

אדם, the Hebrew for 'Human, Humanity' A Response to James Barr

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1. *The Issue*

At the meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in New Orleans in 1996, James Barr read a paper to a plenary session, 'Words and Meanings, This Century and Next'. I had the honour of introducing Barr and of being one of the invited respondents to his paper. Since he did not at that time publish his paper (as far as I know), there was no point in my attempting to publish my response; but now that he has published a version of that paper, under the title, 'One Man, or All Humanity?',¹ and since he refers in one passage to a work edited by me, I am taking the opportunity to make known my own view.²

Barr's paper has other concerns besides the point to be considered here. The title of his paper indicates that his principal interest is the exegetical question whether Gen. 1:26-27 envisages the creation on the sixth day of humanity as a species, or of a *primaeval* pair of humans, or of a male ancestor of the human race. A further interest, perhaps less obvious, is the author's desire, behind this exegetical question, to challenge the claim of some feminist scholars that Genesis 1 portrays a primitive egalitarianism between the sexes.³

These points, however, are beyond my concern here, which is rather with a key interest in James Barr's paper, viz. whether אדם means 'humanity' in general or whether it is 'essentially a male term'.⁴ This is the theme I should like to take up in this paper.

First I need to identify what exactly it is that Barr is arguing. I quote some key sentences in order to reproduce his wording exactly:

¹ In Athalya Brenner and Jan Willem van Henten (eds.), *Recycling Biblical Figures: Papers Read at a NOSTER Colloquium in Amsterdam, 12-13 May 1997* (Leiderdorp, The Netherlands: Deo Publishing, 1999), pp. 3-21. See also the response by Johannes C. de Moor, 'The First Human Being a Male? A Response to Professor Barr', in the same volume, pp. 22-27.

² In default of a formal publication, I posted my response in 1996 on my website, under the title, 'Does אדם Mean 'Humanity'? A Response to James Barr, "Words and Meanings, This Century and Next"' (www.sheffield.ac.uk/~bib). The present paper is a substantial revision of that article.

³ This concern becomes evident at the end of the second last paragraph of the paper, where he asks why we should expect Genesis 1, deeply rooted in a patriarchal culture, 'surprisingly, at 1:26-27, suddenly to become the vehicle of modern egalitarian views about the position of women' (p. 21)—clearly indicating his disapproval of such an expectation. It would however be a mistake to regard all feminist scholars, or feminist-inclined scholars, as drawing such an inference from Genesis 1-3; to mention only one example, my own paper, 'What Does Eve Do To Help?' is precisely directed against any superficial perception of 'egalitarianism' here (in *What Does Eve Do to Help? and Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 94; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), chapter 1.

⁴ Barr, 'One Man, or All Humanity', p. 18.

1. אָדָּא is essentially a male concept—which, however, can include women when they are with men, and who then belong to אָדָּא also' (p. 12).⁵
2. '[B]iblical Hebrew has no term for “human being” that is not also a designation of “man” (= male person)' (p. 12).
3. אָדָּא is an essentially male term, which may however include women if they are counted as with men in the context. Women are included of course, when appropriate, but are included as an additional category of humanity; the designation given to humanity, in this sense, including women, is really that of “man”' (pp. 18-19).

We should note that Barr does not distinguish in these definitional statements between the uses of אָדָּא in a collective and in an individual sense. In his phrase, 'a ... term, which may however include women', we need to be aware that he is dealing with the use of אָדָּא in a collective sense, but in the sentence '[B]iblical Hebrew has no term for “human being” that is not also a designation of “man” (= male person)' it must be the use of אָדָּא in the individual sense that is in view.

Summing up Barr's position in my own words, I should say that he believes that אָדָּא, used of an individual, always refers to a male, and that, used collectively, it refers to humanity viewed normally as the totality of males (though exceptionally as the collectivity of all males and all females).

The view that I will defend to the contrary is that אָדָּא, whether used collectively or individually, is not gendered. That is, used of an individual, it means 'human being', and, used collectively, it means humanity—in both cases without reference to gender. The issue then is not whether 'אָדָּא includes both man and woman' (as Barr puts it, p. 11), for that is to focus on the issue of gender, which, I would maintain, is not normally in view with the term אָדָּא.

2. The Arguments

Here are the main arguments to be considered:

1. Barr's first argument for the male-gendered meaning of אָדָּא is that 'it is never used to designate a woman or a group of women' (p. 11). I infer that he means that no individual woman is called an אָדָּא ('A woman is a human being but that does not mean that she is an אָדָּא'), and that no group of women is collectively called אָדָּא. In other words, אָדָּא is not used individually or collectively of women.

What are the facts? There are, to be sure, no sentences that say, Sarah was an אָדָּא; there was not an אָדָּא as wise as Hannah. But there is one case at least that should be considered, Num. 31:35, which was brought into the discussion by Johannes de Moor in a response to Barr.⁶ In a list of booty taken from the Midianites we have the notation:

⁵ I will register here my unhappiness with the term 'concept' in this connection, and say nothing more about it. As I understand it, we are talking about a Hebrew *word*, not a *concept* at all. No doubt the Hebrews had a *concept* of humanity, but how that is related to the *word* אָדָּא is problematic, and is in any case the very issue under discussion.

⁶ De Moor, 'The First Human Being a Male? A Response to Professor Barr', p. 23.

וְאֵלֶּיךָ וְאֵלֶּיךָ וְאֵלֶּיךָ וְאֵלֶּיךָ וְאֵלֶּיךָ וְאֵלֶּיךָ וְאֵלֶּיךָ וְאֵלֶּיךָ וְאֵלֶּיךָ וְאֵלֶּיךָ
and in persons, women who had never slept with a man, thirty-two thousand
in all (NJB)
and a total of 32,000 human beings, namely, the women who had not had
carnal relations (NJPS)

This would seem to be a clear case of a group of women being referred to as אָדָּם. But Barr responds that in this text אָדָּם signifies humanity in contrast with the animals previously mentioned as booty, and it so happens that the only example of Midianite humans left alive at this point in the narrative are females, so אָדָּם must perforce refer to females. Nonetheless, argues Barr, 'the meaning contributed by the presence of the word is not the group of females, but the classification of humans, male and female, by contrast with the animals' (p. 12 n. 7). This does not seem a very strong reply to de Moor's point. Barr has elsewhere in his paper argued that women are included in אָדָּם only if they are counted together with men (p. 18), and that אָדָּם can include women when they are with men (p. 12), but here there are no men for them to be with or be counted with, and yet they still are אָדָּם.⁷

Let us for now suppose that this text did not exist, and that there were indeed no cases where אָדָּם is used of a woman or a group of women. Does this prove what Barr thinks it does, viz. that a woman is not an אָדָּם?⁸ For this argument to have any force, it would be necessary to show that אָדָּם, though never used for a woman or a group of women, is used for a man or a group of men. Otherwise the point has no relevance for the question of whether אָדָּם is 'essentially a male concept'.

Are there sentences that say such things of men? If there are, I do not know them.⁹ The only place I can find where אָדָּם is in apposition to a male personal name is Jos. 14:15, where Arba is called the greatest אָדָּם among the Anakim; even so, I do not know that that must mean that he was the greatest *male* rather than the greatest *person*. Perhaps it is not surprising that no one is called an אָדָּם. For, on the whole, if a narrative is focusing on a specific person, that person is going to be perceived as a man or a woman rather than as a human being pure and simple; אָדָּם is evidently a generic term, which applies either to the collectivity of humans or to an individual human as an example of the human race. It is not the term that is used normally when one is thinking of a specific individual.

Barr does not himself adduce any evidence that a male person or a group of males are called אָדָּם. Rather, he limits himself to saying that while a man

⁷ More tellingly still, Barr says of אָדָּם that 'in principle, it includes males and females alike'—which appears to concede the whole issue; if in principle אָדָּם includes males and females alike, might it not immediately be allowed that it is an ungendered term? It must be acknowledged, however, that this perhaps unguarded statement, made in a footnote secondary to the paper itself, and by way of rejoinder to de Moor's response, is not Barr's position in the remainder of his paper.

⁸ 'A woman is a human being, but this does not mean that she is an אָדָּם' (p. 11).

⁹ Adam is of course a male who is called אָדָּם, or rather, to be exact, אָדָּם. But all will acknowledge that this is a special case. See further below on Genesis 2–3.

can be called a ꠄdaꠄb, a woman cannot be called a ꠄdaAtb.¹⁰ This observation, however, falls short of being an argument that ꠄda is male, since even if a woman were to be called a ꠄdaAtb, it would not prove the point either way, for the daughter of an ꠄda might equally well be the daughter of a human or the daughter of a male.

I might as well ask whether a slave is ever called an ꠄda, or a child. It would certainly be interesting to know whether Hebrews regarded children and slaves as human beings, but I am afraid that the evidence of the word ꠄda is not going to supply the answer. I am equally uncertain that we can say, as James Barr does, that 'A woman is a human being [I presume he means, in the thought of Hebrew-speakers], but that does not mean that she is an ꠄda'. How would we know that women are human beings unless they are regarded as ꠄda?

To conclude the point: Barr has argued that ꠄda is 'essentially a male concept' because in no place does it refer to a woman or a group of women. I reply that in no place does it refer to a man or a group of men, either, and that therefore no inferences can be drawn about the maleness of the term. In any case, I am arguing that ꠄda is a non-gendered term, i.e. that it refers to humanity in general or to an individual human, without consideration of their sex. Whether it is used of individual males or females is beside the point.

2. Another approach to the question, Is ꠄda essentially a male term, would be to ask, Does ꠄda ever *exclude* women?¹¹ Apart from the case of Genesis 2–3, which I will consider shortly, there is just one text in which this is alleged, a text that is frequently quoted in the discussion, Eccl. 7:28:

ytaxm al hl a l kb hvaw ytaxm I am dj a ꠄday

One man (ꠄda) among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these
I have not found (RSV).

One man out of a thousand have I come upon, but a woman among them
all I have not found (NAB).

I have found one man in a thousand worth the name, but I have not
found one woman among them all (NEB).

BDB quote this verse as the one place outside Genesis 2–3 where it regards ꠄda as 'man' as opposed to 'woman'.¹² Barr notes that the *Dictionary of*

¹⁰ There is, however, at least one case where women, or a group of women, are called something like ꠄdaAtb, viz. Gen. 6:2, where 'the sons of God saw the daughters of ꠄdah'. Barr argues that ꠄdahAtwmb here does mean not "members of the human category", i.e. women, but "daughters", i.e. daughters of the genealogy, from Adam onwards, which has directly preceded' (p. 12). He translates 'the sons of God saw the daughters of man', understanding by ꠄda the collectivity of males from the creation to the Flood. To do so, however, is to beg the question, for the precise issue at stake is whether ꠄda *does* mean the collectivity of *males*. If any other reader of Genesis 6 has interpreted the text in that way, it would be interesting to know of it, but Barr cites no support for this understanding, which can only be called special pleading.

¹¹ I can admit in advance the possibility that ꠄda was thought to exclude women but that it so happens that there is no text where you prove that unequivocally. If that were so, I would say that we cannot *know* whether women were excluded from the term or not.

¹² Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 9a. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (ed. David J.A. Clines; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 126-27 (hereafter *DCH*), registers

Classical Hebrew regards this as an example of ḡda meaning ‘humans’, but his sole comment is that ‘I find this simply incredible’ (p. 12). Obviously, the matter deserves some further investigation.

Now, at first sight there appears to be a contrast here between ḡda and ḡva, and thus, one might think, between ‘man’ and ‘woman’. But it is evidently possible to contrast a ‘woman’ with a ‘person in general’, i.e. a ‘human’, in Hebrew as in English. We can say, ‘There were six people in the room, not one of them a woman’, without implying that women are not ‘people’. So too it is possible for Qoheleth to say that he found one person in a thousand who met his standard, and that not one ‘among all those’ (ḡl a l kb) whom he found was a woman. The NJPS reflects the same understanding of the text:

As for what I sought further but did not find, I found only one human being in a thousand, and the one I found among so many was never a woman (NJPS).

If there were 100,000 people in Qoheleth’s Jerusalem, that means to say, there were a hundred who met his standard; but among that hundred there was no woman. The hundred were all males, it is true, but in calling them ḡda he is calling them people, since he was looking among people.

Not only is this a possible interpretation of the Qoheleth text, it is, I argue, a better interpretation, or rather, an indispensable one. For Qoheleth must have been considering the whole population of Jerusalem when he was searching for worthy persons, since if he had considered only men, he would not have been surprised that among them were no women. If he meant that he found only one male among a thousand (whether a thousand of men and women or only of men), it would be a tautology to say that among those (men) there was no woman.

It may therefore be argued not only that ḡda in Qoheleth 7:28 *can* mean ‘human’ but that it *must* mean that rather than ‘man, male’.

I turn to Genesis 2–3. Barr’s only observation on these chapters is that the repeated phrase ḡtvav ḡdah is a clear case of ḡda meaning ‘man’, since the phrase obviously means ‘the man and his wife’ (pp. 11, 12). But things are so not simple. In this narrative, which begins at a time when there is only one human being, that person is always called just that—ḡdah, ‘the human’.¹³ Even when the woman is created, the first human goes on being called ‘the human’. And even when the narrative wants to refer to them both, and we might expect to hear of ‘the man and his woman/wife’ (ḡtvav vyah), we read no such

the passage under sense 2a ‘individual, whether a particular person or an individual human’, which may be presumed to mean that it does not regard ḡda as signifying ‘man, male’ in this context.

¹³ There are three exceptions to this rule in the Masoretic text, as is well known: at 2:30; 3:17, 21 ḡdal is vocalized ḡdal] ‘to Adam’. This vocalization is patently wrong, since it is inconceivable that the proper name should be used only in these three places when in every other place in Gen 2–3 (21 occurrences) it is not. The proper name Adam occurs for the first time only toward the end of Gen 4 (at 4:25, which contrasts with the use of ḡdah ‘the human’ in 4:1 in an otherwise identical sentence). The translational practice of the English versions differs: AV/KJV has Adam 11 times in these chapters, RSV Adam twice (at 3:17, 21 but not at 2:30), JPS three times (the three cases with the prefixed lamed), NIV four times (at 3:20 as well as those three), and NRSV, NAB and NJB not at all. Of course, by the argument of this paper, ‘the man’ is not better a translation than ‘Adam’, since ḡda is not a male term.

thing, but 'the human and his woman/wife' (וְהָאִשָּׁה אִתּוֹ אָדָּם), a strange expression (just twice, at 2:25; 3:8), which occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.

What shall we deduce from these facts? That the first woman is not a human being, that אָדָּם is a male term, which correctly designates the male person in the narrative? Let us admit that it is strictly illogical, if they are both human, for one of them to be called 'the human'. If there were two Canadians in a story, let us imagine, we could not bear it if the narrator insisted on referring to one of them as 'the Canadian'. But let us suppose that one of the Canadians is a patriarch and the other his son; we would not be too troubled if the narrative always called the older man 'the Canadian' and the younger one 'his son', and we would not suppose that the narrative was trying to tell us that that the son was *not* a Canadian.¹⁴ So too in our story, it is not special pleading to suggest that the woman is not called 'the human' because she is not human but because that term has been applied from the beginning to the man. The human in question, from the beginning of the narrative, *is* a man, a man with a woman/wife (eventually); but the text, for its own good reasons,¹⁵ does not want to call him a 'man' (אָדָּם) but 'the human' (אָדָּם), just as it does not want to call him 'Adam' (אָדָּם) but 'the human' (אָדָּם). The fact that the human *is* a man, and *is* Adam, does not mean that אָדָּם means a man, any more than it means Adam.

I conclude that there is no evidence that אָדָּם ever excludes women, or that it ever means men as distinct from women,

3. A further line of reasoning employed by Barr is that there is a strong semantic overlap between אָדָּם and אָדָּם, which does mean 'a male', and that therefore אָדָּם is likely to mean 'male'—essentially, if not in every case. There are several elements in this argument:

(a) First, Barr argues against the view that אָדָּם is a word for humanity—as distinct from God—by noting that אָדָּם is often used in that sense; the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* in fact cites 40 such occurrences.¹⁶ Likewise, אָדָּם is not the term for humanity—as distinct from beasts—for though the contrast of אָדָּם and חַיָּה is 'very common' and 'close to being regular' (p. 17),¹⁷

¹⁴ Another example might be a phrase like 'the Israelite and his wife' or 'the Moabite and his wife'. I admit that I cannot find a place where such an expression occurs, and will have to trust to the agreement of hearers that the expressions sound as normal in Hebrew as they are in English. If anyone needs more persuasion, consider a sentence like 'a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons' (Ruth 1:1) and imagine a variant '... the Bethlehemite and his wife and his two sons'. Would this imply that the wife and sons were *not* Bethlehemites? Or consider דָּרְיָא, הַדְּיָיִ: הַיְדֻיָּה וְתִשְׁבִּי' 'And his Jewish wife bore Jered' (1 Chron. 4:18). Does that imply that her husband Mered was not Jewish?

¹⁵ Who can say just what those reasons are? Perhaps names are like clothes: they both come into existence only at the point when the couple are about to be driven out of Eden, and both conceal as well as reveal.

¹⁶ Barr quotes Num. 23:19 in this connection; further cases cited in the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* are Gen. 32:29; Num. 2:19; Deut. 1:17; Josh. 10:14; Judg. 9:9, 13; 1 Sam. 2:25, 26; 26:15; Isa. 7:13; 31:8; 40:13; Hos. 11:9; Ps. 4:3; 62:10; Job 9:32; 32:13; Lam. 3:33; Sir. 10:4, 7; 45:1; 11QPsa 27:3; 11QT 64:12; 1QS 3:13; 4:15, 20, 26; 1QM 1:11; 11:14; 14:17 (Baillet); 1QH 3:22; fr. 10:8; 11:4 (Licht); 1Q36 25.2:5; 4QWiles 1:17; 4QShir^b 1:11; 4QShirShab^a 2:2, 3; 4QShirShabb 14.1:8; Kuntillet 'Ajrud add. inscr. 2 (DCH, I, p. 222b).

¹⁷ By my reckoning, there may be some 7 cases where אָדָּם means humans as distinct from beasts, but there are perhaps 52 cases where אָדָּם seems to be used in that sense. DCH, I, 125b, notes these

there are also cases where it is *vya* that is contrasted to *hmhb*.¹⁸ This shows, says Barr, that ‘there is no clear distinction’ between the meaning of *μδα* and *vya*.

I wonder if that is so. Just because a term that means ‘males’ (*vya*) is used for ‘humanity’, it does not follow that any term for humanity (such as *μδα*) must be a term for males. To argue that would be to fall prey to the fallacy of the undistributed middle.

(b) A second argument of Barr’s is that *μδα* and *vya* are not to be distinguished as collective versus individual. That distinction ‘does not work’, says Barr (p. 10), pointing to the use of phrases like *larcy vya* for ‘men of Israel’, which shows *vya* as a collective. Now, as far as I know, no one has ever argued that *μδα* is only ever a collective.¹⁹ Again taking my evidence from the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, I would reckon that in about half its usages *μδα* refers to an individual.²⁰ Barr might say that that strengthens his case. If *μδα* can mean an individual, as *vya* of course can, why should we suppose that there is any difference between them?

There is of course no reason in principle why we should suppose there is a difference. It is just that *vya* is self-evidently a gendered word, a ‘man’, a ‘male’ (which Barr does not dispute), while it is at least arguable that *μδα* is not gendered (which is what Barr is disputing). The fact that both words can signify an individual has nothing to do with the question. There is no reason why *vya* could not mean an individual of the male gender and *μδα* an individual of either gender.

In a moment I will look at the question whether *μδα* does indeed signify a human individual (without reference to gender), but first I will take up Barr’s next argument against distinguishing *μδα* from *vya*.

(c) A third argument is that *μδα* and *vya* are ‘interchangeable and reversible’ (p. 18) in poetic parallelism. I presume Barr does not mean that they always are, but that they can be. And I of course readily agree that there are some texts in which the two terms are used in what we call, loosely, synonymous parallelism. Barr cites seven such cases (Num. 23:19; Job 34:11; 38:26; Isa. 2:9, 11, 17; 5:15), but we should not get the impression that there are many more. I identified 19 other cases where *μδα* and *vya* are used in the same verse in some kind of parallelism (Isa 31:8; 44:13; Jer 2:6; 10:23; 31:30; Psa 22:7; 39:12; 49:3; 62:10; 140:2; Job 11:12; 32:21; 37:7; Prov 6:12; 12:14; 19:22; 20:26; 24:30;

cases of the collocation of *μδα* and *hmhb*: Gen. 6:7; 7:23; Exod. 8:13, 14; 9:9, 10, 19, 22, 25; 12:12; 13:2, 15; Lev. 27:28; Num. 3:13; 8:17; 18:15; 31:11, 26, 47; Jer. 7:20; 21:6; 27:5; 31:27; 32:43; 33:10, 10, 12; 36:29; 50:3; 51:62; Ezek. 14:13, 17, 19, 21; 25:13; 29:8, 11; 32:13; 36:11; Jon. 3:7, 8; 4:11; Zeph. 1:3; Hag. 1:11; Zech. 2:8; 8:10; Ps. 36:7; 135:8; Eccl. 3:19. We could add Ps. 49:13, 21; Josh. 11:14. BDB mentions 41 examples in the Hebrew Bible alone, but it is including other words for ‘beast’ beside *hmhb* in its reckoning. Of these references, Barr notes Exod. 9:25; 12:12.

¹⁸ The cases are: Exod. 11:7; 19:13; 34:3; Isa. 66:3; Ps. 22:7; 147:10; Sir. 13:18 (*DCH*, I, p. 222b). Barr quotes the first two of these.

¹⁹ The *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* of Koehler and Baumgartner, p. 14a, admittedly, claims that the use of *μδα* for ‘individual’ is ‘late and sporadic’ and that ‘in most cases the collective interpretation is possible’.

²⁰ No statistics are given in *DCH*, but I observe that sense 1 ‘humanity’ occupies 4 columns of text, while sense 2 ‘individual’ occupies over 3.5 columns. In BDB the sense ‘individual’ has only a third of the space of the sense ‘mankind’, but BDB is not professing to make an exhaustive listing of the various senses, and so no inference about the frequency of either of the senses can be drawn from the space allocated.

Eccl 9:15).²¹ This is not so very many when we consider that µda occurs some 401 times in the poetic books and vya some 574.²² I ignored the cases when it is µda ynb or µda ʿb that is parallel to vya,²³ since the ynb of humanity are likely to be male,²⁴ and a µda ʿb is bound to be male, even if µda itself is non-gendered.²⁵

The question is of course what the significance of parallelistic usage is. Barr is the first to admit that parallelism of terms does not show synonymy (and he quotes the parallel of 'silver' and 'gold', p. 18), and yet he argues that in Job 34:11,

He will render to an µda a deed,
and according to the way of an vya he will cause it to light upon him,

vya cannot be 'intended to convey a different concept of humanity' from µda (p. 18). Well, 'a different concept of humanity' is putting it rather strongly. If we believe that µda means an individual, without regard to gender, and vya means a male individual, that is hardly a matter of 'a different concept of humanity'. It is the most natural thing in the world, especially in a man's world like ancient Israel, to parallel a human being and a man—but that does not mean to say that the terms µda and vya, 'human being' and 'man' as I would argue, are coterminous.

Of course, if µda means humans in general, it is very easy to argue that in many places it *means* males, and all the easier in places where it is paralleled to males. But such a conclusion does not follow; to think so would be to ignore the fundamental linguistic distinction between connotation and denotation (reference). Just because in one context or another µda refers to males does not mean that such is the meaning of the word, any more than just because in some contexts 'the French' means 'French footballers' that is the meaning of the term 'French'.

Furthermore, there are many cases in the Hebrew Bible where the sense is subtly preferable if we take µda as non-gendered humanity (collective) or a non-gendered person (individual), as I am arguing is the correct sense of the term. I am thinking especially of texts like these:

(a) a land where no vya passed through,
where no µda dwelt (Jer. 2:6).

The two terms are in 'synonymous parallelism' but they do not mean the same thing, and the difference between them is meaningful. In a patriarchal world,

²¹ Ezek 23:42 and Zech 13:5 might be considered for this list, but I thought they were different enough to be excluded.

²² I derived the data from Accordance Version 4.1, defining the poetic books as Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Qoheleth, Lamentations and Isaiah to Malachi excluding Haggai, and searching for the noun vya and for the noun µda in senses 1 and 4 (both meaning 'human').

²³ I noted as examples Isa. 52:14; Jer. 32:19; 49:18, 33; 50:40; 51:43; Ezek. 8:12; Mic. 5:6; Ps. 80:18; Job 35:8; Prov. 8:4.

²⁴ I say, likely to be, since µynb can be 'sons and daughters' (see, for example, Exod. 25:39).

²⁵ This against Barr, who thinks it significant that in Num. 23:19 and Prov. 8:4, for example, vya is paralleled by µda ʿb. It is surely an error to use the evidence of the phrase µda ʿb for the question of the gender of those included in µda, since the ʿb makes the µda ʿb masculine whether or not µda is gendered.

humans (people of both sexes) dwell, or do not dwell, but it is men who travel—as messengers, traders, soldiers and the like, the women being anchored to their domestic tasks.

- (b) And I arose in the night, I and some few µymla with me; neither told I any µda what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem (Neh. 2:12).

This is not poetry, and it is not parallelistic, but the differentiation between the two terms is appropriate. On his night ride round Jerusalem Nehemiah had men with him (no women), but he told no one (man or woman) of his plans.

- (c) When an vya or an hva shall commit any sin such as a human (µda) commits ... (Num. 5:6).

A woman will not be committing a sin such as a man commits, nor a man such as a woman commits, but either can commit a sin such as a human commits.

- (d) And the vya who kills any µda shall surely be put to death (Lev. 24:17).

Only males (vya) are likely to be killing (on the evidence of this text), but they may kill men or women (µda).

I conclude that there is no evidence, and especially not from poetic parallelism, that µda and vya are 'interchangeable and reversible'. There are many occasions in a patriarchal culture on which women are not present or else not noticed, occasions therefore when the humans in question are (or appear to be) all males. But that is not a statement about linguistics, and not even a claim on the part of the males that women are not humans.

3. Conclusions

Finally, we need to reconsider the terms in which Barr has set up the debate. His concern has been to show that µda is 'essentially a male concept' (p. 12), but he has not spelled out what being 'essentially a male concept' might mean. We can easily think of words that are *specifically* male, such as 'father' or 'king', but we would not say of such words that they are *essentially* male, which might suggest that they could include women under certain circumstances. So this is not the kind of word that Barr is thinking of. We can also think of words that *usually* refer to men, such as pilot or wrestler or lumberjack. Even these cannot be said to be *essentially* male; rather, they usually *denote* males. The moment we stop to think about it, we know that such terms are not *essentially* male, since there is no reason why a woman cannot be a pilot or wrestler or lumberjack, and we would not need a different word for a woman who was one of these. But perhaps this is the kind of word that Barr has in mind when he says that µda is essentially male but can include women.

If we were to accept such a statement, we would have to be very clear what we meant by it. We would not mean that µda is itself male, any more than we would mean that 'pilot' is male; we would only mean that in the world we are talking about, most pilots are male, that the word refers mostly to males (in a not so distant future world, that might well not be the case). A

female pilot is a pilot in every way that a male pilot is. In other words, the term 'pilot' is not gendered, whereas the term 'father' is. Likewise, in the world of the Bible, it may well be that most individuals in view when the term אדם was used were male, but that would not mean that the term was gendered, and we would have to admit that 'essentially male' was not a very good way of describing a word that, while it most commonly refers to males, does not itself imply a male.

Barr's language is very informal, as when he writes that 'אדם is essentially a male concept—which however can include women when they are with men, and who then belong to אדם also' (p. 12). If women can be included in אדם, if they can 'belong' to אדם, it is not easy to see how the 'essence' can remain male. Elsewhere he writes: 'אדם is an essentially male term, which may however include women if they are counted as with men in the context. Women are included of course, when appropriate, but are included as an additional category of humanity' (pp. 18-19). This is even more difficult to decipher. If women are one category of humanity and men are another, that does not seem very problematic (any more than left-handed and right-handed people may be called two categories of humans); but if there are two categories of humans, one male and one female, then there is no call to say that the term is 'essentially male'—any more than there would be to say it is 'essentially female', or 'essentially right-handed'.

The conclusion to which I am drawn is that the traditional view that אדם means 'humanity, without distinction of gender' is to be upheld. Barr's paper does not reflect the fact that this is the *opinio communis* among Hebraists, judging from the lexica, at least. BDB, for example, stated the meanings of אדם as 'a man (= Ger. *Mensch*) = human being', and as 'man, mankind', meaning humanity in general.²⁶ It did regard Eccl. 7:28 and nine occurrences in Genesis 2–3 (2:22, 22, 23, 25; 3:8, 12, 17, 20, 21)²⁷ as exceptional, meaning *man* as opposed to *woman*; but these were the only exceptions it noted to the general rule. Luis Alonso Schökel's dictionary also allows occasional uses of אדם as 'male', quoting the two occurrences of וְאָדָם אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶדְמָה 'the human and his wife' (Gen. 2:25; 3:8), Gen. 3:12 ('the אדם said, "The הָאָדָם ..."') and Eccl. 7:28; but these are its only examples.²⁸ The lexicon of Meyer and Donner, which always translates אדם as 'Mensch, Menschheit', likewise allows only Eccl. 7:28 in the sense of 'man as opposed to woman'; they translate Gen. 2:25 and 3:12 as 'the human and his wife' (*der Mensch und seine Frau*).²⁹ Ludwig Koehler, for his part, acknowledged no meaning other than 'human, humanity', and quoted no text where he thought it meant 'male(s)'³⁰; he rendered אדם only as 'Menschen, Leute' (for the collective use) and 'Mensch' (for the individual use). The same

²⁶ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 9.

²⁷ But not, strangely, 3:9, 22, 24.

²⁸ Luis Alonso Schökel (with Victor Morla and Vicente Collado), *Diccionario bíblico hebreo-español* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1994), p. 32.

²⁹ Rudolf Meyer and Herbert Donner, *Wilhelm Gesenius: Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 18th edn, 1987), p. 15.

³⁰ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1958), p. 12. His English glosses were of course 'man, mankind', since users of English had not then been sensitized to the gender implications of the terms. The German *Mensch* is not however ambiguous.

is true of the third edition of the lexicon.³¹ Likewise Zorell's lexicon always uses the terms 'homo, homines', never 'vir', and does not note any passage where it refers to males.³²

For myself, as I have argued above, I deny that in any place אָדָּם means 'a man' in the sense of a male, and affirm that the term is ungendered.

³¹ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 3rd edition, 1967), I, p. 14.

³² Franciscus Zorell, S.J., *Lexicon Hebraicum Veteris Testamenti* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1984 [original edn, 1946–54]), pp. 13-14.