

Creation and Liturgy: The Liturgical Background of Genesis 1-3¹

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Introduction

In this paper I will argue that Gen. 1-3, in its account of creation, presents the cosmos as one large temple, the Garden of Eden as the Holy of Holies, and the human person as made for worship. The very content and structure of Gen. 1-3 is in a very real sense liturgical; the seventh day is creation's high point. Various scholars have emphasized aspects of the liturgical theme in Gen. 1-3. Here, however, I rely especially upon Moshe Weinfeld's foundational 1981 study on Gen. 1, and on Gordon Wenham's important 1986 study on Gen. 2-3.²

Creation in Sevens: Gen. 1's Heptadic Structure

The number seven is important for the form and content of Gen. 1, as the number of perfection in the ancient Near East, as the number relating to covenant, and of course, as the number of the day which we know as the Sabbath, the pinnacle of creation.³ In Gen. 1:1 we read:

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ—seven words. When we come to the second

¹I am indebted to Biff Rocha and especially to Maria Morrow for reading over this paper and making numerous suggestions for revision. All errors and other infelicities remain my own. This paper, presented at the Trends of Ancient Jewish and Christian Mysticism Seminar at the University of Dayton, February 26, 2008, represents the revision and expansion of a portion of the work which I presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in San Diego, November 2007. It is a work in progress, and I plan on pursuing it further.

²Respectively, Moshe Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple and the Enthronement of the Lord—The Problem of the Sitz im Leben of Genesis 1:1-2:3," in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henrie Cazelles*, ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor, 501-512 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1981); and Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division A: The Period of the Bible*, 19-25 (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986). Wenham's essay has been reprinted in the easily accessible volume, *"I Studies Inscriptions from before the Flood": Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, 399-404 (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994). Throughout this paper, I will be citing Wenham's text from the original publication, but I will follow the later Eisenbrauns volume in transliterating the Hebrew according to the Society of Biblical Literature's guidelines, for stylistic purposes.

³On the number 7 as the number of perfection in the ancient Near East, see, U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis Part I: From Adam to Noah: Genesis I-VI8*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961 [1944]), 12-13; Carol L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult*, American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series Number 2 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1976), 107.

verse, we find fourteen words—for those of you whose math is as bad as mine, that’s seven times two. Furthermore, significant words in this passage occur in multiples of seven: God (35 times, i.e., seven times five), earth (21 times, i.e., seven times three), heavens/firmament (21 times), “and it was so” (7 times), and “God saw that it was good” (7 times).⁴

The heptadic structure is sufficiently apparent that numerous scholars, from Umberto Cassuto to Jon Levenson, have commented upon it.⁵ As Wenham observes, “The number seven

⁴Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary Volume 1 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 6.

⁵See Cassuto’s comments in his *Commentary on Genesis Part I*, 13-15: “After the introductory verse (i 1), the section is divided into *seven* paragraphs, each of which appertains to one of the seven days. An obvious indication of this division is to be seen in the recurring sentence, *And there was evening and there was morning, such-and-such a day*. Hence the Masoretes were right in placing an open paragraph...after each of these verses...Each of the three nouns that occur in the first verse and express the basic concepts of the section, viz *God* [אֱלֹהִים *’Elōhīm*] *heavens* [שָׁמַיִם *šāmayim*], *earth* [אֶרֶץ *’ere*], are repeated in the section a given number of times that is a multiple of *seven*: thus the name of *God* occurs thirty-five times, that is, five times *seven*...; *earth* is found twenty-one times, that is, three times seven; similarly *heavens* (or *firmament*, רָקִיעַ *rāqīa*) appears twenty-one times....The ten sayings with which, according to the Talmud, the world was created...that is, the ten utterances of God beginning with the words, *and...said*—are clearly divisible into two groups: the first group contains *seven* Divine fiats enjoining the creation of the creatures...; the second group comprises three pronouncements that emphasize God’s concern for man’s welfare....Thus we have here, too, a series of *seven* corresponding dicta....The terms *light* and *day* are found, in all, *seven* times in the first paragraph, and there are *seven* references to *light* in the fourth paragraph....*Water* is mentioned *seven* times in the course of paragraphs two and three....In the fifth and sixth paragraphs forms of the word אַיָּא *ayyā*...occur *seven* times....The expression *it was good* appears *seven* times (the seventh time—*very good*)....In the *seventh* paragraph, which deals with the *seventh* day, there occur the following three consecutive sentences (three for emphasis), each of which consists of *seven* words and contains in the middle the expression *the seventh day*: *And on THE SEVENTH DAY God finished His work which He had done, and He rested on THE SEVENTH DAY from all His work which He had done. So God blessed THE SEVENTH DAY and hallowed it*....The words in the seventh paragraph total thirty-five—five times *seven*.” Cassuto concludes, on page 15, “To suppose that all this is a mere coincidence is not possible” (Hebrew pointing removed). And furthermore, “This numerical symmetry is, as it were, the golden thread that binds together all the parts of this section....” See also, U. Cassuto, “La creazione del mondo nella Genesi,” *Annuario di studi ebraici* 1 (1934) : 47-49. Cassuto even argues that Genesis 2-3 exhibits this focus on the number seven. He writes, “a clear indication of the unity of the section...is to be seen in the numerical symmetry based on the number *seven* that we find in this section just as we encountered it in the story of creation....Here, too [chapters 2-3], the words that express the fundamental concepts of the passage recur a given number of times—*seven* times, or a multiple of *seven*. The name Eden occurs, together with קֶדֶם *qedhem* [‘east’], *seven* times; the names אָדָם *’ādhām* and אִישׁ *’iš* [both mean ‘man’] appear altogether twenty-eight times, that is, four times *seven*; the word אֶזְרָא and its synonyms עֹזֵר *’ezer* [‘helper’] and עֲלֵא *’ēlā* [‘rib’] are used twenty-one times, that is, three times *seven*; so, too, we find twenty-one examples of words derived from the root אָכַל *’ākhāl* [‘eat’] (*seven* in the very paragraph describing the sin, iii 1-7). Likewise, the verb לָקַח *lāqa* [‘take’], which is given special emphasis in a number of verses...occurs, all told, *seven* times in the course of the section. And when I sought to break up the section into paragraphs, according to the logical division of the contents, there naturally emerged *seven* paragraphs” (94, Hebrew pointing removed).

Levenson is critical of Cassuto here, but agrees in substance with many of his points. See Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 67-68, where Levenson writes: “Hardly limited to the seven days in which the action takes place, groups or

dominates this opening chapter in a strange way.”⁶ Wenham notes further that Gen. 2:1-3 references the seventh day three times, in three separate sentences composed of seven words each. This focus on sevens highlights the unique status of the seventh day.⁷ What’s more, although we find ten divine announcements and eight divine commands in Gen. 1:1-2:3, there are three formulae grouped in sevens. In order to retain this sevenfold structure, certain formulae are actually omitted where we might expect them, namely the fulfillment formula in 1:20, the description of the act in 1:9, and the approval formula in 1:6-8.⁸ The significance of these omissions is underscored by the fact that in the Septuagint (LXX) these missing formulae are included. The sevenfold structure of the Hebrew text is thus lacking in the LXX which prefers to complete the various formulae.⁹

The careful attention to a sevenfold structure indicates that Genesis in its final form is a liturgical text.¹⁰ We may go further and state that, in fact, Gen. 1 reads as a sort of liturgical

multiples of seven appear throughout the passage. The first verse, for example, consists of seven words; the second, of fourteen. Of the three dominant terms of v. 1—‘God,’ ‘heaven,’ and ‘earth’—the first occurs thirty-five times in Genesis 1:1-2:3, the second and third of total of twenty-one times each. In the description of the first day, ‘light’ is mentioned five times and ‘day’ (which 1:5 defines as its synonym), twice: the total is again seven. In the passages devoted to the fifth and sixth days, the word *אֵיִלִּים* (‘living thing,’ ‘alive’) occurs a total of seven times. The expression *כִּי טוֹב* (‘that it was good’) appears seven times; mysteriously omitted on the second day, it occurs twice on the third and the sixth, the last time with extra force (‘very good’). The paragraph devoted to the seventh day consists of thirty-five words, twenty-one of which form three sentences of seven words, each of which includes the expression ‘the seventh day.’...the first sentence of the paragraph includes five words, that is, two fewer than we expect, but that the last sentence, which follows the three heptads, consists of nine words and thus compensates for the deficiency of the incipit, leaving us with five sentences that average seven words apiece for a total of thirty-five...even if one demurs on...[Cassuto’s more controversial points, he] is surely right to conclude his discussion of the significance of seven in Genesis 1:1-2:3 with the remark that ‘it is impossible to think that all this is nothing but coincidence.’”

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid, 7, c.f. 34-35.

⁸Ibid, 6. See also, Johann Cook, “The Septuagint of Genesis: Text and/or Interpretation?” in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History*, ed. A. Wénin, 35-79 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 317. Earlier on the same page, Wenham describes these formulae which characterize Genesis 1: “(1) announcement of the commandment, ‘And God said’ (10 times...); (2) order, e.g. ‘Let there be...’ (8 times...); (3) fulfillment formula, e.g. ‘And it was so’ (7 times...); (4) execution formula or description of act, e.g. ‘And God made’ (7 times...); (5) approval formula ‘God saw that it was good’ (7 times...); (6) subsequent divine word, either of naming or blessing (7 times...); (7) mention of the days (6/7 times...).”

⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 6; Cook, “Septuagint of Genesis,” 318 and 320.

¹⁰Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, “The Worship of Divine Humanity as God’s Image and the Worship of Jesus,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the*

hymn.¹¹ On the basis of the heptadic structure, Weinfeld has argued that its *Sitz im Leben* is the liturgy.¹² The poetic framework and symmetry of this passage is what allows one scholar to describe its theme as the “Cosmic Liturgy of the Seventh Day.”¹³ Creation unfolds as a “cosmic liturgical celebration” culminating on the seventh day.¹⁴

Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism Volume 63, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, 112-128 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 123. See also Dexter E. Callender, Jr., *Adam in Myth and History: Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human*, Harvard Semitic Studies 48 (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 23, where he writes, “When isolated from its present literary context of the Pentateuch, the repetitive nature of Gen 1:1-2:4_a suggests a liturgy, for which it may, in fact, have been used at some point.” Furthermore, see Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 58, where he explains, “Genesis 1 also has a certain liturgical flavor,” although he cautions, “but its style is far from hymnic. Indeed, in vivid contrast with Psalm 104, the first chapter of the Torah exhibits an austere self-control: no burst of praise here, no expression of the author’s feelings, no heartfelt petition, but only a highly regular and repetitive description of the *process* of creation, step by step, day by day, without sound or color. The tone is didactic; the chapter teaches a lesson about the organization and rulership of the world. Its concern is not praise, but order, and the lesson, as we shall soon see, is one that has practical implications.” In general, I agree with Levenson’s comments here, but I would want to temper them by maintaining a form of hymnic structure still visible in Genesis 1, precisely in its “highly regular and repetitive description of the *process* of creation.” As we shall see below, the process of temple construction in, e.g., the Gudea Cylinders is hymnic (although it contains many more hymnic features than Genesis 1). I believe that Genesis 1 retains a basic hymnic structure in its final form, although clearly not as evident as in Psalm 104, as Levenson points out. See, e.g., Weinfeld’s comments in a subsequent footnote below.

¹¹Marc Vervenne, “Genesis 1, 1-2, 4: The Compositional Texture of the Priestly Overture to the Pentateuch,” in *Studies in the Book of Genesis*, ed. Wénin, 48; Eugene H. Maly, “Israel—God’s Liturgical People,” in *Liturgy for the People: Essays in Honor of Gerald Ellard, S.J., 1894-1963*, ed. William J. Leonard, S.J., 10-20 (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1963), 13. But see Levenson’s comments in the above footnote, and my comments following his.

¹²Weinfeld, “Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement,” 510. See also 508-509; and Silviu Bunta, “The Likeness of the Image: Adamic Motifs and לַלְאָם Anthropology in Rabbinic Traditions about Jacob’s Image Enthroned in Heaven,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 37, no. 1 (2006) : 64. In contrast to Levenson’s comments against the hymnic nature to Genesis 1 in an above footnote, see Weinfeld’s further comments on page 510: “The recurring formulas: ‘And he saw that it was good’, ‘and it was evening and it was morning’, are a type of refrain which imparts to the chapter a liturgic character. We know today that the Babylonian Creation Epic *Enuma Elish* was customarily read in ceremonies in the sanctuary, whereas the Persians recited their Theogony while sacrificing (Herodotus I, 132). Also in Israel (at least in Second Temple times) the priestly courses (בְּשֵׁמֶרֶת) and the מַעֲבָדֵי מִשְׁכָּן who met at the time sacrifices were being offered in Jerusalem, customarily read portions from the account of creation, and on the sixth day they recited וַיְכַלֵּה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם Gen. 2:1).” Weinfeld may be criticized here for assuming that an early Second Temple tradition lies behind the Mishnah’s and the Tosefta’s comments here, but it is at the very least plausible, and may possibly be supported by a potential trace of this in Theophrastus who wrote about Jewish practices during the Second Temple period, as Weinfeld cites in his essay (510 n. 5). Eventually, of course, as Weinfeld points out, “The festive reading of וַיְכַלֵּה אֱלֹהִים (Gen. 2:1) was incorporated into the Amidah prayer of the Sabbath Eve...” (Ibid, 511).

¹³Vervenne, “Genesis 1,” 53.

¹⁴Samuel E. Balentine, *The Torah’s Vision of Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 63. On page 66 he writes, “the Torah presents worship as the goal of creation.” Writing further, on page 81, Balentine explains that, “The Torah’s vision begins with the liturgy of creation....In the liturgy of Genesis 1-2, the crucial intersection between the ordered world *qua* ritual world and the relational world is the seventh day (Gen. 2:1-3).”

The Tabernacle as a New Creation Pointing Forward to the Temple

Numerous scholars have noted the many parallels between the seven days of creation and Moses' construction of the tabernacle in the Book of Exodus.¹⁵ The tabernacle's consecration process lasted seven days, indicating another heptadic pattern also connected to the Sabbath ordinances. Furthermore, key verbal correspondences exist between Moses' construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 39-40 and God's creation of the world in Gen. 1.¹⁶ Weinfeld includes a very useful comparison between particular Hebrew phrases which are identical or nearly identical in each passage, including among others.

- 1) Gen. 1:31 ["And God saw all that He had made, (בַּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה), and found it (וַהֲנִיחַ) very good"]—and Exod. 39:43 ["And when Moses saw that they had performed all the

¹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 35; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Structure of P," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38 (1976) : 275-292; Menahem Haran, "The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 36 (1965) : 191-222; Peter J. Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Ex 25-40," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89, no. 3 (1977) : 375-378 and 385-386; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 56-69; Cassuto, *Commentary on Genesis Part I*, 62; U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967 [1951]), 476-477, 483; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 142-143; Jon D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *Journal of Religion* 64, no. 3 (1984) : 286-287; Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah Volume 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 23, 63, 76; Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980), 37-38, 41; G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, Illinois: Apollos, 2004), 60 n. 73, 61; Balentine, *Torah's Vision of Worship*, 64, 67-68, 138-140; Michaela Bauks, "Genesis 1 als Programmschrift der Priesterschrift (P^s)," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis*, ed. Wénin, 342-343; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 78, 83-86; Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 200-202; Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement," 502-503 and 502 n. 5; Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 23. This has been picked up by more popular authors as well, e.g., Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture* (Cincinnati: Charis, 1998), 52-53; and Michael Barber, *Singing in the Reign: The Psalms and the Liturgy of God's Kingdom*, with an introduction by Scott Hahn (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road, 2001), 41. Joseph Ratzinger, the current Pope Benedict XVI, likewise noticed this point several years ago in his, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 26-27. Meredith Kline observes that, "The Sabbath motif that informs Genesis 1:1-2:3 is prominent in the account of the tabernacle. The completion of the project is related in a concluding summary (Exod. 40:33; cf. 39:43) that echoes the seventh day conclusion of the creation record in Genesis 2:2. The promulgation of the Sabbath ordinance marks the close of the fiat-command section (31:12-17) and the beginning of the fulfillment section (35:2, 3). And the consecration of the cult is a seven-day process....The Spirit who structured the cosmic temple in the beginning by divine wisdom was also the primary builder of the tabernacle, present and acting through Bezalel and Oholiab, whom he filled and endowed with the wisdom of craftsmanship. In this connection the creative naming theme of Genesis 1 also emerges" (Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 38).

¹⁶Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 143; Balentine, *Torah's Vision of Worship*, 67-68; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 85-86; Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement," 503; Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy," 375.

Absent are the striking verbal correspondences, yet there remains cosmic symbolism in the temple construction.²⁰ Levenson details these correspondences, including:

- 1) The construction of the Solomonic Temple in Jerusalem takes seven years to complete (1 Kings 6:38). In Lev. 25:3-7, the seventh year is called a Sabbath, thus forming a connection between the seven days of the week and the seven years of, in the case of Lev. agricultural labor, and in the case of 1 Kings, architectural labor.
- 2) The Temple dedication occurs during the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a seven day festival (Deut. 16:13) which fell on the seventh month of the year (1 Kings 8:2).
- 3) Solomon's speech during the Temple's dedication included seven petitions (1 Kings 8:31-53).
- 4) The concept of מנוחה also links the Temple with creation. Rest occurs at the completion of each project (Psalm 132:13-14—associates the experience of the Temple with rest). In fact, 1 Chron. 22:9 claims that the reason Solomon and not David was instructed to build the Temple was because Solomon was a "man of rest" (אִישׁ מְנוּחָה) and of peace (שָׁלוֹם) as his name (שָׁלוֹם) implies.²¹

Hence we see an association with Temple and creation; the Temple's construction was depicted as a new creation, and the Temple was seen as a microcosm of world.²²

Temples in the Ancient Near East: The Temple as Creation, Creation as THE Temple

This association between Temple and creation is not unique to the Genesis text, nor is the heptadic structure. In fact, temples throughout the ancient Near East often had cosmological connotations.²³ The building of a temple often accompanied creation, as we find in the *Enuma*

"The Paronomasia of Solomon's Seventh Petition," *Hebrew Annual Review* 6 (1982): 135-138; Levenson, "Temple and the World," 286-289; Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy," 378. This has been picked up by more popular authors as well, e.g., Hahn, *Father Who Keeps His Promises*, 44-45 and 51-53; Michael Barber, *Coming Soon: Unlocking the Book of Revelation and Applying Its Lessons Today* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road, 2005), 16; and Idem, *Singing in the Reign*, 41.

²⁰Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 143.

²¹Ibid, 143-144. See also, Levenson, "Paronomasia of Solomon's Seventh Petition," 131-135.

²²Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 133-135, 140-145; Levenson, "Temple and the World," 283-284; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 62, 64-65, 64-65 n. 35; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 87-99; Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement," 506 and 508; Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 19-20; Michael A. Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 12.

²³Meyers, *Tabernacle Menorah*, 172; Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 51-58, 61-66, 63 n. 78 and 128; Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy," 384 and 384 n. 22; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 80, 82; Levenson, "Temple and the World," 287-288; Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement," 507.

Elish and elsewhere.²⁴ One of the best examples of ancient Near Eastern temple building is found in the Sumerian Gudea Cylinders. The Gudea Cylinders depict the construction of the Temple as a liturgical act,²⁵ the temple building and dedication are essentially a step by step ritual process. Richard Averbeck notes that, “Ritual actions and processes saturate the text and, in fact, structure it.”²⁶ Although he does not connect this to the creation account of Gen. 1, the description parallels this passage on a number of points.²⁷ For example:

- 1) Temple building connected with fertility (Gudea Cylinder A i 5-9, xi 5-11; Gen. 1:22).²⁸
- 2) Temple building in connection with wisdom (Gudea Cylinder A i 12-14; Gen. 2:9, 17).²⁹
- 3) Divine call or permission to build a temple (Gudea Cylinder A i 19; Gen. 1:1, 3, 6, 9, 11).³⁰
- 4) Construction of temple following all the details of a divinely revealed plan (Gudea Cylinder A i 20-21; Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14-15, 20, 24, 26).³¹
- 5) Tireless commitment to temple building (Gudea Cylinder A vi 11-13; Gen. 1:1-2:3).³²

²⁴Weinfeld, “Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement,” 501. See also Kearney, “Creation and Liturgy,” 384 and 384 n. 22.

²⁵Richard E. Averbeck, “Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method: Historiography and Temple Building,” in *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations*, ed. Mark W. Chavalas and K. Lawson Younger, Jr., 88-125 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), esp. 89, 95-96, 116, and 118-121; Idem, “Ritual Formula, Textual Frame, and Thematic Echo in the Cylinders of Gudea,” in *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 80th Birthday*, ed. Gordon D. Young, Mark W. Chavalas, and Richard E. Averbeck, 37-93 (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 1997), esp. 37, 51-54, 51 n. 46, 54 n. 50, 64-66, and 64 n. 71; and Idem, “A Preliminary Study of Ritual and Structure in the Cylinders of Gudea,” (Ph.D. Diss., Annenberg Research Institute, 1987), esp. 44-121, 268-398, and 407-579. Averbeck explains that, “The Gudea Cyls., therefore, have affinities with the Sumerian Temple Hymns—a genre that we know was already active in the Old Sumerian literary tradition, long before the time of Gudea—but should *not* be subsumed under the genre category. Rather, they recount, albeit in poetic style and with some hymnic interludes, the construction and consecration of the temple with special emphasis upon the ritual nature of the temple building process” (“Ritual Formula,” 53-54). Writing further, Averbeck elaborates, “the structure of the composition is a reflex of the ritual nature of the composer’s (and probably also Gudea’s) historical conception (and experience) of the temple building and dedication processes. . . . The ‘recurring statement’ (*i.e.*, ritual formula) which moves the story-line along is both a ritual and literary formula and should be taken seriously by those who are willing to see the text for what it is: a hymnic and, at the same time, step-by-step ritualistic description of a ruler’s pious involvement in the process of building a temple in ancient Sumer” (Ibid, 64 n. 71).

²⁶Idem, “Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method,” 95. In this passage, he also notes that, “This is not the case in the parallel biblical accounts. It is true that the dedication procedures for the tabernacle and temple in the Bible involved elaborate ritual procedures, but that in no way compares with the obsessive concern for ritual guidance and confirmation in the Cylinders.” See also Ibid, 118.

²⁷Ibid, 119-121.

²⁸William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr., ed., *Context of Scripture Volume II: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 419 n. 4.

²⁹Ibid, 419 n. 6.

³⁰Ibid, 419 n. 8.

³¹Ibid, 419-420 n. 9, 426 n. 43, 426 n. 44.

³²Ibid, 421 n. 16, 426 n. 42, 427 n. 50.

- 6) “Pronouncement of blessing on temple” (Averbeck suggests Gudea Cylinder A xx 27-xxi 12; Gen. 2:3).³³
- 7) Building temple on raised region like mountain (Gudea Cylinder A xxi 19-23 [later traditions associate Eden with a raised mountain, and sometimes Mount Zion is associated with Eden]).³⁴
- 8) “Laudatory descriptions of the temple” (Gudea Cylinder A xxv 24-xxix 12; Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 25, 31).³⁵
- 9) Temple completion’s announcement (Gudea Cylinder B ii 14-iii 1; Gen. 1:31, 2:1).³⁶
- 10) Seven-day temple dedication (Gudea Cylinder B xvii 18-19; Gen. 2:1-3).³⁷
- 11) Association of temple building with kingship (Gudea Cylinder B xxiii 18-xxiv 8 [Adam is sometimes interpreted in light of royal terms, as a king, and furthermore, the king of Tyre is associated with Adam in Ezek. 28]).³⁸
- 12) Divine selection and commissioning of king (Gudea Cylinder A xxiii 25-29 [relates to Adam’s creation in the later interpretation that associates Adam with kingship]).³⁹

Ancient Near Eastern temples beyond Sumer also served as places for divine rest.⁴⁰ In the ancient Near East temples were sometimes further associated with gardens.⁴¹ The parallels here with the creation of the cosmos in Gen. 1 are evident, especially the pattern of seven.⁴² As Loren Fisher notes, the ancient Near East’s convention of describing temple construction in terms of seven, means we should not be surprised that creation in Genesis is heptadic: “One must speak of ordering the cosmos in terms of seven even as the construction of the microcosm must be according to the sacred number.”⁴³ Creation in Genesis, we may conclude, is described as a

³³Ibid, 428 n. 55.

³⁴Ibid, 428 n. 56.

³⁵Ibid, 429 n. 59.

³⁶Ibid, 432 n. 74.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid, 433 n. 79.

³⁹Ibid, 429 n. 57. All of these examples are found in Averbeck, “Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method,” 119-121.

⁴⁰Beale, *Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66; Weinfeld, “Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement,” 501-502. Weinfeld cites the example of Egyptian, Assyrian, and Sumerian literature for this theme (502 and 502 n. 4).

⁴¹Beale, *Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 128; Callender, *Adam in Myth*, 50, 54, 59; and Levenson, “Temple and the World,” 297.

⁴²John Currid likewise notes that God is depicted in Gen. 1 as creating the world the way a craftsperson or builder would. See John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, with a foreword by Kenneth A. Kitchen (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), 43 and 64.

⁴³Loren R. Fisher, “Temple Quarter,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 8 (Spring 1963) : 40-41.

temple; it is constructed as an ancient Near Eastern temple would be constructed.⁴⁴ The divine fiat are “architectural directives,” in the words of Meredith Kline.⁴⁵

***Homo Liturgicus* in the Holy of Holies:
Eden as Inner Sanctuary and Humanity as Made for Worship**

So far we have seen a poetic heptadic structure that portrays the creation of Gen. 1 as related to the construction of a temple. This has both canonical parallels—as with Moses’ construction of the Tabernacle at Sinai and Solomon’s construction of the Temple on Zion—as well as extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern parallels, such as the Gudea Cylinders. What remains to be seen is the implications of this on understanding humanity. Gen. 2-3 depicts the Garden of Eden as the Holy of Holies, and this has implications for our understanding of humanity’s purpose. In this section, I will first discuss Eden’s image as an Inner Sanctuary and then discuss human beings as *homo liturgicus*, liturgical humanity made for worship.⁴⁶

Gregory Beale notes that the distinction of regions of creation described by Genesis are similar to those of the Temple. The heavens represent the holy of holies, the earth the inner sanctuary, and the sea the outer court.⁴⁷ Other indications of this similarity appear in the text. In

⁴⁴Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 20-21, 35; Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (S. Hamilton, Massachusetts: Meredith G. Kline, 1993), 17-19, 21; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 84; and Weinfeld, “Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement,” 501.

⁴⁵Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 19.

⁴⁶I am borrowing the phrase, “*Homo liturgicus*,” from Scott W. Hahn, “Worship in the Word: Toward a Liturgical Hermeneutic,” *Letter & Spirit* 1 (2005) : 106.

⁴⁷Beale, *Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 74-75. On these pages, He comments: “It may even be discernable that there was a sanctuary and a holy place in Eden corresponding roughly to that in Israel’s later temple. The Garden should be viewed as not itself the source of water but adjoining Eden because Genesis 2:10 says, ‘a river flowed out of Eden to water the Garden’. Therefore, in the same manner that ancient palaces were adjoined by gardens, [quoting John Walton] ‘Eden is the sources of the waters and [is the palatial] residence of God, and the garden adjoins God’s residence.’ Similarly, Ezekiel 47:1 says that water would flow out from under the holy of holies in the future eschatological temple and would water the earth around. Similarly, in the end-time temple of Revelation 22:1-2 there is portrayed ‘a river of the water of life...coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb’ and flowing into a garden-like grove, which has been modeled on the first paradise in Genesis 2, as has been much of Ezekiel’s portrayal. If Ezekiel and Revelation are developments of the first garden-temple...then Eden, the area where the source of water is located, may be comparable to the inner sanctuary of Israel’s later temple and the adjoining garden to the holy place....Eden and its adjoining garden formed two distinct regions. This is compatible with...[the] identification of the lampstand in the holy place of the temple with the tree of life located in the fertile plot outside the inner place of God’s presence. Additionally, ‘the bread of the presence’, also in the holy place,

Gen. 3:8, for example, God walks back and forth (using a form of לָלַךְ) in Eden, which is also how God's presence is described in the tabernacle in Lev. 26:12 and Deut. 23:14.⁴⁸

In examining the rest of the canon, we find other evidence that points to an intentionality in these parallels that make creation appear as a temple. The Temple, and Mount Zion in general, are frequently associated with Eden, and in some instances actually identified with Eden. Ezekiel 28's discussion of the king of Tyre is the most famous example where Mount Zion, and the temple, are associated with Eden.⁴⁹ Sirach also associates Eden with the Temple and tabernacle, where the Temple is the new Eden.⁵⁰

which provided food for the priests, would appear to reflect the food produced in the Garden for Adam's sustenance...the land and seas to be subdued by Adam outside the Garden were roughly equivalent to the outer court of Israel's subsequent temple...Thus, one may be able to perceive an increasing gradation in holiness from outside the garden proceeding inward: the region outside the garden is related to God and is 'very good' (Gen. 1:31) in that it is God's creation (= the outer court); the garden itself is a sacred space separate from the outer world (= the holy place), where God's priestly servant worships God by obeying him, by cultivating and guarding; Eden is where God dwells (= the holy of holies) as the source of both physical and spiritual life (symbolized by the waters)."

⁴⁸Ibid, 66, 72 n. 101; and Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 20.

⁴⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 64; Bunta, "Yhwh's Cultic Statue," 224; Fletcher-Louis, "Worship of Divine Humanity," 126; Martha Himmelfarb, "The Temple and the Garden of Eden in Ezekiel, the Book of Watchers, and the Wisdom of ben Sira," in *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Contributions to the Study of Religion, Number 30, ed. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley, 63-78 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 65-66; Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 128-129; Meyers, *Tabernacle Menorah*, 150; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 18-19; Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Carpenter Books, 1984 [1982]), 50 n. 3; Callender, *Adam in Myth*, 89, 100-103, 132, 210; Jon D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48*, Harvard Semitic Monograph 10 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Scholars Press for the Harvard Semitics Museum, 1976), 21-36; Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 75-76, 76 n. 110; Bernard Gosse, "Les traditions sur Abraham et sur le jardin d'Éden en rapport avec Is 51, 2-3 et avec le livre d'Ézéchiel," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis*, ed. Wénin, 424-426; and Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 74, 93. Fletcher-Louis writes that, "The office of high priest was thought to recapitulate the identity of the pre-lapsarian Adam. This goes back at least as far as Ezekiel 28:12ff. where the prince of Tyre wears precious stones which are simultaneously those worn by the *Urmensch* in the garden of Eden and those of the Aaronic ephod according to Exodus 28" (Fletcher-Louis, "Worship of Divine Humanity," 126).

⁵⁰Himmelfarb, "Temple and the Garden of Eden," 63 and 75; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 64, 74-75, 75 n. 63; Hartmut Gese, "Wisdom, Son of Man, and the Origins of Christology: The Consistent Development of Biblical Theology," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 3 (1981) : 23-57, esp. 32-33; Hartmut Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981), 196; and Gerald T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 22-27. Following the lead of Hartmut Gese, Fletcher-Louis suggests that, "...Sirach 24:3-6 follows the order of the first three days of creation as described in Genesis 1: the pre-creation chaos over which hovers God's primeval spirit (Genesis 1:2, cf. Sirach 24:3); the creation of the 'intellectual light' (Genesis 1:3-5, cf. Sirach 24:4); the 'delimiting of the cosmos by the firmament and the abyss' (Genesis 1:9-10, cf. Sirach 24:6)...[These comments] can be developed considerably, and, indeed, Sirach 24:3-22 as a whole emerges as a complex reflection upon Genesis 1 and Exodus 25-31....in Sirach 24:3 there is an allusion to the creation by the word of God in Gen 1:3 (cf. 1:6, 11, 14,

Moreover, the Temple was often described with garden-like elements, further associating it with Eden and creation in general.⁵¹ Eden in turn was seen as a prototype of the Temple.⁵² As

etc.) and the spirit over the primeval waters in Gen 1:2....[The cloud in which Wisdom dwells in Sirach 24:4 provides light, but, furthermore,] its changing appearance demarcates the boundary between day and night (Exod 13:21-22; 40:38; Num 14:14; Deut 1:33; Neh 9:12, 16, 19; Isa 4:5) in a way parallel to the appearance of light on the first day of creation according to Genesis....in the next verse Wisdom is located in the 'vault of heaven' and the 'depths of the abyss', the two upper and lower extremities created on day 2 according to Genesis 1:6-8. In Sirach 24:6_a Wisdom rules 'over the waves of the sea, over all the earth'...." (Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 76-77). Fletcher-Louis continues, explaining that the vegetative symbolism of Sirach 24:12-17 is inspired by the third day of creation when plants emerge. Halfway through this discussion of creation, Sirach switches to discuss the cult in the wilderness and then at Zion, to show where Wisdom will find rest. Sirach has just alluded to the first three days of creation in Genesis 1, but instead of continuing with the fourth-sixth days of creation (sun, moon, living creatures, etc.), Sirach "gives us in verse 15 those elements in the tabernacle order which correspond to the fourth and fifth days of creation: first he compares Wisdom's growth to the cinnamon, choice myrrh and fragrance of Israel's sacred incense..., and then to galbanum, onycha, stacte and frankincense of the sacred oil....Finally, the hymn climaxes with an invitation to Wisdom's banquet...which is reminiscent of God's abundant provision of food for humanity in Genesis 1:28-30. The final verse looks forward to the Edenic existence of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2-3 (which is developed in the rest of chapter 24)" (Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 77-78). According to Fletcher-Louis, Sirach does this because he knows of the intratextuality between Genesis 1 and Exodus 25-31. Writing further, Fletcher-Louis explains, "In a chapter so redolent with themes from Genesis 1-3 this [Sirach 24:22] must be an allusion to the curse on Adam and Eve's labour on their exit from the garden (Gen 3:19) and the first couple's freedom from shame before their temptation and fall (Gen 2:25)" (78). The intratextuality between Genesis 1:1-2:2 and Exodus 25-31 that Fletcher-Louis believes Sirach assumes, is as follows: 1) day 1 of creation (heavens and the earth, light and darkness) corresponds to the speech 1 in the Exodus passage (tabernacle structure = heavens and earth, taking care of menorah/tamid sacrifice/incense offering = evening and morning); 2) day 2 of creation (upper and lower waters separated) corresponds to speech 2 (the census and the half-shekel); 3) day 3 (land separated from sea, growth of plants) corresponds to speech 3 (bronze laver = sea); 4) day 4 (sun, moon, stars) corresponds to speech 4 (holy oil—myrrh, calamus, cinnamon, cassia, which are used to anoint cultic objects and priests); 5) day 5 (living creatures in air and sea) corresponds to speech 5 (holy incense—stacte, onycha, galbanum, frankincense); 6) day 6 (land animals and humans in God's image) correspond to speech 6 (Bezalel is filled with the Spirit of God); 7) day 7, the Sabbath, corresponds to speech 7, which concerns the Sabbath (Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 76).

⁵¹Lawrence E. Stager, "Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden," in *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies: Volume Twenty Six: Frank Moore Cross Volume*, ed. Baruch A. Levine, Philip J. King, Joseph Naveh, and Ephraim Stern, 183-194 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society with Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, 1999), 189; John M. Monson, "The Temple of Solomon: Heart of Jerusalem," in *Zion, City of Our God*, ed. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham, 1-22 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999), 7; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 19, 64-65, 67; Gage, *Gospel of Genesis*, 49-61, 57; Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 41; Callender, *Adam in Myth*, 51-54; Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 71-72, 78 n. 119; Gosse, "Les traditions sur Abraham," 424-426; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 90-99, esp. 98-99; Anderson, *Genesis of Perfection*, 46-48, 50, 56-57, 61, 79-80, 122-124, and 213-214; and Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 19. Fletcher-Louis writes that, "The close association of temple and paradise is widespread in post-biblical texts including those cherished at Qumran (e.g. *Jub.* 3:8-14, 27; 1QH^a 16:4-37; 4Q500 frag. 1; 4Q265 7 ii 11-17). It is already enshrined in the narrative of Genesis 2-3 which draws heavily on the symbolism and traditions of the Temple, including something like Ezekiel 28:12-19)" (Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 19).

⁵²Stephen Hultgren, *From the Damascus Covenant to the Covenant of the Community: Literary, Historical, and Theological Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah Volume 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 492 n. 67; Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 26, 79-80; Callender, *Adam in Myth*, 41, 50; Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 32; and Michael Owen Wise, "4QFlorilegium and the Temple of Adam," *Revue de Qumran* 15 (1991) : 103-132, esp. 126-132. Beale concludes that, "The cumulative effect of the...parallels between the Garden of Genesis 2 and Israel's tabernacle and temple indicates that Eden was the first archetypal temple, upon which all of Israel's temples were based" (79-80). In a similar vein, Kline explains that, "the garden of Eden was a

Lawrence Stager remarks, “the original Temple of Solomon was a mythopoeic realization of heaven on earth, of Paradise, the Garden of Eden.”⁵³ Some of the other elements important in this connection include the presence of cherubim and the eastward-facing entrance. One might mention in addition that the tabernacle and temple menorah was stylized as a symbol of the tree of life. Wenham concludes: “Thus in this last verse of the narrative there is a remarkable concentration of powerful symbols that can be interpreted in the light of later sanctuary design....These features combine to suggest that the garden of Eden was a type of archetypal sanctuary, where God was uniquely present in all his life-giving power.”⁵⁴

Conclusion

If Eden is the Holy of Holies in God’s Temple of creation, the implication is that humanity, created for this inner sanctuary, is best understood as *Homo liturgicus*. Living in the Holy of Holies, humanity is called to give worship to God in all thoughts, words, and deeds. When we look at the Genesis account of Eden, we find other instances of people portrayed as created for worship. Adam, for example, is told to “till” (from the root עבד) and “keep” (from the root שמר). When שמר and עבד occur together in the OT (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14) they refer to keeping/guarding and serving God’s word and also they refer to priestly duties in the tabernacle. And, in fact, שמר and עבד only occur together again in the Pentateuch in the descriptions in Numbers for the Levites’ activities in the tabernacle.⁵⁵ Such

microcosmic, earthly version of the cosmic temple and the site of a visible, local projection of the heavenly temple” (32).

⁵³Stager, “Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden,” 191.

⁵⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 86. See also Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 19.

⁵⁵Beale, *Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66-67, 81; and Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 21. This has been picked up in more popular literature, e.g., Scott Hahn, *First Comes Love: Finding Your Family in the Church and the Trinity* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 56 and 65; and Idem, *Father Who Keeps His Promises*, 58-59. Beale’s comments about how rabbinic literature treated Adam’s duties in the Garden are insightful. He explains that, “The Aramaic translation of Genesis 2:15 (*Tg. Neofiti*) underscores this priestly notion of Adam, saying that he was placed in the Garden ‘to toil in the Law and to observe its commandments’ (language strikingly similar

an association reinforces the understanding of Adam as a sort of priest-king, or even high priest, who guarded God's first temple of creation, as it were.⁵⁶ In light of this discussion, therefore, what we find in Gen. 1-3, in its final canonical form, is creation unfolding as the construction of a divine temple, the Garden of Eden as an earthly Holy of Holies, and the human vocation identified as liturgical worship.

to...Numbers [3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6]...Verse 19 of this Aramaic translation also notes that in naming the animals Adam used 'the language of the sanctuary'" (67). Beale writes further, "Indeed, *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis* 2:7 says that God created Adam partly of 'dust from the site of the sanctuary'....*Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 11 and 12, and *Midrash Rabbah Genesis* 14:8 [among other texts],...all affirm that Adam was created at the site of the later temple, which was also at Eden or was apparently close to it..." (67 n. 90). Finally, "*Midrash Rabbah Genesis* 16:5 interprets Adam's role in Gen. 2:15 to be one of offering the kinds of 'sacrifices' later required by the Mosaic Law" (67 n. 91). For mention of the way the Midrash treats these terms, see also Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 21.

⁵⁶Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 68, 70, 78 n. 118, 81-121; Anderson, *Genesis of Perfection*, 122-124; Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 42-43, 54; Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 43-44; and Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 21. Beale writes, "While it is likely that a large part of Adam's task was to 'cultivate' and be a gardener as well as 'guarding' the garden, that all of his activities are to be understood primarily as priestly activity is suggested not only from the exclusive use of the two words in contexts of worship elsewhere but also because the garden was a sanctuary..." (68). Furthermore, as Kline explains, when we read Genesis 2 in its canonical context, we find that, "The Creator had prepared in Eden an earthly replica of his heavenly dwelling as the holy place where man would fulfill his priestly office" (54).