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THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE QUMRAN SCROLLS

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I

AS additional material from the Qumran Caves comes to light, the importance of these texts continues to grow apace. An excellent illustration of this truth is afforded by the material newly published by Barthélemy and Milik,¹ part of which consists of two columns that Barthélemy calls *serekh ha'edah* (1QSa). The editor believes that this document is to be distinguished from the previously published and now familiar *serekh hayahad* 'the Rule of the Community' and calls attention to several significant differences.² He suggests that the *serekh ha'edah* may reflect the standpoint of the Ḥasidim during the Maccabean wars, while the *serekh hayahad* represents a later stage in the history of the movement, possessing strong affinities for the Essenes.

That the monastic tendencies in the sect were implicit in the beginning and gained in power may be demonstrated from an interesting passage in the document, commented on by the learned editor and since discussed by G. W. Buchanan,³ the full implications of which remain to be explored.

In describing the Essenes, both Philo and Pliny state that they renounced marriage on principle. Josephus, on the other hand, declares that the Essenes abstained from marriage on practical grounds and adds that one branch of the sect practiced matrimony because they regarded celibacy as threatening the preservation of the human race.⁴

¹ D. Barthélemy and J. T. Milik, *Qumran Cave I. Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, I* (Oxford, 1955), "La Règle de la Congregation" (1QSa), pp. 108-18.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 108. Thus the new document (1QSa), in contradistinction to the old (1QS), is marked by a preference for the term 'ēdāh as against *yahad*, calls its leader the 'chief warrior,' נשיא כול העדה as against הרבים (מלאכה) על המבקר על האיש המבקר על, is marked by a martial spirit as against an attitude of nonviolence, and refers to women and children in the "congregation" as against the semi-monastic structure of adults envisaged in *serekh hayahad*.

³ "The OT Meaning of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," *JBL*, LXXV (1956), 114-20.

⁴ Cf. Pliny *Historia Naturalis* v.17; Philo, *apud* Eusebius *Preparatio Evangelica* viii.11; Josephus *Antiquities* XVIII.i.5; *Bellum Judaicum* ii.8, paragraphs 2 and 13. See the succinct discussion of the sources in Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York, 1955), pp. 244 f., 290 f.

The passage now published is of great significance both for the process of development in the sect and in suggesting a definitive solution to a long-standing biblical crux. It reads as follows:

Col. 1.9-11

He shall not come near to a woman,	ולוא יקרבו אל אשה לדעתה
in order to have sexual relations with her,	למשכבי זכר
until his completing ⁵ twenty years,	כי אם לפני מלואת לו עש[ר]ים שנה
when he knows good and evil.	ברעתו [טוב] ורע

What is the meaning of the familiar phrase ברעתו טוב ורע? Barthélemy interprets it as "the age of reason." Buchanan similarly takes it to mean "the age of maturity, when one has sufficient experience and knowledge to be able to make important decisions."⁶ Because of the juxtaposition of clauses in our passage, he concludes that this age is twenty. This meaning he assigns to all the OT passages where it occurs, like Deut 1 39, and the Immanuel prophecy in Isaiah (7 14 ff.). He gives the same meaning to the phrase in the aged Barzillai's reply to King David (II Sam 19 36) and in the crucial passages in the Paradise tale (Gen 2 17, 3 5, 22), though he is conscious of the difficulties involved in interpreting the phrase in these last two passages in a chronological, intellectual, or moral sense.⁷

The Qumran text and the OT passages prove mutually revealing and now enable us to give a definitive answer to a problem which is as old as biblical study itself.

II

Two decades ago, the present writer argued on a variety of grounds that all the usual interpretations of "the tree of knowing good and evil" in Genesis were unsatisfactory.⁸ The first and most obvious theory was to explain it as referring to "moral judgment, the capacity to distinguish

⁵ In passing, Barthélemy's suggestion that his emended reading מילואת (for מלואת), be vocalized as a construct noun *millū'at*, from a noun *millū'āh* (*op. cit.*, p. 113) does not commend itself. The latter noun in Exod 28 17, etc., means 'the setting of a jewel,' not 'completion.' The form מילואת is a *plene* spelling for מלאת which occurs in the identical construction in the MT of Jer 29 10. *Shewa mobile* is frequently represented by *yod* in post-biblical texts. [There is no need to emend the text, however, since the first *waw* in מילואת accurately reflects the original *u* vowel of the infinitive form. Ed.]

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁸ R. Gordis, "The Significance of the Paradise Myth," *AJSL*, LII (1936), 86-94. Detailed bibliography on this problem may be found in M. D. Cassuto, *La Questione della Genesi* (Florence, 1934) pp. 37 f., 151 f., 184 ff., 257 ff.; *Me'adam 'ad Noah* (Jerusalem, 1944), pp. 51 f.; and B. Reicke in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, I:3 (July 1956), 193-94, n. 1.

right from wrong."⁹ This view cannot be sustained for two principal reasons. Were the moral capacity lacking in Adam originally, before he ate the forbidden fruit, he could not justly be held guilty of violating the divine will. Disobedience is a sin only if a sense of right and wrong is presupposed. Moreover, it is inconceivable that biblical thought, with its overpowering moral consciousness, could conceive of the Deity creating man without a moral sense, for that is the essence of his humanity.¹⁰

Nor can the "knowledge of good and evil" refer to all the secrets of nature, the entire gamut of knowledge,¹¹ or even the magical arts,¹² in short, a comprehension of "everything." This suggestion is effectively refuted by the biblical narrative itself, which describes how Adam gave names to every living creature (Gen 2 19-20). It is a truism that in ancient thought, including the biblical world-view, knowing the name of any person or object is tantamount to comprehending its nature. In Biblical Hebrew, *šēm* means 'essence.' Witness, too, the significance attaching to the divine Name in biblical and post-biblical thought.¹³ Indeed, naming an object represents the knowledge that spells power, so that in the case of God or the gods it is equivalent to creation. Thus the Babylonian "Creation Epic," *enuma eliš* opens with the familiar lines: "When on high, the heaven had not been named, and firm ground below had not been called by name." Entirely apposite is the usage in

⁹ Cf. Dillman, *ad loc.*; K. Budde, *Die biblische Paradiesgeschichte* (1932). Cf. also Paul Heinisch, *Theology of the OT* (Collegeville, Minn., 1950) p. 166; L. Koehler, *Theologie des AT* (Tübingen, 1953), p. 158.

¹⁰ Some have sought to save the popular concept of Adam's innocence before the fall, by arguing that he possessed no serious moral sense at all and that he was simply confronted by an absolute prohibition and a threat, as a child might be forbidden to perform a given act. This view ignores the clear implication of Adam's wisdom, which underlies his naming all living creatures, as well as the unanimous testimony of all biblical references and extra-biblical parallels, which, as we have noted, picture primal man as perfect in wisdom.

Moreover, the denial of a moral sense to Adam runs counter to the whole ethical spirit of biblical religion, which could not punish him and his descendants for an act for which he was not morally responsible. On this view, nothing would remain of the concept of man's sin, which is the basic theme of the Paradise narrative, whatever other implications may or may not be drawn from it.

¹¹ So Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, pp. 297 ff.

¹² So Gressmann in *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, X, 351 f.

¹³ Cf. Brown-Driver-Briggs, *Lexicon* (New York, 1907), the references cited *s. v.*; Koehler-Baumgartner, *Lexicon in VT Libros* (Leiden, 1951), p. 984a: "In many cases, *šēm JHVH* means not only the name but the full being and power of Yahveh." Cf. also P. Heinisch, *Das Wort in AT und im Alten Orient* (Münster, 1922); J. Z. Lauterbach, "The Belief in the Power of the Word," *HUCA*, XIV (1939), 287-302.

Of the importance of *šēm JHVH* for Israelite belief and ritual, we have recently been forcefully reminded by Prof. James Muilenburg in his illuminating paper on "Psalm 20 and 21" read before the 1956 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Isa 40 26: "Raise your eyes on high, and see who created these. He brings forth their hosts in number, and calls them all by name." There is no more than a suggestion here that Adam's transcendent wisdom endowed him in some degree with a little of God's creative power and made him, in a sense, "God's co-partner in the work of creation" (cf. *B. Shabbat* 119b). In sum, one cannot fairly explain away the clear inference that being able to name all living creatures meant that Adam possessed limitless wisdom before he ate of the forbidden fruit.¹⁴

¹⁴ After our paper was completed and sent to the Editor, a study entitled "The Knowledge Hidden in the Tree of Paradise" by Bo Reicke appeared in the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 1:3 (July 1956), 193-201. One is grateful to the learned author on several counts, such as the bibliography on the subject (*op. cit.*, note 1) which supplements Cassuto, his decisive rejection of the view which identifies "the 'knowledge' . . . with the knowledge of sin" (p. 201), and his emphasis upon the ancient suggestion that the tree of knowledge was a fig-tree. Particularly welcome is Reicke's adherence to the view that good and evil is "a euphemism for the secrets of sex," (p. 196) though he does not seek to explain the origin of the phrase.

However, Reicke insists that "the sexual element seems to be part of a wider context" (p. 197) which he identifies as "the arts of civilization" (p. 198) so that the fall is a "usurpation of culture (the Promethean topic)" (p. 200). To establish a nexus between the motif of sex and that of the arts of civilization, he adds: "An important presupposition is that human procreation is a principle of civilization" (p. 198)

He does not, however, make it clear what aspects of civilization he regards as relevant here. If "the knowledge of good and evil" be agriculture, the most natural view, it is contradicted by the biblical narrative, which states that *ab initio* Adam was charged with tilling and guarding the garden (Gen 2 15), and it is hardly comprehensive enough to be attributed to God (3 5, 22).

If, as Bo Reicke's reference to the Promethean theme suggests, "the knowledge of good and evil" is to be referred to all the technical arts of civilization, the difficulties are even more numerous. In the first instance, he is constrained to assume that Adam before the fall was totally lacking in wisdom. Following Cohon and other scholars, he maintains: 1) that "the rest of the OT has scarcely any references to the Paradise story" (p. 194), and 2) that "direct references to Adam as a holder of perfect knowledge are only met with in later Jewish-Gnostic speculation. . . . But the Genesis story of Adam has not touched upon this" (p. 195). In the body of our paper, we have demonstrated the error of both contentions. Second, there is no indication of an accession of knowledge to Adam in these areas after his eating of the fruit, the only changes being associated with the domain of sex, the sense of shame, the sewing of girdles, and the procreation of children. Third, the discovery of the arts is specifically attributed in the Bible not to Adam but to the descendants of Cain: Jabal, "father" of the arts of tent-making and herding, Jubal "father" of music, and Tubal-cain, inventor of the use of metals (Gen 4 20-22). These are the authentic elements of the "Prometheus-motif." Thus, according to Greek mythology, Athena taught the giant "architecture, astronomy, mathematics, navigation, metallurgy and other useful arts, which he passed on to mankind" (Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* [Harmondsworth, 1955], I, 144). The omission of agriculture, which alone is directly related to procreation, is significant. In the most familiar form of the myth, it was fire that the Titan brought down to man, thus enabling him to make weapons and tools, to warm his dwellings, to introduce the arts and coin money. Cf., e. g., T. Bulfinch, *The Age of Fable*, (Modern Library edition; New York, 1934), chap. ii, p. 16. Fourth, to describe these arts as "knowing how life is increased and mastered," as does Reicke (p. 201), appears to be a modern interpretation,

This conception of Adam as a paragon of wisdom before the Fall is no late midrashic fancy — it is both ancient, and, be it noted¹ universal in biblical and extra-biblical sources. It has left its traces in several poetical passages in the OT as well, which, as is well known, often enshrine ancient mythological references, as has become clear from the Ugaritic epics. Thus Ezekiel in his prophecy against Tyre (28 12 ff.) compares the Phoenician king in his glory to Adam in the Garden of Eden, aptly described by Cooke as “a glorious being, blameless by nature, gifted with wisdom and beauty.”¹⁵ Other vestiges of ancient Semitic mythology are also included, but the conception of Adam’s perfect wisdom is unmistakable:

Son of man,
Take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre,
And say unto him:
Thus saith the Lord God:
Thou seal most accurate, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

Ezek 28 12

Another reference to the perfection of Adam before the Fall occurs in Ps 82 6 f., which is to be rendered:

I said: Ye are godlike beings,
And all of you sons of the Most High.
Nevertheless ye shall die like Adam
And fall like one of the angels.¹⁶

too sophisticated for the ancients, who did associate the fertility of crops and animals with that of humans, but would hardly regard metallurgy or music as part of the knowledge contributing to the increase and mastering of life. Witness the dissociation of the two themes in Genesis, where seven generations separate Adam from the progenitors of the arts of civilization.

With all due appreciation of the insights in Reicke’s treatment, we therefore cannot regard as convincing his view of “the knowledge of good and evil” as representing the arts of civilization, when the theory is viewed within the framework of the biblical text and the world-view it expresses.

¹⁵ Cf. G. A. Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel* (“International Critical Commentary” [New York 1937]), II, 315 ff., who notes that “in Ezekiel the purifying process (of the old Semitic myths) has not gone so far (as in Genesis)”; cf. also Cassuto, *Me’adam ‘ad Noah*, pp. 47 ff.

¹⁶ It is inexplicable to us that modern interpreters have failed to recognize the proper noun in *‘ādām* in this Psalm. Similarly Hosea (6 7) refers to his contemporaries as violating God’s covenant *k’ādām* ‘as did Adam,’ and Job (31 33) protests that he did not try to hide any of his transgressions *k’ādām* ‘as did Adam.’ In view of the vast interest in Adam in post-biblical thought, we cannot understand the endeavor to ignore such references to him in the OT, particularly since the rendering ‘like men’ in these passages is exegetically inferior.

On *sārtm* as ‘angels,’ cf. Dan 10 13, 20, 21, 12 1 and the frequent rabbinic usage as e. g., שר של אש (B. Pes. 118a) ‘the angel of fire’; שר של ים (B. Baba Batra 74b) ‘angel of the sea.’ Cf. Jastrow, *Dictionary*, p. 1627a.

The mythological basis of this psalm has been exhaustively studied by J. Morgenstern, “The Mythological Background of Psalm 82,” *HUCA*, XIV (1939), 29–126.

ere the poet, who is castigating the judges of his time, speaks first of his former high veneration for their wisdom and probity and then of his present disillusion with them. In alternate parallelism (a:b // a':b') the psalmist utilizes two of the most ancient traditions of Genesis (chaps. 3, 6), the fall of Adam (vss. 6a, 7a) and the sin of the angels (vss. 6b, 7b). Originally he thought of the judges as virtually divine; now they are like Adam and the fallen angels after their respective transgressions.

This conception of Adam is not limited to the OT. With many fanciful additions it is frequent in apocryphal, pseudepigraphical, rabbinic, and patristic sources, all of which picture Adam in his "innocence," not as an ignorant child, but on the contrary, as a paragon of perfection, endowed with transcendental wisdom, strength, and beauty.¹⁷

The biblical and post-biblical sources do not exhaust the evidence for this conception of primal man as the paragon of wisdom, for it goes back to the common heritage of all the Semitic peoples. In the Akkadian epic, Adapa, the son of Ea, whose name is equated with *A-da-ap* 'man,'¹⁸ and who, like Adam, is tricked into losing the blessing of immortality, is described as follows:

Wisdom . . .
His command was indeed . . . like the command of Ea.
Wide understanding he had perfected for him to disclose the designs of the land.
To him he had given wisdom; eternal life he had not given him.

Tablet A, ll. 2 ff.¹⁹

The epic of Gilgamesh enshrines a rich storehouse of primitive mythology, from most of which Genesis has been purged. Yet here, too, the hero is pictured as superlatively wise and powerful:

He should be our shepherd,
Strong, stately and wise.
He is radiant with manhood, vigor he has,
With ripeness, gorgeous is the whole of his body . . .
Anu, Enlil and Ea have broadened his wisdom.

Tablet A, col. E. 26, 27

Tablet I, col. 5. 15, 16, 22²⁰

The quest of Gilgamesh for eternal life, both in the Assyrian and Babylonian versions, ends in failure because "the gods have decreed death for mankind, retaining life in their own hands."²¹

¹⁷ Cf. the vast amount of material in all these categories assembled by L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1913-38), I, 52-62, and V:5, notes 21, 22, 27, 29, 30.

¹⁸ In an unpublished syllabary cited by E. Ebeling, *Leben und Tod*, p. 27a.

¹⁹ The material is conveniently accessible in the indispensable collection edited by J. E. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET)* (Princeton, 1950). Cf. E. A. Speiser, *ANET*, p. 101a. The arts referred to in the lines that follow in the epic are part of Oriental "Wisdom," on the scope of which, cf. e. g. R. Gordis, *Kohleth — The Man and His World* (New York, 1951) pp. 16 f.

²⁰ *ANET*, p. 73b.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90a.

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It is characteristic of the biblical world-view that Adam's loss of immortality is not ascribed, as here, to divine caprice or envy, but to man's own sin, a shortcoming that God would have wished him to overcome.

In sum, our sources, Semitic, biblical and post-biblical, are at one in conceiving of primal man as endowed with supreme wisdom and beauty before his misadventure. The theory that it was the fruit of the "tree of knowing good and evil" that conferred the knowledge of the world and intellectual maturity upon Adam is therefore decisively ruled out.

The same objections hold with regard to a variant of this view, that the tree of good and evil refers to "the enlargement of capacity and experience, and ripeness of judgment, which distinguishes an adult from a child."²² Adam is not a child in the garden of Eden, or he could not be held responsible for his disobedience.²³

In view of the difficulties of each of these views, some scholars have had recourse to the convenient assumption that the narrative in Genesis 2-3 represents a composite of two distinct accounts of the first sin.²⁴ Even protagonists of this approach recognize that the "evidence" for a double recension is only "more or less decisive" and even "precarious."²⁵ In addition, analysis of each alleged source makes it clear that the hypothesis creates more problems than it answers.²⁶ Finally, the assumption made a generation ago that the alleged biblical redactor operated mechanically with his sources and could not be expected to have had any intelligent view of the material he used is now rightly rejected by contemporary research. Even if "sources" were to be assumed, we still must come to grips with the conception underlying the "finished product" that we find in Genesis. It is recognized today that the architectonic structure of the pentateuchal narrative, and particularly of Genesis, cannot be the result of chance or of a "scissors-and-paste" method of compilation, but represents a religious and literary achievement of the highest order.²⁷

²² Cf. H. Gunkel, *Genesis*² (1902), pp. 25 ff. Adam and Eve are not "sexually immature" before eating of the fruit as a child might be; they lack sexual consciousness *in toto*.

²³ Cf. Ibn Ezra (on Gen 2 17) who correctly notes: "Adam (before the fall) was filled with knowledge . . . and was a great sage."

²⁴ Cf. J. Skinner, *Genesis* ("International Critical Commentary" [New York, 1925]), pp. 52 f. The assumption that the narrative has not retained its original form or order is still maintained by C. A. Simpson in his "Exegesis of Genesis," *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York-Nashville, 1952), I, 496 ff.

²⁵ Skinner, *loc. cit.*

²⁶ The details may be found in the paper cited in note 8 (pp. 87 f.)

²⁷ This insight underlies the "synthetic" approach to the Pentateuch, which has made significant gains in the last decades. Thus, for example, it lies at the basis of

III

In view of the inadequacies of all of these views, one conclusion emerges: the only conception of the "tree of knowing good and evil" that is validated by the Genesis narrative itself, besides being supported by biblical usage elsewhere and by the evidence of comparative religion and mythology, is that the tree of knowledge represents "sexual consciousness."

This view, which had been previously advanced by several scholars,²⁸ did not win general acceptance, for a variety of reasons that need not be entered into here. By and large, the scholars who favored a sexual interpretation of the tree of knowledge failed to offer any substantial evidence in its favor, contenting themselves in the main with a casual phrase or two.

When this view is adopted, however, it becomes clear that the two trees in the garden represent two roads to eternal life: eating of the tree of life conferred personal immortality upon the eater, while partaking of the tree of knowledge afforded the eater the vicarious immortality which comes from the procreation of children.²⁹ That these are opposing

Cassuto's important Hebrew commentaries on Genesis and Exodus (*Me'adam 'ad Noah, Minnoah 'ad Abraham, Perush 'al Sefer Shemot* (Jerusalem, 1944-52) as well as his *Torat Hateudot Vesiduram Sel Sifre Hatorah (The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch*; 2nd printing; Jerusalem, 1953). Cassuto demonstrates with a wealth of evidence that the Pentateuch reflects a unity of structure both in its details and its over-all form. Even if one does not accept Cassuto's contention that this structure disproves the existence of originally separate sources for the Pentateuch, one cannot fail to recognize the unity of the biblical text as it has reached us, nor avoid the duty of comprehending its meaning in its present form. For a briefer example of the synthetic approach, available in English, cf. M. Buber, "Abraham the Seer," *Judaism*, Vol. V (Fall, 1956).

²⁸ A sexual connotation for "the knowledge of good and evil" is assigned by Ibn Ezra (on Gen 3 16 וְיָלִיד חָאוּהוּ הַמָּוֶל); by Ludwig Levy ("Sexualsymbolik in der biblischen Paradiesgeschichte," *Imago*, V [1917], 163; his contention, however, that there was only one tree in the garden is expressly refuted by 3 22, which distinguishes both trees, a passage he is constrained to delete for the sake of his theory); by A. B. Ehrlich (in his Hebrew and German commentaries, *ad loc.*, but without supporting evidence); by G. A. Barton (*Semitic Origins*, pp. 93 ff.), who maintains that the fruit was an aphrodisiac; and by Hans Schmidt (*Die Erzählung von Paradies und Sündenfall* [1931]).

²⁹ Cf. J. G. Frazer, *Folk Lore in the Old Testament* (one vol. ed.) pp. 11-33, who recognizes that the two trees stand in contrast with each other. He therefore suggests that the original account told of a tree of life and a tree of death and that Adam was tricked into eating the fruit of the latter. This hypothesis makes a purely gratuitous assumption of a fundamental transformation of the tale, for which there is no evidence in the text. Moreover, it is noteworthy that while rivers, trees, and fruits of life are frequent in the folklore of the world (cf. A. Wünsche, *Die Sagen vom Lebensbaum und Lebenswasser*; Frazer, *op. cit.*; Skinner, *op. cit.*, pp. 58 f.), we find no tree of death anywhere; man loses immortality simply by failing to avail himself of the life-conferring

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patterns of life is recognized by modern psychological theory, in Freud's dichotomy between the instinct of ego-preservation and the instinct of sexual experience. The contrast was, however, sensed by the ancient writers of the Gilgamesh epic. After Gilgamesh is denied personal immortality, the alewife offers him sage counsel, in a famous passage the full significance of which has not been noted:

Thou, Gilgamesh, let full be thy belly,
 Make thou merry by day and by night,
 Of each day make thou a feast of rejoicing,
 Day and night dance thou and play!
 Let thy garments be sparkling fresh,
 Thy head be washed; bathe thou in water,
 Pay heed to the little one that holds on to thy hand,
 Let thy spouse delight in thy bosom!
 For this is the task of (mankind)!

Old Babylonian Version, Tablet X, col. 3.6-14³⁰

This injunction is more than the counsel of *carpe diem*, as it is usually understood. He is being offered the consolation of an alternative, the admittedly less attractive road to eternal life through the medium of sexual experience and the procreation of children.

That the phrase itself "knowing good and evil" means "sexual knowledge and experience" can be validated on philological and exegetical grounds.³¹ The verb 'to know' is a universal euphemism for sexual relations, cf. Hebrew ידע, Arabic 'arifa, Akkadian *lamâdu* (*idû*), Greek γυγνώσκω, Latin *cognoscere, noscere, notitiam habere*. The phrase טוב ורע may be a merismus expressing the entire range of experience in this area, without any specific meaning attaching to the terms.³²

On the other hand, we believe that the phrase may have originated in the two aspects of sexual experience, the normal (טוב) manifestations of the impulse and the abnormal (רע). The variety and frequency of

substance. Finally, the whole tenor of the biblical narrative, with its underlying conception of a beneficent Deity, runs counter to the possibility of the garden of Eden containing a tree of death. The great merit of Frazer's view is his recognition of a contrast between the two trees in the garden. Our view likewise recognizes the organic relationship between them, without, however, doing violence to the received text or the spirit of biblical thought.

³⁰ ANET, p. 90a.

³¹ It need not be emphasized that this proposed meaning for הרעה טוב ורע does not exclude the entire range of meanings that the substantives possess in Biblical Hebrew, such as of 'right and wrong,' 'truth and falsehood,' etc. It is noteworthy, however, that when the wise woman of Tekoa praises David for his wisdom, the verb is not ידע but שמע 'understand,' לשמע הטוב והרע (II Sam 14 17). Similarly in Solomon's prayer for wisdom, the verb is not ידע but בין 'distinguish,' להבין בין טוב לרע (I Kings 3 9).

³² Cf. the comprehensive study of A. M. Honeyman, "Merismus in Biblical Hebrew," JBL, LXX (1952), 22 ff.

variant sexual patterns are well attested in biblical narrative and law.³³ For the ancients, the line of demarcation between the normal and abnormal forms of sexual experience was by no means as distinct as it is in the modern world, at least in its official code.³⁴

That the Qumran sect, which made personal purity, if not celibacy, a cardinal virtue, was well aware of these aberrant forms of sexual behavior, is clear from a passage in the "Scroll of the Wars of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness" (sec. 7, ll. 3-5): וכול נער זעטוט ואשה: 'And every young lad and woman shall not enter their camps when they go forth from Jerusalem to go to war until their return.'^{34a}

As the editor of these eschatological texts, Yigael Yadin notes, "the intention of the sect was to remove any possibility of the temporary defilement of the warriors because of normal forms of impurity (cf. Lev 15 18 ff.) and to remove the cause of male cohabitation (Lev 18 22, 20 13)." He also suggests that the limitation in the use for war of horses to the male of the species, סוסים זכרים (sec. 10, l. 11) may have been induced by the desire to avoid sodomy, though this is less certain.^{34b}

In sum, it is clear that both for biblical and post-biblical Judaism, the full gamut of sexual awareness included both its natural and unnatural manifestations.

The specific connotation here proposed for טוב ורע 'natural and unnatural,' may be supported by two similar biblical passages. In the story of Lot's difficulties with the Sodomites and in the equally primitive tale of the Levite from Mt. Ephraim and his concubine, who are attacked by the inhabitants of Gibeah in Benjamin, the townsmen demand that

³³ The prohibitions of abnormal forms of behavior, like sodomy and homosexuality, are found in Exod 22 18; Lev 18 22 ff., 20 15; Deut 27 21. As a legal commentary on the Pentateuch, the Talmud naturally deals with these negative injunctions as well; e. g., the Mishna, Sanh. 7 4 and Gemara, B. Sanh. 54a-58a; and see L. M. Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism* (New York, 1948), pp. 133-47. With regard to the relations between the sexes, rabbinic law recognizes the existence of a wide range of experience. Thus from the plural form of the construct in משכבי אשה (Lev 18 22), the Talmud (B. Sanh. 54a) infers that both the usual and unusual modes are permissible (*k'darkāh*, *šelo k'darkāh*); cf. B. Yebamot 34b and Tosafot s. v. *velō*'. Needless to add, these aberrations become highly infrequent in post-biblical days under the discipline of the Law. See Epstein, *loc. cit.* for details. On the other hand, it is highly doubtful that the temple קרשים (I Kings 14 24, 15 12, 22 47; II Kings 23 7) were sodomites, as is maintained by Epstein (*op. cit.*, pp. 135 f.).

³⁴ Cf. the material assembled in E. Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (London, 1906-8), chap. xlvi, and in Hans Licht, *Sexual Life of the Ancient Greeks* (New York, 1952), as well as the frequent references to homosexuality and other aberrations in classical writers.

^{34a} Cf. Y. Yadin, *Milḥemet B'nei Ha'or Bib'nei Haḥošekh* (Jerusalem, 1955), p. 300 for the text, p. 66 for the editor's comment.

^{34b} Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 269 for the text, p. 66, n. 23 for the comment.

the male guest(s) be handed over to them *ונדעו אותם* (Gen 19 5); *ונדעו* (Judg 19 22). In each case, the host replies *אל . . . תרעו* and expresses his willingness to offer up instead a woman to their lust. The latter phrase, as Ehrlich correctly noted, cannot mean, "do not do wickedly," for violating the chastity of an innocent woman is surely an evil. Ehrlich therefore renders rightly "do not act unnaturally."³⁵ Now, if *רע* refers to the abnormal aspects, *טוב* would refer to the normal, and the phrase "knowing good and evil" becomes a stereotyped idiom encompassing the entire range of sexual experience.³⁶

This meaning alone is appropriate to all the biblical passages where the phrase occurs.³⁷ It has long been noted that the only direct conse-

³⁵ Cf. A. B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel*, Vols. I & III, *ad loc.* He also suggests the meaning 'natural' for *טוב* in Gen 1 3 and 'unnatural' for *רע* in Isa 1 4. We may add the same meaning for *נרע טרעים* in Isa 14 20, in which the king of Babylonia is taunted as being 'unnatural,' in that his actions have succeeded in destroying his own land and people, rather than those of his enemies.

The connotation 'natural, unnatural' for *רע*, *טוב*, respectively, represents one more nuance of the broad constellation of meanings of these common Hebrew substantives, the full range of meaning of which, illustrated by abundant examples, may be studied in the lexicons. Thus Koehler-Baumgartner, *s. v.* *טוב* defines it as 'good in every variety of meaning, pleasant, useful, efficient, beautiful, kind, right, morally good.' *BDB* in its superbly organized article on *טוב* distinguishes a large variety of meanings: a) pleasant, agreeable to the senses (to the sight, taste, smell); b) pleasant to the higher nature (hence pleasing, prosperous); c) good, excellent of its kind, hence fruitful (of soil), choice (of vegetation), fat (of animals), pure (of minerals); d) rich, plentiful, valuable; e) appropriate, becoming; f) of man's sensuous nature, hence glad, happy, prosperous; g) of man's intellectual nature, hence good (of the understanding); h) of man's moral nature, hence good, kind, benign; i) ethically good, right. Ben Jehuda, *Thesaurus*, p. 1850, defines *טוב* in the most inclusive manner *להיות צריך להיות כהוא שהוא* 'that which is as it ought to be.' The idea expressed in our modern idiom by 'natural' obviously falls within the scope of this definition; indeed, it may be subsumed under category *e* of *BDB*, 'becoming, appropriate to man's nature.'

³⁶ Yet the terms *טוב* and *רע* do not altogether lose their specific content, as Isa 7 15, 16 "eschewing evil and choosing good" indicates. Hence the substantives are not *ab origine* a general phrase.

³⁷ Cassuto raises two objections to this proposed interpretation of the tree of knowledge: a) at the time when Adam was commanded not to eat of its fruit, the woman had not yet been created; b) the "knowledge of good and evil" is attributed to God (Gen 3 5, 22) and therefore cannot bear a sexual connotation. Neither objection is decisive.

With regard to the first, the biblical narrative proceeds, in the very next verse after the prohibition, to the choice of a companion that will serve as Adam's helpmeet (2 18). In the biblical account, the animals prove unsatisfactory, and so Eve is created for him. In the primitive sources upon which Genesis drew, the animals might well have sufficed as his companions, as is the case with Enkidu in the Gilgamesh epic, Tablet I, col. 4.2-5, cited in the text of our paper above. Cf. Speiser, *ANET*, p. 74a. Sexual awareness was accordingly possible to Adam even before Eve's creation. It was denied to him only because, possessing personal immortality, he had no need of the procreative faculty. Moreover, Eve's existence from the beginning is presupposed throughout the narrative. Thus the prohibition of the fruit of the tree of knowledge is never addressed to Eve,

quence of Adam and Eve's eating of the tree of knowledge is sexual awareness, the consciousness of their nakedness, which is followed by the sewing of girdles made of fig-leaves (2 25, 3 7).

In Gen 3 5, 22, the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge is described as making Adam "like God, knowing good and evil." So long as Adam had access to the tree of life and could eat of the fruit, he would remain immortal.³⁸ If now sexual awareness were added to him, man would indeed resemble God, for the human procreation of life is the counterpart of the divine attribute of creation. Moreover, we may recall that early biblical thought conceived of the בני אלהים as possessing the procreative faculty, hence their liaisons with the daughters of men, described in Gen 6 1, 4.³⁹ In primitive thought the gods are always pictured as possessing immortality in their own persons, as well as the sexual appetites and capacities of men.

A striking parallel, hitherto unrecognized, to the biblical usage is afforded by a passage in the Gilgamesh epic that illumines both the use of the term "knowledge" for sexual awareness and the description of this attribute as making man "like God."

The mighty Enkidu, "born in the hills, who with the gazelles feeds on grass and with the wild beasts drinks at the watering place," meets a harlot, who arouses his ardor and with whom he spends six days and seven

yet she is aware of the injunction and feels herself bound by it (3 2-3). Some commentators accordingly transpose the command, 2 18, 17, after 2 23 (so Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 496). This radical procedure is unnecessary; we have only to recognize that in the biblical narrative the prohibition of the fruit and the creation of Eve are simultaneous.

The prohibition of the fruit of the tree is mentioned before Eve's creation for reason of style — it is directly connected with the preceding passage: the tree was the last detail mentioned in 2 9; vss. 10-14 describe how the garden was watered, vs. 15 contains the command for Adam to guard and till it. Vss. 16 and 17 complete the instructions to Adam.

Cassuto's second objection, which goes back to Nahmanides, is dealt with above in the text of our paper.

³⁸ The problem as to why Adam did not eat of the tree of life and thus achieve immortality before his expulsion is resolved by comparative folklore. The fruit of the tree did not possess the quality of conferring unending life upon whomsoever ate of its fruit once. Rather, one was immortal so long as one continued to eat of it. This seems to be a common characteristic of the "fruit of life." Thus, the Germanic myth of "the twilight of the gods" tells that while the golden apples were within reach of the gods, they were youthful and happy. But when the giants stole the apples, the gods began to grow old and shrivel up, until Loki succeeded in bringing back the apples, whereupon the gods revived and grew young again. The phrase in Gen 3 22 טן יטלח ידו implies that the apples are within easy reach, but not that "a single partaking of the fruit would have conferred eternal life" (against Budde, quoted by Skinner, *op. cit.*, p. 88).

³⁹ Whether the term is to be rendered in these passages as 'sons of God' or 'divine beings' cannot be determined, nor is it certain that for the writer a distinction between the two existed.

nights. After he has had his fill of her charms, the animals who were his companions before, desert him.

But he now had wisdom, broader understanding . . .
The harlot says to him, to Enkidu,
Thou art wise, Enkidu, art become like a god.⁴⁰

Tablet I, col. 4, 29, 39, 34

Obviously, the only change in Enkidu which has taken place is his sexual experience, on the basis of which he is now described as being "wise . . . having become like a god."

To revert to the biblical tale, when Adam and Eve had eaten of the tree of knowledge, their expulsion from the garden of Eden was inevitable, if the basic distinction between God and man, upon which biblical thought lays such stress, was not to be obliterated. The divine hostility to man, which some scholars have found in the Paradise narrative,^{40a} has no real basis in the text, properly understood. On the contrary, every feature of the tale, the planting of the garden, fruitful and well-watered, the setting of Adam in its midst, God's solicitude in seeking a companion for him, the creation of Eve, and the permission granted Adam to eat of the tree of life, all reflect God's unsentimental love of man that we inadequately describe as divine justice. But instead of meeting these marks of God's favor with reverence and gratitude, Adam permitted himself to be seduced into the sin of disobedience, from which flowed the consequences of suffering and mortality.

In sum, the Paradise tale, seen in its setting, contains some of man's oldest thoughts on life, death, and immortality. Had Adam not sinned, he would have remained eternally alive in his own person. His violation of the divine command brought death into the world and left man only with the compensatory and vicarious immortality that comes through children.⁴¹

IV

The other biblical passages, where the phrase "knowing good and evil" occurs, all receive their most natural and unforced interpretation on this view. In Deut 1 39, Moses refers to the very young children (חָטָט)

⁴⁰ Cf. the Akkadian version, Tablet I, sec. 5. ll. 29 ff. It is conveniently accessible in E. A. Speiser, *ANET*, p. 74. Speiser, *ibid.*, n. 28, notes that "the general parallel to Gen 3 7 is highly suggestive." We are able to go considerably further, in recognizing the specific character of the parallelism between the Akkadian and the biblical usage in two basic respects: the sexual connotation of "knowledge" and the description of this attribute as making man "like a god."

^{40a} R. H. Pfeiffer's indispensable *Introduction to the OT* (New York 1941), p. 164.

⁴¹ Cf. Ibn Ezra on Gen 4 1: "When Adam saw that he would not live in his own person eternally, it was necessary to propagate the race."

of the somewhat older ones (בָּנִים) who have not yet attained to sexual maturity, as being permitted to enter the Promised Land.

In II Sam 19³⁸, no other view of the phrase is possible. Barzillai is not discounting his powers of judgment because of his old age;⁴² for he is not being invited to the royal court to serve as a counsellor. The old man is emphasizing that his advanced years have deprived him of the capacity to enjoy the luxuries of court which David has offered him as a reward for his loyalty. The entire passage must be read:

I am this day fourscore years old; can I discern between good and bad? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord and king?

No longer can he find delight in food, drink, and music. Surely the third member of the triad of wine, women and song, could not have been overlooked by Barzillai.⁴³

In Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy, the recognition that the phrase under discussion has a sexual connotation produces a striking chronological sequence. Speaking in 734, the year of the Syro-Ephraimitic war, the prophet points to the pregnant young woman nearby and foretells that Judah's foes would be exiled before her unborn child "would know how to refuse evil and choose the good," that is, become sexually conscious. This stage is reached at the age of puberty, roughly thirteen years. The Jewish rite of the Bar Mitzvah embodies this tradition. Isaiah is therefore announcing in 734 that before thirteen years have passed the doom will have descended upon both Israel and Syria. The destruction of Samaria took place in 722, exactly twelve years later — surely a striking congruence of dates.⁴⁴

V

The signal importance of our passage in the *serekh ha'edah* for biblical interpretation lies in the fact that here the phrase "knowing good and evil" is explicitly linked up with sexual experience and marriage, a meaning which needed to be inferred in the OT passages where it occurs.

As for the Qumran Community itself, the negative form of the injunction is highly significant: "He shall not come near . . . except when

⁴² Cf. Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁴³ He is hardly emphasizing that he is too old for marriage and its responsibilities, as has been suggested in a private communication. The invitation does not contemplate a new marriage for the old man.

⁴⁴ To be sure, Damascus was destroyed earlier, in 732, but the prophet is announcing the doom of *both* enemies of Judah, Ephraim as well as Syria, cf. 7 16: "Yea, before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land of whose *two kings* thou hast a horror, shall be forsaken."

he reach twenty years of age, etc." Pharisaic Judaism, which looked upon procreation and the companionship of husband and wife as a sacred duty,⁴⁵ favored early marriages, close to puberty.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the Qumran sect sought to postpone marriage as long as possible and permitted it only when it could not safely be postponed any longer — at the age of twenty, when the sexual impulse is at its strongest.

The meaning of our passage is illumined by a rabbinic passage which presents the diametrically opposed Pharisaic standpoint:

Rab Huna follows his opinion, for he said: רב הונא למעמיה דאמר בן עשרים שנה ולא נשא אשה כל ימיו בעבירה. בעבירה סלקא דעתך אלא אימא כל ימיו בהרהורי עבירה. אמר רבא וכן תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל עד עשרים שנה יושב הקדוש ברוך הוא ומצפה לאדם מתי ישא אשה. כיון שהניע לעשרים ולא נשא אמר תיפח עצמותיו.

"He who reaches the age of twenty and does not marry, spends all his days in sin." Do you actually mean 'sin'? At least in the thought of sin! Raba said, "So the school of Rabbi Ishmael taught: until the age of twenty, the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and waits for a man to marry. When twenty is reached and he does not marry, God says, 'May his bones swell up!'"⁴⁷

The impatience of the Rabbis with those who postponed marriage until twenty is in striking contrast to the ordinance of the Qumran community, which does not permit marriage until that age.

⁴⁵ The biblical basis for these two functions of marriage is, of course, Gen 1 18 and 2 18. Because companionship is an important purpose, rabbinic law urges the marriage even of aged, infirm, and sterile people. (Cf. Eben Haezer 23 5 and Isserles on 1, 3, and see R. Gordis, "The Jewish Conception of Marriage," in *Judaism* [1953], II, 225 ff., esp. 232).

⁴⁶ Thus the Talmud (B. Yebamot 62b; B. Sanh. 76b) praises the man "who marries off his sons and daughters close to puberty": תנו רבנן . . . והמדריך בניו ובנותיו בדרך ישרה: והמשיאן סמוך לפירקן עליו הכתוב אומר וידעת כי שלום אהלך.

Even the passage in M. Abot 5 21, בן שמונה עשרה לחופה, 'eighteen — for the marriage canopy,' is interpreted by Maimonides in his Code to mean immediately after his seventeenth birthday (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Isūth*, chap. xv). The passage in Abot, for all its familiarity, did not become normative either in law or in life except as a suggested outermost limit. It is attributed, incidentally, to a little known, unimportant sage, Judah ben Tema. The official teaching of Rabbinic Judaism, based on the various talmudic passages, is codified in the Shulhan Arukh, Eben Haezer (sec. 1, par. 2) as follows: "Every Israelite is commanded to marry by the age of eighteen and he who marries earlier, at thirteen years of age, has performed the commandment most excellently (מצוה טן הטובה). But before thirteen he should not marry, because it resembles immorality. Under no circumstance should he pass twenty years without a wife. If a man has passed twenty years and does not wish to marry, the court compels him to marry, in order to fulfil the commandment "be fruitful and multiply." The practice of early marriages was widespread in the Jewish communities so long as the tradition retained unbroken authority, from talmudic times to the modern age, indeed, virtually to our own day in eastern Europe.

⁴⁷ Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin, 29b.

On the other hand, the standpoint of the Qumran "congregation" bears a marked resemblance to the views of Paul, who likewise preferred celibacy, but conceded the necessity for marriage:

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote, it is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. . . . I say this by way of concession, not of command. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

I Cor 7 1, 2, 6, 7, 8

The ascetic spirit, which finds moderate expression here in the effort by the leaders of the *serekh ha'edah* to postpone marriage, continued to grow in intensity, until marriages were completely avoided by devotees of most of these sects. Thus, in the *serekh hayahad*, we find no references at all to family life,⁴⁸ a situation which is in harmony with the information in our other sources regarding the Essenes.

It is perhaps worthy of note that both the Pharisees, who favored early marriage and the Qumran sectarians, who opposed it, were realistically aware of this major aspect of human nature, which poses a problem that our complex civilization has thus far failed to solve.

⁴⁸ W. H. Brownlee's reading of ל[כול הקהל מטף עד נשים] in the opening lines of the *Dead Sea Manual of Discipline* ("Bulletin of ASOR, Supplementary Studies," Nos. 11-12 [New Haven, 1951], pp. 6 f., 47 f.) is a purely conjectural restoration, which rests in part on his assumption of an identity between 1QS and 1QSa. This assumption is now rendered highly unlikely; see our note 2 above. Even before the new texts were published, De Vaux hesitated to accept Brownlee's restoration on stylistic grounds, while A. M. Haberman (*'Edah V'eduth* [Jerusalem, 1952], p. 57) basing himself on Sukena restored ל[כבוד אלוהים ואנשים].