GENESIS CHAPTER THREE

Translated Directly from the Leningrad Codex

Codex Leningradensis (1008/9 CE) — Base Text of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)

The Fall: Temptation, Transgression, and the First Promise of Redemption

Genesis 3 is the theological hinge of the entire Bible. Every major subsequent movement of Scripture — covenant, sacrifice, prophecy, law, incarnation, atonement, resurrection, new creation — is the divine response to what this chapter describes. The chapter is structured in three movements: **Temptation and Fall (vv. 1-7)**, **Divine Interrogation and Confrontation (vv. 8-13)**, and **Judgment, Grace, and Expulsion (vv. 14-24)**. The final movement contains, embedded within the sentence of judgment, the first promise of redemption — the *protoevangelium* of verse 15 — and closes not with abandonment but with God clothing the exiled couple and posting a guard to prevent their permanent entrapment in a state of immortal corruption.

The literary architecture is precise and deliberate. The *arum/arummim* (cunning/naked) wordplay between 2:25 and 3:1 signals the transition with surgical precision. The three interrogations in vv. 9-13 parallel the three judgment oracles of vv. 14-19. The judgment oracles are delivered in reverse order from the transgression: serpent first (who tempted), woman second (who ate first and gave), man last (who received directly from God the command he abandoned). Paul's reversal of this order in Romans 5 — sin entering through Adam, not Eve — is not a contradiction but a theological reframing that rests on the man's direct reception of the prohibition and his deliberate, informed choice to eat despite it.

The Serpent: Identification and Interpretation

The text introduces the serpent exclusively as one of the animals YHWH Elohim made — the most cunning of them. No further identification is provided within the MT text of Genesis 3. The identification of the serpent with Satan or the devil is drawn from later canonical Scripture (Wis 2:24; Rev 12:9; 20:2; cf. John 8:44; 1 John 3:8; Rom 16:20) and has been the consistent reading of both Judaism (Targum Pseudo-Jonathan) and Christianity throughout their interpretive histories. Christian theology reads the full canonical picture as authoritative: the serpent is the vehicle of Satanic temptation, though the text does not foreground that identification here.

Translation Principles for This Chapter

Arum: Rendered 'cunning' — the English word best captures the combination of intelligence and deviousness the Hebrew conveys. The wordplay with arummim cannot be reproduced in English; it is explained in the note on v.1.

Hu in 3:15: Rendered 'he' following the grammatically singular MT and LXX autos. The full interpretive history of the verse is addressed in its note.

Teshuqah: Rendered 'desire' in v.16, preserving the Hebrew ambiguity. The note addresses the three occurrences of this rare word in the Hebrew Bible.

Mot Tamut / Pen-Temutun: God's emphatic 'you will certainly die' (2:17) and the woman's weakened 'or you will die' (3:3) are preserved as a contrast in the English, with the Hebrew forms explained in the note on v.3.

3:1	וְהַנָּחָשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם מִכֹּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה אַף כִּי־אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכֹּל עֵץ הַגָּן
	we-ha-nachash hayah arum mi-kol chayyat ha-sadeh asher asah YHWH Elohim way-yomer el-ha-ishah af ki-amar Elohim lo tokh'lu mi-kol ets ha-gan
	Now the serpent was more cunning than any wild animal the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?'
•	*Nachash (serpent) is introduced as one of God's own creatures. Its identification with Satan develops through later canonical Scripture (Wis 2:24; Rev 12:9; 20:2) but is not stated in the MT text here. Arum (cunning) shares the same consonant cluster as arummim (naked) from 2:25 — one of the most deliberate wordplays in biblical Hebrew. The innocence-chapter ends on 'naked and unashamed'; the temptation-chapter opens with 'the cunning one.' The serpent's first move is distortion: God said eat freely from any tree (2:16); the serpent renders this as 'not from any tree at all.' The first assault on humanity is the misrepresentation of what God actually said.*

3:2	וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֶל־הַנָּחָשׁ מִפְּרִי עֵץ־הַגָּן נֹאכֵל
	wat-tomer ha-ishah el-ha-nachash mi-fri ets-ha-gan nokhel
	The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,'
•	*The woman engages the challenge rather than refusing dialogue — the narrative shows her correcting the distortion accurately. Her defense is sound so far. The danger comes not in verse 2 but in verse 3, where her quotation of the prohibition subtly diverges from God's original wording.*

3:3	וּמִפְּרִי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹךְ־הַגָּן אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא תִגְּעוּ בּוֹ פֶּן־תְּמֻתוּן
	u-mi-fri ha-ets asher be-tokh-ha-gan amar Elohim lo tokh'lu mimmennu we-lo tig'u vo pen-temutun
	'but about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said: You must not eat from it, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'
•	*Two deviations from God's original command (2:17). First, she adds 'you must not touch it' — not in God's words. Whether this is pious over-caution, an oral family tradition, or the serpent's distortion already absorbed is classically debated. The Midrash (Genesis Rabbah 19:3) suggests the serpent used this addition against her: he pushed her into the tree, showed her touching did not kill her, and then argued eating would likewise have no consequence. Second, the penalty is weakened: God said mot tamut (you will certainly die, emphatic infinitive absolute); she says pen-temutun (lest you die, conditional), reducing certainty to possibility.*

3:4	וַיֹּאמֶר הַנָּחָשׁ אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה לֹא־מוֹת תְּמֻתוּן
	way-yomer ha-nachash el-ha-ishah lo-mot temutun

	'You certainly will not die,' the serpent said to the woman.
•	*A flat, direct contradiction of God's word using the identical emphatic construction: lo-mot temutun (dying you will not die) inverts God's mot tamut (dying you will die). This is the first lie in Scripture. The serpent does not deny that the tree has power; it denies that the power will be exercised in judgment. The anatomy of temptation is made visible: acknowledge the reality of the act; deny the reality of the consequence.*

3:5	כִּי יֹדֵעַ אֱלֹהִים כִּי בְיוֹם אֲכָלְכֶם מִמֶּנּוּ וְנִפְקְחוּ עֵינֵיכֶם וִהְיִיתֶם כֵּאלֹהִים יֹדְעֵי טוֹב וָרָע
	ki yodea Elohim ki be-yom akholkhem mimmennu we-nifqechu eynekhem wi-hyitem ke-Elohim yod'ey tov wa-ra
	'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'
•	*The serpent's most devastating move: the slander of God's motive. It presents God as withholding something desirable out of self-interest — transforming the prohibition from gracious boundary into jealous control. The claim is half-true: their eyes are indeed opened (v.7) and God himself confirms they have become like him knowing good and evil (v.22). The lie is not in the promise but in what is concealed — the devastating cost of acquiring that knowledge through disobedience. A half-truth presented as the whole truth is a complete lie.*

3:6	וַתֵּרֶא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי־טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמַאֲכָל וְכִי תַאֲוָה־הוּא לָעֵינַיִם וְנֶחְמָד הָעֵץ לְהַשְׂכִּיל וַתִּקַּח מִפִּרְיוֹ וַתֹּאכַל וַתִּתֵּן גַּם־לְאִישָׁהּ עִמָּהּ וַיֹּאכַל
	wat-tere ha-ishah ki-tov ha-ets le-ma'akhal we-ki ta'avah-hu la-eynayim we-nekhmad ha-ets le-haskil wat-tiqqach mi-piryo wat-tokhal wat-titen gam-le-ishah immah way-yokhal
	When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.
•	*Three levels of appeal: physical appetite (good for food), aesthetic beauty (pleasing to the eye), and intellectual ambition (desirable for gaining wisdom/insight). Compare 1 John 2:16 — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life — widely read as a deliberate echo of this verse. The critical phrase is imma (with her): the husband was present throughout the entire exchange, silent and passive. He received the command directly from God (2:16-17) and said nothing. Paul's argument that sin entered through Adam (Rom 5:12), not through Eve, rests squarely on this: the woman was deceived (1 Tim 2:14); Adam simply chose, with full knowledge, to follow.*

3:7	וַתִּפָּקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי עֵירֻמִּם הֵם וַיִּתְפְּרוּ עֲלֵה תְאֵנָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חֲגֹרֹת
	wat-tippaqachnah eyne sheneyhem way-yede'u ki eyrummim hem way-yitpru aleh te'enah way-ya'asu lahem chagorot
	Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.
•	*The serpent's promise partially fulfilled: eyes opened, yes — but the first fruit of the opened vision is not godlike wisdom but shame. Self-consciousness has replaced innocence. Eyrummim (naked) echoes arum (cunning) from v.1 — the wordplay closes the loop: the chapter began with the cunning creature and ends with the naked creatures. Fig leaves (aleh te'enah) are humanity's first self-remedy for a spiritual wound — a physical covering for a relational rupture. God will replace these inadequate leaves with garments of skin in verse 21, establishing the pattern of divine provision superseding human effort.*

3:8	וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּגָּן לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם וַיִּתְחַבֵּא הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים בְּתוֹךְ עֵץ הַגָּן
	way-yishme'u et-qol YHWH Elohim mithhalekh ba-gan le-ruach ha-yom way-yitchabbe ha-adam we-ishto mi-pney YHWH Elohim be-tokh ets ha-gan
	Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God moving about in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
•	*Qol YHWH Elohim mithhalekh (the sound of the LORD God walking about) — the use of the Hithpael (reflexive/iterative) of halakh suggests habitual movement, implying this divine walking in the garden was a regular occurrence, a pattern of communion now interrupted. Le-ruach ha-yom (in the breath/breeze of the day) — the cool evening wind of the Near East. Hiding among the trees is a devastating irony: they use God's creation to hide from the Creator. The fruit of the tree they used to seize equality with God now sends them fleeing from his presence. Fear has replaced intimacy as the governing emotion of the human-divine relationship.*

3:9	וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל־הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אַיֶּכָּה
	way-yiqra YHWH Elohim el-ha-adam way-yomer lo ayyekkah
	But the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'
•	*Ayyekkah — three Hebrew words fused into one. It is not a request for spatial information from an omniscient God; it is the act of divine pursuit. The one who hides is called. God seeks first. This three-word question has been read by theologians across two millennia as the paradigm of all divine initiative in salvation: God calls the hiding, ashamed creature back into relationship. From Augustine's restless heart to Barth's doctrine of election, this moment stands as the original declaration that God does not abandon what he has made.*

3:10	וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־קֹלְךָ שָׁמַעְתִּי בַגָּן וָאִירָא כִּי־עֵירֹם אָנֹכִי וָאֶחָבֵא
	way-yomer et-qolkha shamati ba-gan wa-ira ki-eyrom anokhi wa-echave
	He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'
•	*The answer is partially honest but evasive. The man admits the symptoms — fear, hiding, awareness of nakedness — without naming the cause. He does not say 'I ate from the tree.' The nakedness he cites as the reason for his fear was not a problem before the transgression (2:25); its sudden power to produce fear reveals that something has fundamentally changed, but the man will not say what. This is guilt speaking: acknowledging the sign while concealing the act.*

3:11	וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הִגִּיד לְךָ כִּי עֵירֹם אָתָּה הֲמִן הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לְבִלְתִּי אֲכָל־מִמֶּנּוּ אָכָלְתָּ
	way-yomer mi higgid lekha ki eyrom attah ha-min ha-ets asher tsivvitikha le-vilti akhol mimmennu akhalta
	And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?'
•	*God's diagnostic questions cut through the evasion. The first is devastating in its logic: the man's knowledge of his nakedness can only have come from one source. The second question offers the man an explicit opportunity to confess. Both questions demonstrate that God already knows; they are not informational but confrontational — designed to bring the hidden into the open. The man does not take*

the opportunity to confess. He deflects.

3:12 וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי הִוא נָתְנָה־לִּי מִן־הָעֵץ וָאֹכֵל

way-yomer ha-adam ha-ishah asher natattah immadi hi natnah-li min-ha-ets wa-okhal

The man said, 'The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.'

- *A grammatical and moral masterpiece of evasion. The Hebrew syntax places the emphasis on 'you' before 'with me': the woman whom you — God — gave me. In a single sentence the man implicates both the woman and her Creator. The one he celebrated as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (2:23) becomes his alibi. This is not merely cowardice but the first expression of the disruption the Fall brings to human community: the couple who were one flesh now stand divided, each protecting themselves at the other's expense. The only honest word in the sentence is the last: 'and I ate.'*

3:13 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לָאִשָּׁה מַה־זֹּאת עָשִׂית וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה הַנָּחָשׁ הִשִּׁיאַנִי וָאֹכֵל

way-yomer YHWH Elohim la-ishah mah-zot asit wat-tomer ha-ishah ha-nachash hishi'ani wa-okhal

Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'

- *Hishi'ani (he deceived me) — from nasha, to deceive by creating a false impression. The woman names the agent precisely and honestly. She is the most direct of the three in identifying the cause. Yet her answer too stops short: it explains without fully owning. Paul uses this moment in both 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Timothy 2:14 — the serpent deceived Eve through cunning. The last three words of her confession, wa-okhal (and I ate), are exactly the same as the last three of the man's: both end in the same admission, reached by different paths of deflection.*

3:14 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל־הַנָּחָשׁ כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹּאת אָרוּר אַתָּה מִכָּל־הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכֹּל־חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה עַל־גְּחוֹנְךָ תֵלֵךְ וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל כָּל־יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ

way-yomer YHWH Elohim el-ha-nachash ki asita zot arur attah mi-kol-ha-behemah u-mi-kol chayyat ha-sadeh al-gechonkha telekh we-afar tokhal kol-yemey chayyekha

So the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.'

- *The serpent alone receives no question, no opportunity for response, no interrogation of motive — only immediate sentence. Arur attah mi-kol (cursed are you above all) singles out the serpent as uniquely accursed among all creatures. The physical judgment — belly on the ground, eating dust — is simultaneously literal (the serpent's mode of movement) and symbolic (dust-eating as the ancient idiom of total defeat; cf. Ps 72:9; Mic 7:17; Isa 65:25). The serpent's cursed posture becomes a permanent sign enacted in the natural world of its spiritual defeat.*

3:15 וְאֵיבָה אָשִׁית בֵּינְךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה וּבֵין זַרְעֲךָ וּבֵין זַרְעָהּ הוּא יְשׁוּפְךָ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה תְּשׁוּפֶנּוּ עָקֵב

we-eyvah ashit beynekha u-veyn ha-ishah u-veyn zar'akha u-veyn zar'ah hu yeshufkha rosh we-attah teshufennu aqev

'And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and

hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'

- *The protoevangelium — proto-gospel, the first announcement of redemption embedded within judgment. Four exegetical cruxes have driven millennia of interpretation. (1) Hu (he): grammatically singular masculine in the MT. The LXX translates autos (he), also singular. The Vulgate Jerome rendered ipsa (she) — a variant that anchored the Marian interpretation in medieval Catholic theology. The MT and LXX both support a masculine referent. (2) Zera (seed/offspring): grammatically singular but frequently used collectively in Hebrew (as in 'Abraham's seed' collectively and singularly in Gen 22:17-18). (3) The two verbs: yeshufkha rosh (he will crush/strike your head) and teshufennu aqev (you will strike his heel) use the identical root shuph. The difference is the target — the head versus the heel — indicating mortal blow versus painful wound. The asymmetry is the point: the serpent wounds; the seed destroys. (4) The New Testament reading: Paul in Romans 16:20 ('the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet') applies this verse to the Christian community and ultimately to Christ. Galatians 3:16 explicitly identifies the singular seed of promise as Christ. The Church Fathers from Irenaeus onward read verse 15 as the first promise of the Incarnation and Atonement: the seed of the woman who enters history to absorb the heel-strike of the serpent and deliver the death-blow to its head.*

3:16 אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר הַרְבָּה אַרְבֶּה עִצְּבוֹנֵךְ וְהֵרֹנֵךְ בְּעֶצֶב תֵּלְדִי בָנִים וְאֶל־אִישֵׁךְ תְּשׁוּקָתֵךְ וְהוּא יִמְשָׁל־בָּךְ

el-ha-ishah amar harbah arbeh itstsevonekh we-heronekh be-etsev teldi vanim we-el-ishshekh teshuvathekh we-hu yimshol-bakk

To the woman he said, 'I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.'

- *Itstsavon (pain/toil) is the same word used for the man's agricultural burden in v.17 — the two are parallel: the woman's pain in her primary sphere of creation (bearing life), the man's pain in his (sustaining life from the ground). These are not unrelated punishments but parallel consequences of a shared transgression. Teshuqah (desire) appears only three times in the entire Hebrew Bible: here, in 4:7 where sin crouches desiring to master Cain, and in Song 7:11 of erotic longing. Its use in 4:7 in conjunction with the identical mashal (rule/dominate) construction as here strongly suggests the sense is a disordered longing that will be met by domination. This is descriptive of the post-Fall dynamic in human relations — not a divine institution of hierarchy but a diagnosis of its distorted origins.*

3:17 וּלְאָדָם אָמַר כִּי־שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתֶּךָ וַתֹּאכַל מִן־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לֵאמֹר לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ אֲרוּרָה הָאֲדָמָה בַּעֲבוּרֶךָ בְּעִצָּבוֹן תֹּאכְלֶנָּה כֹּל־יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ

u-le-adam amar ki-shamata le-qol ishtekha wat-tokhal min-ha-ets asher tsivvitikha lemor lo tokhal mimmennu arurah ha-adamah ba'avurekha be-itstsavon tokhalenah kol-yemey chayyekha

To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, saying you must not eat from it — cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.'

- *The man's specific failure named: shamata le-qol ishtekha (you listened to the voice of your wife). Not the listening itself, but the listening over against God's direct command. Adam received the prohibition personally and directly (2:16-17) before the woman was created; he was the guardian of that word and its first teacher. He abandoned both roles. The earth (adamah) is cursed ba'avurekha (because of you / on your account) — the adam-adamah wordplay from 2:7 now carries the weight of judgment: the one formed from the ground and placed as its steward has brought a curse upon it. The ground groans under human sin — a theme Paul will develop in Romans 8:19-22.*

3:18 וְקוֹץ וְדַרְדַּר תַּצְמִיחַ לָךְ וְאָכַלְתָּ אֶת־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה

we-qots we-dardar tatsmiyach lakh we-akhaltta et-esev ha-sadeh

	'It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.'
•	*Qots (thorns) and dardar (thistles) — the earth becomes actively resistant, pushing back against the labor commanded in 2:15. Creation, once a cooperative partner in human vocation, is now adversarial. The thorns are not merely agricultural inconvenience but a theological sign: the ground bears the mark of human sin. The crown of thorns woven for Jesus at his crucifixion (Matt 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2) is read throughout Christian theology as the curse of Genesis 3 being placed upon the one who bore it — taking the sign of the curse onto himself.*

3:19	בְּזֵעַת אַפֶּיךָ תֹּאכַל לֶחֶם עַד־שׁוּבְךָ אֶל־הָאֲדָמָה כִּי מִמֶּנָּה לֻקָּחְתָּ כִּי־עָפָר אַתָּה וְאֶל־עָפָר תָּשׁוּב
	be-ze'at appekha tokhal lechem ad-shuvkha el-ha-adamah ki mimmenah luqqachta ki-afar attah we-el-afar tashuv
	'By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you will return.'
•	*The creation-framing of 2:7 (formed from the dust of the adamah) becomes the death-sentence. Afar (dust) now brackets human existence: formed from dust, returning to dust. The warning mot tamut (you will certainly die, 2:17) is given its full content. Yet the symmetry of the language carries an unexpected dignity: the man returns to what he was — not annihilated, but returned. Ecclesiastes 12:7 completes the picture: 'the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.' Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:47-49 uses the dust-origin of Adam as the foil against which the resurrection-body of Christ ('from heaven') is announced — the dust-sentence is not the last word.*

3:20	וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ חַוָּה כִּי הִוא הָיְתָה אֵם כָּל־חָי
	way-yiqra ha-adam shem ishto Chavvah ki hi haytah em kol-chai
	Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.
•	*Chavvah (Eve) from the root chai (life/living). The naming is an act of faith performed immediately after the death-sentence of verse 19. Before the consequences of the Fall have fully descended, before expulsion, before the first death — Adam names his wife Life. This is not naivety but defiant hope: life continues within judgment. Em kol-chai (mother of all the living) is a breathtaking declaration. The woman through whom sin entered the world becomes the mother of all who live — including the seed who will one day crush the serpent's head.*

3:21	וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כָּתְנוֹת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם
	way-ya'as YHWH Elohim le-adam u-le-ishto katnot or way-yalbishem
	The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.
•	*Katnot or (garments of skin) — God himself makes and provides the covering. The inadequate fig-leaf coverings of verse 7 — humanity's self-remedy for spiritual rupture — are replaced by something permanent, durable, and divinely crafted. The provision of skin garments implies the death of an animal — the first death in all of Scripture, and it happens not as punishment of the guilty but to provide for the guilty. The theological structure is precise: life taken to cover shame; death absorbing the consequence of transgression so the transgressor may be covered. The Hebrew root kaphar (to cover, to atone) underlies both this act and the entire sacrificial system. The Church Fathers unanimously read verse 21 as the first enacted type of atonement — the prototype of every sacrifice that pointed forward to Christ's.*

3:22	וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאַחַד מִמֶּנּוּ לָדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע וְעַתָּה פֶּן־יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וְלָקַח גַּם מֵעֵץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וָחַי לְעֹלָם

	way-yomer YHWH Elohim hen ha-adam hayah ke-echad mimmennu lada'at tov wa-ra we-attah pen-yishlach yado we-laqach gam me-ets ha-chayyim we-akhal we-chai le-olam
	And the LORD God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.'
•	*God speaks within the divine council (ke-echad mimmennu, like one of us — the same 'us' as 1:26) and confirms that the serpent's half-truth was indeed a half-truth: they have become like God in knowing good and evil. The knowledge is real and the serpent's claim was not entirely false — the deception lay in what was omitted. Now the tree of life must be guarded. This is not divine jealousy but divine mercy: immortality in a state of broken relationship with God would permanently lock humanity into its corruption. To live forever in this broken state would be the worst possible outcome — not eternal life but eternal death in life. Expulsion makes redemption possible. The way to the tree of life is sealed here (v.24) so that it can be reopened through the work of the seed of the woman. Revelation 22:2,14 declares it is reopened in Christ.*

3:23	וַיְשַׁלְּחֵהוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִגַּן־עֵדֶן לַעֲבֹד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר לֻקַּח מִשָּׁם
	way-yshallechehu YHWH Elohim mi-gan-Eden la'avod et-ha-adamah asher luqqach misham
	So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.
•	*Shalach (sent out/banished) — the verb carries judicial weight: formal dismissal from a position, a place, or a relationship. The vocation continues outside the garden — la'avod et-ha-adamah (to work the ground), the same language as 2:15 — but the conditions have changed. The garden's abundance and God's proximate presence are gone; the cursed ground remains the workplace. The closing phrase — the ground from which he had been taken (asher luqqach misham) — echoes the formation of 2:7 and anticipates the death-sentence of 3:19. The man returns to the labor of his origin, now carrying the weight of his failure.*

3:24	וַיְגָרֶשׁ אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיַּשְׁכֵּן מִקֶּדֶם לְגַן־עֵדֶן אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִים וְאֵת לַהַט הַחֶרֶב הַמִּתְהַפֶּכֶת לִשְׁמֹר אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים
	way-ygaresh et-ha-adam way-yashken mi-qedem le-gan-Eden et-ha-keruvim we-et lahat ha-cherev ha-mithappekhet lishmor et-derekh ets ha-chayyim
	After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.
•	*Keruvim (cherubim) are powerful divine guardians associated with the throne and presence of God throughout Scripture (Ezek 1; 10; Isa 6; Ps 18:10). They are not decorative angels but formidable sentinels. Lahat ha-cherev ha-mithappekhet (the flame of the turning/whirling sword) — mithappekhet (Hithpael of hafakh, to turn/overturn) suggests rotation in every direction: no approach from any angle is possible. The way to the tree of life is sealed. Between Genesis 3:24 and Revelation 22:2 — where the tree of life reappears bearing fruit for the healing of the nations — the entire drama of Scripture unfolds: the story of how the way is reopened, the cherubim laid down their guard, and the curse lifted. The answer to Genesis 3 is the whole Bible.*

Closing Note: Genesis 3 in the History of Interpretation

Jewish Interpretation: Classical rabbinic tradition (Talmud Bavli, Genesis Rabbah, Midrash Tanchuma) does not develop an Augustinian 'original sin' transmitted biologically. Death and the evil impulse (yetser ha-ra) are introduced as consequences of Adam's specific act, but subsequent humans are responsible for their own choices rather than inheriting Adam's guilt. Maimonides (*Guide for the Perplexed* I.2) reads the tree of knowledge allegorically: Adam possessed intellect (chokhma) before the Fall and acquired moral/conventional knowledge (da'at tov wa-ra) after — a knowledge useful for social navigation but inferior to the pure intellectual apprehension he enjoyed before. Philo of Alexandria reads the serpent as pleasure, Eve as sense-perception, and Adam as reason — reason led astray when it follows sense-perception into the domain of pleasure.

Christian Interpretation: Paul's theology of the Fall (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:21-22,45-49) is the interpretive framework for all subsequent Christian engagement with Genesis 3. Sin entering through Adam, death spreading to all through that one transgression, and the reversal through the one man Jesus Christ — the Adam-Christ typology — makes Genesis 3 the negative pole of the entire Gospel. Augustine (*De Civitate Dei*; *De Genesi ad Litteram*) developed the doctrine of peccatum originale: the Fall introduces not merely the consequence of sin but its transmission, such that all of Adam's descendants are born in a state of moral corruption and spiritual inability. The Reformers intensified this to 'total depravity' — the corruption of every faculty of human nature. Eastern Orthodoxy emphasizes the inheritance of mortality and the tendency toward sin rather than inherited guilt.

The Protoevangelium in Patristic Tradition: Irenaeus of Lyon (*Against Heresies* III.23.7; V.21.1, c. 180 CE) is the first systematic treatment: the seed of the woman is Christ, born of a virgin (echoing 'seed of the woman' rather than seed of the man), who recapitulates Adam's obedience where Adam failed. The heel-strike is the Passion; the head-crushing is the Resurrection and final judgment. Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho* 100-102) uses the verse apologetically. Tertullian (*De Carne Christi*) connects the virgin birth explicitly to 'seed of the woman.' The Vulgate's rendering *ipsa conteret caput tuum* (she will crush your head) — Jerome's arguably erroneous feminine pronoun where the MT has hu (he) and the LXX has autos — became the basis for the elaborate Marian interpretation prevalent in medieval Catholic theology. The MT and Greek textual evidence supports the masculine pronoun.

Primary Sources: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977); Biblia Hebraica Quinta, Genesis fascicle (2015); Westminster Leningrad Codex (WLC) electronic edition; Septuaginta, ed. A. Rahlfs and R. Hanhart (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006); Targum Onqelos; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.

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