

いのちの始まり(エシ 1:5,詩139:16)

佐々木哲夫

ABSTRACT Tetsuo SASAKI, “Human Life Before Conception (Jer. 1:5 and Ps. 139:16).” Though the preexistence of human life before conception is supposed in Jer. 1:5 and Ps. 139:16, some commentators read these texts differently by emending the Masoretic Text. For example, W. L. Holladay translates Jer. 1:5 as “Before I summoned you..,” by reading אֶצְוֶרְךָ not as אֶצְרֶךָ (Qal צר) but אֶצְוֶרְךָ (Qal צור) following Dahood’s suggestion. This translation of Jer.1:5 resembles the calling of Isaiah in his mother’s womb; that is, not before conception, but after it. Also, M. Dahood translates לֹא אֶחָד בָּהֶם in Ps. 139:16 as “when I was not yet seen by them” by emending אֶחָד (“one”) to אֶחָז (“I was seen”) and by using several manuscripts which read מֵהֶם (“by them”) instead of read בָּהֶם. Thus, he manages to make Ps. 139:16 indicate a stage of time after conception.

Now in Jeremiah 1:5, one can observe the parallel structure of merism as follows:

בְּטֶרֶם אֶצְוֶרְךָ בְּבֶטֶן
וּבְטֶרֶם תֵּצֵא מֵרֶחֶם

The first line refers to the time of conception, and the second to the time of birth: that is, a stage of time before conception is supposed. Also when one looks at the phrases of Ps. 139:16:

עַל-סֵפֶרְךָ בְּלִם יִכְתְּבוּ
יָמִים יֵצְרוּ וְלֹא אֶחָד בָּהֶם

the former reminds us of “the Book of Life” (סֵפֶר חַיִּים) in Ps. 69:29, and the latter depicts the time before conception.

Although a human’s biological life starts at the time of conception, the relationship with God existed even before. Similar expressions are used of

various people in the Bible, i.e., Isaac (Gen. 18:17-19), Samson (Jugs. 13:3-5), John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-17) and Jesus Christ (Luke 1:28-33). The calling from God, which transcends space and time, can sustain the human's whole life after conception.