

Adam as Israel

Genesis 1-3 as the Introduction
to the Torah and Tanakh

Seth D. Postell



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*I lovingly dedicate this book to Murray Postell,
my father, fishing partner, and friend.*

Contents

List of Tables and Figures • viii

Acknowledgments • ix

List of Abbreviations • xi

- 1 Introduction • 1
- 2 History of Interpretation • 5
- 3 Recent Studies • 27
- 4 Methodology • 43
- 5 A Text-Centered Analysis of Genesis 1–3, Part 1 • 75
- 6 A Text-Centered Analysis of Genesis 1–3, Part 2 • 120
- 7 Genesis 1–3: An Introduction to the Tanakh? • 149

Bibliography • 169

Scripture Index • 181

Subject and Name Index • 193

Tables and Figures

Table 1	Similarities between the Garden of Eden and the Sinai Narrative (Erlich) • 35
Table 2	Parallels between Genesis 3 and the Golden Calf Narrative—Exod 32:1–6 (Erlich) • 37
Table 3	Comparison of Adam and Abram (Sailhamer) • 92
Table 4	Comparison: Seven Days of Preparation and Seven Divine Speeches • 110
Table 5	Comparison of Preparation of the Land and Tabernacle • 111
Figure 1	Symmetrical Structure of the Pentateuch • 143

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Abbreviations

ANE	Ancient Near East
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CG DD	<i>Cairo Geniza Targumic Fragment: MS DD</i>
E	Elohistic Source
ERT	<i>Evangelical Review of Theology</i>
Frg. Tg. P	Fragment Targum, Recension P
Frg. Tg. VNL	Fragment Targum, Recension VNL
<i>Gen. Rab.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i>
J	Yahwist Source
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
P	Priestly Source
Q	Qumran
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
Tg. Neof.	Targum Neofiti
Tg. Onq.	Targum Onqelos
Tg. Ps.-J.	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
Tanakh	The Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>

xii *Abbreviations*

VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series
Vulg.	Vulgate
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Introduction

PRE-CRITICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS INTERPRETED Genesis 1–3 as the fountainhead for all biblical theology and the basis for God’s ultimate act of redemption through the provision of the Seed of the woman in the person of the Messiah.¹ These scholars also accepted without question the continuity between the intentionality of Torah or Book of Moses (in its canonical or final form) and the NT interpretation of it (see John 5:46–47). In essence, Moses (the man and the book) was regarded as a faithful witness of the future Messianic realities (see Heb 3:5), and the compositional intentionality of the Pentateuch was tightly moored to the hope of the new covenant. The rise of critical scholarship, however, brought in its wake not only the rejection of the literary unity of Genesis 1–3, but also a whole new understanding of the compositional history and intentionality of the Pentateuch in its final form. Genesis 1–3 was deemed to be composed of two mutually contradicting creation accounts from differing time periods and with differing theologies. Eventually, Gen 2:4b–3:24 was attributed to an earlier prophetic source (“J”), and 1:1–2:4a was attributed to a final post-exilic priestly layer (“P”). Likewise, the intentionality of the Pentateuch (or Hexateuch/Tetrateuch) was tightly bound to the agenda of the post-exilic priestly circles: namely, Second Temple Judaism.

Recent trends in modern Pentateuchal scholarship in particular, and biblical studies in general, have called into question both the notion of the disunity of Genesis 1–3 (and the Pentateuch as a whole) as well as the assumption that the intentionality of the final form (canonical) Pentateuch is bound up with the priestly agenda of Second Temple Judaism. Although the climate of Pentateuchal studies is changing, there have been relatively few attempts to interpret Genesis 1–3 as a coherent

1. See the history of interpretation in chapter 2.

unity, and as a literarily strategic introduction to the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (Tanakh) as a whole.

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this book is to apply a text-centered, compositional analysis to Genesis 1–3 in order to discern the relationship between these chapters and the remainder of the Torah. In addition, the function of Genesis 1–3 in the canonical Tanakh is investigated. Studies of the first three chapters of Genesis have generally focused on the exposition of the content of the individual hypothetical sources,² ANE parallels,³ scientific and ecological issues,⁴ ethical issues of gender, sexuality, and marriage;⁵ and theological issues pertaining to the image of God and the doctrine of the Trinity.⁶ Although there have been many literary analyses applied to Genesis 1–3,⁷ to date there have been relatively few

2. Bauks, “Genesis 1 als Programmschrift,” 333–45; Bechtel, “Rethinking,” 77–117; Bechtel, “Genesis ‘2.4b–3.24,’” 3–26; Begrich, “Paradieserzählung” 93–116; Engnell, “‘Knowledge’ and ‘Life,’” 103–19; Firmage, “Genesis 1” 97–114; Hurowitz, “P—Understanding the Priestly Source,” 30–37, 44–47; Kutsch, “Paradieserzählung,” 9–24; Levin, “Redaktion RJP” 15–34; Lohfink, “Erzählung von Sündenfall,” 81–101; Schüle, “Würde,” 440–54; Vervenne, “Genesis 1,1–2,4,” 35–79; Weimar, “Struktur und Komposition,” 803–43.

3. Atwell, “Egyptian Source,” 441–77; Harris, “Symbolism in Creation.” Hurowitz, “Genesis of Genesis,” 36–48, 52–54; Johnston, “Genesis 1,” 178–94; Sparks, “Enuma Elish,” 625–48; Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3,” 48–63; Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*.

4. Bozung, “Evaluation,” 406–23; Elbert, “Genesis 1,” 23–72; Greenspoon, “From Dominion to Stewardship?” 159–83; McConnell, “In His Image” 114–27; Raj, “Yahweh’s Earth,” 40–60; Ronan, “Stewardship Model,” 18–19; Zimmer, “Creation Story,” 77–92; Zimmer, “Creation of Man,” 16–26; Zimmer, “Genesis 1 as Sign,” 172–80.

5. Claassens, “Moon Spoke Up: Genesis 1,” 325–42; D’Angelo, “Gender Refusers,” 149–73; Jastram and Weinrich, “Man” 3–96; Jervis, “Story,” 265–79; Magnuson, “Marriage,” 26–42; Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise,” 80–85; Stark, “Augustine on Women,” 215–41; Tarwater, “Covenantal Nature of Marriage”; Valiyapparambil, “Power of the Powerless,” 163–64.

6. Auld, “Imago Dei in Genesis” 259–62; Baker, “The Image of God,” 97–109; Grenz, “Social God,” 87–100; Jenson, “Bible and Trinity,” 329–39; MacDonald, “Imago Dei and Election,” 303–27; Mays, “Self in Psalms,” 27–43; McConnell, “In His Image,” 114–27; Packer, “Reflected Glory,” 56; Towner, “Clones of God,” 341–56; Wall, “Imitatio Creatoris,” 21–42.

7. Collins, “What Happened?” 12–44; Collins, *Genesis 1–4*; Culley, “Action Sequences,” 25–33; Hess, “Genesis 1–2,” 143–53; Jobling, “Myth Semantics,” 41–49; Kovacs, “Structure,” 139–47; Levine, “Curse and Blessing,” 189–99; Lim, *Grace. Ouro,*

text-centered attempts to interpret Genesis 1–3 as the introduction to the Pentateuch.⁸ Furthermore, text-centered studies that have attempted to interpret Genesis 1–3 as the introduction of the Pentateuch are by no means exhaustive. It is the contention of this book that Genesis 1–3 merits further investigation, not only in terms of its relationship to the rest of the Pentateuch, but also in terms of its significance for discerning the overall redactional concerns behind the formation and shaping of the Tanakh.⁹

THESIS

In this book the following thesis is argued: when understood as the introduction to the Torah and to the Tanakh as a whole, Genesis 1–3 intentionally foreshadows Israel's failure to keep the Sinai Covenant as well as their exile from the Promised Land in order to point the reader to a future work of God in the "last days." Adam's failure to "conquer" (Gen 1:28) the seditious inhabitant of the land (the serpent), his temptation and violation of the commandments, and his exile from the garden is Israel's story *en nuce*.¹⁰ The certitude of failure in the introduction to the Pentateuch anticipates the conclusion (Deut 28:69 [29:1, English versions]—34:12). Just as it was in the beginning, under the best of circumstances, so also it will be in the end. In the conclusion to the Pentateuch, Moses presents Israel's future apostasy and exile as a certainty (see Deut 30:1–10; 31:28–29). Thus, the Pentateuch is framed with a prophetic awareness¹¹ of Israel's exile due to their failure to keep the Sinai Covenant both in the present and in the future (see for example Deut 32:1–43) because of the evil "inclination" (יצר) of their heart (compare Gen 6:5; 8:21 with Deut 31:21). This *inclusio* of pessimism at both ends of the Pentateuch with respect to human abilities to "do this and live," not only supplies the contextual framework for interpreting the Sinai Narrative, but also provides

"Linguistic and Thematic Parallels" 44–54; Ouro, "Garden of Eden Account," 219–43; Parker and Patte, "Structural Exegesis," 141–59; Patte, "Genesis 2 and 3," 1–164; Shea, "Unity of Creation Account," 9–39; Trimpe, *Von der Schöpfung*.

8. Notable exceptions include Collins, *Genesis 1–4*; Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*; Toews, "Genesis 1–4," 38–52.

9. The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

10. See Bovell, "Genesis 3:21?" 361–66.

11. For the notion of a "prophetic" Pentateuch—in contradistinction to a "priestly" Pentateuch as is commonly assumed—see Sailhamer, *Meaning of Pentateuch*, 248–49.

the rationale for the need of a new work in the “last days,” whereby God would rectify the human inclination by means of a circumcised heart (Deut 30:6). Moreover, the groundwork is also laid for the expectation of another “Adam” (another priest-king) to arise from among the people of Israel who will ultimately fulfill the creation mandate in the “last days.” In other words, Genesis 1–3, when read as integrally related to the Pentateuch and the Tanakh as a whole, *is not meant to encourage Israel to keep Sinai*; rather, it forthrightly admits that Israel did not (and will not) keep it, and therefore prepares the reader to wait expectantly in exile for a new work of God in the last days (just as Jacob and Moses did).

History of Interpretation

AS WILL BE SEEN in this brief history of the interpretation of Genesis 1–3, the pre-critical scholars, both Jewish and Christian, presumed the unity of the Pentateuch based on the belief that the Scriptures of Israel were divinely inspired. For Christian Pentateuchal scholarship, Julius Wellhausen marks an important turning point in the ways in which Christians understood Genesis 1–3 in particular, and the Pentateuch in general. Recent trends in biblical scholarship have resulted in fundamental alterations in the conceptualization of the compositional history of the Pentateuch as well as a new appreciation for the compositional structure of the final canonical form of the text.

PRE-CRITICAL APPROACH

Jewish Interpretation

Although it is frequently assumed that Jewish midrashic interpretation is not concerned with authorial intent,¹ Isaac Leo Seeligmann demonstrated that many of the associations of midrashic exegesis are part and parcel of the inner-biblical interpretation of the Hebrew Bible itself.² For a long time Jewish scholars have noticed “associations” between the early chapters of Genesis and Israel’s history as it unfolds in the Pentateuch, as well as in the rest of the Hebrew Bible. Jewish exegetes noted textual (and historical) patterns from Genesis 1–3 replicated elsewhere in the Tanakh (Israel’s biblically recorded history). According to Paul Morris,

A pattern is forged linking the precise details of the creation of the world and the creation of Israel based on “associated” bibli-

1. By authorial intent, I am referring to the intentions of the individual(s) responsible for the final form of any given biblical composition.

2. Seeligmann, “Voraussetzungen,” 150–81.

cal readings (for example, of the word “created”) to establish that Israel (like the Torah) was pre-existent and that the world was created only for Israel and Torah (*Gen Rab.* 1.4, 10). This pattern generates a series of parallels between the “textual/historical” and the “natural.” The very structures of creation are reflected and repeated in the patterns of Israel’s history, and human history, the creation of the natural world and Jewish religious life, sin and punishment, and creation and redemption.³

Associations are drawn between the creation of the world and the creation of Israel: thus, the “gathered waters” in Gen 1:6 foreshadow the gathered waters of the Flood and the parted waters of the Red Sea (*Gen Rab.* 5.5). Parallels are drawn between Adam and Abraham (*Gen Rab.* 14.6; 15.5 on Gen 2:7; *Gen Rab.* 12.9 on Gen 2:4; *Gen Rab.* 24.5).⁴ Adam’s violation of the divine commandment and his punishment (curse and exile) foreshadow Israel’s subsequent failure to keep the Torah and their punishment (curses and exile). Perhaps this is most clearly expressed in *Gen Rab.* 19.9:

And the Lord God called to the man, how were you yesterday of my opinion, but now of the opinion of the serpent, yesterday from the end of the world and until its end, and now in the midst of the trees of the garden? Rabbi Avihu said in the name of Rabbi Hanina, it is written (Hos 6): “And they transgressed the covenant like Adam,” they are like the first man. What of the first man? I brought him into the midst of the Garden of Eden and I commanded him, and he transgressed the commandment. And I judged him with sending away and casting out.⁵ And I mourned for him, “How?”⁶ I brought him into the midst of the Garden of Eden, of which it is said, “I brought him [ויניחתי] into the Garden of Eden” and I commanded him, of which it is said, “And the Lord God commanded Adam.” And he transgressed the

3. Morris, “Exiled from Eden,” 122.

4. *Ibid.*, 151 n. 16, 17.

5. The words used here for sending away and casting out (גרשין and שלוחין) are the same terms used for the disannulment of a marital covenant (divorce). It is not clear if *Gen Rab.* 19 intentionally depicts the man and woman’s exile from the garden as a divorce.

6. By using the term “mourned” (קונן) here, the Midrash is drawing a connection between God’s question to Adam (“where are you?”) and the book of *ēchâ* (Lamentations), both of which are spelled with the same consonants, אֵיכָה. God’s “mourning” over Adam for breaking the “covenant” foreshadows Lamentations, a book mourning Israel’s broken covenant.

commandment, of which it is said, “Did you eat from the tree concerning which I commanded you not to eat from it?” And I judged him with the sending away, of which it is said, “And the Lord God sent him from the Garden of Eden.” And I judged him with the casting out, which is written, “And he cast out the man.” And I mourned for him, “How?” of which it is said, “And the Lord God called to the man and he said to him, “Where are you [אֵיכָה]?”” אֵיכָה is written, [for] his sons whom I also brought into the land of Israel, I commanded them and they transgressed the commandment. I judged them with the sending out and the casting out and I mourned for them, “How [אֵיכָה]?” those whom I brought to the land of Israel, of whom it is said (Jer 2), “And I brought you to the land of the gardens [כַּרְמֶל]” and I commanded them, of which it is said (Exod 26), “And you must command the sons of Israel.” And they transgressed the commandment, of which it is said (Dan 9): “And all Israel transgressed your Torah.” I judged them with the sending out, of which it is said (Jer 15), “I am sending them from before my face and they shall go out.” I judged them with casting out, of which it is said (Hos 8), “I cast them out from my house.” I mourned for them, “How? [אֵיכָה];” of which it is said (Lam 1:1), “How does she sit?”⁷

It is important to note that Jewish exegetes regard the giving of the Torah and the observance of its commandments as the ultimate remedy of Adam’s sin and the restoration of God’s creation purposes. Morris writes: “Finally, there is the related theme of the eventual redemption of Israel as the ultimate overcoming of the sin of Adam (*Gen. Rab.* 21.1). While Adam was given but one commandment but failed to observe it, Israel has been given the 613 commandments of the Torah and keeps them. While Adam consigned his descendants to the “flaming sword” (Gen 3:24, identified with Gehenna) and was denied from the Tree of Life, the Torah will “save” Adam’s descendants and enable them to participate in the eternal life of the final redemption (*Gen Rab.* 21.9).”⁸

Jerome

Jerome was unique among the early church fathers in his knowledge of the Hebrew language; in essence, he was the prototypical Christian

7. Kantrowitz, *Judaic Classics Library*, (translation my own).

8. Morris, “Exiled from Eden,” 125.