

Where Did Satan Come From?

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, which is generally considered to be the earliest extant piece of Christian writing, St Paul explains that his plan to visit the community was thwarted by Satan (1 Thess 2:18). Later, in his letters to the Corinthians he refers to Satan as one who tempts people to do wrong (1 Cor 7:5) and who disguises himself as an angel of light in order to deceive (2 Cor 11:14). Clearly Paul understands Satan to be a supernatural character who not only stands for all that is evil but works toward the goal of tempting human beings to commit themselves to a life of evil.

The writer of the Gospel according to Mark portrays Jesus as the one sent from God to overcome the kingdom of Satan and establish the Kingdom of God on earth (Mk 3:22-26). In the time of Jesus this kingdom of Satan was thought to be made up of the prince of demons and his demonic followers. One name given to Satan was Beelzebul (*baal*=lord; *zbl*=prince), a name for Aleyan Baal, the Canaanite fertility god of Ugarit. The Hebrew people generally referred to this god as Beelzebub which was a deliberate mispronunciation of Beelzebul and meant "lord of flies," an obvious term of contempt.

One of the best known gospel references to Satan occurs in the temptation episode in which Jesus encounters the tempter while in the desert (Mk 1:12; Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13). Mark uses the name 'satan' while Matthew and Luke use the term 'devil' (Gk *diabolos*=slanderer). Christ's ultimate victory over Satan is foreshadowed in this temptation story. His power over Satan and the demonic minions is illustrated in the gospels by his ability to cast out demons from sick people. Sickness itself was regarded by Jesus' contemporaries as an affliction that originated with Satan and any sickness that caused a person to be delirious or out of control in any way, such as, epilepsy, psychological disorders, e.g., schizophrenia, paranoia, manic depression, was seen as possession by demons. This meant that it was believed that evil spirits actually resided in the bodies of possessed persons causing them to act in bizarre and eccentric ways.

Because of their adherence to the conviction that there was only one God who was the author of all that exists there is no hint that the biblical writers saw reality in a dualistic way with two independent classes of divine beings, one good and the other evil, standing in opposition to each other. The first two chapters of Genesis demonstrate this unambiguously and Second Isaiah reinforces the same idea.

***I am the Lord, and there is no other.
I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe;
I the Lord do all these things. (Isa 45:6-7)***

The above verse is cited from the NRSV translation. A literal rendition of the Hebrew of the third line reads

I make peace (*shalôm*) and create evil (*rā*)

The question that flows from this conviction is: how can evil come from a God that makes everything good? ('God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.' Gen 1:31). The paradigmatic story of Genesis 3 is an attempt to deal with this dilemma and concludes that human beings bring evil and suffering on themselves through their own selfishness and willful damaging of their relationship with God.

When the Yahwist wrote the story of the couple in the garden he was merely passing on a tale that already had a life of its own in oral form. The Yahwist texts are generally dated by scholars in the tenth or ninth century and at that stage there was no Satan figure in Hebrew religious lore. The snake who appears in Genesis 3 is never referred to in the Bible as a material form of Satan. In the text of Gen 3:14-15 the



"Fire" graphic by Garreth Stevens

snake is spoken to as an animal and cursed as such. There is no suggestion that it is a demon in disguise. Its role in this episode is to provide the humans with a choice of behaviour that had not previously occurred to them. Being an ancient Middle Eastern symbol of life and fertility¹ the snake was the subtlest and smartest (*'arum*) creature of the animal kingdom (Gen 3:1) and so was well qualified to speak to the humans and suggest to them a course of action that would increase their wisdom and make them like God, knowing the difference between good and evil. The snake is neither introduced nor developed in the Genesis story as anything but one of the animal kingdom. When did people begin to interpret the snake in the Garden of Eden as the devil? To search for the origin of Satan as an archrival to Yahweh we need to examine not only the Hebrew Scriptures but also those cultures that had some influence over Jewish thinking. Satan first appears in the Hebrew Bible in texts that were written after the Babylonian Exile, that is, after 539 b.c.e. In the Book of Job,

“Satan first appears in the Hebrew Bible in texts that were written after the Babylonian Exile”

which probably appeared in the late 500s or the early 400s, Satan is a rather benign character who belongs to the heavenly court. The reader gets the impression of God in heaven surrounded by heavenly beings as in a royal court. This is an image that may well have been inspired by the Canaanite notion of the most high god, El-Elyon, presiding over the pantheon of divine figures. In any case the author of Job describes Yahweh talking with Satan who is always referred to in the Hebrew with the definite article *ha* (the). *haSatan* means ‘the opposer’ or ‘the adversary.’² His function in Job is to put human beings to the test in order to try their virtue. This fits in with the ancient Hebrew idea that virtue is only authentic when it has come successfully through trial. The folktale that lays the foundation of the Book of Job shows Yahweh allowing *haSatan* to test Job with various afflictions. God is confident all the while that Job will remain faithful.

At this point in Hebrew religious history Satan dwells in the heavenly court and is certainly not separated from God and presiding over the underworld as the

leader of a cohort of evil spirits. This reference in Job, however, indicates that the ancient Hebrew mind began to admit of the existence of other spiritual beings who formed a heavenly court around God. God is sometimes called the Lord/God of hosts³ where ‘hosts’ refers to heavenly multitudes of angelic beings as well as being a poetic metaphor for the astral bodies of the heavens.

The Chronicler, writing sometime in the 300s b.c.e., describes Satan as the character who puts a negative idea into David’s head inciting him to take a census of the people of Israel (1 Chron 21:1). Here Satan acts as a seducer proposing an action that is displeasing to Yahweh. The Chronicler’s source, the Deuteronomic writer of 2 Samuel 24:1, attributes this negative provocation to Yahweh whose ‘anger was kindled against Israel.’ The two books of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles are roughly 200 years apart and the attitude each one has of the perceived source of evil gives us some insight into the development of the character and role of Satan in Hebrew thinking. Gradually Satan is being seen as an independent character who moves from the being the tester in Job, in a benign sort of way, to becoming the one who puts negative and evil ideas into the minds of humans.

In the text of Zechariah 3:1-2, written just after the return of the exiles from Babylon (c.520 b.c.e.), the prophet has a vision of the high priest Joshua standing before the ‘angel of the Lord’ and with him is ‘the accuser,’ *haSatan*. The setting is the heavenly court and *haSatan* is portrayed as one of its members. His role is to test human beings and expose guilt. In this particular scene ‘the Accuser’ is about to bring a case against Joshua but is interrupted and rebuked by the angel of the Lord. The high priest represents the people of Judah and the filthy clothes he wears represent the corporate guilt he bears of things like the sins of the pre-exilic priesthood, the leadership and the people of Judah in general. The contamination that the people of Judah still carry from having lived in exile in a pagan land may also be included as a factor of guilt. However, that angel of the Lord orders clean garments to be put on Joshua to indicate that the sins and guilt of all concerned are blotted out.

In this vision ‘the Accuser’ does not have a case and his accusation of guilt is dismissed. His function here is to act as the voice that reminds the heavenly court of the past sins of the priests and people and to insist

¹ The snake’s ability to slough off its old skin and emerge with a new skin and a new life, as it were, led people to believe it had the power to regenerate itself. This set it apart from other animals.

² The Hebrew root *stn* means ‘oppose,’ ‘be an adversary,’ ‘persecute,’ ‘accuse.’

³ E.g., 1 Sam 1:3,11; 2 Sam 5:10; 1 Kgs 19:10,14; Pss 46:7,11; 69:6; 80:14,19; Isa 8:13,18; Jer 19:11,15; 42:15,18; Hag 1:5,7,9; Zec 8:23; 10:3.

on a fitting penalty. The outcome of this 'judgment' scene is a triumph for divine mercy over the strict justice demanded by 'the Accuser.'

The three texts of Job, 1 Chronicles and Zechariah 3 all date from the period after the Babylonian Exile and represent the earliest Hebrew references to Satan as an explicitly independent superhuman being. In all three texts Satan is presented in an adversarial role toward humanity but is totally reliant on God and acts in obedience to God's wishes. As 'the Adversary' he uses his powers to test the virtue of human beings. He is not malicious and does not work against God's purposes. Nevertheless, we can see the beginnings of his later image as one associated with evil and hostile toward humans. It is only in the later apocryphal⁴ and apocalyptic literature of Judaism that Satan becomes the personification of evil and the prince of darkness. Apocalyptic literature (Gk *apokalypsis*=revelation), contains details of revelations that have been passed on by angels or through dreams and visions. The revelations generally deal with future events and eschatology, that is, ideas about the end of time (Gk *eschaton*=end). The great bulk of Jewish apocalyptic writing took place in the period around 200 b.c.e. to 100 c.e.

Satan in Jewish Apocalyptic Writing

The Book of Enoch

In the very influential First Book of Enoch, which is made up of sections that were variously composed between 200 b.c.e. and just before the time of Jesus, we read of the downfall of a number of the heavenly beings. The author of chapters 6-36 of 1 Enoch elaborates on the story of the *bene ha-elohim*, children of God, that is told in the first four verses of Genesis 6. The basis of the story is that 'the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after' the daughters of humanity and took them as wives (1 Enoch 6.2).⁵ These 'watcher' angels had the task of watching over creation and instructing humanity but they abused their position by mating with humans, 'the daughters of men.' This was an attack on the boundaries that God had established between the heavenly beings and humanity. The improper

intercourse between the two spoiled the universal order that God had put into place.

The leader of the rebellious angels in 1 Enoch was called Semjaza (Semyaza) and he and his cronies taught humans how to make war and get involved in sorcery, astrology, deception, fornication and various forms of corruption. The giants who were the offspring of the unlawful intercourse also committed evil deeds against both humanity and the animal kingdom (1 Enoch 6-9). When the good folk on earth cried out to heaven for some kind of relief from these evil beings their plea was heard and the angels, Michael, Uriel, Raphael and Gabriel brought their case before the Most High God.

The result was that God ordered Michael and his followers to cast the evil ones into a place of punishment.



Devil antlered - 1400 - in Skuderlev church Denmark

And to Michael God said, "Make known to Semyaza and the others who are with him, who fornicated with the women, that they will die together with them in all their defilement. And when they and all their children have battled with each other, and when they have seen the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them for seventy generations underneath the rocks of the ground until the day of their judgment and of their consummation, until the eternal

⁴ The Apocrypha (Gk *apokryphos*=hidden) were religious writings that did not make it into the Bible. They were originally kept 'hidden' from general view because of the esoteric wisdom they contained. The term 'apocryphal' came to mean heretical in the early Christian era. It now simply refers to non-canonical writings.

⁵ The rebellion of deities against principal gods is a common theme in ancient mythologies, e.g., Zeus led a rebellion of the gods against their parents Titans; under Marduk's leadership the Mesopotamian gods rise up against Tiamat who planned their destruction; Kanaloa, the Polynesian sea god rebels against Kane and is expelled to the underworld. Mesopotamian and Canaanite mythologies may well have influenced Hebrew images of rebellious angels in Yahweh's court.

judgment is concluded. In those days they will lead them into the bottom of the fire—and in torment—in the prison (where) they will be locked up forever. And at the time when they will burn and die, those who collaborated with them will be bound together with them from henceforth unto the end of (all) generations. (1 Enoch 10:11-14)

Different apocalyptic writings assign different names to the leader of the rebellious angels. He is variously named Belial, Mastema, Azazel, Satanail, Sammael, Semjaza, or Satan and of these names only Belial⁶ and Satan occur in the Hebrew Bible. The other names refer to a prince of evil in the apocalyptic literature of the intertestamental period. The analogy of a fallen star is also applied to Satan in some apocalyptic writings and it echoes Isaiah's description of the fall of the King of Babylon.

The metaphor of Satan as a fallen star gave rise to the name 'bearer of light' that occurs in some apocalyptic texts. This was translated into Latin as Lucifer, which became a popular name for Satan in Medieval Europe. What becomes clear from these texts is that at this time in Jewish tradition there emerges a leading spiritual figure who becomes the personification of evil in opposition to God and the good spirits of the heavenly court.

***How you are fallen from heaven,
O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground,
you who laid the nations low!
You said in your heart,
"I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne
above the stars of God;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
on the heights of Zaphon;
I will ascend to the tops of the clouds,
I will make myself like the Most High."
But you are brought down to Sheol,
to the depths of the Pit.***

The Book of Jubilees, written in Hebrew by a member of the Hasidic or Essene tradition within Judaism sometime in the period of the Maccabees (160-140 b.c.e.), is another apocalyptic work that sheds light on Jewish beliefs of that era. It is basically an

interpretation of parts of Scripture and fits into the literary genre of midrash. Jubilees tells how God created spiritual beings on the first day of creation and allocated roles to them in the created universe. These angels preside over the forces of nature (2:2f.), instruct humans and convey God's messages to them (3:15; 12:22; 16:6), test their virtue (19:3), deliver humans from danger (16:7; 48:13-19). One class of angels, called Watchers, were given the task of instructing humanity and performing 'judgment and uprightness upon the earth' (4:15). These are the Watchers described in Genesis 6 who sinned by having intercourse with human women. The spirits of their evil children were condemned to wander the earth as evil spirits inflicting disease on humanity (10:11ff.), leading humans astray to end in sin and destruction (10:11ff.; 11:4).

Satan in the Book of Jubilees

The prince of these evil spirits, Mastema, incited some people on the earth to initiate wars, worship idols and practise all kinds of evil.

And he (Mastema) sent other spirits to those who were set under his hand to practice all error and sin and all transgression, to destroy, to cause to perish and to pour out blood upon the earth. (Jub 11:5)

The author of Jubilees paints an idealised picture of Egypt during the time of Joseph's administration. Under the influence of Joseph's upright and impartial government

'the kingdom of the Pharaoh was upright. And there was no Satan and there was no evil' (40:9).

In general the absence of sin, defilement and error in the land of Israel is equivalent to the absence of Satan and evil spirits (50:5). The messianic era is depicted as the ultimate ideal world in which there will be no evil:

And all of their days they will be complete and live in peace and rejoicing, and there will be no Satan and no evil (one) who will destroy; because all of their days will be days of blessing and healing. (23:29)

In the Wisdom of Solomon, a book that is canonical in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles but not in the Hebrew or Protestant canons, Satan is described as the devil through whose envy death entered the world.

⁶ Belial (Heb. 'wickedness' 'worthlessness') occurs in Deut 13:13; Judg 19:22; 20:13 and 1 Sam 1:16; 2:12; 10:27; 25:17 and is often translated as 'scoundrel(s)'. The word does not refer to an individual evil figure until the intertestamental period.

The reference here is to spiritual not physical death because only those who belong to the devil will experience it.

but through the devil's envy death entered
the world,
and those who belong to his company
experience it. (Wis 2:24)

This text has been interpreted as referring to the scene in Genesis 3:1-19 where the serpent tempted Adam and Eve to go against God's wishes and so lose their gift of immortality. If it does indeed allude to Gen 3 then it is one of the very few pre-Christian texts that attribute evil and death to the sin of Adam and Eve (see also Sirach 25:23).

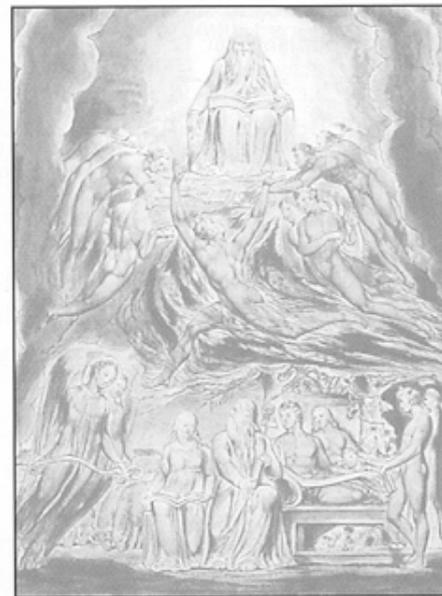
At this stage we can say that the Hebrew Bible does not regard Satan as a leader of evil spirits who opposes God and seeks to draw humanity into a web of evil. It is only in the Jewish apocryphal works that we see Satan being given the role of the archenemy of Yahweh. These same apocryphal works attribute evil in the world to the Watcher angels who lusted after the daughters of humanity. They do see the action of Adam and Eve in Gen 3 as the entry of evil into our world. Neither do they regard the snake in Gen 3 as a devil or Satan figure. It is only in Christian writings and in the Jewish texts of the early Christian era that the snake in Genesis 3 is looked upon as the devil.

Satan in apocalyptic Literature

The change in the perception of Satan is observable in the apocalyptic literature, which tries to deal with the whole issue of theodicy.⁷ Theodicy deals with the question of how a supremely good and just God can allow evil to exist. This has always been a problem for monotheistic faiths, which maintain that all that exists comes from the one God. The apocalyptic writings address this issue by arguing that evil does not come from God but from the evil angel. Yahweh gives the angel power to tempt human beings and even cause their destruction but this is not a timeless arrangement. The Book of Jubilees (23:29) indicates that a time will come when there will be no more Satan, when humans will live in peace with each other and when all evil will disappear.

It is possible that this concept might have been generated by ideas from Iranian Zoroastrianism, which could have had some influence on Jewish thinking in the period of Persian domination after the Babylonian exile (539-330 b.c.e.). Zoroastrianism holds that in the last phase of history a cosmic struggle will take place between the forces of evil led by the

Destructive Spirit, Angra Mainyu (Ahriman), and the forces of good under the Creator God, Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd). In the end good will triumph over evil, Angra Mainyu and all evil will be eliminated and the world will be restored to its original perfect state. In Persian mythology evil entered a perfect world as the result of an invasion by Angra Mainyu and his followers. This dualistic approach to the presence of evil in human society is predicated on the existence of the two principal deities of good and evil. It avoids the difficulty of both good and evil coming from the one divine source. It is interesting to note, too, that the snake because of its deadly bite is a figure of evil in Zoroastrianism. The bottom line, however, is that there is not enough evidence to be certain about any influences of Persian religion on Judaism.



Satan before the throne of God – William Blake

The Dead Sea Scrolls give us a good idea of certain traditions and lines of belief that were current in the conservative Jewish sect at Qumran. The Scrolls have also shown that under the broad umbrella of Judaism there existed a variety of beliefs and practices in the period between 200 b.c.e. and the destruction of the Temple in 70 c.e.

The Community Rule presents a dualistic picture of creation in which people follow good spirits or evil spirits.

All the children of Light are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of injustice are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness. (1QS iii, 20)

⁷ Theodicy is from the Greek *theos* (=god) and *dikē* (=justice).

The Scrolls regard the presence of evil in the world as evidence that creation is dominated by the reign of Satan (Belial) who is striving to win victory over good before the end of days. We read in the War Scroll:

But Belial, the Angel of Malevolence, Thou hast created for the Pit; his [rule] is in darkness and his purpose is to bring about wickedness and iniquity. (1 QM xiii, 12)

When the end of days comes there will be a final struggle in which Satan and all evil will be destroyed forever. The War Scroll, which describes the final battle between the children of Light and the children of Darkness, outlines an eschatology in which the Messiah will lead the righteous into the Kingdom of God where there will be endless peace and happiness. Evil-doers will be doomed to stay with Satan and his angels and endure punishment.

The mighty hand of God shall bring down [the army of Belial, and all] the angels of his kingdom, and all the members [of his company in everlasting destruction]...(1 QM i, 15)

A similar idea is echoed in the gospels which portray the world as the arena in which the kingdoms of God and Satan are locked in conflict. Here is Jesus' answer to those who accused him of casting out demons by Satan's power:

If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?



'St Michael binding Satan' – William Blake

If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. (Mt 12:25-28)

Satan in the Time of Jesus

It is clear from the gospels and other contemporary Jewish writings that Jews at the time of Jesus believed in good and evil spirits. The good spirits were characters that are described in the Hebrew Bible as messengers (*mal'achim*) of the Lord. They were intermediary beings that acted as envoys bringing messages from God to humans or working wonders in God's name.⁸ The gospels maintain this traditional image of the angels and show them performing the same function as messengers. The angel in Luke's infancy narrative that appeared to Mary was a messenger announcing to her that she was to have a child (Lk 1:26-38). Similarly the characters who were at the empty tomb of Jesus acted as messengers informing the women that Christ had risen from the dead (Mt 28:2; Mk 16:5; Lk 24:4; Jn 20:12).

The Hebrew term used for these messengers is *mal'ach* which simply means one sent on a message, a courier. When translated into Greek it became *angelos* (=messenger) from the verb *angelein*, which means to announce. These messengers were generally personified as young men often dressed in white. Popular imagination portrays angels as androgynous figures with wings. This comes from the description of the cherubim (*kheruvim*) in the Hebrew Bible who are mentioned in Gen 3:24 as guardians of the Tree of life.⁹ It is quite probable that the image of the cherub was borrowed from Egyptian mythology. The image is common in the ancient world around Israel as evidenced by winged bulls and lions in Mesopotamian religions and the griffins of the Hittites.

Jewish concepts of Satan abound in apocalyptic writings of the Christian era. Both Jewish and Christian writings contain a noticeable element of dualism. Satan is the chief evil demon who opposes goodness and tries to bring humans under his control. The world of sin and evil is the arena of Satan. It is

⁸ E.g., a messenger appears to Hagar in the desert (Gen 16:7ff.); stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac (Gen 22:11ff.); appears to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:2); appears to Gideon (Jgs 6:11ff.); appears to Elijah as he is en route to Horeb (1 Kg 19:7).

⁹ See also the image of God riding on a cherub (2 Sam 22:11); the cherubim guarding the Ark of Covenant (Exod 25:18-22; 37:7-9) and those in Solomon's Temple (1 Kg 6:23-35).

Satan who tries to ensnare the followers of Christ and thwart the spread of the good news of salvation.

The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (2 Thess 2:9-10)

In the Book of Revelation John of Patmos recounts a story reminiscent of the episode that occurred in the Book of Jubilees where Satan or the Devil is driven out of heaven by Michael and his angels and thrust down to earth. John uses the evil dragon as an image of Satan.

And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Rev 12:7-9)

Since there is no mention of a heavenly war in any Jewish or early Christian literature it is difficult to know what inspired this text, but it gives us an idea of how early Christianity adopted concepts of Satan and his cohorts from apocalyptic Judaism. The imagery of this passage alone shows how natural it was for the early Christians to interpret the snake in the Adam and Eve story as Satan. There is also a firm belief in both Jewish and Christian traditions that in the end Satan will be defeated and will have no future sway over the created universe.

The New Testament writings show a belief in Satan or the Devil as a fallen angel who is head of a demonic horde. Satan is a spiritual being, the personification of evil, whose mission is to oppose God and promote evil. Jesus Christ is portrayed in the New Testament as the one who saves us from Satan and thereby enabling us to overcome the forces of evil and be part of the realm of God.

In the Greek text of the Life of Adam and Eve,¹⁰ which is probably a translation of an original Hebrew text that was very likely written in the

first century c.e., there is clear evidence that Jewish tradition in the time of Jesus interpreted the snake's action in tempting Adam and Eve as originating with Satan.

And the devil spoke to the serpent saying, 'Rise up, come to me and I will tell you something to your advantage.' Then the serpent came to him and the devil said to him, 'I hear that you art wiser than all the beasts; so I came to observe you...Why do you eat of the weeds of Adam and his wife and not of the fruit of paradise? Rise and come and let us make him to be cast out of paradise through his wife, just as we were cast out through him.' The serpent said to him, 'I fear lest the Lord be wrathful to me.' The devil said to him, 'Do not fear; only become my vessel, and I will speak a word through your mouth by which you will be able to deceive him.' (16)

The transition from this point of view to regarding the snake as an image of Satan is a natural and easy one that takes place in Jewish tradition around two centuries before Jesus.



Good and evil angels – William Blake

Conclusion

This brief study of a number of references to Satan in the Hebrew Bible, Jewish apocrypha and pseudepigrapha and in the New Testament shows that:

- Satan as a demon of the spirit world does not exist in early Hebrew tradition.
- Early Jewish tradition did not interpret the snake in Genesis 3 as a demon.
- Jewish apocalyptic writings attribute the entry of evil into the world to the Watcher angels and their sin of lust, not to Adam and Eve.
- The snake in Genesis 3 is cursed as a snake and not as Satan or any kind of demon.

¹⁰ Also known as the Apocalypse of Moses.

- The first references to Satan describe him as a benign member of God's heavenly court.
- Satan is a personification of evil only in later Jewish apocalyptic writings.
- By the time of Jesus Satan is believed to be the leader of evil angels who opposes goodness and whose mission is to tempt humans to evil.
- It is only in this later period that the snake in Genesis 3 is interpreted as a figure of Satan.
- The concepts and metaphors of Satan ruling over a fiery place of torment also come from later apocalyptic writings.

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