

The Meaning of the Phrase *lāda'at tōb wārā'* in Genesis 3:22: An Exegetical and Theological Study

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Abstract - Genesis 3:22's enigmatic declaration that humanity became "like God, knowing good and evil" (*lāda'at tōb wārā'*) has generated divergent interpretations—from divine omniscience to sexual awakening. This study challenges such readings through a rigorous historical-grammatical exegesis of the Hebrew text. Morphological analysis reveals the verb *hayah* ("was," not "has become") signals a lost state of being. Syntactical and semantic examination demonstrates *lāda'at tōb wārā'* denotes not acquired knowledge but an original capacity for God-dependent moral discernment: the ability to distinguish and choose good over evil. By transgressing, humanity severed this divine reliance, corrupting their moral competence. Theologically, this reinterprets the Fall as the forfeiture of *imago Dei*-aligned discernment, not an ascent to godlike knowledge. Findings clarify the tree's prohibition as preserving relational trust, offer fresh insight into human nature and sin, and underscore dependence—not autonomy—as the foundation of biblical ethics.

Keywords: Knowledge of Good and Evil, Moral Discernment, Genesis 3:22, *Hayah*, Hebrew Exegesis, Fall of Humanity

I. INTRODUCTION

Humans were not created by God to be able to rely on and depend on themselves (Rachel, 1971). God also never intended to create humans to rely on and depend on other humans (White, 1997). God created humans as beings who have the ability to make decisions but must always depend on God in every development and growth of their character, moral and ethical (White, 2001, 2022). Character development in this context defined as the discernment of good and evil, is inherently positive when it occurs in continuous communion with God and without transgressing His commandments (Nichol, 1978).

The Book of Genesis stands as the foundational text of the biblical canon (Ulrich, 2002). It provides a comprehensive cosmological narrative, beginning with the ordered creation of the universe (Gen 1:1–2:4) and concluding with the death and legacy of Joseph (Gen 50:22–26). As noted by G. V. Ayers (1936), the book of Genesis holds unparalleled theological and historical significance within the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Book of Genesis records pivotal events in theological narrative. These events illuminate the origins of evil and sin, which continue to cause

human suffering to this day (Gedzi, 2013). The referenced event is the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:1-24), where humanity first succumbed to sin. The biblical narrative of the Garden of Eden, particularly the account of humanity's fall, has become a contentious issue and continues to be the subject of theological interpretive debate across various aspects by biblical scholars (Putra, 2021). Humans who dwelt in the Garden of Eden were expelled for violating God's commandment. There is a brief incident that connects humanity's fall into sin with their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This event is recorded in Genesis 3:22, which states: "And the Lord God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.'" Following this discourse, humanity was banished from the Garden of Eden. There is one phrase stated in this verse, namely *לְדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע*, which means "to know good and evil" (Genesis 3:22). This phrase is particularly intriguing because it seems to emphasize that humans did not know good and evil before eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This phrase also indicates that humans were expelled from the Garden of Eden because they had acquired knowledge of good and evil. This presents a perplexing statement for Bible readers.

The meaning of "knowing good and evil" in the Garden of Eden narrative has become one of the most difficult problems in the Bible (Stern, 1958). This phrase confuses Bible readers, thus generating various different interpretations. H. Schmidt argues that the meaning of this phrase refers to humans gaining knowledge and sexual experience, as well as understanding about conception and childbirth. This sexual knowledge of joy and suffering was forbidden because humans would become like God (Schmidt, 1931). Pidoux contends that the meaning of this phrase is that humans obtained power like God, the same power as deities (Pidoux, 1954). Meanwhile, Doukhan states that the meaning of this phrase is humanity's ability to distinguish between good and evil, and that humans could only do this when they had not yet fallen into sin (Doukhan, 2016). From the discussion above, different results and conclusions emerge, thereby demonstrating inconsistency and differences between research findings regarding the meaning of the phrase "...knowing good and evil..." in Genesis 3:22. Based on the scholarly perspectives above, the interpretation of this phrase can mean omniscient knowledge like God's, it can also mean human knowledge and sexual awareness between opposite sexes, or humanity's ability to distinguish between good and evil which could only be exercised when humans had not yet fallen into sin. There will also emerge the assumption that humans knew nothing about what is good and evil before the fall. This study is important to investigate because misunderstanding the meaning of this phrase can confuse Bible readers in interpreting the actual intended meaning.

In relation to the background and problems outlined above, the general objective of this research is to seek the meaning of the phrase "...knowing good and evil..." in order to find clarity among the differences in previous research. The specific objectives of this research are also to answer three emerging questions. First, why is knowing good and evil forbidden? Second, what is the relationship between knowing good and evil and the fruit? Third, what is the theological meaning of knowing good and evil?

This research contributes to theological issues in Genesis 3:22 that can serve as a foundation for subsequent research, particularly regarding the meaning of the phrase "...knowing good and evil...". The results of this research can also be used in spiritual discussions that occur among fellow Christians or even non-Christians. Future researchers can also use this research as one of the references in their writings. This research can also serve as additional literacy resources available for students, especially at Klatat University.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Freeman Tilden (2007), interpretation is an educational activity with the intention of revealing meaning and relationships through original objects and experiences that can provide factual communicative information. Based on the information above, it can be concluded that interpretation or exegesis is an opinion produced by someone who has conducted an analysis of obtained data. Therefore, in this section, several expert opinions regarding the discussion of Genesis 3, more specifically Genesis 3:22, will be presented.

There are several differing scholarly perspectives regarding the meaning of the phrase "knowing good and evil" in Genesis 3:22. The first perspective interprets that humans gained God's omniscience. The second perspective interprets that humans gained knowledge about sex, conception, and childbirth. The third perspective interprets that humanity acquired moral knowledge, ethics, and obtained the ability to become separated from God. The fourth perspective is the ability to distinguish between moral and ethical matters, but according to them, humanity lost this ability when they fell into sin, and this is merely a matter of translation.

Omniscience, the Bible emphasizes that God created humans as good beings, without defect, and as the pinnacle of creation (Sianturi et al., 2023). Despite humanity's status as the crown of creation, God did not create humans as omniscient beings; in fact, God created humans as limited creatures (Sitohang, 2022). It is against this background that the first perspective reviewed in this research concerns the ability that humans acquired, namely omniscience like God's. According to Von Rad (1973), the meaning of the phrase "knowing good and evil" in its broadest and most widely accepted sense is that humans obtained omniscience like God's. Pidoux (1954) also agrees with Von Rad, arguing that the meaning of this phrase is that humans acquired the same ability as God. Hussey, A. (2004) a scholar from Leo Baeck College in London, England, also holds this view. Based on this, the opinion that humans obtained a God-like ability, namely omniscience, serves as a reference point in this research.

Sexual Knowledge, The Book of Genesis emphasizes that after God created Woman from Adam's rib in Genesis 2, they experienced no shame despite their awareness of their nakedness: "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25, NIV). Their perspective fundamentally changed following their fall into sin (Wahyu, 2013). Halawa (2019) argues that humanity's fall into sin has affected all aspects of human life, including sexual behavior. When humanity fell into sin, they acquired new knowledge, namely sensitivity toward the opposite sex or sexual awareness (Schmidt, 1931). Engnell and Rowley (1955) argue that the meaning of

this phrase is that humanity gained knowledge and experience about conception and childbirth. Hartmann (1958) concurs and further adds that the knowledge acquired included sexual knowledge, joy, suffering, and death; this knowledge was forbidden because it would make humanity like God. The perspective that the sexual knowledge acquired by humanity in the phrase "knowledge of good and evil" is further reinforced by the subsequent chapter, Genesis 4, which narrates the story of Cain and Abel, the children of Adam and Eve. This seems to emphasize and strengthen the understanding that the knowledge gained was indeed sexual knowledge.

Morality, Ethics, and Separation from God, Buber presents his perspective on the phrase "knowledge of good and evil," arguing that when humanity fell into sin and acquired something new, it was the ability to make moral distinctions in life and gain human independence to live separately and completely independent from God (Buber, 1952). Eiselen agrees with Buber's interpretation regarding morality and separation from God (Eiselen, 1910). Budde adds that in addition to the ability to distinguish moral values, humanity acquired the knowledge to make ethical decisions and achieve separation from God (Budde, 1883).

Inaccurate Translation, There is an interesting perspective from two scholars, Jacques Doukhan and Adam Clarke. Doukhan and Clarke agree with Buber, Eiselen, and Budde regarding the interpretation of the phrase "knowledge of good and evil" as the ability to distinguish between moral and ethical matters, but according to them, humanity lost this ability when they fell into sin. Doukhan (2016) and Clarke (1999) argue that there is an inaccurate translation of one word that changes the entire meaning of this verse, namely the word "הָיָה" which, if translated according to grammar, near context, and far context, should be translated as "was" (a past tense verb) rather than "has" (a present tense verb).

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology is the approach used by researchers as a means of solving problems in research (Vyhmeister & Robertson, 2020). The method used in this research is the "Historical-Grammatical Method," a Biblical Hermeneutical approach that determines the original meaning intended by the author through careful literary interpretation of a text, considering the historical background and every aspect that occurred during the era when the text was written (Virgo, 2019), and also based on the principles of *Sola Scriptura* and *Tota Scriptura*. Furthermore, this research method employs the disciplines of Exegesis and Biblical Theology to achieve the best results in this study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study begins by establishing the historical context of the text, examining the authorship, dating, intended audience, and the geographical, socio-cultural, politico-economic, and religious circumstances surrounding its composition. The research then proceeds with comprehensive contextual and literary analysis, exploring textual relationships within the immediate passage and broader canonical connections, while examining the literary genre and structural elements of the

narrative. The core investigation involves detailed textual analysis, comparing original Hebrew with modern translations and conducting morphological, syntactical, and semantic examination of key terms. Additionally, the study explores significant theological themes including Divine Plurality, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and Human Status, evaluating various scholarly interpretations and theological developments. Through this methodical approach, the research aims to clarify the authentic biblical meaning of "knowledge of good and evil" and provide definitive answers to the interpretive questions surrounding this crucial theological concept in Genesis 3:22.

A. *Historical Background of the Book of Genesis*

To understand a book, it is essential to comprehend the historical context of the book itself. By investigating the circumstances behind the text, readers will gain deeper insights into the intention of the text or verse being studied. Therefore, this section will discuss in depth the historical context of the Book of Genesis.

Moses is traditionally recognized as the author of Genesis, a view substantiated by substantial biblical evidence—including consistent attribution by Old Testament writers (Joshua 8:31; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 8:1; Daniel 9:11; Malachi 4:4), New Testament authors, and Jesus himself (Matthew 8:4; 19:8; Luke 5:14; John 5:46-47; Romans 10:5)—along with ancient Jewish tradition (Ben Sirah, Philo, Josephus) and the literary unity of the Pentateuch (Dyer et al., 2001). The Book of Genesis was authored by Moses during the Israelite wilderness wanderings, with its final composition dated to approximately 1445 BCE based on the biblical chronology established in 1 Kings 6:1 (Utley, 2000). This Mosaic authorship represents a purposeful recording of primeval and patriarchal history long after the events themselves, serving to provide the newly formed nation of Israel with its theological and historical foundations (Henry, 1996). The Book of Genesis was directly addressed to the nation of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, during their wilderness journey (Gingrich, 1998; cf. Deuteronomy 1:1). While its immediate context was for the formative Israelite nation, its theological message subsequently expanded to encompass all of God's people, including Jews and Gentiles throughout history to the present day (Dyer et al., 2001).

The Book of Genesis presents a narrative encompassing events throughout the Ancient Near East, spanning from the earliest periods of civilization to Joseph's account in Egypt (ESV Study Bible, 2008). Its narrative follows a deliberate geographical and theological arc, journeying from the universal settings of Eden and Babel to the specific territory of the Patriarchs in Canaan, and finally into Egypt, while consistently pointing toward the future Promised Land (Doukhan, 2016). The narratives of Genesis are embedded in the distinct social and cultural context of the Ancient Near East, which featured practices such as polygamy, slavery, and pronounced social stratification (Wahyu, 2007). To accurately interpret its message, the modern reader must therefore seek to understand the text through the lens of its original cultural setting, despite the vast differences from contemporary norms (ESV Study Bible, 2008). The political landscape of Genesis evolves across three distinct periods, transitioning from direct theocratic rule (Genesis 1-3) to the nomadic journeys of the patriarchs amidst established Near Eastern kingdoms (Genesis

4-40), and culminating in the family of Israel's settlement under Egyptian political power (Genesis 41-50) (Doukhan, 2016). This political narrative is deeply intertwined with the economic realities of its era, reflecting the close connection between governance and subsistence in the ancient world (Kuhrt, 2020). The primary religious problem confronting God's chosen people during the Genesis era was polytheism. This issue was so prevalent that one of the principal reasons for writing this book was to remind the Israelites that God is one—the same God who created the universe, who guides them, and who was the God of their ancestors. The polytheistic problem in this context was influenced by Ancient Near Eastern religious systems, including Canaanite religion, ancient Mesopotamian religion, and ancient Egyptian religion.

The Book of Genesis was written by Moses to establish foundational truths for Israel, explaining the origins of the world (Nichol, 1978) and revealing their identity as worshipers of the one true Creator God, in contrast to the polytheism of Egypt (Dyer et al., 2001). Furthermore, its central purpose is to declare God's plan of salvation—initiated after the Fall (Gen 3:15) and advanced through the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:1-3)—to restore a broken humanity (Gingrich, 1998). As such, Genesis serves as the theological "seedbed" for the entire biblical canon, providing the essential framework for understanding creation, sin, and redemption (Liana, 2019). The theme of Genesis is creation, sin, and re-creation (ESV Study Bible, 2008). These themes demonstrate how God created a world that was "very good" but was corrupted by sin and consequently had to be destroyed by God through the flood. Beyond this, God also planned humanity's salvation through Abraham's descendants, who would become the hope and Savior of mankind.

B. Contextual and Literary Analysis

To enable biblical readers to understand a verse or passage deeply, more than a general understanding of historical context is required. Through analysis and examination of a verse's position as a crucial narrative point between preceding and following verses and chapters, and even analyzing and considering the entire Bible's perspective on that verse, readers can gain deeper understanding of its meaning (Virkler & Ayayo, 2007). Therefore, this section will discuss and analyze the literal context of Genesis 3:22 as well as conduct careful literary analysis to explore the textual characteristics, including identification of the text's literary genre and the text's position within the chapter's structure.

1). Immediate Context

Genesis 3 narrates humanity's fall into sin and expulsion from Eden, serving as a crucial transition from the sinless state in chapter 2 to post-fall consequences in chapter 4. Verse 22 appears in the chapter's conclusion, preceded by key events that establish its interpretive context. The narrative progression leading to verse 22 includes: the serpent's temptation through three major lies (verses 1-6) (Mathews, 2001), humanity's immediate awareness of nakedness and failed self-salvation attempts through fig leaves (verses 7-9) (Hamilton, 1990), God's interrogation revealing blame-shifting between Adam and Eve (verses 10-13) (Nichol, 1978), divine judgments with promised redemption through the woman's seed (verses 15-19) (Hamilton, 1990), Adam

naming his wife "Eve" (life) in hope of future restoration (verses 20-21) (Nichol, 1978), and God's gracious provision of animal skin clothing (verse 21) (Hamilton, 1990).

Verse 22 represents an intra-divine conversation addressing humanity's acquisition of moral knowledge. According to Doukhan (2016), the phrase "knowing good and evil" refers to the actual experience of distinguishing moral choices between good and evil. Doukhan further implies that the capacity can only function properly when humanity remains dependent upon God. The verse emphasizes the primary reason for expulsion: preventing access to the tree of life after moral corruption had occurred. This placement demonstrates that verse 22 serves as the theological explanation for the physical expulsion described in verses 23-24, where cherubim guard Eden's entrance, symbolizing God's holy presence that sinful humanity cannot approach (Wenham, 1987). The contextual flow reveals that verse 22 functions as the pivotal theological statement explaining God's redemptive judgment removing humanity from Eden not merely as punishment, but as protection from eternal existence in a fallen state.

2). *Broader Context*

Genesis 3:22 is situated within the primeval history (Genesis 1-11) (Hamilton, 1990), recognized by scholars as the foundational section of Scripture that establishes fundamental theological patterns for Christianity. This section narrates God's creation (1-2), humanity's fall (3), subsequent generations (4-5), the flood judgment (6-9), Noah's descendants (10), and the Tower of Babel (11). According to Louth and Oden (2016), this portion exerts greater influence than any other Old Testament section due to its foundational role in Christian theology. Genesis 2, provides the essential backdrop for understanding 3:22 by establishing humanity's original state in Eden and God's singular prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17), along with the stated consequence of death. This divine command-prohibition structure sets up the violation that occurs in chapter 3, making the phrase "knowing good and evil" in 3:22 directly connected to the original forbidden knowledge. Genesis 4, demonstrates the tragic aftermath referenced in 3:22, showing fallen humanity's condition outside Eden through Cain and Abel's story the first murder in human history (Mathews, 2001). This chapter illustrates the practical outworking of moral knowledge acquired through disobedience, revealing how the capacity to distinguish good and evil, when separated from dependence on God, leads to jealousy, hatred, and violence. The contextual flow from innocence (Genesis 2) through fall (Genesis 3:22) to consequences (Genesis 4) demonstrates that the phrase "knowing good and evil" represents humanity's tragic acquisition of experiential moral knowledge through rebellion rather than divine dependence.

3). *Genre*

The Old Testament canon consists of 17 historical books (Genesis – Esther), 5 poetic books (Job – Song of Songs), and 17 prophetic books (Isaiah – Malachi), with Genesis categorized as a historical book (Gingrich, 1998). Bob Utley (2000) adds in his commentary that Genesis is not purely historical and theological in genre, but also contains poetic elements (Genesis 2:23; 4:33,

possibly also 4:1,2) and prophetic elements (Genesis 3:15; 49:1, which could also be poetry). Based on this statement, interpreting Genesis requires first identifying the genre of the specific passage being interpreted. After evaluation, it can be concluded that the phrase "knowing good and evil" must be understood literally.

4). *Genesis 3 Structure*

Genesis chapter 3 constitutes a narrative that recounts the fall of humanity and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This chapter is divided into 24 verses, and throughout these verses, the chiasmic structure within this chapter remains systematically organized. The following represents the chiasmic structure of Genesis chapter 3 as analyzed by P. Hall (2015):

- A. Satan enters the Garden of Eden (1a)
- B. The tree of knowledge (1a-7a)
- C. Adam and Eve make their own clothing (7b)
- D. God walks and gives life to the world (8)
- E. God speaks to Adam (9-12)
- F. God speaks to Eve (13)
- G. God speaks to the serpent and the Messianic prophecy (14-15)
- F'. God speaks to Eve (16)
- E'. God speaks to Adam (17-19)
- D'. Eve gives "life" to the world (20)
- C'. God makes clothing for Adam and Eve (21)
- B'. Consequences of eating from the tree of knowledge (22)
- A'. Adam and Eve depart from the Garden of Eden (23-24)

Within the framework of the chiasmic structure presented above, the core message of Genesis chapter 3 is found in verses 14-15 (G), which constitutes the serpent's judgment and the prophecy of the Savior. This study specifically analyzes verse 22 (B') as a parallel representation of the consequences arising from humanity's transgression, which was precipitated by Satan's temptation in verses 1a-7a (B). Genesis 3:22, in particular, contains the narrative of God's discourse regarding the expulsion of humanity from the Garden of Eden due to their violation.

C. *Textual and Theological Analysis*

The primary focus of this section is an analysis of the text of Genesis 3:22, translated from the original Hebrew. In this verse, God declares that humanity has become "like one of Us"; consequently, they must be prevented from eating the fruit of the tree of life to avoid living forever. The second part of this section will address the identification and analysis of theological themes within this verse specifically, the Divine Plurality ("like one of Us"), the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Human Condition. This analysis is conducted within the framework of Christian

theology as defined by Erickson (1998), understood as the discipline that seeks to comprehend God through the Bible and to provide a Christian understanding of reality.

1). *Textual Translation Comparison*

Translations of a biblical verse may result in differing interpretations due to variations in grammatical structures and translation traditions (Wendland & Noss, 2023). Therefore, the following table provides a comparative analysis of the source texts and translations of Genesis 3:22, including: the Masoretic Text (BHS), the Septuagint (LXX), the King James Version (KJV). This comparison aims to illustrate the linguistic variations and interpretive nuances that emerge through the translation process.

Table 1. Textual Translation Comparison

3:22 (BHS)	3:22 (LXX)	3:22 (KJV)
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאֶתְדַם מִמֶּנּוּ לִדְעוֹת טוֹב וָרָע וַעֲתָהוּ פֶּן־יִשְׁלַח יְדוֹ וְלָקַח אֶגְדָּ מִעֵץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וַתֵּי לֵעָם:	καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Ἰδοὺ Ἀδαμ γέγονεν ὡς εἷς ἐξ ἡμῶν τοῦ γινώσκειν καλὸν καὶ πονηρόν, καὶ νῦν μήποτε ἐκτείνῃ τὴν χεῖρα καὶ λάβῃ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς καὶ φάγῃ καὶ ζήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.	And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

¹ Masoretic Text (BHS), Septuagint (LXX), English (KJV)

"Based on the comparative analysis of translations presented earlier, the subsequent section will conduct a textual analysis of Genesis 3:22. This analysis will examine important Hebrew words in the verse in depth, aiming to provide a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the passage's meaning."

2). *Morphological, Syntactic, and Semantic Analysis*

This section provides an in-depth linguistic analysis of the second clause in Genesis 3:22, focusing specifically on the syntax and semantics of the key Hebrew terms *hayah* (הָיָה), *lada'at* (לִדְעוֹת), *tov* (טוֹב), and *ra'* (רָע). The examination addresses morphological features—including the verbal conjugation of *hayah* (qatal perfect), the nominal derivation of *tov* and *ra'* (as abstract qualities), and the infinitive construct form *lada'at*—alongside syntactic relationships within the

clause structure. Finally, the semantic nuances of each lexeme are explored within their theological context.

a) Morphological Analysis

Hen Haadam Hayah Keahad Mimmenu Ladaat Tov Wara, the second clause begins with the word "וְ" (interjection particle). According to Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT) (Harris et al., 1980), this word can mean "behold," "lo," or "see," functioning as an exclamation or call for attention. The KJV, and LXX translate this word as "Behold," and "Ἴδού" respectively. However, based on its morphology and grammatical structure, the more precise translation is "Behold". Next is the word "אִישׁ" (definite article + common masculine singular absolute noun, homonym 1). This word has the definite article "אִ"; the change from "א" to "אִ" occurs because the word's first consonant is a guttural. The root of this word is "אִשׁ". According to Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT), this word means "man" or "mankind" (Koehler et al., 1994–2000, "אִשׁ"). KJV, and LXX translate it as "the man," and "Ἀδάμ" (Adam) respectively. However, based on morphology and grammatical structure, it would be more accurate to translate it as (the man). This word is the subject of the clause. The narrative in this text continues with the word "הָיָה" (Qal perfect 3rd person masculine singular verb). According to Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT), the meaning of this word includes "be," "become," "exist," "be present," "come into being," and "happened" (Bergman et al., 1977). This is a verb with a Qal stem (indicating active action) and Perfect tense (indicating completed action). KJV, and LXX translate this word as "is become," and "ἔγενετο" (has become/became) respectively. However, based on morphological and grammatical analysis, the translations in TB and KJV contain an inaccuracy that can lead to misunderstanding. According to Doukhan (2016), most English Bible translations render it as "has become" because they were influenced by the LXX translation, which emphasizes this meaning. Clarke (1999) also noted that the LXX version, the Syriac version, and the Samaritan version use the same tense. These, he argues, lead readers to a very different sense and indicate an ellipsis of some words needed to complete the sense. However, upon deeper study, the word "ἔγενετο" in the LXX translation means "to come into being through process of birth," "be born," or "be produced." It emphasizes that humans were formerly together with God, more precisely "in God," but are no longer because humans have departed from God (Arndt et al., 2000). Therefore, based on the analysis, this word is more accurately translated as "was".

The next word is "כְּ" (particle preposition numeral cardinal masculine singular absolute). This word has the preposition כְּ (ka). According to Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (CHALOT) (Holladay, 1971) and HALOT (Koehler et al., 1994–2000), this preposition expresses identity and is translated "like". The root of this word is כְּחָד (‘chād), which emphasizes the number "one". KJV, and LXX translate this word: "as one", and "ὡς εἷς". These translations match the morphology and grammar of the word, so it can be translated "like one of". In this case, this word emphasizes similarity and likeness. This word also functions as the predicate nominative of the subject of the clause. The next word is "מִן" (particle preposition suffix 1st person common plural). This word is the preposition מִן (min), meaning "from", "out of", "away

from" (Baker & Nicholson, 1990, 625), with the plural suffix ׀ (nû), meaning "we", "us" (Baker & Nicholson, 1990, 76). Based on this, the most accurate translation for this word is "from us". This word also functions as the predicate nominative of the subject of the clause. The next word is "לָדַעַת" (particle preposition verb qal infinitive construct). There is the preposition לָ (lə) preceding this word. CHALOT (Holladay, 1971) gives meanings for this preposition including: "to", "towards", "concerning". This word has the root דַּעַ (yāda'). CHALOT (Holladay, 1971) gives many meanings for this word, including: "observe", "realize", "know", "understand", "aware". New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE) (VanGemeren, 1997) translates this word: "acquainted with", "have sexual relations with", "gain insight", and also emphasizes that this word is identical to deep knowledge of something, covering practical, intellectual, and intimate knowledge. This word is a verb with Stem Qal (active action). Therefore, this word can be translated "for knowing". The next word is "טוֹב" (noun common masculine singular absolute homonym 1). According to CHALOT (Holladay, 1971), this word can mean "joyous", "pleasing", and "good" in every aspect. HALOT (Koehler et al., 1994–2000) adds that this word also means "good character" and "moral good". Therefore, this word can be translated "good". The second clause ends with the word "וְרָע" (particle conjunction adjective masculine singular absolute). This word has the conjunction וְ (wa), indicating that this word is a continuation of the previous word. The root of this word is רָע (ra'). HALOT (Koehler et al., 1994–2000) translates this word as "wicked", "sad". Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (BDB) (Brown et al., 1906) adds that this word can also mean "bad" or "evil". Therefore, based on morphology and grammar, this word is translated "and evil".

b) Syntactic Analysis

This phrase forms a nominal clause depicting the human condition after eating from the tree of knowledge. The verb הָיָה (hāyâ) connects the subject הָאָדָם (hā'ādām) with the predicate מִמֵּנוּ לָדַעַת (kə'ahad mimmennû). The verb לָדַעַת (lāda'at) explains the result or consequence of the human action from the previous verb. טוֹב וְרָע (tôb wārâ') is the direct object of the infinitive construct (IC), indicating what humans have come to know.

הַן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאָהָד מִמֵּנוּ לָדַעַת טוֹב וְרָע
 O V P V S I
 Interjeksi, Subjek, Verb, Predikatif, Verb, Objek

c) Semantic Analysis

This second clause contains words crucial to this study. This subsection will discuss the etymology and semantics of these words: Hayah "הָיָה", Lada'at "לָדַעַת", Tov "טוֹב", and Wara "וְרָע". Hayah "הָיָה" According to DBL Hebrew (Swanson, 1997), this word describes the characteristic of an object being identical to another object. According to NIDOTTE (VanGemeren, 1997), this word is related to hāwāh and is the second most frequently occurring verb in the Old Testament. In Aramaic, it means "to become" or "be"; in Akkadian, there is a word ewu meaning "to become"; in Arabic, hawa means "to fall." According to the Lexicon, the meaning of this word is "to be."

Lada'at "לָדַעַת" According to TDOT (Bergman et al., 1977), the root of this word is 7' (yd) meaning "know." This word is found across all Semitic language families except possibly Arabic. In Egyptian, it is called rh, meaning "know," "expert," "knowing the forms and names of god," "knowledge of the dead," and "know sexually." In Akkadian, the word idu means "know," "secular knowing," "family law," "magic and religion," and "revelation." In Ugaritic, yd means "warning," "personal knowledge," "sexual knowledge," and "magic knowledge." According to the Lexicon (Jenni & Westermann, 1997), the meaning of this word is "to perceive" or "to know."

Tov "טוב" According to TDOT (Bergman et al., 1977), the root of this word is 2v (tb), a Proto-Semitic word. In Ugaritic, the noun tbt means "goodness"; in Akkadian, the noun tabtu means "good deed," and tabutu means "good will"; in Egyptian, tiabum/tabu means "become good," "make good," and "beautiful." The Lexicon (Jenni & Westermann, 1997), translates the meaning of this word as "good." Wara "רע" According to NIDOTTE (VanGemenen, 1997), the root of this word is 77 (r'). As an adjective, it means "bad quality," "inferior," "disagreeable," "displeasing," "vicious," "harmful," "bad," and "evil." In Old Assyrian, the adjective raggu means "bad" or "evil"; raggu also appears in Old Babylonian. The same root appears later in Arabic as rabble, carrying the same meaning.

d) Intertextual Study

This section will analyze the Hebrew word Hayah "הָיָה" in Genesis 3:22. The usage of this word will be compared with its occurrences in other parts of the Torah, as well as in the books of the Nevi'im and Ketuvim. This intertextual comparison will then be translated into English, and similarities will be examined. For English translation, the King James Version (KJV) will be used.

The Hebrew verb *הָיָה* (hayah) appears consistently throughout the three main divisions of the Hebrew Bible—Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim—demonstrating its foundational role in expressing existence, condition, or state of being. In the Torah, examples include Exodus 1:5 (*וַיִּהְיֶה יוֹסֵף בְּמִצְרַיִם*) – “But Joseph was in Egypt”), Leviticus 8:29 (*לְמֹשֶׁה הָיָה לְחֵן*) – “It was Moses’s part”), and Numbers 33:14 (*וְלֹא־הָיָה שָׁם מַיִם*) – “And there was no water”). In the Nevi'im, hayah occurs in Joshua 1:17 (*כַּאֲשֶׁר הָיָה עִם־מֹשֶׁה*) – “As he was with Moses”), Isaiah 23:13 (*זֶה הָעָם לֹא־הָיָה*) – “This people was not”), and Zechariah 3:3 (*וַיְהִי־וַיִּשָׁע הָיָה לְבוּשׁ*) – “And Joshua was clothed”). Similarly, in the Ketuvim, it is found in Psalm 53:5 (*כִּי־לֹא־הָיָה פֶתֶחַ*) – “Where no fear was”), Ecclesiastes 1:10 (*אֲשֶׁר הָיָה מִלְּפָנֵינוּ*) – “Which was before us”), and Daniel 8:7 (*וְלֹא־הָיָה כֹחַ*) – “And there was no power”). These examples, drawn from a range of literary genres and historical contexts, reflect the versatile and essential function of hayah in Biblical Hebrew for indicating past existence or states of being.

e) Translation Based on Findings

Based on the analysis above, humanity has lost the moral capacity to consistently choose what is good in the same way that God is always inclined to do what is good. As a result of this loss, humans are now more inclined toward moral deviation. In light of the explanations previously presented, the suggested translation of Genesis 3:22 is: “Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the

man was once like one of Us in relation to the knowledge of good and evil. And now, let him not stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live for a long time."

3). *Theological Analysis*

This section will focus on identifying and analyzing the theological themes contained in the text of Genesis 3:22. According to Erickson, theology in the Christian context is a discipline that seeks to understand God as revealed in the Bible and to provide a Christian understanding of reality. The theological themes in Genesis 3:22 that will be examined for the purpose of this study include: Divine Plurality, the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Status of Humanity.

a) Divine Plurality

One of the most debated phrases in Genesis 3:22 is "like one of Us," which raises significant theological questions about divine plurality. Three major interpretations have been proposed. The Angelic Council view, one of the oldest and most common, suggests that the plural "Us" refers to the heavenly court or angels, as supported by Jewish scholars since Philo of Alexandria (Wenham, 1987). However, this interpretation is considered weak, as it conflicts with the context of Genesis 1:26, where humanity is created in the image of God, not angels (Mathews, 2001). The Plural of Majesty interpretation, advocated by Hebrew grammarians like Keil and Dillmann, holds that God uses a majestic plural to refer to Himself (Mathews, 2001). Yet this view has been largely dismissed by scholars such as Wenham and Hamilton, who note that the majestic plural is not linguistically or contextually appropriate here (Wenham, 1987) (Hamilton, 1990). The third and most compelling view is the Trinitarian Interpretation, held by Church Fathers and Reformers, which sees the phrase as a conversation within the Trinity. This understanding is rooted in early Christian theology and affirmed by the Nicene Creed in 325 AD. It remains the most theologically consistent interpretation, affirmed by both historical and contemporary theologians (Doukhan, 2016).

b) The Knowledge of Good and Evil

The phrase "knowledge of good and evil" in Genesis 3:22 has been the subject of various theological interpretations. Biblically, knowledge is understood in several ways: through personal experience (Num. 24:15–16; 1 Sam. 6:9), investigation (Eccl. 7:25), instruction (1 Kgs. 5:17), or divine revelation (Prov. 1:7). In the Old Testament context, knowledge refers to experience, moral insight, wisdom, obedience, and deep understanding. Some scholars, such as Weinfeld and Hartmann, suggest that the knowledge gained in Genesis 3 refers to sexual awareness, based on the narrative of procreation in Genesis 4 (Wenham, 1987) (Westermann, 1984). However, this interpretation is weak, since sexuality was already part of God's creation before the Fall (Gen. 1:28), and the text provides no indication that sexual knowledge was restricted. A stronger interpretation, supported by scholars like Buber, Eiselen, Budde, and Doukhan (Buber, 1952) (Eiselen, 1910) (Budde, 1883) (Doukhan, 2016), views the knowledge of good and evil as moral and ethical awareness. This knowledge was not inherently forbidden, but God intended humanity to receive it through obedience, not through rebellion. By disobeying, humans gained a corrupted

moral awareness and were separated from God, becoming more inclined toward evil. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, placed alongside the tree of life, functioned as a divine test, symbolizing the choice to trust God or claim autonomy. According to Doukhan (Doukhan, 2016) and Wenham (Wenham, 1987), eating its fruit introduced a fusion of good and evil into human experience—not as a sign of maturity, but as a fall into moral confusion and corruption. This theme is echoed in other parts of Scripture. In Deuteronomy 1:39, knowledge of good and evil is associated with children who lack moral discernment and must depend on others, illustrating humanity's need to depend on God. In 1 Samuel 14:17, David is likened to an angel of God, able to discern good and evil, showing that such discernment is a divine trait. Likewise, in 1 Kings 3:9, Solomon's request for a discerning heart affirms that the ability to distinguish good from evil comes only through divine wisdom. Therefore, the phrase "knowledge of good and evil" does not imply divine omniscience or sexual knowledge, but rather a moral independence that results in separation from God. The consistent biblical message is that true moral discernment is not achieved by human autonomy, but through full dependence on God's wisdom.

c) The Knowledge of Good and Evil

Genesis 3:22 highlights not only the divine plurality and the knowledge of good and evil but also a dramatic shift in humanity's status. The phrase "The man has become like one of Us" is better translated as "Behold, the man used to be like one of Us," indicating that humanity originally reflected God's character and dwelled in close relationship with Him. Before the Fall, humans were created uniquely formed by God's hands, given His breath, and made in His image (Gen. 1:26; 2:7). They lived in perfect harmony with God, loved by God and fully aligned with His will (Alighieri et al., 2007). However, after sin entered, that state was lost. Humanity's disobedience led to separation from God, sorrow, and a broken world, as symbolized in Adam's grief over the first signs of death. Sin not only introduced decay but also corrupted human nature, making humanity increasingly inclined toward evil and alienated from God. Thus, Genesis 3:22 marks a theological turning point: from divine likeness to spiritual estrangement.

d) Theological Implication

After evaluating the theological views related to Genesis 3:22, several key implications can be drawn. First, the text reflects the unity within the divine nature of God. Despite the strong monotheistic emphasis throughout the Old Testament particularly in contrast to the polytheism of surrounding nations the Bible subtly affirms a triune understanding of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit existing in one divine essence. This concept of the Trinity neither supports polytheism nor contradicts monotheism but rather presents a complex unity within the Godhead. Second, true knowledge especially moral and spiritual discernment can only be attained through full dependence on God. Writers throughout the Old Testament consistently emphasize that knowledge must originate from the fear of the Lord (cf. Prov. 1:7; 2:1–6; Deut. 4:6; Job 28:28). Instead of trusting God as their source of wisdom, Adam and Eve chose independence, leading to a corrupted knowledge tainted by sin and a natural inclination toward evil.

Human beings were originally created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26), declared "very good" (Gen. 1:31), and given authority over creation. This shows the unique and elevated status of humanity among all God's works. However, sin shattered that original design. Genesis 3:22 implies that humans were once like God able to discern good and evil while depending on Him but after sin, they lost that ability by turning to self-reliance. Biblical texts such as Deuteronomy 1:39, 1 Samuel 14:7, and 1 Kings 3:9 reinforce that true discernment of good and evil belongs to the innocent, the dependent, and the God-led. God never intended for humanity to gain moral knowledge through disobedience; rather, He desired that they grow in goodness through obedience. The Fall resulted in separation from God, loss of divine dependence, and a deep-rooted tendency toward sin. Therefore, Genesis 3:22 serves as a profound theological turning point revealing not only humanity's tragic fall but also God's continued call for dependence and obedience as the true path to knowledge and life.

V. CONCLUSION

God is perfect; therefore, all His creations are also perfect. Among all the perfection and beauty of God's creations, one stands as the pinnacle and crown of creation: humanity. Humans were created in God's image and likeness and entrusted with stewarding all creation. Yet tragically, this crown of perfect creation violated God's command and fell into sin. Genesis Chapter 3 narrates in detail how humanity's fall into sin occurred. In verse 22, before God expelled humans from the Garden of Eden for their disobedience, God uttered a striking phrase: לָדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע (lāda'at tōb wārā'). The King James Version (KJV) translates this phrase as "knowing good and evil".

Genesis 3:22 implies through this phrase that humans had acquired something and "become like God" in knowing good and evil. Scholars have proposed diverse interpretations of this phrase: some argue humans gained divine omniscience; others suggest it refers to sexual knowledge; some view it as the capacity to discern moral decisions; while others contend the verse is mistranslated, leading to widespread misunderstanding. Humans were once perfect like God but lost this state through sin. By transgressing, they experienced, learned, and came to know evil resulting in every human thought, action, and plan being bent toward evil rather than good. God never desired humans to commit evil or disobedience; His original will was for humanity to grow with Him in all things, including knowledge.

After conducting analysis and interpretation on the text of Genesis 3:22, the meaning of לָדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע is the knowledge and ability to morally distinguish between what is good and what is evil not only to distinguish, but truly to be able to choose to do what is good rather than what is evil. Based on the translation obtained from the results of the research, humans were once like God, who was able to distinguish and do what is good rather than what is evil. But now, humans have lost that ability and tend to do what is evil because of their transgression. God placed a prohibition on eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil because God desired that humans obtain the knowledge of good and evil through obedience and grow together with Him. The fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a medium used by God to test humans. By eating the fruit of this tree, humans transgressed God's command, and what they obtained was evil

knowledge and experience. The theological meaning that can be drawn from this phrase is that God desires humans to always rely on and grow with Him in all things, including in knowledge. Instead of doing so, humans chose to disobey God and rely on themselves rather than relying on God.

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