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The Serpent in Gen 3

By Karen Randolph Jones

(Sauldord University, Birmingham, Alabama)

A serpent (*šūp*) appears in seven verses (1-5, 14-15) in the J document's Gen 3 and therein is held responsible for inducing the first woman to disobey her Creator by partaking from a certain tree in the garden of Eden. Then she brings her husband to the same disobedience, subsequently explaining to God, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate" (3 13). Poetry later in the chapter (3 14-15) contains a curse on the serpent, explaining why it is the most despised animal on the earth, why it crawls on its belly, and why women both loathe and fear it so intensely. The object of this present paper is to draw out the precise significance of this reptile in the narrative by comparing its role there to its usual symbolism in the ancient Near East. Apparently, three commonly accepted aspects of that symbolism underlie our story — those of recurring youthfulness, wisdom, and chaos.

The Serpent as a Symbol of Recurring Youthfulness

The serpent of Gen 3 firmly denies (*šūp* *niš-šūp*) the validity of the divine warning that death will follow eating from the tree in the midst of the garden¹, setting itself in direct opposition to God as an authority on the subject of life. Apparently, the author of the narrative was aware that this reptile was a respectable representative of life or recurring youthfulness.

Such an association is common in the ancient Near East. In the famous Babylonian "Epic of Gilgamesh" a serpent steals from the protagonist and for itself the plant of life². Having obeyed the instruction of Utnapishtim, the Babylonian hero-survivor of the great flood now made immortal, to retrieve a plant from the sea, Gilgamesh, although already two-thirds divine, joyfully carries it homeward. Gilgamesh remarks: "This plant is a plant apart, whereby a man may

¹ There were two trees "in the midst of the garden" — the "tree of life" and the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Gen 2 9). The tree discussed by the woman and the serpent is not identified, but from their conversation and decisively from v. 22 it is clear that the woman and man ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. For a Sumerian myth involving Inanna, queen of heaven, a sacred tree in the a garden, and a serpent, see S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, 33ff.

² J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 72ff.

regain his life's breath. . . . Its name shall be 'Man Becomes Young in Old Age.'² But, alas, as he is bathing,

A serpent snuffed the fragrance of the plant; It came up [from the water] and carried off the plant. Going back it shed [its] slough.³

The meaning is clear — the serpent and not man has the ability to take on new life, symbolized by the sloughing of the skin.⁴ In the Babylonian myth "Adapa", the gods Tammuz and Gizzida (or Ninsghizida) stationed at the gates of heaven offer Adapa the bread and water of life to make him immortal.⁵ His god Ea deceitfully convinces him to refuse the elements so that Adapa is returned to the earth. A significant point here is that Ninsghizida is a serpent-god, at times connected with Tammuz, and that this serpent-god offers a man immortality. A Sumerian incantation mentions "the serpent in the water, the serpent at the quay of life."⁶ V. Lloyd-Russell devoted an entire doctoral dissertation at the University of Southern California to the proposition that the figure of the serpent in ancient Semitic-Sumerian culture represents immortality.⁷ J. Morgenstern reports the common Semitic word for serpent, *hawwa*, to be from the same root as the word for life.⁸ It is to be noticed that according to Gen 3:20 the

³ Tablet XI, 279—281.

⁴ Tablet XI, 288—289. The serpent as a thief appears elsewhere in Sumerian literature. In a liturgy from the cult of Ishme-Dagon a worshipper begs the god for prolonged life ("that in the 'House of Heaven' [evidently the sanctuary] the serpent rob me not". See S. Langdon, Sumerian Liturgical Texts, 148. On the Gudean Cylinder B: Column 10 reference is made to a serpent prevented from stealing from the mother of the god Ningirsu the goats' milk used to feed the "Inlin-kid". Here the serpent is the adversary of the prehistoric earth goddess represented as a patroness of goats. See S. Langdon loc. cit. The same motif appears in the Gilgamesh Epic.

⁵ For accounts from primitives of the sloughing of its skin as a representation of the immortality of the serpent, see J. G. Frazer, Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead, I 69—72. The ancient Egyptians believed that the sloughing of the skin reflected the eternal youthfulness of the serpent. See E. A. W. Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians, I 273. C. Westermann has recognized this: "Zu den Fähigkeiten der Schlange gehört auch, daß sie durch Abstreifen der Haut ihr Leben erneuern kann, deshalb kennt sie sich auch über Tod und Leben aus." C. Westermann, Genesis, BK 1/5, 324.

⁶ ANET 101ff.

⁷ S. Langdon, Semitic Mythology, 227.

⁸ V. Lloyd-Russell, The Serpent as the Prime Symbol of Immortality, Has its Origin in the Semitic-Sumerian Culture (unpublished Doctor's thesis, The University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1938). He says that "the serpent cult is the fundamental expression of the desire, inherent in man, for immortality . . ." See also J. A. Soggin, La caduta dell'uomo nel terzo capitolo della Genesi, Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni 33 (1962), 227—256.

⁹ J. Morgenstern, On Gilgamesh-Epic XI, 274—320, Zeitschrift für Assyriologie, 29 (1916), 291. Eusebius reports that the Phoenicians and the Egyptians believed the serpent renews its youth almost indefinitely. See Praeparatio Evangelica I, 10.

first woman is called *hawwa* because she is the mother of all living. Further, the present writer has earlier shown the serpent's relationship to fertility by pointing out its frequent associations in Mesopotamian and Canaanite religion with the reproductive areas of the body of the goddess, with water, with the bull, and with the dove.¹⁰

In Egypt the serpent is often a symbol of immortality. According to W. R. Cooper the cobra, or uraeus, is the Egyptian ideograph for "immortal", and the immortality of the pharaoh may be described as "the living years of the uraeus."¹¹ A serpent biting its tail is a common Egyptian emblem for eternity. One name for the primeval serpent is "Invisible One", because it came into being before the sun.¹² Ezekiel states that Pharaoh is like the great serpent which lies in the Nile and boasts, according to the Hebrew, "I, I have made myself" (29:3). In "The Primeval Establishment of Order" a deceased asks the primeval serpent Atum, "What is (my duration of life)?" Atum replies,

Thou art (destined) for millions (of years), a lifetime of millions. I have caused that he [Horus] send out the great ones. Further, I shall destroy all that I have made, and this land will return into Nun, into the floodwaters, as (in) its first state. I (alone) am a survivor, together with Osiris, when I have made my form in another state, serpents which men do not know and gods do not see.¹³

The Egyptians could symbolize life itself by a rearing serpent.¹⁴ Ch. 87 of "The Book of the Dead" contains the following magical formula to be repeated to bring immortality by transforming a person into a serpent,

I am the snake, the son of the earth, multiplying the years I lay myself down and am brought forth every day. I am the snake, the son of the earth, at the ends of the earth. I lay myself down and am brought forth, renewed, grown young again every day.¹⁵

According to Plutarch the Egyptians "compare the asp to lighting, since it does not grow old and manages to move with ease and suppleness without the use of limbs."¹⁶ The heavenly serpent Bata is "of millions of years, millions of years in length."¹⁷

Clearly, then, both in Mesopotamia and in Egypt the serpent was a figure of life and immortality.

¹⁰ K. R. Joines, The Bronze Serpent in the Israelite Cult, JBL 87 (1968), 245ff.

¹¹ W. R. Cooper, Observations on the Serpent Myths of Ancient Egypt, Journal of Transactions of the Victoria Institute 6 (1873), 339.

¹² R. R. Rundle Clarke, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt, 241.

¹³ ANET 9ff.

¹⁴ R. R. Rundle Clarke op. cit. 36.

¹⁵ Ch. H. S. Davies (ed.), Book of the Dead.

¹⁶ Isis and Osiris, Section 74.

¹⁷ W. R. Cooper op. cit. 340.

The Serpent as a Symbol of Wisdom

The serpent of Gen 3, the most "subtle" (חָיִי) animal of creation, represents also supernatural wisdom. Although the first man is forbidden to eat from the tree of the garden before the serpent is created (Gen 2:16-20), the reptile knows of the prohibition before accosting the woman (Gen 3:1)¹⁸. It pretends to know as much about the tree "to make one wise" as God does (Gen 3:4-5), challenging His demand (Gen 3:1) and questioning His truthfulness (Gen 3:4)¹⁹. It then pronounces the divine motive in the prohibition as one of jealous fear that man would become like God. The serpent convinces the woman that it is wiser than she, knowing even the secret intents of the mind of God so that in its supernatural wisdom it understands that mind better than can the woman in her believing obedience. It invites her to stand in that wisdom and to reconsider the truth of a command made by a god who has willingly deceived her²⁰. To use the words of H. Gunkel, the serpent had "geheimes Wissen, das außer ihr nur noch Gott selber weiß"²¹.

The serpent as a figure of wisdom is encountered frequently in the ancient Near East. The Coffin Texts from Egypt have the primeval serpent saying,

I extended everywhere, in accordance with what was to come into existence, I knew, as the One, alone, majestic, the indwelling Soul, the most potent of the gods²².

It was from the center of the coils of this primeval serpent that the creative word was devised and the laws of the universe formulated,

¹⁸ Weil has C. Westermann witten, "Man kann für die mythische Deutung auch nicht die 'übermenschlichen' Fähigkeiten der Schlange anführen, die sich in ihrem Sprechen und dem Wissen göttlicher Geheimnisse zeigen." C. Westermann op. cit. 324.
¹⁹ "Der Baum der Erkenntnis des Guten und des Bösen ist der Baum des göttlichen Kennens; das Gute und Böse zusammen ist das All. . . . Dem Menschen ist nicht das Kennen im allgemeinen, sondern das göttliche Kennen verboten. Das metaphysische Kennen im allgemeinen, sondern das altorientalische Götterkenn, gehören zusammen." Th. C. Vriezen, *Onderzoek naar de Paradijsoorstelling bij de Oude Semietische Volken* (1937) 240. Th. C. Vriezen has a summary of the work in German on 234ff.

²⁰ The serpent accuses God of the capriciousness, adamancy, and deceitfulness characteristic of the ancient Near Eastern pantheons. In the Babylonian "Creation of Man by the Mother Goddess", man is created to be nothing more than slaves for the gods (ANET 99ff.). Ea, the Babylonian god of wisdom, cheats Adapa of immortality by blatant deception (ANET 101ff.). In "The Creation Epic", man is formed only to be taskmasters for the gods (ANET 60ff.). The point is that these gods felt no compunction either in deceiving man, in manipulating him, or in destroying him.

²¹ H. Gunkel, *Genesis*, 15.

²² See R. R. Rundle Clarke op. cit. 51.

for the "Universal Master" relates to the minor deities that he delivered the controlling regulations of creation "while I was in the midst of the serpent coil"²³. A Pyramid Text has the Creator-Primeval Serpent boasting,

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 be²⁴.

Other Pyramid Texts have it said of the serpent,

. . . thou art indeed the mysterious, the hidden, as the gods call thee, because thou hast no arms, with which thou mayest go in the following of thy brothers, the gods²⁵.

Thus it is understandable that E. A. Wallis Budge can report that the Egyptians believed an amulet of serpent skin would add to a man's craftiness and cunning²⁶. When Jesus of Nazareth instructed his disciples to be discriminating, he told them to "be wise as serpents" (Matth 10:16).

These associations of the serpent with wisdom and recurring youthfulness bring together two highly interesting themes in the ancient Near East²⁷. Man and the Divine are often said to be related by having either similar images or identical substances²⁸, and this divine-human association involves primarily wisdom alike in kind although not entirely in degree. It is this divine wisdom of man which prompts him to seek another divine element — immortality. The predominant traits of Gilgamesh are wisdom and strength; however, his wisdom only makes him, although two-thirds divine, more aware of his mortality and more desirous of eternal life. He is told that "when the gods created mankind, death for mankind they set aside, life in their own hands retaining"²⁹, that is, his humanity prevents his being immortal. Further, a serpent steals from him a plant of which he had

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Number 1146. For this translation, see R. R. Rundle Clarke op. cit. 50.

²⁵ Numbers 664cc—665c. See S. A. C. Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts*, I—IV.

²⁶ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Talismans*, 22.

²⁷ See J. Pedersen, *Wisdom and Immortality*, in: *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, 238—246.

²⁸ Of mankind, his father instructs the Egyptian king Merikare, "They who have issued from his Creator-god body are his images". ANET 417. In Gen 1:26 man is said to have been created in the image of God. In the Babylonian *Enuma Elish* man is created from the blood of the rebellious god Kingu. ANET 60ff. In the Babylonian "Creation of Man by the Mother Goddess" the mother goddess Mami creates mankind male and female from a mixture of clay and blood and flesh of a slain god. ANET 99ff. In the Egyptian myth of "the Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation" man originates from the tear of the Creator-god. ANET 6ff.

²⁹ Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet X, iii, 3—5.

said, "I myself shall eat it and thus return to the state of my youth"³⁰. The obvious import is that even with the wisdom of the gods, man is irretrievably subject to the laws of death. The sun-god Shamash had correctly informed Gilgamesh prior to his obtaining the plant, "The life thou pursuest thou shalt not find."³¹ Utnapishtim, the sole survivor of the flood, is wise, having overheard even the assembly of the gods, but he is not immortal until decreed so by the god Enlil³². In "Adapa" Ea, the god of wisdom, "who knows what pertains to heaven", creates Adapa his priest to have wisdom but not immortality³³. While Adapa is fishing one day in order to feed the gods, his boat is capized by the south wind which Adapa curses, causing it to abate for seven days. Anu, the god of heaven, recognizing that the south wind has ceased to blow, orders Adapa to appear before him. Ea then warns Adapa that Adapa will be offered the bread and water of death in the presence of Anu, admonishing him to decline them. On the contrary, Adapa is presented the bread and water of immortality so that upon partaking he will become a god, as Utnapishtim, and thereby would never again destroy the south wind³⁴. Heeding the treacherous counsel of Ea, alas, Adapa does not devour these elements. Then, "As Anu looked at him, he laughed at him: . . . Thou shalt not have (eternal) life! Ah, perverse mankind."³⁵ Adapa is returned to the earth to live out his days, and Ea by plain deception retains his priest of Eridu. Ea would have lost his priest had Adapa accepted the life-giving substances, for Adapa would have become immortal, that is, a god. Adapa is on the brink of doing so, but Ea, his Creator-god, deceives him. It is highly important, however, that the intention of Anu be understood—if Adapa had eaten, *as a man Anu would have destroyed him*. He would no longer be on the earth to destroy the wind. *This is the same reason Utnapishtim was made immortal*. Enlil intended that all of mankind be destroyed by the flood, but Utnapishtim had overheard the divine council and prepared for the flood, escaping its destruction. Enlil was startled and very angry to see Utnapishtim after the flood: "Has some living soul escaped? No man was to survive the destruction."³⁶ Enlil then in hostility devised a plan to complete the annihilation of mankind: he made Utnapishtim and his wife (who escaped with him) immortal and divine. Utnapishtim recounts:

³⁰ Tablet XI, 282—284.

³¹ Tablet X, i, 8.

³² Tablet XI, 194—195.

³³ ANET 101ff. Ea is so described in line 12.

³⁴ One of the gods who present Adapa these elements is a serpent-god.

³⁵ Fragment B, 66—68.

³⁶ The Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet XI, 173—174.

He took my wife aboard and made (her) kneel by my side. Standing between us, he touched our foreheads to bless us: 'Hicerto Utnapishtim has been but human. Henceforth Utnapishtim and his wife shall be like unto us gods'³⁷.

So it is that the kinship of man and the divine would be perfected if man in his wisdom were granted immortality also, as with Utnapishtim. Man has been close, but has never reached this stage, as is reflected in the myths of Gilgamesh and Adapa and in the story of Gen 3. In Gen 2—3 man from the first is mortal and by substance is ranked with the animals³⁸, but by naming them signifies his superior wisdom. This wisdom is less than that of God and in it man is obedient; it is not until man has eaten of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" that God says, "Behold, man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3 22)³⁹. It is the serpent, the authority on the subject of life, which knows that men with wisdom like that of the Divine once attained will demand immortality. Consequently, when the man has eaten from the tree God expels him from the garden and has it guarded because man now can "put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (Gen 3 22). Man has now become a threat to God. *He would become a god*. The eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil reveals the nature and the location of the tree of life, apparently originally concealed from man. The serpent represents both the wisdom which has overheard (even before its creation) the divine council (as with Utnapishtim) and the craftiness of deceit (as with Ea). As Ea deceived Adapa, God has deceived the man, according to the serpent, but it has seen through the strategy. It pretends to have part of the divine wisdom which man does not have, but which he can have by partaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; thereupon, man would lack but one step to become divine—to partake of the tree of life. The serpent understands each step of the entire procedure. Its final intention is to destroy man and to challenge the uniqueness of God.

The final outcome of Gen 3, as in the myths of Adapa and Gilgamesh, is that man fails to obtain immortality. Mortality marks an eternal boundary between man and the divine. The serpent did not bring mortality; it is innate in man. Instead, the serpent would bring immortality to man in order to pit him against God. It would do so

³⁷ Tablet XI, 191—194.

³⁸ Man is labeled *ḥayyā* "a living creature", in Gen 2 7; so are the animals in v. 19.

³⁹ I. Engnell holds that this new knowledge consists in having sexual intercourse. Because man gained the power to procreate, he must be kept from obtaining immortality. See I. Engnell, 'Knowledge' and 'Life' in the Creation Story, in: Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East, Suppl. VT 3, 103—119. It is to be argued against this view that according to Gen 1 28 God instructed man immediately after his creation to multiply and to fill the earth.

by deception; therefore, the serpent in Gen 3 is a figure also of chaos and evil.

The Serpent as a Symbol of Chaos

The serpent in Gen 3 is obviously a figure of chaos and evil, representing as it were, the return of the chaos of חָוָה (Gen 1 2), the Hebrew adaptation of the Babylonian Tiamat, the chaotic sea-serpent. This is a bit of the chaotic sea *redivivus* now in the garden of perfect harmony and bliss. The serpent sows seeds of distrust and rebellion to a unified and peaceful existence.

As a figure of chaos the serpent is neither the incarnation of, nor under the direction of, a superhuman and demonic power in opposition to man and God; it is "kein böses Prinzip ihm [God] gegenüberstand, von dem das Böse seinen Ausgang haben konnte."⁴⁰ There is no absolute dualism here, for the serpent is "kein uranfängliches böses Prinzip"⁴¹. On the contrary, the woman initially seems to have recognized the serpent as a friendly creature. It is not a demon, but a natural creature of God; it is not the incarnation of a celestial power but a "son of the earth" to be distinguished from the other animals only by its method of locomotion and its craftiness; it is not a mythical monster which invades the garden, but a creature which belongs anywhere and everywhere in the good creation of God. At the same time, the deceitful attitude of the serpent is alien to the spirit of the garden of Eden. The Yahwist has used the figure of the serpent to *objectify* chaos, but *not to personify it*. W. W. Graf Baudissin is quite correct: "Die Schlange erscheint hier nicht als Verkörperung irgendwelcher übermenschlichen Macht."⁴² The serpent of Gen 3 is no *satán*⁴³; it itself is a cunning creature with no need of a superhuman force.

In the ancient Near East in general the serpent was a figure of chaos, evil and destruction. To emphasize the fierceness of their battle, the Canaanite Baal and Mot are said to "bite each other like serpents"⁴⁴. In *Enûma Elish* Tiamat prepares for her battle with Marduk by engaging "monster-serpents, sharp of tooth, unsparing of fang" who have venom for blood⁴⁵. An Assyrian word for serpent, *ai-wi-lu*, is

⁴⁰ J. Hehn, *Zur Paradiesesschlange*, in: *Merke Festschrift*, 1922, 138.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 139. "Hatte J mit der Schlange wirklich die Verkörperung einer Jahwe feindlichen Vorstellung gemeint, dann hätte er nicht im gleichen Atemzug sagen können, Jahwe habe sie erschaffen." (C. Westermann op. cit. 324.)

⁴² Studien zur Semitischen Religionsgeschichte, I 290.

⁴³ Wisdom of Solomon 2 24 and Revelation 12 9 20 2 later make this identification.

⁴⁴ R. Dussaud, *Le Mythe de Ba'al d'après des documents nouveaux*, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 111 (1935), 62.

⁴⁵ Tablet I, 132ff.

from *ai-wu*, "enemy" and means "Enemy of God"⁴⁶. The Egyptian Pyramid Texts contain numerous incantations and magical formulae designed to protect the deceased pharaohs from the evil of the serpents⁴⁷. Serpents are sometimes called gods, or brothers of the gods, and are usually considered hostile to man. They are evil, they love darkness, and hate the light. Even the sun-god Re could be bitten by a serpent. The serpent Apep or Apophis is the Egyptian figure *par excellence* of evil and chaos. It embodies the hostile darkness and the sea which swallow Re at sunset and through which he must travel at night to rise again in the morning. Apep may be called "the destroyer", "the enemy of the gods", and "the devourer of the souls of men."⁴⁸ Serpents on the earth are feared and revered because they are extensions of Apep, as hostile to man as Apep is to Re; thus Apep is the embodiment of all evil⁴⁹. Further, most of the Old Testament references to the serpent point to its assumed ferocity.

Conclusions

The serpent of Gen 3 represents the embodiment of a strange combination of life, wisdom, and chaos. The underlying purpose of this serpent is to deceive and to destroy mankind; consequently, it basically symbolizes chaos. However, it uses its association with life and wisdom to realize this objective⁵⁰. Apparently, the original design of the serpent is that man should become immortal and thereupon throw into confusion the plan of creation. Man would then not be the crown of creation, but a divine being like the Creator. So it deceives man to become "wise", knowing that as a result he would search out the tree of life, eat from it, and become immortal. Gilgamesh would have become immortal had he eaten the plant of life. Anu would have wrecked the *status quo* of Ea had Adapa partaken of the bread and water of life and become a god. In disgust and hostility Enlil wiped the earth clear of mankind by transforming Utanapishtim and his wife into immortal deities. In a sense the serpent wishes good for man — it desires that he be immortal and divine; but to be so would spoil the entire plan of creation. Like Ea, the serpent was deceiving man for

⁴⁶ F. Delitzsch, *Assyrische Tiernamen*, 69.

⁴⁷ See ANET 326 for some of these.

⁴⁸ W. R. Cooper op. cit. 325.

⁴⁹ E. A. W. Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, I 269, remarks: "The allies and companions of this serpent [Apep] were serpents like itself and to nearly every power which was hostile to the dead or the living the form of a snake or serpent was attributed."

⁵⁰ C. Westermann is correct that "... die Schlange in Gen 3 als magisches-Lebens- und Weisheitstier gemeint sei" (C. Westermann op. cit. 323).

its own wider purpose; like Anu and Enlil, it would lead man to transformation into a god. Had God not interrupted the procedure, seemingly man would have been so transformed. The serpent deceives man to bring him life, not death; thereby God and man would be set in conflict in the realm of immortality. In a sense both God and man would be devastated — the one God would degenerate to another god, and man would no longer exist. The serpent would lead man to destroy himself and would use him to share in the Godhead.

The extreme shrewdness in the strategy of the serpent is unmistakable. It can in hostility dispense neither with man nor God. An authority on wisdom, it entices man to search for more knowledge; an authority on life, it knows that added wisdom will demand immortality. Immortality attained, man will be a god. This is the ancient Near Eastern pattern. God admits that taking from the tree of knowledge of good and evil made man "like us". He then takes precautionary steps to prevent man from reaching the tree of life and becoming immortal. The reasoning of the serpent is sound — *man would have become a god*. A pluralistic pantheon and a manless world would have resulted. Now it is evident why the serpent is called "more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made" (Gen 3 1).

The serpent, then, represents exactly what the Yahwist sees in man's disobedience of his Creator — his desire and subsequent attempt to become his own god. The Yahwist has treated some now lost and archaic story involving a serpent in a primeval garden as he did the story of the tower of Babel (Gen 11) — to portray his belief that man's basic fault is his will to be divine, to build himself "a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens", and to "make a name" for himself (Gen 11 4)⁵¹. The serpent objectifies this basic human inclination, thus representing what J. Hehn calls the "tiefsten Probleme des Daseins"⁵².

⁵¹ "Da die Erzählung von dem ersten Menschengeschlecht handelt, kann der Verführer kein Mensch sein, es muß an eines der anderen Geschöpfe gedacht werden. Damit ist die Einführung der Schlange als Verführer auszeichnend motiviert und alle Versuche, ihr Auftreten in 3 1-7 aus anderen Zusammenhängen zu erklären, werden damit von vornherein fraglich." Ibid. 322.

⁵² J. Hehn op. cit. 138. The author of Gen 3 cannot furnish an origin to this inclination. It did not arise in non-Israelite religion, but mysteriously in the depths of man. "Bei ihr [serpent] wäre diese Herkunft eindeutig festgelegt: das Böse hat seinen Ursprung in der Gegenreligion Israels. Das kann in Gen 3 aber auf keinen Fall gemeint sein. Das Böse oder die Kraft der Verführung, von der Gen 3 spricht, muß ein menschliches Phänomen sein, ebenso wie die Sünde des Menschen, die Übertretung. Adam steht in Gen 2—3 in gar keiner Weise für Israel, Adam repräsentiert die Menschheit. Damit daß Kap. 3 J die Menschen durch die kluge Schlange, ein Geschöpf Gottes, verführt werden läßt, bringt er zum Ausdruck, daß es nicht möglich ist, die Herkunft des Bösen zu erkennen. Es bleibt bei der schroffen Aporie, daß Gott das Wesen geschaffen hat, das den Menschen zum Ungehorsam verführt, das Böse bleibt in seiner

Man is then left with his shame: "Dahinter steht ein bestimmtes Wissen vom Menschen, daß Scham unerklärt entstehen und unerklärt verschwinden kann"⁵³.

Die Schlange in Gen 3 scheint immer wiederkehrende Jugendlichkeit, Weisheit und Chaos zu symbolisieren. Wenn man die altorientalische Verfahrensweise beachtet, der Weisheit die Unsterblichkeit hinzuzufügen, um den Status einer Gottheit zu erhalten, zeigt sich, was der Verfasser von J als den grundsätzlichen menschlichen Fehler empfand: das Verlangen und das Bemühen der Menschheit, ihr eigener Gott zu werden.

Le serpent de Gen 3 semble symboliser à la fois la jeunesse toujours renouvelée, la sagesse et le chaos. Si on prête attention au fait que dans l'ancien Orient on ajoutait l'immortalité à la sagesse pour obtenir le statut divin, on entrevoit ce que l'auteur de J ressentait comme l'erreur fondamentale de l'humanité: le désir de devenir son propre dieu et l'effort fait dans ce sens.

The Veracity of Ezekiel, the Sins of Manasseh, and Jeremiah 44 is

By Morton Smith

(614 Fayerweather Hall, Columbia University New York, New York)

For the Ktav reprint of C. C. Torrey's *Pseudo-Ezekiel*, Prof. Moshe Greenberg has written a beautifully clear *Prolegomenon*, itself an important contribution to the study of Ezekiel. It begins with a review of the historical criticism of the book from the end of the past century to the refutation of C. C. Torrey's arguments by S. Spiegel and W. F. Albright and the return of scholarship to the opinion that Ezekiel worked in Babylonia during the twenty or thirty years after 593. Concurring in this opinion, M. Greenberg focuses attention on that side of C. C. Torrey's argument which has not been satisfactorily answered — the contention that the idolatry Ezekiel attributes to the Jerusalemites of his own generation is otherwise attested only for the reign of Manasseh. This contention was attacked by V. Herrlich² and G. Fohrer³ but defended and developed by Y. Kaufmann⁴. M. Green-

Herkunft absolut rätselhaft. Diese für J äußerst wichtige Aussage: für die Herkunft des Bösen gibt es keine Ätiologie . . ." (325).

⁵³ C. Westermann op. cit. 321. C. Westermann had written a few sentences earlier, "Ein Mensch, der sich nicht mehr schämt, der 'schamlos' geworden ist, ist nicht mehr im vollen Sinne menschlich."

¹ Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy, by C. C. Torrey, and Critical Articles by S. Spiegel and C. C. Torrey; Prolegomenon by M. Greenberg, 1970.

² V. Herrlich, Ezechielprobleme, BZAW 61, 1933, 52—55.

³ G. Fohrer, Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel, BZAW 72, 1952, 164—177.

⁴ Y. Kaufmann, Toldot Ha'emunah Hayisre'elit, III 1948, 382—392, 595—601; The Religion of Israel, 1960, 401—408.

