

Understanding Sin & Evil #3: Death or Evil? Adam and Sin in the Second Temple Period

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Adam & Eve as an Explanation of Sin in Second Temple Literature

Ben Sira (Sirach) 25: 24

Hebrew (Manuscript C)

מאשה תחלת עון ובגללה גוענו יחד

Septuagint

ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ἀρχὴ ἁμαρτίας, καὶ δι' αὐτὴν ἀποθνήσκομεν πάντες.

Translation

From a woman is the beginning of sin, and because of her we die together/we die alike (Greek: we all die).

4 Ezra

4 Ezra 3:4-10 (Reminder: 4 Ezra starts with Chapter 3!)

Translation follows Michael E. Stone in Michael E. Stone and Matthias Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Translations, Introductions, and Notes* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013)

“O sovereign Lord, didst thou not speak at the beginning when thou didst form the earth—and that without help—and didst command the dust and it gave thee Adam, a lifeless body? Yet he was the workmanship of thy hands, and thou didst breathe into him the breath of life and he was made alive in thy presence. And thou didst lead him into the garden which thy right hand had planted before the earth appeared. And thou didst lay upon him one commandment; but he transgressed it, and immediately thou didst appoint death for him and for his descendants. From him there sprang nations and tribes, peoples and clans, without number. And every nation walked after its own will and did ungodly things before thee and scorned thee, and thou didst not hinder them.

But again, in its time thou didst bring the flood upon the earth and the inhabitants of the world and destroy them. And the same fate befell them: as death came upon Adam, so the flood upon them.

4 Ezra 3:20-22, 25-27

“Yet thou didst not take away from them their evil heart, so that thy Torah might bring forth fruit in them. For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him.

Thus the disease became permanent; the Torah was in the people’s heart along with the evil root, but what was good departed, and the evil remained. ... This was done for many years; but the inhabitants of the city transgressed, in everything doing as Adam and all his descendants had done, for they also were burdened with the evil heart. So thou didst deliver the city into the hands of thy enemies.

4 Ezra 7:88-92

But this is the order of those who have kept the ways of the Most High, when they shall be separated from their mortal vessel. During the time that they lived in it, they laboriously served the Most High, and withstood danger every hour, that they might keep the law of the Lawgiver perfectly. Therefore this is the teaching concerning them: First of all, they shall see with great joy the glory of him who receives them, for they shall have rest in seven orders. The first order, because they have striven with great effort to overcome the evil thought which was formed with them, that it might not lead them astray from life into death.

4 Ezra 7:118-119

O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the misfortune was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants.

For what good is it to us, if an immortal age has been promised to us, but we have done deeds that bring death? Or that an everlasting hope has been predicted to us, but we are miserably shamed? Or that safe and healthful habitations have been reserved for us, but we have erred wickedly?

2 Baruch

2 Baruch 48:42-43

Translation follows D.M. Gurtner, *Second Baruch: A Critical Edition of the Syriac Text, with Greek and Latin Fragments, English Translation, Introduction, and Concordances* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009).

And I answered and said, “O Adam, what have you done to all those who are born from you? And what will be said to the first Eve who heeded the serpent? For all this multitude are going to corruption. Nor is there any numbering those whom the fire devours.”

2 Baruch 54:15-17, 19

“For though Adam sinned first and brought untimely death upon all, also those who were born from him have prepared for himself the coming torment. And also, each one of them has chosen for himself glories to come. For truly he who believes will receive reward. But now, as for you, you wicked that now are, turn to destruction, because you will be visited quickly, since you previously rejected the understanding of the Most High.... So Adam is not the cause, except only for his own soul. But each of us has been the Adam of his own soul.”

Oracle to Cain as an Explanation of Sin in Second Temple Literature

The Dead Sea Scrolls

The Community Rule (1QS) XI:21-22

וילוד אשה מה ישב לפניכה והואה מעפר מגבלו ולחם רמה מדורו והואה מצירוק חמר קורצ ולעפר תשוקתו

And he born of woman, how can he sit before you? For he is from spit (and) pinched-off clay, and to dirt is his desire...

The War Scroll (1Q33 / 1QMilḥamah) XIII.10-12

...ואתה עשיתה בליעל לשחת מלאך משטמה ובחוש[ך] [תו] ובעצתו להרשיע ולהאשים וכול רוחי גורלו מלאכי חבל בחוקי חושך יתהלכו ואליו [תש] וקתמה

... You yourself made Belial for the pit, an angel of malevolence, his [] in darkne[ss] and his counsel is to condemn and convict. All the spirits of his lot—the angels of destruction—walk in accord with the rules of darkness, for to it is their [des]ire.

The War Scroll XV.9-10

כיא הִמה עדת רשעה ובחושך כול מעשיהם ואליו תשוק[תמה]

For they are a wicked congregation, all their deeds are in darkness; and to it is their desire.

The War Scroll XVII.4

ואתם התחזקו ואל תיראום [] המה לתהו ולבהו תשוקתם

But, as for you, take courage and do not fear them [] they are for emptiness [*tohu*] and to chaos [*bohu*] is their desire.