

Susannah: “a lily among thorns”

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The title of this essay indicates that its subject matter is the little book of Susannah. In the view of the present writer Susannah is so called to link with the female figure in the Song of Songs who is never named but is described as a “lily” or “shoshannah” in Hebrew. Cant 2:1-2 reads,

I am a rose¹ of Sharon
A lily of the valleys
As a lily among thorns
so is my love among the daughters²

Susannah is “a lily” and she is indeed “among thorns” for those who plot her downfall fit the imagery in that they attempt to tear her to pieces. It will be seen later that the quotation from Cant 2:2 is more than symbolic for it links with another biblical passage which advocates death for “thorns”.

The book of Susannah is one of three additions to Daniel which appear in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew Bible.³ It is a short work consisting of a mere sixty-three verses⁴ with Daniel only making an ap-

pearance at verse 45. Daniel is not the main character; rather, Susannah plays that role. She is a beautiful, God-fearing, married Jewish woman who is unjustly accused of adultery by two respected elders who had tried to frighten her into accepting their sexual advances, threatening that if she did not, they would testify that they had seen her having sexual intercourse with a young man. Adultery carried the death penalty so the threat was severe indeed. Susannah, to her credit, refused to succumb to such blackmail saying, "Better not to do it and fall into your hands than to sin before the Lord" (v23). The court condemned Susannah to death upon the evidence of her accusers, who were immediately believed because of their standing in the community. She was saved from her fate by the intervention of the young Daniel who, as God's instrument, knew that the elders had lied and demonstrated it to the court. They then received the death penalty which they had tried to inflict upon Susannah.

The theme of the story is simple and reminiscent of Daniel 3 and 6, where righteous Jews, who remain loyal to God in the face of humans who plot their downfall, are saved from death by their divine overlord. Nickelsburg (1981), however, highlights the major difference from such tales, viz. that Susannah's enemies were Jewish rather than foreigners as in canonical Daniel. While this is a valid point, and thus throws the spotlight upon the actions of the elders, raising the question of why Jews are seen as the *bête noire*, it does not detract from the similarity with the tales of the potential martyrs in Daniel. This likeness underscores that a woman, just as much as a man, can, even in the face of death, be loyal to her God, who is her only true Judge. That this was the original main purpose of the book of Susannah will be demonstrated in the present essay *contra* André Lacoque who, in his recent work, claimed that "Susannah was not a feminist pamphlet". He goes on to say: "More than the vindication of [a] woman the tale centred on the vindication of innocence/justice" (1990:38). There are however a number of pointers in the story which show that woman, or a certain kind of woman, was being proclaimed as innocent, and in the process there is a refutation of male claims that she is not. In order to substantiate these statements it is necessary to look closely at the text.

There are two extant Greek versions of Susannah: the Septuagint (LXX) and Theodotion and the relationship between them is exceedingly complex. In the other additions to Daniel the two versions are very similar, but in the case of Susannah, while they present the same story line, each contains material which is not in the other⁵ and there are places where one seems to be a paraphrase rather than a copy of the other (cf. Moore 1977:83, 116). It has been suggested that a Semitic *vorlage* is behind such discrepancies but this is not certain.⁶ The Theodotion is accepted by

nearly all scholars to be later than the Septuagint version and this is likely to be the case because it presents a much more dramatic telling of the story with an apparently more logical ending. It would be difficult to imagine a writer with knowledge of the Theodotion version scribing the Septuagint one. For these reasons the Septuagint will be treated as primary for the purposes of this paper. Where the Theodotion needs to be used, particularly in the introduction to the story which is missing in the LXX, a careful eye will be cast to see whether this information is corroborated elsewhere in the LXX story of Susannah.

Theodotion sets the story in Babylon (v1). This is not corroborated explicitly in the LXX, but because there, as in Theodotion, Daniel is involved in Susannah's vindication, Babylon is the likely setting (cf. Dan1:1). Her husband is Joakim and her father is Hilkiyah (Th.v2; LXX vv7, 29). Modern commentators tend to assume that the names Joakim and Hilkiyah were chosen at random by the author,⁷ but it is possible that there was a specific purpose behind the two references. They are both names which appear in Biblical sources around the time of the Babylonian Exile. Each one will be discussed in turn.

Joakim is said in Theodotion to be very wealthy (v4). This finds corroboration in the LXX in that Susannah was attended at her trial by five hundred servants and maids (v30): the mark of a wealthy husband. Theodotion adds that Joakim was "the most eminent of all Jews" (v4), but there is no parallel for this in the LXX. A number of ancient commentators, picking up on the Theodotion description, suggested that Joakim should be identified with King Jehoiachin of Judah who was taken into Exile by Nebuchadnezzar (2K24:15, 25:27)⁸ but the two names do not equate consonantly. Moore points out that the name of Jehoiachin's predecessor, Jehoiakim, is closer to Joakim.⁹ He further adds that 2 Chron 36:5-7, differing from 2 Kings, states that Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiakim to Babylon showing that there was a Biblical, if not a historical, basis for Jehoiakim being in Exile. Contrary to the way that his own argument leads him, Moore says, "There is, however, no justification for the ancient view that this Joakim (i.e. the one in Susannah) was the former King of Judah". Moore then asks the rhetorical question, "Had he been the former King, surely that fact would have been noted by the narrator" (1977:95). In reply to Moore it should be borne in mind that the introduction to Susannah is missing in the LXX, and so it is unknown whether that version referred to any possible royal status of Joakim. Further, how much more eminent (as per Theodotion) does one need to be to have one's royal status inferred than "the most eminent of all the Jews"? One Biblical reference to a Jehoiakim which appears to have been ignored by commentators is Dan 1:1-2, where the fictional setting of

Daniel's exile in Babylon is in the context of King Jehoiakim's removal there in the third year of his reign by King Nebuchadnezzar. It is noteworthy that this Jehoiakim's name is spelt the same way in the LXX of Dan 1:1-2 (Ἰωακείμ) as it is in Susannah, whilst the spelling in 2 Chron 36:5-7 is different (Ἰωακίμ). The deliberate linking then of the story of Susannah with Daniel is intensified. At the same time, the ancient reader of Susannah who knew what Chronicles said of Jehoiakim would be aware that "he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God" (2 Chron 36:5) with the LXX of 2 Chronicles going further saying that Joakim had shed much innocent blood. This is reminiscent of the narrator's comment in the LXX of Susannah after her vindication – "innocent blood was saved on that day" (v60). It is noteworthy that Joakim, Susannah's husband, is not listed among the family members or servants who appear by her side at the trial (Pervo in Levine, 1991:147). One wonders whether he was absent deliberately or accidentally or whether he was amongst "all the sons of Israel" who were in the city synagogue and sat in judgement of Susannah (v28). If it was the latter, he was about to be guilty of shedding more innocent blood, preferring to believe the story of the so-called respected elders in preference to his wife!

Susannah's father is Hilkiah. A perusal of Biblical Hilkiahs shows that it is a priestly name (Jer 1:1; 2 K 22:4,8,10,12,14; 23:4; 1 Chron 6:13,45; 19:11; 2 Chron 34:14,15; 20:22; Ezra 7:1; Neh 11:11; 12:7,21).¹⁰ Indeed one particular Hilkiah, a High Priest, found the book of the law in the Temple in Josiah's reign (2 K 22:8,10; 2 Chron 34:14,15) in 618 BCE and it is not outside the bounds of possibility that Jer 29:3 is speaking about the same Hilkiah, whom he informs us was sent to Babylon by King Zedekiah of Judah (reigned 597-587 BCE). At the very least, it should be accepted that the author of Susannah was identifying her father, Hilkiah, as a priest. There is support for this in the LXX for when the elders receive the death penalty that they had tried to inflict upon Susannah¹¹ "the angel of the Lord threw fire down through the midst of them" (v62). According to Lev 21:9 death by fire was the punishment for the daughter of a priest found guilty of a sexual crime.¹² It is likely though that the author of Susannah was hinting that Susannah's father was Hilkiah, the High Priest of Josiah's reign, especially as Theodotion stresses that Susannah's parents taught her the Law (v3). Who would be better placed to do that than the one who had found the book of the Law in the Temple? That Susannah knew the Law is not explicitly stated in the LXX whose introduction to the story of Susannah is missing. Nevertheless, Susannah's righteousness there is not in doubt, and verse 35 draws a contrast between herself and her accusers when in prayer she says, "You know I did not do what these lawless men (ἄνομοι) wickedly allege

against me". Indeed the LXX version emphasises on a number of occasions that the two would-be seducers are "lawless" (vv28, 32 παράνομοι; v35 ἄνομοι; v57 ἐν ἀνομίᾳ). Susannah's actions oppose those of the elders. She, then, behaved in accordance with the Law, the Torah. Her parents appear at her trial in support of her and thus could be said to be on the side of the Torah.

The lawlessness of the elders has already been remarked upon and in this connection attention should be paid to verse 56. In the LXX Daniel asks the second elder,

Why is your race perverted like that of Sidon
and not like that of Judah?
Beauty has seduced you, foul lust

whilst in the Theodotion he says,

Spawn of Canaan, not of Judah,
beauty has seduced you,
desire has turned your heart astray.

In these two variants there is a reference to the same Biblical tradition: in Gen 9:25 Noah cursed Canaan for Ham (Canaan's father) having seen Noah's nakedness in Gen 9:22. Sidon was the firstborn of Canaan (Gen 10:15; 1 Chron 1:13) and the curse would apply to him and his descendents through his father. In commenting upon Gen 9:25, B.W. Anderson¹³ says the curse implies that Canaan's subjection to Israel was the result of Canaanite sexual perversions (Lev 18:24-30). It is noteworthy that in the previous pericope in Leviticus the Israelites are instructed amongst other things not to have sexual intercourse with a neighbour's wife and so defile themselves (Lev 18:20) in the way in which the original inhabitants of the land had done so that God had ejected them from the land (Lev 18:24-25). A further Biblical passage may have been in the mind of the writer of the LXX version: Jezebel, the infamous queen, was the daughter of a King of Sidon (1 Kings 16:31; Moore 1977:112) and she, in league with elders, connived at false witness being brought against Naboth. Like Susannah, Naboth was condemned to death, but no Daniel appeared to save him from his fate (1 Kings 21).¹⁴

It has been suggested that the author of Susannah patterned the elders upon Jer 29:21-23 where two prophets are burned to death by the King of Babylon because they had committed adultery with their neighbours' wives and spoken falsely in God's name.¹⁵ The points of contact between the two tales are numerous: the prophets are two in number as are the

elders; all commit or attempt to commit adultery with their neighbours' wives; all represent themselves as speaking in God's name – the prophets directly and the elders indirectly in that they represent themselves as defending God's Torah when they accuse Susannah of having broken it; all arouse God's ire by their actions and He is moved to bring about their destruction; fire is the instrument of the demise of all of them¹⁶ and finally, similar statements are made about false prophets and the elders: viz. Jer23:15 says that from them "profaneness is gone forth into all the land" and Sus v5 "Lawlessness came forth from Babylon, from elder-judges who seemed to govern the people".¹⁷ This list of similarities between Jer 29:21-23 and Susannah is impressive and it may be further strengthened with the realisation that the Hilkiah who was sent to Babylon, and posited above as Susannah's father, appears in the same chapter of Jeremiah. The use of both I K 21:11 and Jer 29:21-23 as the pattern for the elders in Susannah accounts for their two major crimes: bearing false witness and committing adultery with their neighbours' wives.

Jeremiah 29 may also have provided the setting for the elders' crime. They threatened Susannah in a garden¹⁸ and Jeremiah advised those in Exile in Babylon to "Build houses and dwell, plant gardens and eat the fruit of them". The garden setting recalls another famous Biblical story: that of Eve's "seduction" by the snake, when she was persuaded to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve took the fruit and shared it with Adam, thus disobeying God.¹⁹ Susannah, by contrast, refused "the fruit" and maintained a close relationship with her Deity. The reason for her ability to do this was her desire not "to sin before the Lord" (v23). The prohibition against adultery is, of course, one of the Ten Commandments, part of the Torah, and to break it meant a repudiation of God. Keeping the commandments is associated with the fear of God in Deut 5:9 and the fear of God or the Lord with Wisdom in Job 28:28 and Ps.111:10. That Susannah feared God is stressed and that she knew Torah is undoubtedly behind the reference to her in v57 as a daughter of Judah, reflecting the post-exilic period when a contrast was drawn between those who were descended from the Babylonian Exiles and those who were not. "Daughter of Judah" may also be an allusion to Patriarchal history for a contrast is drawn in Susannah between the heroine's (a daughter of Judah's) refusal to accept the advances of the elders and the acquiescence through fear on the part of the daughters of Israel: Tamar, Judah's daughter through marriage, forced his adherence to the Levirate law when he was reluctant to implement it. Judah then said of Tamar in Gen 38:26: "She is more righteous than I".

By contrast, Israel's (Jacob's) only daughter, Dinah, was raped by Shechem. Susannah, like Tamar, was righteous and the daughters of Israel, like Dinah, were to all intents and purposes raped²⁰ for they submitted to the elders only because they were threatened with death.

It has been asserted that Susannah's refusal to commit adultery has its closest Biblical parallel in Genesis 39: the story of Joseph's rejection of the advances of Potiphar's wife and her subsequent accusation that he was guilty of the very sin she herself had tried to commit. André Lacoque rightly states, "When such reversals of pattern occur the conclusion is almost certain that a traditional scene has been borrowed by a polemicist to make a point" (1990:23). The obvious point is that a man, as well as a woman, could lead astray a member of the opposite sex. Why should it be necessary to demonstrate this? It has already been shown that there is an allusion to the story of Eve and the Fall in Susannah but that Susannah was saved from disrupting her relationship with God through adherence to the Torah. A polemic against the increasingly misogynistic views of Wisdom writers is implied here. Ben Sirach, for example, posits in 25:24: "From woman came the beginning of sin and through her we all die". A statement usually taken as referring to Eve.²¹ Not only do Wisdom writers debase Eve but they have negative views about living women. The following passage from Prov 6:20f gives advice to the young man:

- My son, keep the commandment of your father
and forsake not the teaching (torah) of your mother
- 21 Bind them continually upon your heart
Tie them about your neck
- 22 When you walk it will lead you
When you lie down it will watch over you
And when you awake it will talk with you
- 23 For the commandment is a lamp and the law is a light
And reproofs of discipline are the way of life
- 24 To keep you from the evil woman
from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.

Chapter 7 of Proverbs has a passage in a similar vein where the son or young man is warned against the harlot and advised to stick to the commandments. In Susannah the sexes are reversed: the daughter, not the son, is instructed by the parents; the woman, not the man, is able to reject the advances of the opposite sex because she allows the Torah to lead her.²² In the above passage from Proverbs, the mother, as well as the father, instructs her son, suggesting that women knew Torah also. Leonie

Archer (1990:87) points out, however, that from Hellenistic times mothers are never mentioned in a teaching role²³ and it may be, if a Hellenistic date is accepted for Susannah, as it usually is, that the inclusion of the mother as Susannah's teacher is polemical in itself. Wisdom literature, particularly later examples such as Ben Sirach (c.190 BCE), tends to assume that a woman would be the downfall of a man and a willing accomplice to his lust (cf. 9:8-9). In giving advice to fathers, Ben Sirach (42:12-14) says:

Do not let her (your daughter) display her beauty to any man ...
 For out of clothes comes the moth
 and out of woman comes a woman's wickedness
 Better a man's wickedness than a woman's goodness;
 It is a woman who brings shame and disgrace.

In polemic against these kinds of statements Susannah was walking in private in her husband's garden, not displaying her beauty. Rather than Susannah bringing shame and disgrace upon the elders, they attempted to do so to her. It was not she alone whom they had tried to seduce for their ploys had been successful with the daughters of Israel (v57) and so Susannah's beauty could not be blamed for their downfall: their own inclinations had already led them in that direction. Indeed a reversal of Ben Sirach's statement about a woman's wickedness may be included in the pseudo-Biblical quotation which appears in verse 5 of Susannah,

Lawlessness came forth from Babylon
 from elder-judges who seemed to
 govern the people.

A closer allusion though is to Zech 5:5-11 where the prophet has a vision of an *ephah* (a container of a certain size) being transported through the air. An angel shows him its contents and inside is a woman of whom the angel then said, "This is Wickedness" (v8). In verse 11 the angel says the *ephah* is being taken to Babylon. A woman, then, is characterised as wickedness and established in Babylon! By a neat reversal Susannah says wickedness is characterised by men, especially elders-judges, coming from Babylon!

It follows that the story of Susannah is a polemic against the portrayal of women as wicked. It attacks the statement made in Zechariah and counters the thrust of Wisdom literature which had become increasingly misogynistic in the Hellenistic period:²⁴ it asserts that not all women

were like Eve nor were they all harlots beneath the skin. Men could be, and were, wicked as Jeremiah himself had recognised when he said that the false prophets "spread profaneness throughout the land"(23:5). Knowledge and acceptance of the Torah were necessary for females and males alike if they were to avoid sin. A further pointer to Susannah being a polemic against Wisdom literature appears at the end of the LXX version.

Because of this young men are beloved of Jacob
because of their simplicity.
Let us then take care of our courageous young men
for they shall act piously as young men and there
will be in them a spirit of knowledge and understanding forever
and ever.

It is an ending which strikes an odd note, coming as it does after the death of the elders and the saving of Susannah.²⁵ It does not appear to refer to Daniel only as young men (not young man) are mentioned several times. Plöger (1973:81) sees an echo of Wisdom literature in it, for the education of young men was the central concern of the Wisdom schools. The present writer concurs, although she believes that (just as Susannah, representing the Jewish woman who knew Torah was vindicated against the Wisdom writers who infer that all women are evil or weak) the upholding of the strength and piety of young men is polemical against Wisdom writers who fear constantly that young men will fall prey to sexual misdemeanours. The elders in Susannah bore false witness not only against Susannah but also against an unknown (imaginary) young man, whereas they themselves were the guilty ones. It should be noted that "elder" (*πρεσβύτερος*) in Greek means an "aged man" as well as community leader. It was older men who wrote the Wisdom works as can be inferred from their frequent address of young men as "sons".

Sectarian conflict has been suggested as the motivation for the writing of Susannah.²⁶ There is no evidence, however, that sectarian conflict in a general sense is the main purpose of the work, rather the desire to combat the hypocrisy present in certain circles about the wickedness of women. The LXX version gives a possible *Sitz-im-Leben* for the conflict present in Susannah: the synagogue. The elders themselves are described in both the LXX and Theodotion as elders and judges, suggesting that they are not simply old men but officers of the community. Schürer (1979:43) posits that religious discipline was within the competence of elders of the congregation, although he talks in terms of expulsion from the community rather than the death penalty. Nevertheless, the elders

were the people who supposedly upheld the Torah and ensured that it was obeyed, a practice which appears to have started in Ezra's day (Ezra 10:8). This reference links up with the pseudo-Biblical quotation concerning elder judges from Babylon, the place from which Ezra had returned. One wonders whether any particular incident sparked off the writing of Susannah or whether it was an accumulation of incidents²⁷ coupled with the downgrading of women in Wisdom literature and elsewhere which fuelled female rage. It is likely that a woman penned Susannah, transforming the motifs of folklore²⁸ into a peculiarly Jewish tale through the skilful use of her knowledge of the Torah and prophets²⁹ to show that a woman could be righteous and that there were many Biblical precedents for men being evil.³⁰ Alternatively, it is possible that Priestly circles were involved in the writing of the tale, for in the present paper it has been shown that Hilkiyah, Susannah's father, was likely to have been a priest, that he taught his daughter Torah and that he appeared in court in her support. If a priest (or priests) was the author, then the motive for writing would still be the same: a defence of women (their wives and daughters) against hypocritical men in authority.

The attachment of Susannah at the time of its composition to the Daniel cycle need not be regarded as dubious, as Moore suggests (1977:80, 109), for it served several purposes: it illustrated that God was the true Judge of women as well as men, that He acted in the defence of women and men alike, that Jewish men were just as capable of plotting the downfall of one of their own people as foreigners had been in the other Danielic tales and, last but not least, the link with Daniel would ensure the circulation of Susannah.

To return now to the beginning of this paper: there it was posited that the tale was named Susannah to link with Cant 2:2, where the heroine was "as a lily (shoshannah) among thorns". It has been seen that Susannah's "thorns" were lawless men (*παράνομοι*) according to verses 28 and 32 of the LXX). 2 Sam 23:6 in the LXX states: "Lawless men (*παράνομοι*) shall be as thorns (*ἄκανθα*) to be thrust away".³¹ It then advocates that these lawless men be "utterly burned with fire in their place". This indeed is what happened to the lawless elders. McNamara says, "The story of Susannah should be classed as pious haggadah" (1967:825), and perhaps we should add: "in polemic against some not so pious males".

Notes

- 1 Lit. autumn crocus.
- 2 The name "Susannah" does not appear elsewhere in the Bible and a number of commentators have suggested that the Song of Songs was the inspiration for it. None however have considered the symbolism of the lily (shoshannah) among thorns in connection with Susannah.
- 3 The date of Susannah's composition, provenance and original language are all unknown. Scholars generally accept that it comes from the Hellenistic period, although the Persian period has also been suggested (cf. Moore 1977:91-92). This early dating is dependent upon the notion that Susannah was originally independent of Daniel which the present writer doubts (cf. p. 11 *infra*). The *terminus ad quem* is likely to be 100 BCE when scholars believe that Daniel was translated into Greek in the Septuagint (cf. Moore 1977:92). The questions of provenance and language are interrelated for if Susannah was written in Hebrew or Aramaic then Judah is the likely provenance, but if it was Greek then somewhere in the Greek speaking Diaspora is more probable.
- 4 The Theodotion version has 63 verses. The LXX (Septuagint) has fewer, but the existing ones have been numbered to correspond with the contents of the Theodotion.
- 5 For example, Theodotion includes a bath scene and the Septuagint has a graphic description of the deaths of the elders.
- 6 See Moore (1977:83) for a discussion of scholarly views. Moore refers (1977:25-26) to the unpublished work of Raymond A. Martin, who concluded that part of the LXX version was originally written in Greek. If Susannah's original language was Greek, then the dissimilarity between the LXX and Theodotion versions may be accounted for by the common practice in the Greek world of circulating among friends drafts of a work which might later be superseded by further drafts until the author was satisfied with the result. Earlier drafts may not have remained confidential but have passed beyond the original circle of readers (cf. Raymond J. Starr (1987), "The Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World", *Catholic Quarterly*, 37:213-233, cited by Kraemer 1991:227).
- 7 It is stated by some that "Joakim" means "the Lord establishes" and that "Hilkiah", meaning "the Lord is my portion", was a name which appears a number of times in the Bible.
- 8 See Moore (1977:94). Lacoque (1990:25) points out that the book of Jerahmeel (eleventh century) and the Ethiopic Falashic version also present Susannah as the wife of a king.
- 9 "Jehoiachin" and "Jehoiakim" are names which appear in Hebrew. The Greek alphabet is not capable of transliterating them exactly. The consonants, though, apart from the "h" for which there is no equivalent in Greek, are the same in "Jehoiakim" and "Joakim".

- 10 The only other occurrences of "Hilkiah" are in 1 Chron 26:11, where it refers to a porter in the Temple; Neh 8:4 where a Hilkiah amongst others stood on Ezra's right when he read the law to the people; 2 K 18:18,27 mention an Eliakim, head of Hezekiah's household, whose father was a Hilkiah. It is not known whether or not the latter was a priest. Jer 29:3 says that a certain Gemariah, son of Hilkiah, carried Jeremiah's letter to Babylon. This passage is discussed below.
- 11 Deut 19:19 says that one should do to a false witness what he had tried to do to the one accused.
- 12 It is interesting to note that the Samaritan version of Susannah presents her as the daughter of a High Priest, albeit in a different time period (cf. Lacoque 1990:26).
- 13 *The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (1965:12). Moore (1977:111) notes: "one might infer that 'descendant of Canaan' was a popular expression applied to people guilty of some sexual offence". He sees the link with Gen 9:25 but does not mention Leviticus 18.
- 14 Lacoque (1990:28) mentions 1 Kings 21 but does not recognise its significance for Susannah. No one, to the knowledge of the present writer, has seen the Sidonian connection of Jezebel with the wicked elders of 1 Kings 21.
- 15 Jerome quotes an ancient Jewish opinion that Jer 29:21-23 was the pattern for the elders. This was followed by Brüll (1877). See Moore (1977:87) for a discussion of Brüll's views and also Lacoque (1990:24-25).
- 16 Only the LXX, not Theodotion, has fire as the instrument of destruction in the story of Susannah. The LXX account of the death of the elders where they are thrown into a valley and the angel of the Lord threw fire into their midst may well contain an allusion to Is 30:33 where Topheth (the valley of Hinnom) is prepared with wood which God ignites with his breath which is like a stream of brimstone.
- 17 Other Biblical passages are also likely to have influenced this pseudo-Biblical quotation in Susannah as will be shown below. It used to be thought that Theodotion alone included the pseudo-Biblical quotation, but Moore (1977:95) notes that Kolner LXX Papyrus 967 dating from c. 150 CE contains this saying.
- 18 The garden is mentioned frequently by Theodotion and in v36 of the LXX. A garden is also the traditional site for seduction scenes in Greek romantic novels. See Pervo (1991:148, n. 21).
- 19 The link with the story of the Garden of Eden was first mooted by a former honours student, Anthony Doran. Another link between the two stories may be discerned in that two trees feature in each. For a discussion of the symbolism involved in the story of Adam and Eve, see Gardner (1990).
- 20 The LXX in v19 supports the notion of rape in that it says that the elders "tried to force" (ἐξέβιάζοντο) Susannah.

- 21 References to Eve, her sin and the effect it had upon the rest of humanity proliferate in the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, New Testament and the writings of the Rabbis and Church Fathers. For a brief description of these, see Swidler (1979, 150-157; 324; 339-51). No further examples are quoted in the present paper because of the uncertainty about the date of the composition of Susannah. Ben Sirach was written about 190 BCE and is likely to pre-date Susannah.
- 22 It should be noted that Prov 6:20f parodies the Shema (cf. Deut 6:6f; 11:19f) and thus, although the context is parental instruction (cf. McKane, 1970:327) the implication is that both mother and father are mediating God's commandments and Torah.
- 23 Archer may have overstated the case for she does not mention Susannah's mother and her teaching role even to dismiss it as fictional. Further, she quotes 4 Macc 8:11f where the mother, whose seven sons were soon to be martyred, reminds them of the teaching their father had given them about Biblical characters. The mother does so in sufficient detail to suggest that she herself knew the stories also, stories which came from the Torah or Pentateuch.
- 24 The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, also from the second century BCE, evidences a downgrading of women (see Test Reub 5:1-6).
- 25 Theodotion's ending seems much more appropriate, viz. v63 "Then Hilkiyah and his wife gave praise for their daughter, Susannah, along with Joakim, her husband, and all their relatives, because she had been found not guilty of a shameful act" and v64 "Daniel became great before the people from that day forwards".
- 26 Brüll (1877:43-69) believed that it was a Pharisaic polemic against the judicial proceedings of the Sadducees, but it has been pointed out that Daniel knew the elders were guilty before questioning them and so court procedure could not have been an issue (cf. Moore 1977:88 and Lacoque 1990:25). Wurmbrand (1963:40) suggested that the people of the land (*Am ha-aretz*) were responsible for Susannah and were expressing their resentment of the Rabbis. De Menasce (cited in Lacoque 1990:28) thought that Susannah was directed against priests, but it has been shown in the present paper that priests, as represented by Hilkiyah, supported Susannah against the elders. Lacoque (1990:28) also sees Susannah as opposed to the Jewish establishment although he skillfully avoids naming any particular group as the target, referring to the views of both Wurmbrand and de Menasce.
- 27 Hazleton (1977:51) points out that in modern-day Israel "ultra-Orthodox men are among Israeli prostitutes' most regular clientele". Hazleton attributes this to the strict observance of Niddah (the period of menstrual uncleanness) within the marriage relationship. The men, though, appear not to worry about possible defilement by sleeping with prostitutes who presumably do not observe the laws of Niddah! The outward show then is one of extreme piety but it is hypocritical. Such kinds of hypocritical

- actions may well have been happening also at the time of the author of Susannah.
- 28 Moore (1977:88-89) gives a review of scholars who believe Susannah was originally a secular folk tale.
 - 29 The Torah and Prophets were regularly used in synagogue readings (Schürer 1979:450-453) and thus women would have access to them even if they did not undergo any formal education.
 - 30 Pervo (1991:145-147) outlines the conclusions of M. Egger concerning women in the Greek novel (*Women in the Greek Novel: Constructing the Feminine*, Diss., University of California-Irvine, 1990). He then examines a number of Jewish works in their light and concludes that "Susannah is the Jewish heroine who most closely conforms to [the] model of the romantic novel. She is as beautiful, wealthy and virtuous as any". Lefkowitz (1991:199-219) notes that no women were known to have written novels in the ancient world and from her analysis of other genres written by women she concludes that intimate details of a woman's life and independent action on the part of the heroine are marked characteristics. The former conclusion would support Susannah having been written by a woman, but not the latter. Lefkowitz bases the notion of the independently acting female upon the "Acts of SS Perpetua and Felicity", but it seems to the present writer that one work is insufficient evidence upon which to base a general conclusion, especially with regard to Jewish writings which emerge from a different religious milieu. Kraemer (1991:235) comes to a similar conclusion as the present writer in the case of *Joseph and Asenath* and the *Testament of Job*, which she points out are (like Susannah) "constrained to some extent by the biblical materials on which they are probably based".
 - 31 It is interesting to note that Cant 2:2 and 2 Sam 23:6 both use the same Greek word for "thorns" (ἄκανθα) whereas the Massoretic text has different words in each passage. If there is truly a link between Susannah and the two passages quoted, it may be an indicator that Susannah was originally written in Greek and not in a Semitic language as posited by so many scholars. This would then suggest that Susannah was a Diaspora work.

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