

Revisiting Adam and Eve in Book 3 of Milton's *Paradise Lost*

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the Lord's revisiting of Adam and Eve in Book 3 of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Using the primary texts of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Penguin Classics, 1998) and JPS (Jewish Publication Society's Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures, 1985) and secondary text, "Two Concepts of Liberty in *Paradise Lost*," by Benjamin Woodward, I will closely analyze the Lord's revisiting of Adam and Eve in Book 3 of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. I will argue that the Lord's revisiting of Adam and Eve affirms their mortality and disloyalty to Him. Simultaneously, the Lord alludes to Adam and Eve's sinful nature and also expresses His unconditional love for them by His grace.

Keywords: John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, JPS Tanakh, Jewish Studies, and Biblical Revisioning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Benjamin Woodward's recent Miltonic scholarship on *Paradise Lost* within the past year is especially relevant for Book 3 of *Paradise Lost*. In his essay titled, "Two Concepts of Liberty in *Paradise Lost*," he focuses on philosophical questions of liberty and negative and positive freedom. Woodward's central argument is that "freedom created by God, although it relies on an arbitrary deity, is the only possible path to freedom" (Abstract). He suggests that G-d's concept of freedom for his children is the best type of liberty. My paper extends his argument because I claim that although the Lord's revisiting of Adam and Eve affirms their mortality and disloyalty to Him, He simultaneously displays His unconditional love for them by His grace.

II. THE LORD'S GRACE AND UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

In lines 93-95, the Lord speaks to His Son about Adam and Eve's naive nature and suggests they are gullible to Satan's manipulative power. He states that Adam's and Eve's free will is naturally inclined to listen to Satan because he is persuasive: "For man will listen to his glozing lies, / And easily transgress the sole command/ Sole pledge of His obedience: so will fall" (Lines 93-95). The Lord emphasizes that Adam's and Eve's free will allows them to sin insofar that it violates His command to devote your love, heart, and attention to Him first. Their free will likes idolatry and enables them to think too highly of Satan. But in spite of that, they never forgot their Lord. Therefore, their "fall" is not a catastrophe and does not indicate they will be punished with eternal damnation. Instead, they have His grace and unconditional love.

Moreover, the Lord describes His grace for man, and by implication, woman in Book 3 of *Paradise Lost*. The Lord expresses to His Son in lines 173-176 of Book 3 that man is capable of being saved. His hope for man is emphasized when He declares: "Man shall not quite be lost, /but saved who will,/ Yet not of will in him, but grace in me/ Freely vouchsafed; once more I/

will renew/ His lapsed powers. . ." (Lines 173-176). This quote implies that the Lord's grace allows man to avoid total confusion and the hellfire. Grace instills in man some clarity, so that man is not completely lost or confused. In addition, those who the Lord chooses will be saved by Jehovah Yeshua (God of My Salvation). He will restore and revitalize their capabilities, so they can become pleasing to Him again.

Moreover, in the JPS *Tanakh*, the Lord expresses His grace and unconditional love for man and woman, and also every living thing after Noah's flood. The Lord promises to maintain His covenant and ensure that the earth will never be destroyed again (Genesis 9). He also tells Moses in Deuteronomy 4:31 to remind the children of Israel that He is compassionate: "For the Lord your God is a/ compassionate God: He will not fail you nor will He let you perish; He/ will not forget the covenant which He made on oath with your father's." The Lord's compassion transcends the sins of Adam and Eve. He highlights that He can be found and will listen if man and woman seek Him with their whole heart and soul if they become distressed. If they obey Him, He will not allow them to "perish" or suffer eternal damnation (Deuteronomy 4:29-31). However, Moses asserts that if the children of Israel "act wickedly" and have idols, including "a sculptured image in any likeness, causing the Lord your God displeasure and vexation....," He will make sure they die in the land from which they seek to cross the Jordan River in order to dwell there (Deuteronomy 4:25-27).

III. DIVINE JUDGEMENT

The Lord's divine judgment is also echoed in Book 3, lines 100-102. The Lord suggests man and woman are susceptible to sin: "All he could have; I made him just and right,/ sufficient to have stood, though free to fall./ Such I created all the ethereal Powers and spirits, both them who stood and them who failed" (Lines 100-102). This means that the Lord ensured that man and woman have good ethics and integrity. Nevertheless, they are vulnerable because they are lesser beings than the Lord himself, and therefore, their free will allows them to sin. Made perfectly in His image, but not perfect human beings, they will sin. In addition, their naive human nature is flawed because although they can become obedient to the Lord they will, nevertheless, become disobedient to Him. The caveat is that those who the Lord chooses to remain steadfast to Him despite their sins will please and satisfy Him. Those who are a failure to the Lord—not just disloyal because of gullibility--will suffer from the wrath of the Lord. They will also confront strong enemies who are against them on earth and in heaven.

Similarly, in Genesis 6:5-7, the Lord explains his discontent with man, and also by implication, woman: "The Lord saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how/ every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all/ the time. And/ the Lord regretted that He had made man on earth, and His heart was/ saddened." In these lines, the Lord states that man's sinful thoughts caused His heart to sadden and wish He had not created man. We are also reminded of Adam and Eve's disobedience to Him in the Garden of Eden. Because Eve was manipulated by the serpent, she ate the apple and Adam did the same. However, since they never forgot the Lord, the Lord allowed His grace and unconditional love to transcend their sins in the Garden of Eden.

IV. CONCLUSION: THE LORD'S FREEDOM FOR MAN AND WOMAN

The Lord's freedom for Adam and Eve and every man and woman is the antithesis of Satan's freedom because it consists of their free will to choose to obey his ten commandments and rely on Him as their trustworthy, compassionate almighty G-d. In times of weakness, sadness, and confusion, Moses advises the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 4 to seek Him for guidance and assurance. This kind of freedom is positive because it enables the Lord to bless His children

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and enable them to be prosperous in the countries' they reside in. Simultaneously, the Lord promises to also protect man and woman from their enemies as long as they obey Him and have no idols (Deuteronomy 4:25-27).

Furthermore, the Lord's freedom for His children frees them from the bondage of slavery. In Exodus and Deuteronomy, the implication is that after the children of Israel were released from Pharaoh's captivity their new freedom allowed them to honor the Lord and remember His good deeds for them.

Nevertheless, the Lord's discontentment with Adam and Eve and by implication, man and woman, stems from their sinful thoughts. Constant thoughts of evil angers the Lord and alludes to their mortality. A negative sense of freedom also takes root once they decide to perform evil actions such as eating from the Tree of Knowledge, and when the children of Israel decided to have idols. However, the Lord's grace, which is replete with compassion and empathy, allows His unconditional love to shine in man and woman when they remember His covenant and decide to repent for their sins.

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