdom and power: the wise Adapa has the power to break the wing of the South Wind and the wisdom of the “all-wise” Ea in “Enuma Elish” is manifest in his sneaky plan to overpower other gods.¹⁰⁹⁴ If it could be maintained, this would be an interesting conceptual parallel to the knowledge of good and bad in the PN, which gives humanity creative and destructive power within the world (see 3.3.2). It would require extensive study of the texts

¹⁰⁹¹ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “The Social and Intellectual Setting of Babylonian Wisdom Literature,” 4.

¹⁰⁹² See 4.4.2., especially n. 935 above. Kilmer’s description of the powers of the *apkallu* has similarities with the creative/destructive power conferred on humans through the knowledge of good and bad: “Because of their powers they were capable of acts that could impress or offend the gods, that could cause beneficial or harmful natural phenomena” (Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Counterparts of the Biblical Nêpîlîm,” 41).

¹⁰⁹³ Beaulieu, “The Social and Intellectual Setting of Babylonian Wisdom Literature” 5. See “The Death of Gilgamesh,” in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, ed. and trans. Benjamin R. Foster (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2019), 152, 138–41. Note also that “knowledge” is included in the list of *ME* in the story of Innana and Enki (*COS* 1:161).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ea is referred to as “the all wise” in “Enuma Elish”: “The one who excels in knowledge, the skilled and learned, Ea, who knows everything, perceived their tricks. He fashioned it and made it to be all-embracing, He executed it skillfully as supreme—his pure incantation. He recited it and set it on the waters, He poured sleep upon him as he was slumbering deeply. He put Apsû to slumber as he poured out sleep, And Mummu, the counsellor, was breathless with agitation. He split (Apsû’s) sinews, ripped off his crown, Carried away his aura and put it on himself” (Enūma Eliš, trans. Lambert, 53, 55, tablet I, lines 59–68).

and characters described in these accounts in order to substantiate these speculations, so, for now, they will be left as interesting observations that could provide an opportunity for further investigation.

5.4 Final Thoughts

“Of making many books there is no end” (Eccl 12:12), and of nothing is this statement more true than in reference to studies about the early chapters of Genesis. This reality should not lead to weary despair but rather amazement that, after more than two millennium, these chapters have continued to both confuse and captivate their audience. It is hoped that the analysis and conclusions above provide a small contribution to the better understanding of Gen 2:4–4:26. Perhaps the proposed reading of these chapters, which focused on the theme of the knowledge and good and bad and the power described by this knowledge, may also function as a reminder of the power that each person has to choose to influence their own context in creative or destructive ways.

6. ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations conform to *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014), with the exception of U.S. state abbreviations, for which the two-letter postal codes are utilized, and with the addition of the following abbreviations:

PN	The Paradise Narrative
FN	The Fratricide Narrative

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