

There are, in fact, any number of midrashic Aramaisms scattered throughout rabbinic literature, without any special Aramean context to trigger them.⁶⁸ Occasionally, the interlingual⁶⁹ nature of the exegesis is acknowledged, as in the rabbinic interpretations of (1) Exod 12:4, תְּכַס, as 'you shall slaughter' instead of 'you shall apportion';⁷⁰ (2) Gen 15:9, צָר, as 'ox' instead of 'turtledove';⁷¹ (3) Hos 8:10, יְמִין, as 'they recite' instead of 'they offer a harlot's wage';⁷² and (4) Ps 136:13, גָּזְרִים, as 'for the circumcised' instead of 'to pieces'.⁷³ In each of these *derashot*, there is an explicit reference to Aramaic לשון ארמי(וְסֻרְעֵת).⁷⁴

The *derashot* considered here are part and parcel of the overall exegetical program of the rabbis, who were determined to ferret out every imaginable type of ambiguity in the biblical text: lexical and syntactic, homophonic and homographic,⁷⁵ synchronic and diachronic,⁷⁶ intralingual and interlingual. For them, each *derasha* was quite literally a "search"—a search for new manifestations of the omnisignificance of Scripture.

68. For a small collection, see L. Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt* (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1892) 339 note h. See also R. C. Steiner, 'מַלְתָּא צָדֵק' בזידוש שוניוסו על ניבים מילמי של איזראלי', *Tarbiz* 65 (1996) 33–37. We are speaking here about wordplays, that is, intentional deviations from *peshat*. It goes without saying that the interpretation of Hebrew words based on the uncritical use of Aramaic homophones sometimes resulted in unintentional deviations from *peshat*. A well-known example of this type is the mistranslation of מֹאָב as 'Moab, the basin of my hope' instead of 'Moab is my washbasin' in LXX to Ps 60[59]:10 and 108[107]:10. For this and other examples, see J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) 54–55 and the references cited there.

69. For a discussion of the interaction of Aramaic and Hebrew in rabbinic texts, see Daniel Boyarin, "Bilingualism and Meaning in Rabbinic Literature: An Example," in *Focus: A Semitic-Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman* (ed. Y. L. Arbeitman; Amsterdam; Benjamins, 1987) 141–52. For the theological and historical background of the interlingual *derasha* and additional examples, see J. Fraenkel, *וזיכי תגדה והלזמרא* (Tel-Aviv: Modan, 1996) 115–18, and the literature cited there.

70. *Mekilta, Pisha 3.*

⁷¹ פרקי דברי אליעזר מהזורה מדעית 28a, 93. (Jerusalem: Makor, 1972).

72. b. B. Bat. 8a. I am indebted to

73. Tanhuma Buber, Beşallah §12.

74. Unfortunately, none of these *derashot* involves Hebrew verbal forms with morphologically different Aramaic verbal homophones. The first explicit discussion of this type of interlingual homophony (e.g., תְּלַשׁ: Hebrew imperative but Aramaic perfect; תְּלַעַג, עֲלָג: Hebrew perfects but Aramaic participles) comes in the eleventh century, in *al-Kitāb al-Muṣṭamīl* of Abū l-Farāj Ḥāfiẓ, but awareness of the phenomenon can be detected earlier, in *Kitāb jāmī' al-Afz̄* of David ben Abraham al-Fāṣī and in the *Masorah parva* of *Codex Leningrad* B19a to 2 Sam 24:10; see Aharon Maman and Shmuel Avi'zi 'Ozzi 'Alimot ha-Hebreiyyah le-Yoravim ve-l'Amiotot ha-Briton (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1984), 107, 240; A. Dotan, "De la Massora à la grammaire: Les débuts de la pensée grammaticale dans l'hébreu," JA 278 (1990) 23.

⁷⁵ That is, the orthographic ambiguities inherent in the unpointed consonantal skeleton of the Masoretic Text. The most common are *derashot* substituting one vowel for another and *V* for *W*.

76. That is, *derashot* based on Mishnaic Hebrew usage.

“He Begot a Son in His Likeness after His Image” (Genesis 5:3)

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The statement in Gen 5:3 that “When Adam had lived for 130 years, he begot a son in his likeness after his image” has elicited relatively little comment. Nachmanides observed that although it is obvious that all offspring of living creatures are in the likeness and image of their progenitors, the text specifies this in the case of Adam’s son (Seth) because Adam was created in God’s likeness and image (1:26–27, 5:1), and this exalted him.¹ Most commentators state that the verse means that Adam passed on the divine image to his descendants.² This is syllogistically correct, but if it were the main point the text

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1. For the subject of man being created in the image of God, see E. M. Curtis, *Man as the Image of God in Genesis in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1984); J. H. Tigay, "The Image of God and the Flood: Some New Developments," in *Studies in Jewish Education and Judaica in Honor of Louis Newman* (ed. A. M. Shapiro and B. Cohen; New York: KTAV, 1984) 169–82.

2. Nachmanides; D. Z. Hoffmann; J. Skinner; S. R. Driver; A. Dillmann; U. Cassuto (at 5:1); G. von Rad; N. M. Sarna; M. Weinfeld, in *Hāmīṣā Ḥūmē Tōrā 'im Pērīš Hādāl... mē-ze'ī Š. L. Gōrōnd*, vol. 1: *Séper Bérēshit* (newly revised; Tel Aviv; S. L. Gordon, 1972) 26; Westermann (at 5:1); cf. Keil and Delitzsch.

As Weinfeld notes, there is a similarity between our verse and *Enuma Eliš* I 16, "Anu begot his likeness (*tamšilašu*) Nudimmu (Ea)." What this passage might imply about Gen 5:3 is uncertain. Although it could mean that Nudimmu looked like Anu, the context does not favor this interpretation. *Enuma Eliš* I 12–20 contains a series of comparisons indicating whether successive generations of the gods were equal or superior to their predecessors. In this context, line 16 more likely means that Nudimmu was Anu's equal (cf. line 15, "Anshar made Anu, his firstborn, equal [*umashil-l-ma!*]"). For further discussion, see A. L. Oppenheim, "Mesopotamian Mythology 1," *Or. n.s.* 16 (1947) 208–9; for another view, see J. V. Kinnier-Wilson, "The Epic of Creation," in *Documents from Old Testament Times* (ed. D. Winton Thomas, New York: Harper and Row, 1961) 14.

wished to emphasize, the text would have underscored it by saying that 'Adam begot a son in *God's* likeness, after *His* image' (*bidēmūt ḥēlōhīm uk̄eṣalmō*), rather than 'Adam begot a son in *his* likeness, after *his* image'. The wording of the text stresses Seth's resemblance to Adam, not to God.

What is the point of stressing what to Nachmanides seemed obvious? The third-generation Palestinian Amora R. Jeremiah b. Elazar inferred that begetting offspring in one's own image was not inevitable, and that prior to his 130th year, Adam had in fact begotten children who did not resemble him:

All those years that the first man was under the ban (*bēniddui*, shunned by God)³ he begot spirits, *šēd*-demons, and *ill*-demons,⁴ as it is said: "When Adam had lived for 130 years, he begot a son in his likeness, after his image." This implies that until that time he begot offspring that were not after his image (*b. Erub.* 18b).⁵

The inference that, as a consequence of God's curse for having sinned in the Garden of Eden, Adam begot offspring unlike himself, namely spirits and demons, was fleshed out by R. David Qimhi (Narbonne, Provence, 1160?–1235?), building on observations by R. Sherira Gaon (906–1006, Gaon of Pumbedita 968–1006):⁶

וזיד אודם ואחריו שהויה שלשים ומאת שנה והולד בדורותיו בצלמו [sic], ופירשו כמי שפיריםנו בצלמנו בדורותיו, כי אודם טוב ושלם והוא שיעשה השבה, ואפשׁר שירזוח פירוש בדורותיו, על דמותו גופני שהויה לו בגורתו, ופירוש בצלמו, בדורתו שחכלה, כי אודם אף ליל טהראת חזהליה אחר שב בתשובה והחזרה לתחאה היה שלם בשכלה... וכותב הרב רביינו נסיט בשם רבינו שרירא זיל פירוש דבר זה, דלטיטה הקב"ה לאודם ננתן בו אותה שלא והו לויין ודמון לו ובמו שעשית שילודות ביריות משנותו כאלו ואמור בבורן, אמר רב יודה אמר שמואל הפלג ודמותו לילית אמר טמאה לדינה, ולוד הוא אלה שהורא בעל בנים, וכשהיה אודם הראשון בקהל לא היה מוליך אלא ביריות משנותו דמותו שדרן ולילין ככעריו בנהם ובבנם ודם ורוחות רעות שיש שהויה ורחו של אודם רוח רעה בשעה שהויה מקלל, יצאו ממנה הווחות והמינים רעים בהן רעה ואין בון טבחה, וכן דרך כי אודם קרויה למבעדי הדמות ולהאשים רעים שדים, וכשהוחץ הקב"ה והוסר כללו מהו והאשן ותוליד בנים שעודים לו ברומו נאה ורוח טובה וזהו שנאמנו: וילד בדורותיו בצלמו.

3. B. Epstein, *Torah Talmud*, ad loc.

4. *Midr. Hagadol* adds monkeys to the list of offspring. This reading may be influenced by Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed* 1:7, or by a passage like the one listing "monkeys and spirits and *šēd*-demons and *ill*-demons" in another context, *b. Sanh.* 109a. Cf. M. M. Kasher, *Torah Shelelah* (New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1949) 1.351 no. 33.

5. *Tg. Ps-J.* likewise holds that Adam previously begot offspring unlike himself but takes this to refer to Cain; cf. *Pirke R. El.* chap. 22. See also Jacob al-Kirkisani, cited by M. Zucker, *Saadya's Commentary on Genesis* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1984) n. 189 [Heb.]

6. For the text of Qimhi, see M. L. Katzenellenbogen (ed.), *Torat Hayyim, Bērēšit*, part 1 (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1986) 81–82. Qimhi cites Sherira from the works of R. Nissim Gaon of Kairouan, Tunisia (990–1062).

After Adam had lived for 130 years he begot offspring in his likeness after his image . . . for Adam was good and perfect after he repented. The interpretation of 'in his likeness' possibly refers to his bodily likeness, meaning that he resembled him in form, while 'his image' refers to his mind and intellect, for although Adam sinned at first, after he repented and regretted his sin he was perfect in his intellect. . . .

Qimhi goes on to quote R. Jeremiah b. Elazar's comment from *b. Erub.* 18b and then quotes the explanation of Sherira:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, cursed Adam and placed on him a sign such that his offspring did not resemble him, like women who bear (*yolədōt*) strange creatures such as those mentioned by our [Talmudic] rabbis [in *b. Nid.* 24b], "R. Judah, citing Samuel, stated: If a woman aborted a fetus in the likeness (*dēmūt*) of Lilith, its mother is unclean by reason of the birth [as stated in Leviticus 12], for it is a child though it has wings."⁷ And while the first man was under a curse he begot only strange creatures resembling *šēd*-demons and *ill*-demons in the ugliness of their faces and backs, and they were evil spirits, just as Adam's spirit was an evil spirit at the time he was accursed and there came forth from him evil spirits in which there is evil and no good. Similarly, it is people's custom to call people of ugly likeness and evil people demons (*šēdim*). But when the Holy One, Blessed be He, was pleased to remove the first man's curse, he bore children who resembled him in comely appearance and good spirit, and that is what is meant when it is said: 'He begot in his likeness after his image' (Gen 5:3).

What is behind the assumption that the opposite of begetting offspring who resemble their parents is begetting grotesque, malformed offspring? The answer is found in a curse formula that appears in Greek compacts.⁸ According to Aeschines, the members of the Delphis Amphictiony attacking Cirra in 590 B.C.E. swore that:

If anyone should violate this, whether city, or private man, or tribe, let him be under the curse (*enagēs*) . . . that their land bear no fruit, nor may their wives bear children resembling their parents (*goneusin eoikota*), but monsters (*terata*), nor may the flocks beget offspring according to nature (*kata physin*). . . .⁸

Similarly, at Plataea in 479 B.C.E., the Greeks, before battle with the Persians, are reported to have sworn

7. I first learned of these blessings and curses from M. Weinfeld, "The Emergence of the Deuteronomic Movement: The Historical Antecedents," in *Das Deuteronomium* (ed. N. Lohfink; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985) 80.

8. Aeschines Against Ctesiphon 3.110–11, in C. D. Adams, *The Speeches of Aeschines* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press / London: Heinemann, 1938) 392–95.

If I observe what is written in the oath . . . my (land) shall bear fruits—if not, it shall be barren; and (if I observe the oath) the women shall bear children resembling the parents (*en eoikota goneusin*)—if not, they shall bear monsters (*terata*); and (if I observe the oath) the flock shall bear resembling (*eoikota*) the flock—if not, monsters (*terata*).⁹

In these curses, 'resembling' (*eoikota*) parents refers to physical resemblance, as it does in Aristotle's discussion of children looking like their parents.¹⁰ 'Monsters' (*terata*) is used in the sense of anomalies, that is, congenitally malformed persons or animals, as the term is used by Plato and Aristotle in discussing such phenomena as humans producing offspring that resemble animals or animals of one species producing offspring that resemble another.¹¹ Some other curses, instead of saying "nor may their wives bear children resembling their parents, but monsters," say that "the women shall not give birth according to nature" (*mēte . . . kata physin*, the phrase used of flocks in the oath against Cirrha), which means the same thing.¹²

In these blessings and curses, then, looking like one's parents does not mean bearing a close resemblance to them but looking human rather than inhuman. The curse formula resembles the comments of Jeremiah b. Elazar, Sherira, and

9. P. Siewert, *Der Eid von Plataiai* (Munich: Beck, 1972) 6–8, lines 39–46, and p. 98. Hesiod's *Works and Days*, line 235 states that in a city governed by justice, "the women bear children who resemble (*eoikota*) their parents," which probably means the same thing. See discussion by M. L. West, *Hesiod: Works and Days* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978) 215–16; A. N. Athanassakis, *Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, Shield* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983) 95; W. J. Verdenius, *A Commentary on Hesiod: Works and Days*, vv. 1–382 (Leiden: Brill, 1985) 133–34; and M. Delcourt, *Sérilités mystérieuses et naissances maléfiques dans l'antiquité classique* (Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège 83; Liège: Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 1938) 11 n. 3. As Delcourt observes, the fact that the children are said to resemble their 'parents' (*goneusin*) rather than their 'fathers' argues against the point's being that their paternity is not in doubt. (Contrary to Athanassakis [Hesiod, 71], *Works and Days* 1.182 is not pertinent to our subject; see Verdenius, *Commentary on Hesiod*, 109; West, *Hesiod*, 199; and the translations of West, *Theogony and Works and Days* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988] 42, and H. G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homerica* [LCL; London: Heinemann/Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959] 21.)

10. Aristotle *Generation of Animals* 767a.36–37.

11. LSJ, s.v. *teras*. See Plato *Cratylus* 393b, 394a; Aristotle *Generation of Animals* 767b.6, 8; 769b.10, 30; 773a.32, etc. The word is used in this sense in English derivatives, such as 'teratology,' "the branch of medicine and of developmental biology which deals with congenital defects and abnormal formations" (L. Brown [ed.], *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1993], s.v.).

12. See J. Pouilloux, *Choix d'inscriptions grecques* (Paris: Société d'Édition les Belles Lettres, 1960) no. 52, line 7; G. Dittenberger, *Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum* (4th ed.; Hildesheim: Olms, 1960) 1.773, no. 527, lines 85ff.; M. Guarducci, *Inscriptions creticas* (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1942) 3.50, lines 24–25. For the usage, see Plato (*Cratylus* 393bc), who uses the phrase to illustrate the concept of monsters: "I am not speaking of monsters (*teras*). . . . If a horse, contrary to nature (*para physin*), should bring forth a calf . . . or if any offspring that is not human should be born from a human. . . ."

Qimhi about Gen 5:3 in three respects: it describes a curse, comparable to the "ban" that Adam was under after his expulsion from Eden; it refers to children who do not resemble their parents; and it describes them as unnatural or grotesque. Although the exegetical traditions speak of spirits, not monsters, these two descriptions are not incompatible, since *šēd-* and *lil-*demons were thought to be monstrous or grotesque in appearance.¹³ In fact, in *b. Nid.* 24b (cited by Sherira), one type of malformed fetus, which looks like a human with wings, is called a *lilit* (the feminine form of *lil*-demon), and in the Babylonian birth-omen collection *Šumma Izbu*, one type of malformed baby is called a *LAMMA*, the Sumerogram for a *lamassatu*- or *lamassu*-demon (*Šumma Izbu* II 67').¹⁴

Underlying these blessings and curses is the concern about severely malformed babies that is reflected in the attention given to the subject in ancient literature. Talmudic sources mention the birth of a two-headed human (*b. Menah.* 33a)¹⁵ and discuss hermaphrodites a number of times (e.g., *m. Bik.* 4; *t. Bik.* 2).¹⁶ Usually Talmudic sources deal with malformations when discussing the halakhic obligations of women after aborting a fetus, depending on whether the fetus has a human form (*ṣūrat [ha]’ādām*) or looks like a *lilit*-demoness or, wholly or partly, like an animal (*m. Nid.* 3:2; *m. Ker.* 1:3, 5; *b. Nid.* 22b–24b).¹⁷ Since the Talmud refers to these only as aborted fetuses rather than live births (probably because such serious malformations are more common in aborted fetuses than in live births), its discussion, and R. Sherira's citation of it, are not strictly

13. See, for example, the descriptions in midrashic texts of the *šēd*-demon *Qeteb*: his head resembles that of a calf, with a single horn emerging from his forehead, and he rolls like a jar or ball; he is covered with scales, hair, and eyes; and a single eye is set on his chest (*Num. Rab.* 12:3; *Lam. Rab.* 1:3 [ed. Buber, p. 63]; *Midr. Ps.* 91:3 [ed. Buber, p. 397]). *Pazuzu*, the Mesopotamian "king of the evil *lilu*-demons" has four wings, a grotesque face, long horns, lion's claws, bird's talons as hind feet, and a scorpion's sting (see W. G. Lambert, "Inscribed Pazuzu Heads from Babylon," *Forschungen und Berichte* [Berlin: Akademie, 1970] 12.42:1; H. W. Haussig [ed.], *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, 1: *Götter und Mythen im Vorderen Orient* [Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1965] 48).

14. E. V. Leichty, *The Omen Series Šumma Izbu* (Locust Valley, N.Y.: Augustin, 1970) 52.

15. See S. Lieberman, "Tanna’ hēkā’ qd’ē," in *Studies in Memory of Moses Schorr, 1874–1941* (Qōbeq maddā’i lē-zekher Moše Šōr) (ed. L. Ginzberg and A. Weiss; New York: Hōtsāt Va’adat Zikhron Moše Šōr, 1944) 185. References to anomalous human births in post-Talmudic sources of the twelfth and nineteenth centuries are cited by I. Jakobovits, *Jewish Medical Ethics* (New York: Bloch, 1975) 379 n. 194. The earliest explicit reference in Jewish sources is 2 Esdr 5:8, "women in their uncleanness will give birth to monsters (*prodigia*)," part of a prediction of disasters. I know of no clear reference to the subject in the Bible. Mephibosheth's lameness, even if congenital, is not a birth defect of the same order. Exod 2:2, "When she saw that he was good," could mean that Moses' mother saw that he was normal, but the alternative was not necessarily a severe malformation.

16. B. M. Lerner, "Androgynus," *EncJud* 2.950.

17. Examples are fish, locusts, insects, creeping things, beasts, wild animals, birds, sea monsters (*tannin*), and snakes (*nāḥāñ*); in some cases the fetus has the body of a goat and the face of a human or vice versa, the face of a human but one eye of a beast; in other cases the fetuses lack or have extra bodily parts or have partly indistinguishable parts and features.

relevant to the subject. A Babylonian list of portents lists an incident when a woman gave birth to a child that "had tusks(?) like (those) of an elephant."¹⁸ The Babylonian omen series *Šumma Izbu* lists the predictive significance of women giving birth to children with a wide variety of malformations, including excess eyes, heads, and limbs, animal-like and demon-like features, and other types of malformation like those of the fetuses mentioned in Tractate *Niddah*.¹⁹ The subject is also common in classical literature. Apart from the discussion by Aristotle and the reference by Plato, mentioned above, classical sources mention the birth of monsters that are half man and half beast, a pig with hawk's talons, as well as "hermaphrodites, two-headed animals and children, . . . excess limbs, misplaced body parts, missing limbs or other body parts, appearance like various animals . . .".²⁰

Malformations of these sorts are unfortunately well known even in modern times. "There are human beings with one eye in the forehead, without nose, or with 'flippers' in place of limbs, . . . children covered by a scaly integument that . . . resembles that of a fish, . . . double-headed, four limbed creatures, . . . mouthless individuals."²¹ In 1991, surgeons in Tampa, Florida, performed plastic surgery on a baby who was born with Apert Syndrome. She had "a stovepipe-shaped head, bulging eyes, a concave face, gaping mouth and cleft palate. [Her] hands were grotesque mittens, two lumps of flesh with no fingers and only a stub of a thumb. A bone protruded from the bottoms of the infant's toeless, twisted feet." According to the story about the operation in *The St. Petersburg [Florida] Times*, "Apert is one of a cluster of syndromes that causes facial deformity and webbing of the hands and feet." It occurs once in every 160,000 births and afflicts all races and both genders.²² A year earlier, sur-

18. CT 29 49.23, cited in CAD A/1 290a.

19. Aristotle's comment is relevant to Babylonian omens: when people say that an animal has the head of another animal, they do not mean it literally but are referring only to resemblance (Aristotle *Generation of Animals* 769b, 14ff. [LCL, pp. 417–19]). The malformations mentioned in *Šumma Izbu* include: looking like a lion, wolf, dog, pig, bull, elephant, ass, ram, cat, snake, tortoise, roe, bird, tigilu monster, the head of various animals; children with two heads, with animal-like eyes, face, ears, beak, horns, or feet, or a single eye on the forehead; children with conjoined feet or more than two feet or with a beard or grey hair. *Šumma Izbu* uses the verb 'give birth' (*aladū*) rather than 'miscarry' (*ša libbiša nadū*). However, in some cases, where the women give birth to bodily parts, it, too, must have miscarriages in mind (see Leichty, *Omen Series*, 17, end).

20. Ibid., 14–16; Delcourt, *Sterilités mystérieuses*; Lieberman, "*Tanna² hēka² qā²ē*," n. 11. See, for example, Herodotus 1.84; Livy 41.21.12; Tacitus *Annals* 12.64; *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Ant. Pius 9.3; Ammianus Marcellinus 19.12.19 (all cited by Lieberman).

21. F. Gonzalez-Crussi, "Teratology," in *Notes of an Anatomist* (London: Picador, 1986) 94, cited by L. Holden, *Forms of Deformity* (JSOTSup 131; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 14.

22. C. Gentry, "Doctors Rebuilt a Face, Life," *The St. Petersburg [Florida] Times*, July 7, 1991, City Edition, p. 1A. There are approximately 25 children born with Apert Syndrome in the United States each year (C. S. Vass, "Doctors Offer Baby Daryl Hope as Series of Operations Begins," *Chattanooga Free Press*, October 9, 1996, editorial section, p. A1).

geons at the same hospital reconstructed the face of an 18-year-old boy who "had no nose. His right eye socket was just above his ear. A large hole in the bone of his forehead left his brain protected only by a flap of wrinkled skin." According to the chief surgeon, when the boy first arrived at the hospital, "he was what you call a monstrosity." When he left, his mother said that he "does not look like an animal—he is human now."²³ Reports of two-headed babies, though rare, appear regularly, one as recently as July 28, 1996, in Tijuana, Mexico.²⁴

The attention devoted to this subject in antiquity probably stems from at least two factors: such births were not only heart-breaking, but were regarded as portentous (hence their use as omens), and they were probably more frequent than they are today. According to E. V. Leichty:

[W]e can be quite certain that the rate of abnormal birth was much greater in ancient times. Women in the ancient Near East must have conceived much more often than modern women because of high infant mortality and the lack of any type of birth control. In addition, the lack of medicine and prenatal controls can be assumed to have resulted in a much higher proportion of miscarriages. Since the probability of anomalies is increased after the fifth or sixth pregnancy, this in itself would increase considerably the ratio of malformations to births.²⁵

To this we may add the likelihood that cases of Apert Syndrome, now the second most common craniofacial deformity, were probably more common in ancient and polygamous societies, in which wives often died in childbirth and men remarried or continued to marry and father children in their older years; since "men in their 50s have more than 20 times the risk of fathering Apert's syndrome children than men in their 20s."²⁶

23. *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, September 28, 1990, from the Associated Press. More accessible, though less detailed, reports are available on-line on NEXIS (Library: News, Current News): K. Ovack, "Teen with New Face Leaves for Home," *The St. Petersburg Times*, September 28, 1990, City Edition, Tampa Bay and State section, p. 7B; and B. Port and B. Duryea, "Teen in Fair Condition after Facial Surgery," *The St. Petersburg Times*, August 18, 1990, City Edition, Tampa Bay and State; Metro Report section, p. 3B.

24. Reuters North American Wire, August 5, 1996, Monday, BC Cycle; this and several other cases are accessible on NEXIS (Library: News, Current News) sub "two-headed baby." Six cases from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century are reported by B. C. Hirst and G. A. Piersol, *Human Monstrosities* (Philadelphia: Lea Brothers, 1891–93) 4.157 (cited by Lieberman, "*Tanna² hēka² qā²ē*," 185).

25. Leichty, *Omen Series*, 17.

26. Geneticist Andrew Wilkie of the Institute of Molecular Medicine in Oxford, England, cited by R. Nowack, "Annual Genetics Meeting: Some Puzzles, Some Answers—1995 American Society of Human Genetics Meeting," in *Science* 270/5239 (November 17, 1995) 1120–21, available on-line on NEXIS (Library: News, Current News). Cf. D. J. David et al., *Craniofacial Deformities* (New York: Springer, 1990) 35.

The resemblance of the Greek curses to the comments of R. Jeremiah b. Elazar, Sherira and Qimhi is striking; it is, in fact, more striking than their resemblance to Gen 5:3 itself. As noted above, the rabbinic comments all refer to a curse or a ban, they refer to children who do not resemble their parents, and they describe them as unnatural or grotesque. These similarities make one wonder whether the curse motif of bearing monstrous offspring—known to me only from the Greek world, not from the Near East—had made its way to Palestine, with so many other aspects of Greek culture, by R. Jeremiah's time (cf. 2 Esdr 5:8, cited in n. 15), and from there to tenth-century Babylonia either as curses or in some expanded version of R. Jeremiah's comment. Their resemblance to Gen 5:3 itself is less explicit. Perhaps this is simply because the verse describes a normal birth; like the Greek blessing that is a counterpart of the curse, it need not spell out that this is a blessing or state that the normal birth is non-monstrous.

It is natural to wonder whether the biblical verse reflects, or is reacting to, a mythological theme. Does it aim to counter some myth according to which the first humans gave birth to malformed, monstrous offspring? Mesopotamian and Greek myths refer to monsters in primordial times, but they are born *before* the human race comes into existence.²⁷ A Sumerian myth tells how, some time after Enki created humanity, he and Ninmah created eight humans with bodily defects (blind, crippled, incontinent, sexless, etc.). In the myth, however, they are not the offspring of humans, though they are obviously forerunners of various types of handicapped people who will be born to humans later.²⁸ Seth, the son of the first couple, is not the antithesis of any of the above. Closer to what we are looking for is Oannes, the name used by Berossus for the first of the seven antediluvian sages—known as *apkallus* in Akkadian—who taught mankind the arts and sciences of civilization.²⁹ According to Berossus, Oannes emerged from the Persian Gulf in the reign of the first human king. He had the body of a fish but had a human head growing beneath his fish-head and human feet growing from his fish-tail. In fact, cuneiform sources say that all seven of

27. In Hesiod's *Theogony* the offspring of Earth and Sky include the three Cyclopes who, though "in all other respects they were like gods (*theois enaligkoi*)," had one round eye in the middle of their foreheads, and three other sons who each had 100 arms and 50 heads (lines 139–52). In *Enuma Eliš*, Tiamat bears 11 monsters to battle Marduk, and Marduk himself has 4 eyes and 4 ears (I 95, 132–46). In Berossus's retelling of *Enuma Eliš*, these offspring of Tiamat are called monster-like (*teratōdē*) "men"; they have 2 or 4 wings and 2 faces, one body, and 2 heads, and both male and female sexual organs; others are men with horns and legs or feet of animals, or as composite animals (S. M. Burstein, *The Babylonianca of Berossus* [SANE 1/5; Malibu, Calif.; Undena, 1978] 14–15; for the Greek text, see F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 3C [Leiden: Brill, 1958] 369–71).

28. See T. Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once . . . Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) 151–66.

29. Burstein, *The Babylonianca of Berossus*, 13–14.

these sages were "pure *purādu*-fish of the sea."³⁰ In the opinion of Anne D. Kilmer, anomalous births are "exactly the perception that lies behind the *purādu*-fishmen *apkallu* mythology which no doubt originated in folkloric speculations based on observations of foetal development."³¹ Scholars agree that one of these sages, probably Oannes, is the figure known as Adapa in Akkadian sources.³² Now in the older myth of Adapa, Adapa is described as the son of the god Ea (*Adapa* B, 12), but he is also said to be mortal (A, 4) and 'human offspring' (*zēr amilati*, D, 12). Conceivably, then, Genesis, with its naturalistic conception of the origins of civilization,³³ is reacting to a tradition that civilization was founded by anomalous offspring of the first humans. However, nothing else is presently known of Adapa or of Seth to suggest that they are counterparts of each other and that Gen 5:3 is part of this reaction.³⁴

In any case, it seems that the view of R. Jeremiah b. Elazar, Sherira, and Qimhi may well be correct. The facts that "begetting children who resemble their parents" refers to normal rather than malformed, inhuman-looking offspring; that anomalous births were relatively more common in antiquity; and that the subject received considerable attention in ancient literature lend color to their view that Gen 5:3 means that Adam fathered a normal child with a human appearance. These facts do not support the further, aggadic, inference that Adam previously begot demons or monsters. But they also suggest, since birth anomalies were usually considered ominous, that the birth of a normal child to Adam was a sign of blessing, in fulfillment of God's blessing in v. 2.

30. E. Reiner, "The Etiological Myth of the 'Seven Sages,'" *Or* 30 (1961) 2, 4; S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 182–83.

31. A. D. Kilmer, "The Mesopotamian Counterparts of the Biblical *nēpīlm*," *Perspectives on Language and Text: Essays and Poems in Honor of Francis I. Andersen's Sixtieth Birthday*, July 28, 1985 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 43 n. 14. The main point of Kilmer's article is to suggest that the *apkallus* are the counterparts of the *nēpīlm*. If that were the case, one might argue that the point of Gen 5:3 is to contrast Seth with the *nēpīlm*, but since one lacks evidence that the *nēpīlm* were thought of as culture founders, their identification with the *apkallus* is hard to sustain.

32. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 182–83; see the evidence cited by S. A. Picchioni, *Il Poemetto di Adapa* (Assyriologia 6; ed. G. Komoróczy; Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, 1981) 47–49 (citing the views of Hallo, Lambert, van Dijk, and Reiner). A. D. Kilmer, in contrast, holds that Adapa is the seventh sage, Utuabzu ("The Mesopotamian Counterparts of the Biblical *nēpīlm*," 40).

33. See N. M. Sarna, *Genesis* (The JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 35–36.

34. In postbiblical lore, Seth and his descendants do play a role analogous to that of the culture-bearing Babylonian *apkallus*, but that may well be due to the adoption of the motif from Berossus, whose work was known to Josephus (*Ant.* 1.93, etc.). See Josephus, *Ant.* 1.69–71, *Gen. Rab.* 26.5, and other sources cited by L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909–38) 1.121–22 and 5.149–50 n. 53. For the relationship between the Babylonian myth of the seven sages and Genesis 4 and 5, see W. W. Hallo, *Origins: The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Some Modern Western Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 1–15.



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