

GENESIS: A STUDY

The word, Genesis is Greek. It means the beginning. The Hebrew text has no titles or names. The first word is *bereshit*.

History and Literature: what is the purpose of Sacred Scripture? Revelation=the unveiling of God the divine message in human words through human writers. The Bible is grounded in history, actual people, places and events. Bible is “incarnated” through the language and thought processes of the people who “produce” the final written text, but “inspired” by the Holy Spirit which is God’s own life breath. The entire (very complicated) process has the hand of the creator-savior upon it; including actual events, observation and experience, oral transmission, writing, editing, final composition and the actual compilation of books into the two testaments (Jewish Bible and Christian Bible). As in all things, there is a core which is firm and foundational, and as one moves from the center one reaches those fringes where there is less certitude. Order to chaos, orthodox to heterodox to heretical. Some books are canonical for some churches and not others. Some writings are not canonical but have vitally important historical and theological material. (e.g. Maccabees or Didache). The texts are often in dialogue with the ideas, beliefs and writings of pagan neighbors. Sometimes, possibly, Israel might have reworked preexisting material and reshaped it into their YHWH perspective. At other times, stories are shaped integrating elements of the pagan stories so as to ‘correct’ or reject their teaching.

Of particular value is an awareness of the Enuma Elish, considered the most ancient creation text (18C BC). It is about 1,000 verses on seven clay tablets. 7th C BC copy was found in the ruins of Nineveh in 1875. There are similarities to Genesis, but the differences are far more apparent. The waters of precreation and the themes of chaos/order and dark/light are noteworthy. The Enuma Elish is an *apologia* of the rise of Babylon to replace the more ancient Sumerian culture. The replacement of goddesses by gods may be reflective of cultural elements. Creation by killing gods is turned on its head in Genesis where God speaks creation. The creation of the world and of humans (to be servants of the gods) from the blood and dead bodies of the gods is radically different from the sharply de-mythologized version of Genesis. So modern concerns like the age of the earth, evolution, the expanding universe are not addressed by the Bible. Mattheu Pageau's "The Language of Creation: Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis" puts it succinctly in chapter 1. The Spiritual Perspective asks "What does it mean? What truth does it embody?" while the Modern Materialist asks "How does it work? Of what material is it made?" Heaven and earth are general referents to the earth below and sky above, but they also symbolize the realm of the gods/spirit/eternal truth and the temporal stuff material (lower) creation. As such words and concepts would have had different meaning for an ancient Hebrew or Christian.

What we engage the text seeking will impact what we hear and how we understand. The questions we ask impact the answers we get, and more importantly, keep us from hearing what the text is saying. There can be no "all-

encompassing” reading, only different angles and perspectives. Maybe its best to read, look at connections and ponder.

Other Creation Accounts in Bible

Psalm 74:13-17 provides a reminder, however, that the ancient Jews were cognizant of the mythic idea, incorporating its imagery into their sacred texts. The psalm begins with a heartfelt lament, bemoaning the feeling of abandonment, God’s flock turned over to those who destroyed the temple (like men with axes in the woods). The loss of the holy place is compounded by the absence of a prophet. As the psalmist ponders God ‘drawing back His hand and holding it to His bosom,’ He ponders:

(Alter, p. 259-260) *Yet God is my king of old, worker of rescues in the midst of the earth. You shattered (break, make ineffectual) the sea-god (yam-sea; Canaanite seven-headed dragon god was named *Yam-nahur*, associated with Leviathon). Refers to large bodies of water, rivers, or the east (toward Mediterranean) with your strength (oz, first appears in Exodus 15:2,13 celebrating Exodus), you smashed the monsters (tanniym=dragon, serpent, sea monster. Gen 1:21 in creation, Exodus 7 Moses’ staff, Is 27:1; Ez 29:3 God calls Pharaoh a monster in the river) heads on the waters (word used in Gen 1:2). You crushed (broke) the Leviathon’s (sea monster, dragon; symbol of Babylon; also Job 3, 41; Ps 104; Is 27) heads (both verses), you gave him as food to the desert-folk. [v16 yours is the day, yours also the night. It was you who founded the light and the sun. Genesis creation resonance)*

Psalm 89 (Alter) 89:8 God is held in awe in the council of the holy (the divine council of lesser gods)...Lord God of hosts (another)...You rule (*mashal*, same term in Gen 1:18 for 'heavenlies' which rule; 3:16 man rules woman; 4:7 God tells Cain he must rule sin/desire) over the tide of the sea (majesty, rising up, glory, pride, arrogance of the yam/Yamm), When its waves raise up (*Ps 42, 65, 89, 107; and prophetic references to judgement on nations Isaiah 51:15, Jeremiah 51:55, Zechariah 10:11 with prayer in Jonah 2:3*) it is you who subdue them. It is you who crushed Rahab (storm, fierceness, insolence, arrogance, mythical sea monster, Egypt) like a corpse. [see Isaiah 51:9 "Are you not the arm that cut Rahab apart and wounded the serpent?"]

Genesis 1

WHEN GOD BEGAN TO CREATE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH (Jewish Study Bible) When God began to create the heaven and earth (Alter)

IN THE BEGINNING WHEN GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH (NRSV) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (KJV, NET, RSV)

From the first line of the Bible we see that translation entails interpretation. In most cases, there is subtle impact, if any at all, but it provides us motivation to listen deeply and humbly.

Reading Jewish sources, the premier scholar, Rashi (b 1040 in France Commentaries on both the Masoretic text of the Jewish Bible and the Babylonian Talmud) employed

two approaches *pshat* (simple meaning) and *drash* (interpretative elaboration) Maimonides (Spain 1138) was more philosophically inclined, living under Islam his entire life. Philo of Alexandria (15BC—50AD) was a contemporary of Jesus. A noted philosopher, he saw a literal and metaphorical sense in the bible. He also read it allegorically (see Paul on Abraham's sons in Romans!) While taking the SS seriously, and often literally, he believed that the creation of Eve from Adam was meant metaphorically. The philosophical approaches, and the more exegetical (targums and rabbinic commentary) were complemented by the mystical-apocalyptic (pseudopigrapha, Jubilees, Qumran) which elaborated teaching based on figures from Genesis. Christian exegesis had similar approaches (literal/historical, spiritual: allegorical/metaphorical, moral, anagogical future).

The first word of Genesis *bereshit*. The first letter, *beth*, is closed on the top, right and bottom. The commentator says that the letter itself is the interpretive key, cutting off all that precedes, one can only go forward (Hebrew reads right to left). So modern western approaches are already lacking because we fail to see the shape (or numerical value) of the letters as significant. Also of note, the Jews do not have names for the days of the week. So we begin with the vocabulary.

Resit (*first, beginning, best, chief*). Refers to beginning 18x Gen 1:1; 10:10, 49:3; Jeremiah 26:1, 27:1, 28:1 beginning reigns. Reuben, and others, it is first-born; starting with Ex 23:19 also frequently used of first fruits 11x)

Elohim bara Plural “Gods” (El is singular) with singular verb refers to YHWH (2346x). In other cases, it can be the other gods (244x), Twice used of goddesses [1 King 11:5, 33 Solomon goes after foreign goddesses]. Ps 8:5 “You have made (man) little lower than the *Elohim*.”

Bara to create, shape, form; also cut, cut down, fashion. The scholars are quick to point out that this word is only used of God (and God alone) as the subject of creation. Used three times in chapter 1 (verse 1, 21, 27) the next two are creation of sea monsters and fish, then creation of humans). In 2:3 He rests from creation. 2:4 introduces a parallel account of creation, starting with the ‘*adam*. There are numerous references to both the totality of creation, God as the one who originally created (eg, the mountains), as well as the on-going creation of humanity in each generation. This language is similar to our own usage and does not strictly differentiate creation from the natural order (like giving birth, creating a nation). Isaiah 45:7 emphasizes the totality of creation (I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I am the Lord who do all these things. 45:12 I made the earth and created man upon it, it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.” Is 65:17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth” (even salvation is envisioned as creation). These and other referents to God creating must be understood as a declaration of His Lordship and dominion over all. It is a rejection of the competing creation stories and foreign gods.

[pondering] Is creation a one and done or an ongoing process? Much of the salvation language of the Bible echoes creation language, raising the question is “salvation

a new creation” (which is an obvious theme). Does creation include keeping things going, or are ‘things’ provided with an independent existence? Does God intervene from outside or is He always at work with in the process? Is the Christian understanding of the word ‘creation’ clearly and narrowly defined or is there room for different models for understanding the how?]

Theological Point A key point, for me, is “God created.” This is a beginning point and personally the definitive point. Any discussion which denies “creation” means we have different starting places. It affects how we look at the world/cosmos. It also raises questions about His motivation and purpose—because Genesis doesn’t seem to answer those.

Before we go further, we will run through some other canonical and deuterocanonical writings which look at creation!

Creation in Wisdom and New Testament

1. The Apostles Creed begins: “I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.” The Nicene Creed introduces elements from the NT portrayal of God the pre-existent Son. Scientific explanations of reality do not compete with the declaration of faith and should not be the basis for denying the revelation that God is creator. Creation is a non-negotiable declaration; however, how we understand the process is certainly debatable and is debated. For example, God creates each of us, but human sexual procreation is part of the process. God created Jerusalem, but

there were observable social and political events that were part of the creation.

2. PROVERBS Prov 3:19-20 “The Lord founded (*yacad—found, fix, establish, lay foundation, literally “to set”*) the earth (*eretz* is in Gen 1:1) by wisdom (*tabuwn-knowledge, understanding, intelligence. *see Jeremiah 10:12 (He has made the earth by His power. He has established the world by His wisdom, and stretched out the heavens at His discretion) and Jeremiah 51:15 (He has made the earth by His power; He has established the world by His wisdom, and stretched out the heaven by His understanding). By His knowledge the depths burst apart, and the skies distilled dew.*

3. Prov 8:22 “The Lord created [*qana- Jewish-Christian controversy, was wisdom created or pre-existent—Jesus incarnation? Get, acquire, create, possess; “of God originating, creating, redeeming His people, to erect. 84x in 76v]* me (wisdom). In the distant past I was fashioned [*nasaq to pour out, fashion, anoint (like a king). At the beginning (roshe literally head, top, summit, so beginning) [qedem—east 50x, but also ancient time 20x]* There was still no deep, at the origin of the earth. There was still no deep when I was brought forth, no springs rich in water; before the mountains were sunk, Before the hills I was born [*khool-many meanings, to dance, twist, travail, to wait, to suffer, to be brought forth (like having a baby)...* 8:27 I was there when He set the heavens into place...when He made the heavens above firm and the fountains of the deep gushed forth...When He fixed

the foundations of the earth... rejoicing before Him at all times.”

4. WISDOM of SOLOMON Wis 9:9 With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she understands what is please in your sight... 10:1-4 Wisdom protected the first-formed father of the world, when he alone had been created; she delivered him from his transgression, and gave him strength to rule all things. But when an unrighteous man departed from her in his anger, he perished because in rage he killed his brother. When the earth was flooded because of him, wisdom again saved it, steering the righteous man by a paltry piece of wood (continues to insert wisdom in other biblical stories for two chapters). WISDOM OF JESUS BEN SIRACH Ecclesiasticus 1:4 Wisdom was created before all other things and prudent understanding from eternity.
5. John 1 “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in Him was life and the light was the life of people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not apprehend (understand or overcome)it.
6. Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and in him all

things hold together. [God resides in Him and reconciles all through Him]

7. 1 Corinthians 8:6 [reacting to idols and pagan gods]
“as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom we exist.”
8. Hebrews 1 “God...has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed heir to all things, through whom He also created the world. He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and He sustains (bears along) all things by His powerful word.”

Genesis 1:1 When God created the heavens and earth—the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Listen to the words carefully, there is no mention of the cosmos or universe. The focus is much smaller. The Greek usage *Cosmos* implies order and meaning. [The Greek word *cosmos* (translated as world—meaning all creation, the earth, the people of the earth, +the fallen, ungodly, rebellious, sin, +worldly affairs/things especially the fleeting distractions.)]

WORDS

Heavens *shawmayim* (*heaven, heavens, sky; also the abode of God. From unused root lofty*) 418x in 392v Ten times in Genesis 1; the order is reversed in Gen 2: in the parallel creation account, which has a more “grounded” perspective! The twin meanings of heaven will continue

throughout the Bible (eventually becoming a circumlocution for God—"Kingdom of Heaven")

Earth *eretz* (2,499x) same as English, it can refer to ground/earth, land, fields, earth/planet. The earth is *tohu* and *bohu*.

Tohu (25x 19v) from the root for a waste, a desert. *Empty, unreality, chaos, wilderness, confusion*. Isaiah has half the uses. Isaiah 40 the nations and their princes are *tohu* (*nothing*), the idols and those who make them are *tohu*. Is 45 The Lord says He did not make creation to be *tohu/chaos* but to be lived in. It isn't *tohu*, because He is God alone. The spirituality of creation is present here in the prophet's words and we must be formed by the revelation. Perhaps more striking is the final appearance of the word in Jeremiah 4:23. In Jeremiah 4 he is beside himself in anguish at the pending horror and doom. Employing Wisdom language/argumentation he accuses the peoples of being foolish, stupid and "skilled" (a wisdom term) at evil. "*I looked on the earth and it was "waste and void" and to the heavens and they had no "light"* There is also negation of the 'adam, birds, fruitful land—judgement as anti-creation (cf Noah ark). Ponder the meaning of human sin and violence and God's "will/control"

Bohu (3x 3v) from a root meaning void or empty, hence, empty, void, waste. Obviously, it occurs here and in Jeremiah, as we just saw. The third occurrence is in Isaiah 34 in a judgement oracle against the nations. It extends to the heavenly realm (34:4 *all the host of heaven shall rot away and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall wither like a leaf on a vine or fruit withering on a fig tree.*

Turning his attention to Edom (v6) with threats of the sword, slaughter and a “day of vengeance”, Isaiah uses language from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorah. 34:11 “*He shall stretch the line of confusion (tohu) over it, and the plummet of chaos (bohu) over its nobles.* The Jewish Study Bible (p13) comments that Moderns consider ‘nothing’ to be the opposite of created order, whereas Ancients viewed it as ‘chaos’ (understood as a malevolent force)

Hoshhek (80x) *darkness or dark (77), obscurity (2x)*. [there are four other words from this root connected with darkness and mysterious impenetrability] related no Four times in Genesis 1 verses 2, 4, 5, 18. Next in Exodus 10 (darkness over the land of Egypt but Hebrews had light and Exodus 14 ‘cloud and darkness’ separate Egyptian pursuers from Hebrew slaves. Occurs in Job 23x Psalms 11x. Isaiah warns that evil call “darkness light” and “light darkness,” a reminder that what God has divided must remain divided (and spiritual depth of the words resonates). Isaiah 8, a judgement on Israel, who consult with the spirits of the dead (no life!) Isaiah says that they will have “no dawn” (*shakar*) 8:28 “they will turn their faces upward, or they will look to the earth , but will see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness.” 9:1 “But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish” Isaiah 9:2 “the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined”...because a new prince is born [applied to Jesus in Christmas readings]

+rabbi on youtube asked: how do we picture creation of light? Was it vast and expansive? Or a small spark which grew and grew?

These other readings demonstrate the deeper, metaphorical meaning of darkness. Perhaps the main point of Genesis 1 is to shed light on the mysterious world we live in and offer a tiny glimpse into God's perspective. We have already seen that there are details (the role of wisdom and the Word as God the Son) in other biblical accounts which broaden and deepen (and fill us!!!) our insights into the creation. Since the Modern Age, Christians have been defensive with "the world" and sometimes adopted the materialist assumptions of the culture. Christians want to make the bible answer the wrong questions. Rather than see this in terms of the Big Bang Theory, shouldn't we rather ask, "What is God saying here?"

Running a word search on darkness reveals 171x in 151 verses. Many are references to physical darkness, but regularly it refers to something more spiritual. Proverbs 4:19 "the way of the wicked is like deep darkness." The metaphor for folly as darkness is a reminder that we commonly use the word 'dark' in a negative way to describe human activities. Is 45:7 God declares "I form light and create darkness; I make weal and create woe...I am God." Isaiah emphasizes the uniqueness of YHWH and that all things depend on Him for existence, although Genesis 1 makes no mention of God creating the dark.

The prophets turn the Jewish hope in the 'Day of the Lord' upside down. Amos 5:18, 20 "Day of the Lord is darkness", Joel 2:2 "a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and

thick darkness; 2:31 the sun shall be turned to darkness
 Zephaniah 1:15 a day of wrath, a day of darkness and
 gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. This darkness
 is not primarily about the level of light, is it? Ezekiel 32:8 is
 part of a scathing judgement full of threats against
 Pharaoh, including “I will darken the stars above you and
 put darkness on your land.” Revelation 16:10 includes the
 fifth angel who pours out a bowl of darkness on the earth.

The New Testament employs light and darkness imagery.
 When Jesus is arrested (Luke 22:53) He upbraids them for
 bringing weapons, as if He were a bandit. He says, “*But this
 is your hour, and the power of darkness.*” The power of
 darkness is a theologically loaded expression and it shows
 in the narratives as well. The crucifixion (Mk 15:33) “at the
 sixth hour darkness covered the land.” The earliest NT
 writing, 1 Thessalonians 5:5 “you are all sons of light and
 sons of the day, we are not the night or of darkness.”
 Ephesians 3:8 describes the Gentile convert “once you were
darkness but now you are light in the Lord.” The Gospel of
 John says that people prefer darkness (and reject Jesus—
 who is the true light come into the world).

Panim 1952x in 1746v, over half meaning “before”;
 frequently face or surface(as here)

Tehome from a root word which means, among other
 things, make loud noise or commotion, *tehome* is verbally
 connected to the crashing waves, and by extension the
 great deep beneath the earth, but also the large bodies of
 waters like the sea. Scholars debate whether the Hebrew
 word is related to the word Tiamat which was the water
 goddess in pagan creation accounts.

Ruah Elohim rahap

Ruah—from root to breathe, to blow, to smell. Most frequently *spirit, also breath, or wind; also mind, vain thing; energy, anger, courage*. Various other translations. No one knows exactly what the verse is saying, and perhaps that is the point. Is it a great stormy wind (think of the connection to Jonah, Jesus in the boat during storm stories)? Is it God breathing on creation? Is it the creative Spirit of God hovering over the waters? Are the waters pre-existing chaos? Or the raw material of creation? More and more I am coming to understand that the people of Israel were very familiar with the religious practice and mythic explanations of reality, Abraham and his family before him were part of that culture. The stories predate Israel by centuries. Many assumptions about what the hearer/reader of Israel's Scriptures knew and understood and believed shape the text. We have to dig to find references which the Ancient Hebrew would have understood instantly. So obviously it is a reflection of the Egyptian and Babylonian stories which the Jewish writers are "correcting"!

Rahap "moving" two other uses. Dtn 32:11 reference to a mother Eagle hovering over its nest and Jeremiah 23:9 the impact of the word of God on the prophets shaking bones (literally soften, or 'moved')

Panim mayim face/surface of water

Mayim 575x (another plural noun like heavens, *water*) figures heavily here 11x and next in Noah story 18x. After that it makes a significant appearance in several narratives at wells or springs. Here we must understand, water

surrounds the entirety of the “skies&earth” so that water from the deep abyss below the world and water which falls from above (Gen 7:11 indicates in the sky there are flood gates, literally “lattice windows,” or chimney or sluice). Our understanding of underground water and precipitation is not part of their world view. Water will always be ambivalent—needed for life, for crops, yet also dangerous in storms, and a metaphor for chaos. Remember, the chaos is not a metaphor to them, but a deeper spiritual meaning of the word. Chaos and destruction are very real. In other texts attacking armies or personal problems are called overwhelmed by the waves or the waters rising up to one’s neck. And do not forget the Exodus connection!

And God said, “Let there be light.”

Obviously, the direct creation by fiat sets the Hebrew Scriptures apart from anything else in ancient texts. We have seen how John 1 makes the verb “said” into a noun, “the Word,” and also how he combines light and life. John makes clear that Jesus is the light coming into the world. Does this mean that God is creating the Son? Is this a begetting? Is this light coming forth from God created or uncreated? It is not clear because there is no light source mentioned. Ancient understanding of light matters as well.

We know Jesus says, “I am the light of the world,” and, “as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” (Jn 8:12; 9:5) “God is light, in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5) The last book of the bible concludes with the City of God, which needs no sun, nor lamp because God will be its light (Rev 21:3; 22:5). Such an understanding is thoroughly biblical. Psalm 27:1 (The Lord is my light and

my salvation); 36:9 (In Your light we see light); 43:3 (send out your light and your truth); 119:105 (Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path). The reality of light in Genesis 1 is a mystery. What we know is God said, let it be, and it was.

1:4 And God saw the light, that it was good, and God separated the light and the darkness.

Ra'a (1313X to see 879x, look 83x, behold 68x) Obviously this is anthropomorphic language. God made light, He *saw* it was good. Seeing is linked to many incidents of salvation, something I preached in Lent. God can act in space and time because He has entered a realm of measurable reality. He does so at a cost, perhaps this is why the “Word” is said to be the “through which” He creates. The judgment that light is good is vitally important, because it is an assessment which will recur. Over and over again, God will see “it is good” which stands in stark contrast to philosophies/religions which see created reality as the work of lesser gods and inherently flawed. Spirituality which seeks to escape the earth (echoes to be found in the Christian focus on going to heaven) are part and parcel of “dualist” religions, especially notable is Gnosticism.

Badal (divide, separate, differentiate, sever)

Five times. Where God separates 6 light/dark; 7 water/water; 14 day/night; 18 night darkness. The next time (Ex 26:33) a veil separates the holy place from the most holy place. In Leviticus, God separates clean/unclean and separates His people from other people. Separating is a priestly function, and priests order by separating because they are God’s representatives. In the ancient world, the

priest (like kings) inhabited both worlds, hence the ritual garments (of extravagant metals and jewelry. We cannot let modern/Christian concepts muddy the waters. Keeping things separate is a primary function of society because it is part of ordering chaos. Cutting off and casting out are important, recurring themes in both the Jewish Bible and the Christian Scriptures. Jesus talks of judgement and argues about the criteria for separation (sheep and goats, some will be surprised) Boundaries are inherently divine in origin. Blurring the boundaries is, in this view, an act of deceit against God.

And God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.” And there was evening and there was morning, first day.

I remember the first time I attended a bible study by a real teacher. He startled me when he pointed out, there is no source for the light. He then followed up with the question, “How can there be evening and morning without the sun?”

Ore (light; translated as light 114x, day 2x, bright, clear, flood, herbs, lightening, morning, sun). The third appearance, it is used again in Gen 1:18 in the parallel creation of sun and moon; then again in Exodus 10:23 where God gives light to Israel and curses Egypt in dark. 32x in Job!

Yom day (day 2008x, time 64x, chronicles 37x, daily 44x, ever 18x. [8-10x each: continually, when, as, while, full, whole, 44x misc) **layil** night 233x **erev** (137x evening, night, sunset) //Exodus 29:37-40 Seven days of atonement to make the altar holy, and all who touch it holy (one lamb is sacrificed at morning, the other lamb at evening).

Creation pattern seen at the core of ritual sacrifice and worship, making people holy. The words evening and **Boqer** (morning) raises the question: HOW? There is no sun or earth to produce this phenomenon. Physically I makes little sense but theologically it functions as an illustration of the importance of order in time as well as space. Once again, Genesis is a divine explanation, but in the form and language of Semitic people a thousand years before Christ.

*****Does the earth sit on pillars/columns? While not mentioned in the Genesis account, they appear elsewhere. Psalm 75:3 (*When the earth totters, with all its inhabitants, it is I who keep its pillars steady*) *ammud* most frequently seen in the pillar of cloud or the pillars of the sacred place. It occurs also in Job 9:3 (*who shakes the earth out of its place and its pillars tremble*) and 26:11 with a twist (*the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astounded at its rebuke*). Another word, *mosada*, occurs ten times. Several reference the foundations of the earth: Psalm 18:7, 15 (*then he channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare*); Micah 6:2 (*Hear you mountain, the controversy of the Lord, and you enduring foundation of the earth, the Lord has a controversy with His people...*) ; Isaiah 24:18 (*...For the windows of heaven are opened, and he foundations of the earth tremble. The earth will be broken, torn, shaken, stagger, sway=judgment on "the host of heaven in heaven and on earth the kings of the earth"*). Hosts of heaven is related to the divine council, of the "Let us make" verse later. Jeremiah 31:37 (*the foundations of the earth down below can be explored*) *****

1:6-8 Second Day

These verses are counter-intuitive for modern Christians (i.e., those who believe that NASA is real). The concept of an expanding universe which is 93 billion years old. What does it mean that they think the universe is flat?

Expanding? Expanding into what? The bible provides no explanation beyond there is water everywhere. The ancients could not imagine a three-day trip to the moon, or lander on Mars. A word like “light years” is meaningless. There are no answers (just sentences that sound like answers which are just a twist on mystery). Where did it come from and where is it going? That is the Bible answer [YHWH] and that is the question which is most important.

In the Ancient Near East most cosmologies were based on waters above and below the earth. Egypt had the god Nut holding up the sky. The blue sky has the appearance of water, so it makes sense that the ancient people assumed it was (rain falls down, water gurgles up from the earth). They knew you could dig holes (even deep holes) so they understood the earth was not a thin layer (relatively speaking). Our concept of a multi-layered atmosphere of gases which thin out into the vacuum of space is not what they envisioned.

Raqia (from the root **raqa**: “beat, stamp, stretch, spread” Ps 136:6 “the one who spread out the earth over the water,” Isaiah 44:24 “I the Lord made everything, who alone stretched out the sky, who fashioned the earth by myself.”) 18x Seven in Genesis referring to the sky/firmament. Which was thought to be a solid holding back the waters. Ps 19:1 “*The heavens declare the glory of the Lord; the*

firmament proclaims His handiwork” (Psalm 150:1, too) In Ezekiel’s vision of the heavenly throne room the four references are translated as platforms (which look like ice, or sapphires). Lastly Daniel says the wise will shine like the stars in the heavenly expanse.

Tavak middle, through, between. The root means sever. The firmament is in the middle/between the waters. It **badal** separates/divides them.

But in verse 7, God makes the space (it is not simply spoken into being like the light)

‘asah (*to do or make* literally over fifty different meanings including labour, bring forth, maintain, take, trim, vex). The first appearance of this word, God will also make the two lights, animals and humans. The earth will make vegetation (usually translated as bring forth or produce)

God named it sky **shamayim** (*root word=lofty*) It recurs in twelve verses in Genesis 1. The word also means heaven(s) and can refer to the abode of the celestial as well as God. Sometimes God is said to be in the heavens of the heavens. Our modern division is clear (physical sky and spiritual heaven) but in the thinking of the ancients this was not the case. Hence, God will have to “come down” to see what humans are doing. This is also why mountains are sacred places of encounter, for ancients said that the gods lived in the heights. Hence, Moses encounters God on Mount Horeb/Sinai (as did Elijah). Be aware of the terminology as a repeated pattern connected to encountering God and sacred space.

Evening and Morning: the second day...

Day 3 Land and Vegetation Genesis 1:9-13

Apparently in the LXX, God sees that it is good, which raises the question is there a scribal error in the Massoretic text (which is less ancient than the LXX, even if it is in the original Hebrew). At any rate, there are two goods on this day.

Separate dry land

Let there be. The Hebrew *hayah* (*to be, become, come to pass, exist, happen, fall out*) is a root for the name Yahweh (I am who am, I will be who I will be, I am who I will be)

Qava (*strong, twisted or tied, gather 1x ; by extension to wait for 29x, look 13x, hope, expect*) 2x Genesis, other 47x in Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah.

Yabash dry land. Twice here. Next Exodus 4:9 (pour water on dry land and it turns to blood), Exodus 14-15 (four times, the Israelites pass through the waters on dry land), next Joshua 4:22 (they pass through the Jordan River on dry land), next Nehemiah 9:11 and Psalm 66:6 recount the story,

+++ (Exodus 14. The repetitive patterns throughout the Jewish Bible include both story types and words. There are all manner of twists and turns in this repetition, it is not sterile, but certainly we are invited to see the connections and ponder the accounts together! As we see there are two stories about miraculously passing through waters—Elijah and Elisha will provide two others—although elements and vocabulary may differ. Of special interest is the verbal connections between creation and the great salvation event of the Jewish Bible. Briefly some of the connections:

Darkness covers the Egyptians while light is upon Israel, as cloud and fire leads them. The Sea is *yam* in both cases. There is the word *paniyim*/*face* on the face of the earth, face of the deep. A strong wind *ruah* will separate the waters (*mayim* also Genesis 1), the water is separated from the dry land. The people will walk through *tavek* (*the midst*) of the water—same word used of the firmament which divides water and water. The story of salvation echoes creation (hence the idea that salvation is a “New” Adam, Jerusalem, Israel, heaven and earth) chaos waters will consume Egypt—death—while making life possible for God’s people.

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Dry land is *eretz* (*earth, ground, land; ‘whole’ earth*) 2000+ its constantly recurring so hard to find special significance. But the role of the land, the land promised to Abraham and the patriarchs, the land of Israel, and the term “people of the land” is a disparaging term, referring either to those who are rebellious or unfaithful to Torah and people of low social function.

Earth and sea: God sees they are good

God continues “Let the earth *dasha* (*sprout, green*)... And the earth *yatsa* (*1,000x*) “go forth.” *Dasha* only occurs one other time in Joel 2:22 (and Genesis 1:11) “do not be afraid...for the pastures are springing up and the tree bears its fruit” (tree and fruit are also in this passage).

The third is *asa* as the trees make fruit (all the other uses refer to God’s direct activity of making, as mentioned before)

The first plant life *esev* (*grass, herbs*) occurs in three accounts in Torah. Here, in the creation account of Adam and Eve, and in the Exodus account of the plague of hail.

The Hebrew has a verb noun combination *zara zera*

Zara (*v*) *seeding, to sow or scatter seeds* 56x (Lev 12:22 applied to pregnancy)

Zera (*n*) 229x seeds of plant, semen, human offspring.

Peiy (*fruit*) 119x (for times children, once in Genesis 30) The importance of fecundity and reproduction in the Torah emphasizes that God is the God of LIFE!

Min (*kind, species, root is "portion"*) Factors in here and with animals. Then repeatedly in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 in section on clean and unclean foods.

End of third day

Day 4 "Lights"

The beginning of our second set of three **refocuses** on light. Clearly, the sun is not seen as the source of life-giving photosynthesis, because plants and vegetation already exist prior to sun (moon & stars). The Bible does not answer our modern questions (like how); rather it challenges us to hear, ponder and submit to what it does reveal. We live in a "materialist" world with materialistic assumptions. We assume our facts and world view! We look at the sky and see an endless expanse of empty space with burning stars and planets (solid and gaseous) in orbit around them—and declare that the (silly) ancients, mistakenly, saw these things and thought that they were gods. We declare that there are no such things, and expect,

therefore, that our Bible agrees with us. And even when it doesn't, we miss it or dismiss it. Our frame of reference is what we think is true, which we then project onto the Biblical text (because it is "true," as we defined it). This materialism is behind the confusion about divine and human causality. Divine activity is neither sufficient (God acts alone and we are passive recipients of "grace") nor supplemental (God helping us as a companion), although our limited language frequently makes it sound that way. God is not like a friend who comes alongside us, but our words are too small to capture the truth and our minds are too limited to grasp it, even if they could. The spiritual realm interpenetrates the material, but they operate in a different dimension of reality. Our mind and brain are simply not the same thing. Angels and humans are from different "worlds". When the Bible refers to the rulers of the world it can mean either human and 'divine' (whether rebels or obedient) and often both.

The ancient view looks at the sky and sees the movement and relationship of those twinkling lights as a manifestation of the invisible spiritual forces at work in the world. Worship of astral deities is found in countless pagan religions. It makes no sense to us, but perhaps there is something going on there? The Ugaritic myths, for example, which pre-date the Bible include a heavenly host which are the divine council of the chief god, El. Hebrew parallels sometimes call them the holy ones. In both Ugaritic and in the Bible they are called 'elohim' or 'sons of the Elohim,' and frequently messengers/angels.

The ancient understanding of the celestial lights, which in all cultures were connected to various gods, is the setting.

That is the world our Hebrew ancestors inhabited two to three thousand years ago. That is an important context of meaning for everything they wrote. Modern horoscopes, are a cartoonish variation of the ancient belief that in the heavenly realm, the luminaries were signs of the spiritual forces at work controlling human/earthly existence. The Hebrew SS rework this emphasizing the dominion of YHWH. The stars and moon will serve as signs for the feast days and worship cycle of Israel, but in both Testaments, Jews and Christians meant much more by the word sun, moon, stars and gods than we are accustomed to realize.

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[(cf Job 1:6ff *one day the sons of god came to present themselves before the Lord, and the adversary/accuser also came among them.*) Daniel 8:10 *It (the horn) grew until it reached the host of heavens, and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground and trampled them. 11 He even exalted as high as the Prince of the host...13 then I heard a holy one speaking and another holy one said...25 He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human means.* Daniel 10 Daniel prayed and fasted for three weeks, when he saw a ‘man’ dazzling bright. In the vision he hears the man say, 10:12 *“your prayer was heard, and I have come because of your prayer. However, the Prince of the Persian Kingdom opposed me for twenty-one days; now Michael, a prince of the first rank, has come to my aid, after I was detained there with the kings of Persia...20-21 Now I must go back to fight the Prince of Persia. When I go off, the Prince of Greece will come*

in. No one is helping me against them accept your prince, Michael.” Daniel Smith-Christopher (TNIB) Volume VII, p113, comment: (Here is an interesting association of the host/armies of heaven and stars...The belief that stars were actual beings is suggested in a variety of places in the Bible, usually associated with Caananite/pagan belief.

Some examples:

[2 Kings 23:5 (Josiah’s reform removed priests; *those who made offerings to Ba’al, to the sun and moon and constellations—al the host of heaven*), Jeremiah 19:13 (judgement of the “Lord of Hosts” against *all the houses on the roofs of which offerings were made to the whole host of heaven and libations to other gods*), Isaiah 24:21-23 (*In that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven in heaven And the kings of the earth on the earth, they shall be gathered in a dungeon...and locked in a prison...And the moon shall be ashamed and the sun shall be abashed. For the Lord of Hosts shall reign before the Ancient Ones (elders) on Mount Zion gloriously (kabod).* 1 Kings 22:19 Micaiah the prophet reports (*I saw the Lord seated upon His throne, with all the host of heaven standing in attendance to the right and left*). Nehemiah 9:6 (*you alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, and all their host, the earth and everything upon it, the seas and everything in them. You keep them all alive, and the host of heaven prostrate themselves before you.*) Judges 5 Deborah and Barak sang of God coming to do battle against Israel’s enemies v20 *‘the stars fought from heaven.’* Isaiah 14:12ff (*How are you fallen from heaven, heylel [bright, shining—translated Lucifer] son of the dawn/morning [ben Sahar] ...for you said “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the*

stars of God, I will sit on the Mount of the congregation...I will ascend the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High” Amos 5:26 (You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images, which you made for yourselves)

Deuteronomy 32:8 (When the Host High gave nations their inheritance, at His dividing of the human race, He stationed boundaries for peoples by the numbers of the gods...(YHWH’s portion is Jacob)...12 (YHWH alone did lead them, not with Him any foreign/ strange god [el])

[NEW TESTAMENT STARS

Matthew 2 (“we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him”), Mark 13:25 (the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heaven will be shaken)/ / Mt 24:29 (immediately after the suffering of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken). Jude 1:13 (they are wild waves... wandering stars, for whom the deepest darkness has been reserved) 2 Peter 1:9 (until the [phosphoros] morning star rises in your hearts), Revelation 1:16 (the One among the lampstands...in his right hand he held seven stars... as for the mystery...20 the seven stars are the angels of the seven church and the seven lampstands are the seven churches). Revelation 2:28 to the ones that hold fast and conquer (I shall give him the morning star). Rev 6:13 (and the stars of the sky fell to the earthlike a fig tree dropping its unripe figs) Revelation 8:10-11 (the third angel blew his trumpet and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch...and its name was Wormwood). Rev 9:1 and the fifth angel blew his trumpet and I saw a star fall from heaven to the earth.] Reve

22:16 (*Jesus said, "I am the root and descendent of David and the bright morning star"*)

Here we must ponder, how do we understand the workings of the Spirit of God? What does "causality" mean when applied to the angelic or demonic?

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Let there be *ma'or* (*n*) *light, luminary* mostly refers to lamp (*liturgical* in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers). The symbolic role of the lights is present. The Jewish year is solar, but the lunar phases impact the months

A year in the Hebrew calendar can be 353, 354, 355, 383, 384, or 385 days long.

Regular common years have 12 months with a total of 354 days. [Leap years](#) have 13 months and are 384 days long. Months with uneven numbers usually have 30 days, while months with even numbers have 29 days.

In addition to these regular (*kesidrah*) year lengths, both common and leap years can be a day shorter (*cheserah* or deficient year with 353/383 days) or a day longer (*shlemah* or complete year with 355/385 days).

These alterations are designed to prevent [Rosh Hashana](#) and other holidays from falling on certain days of the week. In practice, a day is added to the 8th month (*Marcheshvan*) or subtracted from the 9th month (*Kislev*).

In civil contexts, a new year in the Jewish calendar begins on Rosh Hashana on Tishrei 1. However, for religious purposes, the year begins on Nisan 1.

Owr (*v*) *shining, lighting* (root for feminine noun *owr-* in Let there be light). The lights will give light Ezekiel 32:8 is a judgement which reverses creation "all the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, and bring darkness upon your land."

Signs *oth* (*feminine noun*) sign 40x token 14x ensign 2x miracle 2x. The symbolic world view is at home with signs—which are a mix of concrete matter and deeper meaning. The next appearances in Genesis in order are the mark & Cain, Noah & rainbow, Abraham & circumcision. Moses & return to Mount Sinai/Horeb. In Exodus repeatedly it refers to signs for Pharaoh to obey God, but keeping Sabbath is called a sign of the covenant.

Seasons also translated as congregation, refers to the appointed times (a particular chosen day, but usually days set apart for liturgical worship).

1:16-18

Two *gadol*=*great lights* (*maowr*) Sun and Moon *memshala* (fem N 15/14x) *ruke*, dominion, domain (used of human, celestial or God) [psalm 136:8-0 “*the sun to rule the day, for His mercy endures forever, and the moon and stars to rule the night, for His mercy endures forever*] root *mashal* (*verb* 1. *To make like, comparison* 2. *Rule* this is the Hebrew word which is called *parable* in Greek) occurs in 1:18; 3:16 man will rule the woman after the sin; 4:7 Cain is warned sin crouches at the door, it desires to rule him. It refers to the rule of oppressors, kings, slave owners, and sometimes God. Reference to the ruling function of the celestial lights. *Kowkab* (*star*) In Joseph’s dream (37:9) eleven stars bow to him In Genesis 26:4 Abraham is told that his seed will be like the stars (Gen 15:5; 22:17; 26:4), which I always thought meant number (like sand), but Sirach 44:21 (*Therefore the Lord assured him with an oath that the nations would be blessed through his offspring ; that He would make him as numerous as the dust of the earth, and*

exalt his offspring like the stars, and given them an inheritance from sea to sea...) Numbers 24:17 (*a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter rise out of Israel...*).

Deuteronomy 4:19 “*and take heed lest you lift your eyes to heaven and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage...*” Robert Alter (Torah, 900) This notion...is a curious one by the lights of later monotheism. To Israel the worship of the one overmastering, God was assigned, whereas other nations were entrusted to the supervision of lesser celestial beings, *beney elohim*, (“the sons of God”) and came to worship these intermediary beings as though they were autonomous deities. Polytheism, in this view, is a reflection of the fact that the sundry nations, unlike Israel, must have not been chosen by the one God to serve Him.

While the text is easily read as simply the lights in the sky, it should also be clear that the ancient assumptions about the ‘heavenlies’ are also in the background and must be considered when hearing these verses.

DAY 5 Genesis 1:20-23

In the second parallel day, YHWH is filling “the waters (*mayim*)” and sky with living things. The Elohim says “Let there be...” The two Hebrew words are spelled the same, with different vowels (sh-r-tz). The first *sharatz* (Verb:to wiggle or creep; by extension to multiply) only occurs 14x (creep 6x, move 1x; bring forth abundantly 5x, breed 1x, increase 1x). It is part of the creation account, re-appears in

the Flood Story, Pharaoh uses it in Exodus concerning the Hebrew slaves in Egypt (double meaning? God fulfilling His promise to Abraham, but Pharaoh views them as multiplying creepers like reptiles). Then five times in Leviticus 11—purity laws on clean/unclean. Also Ps 105:30 (reference to frogs in Egypt) and lastly Ezekiel 47:9.

The second *sheretz* (Noun m: creeping things, here small aquatic animals, swarming group of small creatures). Here and Flood story, 11x in Leviticus—ten in chapter 11—with reference to insects, lizards, etc. as well.

Filled with *chay* (adjective and noun 500x—living, green vegetation, flowing waters, lively/active human, renewal at Springtime. Masculine Noun=life, sustenance. Feminine Noun= living thing, animal, appetite, renewal.) Most commonly translated live 197x, Life 144x, beast 76x.

Another set of repetitive words (*ofe* and *ufe*). Flying creatures (*ofe* Noun, refers to birds, bats, insects. Root ‘to cover’—like feathers or wings—and there is a similar concentration in creation accounts, Flood, and Leviticus 11 as well as Deuteronomy. Afterwards, references are to the threat that birds will feast on the flesh of the dead.

Ufe (v, root word 32/29v, to fly, also to cover—as with wings). Several times refers to angels flying.

God (*bara-created/made*. 1:1 in the beginning God created heaven and earth, 1:21, 1:27 the humans in the Divine image,) the *gagol* (great)tannin (dragon, serpent, sea monster, venomous snake, whale Ps 44:19/Job 30:29, Is 13:22. Is 34:13, 35:7, 43:20, Jer 10:22, 49:33, 51:37, Mich 1:8= jackal) Ex 7 (rods became serpents in v 9, 10,12), Dtn 32:33 (compares the wine of unfaithful Israel to serpents

poison). Ez 29:3; 32:2 Pharaoh is called a river monster (also Leviathan Isaiah 27:1 **1** In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.) Isaiah 51:9 (Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces, that didst pierce the dragon?) Much like the greater and lesser light (sun/moon), this may be a reference to the pagan creation stories—and a clear delineation between YHWH and the created lower deities.

God *barak* (*blessed*) 330x. In creation the *He* will also bless the human (not animals) and the seventh day. Blessings will mark numerous narratives (Noah, Abraham, etc) and is a worthy word to pursue and study.

Day 6 Genesis 1:24—31

“Let the earth bring forth living creatures” In 1:11 God says “let the land (*dasha*) sprout forth/green” [rare word only three times in Bible) and 1:12 “the earth *yasha*” [another root which is not rare! at 1,000+ 518x out, 410x forth, bring forth or proceed] The key point to ponder is that the earth (recall heaven and earth are the whole of creation) participates in the production of vegetative and animal life. What could this mean for us today?

living creatures *chay* (*living*) *nephesh* (f Noun from root verb *naphash* to take a breath, be refreshed, in the sense of “take a breather” Verb form occurs three times [Ex 23:12 command for work to cease and slave/free to take a rest; Ex 31:17 connected to day God ceased from His work,

rested, and was refreshed; 2Sam 6:14 David and his men take a rest after an exhausting journey). The noun is very prevalent 757/683, occurring the first two times in the previous verses on living creature in the seas, and here on the land. The word is loaded with meaning. Literally, a *breathing creature* [it is translated soul 475x, life 117x, person 29x, mind 15x, heart 15x, creature 9x, body 8x, himself 8x, yourself 6x, dead 5x] The concept includes both the mental and emotional, the passions, desires and appetites. I have heard two Jewish Bible scholars discuss the nephesh as “an open mouth/throat/neck,” StudyLight website says that in Hebrew thought the throat was the location of the nephesh Ps 69:12 the waters have risen up to my neck.] The LXX generally translated it as *psyche* (*soul*) although the Hebrew is much broader than a soul as popularly understood.

Min the creation of living creatures (land, sea, air) are all “after their kind” or “of their own kind.” Order is central to the Ancient concept of “creation,” it is not about making stuff, it is about keeping an order and making life possible (and subduing chaos, which dis-integrates creation and produces death).

Cattle (*behema* 189x fem Noun, probably related to a root word for mute, hence translated [dumb] beast (136x) or Cattle (53x); but can include other livestock; domesticated and even wild beasts—any nonhuman animal.

Remes (*creeping things; from root verb ramash in v 20-21*) are land reptiles scooting around. Half of 17x in Genesis, in psalms and numerous prophets generally as part of a list of

different kind of existing creatures (paralleling this account).

God made/fashioned (*asa* God made the firmament, the two lights, now the animals) and it was *tov* (*good, pleasant, agreeable*, good in a wide sense)

1:26 Let us make (make) *adam* (sounds like ahdahm). [Comes from verb root *adam* (sounds like ahdam). Root word means to be red, to redden, dyed red, flushed face) 10x generally dying materials, but Lamentations 4:7 speaks of the whiteness and ruddiness of the skin of the Hebrew princes.] The noun refers to generic man/humanity, or a man 552x/526v (apparently ancient Arabs thought there were two kinds of humans white (red) and black (Gesenius' Hebrew—Chaldee Lexicon) *adam* (noun, name of first man 11x/10v Genesis mostly 3-5, Hosea 6:7 and a city in Joshua 3;16 where the waters were dammed up so Israel could enter the promised land on dry ground) There are eleven other related words (mostly nouns and adjectives—including Edom-nation, Adamah-earth or ground, and the word for rubies.) First nineteen (both times in Genesis 1) uses refer to "the man" Gen 4:1 first appearance of "Adam" 3:20 after he names wife Eve.

Tselem (17x=*image, likeness, appearance, resemblance*). The ancient root was a shade, phantom, illusion, resemblance and by extension a representative figure like an idol—which was seen as vanity and a non-thing in Hebrew theology. Man is in the divine image 3x in Genesis, the 4th Seth in Adam's image, afterwards 7x pagan idols (twice for the mouse and tumors in 1 Samuel). In the ANE,

it was understood that the idols mediated the presence of the gods, and the King was a human image of god.

“Divinity of human monarchs” was widespread, and Genesis turns it on its head by claiming humanity, and every human being, is the image of God—the divine dwelling. Hence, Christian claims that we are Temples of the Holy Spirit are actually a development of creation, more to come in Genesis 2!

Demesh=likeness (19/25 total), similitude, resemblance, shape, manner. Concentrated in Genesis [5:1,3 (twice each, God made man in His likeness, and Adam produced a son in his likeness) and over a dozen in Ezekiel’s heavenly visions which are loaded with similes in chapters 1, 8 & 10 Daniel 10:16 (one in the likeness of a son of man touched my lips). Isaiah asks, “with whom will you liken God, or what likeness compare Him? To an idol?” (40:18-19) (*pesel* graven image from verb *pasal* ‘to carve’) which emphasizes the amazing declaration of human in the divine likeness)

1:27 The word *bara* (create) used three times. God creates man in His image. In the image of God, He created him (singular). “Male and Female” He created them (plural). Male (*zakar* 82/80; from the root for ‘remember, recall, remind’ (e.g. Genesi 8:1; 9:15-16 God remembers Noah and His covenant through rainbow) man. Ironically, the next mention of males will also be Noah’s ark when he is told to collect the animals, male and female. Gen 17 numerous times around circumcision requirement. Will appear many times in Leviticus around sacrifices and priesthood and Numbers concerning the tribal census. Female. (*nek-ay-vah* woman or girl 22/22) from root *nakav*—to bore, to pierce, to hollow out; to specify or single out; blaspheme or curse.

Once again, we see repeated times in ark stories. Leviticus a dozen (peace offering male or female, sin offering female sheep or goat) Leviticus 27 value of males and females fluctuated based on age. [needs to be seen as an actuarial assessment of financial value rather than the intrinsic worth of a human being]

1:28 (&22skipped over this earlier) blessed (barak) and said “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (waters)” God does not do this with the land animals, just sea creatures (and air?)

Fruitful *para* (*fruitful, bear fruit, branch out; increase*) It is a verb and a primitive root PRH (29x/28v) Key connection to salvation history Genesis 1 creation, Flood 8:17 as they leave the ark God declares all living things, crawlers, birds, crawlers (according to their kind!) “*swarm on the earth and be fruitful and multiply*” 9:1, 7 Blesses Noah’s family “*be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth*” & “*be fruitful, multiply, swarm (saras-Genesis Exodus 1)*

Mala fill, be full, satisfy, accomplish, complete verb 250x/242v. Genesis 1:22, 1:28 “fill the earth” Next appearance 6:11, 13 “the earth was corrupt and filled with violence.” 9:1 Noah (creation reset: be fruitful and multiply and fill het earth)

Kabash (verb root. 15x/13v) subject, subdue, force, bring into bondage; violate, dominate, tread down. Literally to tread with the feet. Numbers 32:22, 29 Israel will “conquer the land.” Joshua 18:1; 2 Sam 8:11 David defeated nations, Esther 7:8 Haman accused of sexual assault when he falls on the queen’s couch in dread. Jeremiah 34: 11, 16 two references to the sin of forcing people into slavery.

Zechariah 9:15 The Lord of Heaven's army will protect His people, they will defeat their enemies by throwing great stones... (lots of blood and bloodshed)"

Rada (root verb 27x *to tread down* as in a wine press) rule 14x, dominion 9x, take, prevail, reign. Leviticus 25 three times, God forbids Israelites be enslaved/treated harshly by other Israelites. Lev 26:7 God threatens that Israel will be conquered and maltreated if unfaithful. Numbers 24:19 Balaam prophecies that Israel will trample down and destroy Edom. Judges 5:13 Twice in Deborah's song of victory—God used a remnant to gain "dominion over the nobles and dominion over the mighty ones." 1 Kings Solomon's dominion, also three times the supervisor over the work teams (perhaps an allusion to Hebrew slave days?) Multiple psalms, 110: "The Lord will extend your reign from Jerusalem, you shall rule over your enemies." Isaiah 14:2, 6; 41:2 God promises a reversal of fortunes Israel will take and enslave her captors and rule over her oppressors. & 14:6 the Lord breaks the staff of the wicked and the scepter of rulers that struck down the people with wrath and unceasing blows. 41:2 Messiah "He delivers up nations to him, and tramples kings under foot..." Jeremiah 5:31 the cruel misrule of the priests

This extends over every fish of sea, bird of air, (*chay*) living being that (creeps/moves/glides) across the earth. It would not appear to have been an established fact but more a task to be accomplished. This impacts your "Eden narrative" and assumptions about life before the Fall—all good in every way, or struggle and challenges as part of the situation. As we read the rest of the Jewish Scriptures more closely as theological narratives (rather than straight

history or moral instruction) we will see repeating patterns (with unique twists) which aim to **reveal** more and more the goals and activities of the Lord (YHWH)

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IMAGE and LIKENESS in New Testament

Eikon (from verb *eiko*—to resemble or be like. *Image, figure, likeness* literally, a statue or profile, figuratively, representation, resemblance). Only appears once in the Gospel, in the story about paying taxes to Caesar Mt/Mk/Lk all three “show me a coin, whose likeness and inscription is this?” Romans 1:29 refers to debase humans worshipping images of men or animals. Romans 8:29 For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed (*symmorphous*; also *Philippians 3:21* ‘*who will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body*’) to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the first born within a large family.” 1 Corinthians 11:7 (why men do not cover heads) man is the image and glory of God, woman the glory of man 1 Cor 15:49 “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.” 2 Cor 3:18 “And all of us with unveiled face, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror (*kataprizo* hapax), are being transformed (*metmorphoo*; 4x Mt/Mk Jesus transfigured, Romans 12:2 “don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing [*anakainosis kainos=new*] of your minds [*nous*]” 2 Cor 4:4 The Gospel is veiled to those who are perishing because the “god of this world” has blinded their minds— “to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the IMAGE of God.” Colossians 1:15 “He is the image of the invisible God, the first born (unique, primary) of all creation” Colossians 3:10 strip off the old

self, “have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the IMAGE of its Creator” which eradicates our social and racial divisions. Revelation has eight references to “the Beast and its image.”

LIKENESS *omoites* 4 times (LXX Gen 1:11, 12) Hebrews 4:15 a high priest “like us” who has been tempted as us but did not sin,” 7:15 “another priest rises in the likeness of Melchizedek.” *Omoiosis* James 3:9 The tongue blesses the Lord and Father, and curses people made in the image of God.

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Some Church Fathers differentiated the image as a status (freedom, creativity) and the likeness as the life of virtue which molded us to God. The Hebrew is not so sharply differentiated as that, but as is always the case with two synonyms there are different nuances of meaning. This sort of pairing is a common Hebrew style of writing. Sometimes it is complementary pairs which indicate an entirety (day and night, heaven and earth, earth and sea). Reading the Jewish bible you will quickly notice how words and entire phrases are paired to communicate.

GENESIS 1: 29-30

Immediately we see that parallelism in v29 on trees that bear fruit with seeds. *Zera zara(seed-bearing seed) es* (tree) are repeated twice, *oklah* (root verb—to devour; food, devour, be devoured [Gen 4x, Ezekiel 9x people of Israel being devoured total 18x] The original diet of man and beast is seed bearing plants and trees. This will be reworked with Noah (Creation 2.0) where consuming animals will be added to human menu. The relationship of

humans to animals is generally supposed to be governed by kindness and compassion. The ideal ruler (a good king) reflects the gracious mercy-kindness of the Creator Divine King. There is no command to be vegetarian, but in reality, the diet of the ancient Jews did not include much meat. While the small group of the elite had access to meat; aside from a major feast, like Passover, or perhaps an important family event, the agrarian and working poor did not. They typically ate two sparse meals a day (late morning and evening) consisting of grains, olives, grapes, and ground vegetables. So, the Noah reference is more theological than it is a practical guide to meal preparation, something we will look at when we arrive in chapter nine.

Genesis 1:31 *me'od (exceedingly) tov (good, better, best, well, pleasing, beautiful, precious, favorable, appropriate)* God sees the goodness. The great debate centers on whether the world is still very good? Judaism does not have a developed theology of the fall of creation

Day 7 Finished

2:1 finished (*kala*—"to cease or be completed" accomplish, cease, consume, end, fail, finish, accomplish, complete, spent, used up 205x) used in both verse 1&2; another example of Hebrew repetition. Note the parallelism between beginning of creation and the end.

Tsava 486x (*host; army, warriors, army—God's angels, human army, 'sun, moon, stars,' or all creation; service, hardship worship*) Heaviest use in Numbers, Chronicles, Isaiah. The luminaries // gods in the sky, the vegetation of the earth, the creatures of sea, land, air

2:2 *melakah* (from the root for messenger, ie, angel. *Work, business, occupation, service*) work which He had made (*asa*)

Shabat (71x *cease* 47x) repose, desist from labor. Later in the Torah there will be a strong emphasis on Sabbath and rest day. In the NT, Jesus will be confronted about His healing practice on Sabbath. Jesus does not reject Sabbath, He offers an alternate interpretation of the Law. He makes it about giving life but also ties it to His divine mission and relationship! See Mt 12:1-7 (Sabbath 8x). Luke 13 & 14 add two other accounts. John 5, 7, 9 [5:17 “My Father is still working and I am still working] See Exodus 20:8—11 where the rationale for the Sabbath commandment to rest is tied to creation (Deuteronomy 5:15 is more existential and justice oriented, remember that you were a slave in Egypt...the Lord brought you out; ..commanded you to keep the Sabbath)

Gen 2:3 *Barak* God blesses for the third time (birds&fish, humans, the day). It is a consecration of time. He makes it *kadash* (173x *to be clean, consecrated, holy, dedicated/set apart, sanctified*) Exodus 13:2 God will consecrate the first-born son. Exodus 19:10, 14, 22-23 all the people (they will wash their garments), later the priests. Ex 20:8-11 “keep” Sabbath Holy, God made it holy. Ex 28ff priest, altar, tent and furniture will all be consecrated.

Shabat (*ceased*) two recurring terms in the creation: *bara* (*fashioned, formed* 4v) *asa* (*work, produce* 9v)

2:4 these are the generations of the heavens and the earth: their being created.

Creation from another angle GENESIS 2

Tow-led-ah (descendants, results, proceedings) Except here, always in reference to family lineage, so only found in books concerned with family tree: Genesis, Numbers, Exodus, Ruth and 1 Chronicles. Here generations is meant to convey the idea of the beginning of all that follows.

The first half of Genesis 2:4 is probably not part of the original story as it would disrupt the pattern of seven (Jewish Study Bible). Because the number seven is associated with completeness in the Ancient Near East, The Jewish Scriptures and Christian Writings often have patterns of seven (check out the Apocalypse to really see) Seven days, God sees seven times, the word 'elohim/GOD' occurs 35x (5x7) and He speaks thirty five words on day seven.

2:4b "In the day..." begins a new sentence with a new context. "Earth and Heaven" (ertez and samayim—same words) are reversed here and there will be a greater focus on the earth rather than sky or sea. God *asa (made)* is the same verb found 7x in first account (plus twice applied to trees/vegetation), however, there is one difference. The subject of the action is *YHWH Elohim*. The name YHWH (related to the verb "to be") is a specific "name/title" and here it is coupled with the generic word for God which was previously used in chapter 1. The stylistic change and the different verbiage are seen as reasons to postulate two different stories/authors are being brought together. There is also a discrepancy with the Genesis 1 creation timeline. On Day 3 the vegetation vegetation, while here there is no bush [*see-ahk 4x total, including Hagar story, 2x Job.*] or

esev (used in Gen1:11-12, 29-30) refers to herbs, translated grasses, vegetation on the (*saday*) field, plain, flatlands. Obviously, the ancient compilers of the Scriptures were able to see what we see. So let us PAUSE.

[**excursus** If the Bible is God’s revealed truth, then we are invited to hear this and ponder what GOD is communicating to us in these two dissimilar accounts. If our inclination is to immediately seek to find a way to twist the texts and make it fit factually, then we are not listening and hearing, we are defending a position. Some may ask, “How can the Bible be true if both of these statements contradict?” Others say, “The Bible truly reveals God’s word, so what is this different story telling me?”

[It is a story, so perhaps we should read and enjoy it and discover its internal congruity without reference to the details of Genesis 1 and our compulsive desire to create answers for questions which may not matter? Hear (*shema*) Israel! is the greatest commandment of God. Let us hear.]

Sadly, Richard Friedman (Torah p16f) makes clear, we cannot hear the multiple puns. Frequently the author employs *metathesis* (rearrangement of the root letters. E.g. “Elvis is evil, he lives a vile life.” “I took a nap in the pan.”) E,g, *terem* (not yet) and *himtir* (rain). *Ed, adam, Adamah* (river, man, ground)

Gen 2:5 The dry conditions (the word *matar/rain* makes its first appearance in the Bible) preclude vegetation. The situation here is more reflective of Israel’s actual climate. This story resonates with their physical circumstance. Genesis 1 (which we saw may be corrective of the ANE pagan creation myths) has too much water—yet really both

sea and desert are barren, waste, so sacramentally they both convey the same idea—chaos or “emptiness.” In the ancient view, disorder is non-being (rather than existence/non-existence), so here the Lord provides a Divine water source and the ‘*adam*’ to ‘create’ a relational, ordered, living world.

There is an *ed* (*mist*; only twice in Bible, here and Job 36:27) which serves to water the earth. The author is providing a visual image of what the world looked like before the creation of the *adam*.

There is a verbal word play between *adam/human* and *Adamah/soil-earth*. Humans *abad-work, till* the earth. The word *abad* primarily means to serve. This encompasses the work of slaves/servants and Levitical/priestly functions 227x/290 total (till 9x, servant 5x, worship 5x).

In Genesis, the word is repeated for Adam’s role, and Cain also works the ground; but when he kills Abel (the shepherd) the ground “will no longer yield” to him and he will wander. The word occurs frequently in the Jacob cycle to describe his labor/servitude to Laban. In Exodus 1 it is used of the Hebrew slave labor to Egypt. In Ex 8:1 God says to Pharaoh, “let my people go into the desert to serve me (worship)” so the question emerges “who will you serve? Serving YHWH or serving another ‘god/human ruler’ will yield different results (share in royal nature or being an underling, even a slave)

The process of creation uses pottery language. God forms **yasar** (63x total=form 26x, potter 7x, fashion 5x; frame or make) the *adam from the dust* (*afar—dry earth, dust, mortar, debris*) [Uses of dust—after the sin, in 3:19 God will

declare to the *adam* “*you are dust and to dust you shall return.*” In Gen 3:14 God tells the serpent that it shall “eat dust.” Gen 13:16//28:14 has a more positive spin (promise to Abraham that his descendants shall be as dust on the earth, too many to count)] of the *Adamah* (*ground, red clay*) the Lord *nafak* (*blows, breathes*) into the *af* (*nose, nostril, face*; most often *anger/wrath* because of heavy breathing) and the *adam* becomes *chay* (*life*) *nefesh* (*soul 475x, life 117x, person 27x, mind 15x, heart 15x, creature 9x, body 9x*; refers also to passions, desires, emotions. It can also refer to the dead. It is associated with the throat or open mouth). So God’s breath into a dust body creates a living being. This illustrates the human condition. It is not called the image of God, but there is a creature/creation mixture going on.

In Greek stories, Prometheus created man out of earth (mud), and the goddess Athena breathed life into his creation. Here we see another common pattern repeating in ancient creation myths - the spirit is given to the body so that it will become alive.

2:8 The Lord (YHWH God) plants (*nawtah—to plant, set something upright, affix*) next 3 Noah plants a vineyard, Abraham plants a tree, and Exodus 15 “you will plant them in the Mount of your possession, the sanctuary you established, i.e. Temple) a gan (in Greek *paradiso*) *a garden*. The word occurs 12x in the Adam/Eve story Genesis 2&3 qedem (*east*)

Eden [Ezekiel 28:13 “you were in Eden the garden of God...14andyou resided on God’s holy mountain”] Eden was the whole mountain with a Garden on the east side.

For the Ancients, mountains are associated with gods, the “high places” mentioned regularly in SS. The Temple was on a mountain, the ziggurats were manmade mountains which served as temples [The nature of the Babel pagan religion can be deduced from an examination of the similar pagan forms of worship that accompanied the worldwide ziggurats: snake worship, sun and moon worship, obscene fertility rites, worship of multiple gods and goddesses, human sacrifice and more. The cultic sacrifices were meals—so whatever was sacrificed was also eaten. The mythic stories and sacramental understanding of physicality (the unseen realm is manifest in time and space through physical persons, places and things) is non-rationalistic, non-materialistic. It may seem child-like to us as it is more poetic than prosaic, intuitive than concrete. Or maybe it will seem deeper to us?

Because the gods dwelt in gardens, the human gods—royalty—had gardens as well. Well-ordered and luxuriant, they were the opposite of chaos and desert. Remember, the holy land is pretty arid. In Europe, I visited some of the great gardens which were around royal palaces; it makes sense that only the wealthy could afford such luxury. The garden of Eden is also a model for the Jewish Temple. Paradise is associated with the heavenly realm//afterlife (this day you will be with Me in paradise, said Jesus on the cross). Hence the “gardener” *adam* would have a royal, priestly function. It was a place where the human encountered the divine.

[excursus: Mountains and gardens continue to play a role in not just the Jewish Scriptures but also the New Testament. For example, in Matthew, Jesus is tested by

Satan on a mountain, later Jesus climbs mountains to pray, to teach, He is transfigured on a mountain, and at the end of the end of the Gospel He gathers the disciples and ascends from a mountain. In addition, recall Jesus is in a garden to face His temptations and later is buried in one (John). Mary Magdalene thinks the risen Lord is a gardener—probably a “narrative theological” reference to creation account and the New Adam theology (which is more systematically developed in St. Paul).]

Gen 2:9 In verse 5 nothing had spouted up, here God *tsamach* causes springing up, growth. Trees *ates* (*tree, timber, branch, stick, wood*). Pleasant *Khamad* (*desire, pleasing, in bad sense covet, lust, idolatry, any disordered longing*—e.g. Eve, Dtn 5:21 “Thou shalt not covet...” to the sight and good for food (sight and food are first appearance of each Hebrew word). This is a wonderful place, and in Genesis 3 this imagery will be twisted in the story of Eve as she is tempted and sins. Evil is perversion of good.

(Keep in mind the temple) the *tawvek=midst, middle* are two trees. This same term describes the firmament separating the waters above and below in Genesis 1. The tree of Life (*chay*)

[Excursus Jewish religion refers to the Torah as the tree of life, and tree imagery is popular in ordinary and mystical strains of their religion. It does appear in the Sacred Scripture in three books. “Tree of Life” is twice more in Genesis 3:22, 24. Proverbs 3:18 say Wisdom is the tree of life, as is the “Fruit of righteousness (lawlessness takes life away). The fulfillment of desire and a gentle tongue are also the tree of life. Four times in the Apocalypse. Rev 2:7 (To

him who conquers I will grant to eat the tree of life which is in the paradise of God). In the middle of the street of the city; also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its 12 different kinds of fruit’—one each month, for the healing of the nations. 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes , that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Rev 22:19 anyone who takes away from the words of this book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city.

The idea that the Cross is the Tree of Life finds its roots in several verses. Act 13:23 and 1 Peter 2:24 both refer to the crucifixion as “the tree.” Acts 5:30 and 10:39 “a tree” Deuteronomy 21:23 ‘cursed is the one hung from a tree’ quoted by Paul in Galatians 3:13]

Knowledge (*da’ath* knowledge, skill, perception, wisdom, cunning.) knowledge is broader, experiential and transcends mere memorization of data. This another Hebrew pairing to cover “everything” *tov* (*good*) and bad/evil (like day/night, land/sea, old/young, etc.)

Genesis 2:10-14 River

This seems to come out of nowhere, and two of the rivers are unknown. The river waters the garden, so it is a source of renewal, then it breaks apart/splits into four. This may be an image expressing the idea that Eden is the source of life (symbolic, ancient approach is about meaning!), rather than an actual geography map (modern is concerned with data, facts, details). Remember, science can analyze water

but it cannot discern baptism, and our language of rebirth or washing away sins is not less symbolic! It is noteworthy that much of the vocabulary here are words appearing for the first time, perhaps another indication of a different author's hand at work. The river Euphrates appears three more times in Genesis, the first (15:18) is the promise of the land between the Euphrates and the River of Egypt (Nile).

Pishon (increase. Another break apart, scatter) there are some reasons to think it refers to the Indus River in India. The Nile (Samaritans) and Ganges (Josephus' theory) are also offered as possibilities. Sirach 24:25 mentions it in an analogy about wisdom, but offers no other insights. The precise location of *Havilah* is unknown, however 10:7 (// 1 Chron 1:9) The son of Noah—Cush—has a son Havilah and 10:29 (// 1 Chron 1:23; a son of Joktan). In a pair of geographic references: Gen 25:18 Ishmael's descendants “dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt as you go to Assyrian and 1 Samuel 15:7 “Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt.” The land contains gold (*zawhab*, 389x), bdellium (*bedolak*. 2x Numbers 11:7 the manna looks like bdellium) and onyx *shoham* (11x some type of *precious stone, probably onyx*. It appears in Exodus (6x) as one of the 12 stones on the priest's breast plate. Ezekiel 28:13 also mentions it in the litany of precious stones in the Garden of Eden, where he compares the King of Tyre to Adam's original state and sin, and Ezekiel tells us that Eden was on a mountain) Friedman points out that the root consonants are also found in the Hebrew (they became

a living soul—*nefesh*), there are other verbal puns with other rivers.

Gihon “bursting forth” (the snake will be cursed to crawl on its *gehon/belly*) circles *Cush* (Ethiopia) so some think it means the Nile. There is also a pool near Jerusalem mentioned five times (1 K, 2 Ch) with this name. A spring or stream.

Tigris and Euphrates are well known, parallel rivers (Mesopotamia literally means “between the water”). Babylon (modern day Iraq) was one of the great empires of the Ancient Near East. The letters of Euphrates are also in the snake curse while tigris letters are in a word at story’s end 3:22. While this may seem a stretch for most of us, close reading of the Hebrew demonstrates the almost constant use of interconnected words.

Genesis 2:15-17 Reveals the task of the human and the command about the tree. Whatever else this story ‘unveils,’ it reveals a pattern to be repeated throughout the Bible in reference to individuals, families, and the nation. This cannot be ignored for the sake of concerns about historical Adam.

Yanak (967x; took) and *lakak* (75x; put) the *adam* in the Garden (*gan/paradiso*). Both verbs first appearance in Bible.

Awbad 290x (work, serve, labor. Used of slaves, domestic underlings and also Levitical/priestly) Adam will work the land (Cain also works the land). Gen 15:13 prophecy to Abram of future slavery. In Exodus there is a verbal play

(over a dozen) with serving YHWH vs serving Pharaoh/Egypt. The Book of Numbers is full of usage for the Levites in the worship. So the term is ambiguous

Shamar (from primitive root to hedge around, as with thorns, to protect and guard. *keep, guard, heed, watch, observe*). The usage of this term is interesting. Cain will ask, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” in a sense rejecting the human vocation of “keeping.” The next time (17:9), God instructs Abram to “keep my covenant,” and this will be another key meaning for the term in the Jewish Bible. (17:10; 26:5) Gen 28 in the Jacob cycle it is used of God “I will keep you; keep me in your ways.” In Exodus the term frequently is used as “keep my commandments,” etc.

2:16 *tsava* first time used (494x *command, charge, give an order*). Used of God’s commands as well as human authority. The will of God is not arbitrary, but aligned with human well being.

Akal (*eat, devour*) *eat eat* used twice, in Hebrew doubling the word serves as an emphatic, so translated as ‘freely eat’. The command is to eat almost anything (Brueggeman connects this to 1 Cor 6:12; 10:23 Paul’s admonition “all things are lawful” in reference to dietary law). The sense of grace and provision is powerful, especially in a garden which had such a high standing in the ancient imagination. The intent of creation is for the human good.

2:17 Why are they forbidden to eat tree of knowledge of good and evil? The consequence, death, is not a punishment. This is a warning. The high pace of wisdom in the bible implies that this is not about knowledge, but how knowledge is achieved. Contemporary society is blessed

and cursed by knowledge (is nuclear power good or bad?). Technology is ambiguous, used for a mix of purposes. Humans are called to trust God. Perhaps it's a reminder that we should receive it on God's terms not try to take it on our own terms. Narrative theology is not straightforward and lots of interpretations are possible. These are meditation texts rather than answers. Don't eat the fruit is different from explaining why.

The expression "on the day you eat it you shall die" will not mean immediately, rather on the day you break confidence, your mortality is assured. More on this in chapter 3.

Genesis 2:18-25 "not good"

While seven times God sees the creation is good (culminating in very good) in this account there is the opposite declaration.

Excursus: what is your theory of the original situation? What is the "story" which consciously (or subconsciously) shapes your view of then vs. now? Were things perfect? Was there no work, no challenges, no struggle? Were human beings immortal and healthy, the world a peaceful place devoid of problems? Or was the Garden/Paradiso a contained area of heightened beauty and goodness within a special area (the mountain of Eden) while the world was more similar to what we see now? Was Eden a place of prosperity—more cooperative, more abundance, fertility and good health? Was it like the beginning of "the Kingdom of God" on earth and were the humans supposed to expand that Divine Rule (as the image of God)? In the latter view theologically, the idea of Israel or the Church resonates. The Israel/church (Temple is Garden, Jerusalem, even all

Israel is Eden) connection then helps us to understand the New Jerusalem which comes as a Bride out of Heaven. Because, of course, Eden is a gift of God, we cannot build the Kingdom of God (only cooperate and receive it). The idea that Israel is to be the new Eden is most obvious in the amazing promises of Deuteronomy.

.....

Deuteronomy 7:12-26 (blessing and curse) “He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground (grain, wine, oil, cattle, flock...fertility) 7:15 “The Lord will turn away from you every illness” See also Dtn 11, 28 where the stunning blessings and threats are so graphic. Genesis 2:21-25 Deep sleep (*tardayma* occurs 7x. Gen 15:12, After the covenant sacrifice (where he chases off birds of prey), at nightfall Abraham falls into a deep sleep, horror and great darkness fall upon him; and God speaks and then a burning pot passes through the sacrificed animals—needless to say we will look into that passage!) 1 Sgm 26:12 David sneaks into Saul’s camp and steals his spear, God had cast a deep sleep on the soldiers. Job 4:13 (a word came stealing to me, my ear received the whisper of it Amid thoughts from visions of the night, when *deep sleep* falls on mortals, dread came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake, a spirit glided past my face...it speaks: ‘is anyone righteous before God?’ Job 33:15 God speaks ... in a dream, in a vision of the night, when *deep sleep* falls on mortals while they slumber on their beds...” Proverbs 19:15 laziness casts one into deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger. Isaiah 29:10 “For the Lord has pouted out upon you a spirit of *deep sleep*; He has closed your eyes, you prophets and covered your heads, you seers.”

All previous “helpers” were created from the ground as the *adam*, but why is the woman not formed directly in the same way? This question is not asked, nor is it answered (as I see it). Is this simply “divine anesthesia before the divine surgery”? The symbolic meaning of ‘deep sleep’ is hinted at by other appearances of the word in the Bible.

What is the connection to dying and losing before receiving?

[“Sleep” Ps 13:3 “sleep the sleep of death.” 1 Kings 12:2 David slept with his fathers. Repeated for nine other kings who died, starting with Solomon. Jesus says the little girl is not dead, she is asleep, and Jn 11:11 that our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15:20

With other vocabulary connections to genesis; Daniel 12:2 Many who sleep in the dust (*apar*) of the earth (*adama*) will wake, to everlasting life. This does not mean Adam must be understood as literally dead, although the process seems to indicate something similar to that. However, theologically, it is a revelation of the biblical pattern of death/resurrection; of leaving what was behind (a pattern we will see often in Genesis) in order to find what one is seeking.]

Ehad (957x *one* 687x, *first* 36x, *another* 35x, *any* 8x, *every* 10x, *certain* 9x) *selah* (41x *side* 19x, *chamber* 11x, *boards/beams* 4x, *ribs* 2x) Some think this means the whole side of the man was split, others think it is a single rib. In either case, the understanding is the body, like a building, has supportive structures and it is this which God removed and used to build up the body of the woman. There is no description of what *adam* was required to undergo—a rebuild, a permanent lacking/missing rib? Each invites us to ponder the cost of companionship. Interesting, the word for one occurs here and in the following verse about two shall be one—the many from the one and the one from the many. In human reproduction, biological science says that man and woman contribute some of their own DNA to provide for a new life. Deeper spiritual meaning?

WOMAN

Genesis 2:23 God takes “the rib” and *bana/builds* an *issha* (*woman*) from the ‘*adam*. The response of Adam is written in Hebrew poetry, and the word man (*ish*) is a companion word to *issha*. The bone/flesh connection drives home the literal physical unity of the companion. The poetic exaltation communicated the joy of Adam. She is flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone. She is out of him and *issha* to his *ish*.

2 Sam 5:1 at Hebron they told David, “We are your bone and flesh” (19:12, 19:13 use same expression). Flesh is often used as a term for human existence and human beings in general. The bones are often all that remain of the deceased (e.g. Joseph’s bones are transported from Egypt).

Some church Fathers connected the procession of Eve from the side of Adam to the water/blood flowing from the side of the crucified Christ—which is the church. The church Father Ireneaus (130-202. A bishop, he had met Polycarp, the bishop martyr thought to have known the disciple John) calls Mary the New Eve and Jesus the New Adam in his theological writings. There is a wealth of such reflections which bind the Christian Scriptures to the Ancient texts of Israel. It is no exaggeration to say that one could spend many pages on some verses and their interpretation in the Fathers.

Al ken (therefore therefore) the author provides an *etiology* (the cause of something else) which explains the meaning of the story. In most narratives, we will not be provided such an application. Genesis (the speaker is not identified) declares that the creation of the woman is such that, the man will leave behind/abandon his own parents and cling/cleave to his wife. As typically the woman left her family to join the husband’s family. In actual practice, it seems most ancient Jewish men had a single wife (he polygamy in the Bible is among the Patriarchs—and as we will see has unpleasant outcomes—and the monarchs—which includes their political ramifications. A bridal price was paid to the father/family (as financial return on the loss of a contributing member of the family) and this soon gave way to the practice of the father sharing the dowry with his daughter (failure to do so reflected poorly on the man)

In the current crisis around sexual identity, sex roles, marriage and the like, this brief text from Genesis is frequently twisted or criticized from the modern, political perspective of the reader. WE pause for a brief excursus to Jesus’ use of the text.

[*excursus* In Matthew 19, Jesus will refer to this passage when Pharisees are “testing” Him with a question: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?” Jesus responds “What God has joined, let no one separate.”

The follow up question is “Why did Moses allow divorce?” And the stunning response, “because your hearts were hard.” What does that mean about interpreting SS?

I have reflected on the divorce readings elsewhere. Human existence is complex and there is great joy and great pain in family life.

I think it best to see Genesis offering us a positive story. God made complementary sexes for the purpose of abating the isolation of the original man. Maybe these words from the Episcopal wedding service can provide a fit conclusion:

Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people.

The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

Ephesians 5 begins with an admonition “be subject to one another, wives be subject to your husbands” and proceeds to speak of the husbands love for his wife and the model of Christ and the church. The model of servant leadership (Jesus the foot washer) was lost on the pagan West and the church afterwards has retained a distorted view of power and authority. There is no indication of subservience in the

creation of Eve. We have already seen that “help” does not mean “hired help, maid or servant” and Adam is not declared Lord over the woman. Sadly, things change in the next chapter...]

Genesis 2:25 they are both *awrome* (*naked, bare, nude*) which comes from the root word *awram* (which means wise, crafty, subtle and is used to describe the serpent). The verbal connection serves as a bridge. There is the same relationship as *adam adama*. The term is rare, occurring 16x and the next one is Saul prophesying naked. The third appearance, in Job (naked I came forth from the womb and naked I return) may have creation echoes. In several cases it refers to abject poverty or desolation.

Shame *boosh* (*ashamed*⁷², *shame* 9; *confounded*²¹), Once more reflection material. Symbol of Innocence and openness; one thinks of a young child? The contrast to the Noah story is striking. There Ham sees Noah’s *erva* (nakedness, also shame) which results in a curse. Is this a function of post-Fall world? Perhaps, but the Fall does not play heavily in Jewish thought, nor is there a developed, overt theology within the Bible on that subject.

Excursus male & female

[The humans are *ish* and *issha*, male and female. The woman is not a helpmate and we cannot fall into the belief that the bible sees woman as a lesser servant. The ancient world had an established hierarchy and women were not equal to me, a source of much agitation among contemporary women. Two things about this. First, the Christ makes clear that He is Lord and has come as one who serves. He told the apostles that “the greatest among you is the one who serves.” Mary said “he has cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly” (one of myriad eschatological reversals). Modern people,

including most modern Christians, have adopted the value system of anti-Christ in their discussions about power. This is especially true in the “war between the sexes” which is raging among us. Secondly, we will see that in the Genesis accounts the male/female hierarchy is often flipped on its head—as is the primacy of the first born which we will see over and over again in Genesis. Arguably, the central role of the woman in the Fall is an example. Much like Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene, the fact that a woman is front and center in such a pivotal moment (while Adam passively follows along) serves at some level to undermine the operating assumptions of culture of the time. If women don’t matter why does she matter so much. Tune in to see how the wives of the patriarchs also flip this assumption upside down.

In reading the text, remember that Male and Female are also symbols of the bipolarity of reality expressed as masculine/feminine. Sex refers to the biological male and female, while gender (masculine and feminine) has to do with the meaning of things. In many languages nouns have genders (Spanish “el” and “la”) and sometimes this betrays the ancient understanding of reality. Heaven is masculine, earth is feminine (water falls on the earth, the earth brings forth growth) in Spanish. The story of Adam is multilayered. He is humanity, but also a man, yet his story is a pattern for individuals, a community, a nation. The same is true of Eve. Remember the early church understood Jesus and Mary in terms of Adam and Eve. Ancient and Biblical worldview is the balancing of heaven and earth, masculine and feminine, spirit and matter, ideal and actual, form and matter. It is pre-Scientific and has a

spiritual component. Seeing “through” he characters is vital if we are to encounter the deeper meaning. Moderns also see things in terms of power and oppression. The masculine/ideal is only realized in the feminine/actual. The soul is not superior to the body, without a body&soul the person is dead, or merely an idea. Sherlock Holmes is not real because he has no body, he is a no-body!]

Genesis 3

“Good and Evil” are paired several times in this chapter. In the four other occurrences (Deuteronomy 1:39. 2 Sam 14:17. 1 K 3:9. Heb 5:14) it is always tied to maturity and growth in wisdom/understanding. This has led some to see the tree as a symbol of the path to maturity which will unfold in God’s time, and which the first parents sought to take control of on their own terms. The issue was timing. The sin is not trusting God would provide in due season the “fruits of the tree.” This deeper, symbolic meaning is of vital important and cannot be completely ignored if we are to encounter God’s message here.

A recurring theme in most commentaries is the application of the term “innocent” to Adam and Eve. Are they like children? The story is not detailed nor does it provide much psychological information. It is clearly a case of reading our assumptions into the text because there is so little there. However, as is always the case, job one is to read and hear the revelation. The Lord is not answering our questions, He is communicating to us what is useful for our salvation.

Chapter 3 is called the “fall.” The Jewish study Bible expresses a different understanding of the story (p18, footnote, v22-24). It points out that neither account of

creation portrays humankind is immortal. It references the Tree of Life (Lady Wisdom) remains available to those who seek it. It declares that the estrangement does not require a Messianic act of redemption to heal it—rather the practice of Torah is the antidote (the latter points are obviously at odds with our Christian beliefs).

About fifty years before the birth of Jesus, an Alexandrian Jew wrote the “Book of Wisdom” in Greek. The second chapter is a meditation on the righteous man and whether God will intervene in his innocent struggles. It is read in our church on Good Friday and resonates powerfully as a prophetic word about Jesus on the Cross. It continues with an assessment of the folly of evil men, who do not understand the purposes of the Lord, or the value of holiness and righteousness. Wisdom 2:24 says, “*for God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of His own eternity, but through the devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it.*” Part of the Apocrypha, many Christians do not recognize the work as Sacred Scripture, however, it apparently has influenced Christian thinking.

The text Genesis 3:1

Nawkash (serpent)

Mythology.net Arabic mythology *bahamat (behemoth)* a large fish, sometimes a sea serpent, which sustains life in the watery chaos of the waters and mist beneath the cosmos. Paralleled in Hebrew, behemoth, which is a hippopotamus, (bull or elephant) “Bahamut interacts with a variety of other mythological creatures. The most notable among them are Kujata, the bull who stands on top of his head; Falak, the

snake who lives in the underworld beneath him; and Leviathan, the sea-creature with which he is to do battle on the Hebrew Day of Judgment.” Snakes (winged/dragons in China) figure heavily in mythology on every continent— (African) half human half snake had a role of creation, (Mayans) leading humans across the seas to their home. In Egypt: The serpent is associated with immortality and the gods in the Old and Middle Kingdom periods in Egyptian mythology. A snake was depicted on tombs carrying the Pharaoh off into the sky, to the land of the gods. The snake came to be a symbol of kingship around this time and appeared on the headdress of the Pharaohs. Greek and Roman mythology saw snakes as guardian spirits of altars (in which they were carved).

In the Jewish Bible, the noun *nawkash* comes from the verb *nawkash*, the root word means “to hiss, whisper a magic spell, or prognosticate. It is used of divination or reading signs and omens. It can also mean to observe diligently, learn by experience or fortune telling. The verb occurs 11x in 9 verses, three in Genesis (Genesis 44 Joseph has a cup used in divinization) Lev 19/Dtn 18 forbid fortune-telling and 2 Kings 17, 21 and 2 Chron 33 give narratives of the practice along with child sacrifice. The other times it means to learn by observation or experience. One could certainly see how the garden temptation would be an experiential education for the first couple, although the narrative is silent on their inner life.

The noun is more frequent, 31x in 28verses. The first five are in the Garden story, and the next will be in the 49th chapter where Jacob blesses his sons—Dan is called a viper which bites the horse’s heels so the rider falls off. (we will see that chapter in the far off future) In Exodus the staff of Moses becomes a serpent and in Numbers 21 (*nawkash* and *saraphs*) serpents bite the people. There are

mythic creation references in Job 26:3 and Isaiah 27:1 which refer to the “fleeing serpent,” which Isaiah also calls Leviathan.

In light of all this, even if it is an actual, physical creature, how are we to understand the literary meaning of the serpent? Christians often speak of satan tempting the first parents, and while a plain reading seems to negate that, looking at the verbal connections make it seem less of a stretch. The “simple snake” is not so simple when seen in terms of ancient texts within Israel and elsewhere. The primal battles with a serpent/dragon figure heavily in depictions of creation, and while the Genesis account is devoid of this full-blown mythological narration, this may be an indication that the reality is being addressed as humankind’s dilemma rather than all of creation! It is also noteworthy that talking animals (Balaam’s donkey aside) are not a common feature of the biblical text. The serpent is in stark contrast with what has gone on before and what will follow after. In symbolic world, a story operates on many levels at once (see John’s Gospel or the Apocalypse; a quick example is Paul’s explanation of “muzzling the ox” claiming it is really about paying ministers) so literal and figurative explanations, perhaps several, are both applicable simultaneously.

Kol arum (all, whole, everything, totally; very common word, over 5,400x), so the ‘completely/more’ ‘wise/clever’; shrewd, crafty, cunning—has both a good (Proverbs 8x) and bad (Job 2x) sense. We have already pointed out the verbal play (*arum/aram*) on naked//wise, and it will continue to resonate in the short story. Another theme is seeing-knowing, which in fact continues throughout the

scriptures. It happens so frequently that I once preached on how often the verb to see is connected to salvation and important historic moments in the Biblical narrative.

Chay—living, by extension translated as creature or beast; used several times in Genesis 1 account of creatures.

Saday—spread out, hence open spaces of land, or a field.

Beast of the field occurs several times in the naming sequences of chapter 2. The snake is called a beast of the field, which seems to emphasize the earthbound nature in contrast to some of the more symbolic/spiritual meanings we alluded to above. This raises a question about the other creatures and their level of intellectual and verbal function, something C. S. Lewis plays with in his Chronicles of Narnia series.

Has the Lord God said that you shall not eat?

Awkal—eat, devour, consume. Occurs 15x (chap 2 twice, chap 3 thirteen). Eating in the bible is often symbolic (for example a prophet eating the scroll/word of God, or John 6, the Bread of Life, where Jesus says eat my flesh). God's providence is expressed through food (The Exodus manna is the archetype). In the NT eucharist and the Lord's Prayer (daily bread), all remind us to be open to different angles on the meaning of the story.

Alter f.n. 2 "*A. E. Speiser has noted, the subordinate conjunction that introduces the serpent's first utterance does not have the sense of "truly" that most translations assign it, and is better construed as the beginning of a (false) statement that is cut off in midsentence by Eve's objection that the ban is not on all trees of the Garden. Others*

interpret it as a diversionary tactic, setting Eve up with a falsehood which sets her mind in the wrong direction.

Eve's response includes an addition— "do not touch." Scholars point out that this was not part of the initial command, although personally, based on other Biblical stories where additional words are added, it is unclear to me how to understand this. The Jewish Study Bible gives a positive spin, reminding the reader of the Jewish practice of building a fence around the commandments, a careful approach, not unlike the doctor the margins added to removing a cancer. It is erring on the side of caution. You can't eat it if you don't touch it, which is a commonsense idea. However, in an ancient rabbinic source the snake shakes the tree and the fruit falls. Some others point out Dtn 4 ("*you must neither add to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you*"). This dictate occurs elsewhere in the Bible (most notably the end of the Book of Revelation). Perhaps the genius of narratives such as this is that one can glean different lessons by approaching them with different points of view. Human language cannot fully contain God's word. The "big revelation" about human sin in Genesis 3 includes all manner of angles on sin and sins. So, the story sheds light on a widely diverse human experience. It conveys an "explanatory value" for the human condition, and serves also as a template for understanding the sin of Israel and the sins of each human, and the role of exile.

The serpent negates the divine command. This is rebellion in its simplest and most horrifying level. The all-powerful Creator God can be dismissed with a simple word of denial.

The choice of God to embrace weakness is the theology of the Cross. It is easy to miss all of that here. The Lord has reduced Himself to the human level (Philippians' emptied Himself) to interact with humans, and suffers the indignity of the human condition. One cannot overstate the number of times that God will give commands to Israel and they will not comply. These patterns are the primary connective tissue throughout both testaments. This "unveiling" (*apocalypse/revelation*) is the primary feature of Scripture. The symbolic nature of the communication allows it to have prophetic import. Meaning is not limited to a "once and only" but a web of interconnected stories which provide clues for understanding. This is a story about rebellion and unbelief, it is a broken trust—the characters are denying the reliability of the Word of God, which means denying His character as "Faithful and True" (Revelation 19:10 and the white horse).

[Excursus One recurring pastoral problem I deal with is the people who have lost of faith in young adulthood. A common barrier to faith is the idea of a "literal, historic Adam and Eve." It is interesting that modern minds draw the line there—whether modernist Christians or modernist non-Christians.

In my mind, the sparse nature of the stories is relevant in determining the answer to the question, and the author's (human and divine) purpose in the communication.

Whatever the actual historical nature of the first parents, there can be no doubt that the story has symbolic meaning (whether their literal lives or their story lives, or both!).

However, more to my point, no one ever focuses on the main point of the story, which is sin. I have never been

asked, “You don’t think Genesis’ illustration of sin is real, do you?” no one seems to question whether human choices impacted the world and future generations. If they don’t buy into the “Deceiver/Adversary” image (serpent) they never challenge my belief about the reality of disobedience, sin and alienation?

We should ponder if reading Lord of the Rings is a foolish, and we should just read history. Children should not be read to out of the Chronicles of Narnia, they are fantasies and untrue, instead read the newspaper to them (one which you trust, of course). But there is a question: Is truth only found in biological humans, or can literary characters be revelatory?

It is no exaggeration to say the more deeply I read, study and pray with these texts, the less interest I have in finding a concrete time and place to set them, nor do I have any interest in arguing about facticity and historicity which keeps the salvific process of me entering the story and the story entering me from happening.

3:5 your eyes will be open, you will be like gods and you will know good and bad.

In the wider context of Genesis 1 (image and likeness of God) this is a particularly awful temptation. The idol/images were understood to serve as “bodies” (physical locations) of the gods, which humans served in temples. In Genesis 1 humans are the image, and in Genesis 2 humans are the caretakers of the Garden, which is the archetype of the Temple (beautiful place to encounter God). Perhaps our human destiny (Orthodoxy calls it *theosis*) is at play. Once again, being like gods is our future calling,

but the first humans are impatient, and manifest a lack of trust in God.

**Ahyin* “Eyes” 887x (KJV translated as 495x eye, 216x sight; 19x seem, 12x color, 11x fountain, 11x well, 10x face, 14x please/8x displeased. 4x think 66x other).

Generally, it is both the physical eyes, mental states, faculties or process, things that appear, and places where water comes forth.

**pawkach* “to open” (in particular open the eyes or ears; observe). First two occurrences here, frequently God (Jer 32, Dan 9 & Zech 12) or humans open eyes to see/observe something. More to our text is God’s desire to open our eyes—which may be literal or figurative. I believe the Garden Account is providing us a template of later patterns found in the Apocalypse (Lamb/Ram, Women/Whore, Mark of Christ/Beast). Anti-Christ is a Rebel and Fake which stands in opposition as a failed attempt to duplicate the Divine. God is the source of Wisdom (a tree) but the forbidden Tree of Knowing is a counterfeit. God is the source of Wisdom (she participates in His presence before time), yet the “wisest” creature is actually leading the people astray (not unlike Solomon’s embrace of pagan worship, in spite of his unparalleled genius). God is associated with light, and light is generally goodness; yet He is wrapped in darkness (Ps 18:11; wrapped in light Ps 104:2). God resides in darkness (Exodus 20:21, Deuteronomy 4:11; 5:22, even when His Name enters the Temple, Solomon makes reference to God swelling in darkness/thick clouds 1 Kings 8:12//2 Chronicles 6:11. Meanwhile, Satan (the prince of darkness) is also known as

Lucifer (*hilel; light bearer*) of Psalm 146:8 (The Lord opens the eyes of the blind...”).

There are places where God opens the eyes, Isaiah 35:5 (the eyes of the blind shall be open) and 42:7(“open blind eyes” and free prisoners). Obviously, in the ministry of Jesus numerous times heals the blind.

On a symbolic understanding, knowledge and seeing are often interchangeable. Some verbs “to see” also mean “to know.” To be blind can be moral or intellectual as well as physical. When they eat the fruit there are eyes will be opened, so the serpent said something true there.

Yada (“to ascertain by seeing” hence to know, perceive, understand, recognize) There is also an English expression “you’ll see” to express coming to find out (Find is also a sight term) and come to know. “I don’t see what you are saying” means I do not understand. Know is also used for sexual intercourse

Tove and *Rah* Good and Bad (evil, malignant, disagreeable, sad, wrong, distress and calamity). This is not a moral tree (good vs evil) but rather the whole range of good things and bad things.

Genesis 3:6 the decision!

We speak often of patterns in the Bible and I have said that I think revelation includes God showing Himself to us and also showing us the patterns of our life (both good and bad). The question “what happened” (earth/literal-concrete-material/modern) is less important than “what does it mean?” (heaven/symbolic-universal-spiritual/Ancient-Biblical). Lets look at four words (ra’ah,

issaha, tov, laqah) which occur here and elsewhere connected to ‘world changing’ sins

Gen 6:2 the sons of God *ra’ah* the (bat Adam) were *tov* and *laqah* them as *issaha*

Partial 12:14 The Egyptians will see Sarah is beautiful (*yape=fair*) Pharaoh TOOK her.

1 Kings 11:2 David and Bathsheba He *ra’ah issaha tove* 11:3 he *laqah*.

The words--

Issaha ra’ah woman saw “Saw” occurs 1313x. It can connote to regard, look at and ponder. On the universal level of sin, one precursor to sinful choices is looking at and pondering the opportunity. The Greek word *nous* (mind) came to be understood by some Fathers as “the eye of the soul.” Obviously words like “soul” have had different meanings in different cultures (different times and places), buy the idea of the mind “perceiving and receiving impressions—physical and non-physical—can be applicable to ascertaining the mistake of Eve, or more importantly, “my” mistakes, and how to avoid them. How we “see things” affects how they “impact us.”

Tov ma’akal good for food

Already Eve has made an assessment on good/bad. She exists because it was not good for the man to be alone, now she “sees” (determines, perceives) that the fruit is ‘good’ for *ma’akal* 30x (*root akal is eat*) literally edible, so food, most often translated as meat. Leviticus 19:23 also has a command not to eat of the fruit of a tree, in that case during the first three years when the fruit is considered

“uncircumcised.” There is no indication that the two are to be read in tandem, but it may raise the issue of “timing”? Another reference to fruit trees and eating, Ezekiel 47:2 vision of the water flowing out of the Temple (Jesus). ‘Along the banks of the river there will be all sorts of trees which bear fruit for eating (and leaves for healing)’ (an Eden reference). Eating is turned on its head in Jeremiah 7, 16, 19, 34, the prophet warns that the flesh of (dead) humans will be the food of birds. (also Psalm 74, 79) Eschatological reversal (raise up lowly and weak, cast down high and mighty) is associated with justice/judgment and God setting things right.

Ta’ava ayin pleasant to eyes

Ta’ava 20x (root ‘ava—to desire, covet, crave, long for, lust after) negative and positive. Next appearance, Numbers 11:4 the *asafsup* (collection, rabble) lusted for meat and complained. *Lust, crave, delight*. Psalm 10 contrasts the desires of the sinner and the desires of the faithful. Psalms 6 and Proverbs 8 make up 70% of usage, mostly negative.

[excursus “Passions”

Type in the word “lusts” at the BLB and it provides 19x in NKJV (all NT), 2x RSV, 22x ASV, 1x ESV. Different words are used for the sinful desires which haunt us and drive us.

Epithymia 38x Mark 4:19 Jesus uses a parable of seeds and comments that “lusts and desires” choke the word which has been planted. (In Luke it expresses His desire to eat the Last Supper with His disciples) John 8:44 Jesus calls his adversaries children of the devil who will do the lusts of their father. Romans 1:24 famously says that God

has handed (idolatrous) people over to their unclean desires. Galatians 5:16 (walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh). Ephesians 4:22 (put away the old man and deceitful desires) Colossians 3:5 (dead to the flesh and its passions/*pathos* (*evil desires which bring suffering*) and *epithymia*/*desires* 1 Thessalonians 4:6 combines the words (lustful passions) in describing the pagans who do not know God. 1 Peter 2:11 the lusts of the flesh war against the soul, 4:2 seek the will of God not the lust of flesh of men, and 4:3 gives a litany of words for (passion, desire, lust) pagan practice. 1 John 2:17 the world and its desires is passing away. Revelation 18:14 A prophetic song about the fall of Babylon, tells the merchants, “The *opora*/FRUITS (1x) for which you *epithymia* and all your dainties and splendor are lost to you and never to be found again” (note Babylon is the counterfeit Garden, the land of exile, the home of the human temple tower [ziggurat])

In the Orthodox Psychotherapy (Healing of the Soul/Spirit) the Christian is counseled to guard the soul/nous. The same language as the garden in Genesis 2. To attend to what one receives through looking/pondering. The soul is beset by the passions/desires, which one is to turn from and turn to the Lord. One listens to God, and does not attend to the desires which come to mind. The modern (non-believer) person conforms his/her identity to desires. I was born wanting this, so it must be good (God would not make me ‘wrong’). The ancient faith declares we were made good but have been wounded, we are soul sick, and we must conform not to our desires but to God’s will. In this context the sin of Eve is the archetype of what ails us—we

trust in our own experience and assessment of reality.
More to follow on that.]

Ayin eyes

The first use of the word ‘eyes’ occurs in the temptation account. Not surprisingly it occurs often, almost 900x in the Bible. It is translated in different ways (for example “found favor in your sight, Lord”). Often people have their eyes opened to see (Gen 21 When Hagar sees that she is pregnant she disdains Sarai in her eyes. Sara sends her away which was displeasing in Abraham’s eyes, and as the slave girl lies dying in the desert God opens her eyes to see a fountain). Common expression, someone lifts up their eyes to see.

There is resonance between Eve and Israel’s tribes in Judges 17:6 & 21:25 “There was no king in Israel, each one did what was right in his own eyes.” In contemporary Christianity, such a thing is considered virtuous, many a conservative has told me to do what I think is best. The Bible has a flashing yellow light at those words—be cautious. We are too quick to assume the guidance of the Holy Spirit and too blind to see that we are blind!

Psalm 37:1-2 There is a voice of rebellion deep in the heart of the wicked; there is no fear of God before his eyes. He flatters himself in his own eyes that his hateful sin will not be found out.” This, of course, is a brilliant expression of the mythic/symbolic insight into Genesis 3. We trust our eyes (our senses and desires) and we act in accord with them. Fallen humanity is not simply evil, we are also foolish, ignorant, misled, confused, and an assortment of other things. Assuming “I am okay” is what takes us off the

path, this is especially true of our reading of Scripture. My greatest fear is the same deception and error which blinded Jesus' adversaries is dimming my sight—my passions/flesh, the world/social influences, and the devil—demonic spirits which are opposed to God. In the material realm there are frequencies which humans cannot see or hear, and in the spiritual realm there are the same laws at work. As our human perceptions are impacted by natural limitations, disease, environmental factors and the like, so, too, will spiritual perception be affected. For example, in dim light people all cannot see as well, and if someone blocks our view, we cannot see!

Hamad sakal desired for wisdom

Hamad occurs for the second time in the Bible, the first in Genesis 2:9 (God made every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, including the tree of life and tree of knowledge of good and bad). The word is primarily translated as desire (11/21) but also covet, lust and by extension be precious or pleasant.

Sakal wise, but not necessarily spiritual. Prudence, understanding connected to success and prosperity. Wisdom, like much else in the Jewish Bible, was understood in terms of the material world and the skills and understanding to get the “daily bread.” Biblical “wisdom” does not have the spiritual aspect which most of us associate with it (in contrasting it to knowledge).

Laqah (took) (ate) and Nathan (gave) issh (man) akal-eat

Notice the parallels to Jesus feeding the crowds and Last Supper. He took, gave and they ate. However, Jesus blesses the bread, an element missing here, and another

example of the “spirit of antichrist” expressed in a counterfeit.

Based on the reading, it appears that Adam was with Eve at the time and was a willing, if seemingly passive, participant.

[Excursus Job 28 and Seeking Wisdom

At some level the Eve story includes the search for wisdom—Proverbs 3:18 she is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her—and can be read in dialogue with other Scriptural texts. For example, Job 28:12-28

28:12 “But where can wisdom be found? And where *is* the place of understanding?

¹³ Man does not know its value, Nor is it found in the land of the living.

¹⁴ The deep says, ‘*It is not in me*’; And the sea says, ‘*It is not with me*.’

¹⁵ It cannot be purchased for gold, (lists: silver, gold, onyx or sapphire, gold nor crystal, jewelry of fine gold; coral or quartz, rubies, topaz, gold).

²⁰ “From where then does wisdom come? And where *is* the place of understanding?

²¹ It is hidden from the eyes of all living, And concealed from the birds of the ²¹air.

²² Destruction²² and Death say, ‘We have heard a report about it with our ears.’

²³ God understands its way, And He knows its place.....

²⁷ Then He saw ²⁷wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out.

²⁸ And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom, And to depart from evil *is* understanding.’ ”

Psalm 111:10 the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding have all they that do His commandments.

Proverbs 1:7 the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction

Proverbs 15:33 the fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom and before honor is humility

Fear of the Lord is awe, reverence and submission to Him.]

Genesis 3:7 the eyes of both are opened after they eat and they see they are naked. They sew together leaves to make a ‘belt, apron’ to cover themselves. Whatever inflow of

knowledge is understood to have taken place by eating the fruit of the tree, we only learn of one. They see that they are naked. (Henceforth nudity will be associated with shame. Hebrew *erva* shame, nakedness, *pudenda*; *indecenty*, *exposure*, *improper behavior*. WE will look at this in detail in the Noah story, suffice to say no nakedness is allowed by one approaching the altar and Leviticus has half the usage in a long series on forbidden sexual behaviors) This is what opening the eyes means. We have already seen the contrast between *aram* and *arome*—wise vs. naked. Here they respond to the knowledge by sewing together fig leaves. Leaves are symbolic of both life and death. New growth is expressed in new leaves, but mortality is shown by the dried leaves passing. Leaves are connected with healing in Ezekiel 47:12 (fruit is food and leaves for healing) which may be an interesting text to read beside this one.

Isaiah 34:4 All the stars in the sky will fade away, the sky will roll up like a scroll; all its stars will wither, like a leaf withers and falls from a vine or a fig withers and falls from a tree.

The idea that the leaves are “dead” enters into some reflections. They are covered in death (God will do the same), one of the apparent meanings of the sacrificial system where an animal is killed. Paradoxically, death becomes a blessing to escape the cursed earth. The meaning of the Cross and Jesus is deeply connected to this reality.

Some question if the fig leaves are from the same tree as the forbidden fruit. This leads to interesting speculation and connections.

Growing up we said “they ate the apple” which demonstrates how easily the biblical text is “amended” by our stories (3 wisemen). While this is not a big deal, apple

trees are not native to that land, it illustrates how hard it is to read what the text actually says and not what we think it says.

Genesis 3:8-12 The Confrontation with God.

The power of the story rests on the simplicity of the anthropomorphic portrayal of God—like a human He walks, seeks, calls, questions, and comes to a conclusion. This is not the all-knowing, all-powerful God of philosophy/theology, which is why the term “myth” is accurate in some ways. The narrative feels similar to stories found in other cultures about gods and “beginnings” even if there are also major differences. Fundamentally, the message is most important.

Perhaps this is best seen as a revelation of the pattern of God and incarnation. Hence it is a type of Lord God present in the Word Incarnate/Jesus. This is a theological assessment and interpretation, one which the story as a narrative simply ignores. It is not meant to be didactic or explanatory. The story offers a narrative for our (and more importantly The Church’s) meditation as we piece together some understanding of the encounter of The Divine within the created realm and the human beings with whom He has relationship.

This portrayal of God serves a literary purpose, so that must be factored into any theological reflections or dogmatic declarations (for example, on God’s knowledge, if God has a body, etc.). It is noteworthy that there is no indication that the Lord views this disobedience as going

according to His plan, but in fairness the “Plan of God” is not referred to in Genesis.

3:8 they heard (shama) the voice/sound (kol) of the Lord. This could be a very ironic sentence. Recall the Hebrew ‘to hear’ is also ‘to obey,’ exactly what they have not done! The Hebrew *qol* means voice, but also means sound. Some translations opt to say they heard God walking. A second verbal play is the use of the word *ruah*. As a separate story in isolation, the *ruah* probably refers to wind, and means simply the breezy time of day. In the hot, dry land one would wait until evening to enjoy walking. God waited for it to cool down to have some quality time with the kids! This is, however, the second appearance of the word in the biblical text, and if we read it in conjunction with the first, there are other angles open up. In Genesis 1:1 the I of God moves on the face of the chaos waters before He begins the process of speaking creation order. In a sense, the decision to take the fruit is an embrace of the chaos—water is neither sky nor land and so is connected to uncertainty in the ancient understanding. There is new danger as the covenant is broken and humans are now “on their own.”

Khava hide, withdraw. Note that the humans hide from God. It is God who seeks (think of parallels to parables of the Good Shepherd and the Lost coins). I personally think that the hiding is what cements the permanency of the rebellion. One wonders what the story would look like if instead they had run in their nakedness and shame and confessed their sin and asked forgiveness? (compare Prodigal Son where the Father looks for the returning son, but does not search him out in the foreign land=outside the garden) As a model for us, this is a revelation of the pattern

(which will be expanded by blaming) of human deception. Guilt, shame and fear mix together, culminating in the ultimate catastrophic outcome. Humans hide, not God.

Tawvek—*in the middle, the midst*. This may be a verbal cue, earlier we read that the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life was placed in the *tawvek/middle* of the Garden. Does this mean they are hiding behind that tree, or that they are lurking in the general vicinity of that tree? (scene of the crime!) Interesting that the next time the word appears is in the scene where drunken Noah lies naked/uncovered in the middle of his tent? Perhaps the author's way of tying these two events together?

Qara called Prior to this, all calling was connected to God or Adam naming things, a pattern which will continue over and over as people give names to offspring in Genesis. God calling serves a narrative function, it makes the story more poignant. Literalist critics who reject the Bible ask why did God not know if He is God. I think the question is wrong headed, but acknowledge some Christian approaches to Sacred Writ have helped create this issue. The question in Hebrew consists of the short syllable "*aye*" (*whence? Where?*) It is the same question Cain will be asked of Abel's whereabouts. I offer the suggestion that the question is addressed to the reader (community first, but also each of us). It is a meditation question: "where are you?" Perhaps it is an angle on what we call God's judgement?

3:10 "I heard you in the Garden and I was afraid..."

Tragedy. In the narrative, we participate in the event more intimately. Rather than being told what happened, or having the impact described to us theologically (as in Paul)

we are allowed through our imagination to be there. Pondering these words and allowing them to sit in our 'soul' would be a great benefit.

Once again, the Hebrew is *shama qol* which means "heard a sound," "heard your voice," or "obeyed your voice." So there is irony beneath the words, which is compounded by the word *yare* (*fear, awe, revere, respect*). Because the *adam* did not fear/respect the Lord and obey His voice—the *adam* is now frightened/terrorized when he hears the sounds of the Lord's presence in the garden. He hides because he is naked—he is uncovered so he covers up. Intimacy is gone, and the bond is broken. God is now seen as an outsider from whom the *adam* must flee. This is the opposite of *theosis* and cut off from God the human embraces death, in slow motion.

3:11 God's question serves a narrative function to increase tension in the story. The issue of a befuddled god becomes fodder for anti-theists or anti-christian critics who read it literally. They mockingly ask how can god not know something. I think that is a failure to engage the text in its literary form and ancient context. What is being revealed? That remains the point of focus.

3:12 Blame game. The *adam* is able quickly to shift the blame—to the woman and God (you gave me). This is a psychologically insightful verse, for it provides the model of non-repentance. The human proclivity to avoid detection (physical hiding) continues in shifting responsibility through verbal misdirection with which he modifies the admission (I ate). In spiritual development one must be

open and honest with one's self and with God. The way of rebellion//path of death is truth-avoidant.

Asa (do, accomplish, make, produce, bring forth, accomplish)
 This verb figured prominently in chapter 1 when God was making creation. Once they see that they are naked, the first parents "make" an apron. Now God uses the term in questioning Eve. "What have you done?" will be the same question God asks Cain. It also implies "what have you brought forth?" The problem with our choices is that they begin a chain of events. Eve's eye/passion driven action will have repercussions for the entire world. We are invited to ponder the same question. The narration now turns to the reader and asks "What did Eve (&Adam) produce and bring forth?" This is the deeper truth about God, covenant, sin and death which the story is conveying.

3:14. There is an inclusion here. Beginning and ending with adam, Eve next with the serpent in the middle. The serpent is not questioned. There is not any explanation as to motivation or purpose. Why would the wisest creature inspire the dastardly act? Allusions to the creation myths of Israel's neighbors may lurk beneath (the primordial serpent), as well as the seraphim/ fiery ones in the divine realm. The revelation of God does not address nor unveil the mystery.

3:15 God does not ask, He declares "you have *asa/done*" and utters a curse (*kol most, all awrar 63x. Notice the homonym to kol arum=most clever*). To this point there have only been blessings. We are to ponder that tragedy as well. In short order the earth is cursed, and soon after Cain is cursed from the earth. Deuteronomy has fifteen curses in

it, and Numbers and the prophets have numerous references, to curses, Genesis as well. The exact nature of a curse, like a blessing, is hard to describe. It is an effective word, which imparts what it says, but it is not obviously causal in a materialist way. In some cases, it is an expression of contempt or displeasure, while in others, it seems almost to function as a magic spell. It is also descriptive of a debased condition. In the Garden and with Cain, it seems to have, at least in part, such a function.

Belly (*gakhon*) only occurs twice. **Leviticus 11:42**You are not to eat any creature that moves along the ground, whether it moves on its belly or walks on all fours or on many feet; it is unclean. **43**Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. So, does this imply that prior to this the snake had legs? This is probably also an etiology (all cultures have stories explaining the origin of different things). There are probably ten of them in this condensed section—why people hate snakes, relationship of sexes, mating, pain in childbirth, work, knowledge, daily struggle and death). Ancient “pre-historic” stories frequently serve this function in every culture. We are probably most familiar with the Native American stories.

In an overview of the divine judgement we look at the insight of the church Fathers.

In the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11 (p89) St. Ambrose’s book, *Paradise*, is quoted. He interprets the text *typologically*. This is from the Greek *typos* (Romans 5:14 “Adam was a type of the One to Come”) and is used in the New Testament in interpreting the Jewish Bible. Ambrose of Milan (333-397) says that the serpent is a type of the bodily pleasures, the woman stands

for the senses and the man for the mind. Hence, pleasure stirs the sense which impacts the mind. Further on he offers a proof “Only those who live for pleasures of the stomach, can be said to walk on their bellies (Philippians 3:19, “whose god is their belly and their glory is their shame”). St Augustine (354-430) follows his teacher in (Two Books on Genesis Against the Manicheans) “The term belly signifies ‘carnal desire’ because that part of the body is recognized as softer. He makes reference also to the chest and human pride—because the LXX version has both words. This is the OT of the early church, including many of the NT writers who use Greek.

Not the theme of eating continues. The snake will eat dust. Dust/ *aspar* (*dust93/110KJV; dry earth, dust, *rubbish, debris, mortar*) This is the second appearance of this word, the first is 2:6 in creation of man account. 3:19 will have the refrain “you are dust and to dust you shall return” making an inclusion of the ‘adam story with the serpent in the middle. In Gen 13 God says He will make the descendants of Abraham like the dust (ch 28 as well. It would seem to mean numerous, but also an illusion to the other side of things?) and in Gen 16 Abraham humbly declares that he is but dust as He interrogates God, a return to the initial theme in chapters 2&3. Once again, we note that Job 16x, Psalms 14x Isaiah 13x contain 40% of the usage. Eating dust is associated with destitution and being humbled in the Jewish Bible. To fall on one’s face is to submit, even worship. Many see the snake as symbolically conveying the idea of the lower appetites, so this curse is about denying the passions. While not in commentaries, I have pondered the deeper meaning of

“eating dust” in relationship to humankind (and the connection to dust). As such the literal, snakes slithering in the dirt, can convey a spiritual connotation (the ongoing battle outside the Garden where the “Enemy” consumes humankind)? In my search I came across the following in the ACC Genesis (p90) Bishop Caesarius of Arles (France near Mediterranean. Significant city in Roman Empire and Catholic center against the Arian heresy) in his book of sermons (136) *God said to the devil, “Dust you shall eat.” Is it the earth that we tread underfoot that the devil eats, brethren? No, it is people who are earthly minded, sensual and proud, who love the earth and place all their hopes in it. They labor entirely for carnal advantages, rather for such pleasures, and think little or nothing for the salvation of their souls...If he sees that he has greater care for his body than his soul, let him fear that he will become food of the serpent.* This offers a nuanced insight into the ongoing problems with the serpent, especially as understood as Satan.

Gen 3:15 Note the singular focus in the language, God puts enmity between the serpent’s offspring and the woman’s offspring. The same verb for strike is used of both reptile and human, and at one level it refers to the widespread human reaction to snakes, more symbolically, it is the need to violently oppose the human passions which bite/poison us. Why is there no mention of Adam? Perhaps it reflects the initial encounter which produces the rebellion. There will be a pattern of conflict throughout the rest of the Bible, even within the womb.

The symbolism is not intended as an alternative to reality, nor is it a “merely”—rather it is the multiple dimensional reality in which we live, where things and actions have

multiple meanings and different levels. A meal can be a biological function, family gathering and celebration marking a graduation (and be experienced by insiders and outsiders with a variety of interpretations). The “seed” wording became the foundation for a particular type of Christian meditation on the battle with the passions; while it is developed by others as a contrast of Mary (the Woman) and Satan (the Serpent) and is then seen as a “*protoevangelium*” promise of a Messiah. In *Against Heresies*, Book 5, Chapter 21 (see ACC, 90), Irenaeus (Bishop of Lyons. Lived c135-c202) writes “From then on it was proclaimed that he who was to be born of a virgin, after the likeness of Adam, would be on the watch for the serpent’s head.” Those who saw Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ” may recall that in the scene where Jesus prays in the Garden asking the Father to spare Him, the Satan watches with curiosity, and then a white snake slithers out from beneath his feet. As Jesus lays praying, the snake crosses over His arms and comes to His face. Then Jesus stands, looks at Satan and brings His heel down upon the snake’s head. It was a powerful image which conveys the rich theological depth of meaning in the events which were transpiring and artistically connect them to the Genesis 3 account. [the Passion of the christ movie scene with the white snake. - Bing video](#)

Gen 3:16 *rabaw* to *multiple, increase, enlarge, make many*
 First two uses in Genesis are God’s command “to be fruitful and multiply.” Now the *rabaw* is a multiplication of *its-tsa-bone* (pain, hardship, labor, sorrow, toll). This word is repeated to Adam next, with the third and final occurrence in Genesis 5:29 where it says the newborn named Noah

because “out of the ground which God cursed, this one will bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands.” There is debate whether the reference includes woman working in the land, or if it only refers to giving birth. It is noteworthy that it does not say there will now be pain, but that the pain will be multiplied. Was their pain in the garden prior to the fall? Apparently.

The “wedding curse” is expressed (recall the ancient context) through the woman *tesh-oo-kaw* (*stretching out in longing, especially desires of men and women for one another*) and the man will rule her. The word *tesh-oo-kaw* is rare, also occurring in the Cain story where both words are together again” sin desires to rule. The third and last use is in Song of Songs 7:10 “I am my beloved’s and his desire is toward me.” Ruling (*mashal-dominion*) on the other hand occurs more frequently, the first time it describes the heavenly lights which rule night and day.

What does this mean? One must assume the ancient world view and social structures are the frame of reference. The first thing to note is these words are spoken under a rubric of a broken covenant, not the initial plan. It is not prescriptive (God saying “you should do this”) but descriptive (this is how it is). As the other declarations are all negatives, one can assume that this statement about desire and ruling is also to be understood negatively, i.e., not the ideal state.

Excursus: subservience in the Bible

While we cannot do a thorough sociology of the ancient family, there are a few points to remember. The isolated, nuclear family of modern culture was not the norm. The life

style was more tribal and communal than ours. Generally, there was a father/father figure who served as rule and worship leader for the clan, and his authority was generally unassailable. The wife/mother had her own realm of control, usually within the house. Obviously, personality and skills determined their actual concrete life—much like today. Different settings (rural village, big city or migrating tent dwellers) impacted life as well. Options were far more limited for making a living and the need for structure and protection more pressing than the chance to exercise personal freedom. The others, not the self, were the source of identity.

As we have pointed out earlier, to serve and to worship are interchangeable. The ‘king’ ruled all and his vassals were pledged to obedience, bearing gifts to symbolize their subservient status. The king, out of grace, then bestowed his benevolence. In particular, survival and protection. The people trusted the king, entrusted their life to his care, and were faithful in obedience. In his turn, the king was faithful in his pledge to those who obeyed his commands. The clear parallels to YHWH and Israel’s covenant cannot be overstated. Kings rescued/saved their people from harm—God does the same.

The issue of a woman being subservient/obedient to her husband, therefore, was a social fact. In a tightly hierarchical society this was accepted without question (accept when the authorities so abused their power that the slave rebellion took place). There was no an alternative, although in Roman society at times there were practices where woman could escape the husband’s power (if she produced four children according to one source).

More to the point for a Christian is Philippians 2 (He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, then humbled Himself more by dying on a cross). This is consistent with Jesus' self-designation in Matthew 20:28 (Son of Man came not to be served but to serve) and in John where Jesus washes the feet of His disciples, an act of self-degradation. Mark 8-10 repeatedly couches discipleship as becoming a "child," selling wealth, and carrying a cross—the power and control dynamics of pagan/secular society are not the framework for understanding our relationships Paul refers to himself as a *doulos* (*slave/servant*) in the greeting of Romans and Philippians, James does the same in his letter. The theme of submitting and serving (e.g. Romans 1:9, 12:11, 16:18) are repeated throughout the New Testament—the office of deacon is literally one who serves at table. Titus 3:1, Hebrews 3:7 and Romans 13:1 all require church members to submit to the authorities. So any discussion of the relationship of wives and husbands must factor in both the pagan social context and the wider revelation on the Christian approach to any relationship.

Hypotaga (4x NT) to be submissive or subject occurs in 1 Timothy in reference to wives (2:11) and children (3:4). It is from the verb *upotasso* which describes Jesus' submission to His parents after the Temple incident (Lk 2:51). It is used four times (Ephesians 5: 24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:5, 10) in saying "wives be submissive to your husbands." However, the first of these is introduced Ephesians 5:21 with the command "be subject to one another" which is a generic, all-encompassing approach to our relationships. In addition, the husband is told to love

His wife as Christ loves the church. In other words, to seek their well-being and offer one's self in a non-dominating way. If you ask for a submissive wife, remember to do it with love from a cross.

In a society where woman are fully functioning in leadership roles it is hard to know exactly what the biblical model looks like in a contemporary marriage. But if the starting place is Christ the Slave, then it seems less likely that the bible text will be misused to justify oppressive or abusive practices.

[the rest of the story At Morning Prayer I was reminded by the Revelation to John that we are more than servants/slaves. Once again the model of Christ is central. Revelation 1:5 includes “the ruler of the kings of the earth” in the tripartite description of Jesus Christ (faithful witness and firstborn of dead). This supreme status is repeated in Rev 17:14 (Lamb is “Lord of lords and King of kings”) and 1 Timothy 6:15. Revelation 5 declares believers are kings. However, there are textual issues and the preferred translation (a kingdom of priests to serve our God and they shall reign...) is less declarative than others (e.g. NKJV) “and have made us kings and priests to our God And we shall reign on the earth.” The “rule” of the *adam* (humans—male and female) and gave them dominion; this rule is repeated in Psalm 8 (man is little lower than the *Elohim/gods*). This seems to fuel 1 Corinthians 6:3 where Paul upbraids them for going to civil courts. “Do you not know that we will judge (*krino—judge, rule, have authority over*) angels? How much more the things of this life?” 2 Timothy 2:12 “if we endure, we will also reign with Him...”

Three are indications of differentiation, with the apostles playing a special role. Matthew 19:28 (Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, in the New world, when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel.)

Revelation 20:4 “then I saw the thrones and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.

The key point is that humans are the image of God, which in the ancient context is a literal idol, or a king who was understood to be divine. The divine image entails the indwelling god, it is a personal presence (think sacramentally, “in and through”)

Genesis 3:17

To Adam—*shema qol issa*. We have already noted this phrase when the couple hides because they heard the sound of God’s voice. The contrast seems clear, and is typical of the Hebrew literary style. Adam does not listen to God’s voice, but to the (helper’s) *ezer*. There is a repetition of the sin (eating) and the commandment (i told you not to eat it). The verb *akal* (*eat*) will be repeated in the curse [eat with painful labor and thorns and thistles when you want to eat]. It is easy to overlook the careful weaving of the sin and punishment around the word ‘eat.’”

The earth/soil (*adama*) from which YHWH shaped the ‘*adam* is now cursed because of the ‘*adam*.

Isaiah 32:13, Jeremiah 12:13 and Hosea 10:8 pick up the theme in reference to the people of Israel. 2 Sam 23:6 declares that the godless are thorns. In the New Testament thorns choke the seed/word in Jesus’ parable. Hebrews

6:7-8 (ESV) “For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.” And, more profoundly, the Lord is crowned with thorns during the crucifixion. By mocking Jesus as Messiah in this way, there is little doubt that the Roman soldiers would have been unaware of the theological, deeply symbolic meaning of the event. In Isaiah 52-53, the Suffering Servant “takes our sins and our suffering upon Himself,” which the crown of thorns, connected to the curse of Adam, illustrates. Paul (2 Cor 12:7) utilizes the image (a thorn in the flesh) in discussing a problem he had.

The man is to eat the herbage of the earth (to be repeated in Genesis 9) and the source of the contention that humans were originally meant to be vegetarians.

The creation account is revisited with the promise of undoing. This raises the question whether death is introduced by taking the fruit or if it was already a human certainty. The text does not clearly answer such a question. Theodoret of Cyr (4th C) in his work on the Incarnation makes note of the merciful dimension of death, which frees us from our toil and struggle while cutting off sin. St. Ambrose ponders the source of death—is it inherent in the tree or God’s act? He determines it is the fault of the human, who had been instructed by God not to eat the fruit. The verb *sub=return, turn back, repent* illustrates the circle of life as body becomes dirt. However, the text seems to indicate that the Tree of Life is the source of ongoing life

and humans will be deprived access of it. Mortality seems to have been part of the created human condition.

Bread (*lehem*. 290x *Beth—lehem is house of bread*) can be seen as also meaning food (our daily bread). Interesting that the next usage of the term is in Melchizedek's sacrifice and then when Abraham entertains the three visitors.

3:20 "Eve the Mother" There is interesting alliteration in the text at this point as HAVA (eve) HU (she) HAYA (was) HAY (living). Very frequently, homonyms justify generated etymologies in the Biblical text. "She was mother of all the living."

[EXCURSUS]

1. Lilith is reputed to be the first woman, who left Adam refusing to be in a subservient role. The Medieval work (c 800-1000) *Alphabet of Ben Sira* is the first written text, but many of the legends go back to biblical times. Isaiah 34:14 (there too the Lilith shall repose) associates the name with wildcats, hyenas and goat-demons. In ancient Semitic lore she is associated with seduction, and also a threat to single men, nursing mothers, babies and children. These legends are better known in Jewish circles. (cf Jewish Study Bible, 851) Some stories associate her with Satan, even as a spouse. And one strain makes her the serpent.

2. "Rest of the story" There are numerous rabbinic stories about Genesis 2-4. Some rabbis claim that all the events (creation-garden-expulsion-birth of the two sons) take place on the same day. The grammatical peculiarities (appearance of three extra 'the') allow some to postulate that the births actually included girls as well, Cain (one sister) and Abel (two sisters). This, of course, answers the

question, “Where did the other people come from?” (My ignorance of the entirety of Jewish exegesis, in particular ancient exegesis, really limits my approach to the texts.)

In our own age, there are those who try to reconcile the scientific understanding of history and Genesis. Numerous theologians have similar theories which weave scientific theories and a less literal reading of Genesis. Joshua Swamidass, a scientist, works in the other direction. I do not offer any answers but I have a few points to ponder. First is the complexity of scientific knowledge of the world.

Ignorance allows us to make assumptions and develop theories which do not account for much of what is taking place. In simplest terms, molecules, cells and other building blocks behave in ways which the non-specialist does not understand. The Layman trying to defend a particular reading of SS must factor in such details, but seldom does. For example, does a simplistic, wooden literalism require that I deny the existence of genes? Is it okay to believe in chromosomes? What about Genus and Species? Do mutations apparently occur, e.g., birth defects, and, if so, how do we understand them? Does God cause mutations because people dump chemicals in water sources, or is human activity impacting God’s design of a human person?

On the other hand, the limitations and proper place of any scientific approach are often ignored leading to over-reaching by those who are naively criticizing SS from what they think is a modern, “pro-science” viewpoint. People with a college level understanding of biology read Genesis with a second-grade level of interpretation and make preposterous declarations which are difficult to refute

because, quite simply, it would take weeks or months to build and explain the material to them. One simple case is the contrast between the terms symbolic and true—which is first of all a category error! One could spend many years studying relevant materials, ancient and more contemporary, and still only scratch the surface of scientific, historical, and theological research needed for the depth of insight to more fully understand.

I think we can do little more than ask the question, “What is the Bible “saying” here?” Whatever Moderns might think, it is not an encyclopedia or answer book, it is a Revelation. God is speaking to us, through other humans, who lived far away and long ago. God is not answering a series of questions which we have posited, and many of those questions and concerns are idiosyncratic. For example, the same people who are worried about evolution are not concerned with flat earth or heliocentrism vs. geocentrism.

The Biblical writings are not intended to be comprehensive, clearly, which leaves far more to the speculative realm than we sometimes want to admit. In my experience, when I posit a theory, it is usually the case that more insightful minds can point out that my “solutions” to a problem generate several new problems, some of which are even greater conundrums. My preference, that we accept the biblical revelation as symbolic language and unveiling patterns for understanding salvation history and the God Who saves us, is to see the stories serve as pointers to the nature of reality. And a humble heart keeps us honest about just how little we know and how easily we can miss the point of something which seems obvious. For example, “Eve is the Mother of all the Living,” but how do

we understand the words ‘mother, all and living’? Think of the (middle eastern) expression “Mother of all wars” which we heard in the Gulf conflict. It is not minimizing the bible to take seriously the importance of connotation and denotation! “All living” is it literally every living thing (there is no noun in the text) or only humans. Does all mean literally all, or is it an emphatic usage common to our usage (all of us use hyperbole 😊 sometimes)

As we meditate on the words of the Bible, under the authority of the Church Tradition (the rule of faith), we encounter God’s word and receive insights, but we should be slow to think we “understand it all” and we should be reluctant to be too combative, too early when arguing about things.

[Excursus ends]

3:21 God makes (*asa—fashions, creates*) them coats of skins. Interpreters have argued this means He killed the animals (lesson of mortality, cost of sin), others that He generated the skins in a creation act, or that the reference is skin of the human body. Origen thinks it is mortality. Augustine sees it is shame having brought the image of God to the depths. Gregory of Nissa equates it with the irrational nature and the passions, those things which we leave behind in death. Jonathan Pageau (Symbolic World podcast) who has helped open me to understanding symbolism in reality, frequently speaks of the symbolism here as one of the patterns of SS, animal skins are death, and humans are wrapped in death which gives protection and life. It is another example of things turned on their head, blood makes one unclean yet is used to purify in

sacrifices, here it is a type of Christ (death on cross, clothed in Christ).

Kethoneth (*undergarment, coat, shirt, garment*) This is the first occurrence of the word, which shows up again in the Joseph story and his special coat. Interestingly, the same word is used of the garment worn by Tamar (sister of Absalom, raped by Amnon—a parallels about unwanted sexual advances). All but three of the remaining twenty uses refer to the priestly garments. In light of the ‘royal priesthood’ of the Image Bearer (*‘adam*) one wonders if the choice is meaningful at some level. Most commentators are quick to point out the tension between God’s judgement and mercy, curse and provision. I notice that the story mentions neither divine anger, not punishment. God’s motivation for exiling them has to do with the human knowledge and the tree of life.

3:22 Man has become like “us.” While early church commentators often saw this as a reference to Trinity, it is more likely the divine council (Psalm 82) and the lesser “gods”/”angels”. These are referred to as the “sons of God” and the Holy Ones (and Watchers) in other places. The term holy ones (*hagios*. Translated as saints in NT) will be applied by Christian authors to those who are in the Kingdom of God—who become like the stars, or like the angels—which means they are raised to the status of the Divine Counsel. This is *theosis*, becoming divine/one with God. Recall a messenger was understood to convey the message sender’s personal presence to the message receiver. For more see: [The Divine Council.com](http://TheDivineCouncil.com) – Michael S. Heiser, PhD

The language ties in the serpent's promise, raising the question was he accurate. Early church says not so, satan is a liar, but is this more developed thought than the author intended? The reason is clear (tree of life), but the motivation is less so. The phrase "tree of life" occurs here in Genesis, four times in Proverbs, and in Revelation 2 and 22. Proverbs uses the term as an illustration of the value of wisdom or virtue. The Revelation 2:7 "to him who conquers I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise (garden) of God. In chapter 22 a river is flowing out of the city and the tree of life grows on both sides, its leaves provide healing. (cf. Ezekiel 47)

Leaving the garden is a type of exile and reveals the underlying pattern of covenant relationship. In Kings we see the script writ large as the people of God (first in the North/Samaria, then in the South/Judah) are sent in exile. The loss of home is also at play in the sage of Abraham, David and even, in an inverted way, in the parable of the Prodigal Son. To some extent Jesus (descending to earth to become incarnate, then in death into Hades to rescue-redeem humanity/creation) is the culmination of the exile/unexiled. Once again the SS are sparse in editorial comment. The cherubim (*ker-ooov: angelic figure* 91x/66v). Only appearance in Genesis, but figure heavily in Exodus and 'historic writings' in relationship to the arc and temple, and two dozen times in Ezekiel (1x Isaiah is only other one in prophets). Cherubim guard the throne of God and serve as transportation (rides on wings of cherubim). The four faced creature was a cherubim and many compare it to the sphinx. The more recent domestication of cherubs in art (chubby babies) is a total misrepresentation of the ancient

understanding. Human reentry is not a possibility with the divine security blocking access.

This ends the Garden saga, and it recurs in numerous forms in the patterns of the literature, but there are few overt references. The story of human failure to faithfully be the image of God will be repeated over and over, until the coming of the Fullest and Truest Image (Colossians—Image of God, Firstborn of all Creation) Who is Jesus.

Chapter 4 The Brothers

What do we come to the text hoping to find out? What assumptions and questions are we bringing to the text. In reviewing what literature I could find, the question “Where did everyone else come from?” was not a pressing issue, perhaps because there was less hostility toward the text? There are cases where ancient Jewish sources [Rabbi Jay Asher Levine, *Thirsting for Wisdom and Beauty*] three rabbinic Midrash on why Cain killed Abel: 1) They argued about how to divvy up the world, 2) they argued about where the Temple would be built; and quoting Micah 3:9-12 with the verse “Zion shall be plowed as a field” the connector, 3) They were arguing over who would have the (unnamed) twin sister as a wife. The themes—power, religion, sex—are foundational to human conflict. Some sources (Jewish, Eastern Orthodox, and Muslim) have names for the sisters. See Aclima, Kalmana, Luluwa. [See the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, a 7th C Syriac apocalypse written to deal with the rise and victory of Islam, attributed to a 4th C Church Father. It tells of the rise of a messianic Roman Emperor who will turn all things

over to Christ and was hugely influential on Medieval apocalyptic thought.]

We do well to pay attention to what is left unsaid in these narratives. The story of Cain and Abel has few words; we do well to ponder what He is saying and attend to what is not being revealed, too. What is the function of this story?

The early chapters of Genesis reveal patterns which will recur throughout the Bible. We will also see how this story echoes the previous stories. One rabbinic principle is to read stories which contain the same words in conjunction with one another. The “first born” is supplanted by a younger son frequently in the Bible. The allusion to a shepherd, and an innocent death will also appear again. We will see more brother troubles “in the field.” The role of sin, blood, punishment and grace are also important themes which dominate the Scriptures. As we see how these stories interact (sometimes in paradoxical ways) we get a fuller appreciation of the depth of the Bible.

4:1 Adam knew (*yada*) his wife Eve and she conceived (first appearance of *hara*, 43x in 42 verses; many of most important stories include the conception and birth of children) and bore (*yawlad* 498x there is no reference to the pain being multiplied per 3:16). Eve says “I have gotten a man (*ish*) from YHWH.” The first human to utter God’s sacred name (YHWH) is a woman. [Exodus 6:3 God told Moses “I revealed myself as El Shaddai to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but I did not make myself known to them by my name YHWH. Except Gen 15:7; 18:14.] *Qanah* (*get, acquire, purchase, redeem*) sounds like *qayin* (*Cain, possession*). Most English translations supply the words “with the help”

but they are not present in Hebrew (nor in LXX: *anthropon dia tou theou*). Some note the parallel to the creation of Eve: “out of man came the woman,” “out of the woman came a man.”

4:2 She then bore his brother Abel Note the absence of the word ‘know’ in this line. A key term ‘brother’ will occur seven times in nine verses, an important number in the Bible. The symbolic meaning the term must be factored into our meditation. Abel will keep sheep (a frequent occupation in the coming chapters; Joseph, Moses, David) while Cain tills the soil (see Gen 2:15). Both occupations are simply presented without assessment. Scholars speculate the story may have been an independent, self-contained oral tradition historically-tied to conflicts between these two groups, but such is not really evident in the current text. We know oral tradition existed far longer than written works. We briefly survey the appearances of these two characters in the rest of the Bible.

Cain (possession; related to Kenites=smiths) in Bible

Genesis Fourteen times, all in Genesis 4

*Hebrews 11:4 “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain...”

*1 John 3:12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the Evil One and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous.

*Jude 1:11 Woe to them. For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error and perished in Korah’s rebellion

Abel (*hevel* breath, vapor, mist, by extension “vanity”
Reference to short life?) in Bible

*Genesis 4 eight times

* parts of place names (Abel-maim, Abel-beth-maacah ,
Abel-meholah)

Matthew 23:35//Luke 11:51 “so that on you may come all
the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of
‘righteous’ (only Mt) Abel to the blood of Zechariah...”

Hebrews 11:4 (above) 12:24 and to Jesus, the mediator of
a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks a
better word than the blood of Abel.

4:3 Abel—brought fruit of the ground as a *minha* (*offering, gift, present, tribute, sacrifice*) Cain brought *bekoraw* (*birthright* 9x see Genesis 25 Jacob deal with Essau , *first born* 1x, *primogeniture* 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 Reuben loses his first born status because he polluted his father’s couch and first-born status was give to Joseph and his sons; but Judah became strong among is brothers and a prince came from him—double loss of primogeniture)

God *shahaw* (*look at, regard, to be interested in*) Job 2, Psalms 2, Isaiah 7; total 15 (Exodus only other time). No reason is given why God regards Abel but not Cain, an indication that the reason is not important to the revelation. A “moral/ethical” reading of Scripture (with an insistence that Biblical figures are ‘role models’ or serve as warnings to miscreants) might lead us astray in reading Genesis 4. Although we saw later generations will attempt to supply the “missing information” about the state of their hearts or intentions, clearly that is not part of the

narrative. [I heard one minister claim it had to be a blood sacrifice to be pleasing (and is a reference to Jesus on the cross). The Torah allows for both animal and grain sacrifices and God's word to Cain makes no reference to this at all, so it's probably be an overreach.]

Rabbi Friedman (Commentary on the Torah, 2001)

“Sometimes a silence in the Torah is revealing. In this case it suggests that the concern is not Cain's immediate motive, but rather the deep, essential fact of sibling rivalry... Cain and Abel are the archetypes for sibling rivalry.”

If the story line of the Bible leads from Creation to Restoration/Redemption, is it possible that this narrative functions as an exemplar of the murderous impulses at work within humans (note, God said if they took the fruit, surely they will die—but it is a human who performs the first act producing death). Spoiler alert, a few chapters hence human evil, particularly violence, will result in the Flood/Uncreation. This sets us on the trail leading to Calvary and the execution of Jesus and might be the most important aspect of the story.

4:3 the descriptor of Abel's gift (choicest first fruit) vs. the more pedestrian (an offering) of Cain's may be subtly communicating the decisive difference.

4:4 *shawaw* look at, gaze at with interest, inspect, have regard (or dismay) Twice here; Total 15x. (exodus, 2 Sam), once again we see heaviest usage in 2x Job, 2x Psalms, 7x Isaiah. Cain is angry. *Hara*, (hot, furious, kindled, angry, be incensed) 90x Humans and God are described as angry. His face (*paniyim*) fell (*napal* 434x).

4:6-7 The Lord repeats the verse in question form. A good meditation practice with Sacred Writ is answer the questions for ourselves. “Why am I angry? Why am I crestfallen? This reveals our secret passions. Some English translations miss the Hebrew word play on “fallen,” *seath* (*raised, lifted, dignity, exalted*; Leviticus—lepers *raised scabs*). Sin (*hatawaw*) *rawbats* (*stretch out, lie down, crouch on all four*) several instances refers to lion, so implies sin is like an animal—at creation the *adam/man* has dominion over the animals; the parents were led astray by a serpent, now sin lies ready to pounce like a lion. This is first time the word sin appears in the bible [three more in Genesis:18:20 grave sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, 31:36 Jacob asks what offense he committed against Laban, 50:17 the brothers ask Joseph to forgive their sin]

We noted earlier that “urge/desire” and “master” duplicate the wording of the curse of Eve the female/male relationship. The image of sin as a power will be present in Paul’s writings. The experience of sin as an existential threat is real for us. The Judeo-Christian understanding of sin (in relationship to God) is different from the other ancient views with its emphasis on morality and a personal relationship with God. The pagan neighbors equated sin with taboos, and understood them in terms of irritating or offending one of the deities. The myths about pagan gods are not especially moral. Sin, for the Bible, is a revolt against God, who is just and moral. The word occurs 299x in the Jewish bible with a heavy concentration in Leviticus and Numbers around sin offerings and in Kings repeating the phrase “he followed in the sins of Jeroboam” in assessing royals.

Perhaps this is a key component of the unveiling for us? There are powers/forces at work which are in open rebellion against God. The desire to assert one's will over the will of the Creator is at work within and outside the human being (and human communities). The modern church propensity is to minimize and excuse sin, with the exception of social justice or ecological concerns. Recall the NT assertion that Christ has conquered Sin and Death (which were understood to be gods/actual powers at work in the world).

Genesis 4:8 Matter of fact recounting of the murder without explanation or detail. Friedman (Torah, p27) points out the significance of "in the field" for fratricide. Beginning here and ending with Solomon executing his brother Adonijah there are numerous narratives of fraternal conflict. Jacob & Essau, Joseph and his brothers, Abimelek slew 70 brothers (Judges 9), the war of Benjamin vs tribes of Israel (Judges 20), conflict Israel and Judah (2 Sam 2), and Absalom and Amnon (2 Sam 13-14). The wise woman tells King David about one son killing the other ("in the field" in 2 Sam 14:6), Esau comes to Jacob "from the field" (Gen 25:29, Esau is called "a man of the field" (25:27). In Joseph's dream they were binding sheaves "in the field" (Gen 37:7) (which leads to the proposal of fratricide in verses 19-20). In the war of Benjamin and the other tribes 'field' is mentioned twice as is 'brother killing brother' (Judges 20: 13,23,28; 21:6).

Genesis 4:9—12 As in the Garden, God asks a question of the perpetrator, who side steps it with a somewhat accusatory response. Fretheim (The NIB, 374) says that humans are to keep the garden, but 'keeping' humans is

something God does (Numbers 6:24, Ps 121:3-8) so Cain implies God should be keeping Abel. Compare to the woman You gave me. *Revelation—human tendency to avoid responsibility and blame God. God asks Cain “What have you done?” (cf Eve) Once more a question for our own reflection. The practice of a daily examination of conscience was part of the traditional spiritual discipline.

Rabbi Richard Friedman critiques the popular translation “the voice of your brother’s blood is crying” based on plural and singular nouns and verbs. His translation is “The sound! Your brother’s blood is crying.” Recall Genesis 3:8, when God was walking in the Garden, the Hebrew word can be voice/sound. The exclamation “the sound” conveys the pathos. God hearing the cries of the poor and oppressed, the victims of oppression and violence, finds its first expression here. Hebrews 12:24, Jesus is the summit (His sprinkled blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel) of innocent blood.

The judgement is rapid and radical, twisting the Adam’s curse pattern (3:17), where the ground is cursed because of Adam, now Cain is cursed from the ground. The earth will no longer produce for him and he will wander. The exile of Adam and Eve, they live outside of Eden, is now intensified for Cain (He is “rootless” and cut off from the earth). The two Hebrew words (*nua*=literally to waver, to move to and fro; hence, *vagabond, fugitive*) (*nud* [*nood*]=waver, shake; to wander), A word-play on the land of Nod (*which means restless, wandering*. It should be translated not transliterated.). Note the anthropomorphic imagery, the *Adamah* “opened its mouth”. The Hebrew *pawtsaw* (rend, separate, open a mouth. Also to snatch away, to deliver or

free) next occurs in Numbers 16:30 (Deuteronomy 11:6) when the earth opens its mouth to swallow the rebel families of Dathan and Abiram. Then the Messianic Suffering Psalm 22:14 (they open wide their mouths against me, like a ravening and roaring lion) and references to deliverance from enemies. Thematically tie together shed blood, death and deliverance.

One wonders what the original audience would have read in the Cain story, especially in light of the Torah commands on murder and unclean land. Leviticus 18 provides a long list of pagan behaviors which make the land *tamei* (*contaminated, unclean, impure, polluted*, akin to 'radioactive') so the land vomited out the pagan nations and whoever does these abominable things—cut them off from the people; Numbers 35:31, You are not to accept a ransom for the life of a murderer, since he is culpable, the death penalty... 35:33 on murder, “you are not to corrupt the land that you are in, for the blood, it will corrupt the land that you are in, and the land will not be purged of the blood that has been shed upon it except through the blood of him who shed it (because God dwells in the midst of the land).

In light of the Torah, God's treatment of Cain is superabundant grace, The pattern of mercy, being worn down by ongoing sin, culminating in the Flood is repeated in Exodus where the original complaints against God result in being fed and watered, but later the same complaints result in punishment (biting seraphs). “Slow to anger, rich in mercy” are demonstrated. Leviticus 18 has two laws which will appear in genesis narratives (do not uncover

your father's nakedness in the Noah story, and do not marry two sisters in Jacob).

Genesis 4 invites us to ponder the impact of human sin (especially murder) on our physical environment. We do not generally hear reference curses (beyond the Kennedy family or a sports team) in explaining events. Living in a high murder area (Memphis) one wonders about the spirit realm and its impact on the citizenry. It is a reminder for us to pray for the land to be purified.

Is it noteworthy that the murder takes one brief half verse (4:8), while the aftermath is eight? Does this story seek to explain how the world is peopled? Aside from 5:4 “and he [Adam] had other sons and daughters” we are only aware of three sons. This is a strange lack of focus if the point of the story was explaining where everyone came from. If the story does have a different intent, what is it? Displaying worsening human sin (a theme picked up in 6:5), providing a pattern of sibling rivalry, illustrating further alienation from God (out of garden, now wandering and restless)—each of these is important, but arguably it is grace which matters most. As we ponder Cain's response to the curse, and God's further response to Cain, we find the central revelation of God's mercy/love/compassion.

Cain says, “My punishment is too great!” Or does he? The Hebrew (*avone*) means perversity, depravity, iniquity or guilt. It is translated as iniquity 220x in the KJV and a variation of that 5x. There are 5x it is translated as “punishment” (consequence of sin; Hebrew words frequently use the same word to include an act and its consequences). The word connotes both the sin and the

consequence of sin (guilt/shame, punishment), something which would be obvious to the Hebrew reader. So it can be read as “my sin is too great” (some Jewish traditions see Cain as repentant; just as Christians had traditions where Pilate repented)

[excursus *One dilemma faced by a modern reader is the issue of human history. Cain and Abel are presented as farmers. The study of ancient times has a diverse timeline for things like agriculture and animal husbandry. The concept of hunter-gatherer and nomadic wanderers living off the land is not part of the story. As I have stated, I do not believe in the claims of philosophical evolution—creedal Christians declare God is the Creator of Heaven and earth. I am agnostic on the ultimate beginnings and the process because I have limited knowledge of biological, chemistry and other sciences. While the evolution debates are about a beginning point which modern science admits is pre-historical (and leaves room for the question did God create Man out of dirt and woman out of man in a single moment? Did God create humans out of “the earth” perhaps to be understood as allowing for a longer period of development guided by a Divine hand?) are about ultimate beginnings. Must we, should we, deny any value to history, archaeology, anthropology, etc. to assert that the first humans were a highly developed agricultural community?*

I contend the Bible is clearly not attending to that question and the symbolic nature of the revelation seems to imply that it is an inappropriate quest for the student of the Bible who seeks to hear God’s Word. The Bible simply does not explain where the other people came from –and they are never called Cain’s brothers or sisters. Cain has a wife and

they build a city. Period. It is better to attend to what we are told than to try to squeeze a simple answer to a very convoluted and complex question—provide a history of life in the world.]

Cain says, “whoever meets me will kill me.” The verb *hurag*= *murder, kill, destroy, slay* occurs five times here early in Genesis. (Cain kills Abel, he fears he will be killed, God pledges protection and a sevenfold vengeance on whoever kills him, Lamech will declare he will kill any man who harms him—and avenge himself 70x, and the birth of Seth because Cain killed Abel). We saw murder will be punishable by death in the Torah, but God instead is his champion who avenges him. This is amazing grace. God puts an *oath*=*mark (sign, mark, banner, remembrance*. Other signs will include the rainbow, the male circumcision and the sabbath; and multiple times it refers to the signs and wonders Moses works in the Exodus). This is not a curse, but a protective blessing. The mark of Cain sets him apart as God’s protected one. It is not described by we are told that no one killed him. He goes east of Eden to Nod (wandering, restless) away from the presence (paniym-face, presence. 3:8 Adam and Eve hid from the *paiym* of YHWH. Cain’s *paniym* fell when his offering was not accepted, after the murder Cain says his punishment is to be driven from the *paniym* of the earth and the *paiym* of the Lord. It seems that the presence of the Lord is centered in the Garden of Eden, which is understood as on a nearby mountain (Ezekiel 28:14; recall four rivers flow from it to water the earth and water runs down hill). The universal ancient belief that a gods dwelling place/place of encounter was on mountains (associating heights, heavens and the divine

sphere). Recall Moses ascends Mount Horeb/Sinai, as will Elijah. Disloyal Jews sacrificed to other gods on the high places. Faithful Abraham ascends Mount Moriah with Isaac, which will be the location of the Temple in Jerusalem in the time of Solomon. Jesus is transfigured on Mount Tabor. Our theological word “transcendent” conveys the same meaning.

Personal reflection: East of Eden is a descriptor of the human condition. We are driven away from the face of God by our sins. Two parables describe the proper response. The Prodigal Son must come to himself, turn around/repent and go home to the Father. The Lost Sheep must wait for the Savior/Good Shepherd to find and carry it back. Both of these is the model of salvation—human and divine activity do not overlap, they are complementary and simultaneously different spheres of reality.

GENESIS 4:17-26 The line of Cain.

Cain’s wife conceives and has a baby, Enoch (dedicated). Also, the name of the first city (which was built by a murderer). Is establishing a city a further act of rebellion by the one consigned to wandering? Some speculate if there is an anti-urban sentiment within the text. The construction of great cities (Egypt, Jerusalem) is connected to forced labor and extracted wealth by conquering foreign armies and, even the kings of Israel. This name will also be given to the seventh son of Seth (which may be a contrast? Seth’s descendant walks with God), as well as two of Abraham’s grandsons, one from his concubine Keturah’s son Midian, and the other of his first-born son Reuben. That Irad, Mehjaek, Methushael each have a homophonic

pairing in the Seth descendants of chapter 5 culminating in Lamech (also the father of Noah) lends credence to the possibility that they might be a duplicate. The list of Cain's seven generations ends with the sons of Lamech. Including Adam, Lamech is the seventh, which is a key number (echoing creation). Lamech (powerful) takes two wives, the first with names, Adah (ornament; Esau will marry the Bible's only other Adah) and Zillah (shade, shadow; only time in Bible) produce three children, the "father of" nomadic herdsmen (Jabal=streams of water), musicians (Jubal=stream) and (Tubal=brought forth from Cain) metal workers (bronze and iron—archaeology time line: Stone Age prior; Bronze Age 3000-1000BC, Iron Age 1000BC to present). Naamah (pleasantness; also the name of Rehoboam's mother, by Solomon and mentioned once as a city) who is not identified with anything.

Lamech's poem may be from a longer work. It is classical Hebrew poetry with paired lines, structured syllables and ending with a heightened number. There is much discussion whether the Lamech boast is to be seen as a heightened instance of violence. One commentator mentions that the line begins and ends with a murderer, the first being an impulsive act and the last being a decision and a boast. This is probably an illustration of the decline of humanity as it wanders farther from God. It is interesting to read 4th C Church Fathers speculate on Lamech. There was a belief that Cain was spared for seven generations. One tradition has it that Lamech is killing two men so that God will extend mercy to the 77th! Another tradition held that Lamech killed Cain because the descendants of Seth would not intermarry with those of

Cain, so he hoped this would “breach the wall.” Chrysostom utilizes the story as an example of ‘confession of sins’ so as to assure God’s mercy (for he made the confession without being accused). Chrysostom’s approach to interpreting the Bible, he was a bishop and renowned preacher (Golden-mouth), and he focused on life application and the behavioral/moral meaning of SS. Jesus is no doubt flipping this text on its head when He requires that His followers forgive 70x7 (or 77 times) in Matthew 18:21-22.

The genealogy ends with three children who initiate activities, a pattern repeated in subsequent genealogies (5:32 and 11:26).

Genealogies play a huge role in the Bible, even if they are often skipped over by bored, modern readers. Prior to the printing press, societies were required to rely on memory, and it was common to know extensive lists of ancestors and the stories, often legends, of ancient ancestors. The appearance of a genealogy often concludes the presence of a character in a biblical story. There will be no further mention of Cain. However, we will return to the connections between his genealogy and Seth’s later.

4:25-26 There is a naming pun (Hebrew *shet/Seth* and *shat/given, replace*) on God’s merciful act of bestowing another son on Eve. This will be one of numerous images of redemption/resurrection which replay to the very end of the Bible. Seth has a son Enosh (which means ‘man’ and is in parallel to Cain), in chapter 5 this will be revisited in the ten generations leading to Noah. One point to ponder, especially for those interested in making literal, historical

connections, is how we are to understand the words adam and the enosh. Are the ancient authors implying something, or is the Divine Author calling us to meditation? Many, maybe most, Messianic texts are not apparent (Isaiah, the virgin is with child comes to mind). These are theological discussions about interpreting the text, not to be confused with a truth claim about the Bible.

The second half of verse 26 has an unexpected, and somewhat confusing declaration that “at that time people began to invoke the Lord by name.” The word *shem*/name ties the two parts of the verse together. The holy name (*yhwh*) occurs 6,521x so it’s very frequent. We read in Exodus 6:3 that God (*Elohim*) told Moses; “I am YHWH (Lord). As “*El Shaddai*” (God Almighty) I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but by my name (*shem*) *Yhwh*, I did not make myself known to them. The term *Yhwh Elohim*, has been used 22x in chapters 2 and 3 (Chapter 1 simply uses *Elohim*). In Genesis 4 Eve announces she has borne Cain “with the help of *YHWH/the Lord*” the first of ten times it appears, culminating in the claim that God is first called YHWH at this time. while the Jewish Bible covers over a thousand years, and often they use names from later time periods when writing about earlier times [e.g., Genesis 14:14 Abraham pursues his foes with a small army as far as Dan (land named after the tribe of the son of Jacob, which is obviously not what it was called prior), it is also possible that there are different ancient traditions which have found their way into the final written text (hence the three different ways God is identified in different chapters).

****EXCURSUS “began” *hallel* (*kha-lel*)** One of the challenges in other languages is the strange and unrelated ways that a word can be used. We must be careful to simply read the Biblical dictionaries and think we understand a word.

Hallel has a much greater range of meaning. It is related to the root word for sick and another root word for pipe, flute (connected to ‘bore’ and by extension wound. It means to profane—36, pollute—23x, defile—9x desecrate; but it most commonly is translated as begin—52x. Some other words include gather grapes, prostitute, eat common food, break, slay, eat. It is just like our words in English which have multiple, unrelated meanings.

*Chapter 5 “This is the Book (*sefer/biblia* Gk) of The Generations (*toledot*) of Adam

The word *sefer* is probably an Assyrian loan word, and is used for a book, scroll, a letter or missive, register, genealogy. This is the first of 188 appearances in the Bible. Among the ‘books’ are the Book of Covenant, Book of Law, other reference books quoted in Bible (Joshua 10 asks was the story of the sun stopping not written in the Book of Jashar. Numerous references in Kings to the Chronicles of the Kings)

The word *toledot* appears the second time (39 total, mostly in Genesis (13x), Numbers 1 (13x; each of 12 tribes and a summary) and 1 Chronicles (9x). First used in Genesis 2:4 “these are the generations of the heavens and the earth;” the other uses are in lists of the names of descendants.

Note the repetition of Genesis 1:27-28. *Bara* (created 54x in 46v. also *shaped, cut off, get fat*) and *asah* (2633x; *made 653x, do 1333x, wrought 52x, deal 52x, commit 49x offer*

49x, execute 48x, show 48x, prepare 37x work 29x, dress, miscellaneous 154x) “Male and female.” He called their *she* (name) *adam* (human), which means both sexes are *adam*. The focus on God as creator, outside of Genesis, is not a major theme of the Bible (Dtn 1x, Ps 3x, Amos 1x, Malachi 1x) and really Second Isaiah (chapter 40-65) has the bulk of them in 17 verses.

“Likeness, similitude (*de'muth*; from root, verb, ‘to be like, resemble’) of God” repeated five times in verses 3 and 5 is passed on from generation to generation (Ezekiel has 18x, Genesis 7x next and 7x elsewhere). Apparently, a physical attribute but much debated as to the exact meaning. In light of the Christian doctrine of divine sonship (adoption) through Christ, it seems it may be related to human nature’s openness to divinity?

Adam passes down the image and likeness. We note mention of “other sons and daughters” which provides for population growth, although at the uncomfortable expense of the most intimate level of incest.

CHURCH FATHERS (Genesis 1-11 ACCS, Oden)

ACCS p117: In The City of God (ch 15) Augustine opines that the author inserts this narrative so as to provide an alternative to the murder bracketed list of Cain’s descendants. He interprets the names Enosh “man” (a male) born of Seth the “resurrection” (of Abel who was slain). The latter is a type of the city of God (vs Cain the city of man) Augustine assumes the historicity of the ages and declares a great multitude of people could have been born and built a great number of cities.

Enoch (p119ff) Ambrose (333-396) believed Enoch was taken up into heaven by the same power as manifest at Pentecost, Ephrem the Syrian (306-373) recounts a tradition that Adam was present when God transported Enoch so that he would not grieve, like with Abel, and have hope in meeting again in paradise. Cyprian of Carthage (martyr, bishop 248-258) says Enoch was transported to save him from being corrupted by the world. Chrysostom (344-407) rejected the complaint that the flesh keeps us in sin, pointing to St Paul & Peter, and Enoch who was taken by God and seen no more [moral reading of SS]. Ambrose *“the clear and truthful sense of the passage is that one who puts his hope in God does not dwell on earth but is transported, so to speak, and cleaves to God”* John Cassian (360-432), in his conferences (ascetical teaching), writes of transcending the world *“he will think of these as not transitory so much as already gone, smoke scattered into nothing. He walks with God, like Enoch. He is gone from a human way of life, from human concerns...the text of Genesis relates that this happened to Enoch in the body.”* Tertulian (c 155-c250) says that Enoch and Elijah did not die, but they will some day *“that they may extinguish anti-christ with their blood.”* This is connected with the Book of Enoch, an apocalyptic Hebrew text. Earliest parts were written in 200-300 BC and final form in 100BC. It is one of many works which were highly influential on Jewish thought in Jesus' time (and later Christian theology). Enoch with its narratives on the fall of the Watchers (connected to Genesis 6) is especially significant. It is generally agreed that Jude 14-15 quotes from this work.

The unusual wording “walked with God” twice here, is also only used to describe Noah (6:9 also called righteous) in the next chapter. The Hebrew *halak* is not uncommon (500x: go 217x, walk 156x, come 16x) and resonates with the Hebrew concept of “the way of the Lord” and walking as obedience and fidelity. A similar sense is found in Genesis 17:1 God commands Abram “walk before Me and be blameless.” 24:40 Abraham declares “the Lord before Whom I have walked, will send His angel...” In Jacob’s blessing (48:15) of Joseph “The God before Whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked...” Leviticus 26:12 “I will walk among you and will be your God and you shall be My people” (five times in that chapter “walk contrary to Me/you” in a bless/curse type)... Ps 56:13 “that I may walk before God in the light of life”, Ps 81:13 “that Israel would walk in my ways”, 116:9 “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living”, Psalm 119:1 “blessed are those who way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord...3 who also do no wrong but walk in His ways.” Ps 128:1 Blessed is everyone who fears t he Lord and walks in His ways.

Adam @ 130= Seth (replacement) Died 930
 Seth @ 105= Enosh (Man) Died 912
 Enosh@ 90= Kenan (possession) d 905
 Kenan@70= Mahalalel (promise of God) d 910
 Mahahlalel@ 65= Jared (descent) d895
 Jared@ 162 Enoch (dedicated) d 962
 Enoch @ 65 Methusaleh (man of the dart)

Walk with God; echoes Garden/'was not' same expression of Joseph by brothers 365 (year)

Methusaleh @ 187 Lamech (powerful) d969

Lamech @ 182 Noah (rest) d 777

(note, Cain's descendent Lamech gets revenge 77x)

Noah 2 500 (Shem, Ham, Japhath), 600 Flood

[Methusaleh 187+182= 369 +600= 969; flood. Both St Jerome and St Augustine address a problem with the Septuagint version which computes that he lived "fourteen years after the flood"]

[Book of Enoch - Wikipedia](#)

Noah's name occurs 46x in 39 verses of Genesis 5—10. Elsewhere, 1 Chronicles 1:4 in a genealogy list, Isaiah 54:9 (God says that as in the days of Noah I swore, so now I swear not to be angry with you.), and twice in Ezekiel (14:14, 20) Noah, Daniel and Job are held up as the epitome of righteousness.

The verbal play in the Hebrew of Noah/ *noach* and *nacham* (*comfort, console* also means *repent*) serve as a folk etymology. The root of the name Noah literally means rest. Interesting that the verb *nacham* almost immediately appears twice Gen 6:6&7 where God "repents" for having created humans. Perhaps another clever wordplay

Purpose: Why is this list here? One simple answer is it outlines with accurate precision a list of the first ten generations of human male offspring of Adam. The long lives are literal. God wants us to know how long these men lived. Others think they are symbolic numbers (like the 7's

or 365), some of which have a lost meaning. I have seen analysis of the plagues in Egypt which connected them to Egyptian gods (ie. Assaults on their divine power. Like sun-god and darkness) so it seems possible that there is also some deeper meaning here as well? One pointed out that many cultures do not pay heed to dates and time the way we do (some people do not know when they were born, for example). Ask a young child, "How old do you think I am?" and be ready for a wild answer (which may have some logic it to it, like size=age, so tall people are older). How ancient culture perceived age may be different than us. I do think there is one obvious message, the decline in life span. The assumption of "progress" shapes modern understanding of past and future (that things are getting better). Many ancient cultures believed that humanity/world was in decline from a higher starting place. Note the ages of the first ten generations are close to 1,000. Then they drop to 500, the Patriarchs less than 200 and finally Moses 120 (which is considered the fullness of a life span). In our time, life expectancies are growing longer compared to hundreds of years ago. Perhaps we should consider the historical context of the Sumerian Kings list (predates Israel) which has extended life spans as well in the pre-flood world. Is Genesis written in dialogue with this?

Kingship came from heaven. It moved to various cities over the years

Two kings 28,800 + 36,000 + 64,800 years

The next three kings ruled 108,000 years

One king 28,800, One king 21,00, one king 18,600

Total Five cities, eight kings, 385,200 years. Then the flood swept over.

In Kis, 23 kings, 23,310 years, 3 months, 3½ days

Eanna 12 kings 2310 years

Ur (normalized) 4 kings 177 years

Then eight kings 3195 years (81-360yrs each)

The final three (11/197, 21/125, and 11/159) are actually reasonable.

Final tabulation 134 kings over 28,876 years

GENESIS 6:1-4

These four verses are truly among the most mysterious of the entire bible. They are especially difficult for the contemporary reader, because we are unfamiliar with the referents and unaccustomed to an ancient worldview.

There are numerous angles to consider.

1. We read that each of the nine patriarchs had “other sons and daughters,” and the tenth time the word daughter (*bat*) occurs is here. The most obvious verbal parallel is to Eve in the garden. Three key words are repeated *ra’a* (see) *tob* (good/beautiful) and *laqah* (took)—the *ben elohim* (sons of gods; in contrast to *bat adam=daughters of man*) do what Eve did. Recall that patterns in the bible are not simple duplicates. The patterns can be utilized in new ways, for example, the woman Eve takes the fruit, but now the women function as the fruit which is taken. The verb used means “go into” (the dictionary says “from the Arabic meaning to enter the tent of the woman,” but...) In spite of

the verb, one wonders if there an implied connection to the Tree of Knowledge, (sexual congress is knowing). The sins of the sons of Elohim compound the problem of rebellion. This seems consistent with the reading that the Genesis account is meant to illustrate the growing distance from God.

2. It was interesting how often commentators note that this is a really hard section to understand, and they often pointed out the difficulty of translation. Two of the Hebrew words in verse three are particularly obscure and difficult to translate. There are also apparently some outside references which may imply this is a section of a larger work now lost to us. It may be a written work, or perhaps part of the oral tradition familiar to the people of the time but lost to us so many years later. It should be no surprise to a bible reader that this is often the case. Lastly, while our (non-contextualized) reading may seem to be clear, the words refer to unknown quantities and we run the risk of Job's friends—confidently explaining something about which our expertise is more limited than we perceive. So, let's wade into the waters, shall we?

3. There are many *adam* began to multiply (associated root to other word for multiply) on the face of the *adama* earth/ground/soil." The sentence ties together this to the second creation account much as the genealogies and the image of God/human did. An interesting theory I ran across the other day, Genesis 1 speaks of the mass creation of humans, and Genesis 2 is a single couple who were chosen for a special creation and role. This explains the "other people" whom Cain was concerned with and

provides wives as well. Actually, while I do not think we need to answer this question, I like the theory a lot.

4 *ben Elohim* (sons of gods) // LXX huious theou (son of God). So, who are these beings? This is where our understanding of the type of literature this is really matters. The widely held ancient beliefs about gods is the social context. Our question: Is God revealing an “ancient mythic pre-history” or “modern factual history”? Gen 6:4 *They were the gibor olam (mighty ones of antiquity/long ago), the men of name/reputation.*” Nimrod will be identified as one of them in chapter 10, and he appears in other ancient writings as the founder of Babylon. This legendary group of mighty ones is not given definite content, but it raises the question if the Bible is referring to the pre-existing stories of their pagan neighbors or is it simply an unspecified but direct revelation from God?

The historical critical approaches the text from a social science perspective which seeks to make factual sense. It ponders the historic events which lay beneath ancient legends, and analyzes the psychological “truth” in the mythic/poetic narratives. The non-critical approach assumes all biblical writings are factually accurate (and all non-biblical ancient writings are mythology and erroneous) as understood by Modern social sciences like history (which is interested in facts).

[**excursus**. Let us illustrate with a familiar story. Little Red Riding Hood. Fact—wolves can and did eat young girls in the past, tragically in England this Christmas a 55y/o woman was reportedly “eaten by foxes” after her car broke down, she called for assistance and then wandered off

through a nearby field. So, there is the historical “kernel.” Folktales were often brutal warnings to adults and children about the dangerous world. Wolves are literal and figurative (dangerous humans), so the story has symbolic meaning. However, folklorists find different versions of this story throughout the world. The ‘mythic’ soul of the story is incarnated and expressed in varied ways, including a horrifying version in medieval France where everyone is devoured by the wolf. It is also found in the far east. The sanitized story of Little Red Riding Hood which I read in 1960’s with its happy ending is but one of many incarnations. The point being, there are so many of these stories which, though they are often quite different in details and function, still retain an obvious similarity.]

Orthodox priest Fr Stephen de Young (The Lord of the Spirits, also has a blog) has a long explanation of the historical theory on one of his segments. Michael Heiser is an Evangelical author who has written extensively (also a podcast) on the divine counsel and touches on this as well.

The word *nehphilim* occurs twice in the Bible, here and in Numbers 13:33. There the spies report that the “land devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are of great size. There we saw the *nehphilim* (The *Anakites=long necks* come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.” Grasshoppers are 2-3 inches. If men were five to five and a half feet tall then Giants are 20-30x larger than a man (100 to 150 feet tall; a five-story building?) Problem, how did the Nephilim survive the flood? The LXX translates *Nephilim* as “giants” and some suggest this is because of the Hellenist stories of the Titans. The ancient story trove

of giants may be projected onto the Hebrew text. The Hebrew root word *naphal* means to fall (in various shades) and so “fallen ones” as in “rebels, renegades” or fall upon in the sense of a bully, violent person (which resonates with the next section where God repents of creating humans due to the violence) or oppressor.

In the ancient near east, pagan Kings were considered semi-divine and sons of gods. There are reports of ritual practices which included the king having intercourse with temple priestesses on ‘giant’ beds (Deuteronomy 3:11 on the last of the Rephaim, the king of Bashan, Og, whose bed was 9 cubits by 4 cubits). Hence, the meaning of sons of gods and giants. There is also no reason to doubt the presence of unusually tall men in the biblical references to the giants in the promised land. [Giants are part of the ancient legends of most civilizations around the world (including Jack and the Beanstalk). Some claim that giant skeletons have been uncovered in modern Turkey. I have seen a video where such an archaeological claim is made. There is also an article which said the Smithsonian destroyed thousands of bones to cover up for the evolutionary theory. I can’t know...] Ancient practices sometimes included human sacrifice, and as one ate typically ate the offering (goat, sheep, or human), it is easy to see the horror of cannibalism associated with the practice. It is noteworthy it is the so called “giant clans” [[The Giant Clans of the Bible – Jamin Bradley](#)] which are identified by the spies in Joshua. It is hard to ascertain the exact measurement used (like inches and meters are different) but depending on the accurate translation, Goliath may be 6’ 6” or 9’ 9” and at a time when most men were 5’ 5” either is plenty tall. The

term could also be a reference to their power, ferocity or symbolic of their greatness (after all, we still refer to normal humans as “giants” because of their expertise). Everything is not literal. Some 300-500 years before Christ the Persian Empire was in ascendancy. The King’s 10,000 personal elite troops were called ‘The Immortals’ because they always retained that number of troops (in fact they removed their dead from the field of battle and replaced dead, aged and wounded troops so that they retained 10,000). When their inferior armor and weaponry resulted in a decisive loss on the field of battle with the “300 Spartans”—legend/myth (or hype!) collided with reality.

Numerous ancient cultures (Mesopotamia, Greece and Egypt) have stories of the gods and humans producing semi-divine children. Such stories predate Abraham (c 1850BC?) by hundreds, even a thousand years. Sumeria was founded in 5000BC (writing invented in 3500BC). Ancient Egypt was a significant Empire in 3150BC (and invented math, alphabet and tooth paste). The Saga of Gilgamesh (a divine man mixture) predates the Jewish Bible by 1,000 years. We cannot overstate how important the world view and culture out of which God chose Abraham and called forth Israel was laden with such stories, which continued to the time of Jesus. Alexander the Great (356—323) claimed he was sired by Zeus and the Egyptians declared him the Son of God in 332 BC. Achilles and Hercules are other examples of well-known stories. Historians speculate that Greece may have invaded Troy, roughly around the time of the Patriarchs or Moses, and the epic poems, the Iliad and Odyssey, are laden with legend. The Greek myths are obviously not historical

documents in the modern sense, and authors rewrote the stories without consideration to data or facts, because that was not their purpose in writing. The impulse that led to the deification of the Roman emperors' came from the East. The **Pharaohs and the Ptolemies, Lycurgus and Lysander of Sparta, and Alexander the Great** were worshiped as divinities both while living and when dead. When Rome conquered the East, the same divine honors were transferred to the Roman proconsuls.

The idea that divine beings (later called angels) would cross into the human realm was part of the world view (and based on what we have said above, there is a 'sense' in which this was reasonable based on their understanding). Hence, the revelation could be addressing what would be the violation of the divine order (remember the importance of separation in the creation account). The human rebellion in the garden is now duplicated in the heavenly sphere with the mixing of the sons of God and woman—which is a concern of narrative meaning (and can be symbolic).

The question, “literally how could this happen?” is a modern concern. How do incorporeal angels have sex? (John Calvin, considers such a possibility absurd) It might be helpful to revisit the language of Psalm 74:13-14 (YHWH kills a monster and feeds it to desert creatures) or Isaiah 51:9 (Exodus cut Rahab in pieces and pierced the dragon) and recall that the Bible is no stranger to the mythic imagery of its neighbors and sometimes employs it to describes events. If the Biblical accounts contain some mythic imagery, it is clearly a different kind of writing, and comparatively non-mythical by their ancient standards. I am sure this is a partly a polemic against the beliefs of

their pagan ancestors and neighbors. Remember, this was their world, not our current situation. When we use the word “car” today, we are not thinking of a Ford Model T. It is more like a motorized wagon than a car which are common now comfortable seats, backup cameras, push button starters, entertainment centers, global communications and temperature control. Likewise, words can have different functions (symbolically) in different times and cultures.

A reasonable explanation (for secular moderns) is that “sons of gods” may simply be a reference to the rulers and judges and their harems. Hence, a critique on grounds of justice and oppression.

Many (including some church fathers) theorize that sons of Elohim are the descendants of Seth (of God here many righteous) while the daughters the children of Cain, resulting in a pollution of the godly human line. Once again, we are reminded that these biblical stories produced all manner of explanations and traditions in the ancient world up until today. We will mention briefly one such apocryphal work now.

** EXCURSUS Enoch and the Watchers written c 300-200BC is a Jewish work which continued to be expanded until 100BC. It is part of the biblical canon of the Ethiopian Jewish community. The Epistle of Barnabas (A Christian interpretation of the Tanak, written circa 100AD, considered SS by only a few Fathers, but widely respected for its authentic teaching. He calls Enoch SS in 16:5-6 and quotes from it numerous times). The book expands on the fall of the watchers/angels and provides an explanation for

the generation of the demons (the souls of dead giants). The later additions are Messianic prophecies of the Messiah. This work is quoted in Jude (v14-15) although others have found dozens and dozens of interesting parallels (see here [The Book of Enoch NT Verses \(alaskandreams.net\)](http://alaskandreams.net) where language and themes are the same. It is used by the early church because it is friendly for their faith in Jesus, which may have played a role in its rejection by Jews.

Genesis 6:3 Commentators agree that the wording of this verse is difficult, and the LXX is preferred by translators *Yhwh amar* The Lord said (same as Genesis 1 creation and in His dealings with Adam, Eve and Cain) *ruah din adam olam*. Spirit/Breath will not *din* 24x related to Dan (from *adone—rule, govern*; KJV my spirit will not always strive with man. Typical meaning: judge, contend, plead a case; strive, struggle) It is most common in Psalms 8x where it translates “God judges” and in Jeremiah 5x and also Isaiah and Ezekiel with the same meaning. Isaiah 13:3 sounds similar “The Lord has taken His place to contend (*rib*), He stands to judge (*din*) His people.” The text seems to mean that God’s spirit will not be within a human forever, rather they will live 120 years. However, many of the ancient interpreters thought it was a warning, giving a grace period as a countdown for the flood.

NOAH saga Genesis 6—10

EXCURSUS

Book vs Library

Because the bible is a single book which I can hold in my hand, it is easy to think of it as a single book. However, it is really a collection of different types of literature written in different times and places. Some have a common author, but many do not. While all are inspired by the Holy Spirit, they serve different functions and are at different levels of understanding. Sometimes a single book may contain numerous types of writing (poetry, narrative, wisdom sayings, parables), it cannot all be read the same way. I've seen numerous atheists (or scientists) declare, "I can destroy the bible by proving Noah's ark never happened." Maybe, but I think not.

Let's address, first of all, that there are lots of Christians who declare this story is exactly what happened on a particular day in a particular year (some four or five thousand years ago). And all manner of atheists will mock this. And numerous You-Tube presentation will declare that one or another speaker "destroyed" a Christian speaker. And numerous others will explain how they lost their faith and became an atheist. And others will castigate Christians who fail to uphold the authority of God's word.

In fairness, 1 Peter 3:20 and 2 Peter 2:5 refer to Noah and seem to confirm it—yet 1 Peter declares that the flood prefigures baptism (which now saves you—which is problematic declaration for those who claim faith saves not

baptism...) Jesus (Mt 24) refers to the days of Noah as an example of how it will be on the day of the coming of the Son of Man. Unexpected!

I cannot address this debate as I am not a biologist, archaeologist, geologist, or anthropologist. I am not a scholar of ancient civilizations or ancient literature. By academic standard I'm not really much of a theologian. Yet I have struggled with these questions and want to share my insights because I have not lost my faith and I do embrace the authority of God's Word. In fact, as I have made clear, I think it is a false dilemma, and if a well-meaning Christian feels compelled to declare that Noah's ark is historical fact in the same way as hurricane Katrina (2005) then so be it. I will raise some questions from the text about this, but will not argue from physical sciences. Suffice to say, however, I think the atheist critics are making silly arguments because they misread the text. Disproving the bible based on Noah's ark is not possible, in my opinion.

After decades of study I see a clear difference in Genesis 1-11 and 1 John 1:1ff (*we declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that*

you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that your/our joy may be complete. The passage reflects the style of the Gospel, which is an interesting bible study in itself, but clearly the author is emphasizing a personal experience of the human Jesus coupled with a declaration of belief about His relationship with God. This is not a story about ancient times before history, but a lived experience which some we had of a living man. Likewise, Paul writes the Corinthians about the Gospel, in chapter 15 he references the witnesses of the resurrection. *“He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.”* The declaration of eye witnesses (there are others elsewhere) in 30 AD about a particular event has nothing to do with the historical facticity of the Noah story. In fact, the import of the contemporary resurrection event overshadows an ancient flood narrative completely. Christianity without Noah is not a problem. No one joins the church because of the ark. The resurrection, on the other hand, vital and sufficient.

So we begin Noah, with the historical question hanging over our heads: did it happen? I think the not so obvious

answer is it did, it does and it will. Lots of times. So, what does this mean? Patterns. The Scriptures unveil (*apocalypse* reveal) the message of God—which is about the patterns of salvation. Whatever its status as historical “fact,” there are other questions regarding its literary meaning and more importantly “truth.” Many claim it is divinely inspired history, but others see divinely inspired symbolism, and truth shrouded in a mythic account (which is far less mythic than the competing stories of its pagan neighbors). What is God revealing to us in this amazing literature?

Certainly, the Noah story fits into the pattern of the creation account before it and other narratives after it (most importantly the exile of Israel around 722 BC and the exile of Judah around 586 BC). The ark is a descriptor of how God allows ruin and destruction to come upon a sinful people, while He saves a remnant to preserve His holy people. We will demonstrate the use of this imagery in other biblical texts and note that the language/imagery of Genesis repeats in psalms, Isaiah and Jeremiah (and Job). We will look briefly at some themes and patterns, leaving out many others for time constraints

Stump In Isaiah 6, the prophet is told to preach a message which closes the ears and eyes of the people, until “God

sends everyone away.” If even a tenth remains, “they will be burned again,” like a great tree, “whose stump remains.” “The holy seed is its stump.” The same image is used in Daniel 4 to describe Nebuchadnezzar. Interestingly, the great tree provides for all the animals and birds, until it is cut down; the stump means that the kingdom will be re-established once the king recognizes that “Heaven is sovereign.”

Remnant Occurs 79 times and this is an important theme in the Bible. Arguably, Jesus’ choice of the 12 is symbolic of the remnant of faithful Jews who belong to Him. Just like He sent out 70 in Luke to prepare His mission tour (the number of Israel which entered Egypt in the time of Joseph). Genesis 45:7 Joseph tells his brothers God sent him ahead “to preserve for you a remnant on the earth” during the catastrophic famine. All of the sinful Hebrew will fall in the desert except Joshua and Caleb. Recall Genesis 2 has a desert land rather than water covering the earth at creation. 2 Kings 19:30-31 “The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward; for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors.” Ezra 9, four times he refers to the “remnant” in his prayer. It recurs frequently in numerous prophets, particularly Isaiah 14x and Jeremiah 20x.

Waters

Psalm 18:16-17 He took me; He drew me out of mighty waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me.”

Ps 32:6 let all who are faithful offer prayers to You at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.”

Ps 69:1 “Save me God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire...I have come into deep waters and the flood sweeps over me.”

Ps 124 “If the Lord had not been on our side when our enemies attacked...then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us,... over us the raging water”

Ps 137 [more a peripheral] by the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept...

Ps 144:7 “set me free and rescue me from the mighty waters, from the hand of the aliens// 11 rescue me from the cruel sword and deliver me from the hand of the aliens

Isaiah 8:7 “Therefore the Lord is bringing up against it (*Israel*) the mighty flood waters of the river, the King of Assyria and all his glory; it will rise above all its channels and overflow its banks; it will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over it will reach up to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.”

Isaiah 17:12-13 roaring of nations//roaring of seas.

Isaiah 28:2 God's judgement on arrogant rich rulers will fall like (numerous images including) "like a storm of mighty, overflowing waters"...17 (justice and righteousness) "waters will overwhelm the shelter"

Isaiah 57:20 "but the wicked are like the tossing sea that cannot keep still; its waters toss up mire and mud"

Jeremiah 46:7-8 "Who is this rising like the Nile, like rivers whose waters surge? Egypt rises like the Nile, like rivers who waters surge. It said, Let me rise, let me cover the earth, let me destroy cities and their inhabitants.

47:2 (Jeremiah to Philistines before Egypt invaded Gaza) "See, the waters are rising out of the north and shall become an overflowing torrent; they shall overflow the land and all that fills it, the city and all who live in it."

51:55 [Jeremiah on the doom of Babylon] "For the Lord is laying Babylon waste, and stilling her loud clamor. Their waves roar like mighty waters..."

Ezekiel 26[God to Tyre for its sin against Jerusalem] 26:3 "I will hurl many nations against you, as the sea hurls its waves"26:19 "when I make you a city laid waste, like cities that are not inhabited, when I bring up the deep over you, and the great waters cover you..."

Sea Revelation 13:1 And I saw a great beast rising out of the “sea.” 21:1 a new heaven and a new earth, and the “sea” was no more.

A brief reflection on Psalm 78 may provide us with a Biblically derived model for approaching the Noah narrative.

Psalm 78 A Maskil of Asaph. 1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! 2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, 3 things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders which he has wrought.

Azan “Make your ear broader,” an invitation, or command to listen. **Am** possessive “my” “people, assembly, tribe, nation” **torah** “instruction, direction, legal directives” **nara** Stretch out, incline, **ozen** (ear; shared root with azan) **emer** (utterance, speech, words, sayings) **pe** (mouth)

- Key points, the active process of opening the ear, making it larger to hear. This is the process of spiritual growth which the Bible calls us to, and ‘leaning into’ is a work of active reception. Note, however, the communal nature of the effort, we are part of a larger people, but a group which shares a deep commonality (tribes are families) in covenant relationship with God.

The word **torah** is so often seen as law that it is a delight to see it used in this context as a reminder of the broader meaning. Genesis is part of the Torah and it functions as a torah.

I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN A **mascal** (proverb, parable, poem, ethical maxim, a similitude, generally metaphorical) I WILL POUR FORTH/UTTER **khida** (riddle, dark sayings, difficult question, a puzzle, conundrum, proverb or perplexing question) WHICH WE HAVE HEARD **shama** AND KNOWN **yada** AND OUR FATHERS **sapar** (from root to make a mark, like a tally. So, a Scribe, or count, recount, tell, relate) The psalm goes on, exhorting/supporting people in their faith (which is intermixed with trust, obey, remember, not forget, not go astray all as interconnected parts of a greater whole of covenant relationship) and reminds us that the revelation of God which we know so well, remains a deep mystery.

What has the story been to this point? We have read two versions of creation, the first was grand and very orderly. The second was more intimate and personal. The former culminates with humans and the day of rest; the latter begins with a potter forming a man out of the clay and breathing life into him. The garden is described and quickly the sin ends that chapter, followed immediately by a fratricide. Several genealogical lists lead us to the (mysterious) “sons of gods” and the Nephilim. Some

postulate that what is revealed is a series of rebellions in the human and spiritual realm. This is not a typical history, the characters appear suddenly and are quickly gone. Now we are confronted with the hinge. **Multiple sources?**

We will see that two accounts (YHWH and ELOHIM) have been woven together into a coherent whole. The different names of the Lord/God will signal this and we will note that there are repetitive elements and also slightly different takes on what is transpiring.

In the beginning God saw it was good seven times. In Genesis 6:5 God saw how great was human evil. The tragic end of the first creation is at hand. *Ra'ah* occurs nine times in chapter one, primarily "God saw" but also vegetation 'appeared'. The next two occurrences (Eve saw, the ben Elohim saw) have to do with the twisted perspectives of rebels. This is the third negative *ra'ah* and in verse 12 there will be a repetition of God seeing the mess. Ironically, although spelled differently, evil is homonym (*ra, ra'a*) of see. The language of bad/evil connects the story to the tree in the garden thematically. The *ra* is *rab* (*great, many, much, strong, abounding*) which is verbally related to *rabab* (*increase multiply*) Humans were to increase in numbers, instead they increased in evil. The pun is tragic. *Yatzer* (inclination, frame) the story will end in 8:21 with God smelling the sacrifice and pledging not to destroy the world again, even though every inclination of the human is evil *kol yom* (*the whole/all--days/time*) The flood will not change the human condition.

Yhwh nahum asa 'adam (the Lord regretted making human) **nakhham** 5:29 meaning comfort, connected to Noah's name. Here *nakhham* is (sorry, repent, regret; the verb can also be reflective console oneself) Repeated in verse 7, an emphasis on God' inner reaction to human evil and violence. Heschel (The Prophets) spends much time contrasting the Hellenist God (rational, passionless, immovable, perfect, distant) to the Biblical God (passionate, emotive, at times able to change, intimately involved in humanity). God does not destroy the world in a fit of anger, in fact, God's anger and His judgement are often not connected in narratives. The focus is on preservation (animals and family Noah) without any mention of the experiences of those wiped out/flooded away. It is also interesting that Noah never says a word to God, though "he obeyed" is mentioned repeatedly.

6:7 *maha* "blot out" (also 7:4; 7:23) Seems to literally mean to stroke, or rub, and by extension wipe away; "blot out is most common translation. It is applied to people, memory, sins, names. In 2 Kings 21:13 the same word is used to describe God's judgment on Jerusalem—He will wipe them away like a plate. This is a "pattern" which parallels the flood and the fall of Jerusalem.

Khan (kane) noun 69x (from *khanan* v 78x). Grace, graciousness, charm, favor, elegance. It is used often of humans finding favor, or being pleasing, in the sight of others. It will appear repeatedly in the Jacob-Esau meeting and be used of Joseph and David as well.

6:8 Noah found favor in the eyes of YHWH.

Genesis 6:9 shifts from calling the Creator YHWH to God. *toledot noah. Noah issh sadik tamim halak* [These are the generations of Noah a righteous and whole man]

Toledot appears for the third time; it can mean descendant but is sometimes rendered “account” (Gen 2:4 ‘these are the generations of the heavens and the earth; Gen 5:1 this is the book of the generations of Adam; The next will be 10:1 these are the generations of Noah, repeated in 10:22). Ish refers to male (vs female) division of the ‘*adam* in Genesis 2:23 where the woman is taken from the side of the man.

Sadik just, righteous, lawful, correct. An important aspect of Jewish spirituality. It occurs here and in 7:1 in a parallel account; then figures heavily in Abraham’s intervention with God on behalf of Sodom. It appears almost fifty times in the book of psalms (Ps 37 nine times) [This adjective occurs 206x in 197 verses and is derived from the Root verb *sadak* V. (41x), also *sedek* N. masc. (119x), *sidqa* N fem (1x).]

Tamim most usually refers to unblemished, whole, complete. It occurs 22x in Leviticus and 18x in Numbers in reference to sacrifices (compared to twice each in Genesis and Exodus), In Dtn 18:13 the command to the people, “you shall be blameless before the Lord your God,” certainly echoes Noah thematically.

Noah walked with God: As mentioned earlier, the last time this figure of speech was used was “Enoch walked with God (and then was no more).” Abraham is told to walk before God. God walked in the Garden of Eden (which made Adam and Eve hide).

6:10 Noah had three sons. This is a duplicate of 5:32 (When Noah was five-hundred he became the father of Shem=name, Ham=hot and Japheth=opened) and we will look into their significance in chapter 10 and 11.

6:11 *shakath* to destroy, also to ruin, corrupt, spoil, decay. It occurs for the first time in the Bible here, to be repeated in v 12, 13, 17 and twice in chapter 9 at story's close.

Shakath describes what human (and animal) have done—ruined the earth—so God will bring ‘ruin’ in v 13. Ruin will reappear repeatedly in 18-19 (where Abraham debates with God about Sodom) and then again in the Exodus account. It appears 147x in bible, so it is a recurring theme!

Hamas (violence, wrong, cruelty, injustice, oppression) Mala (fill, be full, abundance) The term occurs five times in the pre-history (Gen 1-11): twice in Genesis 1 and last in Genesis 9 “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” Then a pair of “the earth was filled with violence” in 6:11,13. The striking contrast illustrates blessing vs curse. There can be little doubt that the reader is supposed to understand the role humanity plays in the corruption of the world.

6:12-13 “all flesh” *basar (flesh, body, man and animal)* God declares that He brings ruin upon the earth because the earth has been ruined by “all flesh.” The “end of all flesh” is *paniyim/before* God because the earth is filled with evil *paniyim/through* them. The judgment is aligned with the behavior.

6:14-16 Continues the longest speech by God in the Bible to this point. Some see symbolic meaning to the numbers of the measurements, which can lend itself to some interesting creativity. Augustine sees symbolism of the

church (saved by the wood of Jesus' cross) and describes the ratio (30, 50, 300) as that of the perfectly proportioned human (length, width and depth). Lastly, the door on the side is the open wound of the Lord from the spear. Some point out that the shape of the ark is a long box (not a boat) and that the text conveys that only God's intervention would have kept them safe inside.

Cover it with pitch. The Hebrew term *kaper* is used here, in the next usage it refers to Jacob's desire to make amends with his brother, afterward it is heavily used in the rest of the Torah in reference to the "atonement" and sacrifices (also multiple times in chronicles, psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel)

6:20 Noah is told to have a pair of each animal (as well as food). This is the number with which we are most familiar in our stories and art. This section concludes with the declaration that Noah did it and did all that God commanded. Now a shift of the divine referent.

7:1-5 the Lord (YHWH) tells Noah to "enter the ark" and Noah obeys, (7:5 He does all the Lord/YHWH tells him) there is another reference to his righteousness (6:9 *elohim*) with the addition "this generation," which leads to a meditation. Is this showing how hard it was because his time period was so evil, or simply comparative? Each generation has its share of evil and violence, we are challenged to live in right relationship to God and one another in our own times and place. The biggest difference is now seven pairs of clean animals are to be taken. This would obviously raise the question, from whence the differentiation of clean and unclean? The end of Exodus

sees the usage of Hebrew *taor* some two dozen times to refer to pure gold, not ritual purity. It is not until Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy that the designation is used in the ritual sense. The Bible frequently has such (apparent) anachronisms, as well as time references (“to this day”) which betray the writers time frame. There is a reference to “seed” (offspring) which is another recurring leitmotif.

Further reflection on clean and unclean animals. It is hard to find much written on the topic and there is no indication that Israel’s neighbors had a similar outlook. Many ancient historians believe that the separation of Israel from her neighbors is expressed in this differentiation. There are a number of theories (going way back to Jesus’ day) about the reason. Hygiene, health, economics, and moral motivations have all been suggested. Was it to differentiate them as a holy people? No reason is given, only that God said, so they obeyed.

It is easy for the contemporary reader to forget that Noah is not a Jew, for that matter, the children of Abraham are not “Jews” in the sense that we mean it (the term originated in the Persian exile). The New Testament will have much to say about clean/unclean (both as regards food and people). In Acts, Peter has a famous vision of a four cornered sheet (symbolic of world) unclean animals being lowered from heaven and a command to ‘kill and eat,’ but Peter declares he has never eaten unclean food and he hears “what God has made clean you must not call profane.” It is repeated three times, then he is summoned to the Gentile Cornelius. In Mark 7 Jesus has a debate on unclean foods, where He says it is what comes out of the heart, not what goes into the mouth, that makes a man unclean. Mark famously

declares, v19, “thus He declares all foods clean.” Something which the early church was debating for an entire generation according to Acts. Immediately after this a pagan woman asks to have her daughter exorcised. Jesus says the children’s food should not be given to dogs but she asks for the scraps and receives her request.

This aligns with an interesting insight from St. Augustine is that the ark prefigures the church; and the church is home to both the clean and unclean. Since the beginning the question “How pure should the church be?” has led to all manner of strict and lenient approaches. Does the ark help us in discerning this? St. Ambrose sees a deeper meaning of the command “go into” the ark as “go into yourself, into your mind, in the ruling part of your soul. Salvation is there, the rudder is there; outside the deluge rages, outside there is danger.” He continues explaining the importance of right thoughts, right desires, right actions. Christian practice influenced Christian interpretations; the ‘rule of life’ (conversion) is the framework for reading the bible.

7:4 is the popular belief about the flood, “in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights.”

Gen 7:6 Noah was 600 years old, but 50 (Jubilee, Pentecost) x 12 (tribes) = 600. There is little scholarly discussion of to be found on symbolic numbers. It occurs 685x in the Bible, almost always as part of a larger number (cf. Numbers). In a rare occurrence, Pharaoh takes 600 chariots in Exodus 14:7.

Gen 7:7 Noah and his family went into the ark to escape the flood. 7:10 and after seven days the flood waters came.

[question: were the wife, sons and daughter-in-law also righteous? Are we rather to see a pattern here, how one righteous man saves others by their trust in him/through him trust in God? And if saved by faith, does one also see that faith in obedience is part of the process. Believing Noah, like believing the other ark rider Moses, meant acting on the faith and trust, moving to where God sends.]

7:11 gives a more precise dating. Second month, seventeenth day of 600 years. Note the addition, “The fountains of the great deep burst forth and the windows of the heavens were open.” This addition to the mention of rain earlier may be the indication of another source. The introduction of the *mayan (well, fountain)* reminds us that the geography of Genesis 1 is different from ours. The land sits on the chaos waters of the (*tehome the great deep, primordial sea, the grave*) abyss. This is an uncreation as God turns the world back over to disorder (in response to human sin, violence, disorder). The symbolic experience of water (like time) is its fluidity and was connected to chaos. Outside Noah, all the other twenty references are to normal wells and springs. The rain is the result of the *aruba (window, lattice, sluice)* opening in heaven. Elsewhere (8x) it is sometimes figurative for being able to see where God is, or the means through which God pours out His blessings (Isaiah and Malachi).

In 7:4 (YHWH) the word *matar (rain)* occurs twice. The same word occurs in Gen 2:5 (*yhwh creation account*). Gen 19 YHWH will rain down on Sodom and Gomorah; in Exodus rain hail, then manna. In 7:12 [God] *gesem rain* was upon the earth.

Genesis 7:13 “That same day” Hebrew *etsem* (124x. Usually means bone *100x*, but also means essence or self-same. Adam references Eve as *Bone of my bone*; and Abraham will circumcise Ishmael and himself later “on that same day”). They already went into the ark in verse 7 because (literally in the face of the waters [Gen 1 the *ruah* hovered over the face of the water] of the flood. Another slight variation, the sons are named (the four wives are not).

[**excursus** There are numerous ancient traditions, Jewish and Christian, which give the names. The Sibylline Oracles site the extraordinary life spans of the woman, one of whom is the visionary prophetess who is one of Noah’s daughters-in-law. This ancient work is an invaluable resource for ancient mythology and beliefs. It is also a reminder that the beliefs of ancient Jews and Christians were far further ranging than the biblical texts (even as contemporary scholars in every age provided different interpretations). Things like the Rapture, and the voluminous end times speculative writings come to mind as contemporary examples... Suffice to say, the popular beliefs were shaped by both the Scriptures and the traditions (small t) which were part of the belief patterns. So, the nameless women may have been “well known” in the imagination of the people. This is no different from the three kings (Bible calls them Magi) named [Balthasar](#), Melchior, and Gaspar (or Casper).]

The terminology “of every kind” (*min* 10x in Genesis 1; then only 6:10 and here, not again until Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14) also returns to describe the animals “two each of every flesh” (here and verse 7 it is literally “two and two”)

Genesis 7:16 They enter as “God (Elohim) has commanded and YHWH (the Lord) shut them in.

As *tsava* (*commanded*) this verb is repeated in 6:22 and 7:5,9,16. The only other time we have seen this word was in three uses concerning the command to Adam & Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree. This may be intended as a contrast, as Noah will end up being a type of new Adam? (Later instances of this will be Abraham and then Moses and Aron who also obey what God commands)

Note here that God must close/shut them in, just as He earlier closed up the flesh of Adam after removing his side/rib to create Eve. Numerous commentators point out the divine control over this. YHWH decides who gets in and when they get out. It is a subtle point, but a good reminder of how little we control. The care of God is also unlike any pagan flood stories.

Genesis 7:17-20 provides a description of the flood. For reference, the highest mountains in the world are almost 30,000 feet; while the average depth of the ocean is 12,000 feet. By comparison, there are thirty mountains 12,000 feet high in Montana alone, with hundreds over 20,000 feet tall around the world. Trying to envision the sheer volume of water, which is many times all the water on earth, boggles the mind. There are numerous efforts at “explanations” offered for where it came from and where it went—if you are seeking an answer to this type of question.

7:21-23 as promised in 6:21 all flesh perished. The world is now where it started in Genesis 1, with the exception of those in the ark. The word died, which appears rhythmically in the list of the ancient fathers, occurs once

more. Now everyone is dead. 7:12 the rain fell forty days, in 7:17 the flood continued on earth for forty days [Jacob is embalmed forty days, Ex 16:35 Israel ate manna forty years, 24:18 Moses is on the mountain forty days, Numbers 13:25 the spies are in Canaan forty days. Goliath comes out to challenge Israel for forty days, King David reigns forty years. The number forty is important in the New Testament as well. 7:24 the waters swell for one hundred fifty days; some see this as a sun-category of time while others wonder if it is a parallel account. sources

Genesis 8 Undoing the Flood.

8:1 God remembered Noah (and the creatures). *Zakar* makes its first appearance here. Repeated twice in the next chapter (connected to the covenant and rainbow), it then shows up in 19 (God remembers Abraham and saves Lot in Sodom), 39 (Rachel gets a baby). [Joseph asks to be remembered, but isn't; then he remembers his dream with his brothers). Exodus begins with God remembering His covenant with the Israelites who are crying out. As we see, it conveys a sense of action, saving action, and is an important concept in the covenant relationship (where God's people must also remember) and arguably a central component of a biblical understanding of life.

When God remembers He causes a *ruah* to *abar* (*Passover, pass through*). The fire passes through the carcass when Abraham and God make their covenant and it appears twice in Exodus 12 in reference to slaying the first born—both are related to salvation) and the waters *shawkak* (rare word, 5x-cease, abate, subside). The role of *ruah* in Genesis 1 creation and Exodus 10 (wind blows locusts) & 14 (wind

blows water to make dry land) may be in play. Wind is also spirit (it appears twice to refer to breathing life forms prior to this) so the Ancient understanding (connotation) reveals depths of meaning beyond weather and physical explanations. The fountains of the abyss and the windows of heavens (*samayim* Gen. 1) are *sawkar* (*shut up, closed*). Only 3x in Bible, Ps 63:11 “mouth of liars will be shut” and Isaiah 9:4 “I will shut up Egypt into the hand of a hard master, and a fierce king will rule over them). Once again, the cosmology is different from ours. For 150 days the waters lessened, decrease, abated.

On the seventh month on the seventeenth day (7:11 second month, seventeenth day it began: rain fell 40 days/nights 7:12, continued forty days 7:17, the waters swelled one hundred fifty days 7:24) ark is stuck on the mountains of Ararat (Turkey). They keep “diminishing” until 10 month day 1 (another 73 days) at which point the mountains are now visible. This apparently incongruity is reason to see two sources again. Forty days later Noah releases a raven. Then a dove, followed a week later by another dove. There is some tension in the narrative, as Noah seems self-reliant, opening the ark himself and sending forth the birds. There is also an emphasis on the painfully long process of waiting. This is in marked contrast to the simplistic theological claims (God can do anything) with the reminder (but usually He doesn't) of earthly realities. 8:14 The twenty seventh day of the second month, the land is dry. It is one year and ten days later.

8:15-22 *elohim* tells them to go out with unnamed family members and animals. Then the text repeats, verbatim identifying all the actors who are in compliance with what God said. In 8:19 Noah builds an altar to *yhwh*. The word *bana* make, build first appears where YHWH builds a woman out of the man, and its used four times (Gen 4 & 11 for building cities. Later on, in Genesis, three times (12:8, 13:8, 22:9) Abram builds an altar (26:25 Isaac). Now the clean/unclean differentiation comes to the fore—in sacrifices. Noah makes *ola*—*burned offering*. Will be repeated five times in the Abraham sacrifices Isaac saga. YHWH's internal dialogue is reported, as He smells (rare word, only here and Isaac smells Esau's clothes) the pleasing odor—I will not wipe out life again. This is in marked contrast to the epic of Gilgamesh where we read that the gods circled around the sacrifice like flies—and the story is replete with disorder and confusion among the gods. Remember, the ancient context is a rejection of the pagan story!

We return to the assessment of Genesis 6:5—the thoughts of the human heart are evil. This is not the only place where such an assessment is made. (Jeremiah 17:9 “the heart is more deceitful than all else, and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” Psalm 14:1-3 “man's deeds are corrupt and loathsome, no one does good...all have turned bad. Altogether foul; there is none who do good, not one.” John 2:23 “But Jesus would not trust Himself to them because He knew them all, and did not need anyone to testify to Him about humans, He knew what was in humans.”) This material is not a fully developed anthropology and there are other places where we read that

someone is righteous. But clearly the Bible is not widely or naively optimistic about humankind.

The Lord declares He will not wipe out the earth again. This may be the key point of the story regarding YHWH's relationship to the world (all those nagging historical concerns aside). 2 Peter 3:6-7 alludes to an alternate: ⁶By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. ⁷By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

One could also simply read the promise that as long as the world endures, I will not destroy it, that is, until it ends at which point I will...

This opens the door for all manner of speculation about the intent of creation and the duration of creation. It is not clearly spelled out in Genesis, possibly because each life span is “the end of the world”?

GENESIS 9 New Creation and Covenant

The language of verse 1 is from the creation account—God blesses, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth”. This is something of a reboot of creation, where Noah is a new Adam. Everitt Fox points out that Noah was the first human born after the death of Adam, which reinforces this idea. However, it is not a new Eden, the world is still the world and we will hear that the “human inclination to evil” has not changed.

Verse 2 introduces a new element *mora* (*fear, terror*) and *khat* (*terror, fear, dismayed, shattered*) will fall on all the animals—which are now viewed as a food source. No explanation is given, but the vegetarian diet now includes meat. Everything *remesh* (here used generically of any creature that moves, rather than the sub-species of ‘creeping things’)

However, v 4 provides a caveat—no blood. Acts 15:20 [Gentiles must restrain from sexual immorality, meat of strangled animals and blood] is no doubt influenced by this. In some ancient cultures, drinking blood was thought to be a source of vitality—blood as a life source. The Jewish understanding that blood is life and belongs to God may be at work here. The Jewish Study Bible (p25) *In the Talmud, it is taught that “descendants of Noah”—that is universal humanity—are obligated by seven commandments: (1) to establish courts of justice, (2) to refrain from blaspheming the God of Israel, as well as from (3)idolatry, (4)sexual perversion, (5)bloodshed, and (6) robbery, and (7) not to eat meat cut from a living animal (b Sanhedrin 98)* It was understood that the 613 laws were for Jews, but these seven put Gentiles in good standing with the Lord.

Shedding lifeblood will require an accounting—it is repeated three times and includes both humans and animals as perpetrators. It is also expressed poetically in the form of a chiasm (the words man and blood rhyme: ‘*adam & dam*’). The Jewish Study Bible says v5 has traditionally prohibited suicide and v6 prohibited abortion. The reasoning emanates from the foundational declaration “for in God’s image He made humans.” The image of God

was not lost through human sin and evil. Verse 7 ends with a repetition of verse 1 to set off this first section.

The next, Gen 9:8-17, focuses on covenant, this is the first of four in the Tanak (the other three Abraham, Sinai and David). First, note that it is with Noah and his descendants, with every living creature (further delineated)

9:18-29 Wine and Curses

Shem, Ham and Japeth (same order in Gen 6) are the fathers of all the world. The original patriarchies are wiped out in the flood, except through the unexpressed lineage of the unnamed daughters-in-law.

Noah plants a *kerem* (the first of 92 occurrences). It would be interesting to see how vineyards function in the Jewish Bible, but beyond the grasp of our study. It is said he became an *ish (man) Adamah* (of the ground); terms from the creation accounts. In a concise summary we learn he got drunk, and in a drunken stupor lay exposed. In a shame culture this is an especially grievous thing. In the law to uncover the nakedness of another is a euphemism for taking their wife. This does not seem to be the case. While some think Ham (who is repeatedly identified with fathering Canaan) may have molested his father (homosex) or his mother (?), others think his lack of respect, in particular to talk about it, was sufficient grounds for the punishment.

[Leviticus 18;6 None of you shall come near anyone of his own flesh to “uncover nakedness. I am the Lord. Your father’s nakedness, that is, the nakedness of your mother, you shall not uncover... Do not uncover the nakedness of your father’s wife; it is the nakedness of your father. *Jewish Study Bible p250 “in postbiblical terminology...losing its literal meaning, became the*

standard term for incest, and the word 'nakedness' became a euphemism for a forbidden sexual partner or act."]

Dishonoring one's father was a serious offense. Shem and Japheth respond with filial piety. In previous listings, Ham is the middle one, but Noah describes him as the youngest. Hard to know if this is a textual tension or not. The cursing of Ham is transferred to Canaan. Some question if there is another version of the story which charges him, others think the ancient imagination would not greatly differentiate between the two. It seems that the story is serving as an interpretive key for Israel's taking Canaan in later years. In Psalms God hands over their lands and Prophets refer to corruption and destruction of Canaan and There will be other children who are assigned the heritage of a nation (most importantly Jacob who is Israel). The ancient world has endless founder stories and these founders are connected to the later history of their tribe/nation. The curse is being subordinate to his brothers. Once more, freedom and servitude are functioning in a culture of pride/shame.

[Canaan= lowlands; from root *kana* verb, to humble, subdue, bring low, be subject]

The chapter ends with the years of Noah. He lives another 350 years. In the next chapter the lines of the various sons are spelled out. Shem's line (2+35+30+34+30+32+30+29+70=262 years to birth of Abraham. So it means Noah was around until Abraham was in his 80's. We note that the biblical accounts are silent on the interrelations of the generations. This dearth of references to the biographical details is perhaps an indication of the ahistorical nature of these stories?

GENESIS 10 Birth of the Nations

Seventy Nations issue from the three sons Japheth Greece (North, Europe), Shem (East, Arabian Peninsula) and Ham (South, Africa). This symbolic number (7x10) expressed fullness or completeness. Several scholars comment upon the uniqueness of this narrative. Other ancient cultures had no interest in providing genealogies of outsider nations. The revelation here is that YHWH is the Lord of all the earth, even the nations. Robert Alter mentions there are numerous historical roots in the lists, and they are not simply fictive. Many scholars note that the lists seem to echo the situation during the Bronze Age, c 1500. Clearly it does not include much of the world (Far East, West) and there are obvious omissions. Compare it to 1 Chronicles 1 and you will see some of those editorial changes. For an interesting discussion on Universal History, cf. you tube Richard Rohlin. For example, Rohlin has an entire discussion of Ethiopia, which is at the fringe of the world and is often expanded to include India. Our contemporary criteria do not govern ancient understanding. A quick review of the listings shows that Japhet is sparse, with only two generations of descendents, while Ham has four and Shem has six. Some are named as sons, while others just turn into "people groups" (like Jebusites, Amorites, etc.). Once again we are preoccupied with the modern questions (the biological process) and likely to miss the ancient perspective. The Jewish Study Bible echoes what scholars articulate over and over; "son" is a more expansive term in the ancient world. The treaty relationships are of more import to them as "sonship" than us (physical descent) and these lists reflect that. The timing of this section echoes the blessing and command to multiply. James McKeown notes the image of Noah and the vines is a symbol of the growing nations. (Much like Jesus' parables) While the deep meaning of these lists for the ancients cannot be overstated, it is a tedious chore for the contemporary reader with limited knowledge of the ancient world (and ancient world view). Of note, Nimrod is

described as “the first man of might on earth.” He is a *gibhor* (the term used in Genesis 6 in connection with the sons of God and human women). This term will later refer to men of strength and valor in the armies. In Hebrew, his name is associated with *marad* (*rebel*). Nimrod is associated with multiple kingdoms, including Babylon and Assyria—the two nations which conquered the southern kingdom/Judah and the northern kingdom/Israel respectively. There are many legendary tales in Judaism and Christian writings about Nimrod. See, e.g., Josephus. He is associated with the Tower of Babel which is Babylon in Jewish and Christian legends and writings. There are numerous accounts of his conflict with Abraham, a model of Evil v. Good, including verbal debates and even battles. Some see echoes of Gilgamesh in Nimrod. It is interesting that the biblical text makes no assessment of Nimrod. He, like Cain, is associated with building cities, which seems to have a negative connotation, but it is not spelled out. One can assume that the culture values were driving the reading (think of the Egyptian disdain for shepherds in the Joseph story) and are lost to us.

Shem (10:21) is the father of the children of Eber (from whence *Hebrew*. Eber means “from the other side” as in across a stream or lake.) Peleg (means division, split. Peleg also means stream) is mentioned with the odd phrase “for in his day the earth was divided”). Peleg returns in Genesis 11 where the sons of Shem are traced to Abraham. 1 Chronicles repeats the genealogy (including the division reference) and Luke incorporates parts into his genealogy. Is there a subtle thematic connection to the Garden (nakedness/taking fruit of tree/death/expulsion—nakedness/fruit of vine/drunkenness/earth divided)?

GENESIS 11

Some think that the “earth was divided” 10:25 may refer to this story beginning Chapter 11. Earth (*eretz*) has the same multiple meanings in Hebrew as in English. There is some tension around diverse languages in the text. So, Genesis 10:5 (each with its own language) is variously explained as the result of conflicting sources with different times lines, or a case of a latter narrative spelling out the content of a declaration in an earlier narrative. There are other places where something is declared to have happened and then a story is told to provide the details. Ironically, some who are hyper vigilant in “justifying” biblical texts must now invert the chronology of the text in order to protect its “historical infallibility.” One wonders if that concern was on the authors mind? I find it interesting that while geology and biology are the subject of great focus in “standing up for the Bible” I have never encountered the same energy in denying the relationship of languages (for example the Hebrew *aleph bet* and Greek alpha beta) or that human language evolves (like Latin into Spanish, French).

As a self-contained story, it invites reflection. It is likely not intended to give a moral lesson, but rather to invite meditation (perhaps upon the Babylonian Empire 1792BC to 539BC). It is also an etiology for languages. There are connections with other Biblical texts, some subtle, like Acts 8 (Stephen is dragged out of the city and they stoned him, there is a persecution “and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria) or the exiles (2 Kings 17 & 23)? The lectionary has long connected Acts 2 with Babel in light of the language issue and mission to the world. Maybe connections to Egypt and the Hebrew slaves building for Pharaoh.

11:1 *kol eretz* (whole earth) is *ehad* (one) language, *ehad seph* (one language). *Seph* means lips, border, bank, edge, among other things) *dabar* (one word/speech). Note the parallelism in verse six. Babel (already in 10:10; associated with Nimrod. This is the word translated

as Babylon in the rest of the Jewish Bible, dozens of times especially in 2 Kings, Isaiah and Jeremiah) is in Shinar. Shinar is the region which is known as Babylon and this city is the capital. The Hebrew root means confusion by mixing (from root *balal*= *mix, mingle, confuse*, also fodder for animals) the is a common biblical pattern where names are derived from descriptors.

The East (*qedem* that which is before, as an adverb 'before'; refers to the East; in temporal reference 'ancient times,' so adverb 'old') there are two possible translations: NIV "moved eastward" and ESV & NRSV "from the East." The Eden was in the East and the first couple were driven out 'east of Eden.' Another verbal tie-in. *Laban* (to make bricks, make white) next occurs in Exodus 5:7, 14 with Hebrew slaves and Pharaoh. This is the only 'brick making' in the Tanak. Elsewhere, (Ps 51, Is 1, Dan 11, 12, Joel 1) it refers to making white and purifying sin. *Lebaynaw* (*brick, tile*) Here, Exodus 1, five times in Exodus 5. Is 9 & 65 associated with sin. Ez 4 (prophet writes name of Jerusalem on it in judgement about a pending siege). They had brick for stone ('*eben* next time thrice in Genesis 28 Jacob's dream of a staircase/ladder to heaven). The use *hemar* (*slime, pitch, bitumen, asphalt*) as cement. The word occurs again 14:10 the bitumen pits where some fleeing Abraham from Sodom and Gomorrah fell in), and the only other time is, of course, Exodus 2:3 the ark of Moses is daubed with bitumen and pitch. *Homer* (*mortar, cement*) next use Exodus 1:14, 8:14. Elsewhere: Job 7x, and prophets (Is 6x, Jer 2x, Ez 3x, other 3x)

The people decide to build a city and a tower. Cain had built a city (4) and Nimrod (three times in 10); this is the third time a city is built and the word appears three times in the narrative. Next Genesis 13 (1x) and 18 (12x) reference city in connection to Sodom. City may have a negative connotation. Ancient ziggurat (Sumerian, Babylonian among others) was an immense, terraced structure, which literally meant

height. The top was flat and it is speculated that the cultic center was there, where the gods were thought to live on the top) were made of bricks (burnt) too. There were three staircases and by being high in the heavens it was thought to make access to gods easier (man-made mountain). Jacob's dream may well have been connected to a ziggurat. Recall Eden (where God came to humans) was on a mountain (Ezekiel 28:13-14) so this is a human attempt to control the divine. The purpose *asa shem* (to make a name) verbally echoes the creation accounts (*asa* nine times in Gen 1) In Gen 2 God makes and the human names twice. "Name" is the Hebrew word *Shem* (846x Name, 17x Shem). In Genesis 6 the mixing of the sons of gods with women produced giants and "mighty men of the name" (reputation). This is connected with the violence which leads to the flood, so the tower may be linked to the problem with the human heart. The Babylonians made the ziggurat as "door to heaven" for the gods to come down, but for their own name, while 1 Kings 8:19 Solomon will build a temple for God's Name to dwell among His people. WE conclude with the ten commandments (do not bear the Name of God in vain) and the Lord's prayer (may your Name be made holy) which may shed light on the deeper meaning. Psalm 115:1 Not to us *yhwh shem nathan kabod* (Lord to your name give glory) positively expresses what the Genesis 11 story illustrates.

In a play on the name, *Shem's* genealogy is laid out in the second half of this chapter. In the next chapter 12:2 at the end of Shem's descendants God declares that He "will bless Abram make his name great." Perhaps an intentional connection? The second motivation is so that they will not be *poots* (scattered, dispersed). The first (10:18) mention is connected to Ham's son Canaan (the accursed son) whose clan "spread out" (to places including Sodom and Gomorrah. The second, here, where it is repeated three times. Then 49:7 (Simeon and Levi scattered in Israel for anger and violence; another connection to Genesis 6ff

Nephilim and flood). Next Exodus 5:12 (the people scattered throughout the land to find straw to make the bricks; another exodus connection). “Not scattered over the whole face of the earth” (*kol paniym eretz*) frequent occurrence and part of the repetitive verbal & sound patterns. This reminds me of Pharaoh’s fear Exodus 1:8ff. He oppresses the Hebrews because he fears they will rise up from the ground and fight against Egypt—and his behavior causes what he sought to prevent.

The Lord came down (same words used in Exodus 3:8 when He came down to save; He also “comes down” on Mount Sinai Exodus 19:11, 18) to see the city and the tower. The verbal pattern “Come let us” (of people in v3&4) is now used by God (11:7). Much as God was concerned with what the man and wife would do after they ate the fruit, now He intervenes again to thwart the unified human endeavor. Babel probably meant “gate of god” in Babylonian, so this is a direct mockery. (Much like Ba’al ‘Lord of heavens’ was mocked by Hebrew similar sounding Beelzebub “Lord of flies”) Notice how “whole earth is repeated three times in v 8&9. The shift from the whole earth to a particular man is about to take place with Shem and the next set of ten descendants.

Josephus (Paul Maier Essential Works (condensed) *Jewish Antiquities* and *The Jewish War*. p20ff Written after the Fall of Jerusalem, this is our primary source for that time period. He provides a “History” of Israel, up to his lifetime. It includes references to Jesus and the early church. Josephus writes of the flood (echoing Genesis) but for confirmation he refers to Berosus the Chaldean (Hellenist priest who wrote a history of Babylon circa 300 BC) who writes “a portion of the vessel still survives in Armenia on the mountains of the Cordyaens and people carry off pieces of the bitumen as talismans” (this is reference

to the Deluge of Xisuthrus; the king who was warned of the flood and made a huge boat (3/4 miles) to save his family and friends, he got stuck on a mountain after sending out numerous birds (sound familiar). “Nicholas of Damascus relates the story as follows: “in Armenia there is a great mountain called Baris, where *many refugees found safety at the time of the flood* (huh?) and one man on an ark landed at the summit. The remains of the timber were long preserved. Josephus’ Tower of Babel goes into detail about disobedience to God’s command to send out colonies (they feared He wanted to divide them and make them vulnerable) so they followed Nimrod to build a tower so high another flood could not harm them.

For our purposes, it shows how the biblical text was used by an “historian” in Jesus’ time and reminds us that the commentary and beliefs around these ancient stories have a life of their own—much as our scientific approach impacts our reading of the bible.

Genesis 11:10-32

The descendants of Shem (Name) lists ten generations (just like Adam). The ancient had a different understanding of the function of genealogies. Raymond Brown (Birth of the Messiah) quotes a work by MD Johnson: genealogies served domestic (family, economic, geographic), political (heredity office holders) and religious (cultic office). They are NOT strictly biological and often times demonstrate the significance of a person (Recall Jesus said God could raise up sons of Abraham from rocks). Materialist/positivist assumptions do not dominate the ancient imagination. This is why the discrepancies (like omissions) in Matthew’s genealogy should not be cause for concerns. Ancient lists were typically very careful at the beginning and the end, but the middle was more fluid.

Shem is 100 when he begot his son, and he lives five hundred more years. The next six generations have sons at 29-35 years old. Note the first three (to Eber) live 400+ years; the next three (200) then Nahor only 119. In the climax of the list Terah is 79 when he begot Abram, he lives some sixty years after Abram departs (at age 75). Mathematically, like Noah, many of them lived long past the birth of Abram. This does not figure into the story at all.

The main characters are presented, including the practice of marrying relatives Nahor married Milcah, the daughter of his brother Nahor. Sarai (Princess) is described as barren. Terah dies at 205 in Haran, note the city and his son are the same name. Another feature of ancient genealogy.

Chapter 12 The Promise

Most commentators note that Genesis shifts its focus from the whole of humanity to a single man, Abram. However, the fate of the whole world is somehow connected with the fate of this individual. The Genesis account began with a good creation and human royal/priestly status in the Garden. Rebellions ruin the initial prosperity with the word *arar* (*curse*) appearing five times. Note the close connection of each curse with the earth/land. 3:14 the serpent (which will eat dust and move on its belly); 3:17 the ground; 4:1 Cain “from the ground”; 5:29 “out of the ground which God has cursed” Noah will bring relief; and 9:25 “cursed be Canaan” by Noah, the “first man of the earth.” The word *barak* (= *ble*ss) will occur five times in Gen 12:1-3 as he goes forth from his land. The number five, like three, seven, ten and twelve is often significant. God *Barak* (*ble*ss) also five times prior to Abraham: three times in the initial creation account; 5:2 in the Adam to Noah genealogy; 9:1

God blesses Noah's sons as He had Adam and Eve ('be fruitful and increase') and the sixth, Noah blesses Shem. [We will see this structure again in Gen 27:29 Isaac will bless Jacob (faking Esau) "those who curse you be cursed, those who bless you be blessed"]

Excursus. Experts in history and archaeology debate the historical value of these materials. People trying to prove they are right—whether sceptics or believers—find confirmation of their stance. I do not think this is straight history in a modern sense. I am satisfied that the references are to real people, probably 1800 years or so before Christ. I also think that the oral traditions (I do not assume that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit simply relayed facts to an author which had otherwise been lost) and the final form of the writings were shaped by numerous factors, some of them contemporary. The narratives are truncated and all manner of details are left out. The stories tend to have purposes beyond the mere historical details of a biography. I know that they do not read like history, mainly because I have read a great deal of history in my life. On the other hand, they are not simply myths, or myths at all. I am comfortable treating these texts under the rubric of "what happened" in a generic sense, but a more important question is "what does it mean? What is God revealing about Himself and our relationship with Him?" Did Abram really exist, yes, I do believe it, but that cannot be proved or disproved historically. So, it must be read as literature. The story of this man has been shape and formed into narrative with a function relevant to the ancient authors and audience.

*Yhwh said to Abram lekleka from *halak* (=go, walk, come, depart). McKeown (and others) notes it is an unusual construction which appears again in Gen 22 when Abraham is told to go to Moriah and sacrifice Isaac. Note, Abraham is told to “go from...” but not told where he is going. Compare to Mark 1:16-20 where Jesus simply says “follow me,” an open-ended command. See also Mark 10. Jesus tells the rich young man to sell all he has and follow Jesus; Peter announces that the disciples have left everything to follow Him and Jesus says, “no one who has left house, brother, sister, mother, father or children or fields for My sake will receive one hundredfold in this age and in the age to come eternal life.” Personally, I think the most important revelation here is how God works with people. Believers often treat the Bible as a Gnostic source, giving them detailed information, laid out in advance. The Abram story is about a man dangling in uncertainty for many decades, with an almost blind trust in God. This is spiritually relevant and significant. We are not given an itinerary, only an opportunity to trust.*

The trust response of Abraham is picked up by both Paul and James, and referenced in Hebrews as well. Salvation and faith are given a meaning content by stories such as these, which are the material out of which our didactic theologies are generated. In simplest terms, God gives commands and promises, and humans respond out of the totality of their being. Today, we tend to break things down into separate component parts. As a result we divide up the response into isolated entities which do not fully reflect the human reality. Believing is just an internal intellectual process. Having faith can also be an emotional reaction.

Trusting is an act of the will. Behaviors are determined by what we think, feel and will, but separate from them. However, trust is not differentiated from behavior in this text. What God is doing for Abraham might be called “Salvation” (*yeshuah*; from *yasha*= *salvation, deliverance, welfare, prosperity, victory, preservation*) God’s promise is tied to Abraham’s “blessings” and Abraham’s response. He can believe it is true, feel that it is wonderful, and decide to obey the command, but without the acts of obedience (12:4) the blessings would lie dormant. There is an obvious parallel to the Exodus; the “victory” is the result of an active faith which includes trust and a behavior, i.e., going. In the ancient setting faith seems to have been a multi-faceted thing—both being trustworthy and trusting, entrusting obediently and relying on with faith. If Abraham had just sat on a couch in Ur telling folks what God had promised, then we would not be reading the story today.

YHWH said Abram must leave three things behind. *Eretz/land* the place where he was. *Moledeth* (*kindred, offspring, birth, begotten*) his family-relatives. *Ab beth* (*Father’s house*). One’s identity and survival were centered on these three things. This is the same as Jesus’ requirement of “selling everything” to follow God. Influenced by Abraham as the model of faith, I never noticed that Abraham does not obey the command to leave kindred, as he takes Lot with him. The narrator does not make issue of this, but the biblical text rarely does. This is why we must be careful about seeing the biblical characters as models of virtue (I know Hebrews 11!!!) and stories as simple-to-apply moral models. The narratives are more subtle, for example, Lot will generate problems in the

chapters ahead. And biblical juxtaposition of virtue/morality and faith/love remind us that life is complex.

Genesis 12:4—9

Rekoosh (property, goods, possessions) ten times in Genesis (especially Gen.14), twice in Numbers, a dozen in Chronicles and Ezra and three Daniel

Rawkash (get, acquire, collect or gather property) This is the first of four usages in the Bible, it is interesting that they are all in Genesis and connected to the patriarchs. 31:18 Jacob gathers his property to flee his uncle, 36:6 Esau does the same to separate from Jacob upon his return, and 46:6 when Jacob heads to Egypt to join Joseph.

Obviously, Abram is already wealthy as he begins his sojourn to Canaan. Is Lot's presence a failure to "leave behind family"? the relationship is not surrogate father, for we will see Lot is never considered a candidate to serve as son/heir. The story is devoid of detail and does not include the type of challenges and adventures one would expect to find in a mythic journey. He stops by what was probably a holy tree in Moreh (meaning teacher, probably a place of sacred instruction). Shechem appears 61x and is associated with Gideon in Judges.

Scholars indicate that at the time of Moses the Canaanites were still in the land, so this reference 'were then in the land' betrays the hand of a later author. Whatever the case, in the narrative the presence of inhabitants produces some tension with the promise to Abram. YHWH appears to Abram in verse 7 and declares that He will give the land to Abram's *zera*/seed

