

Is the Garden of Eden a Sanctuary?

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Abstract

The idea that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary, with Adam as priest, is increasingly widespread. The most commonly cited source for this idea is G. K. Beale, who gives as evidence for this the idea that God's "walking" in the Garden (Gen 3:8) is the same as his "walking" in connection with the sanctuary in Lev 26. Other Biblical texts where "walking" using the term הִיטְפָא in the *hithpa'el* are cited in support. However, on closer examination, these texts do not speak of God walking in a sanctuary, and other uses of the *hithpa'el* have no connection with God or the Garden of Eden or the sanctuary. Thus there is no technical term in view which carries this meaning. It is a standard term used in multiple ways simply meaning "walk" or in the *hithpa'el* "walk about," which (even with God as the subject) gives no support for the idea that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary, and consequently calls into doubt the idea that Adam was a priest.

Introduction

The idea that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary, where Adam [הָאָדָם *ha-adam*] served as priest,¹ has become increasingly widespread in the interpretation of Genesis 1–3 in recent years. A widely cited source for this idea is the work of G. K. Beale, principally *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (2004).² He com-

1 While the Hebrew could indicate either a personal name or a designation (perhaps an office-bearer), I will use "Adam" throughout since in the present study it refers to the person Adam and his tasks in the Garden of Eden.

2 G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004). A popular version of his view is found in G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Nottingham, UK: InterVarsity, 2014). Beale acknowledges (*The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66, n. 87) the influence "to a significant extent" of Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hamilton: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1989). See also *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 170, n. 1, and 371, n. 12, where Beale indicates that Kline's work may have been the origin of his idea. M. Barker, *The Gates of Heaven* (London: SPCK, 1991) and D. W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. D. W. Parry (Salt Lake City:

ments: “From the late 1990s onward, it has become widely accepted that Genesis 1–3 depicts Adam as a priest serving in a garden sanctuary.”³ Each time this claim appears the same Biblical verses used by Beale are cited in support.⁴ Careful scrutiny of this exegetical argument is therefore warranted,⁵ especially in light of Block’s criticism:

While impressive collectively, each of these observations is capable of another and in many instances more natural interpretation that removes it from the priestly conceptual realm and transfers it to the realm of an ancient royal garden. In the end the temple interpretation is illusory and can be maintained only by reading later realities into the earlier text.⁶

Beale adduces a number of reasons why we should interpret the story of the Garden of Eden as the establishment of a sanctuary, a temple, and that Adam was

Deseret Book Company, 1994). Beale has also summarised his argument in “Eden, The Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48 (March 2005): 5–31; and “Adam as the First Priest in Eden as the Garden Temple,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 22 (2018): 9–24. The basic ideas appear again in G. K. Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023), 193–202. Detailed analysis of Beale’s view (mostly positive) can be found in Jahisber Peñuela Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3: A Reevaluation of the Biblical Evidence” (PhD Thesis, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2019), and Charles Robert “Chet” Harvey, “A Templated Creation: Application of Gregory K. Beale’s Cosmic-Temple Motif to a Theology of Creation” (PhD Thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

- 3 G. K. Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 197. He cites as evidence his own book, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66–80; and L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 97–100, 258–261. However, this is not independent support for the idea since Morales (110, n. 183 continued on 111, and 111) is quoting Beale, “The Final Vision of the Apocalypse and Its Implications for a Biblical Theology of the Temple,” in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. S. Gathercole and T. D. Alexander (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2004), 191–209, where the same arguments are given.
- 4 Umberto Cassuto comments: “The *Hithpa’el* of the verb *hālakh* [‘walk’] often occurs in connection with the Lord, e.g., Lev. xxvi 12; Deut xxiii 14 [Hebrew, verse 15].” *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, part 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 152. This is a reprint of a translation from 1953, with the Hebrew original dating from 1944, predating Beale’s views. Beale does not cite Cassuto here, although he cites Cassuto in other connections. See *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*.
- 5 This view appears in both academic works (where Beale is cited) and in more popular material including sermons, magazines, and blogs where the ideas are presented often with no sources referenced.
- 6 Daniel I. Block, *Covenant: The Framework of God’s Grand Plan of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 28. See below for Block’s criticisms of the interpretation of Ezekiel 28.

appointed to be a priest in this sanctuary,⁷ to cultivate it (עֲבַד *‘abad*) and keep it (שָׁמַר *šamar*) (Gen 2:15).⁸

While there is much that could be debated about the various exegetical arguments Beale advances,⁹ here I want to examine in detail just one of them.¹⁰

Beale claims that the reference to God “walking” in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8) using the *hithpa’el* הִתְהַלֵּךְ is one of the many indications that Eden was a temple, since the same term is used for walking to and fro outside the tabernacle to guard it, and for God walking in the camp of the Israelites. This claim is repeated throughout his works, but it is not developed in greater depth. A typical comment:

Israel’s temple was the place where the priest experienced God’s unique presence, and Eden was the place where Adam walked and talked with God. The same Hebrew verbal form (stem) מִתְהַלֵּךְ

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- 7 In his extensive thesis on the “land” in Biblical theology, Munther Isaac argues for Eden as “proto-promised land” and as a sanctuary. “If Eden was a sanctuary, it follows that Adam was a priestly figure.” Munther B. I. Isaac, “From land to lands, from Eden to the renewed earth: a Christ-centred biblical theology of the promised land” (PhD thesis, Middlesex University, 2014), 3. Now published as *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centred Biblical Theology of the Promised Land* (Carlisle: Langham Academic, 2015). Note that Isaac sees Eden as sanctuary, as covenanted territory, and as royal garden. This three-fold focus operative throughout his thesis (including in his study of the themes in the NT) mitigates the one-sidedness of seeing Eden as first and foremost a sanctuary.
- 8 Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66–70. The task of “cultivating” and “keeping” is part of human “stewardly” responsibility for the whole of creation, with careful and accountable management expressed in Genesis 1:26–28 by “rule” [רָדָה *radah*] and “keep” [כָּבַשׁ *kabaš*]. There is extensive literature around what is meant by “rule” and “keep,” with some blaming this passage for human responsibility for environmental damage. I cannot enter into that debate here, but suffice it to say that I do not believe God would, after his careful work of creation, relinquish it for people to exploit and abuse. Unfortunately, Beale blunts the force of this allocation of creation-wide responsibility before God by seeing it as primarily a priestly task related to the (garden) temple. The suggestion that עֲבַד *‘abad* and שָׁמַר *šamar* when used together refer to priestly work seems overdrawn. They are admittedly used to refer to the work of priests, but the nature of this work is not stated and so they cannot be referring to specifically priestly tasks. It means simply that there is work to be done which only the Aaronic priests may do [Numbers 16:1–7]. Therefore, use of these terms in Genesis 2–3 does *not* indicate that the garden was a tabernacle, or that Adam was a priest.
- 9 He lists them as follows: (1) God’s “walking back and forth” (Gen 3:8); (2) The command to Adam to “cultivate” and “keep” the garden, seeing the terminology as a reference to priesthood; (3) Adam lost his priestly role by failing to keep out the serpent, so cherubim were appointed in his place; (4) The tree of life was the model for the lampstand in the sanctuary/temple; (5) The temple wall cladding in Jerusalem was carved to resemble a garden; (6) The entrance to the garden and to the temples faced east; (7) Rivers flow out of Eden, the eschatological temple in Ezekiel and Revelation; (8) the Garden of Eden and the temple both had a tri-partite structure. See the helpful concise summary in G. K. Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 198–99. These arguments are discussed in *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66–80.
- 10 J. Alexander Rutherford critiques Beale’s book regarding methodology and interpretation, focusing on issues other than those discussed here. Review of the *Temple and the Mission of God*, Teleioteti Book Reviews, <https://www.teleioteti.ca/2021/02/16/review-of-the-temple-and-the-mission-of-god/>. David G. Firth critically evaluates Beale’s interpretations and methods in *European Journal of Theology* 18:2 (2009): 195–96.

(hithpael) used for God's "walking back and forth" in the Garden (Gen 3:8) also describes God's presence in the tabernacle (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14 [15]); 2 Sam 7:6–7).¹¹

Beale has argued that the verbal form is significant, although he strangely undercuts his argument by suggesting that this applies to only three out of eight instances.

The precise hithpael form that is used is in Gen 3:8 is a participle (*mithallek*), which is the precise form used in Deut 23:14 [15] and 2 Sam 7:6. Outside of these three uses, the hithpael participial form occurs only in five other passages, which have nothing to do with the tabernacle or temple.¹²

Richard Davidson suggests that the "expression used to describe God 'walking around' (Hithpael הִתְהַלֵּךְ) in the Garden (Gen 3:8) is a technical term for God's presence in the sanctuary," citing the usual texts, Lev 26:12 and 2 Sam 7:6–7. He references Wenham and Parry for this idea.¹³ But treating the *hithpael* of הִתְהַלֵּךְ as a technical term cannot be sustained, given that it is never used **explicitly** in this way.¹⁴ Another approach is offered by Peter Beckman, who says that "When the subject of 'walking about' (a hithpael verb) is the Lord, the action's context is always either in the tabernacle or in the Garden."¹⁵ This is inaccurate since the context is never **in** the tabernacle (nor associated with it).

Gordon Wenham is often cited in this connection. He stated in his commentary on Genesis,

The term "walking" (hithpael participle of הִתְהַלֵּךְ) is subsequently used

11 Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66. This same claim is made in 111, n. 68, where Beale says that "'walking' is used figuratively in Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy for God's presence with Israel (apparently in the tabernacle) during the wilderness wanderings." Beale then cites the same texts as in the quotation above, with no indication as to which texts in Exodus and Numbers might be referred to here. The *hithpa'el* הִתְהַלֵּךְ is in fact not used anywhere in Numbers, and there is only one citation in Exod 21:19 which concerns whether or not an injured man is able to *walk around* with the aid of a staff. Other references to God "going" with Israel refer to the pillar of cloud and fire, or the "angel" of the Lord going with them use forms of הָלַךְ other than the *hithpa'el*.

12 Beale, "Adam as the First Priest," 22, n. 3. See table 1 for the use of הִתְהַלֵּךְ in the OT.

13 Richard Davidson, "Earth's First sanctuary: Genesis 1–3 and Parallel Creation accounts," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 53 (2015): 74, citing Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story" and Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 126–151.

14 Note also that the Septuagint gives a number of different translation equivalents for the *hithpa'el* of הִתְהַלֵּךְ, which we would not expect if this were a technical term specially related to God's actions or the sanctuary. The LXX uses forms of *peripatéō* in Gen 3:8, Lev 26:12, Deut 23:14, 2 Sam 7:6; and Esth 2:11. See T. Muraoka, *A Greek-Hebrew/Aramaic Two-Way Index to the Septuagint* (Louvain: Peeters, 2010), 187. In Ezek 28:14 the LXX has *égenēthēs* (exists) instead of a verb for "walking."

15 Peter Beckman, "The Garden of Eden: An Archetypal Sanctuary" (M.Th. Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2017), 42.

of God's presence in the Israelite tent sanctuary (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:15 [14]; 2 Sam 7:6–7) again emphasising the relationship between the garden and the later shrines.¹⁶

Elsewhere, Wenham argues that the garden of Eden is “an archetypal sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him.”¹⁷ He sees parallels between features of the garden and later sanctuaries, the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple, which suggest to him that “the garden itself is understood as a sort of sanctuary.”¹⁸ However, Wenham does not develop his arguments to any extent. It is Beale who makes this connection a linchpin for his perspective on the Old Testament.

The Biblical texts repeatedly cited (with little variation) can be tabulated for ease of reference (NIV 1988 translation).¹⁹

16 Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1 of Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 76. See also his earlier article, “Sanctuary symbolism in the Garden of Eden story,” in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division A: The Period of the Bible* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986) 19–25. Reprinted in Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, eds., *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399–404. Here Wenham made a limited comment on this, saying simply that “The same term is used to describe the divine presence in the later tent sanctuaries in Lev 26:12, Deut 23:15, 2 Sam 7:6–7. The Lord walked in Eden as he subsequently walked in the tabernacle.” “Sanctuary symbolism in the Garden of Eden story,” 20. He adduces other evidence for the Garden being a sanctuary which also needs careful appraisal.

17 Wenham. “Sanctuary symbolism in the Garden of Eden story,” 19.

18 Ibid.

19 The NIV 2011 edition is identical for these verses.

Table 1. Use of *להתהלך* in the OT

Verse	Use	Context
Gen 3:8	<i>להתהלך</i>	Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was <u>walking</u> in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
Lev 26:12	<i>להתהלך</i>	I will <u>walk</u> among you and be your God, and you will be my people.
Deut 23:14 [H 15]	<i>להתהלך</i>	For the LORD your God <u>moves about</u> in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.
2 Sam 7:6	<i>להתהלך</i>	I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been <u>moving</u> from place to place with a tent as my dwelling.
2 Sam 7:7	<i>להתהלך</i>	Wherever I have <u>moved</u> with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”
Ezek 28:14	<i>להתהלך</i>	You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you <u>walked</u> among the fiery stones.

Leaving aside Gen 3:8 for the moment, we will examine the other texts to evaluate the extent to which they provide support for Beale’s argument.

Leviticus 26:11–12

Peñuela Pineda comments on this text, that “the hitpa’el of *הלך* is related to God’s sacred dwelling, and therefore to God’s presence.”²⁰ Similarly, Munther states: “Lev. 26:12 says that God will ‘walk among’ the Israelites in the land, using the same verb form (*יתהלך*) which echoes the ‘walk’ of God with Adam and Eve in Eden in Gen. 3:8.”²¹ Wenham states that the blessings of the covenant for God’s

20 Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3,” 92.

21 Munther B. I. Isaac, From land to lands, 152, citing C. J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 185. It is curious that although both Adam and Eve were given the same commandments, and equally suffered punishment, I have found only one commentator who states that Eve would also have been a priest (and a king!). Williamson sees the garden as the inner sanctum of the whole creation as a sanctuary, and comments: “Thus understood, Adam is portrayed as a priest in Genesis 2, just as he is portrayed as a king in Genesis 1. Hence Adam and Eve were made kings and priests to serve God.” Paul R Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, NSBT (Nottingham,

faithful people include God walking with them “as he did in the garden of Eden before the fall.”²²

While the tabernacle is mentioned, it does not speak of God walking *in* the *tabernacle*, the place where his presence was manifest, but in the camp among the people—who would *not* be in the tabernacle! Of course, it does not exclude God walking in the tabernacle but that is not what this Biblical text states. Both the tabernacle and the “walking” are described as being “among” the people, as is clear from the next verse to consider (Deut 23:14). Harper cites Milgrom’s view that “The clear implication is that... YHWH is not confined to a sanctuary but is present everywhere in the land.”²³

Deuteronomy 23:14 [H 15]

Here the context is the camp of the army when it has gone out to battle against their enemies (Deut 23:9).²⁴ While the camp must be holy since God is walking through it, that does not make it a sanctuary—the tabernacle where the ark was housed remained with the main encampment of the people; it was not taken with the warriors when they went out to battle. The “indecent” thing referred to is human excrement. The Israelites were told to designate a place outside the camp where they could relieve themselves, dig a hole, and cover it up so there is nothing offensive in the camp as God moves among them (vv. 12–13). This is clearly a reference to God “walking” (NIV “moves about”) through the military camp, not the encampment where the Israelites lived, ate, played, and worked.

Note Craigie’s comment though, that this verse is not speaking of God moving about in the camp itself, but may allude to the presence of God symbolised by the presence of the ark in the camp.²⁵ I consider that this does not do justice to the text, which required the people to keep the camp clean since God is moving about in it. This would not refer to the ark being moved about the camp: that remained behind in the tabernacle. We also have a specific reason why God is moving among them: ‘to protect you and deliver your enemies to you.’ This image of God as a warrior is unconnected to his “walking” in a tabernacle.

UK: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 49, n. 22. I would claim that if Adam is to be seen as a priest, then in the pre-fall condition Eve would also have been a priest.

22 Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 330. See also Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Nottingham, UK: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 478–79.

23 Harper, “*I Will Walk Among You*,” 194, citing J. Milgrom, Leviticus 23–27, *The Anchor Bible* 3B (New York: The Anchor Bible, 2001), 2301.

24 Peter C. Craigie refers repeatedly to the “military camp” in *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 299–300.

25 Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 300.

2 Samuel 7:6–7 = 1 Chronicles 17:5–6

God here says that he had not required a fixed temple (one made of cedar), but was content with the portable tabernacle. We can question whether 2 Sam 7:6 is relevant, since it does not refer to God “walking around” but “moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling.” We cannot see this as referring to God walking alongside the tent as it was transported from place to place, and in the occasional relocation of the tabernacle once they were in the land.²⁶ If anything it is the opposite of walking in a tabernacle: it is walking where there is no tabernacle erected since it was packed for travel. When the tent was re-erected, God’s presence “moved” (relocated) to the new site (most prominently in the pillar of fire and of cloud, e.g., Exod 13:21-22, Num 14:14; Neh 9:19).

Ezekiel 28:14

In a later article, Beale adds this text to the list of places where “walking” is an indication of a sanctuary. “The same Hebrew verbal form (hithpael) used for God’s ‘walking back and forth’ in the Garden (Gen 3:8), also describes God’s presence in the tabernacle (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14 [15]; 2 Sam 7:6-7; Ezek 28:14).”²⁷ But here in Ezekiel, it is the “anointed guardian cherub” who is walking among the stones of fire. There is no indication that this cherub was a priest—all the imagery relates to a “ruler,” the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:1, 12).²⁸ Nor does it refer to God walking, in a sanctuary or anywhere else. This occurrence of **התהלך** provides no support for Beale’s argument.

Beale depends on Ezek 28 for many of the details of his interpretation of Gen 3 as a garden to be guarded by Adam, as the priest-king in a sanctuary, with the mandate to exclude from this sanctuary everything that is “unclean.”²⁹ Beale claims: “Ezekiel 28:18 is probably, therefore, the most explicit place anywhere in canonical literature where the Garden of Eden is called a temple and Adam is viewed as a priest.”³⁰ That is not a straightforward conclusion and remains a tenuous basis on which to construct a theology of the garden of Eden as a temple. Block states that this chapter is probably the most difficult one in the entire book

26 The tabernacle was erected at Bethel (Judg 20:26–28), then at Shiloh (1 Sam 4:3), and subsequently at Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:17). The ark was taken from there to the temple of Solomon (1 Kgs 8:3–8).

27 Beale. “Adam as the First Priest” 10.

28 This passage, a prophecy against the king of Tyre, follows the prophecy against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia and Tyre and a lament for Tyre, and is followed by prophecies against Sidon and Egypt, the Pharaoh of Egypt. Ezekiel 28 is highly symbolic but this context suggests it refers to Tyre. This raises a question over its interpretation as a reference to a cherub in Eden. Genesis 3 gives no description of the cherub appointed to guard the way to the tree of life. Cf. Isaiah 45:1 for the same description of the pagan king Cyrus as the Lord’s “anointed.”

29 This mandate applied to the Aaronic priesthood. There is no textual basis for suggesting Adam had to exercise a similar mandate.

30 Beale. “Adam as the First Priest,” 13.

of Ezekiel.³¹ We cannot, then, take it as read that Ezek 28 is a straightforward reference to Gen 1–3, or that it provides insights into the interpretation of Gen 1–3 which are not apparent in the actual text of that passage.³² Does the use of creation imagery in the tabernacle/temple mean that the creation account uses temple imagery?

Other texts using the *hithpa’el*

Reviewing the use of the *hithpa’el* of הלך elsewhere will ascertain whether they contribute to the “garden-sanctuary” interpretation. The texts cited by Beale and others in connection with “walking” in a sanctuary are marked with * after the verse.³³ I have separated the participle usage as this is claimed to be of significance.

Table 2. Narrative Usage of *hithpa’el*

Narrative usage		
Use	Verse	Context
התהלך	Exodus 21:19	An injured man walks about with a staff to aid him
	Leviticus 26:12 *	God moving about
	Joshua 18:4, 8	Spies sent to walk through the land and describe it
	Judges 21:24	Israelites went home
	1 Samuel 23:13 (2x)	David and his men moving from place to place
	1 Samuel 25:15	Nabal’s servants walking in the fields accompanied by David’s men
	1 Samuel 30:31	David and his men walked about
	2 Samuel 7:7 // 1 Chronicles 17:6	God moving about
	2 Samuel 11:2	David walking on the roof of his palace

31 Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 87. The views of Block on Ezek 28 are of particular significance since he has challenged Beale’s interpretation of Genesis 1–3 as a sanctuary/temple, as a former advocate of that position. He states: “I acknowledge at the outset that in presenting this response I am swimming against an overwhelming current of scholarly opinion, and even against positions I once held.” (3). “Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of Biblical Evidence,” in Daniel M. Gurtner, ed., *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2013), 3–29. Block has repeated his questioning regarding the use of temple imagery in Genesis 1–3, asserting instead the presence of royal imagery (e.g., Adam as God’s administrator). *Covenant: The Framework of God’s Grand Plan of Redemption*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 27–28.

32 Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, gives a good survey of the problems entailed in the interpretation of this chapter.

33 Biblical texts listed from Solomon Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1978), 331.

Narrative usage		
Use	Verse	Context
	1 Chronicles 21:4	Joab went throughout Israel
	Job 1:7, 2:2	Ha-satan walking about the earth
	Job 18:8	The fate of the wicked who are ensnared ³⁴
	Job 22:14	God walks on the vault of heaven
	Job 38:16	Walk in the depths of the sea ³⁵
	Psalms 35:14	Go about mourning
	Psalms 39:6 [H 7]	Go about like a phantom ³⁶
	Psalms 43:2	Go about mourning
	Psalms 105:13 // 1 Chronicles 16:20	Israel wandered from place to place
	Ezekiel 28:14 *	Anointed cherub walking among the fiery stones
	Zechariah 1:10, 11, 6:7 (3x)	Men on horses going throughout the earth ³⁷
מתהלך Participle	Genesis 3:8 *	God moving about
	Genesis 13:17	Walk through the land (Abram)
	Deuteronomy 23:14 [H 15] *	God moving about
	2 Samuel 7:6 *	God moving about
	Esther 2:11	Mordecai walking outside palace
	Ezekiel 1:13	Fire flashing (going about)

³⁴ While this has a metaphorical meaning, it uses the narrative sense of walking into a trap.

³⁵ Compare Ps 77:19.

³⁶ Note Benton’s comment on the sole niphāl use of הלך “I fade away [נהלכתי] like an evening shadow” [Ps. 109:23a, NIV]. Richard Charles Benton Jr., “Aspect and the Biblical Hebrew Niphāl and Hitpael” (PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009), 265.

³⁷ While this is a vision of men on horses, they are said to have journeyed through the world. It is thus a narrative usage and not a metaphorical one.

Table 3. Metaphorical Usage of hithpa'el

Use	Narrative usage	
	Verse	Context
התהלך	Genesis 5:22, 24	Enoch walked with God
	Genesis 6:9	Noah walked with God
	Genesis 17:1	Walk before (God) and be blameless
	Genesis 24:40	Abraham's steward walking before the Lord
	1 Samuel 2:30	A priest walking before God (ministering)
	1 Samuel 2:35	A faithful priest will walk before God's anointed
	1 Samuel 12:2	Walk as leader (Samuel)
	2 Kings 20:3 // Isa 38:3	Hezekiah walked before God faithfully
	Psalms 12:8 [H 9]	The wicked prowl about
	Psalms 26:3	Walk in God's truth
	Psalms 56:13	Walk before God in the light of life
	Psalms 58:7 [H 8]	Water flowing
	Psalms 68:21 [H 22]	As a way of life (going on in their sins)
	Psalms 77:17 [H 18]	Lightning flashed in the sky
	Psalms 82:5	The wicked walk in darkness
	Psalms 101:2	Walk with a blameless heart
	Psalms 116:9	Walk before the Lord
	Psalms 119:45	Walk about in freedom
	Proverbs 6:22	As a way of life (guided by parents' teaching)
	Proverbs 20:7	As a way of life (lead a blameless life)
מתהלך Participle	Proverbs 23:31	Of wine flowing
	Ezekiel 19:6	Prowl among the lions (princes of Israel likened to lions)
	Zechariah 10:12	Walk in the name of the Lord
	Genesis 48:15	Abraham and Isaac walked before God
	1 Samuel 12:2	Walk as leader (walking before those being led)
	1 Samuel 25:27	Walk as follower (David's men)
	Proverbs 24:34	Poverty will come upon you like a prowler

Linguistic issues

From these references we see that the participle **מתהלך** is used not only of God, but also for Mordecai walking back and forth each day outside the palace, waiting for news of Esther.³⁸ It is used of lightning flashing, and of Abram walking through the land.³⁹ None of these usages of the *hithpa'el* participle relate to sanctuaries. The narrative use of the *hithpa'el* refers simply to travelling about from one place to another. Metaphorical uses likewise have no connection with sanctuaries or priesthood, being used as a reference to a “way of life,” of repeated or accustomed behaviour. Those who are faithful to God are said to walk “before” him (Enoch, Gen 5:22, 24) or “with” him (Noah, Gen 6:9). Abram was commanded to walk before God (Gen 17:1; see also Micah 6:8 and Mal 2:6).⁴⁰

In his speech, Samuel (1 Sam 12:2) announces that a king has been appointed as leader of Israel, and asserts his integrity in leading Israel. There is no suggestion that this is related to walking in a sanctuary—rather, Samuel walked throughout the land while the sanctuary remained at Shiloh—a metaphorical use indicating leadership.

There is then no special significance for this *hithpa'el* form as meaning “walking” within the tabernacle.

Nor can there be a claim that it has special significance when it speaks of God as the subject who undertakes this walking (Gen 3:8; Lev 26:11; and Deut 23:14; see also Job 22:14, which has no connection with a sanctuary). The same term is used in other contexts for “walking to and fro” where nothing remotely resembling a sanctuary is in view. In other words, **התהלך** is not a technical term with a specific meaning⁴¹—it refers to any general human movement, as well as speaking of God moving among us, but even that has no special significance. Its metaphorical meanings are again related to movement.

Peñuela Pineda acknowledges critics who “maintain that none of the

38 Also, neither Lev 26:11 nor Ezek 28:14 use a participle.

39 I discuss below the claim that the latter refers to “assertion of sovereignty.”

40 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 127.

41 Baxter argues that we should consider “technical usage” for terms rather than refer to “technical terms,” since any term could be used non-technically. “Rather than suggesting that words in-and-of themselves can be technical, it may be best to say that an author is able to use a word in a technical sense in their writings.” Benjamin J. Baxter, “In the Original Text it says... A Study of Hebrew and Greek Lexical Analyses in Commentaries” (M.A. Thesis, McMaster Divinity College, 2008), 13. Also in Benjamin J. Baxter, “The Meanings of Biblical Words,” *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 11 (2009–2010): 99. “Context is ultimately key for determining the meaning even of technical words. It is difficult, therefore, to see how so-called technical words are any different than nontechnical words that can be used referentially.” Ibid., 99, also 94. Baxter asserts that “one must find evidence that an author is using a particular word in a technical sense, rather than merely assuming it to be true.” Benjamin J. Baxter, “The Meanings of Biblical Words,” *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 11 (2009–2010): 99, n. 33.

occurrences of מִתְהַלֵּךְ depicts God's residence in the sanctuary,⁴² an idea which depends on its use elsewhere. Peñuela Pineda admits:

The argument for the sanctity of the garden of Eden is dependent upon the meaning of מִתְהַלֵּךְ, where the 'primary evidence for the garden's sanctity is the presence of the deity.' The semantic domain that surrounds God's pervasive presence (going to and fro) describes a repeated or habitual action in the garden of Eden. God's presence is known and manifested by his walking. The walking motif is later employed in the Old Testament when Israel acknowledges that God requires holiness and obedience if he is to continue to 'walk' among his people.⁴³

The argument here is that a linguistic form (the *hithpa'el*) and the "semantic domain" surrounding God's presence indicate the special sanctity of the garden. It is not clear what the "semantic domain" refers to, as the single verb is all that is cited—God's presence is known by his walking. But "walking" in itself does not refer to God's presence. Certainly he has to be present to be able to walk, but God's presence was no less real for Cain, when there is no mention of *how* God was present (he is not said to walk). If God can be said to be present without "walking," is it not true then that הִתְהַלַּךְ or מִתְהַלֵּךְ has no special relationship to God's presence? It refers to how he is present *in some instances* (cf. Gen 18 for an extended description of God's presence where he is not said to walk except implicitly, v. 16 where Abraham walks along with the Lord and the angels as they leave).

Peñuela Pineda argues that "the walking motif seems to be associated with the sacred character of the garden of Eden."⁴⁴ Then, "the *hithpa'el* of הִלָּךְ is related to God's sacred dwelling, and therefore to God's presence. Leviticus 26:11–12 shows this reality."⁴⁵ He claims that "the motif of God walking among his people is the means by which his presence is known"⁴⁶ and thus "Therefore the *hithpa'el* of הִלָּךְ, describing God's customary action in the Garden of Eden and therefore even before the entrance of sin, speaks of God's presence and/or God's dwelling."⁴⁷ Then, in a strange turn of logic, he argues that the presence of God known

42 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 90, citing Daniel I. Block as one of these critics. "Eden: A Temple?" 7.

43 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 91, citing David P. Wright, "Holiness, Sex, and Death in the Garden of Eden," *Biblica* 77 (1996): 307. Earlier Pineda had stated that "the most significant syntactic and literary characteristics" which link the sanctuary to Eden include the use of *mith-hallek*, 89. He also says: "God's presence in the gan-eden has been construed from the participle *mith-hallek*," 90.

44 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 92.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., 92–93.

47 Ibid., 93.

by his walking in the camp and the presence of the ark, makes the camp a sacred space, thus Deut 23:14 is “concerned with the purity of God’s מִשְׁכָּן, since in the military camp the Israelites walk to and fro, and up and down.”⁴⁸ But there is nothing in this verse about the Israelites walking to and fro; it is God who does that! He concludes from this that “the divine presence is known and manifested in the Israelite camp via the interconnectedness between the walking motif and the dwelling place of God.... The *hithpa’el* of הִלָּךְ does not explicitly describe YHWH’s activity within the tabernacle, but it certainly alludes to the divine presence manifested by God’s מִשְׁכָּן.”⁴⁹ But the *hithpa’el* meaning “walk up and down” does not entail God’s presence—it can refer to movement of either God or others. This is the kind of semantic overload which Barr fulminated against. Porter points out that despite Barr’s *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, published in 1961,⁵⁰ it has been difficult to bring linguistic analysis to bear on Biblical studies.⁵¹ Traditional views show in the reading of an entire theological framework into a single instance of a word’s usage, as we have here.

We then come full circle (literally) and discover: “The sacred space that מִתְהַלֵּךְ creates in Gen 3:8 simply signifies the holy status of the God-humankind relationship.”⁵² The conclusion of these various exegetical moves is summed up nicely:

The question that remains to be answered explicitly is whether מִתְהַלֵּךְ can be considered an unequivocal indication of a sanctuary/temple setting. The answer that I would suggest admittedly carries the semantic logic presupposed above in relation to its context and domain: there is nothing in the post-Fall Eden narrative (and in the rest of the Old Testament) that would exclude מִתְהַלֵּךְ from the semantic framework of the holiness of the sanctuary/temple motif.⁵³

Except that the *hithpa’el* does not appear in that semantic framework: it is a simple verb meaning “to walk up and down.” Thus, it cannot *on its own* indicate a sanctuary or temple setting.

It seems then that “walking to and fro” (the sense of the *hithpa’el* form of the

48 Ibid., 94.

49 Ibid.

50 James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

51 Stanley E Porter, *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament. Studies in Tools, Methods and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 87. For other ways in which linguistics can assist in Biblical interpretation, see *Linguistics and the Bible: Retrospects and Prospects*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Christopher D. Land, and Francis H. G. Pand (Eugene: Pickwick, for McMaster Divinity College Press, 2019). Stanley E Porter, *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament, Studies in Tools, Methods and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015). *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter R Bodine (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992).

52 Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3,” 94.

53 Ibid., 95.

verb) has been connected to the tabernacle, since in reference to the tabernacle there is a mention of “walking to and fro.” Since the tabernacle signifies God’s presence with his people, anything associated with the tabernacle also signifies God’s presence. Therefore, since we have a mention of “walking” by God in Gen 3:8, there is a tabernacle implied; no, proven. He says (in the quote above) “there is nothing to exclude [walking] from the semantic framework of the sanctuary/temple motif.” On the contrary, I would argue that based on the evidence before us, there is nothing to *include* “walking” in the semantic framework of the sanctuary/temple motif. We have a series of tenuous connections all strung together as if they support each other. However, Pineda admits that “critics of this interpretation maintain that none of the occurrences of מְתֵהֵלֵךְ depicts God’s residence in the sanctuary.”⁵⁴ Even more critically, Pineda concedes that

it must be acknowledged that critics of the sanctuary/temple motif seem to be right in the sense that none of the occurrences of מְתֵהֵלֵךְ explicitly depicts God’s residence in the sanctuary. However, this inference seems unnecessary, at least in part. The hitpa’el of הֵלֵךְ has the common meaning of “going to and fro,” suggesting the repeated or habitual presence of someone.⁵⁵

This stands in conflict with the claim made by Davidson that מְתֵהֵלֵךְ is a technical term.⁵⁶ How can this be if it has a common meaning with reference to anyone’s walking? Pineda then suggests that the primary reference to Eden as a sanctuary depends on God’s presence.⁵⁷ But this seems back to front. Not everywhere where God’s presence was manifested thereby became a sanctuary; consider Abraham’s tent where he entertained three strangers one of whom was the Lord (Gen 18).

We need to pay careful heed to the view expressed by Harper around methodological problems in discerning connections between texts.

[T]here is an evident proclivity to build conclusions on genuine, yet in the end insignificant, connections. The problem is exemplified in Moskala’s intertextual examination of Lev. 11. As part of his study, Moskala performs a detailed lexical comparison of the Leviticus pericope and the text of Gen. 1-3. Then, having established genuine overlap in vocabulary, he proceeds to discuss exegetical and theological significance. However, and crucially, Moskala does not consider the commonality of lexemes throughout the remainder of the Old Testament. Thus, for instance, he asserts that the use of כָּל [kol, all]

54 Ibid., 90. However, he refers only to Block, “Eden: A Temple?” 7.

55 Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3,” 91.

56 Davidson, “Earth’s First sanctuary,” 74.

57 Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3,” 91.

thirty-six times in Lev. 11 “points back to creation where the word כָּל is used twenty-nine times.” Yet, in so doing, Moskala fails to address the ubiquitous use of כָּל throughout the Hebrew canon, leaving open the possibility that Lev. 11 likewise “points” to a host of Old Testament texts. What becomes apparent is that lexical overlap alone is insufficient to demonstrate significance in relation to a given connection.⁵⁸

Is this problem, then, evident in the argument for הַתְּהֵלֶךְ as evidence for the presence of a sanctuary? The verb הֵלֵךְ appears in its various forms over 1,500 times in the OT. Do each of these carry implications of a “sanctuary”? Obviously not. So which occurrences are then relevant to this claim? How do we decide? What of the *specific* texts adduced to support this argument that the garden of Eden is a temple, since God went “walking” in it?

Although this verb occurs elsewhere as a *hithpael*, the “temple” argument focuses on the *hithpael* as a participle.

The same *hithpael* participle form of the verb הָלַךְ appears in the following passages: Deut 23:15; 1 Sam 12:2; 2 Sam 7:6; Esth 2:11; Ps 68:22; Prov 20:7; 24:34. All these references have a common nuance of “going to and fro.” Lev 26:11-12 is also included, although here הָלַךְ is only a *hithpael* and not a *hithpael* participle.⁵⁹

But is this a legitimate interpretation? Jeffrey Leonard has developed a methodology for analysing intertextual relationships⁶⁰ which Harper says is a “comprehensive and widely applicable methodology.” The criteria are, in summary:⁶¹

1. *Shared language is the single most important factor for establishing a textual connection.* This primary indication involves comparison of the vocabulary used.

58 G. Geoffrey Harper, “‘I Will Walk Among You.’ The Rhetorical Function of Allusion to Genesis 1–3 in the Book of Leviticus,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, Supplement 21 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018), 36–37, citing J. Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology and Rationale. An Intertextual Study*, ATSDS (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society, 2000) 202. Harper indicates that כָּל [kol, all] appears 40 times in Leviticus 11, and over 5,400 times in the Old Testament. See the discussion by Jacobus A. Naudé, “The Interpretation and Translation of the Biblical Hebrew Quantifier *Kol*,” *Journal for Semitics* 20 (2011): 408–21. See also Douglas K. Smith, “Whom, Where, or What Could ‘All the Earth’ Mean? A Case Study in the Implications of Context and Intertextuality for Translating and Interpreting *Kol Ha-Aretz* in the Pentateuch,” *Interdisciplinary Journal on Biblical Authority* 1/2 (2020): 135–53.

59 Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3,” 94.

60 J. M. Leonard, “Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 241–65.

61 Harper, “I Will Walk Among You,” 50–51.

2. *Shared language is more important than non-shared language.* Any vocabulary which is not shared (in addition to that which is shared) does not discount connections between texts.
3. *Shared language that is distinctive or rare suggests a stronger connection than does language which is widely used.* Some vocabulary is so common that it is difficult to prove a genuine connection, while shared use of rare words or uncommon forms indicates a more probable connection. Harper notes that shared clusters of common words may still indicate a connection.
4. *Shared phrases suggest a stronger connection than shared words alone.* A shared phrase is less likely to come about by happenstance, whereas shared words alone are lesser proof of common connections.
5. *An accumulation of shared language indicates a more likely connection than does a single shared term or phrase.* That is, multiple points of contact are stronger evidence of connection than shared phrases or shared words.
6. *Shared language used in similar contexts suggests a stronger connection than does shared language alone.* Overlap at a conceptual level strengthens the connection.
7. *Shared language need not be accompanied by mutual ideology to establish a connection.* Reference to other texts by use of shared language does not mean that the authors share the same viewpoints, and different viewpoints do not prove a lack of connection. An author may use the same language as that of someone expressing an opposing viewpoint, to pursue their own agenda.
8. *Shared language need not be accompanied by shared form to validate a connection.* While not all these criteria are relevant to the present discussion, the set of criteria proposed is helpful to ensure that we are discussing genuine connections between texts. Harper cites Beale himself as saying “All such proposed connections have degrees of possibility and probability.”⁶² He further adduces from Hays that “the more criteria fall into place, the more confident an interpreter can be that an intertextual connection is present in a given text.”⁶³ However, he also draws on Beale again, saying “Thus the cumulative effect of multiple criteria becomes

62 Harper, “I Will Walk Among You,” 52, citing G. K. Beale, *We Become What we Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 24.

63 Harper, “I Will Walk Among You,” 52, citing R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 32.

persuasive.”⁶⁴ However, as we will see with Beale’s interpretation of Genesis 3 in the light of other passages, the cumulative effect of a number of merely possible connections does not produce a persuasive result. If a chain (including an exegetical one) is only as strong as its weakest link, then a chain with multiple weak links is unlikely to withstand stresses.

Regarding the claims about God “walking around” in the garden, and in the Israelite camp, the question must be asked: is the connection with a sanctuary dependent on the common use of the *hithpael* form הִתְהַלֵּךְ?

The use of the *hithpa’el* seems to have no significance beyond indicating repetitive, iterative or habitual actions.⁶⁵ This is a common understanding of the form, noted by Koehler-Baumgartner, “to go to and fro, walk about,”⁶⁶ and Clines, “Go, walk, go about, go to and fro.”⁶⁷ Waltke and O’Connor state that “The *hithpa’el* indicates iterative or frequentative aspect with a number of verbal stems, while הֵלֵךְ presents special problems,” citing Lambdin who gives only הֵלֵךְ as an example of the iterative use.⁶⁸ Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze see it as a reflexive or reciprocal action.⁶⁹ Williams lists it as “reflexive-iterative.”⁷⁰ Garr says that “scholars agree that the *hithpa’el* expresses the reflexive voice... reflexivity is a prominent if not primary function.”⁷¹ Benton notes “The *Hitpa’el* demonstrates a meaning often called ‘iterative’ or ‘durative’ by Hebraists.”⁷² He stresses (in connection with הֵלֵךְ, the most common root with this sense) “As an intransitive verb of motion, it cannot be construed clearly as reflexive or passive or ‘act as X’ in the ways we have defined them. Thus, scholars unanimously see the

64 Harper, “I Will Walk Among You,” 53, citing Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 25.

65 Pineda, Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1-3, 90, n. 8, citing E. A. Speiser, “The Durative Hithpa’el: A Tan Form,” in J. J. Finkelstein and Moshe Greenberg, eds., *Oriental and Biblical Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1967), 507. He also cites W. E. Vine, “הָלַךְ” Merrill F. Unger and William White, eds., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1996), 279, which gives the sense as repeated or habitual action.

66 Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, rev. Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, study edition, trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 248.

67 David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 557.

68 Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 427, 428–29 and n. 18. See also Victor P Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 192. Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 250.

69 Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jacobus A. Naudé and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury; New York: T&T Clark, 2017), 84.

70 Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 28.

71 W. Randall Garr, “Reflexivity: The Cases of the Niphal and Hithpa’el,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 80 (2021): 342.

72 Benton, *Aspect*, 83.

iterative or durative sense of the Hitpael here without any reflexive or passive sense.”⁷³ Further, he comments (referring to the root הלך),

[w]ith “go” the Qal expresses the simple action of going, while the Hitpael refers to walking around literally or to walking around as a metaphor for moral conduct, and there is no specific goal in mind in either case. The Hitpael is completely focused on the activity with no endpoint in its purview.⁷⁴

Gesenius gives the idea of “long continuance” as a frequent use of הלך, including the metaphorical sense, thus to “go on” or “continue.”⁷⁵ Wenham suggests that the *hithpa’el* is an “unusual form” of the verb “to go” is used here; it often has the meaning “to walk to and fro.”⁷⁶ Given the number of times the *hithpa’el* is used in the OT in both narrative (35x) and metaphorical (29x) statements,⁷⁷ it is hardly unusual. Benton also notes that הלך has the most occurrences of the *hithpa’el*.⁷⁸

Cassuto states that the *hithpa’el* of הלך “often occurs in connection with the Lord, e.g., Lev 26:12, Deut 23:14 [Hebrew 15].”⁷⁹ Even adding in the other passage in 2 Samuel, not mentioned by Cassuto, this is hardly *often*, nor surprisingly does he mention Gen 3:8. The point to be made here is that frequency of use (high or low) does not affect the sense of the term. Greater usage is obviously helpful in determining the sense in which a term is used, compared to the difficulties in relation to understanding a *hapax legomena*, but that problem does not affect us here.

Merrill sees the *hithpa’el* of הלך as having special significance, but does not mention walking in the context of a sanctuary.

A special instance of hlk occurs with the hitp. stem, which views walking or stepping as tantamount to an exercise of sovereignty. Whether this is expressed in literal or metaphorical terms, the symbolism of dominion remains the same. In its first occurrence with this meaning God is described as “walking in the garden,” a clear allusion to his appearance to Adam and Eve as their Creator and Lord (Gen 3:8). The

73 Benton, *Aspect*, 84.

74 Benton, *Aspect*, 265. Benton notes that the niphal of הלך (in its single occurrence, Ps 109:23) “differs from the Hitpael because it refers to the end of the ‘walk’ activity; the speaker has reached the end of the path.” Benton, *Aspect*, 265.

75 E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd enl. ed., rev. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 344.

76 Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 330, n. 8.

77 Counting parallel passages as separate instances.

78 Benton, *Aspect*, 76.

79 Cassuto, *Genesis*, part 1, 152.

same imagery is used in Job where God is said to walk (yithallāk) on the “circle” (or “vault”) of heaven (Job 22:14).⁸⁰

This is to read a meaning from a specific context into other uses of the same term, a process that Barr called “illegitimate totality transfer.”⁸¹ Seeing the *hithpa’el* of הִלֵּךְ as having special relationship to sovereignty is unwarranted: such a meaning is dependent on context. In actuality, *none* of the Biblical texts which use the *hithpa’el* of הִלֵּךְ have any connection with asserting sovereignty over land (undisputed right to govern).

Strangely, Merrill immediately states “Satan also walked about on the earth,”⁸² which raises the question, was that an exercise of sovereignty by Satan? Surely not. Satan said that he was “roaming” (שׁוֹט) through the earth and “going to and fro” (הִתְהַלֵּךְ) on it (Job 1:7; 2:2). Hartly comments that “roaming” suggests that “he moved randomly about the earth, perhaps like an emperor’s spy looking for any secret disloyalty to the crown.”⁸³ Satan was up to no good, not exercising sovereignty, as that is not implicit in the use of the *hithpa’el* of הִלֵּךְ and is not specified in the text.

Merrill returns to the theme of “sovereignty” when discussing the use of the *hithpa’el* of הִלֵּךְ in Ezek 28. The king/cherub is “manifesting incredible hubris by seeking to arrogate to themselves the sovereignty that belongs to God. The hitp. stem of the vb. *hlk* and the context of the entire pericope put this beyond any doubt.”⁸⁴ He repeats this claim in connection with Genesis 13:17 and Josh 18:4, 8, asserting that “To walk about on the land, then, was to recognize one’s claim to it.”⁸⁵ He buttresses this with the statement, “The prophet Zechariah uses *hlk* in the hitp. 4x as a way of describing divine sovereignty.”⁸⁶

The use of the Hithpael of *hlk* suggests the totality of the territory covered by this equine scouting expedition. The horses and their riders have gone to and fro, and, by the force of such an implicit merism, have looked everywhere. Cf. Job 2:2, where Satan appears before

80 Eugene H Merrill, הִלֵּךְ, William A vanGemen, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol 1. of *NIDOTTE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1997), 1032. Here we see how external theological views are brought to the text and used to indicate word meanings. Merrill privileges “sovereignty” in his analysis just as Beale and others privilege “sanctuary.”

81 “The error that arises, when the ‘meaning’ of a word (understood as the total series of relations in which it is used in the literature) is read into a particular case as its sense and implication there, may be called ‘illegitimate totality transfer.’” Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 218.

82 Merrill, הִלֵּךְ. *NIDOTTE* Vol. 1, 1032.

83 John E. Hartley, *Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 73.

84 Merrill, הִלֵּךְ. William A vanGemen, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1997), 1032.

85 Merrill, הִלֵּךְ. *NIDOTTE* Vol. 1, 1032.

86 Merrill, הִלֵּךְ. *NIDOTTE* Vol. 1, 1032. He also makes this claim in connection with Zech 1:10–11; 6:7–8; 10:12, but the riders on horses were sent to assess the state of the earth and found it at peace (1:10–11). The other verses also do not explicitly assert sovereignty.

Yahweh in the Divine Council after having “roamed to and fro” in all the earth.⁸⁷

This is again to commit the “totality transfer” fallacy, as the use of the *hithpa’el* of הלך in connection with assertion of sovereignty (if this can be demonstrated from the context) does not permit that meaning to appear every time it is used. Abraham and the spies sent by Joshua were not asserting sovereignty, but viewing the land which they would subsequently possess.⁸⁸

There is no suggestion here of sovereignty, but nor does the *hithpa’el* of הלך suggest the extent of someone’s travels. This is evident in both Zechariah and Job which refer to going to and fro through the whole earth, which would be redundant if the *hithpa’el* of הלך already included the meaning of the extent of their travels.⁸⁹ We also have to consider how this might apply to Genesis 3:8. Is God’s walk in the garden for the purpose of “asserting sovereignty,” or does it refer to the extent of his walk? Neither, it seems.⁹⁰ While the discussion of whether the *hithpa’el* of הלך expresses an exertion of sovereignty is something of a by-path, I include it to indicate that it cannot be specified as meaning “walking in a sanctuary.” Other interpretations are possible (if unlikely).

There are multiple instances where הלך is used in the *hithpa’el*. There are variations in the lexical form—infinitives, perfect and imperfect, singular and plural, participle, etc. No special significance seems to attach to the variations—they all speak of some form of movement either metaphorical (“walking in integrity” as a way of life) or literal movement.⁹¹ Metaphorical use does not change the

87 Carol L Myers and Eric M Myers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1987), 115.

88 There is also the danger of “adding up the usages” of a word, since “you are now adding up the semantic effects of various contexts and not the specific contributions which the word made to these contexts.” Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 71. Thus claiming that God, Abraham, the spies sent by Joshua, Satan, and the horsemen of Zechariah are all claiming sovereignty by moving through the land/earth is unwarranted.

89 The comment of Barr is apposite here. Barr suggests that with regard to one issue discussed, “many of the same conclusions which are in fact reached [from this discussion] could be reached from actual statements made explicitly in the OT and NT and without the attempt to draw evidence from the significance of particular words. In other words, what may be a good theological case is spoiled by bad linguistic argument; and is not supported by actual exegetical argument from texts which say things from which the general thesis could be supported.” Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 127. Merrill’s argument is another instance of “illegitimate totality transfer.”

90 Barr points out “the danger of taking a case of a word along with its context and suggesting that the significance which is given through associations of the context is in fact the indicator value of that word.” *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 69.

91 A similar error occurs with Bornkamm. Feiler argues that Bornkamm’s claim that Matthew’s use of ἀκολουθεῖν indicates discipleship is overdrawn. Bornkamm admits that it has the simple sense of “follow after” but the context (Matthew 8:23) gives it “a deeper and figurative meaning.” “The stilling of the storm in Matthew,” in G. Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 55. It is hard to see what “deeper” meaning it can have in 8:23, “Jesus got into the boat and his disciples followed him.” In a number of the passages, it means simply “walking behind” Jesus, ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ

sense of “walking,” but has the sense of a “way of life,” that is, one’s accustomed (continued or repeated) behaviour. Benton gives sound advice on the interpretation of verbs.

Even linguistic analysis should not try to extract from verbs information that is not there. If one overgeneralizes on the information supplied by verbs, one may mishandle the information coming from the context. Therefore, when we analyze the meaning of a verb, we must be aware of the source of information. A given verb in Biblical Hebrew combines information from 1) the verb stem or form (morphological), 2) the verbal root (semantic), and 3) the context (contextual). Clear exegesis recognizes where information comes from.⁹²

With this injunction in mind, it is apparent that none of these texts give any support to the idea that the *hithpa’el* הִתְהַלֵּךְ—walking, especially repeatedly or habitually, hence, walking to and fro, or metaphorically, walking consistently (in righteousness)—has any special significance beyond its use to refer to ordinary walking around, or metaphorical “walking in integrity.”⁹³ There is no indication that in itself it refers to holiness, or to the presence of God, or the presence of a sanctuary, tabernacle or temple, or other form of sacred space or location or activity.

Beale summarises his own view concisely, but even then, this raises new questions.

The temple later in the OT was the unique place of God’s presence, where Israel had to go to experience that presence. Israel’s temple was the place where the priest had experienced God’s unique presence, and Eden was the place where Adam walked and talked with God. The same Hebrew verbal form (Hithpael) used for God’s “walking back and forth” in the garden (Gen 3:8) also describes God’s presence in the tabernacle (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14 [23:15 MT]; 2 Sam 7:6–7).⁹⁴

However, even in this short text, questions arise. Did Adam really “walk and talk

(Matthew 4:25; 8:1; 19:2; 20:29) not “becoming a disciple.” Those who followed included the curious or sensation-seekers as well as those seeking God or seeking healing [Matthew 9:2, 27]. Paul F. Feiler, “The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew: A Response to Gunther Bornkamm,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 26 (1983): 402. Even where it has the sense of “becoming a disciple” it still means that this is done by “walking with” Jesus and learning from him [Matthew 4:20, 22; 8:23].

92 Richard Benton. Verbal and Contextual Information. The Problem of Overlapping Meanings in the Niphal and Hitpael. *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 124 (2012) 385, where he notes further: “Hebraists almost unanimously agree that the Niphal and Hitpael stems can bear multiple meanings depending on context.”

93 We should note the consequences of David’s “walking around” on the roof of his palace: adultery and murder.

94 Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 198.

with God” in the garden? The text does not say so explicitly, except for his speaking in response to the discovery of his disobedience, so at best it is an assumption (admittedly a common one). Otherwise, the text seems to indicate that God walked on his own. To explicitly indicate Adam walked and talked with God, the text could have read along the line that is used with Enoch who “*walked faithfully with God*” (Genesis 5:22, 24), or Noah, who “*walked with God*” as reported in Genesis 6:9.⁹⁵ We have the well-known call in Mic 6:8, “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk [הלך *qal*] humbly with your God.” From Abraham onward we hear of the call to “walk *before* God” rather than *with* him (Gen 17:1; 48:15; 1 Kgs 8:25; Ps 56:13). Block comments: “[Ezekiel 28:15] The use of תמים immediately after הלהלך invites comparison with Noah, who also was ‘blameless’ and ‘walked with God’ (Gen 6:9), and Abraham, who was charged by God: ‘Walk (להלך) before me and be blameless (תמים)’ (Gen 17:1).”⁹⁶

We turn now to see what we can make of all this with respect to the key verse cited to demonstrate that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary.

Genesis 3:8

There are many difficulties with this verse that have a bearing on how we interpret it with respect to “walking in a sanctuary.” I have left discussion of this until after considering the other issues, on the basis that the more difficult text should be interpreted in the light of the texts that are more easily understood.

Perhaps “walking around” would convey the sense of the participle here better than simple “walking.” The idea that the garden is a tabernacle is supported by the use of the term for “walk” as used in Lev 26:11–12, but as we saw above, there is no reference there to God walking *in* the tabernacle but rather *outside* it. Therefore, there is no reason why this term must support the interpretation of Gen 1–3 as a reference to a tabernacle or temple. It is a garden. The Israelites were camped in the wilderness—hardly a counterpart to the garden of Eden. So “walking around” in the garden of Eden cannot be compared on contextual grounds with “walking around” in the Israelite camp. Thus, Harper’s indicator of allusion, the “similarity of narrative settings,” does not seem to apply here.⁹⁷

We also have the difference in purpose behind the “walking around.” In Genesis 3 it is probably with the intent of meeting Adam and Eve to talk with them (hence God called out “Where are you?”); in Leviticus 26 it is to give protection to the people of Israel and to be with them in their journey, and to assure them that God would still be with them when they arrive in Canaan.

95 Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 258.

96 Block, *Ezekiel*, Vol. 2, 116.

97 Harper, “I Will Walk Among You,” 54.

It is commonly stated that the “cool of the day” (רוח היום) would be the later part of the day when the heat of the sun was lessened. Thus, Hamilton states: “Such walks would take place in the early evening (*the cooler time of day*) rather than ‘in the heat of the day’ (cf. 18:1).”⁹⁸ Wenham opines (and connects Genesis 3:8 with the usual texts of interest):

[I]t seems likely that it was not unusual for [God] to be heard walking in the garden ‘in the breeze of the day,’ i.e. in the afternoon when cool breezes spring up and the sun is not so scorching. Maybe a daily chat between the Almighty and his creatures was customary. The term ‘walking’ (hithpael participle of הלך) is subsequently used of God’s presence in the Israelite tent sanctuary (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:15 [14]; 2 Sam 7:6–7) again emphasising the relationship between the garden and the later shrines. It is not God’s walking in the garden that is unusual, but the reaction of the man and his wife.⁹⁹

Cassuto argues that the interpretation “in the cool of the day” is a misunderstanding. It is an extended anthropomorphism in which “God came into the garden to take a stroll and refresh Himself, as it were, in the coolness of the breeze.”¹⁰⁰ He asserts that רוח היום *ruah ha-yom* “cannot possibly indicate a wind blowing *at a specific time of the day*. This apart, seeing that the verse expressly comes to fix the *time*, there must doubtless be a reason for this, and it is inconceivable that this time should have no relation to the actual narrative, but the usual interpretation fails to establish such a connection.”¹⁰¹ Cassuto argues that the term refers to the afternoon.¹⁰²

Wenham comments: “God will *walk* with his people, as he did in the garden of Eden before the fall.”¹⁰³ This implies a repeated walking together by God with Adam and Eve prior to God’s coming in judgment in Gen 3:8. While possible, it is an assumption not explicitly supported by the text. The *hithpa’el* of הלך is cited with an iterative sense to indicate that God walked in the garden each day. But this verb does not always indicate that a repeated walking is taking place. In 2 Samuel 11:2 it is explicitly a single occasion: “*One evening* David... walked around on the roof of his palace.” In Esther 2:11 the repeated walking around of Mordecai is specified as happening “every day” (וּבְכָל־יּוֹם וְיוֹם). The iterative

98 Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 192.

99 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Vol. 1, 76.

100 Cassuto, *Genesis*. Part 1, 151.

101 Ibid., 153.

102 Ibid., 153–54. Curiously, John Calvin suggests that רוח היום referred to the breezes stirred by the warm morning sun, the breeze of the *day*, at which time God appeared, rather than in the afternoon or evening. The sin of Adam and Eve took place on the previous afternoon. *Commentary on Genesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 160–61.

103 Wenham, *Leviticus*, 330.

sense of the *hithpa'el* might indicate repeated walking. The other biblical texts cited here do not indicate the frequency with which the walking occurred. Thus, it should not be claimed that the *hithpa'el* on its own indicates a repeated activity; it may indicate a single occasion in which someone walked “to and fro.” It is then iterative in the sense of a repeated walking one way then the other, on a single occasion (as with David) or on multiple occasions (as with Mordecai).

Niehaus argues that the sound of God walking in the garden should perhaps be translated “in the wind of the storm.” The text would thus read: “Then the man and his wife heard the thunder (*qwl*)¹⁰⁴ of Yahweh God as he was going back and forth (*mthlk*) in the garden in the wind of the storm (*lrwh hywm*), and they hid from Yahweh God among the trees of the garden.”¹⁰⁵ While this may make more sense of this event than traditional interpretations, it is of interest here in that God’s “going back and forth” in theophanic majesty (indicating that God already knew of the sin of Adam and Eve, and did not call out to ask where they were, but summoned them to stand before him)¹⁰⁶ is scarcely compatible with the idea of God “walking back and forth” like a priest in a sanctuary.

If we accept, for the sake of the argument, Niehaus’ interpretation that sees God coming in a storm to the Garden of Eden (and it has been challenged),¹⁰⁷ then it is possible that this “coming” of God was not a regular walk in the garden with the people he had placed there but a singular event that had not happened before. We have no indication that this was a regular practice of God; this is the only time in which he is said to go walking there, and so the possibility that the use of the *hithpa'el* participle of *halak* to indicate frequentative or repeated walks may need to be discounted. Perhaps if the *hithpa'el* has any significance here, it may be that the man heard the Lord God “walking back and forth” in anger, seeking out his disobedient servants.¹⁰⁸ Wenham cites Cassuto to argue that “the brusque ‘the

104 Against this, however, see Psalms 77:18 and 104:7 which should be understood as “the sound of your thunder,” קול רעקק rather than “the thunder of your thunder,” perhaps indicating that קול in Genesis 3:8 should retain the sense of “sound.”

105 Jeffrey J Niehaus, “In the wind of the storm: Another look at Genesis 3:8,” *Vetus Testamentum* 44 (1994): 263–67. See also Jeffrey J Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 155–59, 248. Note that Niehaus accepts the interpretation of the Garden of Eden as a sanctuary. *Biblical Theology, Vol. 1: The Common Grace Covenants* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2014), 74–75.

106 There may be the sense of God’s grace even here, when they were asked to give an account of themselves: would they confess their sin and seek forgiveness, or would they seek to exonerate themselves? They chose the latter, blaming others for their sin.

107 Grundke in particular took issue with this interpretation and responded to Niehaus. He argued that: “there is no compelling logical connection between the textual features of Gen. iii 8 and its status as a storm theophany. Although Niehaus’ proposal is not groundless, the cumulative power of his arguments seems insufficient to establish the case convincingly. Despite the admitted shortcomings arising from the lack of other biblical examples of the expression *ruah ha-yom*, the traditional translation-‘at the windy time of the day’-remains the preferable option.” C.L.K. Grundke. A Tempest in a Teapot? Genesis III 8 Again. *Vetus Testamentum*, 51 (2001) 4:552.

108 I am not assuming here that God did not know where Adam and Eve were hiding. Rather, it is a

Lord God called’ suggests the Judge of the whole earth is calling man in order to demand an account of his conduct.”¹⁰⁹ He comments further: “Their reply to God’s inquiry shows that they understood the question as an invitation to come out and explain their behaviour.”¹¹⁰

In Gen 3:10 Adam says, “I heard your voice in the garden... so I hid.” The NIV has “I heard you in the garden.” Could the Hebrew קול be translated “your sound” or “the sound of you” in the garden? Hamilton cites 2 Sam 5:24; 1 Kgs 14:6; 2 Kgs 6:32 and 11:13 as using קול “to refer to the sound of marching feet, and most likely we have that idea here.”¹¹¹ Westerman also cites 2 Sam 5:24; 1 Kgs 14:6; 2 Kgs 6:32 and suggests the meaning “the noise of footsteps.”¹¹²

The usual interpretation is, the *sound of His feet*, which is based on the sense of the word in other Biblical passages [2 Sam 5:24; 1 Kings 14:6; 2 Kings 6:32]. But it is precisely these verses that rule out this interpretation here, since in all these instances the word קול *qōl* [‘sound’] is expressly followed by the word for feet or marching, that is, in verses of this kind קול *qōl* is not used by itself without an accompanying explanation of the nature of the sound referred to in the passage... [the torah] chose instead a phrase whose anthropomorphism is not excessive by Biblical standards... Our passage does not go into great detail, but leaves the matter shrouded, as it were, in reverent ambiguity. The heard the Lord walking; precisely what they heard is not stated.¹¹³

Lust suggests that 1 Kgs 19:21 should be translated “a roaring and thunderous voice.”¹¹⁴ This may help in understanding Gen 3:8. What “sound” would be made by God as he walked in the garden? Is this the sound of his footsteps? Some other phenomenon accompanying him? There is nothing to indicate that. Could it be that already in v. 8 we have the sound of God calling “Where are you?” That is, God’s call to Adam does not follow his hearing the sound of God walking in the

device in the narrative to emphasise that they were seeking to conceal themselves from God, and to point out the futility of this action. God was not enquiring where they were, playing a game of “hide and seek,” but issuing a summons for them to appear before him. Cf. Gen 4:9; 16:8; Deut 32:37; 2 Kgs 18:34; 19:13; Jer 2:28; 37:19.

109 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Vol. 1, 76, citing Cassuto, *Genesis*, Part 1, 155.

110 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 77. Wenham comments: “a very close parallel is found in Gen 4:9, where ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ is followed by ‘Listen, your brother’s blood is crying to me from the land,’ showing that God knows perfectly well what has happened to Abel.”

111 Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 192, n. 1.

112 Claus Westerman, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, (London: SPCK, 1984), 254. One must ask, what caused the noise? Did the garden of Eden have a gravel path on which footsteps made a crunching sound? What does that imply about God’s manifestation – did it have a physical form?

113 Cassuto, *Genesis*, Part 1, 152.

114 J. Lust, “A gentle breeze or a roaring thunderous sound? Elijah at Horeb: 1 Kings xix:21,” *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975): 110–15.

garden, it **is** the sound Adam and Eve heard. It could be paraphrased as “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God calling to them, ‘Where are you?’ as he walked in the garden.”

We note then that the man and his wife did not hide until they heard God. This may indicate that it was not bashfulness about their nakedness (cf. Gen 2:25) that caused them to hide, but the terrible sound of God coming like the storm, a sound they had not heard previously. If it was just God taking his usual evening stroll through the park, would they have been sufficiently frightened as to hide, just because they now knew they were naked? This “coming” follows immediately on from their realisation that they were naked, when they sought to clothe themselves with fig leaves. Adam did not hide to cover his bashfulness at being naked when he heard the sound of God’s coming.¹¹⁵ Perhaps he realised that the fig leaves did not truly address his newfound nakedness. He may well have connected his newfound awareness of being naked with the memory of the warning given by God: the day you eat of the fruit, inescapable death will come upon you. Was he afraid then that the coming of God so soon after eating the fruit and becoming aware of his nakedness indicated that he was about to face judgment?

Regardless of how we translate Genesis 3:8, it is perhaps less likely that this refers to God’s repeated walking in the garden; it was only a single occasion. Whether this walking was an ordinary approach to the man and his wife (who heard his voice calling them), or they heard the terrific theophanic storm presaging judgment, does not affect the outcome either way. We cannot see this passage as a presence of God equivalent to his presence in the sanctuary. God walking in the garden then did not make it holy ground; it was not sanctified by his presence. No connection can be made here with other texts which speak of God’s walking: it is an occasion *sui generis*. If then this text does not indicate that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary, does that not mean then that Adam was not a priest? That is my conviction.

This terminology therefore fails to provide any support to the claim that the Garden of Eden was a temple. Genesis 3:8 does not have that meaning without this being imported from other texts, but as we have seen, the other texts typically adduced in support fail also.

Conclusion

While this appears to be an obscure discussion over the use of a Hebrew verbal form, and an equally obscure (for many) discussion about whether Adam was a priest in a temple in Eden, the conclusions drawn from this approach affect the legitimacy or otherwise of the concept of a cultural mandate for Christians in

¹¹⁵ Note that while it is assumed, nowhere does the text say that the man and the woman came out from their hiding place to stand before God.

caring for and developing the creation as God's stewards. The "priesthood" of Adam was seen to include the "cultural mandate," but when he fell into sin, he was deprived of his priesthood and cast out of the temple-garden of Eden. He no longer could exercise the cultural mandate. This mandate was then assumed by Christ and completed by him in obedience to the Father. Since it is now completed by Christ, there is nothing for Christians to do with regard to the cultural mandate, as this would be to act as if Christ's work was incomplete or insufficient. Thus, if the garden of Eden was a temple, and Adam was a priest, this has significant consequences for the way we conceive of our discipleship.

I argue that the image of God in humanity is a royal image in a kingdom. There was no need of a temple in the original Edenic setting, since humanity and God interacted directly without mediators or need of cultic activity. Arguing that Adam was a priest immediately demands an answer to the question: priest for whom? A priest stands in for God to represent him to humanity, and to represent humanity to God (primarily in the offering of sacrifices and worship; cf. Hebrews 5:1). There was nobody else for whom Adam could serve as a priest. After the expulsion from Eden, his sons Abel and Cain offered sacrifices, seemingly on their own behalf—there is no indication Adam acted as priest with regard to their sacrifices, or that they acted as priests. There were no designated priests in Israel prior to Aaron.¹¹⁶ Another problem with seeing Adam as a priest is that it ignores Eve, who is equally a recipient of the commandments, commissions, and blessings of Genesis 1–2, communicated presumably by Adam after her formation. She was a "helper," not a subordinate. Adam was not "priest" to Eve, or to his sons. To see the cosmos (or Eden within it) as a temple sacralises the world within which we live, thus elevating the cultic characteristics of human life above other characteristics, in a typically dualistic manner.

As I hope I have shown, the interpretation of the texts claimed to support the idea that Eden was a temple on the basis of God "walking about" in a sanctuary does not in fact support it. Linguistic arguments fail, as do exegetical ones. Too much weight is placed on the use of the *hithpa'el* of הלך. Other arguments are offered in support of this view,¹¹⁷ but without an appeal to the claim that God was "walking about" in a sanctuary the case is proportionally weakened. The other arguments claimed to support this view need also to be critically examined.

¹¹⁶ Not counting Melchizedek (Gen 14:18).

¹¹⁷ See note 9.