

Article

Eve and the Goddess Innana: Reading Genesis 3:16b in Light of Sacred Marriage Cultic Literature

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Abstract: Genesis 3:16b has traditionally been interpreted as proof of woman’s inferiority, her nefarious powers of seduction, and as a license for men to rule and master her. Such an interpretation seems to have a much greater affinity with the Hellenistic context from which it arose than with its immediate Hebraic and Ancient Near Eastern context. If we are to remain faithful to this context—where woman was held in high esteem—we need more than ever to approach Genesis 3:16b with a lens that does not do violence to the woman. This article seeks to offer a new exegetical lens on Genesis 3:16b, as a redemptive rather than a punitive moment. This will entail that the two key concepts “rule” (*mashal*) and “loving intention” (*teshuqah*) be re-interpreted, in the light of its Ancient Near Eastern context, as containing vestiges of the sacred marriage trope figuring in Sumerian cultic texts, notably the *Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi*. The parallels between our story and the *Courtship* will reveal some stunning parallels, enabling us to illuminate a radically new understanding of Genesis 3:16b as a sacred marriage scene, with the woman enabling the uplifting of man, inaugurating his reign as the king of the land, rather than finding herself dominated by him and a victim of his power over her.

Keywords: Adam; Eve; Inanna; Dumuzi; sacred marriage; *mashal*; *teshuqah*



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1. Introduction

For centuries, Genesis 3:16b has been used to keep women in their place. Both Jewish and Christian traditions, heavily influenced by Greek thought, have interpreted this passage as pointing to the woman’s inherent moral depravity, her power to seduce man provoking his downfall, and the need for man, therefore, to keep woman in check and rule over her.¹ Traces of these interpretations, although offered centuries ago, have endured throughout the centuries in the minds of both clergymen and laymen and, to this day, can still be heard preached from the pulpit or spoken at the dinner table. Yet one wonders how such a degrading interpretation of woman could have emerged from a scripture which, just one chapter before (Genesis 2), celebrated woman’s redemptive power as the *ezer kenegdo* of the man, the helper, the life-saver of the man.² If we are to remain faithful to the intention of the text (does God go back on his word?), we need more than ever to revisit Genesis 3:16b with a hermeneutical lens that is not suspicious of woman. This essay proposes a radical re-reading of the “curse” of Genesis 3:16 as a redemptive rather than a punitive moment. This will entail that the two key concepts “rule” (*mashal*) and “loving intention” (*teshuqah*)³ be re-interpreted, in the light of Ancient Near-Eastern text and culture rather than through a Greek philosophical lens.⁴

Samuel Noah Kramer has observed the inter-textual connections that exist between the Hebrew Bible and the Sumerian cultic texts, notably the literature surrounding the worship of the goddess Inanna.⁵ Our explorations will take us to Kramer’s translation of *The Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi*⁶, in the light of which we will attempt to re-interpret Genesis 3:16b. Striking to us (and to our readers), will be the connection in the *Courtship of Innana and Dumuzi* text between the love of the goddess and her bestowing upon the man rulership (symbolized by the throne, scepter and dais that is given him on the morning

of their wedding night). Even more striking are the parallels between the Courtship text and Genesis 3:16b where we find a stunningly similar reciprocal connection between the “loving intention” of the woman (*teshuqah*) and “rulership” (*mashal*) of the man. Does it not then become possible to re-interpret Genesis 3:16b as containing vestiges of sacred marriage cultic texts and as describing, as in the *Courtship* text, a scene of enthronization of man as he emerges from intimate contact with the woman?⁷ The remarkable parallels between the two scriptures invite us to do so, thereby shedding a powerful new light on Genesis 3:16b, one that reveals woman, not as responsible for the downfall of man, but, on the contrary, as an agent of elevation of man to his royal destiny.

2. Inanna and Dumuzi

Any genuine understanding of Genesis 3:16b will entail a journey back into its Ancient Near Eastern context. As Kramer has argued, the Biblical stories do not happen in a vacuum. They emerge against the backdrop of Ancient Near Eastern cultic literature, borrowing from it themes, motives and even phraseology.⁸ One of the central themes borrowed from the Ancient Near Eastern context, and woven throughout the Hebrew Bible, is the trope of the sacred marriage. The theme of the sacred marriage can be glimpsed already during the reign of the kings of Jerusalem⁹, emerging again in the discourse of the prophets,¹⁰ and finally finding its way in the wisdom literature of the Bible, notably in the books of Ruth, Esther, Proverbs and Song of Songs.¹¹ This essay argues that there is evidence of the sacred marriage trope as early as the book of Genesis, notably in the story of Genesis 3:16b. But before we can begin to make this final connection, more must be said on the ritual itself and its significance for Ancient Near Eastern religious life.

The earliest versions of the sacred marriage date back to 2000 B.C.E, and were found narrated on clay tablets excavated in southern Iraq, in what used to be the site of the ancient Sumerian empire.¹² Ancient Sumer was located in Southern Iraq, in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, and was the civilization that gave rise to the Babylonian Empire. The Sumerians worshipped a pantheon of gods, as is evident from the sprinkling of ziggurats¹³ across the territory honoring different deities. But very quickly, one of these, a goddess, began to emerge as supreme: the goddess Inanna, goddess of love and wisdom. A number of stories around the goddess Inanna have been compiled by Kramer and a close reading of these show striking parallels with the stories narrated in Genesis 2–3 about the human couple, notably Eve. In one of these stories,¹⁴ we meet a young Inanna, who is strikingly similar to Eve. This young Inanna, not unlike her Hebraic counterpart, also finds herself connected to a tree. This tree, however, is sadly inhabited by three creatures of chaos: a snake, the Anzu bird, and none other than Lilith. It takes the brutal intervention of Gilgamesh to chase the creatures away and fashion for her, out of the tree, her bed and her throne. The parallels between the two stories are striking and invite us to explore the possibility that the story and character of Eve might have evolved from that of the goddess Inanna.¹⁵ It could well be that the writer or storyteller of our story in Genesis 3:16b was cognizant of the literature surrounding the goddess Inanna and drew from it in his/her composition.

But it is the story depicting the sacred marriage between the Goddess Inanna and a young shepherd called Dumuzi which holds a central place in Inanna’s cultic literature and which particularly interests us here (Kramer and Wolkstein 1983, pp. 30–49). In this story, we see an Inanna who has come of marriageable age. She is presented with two possibilities: Dumuzi the shepherd, or a nameless (in our story) farmer. Initially attracted to the farmer, she is nevertheless advised by her mother to choose Dumuzi.¹⁶ There ensues a season of courtship, during which she enters his garden and shares her fruits with her lover while enjoying his: he her plants, and she his milk and cream. The courtship leads to marriage and, in the scenes following the courtship of Inanna, Dumuzi finds himself invited into her mother’s house to consummate the marriage—to give her her bed and throne. The next morning, upon rising from the marriage couch, a fulfilled and satiated Inanna bestows upon her new bridegroom the throne of the land:

The Queen of Heaven
 The heroic woman, greater than her mother
 Who was presented the *me* by Enki
 Inanna the First Daughter of the Moon
 Decreed the Fate of Dumuzi:

In battle I am your leader
 In combat, I am your armor-bearer
 In the assembly I am your advocate
 On the campaign I am your inspiration
 You the chosen shepherd of the holy shrine
 You the king, the faithful provider of Uruk
 You the light of An's great shrine
 In all ways you are fit:

To hold your head high on the lofty dais
 To sit on the lapis lazuli throne
 To cover your head with the holy crown
 To wear long clothes on your body
 To bind yourself with the garments of kingship
 To carry the mace and sword
 To guide straight the bow and arrow
 To fasten the throw-stick and sling by your side
 To race on the road with the holy scepter in your hand
 And the holy sandals on your feet
 To prance on the holy breast like a lapis lazuli calf

You the sprinter, the chosen shepherd
 In all ways you are fit
 May your heart enjoy good days

That which An has determined for you—may it not be altered
 That which Enlil has granted—may it not be changed
 You are the favorite of Ningal
 Inanna holds you dear (Kramer and Wolkstein 1983, p. 45)

The goddess Inanna thus becomes the one who inaugurates the reign of this earthly king—setting the gold standard for all future enthronizations in the Ancient Near East, including Egypt. From then on, Sumerian kings would receive their authority from the goddess Inanna, replaying the Dumuzi–Inanna sacred marriage every year during the annual festivities preceding fall harvest.¹⁷ The king would enter the temple of Inanna and engage in (or fake) intercourse with the priestess of Inanna. He would then emerge from their lovemaking with renewed authority and with the assurance of a plentiful harvest.¹⁸ In Babylon, the sacred marriage trope story would be passed on from Sumer, but this time occurring between the goddess Ishtar and the man Tammuz. Like the Sumerian kings, the kings of Babylon would derive their authority and protection from the goddess Ishtar.¹⁹ In Egypt, the pharaoh would find his authority derived from his ability to connect to the goddess Ma'at, to her precepts of justice, symbolically offering her back to the gods in order

for them to protect his reign and ensure the sustenance of his subjects.²⁰ Even the kings of Israel, as we will show below, will receive their authority from a powerful feminine figure reminiscent of the goddess, Woman Wisdom.²¹ Thus, it is through an intimate rapport with the goddess of wisdom that the king receives his authority to rule wisely and justly.

But special attention needs to be given here to this dyad love/rulership that emerges from this story. The love shared with the goddess and the inauguration of the man's destiny as king are intertwined and exist in reciprocal connection: As the man receives the goddess's love, he becomes empowered, as a result, to rule the land. As a result of this loving and intimate encounter, she becomes his protector in war and empowers his kingship, as evidenced by her bestowing upon him the "dais", "throne", "crown", and "scepter". We are now ready to enter our text Genesis 3:16b.

3. Eve and Adam

In our text, not only are the two elements essential to the sacred marriage present—love and rulership—but they also stand in reciprocal relation: "Your loving intention for your husband *and* he will rule [over]²² you". Thus, not only are love and rulership intertwined in our passage as they are in the sacred marriage trope, but they stand in relation. The clause about the husband's rule follows, or is grounded, made possible, by the woman's love. First her love, then his rule. The parallel is striking here between our passage and the sacred marriage story we have just explored. Could it be that, far from being a punishment, or negative consequence for the woman's sin, this passage might be read as a scene of enthronization of the man by the woman, in a way reminiscent of the goddess Inanna's enthroning of Dumuzi? Could it be that, far from signifying the woman's subjection *to* the man, this passage might be understood as the man's uplifting *by* the woman? But why would this be happening precisely at *this* moment, the worst moment it seems, when God has arrived on the scene, unmasked the human couple's weakness and transgression, and decreed their mortal fate? A deeper exploration of the events preceding Genesis 3:16 is necessary here.

In our story, Eve resembles Inanna, the goddess of love and wisdom. Like Inanna, she seems made for love, fashioned to be a partner to her man. Likewise, like Inanna, she has a powerful, even transgressive attraction to wisdom. One of the stories surrounding young Inanna depicts her as journeying to Enki (cf. [Kramer and Wolkstein 1983](#), pp. 12–27), the god of wisdom and stealing the *me* from him in order to endow it to humanity. Like Inanna, Eve is also positioned to "steal" the fruit of wisdom when it has been forbidden her. Unlike Inanna, however, Eve seems to have no interest in love. In many ways, Eve is a deeply solitary being. She doesn't speak, doesn't reciprocate the affection and loving words of her man when he exclaims: "Bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh!" upon meeting her for the first time. Eve's solitude is in fact exacerbated by her husband's words, inasmuch as Adam, in this beautiful ode to Eve, does not even seem to be addressing her directly. He seems to be addressing himself, or the world around him; he speaks *of* her but never *to* her.²³ The first time Eve is heard speaking is when the serpent addresses her—which perhaps is the problem here! No one, not even God, has truly addressed her, engaged her in conversation, cared to hear her perspective. The human couple is never seen in conversation, nor do they interact in any way.

Even at the foot of the tree, Eve acts alone. Her focus is wisdom and divinity. Like Inanna, she craves the wisdom that does not belong to her. Like Inanna, she wants to reign alone and without partner. This is evident in the way that Eve, in our text, finds no need to consult with her man as to what to do, even though the text reveals to us that he is there "with" her.²⁴ We are reminded here of one of the most famous stories of Inanna, who, not satisfied with ruling the realm of the heavens, descends into the Underworld—kingdom of her sister Ereshkigal—in order to possess it also. After a treacherous journey in which she finds herself momentarily stripped of all of her powers, she emerges, triumphant, Queen of heaven *and* earth (Ibid., [Kramer and Wolkstein 1983](#), pp. 52–73). Eve's solitary quest for power mirrors here Inanna's craving for total control of the universe. Ultimately, it is

to the status of goddess that Eve aspires, of a goddess ruling the world *alone* in blatant contradiction with the divine command in Genesis 1 that the rulership (*radah*) over the world be *shared*!²⁵

This usurping desire for total power is hinted at in our passage when Eve “gives” (*natan*) the fruit to her husband (Gen. 3:6), an action which hereto in our text was reserved for the Creator: “God said, ‘See I give (*natan*) you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit: They shall be yours for food” (Gen. 1:29). The giving (*natan*) of food was, up until our passage, a divine prerogative, a symbol of the Creator’s power and of total control over the lives of his creatures. When Eve gives of the fruit to Adam, she is therefore taking over a divine prerogative, she is adopting the stance of a divinity, of a goddess towards him, thereby stripping him of all equal claims to the throne of the universe. As for Adam, and perhaps as a result of Eve’s usurping actions, he remains strangely silent and disengaged. He, who once had such a way with words, now reduced to a muted and erased figure. When Eve takes the fruit and gives it to Adam, he receives it without any resistance.²⁶ The absence of dialogue between the human couple is here both poignant and striking. We are reminded of the absence of dialogue between Cain and Abel which led to the murder of Abel.²⁷ Likewise, we can sense here the erasure of Adam in the silence of Eve. Once king of the world alongside his queen, Adam now stands defeated, erased through her indifference and through her usurpation of power. Her incapacity for love and for sharing power have disempowered him, stripped him of his dignity and, as a result, thrown the world into havoc. Ignored by his queen, relinquished to the sidelines of history, unloved, the man loses his birthright as king having the authority to rule, to judge, to decide alongside her.

For it is precisely this authority to rule the world (alongside of Eve) that constituted the man’s destiny given to him by God. As such, Adam resembles Dumuzi and, like him, wears the mantle of kingship. Like Dumuzi, Adam is the one made responsible by God for cosmic harmony. In the Genesis story, Adam is elevated to this royal role in two ways: He receives the command to “work and protect” the garden (Gen. 2:15) and he receives the negative command from God to “not eat” of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Both of these tasks are hugely significant in light of Ancient Near Eastern literature. The duty to tend to the garden is anything but mundane inasmuch as the kings of old also were seen as gardeners of the garden of God, which symbolized the dwelling place of God on earth.²⁸ As such, they ensured the divine presence endured in the world, thereby protecting it from the forces of chaos. The command to “not eat” is also significant inasmuch as it introduces the notion of law, echoing the Sumerian *me* and the Egyptian *ma’at*, which the king was tasked to protect in order to keep the forces of chaos at bay and protect the cosmic order. So, from the start, Adam is presented to us as a king with royal duties—those of protecting the cosmic order. We now understand the devastating consequences of Adam’s partaking of the fruit. Unlike Eve, who eats of the fruit under the delusion of the snake, Adam knows full well what he is doing. He also knows full well what he is throwing away with this gesture: his rulership and his destiny as protector of the cosmic order. Adam knows that, the moment his lips have touched the fruit, he will have forfeited his authority, his kingship, his crown and his rulership. All for the sake of Eve, whom he perhaps cannot bear to lose. And so, rather than inaugurating the reign of man, Eve, because of her inability to love, to even desire the man, ends up dethroning him, casting his crown down and breaking his throne. As a result of her lack of *teshuqah* (“loving intention”), he has lost his *mashal* (“rulership”). We are now perfectly positioned to understand God’s next move.²⁹

To the woman, who has never known the stirrings of desire, to the woman who has never known love, who has shown herself incapable of it, God sets a “loving intention” (*teshuqah*) in her heart: “To your man, your loving intention” (Gen. 3:16b). This interpretation of *teshuqah* as a loving intention (and not, as many commentators have argued, an act of seduction or lust) is confirmed in the way it is used in the Song of Songs, this time to describe the man. In the Song of Songs, the man’s desire for the woman is from the start unfocused and diffused—he loves not just her, and is found also “browsing in the

lilies" (Song 2:16, 6:3), the lilies serving as a metaphor for other women. It is only at the end of a long and perilous journey with this woman, that his desire comes into strong focus, with her becoming the only object of his love (Song 7:10). *Teshuqah* in the Song of Songs has then everything to do with a re-orientating, a focusing of desire onto the beloved.³⁰ Against this backdrop, it is possible to understand the *teshuqah* in our passage as God re-orienting Eve,³¹ turning her away from her solitary and hubris-filled quest for wisdom and divinity and towards her man. He turns her away from the path of the goddess, and throws her back onto her humanity, back to the earth, back to the hummus from whence she came, back to the man, Adam, the fragile being of clay she has been made from and made for.³² He reminds her of her forgotten destiny as the *ezer kenegdo* of man, as protector and challenger of the man. He reminds her of her inherent relationality, of the inherent intentionality of her being. Therein is her glory, her truth and her magnificence. She shines not in solitary divinity, but as the loving companion and protector of the human, the clay one, the fragile one.

It is in the light of this dawning love in the heart of the woman, that the man slowly emerges anew as a king, again ruling over (*mashal*) the cosmos. Our readers will notice that we understand *mashal* here very differently from traditional interpretations. In these interpretations, *mashal* is seen as lording over the woman. This in our view is a grave misunderstanding of the scope that is generally given to *mashal* in the Hebrew Bible. *Mashal* there is usually not stretched over an individual but typically concerns a body of cosmic proportions: the day, the night (in the case of Genesis 1), or a kingdom.³³ The meaning of *mashal* is furthermore not necessarily a negative one of domination and oppression, but of justice and of protection.³⁴ The connection to Genesis 1, where we find the first mention of *mashal* attributed to the sun and to the moon, is particularly illuminating (no pun intended!). In ancient Egypt, the cosmic rule of the sun was echoed by the Pharaoh's all-encompassing rule over his kingdom.³⁵ So the mention of the rule of the sun should immediately bring to mind that of the king. As the sun "rules" (*mashal*) over the cosmos, likewise the king "rules" (*mashal*) over his kingdom. The Egyptian connection and the Genesis 1 connection thus both emphasize the cosmic scope of *mashal* and its connection to justice. The *mashal* that was lost then was never his authority over the woman, as traditional interpretations have made it seem to be, but his authority over his kingdom!

Interestingly, God is not the one bestowing upon man his *mashal*. He is not the one who gives man back his reign. Rather, it is the woman who, in love, restores the man and sets upon his head the crown of cosmic rule. The *mashal* of man is not here God-given,³⁶ it emerges rather from the love of the woman: "Your desire for your husband and (from this, as a result of this) he will rule [over] you". The *mashal* of the man is here grounded, birthed by the woman's love. It is the woman who inaugurates, grants and bestows kingship on the man in a profound restorative gesture: The crown that she had thrown to the ground and broken into pieces she now lays anew on his head. It is to the degree that he welcomes this woman, that he is capable of opening himself up to her, that the man regains his lost kingship.³⁷ We are at the very heart of the sacred marriage trope here, where intimacy with the goddess is what inaugurates the king's reign.

Thus, Genesis 3:16b, far from being a curse or a punishment, emerges from its surrounding darkness as a luminous opening onto hope and restoration. It is as if God is performing the sacred marriage himself, healing the wounded and broken relationship between Adam and Eve, restoring love, restoring dignity and, as a result, the delicate equilibrium between man and woman needed for them to rule together, to protect the cosmic order together. A sacred marriage which, in the midst of the pain and mortality that the couple has been thrown into, opens up a horizon of restoration, of renewal, of redemption. A sacred marriage, which perhaps constitutes the very ground, or foundation of future restoration for, through it, cosmic order rises again, defeating the chaos threatening the whole world. Interestingly, the structure of our passage highlights this emergence of Genesis 3:16b against the rest of the text. A closer look at the Hebrew text reveals that Genesis 3:16b is located at the exact center, at the very heart of the judgment of God against

the serpent, woman and man: 48 words precede it, and 48 words follow it. This literary structure, common in Ancient Hebrew literature, is meant to create emphasis, to reveal to us the very key of the text. Genesis 3:16b thus functions as a key, opening up a new horizon of hope and redemption for the human couple, beyond the pain, toil and death that they now must face.

Against the backdrop of this sacred marriage a new translation can now emerge; rather than the traditional renderings of the passage as “he will rule *over* her” we may now read “he will rule *through* her”. The Hebrew preposition *b-*, translated as “over” by traditional interpreters also has the meaning of “through, by means of” in other contexts.³⁸ Translating this preposition thus requires an awareness of the polysemy of the word *b-* as well as the wide variety of meanings it harbors in the Biblical text. Often, the best way to go about favoring a meaning over another is to remain attentive to the context. If, as has been argued in this essay, the context of Genesis 3:16b is in fact a sacred marriage scene, where God is in a way restoring, renewing a broken relationship, then the text itself invites us to understand the preposition *b-* as meaning “through” rather than “over”. This is especially true if we understand this passage, not as it has traditionally been understood as a punishment or as a consequence for sin (even though the word for sin is significantly absent from our passage!), but as a restorative gesture on the part of God to heal a broken relationship. For in such a case, the inauguration by God of a hierarchical, oppressive relationship, as would be inferred from *b-* as “over” would be out of the question. This is all the truer as we have been forced to admit that the man, in our story, has precisely shown himself to be anything but a reliable ruler more deserving/able somehow than woman to rule. But there is an even stronger argument for a translation of *b-* as “through”, this time from the book of Proverbs.

4. Woman Wisdom and the King

In the book of Proverbs, we find the traits of the goddess Inanna again, but this time, embodied by Woman Wisdom. The author of the book of Proverbs is well versed in sacred marriage literature, and we can find there a continuation of the idea that the goddess (embodied by Woman Wisdom in our text) empowers the king to rule. In the book of Proverbs, Woman Wisdom, not unlike her Sumerian and Egyptian counterparts, is she who gives the king his authority. We find her holding “long life in her right hand and honor in the other” (Prov. 3:16), in a way reminiscent of the goddess Ma’at (the Egyptian goddess assigned to the pharaohs of Egypt) who also holds life and scepter in her hands.³⁹ This is also reminiscent of Inanna’s bestowing on Gilgamesh the “pukku” and the “mikku”, understood by translators to possibly refer to the royal rod and ring.⁴⁰ The book of Proverbs also depicts intimacy with Woman Wisdom as a prerequisite for the king’s successful reign: “She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, those who lay hold of her will be blessed” (Prov. 3:17). Just as the Sumerian king must have intercourse with the goddess to be given the authority of a king, the Hebrew king is here commanded to “embrace”, and “lay hold” of Woman Wisdom in a language saturated with eroticism.

But the most powerful passage for our argument is the following, with Woman Wisdom decreeing: “Through me kings reign (*malach*) and rulers decree (*haqqaq*) just laws. Through me, princes rule (*yasar*), great men and all the righteous judges” (Prov. 8:15–16). Again, we have here a powerful allusion to the sacred marriage trope saturating Ancient Near Eastern/Egyptian cultic literature: kings, rulers, princes and nobles owe their governance, their authority to a powerful feminine figure, in our text, Woman Wisdom. But it is to the preposition “through me” that I want to call the reader’s attention. This “through me” translates precisely the preposition *b-* that is in use in Genesis 3:16b, this time with the clear meaning of “through” or “by means of”. Not only then do we have a precedent of the preposition *b-* being translated as “through” in the Hebrew Bible in general, as already noted, but we have here a precedent that takes place precisely in the context of royal rule. Although the Proverbs text does not include *mashal* in its list of verbs signifying rulership, we have here verbs otherwise closely associated with it, such as *malach* (to reign), *haqqaq* (to decree), and *yasar* (to rule). Thus, there exists a definite semantic field of rulership, of royal

rule, in which the preposition *b-* is aptly translated as “through”. This text in the book of Proverbs thus sheds a revealing new light on Genesis 3:16b, one which lends a powerful plausibility to it being translated as we have proposed: “Her desire for the man and he shall rule *through/by* her” (Gen. 3:16b).

5. Conclusions

For centuries, rabbis and church fathers alike have interpreted Genesis 3:16b in a negative light, as a punishment, as a curse, or a consequence for the woman’s moral failure and inability to resist temptation. To prevent her from failing again and throwing the world into chaos, these same commentators argue, man has found himself granted a God-given mandate to rule over her. Such has been the narrative up until now. Striking are the similarities between such a narrative and the teachings of Aristotle! One wonders to what degree the philosopher might have influenced the history of interpretation.⁴¹ Even more striking, however, are the ways that a closer reading of Genesis 3:16b, one that is attentive to its intertextual Ancient Near Eastern context and sensitive to its intra-textual resonances, *overturns* this interpretation!!! In *lieu* of the woman throwing the world into chaos, we find that it is the man who has done so, in his forfeiting of his God-given cosmic rule for the sake of the woman. In *lieu* of the woman seducing the man with her love, luring him into the lower depths of materiality, we find that her love in fact elevates him, restores him, and gives him back his crown and his throne. This throne, far from becoming the tool of the oppression of woman, becomes the means of her liberation! For the first thing that man does with his newly-found authority and crown is to overturn the divine decree of death, turn to the woman, and elevate her to the status of Mother of Life!

The man named his wife Eve

Because she was the mother of all the living⁴²

Centuries of interpretation have depicted the woman as the one who ushered death in the world⁴³. Adam, in one breath, forgives her everything and restores her as the one who will, from now on, usher life into the world.

Far from witnessing a curse and a tragic consequence of sin, might we not be witnessing a sacred marriage wherein the woman finds herself re-oriented towards her forgotten destiny as the *ezer kenegdo* of man, as healer, lover and protector, and the man finds himself given back his throne, not the throne of oppression and domination, but the cosmic throne of justice and liberation—the throne of the Ancient Near Eastern/Egyptian kings, the throne of justice, of the guardians and protectors of the cosmic law, of the *me*, or the *ma’at* which protects and sustains the creatures of the world rather than oppresses them. A sacred marriage which arises out of the ashes of the profound betrayal that precedes it: first and foremost the betrayal of woman, her betrayal of her destiny as the protector, the sustainer of the man; but also the betrayal of man, his betrayal not only of the woman, but of the whole world which depended on his reign for harmony and protection from chaos and, as such, a sacred marriage which only God, in his creative and restorative power, can bring about! And a sacred marriage which inaugurates their rule *together*, as prescribed by Genesis 1, she as the protector of man, he as the protector of the cosmos. For only once the balance is mended between the man and the woman can the world be restored in its cosmic harmony.⁴⁴ The sacred marriage between man and the woman thus holds the key to the restoration and redeeming of the world from the chaos that entered it with the transgression of the divine command. Perhaps this is why our author has situated our verse, Genesis 3:16b at the very center of the divine judgment! Read as such, the divine judgment, although profoundly painful and punitive in its expulsion of the guilty pair out of Paradise, holds, at its center, a gateway back into Eden.

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Notes

- 1 In Judaism, Philo's commentary on this passage offers a damning portrait of woman's inherent moral depravity: "But the woman was more accustomed to be deceived than the man. For his counsels as well as his body are of a masculine sort, and competent to disentangle the notions of seduction; but the mind of the woman is more effeminate, so that through her softness she easily yields and is easily caught by the persuasions of falsehood, which imitate the resemblance of truth." (Philo 1999, p. 65). According to Philo, "Man's sin was that he gave up his rightful position as master to subordinate himself to the woman." (Philo, *De Opificio Mundi*, 165, in Kvam et al., eds., *Eve and Adam*, p. 42). Such reading of the text can also be found in the midrash (Cf. Genesis Rabbah 17.7), and in later commentaries by Rashi and Nachmanides (Cf. Rashi, *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, Genesis 1: 16, and Nachmanides, *Commentary on the Torah*, Gen 3:16). The Christian tradition falls into the same line of interpretation. Quoting the writings of Paul, Ambrose observes: "She was first to be deceived and was responsible for deceiving the man. Wherefore the Apostle Paul has related that holy women have in olden times been subject to the stronger vessel and recommends them to obey their husbands as their masters. (1 Peter 3:1). Paul says: 'Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and was in sin.' (1 Tim 2:14). This is a warning that no one ought to rely on himself, for she who was made for assistance needs the protection of a man (Gen 2:18). The head of the woman is man, who, while he believed that he would have the assistance of his wife, fell because of her (1 Cor 11:3)" (Ambrose, *Paradise*, 4:24, in Kvam et al., eds., *Eve and Adam*, p. 136). Ambrose concludes on the moral superiority of man over woman and, as such, it becomes the man's legitimate task to lead the woman and lord over her. The woman, by virtue of her inherent moral depravity, must obey and submit. This perspective will permeate Christian exegetical circles throughout the history of interpretation in the commentaries of Tertullian and Aquinas (Cf. Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women*, 1:1 and Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 92). For the connections between these interpretations and Greek thought, notably that of Aristotle, see (Doukhan 2020)
- 2 *Ezer kenegdo* has been traditionally translated as help-meet, as though the woman were some sort of subservient "help" to the man. This is to miss the powerful and redemptive role contained in the Hebrew word *ezer*, which in the rest of the Bible is identified to God's saving and redemptive power (cf. Psalm 145:1). Phyllis Tribble also makes this parallel between God's saving power and the woman's: "She is not created as his helper, that is to say, his assistant and his inferior. To be sure the Hebrew word *ezer* has traditionally been translated 'helper,' but the translation is totally misleading. If you look the word up in a concordance, you discover that most often in the Hebrew Bible it is used to describe God. God is the helper of Israel. When we hear that God is the helper of Israel, we never think that God is inferior to Israel. To the contrary, we know that God is superior to Israel. God is the one who creates and saves Israel. . . the connotations of the word are connotations of superiority. I think the storyteller recognizes the issue because the storyteller does not allow the word to stand alone but adds to it another word: an *ezer* 'fit for,' an *ezer* 'corresponding to.' The point is to temper the connotation of superiority" (Tribble 1995, p. 13).
- 3 We will elaborate on this definition of *teshuqah* as "loving intention" later in this essay.
- 4 Incidentally, Ancient Near Eastern culture, notably Sumerian culture, was much less misogynistic than its later Greek counterpart. This is in part due to the strong ties that still existed between Sumerian culture and the matriarchal world that it emerged from. Ruby Rohrlich has made a convincing argument for the strong matriarchal roots of the Sumerian empire in her analysis of the place of women in all main strata of society. According to Rohrlich, it is only with the rise of the Babylonian empire that the region began to abandon matriarchy for patriarchy: "In the initial stages of Sumerian civilization, women appear to have been in the highest ranks: 'matriarchy seems to have left something more than a trace in the early Sumerian city-states' . . . by the end of the third millennium B.C., 'the king had become the sole and absolute ruler of the land', for the assembly had yielded up even its token powers, as reflected in the epic of creation, the *Enuma Elish*. Composed during the latter half of the second millennium B.C. it was performed during the New Year by the priests of Babylon every year for nearly two thousand years, so significant was it deemed as religious ideology. The epic shows that before the king could assume absolute power, the women had to be totally subjugated, and the price men paid for the power they acquired over women was complete servitude to their earthly rulers" (Rohrlich 1980, pp. 84, 95–96). As such, Sumerian culture might be defined as pre-patriarchal. To situate our text back in its Sumerian context amounts then to interpreting it against the backdrop of a world with strong matriarchal roots, a world that is still pre-patriarchal, knowing nothing of the misogyny that would later arise in this region of this region of the world. This in itself, is bound to reframe how the character Eve will be understood.
- 5 Commenting on the Song of Songs, Kramer observes that "the Song of Songs, or at least a good part of it, is a modified and conventionalized form of an ancient Hebrew liturgy celebrating the reunion and marriage of the sun god with the Mother Goddess which flourished in Mesopotamia from earliest days. This sacred marriage had been part of a fertility cult which the nomadic Hebrews took over from their urbanized Canaanite neighbors who in turn had borrowed it from the Tammuz-Ishtar cult of the Akkadians, a modified form of the Dumuzi-Inanna cult of the Sumerians" (Kramer 1969, p. 89).
- 6 In (Kramer and Wolkstein 1983, pp. 30–49). The story we are about to study is a part of a large number of clay tablets and fragments unearthed towards the end of the 19th century and dating back to 2000 B.C.E. Since the 1970s, a small international group of dedicated scholars have been deciphering, translating and interpreting them and making these texts available to us (cf. *Ibid*, p. xiii).

- 7 It is important to mention here that, although the Biblical writers seem to at times borrow motives from Ancient Near Eastern literature, they are in no way “copying” those stories. Rather, what very often happens, is a “polemic” borrowing of these motives. The Biblical storyteller borrows from a given worldview in order to precisely challenge that worldview, and sometimes even overturn it. We will see this in the way that Eve is depicted in a way reminiscent of the goddess Inanna, while at the same time seeing this role challenged by God in our story. For more recent scholarship on the connections between Ancient Near Eastern literature and the story of Eve see (Beaulieu 2007) as well as (Walton 2015) and, finally (Bauks 2012).
- 8 Again, speaking of the Song of Songs, Kramer observes that: “it is only now when we have more than a dozen Sumerian sacred marriage songs of celebration and rejoicing that we begin to get a true picture of the parallels between the Biblical book and some of its probably cuneiform forerunners. For it is now evident that the similarities and resemblances between them are not confined to the general stylistic features such as the portrayal of the lover as both shepherd and king, and of the beloved as both bride and sister, or the formal interlacing of soliloquies, colloquies and refrains; they extend to theme, motif, and occasionally even phraseology” (Kramer 1969, p. 91).
- 9 There is ample evidence within the Hebrew Bible itself (notably the book of Kings) of the influence of the Inanna/Dumuzi cultic literature (via the Akkadian Tammuz/Ishtar stories and Canaanite Baal/Asherah) on temple worship during the reign of the Kings of Jerusalem.
- 10 Kramer notes that “the prophets themselves did not hesitate to draw some of the symbolism from the cult, and the frequent descriptions in the prophetic writings of the relation between Yahweh and Israel as that of a husband and wife indicate the existence of a sacred marriage between Yahweh and the goddess Astarte, the Canaanite counterpart of the Mesopotamian Ishtar/Inanna” (Kramer 1969, p. 90).
- 11 We have already noted the connections observed by Kramer between the Song of Songs, a text composed during the monarchy, arguably by King Solomon himself, and the stories surrounding the goddess Inanna.
- 12 These clay tablets and fragments were unearthed towards the end of the 19th century in the southern Iraqi region. Since the 1970s, a small international group of dedicated scholars have been deciphering, translating and interpreting them and making these texts available to us (cf. Kramer and Wolkstein 1983, p. xiii).
- 13 The story of the tower of Babel seems to describe precisely the Sumerian civilization from which the Hebrew nation would emerge through the person of Abraham, shedding light on its potential dangers and pitfalls.
- 14 The story is entitled *The Huluppu Tree* and has been compiled in (Kramer and Wolkstein 1983, pp. 4–9).
- 15 This has been noted by Beaulieu: “Genesis 2–3 attests to a long mythical tradition in which the personage of Eve developed as a demythologized Asherah figure through deterioration resulting from royal tradition; proof of this can be seen in the fact that both women represent fertility and are associated with the serpent. . . as well as tree” (Beaulieu 2007, p. 98).
- 16 This “competition” between shepherd and farmer will remind our readers of the conflict between Cain (a farmer) and Abel (a shepherd). The story of Cain and Abel thus takes place against the backdrop of a more ancient conflict: that perhaps of a clash of civilizations and worldviews between the nomadic Hebrews and the sedentary Sumerians.
- 17 According to Jacobsen, “In the Dumuzi cult the love songs led up to the marriage of the god, which was celebrated in a rite of sacred marriage. In this rite, the king assumed the identity of the god while a high priestess seems to have embodied the goddess” (Jacobsen 1978, p. 87). R.F.G. Sweet enumerates three texts that seem to support Jacobsen’s idea: Shulgi X, which extols the greatness of King Shulgi (2094–47 BC) and speaks of sacred marriage ritual between him and Inanna; the second text is a sacred marriage hymn dedicated to Inanna that mentions a consort by the name of Iddin-Dagan (third king of the Isin Dynasty); and the third text is the British Museum text CT 42, no. 4 which also mentions a sacred marriage ritual between Inanna and an earthly king (cf. Sweet 1994, pp. 96–102).
- 18 Tykva Frymer-Kensky describes the ritual as follows: “Kings of Sumer called themselves the spouse of Inanna and celebrated a sacred marriage to her. Through the ritual, culture (Inanna) and nature (the king) were brought together. And thus, the human world is related to the divine . . . Through the vagina, the female force of the universe was considered determinative for the continuation of the universe.” (Frymer-Kensky 1995, p. 36).
- 19 Inasmuch as Ishtar is the Babylonian version of Inanna, her role and purpose are identical to those of Inanna. Like Inanna, she is partnered up with a shepherd-king, Tammuz, whose reign she has inaugurated in a sacred marriage ceremony reminiscent of Inanna and Dumuzi’s.
- 20 Quoting the Pyramid texts, Bernadette Menu observes: “‘Le ciel est satisfait, la terre est dans la joie, car ils ont appris que le roi amène la Ma’at et repousse l’Isifet’ (Pyramides, 1775–1776). Le pharaon légitime est celui qui fait régner la Ma’at dont il est redevable” (Menu 2005, p. 9). Translation: “‘The sky is satisfied, the earth is joyful, for they have learned that the king brings the Ma’at and expulses the Isifet’ (Pyramid Texts, 1775–1776). The legitimate pharaoh is the one through whom Ma’at reigns, the one to whom he is indebted.” A number of beautiful Egyptian temple engravings depict the pharaoh offering up the Ma’at back to the gods as a pleasing offering to them, and as a sign of his continuous devotion to and protection of the Ma’at in his kingdom. One of these is a raised and colored relief within the interior of the temple of Beit el-Wali, Lake Nasser, Aswan, Egypt (c. 1276 BC). On the left, Ramses II makes an offering of the goddess Ma’at to the god Amun. Cf. <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/5428/the-offering-of-maat> accessed on 1 June 2024.
- 21 See my commentary of Proverbs 8:15–16 below.

- 22 I am bracketing here the traditional translation of the preposition *b-* as “over” in order to challenge its hereto unquestioned finality. As it turns out, and this will be shown later, there are other possible ways to translate this preposition.
- 23 Janine Elkouby poetically situates the origin of Eve’s solitude in the fact that no one seems to speak to her: “Il a parlé. Mais pas à moi. Son regards m’avait déjà quitté, et c’est à lui-même, au monde entier qu’il a parlé. *De moi. Pas à moi. . . je n’avais rien à répondre, les mots se sont desséchés dans ma gorge, tués en même temps que moi. La parole est morte entre nous, morte avant que de naître*” (He spoke. But not to me. His gaze had already moved on and it is to himself, to the whole world, that he spoke. *Of me. Not to me. . . I had nothing to say in response. The words dried up in my throat, killed at the same time as my own self. Language died between us, died before even emerging* (Elkouby 2013, p. 14)).
- 24 The translations often omit to translate the preposition “*ima*” (with her), which is found in the original Hebrew text of Genesis 3:6. The translation should be as follows: “And she also gave some to her husband, *with her* (*ima*), and he ate” (Gen. 3:6). This implies that her husband might have been standing right there with her all along (cf. Trible 1973, pp. 112–13).
- 25 Mieke Bal incidentally also describes Eve’s giving of the fruit to her husband as a power move which simultaneously empowers her, raises her own status, while lowering God’s: “The woman promotes her own status in the narrative. Her disobedience is the first independent act, which makes her powerful as a character. Not only has she the power to make the man eat . . . but she also manages to turn the almighty God of Genesis 1 into a character with equal status . . . (He) is no longer in a position to ‘take’ and ‘put’ the human objects wherever he wishes. Speech becomes dialogue, action, confrontation. The relationship between them is now basically horizontal” (Bal 1985, p. 35).
- 26 This passivity of Adam, contrasted with Eve’s proactiveness (and perhaps generated by it!) was noticed by Phyllis Trible: “Throughout this scene the man has remained silent; he does not speak for obedience. His presence is passive and bland. The contrast that he offers to the woman is not strength or resolve but weakness. No patriarchal figure making decisions for his family, he follows his woman without question or comment. She gives fruit to him, ‘and-he-ate’. The story does not say that she tempted him; nor does its silence allow for this inference, although many interpreters have made it. It does not present him as reluctant or hesitating. He does not theologize; he does not contemplate; and he does not envision the full possibilities of the occasion. Instead, his one act is belly-oriented, and it is an act of acquiescence, not of initiative. If the woman is intelligent, sensitive and ingenious, the man is passive, brutish and inept” (Trible 1973, p. 113).
- 27 The original Hebrew of the text highlights a breakdown of dialogue right before the murder of Abel: “Cain said to his brother Abel . . . And when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him” (Gen. 4:8). “Cain said to his brother Abel.” We expect here to see the content of what was spoken, but instead, and in a highly unusual way, nothing is said. The text makes the murder of Abel follow directly this absence of dialogue, as though to show their inter-relatedness.
- 28 Michaela Bauks makes this point: “The trees stand as markers of a holy place, a place where God and humans meet. In other cultures, holy groves or certain common tree species are dedicated to gods . . . Gardens furthermore, represent a sacred space and may be imbued with a sacral character. In them the existing world is shown *en miniature* in an ideal way or is paradigmatically recreated . . . More controversial is the connection of these images to the *Pardes*, or *Paradeisos*, or Persian vegetable garden, which was laid out in the style of an exotic, fenced in tree- and wildlife park, and initially used for royal hunting. At least in the reception of Greek authors like Herodotus, Xenophon, and others, Persian kings came to be portrayed as royal gardeners, with the garden—much like the Neo-Assyrian temple gardens—imagined as holy space” (Bauks 2012, pp. 280–81). John Walton also makes this connection between the garden and sacred space, that of the temple, signifying the presence of God in the world and Adam’s royal role to protect that presence: “Scholars have also recognized that the temple and tabernacle contain a lot of imagery from the Garden of Eden. They note that gardens commonly adjoined sacred space in the ancient world. Furthermore, the imagery of fertile waters flowing from the presence of the deity to bring abundance to the earth is a well-known image.” Walton then quotes Gordon Wenham: “The garden of Eden is not viewed simply as a piece of Mesopotamian farmland, but as an archetypal sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him . . . these parallels suggest that the garden itself is understood as a sort of sanctuary” (Walton 2009, p. 81).
- 29 This move is incidentally not a punitive move, as Mieke Bal correctly observes: “the woman is not cursed. The content of Yahweh’s words to her is not even presented as the consequence of what she has done, let alone a punishment” (Bal 1985, p. 36).
- 30 For more details on the evolution of male desire in the Song of Songs, see (Doukhan 2019, pp. 61–73).
- 31 Carol Meyers has pointed out the semantic proximity between *teshuqah* (desire) and *teshuvah* (turning) and shown how one might understand the former in light of the latter as a turning or returning of the woman to the man. She admits to not being alone in doing this: “Virtually all other ancient translations, like the Septuagint, and also early Christian and Jewish exegetical traditions understand the text to say turning or returning. Rather than focus on sexual desire, they have the woman (re)turning to the man. They apparently understood the rare *teshuqah* to have a semantic range overlapping with *teshuvah*, with the woman being drawn (as by desire?) to the one to whom she is turning/returning” (Meyers 2013, p. 94). Joel Lohr makes a similar point in a comparative study of the translations of *teshuqah* in Jewish text: “Our history of translation and interpretation reveals that ancient Jewish and Christian interpreters regularly, if not always, understood *teshuqah* as an action involving the return of the subject or thing . . . We might conclude that, for ancient interpreters and writers, *teshuqah* and *teshuvah* had an overlapping semantic range” (Lohr 2011).

- 32 André Lacocque puts this beautifully: “The divine saying to the woman in effect displaces the accent of responsibility from eating a forbidden fruit to betraying the sacred covenant with man. She is hit in her womanhood and in her relationships with her husband, because, as stressed above, the very fact that Eve speaks with an animal in the absence of Adam is a perversion of order. The serpent plays with her a role of partnerships that belongs by right to Eve’s man. She wanted to play God, and she is now reminded of her humanity in her torn flesh, a far cry from her dream to submit God’s creation to her decision regarding what is good and what is bad/evil” (Lacocque 2006, p. 219).
- 33 Cf. Isaiah 3:4, 19:4, Judges 8:23, Deut. 15:6.
- 34 Davidson notes that “the verb *mashal* does not consistently indicate submission, subjection or dominion in scripture . . . indeed there are a number of passages where *mashal* is used with the connotation of servant leadership, to ‘comfort, protect, care for, love.’ In later usages of *mashal* in scriptural narratives (e.g., the time of Gideon), the people of Israel are eager to have someone to ‘rule’ (*mashal*) over them (Judg. 8:22), and the term *mashal* describes the rulership of Yahweh and the future Messiah. Thus *mashal* is predominantly a positive concept, not a negative one” (Davidson 2007, p. 72).
- 35 This connection between the rule of the sun and the rule of the pharaoh in Ancient Egypt was established by Jan Assman: “Appliquée à l’Égypte ancienne, cette trinité théorique du sacré, du politique et de l’ordre prend la forme d’une réalité vécue et s’incorpore dans la constellation du soleil, du roi et de la maat. . . la domination, le gouvernement du monde est la continuation de la création et la prérogative propre au créateur—qu’il partage pourtant avec son fils le pharaon—d’adapter le régime du monde à son état actuel où existe la séparation mais où grâce à la maat, l’homologie des deux sphères est toujours possible . . . le soleil répand la maat dans le monde sous les formes cosmiques de la lumière et du temps mesuré; le roi la répand sur terre sous les formes culturelles de la justice et du culte sacrificiel” ((Assman 2001, p. 125). Translation: Applied to Ancient Egypt, this theoretical trinity of the sacred, the political, and the order of things takes the form of a lived reality incorporated by the sun, the king and the Ma’at. . . the domination, the government of the world is the continuation of the creative order and it is the Creator’s prerogative—which he chooses to share with his son, the pharaoh—to adapt to the regime of the world in its present state where separation still exists, but where thanks to the Ma’at, the communion between the two spheres is always possible . . . the sun shines forth the Ma’at on the world in the cosmic form of light and temporality; the king shines forth the cultural forms of justice and of worship).
- 36 This notion of a “God-given authority” bestowed upon man by God has been a staple of patriarchy. The earliest version of this in the context of Christianity is found of course in the writings of Paul: “The head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:4). Taken literally and without careful reading, this passage seems to decree that the woman is to remain under the authority of man in a divinely ordained hierarchy. But this idea is profoundly nuanced when one notices that the man’s headship is conditional upon his being totally surrendered to Christ and living the surrendered, sacrificial life of Christ. If, as Christ taught, to lead is to serve, one realizes that the headship of man might not mean his having authority or control over his wife at all but something else entirely.
- 37 The book of Proverbs elaborates on this notion when it summons the future king (the “son” in the book of Proverbs is most likely the heir to the throne being introduced to the art of reigning) to listen to the voice of Woman Wisdom. Only a king capable of listening, of receiving, of eating and drinking at the table of Woman Wisdom is fit to reign. Cf. Prov. 1:33, 8–9.
- 38 The preposition *b-* has a wide variety of meanings, stemming from “in”, “at/by” and “with”, the latter denoting accompaniment or instrumentality. I am suggesting here a translation of *b-* in the instrumental sense of “through” or “by means of”. Examples where the preposition *b-* is used instrumentally are: “Lest he strike us through/by means of (*b-*) the pestilence or sword” (Ex. 5:3), “kill the whole camp through/by means of (*b-*) hunger” (Ex. 16:30), “through/by means of (*b-*) the three hundred men who lapped I will save you” (Judges 7:7), “through/by (*b-*) you, I can run against a troop, through/by (*b-*) my God I can leap over a wall” (Ps. 18:29), “whoever sheds the blood of man through/by (*b-*) man (Gen. 9:6).
- 39 In much of the iconography surrounding the goddess Ma’at, she is depicted carrying the ankh (key of life) in one hand and the royal scepter (symbol of rulership) in the other.
- 40 “Sumerologists have not yet been able to translate the meaning of either *pukku* or *mikku*. One possible explanation is that they are emblems of kingship, such as a rod or a ring” (cf. Kramer and Wolkstein 1983, p. 143, Note 9).
- 41 See Abi Doukhan “Re-imagining the Woman’s Curse: A Redemptive Reading of Genesis 3:16”, where the argument is made that the history of interpretation has been systematically and woefully tainted by the Aristotelian philosophy on gender relations. Cf. <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/11/11/600> accessed on 1 June 2024.
- 42 Genesis 3:20.
- 43 Philo, for example, utters that “rather than bringing life (as her name seems to indicate), Eve brought Adam death”, and “Woman rules over death and vile things”, quoted in (Kvam et al. 1999, p. 41).
- 44 Such was the intuition of Luce Irigaray, for whom true civilization rests on the shared partnership between the man and the woman: “The other opens us to the possibility of another era for our subjective becoming and for our culture. The other introduces us to another logic in which the relational values, notably of coexistence in difference, are considered and cultivated and not only the values of mastery and know-how and their extension-expansion, which are necessarily accompanied by warlike and conflictual competitions between those who are alike. And let us recall that in our tradition, the other is at first woman, beginning with woman in the mother” (Irigaray 2008, p. 133).

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