

BOOK REVIEW / KİTAP İNCELEMESİ

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ADAM AND EVE IN THE ARMENIAN TRADITION, FIFTH THROUGH SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

(*ERMENİ GELENEĞİNDE ÂDEM İLE HAVVA,
BEŞİNCİ YÜZYILDAN ON YEDİNCİ YÜZYILA*)

Book Title: Adam and Eve in The Armenian Tradition, Fifth Through Seventeenth Centuries

Author: Michael E. Stone

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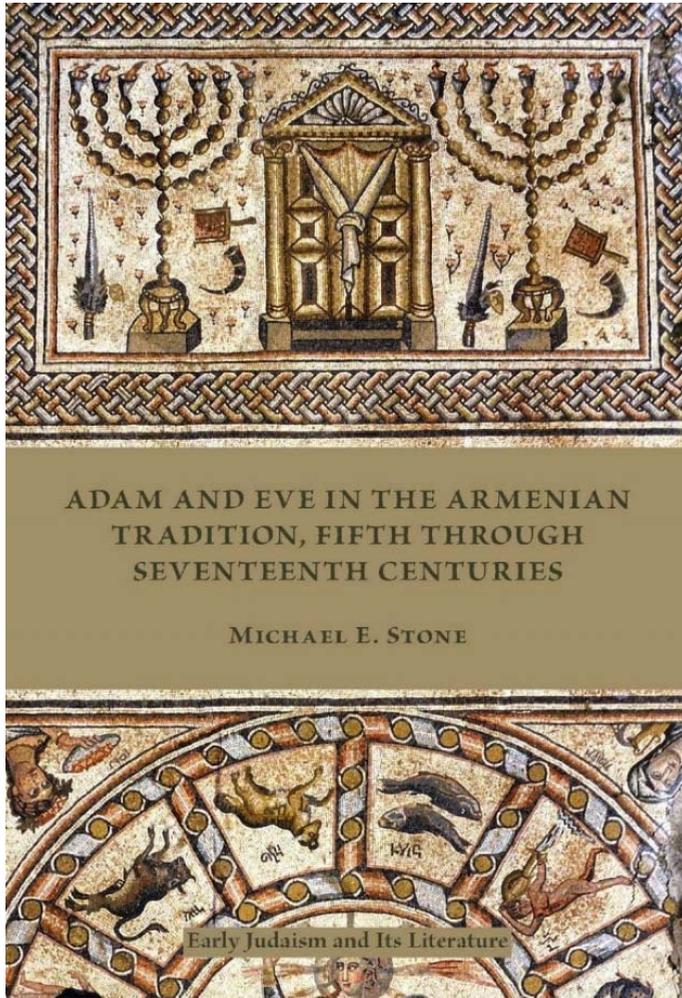
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Michael E. Stone, the author of this book, is a Professor Emeritus of Comparative Religion and Armenian Studies at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. During his academic career, Stone pursued his studies under two categories: Jewish Studies and Armenian Studies. Most of his works thus focus on the intersection points of these

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two categories. Throughout his career, Stone also served as a visiting scholar at numerous universities, foremost being Yale University, University of Virginia, and University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Being a member of various editorial and scientific boards, Stone has been awarded around 10 awards in recognition of his academic works. To this date, he has been either the sole or joint author of more than 50 books. Some of his most recognized works are as follows: *The Manuscript Library of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem*, *Medieval Armenian Culture*, *The Armenians in Jerusalem and the Holy Land* and *Early Judaism: Texts and Documents on Faith and Piety*.

Stone's book titled *Adam and Eve in The Armenian Tradition, Fifth Through Seventeenth Centuries* that was published in 2013, which is the focus of this book review, contains two parts besides the Preface and Introduction.

Indicating that he had also carried out studies on Adam in the previous years, Stone explains in the Introduction that he decided to prepare this book to utilize texts on theological issues to reveal aspects of the historical trajectory of Armenian culture:

“The apocryphal literature attests to just one of the ways in which the Adam and Eve stories were rewritten within and influenced Armenian culture. To complete the picture, I decided not to look only at Adam apocrypha, of which there is an abundance in Armenian, but also at how the stories of Genesis 1–3 were reflected in Armenian literature. I was not interested in purely theological issues, nor in the simple use of such typology as the Old and New Adam in itself, although on occasion the typological passages bear narrative elements within them. This undertaking had two main goals. First, to see how the Armenians handled the biblical narrative and to try to isolate and specific retellings or interpretations that reflected particular theological or, indeed, historical circumstances. The other was to try to find out when the Armenian apocryphal Adam literature started to be reflected in dated authors and thus to get some idea of the dating of the Armenian Adam literature, which cannot have originated much before its attestation in the known authors. The present book is the outcome of this project.” (p. xix)

Stone also indicates in the Introduction that the basis for the publication this book was the project titled “Adam and Eve in Armenian Tradition” that was funded by the *Israel Research Foundation*.

The first part of the book titled “The Adam and Eve Traditions in Armenian” contains the following five sub-parts that chronologically present the period from the 5th to the end of the 17th centuries:

1. Adam and Eve Traditions in Fifth-Century Armenian Literature
2. Adam and Eve Traditions in Sixth- to Eleventh-Century Armenian Literature
3. Adam and Eve Traditions in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Armenian Literature
4. Adam and Eve Traditions in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Armenian Literature
5. Adam and Eve Traditions in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Armenian Literature

These sub-parts are all themselves divided into the following headings:

0. General Considerations
 1. The Creation
 2. The Garden of Eden
 3. Satan
 4. Sin and its Results
 5. The Burial of Adam and Other Traditions

The views expressed under these headings are analyzed and discussed based on the texts contained in the second part of the book. Additionally, there is an appendix at the end of the first part titled “Satan and the Serpent” that has been formulated around a single subject; “the variety of language and metaphor used [by the Armenians] to describe the relationship between Satan and the serpent” associated with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (p. 186). That relationship, according to Armenian imagination, takes on fascinating forms such as when the serpent is perceived as a “pack animal/vehicle” ridden by Satan or when the serpent is considered to be Satan’s arms and legs (p. 182).

The second part of the book titled “Texts and Translations” is dedicated to the relevant texts and their translations. A chronological order is followed here as well and texts belonging to each century are presented under separate headings. These texts are given in both Armenian and English. Stone indicates that most of the translations were done by him, while already existing translations were used for some of the works. Also, small biographical notes are present at the end of the book for each author whose texts were utilized by the author.

Stone’s book does not contain a conclusion part. This makes the structure of the book as interesting as its content. Indeed, Stone offers the following comment concerning his chosen method of narration;

“The reader may justly remark that each of the topical chapter sections throughout this book could be treated in the same diachronic way. I have chosen just one theme as a probe, to indicate how future research might develop, based on such corpora of texts as that presented here, and on a preceding synchronic analysis, which itself indicates connections between the development of specific directions of thought in the discrete segments of time.” (p. 177)

It would not be appropriate to expect chronological conclusions concerning Adam and Eve stories, since Stone only provides a narration when there is data to be processed for a specific sub-heading, and if there is no such data, he leaves that sub-heading empty and moves on to other sub-headings. Instead of making general conclusions in summation of all the centuries he has analyzed, Stone makes it apparent through his narration style that he wants the readers to make such conclusions. In short, the reader is forced to jump between sections and repeatedly visit texts from the same century rather than carrying out a systematic reading.

Stone provides a valuable source for those interested in Armenian studies through his accurate analyses and his comprehensive account of the Adam and Eve stories in Armenian tradition. The fact that short biographical information is provided for 130 Armenian authors, many of whom might have been forgotten in the passage of time, gives importance to the book for scholars of this subject. Finally, another important aspect of the book is that it makes the texts of Armenian authors accessible to people who do not know Armenian through the included translations.