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The Serpent Motif in Genesis 3: Some Systematic Implications Drawn from its Place in the Thought of Early Israel

John Gienapp

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_gienappj@csl.edu

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THE SERPENT MOTIF IN GENESIS 3:
SOME SYSTEMATIC IMPLICATIONS DRAWN FROM
ITS PLACE IN THE THOUGHT OF EARLY ISRAEL

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by
John C. Gienapp
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CHAPTER I

SOME RECENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SERPENT IN GENESIS 3

Modern Biblical scholarship has brought many new resources and approaches to the task of interpreting the Bible. A greater awareness of the history in which God's mighty acts are set and a more rigorous concern for the literary form which each section of the Bible has are not the least of what is new. Such methods of interpretation have brought both negative and positive results. They have brought negative results in that they have occasionally made cherished opinions appear to be untenable. But at the same time they have brought numerous positive advances, illuminating passages that have long been obscure.

An example of modern interpretation is the interpretation of the serpent in Genesis 3. It has been traditional for exegetes in the Church to identify the serpent directly as Satan or as an animal wholly possessed by Satan.¹ Recognizing that the text itself makes no explicit identification of the serpent as Satan and that this identification was first made in the intertestamental period,² most modern scholars would deny that the mention of the serpent is an explicit reference to Satan.³ In fact, many see the entire account as parabolic. As a result of this, a variety of interpretations have been proposed.

Some commentators would admit that Satan is not named directly in the account but would maintain that, as the history of God's people progressed and as God revealed more and more, it became clear that the basic opponent of God and man is Satan. Therefore Satan must be the ultimate figure that stands behind the temptation. Vawter says, "Jewish and Christian interpretation have always seen in 'the serpent' the ancient enemy of man whom later Jewish writers called Satan..... . This is certainly the only possible meaning."⁴ The danger of this interpretation is that in its emphasis on the ultimate meaning of the temptation it may overlook the concrete situation to which the account was directed. Vawter, however, adds, "Probably the reason that the author chose the symbol of a serpent was the serpent worship common among the Chanaanites and other Gentile peoples, on which he wished to vent his contempt."⁵

Other commentators have explained that the use of the snake in the temptation story illustrates a universal fear that men have of snakes. That it should have been the snake that caused evil to come upon man is the way the Israelite writer accounted for the fear people have of snakes. Routley puts this interpretation in popular form:

The snake is a whining horror, the symbol of the source of all whining horrors. There is the story's naive answer to one innocent subsidiary question, as when a child asks, 'Why are snakes so horrid?'"⁶

Von Rad sees the account as answering the Palestinian man's curiosity about the uncanny abilities of the snake and about the way it slithers in the dust.⁷ This explanation, however, is not a complete one. It is quite possible that there is an aetiological element in the use of the serpent, for it cannot be denied that snakes have often appeared to be uncanny and fearful creatures. They are silent and swift. Many are deadly. According to some folk tales snakes are able to rejuvenate themselves by sloughing off their skin. However, this aetiological element is apparently secondary in this particular account. It must still be explained why this aetiological story is used by this writer in this particular account. The fact that the snake is a curious creature would not compel the writer to use it in the story of the temptation of man. another creature could conceivably have been used.

Perhaps the majority of commentators are interested primarily in the human beings involved in the temptation. They see the account as a brilliant theological and psychological description of sin in every man. The fall is the universal experience of the human race. The weakness of this approach is that the account may become only a parable. One can ignore the specific details of the account. Richardson says;

[The images] are amongst those very images by means of which the biblical revelation is mediated to us We must realize that Adam, Eden, the Serpent,

the Ark, and so on are all poetical figures; they belong to the poetry of religious symbolism, not to history and geography."⁸

Richardson later continues, "The serpent of J's parable is a personification of temptation, and is not to be thought of as something external to our nature."⁹ Gunkel sees the serpent as a symbol of cultic wisdom,¹⁰

With the exception of Vawter, the modern discussions of Genesis 3 mentioned here do not come to grips with the specific meaning of the serpent in the context of Genesis 3. If it is true that the account is not meant in the first instance to portray the basic struggle between God and Satan, it must then be true that the writer attempted to speak a truth to his generation in terms that they could understand. He did not use details and allusions with which they were not familiar. In fact, one might surmise that he would make a point of choosing details that would denote or connote things that the Israelites knew from experience. Therefore the question still remains, why did the writer use a snake to broach the temptation to man? Could he not, for example, have used a speaking donkey, for which there is Biblical precedent?¹¹

Because serpent figures occur with relative frequency in the archaeological materials from Palestine, it occurred to this writer that the reason for the use of the serpent in Genesis 3 may perhaps lie in the religious culture in

which Israel found itself. It is possible that the serpent was used with polemic intent. The story of the creation and fall is a deep expression of Israel's faith in Yahweh, the God who brought them out of Egypt. The creation account is almost a creedal statement. It is a confession of faith in narrative form. Like the great creeds of the Christian church, which were shaped in a large measure by controversy and polemical intent, each detail in the creation account may be important. At any rate, it would be a mistake to gloss over an aspect of the account so striking as the introduction of a talking snake without attempting to determine what significance it had.

It is possible that the serpent was introduced in opposition to some type of serpent worship known to the Israelites. Vawter seems to suggest this in his commentary.¹² J. Coppens apparently also suggests a Canaanite background for the serpent. As he is quoted by MacKenzie, he suggests that the serpent is a phallic fertility symbol.¹³ F. F. Hvidberg attempts to demonstrate in an article that Genesis 1-3 can best be understood as a polemic against the fertility worship associated with Baal.¹⁴ He sees the serpent as one element in this polemic. Unfortunately his assertions are not specifically documented, and it is impossible to identify the sources on which he bases his article.

This paper will attempt to explore the meaning of the serpent in Canaanite culture to see if it is likely that the writer of Genesis 3 was opposing Canaanite religion. This paper will first mention some of the many parallels between Canaanite and Israelite religion, pointing out particularly the continuing syncretism among the Israelites. Then by an examination of archaeological materials from Palestine, supported by other archaeological data from the Mediterranean area, an attempt will be made to state the meaning of the serpent in Canaanite religion. If it can be shown possible that the serpent in Genesis 3 reflects a polemic against false worship, then some systematic implications will be mentioned.

CHAPTER II

SOME CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ISRAELITE AND CANAANITE RELIGION

Recent scholarship has demonstrated on the basis of archaeological findings that Israel's culture had close ties with that of its neighbors, the various Canaanite tribes. It cannot be doubted that, as they shared land and language, as they traded with one another, they also learned to know one another's religion. The discovery of the Ras Shamra texts has enabled scholars to assess the religious interchange that occurred between Israel and its neighbors more accurately. Israel sometimes borrowed useful ideas and expressions from its neighbors. She assimilated them legitimately into her Yahwist faith. Sometimes pure Yahwism required repudiation of ideas or cultic practices. It happened also that Israelites relapsed into a syncretistic worship that was as abomination to the Lord. A few examples will demonstrate this religious interchange.

In the first place, Israel used literary forms and imagery that were also used by the Canaanites. After quoting some of the Ras Shamra texts Gray sums up by saying,

The many literary correspondences in form and language to the poetic portions of the Old Testament are apparent even from the limited fragments to which we have advisedly confined ourselves. The theme and imagery of the fragments which we have cited was appropriated by the Hebrews with due adaptation to the

cult of Yahweh, as appears clearly from psalms celebrating the kingship of Yahweh (e.g. Ps. 22,47,93, 96,97,98, etc.). The prophets too draw frequently on this source in the language and imagery in which they speak of 'the Day of Yahweh'. . . ."1

Even some of the terms used for God have parallels in Canaanite or other Western Semitic literature. Yahweh is called El. The Canaanite god El was the head of the Canaanite pantheon. The word also is the generic word for god, but in Ugaritic and Hebrew it can refer to a specific god. In the Old Testament it is usually compounded with appellatives which themselves were "probably originally divine names or epithets become divine names."² Attributes of El are similar to attributes of Yahweh. Both are called king.³ Both are called father.⁴ The epithets of El "beneficent and benign" are probably similar to the "merciful and gracious" applied to Yahweh.⁵ Both are thought of as holy. Both are considered head of the heavenly council.⁶ Both are considered creator. El is called "Father of Mankind" and "Creator of Creatures."⁷

Some of the attributes of Baal are also applied to Yahweh. Baal's title "Rider of the Clouds"⁸ is applied to Yahweh in Ps. 68:4. An important aspect of Baal is his power over storms. Yahweh is pictured as a storm God in Judges 5. The bull is a common symbol for Baal. It is significant that a bull is used in worship of Yahweh during the wilderness period and again at the shrines of the Northern Kingdom. This displeased the prophets of Yahweh.

The Old Testament also names some of the mythical creatures of Canaanite literature. To be sure, the mythological animals and beasts no longer retain all the significance that they had in Canaanite mythology. Jacob says,

Israel knew some creation myths which, like Babylonian or Phoenician myths, spoke of an original struggle between two opposing deities; through certain poetic texts we can picture this myth as a struggle between Yahweh and two sea monsters, Rahab and Leviathan, the victorious outcome of which allowed him to organize heaven and earth (Ps. 74: 12-17; 89:10-13; Job 26:10-12).⁹

In Isaiah 51:9-10 the Exodus is likened to Yahweh's slaying Rahab. Leviathan is called by the same epithets in both the Old Testament and the Ras Shamra texts.

When thou shalt smite Lotan, the fleeing serpent,
(And) shalt put an end to the tortuous serpent,
Shalyat of the seven heads. . . .¹⁰

The Lord. . . will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.¹¹

Yahweh is the creator of the tannin, or sea monsters.¹²

The sacred mountain of Canaanite mythology appears in the Old Testament in several places, notably Is. 14 and Ezek 28. Numerous other parallels could be cited, but few who have considered the subject would doubt the shared terminology of Israel and Canaan.

The people of Israel also shared a cosmology with their neighbors. They thought that the universe consisted of a firmament curving over the flat earth. It rested on pillars. In it were set the heavenly bodies, and above

and below were the waters. The abode of God was a chamber above the firmament. God controlled nature from his heavenly abode. Like Canaanite gods he is sometimes pictured living on the mountain of the North.¹³ Like Baal he sent the storms and thunder. The stars were his heavenly council. It was not hard for some Israelites to begin to think of Yahweh as merely a god like Baal.

More important, perhaps, than the imagery or cosmology that Israel shared with the Canaanites was the fact that in at least some cases Israel adopted places of worship or rituals that the Canaanites used. An example of the former is Shechem. Here, presumably at an existing shrine, Jacob had worshipped, putting away the foreign gods¹⁴ as his descendants did many years later.¹⁵ When the Israelites came into the land, they apparently accepted the shrine at Shechem as their own. They used the temple of El-Berith or Baal-Berith as the temple of their own God, Yahweh-Elohe-Israel. Archaeological research has shown that the temple at Shechem was not destroyed from from the Late Bronze period, 1550 B.C., until the time of Abimelech.¹⁶ In addition to the temple, the Israelites attached significance to the trees in the sanctuary, and set up a stone, probably like a Canaanite massebah.¹⁷

It is possible that the ritual at Shechem was similar to the Canaanite ritual there. At least the idea of gods

covenant was prominent in both. The Israelite ritual as it is found in Joshua 24 is akin to older forms.¹⁸ It is couched in the form of a Near Eastern sovereignty treaty. One might surmise that the form of Canaanite worship was also imitated at Bethel¹⁹ and Shiloh.²⁰

There are many indications that the system of sacrifice, as it is presented in the Old Testament, was similar to that of the Canaanites. The Canaanites sacrificed oxen or sheep which had to be perfect and approved.²¹ Gray says,

We see in šrp, the 'burnt offering,' and šlmm in 1. 4 of this text a reference to the two categories of sacrifice familiar in the Hebrew cult, šrp being the whole₂₂ burnt offering. . . and šlmm the communion offering.

Gray also suggests a similarity with the Hebrew Day of Atonement.

There is a reference to šlh nps, 'forgiveness of soul,' and it may well be that here we have the Canaanite counterpart to the Hebrew Day of Atonement Such a text as this, fragmentary as it is, suggests that the religion of ancient Canaan was much fuller and deeper than the imitative magic of a fertility cult.²³

Gray also notes the similarity between the way Solomon dedicated the temple and the way Baal's house was dedicated. Apparently both were dedicated in the month of regular rains, Ethanim. Baal's ceremony was like this:

Baal prepares the menage of his house,
Yea, Hadad orders the arrangement of his palace.
He has slaughtered oxen and sheep,
He has felled bulls and fatlings of rams,
Yearling calves,

Lambs of young sheep:
 He has called his brothers into his house,²⁴
 His kinsmen into the midst of his palace.

At the dedication of the temple

Solomon offered as peace offerings to the Lord twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord.²⁵

Other parallels of varying probability have been suggested. The ritual weeping mentioned in connection with Jephthah's daughter,²⁶ for example, may have been similar to the ritual mourning for the dead fertility god.²⁷ Perhaps the rite of offering the first sheaf mentioned in Lev. 2:14,

You shall offer for the cereal offering of your first fruits crushed new grain from fresh ears, parched with fire.

is similar to the ritual described in Anath's killing of Mot,

With a blade she cleaves him.
 With a shovel she winnows him.
 With fire she parches him.
 With a millstone she grinds²⁸ him.
 In the field she sows him.

The Psalms which speak of the coronation of a king have been related by some scholars to the annual enthronement festival known in parts of the Semitic world.²⁹

It is clearly stated in the Old Testament that Israel's worship was not always pure. The cultural borrowing was more than innocent imitation. This is true of every period

in Israel's history. The last reverberation of God's thunder from Sinai had scarcely died among the distant hills, as the first shout of the people "who sat down to eat and rose up to play" pierced the desert air. The judgment on Zedekiah was that he followed in the evil way of his fathers. Nor were those who returned from the exile exempt from syncretistic worship.

The most important incident of syncretistic fertility worship occurred at Peor during the wilderness wanderings.³⁰ Here the main details of fertility worship are explicitly mentioned. The Israelites worshipped with sacred prostitutes from the daughters of Moab. It is said that "Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel."³¹ The people performed the ritual mourning for Baal outside the tent of meeting. An Israelite named Zimri took a Midianite woman into the inner room of the tent to carry out the rites. However, the Yahwist priest Phinehas surprised them in the tent and killed them with a spear. The importance of this sin in Israelite history is seen from the fact that it is alluded to in Joshua 22:17, Deuteronomy 3:29, 4:44-46, and Hosea 9:10. This was the sin of fertility worship par excellence.

During the entire period from the judges to the fall of the kingdoms, Israelites worshipped with fertility rites to a greater or lesser degree. The nature of worship in

this period is important because many scholars hold that Genesis 2-3 was written during this time.³² During the period of the judges it was clear that some of the Israelites had forsaken pure Yahwism. The oppression of the tribes is attributed to "playing the harlot after other gods."³³ Gideon (Jerubbaal) destroys the altar of Baal and the Asherah, but later he leads in sinful worship.³⁴ The time of Saul is much the same. The ark of the Lord is totally forgotten for twenty years. The people serve Astaroth and the baals.³⁵ Saul's own sons are named after Baal, not Yahweh. When David conquers Jerusalem, he apparently permits the Jebusite worship to continue.³⁶ David's concubines and wives were not all from the tribes of Israel and some presumably worshipped other gods. This is certainly true of Solomon's wives. From the time of Solomon on, the cult of Baal, the high places, the offering of incense were always present in some degree. False gods were sometimes worshipped even in the temple.

It is not surprising then that the faithful in Israel carried on a constant polemic against false and syncretistic worship, particularly against Baal and the female fertility goddesses. They inveighed against the high places, the so-called Astaroth, and the worship under every green tree. This is a major theme of the former prophets. In these books the success and prosperity of Israel is declared to be a result of true worship of Yahweh and

obedience to his commands. Misfortune or punishment is a result of "being like the nations," playing the harlot after the fertility gods. The prophets Hosea and Amos also attack the fertility cult, particularly in the Northern Kingdom. Hosea explicitly denounces those who think their bread and water, flax, oil, and wool come from the gods called "her lovers."³⁷ Amos declares that Yahweh, not Baal, determines whether crops will grow.³⁸

It must be noted that the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and Psalm 104 have their own polemic against false religious mythology. In Semitic mythology the sea monster is slain by the god, and from it the world is made. In Genesis 1 there is tehom, the unformed material of the world, which is specifically created by God. The sea monsters are created by God also. Leviathan swims in the sea for sport.³⁹ The sun and the moon are not gods; they are rather objects that serve man. It is not unlikely that the Genesis 2-3 account sets the universal story of the creation and fall of man in opposition to false religious ideas which threatened Israel's faith. An answer to the question of why the author used a serpent to be the agent of temptation may be suggested by defining as nearly as possible the meaning of the serpent in Canaanite religion.

CHAPTER III

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES FOR SERPENT WORSHIP IN CANAAN

To understand the symbolical significance of the snake motif in Genesis 3, it is necessary to attempt to understand the significance that the snake had as a religious symbol for the Canaanites. These were the people with whom the Israelites lived and exchanged ideas. It is clear from what has been said above that the Israelites shared with their neighbors many common ideas about the world. In addition, they were familiar with much of the religious symbolism of their neighbors. What the snake meant for the Canaanites would affect the way the Israelites treated this symbol. It could lead them to reject its religious meaning, using it as a symbol of that which was wrong.

There is a large amount of archaeological material which indicates that the snake was a religious symbol in Canaanite culture. This evidence is drawn from excavations in many parts of Palestine. It has been recovered from various strata. Snake forms are found in connection with representations of goddesses. There are certain cultic shrines and instruments which are decorated with the snake symbol. Bronze representations of snakes have been found in or near temples.

This chapter will attempt to describe the material found in Palestine itself. Then some selected comparative material which may aid in the interpretation of the snake material will be mentioned. In the following chapter an attempt will be made to interpret the place of the serpent motif in Canaanite religious thought.

A discussion of the representation of the serpent in Canaanite culture must begin with an examination of the terra cotta figurines which show a nude female figure and also include a serpent. The terra cotta figurine is an art object unearthed with regularity in Palestinian excavations. Other archaeologists would agree with Fritchard when he says that these figurines have come from almost every important excavation in Palestine.¹ In his book he catalogues over two hundred of these figurines, recovered from strata dated from the Middle Bronze period, ca. 2000 B.C., to the end of the Late Iron period, ca. 600 B.C. In most discussions it is assumed or stated that these figures are representations of a goddess. They are identified with a goddess of fertility or the mother goddess. Some even go so far as to call this goddess Astarte or Ashtoreth. Fritchard, however, concludes that "there is no direct evidence connecting the nude female figure with any of the prominent goddesses."² Although the figurine cannot be linked with certainty to any specific Canaanite goddess,

known from literary sources, it cannot be doubted that this is a figure connected with fertility. The prominence given to reproductive organs, the position of the hands on some figures, the fact that some figures are shown as pregnant or with child in arm, all indicate this. These figurines may be mother-goddess figures or objects to promote the fertility of human, animals, or crops by sympathetic magic.

The figurines which are important in this discussion are those with a serpent connected somehow to the figure. Pritchard lists these figurines in two groups. One type, called the Qadesh type, is similar to representations of the Canaanite goddess Qadesh, known from Egyptian carvings and inscriptions. This type will be discussed more fully with the material from Egypt. Those Qadesh-type figurines recovered in Palestine, however, include two which show the figure holding serpents in her outstretched arms. From Gezer a broken plaque was uncovered that showed the upper part of the body. Although the arms are obliterated, the figure is bordered by two serpents drawn up in the position of striking.³ A plaque discovered at Ain Shems, dated between 1500-1200 B.C., is described as "showing [a] plump, nude female figure. . . the left hand holding a stalk or serpent. Coiled around the neck is a serpent with head at left thigh."⁴

Another genre of figurines is the pillar figurine.⁵ Pritchard mentions three examples that have serpents connected with them. One from the late fourteenth century at Beth-Shan shows a bust with missing head. A serpent is coiled around the neck.⁶ An object from the early sixteenth century at Tell Beit Mirsim shows in relief the base of a figure around which is coiled a serpent.⁷ A third plaque, uncovered at Shechem also shows a serpent coiled around the lower part of the figure.⁸ The terra cotta figurine is a major genre of Canaanite art. It has also been found in Israelite settlements. The association of the serpent with this figure at different times and different places is not a co-incidence and requires explanation.

More evidence to support the idea that the serpent is a religious symbol in Palestinian culture comes from Beth-Shan. The unusual nature of the materials found at Beth-Shan suggests that they were cult objects. This in turn leads many scholars to speak of a serpent cult at Beth-Shan.⁹ One of the objects is a pottery model shrine, a cylindrical object with square openings incised. Four serpents wind around the shrine. In the openings are placed birds. The shrine comes from about 1100 B.C. It is similar to a shrine found at Megiddo, dated between 1150-1100 B.C., which exhibits a nude figure on it.¹⁰

A square house-like object with openings like windows was also found at Beth-Shan. Attached to it are two nude figures, some birds, and several climbing serpents. Pritchard suggests that it was an incense holder from about 1100 B.C. It shows great similarity to a house-like shrine from Mesopotamia from the third millenium B.C.¹¹ This similarity gives confirmation of the tenacity with which religious symbols were preserved. Another object, mentioned by Cook, is a bowl with an undulating serpent on it.¹² Pritchard describes an unusual object which he calls "a cult object of clay on which are represented two breasts below which is a cup for the lacteal fluid." The breasts are apparently attached to a serpent.¹³

The number of serpent cult objects found at Beth-Shan leads one to suspect that the serpent played an important part in worship there. Further evidence for this perhaps comes from the name itself. Many scholars suspect that the name Beth-Shan refers to the temple of a deity, just as the names Beth-Shemesh, Beth-Horon, Bethel and many others do. They have allemted an etymology from Shahan or Sakhan, the Semitic name of an old Sumerian serpent deity.¹⁴ Although others have disputed this etymology, no suggested alternative is more probable.

Other evidence indicates that serpents played some part in cultic life in many other parts of Palestine. A

relief from Ta'annek shows a boy who carries a large serpent.¹⁵ Two bronze serpents from Gezer were found near cultic stones. They may be comparable in some sense to a serpent head found by Sellin at Ta'annek.¹⁶ Snakes were also depicted at Petra. One drawing shows a boy carrying two serpents.¹⁷ Also discovered was a cone-shaped monument with three snakes coiling around it.¹⁸ At Hazor a cult standard was found. It is a unique archaeological find so far. It was apparently placed on a pole and used in processions. It has on it the head of a female figure. A triangular necklace hangs down from the neck. From the apex, which hangs downward, descends a pendant voluted at each end. It is not easy to tell exactly what is meant. Possibly it is a stylized serpent. There are two serpents on each side of the figure, similar to Qadesh-type figures. This standard was found in a strata labeled Late Bronze II.¹⁹ One other bit of evidence is a seal identified by Gressmann as a seal of Baalnathan. Here the god holds two serpents in outstretched arms in the typical position of the Qadesh figurines.²⁰

Any discussion of serpent worship in Palestine must naturally take into account several Biblical references to serpent worship. There was a "serpent stone" beside the spring of En-rogel where Adonijah was abortively made king.²¹ There is also some evidence that a type of serpent worship

was practiced at Jerusalem. In II Kings 18:4 there is mentioned a brazen serpent called Nehushtan, which was worshipped by the Israelites at the time of Hezekiah. Since Hezekiah destroyed it along with the high places, the pillars, and the Asherah, it may have been connected with a type of fertility worship.

Where did this serpent come from? Two explanations are possible. It may have been the serpent made in the wilderness by Moses. This is the explanation given in II Kings. A number of scholars suggest that it may have been part of the worship of the Jebusites which was continued by David and his successors.²² If it was the serpent made by Moses, then by Hezekiah's time it had assumed some significance beyond a mere relic of the Mosaic age. The people were worshipping by offering incense to it. Why would a serpent be worshipped? The Deuteronomic injunction in 18:11 would seem to forbid such a thing. Possibly the idea was suggested by what the neighboring Canaanites were doing.

The possibility that the serpent was a relic of the pre-Davidic Jebusite worship cannot be discounted hastily. Most scholars seem to think that the cult worship of the Jebusites was continued alongside official Yahwism. There is more than a little evidence for this. The standard etymology of Jerusalem is "foundation or hearthstone of

Shalem." In the Amarna letters the city is called Beth-Shalem, which may indicate that it was a center of the worship of Shalem.²³ The fact that the name of the deity was apparently used in the names of David's sons, Absalom and Solomon, lends weight to the idea that an older cult continued. Mowinckel and Rowley suggest Zedek as another deity or another name for the deity at this place. Although the Ras Shamra evidence does not seem to support his idea, Albright identifies Shalem with Shulman or Eshmun, "the god of healing, par excellence, who was identified by the Greeks and Romans with Aesculapius."²⁴ The symbol of this god of healing was the serpent.²⁵ Possibly Eshmun also had some connection with fertility.²⁶

Whether the serpent was from Moses' time or from the time of the Jebusites, it seems likely that at Hezekiah's time it was worshipped with a type of worship intolerable to pure Yahwism. Some form of sinful serpent worship therefore existed right in the temple. Apparently the serpent had been there for a long time also. This explicit worship of a serpent shows that Israelites were familiar with and saw a danger in worshipping a serpent at this particular time.

There is more evidence than that which comes from Palestine itself. The serpent idea plays a part in religious thought throughout the Semitic world and even in

Cyprus, Crete, and Greece. It may be objected that it is invalid to draw conclusions for life in Palestine during the Israelite period from material from widely separated places and from other ages. Moreover, it is true that scholars have often succumbed to the temptation of oversimplifying the historical situation and have drawn indiscriminate parallels. It must be remembered, however, that ideas were held in common by different groups of people. Literary parallels show that a good deal of borrowing of religious thought was carried on. It must also be noted that religious ideas were conserved in the various cultures, changing more slowly than the cultures themselves. It is possible to find ideas and pictorial representations which show amazing durability throughout the Mediterranean and especially the Near Eastern World.

Parallels may then be cited from Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Aegean culture which show the pervasiveness of the snake motif and clarify its religious meaning. The numerous parallels from Mesopotamia are most illuminating. They show in a general way that the serpent is "symbolic of the generative powers of the earth."²⁷ Van Buren sums up his detailed treatment by saying,

All the evidence tends to prove that the motive was a symbol, not of any particular divinity, but of the blessings of fertility ensured by the union of male and female; thus it was a symbol of happy augury, not only for mankind, but also for the increase of all the kindly fruits of the earth.²⁸

It must be noted that at times the serpent motif was associated with a particular divinity, but at other times not. The serpent is a more basic symbol than merely the symbol of a single god. The basic meaning of the serpent is expressed in a carving on a vase of steatite from the time of Gudea, dedicated by him to his patron god Ningizida (Figure 1).

That the serpent idea is ancient can be seen from the fact that a very early Mesopotamian pictograph for the mother goddess is a serpent coiling around a staff.²⁹ Numerous seals illustrating the worship of a serpent-divinity who is the source of fertility come from early periods. A good example is a seal from Akkad, ca. 2350-2150 B.C., which shows a deity in human form being approached by worshippers. One of the worshippers has a serpent on his head. Flanking the figures are the serpent fertility signs.(Figure 2).³⁰ Another Akkadian seal from the same period shows the god seated on a throne which ends in the head of a snake. The god holds a plow, and a worshipper brings a lamb. Also pictured is the sacred mountain with a sacred tree growing on it.³¹ Another seal shows people in a cultic ritual. The fertility symbol of entwined serpents is present.³² A Sumerian seal shows a mythical tree with fruit to be culled. A figure reaches for the fruit. Behind the figure is a serpent. According to Campbell this



Figure 1. Vase Carving

figure may be Gula-Bau, a goddess of the fruitful earth. (Figure 3).

The serpent fertility idea existed over a wide area and extended for a considerable period of time. Examples can be cited from ages extending from the third millenium B.C. to the Sassanian period, 226-641 A.D. From Ur, Level I, there is a design of a nude hero holding a feline in each hand. Above his head are two serpents entwined, each biting the tip of its tail. A similar treatment is found at Susa, where an object shows "the interlaced serpents biting their own tails." They "seem to hang in the air above a kid (?) standing between two nude men."³³ Other seals from Ur, Fara, and Susa also show the serpents entwined. One includes a fantastic figure kneeling on one knee and clasping with each hand a head of one of the pairs of serpents which rear to the right and left of him.³⁴ Some early seals represent a male deity whose upper parts are human, but whose lower parts are a long coiled serpent. Langdon calls this the serpent deity Mush, whose Akkadian names Sherah, "grain," and Shahan, "fire," clearly reveal his connection with the generative powers of the earth and the heat of the sun.³⁵

The serpent idea was present in a period contemporaneous with the Israelite invasion of Palestine. A serpentine amulet of the thirteenth century from Nippur was engraved with symbols to protect or bless the owner. In-



Figure 2. Akkadian Seal

cluded on the obverse side are a dog, a sacrificial knife, a rhomb, and the coils of two serpents entwined.³⁶ From Ras Shamra, ca. 1900-1700 B.C., there is a statue of a goddess who wears a garment with strange snake-like coils.³⁷ A similar type of figure comes from Alalakh, ca. 1475. This king figure wears a garment with a peculiar rolled edge that apparently represents a snake.³⁸ In a discussion of several examples of this type of figure, Albright concludes that in at least some cases a stylized serpent is represented.³⁹

From Assyria about 700 B.C. comes a bell with handles and clappers as serpents. This object also has symbols of several gods on it.⁴⁰ Finally from the late Sassanian period, 224-641 A.D., comes a bowl with the drawing of a serpent climbing a sacred tree. Nearby are the symbols of the sun and moon (Figure 4).⁴¹ The extent and pervasiveness of the serpent symbol shows that it has meaning beyond that associated with any local deity. It is quite likely that in specific cultures the serpents may have represented a local deity, or may have been an amulet-type charm, or may have been a phallic symbol. Such precision, however, cannot be established with the evidence available to this writer. Moreover, it would have little bearing on the meaning of the serpent in Palestine at any given period unless a direct link could be shown. The general idea that the serpent is usually connected with fertility seems evident.



Figure 3. Sumerian Seal

The evidence from Egypt that is pertinent to an understanding of Canaanite religion is the figure of the goddess Qadesh. Egypt was invaded by a foreign element called the Hyksos about 1800 B.C. Some of these people came from the Mediterranean coast or had relations with the people who lived there. At any rate, during and after this time many representations of Canaanite deities are found in Egypt. The goddess Qadesh illuminates the place of serpent figures in Canaanite religion. Qadesh is pictured nude, standing on a lion. She is not in the typical frontal position of Egyptian art. In her hands she holds one or two serpents. Sometimes she has a serpent in one hand and a lotus stalk in the other. She is called, "Qadesh, beloved of Ptah." On several occasions the god Min or the god Resheph is pictured with her. Min is depicted on at least two occasions with a prominent phallus.⁴² There is no doubt that Qadesh is a fertility goddess. Nor can there be doubt that the serpent is in some way intimately connected with worship of her. As mentioned above, many Qadesh-type figurines have been found in Palestine.

Not only is the serpent associated with fertility ideas in Mesopotamia and Egypt, but it occurs also in the Aegean world. In Cyprus many examples of serpents are found on various objects. These come primarily from the Bronze Age, corresponding roughly to the Bronze Age in Palestine.



Figure 4. A Drawing from a Bowl of the Sassanian Period.

Küster concludes that these must have some connection with mythology or well-known religious ideas.⁴³ Serpent worship was common on the island of Crete. It surely contributed to the spread of the serpent motif.⁴⁴ Well-known are the faience figures of the mother goddess holding snakes in her hand or letting them coil over her body. These come primarily from the Middle Bronze Age.⁴⁵

In Greece also the serpent is thought of as a symbol of fertility. The serpent motif is connected particularly with the goddess Demeter, the goddess who brings fertility and new life to the lands each year (Figure 5). Küster remarks that in family worship of Demeter the snake serves as a symbol of that power of the earth which generates new life.⁴⁶ It may be that the serpent is a fertility symbol apart from specific association with Demeter (Figure 6).⁴⁷

The association of the serpent with fertility is found as late as the mystery religions. The fertility element is present in at least one mystery religion in the ceremony in which women complete a cultic marriage with the god by symbolically drawing a real snake or a golden snake image into their garments with the belief that the snake god would thus penetrate through their genitals.⁴⁸ Perhaps a similar idea is expressed by a statue found in Hellenistic Palestine from the second century B.C. The statue was



Figure 5. The Goddess Demeter with a Serpent



Figure 6. The Tree of the Hesperides

found at Mugharat el Wad, Mount Carmel. It is a female figure, nude except for a necklace. On the thigh of the figure, with its head pointed toward the genitals, is a snake.⁴⁹

In Greek thought, however, the serpent is not only thought of as a symbol of fertility. It is also an animal of healing. As such it is related to Asclepius. The god's healing powers are ascribed to the serpent. The idea of the serpent as a healer is apparently earlier than its attribution to Asclepius, Küster cites places in Thessaly near Sikyon where a cult of the serpent-healer was found.⁵⁰

The survey of Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures leads to the conclusion that serpent worship in Palestine was a reflection of ideas held throughout the Near Eastern world. The worship of the serpent was particularly prevalent in the Aegean world during the Bronze Age, when there were many ties to Phoenicia and Palestine. The serpent as a symbol of fertility was also a part of the Mesopotamian thought world. It is not an unlikely conclusion that this idea was present also in Western Semitic thought, as the data from Palestine suggests. Scholars have demonstrated that many religious ideas were exchanged between Mesopotamian and Canaanite cultures.

The specifically Palestinian evidence agrees with the general idea found in other data. Because of the

relatively common Qadesh figure one may suspect that other figures holding serpents in outstretched arms have some relation to the Qadesh figures and the sexual worship so represented. The materials from Beth-Shan and the cult standard from Hazor indicate that the serpent was a theme used in rituals.

The archaeological material in Palestine is not clarified by referring to the literary documents from Ras Shamra. To this writer's knowledge the serpent is only mentioned there as the chaos monster or metaphorically as in a text translated by Gordon,

They gore like buffaloes.
 Mot is strong, Baal is strong.
 They bite like serpents.
 Mot is strong, Baal is strong.⁵¹

The Mesopotamian literature was not examined in any detail by this writer. There is one story from the Gilgamesh epic in which a serpent swallows the plant of eternal youth, which Gilgamesh left in his boat while he was bathing.⁵² The idea apparently is that the serpent becomes immortal. However, this has little bearing on the fertility aspect of the serpent. It is possible that further investigation will lead to literary evidence to support the fertility associations of the serpent more fully. It is also possible that the serpent, having perhaps phallic significance in Canaan rather than representing a specific deity, does

not fit well into mythological texts such as those found at Ras Shamra. Little of the phallic symbolism commonly known in Greece and Italy could be ascertained from the classical epics of either culture.

CHAPTER IV

THE MEANING OF THE SERPENT IN CANAANITE RELIGION

After reviewing the archaeological evidence which demonstrates serpent symbolism in Canaan from the Middle Bronze period onward, what can be said about the meaning of the serpent in Canaanite religion? Three things may be said, namely, that the serpent is not the chaos monster, the Tiamat of Babylon or the Yam of Ugarit, that the serpent is a fertility symbol related to the fertility goddess or fertility worship, and that the serpent may occasionally represent a healing force.

That the serpent in Canaanite religion in Palestine is not the chaos monster can be demonstrated from the evidence. First, the idea itself stems from a superficial association of all snakes and dragons with one another. When the evidence from Mesopotamia is assessed, this association is shown to be wrong. The chief symbol of fertility in Mesopotamia is the intertwining snakes. These are seen on numerous seals in which there is no evidence of chaos or battle. Sometimes individual snakes are used as fertility symbols. They are generally naturalistically drawn and in a context similar to the entwined snake motif. The dragon or chaos monster, on the other hand, is often drawn with obvious mythological features.¹ A look at the

carving on the vase of Gudea² shows the distinction between the dragon and the fertility serpent. Here the two dragons flank the fertility symbol. It apparently shows the fertile world in the center, held in on both sides by the chaos.

The evidence from Palestine shows snakes portrayed naturalistically. The material from Gezer, Beth-Shan, Ta'annek and other places is in harmony in its presentation. The serpent with a youth, or with the nude figurines, is not the chaos monster. Convincing evidence of this is the fact that serpents are held precisely in the same way by Baalnathan as they are by the Qadesh-figurines. One might expect Baal to be fighting the serpents as Marduk fights the dragons, if they are symbols of the chaos monster. Whether made by Moses or not, the Nehushtan worshipped in Jerusalem is not a chaos monster.

The second conclusion that may be drawn is that the serpent is a symbol of fertility. The evidence from Palestine itself, where the serpent is related to the nude figure, often to the genitals, supports this. The comparative evidence from every culture surrounding Canaan suggests this conclusion. The serpent, it seems, is related to the mother goddess or to whatever divinity or image happens to represent fertility. This varies with the culture and the period. In Palestine both the nude figure and the serpent are common objects in several periods, although

different fertility goddesses seem to have been prominent at different times.³ Apparently the serpent motif may even be connected with Baalnathan.⁴ That Baal appeared as a serpent is stated by Hvidberg as he maintains that Genesis 3 is a polemic against Baal worship.⁵

Although it cannot be stated with absolute assurance, it is possible that sometimes the serpent is a phallic symbol. A number of scholars seem to suggest this.⁶ On a number of nude female figures the snake's head is pointing at the genital region. In the Hellenistic mystery religions snakes played a phallic role. An Assyrian illustration which shows a strange creature with a lion body but eagle's wings and feet supports the phallic symbolism of the serpent because the penis ends in a serpent head.⁷ From Palestine come representations of a god Iaw, possibly also mentioned in the Ugaritic texts.⁸ This god is pictured on coins of the Hellenistic period. Here the phallic nature of the serpent is evident on several representations (Figure 7).

It is true that the serpent is sometimes connected with gods whose major function is healing. It is seen with the Greek god Asclepius and the Phoenician god Eshmun. The caduceus form often associated with Asclepius is similar to the entwined serpent symbol which represented fertility in Mesopotamia. The brazen serpent made by Moses appears in Numbers in a healing story. Possibly the Nehushtan, if



Figure 7. Hellenistic Coins Depicting the God Iaw

related to Moses' serpent, was thought of in this way. However, there is no evidence for this. Just what relationship this idea has with the dominant serpent-fertility idea is not clear. It may be that the gods generally known as healing gods were at one time gods of fertility. There is, for example, the story of Eshmun cutting of his genitals.⁹ Or perhaps the idea of the serpent as ensuring the blessings of fertility was broad enough to include the idea of healing. Rowley advances this point of view,

There is ample archaeological evidence of the association of the serpent with fertility rites. . . . There is also evidence, of course, that in the ancient world the serpent was associated with healing, and the story of the erection of Nehushtan rests on this association. The restoration of life is not unrelated to the giving of life, however, and even the healing function of the serpent may rest on its fertility associations.¹⁰

It is also possible that the fertility and healing associations of the serpent developed independently. However, it would not be too likely that the staff and intertwined serpent motif developed in complete independence in several related cultures.

CHAPTER V

SOME CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE SERPENT IN GENESIS 3

The preceding discussion shows that the people of Israel were likely to have been familiar with the serpent as a symbol of a divine power from the time of Moses until the destruction of Jerusalem. It is also clear that generally this serpent symbol was connected with Canaanite fertility worship. This fertility worship was widely practiced and was constantly threatening the purity of Yahwistic religion. In fact, there were periods of syncretism or outright apostasy from the worship of Yahweh.

If the question of why the author of Genesis 3 chose to have the serpent pose the temptation to Adam and Eve is raised with this in mind, a likely answer is that he used this figure as a polemic against fertility religions. It is probable that an Israelite who heard or read this account would make this association. What this means is that one of the dimensions in the Genesis 3 narrative of the fall speaks directly to the life situation of Israel, pointing out that the fertility religion poses a temptation with all the subtlety and with all the catastrophic dimensions as the temptation to the first man and woman. Syncretism or idolatry is the ultimate disobedience to God's

command. The serpent, then, is the antitheses of all that God is. To follow his direction, however innocent or reasonable it seems, is to turn away from God in idolatry.

That the serpent may represent a polemic against the fertility religions agrees well with the entire Genesis 2-3 account. The serpent claims that Adam and Eve will become like gods by doing as he suggests. The aim of fertility worship was that by their own actions people could control the gods and induce fertility. In effect, they themselves became the gods.

The disobedience put Adam and Eve under the curse. Precisely those elements of life are cursed to which fertility worship was to bring blessing. To woman the curse is given that she shall bear children in pain and hardship. A curse upon the fertility of the fields is given to man. The ultimate result of sin is death, the negation of everything fertility worship promised to bring.

To see as deliberate the choice of a serpent to pose the temptation deepens the understanding of the Genesis narrative and also points the way to subsequent interpretations which the New Testament and the Christian Church have made. That basic power of evil which lies at the heart of all temptation is here seen in concrete form. The subtle and plausible temptation is the temptation to idolatry, which, as Luther says, is the essence of all sin.

Just as the writer of this account could see the essence of temptation and sin in the concrete allure of fertility worship, so later Jewish writers with a fuller understanding of God's revelation could speak of the concrete opponent of God and man as Satan. Thus also in the New Testament, when the full nature of sin and redemption became manifest to man, the writer of the Apocalypse can talk of Michael warring with that ancient serpent, meaning the Devil himself.

In the history of interpretation many exegetes have interpreted the sin of Adam and Eve as a sexual sin.¹ Perhaps the nakedness of Adam and Eve together with their later shame has encouraged this view, although not necessarily with full justification. Augustine called the basic sin concupiscence, using the word with sexual connotations. Perhaps when early interpreters saw the Fall in this light, they were not merely showing tendencies toward asceticism, but rather they recognized that in the early Mediterranean world fornication and idolatry were inseparably united. Perhaps the Apostle Paul's injunctions against fornication and adultery are made from precisely this point of view, that idolatry and sexual sin are closely related.

It is true today no less than when Genesis 3 was written that a great danger to the Church is syncretism. Nothing saps the strength of the Church more than worship

of that which is not God. A host of subtle syncretisms constantly tempt Christians. In the United States not the least of these is the temptation to idolize the powers of sex or sexual love. To see in the serpent a warning against the use of sex for man's own ends is a deep insight even for the present day.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹For the history of patristic and medieval interpretation see Martin Metzger, Die Paradieserzählung (Bonn: H. Bouvier und Co. Verlag, 1959), pp. 68ff.

²Wisdom 2:24.

³There are, however, still those commentators who apparently make no effort to identify the circumstances out of which Genesis 3 comes as a possible aid in their interpretation of the passage. Leupold simply maintains from the Apocryphal and New Testament statements "that Satan used the serpent as his tool or instrument and was in the final analysis the one who spoke through this creature. With his superior knowledge Adam ought at once to have sensed a grave irregularity in the serpent's speaking." H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1942), p. 140f.

⁴Bruce Vawter, A Path Through Genesis (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), p. 64.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Erik Routley, Beginning the Old Testament (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1962), p. 29.

⁷Gerhard von Rad, Genesis: A Commentary, translated by John H. Marks (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 89.

⁸Alan Richardson, Genesis I-XI (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1953), p. 30.

⁹Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁰Hermann Gunkel, Genesis, in Handkommentar zum Alten Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917), p. 15.

¹¹Num. 22:28

¹²Supra, p. 2.

¹³J. L. MacKenzie, "The Literary Characteristics of Genesis 2-3," Theological Studies, XV (1954), 541-572. Because this paper was prepared in a few weeks, it was not possible to obtain J. Coppens' book, La Connaissance du Bien et du Mal (Louvain: 1948).

¹⁴Flemming Hvidberg, "The Canaanitic Background of Gen. I-III," Vetus Testamentum, X (1960), 285-294.

Chapter II

¹John Gray, Archaeology and the Old Testament World (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1962), p. 107.

²So says Pope referring to elyon, olam, sadday, and bet el. Marvin H. Pope, El in the Ugaritic Texts (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), p. 25.

³Ibid., p. 26. See also Deut. 33:5 and Ex. 15:18.

⁴I K 37,43. Is. 64:8.

⁵Pope, p. 25.

⁶III K II 7,11. Ps. 82:1.

⁷Pope, p. 50.

⁸Theodor H. Gaster, Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 188.

⁹Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, translated by Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 197.

¹⁰Cyrus Gordon, Ugaritic Literature (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1949), p. 91.

¹¹Is. 27:1.

¹²Gen. 1:21.

¹³Ps. 48:2.

¹⁴Gen. 35:4.

¹⁵Josh 24.

¹⁶For a full discussion see L. E. Toombs and G. E. Wright, "The Third Campaign at Balatah (Shechem)," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, no. 161, 32ff.

¹⁷That Israel used masseboth in its worship is clear

from the discovery of an Israelite sanctuary at Arad. Y. Aharoni, "News and Notes," Israel Exploration Journal, XIII (1963), no. 4, 336.

¹⁸For one suggested reconstruction see Bernard Anderson, "The Place of Shechem in the Bible," Biblical Archaeology, XX, no. 1, 18.

¹⁹Gen. 35:1f.

²⁰Judg. 21:19-21.

²¹John Gray, The Legacy of Canaan (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957), p. 141.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 141f.

²⁴Gray, Archaeology, p. 108.

²⁵I Kings 8:63.

²⁶Judg. 11:37.

²⁷A complete treatment of the ritual of weeping in relation to the Old Testament is F. F. Hvidberg, Weeping and Laughter in the Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962).

²⁸Gray, Legacy, p. 110.

²⁹The most elaborate theory is probably Mowinckel's. S. Mowinckel, Psalmstudien (Kristiania: Jacob Dybwad, 1921).

³⁰Num. 25.

³¹Num. 25:3.

³²Time does not permit a discussion of the method of analysing and dating the so-called J source. For the purposes of this paper it will be maintained that J is a document of the united monarchy coming from the southern tribes. Although there may be debate about the specific extent of the document, it surely contains Genesis 2 and 3. The arguments for the background against which Genesis 3 is written, however, remain essentially the same whether one were to hold an early or a late date for this material.

³³Judg. 2:17.

³⁴Judg. 8:27

³⁵I Sam. 7:1-3.

³⁶For the relation of Melchizedek, Adonizedek, and Zadok, David's second priest, see H. H. Rowley, "Zadok and Nehushtan," Journal of Biblical Literature, (1939), 113-141. Also infra, p. 23.

³⁷Hos. 2:4-6.

³⁸Amos 4:7.

³⁹Ps. 104:26.

Chapter III

¹James B. Pritchard, Palestinian Figurines in Relation to Certain Goddesses Known Through Literature (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1943), p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 86.

³Ibid., p. 9f.

⁴Ibid., p. 10.

⁵Described by Pritchard, Palestinian Figurines, p. 56.

⁶Ibid., p. 27.

⁷Ibid. Albright also discusses this figure in Archaeology of Palestine (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 97, and elsewhere. He points out that it is not the traditional mother goddess figurine, but he adds that the head of the serpent is pointing significantly toward the genitals. In The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1932), p. 96ff, he mentions that this figure was found in a house. It had been attached to the wall in what was apparently a little oratory.

⁸Pritchard, Palestinian Figurines, p. 27.

⁹Albright mentions the theories which link Beth-Shan to serpent worship in Cyprus. Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1942), p. 79.

¹⁰James B. Fritchard, The Ancient Near East in Pictures (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), plate 585. Hereafter this book will be abbreviated ANEP.

¹¹Ibid., pl. 590 and 591.

¹²Stanley Cook, The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 98.

¹³Fritchard, Palestinian Figurines, p. 27. See Cook, p. 98.

¹⁴Cook, p.98.

¹⁵Hugo Gressmann, Altorientalische Texte und Bilder. (Zweite Auflage; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1927), II, abb. 174.

¹⁶Ibid., abb. 177.

¹⁷Ibid., abb. 175.

¹⁸Ibid., abb. 178.

¹⁹Y. Yadin, Hazor II (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1960), p. 117f and plate cxxxii.

²⁰Gressmann, Bilder, abb. 176.

²¹I Kings 1:9. A Dragon's well is also mentioned in Neh. 2:13.

²²Rowley, for example, says that "the Brazen Serpent was of Canaanite origin" and that it "represented a Canaanite god older than the Israelite occupation of Jerusalem." Rowley, p. 139.

²³M. Burrows, "Jerusalem," in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), II, 843f.

²⁴Albright, Archaeology and Religion of Israel, p. 79.

²⁵"An important Phoenician deity was Eshmun of Sidon, Identified by the Greeks with Asclepius." S. Langdon, Semitic Mythology, in The Mythology of All Races (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1931), V, 74. "Coins from the Roman period found at Beirut and at Sidon show a youthful god standing between two serpents. Apparently he is the Phoenician Eshmun." Langdon, p. 77.

²⁶Ibid., p.74.

²⁷Ibid., p. 90.

²⁸E. D. van Buren, Symbols of the Gods in Mesopotamian Art (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1945), p. 40.

²⁹See Langdon, fig. 46, drawn from the Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, 1914, 280f.

³⁰Pritchard, ANEP, pl. 692.

³¹Ibid., pl. 675.

³²Ibid., pl. 697.

³³Both taken from van Buren, p. 41.

³⁴Ibid., p. 40.

³⁵Langdon, p. 90.

³⁶van Buren, p. 42.

³⁷Pritchard, ANEP, pl. 480.

³⁸Ibid., pl. 452.

³⁹Albright, Archaeology and Religion of Israel, p. 189, n. 51.

⁴⁰Pritchard, ANEP, pl. 665.

⁴¹Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), p.11.

⁴²For examples of Qadesh see Pritchard, ANEP, pl. 470-474, and Gressmann, abb. 128 and 129.

⁴³E. Küster, Die Schlange in der Griechische Kunst und Religion, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten (Gieszen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1913), 25.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁵W. C. Graham and H. G. May, Culture and Conscience (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1936), p. 81f.

⁴⁶Küster, p. 140f.

⁴⁷Campbell, p. 21.

⁴⁸Küster, p. 140f.

⁴⁹Description from the guidebook to the Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem, Jordan, figure 45.

⁵⁰Küster, p. 133ff.

⁵¹Gordon, Ugaritic Literature (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1949), p. 48.

⁵²T..H. Gaster, The Oldest Stories in the world (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 81.

Chapter IV

¹E. g., the Serpent Dragon on the Ishtar gate, J. Fritchard, The Ancient Near East in Pictures (Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1954), pl. 761. See also pl. 658. Compare Marduk in combat with a dragon, S. Langdon, Semitic Mythology, in The Mythology of All Races (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1931), V, figs. 81-86 and 89-90.

²See Figure 1 above.

³J. Fritchard, Palestinian Figurines in Relation to Certain Goddesses Known Through Literature (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1943), p. 65 passim.

⁴See Chapter III, note 20.

⁵F. Hvidberg, "The Canaanitic Background of Gen. I-III," Vetus Testamentum, X (1960), 285ff. However, his argument is not as strong as it could be because he does not cite any data.

⁶See J. L. MacKenzie's brief discussion in "The Literary Characteristics of Gen. 2-3," Theological Studies, XV (1954), 541ff.

⁷Fritchard, ANEP, pl. 658.

⁸John Gray, The Legacy of Canaan (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957), p. 134.

⁹Chapter III, note 26.

¹⁰H. H. Rowley, "Zadok and Nehushtan," Journal of Biblical Literature, (1939), p. 140.

Chapter V

¹For selected quotations on this point of view from the Latin fathers see J. Coppens, "L' interpretation sexuelle du Peche du Paradise," Ephemerides Theologicae Louvanienses, XXXIII (1957), no. 3, 506-508.

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