

The Etymological Significance of Biblical Names in
Paradise Regain'd

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We have long recognized that in Paradise Lost Milton described Eden in terms of its etymology from a Hebrew word derived from the Sumerian meaning "pleasure." His first citation, with reference to Satan, is:

Sometimes toward Eden which now in his view
 Lay pleasant, his griev'd look he fixes sad.

(IV, 27-28)

His second citation reinforces the meaning and introduces Paradise, a word drawn from the Persian meaning "enclosing wall" and "garden":

So as he fares, and to the border comes
 Of Eden, whose delicious Paradise,
 Now nearer, Crowns with her enclosure green,...
 ...a steep wilderness, whose hairie sides
 With thicket overgrown, grottesque and wild,
 Access deni'd;... Yet higher then thir tops
 The verdurous wall of Paradise up sprung:
 ...And higher then the Wall a circling row

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Of goodliest Trees loaden with fairest Fruit...

(IV, 131-147)¹

Likewise there are other names cited to which are attached their etymologies, such as Adam, created from the earth and thence Man;² Eve, mother of mankind, derived from a verb meaning to create or bring to life; Satan, the adversary; Belial, who is "worthlessness" personified; Mammon, who personifies the evil of "riches"; Moloch, the "horrid King." Clearly Milton knew the etymologies of these names, and others, and employed those meanings to reinforce the concepts which the places and characters represented.

Now names, as all of you here are emphatically aware, arise for various reasons. One set of names deals with tangibles such as occupations and geographic locations; and another set of names arises from intangibles like qualities of mind or person, involving some kind of evaluation or comparison. When we turn to the Bible we can see immediately why Cherith is called that: it was a trench in which sometimes water flowed--a brook. Why "Gennesaret": it was a harp-shaped lake; that is, it was broad. Why "Hebrew" is

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attached to the Israelites: these people were nomads who came from some outlying geographic area. Why Jesus is called a name cognate with Joshua and Jesse: they were all deliverers. Why Andrew: he was considered manly. These names--Eden, Paradise, Adam, etc.--all appear in Paradise Regain'd and my remarks are pertinent to meanings for that poem.

What should be evident is that biblical names do not exist because of some mystic quality about them or some miraculous naming by God through some mortal agency. Was Gideon called Gideon from birth or only from the time when "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor" (Judges vi.12), for Gideon means "warrior." Or did the name attach itself to the son of Joash when he defeated the Midianites? My point, of course, is that in dealing with biblical names we must dispel a religious bias and recognize the commonplaceness of the naming process. And in turn we will recognize that Adam was called that because of the legend of miraculous inspiration of some soil--a legend

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devised to answer the nagging question of human creation. Not recognizing this, people overlook the mythological dimension in names and, in the case of Adam and Eve and Eden, the allegory often inherent in ancient names. Adam is called Adam because the earth is considered female and a mother symbol as a result of natural observation of the growth of vegetation out of the earth and an equation with birth out of the female. What is clearer than generation of humankind, mythologically, out of the earth? The legend is a result of natural observation and the name Adam is a result of the legend. And what is clearer than the mother's secure womb as an enclosed garden out of which issues life? Paradise Lost explores this mythological dimension extraordinarily, for the poem itself becomes as it were the enclosed garden or womb out of which life--man and woman as progenitors of humankind--emerge as the poem ends. The pleasure of Eden gives way to the desiccation of the final lines, to the world that was all before them and that will transform into the sadness recounted in books XI and XII. The enclosed garden of Paradise is replaced by a vast

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"subjected Plain," whose potential vegetation must somehow persist through a parching climate--just as Man must. But the poem is a womb most importantly through its gestation of dove-like creatures who will know how to use God's Providence as their guide.

What I propose today is to look at biblical names in Paradise Regain'd in these same ways: to see whether Milton makes use of the etymologies of these names in the brief epic as he had in the longer epic; to see whether Milton employed the mythological or allegorical level implied by the etymologies to enhance the meaning of his poetry; and to see whether knowledge of the etymologies of these names adds meaning to the poetry. A Word List is attached giving biblical names in Paradise Regain'd, omitting only a few names such as Ninevah and Media, which are not Hebraic in origin and which were first external to the Hebraic world out of which the Bible came. I give the loci of the words in the poem, note whether a word is found in the Old Testament or only in the New Testament, and cite what appears to be the word's source meaning.

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Let's look first at some geographic place names in Paradise Regain'd, a poem in four books dealing with the temptation of the Son, Jesus, in the wilderness by Satan. The induction to book II cites Jordan three times, Bethabara, Jericho, Aenon, Salem, and Genezaret. It talks of the fishermen Andrew and Simon and of the Plain Fishermen and refers to the baptism of Jesus, which was prefatory to the temptation begun in book I and continued in books II, III, and IV. The Jordan is clearly the river where the baptism took place and there is a specific reference to its bank. Genezaret is called "the broad lake." In Luke v.1 it is simply "the lake of Gennesaret"; Milton's adjective renders its Hebrew meaning, "harp-shaped." The context of the induction is decidedly concerned with water imagery, and thus, although Bethabara and Aenon are not qualified, it seems clear that Milton knew and expected his reader to know that the first is "the house of the ford" (that is, the place where the baptism occurred; presumably it is the site connected with the Exodus over Jordan), and the second is "the place of springs." Jericho, whose etymology is uncer-

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tain, is qualified as "the City of Palms," thus emphasizing its location near water; Jericho lay in a valley north of the Dead Sea at the confluence of a number of streams, and to the west of the river Jordan which descends out of the Dead Sea. Perhaps since etymology did not underline the applicability of Jericho to this passage dominated by water images, Milton purposefully qualified the name through a citation of Deuteronomy xxxiv.3. Salem is called "Old," offering no play on water imagery but perhaps emphasizing its former "peacefulness," now shattered by conquest. The Jordan appears five other times in the poem. The first is "the flood Jordan," the second, "the Coast of Jordan." The third and last talk of "the Ford of Jordan," and the fourth recalls God's cleaving of the waters of Jordan after the Exodus from Egypt. The etymology of Jordan seems to have no significance for the poem but the references to the Ford of Jordan are to Bethabara, the meaning of that name; Bethabara is used similarly also in I, 184, being specifically connected with John's baptizing.

Mythically a ford represents a passage from one kind

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of life or pattern of life or condition of life to another, the passage over water being one of coming to resolution. The baptism of Jesus at the Ford of Jordan, that is, at Bethabara, is the division point between his growing into a man and his being forged into the redeemer of mankind through his conquering of Satan in the temptation in the wilderness. Mythically it is initiation into one's adult mission; for Jesus the temptation is the task that he must accomplish to show himself to be the hero. The mythical proportion lies in the Bible itself; Milton's emphasis on the baptism at the ford shows his recognition of the significance of the episode to the theme of his poem. The passage precedes the worldly temptation of wealth, kingdoms, and glory.

The names in the passage emphasize water, a symbol of spirituality; the ford and thus the baptism; the transition into the temptations of manhood (the second and third parts of the temptation motif). The use of the names Andrew and Simon, which is nonbiblical in this context and at this point of the narrative, emphasizes that Jesus is now manly

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and able to undergo the temptation of the world, and that he has heard his calling and is prepared to act his role.³

Let's turn to three other place names (Bethel, Habor, and Ramoth) which are employed ironically. Bethel, which means the house of God, is cited by the Son in talking of idolaters and servitude to them. This passage (III, 427-432) also notes Dan ironically since it means Judge; that is, one who governs or rules. And of course some of the Israelites are no longer in the house of God or governing themselves. Habor means united; Satan fraudulently argues that he can set up Jesus as David's successor to rule the ten tribes of Israel now serving in Habor and the two tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh) dispersed in Media. Clearly Israel is not united. Ramoth, which means heights, appears in the lines,

And when to all his Angels he [God] propos'd
To draw the proud King Ahab into fraud
That he might fall in Ramoth...

(I, 371-373)

The ironic play between "fall" and Ramoth ("heights") under-

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scores Satan's fraudulence.

Milton's use of biblical geographic names may simply cite a biblical place with no further significance suggested, or it may lead one into deeper, more textural reading when one is aware of the etymologies, or it may comment ironically on the substance of a poetic passage when one is aware of the etymologies.

Other names in Paradise Regain'd, primarily names of biblical personages, frequently are cited in terms of their biblical significance, but with no further importance. However, each use of the names Adam, Eve, and Satan is enhanced by our remembrance of their etymologies, noted before. For example, remembering that Eve means "mother of mankind," note these lines at the very beginning of the poem:

that fatal wound
 Shall be inflicted by the Seed of Eve
 Upon my [Satan's] head.

(I, 53-55)

meaning that any man may inflict a fatal wound on Satan, and

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the man Jesus will show in Paradise Regain'd the way to inflict that wound. Or, for example, we must remember that Satan is Adversary: that is his function in the poem, totally. The name first is used at the very end of the first temptation when he is explicitly discovered not to be an "aged man in Rural weeds" but the subtle Fiend. Satan is allowed his range to test the Son and to forge him into the "heir of both worlds" so that he can at the end of the poem enter on his "glorious work ... and begin to save mankind." Satan is referred to as "Adversary" in I, 33, and he calls the Son his Adversary in IV, 527. Lines IV, 21-22, refer to this adversary position: "So Satan, whom repulse upon repulse / Met ever"; as does the Son's epithet "Queller of Satan" (IV, 634).⁴

To turn to another name, Jesus's mother Mary, called the second Eve, because her seed produces the New Man, Jesus, and thus all of mankind who likewise become New Men, figures prominently in the poem.⁵ Mary, the Greek form of Miriam, has been defined as meaning rebelliously, since Miriam had criticized Moses for his marriage to an Ethiopian

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woman (Numbers xii.1-10). Mary is introduced in book II in a soliloquy articulating her "Motherly cares and fears" and "troubl'd thoughts." She at first seems to question the Annunciation and her function, refers to her afflictions (Miriam had been afflicted with leprosy for her rebelliousness against the Lord's prophet Moses), but concludes that she will wait with patience to find out what has happened to her son. Mary, as mother of the new mankind and as a second but new Miriam, represents the rejection of rebellion and acceptance of God's mysterious ways as just and true, for she "with thoughts / Meekly compos'd awaited the fulfilling" (II, 107-108).

The suggested etymology of Aaron forms the basis of the name's appearance in the poem, and the meanings of Asmodai and Belial are implied when they are mentioned. Gabriel, man of God and one through whom God shows himself to be mighty, is important as reciter of the Annunciation, cited twice in books I and IV, and through which God shows himself to be mighty in the person of the Son. But a curious alteration of names, the substitution of Nebaioth

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for Ishmael, is particularly instructive for us. Nebaioth, actually Ishmael's eldest son, means fruitfulness, and it occurs in Paradise Regain'd in a passage spoken by fraudulent Satan concerning miraculous feeding (such as manna sent to the Israelites from heaven). It is prelude to his temptation of a sumptuous banquet, which is fraudulently described as not including foods proscribed for a Jew, which, of course, the Son was. Milton's alteration of these names easily demonstrates his knowledge of the Hebrew, for the Son spoke Aramaic: Satan is employing the etymological meaning of Nebaioth as a subtle psychological lure for the Son as he hungers in the wilderness.

Both geographic and personal is the name Israel. Its sixteen appearances in Paradise Regain'd consistently emphasize that Israel, meaning he will rule as God, is the chosen nation, and the model of Jesus as "Queller of Satan" establishes how the chosen people will be able to rule as God on earth, breaking the yoke of Babylon, Rome, Satan, and so forth.⁶ "Jesus" significantly means "deliverer," and that's what the brief epic is all about: the Son's

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deliverance of Mankind out of bondage to Satan. It parallels the exodus of Moses from Pharaoh (identified with Satan) as my remarks have been indicating. Note the fishermen's plea:

we have heard

His words, his wisdom full of grace and truth,
 Now, now, for sure deliverance is at hand,
 The Kingdom shall to Israel be restor'd ... God of Israel,
 Send thy Messiah forth, the time is come.

(II, 33-43)

And the Son, "Israel's true King," answers Satan's kingdoms temptation with understanding of what Israel is and what, ultimately, his position is going to be although he avoids any assumption of personal power and glory:

My brethren, as thou call'st them, those ten tribes
 I must deliver, if I mean to reign
David's true heir, and full scepter sway
 To just extent over all Israel's Sons.

(III, 403-406)

As deliverer Jesus enacts the role of the mythic hero.

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Note too lines III, 82, 374, and 380. His arms are obedience and faith, or love; his energies are fortitude and patience; his achievement is the example he sets for others. These qualities of the deliverer are inherent in three other names in Paradise Regain'd: David, which appears fifteen times and means loving; Job, which appears six times and perhaps means howler; and Elijah, which appears four times and means Yahweh is God. All are paralleled with the Son in the poem.

David as king exemplifies the man of arms and warfare, but as his name implies he functions for the greater glory of his God and his people through his love for them. David's throne is clearly one ruled by love. He is called the Son's father frequently and the Son is his heir. Knowing the meaning of "David," the reader can easily see the way to achieve the throne, Satan's fraudulence in linking it to war and wealth and earthly glory, which are things of pride and envy, and the contrast with Satan's lack of love for God, which led to the rebellion in Heaven.

The Book of Job has been considered one of the models

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for Milton's brief epic, and this is reinforced by the references to it. All citations indicate Job's patience and fortitude. Milton does not employ the suggested etymology which accords with the lament of Job in chapter iii of the Bible. But perhaps we are to remember the way in which Satan was

mov'd to misdeem

Of righteous Job, then cruelly to afflict him

With all inflictions,

for as Milton adds: "but his patience won" (I, 424-426). Job, howling, contrasts diametrically with the Son, and this contrast then makes truly meaningful the Father's statement that he

can produce a man

Of female Seed, far abler to resist

All his sollicitations, and at length

All his vast force, and drive him back to Hell.

(I, 150-153)

Elijah, who withstood forty days without food (I, 353) and rejected the ravens' feast (II, 266-269), is paralleled

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with the Son in II, 16-19. Elijah attests to God's being God, for his faith is rewarded (II, 270-277), just as Jesus shows himself to be the true Son of God by his resistance to Satan's temptations. The point of the induction to book II and of the full poem is that one should not simply await or seek out the Messiah or Elijah, whose return is expected in the Bible: one duplicates their example and thereby only is God manifest in Man. The hero Jesus going beyond Job and emulating Elijah shows how we can all be heroes.⁷

In all, then, examining biblical names in Paradise Regain'd has direct significance for a recognition of Milton's citation of their meanings, for an understanding of ironies and deeper texture, for a mythic context, sometimes arising from the Bible, and for a realization that, explicitly and implicitly, Milton enhanced his message and art by word-play on names.

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NOTES

1 Quotations from my edition of The Complete Poetry of John Milton, rev. ed. (Anchor Books, 1971). Etymologies have been checked against various Hebrew dictionaries, dictionaries of the Bible, the Jewish Encyclopedia, and the Oxford Dictionary of Names.

2 This etymology is disputed. During Milton's time this was the accepted derivation; today Adam is generally assigned the same root as in Edom, that is, "red."

3 For a complementary discussion of the significance of the induction of book II to the sharp division between book I (which narrates the first temptation) and books II, III, IV (which narrate the second temptation) and the second half of book IV (which narrates the third temptation), see my forthcoming article on "The Structure and Myth of Paradise Regain'd." Onomastics provides an avenue to fuller understanding of what Milton was doing in his brief epic.

It is probably significant that Milton uses only "Simon," not "Simon Peter." "Peter" (from the Greek) means rock and thence implies Christ's "church"; Milton

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would not want to raise the concept of the founding of a church in his narrative or suggest the concept of the crucifixion at this point in the poem.

4 The Satan of Paradise Regain'd, a quite different character from the Satan of Paradise Lost, has no other function or personality than being adversary to the Son. Much criticism of the brief epic has not adequately noted the significance in the etymology of the name. Satan appears first in the Bible in Job i.6; the Book of Job, which Milton called a brief epic in The Reason of Church-Government, is considered a model for Milton's poem. See also later remarks in this paper.

5 The more recently offered etymology of the name, wanted to be with child, accords with this statement and suggests that Milton was aware of this possible meaning.

6 For example, note the first appearance of the name in the poem:

[The Son soliloquizing:] victorious deeds

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Flam'd in my heart, heroic acts, one while
To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,
Then to subdue and quell o're all the earth
Brute violence and proud Tyrannick pow'r,
Till truth were freed, and equity restor'd.

(I, 215-220)

7 Compare my reading of Samson Agonistes in "Irony as Tragic Effect: Samson Agonistes and the Tragedy of Hope," Calm of Mind, ed. Joseph A. Wittreich (Press of Case Western Reserve, 1971), pp. 289-306. Milton, I argue, recognized that each man must act separately, not simply await a Great Deliverer like Samson, in order to rid Man of the bondage of Philistines.

WORD LIST

- Aaron, III, 15. OT. ?Hebrew from ?Egyptian, ?oracle-giver.
- Abaddon, IV, 624. NT. Greek from Hebrew, destruction
(i.e., destroyer).
- Abraham, III, 434. OT. Hebrew, father of multitude.
- Adam, I, 51, 102, 115; II, 133, 134; IV, 607, 614. OT.
Hebrew, red; formerly earth, thence man.
- Aenon, II, 21. NT. Greek from Hebrew, place of springs.
- Ahab, I, 372. OT. Hebrew, affection, love.
- Andrew, II, 7. NT. Greek from Hebrew, manly.
- Anna, I, 255. NT. Hebrew, grace.
- Asmodai, II, 151. Apocrypha. Hebrew, evil devil from
Avestic, devil of wrath.
- Babylon, III, 280; IV, 336. OT. Chaldean, confusion.
- Balaam, I, 491. OT. Hebrew, foreigner.
- Belial, II, 150, 173. OT. Hebrew, land without return;
worthlessness; wickedness.
- Bethabara, I, 184; II, 20. OT. Hebrew, house of the ford.
- Bethel, III, 431. OT. Hebrew, house of God.
- Bethlehem, I, 243; II, 78; IV, 505. OT. Hebrew, house of
bread.

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- Cherith, II, 266. OT. Hebrew, trench, wadi.
- Dan, III, 431. OT. Hebrew, Judge.
- Daniel, II, 278, 329. OT. Hebrew, judge of God.
- David, I, 240; III, 153, 169, 282, 353, 357, 373, 383,
405, 408; IV, 108, 147, 379, 471, 500. OT. Hebrew,
loving.
- Eden, I, 7. OT. Hebrew from Sumerian, pleasure.
- Edomite, II, 423. OT. Hebrew, red.
- Elijah, I, 353; II, 19, 268, 277. OT. Hebrew, Yahweh is
God.
- Eve, I, 51, 54; II, 141, 349; IV, 5, 6 (2), 180. OT.
Hebrew, mother of mankind.
- Gabriel, I, 129, 130; IV, 504. OT. Hebrew, man of God;
God has shown himself mighty.
- Galilee, I, 135; III, 233. OT. Hebrew, ring, circle.
- Genezaret, II, 23. NT. Greek from Hebrew, harp-shaped.
- Gideon, II, 439. OT. Hebrew, warrior.
- Habor, III, 376. OT. Hebrew, united.
- Hebrew, IV, 336. OT. Hebrew, nomad from one from beyond.
- Herod, II, 424. NT. Greek, heroic.

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Israel, I, 217, 254; II, 36, 42, 89, 311, 442; III, 279,
378, 406, 408, 410, 411, 413, 441; IV, 480. OT.

Hebrew, contender with God; he will rule as God.

Jacob, III, 377. OT. Hebrew, heel-catcher, supplanter.

Jephtha, II, 439. OT. Hebrew, he will open.

Jericho, II, 20. OT. ?Hebrew, fragment.

Jerusalem, III, 234, 283; IV, 544. OT. Hebrew, founded
peaceful.

Jesus, II, 4, 317, 322, 378, 432; IV, 560. NT. Greek from
Hebrew, deliverer.

Job, I, 147, 369, 425; III, 64, 67, 95. OT. ?Hebrew,
?howler.

John, I, 184; II, 84. NT. Greek from Hebrew, Jehovah-
favored.

Jordan, I, 24, 119, 329; II, 2, 25, 62; III, 438; IV, 510.
OT. Hebrew, a descender.

Joseph, I, 23; III, 377. OT. Hebrew, let him add.

Judaea, III, 157. NT. Greek, of the Jews from Hebrew,
celebrated.

Judah, II, 424, 440; II, 282. OT. Hebrew, celebrated.

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- Machabeus, III, 165. Apocrypha. ?Hebrew, who is like thee among the gods, Jehovah; a hammer from hero.
- Mary, II, 60, 105. NT. Greek from Hebrew, Miriam, formerly, ?rebelliously; perhaps ?wanted to be with child.
- Moses, I, 352; II, 15; IV, 219, 225. OT. Hebrew, drawing out of the water, rescued.
- Nazareth, I, 23; II, 79. NT. ?Greek, ?
- Nebaioth, II, 309. OT. Hebrew, fruitfulness.
- Paradise, I, 3; IV, 604, 608, 611, 613. NT. Persian, enclosing wall, garden.
- Ramoth, I, 373. OT. Hebrew, heights.
- Salem, II, 21. OT. Hebrew, be safe, peaceful.
- Satan, I, 497; II, 115, 172, 319, 392; III, 1, 146; IV, 21, 194, 562, 581, 634. OT. Hebrew, adversary.
- Sion, IV, 347. OT. Hebrew, conspicuous, pillar.
- Simeon, I, 255; II, 87. OT. Hebrew, hearing.
- Simon, II, 7. OT. Greek from Hebrew, hearing.
- Solomon, II, 170, 201, 206. OT. Hebrew, peaceful.
- Thebez, II, 313. OT. Hebrew, whiteness.
- Thisbite, II, 16. OT. Hebrew, recourse.
- Uz[zean], I, 369. OT. Hebrew, consultation.