

# OIM UPDATE

February 2019

Trying to stay in shape this month, while packing and preparing to relocate thirty miles north of our current location, requires some consistent time on the elliptical machine burning calories! So, amazed by Bluetooth aided praise and worship music, while perusing and meditating upon Scriptures via the “miracle” of an iPhone, I had an intriguing observation about the “barrier of the dividing wall” that the Apostle Paul references in Ephesus 2:15. Here is the passage which contextually describes not only why born again Believers were created (for good works), but how the old barrier separating Jewish and non-Jewish people had finally been demolished by the precious atoning blood sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua:

“For we are His handiwork, **created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we would walk in them.** Therefore remember, that once you, the nations in the flesh—who are called ‘Foreskin’ by the ones called ‘Circumcision,’ *which is* in the flesh, made by hands—**remember that you were at that time separate from Messiah, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.** But now in Messiah Yeshua you who were once far off, have been brought near in the blood of Messiah. For He is our peace, who made both *groups* one, **and broke down the middle wall of partition,** having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the *religious* Law of commandments in dogmas, **that He might create in Himself the two into one new humanity, so making peace,** and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the wooden scaffold, **having killed the enmity by it.** And HE CAME AND ANNOUNCED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR OFF, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR [Isaiah 57:19; 52:7; Zechariah 9:10]; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones, and of the household of God, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Messiah Yeshua Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building,** being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:10-22, PME).

It is not unusual for me to ponder this passage, because over the past twenty-four years, our family and ministry efforts have positioned us to observe the centuries-old slow but steady reconstruction and reinforcing of yet another wall of separation built since the Apostolic Era concluded. Of course, the architect of the debilitating partition was and remains (1) the enemy of our souls, the accuser of the brethren (Satan). Cleverly and with malice, he exploits (2) humanity’s fallen fleshly nature and mind through (3) the world system where the Devil orchestrates his nefarious schemes to thwart the will and purposes of the Creator God:

“And you were **dead** in your trespasses and sins, in which you **formerly walked** according to [1] **the course of this world, according to [2] the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in [3] the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath,** even as the rest” (Ephesians 2:1-3, NASU).

Here Paul summarized how the Believers “were by nature children of wrath, dead in their trespasses and sins in which they formerly walked.” Notice the past tense description of what

these people *were* in their fallen nature inherited from Adam and Eve. However, since the good news of Yeshua's sacrifice, His resurrection, and the commencement of the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, a new era evidencing God's promises had begun:

“Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, **‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,** not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD. ‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the LORD, **‘I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’”** (Jeremiah 31:31-33, NASU).

“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. **Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.** And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:24-28, NASU).

However, despite the extraction of stony hearts and insertion of hearts of flesh with God's Torah written on them, and a “new spirit” which *includes* the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit—humanity at large still wrestles with the world, the flesh, and the Devil. The “dividing wall” between Jews and non-Jews has remained in place, in the hearts and minds of too many millions, the past two millennia. As I cogitated upon this great tragedy while pedaling, with my closed eyes catching glimpses of the Holy of Holies, it dawned on me that the God of Israel is not mocked but is instead, according to the Apostle Peter, diligently at work building a “spiritual house” out of living stones upon the Cornerstone Yeshua, and *not* manmade bricks:

“Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. **And coming to Him as to a living stone,** rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, **as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house** for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Yeshua the Messiah. For *this* is contained in Scripture: ‘BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER STONE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED’ [Isaiah 28:16]. This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve,

**'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone [Psalm 118:22],'** and, **'A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE [Isaiah 8:14]';** for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed. **But you are A CHOSEN RACE [Isaiah 43:20, LXX; Deuteronomy 7:6; 10:15], A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD [Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6], A HOLY NATION [Exodus 19:6], A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION [Isaiah 43:21, LXX; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; 14:2], THAT YOU MAY PROCLAIM THE EXCELLENCIES OF HIM [Isaiah 43:21] who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY [Hosea 2:23]"** (1 Peter 2:1-10, NASU).

But as I envisioned these wall building materials, the thought came to me that stones and rocks are actually created by our Creator God, while bricks are a byproduct of man's ability to take elements of the created order and fashion a block that can be stacked in order to form a wall. So I thought of all the false gods that humans have conceived of that have, **like individual bricks**, contributed to the rebuilt wall. Immediately the thought of the tens of thousands (if not more) religions, cults, sects, (and even distractions including the love and worship of self) flashed in my mind. Then as I surveyed the wall in my mind's eye, I noticed the mortar holding the bricks together and I queried, **"What is the mortar?"** Without hesitation the answer came to me, **"It's the flesh of humanity!"** Well of course, the accuser of the brethren and architect of the wall has intimate knowledge of mankind's weakness and faults to exploit, and since the Holy One has given him abilities and powers, he influences people through the trials, tribulations, and results of spiritual warfare:

**"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places"** (Ephesians 6:12, NASU).

So what is my point? It is simply this: as maturing Believers filled with and being led by the Spirit of God, we should know what the wiles of the Devil were and are, and as led by the Spirit of God, avoid the pitfalls pandemic to our flesh and the world system that work diligently to impede the construction of *the Spiritual house* Yeshua is building. After all, the **Branch** referenced in Isaiah and Jeremiah has become the **Breach** or breaker through the wall/fence noted by the Prophet Micah. It is He who leads His flock of sheep out through the "narrow" gate, because He is also the Gate or the Door of our collective salvation:

**"In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel. And it will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem. When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. And there will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain"** (Isaiah 4:2-6, NASU).

**"Behold, days are coming,"** declares the LORD, **"when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety; and this is the name by**

which she shall be called: the LORD is our righteousness” (Jeremiah 33:14-16, NASU).

“I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; like a flock in the midst of its pasture they will be noisy with men. The **breaker** goes up before them; **they break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it. So their king goes on before them, and the LORD at their head**” (Micah 2:12-13, NASU).

However, in order to follow the lead of the Good Shepherd out from behind the two sides of the wall of separation and into green pastures where He restores our souls, Believers **must adhere** to two elementary instructions made by both Micah and Yeshua. First, Micah summarizes what the Lord expects of His children in this succinct statement:

**“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”** (Micah 6:8, NASU).

John records the “new commandment” declared by Yeshua during the Last Supper:

**“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”** (John 13:34-35, NASU).

Please note that Yeshua was categorically emphatic about the **agapē love** that is required for His disciples to evidence that they are indeed His born again followers indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. After all, our human flesh **cannot** muster unconditional **agapē** love for one another! It is **only** the Messiah’s Spirit within the softened and vibrant human heart that can put other people’s needs and welfare above their own. As a result, the ultimate eternal “glue” that holds the living stones together in the spiritual house of God is the **agapē love** of the Holy One. Now imagine that. Can you see it? Do you have it? Are you following the lead of the Branch/Breaker/Messiah Yeshua, allowing His adhesive glue of love through you to contribute positively to the construction project, as He is building His spiritual house? Or instead, are you still predominantly under the influence of your selfish ambition, and like fleshy mortar, counter productively adding to or reinforcing the rebuilt barrier of separation between Jews and non-Jews? These are some thought provoking questions that need to be considered as the End of the Age approaches.

Nevertheless with all of that being said, the relocation project we are presently involved with requires a great deal of packing and lifting—something we have become quite proficient at since our “spiritual scavenger hunt” began in 1994. Provisionally, after a twenty-one year sojourn that began in McKinney, Texas, we are coming “full circle” and relocating back to that area. It is thirty miles north of us, and we are going to have a home that Margaret says, “is finally going to be more than the rented parsonage we have been occupying for the past six years since our return to the Dallas area!” *It has been quite a journey!* But Lord willing with retirement never an option or even under consideration, we hope and plan to be living in the McKinney area for the next few decades, unless the Messiah returns or our numbered days of service come to a premature end. Your faithful willingness to help us financially with the relocation is greatly appreciated. Your prayers are a blessing to our family and for the work of the ministry we have been called to perform!

**“The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace”** (Numbers 6:24-26, NASU).

Blessings and shalom!  
Mark Huey

# The Seed of the Woman Crushing the Head of the Serpent

by J.K. McKee

*The following has been excerpted from the forthcoming publication Salvation on the Line, Volume III: The Messiahship of Yeshua*

**"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; they shall strike at your head, and you shall strike at their heel" (NJPS).**

There are consequences for Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1-12). Eve reports to God that the serpent had deceived her (Genesis 3:13), and God condemns the serpent via the word, "Because you did this, more cursed shall you be than all cattle and all the wild beasts: On your belly shall you crawl and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:14, NJPS). It is also witnessed that as a result of eating the forbidden fruit, that there will be some sort of conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Further stated is how there will be pain in a woman's childbirth (Genesis 3:16a), tensions between males and females (Genesis 3:16b), and the difficulties of human living and eventual death are elucidated (Genesis 3:18-19). Both Jewish and Christian readers throughout the centuries have recognized how the Lord's response to the action of Adam and Eve is largely negative—although it is good to see that in spite of violating the command not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:16-17), the human race was not terminated with Adam and Eve. Instead, Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden, and are introduced to excruciating toil. *They forfeit the intimate presence of their Creator.*

Among the statements issued by God in response to Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, it is asserted, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will pound your head, and you will bite his heel" (Genesis 3:15, ATS). In historic Christian theology, Genesis 3:15 has been labeled as the *protoevangelium* or "first gospel," as the seed or *zera* (זֵרָה) here is believed to be a promise of the Messiah to come. As noted by the *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, "The 'first gospel,' [is] a reference to the statement in Gen. 3:15, which has been taken by some biblical interpreters as predicting the defeat of evil by the victory of Jesus Christ and thus as the first promise or 'gospel' of a coming Redeemer."<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:15 is often concluded to be intertextually employed or alluded to in the Apostolic Writings, as it involves the arrival of Yeshua of Nazareth (Matthew 1:18; Galatians 4:4-5) and His conflict with Satan (1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:9; 20:2).

Does Genesis 3:15 actually include any promise of a Redeemer or Deliverer to come? Common Jewish examination of Genesis 3:15 takes the conflict between the

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<sup>1</sup> Donald S. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 226.

seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent to represent the superiority of human beings over reptiles like the serpent. Jon D. Levenson states in *The Jewish Study Bible*, "The serpent is to lose his legs, slither in the dirt, and suffer from the hostility of human beings (vv. 14-15)."<sup>2</sup> Such a naturalistic approach to Genesis 3:15, denoting a conflict between humans and threatening reptiles, such as serpents (Heb. sing. *nachash*, נָחָשׁ), is hardly unwarranted. But, does the statement of Genesis 3:15 represent something else, beyond humans having to deal with the threat of being bitten by poisonous snakes and having to defend themselves? It should not be a surprise that other avenues of interpretation have been offered in Jewish resources. The *ArtScroll Chumash*, for example, takes Genesis 3:15 in an homeiletical direction:

"Homiletically, the Sages derive from this description the proper tactics in the eternal war between man and the Evil Inclination, which is symbolized by the serpent. The *serpent* seduces the Jew to trample the commandments with his *heel*, and the Jew can prevail by using his *head*, meaning the study of Torah (*Midrash HaNe'elam*)."<sup>3</sup>

That there can be applications of Genesis 3:15 beyond naturalistic scenes of human beings in the Ancient Near East striking down poisonous snakes, is actually seen within the Tanach itself. God decreed to the serpent, "upon you belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:14b, ATS). When Israel is restored in the future by God, it is said of the nations of Planet Earth, "Let them lick dust like snakes, like crawling things on the ground! Let them come trembling out of their strongholds to the LORD our God; let them fear and dread You!" (Micah 7:17, NJPS). This, at least, permits readers of Genesis 3:15 to explore possibilities for how it could be read and/or applied by later generations.

That there is some issue with how to approach Genesis 3:15, particularly in terms of Messianic significance, can be deduced with how English Jewish versions choose to translate *hu yeshuf'kha rosh v'attah teshupennu 'akeiv* (הָאָדָם הַשּׂוֹפֵן עֶקֶב רֹאשׁ הָרֶשֶׁת, "he he-will-crush-you head and-you you-will-strike him heel" (Kohlenberger).<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew *hu* (הוא) is the masculine pronoun. Several English Jewish versions have rendered this literally as: "he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt wound his heel" (Leeser Translation 1853), "He will pound your head, and you will bite his heal" (ATS), "he will crush you on the head and you will bite him in the heel" (Keter Crown Bible), "He'll strike you at the head, and you'll strike him at the heel" (Friedman),<sup>5</sup> "He will boot your head and you will bite his heel" (Alter).<sup>6</sup>

However, per some of the potential ambiguities regarding *zera*, "offspring, descendants" (*HALOT*),<sup>7</sup> being either singular or a singular representing a collective

<sup>2</sup> Jon D. Levenson, "Genesis," in Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 17; also J.H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1960), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Nosson Scherman, ed., et. al., *The ArtScroll Chumash, Stone Edition*, 5th ed. (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2000), 17.

<sup>4</sup> John R. Kohlenberger III, trans., *The Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 1:7.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Elliot Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 24.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Alter, trans., *The Five Books of Moses* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2004), 26.

<sup>7</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 1:282.

plural, other English Jewish versions have employed the plural “they” in Genesis 3:15: “they shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise their heel” (1917 JPS), “they shall strike at your head, and you shall strike at their heel” (NJPS), “they will bruise you on the head, and you will bruise them in the heel” (Fox),<sup>8</sup> “they shall strike at your head, and you shall strike at their heel” (Israel Bible). (The English Christian Common English Bible also has, “They will strike your head, but you will strike at their heels.”)

At least one English Jewish version has the neuter “it”: “it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Jerusalem Bible-Koren).

While it would not be entirely unacceptable to render the Hebrew *hu* or masculine pronoun “he” via the plural “they,” with *zera* representing the collective posterity of the woman Eve—“I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your brood and hers. They shall strike at your head, and you shall strike at their heel” (NEB)—it cannot go unnoticed how Genesis 3:15 playing a role in Christian theology might affect Jewish approaches, in how a singular “he” could be applied to some later figure involved in a conflict with the crafty serpent. Liberal Christian examiners of Genesis 3:15 see no reference to some future Deliverer figure, in spite of historical interpretation.<sup>9</sup>

Going beyond a naturalistic interpretation of humans needing to beware of poisonous snakes, some ongoing conflict between good and evil, can be deduced from this passage, first involving those who ally themselves with such parties: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring” (Genesis 3:15a, ATS). But, does Genesis 3:15 at all anticipate some kind of a showdown between a singular good person and a singular evil person?

The Greek Septuagint translated Genesis 3:15b with *autos sou tērēsei kephalēn kai su tērēseis autou pternan* (αὐτός σου τηρήσει κεφαλὴν καὶ σὺ τηρήσεις αὐτοῦ πτέρναν), “he will watch your head, and you will watch his heel” (NETS), employing the masculine nominative (case indicating subject) singular *autos* (αὐτός). Various Christian examiners have seen *hu* (אָהוּ) rendered as *autos* to be supportive of Genesis 3:15b being interpreted as Messianic in the Third-Second Centuries B.C.E., by the Septuagint’s Jewish translators. Sometimes offered as corroborating evidence, is how the Targum Onkelos paraphrased Genesis 3:15, leaving the singular pronoun “he” intact:

“And I will put enmity between thee and between the woman, and between thy son and her son. He will remember thee, what thou didst to him (at) from the beginning, and thou shalt be observant unto him at the end.”<sup>10</sup>

The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan moves Genesis 3:15 in a different direction, but noting how resolution to the conflict will come in the time of King Messiah:

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<sup>8</sup> Everett Fox, trans., *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 23.

<sup>9</sup> Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, revised (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 93.

<sup>10</sup> [BibleWorks 9.0: Targum Onkelos on the Pentateuch](#). MS Windows 7 Release. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC, 2011. DVD-ROM.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between the seed of thy son, and the seed of her sons; and it shall be when the sons of the woman keep the commandments of the law, they will be prepared to smite thee upon thy head; but when they forsake the commandments of the law, thou wilt be ready to wound them in their heel. Nevertheless for them there shall be a medicine, but for thee there will be no medicine; and they shall make a remedy for the heel in the days of the King Meshiha."<sup>11</sup>

Protestant commentators on the Book of Genesis, in encountering "he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15b, RSV), have to sort through the Hebrew text, ancient translations, and some history of interpretation. Is there some expectation of a Deliverer figure planted within Genesis 3:15? Gordon J. Wenham, in summarizing a brief selection of Jewish and Christian views, thinks that Genesis 3:15 is appropriately viewed as Messianic only in retrospect, but not from the original perspective of the narrator:

"Certainly the oldest Jewish interpretation found in the third century B.C. Septuagint, the Palestinian targums (*Ps.-J.*, *Neof.*, *Frg.*), and possibly the Onqelos targum takes the serpent as symbolic of Satan and look for a victory over him in the days of King Messiah. The NT also alludes to this passage, understanding it in a broadly messianic sense (Rom 16:20; Heb 2:14; Rev 12) and it may be that the term 'Son of Man' as a title for Jesus and the term 'woman' for Mary (John 2:4; 19:26) also reflect this passage (Gallus; cf. Michl). Certainly, later Christian commentators, beginning with Justin (*ca. A.D. 160*) and Irenaeus (*ca. 180*), have often regarded 3:15 as the Protoevangelium, the first messianic prophecy in the OT. While a messianic interpretation may be justified in light of subsequent revelation, a *sensus plenior*, it would perhaps be wrong to suggest that this was the narrator's own understanding. Probably he just looked for mankind eventually to defeat the serpent's seed, the powers of evil."<sup>12</sup>

While there is nothing particularly wrong with trying to understand what the statement of Genesis 3:15b meant to Adam and Eve, when originally hearing it—or even those within the community of Ancient Israel later on—that Genesis 3:15b was read with a Messianic tinge to it in Second Temple Judaism, cannot go overlooked. This does play some role in one's study of the Messiahship of Yeshua. In his resource *The Messianic Hope*, Michael Rydelnik appropriately concludes

"Not surprisingly, many scholars recognize that ancient Jewish sources read Gen 3:15 (and other passages) messianically but dismiss their interpretations as far-fetched. Is it not also possible that these ancient Jewish interpreters were sensitive to the nuances of the text, read them carefully, and understood their meaning? It is just as likely that the LXX, the Targumim, and the midrashim read Gen 3:15 messianically because that was the true meaning embedded in the text."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [BibleWorks 9.0: Targum Pseudo Jonathan on the Pentateuch](#).

<sup>12</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15*, Vol 1 (Dallas: Word Incorporated, 1987), pp 80-81.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Messianic?* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 137.

Kenneth A. Matthews, *New American Commentary: Genesis 1-11:26*, Vol 1a (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 247 notes some of the views held by a cross-section of emergent Christianity and later the Reformation.

Conservative Protestant examiners will strongly take “he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15b, NIV), to indicate future Messianic fulfillment in the person of Yeshua of Nazareth.<sup>14</sup> Of particular importance are statements appearing in the Apostolic Writings, which give testimony to a conflict between Yeshua the Seed, and Satan the serpent:

- “Now the God of *shalom* [peace] will soon crush satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Yeshua be with you” (Romans 16:20, TLV).
- “[T]he one who practices sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sins from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John 3:8, PME).
- “And the great dragon was thrown down—the ancient serpent, called the devil and satan, who deceives the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Revelation 12:9, TLV).
- “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are too, and they shall be tortured day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10, TLV).

While it might be easy for some layreaders to quickly conclude that English Jewish versions translating the Hebrew pronoun *hu* (הוא) or “he,” with the plural “they,” are fomenting a conspiracy against Yeshua—evangelical theologians are bit more tempered. In his resource *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Walter C. Kaiser recognizes, “the very fact that the noun ‘seed’ is a collective singular deliberately provides for the fact that it may include the one who represents the whole group as well as the group itself. The fact that there is such a one specified in this text as a male descendant of the woman opens up this text to its messianic possibilities.”<sup>15</sup> Even when one concludes that *hu* in Genesis 3:15b, “He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel” (TLV), represents a Deliverer to come, religious Jews could apply this to someone other than Yeshua of Nazareth. Some Protestant examiners see the “seed” or “offspring” in some collective sense, at least, in that there are specific righteous persons in the Biblical narrative, whose examples culminate in the person of Yeshua of Nazareth. Kenneth A. Matthews notes,

“This hope for the appointed ‘seed’ is unveiled progressively by the offspring of Eve through Seth (‘another seed’, 4:26; his genealogy, 5:1-32), through Noah’s offspring (9:9), and the seed of Abraham first described in 12:7 (with 12:1-3). Moreover, this promise points to the Mosaic community, which defined itself as the offspring promised to Abraham (e.g., Exod 32:11-14; Deut 11:8-12).”<sup>16</sup>

John E. Hartley similarly affirms how there would be conflict between human beings and poisonous snakes—something to be fully realized in the ultimate conflict between the future Messiah and Satan:

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<sup>14</sup> Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1969), pp 70-71; Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 40; Rydelnik, 48.

<sup>15</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 39.

<sup>16</sup> Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 246.

"From then on there would be **enmity between** the serpent and **the woman, between** the **offspring** of both. 'Offspring' (seed) is singular, connoting all offspring. Serpentine creatures would **strike** at the **heel** of humans, inflicting harm, but the offspring of women would defend themselves by striking a blow, often a fatal one, on the **head** of these creatures. Thus God gave humans the hope of mastering frightful serpents. Metaphorically, this statement meant that humans could rise above natural disasters and forces of evil to fulfill God's commands.

"A few late Jewish writers and the church fathers found in this verse a fuller meaning that would one day be realized in the Messiah, when a representative of all humans would strike the serpent, the representative of the forces that oppose God, with a fatal blow. That victory would put an end to the enmity between the serpent and humankind. As Scripture unfolds God's design, it becomes clear that the one to achieve such a major victory is the Messiah (Rom. 16:20), but it would take centuries before any audience would see that meaning in this text."<sup>17</sup>

It cannot go overlooked, however, that John H. Walton, a rather well known and highly regarded Old Testament theologian, does not see any sort of Messianic expectation or hint in Genesis 3:15. Among his reasons, he thinks that Genesis 3:15 is absent elsewhere in the Tanach's Messianic expectation:

"Usually it is on the basis of other texts of Scripture that such a fulfillment is identified that transcends the original context. Otherwise, such an identification has no authority. In this case, however, the rest of Scripture does not help us. Messianic expectation of Israel developed around the concept of a future king of David's line....We should also note that the rest of the Old Testament never makes reference to Genesis 3:15 in the development of its messianic expectation....there is no biblical identification of Christ as the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, there is no authority link to support that interpretation. It is therefore haphazard to adopt a messianic interpretation of the text."<sup>18</sup>

Victor P. Hamilton deliberates on Genesis 3:15, not quite being sure whether it is a prophecy of a Messiah to come, but still recognizing it as good news of some sort. His issue with Genesis 3:15 being a Messianic prophecy is whether or not the Hebrew *hu* being rendered by the Greek *autos* in the Septuagint, should be given as much weight as it often is among evangelicals:

"...[O]ne should not force an interpretation on *her offspring* that the expression cannot bear. The LXX translates the Heb. *zar'ah* [זָרָה] (lit., 'her seed') as *spérmatos autēs* [σπέρματος αὐτῆς] (lit., 'her seed') and the Vulg. as 'her semen' (an oxymoron if there ever was one!) in order to see a hint here of the virgin birth of this seed (the absence of a sperm-supplying father) if farfetched indeed....

"The question is: How should we translate the anticipatory *hū* [הוּ] in 'it will strike at your head'—'he' or 'they' or 'it'? The ancient versions offer the various alternatives. Few are inclined to follow Vulg. *ipsa*, 'she' (!). LXX has *autós* [αὐτός], 'he,' even though the antecedent is *spérmatos*, which is neuter in Greek. One might

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<sup>17</sup> John E. Hartley, *New International Bible Commentary: Genesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 69.

<sup>18</sup> John H. Walton, *NIV Application Commentary: Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), pp 234-235.

have expected *autó* [αὐτό] instead of *autós*. The LXX seems to have had a messianic understanding of the verse, for, as has been pointed out, the independent personal pronoun *hú* ' occurs more than one hundred times, but this is the only one that the LXX translates literally with *autós*, although the Greek idiom would require the neuter. Nevertheless, one must decide whether the LXX should be allowed to carry so much weight here and whether it offers the correct understanding of the original intention of Gen. 3:15.

"We may want to be cautious about calling this verse a messianic prophecy. At the same time we should be hesitant to surrender the honored expression for this verse—the *protoevangelium*, 'the first good news.' The verse is good news whether we understand *zera* ' singularly or collectively..."<sup>19</sup>

When Adam and Eve heard the statement, "he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15b, NRSV), what could *they* have understood this as implying? It is fair for us in the Twenty-First Century to recognize that the two first humans barely understood the world outside of the sheltered confines of the Garden of Eden. For anyone to argue that Adam and Eve had a complex understanding of a Messiah figure to come, is a complete impossibility. That some conflict would emerge in history, and that some resolution would come to the problems that they had introduced by eating the forbidden fruit, is the absolute most they could have understood. Any view of the *zera*, the seed, offspring, or posterity being applied to Yeshua of Nazareth—or any Messiah figure for that matter—is a value judgment made by later generations of readers. While today's Believers in Yeshua of Nazareth conclude that Genesis 3:15b first foretells of His arrival to defeat "the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9, NASU), this verse hardly provides us with a full picture of Messianic expectation. Believers in Yeshua of Nazareth can recognize the importance of a word like Genesis 3:15b, but more examination is required.

The issue in Genesis 3:15 does come down to the placement of "he": "he will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel" (CJB/CJSB). As Kaiser deduces, "Herein lies, even if only in germ form and somewhat enigmatically stated, the roots of the messianic doctrine."<sup>20</sup> More has to be evaluated throughout the course of the Biblical narrative, but that something is to take place in the future regarding the problems introduced by Adam and Eve, should not be casually dismissed.

If you have ever been in a religious setting where a teacher has brazenly declared that Adam and Eve understood that the Messiah would come, such a teacher has overstated his or her point. But, if it has been stated that Adam and Eve were given a sure word of the crafty serpent one day being struck or bruised, helping to resolve the offense they committed in Eden, then this would be appropriate. It was later generations who searched the Scriptures, i.e., "that everything written about me in the *Torah* of Moshe, the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44, CJB/CJSB), who saw the beginning of the Messianic expectation in Genesis

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<sup>19</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp 199-200.

<sup>20</sup> Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 40.

3:15. The original recipients of Genesis 3:15 hardly had to understand its fuller implications.

The 2016 *Messianic Jewish Study Bible* includes a brief article called "The Seed," concluding that while there will be conflict between good and evil in history, that the Messiah is the ultimate descendant of the woman. It also makes the straightforward determination that Genesis 3:15 served as intertextual background for various statements in the Apostolic Writings about the spiritual war between the Messiah and Satan:

"The 'serpent' mentioned in this prophecy is not a mere reptile, since he is described as an individual with intelligence, speech, and awareness of God. The name is probably a title, describing its nature, not a statement of its shape. This is the serpent in the final conflict between God and his adversary, who will be crushed by the seed mentioned in this text. The 'descendant' of the woman here is a generic term for all humanity and the 'descendant' of the serpent, of all evil. Yet there is a clear sense that one specific male descendant of the woman will ultimately crush the head of the serpent. In Genesis 3:15, the suffix on the word *heel* is singular. Even though humanity will conquer the serpent, it will be through the work of the singular 'descendant of the woman,' who will crush his head, that evil will ultimately be defeated. Rabbinic sources see this as a messianic prophecy: 'At his request, God showed Satan the Messiah; and when he saw him, he trembled, fell on his face and cried: "Truly this is the Messiah, who will bruise me"' (*Pesiqta Rabbati* 3:6).

"Romans 16:20 identifies the serpent Genesis 3:15 as Satan...In 2 Corinthians, Sha'ul warns...{quoting 2 Corinthians 11:3, 14}. Revelation 12:9 makes it even clearer...Although Genesis 3:15 does not specify a name for the descendant of the woman, the New Testament clearly connects this first messianic prophecy to the Messiah, Yeshua."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Barry Rubin, gen. ed., *The Complete Jewish Study Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016), 8.