

I FORMED A MAN WITH YAHWEH

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The title is a literal translation of the words of Eve at the birth of Cain, *qānītī 'iš 'et-YHWH* (Gen 4,1). It has aroused some interest because it mentions the activity of the woman together with that of Yahweh at childbirth, although it does not posit a special divine initiative and acknowledges the factual intervention of the husband.

Translations differ on the interpretation of the beginning (*qānītī* and end (*'et-YHWH*) of the phrase. The beginning has a uniform textual tradition (no variant readings), and a clear reference to the birth of Cain. The specific role of Eve in childbirth is not immediately clear. It largely depends on the interpretation of the controversial end (*'et-YHWH*).

The verb *qānāh* expresses the general idea of procuring which could include the acquisition (receiving, buying) or the production (forming, creating) of something. It is generally assumed that the various shades of meaning derive from the same root. This was also the original opinion of L. Keohler¹ before he opted for a double root with W. Baumgartner.² P. Humbert³ offers a semantic reason for the double root: it is difficult to derive the disparate meanings from the same root. E. Testa⁴ volunteers a morphologic reason: the

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1. "Kleinigkeiten," 3, ZAW, 11(1934) 160.
2. *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, (Brill; Leiden 1958) 843.
3. "Qana en Hebreu biblique," *Festschrift Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag*, (Tübingen, 1950) 258-266.
4. *Genesi: Introduzione — Storia primitiva, La Sacra Bibbia*, (Marietti; Torino 1969) 331.

classic *qānāh* could derive from an original *qnw* (to produce) and *qny* (to acquire). The available evidence is too meager to end all discussions.

With God as a subject, *qānāh* means creating (the universe, Gen 14,19,22), producing (wisdom, Prov 8,22), forming (a man in his mother's womb, Ps 139,13), choosing (Israel, Dt 32,6), redeeming (Israel, Ex 15,16; Ps 74,2), conquering (Jerusalem, Ps 78,54). With man as a subject, it means acquiring (counsel, Prov 1,5; wisdom and understanding, Prov 4,5; knowledge, Prov 18,15; truth, Prov 23,23), buying (land, Gen 47,22; a slave, Ex 21,2; a girdle, Jer 13,1), owning (a house, Lev 25,30; an ox, Is 1,3; a flock, Zac 11,5).

The LXX opts for the meaning of acquiring (*ektēsamen*, I acquired). It is followed by the Vulgate (*possedi*, I owned, came into possession), the New Vulgate (*aquisivi*, I acquired) and many modern translations, such as AV, RSV (I have gotten), NICOT (I have acquired), Dhorme, *Bible de Jérusalem*, Osty (*J'ai acquis*, I acquired), Luther (*Ich habe gewonnen*, I have gained), Garofalo (*ho avuto*, I had), Saydon, Sant (*ksibt*, I acquired).

The meaning of producing is adopted by some other modern translations, such as NAB (I have produced), Confraternity (I have given birth), NEB (I have brought into being), TOB (*J'ai procréé*, I have begotten), Segond (*J'ai formé*, I have formed), Riessler-Storr (*Ich habe das Leben gegeben*, I have given life), Testa (*ho formato*, I have formed).

The end of the phrase (*'et-YHWH*, with Yahweh) does not have a uniform textual tradition. The seemingly incongruous idea of Eve operating together with Yahweh, has produced some textual fluctuations and arbitrary interpretations. The most conspicuous textual fluctuation is witnessed by the Targum Onkelos which reads *min qodam* and presupposes an original *mē'ēt* (from). The arbitrary interpretations are witnessed by the LXX which has *dia tou theou* (through God), and by an anonymous Greek manuscript that understands *'et* as an accusative particle and reads *anthrōpon kurion* (a man as lord). The masoretic reading is retained by Symmachus (*sun kuriō*, with the Lord). Modern translations follow either the MT, the Targum, or the LXX.

The reading of the LXX is an easy favourite. It is followed by the Vulgate (*per Deum*, through God), the New Vulgate (*per Dominum*, through the Lord), RSV, Confraternity, NAB, NEB (with the help of the Lord), Dhorme (*grâce à Jahvé*, thanks to Yahweh), Segond (*avec l'aide de l'Eternel*, with the help of the Eternal), Riessler-Storr (*mit des Herrn Beistand*, with the help of the Lord), Garofalo (*con il favore di Jahve*, with Yahweh's favour), Testa (*con [il favore di] Jahweh*, with Jahweh's favour), Saydon (*[bil-ghajmuna ta]l-Mulej* with the Lord's help), Sant (*[bil-ghajmuna tal-Mulej*, with the Lord's help). The variant

of Onkelos is followed by AV (from the Lord), NICOT (from Yahweh), Bible de Jérusalem, Osty (*de par J/Yahvé*, from Yahweh, in his name). The masoretic reading is retained by Luther (*mit dem Herrn*, with the Lord), and TOB (*avec le Seigneur*, with the Lord).

The masoretic reading has a mythological and a biblical justification. The mythological justification is found in a Babylonian creation narrative where "Aruru, together with him [Marduk], created the seed of mankind."⁵ It is confirmed by the Akkadian theophorous names that begin with *itti*, such as *itti-bel-balatu* (with Bel there is life), and commercial expressions such as *itti-ili-ašāmšu* (with God I acquired it).⁶ Considering that the creation narrative of the Jahwist (Gen 2,4b-3,24) is steeped in Mesopotamian imagery, it is possible that Eve's words in Gen 4,1 (equally belonging to the Jahwist) reflect the same cultural background.

The biblical justification stems from the idea of the sanctity of Yahweh, found mainly in the Priestly tradition. Sanctity separates and contaminates. Yahweh is remote and tremendous. Whatever concerns him is excluded from normal human use, falls under the contaminating influence of the deity, embodies a potentially dangerous force, and has to be decontaminated in order to return to common use.

The mountain of Sinai was contaminated by God's presence; the Israelites were not allowed to tread its soil (Ex 19,10-25). Uzzah did not respect the remoteness of the ark, and God struck him down on the spot (2Sam 6,7). The high priest changed his clothes and washed himself after entering the Holy of Holies in the Day of Atonement (Lev 16,24). The Bible contaminates the hands because of its sanctity (Mishnah, *Yadayim*, 4,6; Talmud Babli, *Megillah*, 7a). All genital activity contaminates, but especially childbirth (Lev 12,1-5), for Yahweh forms the child in the womb (Job 31,15; Ps 139,13; Is 44,2,24; Jer 1,5), and minds it at birth (Ps 22,10). The mother works with Yahweh.

Kunvent tal-Lunzjata
Vittoriosa
Malta

5. E. Schrader, *Keilinschriftliche Biblnotek*, VI, (Berlin 1900) 1,40-41.

6. See R. Borger, "Gen 4,1, cf. Accad. *"Itti-ili-ašāmšu* vel *"Ištu-^dAšur-ašāmšu*: 'penes Deum emi eum'" *VT* IX (1959) 85/6.