TOWARD A PURGE OF THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES AND “RETURN” FOR THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF GENESIS 3:16B

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Abstract: Susan T. Foh argues the woman’s הושקה in Gen 3:16 is not an affectionate “desire for” her husband, as in almost all previous English translations, but rather a “desire to contend with him for leadership.” This adversarial view has gained wide acceptance among evangelicals, as can be seen by its appearance in the NLT and 2016 ESV. The present essay contends the view is seriously misguided. Its reliance on Gen 4:7, a text with its own major difficulties, makes for an unreliable foundation. Furthermore, an examination of the history of translation and interpretation of הושקה in its three OT occurrences, as well as its use outside the OT in the DSS, reveals both a complete lack of precedent for an adversarial reading as well as considerable evidence that the original meaning was not “desire” but rather “return.”

Key words: Gen 3:16, Gen 4:7, Song of Songs 7:10, desire, woman, translation, curse, marriage

“It has been thirty-five years since Walter C. Kaiser first called for a move away from the longstanding translation of הושקה in Gen 3:16 as “desire” in Gen 3:16.4 Far from heeding the call, however, recent translations and commentaries have actually doubled down on it. Following the lead of Susan T. Foh’s use of the “desire” (הושקה) of sin in Gen 4:7 as an interpretive key, conservative scholars have increasingly favored seeing the woman’s הושקה not as an affectionate “desire for” her

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1 Matching the NIV word-for-word are ESV 2011, NASB, and HSCB. NRSV, NJPS, KJV, and NKJV show minor variations (e.g. “shall be” rather than “will be”).


3 The Challenge of Hebrew Lexicography Today,” in Congress Volume Ljubljana 2007 (VTSup 133; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 95.

husband (implied in the NIV), but rather an adversarial “desire against” him.\(^5\) This adversarial view is now embraced by a remarkable number of evangelical OT scholars,\(^6\) theologians on both sides of the complementarian-egalitarian debate,\(^7\) as well as more popular writers on male-female relationships.\(^8\) According to Ronald and Beverly Allen, “Susan Foh has done an inestimable service to the church in helping us understand these words in a new way.”\(^9\) Several recent translations are emblematic of the trend:

“Your desire shall be contrary to your husband” (ESV 2016)

“And you will desire to control your husband” (NLT)

\(^5\) “What Is the Woman’s Desire?,” \textit{WTJ} 37 (1975): 376–83. Foh recognizes no historical precedents to her view, and commentators consistently trace the adversarial view back to her. See, however, Derek Kidner, who already at least hinted in this direction: “An echo of the phrase, in 4:7b, conjures up still more vividly its suggestion of the jungle” (\textit{Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary} [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967], 71).


“You will want to control your husband” (NET)

Interestingly, although the NIV retains the traditional affectionate translation,\(^\text{10}\) notes for the new NIV Zondervan Study Bible favor the adversarial view.\(^\text{11}\) On the traditional interpretation, the woman’s נְשׁוֹן is most often understood as a sexual desire,\(^\text{12}\) though many see it as a broader desire for relational intimacy or dependence.\(^\text{13}\) Both variations of this interpretation are helpful for explaining the relationship of the woman’s desire (3:16b) to the immediately preceding focus on pain in childbearing (3:16a): Despite the suffering, she will continue to desire the very relations with her husband that cause it. The NRSV makes this clear:

To the woman he said,

I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; (16a)
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband, (16b)
and he shall rule over you.\(^\text{14}\)

The affectionate desire view also fits well with the only other OT occurrence of נְשׁוֹן (aside from 4:7) in Song 7:10[11 MT]: “I belong to my beloved, and his desire (נְשׁוֹן) is for me” (NIV).

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\(^{10}\) “Desire for” or its equivalent first appears in EVV in Tyndale’s translation of 1530.

\(^{11}\) D. A. Carson, ed., NIV Zondervan Study Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 32.


This view has struggled, however, to explain how the first half of 16b relates to the second concerning the husband’s rule. It is frequently suggested the woman’s desire for her husband puts her in a position of dependency that enables him to rule over her.15 According to Gordon J. Wenham, “Women often allow themselves to be exploited in this way because of their urge toward their husband: their sexual appetite may sometimes make them submit to quite unreasonable male demands.”16 Some have seen in the woman’s desire a hypersexual disorder,17 with debate even arising over whether the sex drive of women is presented as stronger than that of men.18 Other questions raised include: Is the woman’s husbandly desire part of the original creation? If so, why is it part of God’s judgment speech? If not, should it be seen as a disorder? Unsurprisingly, this verse has provoked no little controversy among interpreters inclined toward modern views on women. According to Carol L. Meyers, “Perhaps no single verse of scripture is more troublesome, from a feminist perspective.”19

Foh’s adversarial view is appealing because it bypasses much of this controversy in favor of seeing a perpetual battle of the sexes as the focus of God’s judgment. Furthermore, the notion that male-female conflict is intrinsic to our fallen world seems, for many, particularly fitting.20 Of course, a new interpretation’s ability to alleviate controversy and fit with personal experience ought not alone be sufficient cause for its adoption.

This essay argues the adversarial desire view is fundamentally misguided.21 In doing so, it is also my hope to reinvigorate Kaiser’s call for a departure from the translation “desire” altogether. First, the difficulties inherent in Gen 4:7 make it an unreliable interpretive key for indicating an adversarial use of תְּשׁוֹקה in 3:16. Second, not only do the early translations and interpreters of תְּשׁוֹקה in 3:16 show no precedent for reading it as indicating the woman’s adversarial relationship to her

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15 Most take the verb מְשַׁל (“rule”) to indicate a harsh, exploitative rule.
16 Genesis 1–15, 81. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch write of “the almost morbid and continual desire she should experience towards the man in spite of the perils and pains of child-birth, that natural attraction which will not let her free herself from him, that weak dependence which impels her to lean upon the man, and to let herself be sheltered and completed by him” (Commentary on the OT: The Pentateuch [trans. J. Martin; vol. 2; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 165–66); Skinner: “by the instincts of her nature she shall be bound to the hard conditions of her lot, both the ever-recurring pains of child-bearing, and the subjection to the man” (Genesis, 83).
17 H. Stigers: “she will find within herself a yearning for man which on occasion amounts to nymphomania” (A Commentary on Genesis [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976], 80); H. C. Leupold: “This yearning is morbid. It is not merely sexual yearning. … It may be normal. It often is not but takes a perverted form, even to the point of nymphomania” (Genesis, 172).
18 Gunkel, Genesis, 21; Skinner, Genesis, 83.
20 Foh is concerned in part that “common experience suggests few husbands rule their homes. In addition, many wives have no desire—sexual, psychological or otherwise—for their husbands” (“The Head of the Woman Is the Man,” in Women in Ministry: Four Views (ed. Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989], 74). See also her Women & the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1979), 69.
husband, the dominant understanding of the term by these witnesses is not “desire” but rather “return.” Finally, evidence from the DSS confirms the strong likelihood that “return” is in fact its earliest meaning.

I. PROBLEMS WITH USING GENESIS 4:7 AS AN INTERPRETIVE KEY

Foh’s strongest argument in favor of the adversarial view, and the one consistently cited by proponents, is that it accounts best for the adversarial use of sin’s והשוקה in Gen 4:7. Indeed, with only minor variations, the language and syntax of the two passages is identical:

And for your husband [is] your desire (תשוקה) and he will rule over you
(Gen 3:16b)

And for you [is] its/his desire (תשוקה) and you will rule over it/him
(Gen 4:7b)

The parallel is reinforced by the fact that והשוקה only appears once elsewhere in the OT (Song 7:10[11]). Furthermore, the two passages are separated by only fifteen verses, both occurring in the opening toledoth section of Genesis (2:4–4:26). Finally, in both passages God is seen to be speaking to characters concerning their rebellion against divine rule.

The strength of this parallel leads Bill Arnold to consider it “decisive” for interpretation. According to Victor P. Hamilton, we have “a case where the clear meaning of 4:7 illuminates a less clear meaning of 3:16.” That is, the clear adversarial desire (of sin) against Cain in chapter 4 favors viewing the woman’s desire in chapter 3 as adversarial. It should not be missed that this reading is an indispensable interpretive key for the adversarial view. Without it, there is absolutely no reason to infer that the woman’s desire is adversarial. In fact, the closest parallel to 3:16 becomes the affectionate use of והשוקה in the male-female relationship of Song 7:10[11].

Unfortunately, the problems with using Gen 4:7 as an interpretive key are seldom recognized. Most significantly, what Hamilton describes as “the clear meaning of Gen 4:7” is actually not quite so clear at all. According to Umberto Cassuto,

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22 The similarities are so striking they are often seen as a problem in need of a text-critical solution. See the literature cited in Westermann, Genesis 1–11, 300.
24 Genesis, 70. Iain Provan claims “the near context [of Gen 4:7] makes it all but certain” the woman’s desire is one of domination (Discovering Genesis, 86). Ross calls the parallel “the clue for the interpretation of this text” (“Genesis,” 56).
26 Contra Waltke, who writes of “the unambiguous context of 4:7” (Genesis, 94).
4:7 is “one of the most difficult and obscure Biblical sentences.” 27 Claus Westermann sees 4:7b as “a sentence which is incomprehensible” and notes that “all explanations or attempts at emendation of the text have failed. It must be admitted that the text is very corrupt.” 28 Otto Procksch goes so far as to call 4:7 “the most difficult verse in Genesis.” 29

LXX/OG translators, in fact, arrived at a very different understanding of the MT than most modern translations, as a comparison of NETS with the NIV illustrates:

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it. (Gen. 4:7 NIV)

If you offer correctly but do not divide correctly, have you not sinned? Be still; his recourse is to you, and you will rule over him. (Gen 4:7 NETS) 30

The most popular interpretation of 4:7 today is that “sin” (חטאת) is portrayed as a beastly demon “crouching” (ורבץ) at Cain’s door. 31 It has a “desire” (משקה) to devour Cain; Cain “must rule over it” (תמל בו). Westermann criticizes this view, however, arguing that an introduction of sin personified as a beast/door demon “lies completely outside the admonitory or warning style” of verse 6–7, and that there exists no comparable imagery elsewhere in the OT. 32 Joaquim Azevedo goes so far as to say that “the Pentateuch does not allow the interpretation of [ורבץ] as a 'demon.” " 33

27 A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 208. The notes in BHQ make this fact readily plain (p. 86). According to Skinner, the “obsccurity” of the verse is “due to deep-seated textual corruptions”; Driver: “the text is open to suspicion” (The Book of Genesis: With Introduction and Notes [10th ed.; London: Methuen & Co., 1916], 65); Sarna: “The Hebrew text bristles with difficulties” (Genesis, 33); Robert Alter: “particularly elliptic in the Hebrew, and thus any construction is no more than an educated guess” (The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary [New York: W. W. Norton, 2004], 30. Mathews acknowledges the problems, and even that “Jewish tradition counted it as one of the indeterminate verses (b. Yoma 52a–b),” yet he is more optimistic: “Despite the problems, we can achieve a credible understanding of the passage” (Genesis 1–11:26, 269).

28 Genesis 1–11, 299.


30 One proposal is that the LXX translator read תַּחְת הַגְּוֹדָע (from תַּחְת הַגְּוֹדָע, “cut up, cut in pieces, divide by joints”) instead of תַּחְת ("at the door") (John W. Wevers, Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis [SCS 35; Atlanta: Scholars, 1993], 55). LXX revisions Symmachus and Theodotion also vary considerably.

31 This view refers to a possibly analogous Mesopotamian רַבְצָי, “croucher demon” (E. A. Speiser, Genesis [AB 1; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964], 32–33; Wenham, Genesis 1–15, 104–16; K. Koch, TDOT 4:312; Arnold, Genesis, 79; Waltke, Genesis, 98; Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, 270–71; Alter, Five Books, 30; Hamilton, Genesis 1–17, 225–28).

32 Genesis 1–11, 299. Ronald S. Hendel further notes there is no such croucher demon attested for West Semitic religion and thus “with the variety of West Semitic malevolent spirits and demons available, it is difficult to think that in this verse Yahweh casually alludes to a minor Mesopotamian deity” (Hendel, The Text of Genesis 1–11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 46).

Perhaps the most significant problem, however, is grammatical. The feminine noun תַּשָּׁךְ (“sin”) lacks agreement with the masculine participle בַּר (“crouching”), as well as with the masculine pronominal suffixes on חטאת (“its/his desire”) and בַּר (“you must rule over it/him”). Azevedo resolves the gender agreement problem with בַּר by arguing that the feminine subject תַּשָּׁךְ is not a reference to “sin” but to the more common use of the word for “a sin offering.” If so, the male animal used for the sin offering can become the subject of the masculine בַּר. This interpretation, in fact, has been especially popular in previous centuries.

As for the masculine suffixes, the LXX/OG views Abel, not sin (תַּשָּׁךְ), as antecedent. Interpreters such as Ibn Ezra and Calvin held variations on this view, and it continues to be advanced today. Michael Morales, after a survey of the pervasive narrative contrast between Cain and Abel, observes that “it would be quite odd for this pair to be replaced by that of Cain and personified sin.” He con-

34 Calvin notes this problem (Genesis, 203). On the crouching demon view, the problem is dealt with by construing בַּר as a predicate nominative: “sin is a בַּר (crouching beast)” (Cassuto, Genesis 1, 210–22. Wenham, Genesis 1–15, 105–106; Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, 112). As Hendel observes, however, the antecedent to the masculine suffixes would still be expected to be the subject, here the feminine תַּשָּׁךְ (Text of Genesis 1–11, 46).

35 E.g. Exod 29:14. “Door of Paradise,” 53. The location of the תַּשָּׁךְ at an otherwise obscure “door” (חֵתֹן) is also illuminated on the analogy of the garden as a prototype of the tabernacle. Because offerings, including the תַּשָּׁךְ, are to be brought to the “door” (חֵתֹן) of the tabernacle (e.g. Lev 4:4), the תַּשָּׁךְ (“sin offering”) in Genesis 4 is made available at the “door” (חֵתֹן) to the garden (pp. 54–55). So also L. Michael Morales, “Crouching Demon, Hidden Lamb: Resurrecting an Exegetical Fossil in Genesis 4.7,” BT 63 (2010): 186–88; Hans-Christoph Aurin, “Your Urge Shall Be for Your Husband? A New Translation of Genesis 3:16b and a New Interpretation of Genesis 4.7,” Lectio Difficilior 1 (2008): 14–15.

36 Matthew Henry, for example, writes, “Yet some choose to understand this also as an intimation of mercy. ‘If thou dost not well, sin (that is, the sin-offering), lies at the door, and thou mayest take the benefit of it.’ The same word signifies sin and a sacrifice for sin. ‘Though thou hast not done well, yet do not despair; the remedy is at hand; the propitiation is not far to seek; lay hold on it, and the iniquity of thy holy things shall be forgiven thee.’ Christ, the great sin-offering, is said to stand at the door, Rev. iii. 20” (Commentary on the Whole Bible, vol. 1: Genesis to Deuteronomy [Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.], 39; emphasis original). See John de Jong, who also cites Adoniram Judson (1788–1850), Adam Clarke (1762–1832), and Jamieson, Fauset, and Brown (1877) as adherents to this view (“A ‘Sin Offering’ Crouching at the Door? Translation Lessons from an Exegetical Fossil in the Judson Bible,” BT [2010]: 91).

37 See Wevers, Greek Text, 55.


cludes that Abel, not personified sin, is “the most likely person being referred to” in verse 7. 40

My point here is not to defend any one position on 4:7 but to insist it is not the rock-solid interpretive key to 3:16 that it is often made out to be. 41 According to Westermann, Gen 4:6–7 “can only be made use of with caution to explain the Cain and Abel narrative, if used at all.” 42 Interpreters would do well to heed similar caution when it comes to using 4:7 to explain 3:16. Indeed, the fact that 4:7 is an indispensable interpretive key for the adversarial view exposes this view as based on the most precarious of foundations.

II. EARLY TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION OF 

A second problem for Foh’s adversarial view is the translation and interpretive history of תַּשׁוּקָה. Largely because of the rarity of תַּשׁוּקָה in the OT, major lexical works can lead to an overconfident assessment of its meaning (e.g. BDB, “longing”; HALOT, “desire, longing”), unmindful of the scholarly struggle for its definition. 43 This section will first examine evidence for how the word was understood in the early interpretive tradition related to Gen 3:16 before turning to its nonbiblical use in the DSS. It will be shown that (1) there is no precedent for an adversarial reading of תַּשׁוּקָה and (2) the dominant early understanding of the term is “return,” with “desire” likely a later arrival on the interpretive landscape.

1. The biblical interpretive evidence for תַּשׁוּקָה as “return.” The earliest known translation of the Pentateuch is the LXX/OG (3rd cent. BCE). If translators of Gen 3:16 understood תַּשׁוּקָה as “desire,” we might expect to find words such as ἐπιθυμίᾳ (“desire,” “longing,” “craving”) or ὠρμή (“impulse,” “inclination,” “desire”). 44 What we find, however, is ἀποστροφή (“turning,” “return,” “turning away from”). 45

40 “Crouching Demon,” 189.
43 All Jastrow’s citations are in reference to its three biblical occurrences (1703). BDB and HALOT both recognize debate over identifying the best Arabic cognate. Foh argues for Arabic sāqa (“drive on, herd, impel”) and thus that תַּשׁוּקָה can be rendered “control” (“Woman’s Desire?,” 378). So also Shields, “Man and Woman,” 105–6. However, the dangers of dependence on etymology to establish a word’s meaning are well known. See the cautions cited in John Kaltner, The Use of Arabic in Biblical Hebrew Lexicography (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1996), 98–102. In his study of תַּשׁוּקָה, Joel N. Lohr prefers to avoid etymological discussion altogether, though in a footnote he suggests תַּשׁוּקָה may be related to שׁוּק “leg” or “street, marketplace” (“Sexual Desire? Eve, Gen 3:16 and תַּשׁוּקָה,” JBL [2011]: 245 n. 69). Overall, it seems best to agree with Busenitz that “the data revealed by such is dim and inconclusive” (“Woman’s Desire,” 205–6); also, Walton, Genesis, 227–28.

While DCH offers an initial entry for תַּשׁוּקָה with the meaning “desire, longing,” it is followed by a second entry with the meaning “driving ... as expression of ruling over someone” (8:684). Yet strangely, the woman’s driving for her husband is taken to mean “he will rule over” her, the lover’s driving for the maiden is taken to mean she “will rule over him,” and sin’s driving for Cain is taken to mean sin “would rule over” Cain.

44 Lohr, “Sexual Desire?,” 231.
45 BDAG 123; LSJ: “turning back” (220); GEL’S: “turn back, revert” (85).
καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα σου ἡ ἀποστροφὴ σου (LXX)

and your recourse will be to your husband (NETS)⁴⁶

This striking disjuncture between ἀποστροφὴ and ἡ καίσαρα as “desire” has led many scholars to conclude LXX translators used a different Hebrew Vorlage that read not ἡ καίσαρα but ἡ ἀποστροφὴ (“return”).⁴⁷ Yet ἀποστροφὴ is used again to translate ἡ καίσαρα in 4:7, and the very similar ἀποστροφὴ (“turning [toward]”)⁴⁸ is used in Song of Songs. Regardless of the reason behind the translation in Gen 3:16, we have in the LXX an early tradition of the woman’s “(re)turn” to her husband,⁴⁹ a movement that is in no way conceived of as adversarial against him.⁵⁰

The Syriac Peshitta (1st–2nd cent. CE) offers another important early translation independent of the LXX. It, too, renders ἡ καίσαρα as the equivalent of “return” in Gen 3:16, 4:7 and Song of Songs.⁵¹ Several LXX daughter translations, although less weighty, contain parallel readings that attest to an early and widespread acceptance of the translation “return.”⁵² The Old Latin (2nd–3rd cent.),⁵³ Ethiopian

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⁴⁶ Cf. Brenton: “and thy submission shall be to thy husband.”

⁴⁷ So BHQ, without variant readings in MT or SP, suggesting a Vorlage motivated by a desire to avoid “the sexual connotation of καίσαρα” (85, citing Harl, Genesis, 109). Similarly, Vogels, “Power Struggle,” 202; E. Nestle, “Marginalien 6,” ZAW 24 (1904): 312ff., cited in Gunkel, Genesis, 21. Contra Gunkel, Genesis, 21; Skinner, Genesis, 83. Others suggest the LXX translator is responsible for the change and, e.g., wanted to avoid sexual connotation (Wevers, Greek Text, 45), or was unfamiliar with καίσαρα and used instead an Aramaic term mistakenly believed to be its equivalent (Roland Bergmeier, “Zur Septuagintaübersetz von Gen 3,16,” ZAW 79 [1967]: 77–79). Similarly, Yeshayahu Maori, “Methodological Criteria for Distinguishing Variant Vorlage and Exegesis in the Peshitta,” in The Peshitta as a Translation: Papers Read at the II Peshitta Symposium [ed. P. B. Dirksen and A. Van der Kooij; MPI 8; Leiden: Brill, 1995], 114–15. BHQ further notes “the meaning ‘longing’ for νεῖσθαι is not excluded, as it parallels the Mishnaic וinesis, basically meaning ‘return,’ often used in connection with man/woman relationships (e.g. b. Nid. 31b),” as well as the parallel use of καίσαρα and חזרה in DSS (85), the latter observation to be taken up below.

⁴⁸ BDAG 382; GELS, 283.

⁴⁹ One major revision of the Septuagint, Aquila (early 2nd cent. CE), reads συνάφεια (“conjoining, alliance”), perhaps indicating the result of her turning. Another, kaige-Theodotion (late 2nd cent. CE), while lacking 3:16, reads ἀποστροφὴ in 4:7. We will discuss the counter-testimony of Symmachus below.

⁵⁰ William R. G. Loader is the only scholar I have found who mentions the possibility of an adversarial intention. Although he argues ἀποστροφὴ in Gen 3:16 LXX implies the woman’s sexual return, he suggests in a footnote it may have functioned adversarially: “By association [with 4:7] one might then read the woman’s ‘return’ as something negative, even if not as ‘sin’” (The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament: Case Studies on the Impact of the LXX in Philo and the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 47 n. 55). His reading suggests, against NETS, Wevers (Notes, 55), Brayford (Genesis, 252), GELS (85), etc., that “sin” is the subject of “desire” in Gen 4:7 LXX, despite the fact it appears verbally ᾣμαρτεῖς. Neither does he account for the weighty evidence below that καίσαρα lacks any adversarial sense in DSS.

⁵¹ Katherine Bushnell, God’s Word to Women (Minneapolis: Christians for Biblical Equality, 1921), 234 (online: https://godswordtowomen.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/gods_word_to_women1.pdf, 58); Lohr, “Sexual Desire?” Lamsa: “You shall be dependent on your husband” (3:16); “you should return to your brother” (4:7).

⁵² Emmanuel Tov lists the OL, Ethiopian, Armenian, and Coptic as LXX “daughter translations,” with the major translations from the Hebrew being LXX, LXX revisions, Targums, Peshitta, Vulgate, and the Arabic translation of Saadia (Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, 3rd ed. [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012], 127).
all translate the equivalent of “return” or “turning” in Gen 3:16; 4:7 and Song of Songs. The Arabic (9th–10th cent.) has “return” in Song of Songs and related words in Gen 3:16 (“direction”) and 4:7 (“moderation”). The Coptic Bohairic version (4th cent.) lacks the Song of Songs text but reads the equivalent of “(re)turn” in Gen 3:16 and 4:7, and the Coptic Sahidic (4th cent.) lacks Gen 4:7, but reads the equivalent of “(re)turn” in Gen 3:16 and Song of Songs.

The testimony of these translations corresponds to significant early Jewish writings. In reference to Gen 3:16, the Book of Jubilees (2nd cent. BCE) reads, “and to your husband is your return.” Philo (mid-1st cent. CE) asks, “Why does the curse on the woman consist of … turning (ἐπιστροφή) to her husband …?” And Josephus (late 1st cent. CE) plausibly reflects a similar tradition in his use of ἀναστρέφω (“overturn, return, associate with someone”) in reference to God’s confrontation with Cain in Gen 4:6-7.

The Babylonian Targum Onqelos (1st–5th cent CE) uses↳ןوبة “repentance, reply, return” in Gen 3:16, and apparently↳נה (“return,” “repent”) in 4:7. The Palestinian Targum Neofiti (1st–5th cent CE) has “to your husband you will turn ( Heb)” in 3:16. The marginal reading, דתונא (“your safety”), according to Reuling, captures the idea likely implied in the Greek ἀποστροφή.

All of this evidence can be supplemented by the Church Fathers. The writings of Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Didymus the Blind, Ambrose of Milan, 

53 Bushnell, God’s Word, 58; Lohr, “Sexual Desire?,” 233, citing Bonifatius Fischer, Genesis (vol. 2; Freiburg; Herder, 1951), 69–71, 82–83), and noting conversio (“turning, return”) appears most often, with reversio (“recovery, return”) found in a minority of cases.

54 Bushnell, God’s Word, 58; Lohr, “Sexual Desire?,” 233, citing only 3:16 and 4:7.

55 Bushnell notes in each case the equivalent of “circuit” is used (God’s Word, 60 n. 4).

56 Ibid., 59, 61. According to Bushnell, the choice of “direction” reasons that “if Eve is about to turn away from God, it must be in some direction” (p. 59).

57 Bushnell, God’s Word, 58.


59 Questions and Answers on Genesis (LCL; trans. Ralph Marcus; London: William Heinemann, 1953), 1.49.

60 Noted in Deurloo, “ناقش,” 406. See Ant. 1.55; BDAG 73.


62 C.A.L; Michael Sokoloff, A Dictionary of Judeo Aramaic (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University, 2003), 86. The translation is paraphrastic but Lohr (“Sexual Desire,” 235) and Hanneke Reuling agree is rendering↳נהשון (After Eden: Church Fathers and Rabbis on Genesis 3:16–21 [Jewish and Christian Perspectives 10; Leiden: Brill, 2006], 41 n. 41).


64 After Eden, 41.
Chrysostom, Augustine, Epiphanius, and Theodoret can be adduced to support Lohr’s claim that the Fathers “use the equivalent of ‘(re)turn’ (ἀποστροφή and conversio) largely without exception.” The exception in mind is Jerome, whom we will discuss below.

To summarize, this survey has covered the vast majority of early witnesses and shown a remarkable unanimity among them. Not only is consistently understood as “return” in all three of its OT occurrences (Gen 3:16, 4:7 and Song 7:10[11]), there is a clear absence of any adversarial sense in its use that might support Foh’s adversarial view.

2. The biblical interpretive evidence for ἀποστροφή as “desire.” The midrashic tradition preserved in Genesis Rabbah (4th–5th cent. CE) witnesses to both the “return” and “desire” traditions for Gen 3:16. As such, it offers a window into what may be a slow emergence of “desire” as an alternative reading for ἀποστροφή. Initially, four biblical texts are cited to indicate four types of “desire” (הַשָּׁוָה): (1) the woman’s “desire” for her husband (Gen 3:16); (2) the evil inclination’s (הַעֵרוֹ) “desire” for Cain (Gen 4:7); (3) the rain’s “desire” for the earth (Ps 65:10); and (4) God’s “desire” for Israel (Song 7:11). According to Reuling, this passage is “an independent exploration of the meaning of ‘desire.’” It is a rabbinic “lexical entry” of sorts that is concluded by a sentence that zooms in on the type of desire deemed relevant to Gen 3:16. This is accomplished through a word play on ἀποστροφή, understood as “desire,” with “return” (בָּשָׂה):

When a woman sits down on the birthstool, she says, “I shall never again have sexual relations with my husband.” Then the Holy One, blessed be he, says to her, “You will return to your desire (לתשׁוקתך תושבי), you will return to having desire for (לתשׁוקת תושבי) your husband.” (20:7) 69

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65 Lohr, “Sexual Desire?,” 238 (pp. 238–40). For example, Chrysostom exposit ἀποστροφή as indicating a “place of refuge” (καταφυγή), “harbor” (λιμήν) and “protection” (ἀσφάλεια) (p. 238). See also, Reuling, After Eden, 61, 87, 133, 176; Bushnell, God’s Word, 63. Bushnell concludes, “The Church Fathers seem to be ignorant of any other sense but ‘turning’ for this word.”


68 After Eden, 238.

Lohr reasons this may be “an ingenious way of explaining what חשקה is, its meaning being inextricably linked with the idea of returning.” At minimum, the rabbis appear to recognize two interpretive traditions, one favoring “return,” the other “desire.” It is worth speculating whether or not they recognized the “return” tradition as the older and more established of the two, but this would go beyond the evidence.

The Babylonian Talmud (3rd–6th cent. CE) and 'Abot de Rabbi Nathan (late 2nd–8th cent. CE) offer examples of the interpretation of חשקה as “desire” without mention of “return.” Both sources preserve the comment that the woman’s חשקה in Gen 3:16 “refers to the fact that a woman lusts after her husband when he goes off on a journey.”

Although we have seen the LXX/OG uses ἀποστροφή (“[re]turn”) in Gen 3:16, its revision by Symmachus (2nd–3rd cent. CE) uses ὄρμη (“impulse,” “desire”). Potentially significant for the adversarial view, ὄρμη can also mean “onrush, onset, assault.” It is vital to note, however, that ὄρμη is not repeated in 4:7, the key verse for establishing חשקה as the woman’s adversarial desire. Lohr suggests that because ὄρμη carries the idea of “a strong movement towards” it might not be as different to “return”/ἀποστροφή as it first appears. This would alleviate the need to explain the otherwise substantial departure from the LXX. However, in light of Jewish interpretations of חשקה as “desire” already noted, it is best to recognize the use of ὄρμη as another, very early, instance of the view that חשקה refers to the woman’s “desire” for her husband.

A possible example of the process whereby reading חשקה as “desire” entered Christian interpretive tradition is found in Jerome’s Vulgate (405 CE). Aligning with the OL and other witnesses available to him reviewed above, Jerome translates חשקה as conversio (“return, turning”) in Song of Songs. In Gen 4:7, however, he uses appetitus (“passionate longing,” “grasping at,” “attack”). As Lohr observes, “If appetitus were indeed the closest of the terms to חשקה, indicating a type of desire, we might have expected Jerome to employ it in the sexually charged Canticles passage as well, which he does not.” As for Gen 3:16, Jerome uses a...

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70 “Sexual Desire?,” 238.
71 ‘Erub. 100b; Reuling, After Eden, 297–98, citing Jacob Neusner, The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan (BJS 114; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 4, 26–30. Note also the opinion that the serpent injected lust into Eve through sexual intercourse (e.g. 'Abod. Zar. 22b; Šabb. 146a).
72 “A psychological state of strong tendency, impulse, inclination, desire” (BDAG 724). Bushnell notes some manuscripts follow Aquila in reading συνάφεια (“connection,” “union”), a term closer in meaning to ἀποστροφή (God’s Word, 58–59).
73 LSJ 1253. Plutarch uses it to refer to a wild beast’s lair (1253). LSJ gives no indication of sexual overtones.
75 Symmachus is believed to have been Jewish, or perhaps Ebionite (Jewish-Christian) (Tov, Textual Criticism, 144).
76 With “sin” as the subject. Lewis and Short lists Gen 4:7 under “passionate, eager longing or desire for a thing,” and notes this derived meaning is “far more frequent” than the basic sense of “onset, attack, assault” (p. 141).
paraphrase rather than a literal translation: “et sub viri potestate eris” (“and under the power of your husband you will be”). Yet intriguingly, in his later commentary on the verse, Jerome does in fact use conversio (“return, turning”) in reference to חשית.78 Considering the fact he uses conversio in Song of Songs, his paraphrase in Gen 3:16 seems aimed at clarifying for readers that the woman’s “return” indicates a movement back under her husband’s authority, an authority made explicit in the final line of verse 16.79

Regardless of the reason behind the discrepancy between the Vulgate and Jerome’s commentary, we have in Jerome an early Christian example of חשית being translated with the equivalent of “desire” (appetitus). It is worth repeating, however, that Jerome does not use this term in our primary verse of interest, Gen 3:16. What is more, he does not even use it in Song 7:10, where the notion of “desire” would seem eminently fitting. Nevertheless, we have what may be the first step in the introduction of “desire” into the translation history of the church.

A final potential example of reading חשית as “desire” comes from Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (7th–8th cent. CE). It uses the very rare מתי in Gen 3:16 and 4:7, a word often given the definition “longing.”80 Lohr, however, suggests this definition is the result of the term’s only occurrences being in Ps.-J. Gen 3:16, 4:7 and Tg. Song 7:11. He proposes מתי derives from Aramaic מתי (“again, more”) and thus that it actually aligns well with the sense of “return.”81 It is probably best to refrain from using Pseudo-Jonathan as evidence either way, but for the present argument we will grant it as a tentative witness to the “desire” tradition.

This section has surveyed the counter-testimony to the early understanding of חשית as “return.” The Babylonian Talmud, ʾAbot de Rabbi Nathan, and Genesis Rabbah are all unambiguous witnesses to reading חשית as the woman’s “desire,” though the latter links this with the idea of “return.” Symmachus also most likely reflects an interpretation of חשית as “desire,” and perhaps Pseudo-Jonathan as well. Jerome introduced a term similar to “desire” in Gen 4:7, but continued to think in terms of “return” for 3:16. Because he uses “return” and not “desire” in Song of Songs, it is reasonable to assume he did not view “desire” as fundamental to the meaning of חשית.

Our review of the majority of early interpretations of חשית in Gen 3:16 has shown that while the reading of “return” is by far the most dominant, a number of

78 C. T. R. Hayward, Jerome’s Hebrew Questions on Genesis (O ECS; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 33; Lohr, “Sexual Desire?,” 233–234. It is believed Jerome was using a slightly different text by the time of his work on his commentary (Tov, Textual Criticism, 153, citing Kedar-Kopfstein, “Isaiah,” 209).
79 Similarly, Wevers, Greek Text, 45 n. 35. Reuling suggests Jerome reads חשית as “return” in the sense of a “legal transfer of the erroneous wife back to her husband’s sphere of jurisdiction” (After Eden, 38). Contra Bushnell, who states, “Jerome plainly shows he does not know what חשית means, but since the latter part of the phrase refers to the man’s part,—‘he will rule over thee’—he concludes that the beginning of the passage must refer to woman’s position, and renders, ‘Thou shalt be under the power of a husband’ (God’s Word, 59, emphasis original). Lohr simply speculates Jerome’s paraphrase can be explained by “a misogynist tendency” in his writings (“Sexual Desire?,” 234).
80 מתי in C–A, citing late Jewish literary Aramaic; Jast. 860, but citing only the present text.
81 “משה” in CAL, citing late Jewish literary Aramaic; Jast. 860, but citing only the present text.
Jewish witnesses reflect an interpretation of “desire.” This “desire” tradition may have emerged only secondarily, as is suggested by the very early (e.g. OG/LXX), and numerical dominance of, witnesses to the “return” tradition (many of which are independent Hebrew translations),\textsuperscript{82} the presence of both traditions in Genesis Rabbah and the partial entrance of the “desire” tradition into the Vulgate in Gen 4:7. More evidence is needed to firmly establish this, however, and the following study of the DSS will prove helpful in this regard. What is indisputable is that the woman’s desire is consistently seen as movement toward or desire for her husband, never as adversarial against him.

3. The nonbiblical evidence in favor of תשקה as “return.” The above evidence from the interpretation of תשקה in Gen 3:16 suggesting “return” as its earliest meaning, with “desire” arising only secondarily, will now be strengthened through an analysis of the word’s attestations in the DSS. It appears four times in reasonably preserved contexts: once in the Community Rule, or Manual of Discipline (1QS 11:21–22 [2nd–1st cent. BCE]) and three times in the War Scroll (1QM 13:12; 15:10 and 17:4 [2nd–1st cent. BCE]). In each case the context is unrelated to the term’s use in the OT, thus providing a kind of interpretive “control group” for the present study. If these early and independent texts also use תשקה to mean “return,” the case for reading “return” in Gen 3:16 will be considerably stronger.

Karl Deurloo observes that to translate תשקה as “desire” in its DSS contexts, as per the standard dictionaries, “does not suit the context very well.”\textsuperscript{83} His own translation of תשקה as “dependency” in Gen 4:7, however, is unconvincing, and he offers no defense for this proposal in the context of the Scrolls. Elisha Qimron, in a Hebrew article likely lacking wide readership, and in analysis apparently independent of Deurloo, notes the Scrolls lead to the “surprising” conclusion that תשקה should be seen as closely connected to תשובה (“return”).\textsuperscript{84} Finally, in the most thorough analysis of תשקה in the Scrolls, and apparently independently of Deurloo and Qimron, Lohr concludes the authors of these texts used the term to mean “return.”\textsuperscript{85} His work is foundational to the following analysis.

a. תשקה in 1QS 11. In a lament concerning humanity’s insignificance, 1QS 11 speaks of the תשקה of mankind “to/for” dust. The text and translation of verses 21–22 given by Florentino García Martínez and Eibert Tigchelaar is as follows:\textsuperscript{86}

82 E.g. Peshitta, Onkelos, Neofiti, Arabic, and Jerome.
83 “תשקה,” 406.
84 “Biblical Philology and the Dead Sea Scrolls” [Hebrew], Tarbiz 58 (1989): 312. He refers to Jubilees and the targums as support, and cites as evidence the fact that the expression תלבטש תשובה (“to dust is his return”) in Hodayot (1QH 10:4) is comparable to תשקת תשובה in 1QS 11:22. He also draws attention to additional parallels such as עפר אל שבע in 1QH 12:31 and תשובת תשקה in Gen 3:19. Similarly, BHQ, 85.
85 “Sexual Desire?,” 240–44.
“Shaped from dust has he been, maggots’ food shall be his dwelling; he is spat saliva, moulded clay, and for dust is [his longing] What will the clay reply And the one shaped by hand? And what advice will he be able to understand? (11:21–22)

The use of standard definitions of התשוקה as “desire”/“longing” leads Garcia Martinez and Tigchelaar (and others) to the translation “for dust is his longing.” Yet it is difficult to determine what exactly is meant by “longing” for dust. Furthermore, the creation context of mankind being “shaped from dust (עפר)” can be expected to prompt readers to recall the garden story of Genesis 2–3. There, the man is first “formed from the dust (עפר)” (2:7) but in the end told “dust (עפר) you are and to dust (עפר) you will return” (בראשית ל:ז). Might 1QS 11 also have in view mankind’s “return to dust,” rather than “longing for dust”? Especially in light of the widespread evidence that התשוקה was understood from earliest times to mean “return,” it is certainly a reasonable conclusion that התשוקתו לעפר is best translated “to dust is his return” and not “for dust is his longing.”

This argument can be reinforced by appeal to 1QHa 18, a text with multiple similarities to 1QS 11 in language and theme, which actually does contain “to dust is his return” (לעפר). The similarities increase the likelihood that 1QS 11 shares with 1QHa 18 imagery of mankind’s return to dust as well. Moreover, a second parallel text to 1QS 11 is found in 1QHa 20. Containing two references to “returning” to dust, along with an even greater number of features in common with 1QS 11 than 1QHa 18, 1QHa 20 further illustrates the frequency with which the imagery of returning to dust appears in the kind of context in which התשוקה occurs in 1QS 11. Rather than believing לערת התשוקה is a distinctive element of 1QS 11 (meaning “desire for dust”) in comparison to two texts with many other similarities, it is much simpler to believe essentially means “return” in 1QS 11 as well.

b. התשוקה in 1QM 17. The focus of 1QM 17:1–3 is God’s judgment of the wicked. In verse 4, according to the translation by Garcia Martinez and Tigchelaar, the sons of the covenant are exhorted not to fear their wicked enemies because “their desire goes towards chaos and emptiness (לתשוקתו)” (v. 4). It is

88 As noted by Lohr, “Sexual Desire?,” 241.
89 See my “The Meaning of התשוקה” (forthcoming).
90 Ibid.
91 “And you, exert yourselves and do not fear them, for their desire goes towards chaos and emptiness” (Garcia Martinez and Tigchelaar, Scroll, 1:141).
certainly possible that the enemies’ desire for chaos and emptiness is in view. Yet more probable, in light of the context of judgment, is that these enemies “will return to chaos and emptiness,” that is, they will be destroyed. In fact, the following verse (v. 5) continues the emphasis on God’s judgment of the wicked. What is more, God is depicted as creator of everything in verse 5. Only when we translate “return to chaos” do we have the comforting irony that the God who creates will soon “uncreate” his people’s enemies.

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Overall, it is clear that it is possible to render תשוקה as “return” in all four DSS contexts. The fact that such a rendering is probable in 1QM 17, and even extremely probable in 1QS 11, is further evidence in favor of reading “return” in 1QM 13 and 1QM 15 as well. Returning to Gen 3:16, it should be noted that תשוקה appears here as part of the same syntactical construction as its DSS counterparts. This further reinforces the likelihood that the meaning of תשוקה as “return” in the Qumran texts can be applied to Gen 3:16. As a result, the impression from the biblical interpretive tradition of Gen 3:16 that “desire” only later began to displace an original meaning of “return” is considerably reinforced. Contemporary interpreters ought now judge “return” as a possible, perhaps even the most plausible, reading in this text.

4. A final note on the origin of the English translation “desire.” Details remain obscure as to how early Bible versions that consistently translated תשוקה as “return” gave way to current EVV that overwhelmingly use “desire.” We have seen evidence of the “desire” tradition in Jewish works such as Genesis Rabbah and the Talmud. Later rabbinic interpretation clearly understood this as sexual desire (e.g., Rashi, Ramban). Jerome is well known to have been heavily influenced by Jewish scholarship, a fact that may explain his willingness to translate תשוקה as appetitus (“desire”).

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92 Lohr, “Sexual Desire?,” 244.
93 “Today is his appointed time to humiliate and abase…” For תחיה ותחו (“chaos and emptiness”) in a context of divine judgment, see Jer 4:23.
94 Ibid., 243.
95 1QM 13: [תשוקה] והיוQUE; 1QM 15: [תשוקה], with [חושך] as the antecedent to the 3rd person masculine singular pronoun in each case.
96 God’s judgment is an emphasis of the same verse in 1QM 15. It is an emphasis in the previous verse (and reappears three verses down) in 1QM 13, where the clear focus of the near context is deeds of wickedness. Indeed, Lohr views the object as “laws” rather than “darkness,” yielding the translation “to them is their (continual) return” (“Sexual Desire?” 242). The argument for the meaning of תשוקה in 1QM 13 is not impacted in either case.
97 Added evidence for this conclusion is found in the fact that all four occurrences of תשוקה are part of the same syntactical structure.
98 The same is true of Gen 4:7 and Song 7:11.
in Gen 4:7. Still, for Gen 3:16, evidence within early Christian interpretation is lacking for understanding ḥēḵōn as “desire.” How then did “desire” become the exclusive reading? Bushnell suggests the following progression. Wyeliffe’s Bible of 1380 was not a translation of the Hebrew, but rather the Vulgate, and so it adapted Jerome’s reading:

“and thou shalt be under (the) power of thine husband” (Gen 3:16 Wyeliffe)

But in 1528 a translation from the Hebrew was completed by an Italian Dominican monk named Pagnino. Known to have been indebted to Jewish scholars, he translated ḥēḵōn as “lust” in both Gen 3:16 and Song of Songs. Thereafter, beginning with the translations of Tyndale in 1530 and Coverdale in 1535, all English Bibles have followed Pagnino’s lead in Gen 3:16. E.g.:

“And thy lustes shall pertaine vnto thy husband” (Gen 3:16; Tyndale)

Only with Cranmer’s Bible in 1539 was the translation “lust” finally introduced into Gen 4:7. And all EVV continued to read “turning” in Song 7:10 until its change to “desire” in the 1560 Geneva and 1611 King James. As Bushnell writes, this final move “obliterated all trace of any other sense but ‘desire’” from our English translations.

III. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THE INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS 3:16

The evidence presented in this essay, especially data from the DSS not considered by Kaiser, suggests that his call for the church to return “to the real meaning” of ḥēḵōn in Gen 3:16 should be reinvigorated. A few observations in this regard can be made.

Kaiser’s own translation of “turning away” is less than satisfactory: “You are turning away [from God!] to your husband, and [as a result] he will rule over you [take advantage of you].” While the DSS affirm the reading of ḥēḵōn as “(re)turning,” there is no hint it carries a sense of “turning away” from something else.

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99 Kaiser follows Bushnell in pointing to Jewish influence (Hard Sayings, 98); Bushnell, God’s Word, 48–49.
100 Ibid., 62 n. 107.
101 The same is the case with the Douay Bible (1609).
102 “Appetite” for 4:7.
103 Luther’s original translation (1534) aligns with Jerome’s Vulgate yet was changed in 1545 to read “Verlangen” (“desire”; Lohr, “Sexual Desire?,” 245 n. 70).
104 God’s Word, 62. Kaiser: “Clearly, then, the sense given to the word by Pagnino and his followers was that of libido or sensual desire” (Hard Sayings of the Bible, 98).
105 Kaiser, Hard Sayings, 98 (inserted commentary his). “As a result of her sin, Eve would turn away from her sole dependence on God and turn now to her husband.” He follows Bushnell, God’s Word, 58. This interpretation is especially dependent on its proponents’ view of the meaning of ἀποστροφή.
106 Kaiser’s translation also fails to connect clearly to childbearing in 3:16a.
Lohr notes the DSS use תֵשׁוקה when speaking of “final destruction or a return to origins.” Observing the semantic overlap between תֵשׁוקה and תֵשׁובה, he suggests:

perhaps there was a nuance involved whereby with תֵשׁוקה there is a strong movement toward, perhaps of an impelling nature, returning someone (or thing) to where he or she (or it) belonged, perhaps for refuge or to one’s origins, or even for destruction or in the sense that the returning is final. One might suggest that the movement is to an appropriate or natural place, almost as if part of the genetic makeup of the one (or thing) returning.107

The notion of a movement back toward a place of original belonging fits well with an interpretation that sees Eve returning to original intimacy with her husband.108 The maiden in Song of Songs perhaps sings of such a return to primal intimacy when she communicates confidence in her lover’s advance: “I belong to my beloved, and his return (תֵשׁוקה) is to me” (7:11).109

Because the woman’s return to her husband (16b) follows immediately upon the judgment of pains in childbirth (16a), the purpose of her return is likely in part sexual. However, the larger literary context emphasizes a broader depiction of male-female intimacy (2:18–25), highlighted, for example, in the couple’s relatedness as אישׁ and אישה.110 Yet this intimacy is tragically subverted (3:7–13). After the woman eats the forbidden fruit, relational separation is on full display as the man tells God, “the woman (יתֵשׁاهرة) whom you gave me” is to blame (3:12).111 Nevertheless, according to verse 16b, the woman returns to her man (ישי) in an effort to recapture, according to Phyllis Trible, “the original unity of male and female.”112 The woman’s return for sexual intimacy, then, is best viewed as only the culminating aspect of her return for the relational harmony and naked vulnerability forfeited by disobedience (3:1–6).113

Second Samuel 17:3 LXX may further illuminate the kind of returning in view. Ahithophel tells of the people’s return to Absalom, that is, to the one to whom they belong:

107 “Sexual Desire?,” 245. Walton similarly suggests the meaning of “one’s basic or inherent instincts,” though he believes reproduction is in view in Gen 3:16 (Genesis, 228). This is not far from what I advocate here, though I see a greater concern for the broader husband-wife relationship.

108 Cf. the second definition for ἀποστροφή in GELS: “turning to sbd for companionship and intimacy” (p. 85).

109 Indeed, the inability of the adversarial view to deal with תֵשׁוקה in Song 7:11 is yet another major weakness.

110 In fact, her origins are in being physically a part of him (2:22). Note also the poetic climax of the man’s speech connecting them as “bone of bone” and “flesh of flesh,” followed by the narrator’s description of the new relationship as “one flesh” (תֵשׁואת, 23–24).

111 Hauser notes the shift from the woman as “his wife” (2:24, 25; 3:8) to the man calling her “the woman” (3:12) (“Linguistic and Thematic Links,” 299).


113 Although still seeing “desire” in view, Michael Fishbane helpfully writes of both “physical and partnership considerations” being in view (Song of Songs [JPS Bible Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1015], 192). Similarly, Meyers: “includes but is broader than sexual attraction alone” (Discovering Eve, 111).
“I will turn (ἐπιστρέψω) all the people back to you, as a bride turns back (ἐπιστρέφει) to her husband.” (NETS)\textsuperscript{114}

In Gen 3:16, the woman returns to the one with whom she intrinsically belongs.\textsuperscript{115} Despite the judgment of pain in childbearing, her return is sexual, yet much more than sexual. Such a movement on the woman’s part toward recapturing God’s original design for the husband-wife relationship is, in fact, not too different from having a desire to do so. In the end, the intuition of many advocates of the affectionate desire view seems substantially on track after all.

Finally, while we have found Foh’s adversarial view seriously deficient, her insistence that the interpretation of 3:16 is inevitably bound up with 4:7 is almost certainly a helpful one. The task remains, then, in light of the probable meaning of נקש as “return,” not only to offer a revised interpretation of Gen 3:16, but also to show how the literary relationship with 4:7 enhances an understanding of both texts. Such full-orbed interpretive work unfortunately rests, of course, on incorporating the evidence presented here into a revised interpretation of the exceedingly difficult text of 4:7.

\textsuperscript{114} The metaphor speaks of a recently married woman taken from her husband. “Given the chance, says [Ahithophel], she will return willingly” (Kyle P. McCarter Jr., \textit{II Samuel} [AB 9; New York: Doubleday, 1984], 386). MT uses the hiphil imperfect and qal infinitive construct of שׁוּב, respectively.

\textsuperscript{115} The focus of divine judgment, then, is the frustration of this return effected by her husband’s rule.