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**CREATION
REVISITED:
ECHOES OF
GENESIS 1 AND 2
IN THE
PENTATEUCH**

INTRODUCTION

This study will examine several key terms used in the Pentateuch outside Genesis 1 and 2—ones also used or connected to the creation account. The use of these key terms will help us to better understand certain aspects of creation terminology and, where possible, demonstrate its structure and theology. In this study, I will not follow a chronological order in the discussion of Pentateuchal creation language, but rather the sequence is based on the relative importance and impact that the reused terms had. Ultimately, it is hoped that a better understanding of creation terminology in the Pentateuch will enhance our comprehension of the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2 itself.

CREATION LANGUAGE IN THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Apart from Genesis 1 and 2, creation language is most concentrated in the fourth commandment, especially in the one recorded in Exodus 20:8–11. The first three verses (vv. 8–10) emphasize the command about the seventh day, but the last verse is linked to the first part by a causative clause starting with *kî*, indicating the reason for such a demand. It refers to the creation week when everything was

created in six days and on the seventh day God rested (Exod. 20:11). The author employed the verb *‘āśá*, “to make,” which is in harmony with the creation story recorded in Genesis 2:2, 3. The same verb is used for the first time during the second day of creation (Gen. 1:7) in relationship to the creation of the firmament (*rāqîa’*). The same was named *šāmayim*, “heavens,” and it is probable that the fourth commandment (Exod. 20:11) is referring to these “heavens” rather than to the one in Genesis 1:1, which may point to the entire universe.

NŪAḤ, “TO REST”

It seems that the vocabulary in Exodus 20:11 corresponds to the creation account in Genesis 2:1–3 with one exception. While the Genesis account employs the verb *šābat*, “to rest,” the Exodus account uses *nūaḥ*. This verb will be discussed further in connection with Genesis 2:15. Here in Exodus 20:11 it appears in the *qal* form, and therefore it has a meaning different from than its *hip’il* form found in Genesis 2:15. This verb is used in the *qal* form only thirty times in the Old Testament, and it is mostly employed in theological contexts, even though secular contexts are possible. Its subject may vary from things, such as Noah’s ark (Gen. 8:4) and the ark of the covenant (Num. 10:36), insects (Exod. 10:14), animals and birds (2 Sam. 21:10), and humans (1 Sam. 25:9), to abstract objects, such as justice (Prov. 14:33), death (Job 3:17, 26; Dan. 12:13), and the Spirit (Num. 11:25; 2 Kings 2:15; Isa. 11:2). God’s gift given to the human race is *nūaḥ* (Isa. 25:10; 57:2). In these contexts, the verb is to be translated as “to settle down (to rest), to become quiet, and (consequently) to rest.”¹

The verb *nūaḥ* is also used in covenant contexts (Exod. 20:11; 23:12; Deut. 5:14). Obviously, “resting” was extended to the entire human race, animals, and even to nature. God Himself rested on the seventh day (Exod. 20:11) after all His work was completed. This is the only place where the verb *nūaḥ* conveys the opposite of work. By implementing the verb in this unique contextual position, the author clearly intended to show that resting should come only as the finale, after the completion of work. This is also evident in Genesis 2:1–3 where the author employed a different verb to indicate the same result.

1. Horst Dietrich Preuss, “*נָחַ nūaḥ*,” *TDOT*, 9 (1998), 278.

ŠĀBAT, “TO REST”

The verb *šābat*, which is used in Genesis 2:1–3, appears in the *qal* form twenty-seven times. In most cases, it is related to the weekly or yearly Sabbath. Its basic meaning is “to cease, come to an end,” and it “indicates the pertinent rest and celebration of people (Exod 16:30; 23:12; 34:21, etc.), animals (23:12), [and] land (Lev 25:12).”² However, the full breadth of its meaning is evidenced through its wide usage in various contexts. The term is used in the covenant speech just after the Flood. God promised that as long as the earth remained that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night would not cease (*šābat*). “God decrees that as long as the form of this world exists, the natural processes that carry the life of creation will never come to an end.”³ The promise of God’s continual care will not be limited by the human condition but will be granted unconditionally.

In the same way, the word is used in Joshua 5:12 when manna, which was given to the people on a daily basis throughout the forty years of the wilderness experience, ceases (*šābat*) on the same day the people of Israel tasted the produce of the land of Canaan. The period in which manna was available to them was completed and came to an end. Again, the cessation of manna was not subject to the human condition. It seems that *šābat* represents a cessation or a complete stoppage of a process, which has been going on for a certain length of time. The provision of manna came to a conclusion and was not just temporarily interrupted.⁴

Similarly, when *šābat* is used in relation to the seventh day (Gen. 2:1–3), it is not primarily connected to resting in order to recover but rather indicates that a particular process is completely finished and that there is nothing else to be added to it.⁵ Every time *šābat* is used, it does not depend upon any human condition for its implementation. Even though it was given to all creation, unfortunately, it seems that the observance of the Sabbath was unique to ancient Israel.⁶ It was not an “aversion to labor but the celebrative cessation of a completed work.”⁷ The seventh day comes as a result of the

2. Fritz Stolz, “שָׁבַת *šābat*,” *TLOT*, 3 (1997), 1298.

3. Ernst Haag, “שָׁבַת *šābat*,” *TDOT*, 14 (2004), 382.

4. *Ibid.*, 14 (2004): 385.

5. Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, NAC 1A (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 178.

6. Gerhard F. Hasel, “Sabbath,” *ABD*, 5 (1992), 849–56.

7. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 179.

completion of a six-day cycle, and it is given as a gift from the Creator Himself. He completed His work in six days and rested (*šābat*), and He does not expect less from humankind either.⁸ Therefore, the institution of the seventh day does not simply imply a disruption of labor, but the rest (*šābat*) has its full meaning only if the tasks set for six days have been completed.

The seventh day of the week, requiring *šābat*, represents a literal day that follows six literal days. The only reason for such a request, indicated specifically in the fourth commandment, is that God also finished His work in six days. If the miracle of creation was not finished within six literal twenty-four-hour days,⁹ there is no foundation for keeping the fourth commandment. By connecting the fourth commandment to creation week, the biblical author made clear that those two are closely related (cf. Exod. 31:17).

ADDITIONAL CREATION TERMINOLOGY

Creation language does not only play a pivotal role in the formulation of the fourth commandment; echoes of important concepts and terminology found in Genesis 1 and 2 also reappear at crucial places in the Pentateuch. The following discussion revisits a number of them.

RĀDĀ, “TO DOMINATE”

The role of humanity involved fulfilling the directive “to have dominion” (*rādā*) over God’s entire creation on this earth (Gen. 1:26). The verb *rādā* is used only twenty-five times in the Old Testament, which complicates its appropriate understanding, and has usually been translated as “to rule, dominate.” Apart from Genesis 1:26, 28, the verb can also be found four times in Leviticus and once in Numbers. The remainder of its occurrences appear elsewhere in the Old Testament. Every time *rādā* is used in the biblical text, its subject is a human being, a group of individuals, or a nation. Its object could be either human beings or the entire creation of this earth, including plants (Gen. 1:26, 28).

8. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC, vol. 1 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987), 36.

9. For further evidence that the creation week consisted of six literal twenty-four-hour days, see the chapter “The Genesis Account of Origins” by Richard M. Davidson in this volume.

While its etymology is uncertain,¹⁰ it appears that elsewhere it is mostly used in connection with royalty (1 Kings 4:24; Ps. 8:5, 6; 72:8; 110:2; Isa. 14:2)¹¹ and, as such, is associated with a variety of meanings.¹² In addition to using the term to refer to royalty, the books of Numbers and Leviticus employ *rādâ* in a different context. The book of Numbers uses it only once in Balaam's oracle (Num. 24:19). Here, it is used as a *qal* imperfect jussive, the same as in Genesis 1:26. "The jussive is used to express the speaker's desire, wish, or command" where a third person is the subject of the action.¹³ This oracle is considered to be a Messianic prophecy, and therefore the subject is the Messiah Himself. In this case, desire is expressed that the Messiah will "rule" or "have dominion"; in this context, the word *rādâ* has a positive meaning and is meant to convey a gentle rulership.

The same word is also used four times in the book of Leviticus but in different settings. Three times it is employed in connection to laws of redemption involving Israelites who were sold into servitude. The law provided the same guidelines for all masters, whether Israelite (Lev. 25:43, 46) or Gentile (Lev. 25:53). In all three cases, the author uses a *qal* imperfect with the negative particle *lōʾ*. The imperfect with negation "expresses an absolute or categorical prohibition,"¹⁴ "with the strongest expectation of obedience,"¹⁵ and mostly in divine commands.¹⁶ In all cases, *rādâ* is followed by the noun *perek*, meaning "harshness" or "severity." Since, in all cases, a strong prohibition is issued, the masters are prohibited to "rule" over their servants with any harshness. In this context, it is obvious that the word *rādâ* should be understood as a reference to some type of gentle rule.

10. Hans-Jürgen Zobel, "הָרָדָה *rādâ*," *TDOT*, 13 (2004), 330.

11. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 169; H. Wildberger, "Das Abbild Gottes," *TZ*, vol. 21 (1965): 245–59; Werner H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964).

12. For more information, see Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift*, 147, n. 3; Wildberger, "Das Abbild Gottes," 245–59; K. Elliger, *Leviticus*, HAT, vol. 4 (Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1966), 358n54, 361; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, trans. John J. Scullion, CC (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1984), 158–60; Norbert Lohfink, "Growth," in *Great Themes from the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 178.

13. Page G. Kelley, *Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 131.

14. *Ibid.*, 173.

15. *GKC*, 317.

16. This is evident in Exodus 20 where the same device is used in eight of the Ten Commandments.

The word *rādâ* appears for the last time in the Pentateuch in Leviticus 26:17 in the context of covenant making. It is mentioned in the curses section as a caution against disobedience. If the people decided to follow foreign gods, they would not be able to stand against their enemies. A grim warning was issued to the people of Israel with the consequence that “those who hate you shall rule over you.”¹⁷ In this context, it is obvious that the word *rādâ* occupies a very important place. Certainly, in this context it points to a different, harsher type of rulership.

However, this punishment is issued as the first step for insubordination, and it is considered to be the mildest one. Its decisive role in a covenant context does not necessarily imply slavery, which will come as the last resort for the stubborn nation. Leviticus 26:14–39 includes effectively six steps whereby God’s power and might are exercised in order to bring His disobedient people back to Himself. The divine disciplinary actions show a gradual intensification, resulting eventually in exile. The exile is used here as the last resort and as such is placed at the end of the list. Following this line of argument, it is obvious that the first step will be the mildest one; since the word *rādâ* appears in the context of step number one, it should not be understood as cruel, slavery-like dominion by Israel’s enemies, but rather as a more general indication that other nations will be more successful in everything, including battle, and will dominate Israel.

Bringing all this to bear on the creation account, we can have a clearer understanding of the role God gave to the first humans. The author employed the verb *rādâ* skillfully in order to bring into focus two important elements: (1) the title or office of the first human beings and (2) their obligation toward those who were placed under their care. As noted earlier, the word is closely connected to royalty and, as such, highlights the royal status of the first humans. They are the masters, and all creation is placed under their care and stewardship. As *rādâ* indicates, their “domination” must be administered with kindness, care, and compassion for those who are under their superintendence. Furthermore, *rādâ* is used here as a

17. Scripture quotations in this chapter are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

bridge to connect chapters 1 and 2. The word used in Genesis 1 introduces generically the role of humans, which is then fully explored and understood in the following chapter (Gen. 2:8, 15).

ŚĪM, “TO PUT”

The biblical author captivates the attention of his readers by introducing the Garden of Eden scene. Genesis 2:8 simply states: “And there he put the man whom he had formed.” Interestingly, the author does not specify any justification or purpose for such an action. No explanation is provided as to the rationale of this action. He does not elaborate on this point since he already provided his readers with such information. The only previous text that deals with such material is located in Genesis 1:26 in the preceding chapter, where humanity was given dominion over all creation.

Some might suggest that the explanation of purpose is found in the following verse using *śim* (Gen. 2:15), rather than in the previous one (1:26). This is most unlikely for two reasons. First, these two verses are separated by a long description of the garden; and second, in spite of the fact that most English translations use the verb “to put” in both cases, the Hebrew text actually employs two different verbs, *śim* in verse 8 and *nūah* in verse 15. Therefore, if verses 8 and 15 are related, it should be reasonable to assume that the author would use the same verb. Since he did not, the purpose of verse 8 is located in the previous chapter.

The word *śim* is one of twenty-five verbs most frequently used in the Old Testament, and it appears in every Old Testament book with the exceptions of Jonah and Ecclesiastes. Since this word is widely used, some lexica offer more than twenty-five meanings and many other sub-meanings.¹⁸ In such cases where a wide variety of meaning does exist for a single verb, its context always plays a crucial role in unlocking its meaning. Among the wide range of its usage, *śim* is used in the context of appointing someone to an office of authority, whether they are taskmasters (Exod. 1:11; 5:14), elders in the community of Israel (Exod. 18:21), judges (Judg. 11:11), or military commanders (1 Sam. 8:11, 12; 2 Sam. 17:25). It is also used in the context of setting a king upon a throne as a symbol of rulership and an indicator of power (Deut. 17:14, 15; 1 Sam. 8:5; 10:19). Deuteronomy

18. See HALOT; G. Vanoni, “*שׂם śim*,” *TDOT*, 14 (2004), 89–112; S. Meier, “*שׂם*,” *NIDOTTE* 3 (1997), 1237–41.

uses the word *śîm* four times in this sense, which unmistakably reflects this significance. Furthermore, the language of appointing kings is ultimately connected to the coronation ceremony.

Understanding the meaning of the word *śîm* in this context illuminates its significance in the creation account. The fact that the purpose of Genesis 2:8 is found in Genesis 1:26, where rulership and dominion over all creation was given to humanity, sheds new light on the understanding of the word *śîm* in this context. Genesis 1:26 serves as an introduction of God's intention to address humanity's role, and Genesis 2:8 explains how it was done. God did not just put humans into the Garden of Eden as missing pieces in a puzzle or as misplaced items on their rightful place on a shelf, but rather, He placed humans in the garden in order for them to accept kingship over all creation. On the sixth day of creation, God introduced the first human beings to the entire creation and performed a coronation ceremony, placing a scepter of dominion into their hands. Since only human beings were created in His image, obviously, God had chosen them from among all other living creatures to be granted royal status.¹⁹

Human beings did not come into this position because they deserved it in the first place but because it was given to them. Whenever the verb *śîm* is used in this context, its subject—God in this case—is always the one who has “the requisite authority or the competence to achieve the task . . . the one who appoints is . . . superior to both the position and the individual appointed.”²⁰ The first humans had to know that their appointment as rulers came from a higher power, and they did not hold ultimate dominion in their hands but were responsible to God, who is the supreme authority. This was also evident in other cultures in which a suzerain king appointed a vassal king. In this setting, the vassal king owed his position and crown to the suzerain king. This is why in some cases a vassal king was anointed. This was also evident when kingship was introduced to Israel. At that time, kings were anointed for such positions, and they had to know from the beginning that God was their Suzerain King and Lord to Whom they owed everything they had. In this way, the first humans in the Garden of Eden knew right from the beginning not only that they owed their position to their Creator God but also that, for every decision and every act they made, they were responsible to their Creator King.

19. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 158.

20. Meier, “שׂם,” *NIDOTTE* 3 (1997), 1238.

NŪAH, “TO PUT”

While Genesis 2:8 indicates the coronation of the first humans and their role as rulers, verse 15 of the same chapter informs the readers about humanity’s responsibilities in this new kingly role. They were given a task in relation to the Garden of Eden: “to till it and keep it.” Again, the text (v. 15) indicates that God “put him in the garden of Eden.” As noted earlier, the author does not use the verb *śîm* here, but rather, he introduces an entirely new aspect of function and responsibility for human beings in their role as masters of God’s creation.

In spite of the fact that *nûah* is not as widely used as *śîm*, its usage in different contexts brings to light its various interpretations and meanings.²¹ Among its variants, the verb appears also in *hip’il* with two slightly different spellings. Whenever it occurs with a single letter *n*, it usually means “cause to settle down, give rest, bring to rest.”²² However, when it occurs with a double *n*, as is the case in Genesis 2:15, then it involves a different meaning, such as “leave behind,”²³ referring to either a person (Gen. 42:33; 2 Sam. 16:21; 20:3) or things (Lev. 16:23; Ezek. 42:14; 44:19). In this particular form, the verb may also indicate “permit to remain” or “leave alone,” where its objects might include people (Gen. 2:15; 19:16) or things (39:16; Exod. 16:23).²⁴ When God placed the first couple in the Garden of Eden, He actually left them behind with a new task. The verb may also convey the notion that He placed them in charge with full authority over His entire creation on earth. God permitted them to remain in this environment as rulers or masters—not to be idle but “to till it and keep it.”

‘ĀBAD, “TO WORK, SERVE,” AND ŠĀMAR, “TO KEEP”

The responsibility and title that humanity received did not come without obligations and responsibility. The author employs two very common Hebrew verbs, *‘abad*, “to till, to work,” and *šamar*, “to keep,” both in *qal* infinitive construct form. The verb *‘abad* appears 287 times in the Old Testament, mostly in *qal* (271 times), while the Pentateuch alone uses the verb in *qal* 105 times and in other forms six

21. BDB, 628, 29.

22. Preuss, “*nûah*,” 278.

23. J. N. Oswalt, “*nûah*,” *NIDOTTE*, 3 (1997), 57.

24. Preuss, “*nûah*,” 278, 282; Fritz Stolz, “*nûah*,” *TLOT*, 2 (1997), 723.

times (*niphal* one time, *pual* one time, *hophal* four times).²⁵ According to Ringgren,²⁶ the verb occurs in six different contexts with a variety of meanings. It may appear without any objects, and in such instances, its meaning is “to work.” In this particular context, it appears in the Sabbath commandment where God requires from His people to work six days only (Exod. 20:9; Deut. 5:13). Second, it may be followed by an object, which is preceded by the preposition *bē*, where it is usually interpreted as “to work for” or “to serve for.” The object of this kind of service may be another human being (Gen. 29:18, 20, 25; 30:26; 31:41) or nation (Ezek. 29:20), or it may be used in a symbolic context (Hos. 12:12). Third, the verb may appear with an inanimate object, such as soil or ground (Gen. 2:5; 3:23; 4:12), vineyards (Deut. 28:39), or flax (Isa. 19:9). In these cases, the verb should be interpreted as “to work, cultivate, develop.” Fourth, the verb *ʿabad* may also be found in combination with *ʿābōdā*, which is most commonly translated as “labor, service.” It may involve secular (Gen. 29:27) or cultic service (Num. 3:8; 4:23, 27; 7:5; 8:22; Josh. 22:27).²⁷ Fifth, the verb may be used with personal objects where it is usually interpreted as “to serve.” Such service might indicate slavery for an entire life (Exod. 21:6) or only a specified duration of time (Gen. 29:15, 30; 30:26, 29; 31:6, 41). It may also indicate maintaining an alliance (2 Sam. 16:19), or it may reflect vassal relationship (Gen. 14:4; 2 Kings 18:7).²⁸ Lastly, the verb is also used in the context of serving YHWH (Exod. 3:12) or other gods (Exod. 20:5; 23:24; Deut. 5:9).

In addition, the verb *ʿabad* is also used with pronominal suffixes attached to it, as is the case in Genesis 2:15, and is usually understood as “to serve,” which involved voluntary (Gen. 29:18; Exod. 7:16) or involuntary service (Deut. 15:12, 18). Whenever the pronominal suffix is attached to *ʿabad*, it refers to an object, which is already mentioned earlier in the text. Objects may vary, from humans

25. Claus Westermann, “עָבַד *ʿabad*,” *TLOT*, 2 (1997), 820, 821.

26. Helmer Ringgren, “עָבַד *ʿabad*,” *TDOT*, 10 (2000), 381–87.

27. Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Levitical Terminology*, Near Eastern Studies, vol. 1 (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1970), 60; Johannes Peter Floss, *Jahwe dienen—Göttern dienen: Terminologische, literarische, und semantische Untersuchung einer theologischen Aussage zum Gottesverhältnis im Alten Testament* (Cologne, Germany: P. Hanstein, 1975), 19.

28. Floss, *Jahwe dienen—Göttern dienen*, 24; I. Riesener, *Der Stamm עָבַד im Alten Testament: Eine Wortuntersuchung unter Berücksichtigung neuerer sprachwissenschaftlicher Methoden*, BZAW 149 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979), 112; C. Lindhagen, *The Servant Motif in the Old Testament* (Uppsala, Sweden: Lundequistaska Bokhandeln, 1950), 62–71.

(Gen. 15:13; 27:29; 29:15, 18; 30:26; Exod. 14:5; 21:6; Deut. 15:12, 18; 20:11), to God (Exod. 7:16; Deut. 11:13), or to foreign gods (4:19; 28:14). The author of Genesis 2:15 attaches a rare third feminine singular suffix to the verb *ʿabad*. The same suffix is attached to *ʿabad* only one other time in Jeremiah 27:11, but not to the same inflexion of the verb. While Jeremiah uses the perfect tense for his base and attaches the suffix to it, the author of Genesis 2:15 uses the infinitive construct base. The infinitive construct form is widely employed with the verb *ʿabad*, but it is used only nine times with pronominal suffixes, and it is always interpreted as “to serve.” In spite of the fact that most English versions translate *ʿabad* in Genesis 2:15 as “to work, till,” the possible meaning of servitude must not be ignored. Indeed, in such a context, it is probable that the Garden of Eden, with all it contained, was to be served by the first human beings. This would shed new light on their role in the garden, including their royal obligations.

In addition to serving God’s creation in the Garden of Eden, the first couple also accepted another role, namely, “to keep it.” Here, the author employed the word *šamar*, which is one of the most common verbs²⁹ in the Old Testament³⁰ and, as such, is present in almost all Semitic languages.³¹ In the Pentateuch itself, the word is used 148 times. In addition to its participle usage (6 times), it appears only in *qal* (121 times) and *niphal* (21 times) forms. The highest density involving the use of the word is found in the book of Deuteronomy (73 times).

Due to its wide usage, Sauer detected five different contexts in which the word *šamar* was employed.³² Its most frequent subject is a human being (patriarch, king, and judge). However, in most cases, its subject is a group of people or the nation of Israel. On the other hand, the object of *šamar* may be anything of value, whether it is an individual or a possession.³³ In a profane sense, the word *šamar* refers to “protection” and “guardianship” of individuals, whether it is a king

29. It is used 468 times in the Old Testament.

30. This verb is on the list of the most common verbs used in the Old Testament; see *TLOT*, 3, 1444.

31. KBL, 993–994; F. García López, “שָׁמַר *šamar*,” *TDOT* 15 (2006), 279–83; K. N. Schoville, “שָׁמַר,” *NIDOTTE* 4 (1997), 182; C. J. Mullo Weir, *A Lexicon of Accadian Prayers in the Rituals of Expiation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 323.

32. G. Sauer, “שָׁמַר *šamar*,” *TLOT*, 3 (1997), 1381–83.

33. López, “שָׁמַר *šamar*,” 286.

(1 Sam. 26:15), an ordinary person (1 Sam. 19:11; 28:2; 1 Kings 20:39), or even a soul or life (Deut. 4:9). Furthermore, the same meaning is applied when the object is an animal (Gen. 30:31), a way (3:24), a city (2 Kings 9:14), a palace (11:5–7), a house (2 Sam. 15:16), a cave (Josh. 10:18), and a property in general (1 Sam. 25:21).

In addition to appearing in nonreligious contexts, the verb *šāmar* is also frequently used to convey a variety of religious meanings. It is God Who cares and guards His people (Gen. 28:15, 20) and Who is also the keeper of Israel (Ps. 121:4). The Aaronic blessing uses the same word to express desire where God is portrayed as the One Who protects His people (Num. 6:24–26). Furthermore, *šāmar* is often used in covenant speeches (Gen. 17:9, 10; Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:9, 12); and according to Klaus Baltzer, it became a constitutive element of covenant language.³⁴ Consequently, it was used in Deuteronomy 5:12 as part of a covenant speech and in the context of the fourth commandment. Here, the word *šāmar* appears in the infinite absolute form and, as such, “in this use it predominantly expresses divine and/or prophetic commands.”³⁵ To keep the Sabbath simply meant “to preserve its distinctive features by positive action.”³⁶ By observing the Sabbath day, the people of Israel demonstrated obedience to their covenant obligations and expressed their loyalty to God’s desire to preserve and guard the seventh day. Since stewardship is deeply embedded in the core meaning of the word *šāmar*, preservation and guardianship of the seventh day for future generations within the people of God (Deut. 6:7, 8; 11:19) and also for the rest of the world (4:6, 7) is evident.

When the author employs the word *šāmar* in Genesis 2:15, human beings are the subject and the Garden of Eden with its plant and animal life is the object. Guardianship implies stewardship, which reminded Adam and Eve of the fact that Eden was not their

34. Klaus Baltzer, *Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1971), 44–47; see also Moshe Weinfeld, “Covenant Terminology in the Ancient Near East and Its Influence on the West,” *JAOs* 93 (1973): 190–99.

35. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 593; see also G. Beer, *Exodus*, HAT, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1939), 100; J. D. W. Watts, “Infinitive Absolute as Imperative and the Interpretation of Exodus 20:8,” *ZAW*, 74 (1962), 141–45, tried to show that an infinitive absolute is best understood if “a kind of gerundive force” (144) is applied to it. However, his arguments are not convincing, and it is best for now to leave the door open for the imperative interpretation.

36. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, AB, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 302.

possession³⁷ but had been given to them for safe keeping. In their royal status, they were obliged to serve the garden and to protect it. Protection of the garden does not imply an imperfect world surrounding it, but it refers to the maintenance and, even more so, to the preservation of its perfection as it came out of the Creator's hands. Since *šāmar* carries in itself a notion of covenant as well, it is possible to recognize that, by protecting the garden and by preserving it, humans entered into a covenant relationship with their Creator and with the entire creation as well. Thus, humans accepted royal status to rule gently by serving the needs of all creation and preserving the Garden of Eden for future generations in a covenantal care, which God entrusted them.

As noted earlier, a pronominal feminine singular suffix is attached to both *ābad* and *šāmar*, indicating that the object of service and protection should have the same gender and number. The most obvious candidate should be "garden"; however, "garden" is a masculine singular noun and in this capacity does not qualify for such a function. It is true that the noun "garden" may also appear as a feminine noun, but in this case, it is clear that the author unmistakably used its masculine form. Since the Garden of Eden was a smaller geographical location, which belonged to a larger place (earth), it is possible that the author opted for the feminine singular suffix for a reason. Since "earth" is a feminine noun, it is possible that the author tried to indicate that the first couple's service and protection would not always be limited only to the Garden of Eden but would gradually be extended to the entire planet Earth.

In addition to Genesis 2:15, the verbs *šāmar* and *ābad* appear as a pair only once in Numbers 8:26. Regarding this pairing, Richard M. Davidson rightly argues that the first couple received priesthood in the Garden of Eden as well.³⁸ In this way, they became a royal priesthood with the clear understanding that they were stewards in His service for the good of all who inhabited the Garden of Eden.

37. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, OTL (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster, 1972), 80.

38. See Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 47; Davidson also argued that there is a strong connection between the Garden of Eden and the sanctuary as well. For more details, see Richard M. Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," *JATS* 11 (2000): 108–11; and also Margaret Baker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991): 68–103.

QĀNĀ, “TO ACQUIRE, POSSESS”

Melchizedek, the king of Salem, blessed Abraham after his victory over Chedorlaomer and the other three kings from the east and the rescue of his nephew Lot and his family (Gen. 14). In Melchizedek’s blessing, the reference to “maker of heaven and earth” (v. 19) is the same phrase used in Abraham’s response (v. 22). In spite of the fact that one might expect to see the words *‘ōśēh* or *‘ōśeh*, which are the most common terms denoting “maker,” both Melchizedek and Abraham rather employed the word *qānā* here.

The word *qānā* is used only eighty-four times in the entire Old Testament. The author of the Pentateuch employs the same word twenty-four times in its various forms. According to most lexicons, the basic meaning of the word *qānā* is “acquire, purchase, get, possess.”³⁹ Earlier lexicographers indicated its primary meaning as “to found, create,”⁴⁰ which is not accepted by present scholars.⁴¹ The word *qānā* appears in most Semitic languages⁴² and, according to Lipinski,⁴³ has two basic meanings: “acquire” and “retain,” with “acquire” being its more common use.

The verb *qānā* usually appears in various forms of *qal* with a few exceptions when it is used twice in *niphal* (Jer. 32:15, 43) and in *hiphil* (Ezek. 8:3; Zech. 13:5). In most cases, it refers to the acquisition of various articles, such as timber and stone (2 Kings 12:13; 22:6; 2 Chron. 34:11), spices (Isa. 43:24), a jug (Jer. 19:1), or a loin-cloth (13:1, 4). It may also refer to property, whether a field, a vineyard, a piece of land, a house (Gen. 25:10; 33:19; 49:30; 50:13; Lev. 25:28, 30; 27:24; Josh. 24:32; 2 Sam. 24:21, 24), livestock (12:3), a slave (Gen. 39:1; 47:19–20; Exod. 21:2; Lev. 22:11; Deut. 28:68), or a wife (Ruth 4:5, 10). The word may also be used to indicate the ransom that had to be paid for a prisoner (Neh. 5:8). In all the above cases, *qānā* with the meaning “to acquire” always involves

39. W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), 320; A. Harkavy, *Students’ Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary to the Old Testament* (New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1914), 633, 34; *BDB*, 888, 89; K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 684.

40. S. P. Tregelles, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1905), 735.

41. E. Lipinski, “*qānā*,” *TDOT*, 13 (2004), 59.

42. W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–1981), 898.

43. Lipinski, “*qānā*,” 59–62.

monetary payment or other compensation to a third party to obtain property or goods.

The verb *qānâ* may also refer to begetting a child, whether literally or symbolically. In this context, the verb is used only four times in the Old Testament (Gen. 4:1; Deut. 32:6; Ps. 139:13; Prov. 8:22). Out of these four occurrences, only Genesis 4:1 refers to a literal meaning when Eve declared that she begot her firstborn Cain. It seems that Eve might have been aware of the difficulties of becoming pregnant, since she indicated that this time she became pregnant only due to God's help. If this is correct, then it is obvious that even if God is not a subject here, He played an important role in the process of begetting a child, and as such, He becomes essential in understanding the meaning of the verb *qānâ* in this context. In all instances where *qānâ* is used symbolically, the subject is God and the object is a person (Ps. 139:13), the nation of Israel (Deut. 32:6), and wisdom (Prov. 8:22). So it seems that when God is the subject or when He is involved in the process of begetting, the parental side of the subject, God is incorporated in the meaning of the verb *qānâ*.

The verb *qānâ* appears in Genesis 14:19, 22 in the *qal* participle form. This verb is used in the *qal* participle thirteen times in the Old Testament and six times in the Pentateuch. The book of Leviticus uses the same form three times (25:28, 30, 50), while Deuteronomy employs it only once (28:68). In all three of the instances in Leviticus, the subject is a person, and the object is either property (Lev. 25:28, 30) or an individual (25:50) who needs to be redeemed during the year of jubilee. In the Deuteronomy usage, both the subject and the object are nations of people.

Apart from *qal*, the verb *qānâ* also appears once in the *hiphil* participle (Zech. 13:5) with a slightly different meaning. In most cases, the function of the participle is to convert the verb to a noun, and thus, it becomes a verbal noun. While the *qal* participle would simply translate to "one who is buying," or simply "buyer," the *hiphil* participle would point to a slightly different meaning of "one who caused to possess," as is the case in Zechariah 13:5.

Obviously, the context of Genesis 14:19, 22 does not leave much room for such an interpretation of the verb *qānâ*, as suggested above ("buyer, one who caused to possess"). On the other hand, the most common interpretation as "maker" or "creator" as found in modern Bible translations is not correct either. Lipinski suggests a

new argument that could clarify the enigma concerning the proper meaning of *qānâ* in this context.⁴⁴ Using extrabiblical material from various inscriptions throughout the ancient Near East, he argues that the best translation of the phrase in Genesis 14:19, 22 is “Elyon, Lord of heaven and earth.” If he is correct, then implementation of ownership is quite probable, which might be supported by Zechariah 13:5, where the verb *qānâ* is also used in its participle form. Furthermore, Lipinski indicates that the participle form of *qānâ* is part of some Hebrew and Aramaic names with the meaning of “Yahweh is the owner” or “Yahweh is begetter.”⁴⁵ He supports his argument using some Ugaritic parallels where *qānâ* is combined with the word *melek*, which means “the king is the owner.”

Since the phrase “heaven and earth” is an object here, it is not difficult to associate this text with the creation account. Since God is presented as the One Who creates everything, scholars translated the verb *qānâ* here as “maker” or “creator.” Even though this may be correct, it does not reflect the full meaning of the utterance as it was intended by the author. God is presented here not only as a Maker or Creator without any emotions, but also as the One Who is the Lord, Owner, or Possessor, which shines a spotlight on His legal obligation toward His creation. Legally, the heaven and earth are His possessions, but this term *qānâ* also indicates His obligation to maintain and provide life support for the existence of all creatures, including human beings. This obligation is carefully pointed out by the author, who uses the verb *qānâ* with this intention. As noted earlier, when God is the subject, the verb *qānâ* is found in the context of begetting, thus bringing parental care into perspective. God is the Lord and Owner of heaven and earth; He provides for their existence; He is the One Who cares for all He created with parental love and deep concern for all His creation.

***RĀḤAP*, “TO MOVE” AND *TŌHŪ*, “FORMLESS”**

The verb *rāḥap* is used only three times in the entire Old Testament. Apart from Genesis 1:2, it appears in Deuteronomy 32:11 and Jeremiah 23:9. Due to its rare occurrence, its etymology is uncertain; but according to most lexicons, it has two distinctive meanings.⁴⁶ It

44. Ibid., 13:62, 63.

45. Ibid., 13:63.

46. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 337; Harkavy, *Students' Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*, 668; BDB, 934; Tregelles, *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, 766.

appears only once in the *qal* in Jeremiah 23:9, where it means “grow soft, relax, shake, tremble.” Twice, it is used in the *piel*, and then it means “hover, move, flutter.” Interestingly, Deuteronomy 32:11 uses the words *rāḥap* and *tōhû* in the same context, which is also the case in Genesis 1:2. Both words appear in the Pentateuch only twice and both times in close proximity to each other.

The author of Deuteronomy 32:11 uses the word *rāḥap* in Moses’s song where God is the subject and Jacob is the object. Here, God is pictured caring for Jacob (who serves as a synonym for Israel) as an eagle who *rāḥap* over its youngsters. In this context, it is clear that the verb *rāḥap* should be understood as a gesture of tenderheartedness that manifests deep motherly feelings of love and care. Since both occurrences refer to the creation of the world (Gen. 1:2) and the Jewish nation (Deut. 32:11), the meaning of the verb *rāḥap* is therefore reserved for gentle movements toward young ones as a sign of protection and assurance.⁴⁷ It represents the parental provision of a safe and healthy environment, which will ensure the necessary security for further development of offspring. Interestingly, the word *rāḥap* in Ugaritic is applied to the winged goddess, while Syriac *reḥep* means “to brood, protect.”⁴⁸

When this understanding of the verb is transferred to Genesis 1:2, where the Spirit of God *rāḥap* over the waters, it is clear that this movement was a show of power represented by tender love and care. It was a moving force behind God’s eternal intentions and served as a prelude to the imminent creation of everything on this planet. The author intentionally implemented the verb *rāḥap* right in the beginning of the creation account to indicate that not only careful planning preceded the act of creation, but also that God’s love and the tender care He shows as a Parent was present from the very beginning of His creation. It also serves as a promise or indicator that the power of His parental love will find a way to save His children and the entire creation from disaster if anything goes wrong.

In addition to the above-mentioned terminology that belongs to the corpus of creation language, there are additional aspects of the Pentateuchal material that have intertextual connections with the

47. As Davidson observed, this understanding of the Hebrew word *rāḥap* is also attested in Ugaritic texts. See Richard M. Davidson, “The Holy Spirit in the Pentateuch” (paper presented at the IX South American Biblical-Theological Symposium, Iguassu Falls, Brazil, May 20, 2011).

48. Miles V. van Pelt and Walter C. Kaiser, “רָחַף,” *NIDOTTE*, 3 (1997), 1098.

creation narratives, which were covered by other publications and, as such, do not need to be elaborately dealt with here. It seems that Phyllis A. Bird stated correctly that “canonically, the understanding of human nature expressed or implied in the laws . . . may be viewed as commentary on the creation texts.”⁴⁹ S. Dean McBride touched upon some of the material,⁵⁰ while Jiří Moskala demonstrated that the distinction between clean and unclean animals found in Leviticus 11 has an obvious connection to Genesis 1 and 2.⁵¹ Furthermore, A. Breja also convincingly argued⁵² that sexual, dietary, and Sabbath laws, as explained in the Pentateuch, have their roots in the creation story.

CONCLUSION

This study has clearly demonstrated that the author of the Pentateuch was extremely careful and selective in his choice of certain words in order to demonstrate certain important issues and effects of God’s power of creation. It is reasonable to argue that the intention of the author was to indicate God’s parental love right from the beginning as the driving force that resulted in the perfect creation of this planet and everything contained in it.

Most obviously, humanity was given a distinctive role and function. As has been argued, God intended that the first humans were to responsibly rule over the entire creation, knowing that they were accountable to their Creator for their actions. With this understanding, they accepted their royal role of protecting and preserving the Garden of Eden by rendering service to the entire creation. Furthermore, they received the gift of the Sabbath, which provided a covenantal rest as a perpetual sign of the Creator’s authority and ownership as Suzerain King.

49. Phyllis A. Bird, “Bone of My Bone and Flesh of My Flesh,” *ThTo* 50, no. 4 (January 1994): 525n14.

50. S. Dean McBride Jr., “Divine Protocol: Genesis 1:1–2:3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch,” in *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner*, ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans: 2000).

51. Jiří Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11*, ATSDS 4 (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2000).

52. A. Breja, “Law and Creation: A Study of Some Biblical Laws Related to Creation: The Sexual, Dietary, and Sabbath Laws of the Pentateuch and Their Interrelatedness” (PhD diss., Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2011).