“Wretch I am!” Eve’s Tragic Speech-in-Character in Romans 7:7–25

Ah me, what unhappiness is mine! What shall I utter, what sound, what cry of lamentation, since I am wretched with wretched old age and slavery unbearable, unendurable? Ah me! Who is my protector? What family, what city? Gone is my aged husband, gone are my children. What road shall I walk, this one or that? Where shall I reach safety? Where is there god or power to help me? –Euripides, Hecuba 154–165 (Kovacs, LCL)

INTRODUCTION

Of the myriad approaches to the identity of the ἐγώ (“I”) in Romans 7:7–25, missing is any treatment that considers seriously the tragic laments. In view of this lacuna, this article offers a new perspective on the identity of the “wretched man”—or rather, the “wretched woman”—in Rom 7:7–25. I contend, based on generic and inter-traditional arguments, that Eve, not Adam, is the individual identified in Paul’s speech-in-character (προσωποποιία) in Romans 7. Paul has cast Eve in the role of the lamenter who bemoans her tragic condition. By doing so, he has uniquely fused Second Temple Jewish traditions about Eve with tragic traditions that were prevalent in his Greco-Roman context. Thus, the ἐγώ in Romans 7 is Eve lamenting herself because the tragic conditions of sin and death that she has brought into the cosmos.

The article proceeds in three sections: first, the arguments often made for an Adamic προσωποποιία are reformulated to argue that Eve is the speaking subject in Romans 7.

Second, I demonstrate that there is a vibrant tradition in Second Temple Judaism that

\[1\] εἰ ἡ γῆ μελέα, τί ποτ’ ἀπύσω; // ποίαν ἀχώ, ποίον ὄδυρμόν, // δείας δειλαῖον γῆρως // <καὶ> δουλείας τάς οὐ τλατάς, // τάς οὗ φερτάς; ὃμοι μοι. // τίς ἀμύνει μοι; ποία γενεά, // ποία δὲ πόλις; φρούδος πρέσβυς, // φρούδοι παῖδες. // ποίαν ἢ ταύταν ἢ κείναν // στείχω; ποί δὴ σωθῶ; ποῦ τις // θεών ἢ δαίμονων ἑπαρχόμενος; (Kovacs, LCL).
ruminates on Eve’s role in the primeval history, and Paul recalls many of the themes and tropes that were integral to this tradition in Romans 7. Third, and finally, I argue that Paul recasts Eve in a tragic, lamenting mode, and this explains a number of the text’s syntactical and verbal features, particularly the use of first-person verbal and nominal forms.

EVE IN GENESIS 2–3 AND ROMANS 7

In an innovative article published in *Biblical Interpretation* in 2004, Austin Busch proposed that Eve is the subject of Paul’s προσωποποιία in Romans 7.² Busch’s argument is made on both ideological and intertextual grounds. Ideologically, he utilizes a deconstructivist method, and suggests that Paul frequently destabilizes the binarial categories of social and psychological identity that were inherent to the Hellenistic world.³ Busch establishes that in antiquity female and male categories were simultaneously psycho-social and intellectual distinctions marked by a dichotomous configuration.⁴ One of the prominent gendered oppositions was that of male activity and female passivity. Busch purports that Paul uses Eve’s προσωποποιία in Romans 7 to deconstruct this dichotomy. Eve

² Austin Busch, “The Figure of Eve in Romans 7:5-25,” *BibInt* 12 (2004): 1–36. Busch’s proposal about Eve has not been significantly advanced elsewhere. Busch, “Figure of Eve,” 14 n. 28 specifically denies that Paul is evoking a tragic ethos, seeing it is incommensurate with Eve’s προσωποποιία. Against Busch, I will argue that Paul evokes the female lament genre.

³ Busch, “Figure of Eve,” 2.

⁴ Ibid.
is simultaneously, and paradoxically, a figure of passivity and activity, and the tension between the two helps explain the self-conflict that is inherent to every human.\textsuperscript{5}

Busch then offers intertextual arguments from Genesis 2–3 for Eve’s προσωποποιία in Romans 7, which are particularly relevant for the argument here. He argues that “the association of the law with ‘fruit for death’ (καρποφορήσας τῷ θανάτῳ, [Rom] 7:5) and mention of a commandment unto life that proved to be death ([Rom] 7:10) suggest that Paul is evoking the scene of the primeval transgression.”\textsuperscript{6} James D. G. Dunn, Ernst Käsemann, and Stanislas Lyonnet similarly contend that the Genesis narrative is the prominent interpretive intertext at work in Romans 7:7–25. They, however, argue that Adam is the ἐγώ in the pericope.\textsuperscript{7} Many of the themes in Rom 7:7–25 will have recalled the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 12.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Ibid.,” 13.
\item \textsuperscript{7} James D. G. Dunn, Romans, 2 vols., WBC 38A–38B (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 1:377–411; Ernst Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 196–212; Stanislas Lyonnet, “L’histoire Du Salut Selon Le Chapitre 7 de L’épître aux Romains,” Bib 43 (1962): 117–51. Their proposals are primarily based on three arguments: (1) Adam was the only human who both experienced life apart from the law and the entrance of the commandment that brought death (Dunn, Romans, 1:401 and Werner Georg Kümmel, Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament; zwei Studien, TB 53 [München: C. Kaiser, 1974], 196). For an extensive overview of ancient Jewish and rabbinic texts that posit Adam possessed the law in paradise see Hermann Lichtenberger, Das Ich Adams und das Ich der Menschheit: Studien zum Menschenbild in Römer 7, WUNT 164 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 205–41. Philo’s Decal. 142, 150, 153, Opif. 152, James 1:15, and LAE 19:3 are good representative examples. (2) There are significant shared themes between Rom 7:7–25 and Gen 2–3: the personification of sin, the reality of death because of sin, and a similar sequence of events (Dunn, Romans, 1:384). And (3) there is a strong verbal parallel between Rom 7:11 and Gen 3:13 in its Septuagintal form (ibid).
\end{itemize}
Genesis narrative for Paul’s Roman audience, but the primeval history is most clearly evoked by the arresting verbal parallel between Rom 7:11 and Gen 3:13:

Rom 7:11: ἡ γὰρ ἀμαρτία ... ἐξηπάτησέν με καὶ ... ἀπέκτεινεν (“for sin deceived me and I died”).
Gen 3:13: ὁ δὲ φίς ἠπάτησέν με καὶ ἐφαγον (“the serpent deceived me and I ate”).

While this parallel is sometimes noted by those arguing for an Adamic προσωποποία, there are two aspects of it that indicate Paul is constructing Eve’s προσωποποία here. First, the allusion in Rom 7:11 is to Eve’s words in the Genesis narrative, not Adam’s. Second, when the verbs ἐξαπατάω and ἀπατάω (“deceived”) appear in the Pauline and deutero-Pauline corpora echoing Gen 2–3, they are always appended to Eve’s action and never Adam’s. This is the case in 2 Cor 11:3, where Paul parenthetically states ὡς ὁ δὲ φίς ἠπάτησεν Εὕαν ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτοῦ (“just as the serpent deceived even in his craftiness”). Even more decisive is a text from the deutero-Pauline tradition: 1 Tim 2:13–14. This passage explains why women, according to this author, must learn in silence and may not teach: Ἄδαμ γὰρ πρῶτος

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8 See Dunn, Romans, 1:384 and Busch, “Figure of Eve,” 13–14. There is, of course, a slight difference in the verbal forms here, as Genesis 3:13 in the LXX does not use the prefix ἐξ-. The form of the verb ἀπατάω, with the prepositional prefix ἐξ- is also used by Paul in 2 Cor 11:3 and 1 Tim 2:14 with respect to Gen 2–3. It could be that the prefix is an attempt to express the Hifil form of the verb in Gen 3:13. It could also be the case that this is simply the Greek form of the verb Paul knows for Gen 3:13.

9 Busch, “Figure of Eve,” 15–17, following the feminist literary critic Judith Fetterly, believes this to be the result of an androcentric bias in the academy. See Judith Fetterley, The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), xi–xii.

10 Forms of ἀπατάω are used three times in the NT: Eph 5:6, 1 Tim 2:14, and James 1:26. Forms of ἐξαπατάω are used six times in the NT: Rom 7:11, Rom 16:18, 1 Cor 3:18, 2 Cor 11:3, 2 Thess 2:3, and 2 Tim 2:14.
Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, became a transgressor). Here, there is not only an explicit assertion that Eve was the one deceived, but there is also an unambiguous denial about Adam’s deception. As will be indicated below, Adam is commonly and consistently distanced from accusations about deception in traditions about the primeval history in Second Temple Judaism.

Based on the intertextual parallels between Romans 7 and Gen 2–3, I contend, following Dunn, Käsemann, and Lyonnet, that Paul is constructing a προσωποποίησις of a specific character from the primeval history in Rom 7:7–25. However, this does not necessarily imply that Rom 7:7–25 is an Adamic προσωποποίησις. Eve fits the bill better than Adam. Käsemann’s oft-quoted dictum, “there is nothing in the passage which does not fit Adam, and everything fits Adam alone,”11 might be revised to read “there is nothing in the passage which does not fit Eve, and everything fits Eve alone.” Paul, however, does not evoke Eve to engage a single Septuagintal textual tradition or, contra Busch, to deconstruct a social-psychological binary. Rather, he offers his own contribution to a vibrant Second Temple Jewish tradition that ruminated on Eve and her role as the originator of sin and death in the cosmos. Because Eve had been commonly cast in this role in Second Temple Judaism, Paul evokes the tragic mode and recasts Eve in the role of a popular tragic subject: the lamenting, morally-torn woman. Before turning to the role of tragedy in Romans 7:7–25, we will look to the consistent tropes about Eve in Second Temple Judaism.

11 Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 196.
JEWISH TRADITIONS CONCERNING EVE

Paul's literary predecessors, contemporaries, and successors all had traditions about Eve of their own. This makes it more likely that Paul evokes the female protoplast in this pericope and is entering into an active literary and theological tradition. Too often, however, these traditions about Eve have been overlooked because of a predilection for Second Temple Adamic traditions. Remarking on these traditions, Dunn writes, “Paul was entering into an already well-developed debate and his own views were not uninfluenced by its earlier participants.”¹² I allege that Dunn's statement is just as true of traditions about Eve as it is about Adam. In this section, I will present textual traditions about Eve from Second Temple Judaism. I contend that there are three consistent features of the tradition about Eve from this context that relate to Rom 7:7–25: (1) she is connected with pleasure and desire; (2) she is presented as a transgressor of the law and/or the primeval commandment; (3) and her transgression ushers sin and death into the world.

Sirach 25:24 and 2 Baruch 48:42–43

One of the most unambiguous statements that sin originates from Eve in Second Temple Jewish literature is Sir 25:24: ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ἀρχὴ ἀμαρτίας, καὶ δι’ αὐτὴν ἀποθνῄσκομεν

¹² James D. G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 90.
πάντες (“the beginning of sin came from the woman, and through her we all die”). Not only does the text predicate the beginning of sin to Eve, but she is also the conduit of death to all humanity. The passage is reminiscent of the themes of sin and death in Romans 7, and particularly Rom 7:11: ἡ γὰρ ἀμαρτία ἀφορμὴν λαβώσα διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἐξηπάτησέν με καὶ δι’ αὐτῆς ἀπέκτεινεν (“for sin, taking an opportunity through the law, deceived me and through it killed me”). Moreover, in Rom 7:11 sin is the conduit of death (δι’ αὐτῆς [ἀμαρτία] ἀπέκτεινεν), and, in Sirach 25:24, Eve serves as a similar conduit (δι’ αὐτῆν [γυνῆ] ἀποθνῄσκομεν πάντες). An analogous idea occurs in 2 Bar. 48:42–43. Here, sin is not explicitly attributed to Eve alone, but is the collective result of the two protoplasts’ actions: “And I [Baruch] answered and said, ‘O Adam, what have you done to all those who are born from you? And what will be said to the first Eve who heeded the serpent? For all this multitude are going to corruption. Nor is there any numbering those whom the fire devours.” Similar to Romans 7, this utterance occurs within the context of a nomistic

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13 Eve is not explicitly mentioned here, but, as Felipe De Jesus Legarreta-Castillo notes, the context strongly suggests that she is in mind (The Figure of Adam in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15: The New Creation and Its Ethical and Social Reconfigurations [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014], 45).

14 The antecedent to the feminine personal pronoun αὐτῆς could be ἀμαρτίας. However, given the focus on the wiles of women in this passage, γυναικός is preferred as the antecedent. This is reflected by the NETS translation, “From a woman is the beginning of sin, and because of her we all die” (italics my own). If ἀμαρτίας is the antecedent, however, this would more closely connect Sirach 25 and Romans 7 thematically and verbally. The movement in both would be from Eve to sin to death.

discourse. Also reminiscent of Romans 7, 2 Bar 48:42–43 explores the broader consequences of transgressing the law with reference to Genesis 2–3. As in the Pauline corpus, deception is more closely associated with Eve than with Adam in 2 Baruch 48.

**Philo’s *De Opificio Mundi***

Philo also presents the idea that Eve is the originator of sin in his allegorical interpretation of Gen 2–3 in *De Opificio Mundi*. Beginning in *Opif.* 151, after extensively relaying the excellence of the first created human in §§136–50, Philo narrates the first man’s fall from wellbeing (εὐδαιμονία) into misfortune (κακοδαιμονία). The relevant sections particularly focus on the latter. The root cause of this fall, for Philo, is the first woman. Philo explains in *Opif.* 150, “the first human being too had to enjoy some ill fortune. The starting point [ἀρχή] of a blameworthy life [τῆς ὑπαιτίου ζωῆς] becomes for him

16 On this passage’s occurrence in the nomistic discourse, see Legarreta-Castillo, *Figure of Adam*, 108–9.

17 David T. Runia notes that the bodily excellence of the first created man is, for Philo, rooted in the Greek, rather than Jewish, tradition (*Philo of Alexandria, On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses*, PACS 1 [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 333). This has led John R. Levison to write, “most details and general tendencies in Philo’s portrait of the first man are his own and should not be amalgamated with other early Jewish interpretations into a hypothetical ‘Adam tradition’” (*Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch*, JSPSup 1 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988], 88). Given the allegorical interpretation of Gen 2–3 that is to follow, it is judicious to interpret Philo, against Levison, as a representative of the Jewish Adam tradition, even if the parameters of this tradition are quite wide and its representatives diverse.

18 *Opif.* §§144, 150, 156.
woman [γυνῇ].”¹⁹ Not only does this section introduce Eve into Philo’s allegory, but, as Runia notes, it “focus[es] attention on the chief cause of human decline into misery.”²⁰ When the two protoplasts meet, pleasure (ἡδονή) is birthed out of their desire (πόθος) for one another. For Philo, this pleasure is the beginning (ἀρχή) of all iniquities (ἀδικµάτων) and transgressions (παρανοµµάτων), and is closely connected with ἐπιθυµία (cf. Rom 7:7–8).²¹

Philo allegorically interprets Genesis 2–3 in §§157–170.²² In his allegorical interpretation, the snake represents pleasure (ἡδονή),²³ Adam represents the rational mind (νοῦς), and Eve represents sense perception (αἴσθησις).²⁴ It is only through sense perception, the woman, that pleasure can get a foothold on the dominant reasoning faculty, man, and

¹⁹ Translation from Runia, Philo, 87.

²⁰ Ibid., 354.

²¹ In Rom 7:7–8, desire (ἐπιθυµία) and the commandment against it in Romans 7 serves as a synecdoche for the entire law. While the terms pleasure and desire are not identical, the concepts are similar. Moreover, for Philo, ἡδονή is the foundational passion on which ἐπιθυµία and the other passions operate. ἐπιθυµία is only one step removed from ἡδονή in Philo’s hierarchy of passions. See especially Leg. 1.86; 2.8; 2.18; 2.72; 3.113; 3.148; and 3.250.

²² See also Leg. 2.

²³ Philo goes to great lengths to demonstrate this, using a variety of proofs in §§157–64. Philo makes the same allegorical interpretation of the snake—and Gen 2–3 as a whole—in Leg. 2.72: ἡδονῆς, ἦν συµβολικός ὅφιν ὠνόµασε.

²⁴ This is especially evident in Opif. 165: ἐν ἰµῖν γὰρ ἀνδρὸς μὲν ἔχει λόγον ὃ νοῦς, γυναικὸς δ’αἴσθησις· ἡδονὴ δὲ πρωτέραις ἐντυγχάνει καὶ ἑνοµίλει ταῖς αἰσθήσεις, δι’ ὅν καὶ τὸν ἡγεµόνα νοῦν φενακίζει. See also Leg. 2.24.

26 Opif. 165.


26 Opif. 165.

25 Not only is Eve the beginning of humanity’s fall into misery, but she is, allegorically, the cause—the beginning (ἀρχή)—of all sin. She is also affiliated with deception and pleasure in a manner that Adam is not. According to Philo, the serpent would never dare to offer its trickeries (γοητείας) and deceit (ἀπάτας) to Adam, but can only produce his downfall through Eve. This corresponds well with the Pauline corpus, which does not predicate deception to Adam, but only to Eve, making it even more likely that she utters the phrase ἡ γὰρ ἁμαρτία ... ἐξηπάτησεν με (“for sin deceived me”) in Paul’s προσωποποιία in Rom 7:11.

The consequences of Eve’s actions as interpreted in De Opificio Mundi also have two significant connections with the women’s lament genre and with Romans 7. First, echoing and expounding the injunction of Eve’s grievances and groaning in Gen 3:16, Philo divulges that Eve received, because of her actions, excessive sorrows (ἄνιας) and, more importantly
for the lament genre, grievances (λύπας) “that occurred successively during the rest of her life.” Thus, Philo associates Eve with a life of sorrow and grief. This is an element of the tradition that is taken up in both the *Life of Adam and Eve*, which will be explored below, and Romans 7. Second, in *Opif. 167* Philo explicitly writes that Eve is in a state of captivity and lacks freedom (ἐὰν ἀφαίρεσιν ἔλευθερίας καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ συνόντος ἀνδρὸς δεσποτείαν). This is significant on two counts. First, it correlates well with Romans 7:1–6, which purports that, by law, a woman is not free from her man as long as he is alive, and introduces Paul’s προσωποποιία. Second, a consignment to slavery, in one form or another, is a recurring characteristic of the tragic lamenting women. Before turning to this lament genre, there is one more textual tradition about Eve from the Second Temple period that ought to be explored.

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28 In the preceding sentence, Philo explicitly writes that those who find the recompense of pleasure become slaves of harsh and incurable sufferings. Eve is his representative example. Runia (*Philo*, 387) notes that the idea here is related to 1 Tim 2:11–15.
The Life of Adam and Eve

The Life of Adam and Eve is the strongest testimony to a vibrant textual tradition about Eve in ancient Judaism. In this narrative, Eve is the lead actor who is, more often than not, standing center-stage. All the themes concerning Eve that were investigated above are amplified and clearly presented in the Greek Life of Adam and Eve. I will first examine

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29 The textual tradition of the LAE is complicated. At best, it can be inferred that “a single copy of the Greek Life of Adam and Eve is at the fountainhead of the entire manuscript tradition” (Johannes Tromp, The Life of Adam in Eve in Greek: A Critical Edition, PVTG 6 [Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005], 71. See also the overview of the MSS tradition on pp. 17–111). de Jonge makes a similar contention in “The Literary Development of the Life of Adam and Eve,” in Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays, ed. Gary A. Anderson, Michael E. Stone, and Johannes Tromp, SVTP 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 239. There are, however, other approaches to the textual tradition that don't posit a single textual archetype. For an overview of these, see Michael E. Stone, A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve, EJL 3 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 68–69. John R. Levison suggests that LAE 15–30 of LAE were originally transmitted independently of the rest of the narrative in what we might call a ‘Testament of Eve’ (“The Exoneration of Eve in the Apocalypse of Moses 15-30,” JSJ 20 [1989]: 135–50).

30 It is possible that LAE actually belongs to a Christian provenance. For this position see Marinus de Jonge, “The Christian Origin of the Greek Life of Adam and Eve,” in Anderson, Stone, Tromp, Literature on Adam and Eve, 347–63; Stone, History, 58–61. Evidence for a Christian provenance is also presented in de Jonge, “Greek Life,” 154–55. de Jonge, however, ultimately takes an agnostic approach about the text’s provenance, which is outlined in “The Greek Life of Adam and Eve and the Writings of the New Testament,” in Religionsgeschichte des Neuen Testaments: Festschrift für Klaus Berger zum 60. Geburtstag, ed. Klaus Berger et al. [Tübingen: Francke, 2000], esp. 156. A Christian provenance for the text would be no less relevant for the present argument. In fact, if the narrative is of Christian provenance, the strong thematic and lexical parallels between Romans 7 and LAE presented below might suggest that the tradition about Eve was vibrant amongst early Christian circles and developed out of Rom 7:7–25.

31 Most scholars have been skeptical about the possibility that LAE exerted influence on Paul. See especially de Jonge, “Greek Life.” However, John R. Levison, makes the case that LAE is indispensable to the interpretation of Rom 1:18–25 in particular and the Pauline corpus at large (“Adam and Eve in Romans 1:18–25 and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve,” NTS 50 [2004]: 519–34). It is not impossible that an Ur-form or oral tradition that later
the idea that desire is the root of all sin, as presented in LAE, and then will address Eve’s transgression in the text.

Just as Philo purported that pleasure (ἡδονή) is the root of sin, so also does LAE 19:3 predicate this root of desire: ἐπιθυμία γάρ ἐστι [κεφαλή]32 πάσης ἁμαρτίας (“desire is the head of every sin”). This desire is the poison that the snake places on the fruit earlier in the narrative (LAE 19:3). Desire appears three times in Romans 7:7–8, and is connected to sin in a manner similar to LAE 19:3: ἡ ἁμαρτία ... κατειργάσατο ἐν ἐμοὶ πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν (“sin works up every desire in me”).

Scholars have previously recognized this supposed intertextual connection between LAE 19:3 and Rom 7:7–12.33 However, they typically make little of it. John Levison has critiqued this minimalist approach, arguing that it does not offer anything constructive to Paul’s theology nor to the interpretation of the Life of Adam and Eve.34 He wants interpreters to make more of the intertextual echoes. There is, however, danger in heeding Levison’s critique and relying too heavily on the parallel for an interpretation of either text.

came to be represented by the extant textual witnesses of LAE influenced Paul and Romans 7. However, the relationship between Paul and LAE need not be intertextual, but only intertraditional for the present argument.

32 See the discussion of this variant in de Jonge, “Greek Life,” 158 and the apparatus in Tromp, Life, 144–45.


34 Levison, “Adam and Eve in Romans,” 521.
By making too much of the relationship between LAE 19:3 and Rom 7:7–12, interpreters run the risk of drawing connections that are historically dubious or anachronistic, since the dating of LAE is highly uncertain. Determining which way the textual influence runs, or if there is textual influence at all, is no straightforward task. However, this does not, in my estimation, bring interpreters to an impasse. Rather, by considering the connection between the texts from an inter-traditional—rather than a strictly intertextual—perspective, we can walk the narrow path and avoid the pitfall of making dubious textual inferences, on the one side, and the pitfall of minimalizing the connection between the texts, on the other. My contention is that LAE 19:3 and Rom 7:7–12 interweave the themes of sin, desire, commandment, and Eve together because these were traditional tropes about Eve in Second Temple Judaism. By comparing how Eve is constructed and to what ends she is utilized in each text, interpreters can draw significant conclusions about both Paul’s theology and the Life of Adam and Eve.

One of the consistent tropes throughout the LAE is that Eve’s sin is the root cause of human transgression and death.35 Adam first presents this idea in LAE 7:1, where he relates to Seth how disease (νόσον) and infirmities (πόνους) came upon him.36 Introducing Eve into his discourse about the garden, Adam notes that it is “through her [that] even I die” (δι᾽ ἦς

35 On this, de Jonge, (“Greek Life,” 154) writes, “the sin of Adam and Eve is seen as basically a transgression of God’s commandment (LAE 8:2; 10:2; 14:3; 23:3; 24:1, 4; 25:1). Eve in particular is to blame and she realizes that (LAE 9:2; 10:2; 14:3; 25:1, 3). It is the central point in Eve’s description of what happened in the Garden.”

36 On the importance of these terms in LAE see John R. Levison, “The Primacy of Pain and Disease in the Greek Life of Adam and Eve,” ZNW 94 (2003): 1–16.
καὶ ἀποθνῄσκω). Adam repeats Eve’s culpability in a stronger form in LAE 14:2. This happens after Eve, Seth, and Adam learn from the archangel Michael that Adam will indeed die. He then asks Eve: τι κατηργάσω [cf. Rom 7:1, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20] ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ἐπήνεγκας ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ὧργὴν μεγάλην, ἣτις ἐστὶν θάνατος [cf. Rom 7:10, 11, 13, 24] κατακυριεύων πάντος τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν; (“what have you done to us, bringing great wrath on us, which is death that rules over all our generations?”). Other characters in LAE also make Eve liable for death and transgression entering into the world. Significantly, Eve herself reinforces this trope throughout the narrative, often recognizing that she is primarily to blame for what happened in the garden. This occurs in LAE 10:2, where Eve laments how her actions have caused enmity between the human and animal world: ἐκλαυσεν δὲ Εὕα λέγουσα· οἶμοι οἶμοι, ὅτι ἐὰν ἔλθω εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς ἀναστάσεως, πάντες οἱ ἀμαρτήσαντες καταράσονται με, λέγοντες ὅτι οὐκ ἐφύλαξεν ἡ Εὕα τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ (“Eve wept, saying, ‘Woe is me! Woe is me! Because when I come to the day of resurrection all the sinners will accuse me, saying, ‘Eve didn’t guard God’s commandment!’”). There are two important connections with Romans 7 here. First, Eve is clearly lamenting. The contrast between time, the verb ἐκλαυσεν, the use of the phrase οἶμοι οἶμοι, and the presence of a hypothetical situation

37 For the Greek text, I use Tromp, Life. All English translations are my own.

38 Significantly, Rom 7:13 also directly links a participial form of κατεργάζομαι with θάνατος.

39 See the devil’s instructions to the snake in LAE 16:3 and the talking beast in LAE 11:1.

40 In LAE 9:2, for example, Eve requests that Adam give her half of his disease, because she knows it is on her account that Adam is experiencing death.
differentiated from reality are all features of the lament genre that will be outlined below.

Second, the text implies that sin and death are a result of Eve's transgression of the commandment (τὴν ἐντολήν), as is also the case in Romans 7:9–11.

Eve's confession in LAE 32 is a fitting text to conclude our discussion of Eve in this narrative and Eve traditions in the Second Temple period. Lying on his deathbed, Adam reports to Eve that she too will die, and ought to pray to God, because neither of them know “how they will meet [their] maker—whether he will be wrathful or will turn and pity [them]” (LAE 31:4). In her confession, there is a striking constellation, as in Romans 7, of sin, death, repentance, and rescue. Eve repeats the verb ἡμαρτων nine times, each time with a different object that she has sinned against. Her last confession of sin is particularly significant, as it is another representation of the idea that sin enters the cosmos on Eve's account: ἡμαρτων ἐναντίον σοῦ, καὶ πᾶσα ἁμαρτία δι' ἐμὲ γέγονεν ἐν τῇ κτίσει (“I have sinned against you and every sin in creation comes through me”).

LAMENT GENRE

Thus far, I have argued that certain thematic and lexical elements of Rom 7:7–25 evoke Genesis 3 and corresponding Second Temple Jewish traditions about Eve. However, I have yet to address the reason that Paul formulates these themes in first-person form. In this final section, I will argue that Paul has recast Eve in the role of the tragic, lamenting woman. Because Paul is evoking Eve in this pericope, utilizing a προσωποποία to do so was a natural choice for two reasons. First, Genesis 3:16 indicates the female protoplast’s grievances and groaning (τὰς λύπας σου καὶ τὸν στεναγμὸν σου) would be multiplied. This is a
theme that both Philo and the Life of Adam and Eve expounded upon, characterizing Eve as a lamentable and lamenting figure. Second, tragic laments were characteristically feminine speeches in Paul’s context, making it an obvious role in which to recast a woman who was characteristically lamentable.

Throughout their storied history, the Greek laments have characteristically been feminine speeches.\footnote{On the lament as women’s speech, see Laura McClure, Spoken like a Woman: Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 40–47; Margaret Alexiou, The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Helene P. Foley, Female Acts in Greek Tragedy (Princeton University Press, 2009), 19–55; and Casey Dué, The Captive Woman’s Lament in Greek Tragedy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 30–56.} This is true in classical Greek literature, but, as Margaret Alexiou has shown, has also persisted into the lament tradition of modern Greek villages.\footnote{McClure, Spoken like a Woman, 40; Alexiou, Ritual Lament, 36–54; 90–101.} Laments as women’s speech acts are particularly pronounced in the tragedies. Casey Dué notes, “one thing that female characters do in tragedy above all else is lament.”\footnote{Casey Dué, Captive Woman’s Lament, 46.} The objects of laments in the tragedies are of varying sorts. Particularly relevant is the personal lament. There is a strong tradition of women who lament themselves in the Greek tragedies. Dué offers the following list: “Cassandra, the suppliant women of Aeschylus, Jocasta, Antigone, Deianeira, Alcestis, Hecuba, Polyxena, Medea, Phaedra, Andromache, and Iphigeneia all perform laments for themselves in anticipation of death or disaster.”\footnote{Dué, Captive Woman’s Lament, 20. Here Dué has distilled Alexiou, Ritual Lament, 113.} Pauline scholarship on the
προσωποποία in Rom 7:7–25 has focused on one of these female figures in particular: Medea in Euripides’ tragic play of the same name.

Gerd Theissen and Stanley Stowers have both argued that Romans 7 is a part of the Greek moral psychologizing tradition that has its roots in the figure Medea. They do so with specific reference to the proverbial expressions in Rom 7:15b and Rom 7:19. Theissen demonstrates that there is a long-standing trope in Greek moral psychology regarding desire’s power over reason that originates in Medea. Stowers further contends that this battle between desire and reason is a battle for self-mastery. Following the precedent set by Medea, women came to represent the epitome of ἀκρασία in Greek moral psychology. Lines 1077–80 of Euripide’s tragic play Medea represent this tradition, and are echoed in Romans 7:7–25.

Stowers and Theissen both suggest that the intertextual resonances between Romans 7 and Medea are the result of Paul’s evocation of moral psychology. Neither makes


46 Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 212.


48 Stowers, “Romans 7:7-25,” 199.

49 This is clear in Theissen’s contention that the underlying notion of the Medean text—and the tradition that follows it—is that “in everyone, not only in Medea, passion is the cause of evil” (*Psychological Aspects*, 212).
anything of this connection with respect to the speaker’s gender in Rom 7:7–25, much less
to the women’s lament tradition as a whole. Instead, Theissen concludes that Paul is not
speaking fictively with the ἐγώ in Romans 7, but autobiographically.\footnote{Theissen, \textit{Psychological Aspects}, 201.} Stowers contends
that Paul follows the Medean tradition, and this is what causes him to use first-person
forms in his προσωποποίια. But the referent of these forms is, according to Stowers, a
constructed gentle interlocutor, presumably male, who is finding it difficult to live
according to Torah.\footnote{Stowers, \textit{Rereading}, 277–79. Stowers consistently uses masculine personal
pronouns when writing about Paul’s interlocutor in this section.} According to Stowers and Theissen, then, Paul has not evoked a
figure from the tragic tradition for the sake of lamentation, but for the sake of moral
psychologizing.

In contrast to Stowers and Theissen, I suggest that the intertextual resonances with
Medea are a result of Paul recasting Eve in the tragic, lamenting mode. I have already
argued that Eve is portrayed as a lamentable and lamenting figure in Philo and the \textit{Life of
Adam and Eve}, and that many features of the Second Temple Eve tradition are recalled in
Rom 7:7–25. I have also shown that the lament genre was characterized by tragic feminine
speech acts in antiquity. This makes it likely that Paul is evoking the tragic, lamenting
woman, and the contention is further bolstered by Courtney Friesen’s recent argument that
Paul evokes the tragic mode in 1 Corinthians, and that it “is not improbable that a Greek-
speaking Jew such as Paul would have attended the theater,” since the performance of the

classical tragedies were popular spectacles in Paul’s context. All this leads to the conclusion that Paul evokes a popular Jewish tradition about Eve’s lamentable action, and brings her on stage to speak in her tragic voice.

To demonstrate that Eve speaks in this voice, it is crucial to understand the features of the lament speeches. Moreover, these features from the lament genre explain Paul’s syntax in Rom 7:7–25. These features are:

a) A hesitant beginning with an initial question.
b) Questions, sporadic or successive, that carry the lament along.
c) A series of hypotheses, differentiated from reality that are proposed and rejected.
d) A contrast between past, present, and future time, resulting in a variety of verbal tenses.
e) A prominence of the invocational now (νῦν).
f) An abundance of first-person pronouns and verbal forms.
g) Self-deprecation on behalf of the lamenter. This is often expressed by words such as δύστηνος, ταλαίπωρος, or τάλας.
h) The lament ends with the speaker in a desperate situation, often feeling utterly abandoned to slavery or death.
i) Standard words of woe, such as οἴοι or ἵώ.

Many of these features were present in Eve’s brief lament in LAE 10:2 that was considered above. Before examining the aspects of Eve’s lament in Romans 7, it will be helpful to see how a different Hellenistic text, from a vastly different genre than Paul’s epistles, similarly evokes the woman’s lament genre, employing many of these features.


Joseph and Aseneth

*Joseph and Aseneth* is a Hellenistic narrative that recounts the circumstances surrounding the marriage of Pharaoh’s right-hand man, Joseph, to Aseneth, the daughter of the Egyptian priest, Pentephres. When Pentephres initially proposes that Aseneth be betrothed to Joseph, she ridicules the idea. However, upon seeing Joseph in all his stateliness, she realizes that she has made a huge mistake. This sends Aseneth into a personal lament that encompasses the entirety of *Joseph and Aseneth* 6.

Aseneth’s speech in this chapter is bursting at the seams with the elements of the Greek lament genre. While lament speeches often only contain a few of the features outlined above, Joseph and Aseneth has a penchant for the parodic, and, in my estimation, this is why Aseneth’s lament in *Joseph and Aseneth* 6 hyperbolically utilizes all the standard features of the genre. The lament contains at least five questions (criterion ‘a’). Two of these questions begin the lament, and the remaining questions are peppered throughout to flavor her speech (criteria ‘b/c’). The contrast between time and tense is prominent in Aseneth’s lament. In the indicative mood alone, five present tense verbs are used alongside nine futures, six perfects, and three aorists (criterion ‘d’). Four invocational νῦνs are present.

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54 The scholarship on the date and provenance of Joseph and Aseneth is notoriously divided. For the most recent overview on the these issues, see Angela Standhartinger, “Recent Scholarship on Joseph and Aseneth (1988-2013),” *CurBR* 12 (2014): 353–406. My intention here is only to demonstrate that the lament in Joseph and Aseneth 6 is an example of the women’s lament genre that is roughly contemporaneous with Paul, and that Rom 7:7–25 exhibits generic parallels to this text. The text and verse enumeration of Joseph and Aseneth used here are from Christoph Burchard, ed., *Joseph und Aseneth*, PVTG 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2003). English translations are my own.
Aseneth’s speech ends in utter desperation. She expresses her desire to be given to Joseph as a maidservant or slave (criterion ‘h’). Finally, and important for our purposes, Aseneth uses the first-person personal pronoun (ἐγώ) seven times, along with another fifteen first-person singular verbal forms (criterion ‘f’).

In these ways, Aseneth’s speech is an significant testimony to the Hellenistic form of the tragic female lament. In fact, because of its parodic nature, it may be the best evidence for elements of this lament genre in the Hellenistic period. Moreover, Aseneth’s lament has strong parallels to Rom 7:7–25, and especially vv. 14–25. None of these parallels, however, is more significant than the shared lexeme, ταλαίπωρος. Aseneth applies the self-deprecating term twice, once in Jos. Asen. 6:2 and again in Jos. Asen. 6:4. The word also appears in Romans 7:24: ταλαίπωρος ἐγώ ἄνθρωπος (“Wretch I am!”). Joseph and Aseneth 6:4 is the closest contemporary parallel with the strongest verbal resonance to Paul’s phrase here. In fact it appears to be the only other occasion in Hellenistic literature where ταλαίπωρος (“wretch”) is immediately followed (or preceded) by the nominative ἐγώ. This is not because the two are in some kind of direct intertextual relationship. Rather, both are the product of the women’s lament genre. Aseneth’s discourse is an exemplary model of the desperate woman’s lament in the Hellenistic period, and Rom 7:7–25 reflects aspects of this lament model.

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55 It is important to note, however, that ταλαίπωρος does occur elsewhere on the lips of the lamenter. See, for example, Euripides’ Suppl. 1094: τί δὴ χρὴ τὸν ταλαίπωρον με δρᾶν. Medea also uses a similar phrase, ἢ τάλαιν’ ἐγώ, in Med. 1016, and another, ὦ τάλαιν, in Med. 1057.
Romans 7:7–25 contains many of the features of the lament genre listed above: Eve’s speech begins with two initial questions (Rom 7:7). While there are not sporadic questions throughout the lament, there is a third question posed towards the end of the speech at Rom 7:24 (criteria ‘a’ and ‘b’). The contrast between fiction and reality is even more pronounced, especially in Rom 7:14–23, in Eve’s lament than it is in Aseneth’s (criterion ‘c’). There are a variety of tenses in the speech: Eve uses ten aorists, two imperfects, twenty-seven presents, three futures, two perfects, and one imperfect (criterion ‘d’). There is an invocational νῶν in Rom 7:17 and 8:1 (criterion ‘e’). First-person pronouns and verbal forms abound: there are twenty-three instances of the first-person personal pronoun in Rom 7:7–25, along with another twenty-nine first-person verbal forms (criterion ‘f’). Eve applies a self-deprecating term, ταλαίπωρος, typical of laments in Rom 7:24 (criterion ‘g’). Finally, Eve’s speech ends in a desperate situation, as she declares her wretchedness, asks who will rescue her from her body of death, and consigns herself to service to the law Christ in her mind, but the law of death in her body (criterion ‘h’).

The conclusion of Eve’s speech in Rom 7:25 is not atypical. Greek tragic laments and desperation speeches often end with the speaker in a state of utter helplessness. At the conclusion of the lament, the lamenter often bemoans her wretchedness and expresses desire for her hasty death. This is the case with Medea’s petition in Med. 143–47. It is also

56 Or perhaps twenty-four, depending on the variant reading in Rom 7:20 wherein several manuscripts omit ἐγώ.

57 In the end, Medea does not commit suicide or die. She is, in fact, the only tragic offender who is not brought to justice in some form or fashion (Edith Hall, Greek Tragedy: Suffering Under the Sun [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 242).
the situation in Polyxena’s lament and subsequent heroic sacrifice in *Hecuba*, where she expresses her desire for death in 213–15, 346–48, and 369–78.58 Another option was for the lame†er to concede their consignment to slavery. Aseneth, at the end of her lament in Jos. Asen. 6:8, states, “And now may my father give me to Joseph as a servant and slave, and I will serve him forever” (καὶ νῦν δότω με ὀ πατὴρ μου τῷ Ἰωσῆφ εἰς παιδίσκην καὶ εἰς δούλην καὶ δουλεύσω εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα χρόνον). The lamenting woman may also seek rescue by means of a savior or the gods. Hecuba asks if she might receive intercessorial or divine aid at the conclusion of her lament in *Hecuba* 96–97. She does this again in interrogative form in 164–65: πῶς τις θεῶν ἢ δαίμων ἐπαρωγός; (“what god or intercessor is my helper?”). Eve’s question near the end of her lament in Rom 7:25 no doubt resembles this tradition, as she asks who will save her from her body of death. Dissimilar from the tragic lament tradition, however, Eve *does* receive intercessorial aid. Following the lament’s conclusion, Eve receives a positive response to her lament in Rom 8:2.

In tragic literature, the lame†er was frequently addressed by the chorus or another character in the tragedy at the conclusion of their lament. This occurs, for example, in *Med.* 148–59 and 357–63. Just as the chorus is concerned with who Medea’s advocate and protector might be in the latter case, so also does Paul assure Eve that she has her own advocate “in Christ Jesus” (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Directly opposing Eve’s own lamentable conclusion that she is consigned to slavery in both her mind and her flesh, Paul assures her

58 On the heroism of the lame†er’s consignment to death see Fowler, “The Rhetoric of Desperation,” 6. Dué specifically argues that Polyxena's self-consignment to death follows a tradition heroization pattern (*Captive Woman's Lament*, 131).
that that the law of the spirit of life has freed (ἐλευθέρωσεν) her from the law of sin and death.\(^{59}\) This is Paul’s own creative twist endowed to Eve’s tragic lament in Romans 7.

CONCLUSION

According to Aristotle, the function of the tragic character is to provoke fear, pity, or a mixture of the two in the audience’s mind.\(^{60}\) He argues in Poetics 1453a.7–13 that the character who most successfully evokes fear or pity is the one who falls into adversity (eις τὴν δυστυχίαν) not through evil or depravity (διὰ κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν), but by some error (δι’ ἀμαρτίαν τινά). It is in this sense that Paul’s literary contemporary, the Stoic Epictetus,
can evoke Medea as a tragic figure who is to be pitied in Discourse 28.5–9.\textsuperscript{61} According to Epictetus, it is because Medea is deceived (ἐξηπάτηται) by her passions, not because she is evil or depraved, that she commits her tragic actions. Epictetus then tells his interlocutor that he ought not be angry with the wretch (ἡ παλαίπωρος), who has become a viper rather than a human (ἐχις ἀντὶ ἀνθρώπου γέγονεν), but rather ought to pity her (ἐλεεῖς).

Paul ultimately utilizes Eve's tragic προσωποποιία in Rom 7:7–25 to creatively endow her tragic lament with a pedagogical function. Eve is the perfect pitiable and lamenting figure that fits Paul's unfolding argument in Romans 5–8 for three reasons. First, she falls into adversity not because of her inherent evil of depravity. On the contrary, and perfectly in line with Aristotle's conception of the ideal tragic figure, sin (ἁμαρτία) was the cause of her fall into misfortune. Second, Gen 3:16 indicated that Eve's grievances and groaning would be excessively multiplied, and this characteristic of Eve was a consistent trope about her in various Second Temple textual traditions. She was an ideal candidate to be presented as lamenting in Romans 7 because grieving was an indelible mark of her character in Paul's Jewish context. Third, she was a perfect counterpart to the Adamic argument that Paul expounded in Rom 5:12–21. As a result, Paul presents the two protoplasts as jointly

\textsuperscript{61} Aristotle, Poetics, 1453a.29–30 also indicates that Euripides is the most tragic of the poets. This could be why Medea continued to exert literary influence in Paul's own context. Stowers and Theissen emphasize that Medea's words were retold and reinterpreted in several women's speech contexts and that rewritten Medea eventually became its own genre. This genre was incredibly popular in first-century Rome. See Stowers, A Rereading, 260–72; Stowers, “Romans 7:7–25,” 188–99; Theissen, Psychological Aspects, 211–19; Hildebrecht Hommel, “Das 7. Kapitel des Römerbriefs im Licht Antiker Überlieferung,” ThViat 1961–62 (1962): 90–116. Some significant examples of references to or retellings of Medea include: Euripides' Hippolytus 377–383; Galen, Hippoc. Et. Plat. 4.244.2–9; 4.274.15–22; Seneca, Medea; Plutarch, Mor. 446; Plautus, Trinum., 657–58; Albinus, Ep. 243; Aelius Aristides, Or. 50; and Lucian, Apology, 10.
culpable in humanity’s downfall: Adam in Romans 5 and Eve in Romans 7.

The protoplasts’ joint culpability, however, is not the end of the story for Paul. He addresses Eve in Rom 8:1–2, indicating that the consequences of her error are apocalyptically undone.\(^6^{2}\) If, as Aristotle indicates, the purpose of tragic lament is to provoke pity or fear, the purpose of this provocation is for the cathartic release of these emotions (Poetics, 1449.b.26–27) in the audience itself. By addressing Eve and assuring her she now has no condemnation, Paul provokes a cathartic release of the pity the audience felt for Eve and for themselves. This release makes it possible for the audience to choose a new path. By addressing Eve in such a rhetorical form, Paul can more effectively address and provoke a response in his Roman audience as his discourse moves forward in Romans 8.