

VINEYARD, FARM, AND GARDEN:
THE DRUNKENNESS OF NOAH
IN THE CONTEXT OF PRIMEVAL HISTORY

DEVORA STEINMETZ

Beit Rabban, 15 West 86th Street, New York, NY 10024

"... Is my sin too great to bear?" (Gen 4:13) The Holy One Blessed Be He said to him: "Have you repented? By your life, I will annul for you one decree," as it says: "And Cain went out from before God and he dwelled in the land of Nod" (Gen 4:16). As he was leaving, the first man met him. He said to him: "What happened in your case?" He said: "Had I not confessed, I would already have been lost from the world." At that moment, the first man said: "It is good to confess to God" (Ps 92:2). (*Tanhuma*, ed. Buber 10a)

Noah found a vine which was expelled from and left the Garden of Eden and its clusters with it; he took from its fruit and he ate, and he desired them in his heart, and he planted from it a vineyard on the earth. (*Pirqe R. El.* 23)

The Holy One Blessed Be He said to Noah: "Noah, shouldn't you have learned from the first man, for it was wine alone which brought it about for him?"—in accordance with the one who said: "that tree of which the first man ate was a vine." (*b. Sanh.* 70a)

After the flood and the attendant sacrifice, blessing, and covenant, the Bible tells one brief story before embarking on the genealogies of the families of the earth. This story, of the drunkenness of Noah, is essential as a prelude to those *תולדות*, to be sure, for it explains the hierarchical relationship between the sons of Noah, a relationship crucial not only to the genealogies but to the entire narrative of the Torah, the story of the descendants of Shem and their conflict with the children of Ham—Mitzrayim and Canaan.¹

But I want to suggest that this brief story has another function as well. It is the first vignette that we are offered of the postdiluvian world, indeed

¹ For an analysis of how this conflict shapes both the overall narrative and specific episodes, such as Genesis 14, see my discussion in chapter 5 of *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict, and Continuity in Genesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1991). The sin of Ham continues to be enacted by both Canaanites and Egyptians within the biblical narrative; see n. 12 below. For U. Cassuto, the characterization of the three branches of humankind, including the sexual immorality of the children of Ham, is the main purpose of this story (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Noah to Abraham* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964] 149-50, 161).

the only thing we know about Noah after the flood story is completed. As such, I think, it describes for us what this new world is like. How do God's post-diluvian words of blessing and warning play themselves out in this new world onto which Noah and his family have just stepped? How is Noah's world—the relationship between human being and God, human being and human being, human being and nature—different from the antediluvian world which is no more?

Noah's world, in fact, is the third world inhabited by humankind at the beginning of Genesis, and it is the last; it is the world that the Bible sees us as inhabiting to this day. In order to understand Noah's—and our own—world, we have to compare it with the two earlier worlds in Genesis, the Garden of Eden and the world outside of Eden. Each of the three beginnings of humankind is characterized by a sin or fall: Adam's and Eve's eating of the fruit, Cain's murder of Abel, and Noah's violation. A comparison of these three stories yields striking parallels and significant differences, and allows us to piece together a view of the postdiluvian world in which the history of humankind unfolds.

The first two of these stories are strikingly similar not only in theme but also in the words used, and the parallels have been noted and discussed elsewhere.² I want to begin by establishing the less obvious parallel of the vineyard story to the Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel stories by noting just a few points of similarity between these three stories. I will then move on to a point-by-point comparison of the three stories and to an analysis of the differences between them.

The first point of similarity between the three stories has already been mentioned: each of them tells of the first act of violation perpetrated in a new world. In addition, Adam, Cain, and Noah are each described in relation to the earth: Adam is created from the earth, אֲדָמָה (2:7), to work the earth (2:5, 15); Cain becomes a "worker of the earth," עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה (4:2); and Noah is described as a "man of the earth," אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה (9:20). Each story begins with a planting; the tree of knowledge, Cain's produce, and Noah's vine each set the stage for the fall that is to occur. In each story the theme of knowledge plays a more or less central role; the word יָדַע appears in each case directly after the violation has occurred. Each violation leads to the pronouncement of a curse. In addition, of course, nakedness—the awareness or seeing of nakedness, and the intimation of sexuality or sexual sin—is central both to the Adam

² See, e.g., A. J. Hauser, "Linguistic and Thematic Links Between Genesis 4:1–16 and Genesis 2–3," *JETS* 23 (1980) 297–305; and E. Neufeld, "Cain and Abel," *Dor le Dor* 17 (1988–89) 40–43. These analyses point to similarity of theme and do not focus significantly on the differences between the stories. Among Hauser's many parallels, those discussed below are: Adam's and Cain's working of the earth; the motif of the fruit; God's warning, questioning, and accusation; the sinner's self-incriminating response and Adam's (though not Cain's) attempt at shifting the blame; the role of knowledge; alienation from earth, God, and human society; and banishment. Neufeld notes: God's warning; the threat of death; Adam's and Cain's attempts to shift the blame; the similarity of their punishments; the danger inherent in the power to choose.

and Eve story and to the vineyard story, although not to the Cain and Abel story.

This is enough, I think, to suggest that we must read the vineyard story in the context of the prior creations and violations and that such a reading will provide a description of human existence in the new—and real—world. Before doing that, though, let us look at what God says to himself and to Noah about the re-created world onto which Noah and his family have just stepped.

As God smells Noah's sacrifice of the animals which Noah has saved on the ark, God asserts that he will no longer curse the earth or destroy all life on account of humankind. Indeed, this new world begins with a recognition on God's part that "the inclination of a human being's heart is evil from its youth" (8:21–22). God goes on to bless the new human family (9:1–7) with words reminiscent of his blessing of the human creatures at the first creation (1:28–30), but with some significant differences. In this new world, the animals will fear humankind (9:2), and for good reason. People will now be permitted to eat animals just as they can eat plant life (9:3). Finally, God warns against the taking of life and hands over to human society the responsibility for carrying out justice against a murderer.³

Now each of these statements contrasts sharply with the antediluvian world. God has, in the past, cursed the earth (3:17) and destroyed his creation (6:5–8) on account of humankind's deeds. The first creation was an unfolding of goodness (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31),⁴ with a recognition of humankind's evil giving cause for destruction of God's creation (6:5).⁵ After the flood, though, God takes humankind's evil into account and forswears destruction of the world as a consequence of humankind's deeds.

In the first world, humankind and animals, created by God on the same day, were to share a vegetarian diet (1:29–30). Noah, though, who has helped

³ This is based on the assumption that כַּאֲדָם (9:6) means "by a human being," a point much discussed. The LXX has "instead of his blood"; see also Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 2.61.

Rabbinic tradition understands one of the seven Noachide laws as the injunction to establish a system of justice. See *b. Sanh.* 56a–b and parallels. Interestingly, one rabbinic opinion, which derives these laws from passages within the Noah narrative, substitutes castration and interbreeding of diverse kinds for two of the seven injunctions. These two prohibited acts are seen as antithetical to God's command to be fruitful (9:7) and to God's direction to gather the animals in pairs according to their kind (7:14); see *b. Sanh.* 56b–57a. Could this opinion be related to interpretations of Ham's violation of his father?

⁴ Interestingly, God does not respond to the creation of the human being with a recognition that it is "good." Is this because the summary recognition that all creation is "very good" (1:31) includes a response to humankind, the culmination and pinnacle of creation? Or, rather, is it because God cannot say of humankind that it is good, for goodness is only one of the choices that the human being can make, as we learn in the next few chapters? Note that the first introduction of "evil" comes with the tree that God places in the garden which is to be the human being's abode (2:9). And the first evaluation of something as "not good" relates to the state of the human being (2:18).

⁵ In fact, humankind's evil has already destroyed God's creation (6:11–12); the flood is the physical destruction of a world already destroyed (6:13).

to save animal life from destruction, is given permission to eat animals. Humankind was at first merely given dominion over the animals (1:28); now humankind will cause fear and dread among the creatures of sky, earth, and sea.

God's warning of social responsibility also contrasts with the antediluvian world. His injunction to Adam concerned violation of a divine command, disobedience to which involved a potential trespassing over the boundary between human and divine, and necessitated divine intervention as punishment and as protection. Cain's murder of his brother was not, despite Cain's fear, to be avenged by a human agent. But now, God warns against the violation of social bonds and asserts that divine justice shall be carried out by humankind.⁶

What, then, is the difference between the new world and the old? In the old world, the human being is a creature, created with the earth (chap. 1) or from the earth (chap. 2), a member of, though higher than, the animal kingdom.⁷ In the new world, the human being is a partner with God in creation, sustaining life for a microcosm of the natural world in order to help remake the world after the floodwaters of chaos un-make God's first creation.⁸

In this new world, humankind has new rights and new responsibilities. But humankind's new status is not all positive. First, of course, it emerges from a recognition of humankind's potential for evil. But, beyond that, it suggests a rupture in the initial harmony between humankind and the rest of the created world. That God will never again curse the earth or destroy the natural world on account of humankind implies a breach between humankind and nature. Earth could be cursed through Adam's sin because earth (אדמה) and Adam were of the same substance. Noah is distinct from the earth, and so his actions and those of his descendants will not inevitably cause the earth's destruction. Noah has taken responsibility for animal life, and so he and his family enjoy new rights over the animal kingdom; but gone is the relative harmony between human being and animal suggested in the first two chapters of Genesis.⁹ Human

⁶ Note how God's language echoes both the story of creation—"for in the image of God he made the human being" (9:6)—and of Cain and Abel—"from the hand of a human being's brother" (9:5). See N. Sarna for a discussion of 4:10 and this passage (*The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* [Philadelphia/New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989] 61). God's justice and humankind's are conflated here: "... I shall seek out the soul of a human being. He who spills the blood of a human being, by a human being shall his blood be spilt" (9:5-6).

⁷ Genesis 1 and 2 offer different portraits of the relationship between humankind and the rest of creation, but both are fundamentally similar in contrast to the postdiluvian creation.

⁸ Sarna notes that 7:11 implies the reversal of creation, as the upper and lower waters remingle and reduce the earth to primordial chaos (*Genesis*, 55). Philo notes that both Noah and Adam are described in relation to the earth and that both initiate agriculture after a flood—for the world, before creation, was flooded (*Questions and Answers on Genesis* 2.66).

⁹ This harmony is one element of the eschatological ideal. See Isa 11:6-9 and Nachmanides' interpretation of God's promise to "rid evil beasts from the land" (*Lev* 26:6), situated within an Edenic description of what life in the promised land will be if Israel fulfills God's commandments (*Lev* 26:3-13).

beings have responsibility for carrying out justice, but no longer will humankind hear the voice of God walking through the garden (3:8)¹⁰ or be divinely protected from fellow human beings. God, after the flood, hands over governance of the world to Noah and his family.

This new world order is what we are offered a glimpse of in the brief story of the vineyard. Turning now to this episode, we can contrast it with the Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel stories and see how a picture of the new order emerges. A summary of parallels between the stories is offered in the chart; a glance at this chart before reading the discussion of the main points will be helpful.

MOTIF	ADAM	CAIN	NOAH
human being and earth	Adam/אָדָם	עֵבֶר אָדָם	אִישׁ הָאָדָמָה
plant and produce	God plants; fruit of the tree	God-human partnership*; produce of the earth	human being plants; wine is human-made product
prohibition	God prohibits sin explicitly	God does not describe the sin	no prohibition
warning	God warns of punishment explicitly	God warns gener- ally; does not describe punishment	no warning
seduction to sin	external seducer— serpent and Eve	personified internal seducer—"sin"	no seducer
nakedness/sexuality	nakedness/suggestion of sexuality	-----	nakedness/intimation of sexual violation
who is sinned against	God	human being (and God)*	human being (Ham's sin); self (Noah)
sin and knowledge	sin involves gaining of knowledge	sin involves denial of knowledge	sin involves loss of knowledge
accusation by God	God questions, then accuses	God questions, then accuses	-----
initial response to God	Adam hides from God; hides his sin; blames Eve and (im- plicitly) God	Cain denies respon- sibility	-----

*See discussion in text and notes of Cain as exemplifying an arrogant and ultimately destructive misassessment of the human being's potential as a partner with God in creation.

¹⁰ Note, within the passage cited in the previous note, God's statement: "and I will walk in your midst" (Lev 26:12).

who pronounces punishment	God pronounces punishment and enacts it	God pronounces punishment; Cain amplifies on this; fear that human being will punish	human being punishes (Noah punishes Ham; Noah brings consequences upon himself)
banishment	from God	from earth (Cain adds—from God and humanity)	----- (later, the sin of Ham's descendants will not be tolerated by the land)
nature of punishment	related to sin	consequence of sin	direct consequence of sin
impact on earth	earth is cursed	Cain is cursed from the earth	----- (possible release from earth's curse implied in vineyard)
who pronounces ^{curse} the person's final response	God -----	God Cain recognizes guilt	Noah Noah takes charge
sexual knowledge and new generations	Adam knows Eve; they bear Cain and Abel	Cain knows his wife; they bear Enoch	implication of sexual knowledge with son; none with wife**; the genealogy of Noah's family

**This absence is so glaring, especially in the context of God's injunction to "be fruitful and multiply" (9:7), that a midrashic tradition sees Ham's act as the castration of Noah (see *b. Sanh.* 70a and parallels). This tradition is linked as well to Noah's curse of Canaan; since Ham deprives Noah of the capacity to bear a fourth child, Noah curses Canaan, Ham's fourth son (see Sarna, *Genesis*, 66).

Before contrasting the violation in the vineyard story with the sins of Adam and Eve and of Cain, we must clarify, as well as we can, two points within this story: Who is the sinner here, and what is his sin? What the sin is, of course, has been the focus of inquiry from the earliest biblical interpretation until today.¹¹ It seems clear to me that the text suggests a sexual violation by Ham of his father; the text does not make clear the nature of the violation, and probably we need not surmise further details. But clearly the "seeing of nakedness" implies a sexual violation,¹² as it does throughout the biblical text in both legal and narrative passages.

¹¹ See W. Vogels, "Cham découvre les limites des son père Noé," *NRT* 109 (1987) 554-73 for a review of major approaches as well as a stimulating interpretation. See also Cassuto, *Noah to Abraham*, 150-51; and Sarna, *Genesis*, 357 n. 7.

¹² See, e.g., Lev 20:17. The Bible's list of sexually immoral behaviors is introduced by a reference

Who then violates and who is violated? Noah is violated, but I suggest that it is not just by Ham that he is violated. The narrative implies that Noah takes part in his own humiliation, that he, in effect, sets the stage for the son's violation of his father. Not only does Noah make himself drunk;¹³ he becomes "uncovered within his tent" (9:21). Just as "seeing" nakedness is more than seeing, "uncovering" is more than uncovering. To "uncover" nakedness is the other term which the Bible uses to describe sexual immorality.¹⁴ That there are two parts to Noah's humiliation is supported by the verse which describes the actions of Shem and Japheth: "Shem and Japheth took the garment, and they put it on the shoulder of both of them, and they walked backwards, and they covered their father's nakedness; and their faces were backwards, and they did not see their father's nakedness" (9:23). The almost redundant specificity of the verse makes sense if we understand Shem and Japheth's

to the practices of the children of Ham (Lev 18:3) (see A. Phillips, "Uncovering the Father's Skirt" VT 30 [1980] 38-43 as well as the discussion and sources in Steinmetz, *From Father to Son*, chap. 5; see also n. 1, above). Note that the sexual immorality of Canaan is the cause of banishment from the land, according to Lev 18:25; the sin of Ham does, then, ultimately lead to a banishment paralleling Adam's and Eve's and Cain's. See chap. 5 of *From Father to Son* for a discussion of Shechem's rape of Dinah as consummating the sinfulness of Canaan (Gen 15:16) and leading to Shem's descendants' conquest of the land from Ham's descendants. See Phillips for an interpretation of Lev 18:7 that links the injunctions against sexual immorality in Leviticus quite specifically to Ham's act.

Seeing often is a prelude to sexual misappropriation in biblical narrative, especially in the accounts of the sexual misconduct of the descendants of Ham: Canaan and Mitzrayim. See, e.g., the Egyptians' seeing and taking of Sarai in Gen 12:12-15; the imposed blindness of the Sodomites, which prevents them from sodomizing the strangers in Gen 19:11; the Canaanite prince's seeing and rape of Dinah in Gen 23:2; Potiphar's wife's seeing and attempted seduction of Joseph in Gen 39:7.

Vogel's citation of passages such as Isa 47:3 or Ezek 23:18, in which the uncovering of nakedness is used to suggest humiliation and revealing of sinfulness, does not stand, in my mind, as an argument against such phrases as implying sexual immorality ("Cham"). On the contrary, only because the expression "to see/uncover nakedness" so clearly communicates sexual immorality can it be used in these poetic texts as a metaphor for humiliation and sinfulness. The parallel phrases in these verses and their immediate contexts provide additional images of sexual misconduct as metaphors for the sinfulness against which Isaiah and Ezekiel cry out. Nevertheless, Vogel's development of the notion of limitation within the Noah story, and its connection to the larger context of the primeval narrative, is certainly a component of the sexual violation of the father, whatever form it might take.

¹³ This is in contrast to Lot, whose daughters make him drunk in Gen 19:32-35. The parallels between these two stories are significant and were first pointed out to me some years ago by David Silber. Being made drunk certainly implies less responsibility for what occurs than making oneself drunk, but this also means that Lot is not at all in charge of himself. Note that Lot does nothing in this episode; in fact, we are never told that he awakens from his stupor. Lot, here, is fully drawn in and destroyed by his choice to leave the land that was promised to Abraham, descendant of Shem, in favor of dwelling with the Sodomites, who exhibit the immorality of Ham. Note the comparison of Sodom to Mitzrayim in Gen 13:10. The parallel between the Lot story and the vineyard story supports the implication of a sexual violation of Noah by his son.

¹⁴ E.g., throughout Leviticus 18 and 20; in 20:17 the terms "to see" and "to uncover" nakedness are both used to describe the same act.

actions as addressing the two-part humiliation of Noah. They "cover" their father's nakedness, which Noah himself had caused to be "uncovered," and they do "not see" the nakedness of their father, which their brother Ham did "see." They are negating both the violation of Noah brought about by himself and that brought about by his son.¹⁵

This analysis of the sin in the vineyard story is important at this point because, when we contrast this episode with the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel, we will be seeing Noah as both the sinned against, by Ham, and the sinner, along with Ham. Thus, Noah's stature as a moral agent—the nature of his sin and his response to his sin and its consequences—must be compared to Adam's and Eve's and to Cain's. But Noah also functions in this story as the one who pronounces judgment upon the individual who sins against him, and this is comparable to God's role in the Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel stories. The analysis is important also because, as we shall see later, seeing Noah as both sinner and sinned-against suggests a shift in the relationship between sin and consequences, in the degree to which people will now be held responsible for their actions, and in the degree to which the human being is now an autonomous moral agent.

As we undertake a comparison of the three stories, a brief look at the chart will make a number of points immediately apparent. First, there is an increasing disassociation between the actions of human beings and the fate of the earth. Second, God plays no role in the vineyard story and, in fact, plays a lesser role in the Cain and Abel story than in the garden story. Third, there is a steady increase in the human being's autonomy with each successive story. Fourth, there is an increasingly close relationship between sin and its consequences. Fifth, the human being takes on a greater role not only as an individual moral agent but as an orderer and arbiter of human society. And, finally, knowledge—the attainment, denial, or lack of knowledge—is evaluated differently in each of the stories.

I will discuss how each of these trends is indicated by details of the three stories. The trends, clearly, are interrelated, and the whole picture of the moral universe portrayed in each of the stories, as well as how the vineyard story exemplifies God's vision of the new, postdiluvian world, will emerge at the conclusion of this study.

¹⁵ Vogels notes both that the brothers' not seeing negates Ham's seeing and that Noah's uncovering is a self-humiliation ("Cham"). These two points are adduced by Vogels as a support for his contention that the story is not implying a sexual act. Clearly, we need not see Noah's uncovering as a sexual act committed by Noah against himself, nor can Shem's and Japheth's role be seen as an act that undoes a sexually immoral act. And certainly Noah's and Shem's and Japheth's roles support the idea that sexual violation has broader implications than whatever physical act might be involved. But I do not think that any of these elements negates the implication of sexual immorality in this story.

Human Being and Earth

While Adam, Cain, and Noah each work the land, and each have an appellation relating to the earth—אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה, עֶבֶד אֲדָמָה, אָדָם—the three relationships are different. Adam and אֲדָמָה are one. Adam is created from אֲדָמָה (2:7), for the purpose of fructifying the earth through his labor (2:5), and the garden is planted by God in response to Adam's creation (2:8–9, 15). Adam's sin, accordingly, has a direct impact on the earth: the earth is cursed on his account (3:17). The passage in which God explains the implications of this curse, in fact, ends with a reminder of Adam's origin from, and ultimate return to, the earth (3:19). Adam, ultimately, is banished from the fruitful garden, remaining outside of Eden "to work the earth from which he was taken" (3:23).

Cain takes on this work of the earth. Born in the shadow of Adam's curse, he becomes an עֶבֶד אֲדָמָה (4:2). His sin is a violation of the earth, as he has forced it prematurely to receive the blood of Abel (4:10–11).¹⁶ The earth is not punished on account of Cain's sin; rather, because Cain has violated the earth, the earth is the vehicle of Cain's punishment. Cain is "cursed from the earth," which will no longer give its strength to support Cain's labor, and this curse constitutes a banishment from upon the earth (4:11–14). In this story, Cain and the earth are two separate entities engaged in first a cooperative and then an antagonistic relationship. But never are Cain and the earth portrayed as being of the same essence, in the way that Adam and the earth are.

The meaning of אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה, Noah's appellation, is the subject of much dispute, but it clearly parallels and contrasts with both Adam's and Cain's relationships with the earth.¹⁷ Noah is not born, like Adam, from the earth; nor, like Cain, is he born as one doomed by the curse of the earth. On the contrary, Noah's birth is greeted with the hope of alleviation of the suffering caused by God's curse of the earth (5:29). This, in fact, is one interpretation of the significance of planting the vineyard; Noah, for the first time since Adam's sin, brings forth comfort from the earth.¹⁸ Noah is separate from the earth. He

¹⁶ Note how 4:11 plays off 3:19. Adam was "taken" from the earth and will eventually return there; Cain has violated the earth by making it "take" back his murdered brother (Hauser, "Linguistic and Thematic Links," 301–2). Y. Marzal suggests that, while in chap. 3 God prohibits and thus God accuses the sinner, in chap. 4 it is the earth that is violated by the spilling of Abel's blood and thus the earth that cried out for, and executes, justice ("Cain's Punishment and the Sign For Identifying His Weakness [Gen 4:11–17]," *Beth Mikra* 29 [1983–84] 235–44 [Hebrew]).

¹⁷ See G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 94, 106, 136; and Cassuto, *Noah to Abraham*, 158–60. Philo notes the parallel between Noah and Adam (*Questions and Answers on Genesis* 2.66; see n. 8 above); see *Bereshit Rabbah* 36:3 for the parallel between Noah and Cain.

¹⁸ This may be one intimation of the midrashic tradition that Noah's vine came from the Garden of Eden. The fruit of the vine is a luxury, pleasurable to experience like the fruit of Eden and in stark contrast to the staple of grain for which human beings have had to labor. For Noah's vincture as the alleviation of the consequences of the earth's curse, mentioned by Lamech (5:29), see Cassuto, *Noah to Abraham*, 158–60; Sarna, *Genesis*, 44; von Rad, *Genesis*, 72, 136. Some have suggested that Noah represents the alleviation of this curse as the first person born after

does not share the earth's fate at the flood, and neither is the earth involved in the first sin after the flood, in the story of the vineyard. The earth is not cursed, the earth need not enact the curse of the sinner, and there is no intimation within this passage of the sinner's banishment from the earth, although such banishment will come later for the Canaanites, as the chosen land will not tolerate their sinfulness.

God's Role and Human Autonomy

The tree of knowledge is planted by God; its fruit stands ready simply to be plucked. Cain's produce is planted by Cain, a product of Cain's labor and the fructifying power of the earth that God has created.¹⁹ The vineyard is planted by Noah, and the wine of which Noah drinks is a human-made product of the fruit of the vine. Thus, the very fruit which sets the stage for each story suggests a diminution of the role of God and an expansion of the role of humankind.

This is true as well of God's and the human being's roles as loci of moral judgment and moral action. In the garden story, God explicitly prohibits the forbidden act and warns specifically of the consequences of transgression of the divine prohibition (2:17). God manifests himself in the garden, questions Adam and Eve, accuses them of sinning, pronounces their punishment, and banishes them.

In the Cain and Abel story, God's role is more obscure. God issues a warning to Cain before the sin is committed, but he neither spells out the prohibition nor details the punishment. Rather, God enjoins Cain to be a moral agent, to choose to do good rather than be lured by sin. After the murder of Abel, God questions Cain and accuses him, and he also pronounces Cain's punishment. But here there are significant differences from the garden story. First, God is simply not as manifestly present here as in the garden. Second, while God states Cain's punishment, Cain expands on it, recognizing its implications and the widespread consequences of his sin beyond anything that God has told him.²⁰ While God speaks only of the earth's antagonism toward Cain and of Cain's consequent wandering on the earth (4:11-12), Cain speaks of

the death of Adam; see Rashbam's commentary on Gen 5:29 and Sarna, *Genesis*, 44. This suggestion would interpret the words "until you return to the earth" (3:19) as speaking specifically of Adam; once Adam dies, there is the opportunity for comfort from earth's curse, and it is Noah who will bring this comfort.

¹⁹ See 4:12. This partnership between the human being and God in bringing forth the earth's vegetation is implied in 2:5. I am assuming throughout the analysis that Cain's sin emerges from an improper perception of humankind's partnership with God. For a discussion of this point, see Steinmetz, *From Father to Son*, 172-73; and B. K. Waltke, "Cain and his Offering," *WTJ* 48 (1986) 363-72.

²⁰ See Hauser, "Linguistic and Thematic Links."

his alienation from God and from humankind, and he recognizes his curse as a form of banishment from the face of the earth.²¹

Finally, Cain does not remain silent, as Adam does after God's pronouncement of his judgment. Cain recognizes the magnitude of his sin.²² In fact, as we shall see, the recognition of sin and of the consequences of sin in this episode are nearly indistinguishable; hence, perhaps, the difficulty in translating Cain's exclamation "גָּדוֹל עוֹנִי מִנְשׂוּאָה" (4:13).²³ But the very fact that Cain responds rather than remaining silent suggests that Cain, although having committed a heinous crime, does not lose his stature as a moral agent. He can still enter into dialogue with God; he can understand the full magnitude of his sin and the full range of its consequences. And, of course, he goes off to build a civilization at נֶדֶד, paradoxically settling down in a place of wandering (נָע וְנָד),²⁴ which suggests that Cain takes charge of his fate and internalizes the consequences of his sin in a way that Adam never does.

This movement toward autonomy and internalization is suggested as well by the motif of seduction in these two stories. In the garden, Eve is seduced by the serpent, and Adam is seduced by Eve. Hence, both Adam and Eve, when accused by God, cast blame on others rather than accepting personal responsibility for their actions.²⁵ Cain, in contrast, is not seduced by a creature external to himself; rather, "sin" is presented by God as desirous of Cain (4:7). While the serpent can be understood as a personification of the evil within, not so different from the way we might understand "sin," there is certainly a significant difference between the presentation of a seducer as a distinct creature with a personality of its own and the ability to engage in dialogue with a human being, as in the garden story, and the evocation of "sin" in the Cain and Abel story. Cain's sin is not caused by someone outside himself, and Cain will not be able to blame anyone else for his sin. This seems to be what God tells Cain

²¹ Cain uses the same term for his banishment from the earth and his alienation from God: "you have driven me out today from upon the face of the earth, and from your face shall I be hid" (4:14).

²² This recognition is understood in midrashic sources as an at least partial repentance. See *Tanhuma Buber* 10a, quoted above, and parallels, where Adam is presented as learning from Cain of the possibility of confession and תְּשׁוּבָה, and as wishing that he had known about this when he had sinned.

²³ See, e.g., Sarna, *Genesis*, 34.

²⁴ See Sarna, *Genesis*, 35. For a discussion of the nature and fate of this civilization, see Steinmetz, *From Father to Son*, 172–73. Note, in connection with this, the midrash in *Tanhuma* 12b, cited by Rashi in his commentary on Gen 4:23. According to this midrash, Lamech's song refers to his killing of Cain, his ancestor, and Tuval-Cain, his son, on the same day. Thus, with Lamech comes the ultimate destruction of Cain with the violent destruction of the future of Cain's line. That the midrash sees this moment as the collapse of Cain's line is suggested, further, by its assertion that the earth then swallowed up the families of Enoch, Irad, Mehuyael, and Metushael, the four generations between Cain and Lamech, and that Lamech's wives refuse, at this point, to bear any more children for him.

²⁵ Adam's words also suggest that God is partially to blame: "the woman whom you gave with me" (3:12). See Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah*, 157–58.

when Cain is angry that God has favored Abel's sacrifice; rather than indulge in anger, Cain is enjoined to accept responsibility for his actions. Cain's sin, in fact, results from his refusal to assume such responsibility and his choice, instead, to destroy the object of his blameful anger.

The power to choose whether to overcome the lure of evil or be seduced by sin is perhaps the most significant element of the human being's moral state after the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. In fact, God speaks of the capacity to overcome the seduction of sin both to Adam, after he eats the fruit, and to Cain, before he murders his brother. These two verses of exhortation present probably the most apparent parallel between the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and also offer a lens to examine more closely the relationship between sin and consequences in these stories.

To Cain, before he sins, God says ". . . and unto you is its [sin's] desire, but you may rule over it" (4:7). To Eve, after she and Adam have violated God's command, God says ". . . and unto your husband is your desire, but he may rule over you" (3:18).²⁶ These clearly parallel statements, I believe, have the same import: although you may be seduced to sin, you have the power to rule over that which lures you. This is God's assertion that human beings are responsible for their own deeds; once the human being achieves the capacity to choose between good and evil, blame for sin cannot be cast upon any external agent. Cain can exert dominion over his seducer, sin, and Adam can exert dominion over his seducer, Eve.

This reading of God's pronouncement to Eve suggests that God's judgment of Adam and Eve, and of the serpent as well, is linked in every detail to the nature of their sin. Some aspects of this connection are obvious: Eve and Adam both suffer with respect to their fruit-bearing capacity, and the serpent is consigned to eat of the tasteless dust of the earth rather than indulging in the desirable fruit of the tree.²⁷ These elements of the punishment correspond to the sin of eating the fruit. But there is another element to the sin in this story, and, accordingly, there is another element to the punishment. The serpent has sinned by seducing Eve, and Eve has sinned by seducing Adam. God pronounces a judgment directed specifically at the relationships which allowed for these seductions. There will be enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between their descendants (3:15); no longer will the serpent have power over Eve or her children. And, though Eve has seduced Adam to sin and may seduce him again, man will henceforth have the capacity to rule over woman (3:16).

²⁶ My presumption here, as elsewhere, is that identical terms must be rendered identically. Thus, if *יָרַד* means "may rule" for Cain, it does not mean "will rule" for Adam. See K. A. Deurloo, "TSWQH 'dependency,' Gen 4,7," *ZAW* 99 (1987) 405-6, for a recent attempt to translate 3:16 and 4:7 in light of each other.

²⁷ Sarna, *Genesis*, 27. There are a number of specific links between the language of punishment and the crime committed, e.g., the comparison of the snake with other animals in 3:14 and 3:1 noted by Cassuto (*Adam to Noah*, 159) and mentioned already in *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:1.

Adam and Eve, then, are not simply punished; their fate, though imposed by God, corresponds precisely to their sin. Yet their punishment is not an outgrowth of their sin. It is not a natural consequence; it is brought upon them by an external agent as a response to their sin. Once again, it is God who controls life in the garden.

Cain's punishment, as we saw, is of a different nature. Though pronounced by God, it is the natural consequence of his sin. And that is why Cain has no trouble comprehending the magnitude of his fate.²⁸ Having violated his relationship with the earth, with humankind, and with God, Cain is now an outcast from the earth, from human society, and from the presence of God. Sin and punishment are one. Cain, whom God has already affirmed is a moral agent, has brought his fate upon himself by the moral choices he has made.

With the vineyard story comes a sharp decrease in God's involvement, with a corresponding increase in human autonomy and, accordingly, a further shift in the relationship between sin and consequences.

Here, there is no prohibition, no warning, no seduction, no questioning, no accusation, and no pronouncement of punishment by God. Yet people suffer the consequences of their actions. Noah, as I have suggested, brings his violation upon himself, uncovering his own nakedness and paving the way for Ham's seeing of his nakedness. That Noah is not forewarned, that he may not have recognized what would come of his drinking, is no excuse.²⁹ There is no mitigation of his punishment, for his punishment is nothing more than the consequence of his action. It is not imposed as a judgment by an external agent, nor is his fate pronounced by such an agent. Because the punishment is brought about by Noah's own action, there can be no mitigation.

In contrast, there is at least a suggestion of mitigation of punishment for both Adam and Cain.³⁰ While God warns Adam that violation of the divine command will bring death on that very day (2:17), this does not happen. Adam's sin may bring mortality (3:19),³¹ but Adam does not die on the day that he sins. Cain's judgment that he will be "a fugitive and a wanderer" (נֹעַ וְיָרַד, 4:12) gives way to a settling down in the land of נֹד (4:16).³² And, although Cain

²⁸ See Hauser, "Linguistic and Thematic Links," 303. Marzal suggests that Cain does not argue against God's judgment because he recognizes it as the consequence of his act ("Cain's Punishment," 238-39).

²⁹ Some scholars do cite Noah's presumed ignorance of the intoxicating effects of wine as an excuse for his drunkenness; see, e.g., von Rad, *Genesis*, 136; and Sarna, *Genesis*, 65. Sarna similarly suggests that Cain's lack of knowledge about murder mitigates his guilt and punishment (p. 31).

³⁰ See Hauser, "Linguistic and Thematic Links," 303-4.

³¹ For a synopsis of some classical interpretations of God's warning, see Cassuto, *Adam to Noah*, 124-25. See *Jub.* 4:30 for an early attempt at explaining the apparent contradiction between God's threat and Adam's long life after his sin.

³² See the midrash cited in n. 22 above, which sees Cain's dwelling in Nod as a partial mitigation of his judgment to be נֹעַ וְיָרַד. See Marzal, "Cain's Punishment," 235-36.

anticipates that he will be killed in revenge for his act of murder (4:14), God protects him from this eventuality (4:15). Externally imposed judgments can be mitigated; natural consequences cannot. Perhaps, in addition, we might see Adam's and Cain's lack of full awareness as a cause for the mitigation of their punishments. In striking contrast, Noah, who is given no prior information to help him make a good choice, is nevertheless fully accountable for his actions.

The second sinner in the vineyard story, Ham, is also held accountable for his actions despite the lack of a prohibition or warning. But Ham does have his judgment pronounced by an external agent. For the first time, though, the one who pronounces the punishment and who utters the curse is a human being.³³ Noah, here, takes the place of God; it is Noah against whom Ham sins, and it is Noah who stands in judgment. Noah, not God, utters the blessings and the curse which conclude this first moment in the postdiluvian world and which shape the rest of biblical history.

The human being's role as judge is new. In the Cain and Abel story such a role is anticipated; Cain fears that he will be slain because of his act. But God rejects this role for humankind and prevents the slaying of Cain. After the flood, after God's statement that "he who spills the blood of a human being, by a human being shall his blood be spilt" (9:6), it is Noah's task to make sure that justice is served. Punishing Ham, he orders the world with his blessings and curse, choosing good over evil, and making the sinner a slave to those who refuse the lure of sin.

Knowledge

The final, and I think most important, parallel between the three stories is the theme of knowledge. In the garden story, knowledge is the prerogative of God. God "knows"; Adam and Eve lack knowledge (3:5). The sin of this first couple involves the attainment of knowledge. Eating of the prohibited fruit of the tree of knowledge, they "know" what they were unaware of before (3:7; 2:25). The attainment of knowledge threatens the boundary between the human being and God and leads to the banishment of Adam from Eden (3:22-23). For Adam and Eve, knowledge is the state of sin.

The Cain and Noah stories do not focus on the theme of knowledge (after all, knowledge has already been achieved), but in each of these stories there is a link between sin and knowledge. Cain responds to God's query about his brother's whereabouts with the astonishing and, in fact, self-incriminating "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (4:9). Just as Adam's response to God's "Where are you?" (3:9) demonstrates his guilt in having attained knowledge (3:10-11), Cain's response, his denial of both knowledge and responsibility,

³³ Cassuto notes that this is the first time that a human being, rather than God, blesses and curses (*Noah to Abraham*, 155).

indicates his guilt. Denial of knowledge is tantamount to the relinquishing of moral responsibility, and it is Cain's task, as we have seen, to be a moral agent. Unlike Adam, he is to use his understanding to choose good over sin (4:6); failure to make the moral choice, now that humankind has attained knowledge, is what leads to sin. For Cain, denial of knowledge and of the moral responsibility it entails is the state of sin.

Noah drinks himself into a loss of consciousness, bringing upon himself both self-degradation and the violation of Ham (9:21–22). But Noah awakens from his drunkenness and achieves knowledge (9:24). It is this knowledge that allows him to exercise his moral agency. While loss of knowledge brought with it the violation of boundaries, with the sin of Ham against his father, the regaining of knowledge allows Noah to impose order within the incipient human society which his family constitutes. For Noah, loss of knowledge is the state of sin.³⁴

In this postdiluvian world, lack of knowledge is no excuse and no defense against the consequences of sin. On the contrary, lack of knowledge is itself sinful; it is the abdication of moral agency. Only with knowledge can postdiluvian humanity exercise the kind of moral responsibility God now expects of it.

The achievement of knowledge, then, is closely related to the other themes we have traced. Humanity's moral autonomy and governance of the world are bound up with the human being's knowledge. No longer merely a part of the created world, Noah is given mastery over the world that he has helped to re-create. The human being now has dominion over nature, governs human society, and, not least, has mastery over itself. Lack of awareness, in this postdiluvian world, brings sin. Awakening into consciousness, regaining of knowledge, allows for the moral choices that order human existence. While for Adam the attainment of knowledge threatened a dangerous breach of the boundary between human being and God, Noah's task is to become more God-like. He is to know, to create, to govern, to judge, to choose, to bless, and to curse.

Noah's world is our world. While not necessarily the Bible's vision of the best of all possible worlds, it is the world in which the rest of biblical history and human history takes place. God describes the nature of this world in a few sentences after the flood, and then we are offered the brief narrative of Noah's drunkenness. It is my contention that this small vignette serves to demonstrate the new role of the human being in this world, and the new relationships between the human being and nature, God, and human society. This brief story, and not only the blessings and curse with which it ends, sets the stage for the entire drama of the Bible's vision of human history.

³⁴ Both Adam's sinful knowledge and Noah's sinful lack of knowledge threaten the violation of boundaries. For Adam, though, the boundary which is threatened is that separating humankind from God; for Noah, it is that which separates son from father, the focus of the vineyard story being on the establishment of human society.