

Evil in Genesis and Other Ancient Near Eastern Creation Stories

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1 Introduction to the Question

Thanks to the wealth of texts about creation that have emerged from the Middle East over the past 150 years,¹ it can seem that creation accounts cover, as put by one commentator, “the origins of life, the universe, *and everything*”² (Everything!). The author of this quotation seems to have the vast range of phenomena in mind that can be gleaned from the many, multifaceted ancient Near Eastern creation accounts and references now available. Whatever the precise meaning of “everything” for this author, his formulation evokes some critical questions for the study of biblical creation: what is the range of experienced material and non-material phenomena across the range of biblical and extra-biblical creation accounts and allusions? What do creation accounts include in the range of activity and attitudes exercised by humans? Where (if at all) do sin and evil fall within this range?

Historically, the question about sin and evil has carried tremendous weight. Traditional Christian theology has, in Genesis 3, seen the “fall” of humanity from grace because of its sin in disobeying the divine command not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Here Christianity was dependent on Jewish antecedents (Ben Sira 25:24–26; 2 Esdr 7:118, 3:21–22, 4:30; 2 Bar 48:42–43).³ Later, Jewish thought generally moved away from this approach. Instead, it attributed the “evil inclination” (*yēšer hara*) to humanity, which could be traced to one of the prefaces to the Flood Story in Gen 6:5: “And the Lord saw that the wicked-

1 For surveys of Mesopotamian, West Semitic and biblical sources: Clifford 1994; Schmid 2012; Batto 2013; for further surveys of Mesopotamian sources: Pettinato 1971; Bottéro & Kramer 1989; Lisman 2013; Lambert 2013, 2016; for surveys of Egyptian sources: Allen 1988; Quirke 2008.

2 Hays 2014, 61 (my italics).

3 Zevit 2013, 9–13.

ness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination (*yēšer*) of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil (*ra'*) continually" (Gen 8:21).⁴ This "evil inclination" was inferred to have been created in humans by the deity. An early Jewish text with this view on human creation is fragment 1 of what is called 4Q Paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus (4Q422). This Qumran fragment attributes an "evil inclination" (*ywšr r'*) to the man in the context of the Garden (l. 12),⁵ a hallmark of the human person in Second Temple literature⁶ and more extensively so in rabbinic accounts.⁷ The Qumran fragment echoes the same vocabulary (though not the identical phrase) found in Gen 6:5 and 8:21. Thus, this reading tradition retrojects the view of Gen 6:5 and 8:21 back to the creation of humanity, despite what Gen 8:21 says: "the inclination of the heart of the human person is evil *from its youth*" (my italics; note also Jer 32:30; Ps 51:7).

Neither "the fall" nor the "evil inclination" captures the whole story as related in Genesis 1–6. The early Jewish and Christian view of the sin in the garden in Genesis 3 has been discredited in recent biblical scholarship,⁸ while the traditional Jewish approach about the evil inclination does not account for what leads up to Genesis 6. Yet, even biblical scholars who have recognized the problem with the Christian view of "the fall" have not provided an account of what Genesis 1–6 does entail when it comes to the question of the origins of evil. For example, Bernard F. Batto states: "The Yahwist's primeval myth is not about a 'fall' at all, but about *continuously improved* creation."⁹ Batto traces the plot from Genesis 2 through 6, criticizing the divine creator's "original failure" in creation,¹⁰ but without mentioning the text's discourse of sin in Genesis 4 or evil in Genesis 6. Moreover, it is arguably not a general story only of improvement. Batto does recognize, rightly to my mind, that it is only in Genesis 6 that "the full definition of humankind" is achieved,¹¹ yet what the text has to say about this matter prior to Genesis 6 is understudied in his discussion. Another scholar who has treated Genesis 2–3 extensively is Ziony Zevit.¹² While denying "the fall" in Genesis 3, Zevit's account leaves aside the question of humanity's moral development along with the emergence of sin and evil.

4 On the "evil inclination": Brand 2013, 19–22, 46–48, 138–144, 277–283; note the combination of "the evil inclination" and "a satan/Satan" in 11QPs^a XIX, ll. 15–16, discussed in: Brand 2013, 208–210; Keith & Stuckenbruck 2016.

5 Parry & Tov 2014, 1028–1029.

6 Brand 2013, 35–146.

7 Stuart 1984, 81–205; Boyarin 1993, 61–67; Nash 1997, 74–75; for further secondary literary: Brand 2013, 21.

8 Batto 2013, 76; Zevit 2013, 8–16, 160–171. See further below for the problems entailed.

9 Batto 2013, 76–77 (Batto's italics).

10 On comments on Genesis 2–11: Clifford 1994, 149: "God does it right the first time [...]. Confidence in Genesis is founded on God's justice and mercy, and the reliability of the created world."

11 Batto 2013, 79–80.

12 Zevit 2013.

One important phenomenon with respect to creation stories is the understanding of evil. The ancient vocabulary for “evil” or “bad” may not distinguish different types of evil, for example moral evil as opposed to destruction. Biblical Hebrew *raʾ* bears the following range of meanings: “bad,” i.e., “poor in quality, unhealthy, of little value”; “bad, evil” i.e., “displeasing, disagreeable, unpleasant, unsatisfactory, distressing”; “(ethically) evil, wicked”; “evil one, wicked one”; “evil,” i.e., “unkind, mean” or “greedy” or “harmful, severe grievous, awesome.”¹³ The moral is likewise absent from attestations of Phoenician and Aramaic *rʾ*,¹⁴ while the Ugaritic noun is unattested.¹⁵ West Semitic **ršʾ*, too, denotes non-moral harm as well as moral evil or wickedness.¹⁶

These terms play only a little role in the biblical creation narrative (see the discussion below of Isa 45:7). While modern theological discourses place a high premium in thinking about moral matters, biblical texts tend to embed the moral within a broad rubric of a beneficial political order and power that sometimes names justice and thus public morality as a concern—and sometimes not. The modern concern for moral or ethical evil or bad stands in an inverse relationship to ancient representations of evil or bad that are often lacking in moral terms or characterization. This difference—and even the lack of the use of terminology for good and evil—sometimes goes unacknowledged in many discussions of creation. Given the range of senses for *raʾ* (or for **ršʾ*), the distinction may not always be clear in a given text, and only contextual clues (such as other vocabulary suggesting either moral evil or simply destruction or harm) can help to make a determination of the word’s sense. This difficulty needs to be acknowledged at the outset. Notably for this discussion, the discourse of good and evil is never used of, much less attributed to, either human actions or primordial components of the universe in biblical creation accounts or related West Semitic texts.

2 Evil in Ugaritic and Mesopotamian Texts

The problem of the vocabulary of “evil” in ancient sources may be illustrated by modern discussions of primordial elements in the universe, such as divine enemies in Ugaritic, Mesopotamian and biblical texts. To be clear, the Ugaritic texts or other extra-biblical West Semitic texts afford little, if any, information about the creation of the universe or the human person apart from divine titles, e.g., El as “creator of

13 Clines 2010, 505–509.

14 Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995, 1079.

15 The word is not attested in: del Olmo Lete & Sanmartín 2015.

16 For example, in Ugaritic *ršʾ* in KTU 1.178.10 is used for a bad person, and the verbal form, “to harm, do evil to” in KTU 1.169.6 (del Olmo Lete & Sanmartín 2015, 736). This arguably moral usage in these incantational contexts is absent from mythic descriptions of cosmic enemies or other primordial elements of the universe. See further below.

creatures" (*bny bnwt*), "father of humanity" (*'ab 'adm*; see "creator/establisher of the earth," *qn 'rṣ*); and Athirat as "mother of the gods" (*qnyt 'ilm*).¹⁷ While these epithets indicate that cosmogony was a known concept at Ugarit, it is unfortunate that no creation account of the world and humanity has survived thus far (see the theogony in the text often called "the Birth of the Beautiful Gods").¹⁸ Accordingly, the West Semitic sources afford very little, if any, evidence when it comes to the question of evil in creation.¹⁹

Though neither a creation account nor a cosmogony (as these terms are commonly used),²⁰ the Ugaritic Baal Cycle has been drawn into the discussion of primordial evil in the universe. Christoph Uehlinger characterizes Leviathan in the Baal Cycle along the following lines: "a paradigmatic monster and enemy of considerable mythological attire, he outweighs other representatives of chaos and evil."²¹ According to Marjo C. A. Korpel and Johannes C. de Moor,²² "evil" and "powers of evil" are terms of discourse for demons that take the form of monstrous snakes such as *ltn* (biblical Leviathan).²³ The book also refers to Yamm in the Baal Cycle as among the "forces of evil."²⁴ In a similar vein, Richard E. Averbeck divides the protagonists along the following lines: "Baal is considered to be the good god and Yamm the evil god."²⁵ There are two problems with this approach. First, these scholars sometimes do not define what they mean by the term, "evil." They may mean that as Yamm opposes the good order to be established by Baal, the opposition to this god by Yamm is considered evil, but they do not say so. Second, and arguably more problematic, no language of evil is ever clearly used by Leviathan, Yamm or other Ugaritic cosmic enemies. Such forces are destructive, but whether they are to be regarded as evil may be questioned.

17 Batto 2013, 40; Clifford 1994, 118–119, 126–127, 132; Korpel & de Moor 2014, 6–8, 11–12, 30; for these epithets: Rahmouni 2008.

18 For this text: Smith 2006.

19 Korpel & de Moor 2014, 50–51 hold the view that Mot is called "evil" in KTU 1.23.13 based on a highly debatable interpretation of the word, *šr* (untranslated in: del Olmo Lete and & Sanmartín 2015, 843), often taken as a title of rank such as "prince," a meaning known elsewhere for this word in Ugaritic (del Olmo Lete and & Sanmartín 2015, 842; Rahmouni 2008, 44, n. 9). Based on this single, dubious instance, Korpel and de Moor draw the following, strong conclusion: "The Ugaritic evidence shows that the concept of an evil divine or angelic prince is much older than previously thought."

20 For critical views on this question: Margalit 1981, 137–145; Smith 1994, 75–87, 100–101; note also the careful comments: Clifford 1994, 117–126, 132; Levenson 1988, 158–159, n. 30; for a recent discussion of the Baal Cycle as a creation myth: Korpel & de Moor 2014, 11.

21 Uehlinger 1999, 512; also 514: Leviathan "represents a symbolic residue, within reality, of evil and chaos which even the creator cannot expel beyond the boundaries of his creation"; for problems with the use of the term "chaos" applied to ancient Near Eastern accounts: Watson 2005; Smith 2010, 234, n. 149.

22 Korpel & de Moor 2014, 72–73.

23 Korpel & de Moor 2014, 54, 73.

24 Korpel & de Moor 2014, 73–74.

25 Averbeck 2013, 15.

This lack of vocabulary in Ugaritic may be illustrated by comparing—and contrasting—the discourse of benefit and “evil” in Ugaritic Baal Cycle and the Phoenician Azitawada inscription (KAI 26). Both texts emphasize benefits provided by kings, one divine and the other human. In the Baal Cycle, the warrior storm-god, Baal, establishes a new political order entailing divine, human and natural well-being and prosperity in a broad sense. The text places an emphasis on Baal’s powerful victory over Yamm, literally “Sea,” arguably an unruly force with potential for destruction (although even here the text does not say so). The building of Baal’s palace evinces the good order of a successful monarch over his dominion. The benefits expressed in the Baal Cycle correspond to some degree with those listed by Azitawada for his kingdom, including “abundance and luxury.” Azitawada defeated rebels and violators of royal order: “And I smashed the rebels; and I crushed all evil (*kl hr*) which was in the land.” He also provided “ease (*nht*) of heart,” similar to El’s rest (**nwh*) for his spirit that he expresses about Baal in the Baal Cycle (KTU 1.6 III 18–19).²⁶ Some of the benefits provided by Azitawada, “servant of Baal,” come from “Baal” and by “the grace of Baal and the gods.” Evil here includes violations of law and order on the part of opponents to the royal order. As they would include violations of justice, they may be considered “evil,” in other words, what would be violations of good from a royal perspective. This labeling differs markedly from what is seen in the Baal Cycle, with no language for “evil.” It might be in the sense as a destructive power that Yamm might be considered “evil,”²⁷ yet unlike Azitawada’s words, the Baal Cycle never calls Yamm evil, and this god is certainly not cast as morally evil. Similarly, while Baal is powerful and constructive and thus “good,” Baal is not called “good” nor is he cast as morally good. The terms “good” and “evil”—when used by scholars to characterize the protagonists in the Baal Cycle—thus may seem misleading, not only because such terms may connote moral good and evil but also because these very terms are not even used in the Baal Cycle. Destruction in the form of Yamm and correspondingly, Death in the form of Mot, are, to be sure, fundamental to the picture of the universe that the Baal Cycle represents. Yet, there is little, if any, evidence for evil as such.

Sin has played a role in a recent analysis of two Ugaritic incantations against snakebites.²⁸ According to Marjo C. A. Korpel and Johannes de Moor, KTU 1.107 and KTU 1.100 is a creation story involving the divine being Adammu, who is killed by a snakebite leading to the recovery of the tree of life.²⁹ The text of KTU 1.107 is ex-

26 Rollston 2000, 149.

27 Levenson 1988, 10 characterizes Yamm as a rebel in the Baal Cycle. The basis for this claim is entirely unclear. In KTU 1.2 I, Yamm is not a rebel but claims the surrender of his enemy from the divine council, which accedes to his demand. In a recent work, Aaron Tugendhaft 2012, 367–384 has suggested that if any deity is a rebel in KTU 1.1–2, it would be Baal, who, in KTU 1.2 IV, does not appear to obey the decree of the divine council issued in 1.2 I.

28 For a recent discussion: del Olmo Lete 2014, 157–164, 188–211.

29 Korpel & de Moor 2014, 14, 22–26, 40–45, 47–48, 78–79.

tremely fragmentary and difficult at several critical points. Moreover, there is no indication that *'adm* in this text is divine, and elsewhere in incantations the figure is human (e.g., KTU 1.169 14, 15).³⁰ The overall interpretation is correspondingly speculative. Indeed, as Korpel and de Moor note, these texts are typically regarded as snake incantations; yet, despite these difficulties, this does not prevent them concluding that “original sin was committed by a god.”³¹

When it comes to Mesopotamian accounts, some scholars have claimed that evil is part of creation of the human person or divine enemies. Contrasting what he regards as the more dignified position of humans in Genesis, Tremper Longman III notes how the blood of what he calls “a demon god” used in human creation in Atrahasis “suggests a low view of humanity as creatures distained by the gods and evil in their creation.”³² The category of “a demon god” seems to make humanity worse than it is in this case, and it also appears to cast the narrative in moral terms more than the narrative itself does. By contrast, Batto’s characterization of humanity in Atrahasis recognizes the lack of moral language: “Whether there is a moral element (‘sin’) present or not, the humans, like the rebel god Aw-ilu, whose divine blood coursed through their veins, seem to reject their divinely decreed role as servants of the gods.”³³ Batto’s characterization removes a moral focus on humanity’s condition, yet still imputes a negative human response to the gods. The components in the human person may be more complex than in Batto’s account. On the one hand, this form of creation shows that humanity partakes of the divine,³⁴ and on the other hand, it may anticipate the later action of a rebellion on the part of the humans. Yet, there is little demonic or evil in human creation. Indeed, such “evil” or “bad” (**lemnu*) occurs only once in Atrahasis, and it does not concern humanity or its creation. In Atrahasis tablet II, column viii, line 35, *lemnu* falls within the purview of the main god, Enlil: “The gods commanded total [destruction], Enlil did an evil deed (*šipra lemna*) on the peoples.”³⁵ The text does not provide a genealogy of evil, only noting that “evil” or “bad” is a fact of life, whether on the divine level or in human experience. Indeed, evil (Enlil’s!) is manifest at the time of the flood, not at the time of creation—an important association to which we will return.

Batto suggests that evil is an important feature in other Mesopotamian accounts. For Batto, the “chaos dragon” in the cases of Anzu in the Myth of Anzu and Tiamat in Enuma Elish are “seen as the embodiment of the power of evil.”³⁶ In his characterization of Enuma Elish, Batto sees “two camps, one malevolent and the other

30 del Olmo Lete 2014, 171.

31 Korpel & de Moor 2014, 78.

32 Longman 2013, 107; Lambert 2016, 228, characterizing the enemy in the Labbu Myth and the Anzu Myth as “a demonic being or monster.”

33 Batto 2013, 202–203.

34 Lambert 2016, 140.

35 Batto 2013, 199; for the passage: Lambert & Millard 1969, 86–87.

36 Batto 2013, 213.

benevolent,” in other words, “the good guys” and the ‘bad guys’.”³⁷ Are the “bad guys” the embodiment of ‘evil’ as such? However, both sides are regarded as ‘evil.’ The term ‘evil’ is applied to the younger generation of deities rebelling against the older deity, Tiamat (Enuma Elish, tablet I, lines 111, 128).³⁸ In turn, Tiamat is said to plot “evil” against them (tablet II, l. 3).³⁹ In the end, Batto sees a “lack of a firm boundary between the ‘good gods’ and the ‘bad gods’,” and expresses “the suspicion that ultimately the malevolent deity may be indistinguishable from the benevolent deity.”⁴⁰ While such a distinction may seem elusive, the question is whether it is the distinction as such or the usage of the term for evil that is elusive. In other words, what is the meaning or sense of ‘evil’ in this case? Both sides in the text seem to be characterized as ‘evil’ from the perspective of the other; they are, in effect, political enemies that view each other negatively. Moreover, this does not seem to express evil as a general moral standard. Indeed, the text concerns competing political powers and orders, not moral evil. The rarity of moral discourse in Enuma Elish likewise serves to highlight its relatively minor weight in the picture of reality. An exception is evident with Marduk’s name 19, in VII 39–40, which declares about this god: “He made truth to prosper, he uprooted perverse speech, He separated falsehood from truth.”⁴¹ Another case appears in the summary in VII 155–156: “His mind is deep, his spirit is all-embracing, Before sin and transgression are sought out.”⁴² These relatively rare instances of ethical discourse are subsumed under a larger representation of religio-political order. It is a positive outcome of Marduk’s political power and order. Yet, as this survey suggests, Enuma Elish is not mainly concerned morally with good and evil. In sum, evil in its common moral sense is uncommon in Mesopotamian creation accounts considered by the scholars under discussion.

Biblical critics have commented in similar ways. For Jon D. Levenson, there is no evil embedded within creation in biblical creation accounts, whether in the form of the waters or in any other primordial reality: “evil has no primordial existence.”⁴³ At the same time, Levenson deploys language of malevolence in his descriptions of the primordial waters in a manner that sounds rather like the above characterizations by Batto and Averbeck. Levenson states that “we have a sense of Sea as a sinister force” in Psalm 74, and he contrasts the “benevolent, word-ordering side

37 Batto 2013, 215; for this terminology: 216–217.

38 Lambert 2013, 56–57. The word for “evil” here is mostly reconstructed, [*lemn*]*é-ti*.

39 Lambert 2013, 62–63.

40 Batto 2013, 220. According to Batto 2013, 211, the story of Erra and Ishum goes further in attributing evil in the world to the abuse of divine power; he concludes: “So the real problem is with the gods themselves. In some sense, all the gods could be considered malevolent in bad times like this, when ‘the world has gone to pot.’”

41 Lambert 2016, 126–127; much of these lines are stock phraseology as known from wisdom texts: Lambert 2013, 485; on this score he cited his own work: 1996, 88, l. 279, 134, l. 127.

42 Lambert 2016, 132–133.

43 Levenson 1988, 53.

of God” with the “malevolent forces.”⁴⁴ As a result, there is a lack of clarity or distinction about the nature of the cosmic enemies in Levenson’s descriptions. Finally, he has little to say about the origins of evil, although he states clearly that “evil is only of human origin.”⁴⁵

3 Evil in the Garden (Genesis 2-3)

Levenson, like Batto and Zevit, leaves the one clear datum about evil that is provided by the Genesis creation story undertreated: the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” or perhaps better, “the tree of knowing good and evil” (2:9, 17, and referenced also in 3:3, 6, 11–12).⁴⁶ This tree is the beginning of evil’s genealogy in the book of Genesis. The theory of “good and evil” deployed in Genesis 2 presumes neither a direct, divine creation of evil nor the presence of evil in any of the primordial elements of creation. Instead, the definition given to the tree acknowledges that what makes a human person good or evil presupposes divine knowledge (“The Lord God caused to grow from the ground every tree [...] and the tree of knowing good and evil,” 2:9). The deity knows both good and evil (as assumed by 3:5). The knowledge of both exists at the time of human creation, and it is there in the garden accessible to the humans. The deity generated both this tree and the humans, and placed in the same locale of the divine garden. In other words, the deity is credited for generating the precondition for human evil in the form of its knowledge. This tree is analogous to the material sustenance provided by the deity insofar as it is a tree along with other trees planted by the deity (2:8–9). This “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” along with the “tree of life,” belongs with “every tree desirable to sight and good for food.” In this context, goodness (*tôb*) covers the material reality of food as well as moral knowledge and immortality. The trees also appear “desirable to sight” (*neḥmād lēmar’eh*.)” The deity provides the resources for what it means to be human both in terms of human sustenance and human moral choice. Implicitly, the deity makes things that are constitutionally desirable to humans. In other words, humans are made with a capacity for desire. Desire is presupposed, not spelled out. It is in the account, but it is not accounted for.

In context, human evil results from a sequence of two actions. The first, as we have noted, is the planting of such a tree, which is a divine act. The second is the choice to eat of the fruit of that tree, which is human. The two are connected literarily, as the description of divine planting in Genesis 2:9 is echoed and ex-

44 Levenson 1988, 15, 21.

45 Levenson 1988, 49.

46 This is the standard translation despite the presence of the definite article on the second noun. The translation, “the Tree of Knowing” by Zevit 2013, 94 captures the construct relationship well for the first two nouns. Zevit does not translate what are evidently the objects following, namely “good and evil.”

panded in the description of human desire in Genesis 3:6: “The woman saw that the tree was good (*tôb*) for food, and that it was a desire (*ta’ăwâ*) to the eyes and the tree was desirable (*neḥmād*) for making one wise (*lēḥaškîl*), and she took some of its fruit and ate.” While Gen 3:6 includes the wording in 2:9, it also expands on its description. The description in 3:6 begins with the tree’s fruit: “the tree was good for food.” This clause is the same in Gen 2:9 and 3:6.

The second clause in Gen 3:6 largely follows 2:9, “it was a desire (*ta’ăwâ*) to the eyes.” The one difference in 3:6 is the substitution of *ta’ăwâ*, “desire,” for *neḥmād*, “desirable.” The noun *ta’ăwâ* (from the root, *’wh) may denote “desire, craving,” while *neḥmād* (from the root, *hmd) is a participle used adjectivally for what is “desirable” or “pleasurable.”⁴⁷ They are used both positively and negatively. The difference between the two words may not be so large as one would think. The two appear together in the Ten Commandments in the version in Deuteronomy 5:18 (the parallel version of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:14 uses *hmd twice instead). Still there may be some difference in nuance as suggested by the subjects that govern the two verbal roots. The root *hmd applies to people, while *’wh is sometimes predicated of the human “seat of the appetites (*nepeš*).”⁴⁸ Thus *hmd may denote desire generally on the part of a person, while *’wh perhaps goes deeper in adding a psychological nuance.

It is the third clause in Genesis 3:6 that is more distinctively relative to 2:9. Echoing the term *neḥmād*, “desirable,” from 2:9, the third clause in 3:6 makes a further addition: “the tree was desirable (*neḥmād*) for making one wise (*lēḥaškîl*).” The discourse of wisdom was not present in Genesis 2 but becomes part of the story in Genesis 3. Thus, compared with 2:9, v. 6 adds a layer of meaning to “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” In 2:9 the deity had made “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” attractive or desirable (*neḥmād*). However, in its human reception in 3:6, the human experiences it not only as inducing “desire” (*ta’ăwâ*). The human also receives it with a cognitive perception, a recognition (expressed as a matter of physical perception, “she saw”) of what it is desirable for, namely, “for making one wise.” How did the human come to be able to make this assessment? The story presupposes that the human has an inbuilt capacity to make such distinctions. Yet, the logic or reasoning for the choice is not provided, leaving open the question of how a human thought to be made good can make a choice that is not considered good. Desire and desirability are included in the account, but they are not accounted for.

Desire is central to this account, while evil is not yet part of the story. Desire belongs to a number of accounts. Personified “Desire” (*’arš*) is named with Tnn (see biblical Tannin, for example in Psalm 74:13) as two ancient creatures of the cosmic sea in the Ugaritic texts. This figure has been compared with *pothos* (“desire”) in the

47 Brown et al. 1907, 326.

48 Brown et al. 1907, 659–661, cited by Greenstein 1973, 155; Clines 1993, 149, 150, 2011, 582.

cosmogony found in Philo of Byblos' *The Phoenician History*,⁴⁹ and with *erōs* ("love, passion, desire") attested in some Greek cosmogonies.⁵⁰ Pothos and Eros are also the names of the two children of Kronos and Astarte in Philo of Byblos.⁵¹ These rather disparate sources for primordial "desire" are suggestive at best. In any case, in Genesis, desire is the first term of human psychology. Evil is not the cause of the human choice. Thus desire precedes evil, which is not the cause of the human choice here.

Evil is unrelated as an outcome; such a term cannot even be found in Genesis 2-3. Instead, what the text explicitly acknowledges is the knowledge that issues from making this choice: "*The eyes of the two of them were opened ...*" (3:7, my italics). The expression echoes the serpent's earlier words in 3:5: "For God knows that on the day of your eating from it your *eyes will be opened* and you will be like God/divinities knowing good and evil" (3:5, my italics). The opening of the eyes in this context indicates the acquisition of knowledge. The phrase is analogous to the blind acquiring sight (Isa 35:5, 42:7); elsewhere it can suggest recognition and attention (Prov 20:13; Job 14:3; Dan 9:18).⁵² Here it denotes human recognition of the knowledge of good and evil. The humans have, in a manner of speaking, ingested this knowledge. Such "textual ingestion" has prophetic analogues. In Second Isaiah, an invitation is issued for a feast of food consisting of divine words (Isa 55:1-2): "Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good." The prophetic voice of Jeremiah rejoices in the divine words that he says he ate (Jer 15:16). At the divine command, Ezekiel ingests the scroll with "words of lamentation and mourning and woe" (Ezek 2:8-3:2).

Notably, the eating of the fruit is never characterized as evil. Neither any character in the story (including the deity) nor the narrator characterizes the action as evil, nor is the language of disobedience used in the story. The woman claims that the serpent tricked her, and the divine response is not to punish the woman first, but to curse the serpent offering an etiology of its condition in the world. Only afterwards does the deity address the woman. There is no curse but a genealogy for the condition of women with respect to pain in pregnancy and submission to patriarchy. In other words, the story here offers two etiologies that suggest a backstory to how things in human life and society have come to be the way they are. The man likewise is not cursed or even punished as such. Instead, it is the ground providing his livelihood (structurally parallel to women's pregnancy) that is cursed. What is remarkable is that the language of morality is entirely absent from this account. It is not a story of human sin or of human evil, but of outcomes expressed

49 Attridge & Oden 1981, 36-37, Eus. *PE* 1.10.1; discussion: Baumgarten 1981, 110-112, 121-122, who disputes any relation between the Ugaritic figure named Desire and the Greek figures by the same name.

50 Hes. *Th.* 116-122; Acusilaus of Argos in Damascius, *Princ.* 124; discussion: Baumgarten 1981, 122, 132-133; for these figures in Greek sources: Marco Antonio Santamaría in this volume.

51 Attridge & Oden 1981, 52-53; Baumgarten 1981, 205.

52 Zevit 2013, 169.

etiologically. In terms of what the story does say, Genesis 3 tells how humans came to be the way that they are with respect to pregnancy, patriarchy and labor, just as Gen 2:24 provides an etiology for human marriage.⁵³

The outcome of Genesis 3 includes further divine action. The humans are removed from the garden to prevent them from eating from the tree of life and gaining immortality like the deity (“like one of us”). The verbal action here is “to expel” (*grš), a root that occurs 22 times in the Hebrew Bible. It may denote removal from the presence of a higher status or more powerful figure (Exod 10:11; see Ps 34:1), a woman rejected by her husband (Lev 22:13, Num 30:15, Ezek 44:22), or removal from office by an official (1 Kgs 2:27).⁵⁴ It involves more than their departure from the divine presence (see Cain’s departure from the divine presence at the end of his conversation with the deity in Gen 4:16). It indicates an active divine action. The verbal root denotes conflict between two parties (Exod 2:17; Judg 9:41, 11:2, 7), often enemies (Exod 23:28, 23:31, 33:2, Num 22:11, Deut 33:27, Josh 24:12, 18; Judg 6:9; Ps 78:55).⁵⁵ Thus God and the two humans may be in a conflicted situation, with the two removed from the divine presence and the garden guarded to prevent their entry. Yet, the verbal root is not a term of punishment as such; it does not occur in any biblical legislation for any legal punishment. It expresses a fall-out in interpersonal relations.

Human evil is not in this story; that is left to later chapters of Genesis. Genesis 2-3 is not a story of sin, again a word notably lacking in these chapters. Instead, what the story explicitly tells of is a transferal of the knowledge of good and evil from the deity to the humans. The transferal involves both the divine and human roles. The former makes evil possible, the latter will make it actual, and yet not in this story, but only later in the larger story of Genesis 1-6. The story also tells more implicitly. It unfolds with a series of points involving assumed knowledge about both the deity and humanity. It offers an implicit theory of what will lead to human evil that will be named only later in the book: human access to the means for doing good and evil; the human desire exercised towards such means; the human vulnerability to acceding to such desire; and human communication in fostering such choices.

53 Lambert 2016, 219, 232.

54 It applies in one Ugaritic legal text to expulsion from a house to which one party has a legally based right: “if I expel you from my house, fifty (shekels of) silver I will pay” (KTU 3.9.6–7).

55 The Ugaritic story of Baal’s conflict with Yamm includes a weapon named “May he/it expel” (*ygrš*), in KTU 1.2 IV 11–12; Smith 1997, 103; for more examples in Ugaritic: del Olmo Lete & Sanmartín 2015, 305–306.

4 The Fallout in Genesis in Comparison with Atrahasis

In Genesis, sin does not appear until Gen 4:7 and evil is not attested until the two prefaces to the flood story in Gen 6:5–8 and 6:9–13 (when Noah is said to be six hundred years old, 7:6). On this matter of early human development, the Mesopotamian story of Atrahasis offers helpful points of comparison and contrast with Genesis 2–6, as long noted by many critics.⁵⁶ Among the many points of comparison, I wish to focus on only three. First, both texts begin with a basic form of humanity. This is signaled by the symbolic numbers of humans created at the outset: seven pairs in Atrahasis, and one pair in Genesis. Moreover, both show an elemental or incompletely developed form of humanity. In Atrahasis, humanity first appears in a sort of primordial form, called *lullû* (OB I 195). Often translated “man,” it may connote an uncivilized or wild man.⁵⁷ Humanity, too, in Genesis 2–3 does not emerge with wisdom or knowledge; it is not yet a fully fledged humanity in terms of its capacities.⁵⁸ Prior to them eating the fruit, the humans have appeared somewhat child-like in lacking knowledge of good or evil (for this notion: Deut 1:39; “the inclination of the heart of the human person is evil *from its youth*,” Gen 8:21).⁵⁹ These experiences in association with other humans turn them into people, as nicely put by Sarah Blaffer Hrdy: “To be distinctively human [...] is to develop this unique empathetic component that is the foundation of all morality. Such unique capacities do not, cannot, develop in a social vacuum.”⁶⁰

Second, both Genesis and Atrahasis present two major stages in human development. In Genesis 2, humanity is created to provide labor in the garden (“there was no human to work the ground,” 2:5, my translation). It is followed only considerably later by the attestation to sin in Genesis 4 and evil in Genesis 6. This sequence corresponds to the successive stages that the story of Atrahasis marks between the creation of humanity for labor and the much later human offence to the

56 Lambert 2016, 239–241; Batto 2013, 76–81; Clifford 1994, 144–150. The further similarities between the biblical and Mesopotamian flood stories have received fresh impetus thanks to the publication of an Old Babylonian flood tablet by Finkel 2014.

57 So the description of the animalistic Enkidu in Standard Babylonian Gilgamesh, tablet I, lines 103–112, called *lullû* in Old Babylonian Gilgamesh, tablet I, ll. 178, 185, 192, translated variously as “man” and “man-savage” by George 2003, 549. George 2003, 795 also characterizes this term as “uncivilized” for Enkidu; Reiner 1989, 71; Batto 2013, 30. At its base, the word means, “man” (i.e., a human) and it seems to mean “man” elsewhere perhaps where the development of humanity is not at issue (Enuma Elish, tablet VI, lines 5–8, in Lambert 2016, 110–111; it is perhaps for this reason that Lambert, 2013, 478, plays down the savage or uncivilized as a connotation of the word). See early humans construed in terms of animals in Sumerian texts, “The Debate between Grain and Sheep,” ll. 20–25 and “How Grain Came to Sumer,” ll. 1–2, in Lisman 2013, 320.

58 Batto 2013, 79–80.

59 There is a considerable range of interpretation about this knowledge.

60 Hrdy 1999, 392–393. I have deleted a part of this quote after the word “human” (“—different from, say, a genetically very similar chimpanzee—”), as new research continually suggests the possibility of such qualities about various animals (such as elephants).

gods. Humanity is said to have been created for labor (Atrahasis, tablet I 190–191),⁶¹ while twelve hundred years later human offence in the form of human noise is prefatory to the flood (tablet II col. I).⁶² In Richard J. Clifford's words: "In Mesopotamian examples the flood is the dividing line between the primordial world and the world of contemporary experience."⁶³ Creation and flood signal two different stages in the human condition, and only the latter clarifies what is considered problematic to the deity.

Third and finally, both Atrahasis and Genesis offer a backdrop for the negative condition presented by humans to the gods. In Atrahasis, the human noise (*rigmu*) that so disturbs Enlil in OB I ll. 356 and 358, II col. I, ll. 5 and 7 (Assyrian recension, rev. col. iv l. 2; see ll. 10, 14) has an antecedent in the noise (*rigmu*, OB I ii 77, iv 179) of the junior gods (the Igigi) during their rebellion against the senior gods (the Anunnaki). Thus, Atrahasis offers an antecedent for the human problem, one grounded in divinity itself: the *rigmu* of the humans made for labor echoes the *rigmu* of the junior gods who labor.⁶⁴ Genesis, too, offers a backdrop, though not by way of antecedent. What Atrahasis describes in moral neutral terms as noise,⁶⁵ Genesis renders as human development (as discussed above). It furnishes a number of thematic notes along the line of the "fallout" (not the "fall") in chapters 2–3 to the flood story in chapter 6. These clues hint at—but not explain—an unfolding human development, beginning with human desire and "knowledge of good and evil" in Genesis 2–3, to "sin" first mentioned in the Cain and Abel story in Genesis 4 (v. 7), to the "wickedness of humanity" at the beginning of the Flood narrative beginning in Genesis 6 (v. 5; see also vv. 11–12).

There is also a parallel genealogy of divine-human relations: residence in the deity's home and proximity to the deity (Genesis 2); hiding from the deity because of human fear (Gen 3:8–10); divine questioning with humans blaming others (Gen 3:11–13); divine verbal declaration of negative fallout (3:14–20); divine clothing of the human, often considered a solicitous gesture from the deity but also a sign of the acquisition of human culture (Gen 3:31)⁶⁶; banishment from the garden (Gen 3:22–23), the declaration of help from the deity in conception (4:1); divine reception of Abel's offering but not Cain's (4:3–5); divine counseling of Cain (4:6–7); the divine questioning of Cain (4:6–10); divine verbal declaration of a negative fallout (4:11–12); divine protection of Cain (4:13–16). A number of positive notes ac-

61 Lambert & Millard 1969, 57.

62 Lambert & Millard 1969, 73.

63 Clifford 1994, 146.

64 The noun *rigmu* is a *Leitwort* threading through the story of Atrahasis; the listing of the word's occurrences: Lambert & Millard 1969, 193–194; Kilmer 1996, 130. See Kilmer 1996, 133 for the musical scale known for Adad's *rigmu* (thunder), as well as the percussion instruments to which it is compared.

65 Some commentators have attempted to see some moral dimension in *rigmu*, but this line of interpretation has been strongly criticized: Clifford 1994, 81–82.

66 Oden 1987, 92–105.

company the downward trend in relations. There may be also some divine actions that seem designed to remain mysterious (e.g., allowing the humans to be tempted by an animal with more wisdom than them; accepting Abel's meat offering even if it was from the best of his meat, more prized than Cain's grain offering, described as nothing special).

While Atrahasis provides a helpful backdrop for Genesis 2-6, it also offers some pointed differences. Where Atrahasis offers a sketch of humanity in two major stages of creation and flood, Genesis 2-6 overlays these stages with hints of a moral problem with humanity as well as additional, critical plot elements. It locates the beginnings of the problem in the divine garden, drawn out by the additional snake motif.⁶⁷ It further explicates this problem by including the emblematic story of Cain and Abel as a sort of intermediate stage between human creation and the flood, indicating two types of human behavior. Its story of human moral development also overlays the more traditional discourse concerning culture heroes (e.g., Gen 4:1-16, 20-22; 9:20, 10:8) and the founding of cities (e.g., Gen 4:16; for discussions: Kawashima 2004, 483-501; Hendel 2005, 23-26; McCants 2012, 21-28). It is over the course of the story in Genesis 1-6 that humanity becomes fully human: in the human experience, human desire precedes human knowledge of good and evil, this knowledge precedes sin, and sin precedes evil. Genesis 2-3 plays out these themes in a mysterious primordial time in the divine garden, inhabited by not only commonly known animals but also a talking snake, and planted not only with trees of common experience but also with trees of knowledge and immortality. In the end, evil may be only of human origin insofar as humanity is considered evil's effective cause, but the massive act of literary imagination represented by Genesis 2-6 offers an important and sometimes subtle story eventuating in human evil. The story names a number of important components, yet it does not offer a clear line of reasoning of the development of human psychology and moral character. Instead, it labels but does not explain several components in humans.

There is one final chapter in this moral story added to its beginning. Genesis 1 serves as a preface to this entire landscape, and it provides a further layer of meaning. The opening of the book offers a distinctive and strong statement relevant to its considerable genealogy of evil, namely that "good" (*tôb*) is built into the fabric

67 Clifford 1994, 148, original italics: "The J-storyteller takes the *Gilgamesh* motif of the snake's theft of the plant of life from the hero (a postflood occurrence in *Gilgamesh* XI) and places it *before* the flood (Genesis 3)." For the snake: Charlesworth 2010, 289-300, who generally disputes the negative portrait of the serpent in Genesis 3 (so too Zevit 2013, 163). Charlesworth does suggest that the serpent "represents primordial chaos" (2010, 300). While snake imagery is commonly used to depict the primordial enemy of a beneficial, powerful god (Ps 74:12-13; Isa 27:1), the issue is the degree to which the serpent in Genesis 3 might retain this association. There is nothing that points to this association; this sort of association might conjure up a fraught atmosphere. Zevit 2013 emphasizes the serpent description with a wisdom term, '*ārūm*, "shrewd" (not evil); humans should thus take note. The appearance of a "shrewd" snake in the story introduces a complication for humans lacking wisdom.

of creation (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). The usage here arguably encompasses “good” broadly, in its senses of both benefit and (moral) good, given creation’s associations with sanctuary holiness.⁶⁸ Good precedes evil and unlike evil, it is constitutive of creation. Genesis 1 is generally considered part of a creation account of 1:1–2:4a separate from Gen 2:4b–3:24. It has been considered as, more specifically, an introduction that was added to provide an interpretative lens on what follows in Genesis.⁶⁹ In this reading, the final addition offers a new beginning of good in creation. It also serves to offer a corrective to any possible implication that both good and evil provided by the deity in Genesis 2–3 might be traced to the deity as their effective cause: only good is. (Here the deity differs from Enlil in Atrahasis as the originator of an evil decree, as noted above.) Yet, the addition of Genesis 1 perhaps implies that even as the deity is the source of only good, the knowledge of good is only meaningful in association with its binary opposite.

5 After Genesis: Evil of the Creator and the Cosmic Enemies

As a closing consideration, there remains the question of when evil does enter the picture for biblical creation. In this context we may only briefly address the question of evil attributed to the creator-deity and then evil on the part of cosmic enemies. It is unclear whether any act of creation was labeled as evil prior to the end of the Judean monarchy. The most explicit text would appear to be Isa 45:7. In the NRSV translation, the verse is rendered: “I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things.” It is possible to regard its “weal” and “woe” (so also NJPS and NABRE) instead perhaps more literally as “good” and “evil.” Indeed, this passage also mentions divine “righteousness” (v. 8), a sign that some moral sensibility is obtained in this context. Thus, Levenson could characterize God in this passage as “author of evil” and “creator of evil.”⁷⁰ Again, the issue remains whether moral evil or simply destruction is intended. To my mind, in this context the verse indicates the extent of the deity’s ultimate control over all earthly powers in the context of the exilic situation of Israel.⁷¹ In other words, the terrible disaster that had befallen Israel, including the many crimes against Judeans as a result, was not beyond the power of its deity to remedy. The association of evil with

68 See Smith 2010, 61–62, 235, n. 154. **tābu* in *The Founding of Eridu*, l. 24: “Benevolently (*ta-biṣ*) he assigned names to them,” in Lambert 2013, 372–373. See also the other positive characterizations in ll. 16 (“an exalted name to the pure city in which they [the deities] were pleased to dwell”), 19 (“a dwelling of their pleasure”).

69 Clifford 1994, 137–140; Smith 2010, 117–138; for this sort of textual composition: Milstein 2016.

70 Levenson 1988, 124.

71 Smith 2010, 72–73; Ben Sira 34:13 Hebrew ms. B on greed, literally, “he did not create anything more evil,” but rendered “was there ever any creature greedier?”: Skehan & Di Lella 1987, 384 (see also NRSV).

the deity may be less a dark statement about the deity's evil, and more about the ultimate control of the deity over any evil and the mystery involved in how the deity exercises this control. In context, this formulation of Isa 45:7 is perhaps designed as an encouragement to Israel that the evil empire on earth is only one part or dimension of the evil now in creation that the deity ultimately rules. Thus, political power and divine destruction may remain the dominant sensibility. Still, this is a matter of the deity's righteousness in acting on Israel's behalf; thus, a positive, moral dimension is evident, as a matter of controlling evil in the universe. This predication of the deity stands in a long tradition of the deity exercising *rā'ā* (destruction or disaster) or benefit against one who sins (Lam 3:38). In a number of cases, the divine destructive *rā'ā* is a response to the people's immoral *rā'ā* (Jer 26:3; Jonah 3:10; Neh 13:17–18). Divine destruction may be exercised against the ruling empire (Jer 51:64; Jer 1:14) or against a nation (Jer 18:8–10; Jonah 3:10), not to mention the Israelites considered deserving of punishment (2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chron 21:15; Jer 16:10, 19:15, 26:3, 19, 32:42, 35:17, 40:2, 42:10, 17, 44:2; Ezek 14:22; Joel 2:13; Dan 9:13; Neh 13:17–18; 2 Chron 7:22, 34:28; see also *ra'* in Exod 32:14). The deity is also said to renounce such divine evil or destruction (Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). In these instances, the deity is not considered morally evil but perhaps the opposite: bringing just judgment for such evil.

Now let us turn briefly to the question of evil and cosmic enemies in later sources. These foes were not traditionally labeled evil (modern commentators noted above notwithstanding). Such a negative, moral association is not made with any cosmic enemy in any of the 343 instances of the BH *ra'* (so Accordance) nor in any of the 79 cases of the noun *rā'ā*. Yet, cosmic, monstrous enemies come to be associated with moral evil. Dan 7:8 and 20 are indicative of this. The last of the four beasts in Daniel 7 is called “terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong” (v. 7). It is with “the little horn” in v. 8 that moral terms enter the picture, with its “mouth speaking arrogantly (literally, ‘great things’)” (*pûm mēmallil rabrēbān*; see also v. 20). That this is a moral matter is indicated by the corresponding interpretation in v. 25. As this particular force is the endpoint and point of this chapter, it might be thought that the moral dimension is fairly important. The relatively brief moral noted here provides the hermeneutical key to this text as a moral discourse about power and politics.

The apocalyptic perception of the cosmic enemies as evil may have been informed by older parallelism made between such cosmic forces and earthly enemies. Earthly enemies are identified elsewhere with cosmic ones (e.g., the Egyptian king called “the great *tannin*” in Ezek 29:3; 32:2; Jer 51:34).⁷² Sometimes such human ene-

72 Marzouk 2015. Note also Rahab used for both Egypt and a “mythological sea monster”: Clines 2010, 425; Damascus Document 8:10, “the *tannin*’s are the kings of the peoples.” This sort of identification may be quite traditional, informing older West Semitic texts such as the Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Smith 1994, 105–114.

mies are regarded in moral terms. In the poem of Habakkuk 3 (vv. 8–19), the human enemy and divine cosmic enemies are “parallel,” opposed to the human speaker and to the deity, respectively. The human enemy is criticized on moral grounds (Hab 3:14).⁷³ In such instances, the cosmic enemies embody a cosmic opposition to the deity while the corresponding earthly enemies represent “evil historical forces opposed to Yahweh and his people.”⁷⁴ How this developed is by no means clear. This “parallelism” is consistent with the traditional invocation of a warrior-god such as Baal against demonic forces,⁷⁵ and thus it is tempting to view the magical praxis as forming the deeper background here.⁷⁶ In Job 3:8, magical praxis is associated with unleashing Leviathan (Job 7:12).⁷⁷ Accordingly, demonic enemies warded off by magical means involving major, beneficial gods may have provided a model for the association of human empires and cosmic enemies, both opposed to the beneficial and good deity. Whatever the background for this development, it is not surprising to see the identification of cosmic and national enemies surfacing in apocalyptic literature (Daniel 7). Levenson comments on the evil and apocalyptic:

73 A comparable, traditional parallelism of cosmic and human enemies can be glimpsed in imagery used in Ugaritic for cosmic enemies applied also to human enemies in biblical texts. Examples involving the mythic mouths of gods and humans may be noted first. The ravenous mouth of Death is explicitly compared with the wicked in Hab 2:5 (the similarly mythic maw of Sheol in Isa 5:14, a passage that has been long compared with the gigantic mouth of the god Death in KTU 1.4 VIII 19–20 and 1.5 II 2–3; Smith 1997, 139, 159, respectively; Tromp 1969, 104–106. Tromp also compares the similar imagery for enemies in Prov 1:12 and Ps 41:3. The imagery of ravenous, destructive human enemies in Isa 9:19 likewise compares with the description of the superhuman appetites of the destructive gods in KTU 1.23.63–64; Lewis 1997, 213. For discussion: Smith 2006, 114–115. The mythic cosmic waters as identified in the god Sea in Ugaritic are likened explicitly to human enemies in the Hebrew Bible. In Isa 17:2 the thunder of “many peoples” is compared with the thunder of the thunderous sea and the roar of the nations to the roar of “many waters” (*mayim rabbim*). By comparison, the image of Assyria as the mythological flood in Isa 8:7–8 has two mythic backgrounds. On the one hand, it recalls Mesopotamian imagery, as noted by Machinist 1983, 726–727 and Flynn 2014, 170. On the other hand, the “many” with respects to these flood-waters” in Isa 8:7 also enjoys a West Semitic background in the cosmic enemy of the Sea, as recognized by Tromp 1969, 64.

74 Heider 1999, 836.

75 Note the invocation of Baal against sorcerers in KTU 1.169; del Olmo Lete 2014, 167–172. Demonic forces are better attested in the Greco-Roman context. For recent discussions: Dochhorn et al. 2016 and the bibliography therein.

76 This discussion might appeal to what are called “evil spirits” (e.g., 1 Sam 16:14–16, 23, 18:10, 19:9), as well as “evil angels” (Ps 78:49). However, the excellent survey by Anne Marie Kitz 2016, 447–464 proposes that such beings are not evil; only the mission for which they are sent is. Indeed, such “evil” divine figures exercises evil punishment upon the wicked is similar to the evil that Yahweh visits upon the guilty, noted above. Still the distinction drawn by Kitz between such figures and their missions is not provided with evidence, and the basis for the drawn distinction remains unclear. The sense of demons as evil is not simply a “medieval/modern rationale” (Kitz 2016, 463); it is also Greco-Roman and arguably earlier. Still Kitz’s discussion raises important questions.

77 Stolz 1999, 741.

“The central affirmation of apocalyptic is that the evil that occurs in history is symptomatic of a larger suprahistorical disequilibrium that requires, even invites, a supra-historical correction. As evil did not originate with history, neither will it disappear altogether in history, but rather beyond it, at the inauguration of the coming world.”⁷⁸

Evil is a dimension of the apocalyptic scenario, and yet in the biblical apocalyptic the moral dimension of evil remains rather muted. Apocalyptic literature represents the evil powers on earth with the old language about cosmic enemies. Yet in the handling of these powers, they intimate evil in a way that the Late Bronze Age mythic discourse at Ugarit had not. The intuition of Hermann Gunkel that *Urzeit ist Endzeit* has proven fundamentally sound,⁷⁹ yet the development of *Endzeit* in terms of *Urzeit* adds a layer of meaning cast in terms of moral good and evil not quite evident to the older West Semitic tradition of cosmic enemies.

The Greco-Roman period also offered some reflections on various sources or explanations for the sources of evil in human experience. For example, Ben Sira focuses on human actions in the garden (Ben Sira 25:24) as well as the evil inclination (e.g., Ben Sira 37:3). At the same time, there is no account for how humans could sin.⁸⁰ Ben Sira 15:11–20 depicts the problem explicitly. The opening of this section acknowledges the problem that God might be understood as the source of sin: “Do not say ‘It was the Lord’s doing that I fell away’; for he does not do what he hates” (15:11).⁸¹ The passage continues to deny divine responsibility for human evil (15:12–13). Instead, it is claimed that choice was given to humans at their creation (15:14). Thus, the deity is explicitly exculpated of any relation to evil (15:20), even as later Ben Sira recognizes that the deity showed both good and evil to the humans (17:7). Here, Ben Sira claims that God “filled them with knowledge and understanding.” Yet, the book also passes over the episode of the human couple eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the very means by which “He filled them with knowledge and understanding,” to judge from Gen 3:7 (“Then the eyes of both were opened”). In its reflections on Genesis 2–3, Ben Sira acknowledges what happened in the garden but does not provide an account for the origins of human evil.

As illustrated by these few comments on later apocalyptic and wisdom, these sources offer reflections on the sources that they inherited. Still, the problem of evil in creation, whether it entails cosmic enemies or human action in the garden, remains just as enigmatic in these later texts as in the scriptural texts that they interpreted.

78 Levenson 1988, 50.

79 Gunkel 2006; the view is generally accepted or used, e.g.: Uehlinger 1999, 513–514.

80 Berg 2013, 139–157.

81 NRSV here follows the Greek. Brand 2013, 95 translates the Hebrew A ms. version: “Do not say ‘From God is my sin,’ for that which he hated he did not make.”

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