Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3

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Genesis 1-3, in its account of creation, presents the cosmos as one large temple, the Garden of Eden as the Holy of Holies, and the human person as made for worship. The very content and structure of Genesis 1-3 is in a very real sense liturgical; the seventh day is creation’s high point.2

**The Sevenfold Structure of Creation in Genesis 1**

The number seven is important for the form and content of Genesis 1 as the number of perfection in the ancient Near East, the number relating to covenant, and of course, the number of the day known as the Sabbath, the pinnacle of creation.3 Genesis 1:1 contains seven words: bĕrē’šît bārā’ ’elōhîm ’ēt hašāmayim wě’ēt hā’āreṣ. Genesis 1:2 has fourteen words, seven times two. Furthermore, significant words in this passage occur in multiples of seven: God (35 times, i.e., seven times five), earth (21 times, i.e., seven times three), heavens/firmament (21 times), “and it was so” (7 times), and “God saw that it was good” (7 times).4

The heptadic structure is sufficiently apparent and scholars from Umberto Cassuto to Jon Levenson have commented upon it.5 Gordon Wenham observes, “The number seven dominates

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5 See Cassuto’s comments in his *Commentary on Genesis Part I*, 13-15: “After the introductory verse (i 1), the section is divided into seven paragraphs, each of which appertains to one of the seven days. An obvious indication of this division is to be seen in the recurring sentence, And there was evening and there was morning, such-and-such a day. Hence the Masoretes were right in placing an open paragraph...after each of these verses....Each of the three
nouns that occur in the first verse and express the basic concepts of the section, viz God ['Elōhīm] heavens [šāmayim], earth ['ères], are repeated in the section a given number of times that is a multiple of seven: thus the name of God occurs thirty-five times, that is, five times seven;...earth is found twenty-one times, that is, three times seven; similarly heavens (or firmament, râqîa‘) appears twenty-one times....The ten sayings with which, according to the Talmud, the world was created...that is, the ten utterances of God beginning with the words, and...said—are clearly divisible into two groups: the first group contains seven Divine fiats enjoining the creation of the creatures;...the second group comprises three pronouncements that emphasize God’s concern for man’s welfare....Thus we have here, too, a series of seven corresponding dicta....The terms light and day occur, in all, seven times in the first paragraph, and there are seven references to light in the fourth paragraph....Water is mentioned seven times in the course of paragraphs two and three....In the fifth and sixth paragraphs forms of the word hayyā...occur seven times....The expression it was good appears seven times (the seventh time—very good)....In the seventh paragraph, which deals with the seventh day, there occur the following three consecutive sentences (three for emphasis), each of which consists of seven words and contains in the middle the expression the seventh day: And on THE SEVENTH DAY God finished His work which He had done, and He rested on THE SEVENTH DAY from all His work which He had done. So God blessed THE SEVENTH DAY and hallowed it....The words in the seventh paragraph total thirty-five—five times seven." Cassuto concludes, on page 15, "To suppose that all this is a mere coincidence is not possible" (Hebrew pointing removed). And furthermore, "This numerical symmetry is, as it were, the golden thread that binds together all the parts of this section...." See also, U. Cassuto, “La creazione del mondo nella Genesi,” Annuario di studi ebraici 1 (1934) : 47-49. Cassuto even argues that Genesis 2-3 exhibits this focus on the number seven. He writes, "a clear indication of the unity of the section...is to be seen in the numerical symmetry based on the number seven that we find in this section just as we encountered it in the story of creation....Here, too [chapters 2-3], the words that express the fundamental concepts of the passage recur a given number of times—seven times, or a multiple of seven. The name Eden occurs, together with gedhem ['east'], seven times; the names 'ādēm and 'ēs [both mean ‘man’] appear altogether twenty-eight times, that is, four times seven; the word 'ēs and its synonyms 'ēzer ['helper'] and sêlā ' ['rib'] are used twenty-one times, that is, three times seven; so, too, we find twenty-one examples of words derived from the root 'ākhal ['eat'] (seven in the very paragraph describing the sin, iii 1-7). Likewise, the verb lâqah ['take'], which is given special emphasis in a number of verses...occurs, all told, seven times in the course of the section. And when I sought to break up the section into paragraphs, according to the logical division of the contents, there naturally emerged seven paragraphs” (94, Hebrew pointing removed).

Levenson is critical of Cassuto here, but agrees in substance with many of his points. See Jon D. Levenson, Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 67-68, where Levenson writes: “Hardly limited to the seven days in which the action takes place, groups or multiples of seven appear throughout the passage. The first verse, for example, consists of seven words; the second, of fourteen. Of the three dominant terms of v. 1—‘God,’ ‘heaven,’ and ‘earth’—the first occurs thirty-five times in Genesis 1:1-2:3, the second and third of total of twenty-one times each. In the description of the first day, ‘light’ is mentioned five times and ‘day’ (which 1:5 defines as its synonym), twice: the total is again seven. In the passages devoted to the fifth and sixth days, the word hayyâ (‘living thing,’ ‘alive’) occurs a total of seven times. The expression kî tṑḇ (‘that it was good’) appears seven times; mysteriously omitted on the second day, it occurs twice on the third and the sixth, the last time with extra force (‘very good’). The paragraph devoted to the seventh day consists of thirty-five words, twenty-one of which form three sentences of seven words, each of which includes the expression ‘the seventh day.’...the first sentence of the paragraph includes five words, that is, two fewer than we expect, but that the last sentence, which follows the three heptads, consists of nine words and thus compensates for the deficiency of the incipit, leaving us with five sentences that average seven words apiece for a total of thirty-five....even if one demurs on...[Cassuto’s more controversial points, he] is surely right to conclude his discussion of the significance of seven in Genesis 1:1-2:3 with the remark that ‘it is impossible to think that all this is nothing but coincidence.’”

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid, 7, c.f. 34-35.
formulae grouped in sevens. In order to retain this sevenfold structure, certain formulae are actually omitted where we might expect them, namely the fulfillment formula in 1:20, the description of the act in 1:9, and the approval formula in 1:6-8. The significance of these omissions is underscored by the fact that in the LXX these missing formulae are included. The sevenfold structure of the Hebrew text is thus lacking in the LXX which prefers to complete the various formulae.

The careful attention to a sevenfold structure indicates that Genesis in its final form is a liturgical text. We may go further and state that, in fact, Genesis 1 reads as a sort of liturgical hymn. On the basis of the heptadic structure, Weinfeld has argued that its Sitz im Leben is the liturgy.

8 Ibid, 6. See also, Johann Cook, “The Septuagint of Genesis: Text and/or Interpretation?” in Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History, ed. A. Wénin, 35-79 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 317. Earlier on the same page, Wenham describes these formulae which characterize Genesis 1: “(1) announcement of the commandment, ‘And God said’ (10 times…); (2) order, e.g. ‘Let there be…’ (8 times…); (3) fulfillment formula, e.g. ‘And it was so’ (7 times…); (4) execution formula or description of act, e.g. ‘And God made’ (7 times…); (5) approval formula ‘God saw that it was good’ (7 times…); (6) subsequent divine word, either of naming or blessing (7 times…); (7) mention of the days (6/7 times…”)


10 Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, “The Worship of Divine Humanity as God’s Image and the Worship of Jesus,” in The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism Volume 63, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, 112-128 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 123. See also Dexter E. Callender, Jr., Adam in Myth and History: Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human, Harvard Semitic Studies 48 (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 23, where he writes, “When isolated from its present literary context of the Pentateuch, the repetitive nature of Gen 1:1-2:4 suggests a liturgy, for which it may, in fact, have been used at some point.” Furthermore, see Levenson, Creation and the Persistence of Evil, 58, where he explains, “Genesis 1 also has a certain liturgical flavor,” although he cautions, “but its style is far from hymnic. Indeed, in vivid contrast with Psalm 104, the first chapter of the Torah exhibits an austere self-control: no burst of praise here, no expression of the author’s feelings, no heartfelt petition, but only a highly regular and repetitive description of the process of creation, step by step, day by day, without sound or color. The tone is didactic; the chapter teaches a lesson about the organization and rulership of the world. Its concern is not praise, but order, and the lesson, as we shall soon see, is one that has practical implications.” In general, I agree with Levenson’s comments here, but I would want to temper them by maintaining a form of hymnic structure still visible in Genesis 1, precisely in its “highly regular and repetitive description of the process of creation.” As we shall see below, the process of temple construction in, e.g., the Gudea Cylinders is hymnic (although it contains many more hymnic features than Genesis 1). I believe that Genesis 1 retains a basic hymnic structure in its final form, although clearly not as evident as in Psalm 104, as Levenson points out. See, e.g., Weinfeld’s comments in a subsequent footnote below.


12 Weinfeld, “Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement,” 510. See also 508-509; and Silviu Bunta, “The Likeness of the Image: Adamic Motifs and šlm Anthropology in Rabbinic Traditions about Jacob’s Image Enthroned in Heaven,” Journal for the Study of Judaism 37, no. 1 (2006) : 64. In contrast to Levenson’s comments against the hymnic nature to Genesis 1 in an above footnote, see Weinfeld’s further comments on page 510: “The recurring formulas: ‘And he saw that it was good’, ‘and it was evening and it was morning’, are a type of refrain which imparts to the chapter a liturgic character. We know today that the Babylonian Creation Epic Enuma Elish was customarily read in ceremonies in the sanctuary, whereas the Persians recited their Theogony while sacrificing (Herodotus I, 132). Also
The poetic framework and symmetry of this passage is what allows one scholar to describe its theme as the “Cosmic Liturgy of the Seventh Day.” Creation unfolds as a “cosmic liturgical celebration” culminating on the seventh day.

**The Tabernacle as a New Creation**

Numerous parallels exist between the seven days of creation and Moses’ construction of the tabernacle in the Book of Exodus. The tabernacle’s consecration process lasted seven days,

in Israel (at least in Second Temple times) the priestly courses [mšmrot] and the [nšy m’md] who met at the time sacrifices were being offered in Jerusalem, customarily read portions from the account of creation, and on the sixth day they recited [wyklū hšym] Gen. 2:1). Weinfeld may be criticized here for assuming that an early Second Temple tradition lies behind the Mishnah’s and the Tosefta’s comments here, but it is at the very least plausible, and may possibly be supported by a potential trace of this in Theophrastus who wrote about Jewish practices during the Second Temple period, as Weinfeld cites in his essay (510 n. 5). Eventually, of course, as Weinfeld points out, “The festive reading of [wyklū hšym] (Gen. 2:1) was incorporated into the Amidah prayer of the Sabbath Eve…” (Ibid, 511).

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13 Vervenne, “Genesis 1,” 53.

14 Samuel E. Balentine, *The Torah’s Vision of Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 63. On page 66 he writes, “the Torah presents worship as the goal of creation.” Writing further, on page 81, Balentine explains that, “The Torah’s vision begins with the liturgy of creation…In the liturgy of Genesis 1-2, the crucial intersection between the ordered world *qua* ritual world and the relational world is the seventh day (Gen. 2:1-3).”

indicating another heptadic pattern also connected to the Sabbath ordinances. Furthermore, key verbal correspondences exist between Moses’ construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 39-40 and God’s creation of the world in Genesis 1.16 Weinfeld includes a very useful comparison between particular Hebrew phrases which are identical or nearly identical in each passage, including among others.

1) Gen. 1:31 [“And God saw all that He had made, (kāl ’ašer ’āšah), and found it (wēhinēh) very good”]; Exod. 39:43 [“And when Moses saw that they had performed all the tasks (kāl hamēlā’ākāh)—as the LORD had commanded, so they had done (wēhinēh ‘āšū ’ōtāh)].

2) Gen. 2:1 [“The heaven and the earth were completed (wayēkulū) and all (wēkāl) their array”]; Exod. 39:32 [“Thus was completed all (watēkēl kāl) the work of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting”].

3) Gen. 2:2 [“God finished the work which He had been doing (wayēkāl ’elōhîm…mēlā’ēkō ’ašēr ’āsāh)”; Exod. 40:33 [“When Moses had finished the work (wayēkāl mōšēh ’et hamēlā’ākāh)”].

4) Gen. 2:3 [“And God blessed…(wayēbārek)”; Exod. 39:43 (“And Moses blessed (wayēbārek) them”).

5) Gen. 2:3 [“And sanctified it (wayēqadaš)”]; Exod. 40:9 [“…and to sanctify (wēqidašētā) it and all its furnishings”].17

Crispin Fletcher-Louis sums up the significance of this correspondence nicely when he states that: “Obviously, these correspondences mean that creation has its home in the liturgy of the cult and the Tabernacle is a mini cosmos.”18

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17 Weinfeld, “Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement,” 503 (underlining added to the Hebrew to highlight the verbal connections, and order of the Hebrew words and ellipsis in the Gen. 2:2 reference slightly modified to more closely reflect the Hebrew text of Genesis, and the English translations of Exod. 39:43 and 40:9 slightly modified to more closely reflect the Hebrew).

18 Fletcher-Louis, All the Glory of Adam, 63. This conclusion follows a series of liturgical parallels and themes that Fletcher-Louis had just summarized in his text as follows: “[There exists] a set of literary and linguistic correspondences between creation (Genesis 1) and the tabernacle (Exod 25-40)….the seven days of creation in Genesis 1 are paired with God’s seven speeches to Moses in Exodus 25-31….Each speech begins ‘The Lord spoke to Moses’ (Exod 25:1; 30:11, 16, 22, 23; 31:11, 12) and introduces material which corresponds to the relevant day of creation. Most transparently, in the third speech 30:16-21 there is commanded the construction of the bronze laver. In the Solomonic temple this is called simply the ‘sea’ and in P it matches the creation of the sea on the third day of creation in Genesis 1:9-11. Similarly, the seventh speech (Exod 31:12-17) stresses the importance of the Sabbath for Israel, just as Genesis 2:2-3 tells us how God rested on the seventh day. In the first speech to Moses Aaron’s garments and his ordination are described and stress is placed upon his duty to tend the menorah at the evening and morning sacrifice (Tamid) (27:20-21; 30:7-8)….the golden and jewel-studded garments which Aaron wears are,
The Temple as New Tabernacle and New Creation

The parallels between creation and the tabernacle are also mirrored in the parallels between the seven days of creation and Solomon’s construction of the Jerusalem temple. Absent are the striking verbal correspondences, yet there remains cosmic symbolism in the temple construction. Levenson details these correspondences, including:

1) The construction of the Solomonic Temple in Jerusalem takes seven years to complete (1 Kings 6:38). In Lev. 25:3-7, the seventh year is called a Sabbath, thus forming a connection between the seven days of the week and the seven years of, in the case of Leviticus, agricultural labor, but in the case of 1 Kings, architectural labor.

2) The Temple dedication occurs during the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a seven day festival (Deut. 16:13) which fell on the seventh month of the year (1 Kings 8:2)

3) Solomon’s speech during the Temple’s dedication included seven petitions (1 Kings 8:31-53).

4) The concept of mĕnûḥāḥ also links the Temple with creation. Rest occurs at the completion of each project (Psalm 132:13-14—associates the experience of the Temple with rest). In fact, 1 Chron. 22:9 claims that the reason Solomon and not David was instructed to build the Temple was because Solomon was a “man of rest” (‘îš mĕnûḥāḥ) and of peace (šlm) as his name (šlmh) implies.

Hence we see an association with Temple and creation; the Temple’s construction was depicted as a new creation, and the Temple was seen as a microcosm of world.

generally, best understood as the Israelite version of the golden garments worn by the gods of the ancient Near East and their statues. This means that Aaron is dressed to play the part within the temple-as-microcosm theatre that God plays within creation. Indeed, the fact that in this first speech Aaron is twice told to tend the temple lampstand and offer the Tamid sacrifice means that he is to police the first boundary—between day and night, light and darkness—which God creates on the first day of creation (Gen 1:3-5)” (63). See also Ibid, 70-71 and 71 n. 51. Weinfeld as well notes that the tabernacle in Jewish interpretation was often seen as a microcosm of the universe (“Sabbath, Temple and Enthronement,” 506 and 506 n. 2).

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20 Levenson, Sinai and Zion, 143.

21 Ibid, 143-144. See also, Levenson, “Paronomasia of Solomon’s Seventh Petition,” 131-135.

Creation as Temple in the Ancient Near East

This association between Temple and creation is not unique to the Genesis text, nor is the heptadic structure. In fact, temples throughout the ancient Near East often had cosmological connotations. 23 The building of a temple often accompanied creation, as we find in the Enuma Elish and elsewhere. 24 One of the best examples of ancient Near Eastern temple building is found in the Sumerian Gudea Cylinders. The Gudea Cylinders depict the construction of the Temple as a liturgical act, 25 the temple building and dedication are essentially a step by step ritual process. Richard Averbeck notes that, “Ritual actions and processes saturate the text and, in fact, structure it.” 26 Although he does not connect this to the creation account of Genesis 1, the description parallels this passage on a number of points. 27 For example:

1) Temple building connected with fertility (Gudea Cylinder A i 5-9, xi 5-11; Gen. 1:22). 28


25 Richard E. Averbeck, “Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method: Historiography and Temple Building,” in Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations, ed. Mark W. Chavalas and K. Lawson Younger, Jr., 88-125 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), esp. 89, 95-96, 116, and 118-121; Idem, “Ritual Formula, Textual Frame, and Thematic Echo in the Cylinders of Gudea,” in Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 80th Birthday, ed. Gordon D. Young, Mark W. Chavalas, and Richard E. Averbeck, 37-93 (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 1997), esp. 37, 51-54, 51 n. 46, 54 n. 50, 64-66, and 64 n. 71; and Idem, “A Preliminary Study of Ritual and Structure in the Cylinders of Gudea,” (Ph.D. Diss., Annenberg Research Institute, 1987), esp. 44-121, 268-398, and 407-579. Averbeck explains that, “The Gudea Cyls., therefore, have affinities with the Sumerian Temple Hymns—a genre that we know was already active in the Old Sumerian literary tradition, long before the time of Gudea—but should not be subsumed under the genre category. Rather, they recount, albeit in poetic style and with some hymnic interludes, the construction and consecration of the temple with special emphasis upon the ritual nature of the temple building process” (“Ritual Formula,” 53-54). Writing further, Averbeck elaborates, “the structure of the composition is a reflex of the ritual nature of the composer’s (and probably also Gudea’s) historical conception (and experience) of the temple building and dedication processes….The ‘recurring statement’ (i.e., ritual formula) which moves the story-line along is both a ritual and literary formula and should be taken seriously by those who are willing to see the text for what it is: a hymnic and, at the same time, step-by-step ritualistic description of a ruler’s pious involvement in the process of building a temple in ancient Sumer” (Ibid, 64 n. 71).

26 Idem, “Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method,” 95. In this passage, he also notes that, “This is not the case in the parallel biblical accounts. It is true that the dedication procedures for the tabernacle and temple in the Bible involved elaborate ritual procedures, but that in no way compares with the obsessive concern for ritual guidance and confirmation in the Cylinders.” See also Ibid, 118.

27 Ibid, 119-121.

2) Temple building in connection with wisdom (Gudea Cylinder A i 12-14; Gen. 2:9, 17).29

3) Divine call or permission to build a temple (Gudea Cylinder A i 19; Gen. 1:1, 3, 6, 9, 11).30

4) Construction of temple following all the details of a divinely revealed plan (Gudea Cylinder A i 20-21; Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14-15, 20, 24, 26).31

5) Tireless commitment to temple building (Gudea Cylinder A vi 11-13; Gen. 1:1-2:3).32

6) “Pronouncement of blessing on temple” (Averbeck suggests Gudea Cylinder A xx 27-xxi 12; Gen. 2:3).33

7) Building temple on raised region like mountain (Gudea Cylinder A xxi 19-23 [later traditions associate Eden with a raised mountain, and sometimes Mount Zion is associated with Eden]).34

8) “Laudatory descriptions of the temple” (Gudea Cylinder A xxv 24-xxix 12; Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 25, 31).35

9) Temple completion’s announcement (Gudea Cylinder B ii 14-iii 1; Gen. 1:31, 2:1).36

10) Seven-day temple dedication (Gudea Cylinder B xvii 18-19; Gen. 2:1-3).37

11) Association of temple building with kingship (Gudea Cylinder B xxiii 18-xxiv 8 [Adam is sometimes interpreted in light of royal terms, as a king, and furthermore, the king of Tyre is associated with Adam in Ezek. 28]).38

29 Ibid, 419 n. 6.

30 Ibid, 419 n. 8.

31 Ibid, 419-420 n. 9, 426 n. 43, 426 n. 44.

32 Ibid, 421 n. 16, 426 n. 42, 427 n. 50.

33 Ibid, 428 n. 55.

34 Ibid, 428 n. 56.


36 Ibid, 432 n. 74.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid, 433 n. 79.
Divine selection and commissioning of king (Gudea Cylinder A xxiii 25-29 [relates to Adam’s creation in the later interpretation that associates Adam with kingship]).

Ancient Near Eastern temples beyond Sumer also served as places for divine rest. In the ancient Near East temples were sometimes further associated with gardens. The parallels here with the creation of the cosmos in Genesis 1 are evident, especially the pattern of seven. As Loren Fisher notes, the ancient Near East’s convention of describing temple construction in terms of seven, means we should not be surprised that creation in Genesis is heptadic: “One must speak of ordering the cosmos in terms of seven even as the construction of the microcosm must be according to the sacred number.” Creation in Genesis, we may conclude, is described as a temple; it is constructed as an ancient Near Eastern temple would be constructed. The divine fiats are “architectural directives,” in the words of Meredith Kline.

The Garden of Eden as the Inner Sanctuary and the Human Person as Created for Worship

So far we have seen a poetic heptadic structure that portrays the creation of Genesis 1 as related to the construction of a temple. This has both canonical parallels—as with Moses’ construction of the Tabernacle at Sinai and Solomon’s construction of the Temple on Zion—as well as extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern parallels, such as the Gudea Cylinders. What remains to be seen is the implications of this on understanding humanity. Genesis 2-3 depicts the Garden of Eden as the Holy of Holies, and this has implications for our understanding of humanity’s purpose. In this section, I will first discuss Eden’s image as an Inner Sanctuary and then discuss human beings as homo liturgicus, liturgical humanity made for worship.

Gregory Beale notes that the distinction of regions of creation described by Genesis are similar to those of the Temple. The heavens represent the holy of holies, the earth the inner sanctuary,

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39Ibid, 429 n. 57. All of these examples are found in Averbeck, “Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method,” 119-121.


41Beale, Temple and the Church’s Mission, 128; Callender, Adam in Myth, 50, 54, 59; and Levenson, “Temple and the World,” 297.

42John Currid likewise notes that God is depicted in Gen. 1 as creating the world the way a craftsperson or builder would. See John D. Currid, Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament, with a foreword by Kenneth A. Kitchen (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), 43 and 64.


45Kline, Kingdom Prologue, 19.

and the sea the outer court.  

Other indications of this similarity appear in the text. In Genesis 3:8, for example, God walks back and forth (using a form of הָלְךָ) in Eden, which is also how God’s presence is described in the tabernacle in Leviticus 26:12 and Deuteronomy 23:14.

In examining the rest of the canon, we find other evidence that points to intentionality in these parallels that make creation appear as a temple. The Temple, and Mount Zion in general, are frequently associated with Eden, and in some instances actually identified with Eden. Ezekiel 28’s discussion of the king of Tyre is the most famous example where Mount Zion, and the temple, are associated with Eden. Sirach also associates Eden with the Temple and tabernacle, where the Temple is the new Eden.

Beale, *Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 74-75. On these pages, He comments: “It may even be discernable that there was a sanctuary and a holy place in Eden corresponding roughly to that in Israel’s later temple. The Garden should be viewed as not itself the source of water but adjoining Eden because Genesis 2:10 says, ‘a river flowed out of Eden to water the Garden’. Therefore, in the same manner that ancient palaces were adjoined by gardens, [quoting John Walton] ‘Eden is the sources of the waters and [is the palatial] residence of God, and the garden adjoins God’s residence.’ Similarly, Ezekiel 47:1 says that water would flow out from under the holy of holies in the future eschatological temple and would water the earth around. Similarly, in the end-time temple of Revelation 22:1-2 there is portrayed ‘a river of the water of life…coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb’ and flowing into a garden-like grove, which has been modeled on the first paradise in Genesis 2, as has been much of Ezekiel’s portrayal. If Ezekiel and Revelation are developments of the first garden-temple…then Eden, the area where the source of water is located, may be comparable to the inner sanctuary of Israel’s later temple and the adjoining garden to the holy place….Eden and its adjoining garden formed two distinct regions. This is compatible with…[the] identification of the lampstand in the holy place of the temple with the tree of life located in the fertile plot outside the inner place of God’s presence. Additionally, ‘the bread of the presence’, also in the holy place, which provided food for the priests, would appear to reflect the food produced in the Garden for Adam’s sustenance….the land and seas to be subdued by Adam outside the Garden were roughly equivalent to the outer court of Israel’s subsequent inward…Thus, one may be able to perceive an increasing gradation in holiness from outside the garden proceeding inward: the region outside the garden is related to God and is ‘very good’ (Gen. 1:31) in that it is God’s creation (= the outer court); the garden itself is a sacred space separate from the outer world (= the holy place), where God’s priestly servant worships God by obeying him, by cultivating and guarding; Eden is where God dwells (= the holy of holies) as the source of both physical and spiritual life (symbolized by the waters).”


Moreover, the Temple was often described with garden-like elements, further associating it with Eden and creation in general.\(^{51}\) Eden in turn was seen as a prototype of the Temple.\(^{52}\) As

Lawrence Stager remarks, “the original Temple of Solomon was a mythopoetic realization of heaven on earth, of Paradise, the Garden of Eden.” Some of the other elements important in this connection include the presence of cherubim and the eastward-facing entrance. One might mention in addition that the tabernacle and temple menorah was stylized as a symbol of the tree of life. Wenham concludes: “Thus in this last verse of the narrative there is a remarkable concentration of powerful symbols that can be interpreted in the light of later sanctuary design….These features combine to suggest that the garden of Eden was a type of archetypal sanctuary, where God was uniquely present in all his life-giving power.”

Conclusion

If Eden is the Holy of Holies in God’s Temple of creation, the implication is that humanity, created for this inner sanctuary, is best understood as Homo liturgicus. Living in the Holy of Holies, humanity is called to give worship to God in all thoughts, words, and deeds. When we look at the Genesis account of Eden, we find other instances of people portrayed as created for worship. Adam, for example, is told to “till” (from the root ‘bd) and “keep” (from the root šmr). When šmr and ‘bd occur together in the OT (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14) they refer to keeping/guarding and serving God’s word and also they refer to priestly duties in the tabernacle. And, in fact, šmr and ‘bd only occur together again in the Pentateuch in the descriptions in Numbers for the Levites’ activities in the tabernacle. Such an association reinforces the understanding of Adam as a sort of priest-king, or even high priest, who guarded already enshrined in the narrative of Genesis 2-3 which draws heavily on the symbolism and traditions of the Temple, including something like Ezekiel 28:12-19” (Fletcher-Louis, All the Glory of Adam, 19).

52Stephen Hultgren, From the Damascus Covenant to the Covenant of the Community: Literary, Historical, and Theological Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah Volume 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 492 n. 67; Beale, Temple and the Church’s Mission, 26, 79-80; Callender, Adam in Myth, 41, 50; Kline, Kingdom Prologue, 32; and Michael Owen Wise, “4QFlorilegium and the Temple of Adam,” Revue de Qumran 15 (1991) : 103-132, esp. 126-132. Beale concludes that, “The cumulative effect of the…parallels between the Garden of Genesis 2 and Israel’s tabernacle and temple indicates that Eden was the first archetypal temple, upon which all of Israel’s temples were based” (79-80). In a similar vein, Kline explains that, “the garden of Eden was a microcosmic, earthly version of the cosmic temple and the site of a visible, local projection of the heavenly temple” (32).


54Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 86. See also Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 19.

55Beale, Temple and the Church’s Mission, 66-67, 81; and Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 21. This has been picked up in more popular literature, e.g., Scott Hahn, First Comes Love: Finding Your Family in the Church and the Trinity (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 56 and 65; and Idem, Father Who Keeps His Promises, 58-59. Beale’s comments about how rabbinic literature treated Adam’s duties in the Garden are insightful. He explains that, “The Aramaic translation of Genesis 2:15 (Tg. Neofiti) underscores this priestly notion of Adam, saying that he was placed in the Garden ‘to toil in the Law and to observe its commandments’ (language strikingly similar to…Numbers [3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6]…Verse 19 of this Aramaic translation also notes that in naming the animals Adam used ‘the language of the sanctuary’” (67). Beale writes further, “Indeed, Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis 2:7 says that God created Adam partly of ‘dust from the site of the sanctuary’…Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 11 and 12, and Midrash Rabbah Genesis 14:8 [among other texts]…all affirm that Adam was created at the site of the later temple, which was also at Eden or was apparently close to it...” (67 n. 90). Finally, “Midrash Rabbah Genesis 16:5 interprets Adam’s role in Gen. 2:15 to be one of offering the kinds of ‘sacrifices’ later required by the Mosaic Law” (67 n. 91). For mention of the way the Midrash treats these terms, see also Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 21.
God’s first temple of creation, as it were.⁵⁶ In light of this discussion, therefore, what we find in Genesis 1-3 is creation unfolding as the construction of a divine temple, the Garden of Eden as an earthly Holy of Holies, and the human person created for liturgical worship.

⁵⁶Beale, Temple and the Church’s Mission, 68, 70, 78 n. 118, 81-121; Anderson, Genesis of Perfection, 122-124; Kline, Kingdom Prologue, 42-43, 54; Robin Scroggs, The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 43-44; and Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 21. Beale writes, “While it is likely that a large part of Adam’s task was to ‘cultivate’ and be a gardener as well as ‘guarding’ the garden, that all of his activities are to be understood primarily as priestly activity is suggested not only from the exclusive use of the two words in contexts of worship elsewhere but also because the garden was a sanctuary…” (68). Furthermore, as Kline explains, when we read Genesis 2 in its canonical context, we find that, “The Creator had prepared in Eden an earthly replica of his heavenly dwelling as the holy place where man would fulfill his priestly office” (54).