Chapter IV – Theological Notions

This chapter contains two sections

Section one: God’s mercy as the catalytic code

Section two: Narrations on the non-corporal beings
# Chapter IV  Section 1. God’s Mercy as the Catalytic Code

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Chapter IV  Section 1

God’s Mercy as the Catalytic Code

Introduction

One of the common factors that make the early Syriac fathers birds of the same feather is their way of communicating the divine mysteries. They never dared to define God in human terms; hence one may not find in them systematic, dogmatic and theological treatises on God, but, their common practice was the employment of cognisable and rich symbols, images and types in order to represent what they wanted to convey. Sebastian Brock explains the rationale behind this practice: “The types and symbols are a means of expressing relationships and connections, of instilling meaning into every thing”. 991 Mar Jacob of Sarug himself explains his technique of disclosing the divine mysteries: “Through the revealed things the concealed things too are signified and through the visible things the hidden things too are proclaimed”. 992 The main reason behind the refraining of the Syriac fathers from defining the divine mysteries is their firm conviction of their intellects’ limitations and of the incomprehensibility and mysteriousness of the subject matter. Analysing Mar Ephrem’s such approaches Sebastian Brock discloses the common mind of the early Syriac fathers in this regard: “They (definitions) can be dangerous because, by providing ‘boundaries’, they are likely to have a deadening and fossilizing effect on people’s conception of the subject of enquiry, which is, after all, none other than the human experience of God. Dogmatic ‘definitions’ can moreover, ........ be actually blasphemous when these definitions touch upon some aspect of God’s Being: for, by trying to ‘define’ God one is in effect attempting to contain the uncontainable, to limit the

991 Brock, Hymns on Paradise, 42.
992 Kollamparampil, Jacob of Sarug’s Homily on the Nativity, 98.
limitless”⁹⁹³

Mar Jacob of Sarug is an enthusiastic champion of this way of describing God and the divine mysteries. Hence he never dared to look straight into those affairs of God, but always sought divine assistance for approaching them. This attitude of the poet is evident throughout the Four Mimre ‘On Creation’. He declares the inadequacy of his capacities and the restrictions of his language to express the limitless God and hence he starts with invocations for the celestial support:

“Oh! Lord, my Lord, your mimro is greater than that of the orators, permit me, to speak on you: how you transcend the eloquence. Henceforth the words of all orators will fall short and there is no word that reaches you, except yours. By your word, your discourse shall be spoken through me, for, I do not have any word; you may speak for yourself. My Lord, I know that not even a mouth of flame can subdue your mimro; speak through me, for, it is raised above all” (FMC I 1-8).

For the poet any attempt to investigate into the affairs of God will be blasphemous and he ridicules such attempts:

“And a debate (b’oto) is useless, because, I will introduce your genealogy. Yes, my son, what compelled (me) is not to investigate (‘aqeb), but to learn only (FMC II 114-115).

For the Syriac poets, poeticising was a means of communicating theological reflections. And through their poems they were not praising the beauty of material objects, but considering it as reflections of God’s perfection they were praising their Creator. Thus for them, poetry, theology etc. were means of effective prayer. In such a context Sebastian Brock quotes Evagrius: “If you are a theologian, you will pray in truth; if you pray in truth, you will be a theologian”.⁹⁹⁴

Any attempt to compare the greatness of God’s kindness with any earthly event or thing

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⁹⁹³ Brock, Luminous Eye, 23.  
⁹⁹⁴ Ibid.
will be futile and it will definitely be an attempt to limit the divine characteristics of God. Since St. John the apostle found no other comparisons he synonymises God with His love itself: “God is love”.\(^{995}\) This love is intrinsic in God and therefore indivisible from Him. Mar Jacob is not second to the apostle in picturizing God on the canvas of mercy and love. Mar Jacob does not take particular interest in differentiating between the love and mercy of God, instead, he sees the one as the extension of the other. This we can infer from his verse:

“Here, love (hubo) had been gushing forth (spa’) from the grace (taybuto) ....” (FMC III 691).

Here, the poet considers love as the flow from the fountain of mercy. There is no doubt that the poet had imbibed to his maximum the honey of love which gushes forth (FMC III 759) from the kind-heart of God. Out of his personal experience, the name through which Mar Jacob very often calls God is ‘the merciful one’ (FMC III 771) or ‘the benevolent one’ (FMC IV 13). Wherever he wants to invoke God’s name he uses no names other than that which reveals God’s mercy.\(^{996}\) The immeasurability of God’s mercy urges the poet to describe it as a sea and hence he invokes, “I thirst for mercy and without it I cannot exist. Sea of Mercy, pour out on me the streams of your kindness”.\(^{997}\)

A deep delve into the Four Mimre ‘On Creation’ and an exploration on Mar Jacob, as he had expressed himself in them, will help the scholar to pick up the precious pearls of his profound views on God, especially of His mercy. For Mar Jacob, the notion of God’s mercy is an intoxicant. He enjoys thrill in being garrulous on the topic and he himself approves that no container can hold the flow of his narration on the issue as well as the richness of God’s mercy (FMC III 157- 162). He cannot but view God as the fullness of mercy and this vision of Mar

\(^{995}\) I Jn. 4/16.

\(^{996}\) E.g. Rahmono = merciful one etc.

\(^{997}\) Johnson, “The Sinful Woman”. Sobernost, 57
Jacob makes him say that the Mercy of God is a pushing urge within God.  

Mar Jacob draws his understanding on God’s mercy from the divine Scriptures. Thus he enlists in his mimre the major happenings in history and main interventions of God where He explicitly outpoured His mercy – certainly he enlists only those which are in connection with the creation and redemption events. Mar Jacob views every event in the life of man through the eyes of God’s mercy and thus he narrates how those events had become channels of God’s mercy and from those events the poet sketches the characteristics of the mercy of God.

At the beginning of this session we discuss the poet’s general perspectives on God where we will see his portrayal on God which will be followed by the general notions of Mar Jacob on the concept of the mercy of God which includes the Scriptural background, the image of God as the reason for the compassionate acts of God etc. Then we go to the etymological analysis which will be followed by an enumeration on the characteristics of God’s mercy as we see them in the mimre. After that we try to go through the positive outlook of the poet where we will find that whatever happens in the world are emanations of God’s mercy. Before the conclusion we have a comparative study between the justice and the mercy of God as it is done by Mar Jacob in the mimre.

IV. 1. A. The Poet’s perceptive on God

The Four Mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ is full of theology. But Mar Jacob has to say in his mimre more about the mercy of God than any of His other attributes. But the mimre itself spills over with a lot of attributes on God. Since we cannot overlook them, we just mention some of them and go to the details of the descriptions of the poet on mercy of God.

998 This aspect of God’s Mercy is discussed below in this section.
IV. 1. A. 1. Characteristics of God

Not all the characteristics of God are narrated in the mimre and the prime motive of the poet behind the creation of the mimre was also not the same. Yet, God is presented in the mimre as a working God. Mar Jacob is certainly inspired by the revelation of Christ on God: “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” The repeated expressions of the poet on the activities of God such as the inclination of God towards the dust (E.g. FMC I 31), descend of God for the creation (E.g. FMC I 43), fashioning of the image (E.g. FMC II 175), decoration and clothing of the bride and groom (E.g. FMC IV 155 ff.), allotment of the place and possessions to the couples (E.g. FMC IV 164 ff.), making of the garments for covering the nakedness (E.g. FMC I 231), extension of God’s hands several times for various purposes (E.g. FMC I 75 ff.), search of God for the lost one (E.g. FMC I 90), efforts for restoration of the image (E.g. I 94), the walking of God in the Garden (E.g. FMC III 695), the questioning against the culprits (E.g. FMC III 707 ff), the making of judgements and curses (E.g. III 811 ff.), appointment of the cherub (Eg. FMC III 1049), casting the culprits out from the blessed place (E.g. FMC I 227), application of God’s mercy at all necessary occasions (E.g. FMC IV 203 ff.), deliverance of the Son of God to the cross (E. g. FMC I 33), creation of the universe (E. g. FMC I 255), making of the tablets (E. g. FMC I 135), emancipation of Hebrews from Egypt (E. g. FMC I 173), etc. show how he presents God as a hardworking God.

Another basic concept on God that we see in the mimre is that He is nonmaterial and self-existant God. This we see from this verse of the poet,

“The entirely self existent Being (ityo dalgmar) was not generated (on the principle) of change” (FMC III 696).

The poet acknowledges God as the ‘Alfa and Omega’ (suryo ugulomo):

“From the Torah, the treasure of the books and of revelations,

999 Jn. 5/17.
one comprehends that you are the beginning and you are the end” (FMC I 23-24).

For the poet God is omniscient (yoda’ kul) (FMC III 716, 709, 727 etc.) and omnipotent (saliŋ kul):

“That all-knowing one (yoda’ kul) had joined them and drove them ahead ...” (FMC IV 327).

The poet’s exclamations like, “Who is able ...... who is capable ...... who is competent enough ..... who is this .... etc. (FMC IV 45-52) show how he is amazed at the omnipotence of God:

“Glorious is this image which proclaims the wonder of its Creator, that is, how wise, capable and powerful He is!” (FMC IV 53-54).

God is presented in the mimre as the covenant maker (‘obudo dqyomo). Usually we speak of God’s covenants with Noah,1000 Moses1001 etc. But here, Mar Jacob speaks of another covenant which is not stated in the Scripture in the strict sense of a covenant; it is a finding of the poet and this covenant, due to its greatest benefit, is the best one among the other ones:

“He entered into a covenant with the dust when He fashioned him that even if he falls or become corrupted, He will set him in order” (FMC I 189-190).

Very often the poet entitles God as the Just one (kino / zadigo) (FMC II 85, 127, III 1, 36, 509, 844, IV 61 etc.) and identifies the concept of justice with Him (FMC III 507, 553, 629, 879 etc.). According to the poet, The chief purpose of making man in His image, as it is said in the mimre by the poet, is God’s Will to be generically (gensonoit) united with man (FMC I 73-74 and IV 211-212). He is the Fashioner of the image (gobulo d’almo)1002 and the designer of the universe (mtaqnono d’olmo). Thus the poet very often calls God, the ‘Creator’ (‘obudo / boruyo) (FMC I 34, 50, 69, 89, 103, 184, 186, 199, 251, 253, 282, II 120, 122, 133, 134, 168, 281, 283, 287, 306, III 31, 169, 173, 783, 981, 997, 1013, IV 3, 19, 28, 29, 36, 53, 113, 205, 211, 213, 219, 231,232 etc.).

1000 Cf. Gen. 9/1ff.
1002 Fashioning the image of man is discussed in detail in the segment, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 249 ff.
Mar Jacob highlights the conspicuous philanthropic (yohubuto) characteristic of God, who gives everything to man and who is willing even to take on self-torturing for the same, even to the extent of delivering His own only begotten Son on the cross. Usually Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is conceived as the one who undertakes the task of redeeming (praq) man from the sin through His incarnation and crucifixion. But Mar Jacob uses his gift of the tongue to narrate the role of God the Father in the activities of saving humanity, in particular, the first parents (FMC I 282, IV 201, 211, 214, 231-232 etc.). God is pictured in the mimre not only as a giver of life but as a merciful reviver (mqimono) of the lost life as well (FMC IV 202, 210-211, 221, 232, 234). So the poet repeats the scripture,

“It is the Lord who sends down to Sheol and raises up” (FMC III 233).1003

One of the striking revelations of Jesus Christ on His own characteristic was that He is the good shepherd who looks after the sheep.1004 But Mar Jacob presents God the Father also a pastor (ro‘yo) who went after the lost sheep, Adam and sought him:

“The pastor (ro‘yo) went after the sheep that willed (insolently) and perished” (FMC III 703, 727, 729, 759-760, 766, IV 195 ff.).

God is presented in the mimre as the one who is willing to repeat His own actions. Mar Jacob bases his thought on the prophesy of Isaiah; “The Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left” (FMC I 75).1005 So the poet assertively says,

“And because of this, “the Lord will extend His hand again” in order to gain Adam; it was told in the prophecy” (FMC I 79-80).

Based on the Holy Scripture, God’s readiness to compensate in order to gain Adam and Eve from the total ruin has been beautifully drawn in the mimre:

“If He had not willed to make restitution for them,

1003 Cf. I Sam. 2/6.
1005 Is.11/11.
He would have expelled them naked from the Paradise” (FMC III 1029-1030, 1031-1032, 1034 etc.).

The poet is not at all hesitant to present God as one who behaves at the lowest and common levels of human activities. A lovely depiction on God as a groom’s man for Adam and Eve, the bride and the bridegroom - who are only one among His creatures - can be seen in the mimre. With choicest pigments He decorates bride and the bridegroom, prepares the bedchamber and places them (FMC IV 157 ff.). God is mother as well as father. Very affectionately the poet calls God, the Father (abo) (FMC I 29). Even though the poet doesn’t speak directly on the motherliness of God, here and there in the mimre, we find traces of feminine features of God.1006 God as the source (mabu ‘o) of life, virtues, blessings etc. are not virgin thoughts during Jacob’s time. But when the poet says,

“Since all the courses of all creatures are with Him” (FMC I 265), it connotes to the dependence of the whole universe on God for its origin.

God is the supreme Judge (dayono rabo), the supreme law maker (FMC III 197); thus He is the maker and pronouncer of the verdict (FMC III 812 ff. 889 ff. 921 ff., 1019, 1037 etc.) as well as its implementer (FMC III 949 ff. 1015, 1047 ff.). But the exceptional characteristic of this supreme Judge is His empathy towards the culprit who shares the Judge’s own image (FMC III 897 ff. I 225-226, III 920, 922, 923, 983 etc.).1007 Hence, the poet himself calls God ‘The benevolent Judge’ (FMC III 920).1008 Since the main topic of discussion in this section is the mercy of God, I do not attempt to go into all the details of Mar Jacob’s portrayals on God.

IV. 1. A. 2. Anthropomorphism in the mimre

Elsewhere in the mimre we see that God, the Father is presented in human pattern. But

1006 See below in this section, ‘God – the merciful mother’.
1007 See the segment, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 262 ff.
1008 See below in this section – ‘God’s righteousness and mercy’.
this concept of the poet on God shall never be misunderstood as an antitheism and apostasy, but subduing himself totally before the supreme divinity and following the manner of the presentation of God in the Holy Scripture, he also was trying his best to draw in the mimre the picture of God which should be intelligible to the common man. This is one of the common characteristics of the Fathers of the Church also. Based on Scriptural passages Sebastian Brock affirms that, because of the limitations of the human intellect to comprehend the eternal God, it is God who reveals Himself to man in human terminology and according to him this incarnation of God into human language is perhaps most fully described by St. Ephrem, who also narrates on the limbs of God such as His ears, eyes, His emotions etc. as human beings possess. But Mar Jacob never comes behind to Mar Ephrem in this aspect. Following the trend of the Holy Scripture, especially of the Old Testament, Mar Jacob ascribes various human possessions, qualities and behaviours to God the Father, such as He possesses hands, mind etc., He talks, works, walks, makes queries, shouts etc, particularly in verses from 690 to 800 in the third mimre. Mar Jacob considers that God possesses a mind:

“Nothing is placed in the mind (re’ono) of God which was not there from the beginning” (FMC I 48).

Attributing human limbs to God the poet describes God’s creation of man as if with His hands (ido) (FMC II 175). According to the poet, like an artisan does, God creates man (FMC II 175, IV 19 ff. 149-153). In the manner of a responsible parent God feeds Adam and Eve (FMC III 203), and akin to a loving father, God arranges the marriage of His children, Adam and Eve and shares His wealth with them (FMC IV 160-166). Resembling a beautician He adorns the bride and groom (FMC IV 157, 159), and similar to a mother who cares for her little baby, God clothes His kids (FMC IV 163, 209). God talks and interrogates with Adam, Eve and Satan (FMC III 707 ff.):

1009 Cf. Brock, Hymns on Paradise, 45.
1010 See below in this section, ‘God, the merciful mother’.
“He took the face (role) of an interrogator (mزالونو) and approached him” (FMC III 730).

The poet even goes up to attributing God certain amount of shrewdness as some crafty men possess. Narrating the verdict scene the poet mentions,

“He (God) offered again another question as if He doesn’t know” (FMC III 772).

While the interrogations were proceeding on the crime Eve had done in the garden, as if in a judicial court where questions are asked against the culprit, the poet states that the Judge, whispers (رتام) towards her interrogatively (FMC III 803). This expression of the poet is deliberate in order to describe God in human manner. In one place what the poet says about God is that He is a spectator and referee of a contest who waits to see what result would happen (FMC III 553). And while discussing the dissolution of the universe at the end of the ages the poet even dares to compare God with a little child who fancifully breaks up his toy:

“In the manner of a little man (נוֹזִו z’uro) He loosens the whole world” (FMC IV 329).

Influenced by the Old Testament concept on God, some of the negative facets of men were also attributed to God such as He shouts (ז’אק) (FMC III 811), gets angry (רגד) (FMC III 1019, 1023) etc.

III. 3. A. 2. i. The poet clarifies the paradox

Mar Jacob himself clarifies what he means when he attributes human qualities to God by asking questions about the corporality of God the Father. He asks questions on this and answers them in the mimre:

“They heard the voice of the Lord walking (חלאק) in the garden.
Here, love had been gushing forth from the grace
in order to make them hear corporally the voice of His foot steps.
By which feet He walked indeed in the garden:
(how) He who was not composed had composed the voice for the
sense of hearing (ears)?
How did He walk (חלאק) in human steps?”
The entirely self existent Being was not generated (on the principle) of change. 
He caught the way and started approaching as if from afar, so that, Adam should hear and be prepared himself for penitence. 
The voice rattled (qarqes) towards their ears as if one goes on foot” (FMC III 690-699)

In the same manner we can understand that the narrations of the poet on God’s activities in anthropomorphic manner are not eyewitness descriptions, but rather they are poetical expressions in order to make it intelligible to the common man. God was not making man with His fleshy and bony hands. God willed to fashion man and it is the Will of the Father that created man; each part of the body according to its shape and place – from top to bottom or vice versa. Thus, actually God was not doing something as man does corporeally, but God did everything Godly. Since man’s capacity cannot comprehend the divine things as it is, God’s activities are seen, felt and explained in human terms. The poet was also following the same method and hence he considered God as a potter, an artisan, a groom’s man etc.

IV. 1. B. Basic notions on God’s mercy

Since Mar Jacob exposes his theory on the Mercy of God purely on the Scriptural basis, it is essential to have a journey through the Scripture in order to see how much he had employed those Scriptural notions in his mimre. Then, it is to be understood how Mar Jacob presents his theory that the image of God in man is the prime reason for all the merciful acts of God.

IV. 1. B. 1. Scriptural notions on God’s mercy

Elsewhere in the Holy Scripture as well as in other sacred writings, God is, in a way, pictured as an angry God, a strict ruler who is keen to catch the wrong doers in order to punish them and the one who sets His fire of wrath on such people. The following citations, “For the
wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”\textsuperscript{1011} “I will pour out My wrath on them like water”\textsuperscript{1012} “For, the Lord, Your God is a consuming fire”\textsuperscript{1013} “For, a fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell; It shall consume the earth with her increase and set on fire the foundations of the mountains”\textsuperscript{1014} “For, the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God”\textsuperscript{1015} etc. are only some of such portrayals of God in the Holy Scripture. God is also depicted in the Scriptures as rigorous and impartial in His judgements: “God is righteous in all his ways”\textsuperscript{1016} “Just and true are Your ways O! King of the saints”\textsuperscript{1017} etc. are only a few samples. For the poet, these are incomprehensive compliments attributed to God by men.

But Mar Jacob likes to see God’s mercifulness above His justice and over His other divine natures.\textsuperscript{1018} Besides other Biblical passages which reveal God’s mercy, Mar Jacob is mesmerized by the words of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who revealed the true nature of the Triune God: “For, God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour”\textsuperscript{1019} Mar Jacob is crazy, passionate, fanatical and willing to go to any extreme to express God’s kind-heartedness. His mind is filled only with one picture of God, the loving and compassionate one; he could see only one vision of God; His mercifulness, and he has only one topic to poeticize, His graciousness. Consciously or unconsciously, explicitly or veiled he touches this benevolence of God all over the places in all mimre. There are clear evidences to show how much he is lovesick with the mercifulness of God while he was making his mimre. Although it was not there in the original scheme of the third mimre to speak about the grace of

\textsuperscript{1011} Rom. 1/18. \\
\textsuperscript{1012} Hos. 5/10. \\
\textsuperscript{1013} Deut. 4/24, also Heb.12/29. \\
\textsuperscript{1014} Deut 32/22. \\
\textsuperscript{1015} Ex. 34/14, also Deut. 4/24 \\
\textsuperscript{1016} Ps. 145/17. \\
\textsuperscript{1017} Rev.15/3. \\
\textsuperscript{1018} See below in this section – ‘God’s righteousness and mercy’. \\
\textsuperscript{1019} Jn. 3/17.
God, while the poet was narrating the fall of Adam, naturally he was urged to speak of God’s mercy. He is not contented in saying few words here and there about the mercy of God. So he says,

“The bosom (’ubo) of the discourse, which I set to speak, is not expanded enough to contain the riches which Adam gathered together from the Grace (taybuto)” (FMC III 161-162).

It is sure that a lot of Scriptural passages, both from the Old Testament and from the New, had influenced Mar Jacob for formulating his treatise on the mercy of God: “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”, 1020 “Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful”, 1021 “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness”, 1022 “Surely you know that God is kind, because He is trying to lead you to repent”, 1023 “For, the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting”, 1024 “But go and learn what this means; ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice’. For, I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance”, 1025 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort”, 1026 “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us”, 1027 “For, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more”, 1028 “The Lord is very compassionate and merciful” 1029 etc. are only a few of them. The concept of Mar Jacob on the mercy of God is the coagulated sum total of the essence of all these Scriptural passages.

1020 Ex. 33/19.  
1021 Ps.116/5.  
1022 Lam.3/22-23.  
1023 Rom. 2/4.  
1024 Ps.100/5.  
1025 Matt. 9/13.  
1026 2 Cor. 1/3.  
1027 Eph. 2/4.  
1028 Heb. 8/12.  
1029 James 5/11.
Alongside of God’s powerful deeds, what is the most beneficial and essential for human beings, according to the poet, is God’s mercy towards them. The poet wishes to relate the whole actions of God, beginning from the first instance of creation until the consummation of the whole world at the end of the times, with God’s mercifulness alone.

In God-man relationship, whatever God performs is solely out of His love and compassion towards human being and nothing could be claimed as an end-result that came out of the merit of man. The poet keeps in mind the Scriptural verses when he speaks of man’s discredit and God’s greatness, “What is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You visit him”\(^ {1030}\) and “What is man that You should magnify him, that You set your heart on him”,\(^ {1031}\) “His choice is based on His grace, not on what they have done. For, if God’s choice were based on what people do, then, His grace would not be real grace”.\(^ {1032}\)

Mary Hansbury finds in Mar Jacob’s understanding of love a reciprocal medium between God and man: “As wonderful as this is, Jacob seems to say that love is even better (than faith). Love seems to be the only adequate response to God’s love as seen in the divine economy. And this love brought God for the incarnation. It’s as if love opens the door to doctrine which leads to God”.\(^ {1033}\) But in the Four Mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ we do not find this reciprocal characteristic of love, instead more insistence is given to the unidirectional outpouring of God’s mercy from Him towards man (\textit{FMC} IV 201 ff). Also, Hansbury finds Mar Jacob’s concept of love as his exegetical principle based on Soteriology: “Jacob emphasises love in relation to scripture ....... But there is in Jacob’s \textit{Letters} and \textit{mimre} an insistence on the power of love as an exegetical principle. It doesn’t seem to be simply formulaic or even only an aspect of cognition. Rather it is intrinsic to his Soteriology which

\(^{1030}\text{Ps. 8/4.}\)
\(^{1031}\text{Job. 7/17.}\)
\(^{1032}\text{Rom. 11/6.}\)
\(^{1033}\text{Hansbury, “Love as an exegetical principle in Jacob of Sarug” \textit{Harp}, XXVII, 357.}\)
underlies his understanding of Scripture”. And for this purpose Hansbury quotes from Jacob’s mimre, ‘On Elisha and on the King of Moab’, “Draw near to Scripture, lovingly, and see its beauty, for without Love (huba) it does not allow you to see its face. If you read without love (huba) you do not benefit, for love (huba) is the gate through which a man enters into understanding”. This idea of the poet is not visible in the Four Mimre ‘On Creation’; instead, Mar Jacob emphatically states that all what Adam received from God were free gifts and man is unable to return anything to God:

“When did Adam render his riches to his Lord, or, again, when was he capable of rendering his beauties? Also, what he offered Him when He gave him shape out of nothing, or, what he gave Him, so much so He lifted up His Son (on the cross) for him? .......

but, all these are without expense (magon) and (only) on account of the mercy (rahme) which is incomprehensible (lo metdarken)” (FMC IV 217-222).

IV. 1. B. 2. Image of God – the reason for the compassion

For the poet, the transfusion of the image (śalmo) of God into the figure of Adam is the main reason for a certain amount of thrust in God to express His love (rahme) towards man.

Awfully Mar Jacob illustrates how this love (rahme) of God turned out to be a kind of compulsion on Him:

“For, if He had not given him His image (śalmo), when He created him, He would not have handed over His Son for him, while redeeming him” (FMC I 37-38).

The love (rahme) towards His image (śalmo) required God to act mercifully again at the time of salvation of man:

“Since He descended (nḥet) towards Adam when He fashioned him, love (rahme) impelled (tba’) Him to descend again; because he was lost” (FMC I 81-82)

and “And since He descended (nḥet) near him and showed love (hubo), the love (hubo) urged (tba’) Him

1034 Ibid, 354
1035 Ibid.
1036 See the segment, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 249 ff.
to extend and to go down; otherwise Adam would not have been raised” (FMC I 85-86).

God’s first descend for the creation necessitated Him to descend again (FMC I 85-86):

“He descended (nhet) because He created him ....” (FMC I 89, 103-104).

The poet opines,

“If His image (salmo) was not mixed (hlat) with the dust of Adam, the Son would not have borne these passions for his sake” (FMC I 197-198).

Since the image (salmo) of God and the image (salmo) of Adam are one and the same, God has no reluctance to redeem Adam at any price (FMC I 199-200).

The mercy (rahme) of the Lord made Him even to send His only begotten Son for the crucifixion and the redemption of man (FMC I 215), because,

“Adam had the image (salmo) of that majesty; the advent of his Lord near him happened because of His love (hubo)” (FMC I 221-222).

Thus, according to the poet, God was taking up a great task; a great search for the lost one (FMC I 194). The poet reveals why God lavished such a biggest cost:

“Because he was a great image (salmo rabo), a great search (b’oto rabto) was undertaken by the Father for his sake, so that, he may not be lost” (FMC I 211-212).

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was also pleased to take up the venture, because, the poet says,

“It was pleasing to Him (Son), hence He (Son) did not renounce His image (salmo) to be perished” (FMC I 214).

Mar Jacob views another reason for such a sort of compulsion (tab’o) in God to act mercifully (rohmoit). That reason is based on a covenant (qyomo). But, unlike other covenants, the initiation for the same came from God Himself and there also, no external force compels God to follow the precepts of the covenant. The poet says,

“He (God) entered into a covenant (qyomo) with the dust when He fashioned him that even if he falls or become corrupted, He will set him in order (taqen)” (FMC I 189-190).
At least two parties are involved in a covenant. Both the parties in the covenant are to keep the precepts of the covenant which, in turn, are obligations and hence it is a kind of compulsion. But here, God being the initiator, concerned party, whole owner and the only operator of the covenant, and since the human participation in it is not from his merit but only out of God’s grace, the responsibility on God for maintaining the covenant is not from external force but it is willed by God for Himself. This covenant with the image is also on account of God’s love towards it.

IV. 1. B. 3. Three significant expressions of God’s Mercy

Even though each and every little thing that happens in God - man relation is the result of God’s graciousness (taybuto), the poet wants to make out three major events from among them and to analyse their significance in the history of man. These three most important occurrences are:

“At first, He designed (şro) it from the dust (dahiho) in His own image (šalmo), and in the middle (secondly), He saved (praq) it (image) with the blood of His only begotten Son. And later, He called in a (loud) voice and resuscitated it (image) and thirdly, when He perfects, restores and fulfils it (image) (FMC IV 205-208, 194).

Hence he also says,

“By the (same mercy) He lowered himself to give His image, when He created” (FMC I 34, 281-282).

And it is in this context that the poet asserts,

“He shows love (rahme) and He loved (rhem) from when He created (the image) and because of this He said, “let us make man in our image (šalmo) and in our resemblance (dmuto)” (FMC I 247-248).

The sole intention behind this mercy of God is genuinely communicated by the poet as it was for keeping man indivisibly with God at all times:
“He moulded it, saved it; and He raises it up and unites it with Him, so that, it may be with Him, in Him, like Him and for Him” (FMC IV 211-212).

The explicit, supreme, foremost and pricey revelation of God’s kindness (rohţmuto) towards man was at the deliverance of God’s only begotten Son for the crucifixion in order to save the perished image (FMC I 241-242, 249-250). This conviction facilitates the poet to proclaim,

“Through that mercy (raţme), through which the Father handed over the Son to the cross ...” (FMC I 33, 35).

The poet reaffirms that man owed to compensate for his sin, but God’s mercy had overflown and by giving His own Son, God recompensed man’s dues:

“The love (hubo) of the Father had concealed the tax (makso) from the creatures and He revealed it in His Son and the world learned how much He loved (rheţ) him” (FMC I 243-244).

And the poet continues,

“Out of His love (hubo) He descended (nhet) towards the creatures to create them, like that, out of His love (hubo) His beloved one ascended on Gogultho” (FMC I 251-252 and 275-276).

IV. 1. B. 4. Three important merciful acts

Mar Jacob speaks also about the three most important acts of God through which the mercy had been poured out. These are the three descents of God towards man; among which two had already happened and one will happen later:

“He descended (nhet) towards Adam when He fashioned (g-bal) him from the dust and He stretched out (‘vsep) (again) and descended when He restored (qno) him from destruction. And because of this, “the Lord will extend (navsep) His hand again” in order to gain Adam; it was told in the prophecy” (FMC I 77-80).
Here, the poet mentions the prophesy of Isaiah, “It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people ....”.\textsuperscript{1037}

According to the poet, these actions are stretching out (‘\textit{vsep}’) of God’s hands of mercy (\textit{id rahme}) towards the human being. He explains it as,

\begin{quote}
“With mercy (\textit{rahme}) He moulded (\textit{gbal}) it (image) and with compassions (\textit{rahme}) He saved it from captivity, and with mercy (\textit{rahme}), He will come again at the end in order to raise it (image) up” (FMC IV 201-202).
\end{quote}

And the poet emphasizes,

\begin{quote}
“If the Lord had not extended His hand a second time Adam would have lost his image and would become non-existent” (FMC I 91-92).
\end{quote}

In order to illustrate the altitude of God’s position and the immeasurable depth of His mercy and also to give the length of the distance of His descend, the poet writes,

\begin{quote}
“In the beginning God descended (\textit{nhet}) as far as to the dust and at the end He sent (\textit{ahet}) His son down as far as to death” (FMC I 43-44)
and “The Supreme One descended (\textit{nhet}) to the extremity of the whole depth in order to raise it (image) up from within the depth towards its exalted position, the summit (from which) it fell down” (FMC IV 197-198).
\end{quote}

Being filled with this notion of God’s mercy, the poet expresses the same thought in his other mimre also as we see in his homily ‘On Nativity’ where he narrates the descent of God as His merciful act: “Let me speak a little about grace that was upon Adam, because, his Lord has come down to restore his image that had been corrupted”.\textsuperscript{1038}

IV. 1. B. 4. i. \textbf{Implication of the descents}

When the poet emphasises that ‘God descends’ (\textit{nohto}), even though the emphasis is for highlighting the abundance and greatness of God’s mercy, it sometimes connotes that God resides somewhere above and occasionally He visits the earth. This mind of the poet can be

\textsuperscript{1037} Is. 11/11.
\textsuperscript{1038} Kollamparampil, Jacob of Sarug’s Homily on the Nativity, 22.
read also from the narrations on Adam’s godliness, where Adam as the god of the creatures should have lived in exalted environments:

“He should live like a god in great lofty habitations (medyoro)” (IV 120).

But this notion of the poet does not go against his own arguments for the omnipresence of God.

IV. 1. C. **Employment of various terms for ‘mercy’, ‘love’ etc.**

The New King James version of the Bible makes a distinction between Grace and Mercy; “Mercy is closely related to grace. Man needs both mercy and grace in order to be saved. Logically, mercy precedes grace... (‘Grace takes away the guilt; mercy (takes away) the misery’). From the human viewpoint, grace precedes mercy. We must accept God’s grace through faith before we can have our misery removed ... likewise, grace always precedes peace ...” 1039 But Mar Jacob doesn’t attempt to differentiate either etymologically or significantly the terms used to characterize God’s outpourings such as His love, concern, pity, forgiveness, mercy, grace etc., instead, throughout the mimre he uses them synonymously. For him, these expressions are not only inlets of the same soft and compassionate temperament of God, but also interrelated to each other in a cause and effect basis; because, His love is the cause of His mercy, grace, forgiveness as well as His every other act and it is vice versa also. That is why the poet writes like this,

“Here, love (hubo) had been gushing forth from the grace (taybuto) (FMC III 691).

For Mar Jacob, mercy is not only something which is applied on the afflicted to soothe his misery; but for him every intervention of God in the life and history of man is a merciful act. If Mar Jacob considered it only for a soothing effect, he would not have narrated the act of

1039 See P. 1379.
the creation of man a merciful act of God,\textsuperscript{1040} because, man was not in an afflicted position at that time. The poet includes the creation of man, the descent of God for the same etc. in the list of the manifestations of God’s mercy (\textit{FMC} IV 201 ff).

Mar Jacob employs various terms to denote the Love, Grace, Mercy, Compassion, Mercifulness etc. of God and also for denoting God as the embodiment of mercy. They are: \textit{rahmonuto} = mercifulness (\textit{FMC} I 31, III 1025 etc.), \textit{rehmto} = kindness (\textit{FMC} III 904), \textit{rahme} mercy (\textit{FMC} I 33, 82,104, 111, 114, 247, III 899, 911, 919, 922, 930, 983, 1016, IV 201, 202, 204, 222, 456 etc.), \textit{rahmonoit} = mercifully (\textit{FMC} III 759, 908, 1023), \textit{rahmono} = merciful (\textit{FMC} III 995) \textit{hnono} = mercy, compassion (\textit{FMC} III 759, 934, IV 230 etc.), \textit{habiboit} = kindly (\textit{FMC} III 922 and 1022), \textit{taybuto} = grace (\textit{FMC} I 45, 46, III 691, 725, 923, 928, 1018 etc.), \textit{hubo} = love (\textit{FMC} I 39, 40, 50, 85, 117, 243, 251, 252, 253, 279, III 691, 906, 913, 1020, 1023 etc.), \textit{tobto/tobo} = benevolent (IV 223, 227, 229 etc.), \textit{hushkos} = to have pity (I 141 and 143) etc.\textsuperscript{1041}

\textbf{IV. 1. C. 1. \textit{Implications of the term rahme}}

The aforementioned list points to the fact that Mar Jacob basically uses the root verb \textit{r-hem} to denote the mercy of God. This term becomes more favourable to Mar Jacob because of its deep meaning and connotations. He uses the term elsewhere in the mimre having fully contained the entire implications of the term. And so, wherever Mar Jacob used this term, there, we can feel its total richness. It is a term to be very specially understood. Dr. P.G Thomas Paniker makes an elaboration on the implications of this term. Usually \textit{rahme} in its plural is translated as ‘Mercy’. First of all he points to the deficiency of English terms to

\textsuperscript{1040} See above in this section – ‘Three significant acts of mercy’.

\textsuperscript{1041} Cf. Smith, \textit{Compendious Syriac Dictionary}.
correspond to the exact connotation of the word *rahme*. Thus he writes, “No one English term corresponds precisely to the Syriac *Rachme* and the exact nuances of the term have been much disputed”. Comparing the word with its Hebrew equivalent, Dr. Paniker notes down its connotations as a particular act of one person towards another, a continuing behaviour of one person to another and God’s consistent behaviour toward individuals or Israel. He takes the meaning of the word in its singular number *rahmo* = womb, and connects it with the meaning of its plural number *rahme* = mercy. Hence it designates the love of a mother for her child; in a way it can be called ‘womb love’, which also includes the love of brothers and sisters who have shared the same womb. He brings physiological elements and applies them to add more meaning to the word and says, “It implies a physical response; the compassion for another is felt in the centre of one’s body”.

He conceives the mercy not in its conceptual level but he applies it with action and thus goes into the real meaning of the word: “This Mercy also results in action. It is a word frequently predicated of Yahweh who has mother love for Israel. The ‘womb love’ of Yahweh leads to forgiveness for the wayward children”.

Dr. Paniker brings up three major contexts also where the term is particularly used; *rahme* is used for mentioning an overflow of one’s love towards another person alone and not to any inanimate objects, consequently an intimate personal relationship must be involved in its application and thirdly it is not used in abstract, but a concrete action as an associate to and as a result of this mercy shall be followed. Dr. Paniker relates the mercy of God with the Covenant made between God and Israel: “The significance of the term *rachme* cannot be fully understood with out reference to the covenant relationship of Yahweh with His people. Israel

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1042 Paniker T, “Significance of the word ‘Rachme’ in the context of the History of Salvation”, *Harp*, XI-XII, 1
1043 Ibid, 2.
1044 See below in this section, ‘God – the merciful mother’.
1046 Ibid.
understood God to be committed to the community in covenant relationship as the One who provided for all needs yet One always free and uncoercible (incoercible). The God who is covenanted to Israel is defined as merciful”. 1047

Mar Jacob is too meticulous to select only apt words to create his works. The ‘womb love’ or the motherly affection and kindness of God, the intimate personal relation between the lovers etc. had already been depicted by Mar Jacob in his Four Mimre ‘On Creation’. 1048 For Mar Jacob, the covenant is not only a reason for the outpouring of God’s mercy, but the covenant itself is an act of God’s mercy. The poet bases the edifice of his concepts on the mercy of God not only on the covenant made by God, but for him, the whole programme of God, including the very minute thing are emanations of God’s mercy. The poet always tries to illustrate how the mercy of God is being poured out towards man through the merciful acts of God. The following categorisation of the characteristics of the divine mercy shows us the fact that how far Mar Jacob was fully aware of the deeper implications of the term rahme and also of all other terms which he had employed in his works and the same fact elevates him to a greater rank among the literary men as well as theologians. But it is also to be noticed that Mar Jacob employs all the above mentioned terms almost in the same sense as that of ‘rahme’

IV. 1. D. Characteristics of God’s mercy

The impressions of Mar Jacob on diverse features of the divine mercy (rahme) can be seen sprouted up everywhere in the whole mimre as he goes on poeticizing the events. We can pick those pearls up and categorise them under various aspects of the mercy of God.

1047 Ibid, 3.
1048 See below in this section, ‘God – the merciful mother’.
IV. 1. D. 1. **Mercifulness (rahamunuto) – an intrinsic force in God’s person**

Since God is the self-existant and the perfect Being, any kind of compulsion on Him is against His true self. But the poet sees, in a way, a certain amount of compulsion (tbo ‘o) on God; the urge of God’s mercifulness to act even beyond His justice. If God is under the pressure of something due to an external force, it will be an imperfection to the fullness of God. So, it is God who Himself makes a push (tbo ‘o) within Him. Since it is only a basic and intrinsic pressure within God and not from outside – entirely deliberated in His will, and in effect it is constructive – it shall never be conceived as coercion on God as the word ‘compulsion’ is ordinarily understood. Instead, it is always a positive expression of God’s true self. According to the poet, since this mercifulness (rahamunuto) is basic, innate and indissoluble in God and at times He can’t go against this push (tbo ‘o) that is within Him. Being fully conscious of this fact, Mar Jacob views that even God’s very thinking of creating man and the universe itself was out of the call of His mercy. The poet says,

“The mercy (rahamunuto) had inclined (§lo) God towards the dust and He gave it His image and fashioned it (in) the likeness of His only begotten Son.” (FMC I 31-32).

Since Mar Jacob finds this push (tbo ‘o) in God positively, he repeats the same notion in his other homilies also. In this sense he writes in the homily ‘On Nativity’: “Your love compelled You on account of us to come to our place”1049

The poet is fanatically zealous to disclose and reveal the kind heart of God. The poet sees every act of God very optimistically and he wishes to place them in the vessel of God’s mercy. In this sense he writes,

“In this manner the Lord loved (aheb) Adam from the beginning and what He did towards him at the end testifies this” (FMC I 239-240).

In his other homilies also Mar Jacob wants to describe God’s mercy in its richness and fullness.

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1049 Kollamparampil, *Jacob of Sarug’s Homilies on the Nativity*, 186.
In his homily ‘On the Nativity’ Mar Jacob considers the nativity of Christ as God’s involvement in the history to supplement to the empty granaries with the richness of God’s mercy: “In this month in which the granary is impoverished of crops, the sheaf of mercy is gathered to satisfy us. In this month in which all the poor are in need, the Rich one has come sprinkling His treasures upon the mendicants”.  \(^{1050}\)

IV. 1. D. 2. **God’s mercy is immutable** (*lo mestahlpono*)

The immutability of God’s mercy is related to the immutability of God; since God is immutable, His characteristics like His mercy, justice etc. are also immutable.

IV. 1. D. 2. i. **The unchangeable God** (*aloho lo mestahlpono*)

A substantial nature of God is His immutability (*lo mestahlponuto*). God is existentially permanent (*ityo dalgamro*) and His plans and designs are not bendable as and when it is wished by others. The poet states that nothing is new to God (*FMC I* 36) and nothing is placed in the mind of God that was not there from the beginning (*FMC I* 48, 275, 277). God has the same intention and design for ever whether it was at the time of creation or at the time of redemption (*FMC I* 49-51). Hence, according to Mar Jacob, God has ever fresh thinking:

“*God has unique design (husbo hadto) from eternity (men mtum)”* (*FMC I* 47).

The poet has very sensible reasons to affirm this. A change (*suhlopo*) of thinking is impossible in God. If there is a change (*suhlopo*) in the plan of God it is to be admitted that God is also subject to change (*suhlopo*). But this is a limitation to the perfection of God. Change (*suhlopo*) is an attribute of objects made of mater. So, with firm conviction Mar Jacobs affirms the inmateriality as well as the immutability of God. This we see from some of his

\(^{1050}\) Ibid, 132.
expressions:

“He who was not composed (lo markbo) had composed (rkeb) the voice for the sense of hearing (ears)” (FMC III 694)

and

“The entirely self existent Being (itayo dalgamro) was not generated (on the principle) of change (suhlopo)” (FMC III 696).

That is why the poet strongly asks,

“By which feet He walked indeed in the garden?” (FMC III 693)

and

‘How did He walk in human steps?’ (FMC III 695).

Due to his Hellenic influence also, Mar Jacob is fully aware of the fact that only the material things are prone to alteration. Because Aristotle suggested that the three basic principles and ingredients for the explanation of change are matter, privation and form. Since God is immaterial He can’t be brought under change. A changeable thing is subject to decay. If some one says that God changes His plan, then he has to equally admit that God decays. It will be a blasphemy. Mar Jacob emphasises that God cannot change and He is the unmoved mover:

“He removes the times, but He is with the times; He never vanishes (lo mtum ‘obar),

and with a gesture (remzo) He changes the season, but He (remains) unchanged (lo methlep)” (FMC IV 315-316)

and

“The manifestation (denho) of the Messiah is not transmitted on (the principle of) change (suhlopo)” (FMC IV 310).

IV. 1. D. 2. ii. The unchangeable mercy of God

The notion of the poet on the immutability of God’s mercy has been very clearly stated in his verse:

“In a unique, definite and immutable (lo meythlep) design the mercy manifested three times and thus it was accomplished ” (FMC IV 203-204).

Since God can’t change, His characteristics are also immutable (lo megstahlpono).

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1051 This topic is discussed in detail in the segment, “Hellenic Influence in the Formation of the Mimre”, p. 651 ff.
1052 Edward. P, The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, I, 156.
1053 See Aristotelian principles on change in the section, “Hellenic Influence in the Formation of the Mimre”, p. 670.
According to the poet there cannot be a variation in the quantity as well as in the quality of God’s mercy in relation to the person or season to whom and to which it is being poured out. That is why the poet writes,

“It is one and the same grace (ḥad ṭaṣbuto) here and there: when He fashioned (gbal); when He saves also, the same grace (ṭaybuto) was employed” (FMC I 45-46).

“With the same intention (ḥad ḫubbo) in Him which He had from eternity; He created and He saves, because of His love (ḥubbo)” (FMC I 49-50)

and “It is (out of) great kindness (ṭobto) that Adam came to be out of nothing and it is the same, that he was redeemed by the blood of the Son of God. And it is also (out of) kindness (ṭobto) that he was raised to life from the dust:

they are three; but same is the mercy (ḥad ḫnoono) that administers them” (FMC IV 227-230).

When God created Adam in His image, God loved Adam and this love never changes. When the poet speaks of three foremost descents of God towards man, he underlines that there occurred not even a least measure of change in the mercy of God.

The poet is confident that God will preserve the same measure of mercy even after the consummation of the world and hence he is sure of the return of the inheritances of Adam at the end of the time which he lapsed through his sin. In this sense he writes,

“The world falls down but Adam rises up from the fall in order to inherit the treasure (nirat gazo) which has been prepared for him from the beginning (men ṣuryo)” (FMC IV 393-394).

In God there is no renewal of thinking so as to love once and to hate the same person later. God’s thinking and love remains the same for ever. God loved Adam very much (marḥem) (FMC I 247), this love (ḥubbo) remains for ever (FMC I 249) and God did not hate Adam even if he committed sin (FMC I 278). With the same love God searched Adam at the Garden: “Where are you Adam” (FMC III 709 ff). When the

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1054 See above in this section, ‘God’s mercy is immutable’.
1055 See above in this section, ‘Three Significant acts of mercy’.
poet mentions of the search for the lost sheep (III 703-704), certainly he had in his mind the teachings of Christ, especially the parable of the lost sheep\textsuperscript{1057} as well as the life and characteristics of Jesus Christ, who is always on the search for the lost one.

IV. 1. D. 3. **God’s Mercy is repetitive**

Mar Jacob analyses and emphasizes that a second extension of God’s merciful hands is God’s basic nature and it is included in His basic scheme also. To elucidate this, the poet brings out few examples from the Scripture.

IV. 1. D. 3. i. **The Tablets**

The first one among them is the bruise of the first two Tablets (\textit{luhe}) of the commandments and their renovation. Seeing the iniquity of the people, Moses bruised the first Tablets of the Law, but later, through the mercy (\textit{hubo}) of God they were restored (\textit{FMC I 117-118}).\textsuperscript{1058} As the poet says,

\begin{quote}
“The sin of the world had broken the beautiful Tablets (\textit{luhe}) and the mercy (\textit{rahme}) of the Father retained the law a second time by His hand” (\textit{FMC I 113-114}).
\end{quote}

The poet opines that this was a symbolic representation of God’s mercy (\textit{rahme}) on something which would happen later at the time of the restoration of Adam (\textit{FMC I 115-116, 119-122 etc.}). He clarifies that the first Tablets (\textit{luhe}) were essentially fragile, and they represent Adam and Eve:

\begin{quote}
“The two Tablets (\textit{luhe}); so as to say, are Eve and Adam” (\textit{FMC I 123}).
\end{quote}

The poet relates these two events and says,

\begin{quote}
“And as those Tablets (\textit{luhe}) were renewed by the hands of Moses, in the same manner, the Son of God renewed Eve and Adam.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1057} Cf. Lk. 15/1 ff.
\textsuperscript{1058} Cf. Ex. 31/18, 32/19, 34/1-3.
And as the Lord gave the law through His hand a second time, also, He gave the salvation to the nature through the repetition (second extension) (tenyo) of His hands” (FMC I 131-134).

The poet tries to explore the meaning implied in God’s words, ‘let us make man in our image’.

According to Mar Jacob the making of man in the image of God\textsuperscript{1059} was purposeful and in it implied the second advent of God:

“For, He was prepared to descend towards him again, a second time, lest He should descend to a stranger, He made him “in our image” (FMC I 147-148).

So, the poet reiterates that this transfer of the image at the time of creation was an act of God, foreseeing the extension of His hands a second time for the restitution (I 149-150).

IV. 1. D. 3. i. a. Similarity between the Tablets and the image: A lot of resemblances between the two events; the creation of man and the making of the Tablets of the commandments enticed the poet to compare them. According to the poet, among the two Tablets, one Tablet is Adam and the other is Eve (FMC I 123). Another similarity lies in their making; both of these were fashioned by the hands of God: “Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets”\textsuperscript{1060} (FMC I 135). In the same way, the poet portrays that, the creation of man was by the hands of God as if a potter makes a pot:

“He collected the dust, moulded it, rent it, bound together and plucked it....” (II 175).\textsuperscript{1061}

Man received the image of God\textsuperscript{1062} and Moses received the Tablets directly from God\textsuperscript{1063} (FMC I 107, 124). Sameness is also seen in their collapse; in the case of the image:

\textsuperscript{1059} See details on this topic in the section, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 249 ff.
\textsuperscript{1060} Ex. 32/16.
\textsuperscript{1061} This topic is discussed in the sections, “Anthropological Concepts of the Poet”, p. 345 and “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 266 ff.
\textsuperscript{1062} Gen. 1/27.
\textsuperscript{1063} Ex. 19/1 ff.
“He (Satan) dragged and brought him down, carried in and threw him into the abyss of Sheol. He trampled him, shattered him and made him dust as he was” (FMC I 208-209);

in its place, the Tablets were thrown and were broken by Moses (FMC I 108). The poet asserts that the sin is the cause of both the collapses:

“And since, in his Will, he disobeyed the commandment rebelliously, he is rightly dead and became dust in Sheol” (FMC II 293-294) and “The sin of the world had broken the beautiful Tablets” (FMC I 113).

Both of them, the tablets and the first parents, were thrown down into the pit from a lofty place (FMC IV 5-6). The nature of the dissolution was also same:

“Just as those first tablets were broken, the divine law also was perished with them. Likewise, Eve and Adam also were perished and became corrupt and the nature came to be as if it did not exist at all, because it fell down” (FMC I 127-130).

Yet another likeness is that both were restored a second time after the fall and the sole source and force of the restoration was the mercy of God (FMC I 114, 116).

IV. 1. D. 3. ii. Pot of Jeremiah

Another type (tupso) (FMC I 169-170) the poet cites from the scripture to show the further extensions of God’s merciful hands is the revelation of the mystery to prophet Jeremiah through the potter’s works. The poet says,

“Jeremiah also, in the repetition of the hands (tenyo dido) of that potter (pahoro), saw that he fashioned an earthen vessel, as if in mystery” (FMC I 151-152).

The potter (pahoro) destroyed the first pot which he made and as an alternative he made a new one from the same clay. Based on this event the poet asserts that it was through the repetition of the merciful hands (tenyo dide rahmonto), God restored the clay of Adam

1064 Ex.32/19, also see ‘The destruction of the Image’ in the section, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 286.
1065 Ex. 32/19.
1066 Jer. 18/1 ff.
(FMC I 161-162, 165-166):

“And through this, Jeremiah taught there that, in this manner, the Lord establishes (matqen) Adam, who was destroyed” (FMC I 159-160).

IV. 1. C. 3. iii. Emancipation of the Hebrews

Yet another instance of such second extension of God’s merciful hands (tenyo dide rahmonto), was the emancipation of the Hebrews from Egypt. Commenting on this historical event the poet says,

“Lord emancipated (apek) the Hebrews from Egypt and He extended His hands (tenyo dide) to them, a second time, from Assyria. And in them the first creation of Adam was depicted, also, the redemption happened to the world through the repetition (extension) of the hand (tenyo dido)” (FMC I 173-176).

The narrations of Mar Jacob on the repetitive characteristic of God’s mercy can also be seen in the poet’s other works also. In his homily ‘On Nativity’ he says, “Mercy grew fervent in the furnace of compassion which had fashioned Adam and again received him in nativity so that again he (Adam) shall be renewed by Him (Divine Mercy). Hidden was the mercy of that grace which formed Adam and came to wash the lump of earth that had wasted away through (its wounds)”


Very brilliantly, emotionally and calculatedly Mar Jacob compares the mercy of God with a nurse:

“The grace (taybuto) was like a nurse (maynagto) in Paradise and it issued questions (tab’e) to its son, Adam, who destroyed his soul” (FMC III 725-726).

He repeats the notion of God’s mercy as a nurse, saying,

1067 Is. 11/11.
1068 Kollamparampil Jacob of Sarug’s Homily on the Nativity, 24.
“As a nurse (maynaqto) it (grace) embraced (‘paq) him (Adam), so that he shall not be hurt (lo nebla’)” (FMC III 926).

Instead of some other words like suolo, Mar Jacob uses tab’e from the root tba‘ when he speaks of the questions of the grace as a nurse (FMC III 726) which denotes a legal enquiry and perhaps tab’e is the most suitable term which can be employed in the context of questioning the culprits at Eden. But, when the poet says that the grace (taybuto) as a nurse embraced (epaq) the child (FMC III 926), the ‘questions of nurse (tab’e damaynaqto)’ get a new connotation. It is not that of a judge who is ready to pronounce the judgement after the investigation, but, it is that of a compassionate caretaker who treats the afflicted one not with the intention of killing the afflicted with harsh judgements but with the intention of recovering and restoring him. Mar Jacob’s comparison of the questioning of God in the Garden of Eden (FMC III 707 ff) with that of a nurse is purposeful. The Medical practitioners use to ask questions to an ailing patient in order i) to explore the details of the ailment, ii) to know the condition of the patient, iii) to diagnose the sickness properly, iv) to make the patient know the seriousness of the injuries happened in the body, v) to make him understand why and how it happened, vi) to communicate him his failure in preventing himself from the infection, vii) to warn about the misfortune which would happen if the disease was not properly treated, viii) to advise him the steps to be taken for a speedy and complete restoration, ix) to prescribe the proper medicines etc.

These interrogations of a medical practitioner are only with the intentions of helping and healing the patient and only out of his concern and care for him. As part of the treatment the clinical expert might cause pain to the ailing one and in an extreme case, a part of the patient’s limbs might be mutilated. But none of these are due to the cruelty and harshness of

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1069 Cf. Smith Compendious Syriac Dictionary.
the specialist practitioner against the patient, but they are only essential procedures for the benefit of the patient.

Here, bearing in mind that the image of Adam was greatly damaged due to the sin and he is at the verge of death, the poet considers the questions asked by God in the Garden not as insensitive and harsh queries of an arbitrator for pronouncing a rigorous verdict against him but as compassionate solicitations that comes out from His grace as from a nurse in order to restore him from eternal death. So, the poet finds another implication in the questions asked by God at the Garden:

“In this ‘where are you’, through this, He indicated to him; ‘seek your soul, make a prayer and approach Me, so that, I may be in agreement with you’” (FMC III 733-734).

Here, the poet views that the questions of God are for the recovery of the sinner and not to punish him.

The poet uses the imagery of a nurse also for representing the soothing effect an ailing patient feels at a treatment centre. The cure of a patient also depends on the care and concern he gets at the centre. The compassionate and dedicated approach of a nurse makes the recovery of the diseased faster. If the sick one is an infant, the nurse carries him in her chest, covers him with her warm hands, feeds him affectionately, consoles him with lullaby etc. The poet relates this imagery of a nurse with the cool effect of God’s mercy on the accused. Even though, elsewhere in the mimre, Mar Jacob emphasises on the invisible and immaterial existence of God (FMC III 693-696), while unfolding the affluence of God’s mercy, he forgets this fact and says that like a nurse covers the ailed infant, God covers the sin-infected Adam and Eve:

“But affectionately (habiboit) His hand covers (agen) their nakedness” (FMC III 1022, 1018).

Jesus Christ spoke of the care and concern of a hen towards its chicks. A mother-bird protects its kids from every danger by spreading its wings and keeping the kids safe under the wings. Attributing the same image to the care and concern of God, the poet says,

“And the grace (тaybutо) arrived and remained (qom) in the midst of Him and the Judge (dayono) and it spread (prag) its wings (kenpe) out upon the guilty (hayobo) while he was being scourged (naged). It did not permit the staff (sabo) to touch (qreb) and it guarded (ntar) his body (gusmo)” (FMC III 923-925).

As the mother-bird attacks the predators in order to save the chicks, the poet says,

“But when it (judgement) had groaned (‘nq) to smite (mho) Adam according to his transgression, the grace (taybuto) arrived and stood in front (apo) of it, so that he (Adam) shall be protected” (FMC III 927-928).

In this context, while describing the manifestations of the mercy of God, the poet views the extension of God’s hands as the stretched-out wings of a mother-bird in order to cover the kids:

“He descended towards Adam when He fashioned him from the dust and He stretched out (yisep/avsep) (again) and descended when He restored him from destruction” (FMC I 77-78).

When the predators attack the chicks, in order to protect them from the predators, the mother-bird bears all the trouble of the attack and sometimes endangers her life for the chicks. The mercy of God also operates like this: in order to save the chicks, His own image and the likeness, from the attack of Satan, the Creator Himself bears all the pain of salvation and endangers His own self for the salvation of the chicks – human beings. To bring out this aspect of God’s mercy, the poet repeatedly reminds in the mimre of the deliverance of God’s only begotten Son on the cross for the salvation of man:

“On account of (metul) Adam, He delivered His only begotten Son (ihido) to death” (I 35).


In the mimre, the lavish employment of the term ‘rahme’ which, in its plural number, means ‘mercy’ and which, in its singular number ‘rahmo’, means ‘womb’, denotes the motherliness of the concept of mercy\textsuperscript{1071} which in turn attributes to God a kind of femininity to God. Even though the poet doesn’t speak directly on the motherliness of God, here and there in the mimre, we find traces of feminine features of God. When the poet speaks of God’s infinite compassion, in order to make it intelligible to the ordinary men, he compares it with the care and concern of a nurse\textsuperscript{1072} (FMC III 725, 926 etc.) which is more or less a womanly temperament. Also, while speaking about the fall, redemption and restitution of the fallen nature of Adam, we see a motherly concern of God towards him. As a loving mother cares her infant who happened to fall on mud, the poet says,

\begin{quote}
“He (God) clears (npaš) its (image’s) face from the dust and renews it” (FMC IV 209).
\end{quote}

Whenever the poet speaks of the renewal of the image, this notion of motherliness of God can be seen veiled over there. Decorating the bride, Eve, also can be considered a conventional womanly practice (FMC IV 159). Throughout the history of Israel God can be seen as the mother for them, who provides food, care, protection etc. as well as at times disciplinary corrections also\textsuperscript{1073} Motherhood is always considered a symbol of love, care and concern, and the mercy of God goes hand in hand in many respects with the motherhood. Thus, as Thomas Kollampampampil opines, one can say that the grace of God is the mother of all compassions\textsuperscript{1074}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See above in this section, ‘Employment of the term ‘rahmo’’
\item See above in this section, ‘Mercy of God - a nurse’.
\item Paniker, “Significance of the word ‘Rachme’ in the context of the History of Salvation” ,Harp, XI-XII, 2.
\item Kollampampilig, Jacob of Sarug’s Homily on the Nativity, 24.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
IV. 1. D. 7. **God’s Mercy is unique**

Elsewhere in the mimre, the poet speaks of God’s permanency in His existence as well as in His designs and executions. Mar Jacob speaks also about the stability in carrying out God’s mercy throughout the ages from the beginning until the end of the times.\(^{1075}\) The poet approves that due to the physical limitations, man is unable to comprehend the fullness of God’s mercy, but when he transcends all restrictions after his life on earth, he will be in an attitude only to praise God’s mercy seeing that the mercy has been showered upon him in its abundance:

“But in resurrection (nuhomo) you will give praise (qales) to the mercy (rahme), (because) how much it had pitied (hon)” (FMC III 980).

The uniqueness of God’s mercy consists in the fact that it is being poured out not as a reward according to the merit of the one who receives it, instead, it is a free gift to the undeserved, to a greater degree, to the insolent. The poet analyses the whole merciful interventions of God and states that none of the accomplishments of God’s mercy was on the merit of man but purely out of cordial and filial love towards His image:

“But, all these are without expense (magon) and (only) on account of the mercy (rahme) which is incomprehensible (lo metdarken)” (FMC IV 222).

**IV. 1. E. Modus operandi of God’s mercy**

From the human point of view the mercy of God is being operated quite differently from the operations of other characteristics of God. The omniscience, omnipotence, justice etc. of God work according to their own permanent mode and they are, to a certain extent and as far as they are revealed, comprehensible to the human mind. The mercy of God also works in a permanent and unique way; but the rationale behind it may not be logical always. The poet

\(^{1075}\) See above in this section, ‘God’s Mercy is immutable’. 
projects it not as an imperfection in God, but he presents it as the perfect characteristic of God.

The uniqueness of the mode of operations of God’s mercy, as the poet shows, is that it is flexible and elastic while being firm and strong.

IV. 1. E. 1. Adjournment

From the questions of God in the Garden (FMC III 707 ff), the poet looks into the greatest characteristic of God’s mercy. The mercy of God urges Him to wait for the repentance and the return of the sinner. The poet expresses it excellently in his Four Mimre ‘On Creation’. God delayed the declaration of the verdict in the Garden, for the reason of giving more chances for Adam and Eve for penitence. None of the answers given by Adam to the questions of God were to the point and as it was wished by God. The poet narrates it in this way,

“Adam was not justified from what he had responded (emar) to God” (FMC III 787).

It could have certainly raised the interrogator’s hot temperament. But Mar Jacob observes how God was so patient and reacted mercifully:

“But the compassionate one (hanono) did not reply him with admonitions (maksonuto)
and after his words, He did not turn towards him as one who is opposite (iqublo)” (FMC III 789-790).

And the poet discloses the real nature of God:

“But behold, the merciful one (rahmono) did not become furious (hmat) on these
but, He offered (qreb) again another question (suolo) as if He doesn’t know” (FMC III 771-772).

Admiring the tolerance and endurance of God, the poet discloses God’s plan behind the profusion of questions:

“Behold, the questions (suolo) in order to open the door (tar’o) towards repentance (tayobuto)” (FMC III 775),

and “Behold the loving kindness (taybuto), how much it is pleased in his discovery (skihuto)” (FMC III 777).
God’s questions to Eve were also intended for giving a chance to them for contrition, as said by the poet,

“So that, she might be a cause (apto) for Adam to be afraid of the Judge”
(FMC III 792).

Mar Jacob sees yet a new reason why God prolonged the judgement through asking more and more questions in the garden. He says that it was for taking time to wither up and thus to crumble down the tunic of leaves from the fig tree which they had put on by themselves and without the permission of God. These leaves were symbols of the sin on their bodies. God was patiently waiting for their repentance, which should come from them deliberately, to sweep away this black mark of sin from their flesh. Since this intention of God was unrecognised by them, the poet views that God had prolonged the questions mercifully for a natural dry up of the leaves (FMC III 987 ff):

“Since He prolonged (mtah) to lay hold of (lbaה) the time at the hour of the judgment,
the leaves descended (שָׁב) and were bruised (פרָק) and they fell down (נַ-פָּל) from their bodies (גוֹשָׁם)” (FMC III 991-992).

IV. 1. E. 2. Diversion

According to the poet, another mode of operation of God for the implementation of His mercy is diverting the judgement which is due on the culprit. In this sense he says,

“He (Judge) smote (בְּלֵא) the earth, so that Adam, who went astray, should not be scourged (נ-גד), for, by means of its scourging (נ-גדו), he would have repented without being beaten.
The Lord said to him, ‘the earth is cursed (לito) because of you’;
(FMC III 935-937, Gen. 3/17).

This pronouncement of punishment may seem paradoxical to those who are ignorant of the nature of God’s mercy, because, here the transgressor, Adam, was protected from the
severe punishment, at the same time, the earth, having no stains by itself, was cursed. The poet gives the explanation to this paradox,

“The foster mother (mrabyonito) received punishment without any transgression, so that the child (yaludo), whom she bore, should not have been beaten” (FMC III 939-940).

This diversion of the direction of the arrow of the curse is exclusively out of God’s mercy. He considers the earth as the foster mother (mrabyonito) of Adam, because he was made of dust which was from her. Even though both of them – Adam and earth – are of the same stuff, one is saved and the other is punished. Mar Jacob was not pointing out the partiality of God towards the one alone, but, he was stressing the worth and value of the image of God in man. Among the two – Adam and earth – only Adam possessed the image of God. If Adam were cursed in the Garden, the curse should have affected the image of Adam, which is the image of God; hence a curse on Adam would have been turned into a curse on God Himself. In order to avoid this dilemma, God cursed the earth, the foster mother (mrabyonito) of Adam. Here also, it was God’s mercy that avoided the dilemma.

IV. 1. E. 3. Mediation

Mar Jacob discloses how the characteristics of God function within Him: each of them is ready to function in its own mode and in its perfection. But Mar Jacob reveals that when the justice of God is ready to function and to effect righteousness in the world by giving rewards to the best ones and punishing the culprits according to the gravity of their sin, the mercy of God mediates and appeals for the culprit; here the final victory will always be of the mercy of God. This victory of the mercy of God is not by defeating the justice of God, but by bearing all the consequences and the burdens of the effect of God’s justice. This we infer from the verse of the poet:
“And the grace (ṭaybuto) had arrived and remained in the midst (beyt) of him (Adam) and the Judge ..... 
It did not permit (lo yab) the staff (ṣabto) to touch (qreb) and it guarded (nṯar) his body (guṯmo)” (FMC III 923-925),
“The grace (ṭaybuto) arrived and stood in front (apo) of it (justice), so that he (Adam) shall be protected” (FMC III 928) etc.

Here, by being the mediator between the justice (kinuto) of God and the culprit (ḥatoyyo), the mercy (rahme) of God allows itself to be the prey of all the severity of the punishments that should have been fallen on the culprit (ḥatoyyo).

IV. 1. E. 4. Soothing

The mercy of God always acts as the consoling agent on the afflicted ones. The poet has a thousand tongues to illustrate how Eve was consoled at her misery by the mercy of God. It is quite natural that the culprit deserves punishment, but, at the moment of the punishment the mercy (rahme) of the Lord arrives and it prevents the severity of the punishment and comforts the grieved one. The poet beautifully draws this mode of operation of the mercy (rahme) of God primarily from the instance of Eve at the Garden:

“Whenever He inflicted her (Eve) pain (sum) while He smote (mḥo) her vehemently (azizoit), 
it (Mercy) turned and soothed (rak) her pleasantly, lest she should faint. 
Whenever He terrified (zuē) her through the voice of grief, which He proclaimed on her, 
it (mercy) turned and contented (nuḥ) her through the love (rḥem) towards the child; which rejoiced her. 
Whenever He stimulated (zqat) her passion (mahṣuto) through multiplying the pain (kibo), 
the love (ḥubo) stood firm and suppressed (ṣateq) them (on account of) those infants. 
By one scourge (mḥuto) He pained her severely; 
by another strap (nagdo) He comforted (mbayo) her mercifully (rahmonoit). 
He wisely bestowed the pain (nagdo) together with the gift (mavhabto)” (FMC III 901-909).

By narrating all these modes of operations of God’s mercy what the poet really wanted to disclose was that God, out of His mercy, gives all possible opportunities to man to be saved.
IV. 1. F. **Emergences of God’s mercy**

Mar Jacob is fully conscious of the fact that God and His fundamental natures are indivisble and hence God’s actions are not alien to His true self. Out of this conviction, that all the manners of God are embodiments of His very substantial existence, the poet never tries to separate God from His actions. The poet, being the obsessive admirer of God’s mercy and hence having only one picture of God in his mind, the compassionate nature of God, and having only one action of God to tell, the action of His mercy, goes into the minute details of every event that happened in the life of Adam and through them he tries to draw in his mimre a vivid picture of the greatness of God’s kindness. For the poet, these occurrences are languages through which God had communicated His mercy towards man. Those who try to deduce them from the mimre will certainly find the amazing attempts of the poet to extol the magnificence of God’s mercy.

IV. 1. F. 1. **Initial Preparations**

Planning of an expectant-woman for a safe procreation and nurturing of her offspring is an example, even if it is imperfect, that shows how God, out of His love, had arranged everything which are essential for man before the making of Man in His image (FMC I 255-260). The poet emphatically states that the whole creation is useless for God:

> “And the course of all these are for Adam.
For, the works which God did are useless (lo mahno) to Him;
and what would be His advantage for creating them?” (FMC I 260-262).

In view of the fact that all these created things were already existed in God immaterially from infinity (FMC I 265), a new production of them is useless for God (I 261) and so they were created by Him only for man (FMC I 267). So, the poet states,

> “If it was not out of His love (hubo) He created the creatures;
He would not have possessed (qno) the possessions (qenyono) that are
not useful (lo ḫṣah) to Him” (FMC I 253-254).

Thus the poet finds that all the preparations before the birth of Adam were only on behalf of the love and mercy of God towards Adam.

IV. 1. F. 2. Ingredients of the Image

The scientific knowhow of the poet\textsuperscript{1076} enables him to elucidate the constituents of the image.

“It (image) was arranged from the elements (esṭukso) and was standing like a pillar (‘amudo): He who gave its existence out of nothing had joined (k-den) it strongly” (FMC IV 89-90, II 269).\textsuperscript{1077}

The poet looks intensely at the image of Adam, systematically unhooks each ingredient out of which it was constituted, and marvels at the phenomenon through which God has composed it (FMC IV 151-156):

“Glorious (ṣbih) is this image (ṣalmo) which proclaims the wonder (tehro) of its Creator” (FMC IV 53).

In the fourth Mimre we see an elaborate exposition on these elements which God had used to compile the image, especially from verse 15 onwards. It was not an anatomical attempt of the poet, but as the one who had attempted to imbibe the sweetness of the mind of God, the poet was expressing it as a cool drizzle of God’s mercy oozed on Adam. Even though the whole creatures are created perfectly in its own kind\textsuperscript{1078} and hence they are epithets of God’s mercy, the creation of Adam is a very special sign of His great benevolence. Because, besides the transfusion of the image, the poet says,

“When He created, He created all kinds of beauties (ṣupre) according to their natures (kyono) and He came and comprehended (suk) all the beauties (ṣupre) in the

\textsuperscript{1076} See the section, “Man Behind the Mimre”, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{1077} See the ingredients of the image in the section, “Image and Likeness of God in man”, p. 266 ff.
\textsuperscript{1078} Cf. Gen. 1/3 ff.
beauty (supro) of Adam.
He condensed (h’bas) in the image all those colours (gavno) that belong to the nature (kyono), so that, people should see in him the whole worlds (kul ‘olmo) and spaces (atrávoto)” (FMC IV 19-22). 1079

This comprehension of the entire components, which includes contradictory, contrary as well as supportive, and those which are to be generated throughout the generations in addition to what was existing as well as the perfect embellishment with purest colours, are claimable to no other creature except to Adam. Behind this magnificent recipe of ingredients of the image and its indissoluble, unique and accurate combination, the poet could see only the mercifullness of God towards His image.

IV. 1. F. 3. The placement of Adam at the apex

God not only created Adam in His own image but also placed him at the top of every created thing. Mar Jacob narrates the purpose behind it:

“The Creator wished (šbo) that Adam should become great (nireb) like God (aloho)” (FMC I 203, 205).

For the poet this assignment was another occasion where the outpouring of God’s mercy is visible. Now and again in his mimre he repeats,

“The benevolent one (tobo) who fashioned him, had set (tqen) and placed (sum) him at the summit (ravmo) of Eden” (FMC IV 5, also 145-150).

Whenever the poet mentions the sin committed by Adam, he refers it to a fall:

“It (image) fell down from its heights (ravmo) …” (FMC IV 99 also 192)

and a pulling down by Satan:

“He who was expelled from the house of watchers (angels) had pulled (shap) Adam down” (FMC III 145, 150, I 207-208 etc.).

The fall, casting down and pulling down, all these refer to the position of someone at the top of the

summit (ravmo). This top placement earned him the designation of lordship,

“By his Creator, he was (made) a god of flesh (aloh besro) for the creatures” (IV 3, 139-140)

and “This is great that he is powerful (sali) like God (aloho)” (II 289).1080

Visualizing the whole creation as a great city the poet says,

“The whole creation is a great city (mdito) which the Righteous one (kino) had built, 
and He established (qum) a rational image (yuqno mlilo) in it and made it its (city’s) lord (moro)” (FMC IV 61-62).

This peak (ravmo) position of Adam also connotes to a point of centralization of the whole attentions of all creatures towards him. The poet awfully looks at the deep and profound measure of God’s mercy in making Adam the most dazzling aim among the creatures:

“The Wisdom (hekmto) (God) had depicted the great image (šalmo rabo) which is full of wonders (tehro); 
it (wisdom) brought in and placed (qum) it (image) at the centre of the worlds (mes’at ‘olme), so that, they should look it. 
It (wisdom) decorated it with ornaments (šabto), so that, the whole creatures shall be seen in it” (FMC IV 55-57).

The ornaments which made him the centre of attraction were the extraordinarily and perfectly arranged internal as well as external organs (FMC IV 69 ff). Through these the poet reiterates that it is the mercy of God and not the merit of man, that made Adam to be placed above all creatures and at a lofty place.

IV. 1. F. 4. Establishment of the commandments

Usually rules and regulations are considered as restrictions and limitations on the liberty of the one who is compelled to follow them. But in principle, no law is made for hindering the freedom of the people, but out of justice they are made and they are only for the benefit of the public, even though they seem obstructing the selfish interests of a few. But for the poet, the primary commandments given in the Garden by the Divine law-giver were not

only based on this principle, but for much more than this; they were given out of His mercy:

“And since His law is out of love (men ḡubu) and not out of constraint (men qūrā)” (FMC III 201).

The law was given, in the poet’s opinion, for the nourishment of the human beings.

Firstly, the law was given as an initiation from the part of God for revealing Himself to man.

So the poet says,

“And, in order that they should understand (yida’) who the Lord is, who raised them to honour, He constituted the law that they should not eat from the tree” (FMC IV 171-172).

The eventual revelations of God in the history were not out of constraint, but purely an act of God’s mercy. Through these God nourishes the wisdom of the people. Then, by keeping the law, they should grow in power and attain the fullness of divine natures which were granted to them. keeping this aspect of the law in mind, the poet says,

“That was why the Lord had constituted the law (nomuso) for Adam, so that, the observance of the law should become something which makes him grow (mrabyono)” (III 197-198).

Mar Jacob considers the law given to Adam by God was a shield around him to protect him from the attack of the opponents (FMC III 195-196). Also, it was a weapon in his hands to fight against evil. In this sense the poet makes a comment that the victory of a man is ascertained when he is in the battle field; there is no victory if there is no battle (FMC III 189-194). God wished that man should obey the commandments and come victorious in order to receive the reward which is kept for him. The law was given as a garment to cover Adam and Eve, but, while speaking about their transgression, the poet bewails and opines that what they have actually renounced was the loving concern of the Lord which clothed them with the ordinance:

“They had torn (violated) the law (nomuso) which was of compassion (raḥme)” (FMC III 680).
IV. 1. F. 5. The middle Tree and other trees in the Garden

Mar Jacob evaluates in detail each and every event which happened in the Garden only on the foundation of the benevolence of God. The tree of life and death in the middle of the garden was not a symbol of death but, out of God’s mercy, it was a spring of life. For the poet, the commandment given by God, “But the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat”, was not a limitation for Adam and Eve, as it is generally understood, but it was favourable for them. Since God is the perfection and thus not in want of something, He never reserves selfishly a part of the created things for Him (FMC I 259-266). Whatever God had created, He created them only for the benefit of the creatures and ultimately for the human being and they add nothing to the fullness of God (FMC I 267 ff, 253 ff.). What man should have done was to maintain and use them properly. The tree of life and death which was in the middle, like any other tree in the garden, was also only for the benefit of the first parents. Keeping this fact in mind, the poet says,

“The tree of life (ilon hayo) within the vast bedchamber (qaytuno) of Eden
was concealed (kso), so that, the couple of light (hatne dnuhro) shall be perfected (mlo) from it” (FMC IV 167-168).

Mar Jacob discloses the merciful purpose behind the withholding of the central tree. At the very early stages of life, Adam and Eve were so immature to handle life and death. So He preserved it from them and ordered not to approach it. The poet explains it in this way,

“He (God) affectionately (habiboit) gave him (Adam) many and withheld him (Adam) from one alone” (FMC III 202)
because, “He preserved there the tree of life in watchful care, so that, its fruit will be theirs long after” (FMC III 1049-1050).

It was a merciful as well as intelligent reservation for a dazzling future. But the foolish Adam and Eve did not recognize this sumptuousness of God’s thoughtfulness; instead, they

1081 Gen. 2/17.
gave ear to the cunningness of Satan, plucked the fruit immaturely, committed sin, lost their supremacy over life and death and died.

IV. 1. F. 6. **The wedding and the feast**

If Mar Jacob had seen in God a motherly anxiety at the initial preparations before the creation of Adam, he portrays the care of a friend in addition to the fatherly affection of God in the coupling of Adam and Eve as husband and wife and in making their residence in the Garden of Eden. He explains that, as the best groom’s man, God clothes Adam and Eve (FMC IV 163), adorns and brings them to the bride chamber, the Eden (FMC IV 158-159) and gives them marriage gifts (FMC IV 165). And as a benevolent and caring father He prepares the wedding feast for them by putting together the whole worlds (FMC IV 161), and He shares His wealth with them as dowry (FMC IV 160, 165, 173). None of these was profitable to God, but all these were outpourings from the abundance of God’s mercy for the advantage of man.

IV. 1. F. 7. **Walking in human steps**

We read in the Holy Scripture, “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” Even in this incident, the poet sees the extension of God’s mercy. He says,

> "Here, love (hūbo) had been gushing forth (spa') from the grace (taybuto) in order to make them hear corporally the voice of His foot steps " (FMC III 691-692).

The poet argues logically that the nonmaterial God does not walk in human steps which are made of matter. So the poet interprets it as God was making a noise as if He was walking:

1082 See above in this section, ‘Initial Preparations’.
1083 Gen. 3/8.
“The mystic voice took the tangible shape” (FMC III 761).

The purpose of God behind the making this noise, as the poet understands, was for giving a chance for them to prepare themselves for asking pardon for their sins and to receive God with supplication (FMC III 697-706). This was absolutely a gracious act of God. Or else, if He was a God of wrath, He would never have given them a chance for repentance. According to the poet it was like,

“He arranged the foot steps in the garden and made them hear, so that, when He approaches them He should have been received with supplication.
The pastor went after the sheep that willed (insolently) and perished, so that, it should hear his voice and follow him with prayers” (FMC III 701-704).

Here is an allusion to a later parable of the lost sheep and lost coin told by Jesus Christ in St. Luke chapter 15. In the poet’s opinion,

“Mercifully (rahmonoit), great compassion (hnoono) had emanated at His search and He had (great) care (bțiluto) in His action when it was required” (FMC III 759-760).

IV. 1. F. 8. Interrogations

Mar Jacob is fully conscious of the omniscience of God on the basis of a lot of scriptural passages like, “God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things”. So, according to the poet, all the questions of God during the search of Adam and Eve at the Garden were not out of His lack of knowledge; instead they were purposeful. The poet puts it like this:

“Even while knowing it well, the Lord asked him: “Where are you Adam?” (FMC III 709).

Besides that, physically Adam was very close to God in the Garden when He asked the question (FMC III 717). The all-seeing God is not blind so as to ask about something which is

1084 I Jn. 3/20.
concealed from Him. So, according to the poet,

“The search was to find out everything; on account of Adam” (FMC III 727).

Mar Jacob infers the purpose behind this question of God. It was certainly an occasion for the flooding of God’s mercy. Adam bears the image of God, but it was destroyed through sin. It was God’s mercy that sought after it and revived it:

“That, he (Adam) had been lost and He (God) seeks him mercifully (raḥmonoit)” (FMC III 714).

It was like the search for the lost coin narrated in Lk.15/8 ff. (FMC III 707). The poet says,

“Where are you”, indeed, is as people say ‘you are lost and behold, the abounding mercy (raḥme ṣpi’e) is seeking you lovingly ḥabiboit)” (FMC III 721-722).

So, for the poet, these questions and the search are solely the expressions of God’s love. The richness of God’s mercy initiates Him to undertake any task even if they are extremely painful:

“Even if it happens as far as to suffering and crucifixion His Lord will come for his sake until He finds him” (FMC I 195-196).

At Eden, Adam was the lost sheep. These questions at Eden were part of the search for the lost sheep, Adam.

IV. 1. F. 9. The verdict

Besides the creation, the placement of Adam in Eden, the gift of law etc. – as explicit realizations of God’s mercy – yet another major event, in which the mercy of God had manifested, according to the poet, was the moment when God declared the verdict against Adam. Usually pronouncements of verdicts are occasions for retributions. Hence, it may be paradoxical to consider the verdict of God an occasion of the overflow of His mercy. But in the poet’s opinion, God availed even the time of the declaration of the judgment against Adam for imparting His mercy towards him. The poet has to write a lot when he speaks of the unique feature of God’s mercy:
“He (Adam) sinned but He (God) did not curse him, since His love (hubo) was with him, He did not hate him: not to curse him, He cursed the earth on account of him” (FMC I 225-226), and “He (God) smote the earth, so that Adam, who went astray, should not be scourged, for, by means of its (earth’s) scourging, he would have repented without being beaten” (FMC III 935-936).

This curse caused to spring forth thorns and thistles on the earth. When Adam was thrown towards the earth and was forced to walk upon it, these thorns inflicted him pain. The poet sees it as God’s compassionate attempt to show him how the word of God takes shape at once and as a considerate reminding of Adam’s sin and as a token of constant invitation for his repentance:

“The thorns pierced Adam while he was running, so that, he should understand that the curse of his Lord had already been fulfilled on the face of the earth. At his expulsion the stings of the field inflicted him pain, so that, he should recollect the about the produce (product) which his rebellion had brought in” (FMC III 1073-1076).

By this Mar Jacob points out that even the painful events in human life are also the conveyances of God’s mercy. The poet feels from God’s verdict His softness and tenderness rather than His harshness. This is clear from his statement,

“Lest He should curse him, He showed softness (rapyo) and brought him in” (FMC I 228).

IV. 1. F. 10. The punishments

Legal penalties are always understood as inflictions of pain imposed by a competent authority upon an offender according to the severity of his crime. Usually compassion and punishment do not go hand in hand. Since Mar Jacob cannot but think of God as the fullness of compassion, he perceives the abundance of mercy even in God’s punishments against Adam and Eve. The love of God did not allow Him to sentence the offenders at the Garden as seriously as their sin:
“The punishment which Eve received from the Judge was soft; it was not as grievous as the transgression and her revolt. She was beaten there with the straps of mercy (‘arqe draḥme) when it was stretched out: the love (ḥubo) had borne feeble staff (sabta zuro) and scourged her (mildly)” (III 897-900).

And while describing God’s announcements of punishments on Adam, the poet says,

“Again, the judgment was lovingly (ḥabiboit) abated by the mercy (raḥme)” (FMC III 922),

and “Because they have sinned against Him, He casts them out of Paradise” (FMC III 1021).

Through these statements Mar Jacob was disclosing the fact that God’s punishments are natural consequences of man’s transgressions. Even then, they are meant neither to curtail nor to inflict him nor to destroy him, but they are intended to be measures for man to turn towards God and be saved. God punishes very softly; but when man receives it without discerning the intention of God, he feels it painful. But when he recognizes the intention of God, even the punishments can be felt soft.

IV. 1. F. 11. The Expulsion from Paradise

Human interpretation of the casting out of Adam from Paradise may be part of the punishment for his sin. But Mar Jacob interprets it as a positive and kind-hearted response from the part of God. Analysing the judgment he says,

“When He cast him out He did not cast out an enemy (b’eldbobo); but He raised up a friend (roḥmo) a little near to His beloved one (ḥabibo) (Christ)” (FMC I 229-230).

It was only natural that the first parents deserve severe punishments for their crime. But, God is not cruel so as to multiply the humiliations and sufferings of man; instead, His love always appears in order to glorify man and to give him all possibilities for recovery from the fall. Out
of justice, the criminals ought to be punished; at the same time, the mercy of God does not tolerate infliction upon man. The poet illustrates how this dilemma was overcome:

“Because they have sinned against Him, He casts them out of Paradise, but affectionately (habiboit) His hand covers their nakedness. The love (hubo) had been mercifully (rahmonoit) mixed with His wrath of judgment, for, He clothed them and at the same time led them out in order to expel them” (FMC III 1021-1024).

As one goes through the mimre, he will surely come across some exegetical comments of the poet which will be contrary to the common understanding on certain events and themes. It is commonly understood that the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise was out of the wrath of God and as a punishment imposed on them. Discerning well the kind-heartedness of God and as against the common estimation, he explains it as,

“And He expelled them from Paradise filled with joy (mlo haduto)” (FMC III 1040).

This joy should not be understood as sadism of God on the implementation of His superiority and the punishing authority over His creatures or on seeing their grief due to the pain inflicted upon them. But this joy, as the poet understands, is derived form the hope of their return to the Paradise through their repentance. This joy of God is also based on the mercy which emanates from Him at the time when He sends His only begotten son to save them.

Another such different exegesis of the poet, other than the ordinary understanding, was on the very incident of expulsion. While every one identifies it with a chastisement with a whip, the poet finds it as a gracious procedure of God for the greater benefit of the human race. If Adam and Eve continued living in the Garden, according to the poet, they would certainly have disobediently approached the tree again, plucked the fruit and have ruined eternally. Thus he says,

“He expelled them, so that, they shall never approach the tree of life” (FMC III 1041).
Moreover, if they were not sent out from Paradise, they would never repent and regain eternal life. Through further analysis Mar Jacob opens wider the vessel of God’s clemency:

“He Willed this (way), because, He will give them life out of His grace (taybuto) but they should repent when their faithlessness was revealed. He did not allow them to approach the tree of life, for, perchance they might live rebelliously from it forever” (FMC III 1043-1046).

Thus according to the poet, it was only advantageous that they were expelled from the Garden.

Even though Mar Jacob of Sarug expounds in a better manner the providence behind the expulsion of the first parents from Paradise, we cannot attribute the exclusivity of this thought on him. All the early fathers of the Church viewed every act of God only positively: for them even God’s punishments are also means of outpouring His grace. Thus we see that Mar Jacob was following his predecessors, especially Mar Ephrem, who also, in his Hymns on Paradise gives the same idea on the reason behind the expulsion of Adam from the Paradise.\textsuperscript{1085} Mar Ephrem views the tree of knowledge as a fence that hinders the intruders towards the tree of life.\textsuperscript{1086} When that fence was broken by the commission of the sin of Adam and Eve, God appointed the Cherub to protect the tree of life. Mar Ephrem also gives the same note on the reason behind the expulsion of Adam; “The Just one saw how Adam had become audacious because he had been lenient, and He knew that he would overstep again if He continued thus; Adam had trampled down that gentle and pleasant boundary, so instead God made for him a boundary guarded by force”\textsuperscript{1087}

IV. 1. F. 12. \textbf{The mortification}

On the basis of the mercy of God, the poet has a positive explanation for the humiliation also which fell upon the guilty when they were sent out from the luxury of the

\textsuperscript{1085} Brock, \textit{Hymns on Paradise}, Hymn IV.1.
\textsuperscript{1086} Ibid, Hymn III. 3.
\textsuperscript{1087} Ibid, Hymn IV.1.
garden to the scarcity and difficulties of the earth. Their degradation was intentional, but it was not to add more shame on them. On the other hand it was to channelize the fountain of the kindness of God towards them. It was an occasion for the mercy of God to go sky-high, because, the mercy has less chance to effect in a state of uprightness, because justice of God has more chance to prevail over there. But in a state of humiliation the mercy can flow as a deluge upon the mortified. So the poet argues,

“He expelled them to the cursed earth (ar‘o dlitō) to be humbled, so that, when they were brought low, the Merciful one (hanono) will come and look after them” (FMC III 1047-1048).

Thus the humiliation was for glorification through the mercy of God.

IV. 1. F. 13. The curses

A curse (lavţto) is commonly regarded as a violent expression of the evil upon others; hence, it is considered an imperfect act. But, God, being the supreme perfection, can’t do an imperfect act like uttering a curse. So, Mar Jacob denies that the pronouncements of God against Adam were curses:

“Since He (God) honoured him (Adam), He did not curse (lo lut) him when he went astray” (FMC I 235).

In this context, Mar Jacob gives explanations to the so called curses (lavţoto) of God.

The pronouncement of God against Adam,

“You are dust and through death you will return to dust” (FMC III 953)

is ordinarily regarded as a curse (lavţto) on Adam and also as an amputation of all the powers which were granted to him. But the poet likes to see in it a flow of the streams of God’s mercy. In his estimation, it was a merciful attempt of God to teach Adam:

“The Lord wisely ascertained the notch of His judgment (g‘zar dino),

1088 Cf. 2 Sam. 16/5 ff.
1089 Cf. Gen. 3/19.
for, through the curses (lavqoto), He was dealing with admonition” (FMC III 949-950).

The reason why God evoked the matter of dust, according to the poet, was,

“Through this, He was wisely pointing out to him many things” (FMC III 958).

Imaginatively the poet assesses that a few previous events which happened in the garden after the creation of Adam, such as birth of Eve from him, entrusting of the Garden for his care, naming the animal and birds created by God etc.\(^{1090}\) might have caused Adam to boast himself as a mighty being. But this pronouncement of God taught Adam the reality; the weakness and meekness of his nature in comparison with that of God (FMC III 953-970). Moreover, it was an occasion of the revelation of Adam’s root:

“Until then Adam did not know which his origin (tuhmo) was and He was revealing him that his clod (qulo’o) is assumed from the earth (ara’o)” (FMC III 951-952).

Mar Jacob explains in detail the various meanings of ‘dust’\(^{1091}\) (FMC III 953-970) with the intention of disclosing the mercy of God that is hidden in His curses. It is very interesting to note the exegetical expertise of the poet that turns every event, even apparently negative, into the praises of God’s mercy.

IV. 1. F. 14. Posting of the Cherub with the sword of flame

Mar Jacob writes,

“He saw a cherub who was glowing and bearing a sword to guard the way, that is (towards) the tree which had borne life” (FMC III 1053-1054).

This cherub was appointed by God.\(^{1092}\) This awful sight terrified Adam and Eve:

“The fearful vision, which they saw there, had hastened them” (FMC III 1061).


\(^{1091}\) Connotations of ‘dust’ are elaborated in the segment, “Anthropological Concepts in the Mimre”, p. 287 ff.

\(^{1092}\) Cf. Gen. 3/24.
But the poet asserts that this too was another scheme of God which would reveal His mercy. Roberta C. Chesnut points out Mar Jacob’s narrations on a mountain of fire or a fiery wall or a sea of fire that separates Adam or human being from God besides Mar Jacob’s narrations on the appointment of the Cherub with a fiery sword to guard the Garden in the mimre\textsuperscript{1093} as well as the occupation of the Garden of Eden by the angels substituting; “Adam was driven out of the garden and set to live on earth, separated from Eden, not only by an enormous mountain of fire and a cherub with as word, but also by a great and dangerous sea of fire which could not be crossed over. At the same time, some of the Cherubim and/or the watchers came o live in Eden, usurping the place of Adam”\textsuperscript{1094}

In order to show different facets of the kind-heartedness of God, even in apparently frightening events, and also to make people aware of the manners of God’s works, the poet compares the flight of Adam from paradise with a later similar event, the escape of Lot from Sodom,

“Was it not in this manner Lot hurried and went out from Sodom? ” (FMC III 1063).

He was alluding to Gen. 19/15-16, where it is explained how Lot was saved by the mercy of God.

It was not to punish Lot that the angel of the Lord took him and his family out of Sodom, but it was a precaution for him from the total ruin along with the fellow Sodomites. The hastening made by the angel might have scared Lot, but the scripture says that the expulsion from Sodom was only out of God’s concern towards him.\textsuperscript{1095} The poet applies this mind of God to the similar occurrences in the Garden, where Adam and Eve saw the awful

\textsuperscript{1093} The poet’s notions on the spiritual beings, especially on Angels are discussed in the section, “Narrations on the Non-corporeal beings”, p. 483 ff.

\textsuperscript{1094} Chesnut, \textit{Three Monophysite Christologies}, 114.

\textsuperscript{1095} Cf. Gen. 19/16.
appearance of the angel. Even though the angel had chased and hastened them from Eden according to the order of God, the poet claims it as,

“Like that, (like Lot was saved by being expelled from Sodom)\textsuperscript{1096}, he (angel) was urged to drive Adam away from Paradise” (FMC III 1064).

This was to save his life from everlasting and inescapable disasters; otherwise he would have revolted more rebelliously and gained eternal punishment (FMC III 1043-1046).

Here, there are many reasons for the poet to compare the event of Lot with the flight of Adam from the garden. i) In both the cases the presence of an angel is noticeable. ii) As usual the angels were sent by God. iii) These angels led them out from where they had been so far. iv) In these two incidents the angels make hurry to take them out. v) They were asked to go out with their family. vi) The women of the families (Eve and daughters of Lot)\textsuperscript{1097} become the reason for the banish. vii) Lot was not allowed to look back\textsuperscript{1098} and regarding Adam, the poet says,

“And when he (Adam) was going out, it was impossible (for him) to look back” (FMC III 1066).

viii) The presence of fire; the fire which burnt Sodom and the fiery sword in the garden. ix) The intention behind the eviction was to save them from the forthcoming punishments. In all these similarities what holds our attention is the mercy of God that expels them in order to save them.

IV. 1. F. 15. Honouring the culprit

Rewarding a wrongdoer with blessings is undoubtedly a contradiction, because the culprits deserve punishments. The justice of God is the basis of His punishments, but His mercy forgives them and takes care of them. The mercy of the Lord had not only saved the

\textsuperscript{1096} Cf. Gen. 19/1 ff.
\textsuperscript{1097} Cf. Gen.19/8.
\textsuperscript{1098} Cf. Gen. 19/26.
lawbreakers from severe punishment, but to a certain extent, it rewarded them also. How much immense was the quantity of God’s mercy, as the poet felt it, is evident from his invocation:

“The Good one (tobo) who gave inheritance, a garden of blessings (ganko dtube), to the one who did not obey Him; teach me also, so that, I may sing your discourse, even though I am unworthy” (FMC III 3-4).

Based on the Garden event, especially the clothing and the expulsion of Adam and Eve, Mar Jacob draws out the coolest, innovatory and the most beneficial theory on God’s mercy:

God respects even a culprit. To emphasise this, the poet writes,

“Even when he (Adam) went astray, he was precious (yaqir) to Him when He looked upon (kur) him” (FMC I 224)

and

“Since He (God) honoured (yaqir) him (Adam), He did not curse him when he went astray” (FMC I 235).

And also, the poet sees that God was so careful to show not even a sign of hatred towards Adam:

“He took pain to show him that He did not hate him, because, if He had hated him He would have neither clothed nor covered him.” (FMC I 233-234).

Because, the new cloth by which they were clothed by God was immeasurably more precious, durable, convenient, beautiful and glorious than that of the tunic of leaves (FMC III 681-682). Giving this kind of new garment to them He was honouring them and through it His unique and unending mercy was proclaimed.

IV. 1. F. 16. Promise of the restitution

Another blossom which flourished from the mercy of God and gave sweet fragrance for the whole human race was the guarantee of the resurrection for Adam. The poet explores the meaning of the verse, “You will return towards your earth and you will become dust”1099 (FMC

1099 Gen. 3/19.
III 979) not as a total annihilation of the image of Adam into the smallest particles of the earth, but as a promise for his resurrection. In this sense Mar Jacob writes,

“But in resurrection you will give praise to the mercy (raḥme), (because)
   How much it pitied (ḥan) on you.
The Creator placed this purpose when He condemned Adam” (FMC III 980-981).

From the circumstantial indications, the poet infers from this masked curse an ocean of God’s mercy for the restoration of Adam:

“If He had not willed to make restitution for them,
   He would have expelled them naked from Paradise.
If He had not intended to introduce them to return
   He would have driven them out exposed as if in wrath” (FMC III 1029-1032).

Mar Jacob considers the new garment which God had woven (FMC III 1026) for the first parents after their sin was a symbol not only of God’s concern for them and just for a temporary use to cover their nakedness, but as a mark of their glory which they would receive at their resurrection:

“He wove a garment for the thieves even when they were guilty.
If He behaved in wrath with (against) the condemned ones,
   He would not have cared to clothe them when they were exposed” (FMC III 1026-1028).
“Because He saw him naked, He gave him cloth.
And through these He beckoned to him about the restitution which He brings in for him at the time that is set for him to return.
In this manner the Lord loved (aḥeb) Adam from the beginning and what He did towards him at the end testifies this” (FMC I 236-240).

This shows that God’s love and mercy are not provisional and momentary but it is stable and everlasting as well as schematic.\textsuperscript{1100}

IV. 1. F. 17. \textbf{The new fabric – gift of God’s mercy}

The Scripture says, “Also, for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them”.\textsuperscript{1101} Mar Jacob finds that the main aim of clothing Adam and Eve with new

\textsuperscript{1100} See above in this section, ‘Unchangeable mercy of God’.
clothes woven by God, besides as the marks of honouring the culprit and promise of restitution, was to cover their nakedness and to eradicate their poverty. So, one of the greatest occurrences of God’s compassion towards man, in the poet’s opinion, was the clothing ceremony.1102

The poet assesses that along with their shame of nakedness due to their sin, the poverty which they felt in the garden made them beggars also (FMC III 635, 649). In such an extremely wretched situation God felt pity on them. Mar Jacob’s appraisal on how much unfathomable, unique, unchangeable1103 tolerant and concerned is God’s mercy can be understood from his elucidation on what happened in the Garden:

“The Merciful one had seen the shame which had covered them and He did not put force to expel them stripped. The Creator had woven the garments, which were not out of something, and He clothed them, so that, their nakedness should become chaste ” (FMC III 995-998).

This clothing becomes a gracious act of God, also in respect of its inherent reaction against Satan who stripped them and put them into shame:

“It is this (flesh) which was exposed and it is this (flesh) which the garment of glory is being clothed in order to put its enemy to shame by the mercy (rahme) which inclined towards it (flesh) when it (flesh) will be resuscitated” (FMC IV 455-456).

The new garment, which later understood as skin by Adam and Eve (FMC III 1002), remains as the eternal monument of the mercy of God, because, the poet asserts it as,

“But, on account of His mercy (rahme), He clothed them as sons ..... but, on account of grace (taybuto), His other hand weaves a garment..... but, out of love (hubo), He weaves the cloak to clothe them...... affectionately (habiboit) His hand covers their nakedness....” (FMC III 1016-1022) etc.

By explaining all these emergences of God’s mercy the poet wishes to point to a single fact; the initiation and source of the mercy is only from God and all these show that man is not even

1101 Gen. 3/21.
1102 Importance of divine garments in the salvation history is discussed under the heading ‘Cyclic History of the garments’ in the section, “Eschatological Perceptions of the Poet”, p. 615 ff.
1103 See above in this section.
conscious of the utmost need of God’s mercy for his salvation and eternal life.

IV. 1. G. **God’s Righteousness and Mercy**

As the poet analyses the happenings in the garden, he compares the two essential characters of God; His righteousness (kinuto) and mercy (rahme). He doesn’t dare to deny or conceal God’s truthful judgements. Because God being the perfect Being, righteousness is the essential part of His perfection; He cannot but be just.

IV. 1. G. 1. **Scriptural basis**

God as the righteousness one can been seen in different places in the Holy Scripture like “Just and true are Your ways, O, king of the saints”\(^{1104}\) and Jesus Christ himself entitles His Father “Oh, righteous Father”.\(^{1105}\) But the poet always sings in tune with the melody of the psalmist, out of whose conviction and experience uses to describe God as merciful and at the same time righteous: “Righteousness and Justice are the foundations of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face”,\(^{1106}\) “The Lord is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works”\(^{1107}\) etc.

IV. 1. G. 2. **Mar Jacob’s contrast**

Even though the poet recognizes the existence of these two natures in God as the psalmist had sung, for the poet, His mercy (rahme) excels His righteousness (kinuto). Here, we understand that Mar Jacob has fully conceived the value of the gem in the teaching of St.

\(^{1104}\) Rev. 15/3.
\(^{1105}\) Jn. 17/25.
\(^{1106}\) Ps. 89/14.
\(^{1107}\) Ps. 147/17.
James, who said, “Mercy triumphs over judgement”.1108 So, according to the poet, whenever God expresses His righteousness (kinuto) His mercy (rahme) also emanates at once and God’s all Judgements are only out of His mercy. So the poet says,

“Through these mercies (rahme) Eve was scourged there” (FMC III 919).

He continues,

“Whenver He inflicted her pain while He smote her vehemently,
it (mercy) turned and soothed her pleasantly, lest she should faint” (FMC III 901-902).

In this case, if God had punished her solely out of His Justice, it would have been intolerable; but along with the pain of punishment God gave her the promise of a child which, according to the poet, delighted her in an amount immeasurably multiplied than the pain of punishment (FMC III 903-906).1109 From this the poet tells how God acts,

“By one scourge He pained her severely;
by another strap He comforted her mercifully (raḥmonoīt)” (FMC III 907-908).

He also states the reason behind this nature of God,

“He gave Eve the lovely gifts and vigorous punishments,
so that, by means of the gifts she should forget the grief which He bestowed upon her.
He coupled the beloved children and the severe punishment together,
so that, when she become wearied, she should forget these (pain) on account of these (gifts)” (FMC III 915-918).

In the mimre, the unfolding of the scene of the proclamation of the punishment on Adam is not only an occasion of the revelation of Mar Jacob’s outweighed fascination on God’s mercy (rahme) than on His righteousness (kinuto), but it is as well a disclosure of how much he is imaginative and artistic in his creation. Here, the mercy of God is poetically pictured as a bird which spreads its wings and covers Adam and instead of him the bird receives the scourging which was effected out of God’s righteousness (FMC III 923-925). Thus the mercy (rahme) of the Lord protected Adam as a shield otherwise he would have been burnt up in the fire of wrath

1108 Jas. 2/13.
1109 Cf. Gen. 3/15
when it would have burst out from the righteousness of God and as per the gravity of his sin (FMC III 927-930). The poet describes how the mercy of God saves Adam from the destructive punishment:

“The quiver of wrath (qìrı̇qo ḏugzo) which was against the serpent was emptied and when it was about to come to befall on Adam, it completely came to an end” (FMC III 931-932).

Again, the poet narrates how the mercy of God had diverted the rage of Justice which would have been fallen on Adam, towards the earth:

“The staff (s.bat) was lifted up by the Judge against the guilty but, the mercy (h̀ono) had arrived, withheld it (staff) from him and threw it (judgement) down onto the earth” (FMC III 933-934).

If God’s justice (kinuto) and His benevolence (raḥme) can be considered two sides of a weighing balance, Mar Jacob would definitely say that God’s kindness (raḥme) outweighs His justice (kinuto). It was only natural that out of His Justice (kinuto) God expelled Adam and Eve from paradise (III 1015) and logically they should have gone out exposed (FMC III 994). But the poet says,

“His mercifulness (mercy) (mraḥmonuto) is much more than His rebuke (mar˚uto)” (FMC III 1025).

The uniqueness of God’s mercy, according to the poet, is that it is being poured out on all irrespective of their disposition whether they are pure or culpable. In order to disclose this greatness of God’s grace, he writes,

“He wove a garment for the thieves even when they were guilty” (FMC III 1026).

This clothing of Adam and Eve with the new garment of glory was a concrete realization of God’s filial mercy:

“On account of His mercy (raḥme), He clothed them as sons (children).” (FMC III 1016).

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The poet is excited to make a conclusion on the theme of the relation between the righteousness and mercy in God so as to applaud at the upper hand of God’s kindness over His justice; he declares:

“By the mercy (rahme) of the Judge (dayono), the judgment (dino) was put to death (šlem) and the accusation (marsuṭo) also had been put on (ṣqal) its end (soko) at the guilty (ḥayobō)” (FMC III 983-984).

Thus the poet categorically says that what only exists eternally will be the mercy of God.

**Conclusion**

“Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful”\(^{1111}\) and “God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us ....”\(^{1112}\) The whole attempt of Mar Jacob in the Four Mimre ‘On Creation’ is to see the amount of the richness of God’s mercy as it is seen in these and many other similar verses of the Scripture as well as to disclose how it appears in the manifestations of God’s works. Since it is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who reveals about the fundamental characteristics of His Father, it cannot but be true and perfect, because He is the eyewitness of the merciful activities of the Father as well as the one who involved equally in all of them. Also, the Gospel of Grace, as said by St. Paul,\(^{1113}\) had instigated the poet to go deep into the sweetness of the mercy of God. The result of the investigation of the poet, even though ‘investigation’ is not a favourable term for him\(^{1114}\) only accentuates the statement of Jesus Christ about His Father. As he himself said in the mimre about the limitation of the container to hold the richness of God’s mercy (FMC III 159), what hindered the poet from being garrulous in narrating and enlisting all the merciful activities of

\(^{1111}\) Lk. 6/36.

\(^{1112}\) Eph. 2/4.

\(^{1113}\) Cf. Gal. 2/1ff.

\(^{1114}\) Mar Jacob fears that even an attempt of investigating God is improper; see ‘Pious Poet’ in the section, “Man behind the Book”, p. 150 ff.
God was the limitation of the scope of the mimre which he had to limit only on the topic of creation, fall and resuscitation of Adam. The poetical and exegetical calibre of Mar Jacob could have produced unlimited volumes on the mercy of God if he had attempted to go through all the merciful manifestations of God throughout the history. The picture of the poet that emerges from the verses of the mimre is of the one who is fascinated and thrilled to illustrate the unending flow of God’s mercy.

Mar Jacob wants to shape the image of God only in the mould of mercy and he has no other pigment to paint the picture of God. For him, all the attributes of God ranks only below His mercy and all the powers of God are channelized only through the stream of His mercy. Every moment, occurrence, movement and experience in history are only manifestations of God’s mercy. For him, the whole mind, design, words, involvements, manifestation and activities of God are coated with the honey of the mercy of God. Thus, for him, even the ever most agonizing words of the verdict against Adam and Eve at the Garden and the ever most hurt and humiliated feeling of their expulsion from there are only melodies of God’s sweetness. So, even though Mar Jacob does not make a clear cut distinction between the love and mercy of God, the mimre gives us the picture that he is more favourable to call Him the God of mercy than the God of love. On the basis of the illustrations of the poet on the mercy of God, we cannot but defend the one who argues that Mar Jacob had limited the whole attributes of God into only one; His mercifulness, because he often narrates that the mercy of God as an urge within Him (FMC I 31) directs all other powers of God and pushes Him to act (I 39).1116

Here also, the platform on which Mar Jacob bases his treatises on God’s mercy is the image of God in man. Whenever the poet narrates that God showed or showered mercy upon man, he only means that God turned towards Himself, because man is the image and likeness of God in man.

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1115 See above in this section, ‘God’s righteousness and mercy’.
1116 See above.
of God. The various descents of God towards man, for the creation, redemption, resuscitation etc., become more significant only on this criterion. The high-priced deliverance of the only begotten Son on the cross for the redemption of man also becomes the most dazzling monument of God’s mercy only on this basis.

Although the range of the topic is limited to only a few events related to Adam, Mar Jacob is cent percent successful in bringing up almost all the characteristics of the mercy of God. Mar Jacob goes even to the extent of saying that even when the commandments of God are changeable, His mercy is immutable. The intention of Mar Jacob in bringing in many events from the history, where one finds that God repeats His own actions, was not to point out the failure of God in establishing His Will, but all of them were for exhibiting the immensity of God’s mercy which goes to any extreme for the sake of man. The illustration of the poet on God’s mercy in very common terms, like comparing it with the caring of a nurse, with the covering of a wing-spread mother bird etc. will certainly pour into the ears of the audience a melody of lullaby. The Four Mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ provides the reader the perfect insight that our God cannot but be merciful.

\[1117\] This topic is discussed in the segment, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 249 ff.
Chapter IV  Section 2

Narrations on the non-corporal beings

Introduction

Even though the Four Mimre of Mar Jacob of Sarug is ‘On creation’, as he goes on narrating it, he can’t but speak on spiritual beings. As usual, his source of information on them is the Holy Scripture. But out of those raw materials he furnishes castles with the pearls of his imagination. In his expositions on non-corporal beings angels, Satan, etc. are included. Even though the serpent is, in fact, a corporal organism, it being the embodiment of the Satan, the poet relates many characters of Satan to the serpent also. So, in order to have a comprehensive picture on the views of the poet on Satan we have to discuss on the serpent also here in this section.

IV. 2. A. Angels

Among the spiritual beings angels are the most beloved ones. Mar Jacob speaks of their nature, their place among other beings, their categories, assignments etc. Mar Jacob describes the archangel as a household member of God in his homily ‘On Nativity’; there, while disclosing the dream of Joseph to Mary, he writes, “A servant of your Son announced all these things in my ears. The archangel is a household member of His and he has demonstrated to me”.1118

The poet establishes that anything and everything other than God, is created by Him and thus all spiritual beings are also included among the creatures. He does not say directly

1118 Kollampampil, Jacob of Sarug’s Homily on the Nativity, 92.
how angels are created by God. But the poet’s notion on the creation of angels can be deduced from the narrations he makes on Satan:

“The King imprinted (tḥa’) him in the same die (muniṭo) of the house of Gabriel and his Goldsmith (ḥasolo) fashioned (taqen) (him) as the images of the house of Michael” (FMC III 63-64).

The poet understands that the angels are celestial beings (ṣmayono) (FMC III 138, 149) and it is God who assigned this place for them (FMC I 255). Theirs is a blessed (briko) (FMC III 74) and glorious (ṣbiḥo) rank (FMC III 72, 90, 149). In number they are innumerable and they remain as troops (tęgmo) (FMC IV 240-241, 253, 261, 263) and the poet calls it ‘thousands and thousands’ (alep alpin) (FMC III 76). The poet mentions some of their offices as archangel (riṣ maloko) (FMC IV 249), vigilant watchers (‘iro) (FMC III 74, 77, 139, 145, IV 239, III 1049 ff.) etc. and cites some of their names such as Gabriel (FMC II 69, III 63, 65, 68, 86, 451, IV 261), Michael (FMC II 179, III 64, IV 263), and some names of the troops like Cherub (FMC III 1053) etc.

IV. 2. A. 1. Nature of Angels

Mar Jacob indirectly emphasises the immortality of the angels:

“All, if Gabriel were to sin, let it not happen, there will not be a chance (place) for death to approach him” (FMC II 69-70).

He confirms that they are pure,

“Gabriel and the angels are purer than Satan” (FMC III 86, 59)

and mentioning the holiness of the angels the poet opines that Satan also is expected to be holy like the angels (FMC III 171-172). They are also honourable (tōb) (FMC III 447), powerful (ḥayłtono) (FMC III 1055), furious (FMC III 1056), terrifying (FMC III 1058, 1061, 1065 ff.), with wings to fly (FMC IV 239, 242) etc. Most frequently Mar Jacob draws the picture of angels as the fiery ones:
“He (Adam) saw a cherub who was glowing (msalheb) and had borne a sword” (FMC III 1053),
“That fiery one (norono) was set on fire (gavzel) against Adam” (FMC III 1059),
“Ardent multitudes, which are the flames (salahabito), come with Him; the clouds of light (‘none dnuhro) will carry Him in great tremble” (FMC IV 253-254, 244, 440,) etc.

In his other works also Mar Jacob portrays angels as the fiery ones. In his homily ‘On Nativity’ while narrating the flight of the angel towards Joseph, we see, “He blew like wind and flew on high like lightning and reached him. He was inflamed like fire, resounded like thunder and spoke with him. He became a man and brought forth lightning from his flame. He shone forth like sun and filled the house with his flashing light. The light of flame flashed out and Joseph was shaken”.1119 Even when possessing all these characters, according to the poet, they tremble before the sight of God:

“The legions of angels and also the magnitudes tremble (zue) and He hastens them” (FMC IV 241).

The poet indicates another limitation of the angels, that is, they are unable to comprehend the mysteries of God:

“Even the angels can not comprehend (sayek) your narration” (FMC II 27).

IV. 2. A. 2. Duties of Angels

From the mimre we infer that the poet sees that the angels are assigned as messengers (izgado) (III 438, 447), watcher (‘iro) of Paradise (FMC III 1049, 1053-1054, 1058, 1067), singers (zamoro) (FMC IV 264), one who is asked to cast out the culprits (FMC III 1060-1061), one who accompanies God (FMC IV 239 ff), executes the will of God (FMC IV 243 ff), makes loud voice (FMC IV 249), blows the trumpet (FMC IV 250-252, 264), carries clouds of fire (FMC IV 254) etc. The poet establishes in his homily ‘On Nativity’ another duty of the

1119 Ibid, 90.
IV. 2. B. Satan

The Four Mimre of Mar Jacob ‘On Creation’ reveals that he has to say much more on Satan, even though they are scornful, than on angels. The fire of fury of the poet can be seen aflame against Satan. This mind of the poet is visible in his verse,

“Now, therefore, I have to say more or less on the spoiler (ganobo) who revolted against and transgressed the commandment” (FMC III 19-20).

He utilizes in his mimre all possible harsh words to stone Satan in order to react against his wickedness. The reasons behind this rage against Satan are i) he rebelled against and disobeyed the will of God, ii) he fell down from the rank of celestial beings, iii) he seduced Adam and Eve and iv) he continues his same work among men through out the ages. From the narrations of the poet on Satan, one can infer his impressions on the nature of Satan, the methods of his action, the gravity of his wickedness, the warnings and punishments against him etc.

IV. 2. B. 1. Origin and basic nature of Satan

Keeping in mind the scriptural passages on the origin of Satan as he was also created by God, and looking at his pathetic fallen state after his revolt, Mar Jacob feels badly with him. The main passage from the Scripture on which Mar Jacob bases his treatises on Satan and the serpent is the words of Jesus Christ: “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it”. Mar Jacob highlights these two main
faces of Satan; the killer (qotulo) and the liar (sagoro), in his mimre. Satan is pictured in the mimre as the killer (qotulo) of the image\textsuperscript{1123} and as the one who distorts the truths into lies.\textsuperscript{1124} The incidents happened in the Garden of Eden is the best example of the implementation of both these main characteristics of Satan. On this basis Mar Jacob distinguishes the characteristics of Satan.

IV. 2. B. 1. i. Satan was an angel

Like the angels, Satan was also created by God as one among them:

\textit{“The King imprinted (tbae) him in the same die (munito) of the house of Gabriel}
\textit{and his Goldsmith (hasolo) fashioned (taqen) (him) as the images of the house of Michael” (FMC III 63-64, 171).}

He was pure and spiritual as the angels are:

\textit{“God created him without error (lo to’yuto) like a spiritual being (ruhono)” (FMC III 59, 65, 68, 145, 149)}

and he ought to remain in his purity forever (\textit{FMC III 172}). Prior to his fall he enjoyed all eminences of an angel:

\textit{“And among the ranks, the wicked one had been united (hlit) with the angels (malako)” (FMC III 90).}

Similar to the angels, the quantity of Satan is innumerable and they remain as troop (tegmo) (\textit{FMC III 80, 81}). And Mar Jacob enlists some of the legions among them:

\textit{“Demons, devils and Satan, along with them the wicked one ..” (FMC II 65)}

IV. 2. B. 1. ii. Freeborn

The freedom of Satan is ascertained in the mimre:

\textsuperscript{1123} In the sense that when one follows Satan and commits sin, then the image of God in him is being killed by Satan. Also see the section “Sin as the Soteriological Causality”, p. 547. The same notion is further discussed below in this section.

\textsuperscript{1124} See a discussion on the topic below in this segment.
"since he was freeborn (bar hiro) from the beginning ....." (FMC III 58)

and it was in his freedom he made all his wickedness (FMC III 44, 48, 99-103, 176). Thus the poet emphasises,

"For, behold, the perverse way (uraho ptilto), through which he travelled, was from himself" (FMC III 62, 92),

"It was he (Satan) who Willed, revolted, desired, deviated, fell in error and ventured" (FMC III 57),

"That, it is in his freedom (hiruto), Satan turned aside and deceived Adam" (FMC III 44) etc.

The poet again ascertains,

"Hence it was not God who appointed him to seduce the people " (FMC III 56, 88, 99).

The poet opines that Satan would have been blameless if he had been appointed by God for seducing the house of Adam (FMC III 29-42, 59 ff), but since he was not expected to do so, and he did every wickedness out of his freedom, he has no excuse. But Satan abused this gift of freewill. He tried in vain to raise himself up above God and also to become the head of the angels:

"One alone among the company (tegmo) was made by himself the head (riso) of the watchers (angels)" (FMC III 77).

Thus, since he apostatized (sto) (III 84), obviously he had undergone judgement (dino) (FMC III 47-55, 96, 102, 156), consequently he was dethroned (shap) from his celestial rank (gudo) (FMC III 95), expelled from heaven and separated from the company of the angels (FMC III 144-145), and had fallen down from his exalted status and thus he was thrown into the abyss of Sheol (FMC III 139). The following lines from the mimre also underline these notions of the poet on Satan:

"And from the rank (sedro) of the glorious watchers (‘ire sbihe) (angels), the wicked one (biso) had slipped away (sra’)” (FMC III 72,136, 139, 153),

"He fell down (npal) there, from that rank (dargo) of the celestial beings (smayone)” (FMC III 138, 143, 149),

and “The whole troop (tegmo) which joined with him had slipped (sra’) after him” (FMC III 80).
According to the poet, Satan, who, prior to the fall, was regarded as pure and fragrant as that of an angel, had become an inflicting instrument after the fall:

“And from that blessed field (haqlo) of watchers (angels) a thorn (kubo) had sprung up (švah)” (FMC III 74).

IV. 2. B. 1. iii. **Immortal**

Satan possesses immortality, the intrinsic nature of the spiritual being:

“Behold Satan, who being immortal (lo moyuto), is unable to die (lo m-še moet), even while not keeping the commandment from afore time, he lives while causing to err (hay kad met’o)” (FMC II 47-48, 65-66, 68, 93, 97).

But the poet attributes this immortality to Satan in a negative sense, because this immortality is not based on the life of God, but it is only longevity of existence in punishment and only a life totally cut off from God. It cannot be compared with the immortality of Adam\textsuperscript{1125} or with that of the angels.

IV. 2. B. 2. **Attributes of Satan**

Besides narrating in the mimre the essential characteristics of Satan, the poet attributes on him several other features which are deduced from his performances; none of them are pleasing, but all of them are meant to attack and condemn him.

IV. 2. B. 2. i. **Perverted**

Satan, by nature, is perverted (t-’o) and he puts perversions (hapokoto) into the lives of others (III 317 ff). The psycho-analytical mind of the poet\textsuperscript{1126} finds that the basic reason behind all wickedness of Satan is his perverted mind; hence he demonstrates Satan as the sum total of all perversions (hapokoto) (FMC II 97, III 60-62):

\textsuperscript{1125} See the segment, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 272.

\textsuperscript{1126} See under the heading, ‘Psychologist and Psychiatrist’ in the segment, “The Man behind the Book”, p. 164.
“From the beginning itself, the deceitful scribe (sopro nkilo) distorted (ptah) his word, because, all the ways of his teaching were perverted (ptilo)” (FMC III 359-360).

This tainted attitude of Satan provoked him to make an attempt to raise himself above God and the angels (FMC III 247) and the same mind-set led him to lead all others astray and make them fall. Sarcastically Mar Jacob admires the enthusiasm of Satan for his perverted activities:

“Applause is proper to him also, because, how vigorous he is!” (FMC III 32, 31-34), “Behold, he employed well through the gift that was granted to him” (FMC III 38, 40) etc.

IV. 2. B. 2. ii. Killer

The poet opines that Satan is skilful, crafty and wily to kill those who belong to Christ:

“The skilful one went and in his craftiness he put on wile (lbos 'rimo) so that he will bring excellently the good tidings (sbaro), full of death (mavto)” (FMC III 317-318, 24, 323, 329, IV 10).

He is the maker of darkness (‘obudo dhesuko) (FMC IV 14) and the cause and agent of death:

“The wise one for destruction had drawn a base line which begets death (mavled mavto)” (FMC III 329,144, 318, 322, 329).

The poet, estimating that a division in relations causes destruction and death, speaks more against the destructive nature of Satan: he is guilty (II 93, 96) and he is one who makes divisions among relations; first he caused a division among the company of angels:

“Satan divided (sdeq) the unlearned watchers (angels) and deceived Adam.” (FMC III 70),

and then he divided the marital relation between Adam and Eve:

“The malicious one entered and cast division (sedqo) in this marriage (mesuto) (of Adam and Eve)” (FMC IV 175) etc.

IV. 2. B. 2. iii. One who pulls down

Another attribute of the poet on Satan which is drawn in the mimre is that he is so ardent to pull down (those who are exalted, especially in spiritual life (FMC III 22, 137, 140,
According to the poet, Satan, who himself had fallen down (npal), wishes that every one should perish as he was perished (FMC IV 6). Thus the poet asserts:

“Satan fell down (npal) from the rank of the heavenly beings (smayono) and from that blessed rank at Eden, he (Satan) cast Adam down (ahet)” (FMC III 149-150),

“The calumniator had cast down (shap) the one who was existing (qum) in Paradise” (FMC III 141, 145) etc.

IV. 2. B. 2. iv. Crooked

Satan never plans and acts straightforward but always chooses crooked ways to mislead people and achieve his goals. The crookedness of Satan in his actions as well as in his planning is well expressed by the poet from the verses 287 onwards of the third mimre where we see how Satan makes strategies to entrap Adam and Eve and how had confused Eve through distorted questions and led her into ungodly resolutions. Diagnostic expertise of the poet scrutinizes every nook and corner of Satan’s mind and draws each moment of the process of the deception:

“He took the role of an interrogator and approached her in order that the treachery could be told gradually. While he began, he stirred up the discourse in common words, so that, Eve shall be accustomed in his words and then be seduced.” (FMC III 341-344).

IV. 2. B. 2. v. Mask-wearer

The poet discloses the appearances of Satan as if very attractive, approachable and appealing to the people. Mar Jacob states that through masked appearances, which went even to the extent of a god-parent (qaribo) and protector (FMC III 333), caretaker (yōšupō) of virtues (337), a friend (habibo) (FMC III 335), and a learned counsellor (FMC III 363-364), as well as through giving enticing promises he seduced the infant girl, Eve (FMC III 334 ff), the

1127 Cf. 2 Cor. 11/14.
house of Adam (FMC III 30), the people (FMC III 46) etc. Satan was punished by God for the same vicious seduction (FMC III 886, 855).

IV. 2. B. 2. vi. **Spoiler**

The inherent and indispensable trait of Satan is under no circumstances constructive, but it is always destructive and for this reason the poet aptly calls him ‘the skilful one for destruction’ (tuliq lebdon) (FMC III 24, 309, 320). As Jesus Christ taught that the criteria of evaluating man is that which comes out from within him.1128 Whatever comes from Satan reveals his character, which is essentially wickedness, because, he is the embodiment of malice. Hence very often the poet calls him ‘the wicked one’, ‘the evil one’, ‘the malicious one’ (biso) etc. (FMC II 94, III 81, 84, 90, 137, 171, 287, 331, 399, 848, 858, 860, IV 6, 14, 64, 175 etc.). Mar Jacob attributes to Satan the mastery of all wickedness and says,

“*The wicked master (rabo biso) had written the discourse, full of distresses, and he gave it to the accursed disciple in order to ascend and assert it*” (FMC III 327-328).

IV. 2. B. 2. vii. **Fornicator**

The relation between Satan and Eve in the Garden of Eden is conceived by Mar Jacob as that of adultery. Satan approached her in the absence of Adam and he trapped and seduced her through tempting words (FMC III 334 ff). Hence the poet goes to the extent of calling Satan, a fornicator (zanoyo) and Eve, a harlot (zanoyto) (FMC III 17) and he explains it further saying,

“*And she proceeded forth to go with the robber (saboyo) who beckoned (rmaz) her* (FMC III 512).

IV. 2. B. 2. viii. Treacherous

Treachery is the most favourite and successful scheme of action of Satan (FMC III 858). Whatever comes out from Satan is full of treachery.\textsuperscript{1129} According to the poet,

\begin{quote}
"The crafty scribe wrote the letter which was full of treachery (neklo)" (FMC III 323),
\end{quote}

and he whispered treachery in the ears of Eve (FMC IV 176); hence the poet calls him ‘the treacherous one’ (nkilo) (FMC III 22), deceitful devil (bigo nkilo) (FMC III 182, 185, 485) etc. The poet compares the treachery of Adam with the cunningness of a hunter who hides his trap deceptively to ensnare the prey. Here, the poet employs the symbol of a snare to represent the tricky devises of Satan:\textsuperscript{1130}

\begin{quote}
"Like a hunter (ṣayodo), he twined the net and laid the snares (neṣbe) hidden in order to entangle (‘argel) the two partridges (ḥagle) into his snare (mṣidto)” (FMC III 301-302)
\end{quote}

and

\begin{quote}
“These snares of treachery (paho dneklo) which he laid hidden (ṯmar) were his own” (FMC III 61).
\end{quote}

The poet, in order to show that the basis and totality of deception is in Satan, uses the phrases such as ‘he is clothed with (lbeṣ) deception’ (FMC III 81) and he sees that Satan cannot but be a deceiver forever:

\begin{quote}
"While the root (‘eqoro) of whole deception is from Satan” (FMC III 134),
"And now onwards, Satan has no time but to deceive “ (FMC III 180) etc.
\end{quote}

We see a suitable association of Satan with a furnace (kuro) where the words of treachery were moulded (FMC III 867). Mar Jacob is ready for a debate with anybody to establish this deceitful nature of Satan (FMC III 103 ff.). Even though we see in the scripture that Satan, through the serpent, deceives Eve only\textsuperscript{1131} (FMC IV 176), Mar Jacob states that Satan deceived Adam also (FMC II 94, III 13, 22, 44, 70, 79, 177, 304 ), because Adam is the head of the

\textsuperscript{1129} Cf. Rev. 12/9.
\textsuperscript{1130} This face of Satan is described in detail under ‘snare – a device of sin’ in the section, “Sin as the Soteriological Cause”, p. 526.
\textsuperscript{1131} Cf. Gen.3/1 ff.
whole human race as well as the spouse of Eve, he cannot escape from bearing the responsibility of the sins of those who are brought under his care.

IV. 2. B. 2. ix. **Robber**

Analysing the total activities of Satan, the poet calls him a robber (*gayso*/*gabo*) (*FMC* III 15, 512), because he robbed all possessions of virtues of human beings and hence his whole deeds are robbery:

“*The robber (gayso) made haste on the way of Eden and he placed himself there in order to strip off (salah) the two merchants (tagoro) who were proceeding forth through it*” (*FMC* III 299-300).

IV. 2. B. 2. x. **Embodiment of all vices**

Satan is pictured in the mimre as arrogant, harsh and impudent:

“And from the troop of thousands and thousands one behaved haughtily” (*FMC* III 76, IV 10, 12).

He is a hater (*sono*) (IV 6), jealous (*hasomo*) (*FMC* III 182, 183, 185, 289, IV 64), cunning (*šni’o*) (*FMC* III 13, 22, 94, 304-316) and an adversary (*b’eldaro*), who is destined to make conflict (*daro*) (*FMC* III 29, 188, 287). He is figured in the mimre also as the teacher of iniquity (*FMC* III 325-326), crafty Scribe (*sopro šni’o*) who writes unfair words (*FMC* III 323, 325, 327), one who produces ruining verses (*FMC* 327, 400, 835), one who stones the house of Adam in order to destroy them (*FMC* III 319-320). He is a calumniator (*ramoyo*) (*FMC* III 141) and he presents God as a liar (*FMC* III 421-424). He is presented in the mimre also as the controller of Sheol (*FMC* IV 14, 6).

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IV. 2. B. 3. **Other synonyms for Satan**

Due to the wickedness of Satan and his company, the poet often uses the term ‘devil \( (\text{okelqar\$}) \) \( (FMC \text{ III } 52, 81, 94, 182 \text{ etc}) \). In order to portray the most horrible cruelty of Satan, who killed Adam and Eve, the poet uses the symbols of cruel beasts and birds which, through their tricky strategies, grab their prey and brutally kill them for their foodstuff. Hence Satan is pictured in the mimre as a covetous wolf \( (\text{dibo ya’no}) \) who seized the lamb \( (\text{emro}) \), Adam, from the garden of Eden and killed it \( (FMC \text{ III } 289-290) \), an avaricious hawk \( (\text{ne\$o yavno}) \) and a deceitful kite \( (\text{dayto to’yo}) \) who, with their sharpened toe nails, suddenly seized the chicks \( (\text{parugo}) \), the couple, from the nest of Eden \( (FMC \text{ III } 291-294) \), a cursed asp \( (\text{gorso li\$o}) \) who writhes the prey in order to snuff up and devour the innocent companion from the lovely doves \( (FMC \text{ III } 295-296) \) etc.

The common factors of all these cruel animals and birds are: they pinpoint a comparatively feeble prey to catch as their food, they use all tricks to bring the victim into their catchment area, they employ all their devises to clutch the prey, so that, it shall never getaway, they kill the victim in a very unsympathetic, cruel and painful manner and they consume it for their selfish motive. Cleverly and poetically, using all these symbols of most nasty and cruel predators, the poet was drawing a spiteful picture of Satan and was revealing the pathetic situation of the one who becomes the victim of Satan through committing sin.

Roberta C. Chesnut gives a long list of different names used by Mar Jacob in his other mimre than from the Four Mimre ‘On Creation’, for describing Satan and his characteristics such as ‘the great dragon or dragon who ate the dust of Adam, the great serpent, the demon, the wicked ruler, the seizer of the dark world, the mater of the contest, the tyrant, ruler who guards the air, Beelzebub, the kidnapper, the rebel archon, the cockatrice, the killer’ etc.\(^{1133}\)

IV. 2. B. 4. Modus operandi of Satan

Satan does not attack people directly, but always employs indirect means to entangle the victim. Most frequent mode of operation of Satan, as Mar Jacob draws it in the mimre on the basis of the Scripture, is employing ambassadors in an approachable and appealing manner, so that the prey shall be clutched easily (FMC III 303 ff.). The poet narrates it as the words of Satan:

“Through an ambassador (izgado) who will go before me; I will dissolve him on the way and through a query he will learn the secrets and will spy out (bdag) for me” (FMC III 309-310, 838, 885-886, IV 65).

Satan employs the serpent as his envoy:

“Satan put perversions into the mouth of the serpent,” (FMC III 319).

Because of this nature of keeping himself behind the curtain and doing all calamities through the agents, the poet compares Satan with a flute player who blows the melody of death through the flute, the serpent (FMC III 321-322, 836, 863).

Another mode of operation of Satan is presenting the ambassadors as well as himself in a most attractive manner before the one who he has to seduce and also to present the matter in a distorted way. Satan and his ambassador, the serpent, are very successful in this trick before Eve by the intentional distortion of the words of God about the tree at the centre. By cunningly hiding the real subject on the consumption from the tree at the centre, the serpent spoke garrulously on other matters, so that, he could divert the attention of Eve.

Mar Jacob reveals in the following verses the process of how the betrayal of Satan had been materialised in the Garden of Eden:

“He took the role of an interrogator (paršupo damšalono) and approached her in order that the treachery could be told gradually. While he began, he stirred up the discourse in common words, so that, Eve shall be accustomed in his words and then be seduced” (FMC III 341-344).
“He has cunningly taken away the word that was (actually) spoken (by God)” (FMC III 347),
“In the narration, he concealed the (real) subject of that tree” (FMC III 349),
“In his cunningness he extended his word on many (trees)” (FMC III 353) etc.

Mar Jacob explains the mode of operation of Satan in detail in order to contrast its disastrous effects on man with that of God’s mercy which always willingly and patiently waits for the salvation of the image of God. 1134

IV. 2. B. 5. Destiny of Satan

Mar Jacob reminds the reader about the natural end of those who act against the Will of God (III 47-48). Satan, who was once a celestial being, 1135 was forced to be in Gehanna, a place totally separated from God. The poet narrates this state of Satan:

“All men should know that, from Gehanna, which is reserved to him, who had proceeded forth in his own Will to seduce the people” (FMC III 45-46).

To emphasise this statement, the poet quotes from the Gospel of St. Mathew, 1136

“Go away, you accursed, to Gehanna, that is prepared for the devil and all of his powers!” (FMC III 51-52).

Pointing out the sharpness of the Judgement the poet warns:

“One should not prefer either to seduce or to fall in error” (FMC III 54).

IV. 2. B. 6. Punishment on Satan

While finding solutions to a disputed question among the Hebrews on the issue of punishing the serpent alone and excusing Satan who sent the serpent for deception (FMC III 831-844), the poet gives us details of the punishment received by Satan from God. The poet, after asking many questions on this matter (FMC III 835 ff.), comes to the conclusion that,

1135 See ‘Satan was an angel’ above in this section.
1136 Cf. Matt. 25/4
actually God was punishing Satan through the serpent. Thus he writes,

“Through the serpent, the one who spoke there by means of the serpent was cursed: through whom he had seduced, it is through him he received the judgment” (FMC III 885-886).

To prove this thesis the poet brings many arguments from the very same context. The earth was cursed by God; not for its own transgression, but for the transgression of Adam and Eve.\(^\text{1137}\)

The poet invites our attention to the effect of this curse on the earth; it actually affected more on Adam and Eve than on earth, because, the reduction of the earth into its tiny form (\textit{aro z’uryo}) had constrained Adam (FMC III 1069-1071) and the thorns that sprout up as a result of the curse had inflicted Adam, hence, the curse actually effected on him (FMC III 1073-1078).

Likewise, according to the poet, the curses spelled upon the serpent actually intended for hurting Satan, who was behind the serpent (FMC III 851-862). He argues this way; binding a horse is for stationing the horseman, conquering a ship aims at casting harm to its sailor, bruising stubble is for curtailing its keeper and shooting a horse in a battlefield is for humiliating and defeating its rider (FMC III 865-876, 883-886). And none of these media are culpable deserving punishment; yet they were punished in order to hurt their holders and masters. Mar Jacob concludes,

“In the same manner the serpent was cursed (lut) by God, at the same time, Satan had been slapped (qpaḥ) through justice (kinuto)” (FMC III 877-878).

IV. 2. B. 7. \textbf{Contrast between God and Satan}

Mar Jacob makes a distinction between God and Satan. Since it is impossible to compare them on the basis of their essence, the poet attempts to distinguish them on the basis of their performances and brings out the contradiction between them. The main difference, besides the unparalleled existential and fundamental differences, lies in the fact that God never

\(^{1137}\) Gen. 3/17.
destroys anything but He only creates, whereas Satan’s primary characteristic is to destroy everything: when God creates the image, Satan takes all his efforts to kill it. The generous and kind heart of God always raises people from their lower position to the exalted realms, even up to the height near to Him, Satan’s fundamental trait is to seek stratagem to pull man from his exalted position. Mar Jacob states that one of the basic features of Satan is his jealousy (hsomo) (FMC III 182-183, 185, 289, IV 64). Satan, in his jealousy (hsomo) on the magnificence of the image (salmo) of man (FMC III 182-183), had pulled Adam down. The comparison of the poet is conspicuous:

“The Benevolent one (tobo) who fashioned him, had set and placed him at the summit of Eden but, the wicked one who hated him, had pulled (n-pal) him down into the depth of the grave in order to destroy him” (FMC IV 5-6).

Another difference that the poet points out between God and Satan is the difference in their outlook. When God, out of His benevolence, reveals Himself step by step to the world through His creation, Satan’s all activities divulges his basic nasty harshness, because, he is the epithet of cruelty. While Mar Jacob praises the wisdom of God that is manifested through the creatures, he scoffs at the rudeness of Satan. The poet’s contrast in this regard is commendable:

“His (Adam’s) image (surto) declared how much wise (hakimo) is his fashioner and his death (mavto) proclaimed how much impudent (ha sip) is his (Satan’s) craftiness (nokulo). Through this image (salmo) the Lord had manifested His wisdom (hakimuto) and in it (image), again, Satan also had shown his harshness (mariruto)” (FMC IV 9-12).

Mar Jacob finds contradiction in the attitude between God and Satan concerning the provisions for man: when the caring God prepares everything that is needed for the benefit of man (FMC IV 15 ff.), Satan not only destroys what is beneficial for man but he prepares only those things that will lead people towards death:

1138 See the section, “Image and Likeness of God in Man”, p. 266 ff.
1139 See above in this section, the characteristics of Satan, ‘Killer’.
“The benevolent (tobo) Lord had fastened (qtar) a chamber of light (gnuno dnuhro) for him in Eden but, the wicked companion (habro biso) had built a house of darkness (beyt hesko) for him in Sheol” (FMC IV 13-14).

Here, the influence of St. Paul on Mar Jacob is visible, because, St. Paul distinguished between those who belong to Christ as the sons of light and those who belong to Satan as sons of darkness. Mar Jacob makes these distinctions in order to make out how Satan becomes a spoiler to the mankind.

IV. 2. C. The Serpent

Even though the serpent is described in the mimre as well as in the Scripture a corporal being, we have to incorporate him (it) in this session because, the poet considers the serpent the messenger of Satan and the embodiment of his evil characters. So in order to understand the poet’s concepts on non-corporal beings, an awareness of his descriptions on the serpent is also essential, because, he attributes many of his concepts on the devilishness of Satan upon the serpent. The poet rightly calls the serpent an accursed one (liγo) (FMC III 332, 497) and an accursed disciple (talmido liγo) of Satan (FMC III 328).

The poet sometimes considers the serpent as a beast and some other times as the embodiment of Satan, and so, in the mimre and in its analysis the serpent is occasionally represented by ‘it’ and at times by ‘he’ respectively.

IV. 2. C. 1. Illustrations on the serpent

Based on the Scriptural texts, the poet draws the picture of the serpent as the one who crawls (raγopo) (FMC III 297) as well as the one who is swift (qalilo) (FMC III 880, 882) and

\[1140\] Cf. Eph. 5/1-17.
runs quickly (FMC III 332) to carry out treachery. But after the curse of God it became a crippled walker (helakto ḥgirto) (FMC III 816) and began to walk only on its belly (mhalek ‘al karso) (FMC III 818). The poet says that as the agent of Satan, the serpent approached the house of Adam in diverse pretexts such as in the manner of an innocent calf (FMC I 125-126), with the mask of a friend (habibo) (FMC III 335, 821, 823), with pseudo affection of a relative (’hyono) (FMC III 394), in the form of a god-parent and protector (qaribo) (FMC III 333), falsely appeared caretaker of virtues (yo supo dsapiroto) (FMC III 337), in the disguise of an assiduous interrogator who aspires for learning (FMC III 339 ff.) etc. The poet clarifies that all these false appearances were to divert the attention of Eve and to mislead her and her husband through a series of questions and which were anticipated to throw them into the deep pit of Sheol. The poet picturizes the serpent as Eve’s tailor-collaborative for sewing the new garment of iniquity at the garden (FMC III 683).

In order to show the viciousness of the serpent which broke the string of life through its venomous bite, the poet uses the imagery of a dragon (tanino) (FMC IV 105). The meeting between Eve and the serpent is described in the mimre as an approach of an innocent and feeble dove (yavno) towards the deadly dragon (tanino) (FMC III 393). Yet another description of the poet on the serpent is of a viper (gorso):

“And the viper (asp) (gorso) blew: due to its harshness it threw off the crown” (FMC IV 109).

Simultaneously the serpent is pictured also as a basilisk (harmono) (FMC III 389).

The enmity of the Serpent with Eve and her child as it was established in the Garden event is also drawn in the mimre (FMC III 822, 823, 825-830). This hostility among them provokes the poet to call the serpent an avenger (habolo) who destroys people through deadly words (FMC III 326), a hunter (sayodo) who stretches out his net to ensnare the lovely partridge (haglo rhimto) (FMC III 397), a liar (dagolo) (FMC III 465) who distorted the truth
and narrated it to Eve (FMC II 429), a stranger (nukroyo) with whom Eve travelled through pathless desert (FMC III 510), a robber (saboyo) (FMC III 512) and a plunderer (ya’no) (FMC III 508) who robbed the magnificent and glorious garments from the first parents (FMC IV 184), a perforator (neqbo/nqab) who digs holes amidst strong relations (FMC I 164) etc.

From the above descriptions of the poet on the serpent, we infer certain things. The creeping nature of the serpent helps the poet to compare it with similar creatures of the world; those belong to the reptile species, like the dragon, asp, basilisk, viper etc. It is noticeable that the poet does not select the mild ones among the reptiles, but he selects the most monstrous and venomous among them, and that is surely purposeful. Their hideous, deadly and brutal traits enable the poet to bring in the atrocious characteristics of the serpent clearer in order to show how it maliciously seduces people to commit sin and how it kills people brutally through injecting the venom of sin. With the intention of projecting how the temptations of sin attack people and how weak a man, who happens to be under the control of sin, is to withstand their persuasions and provocations, the poet draws the picture of a chick and of a partridge which are caught within the harsh grasp of a covetous beast. How small and feeble a chick is within the clutches of a big monster. The poet employs no pleasant adjective to picturize the serpent, but selects the most scandalous ones in order to draw its dirty picture; avenger, hunter, liar, stranger, robber, plunderer, perforator etc. are only some of them. The poet selects all these to present before us how the serpent and its agent Satan employ to their maximum all spiteful tricks to entrap the innocent ones into their snare of sin. All these examples for the serpent tell us that these reptiles and robbers takeaway all possessions of the prey, including destroying the life of the victim through making plot to entrap and attacking the victim through vicious ways.

1141 The venomous nature of sin is discussed in the section, “Sin as the Soteriological Cause”, p. 538.
IV. 2. C. 2. Modus operandi of the serpent

Being the replica of Satan, the modus operandi of the serpent was also treacherous and so, he also was very often called by the poet, a betrayer (ganobo) (*FMC* III 333 ff, 335-336, 341-342, 387, 394-395, 428, 434, 446, 499, 806, 809, 826, 847, 867, 882, IV 180). The serpent being the personification and byword of Satan, their performances and the manner of operations would certainly be identical. But Mar Jacob, in the course of poeticizing the events, mentions some of the performances of the serpent.

IV. 2. C. 2. i. Overshadowing

Keeping in mind the overshadowing of the ‘Power of the Highest’ over the Blessed Virgin Mary to generate Christ in her womb,\(^\text{1142}\) the poet contrarily attributes the deeds of the serpent as an overshadowing (talel) over Eve in order to generate the child of iniquity (*FMC* III 819). According to the poet, it was for this reason that God cursed the serpent (*FMC* III 821). The serpent had been provoking her through false counselling (*FMC* III 364, 684, 807, 817). If the overshadowing of the ‘Power of the Highest’ over Mary was by means of the angel’s uttering of the truthful and living Words of God,\(^\text{1143}\) in its place, the serpent overshadowed Eve through his distorted words of death (*FMC* III 321 ff.). The poet envisages the discourse of the serpent only as his means of seduction and treachery for destruction (*FMC* III 333 ff, 815 ff.). Mar Jacob elucidates that the overshadowing of the ‘Power of the Highest’ caused Mary to receive the Word of God in her womb and to beget Christ, but the same act of the serpent caused Eve to beget iniquity and give birth to deceit (*FMC* III 546).


IV. 2. C. 2. ii. **Bite of the Serpent**

Mar Jacob considers the treachery of the serpent as a direct injection of lethal venom through sharp biting on the image of Adam and Eve in order to kill them:

> “And he (Satan) sent the serpent and he bit (nkat) the image (šalmo) through the treachery (neklo) which he laid down and because of this venom (bile) (merto) his (Adam’s) image (šalmo) fell down among the dust of the earth” (FMC IV 65-66, 454).

And the poet considers this bile of the serpent, which is his treachery, as the most horrible and nasty thing:

> “The serpent arrived and shed his venom (merto) upon the beautiful one: it decayed and poured ill-smelling mud (syono saryo) on his (its) dust” (FMC IV 141-142).

The poet uses the imagery of bite (nukto)\(^\text{1144}\) for the insertion of sin into the image for the reason that the serpent belongs to the family of reptiles.

IV. 2. C. 3. **Judgement against the serpent**

God pronounced judgments against Adam and Eve only after a proper investigation by means of a series of questions (FMC III 707 ff). But, in the case of the serpent, the attitude of God was,

> “The Judge shouted (z’aq) against the serpent without any question, He uttered the decree of the judgment against him without any investigation (lo ‘uqobo)” (FMC III 811-812).

The reason behind it was not the partiality of God, but the serpent being the root cause of the whole event, deserves the punishment without any investigation. Here, the mind of the poet is to be clarified in explaining why Adam and Eve were questioned for a long time and why the serpent was judged at once. According to the poet, the major reason for the queries on Adam and Eve was that they, being the image of God, must be convinced of their foolishness which

\(^{1144}\) The poet’s concept on sin as a venom of the Satan or the serpent is developed under ‘venomous nature of sin’ in the section, “Sin as the Soteriological Cause”, p. 538.
would have lead them for their repentance and remission of sins (*FMC* III 707 ff, 987 ff). Since Satan, the master of the serpent, in his total Will and without anybody’s compulsion or seduction, as against the case of Adam and Eve, had determined to fall in error (*FMC* III 57), he is destined for everlasting doom. And since there is no possibility for him for repentance and redemption, attempts for convincing him of his wickedness was not necessary and any such attempt would be futile. So, there was the sudden proclamation of the verdict against him at the garden. The poet puts it in this way,

“since he was freeborn (bar hiro)from the beginning, the judgment was reserved (nțar) to him” (*FMC* III 58).

The poet describes the serpent’s return after the judgement:

“The messenger went out being accursed, hated, and abased his head” (*FMC* III 887).

In the poet’s opinion the serpent was cursed by the Judge equally to the wickedness he had done against Adam and Eve (*FMC* III 813-814) and while weighing the evilness of the serpent and the corresponding judgement of God on them; he narrates: for the persuasion on Eve, the serpent was cursed for crippled walking (*FMC* III 815-816), for hastening them through iniquitous paths, he was given the walking on its belly (*FMC* III 817-818), for causing Eve to eat the deadly fruit through the untoward overshadowing, he was granted dust as its food (*FMC* III 819-820), and for the spiteful friendship between them, God punished him with unending wrath between them and their seeds (III 821-824) which will go to the extent of seeking to destroy each other (*FMC* III 825-830).

Even when the poet attacks all the activities of the serpent, sometimes he seems to be lenient towards it, because he knows that he was only a scapegoat for Satan. He asks,

“Why indeed, the serpent was accursed by God? Because, behold, it is Satan who had disguised himself and went to speak to her” (*FMC* III 831-832)

and the poet continues,
“The serpent had neither Will nor deception” (FMC III 854, 833).

But all the severe curses it received were for the ambassadorship for Satan (FMC III 833 ff. 852, 858, 860).

IV. 2. D. Similarities among Satan, Adam and Judas

Seeing few resemblances among Satan, Adam and Judas, Mar Jacob makes a comparison among them on the basis of their pre-fallen and post-fallen statuses and finds the place where all of them have slipped. By nature Satan was equal to angels like Gabriel and Michael and they were moulded in the same die (FMC III 63-65, 68, 90). God created Adam in His own image and Adam was similar to God. Likewise Judas was selected and appointed an apostle by Jesus in the same way He selected the apostles Peter, Thomas, John and others (FMC III 66-67, 89). But all the three, Satan, Adam and Judas, fell down from their natural eminence. The common factor behind their misfortune was their insolent, wilful, and malicious decision. In the poet’s own words,

“...Their freedom (hiruto) dethroned them from their ranks” (FMC III 95, 101), because, all of them had misused their freedom.\textsuperscript{1145}

The poet goes on explaining their common features; from among the thousands of angels, Satan alone behaved haughtily (FMC III 76), tried to make himself the head (FMC III 77), caused a division among the company of angels and deceived Adam and Eve (FMC III 70). Thus he was thrown out from the glorious rank of angels (FMC III 72) and consequently he became an inflicting thorn among the blessed field of angels (FMC III 74). The deception was neither granted nor included in Satan’s original making; it was totally out of his own Will (FMC III 88, 94, 99-100):

\textsuperscript{1145} Misuse of one’s freedom is sin, see the section, “Sin as the Soteriological Causality”, p. 526.
“It is made clear that in his liberty Satan fell in error” (FMC III 103).

Similarly, Adam was assigned quarters in the blessed Garden of Eden (FMC III 292, 294 etc.), he was the comprehension of all creatures (FMC IV 15 ff, 33 ff.) and was like a god among the creatures (FMC IV 3); but unfortunately he was expelled from there due to his disobedience (FMC III 1047). The thorns which sprang up on earth due to Adam’s sin had pierced him while he was running out of the Garden (FMC III 1073 ff.). The poet says that since this thorn is the result of his sin, the thorn and Adam are one and the same and thus he also became an inflicting thorn (FMC III 1077-1078).

In the same way Judas had been enjoying all the rights of an apostle (FMC III 78, 89), but, according to the poet,

“From the legion of the twelve, Judas had revolted himself” (FMC III 75) and “The twelfth one (Judas) burst forth and went out and betrayed his master” (FMC III 69).

By the reason of this betrayal, like Satan,

“Judas separated himself from the harmony (avyuto) (college) of apostles” (FMC III 71).

Judas also became a tare among the granary of discipleship (FMC III 73).

Another similarity is that their companions who associated with them in performing wickedness had also fallen along with them. In this context Mar Jacob says that when Satan rebelled against God, the whole troop of devils joined with him (FMC III 80-81), it is Adam and Eve together committed the sin against God (FMC III 549-552) and when Judas betrayed Jesus, Caiaphas’ palace joined with him (FMC III 82). The poet finds similarity in the area of the punishment also which they had received:

“As the rope was hung up for Judas; the one who had revolted, also, Gehanna was promised to the evil one who had apostatized” (FMC III 83-84, 102)

1146 God-ship of man is discussed under ‘Adam was god’ in the section, “Anthropological Concepts in the Mimre”, p. 374.
and Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden (FMC III 1047 ff.).

**Conclusion**

In the exposition on the non-corporal beings Mar Jacob allots more space to disclose the real face of Satan and his messenger, the serpent. He doesn’t seem to be garrulous in describing the greatness of the angels except few sporadic allusions as and when it became necessary, at the same time we see him taking intentional effort to describe the features of Satan and the serpent. He employs imageries of a lot of wild beings – both beasts and birds – to associate Satan with them\(^{1147}\) whereas in order to associate Adam and Eve, the poet employs the mildest living organisms like chick, dove, partridge etc.\(^{1148}\) The common features of all these imageries of wild beasts are their cruelty and harshness. The highest amount of the poet’s aversion towards those ugly creatures as well as his endless grief over the deformity of the image caused by sin can be seen from his narration on the dreadful state at the misuse of man’s freedom:

> “And in his freedom (hiruto) he joined (nqap) with the beast (b ‘iro) and resembled (dmo) it” (FMC IV 4).

There are several factors that helped Mar Jacob for comparing these wild and cruel animals or birds with Satan or the serpent. Since the serpent belongs to one of these monstrous species, it was easy for the poet to narrate him in such a way and through him to speak about his master, Satan, also. The hideousness and brutality of those wild beasts and birds are common factors that not only bring them together but they associate Satan with them. Their sight and presence are horrible and dreadful to other creatures; same effect is produced by the presence of Satan produces. They set out to seek and catch the prey, mark the feeble one among the many, isolate

\(^{1147}\) See above in this section the illustrations on Satan and the serpent.

\(^{1148}\) See the segment, “Anthropological Concepts in the Mimre”, p. 370.
them from the group, catch them unexpectedly through cunning ways, torture them harshly and finally kill and devour them. The descriptions of the poet on Satan and the serpent give us the picture similar to that of those beasts; Satan will adopt all possible heinous ways to grab his prey and to make it his own food. As a victim cannot escape from the clutches of the brutal beast, it is impossible for those who commit sin in accordance with the instigation of Satan to escape, unless and otherwise he is saved by the redemption of Christ.

Mar Jacob never attempts to project Satan as an opponent so as to fight against God face to face and with equal valiance, but he is presented in the mimre as an embodiment of all vices and as one who lies hidden in order to entrap those who belong to God. The descriptions of the poet on Satan and the serpent are filled with aversion and hatred and at times he outrages against their wickedness. As we see in the entire mimre the whole attitude of the poet towards everyone and everything revolves on the axis of the image of God in man and the gifts, especially the freedom, it received from God; here also, the main reasons for his outburst against Satan and the serpent are their causality for the destruction of the comely and majestic image and their own misuse of freedom as well as the abuse of the freedom of man instigated by them. Hence the poet uses all possible harsh words in his mimre to stone Satan for his revolt against God and for the destruction of the image of God in man.

The long narrations of the poet on the modus operandi of Satan and of the serpent not only illustrate Mar Jacob’s poetical calibre, but they are ever relevant. They help the readers to discern the ways of the entry of wickedness. The poet’s contrast between God and Satan is highly helpful for praising God for His kindness towards man and to hate and keep away from Satan and his ways because of their destructive attitude and activities.