

# A Start

## Notes on Genesis 1-11

### Introduction to the Text:

Most commentators believe that the authorship of Genesis began some time during the ninth century BCE, with several authors following until about the time of the Exile (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE).

Instead of proposing a JEDP-R theory (Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist, Priestly, and Redactor OR Judean, etc.), I shall declare that most of Genesis 1-11 is a literary unit, although its text was marked by several additions and at least one omission. The first author was familiar with early Mesopotamia, including certain cities that were prominent then but not later. Although Egypt was known to the first author, he mentioned few Egyptian cognate names, ignored any place names, and instead merely listed the nations of peoples that also descended from Mizraim (ch. 10). A genealogical record, written on stone tablets, was probably used as a source for the lineages given herein.

With this rendering, I am willing to contend that while the oral tradition clearly goes back further, the first author of what we now know as the early sections of Genesis lived during the time of Abraham, c. 2000 - 1900 BCE and probably dwelt in Mesopotamia. That first author may have been a close associate of Abraham. The events of chapter 14 appear to have been recent enough that the reader was supposed to recognize the king and the locations given. With a succeeding generation adding more stories of Abraham's descendants, the first form of the book was probably finished before 1750 BCE. Genesis then serves as a history of the ancestry of humanity, and most particularly deals with the family of Abraham, through the life of Yosef.

A few additions, made in the same literary tradition, occurred somewhat later, probably during the time of Moses (c. 1550 BCE) and possibly by Moses himself. These tended to point out small details that would have been useful to the later reader (such as the current names of tribes or their locations). The second creation story, with different priorities, may have emerged at that time. Shortly thereafter, chapter 9 may have been rewritten, with one omission and a short addition that predicts and justifies the taking of the land from the Kana'anites (Fulistines).

Sometime after the death of Moses, possibly during the time of the judges or during the monarchy, the work was gathered into what was almost its final form. Sections were added that bore on later generations, including mention of Noach taking different numbers of "clean animals" into the chest (ark) with him. This may have been the time when the rest of the Torah and the story of Yohanan were written, collecting previous information that had been carried around by the formerly wandering Israelites through the desert. Collecting this document into a final form was probably important during the reign of David and for the priests under Solomon.

By the time of the divided kingdoms, the writings were so ancient that they had basically been forgotten. During the time of Yosiah (7<sup>th</sup> century BCE), the documents of the earlier era had been buried for so long that they had completely been neglected and indeed forgotten. Quite possibly, the reforms of Yosiah brought the documents back into focus, allowing the Torah to be smoothed over into its final form. For the faithful, the Exile caused the Torah to achieve a level of utmost importance, and from that point on – at least – it has been regarded with the same level of reverence it receives today.

The first chapters, addressing the time before Abraham, read far more realistically than does the Babylonian account of related events. Instead of legendary figures consulting with gods, the patriarchs here are all human. The fabled epic of Gilgamesh circulated orally as a legend from about 2500 BCE and may have been written in its first complete form during the 18<sup>th</sup> century BCE, in direct competition with this version. Apparently, as time passed the more historical of the two accounts – this one – became the dominant form of the story. Aside from a few drawings and what may be citations, the Gilgamesh Epic exists only on a set of twelve tablets from Ashur-bani-pal's 7<sup>th</sup> century (BCE) library.

### **Text and Commentary:**

*In the beginning, God made the sky and the land.*

The creation here is definitely the beginning of all things, and not the beginning of the Jewish people, or of the lineage of Adam, or some other limited thing. As the author describes the elements of creation, they clearly are not intended to be taken too figuratively. The author is describing the creation of all things, but he is more interested in demonstrating order and value than he is in providing what we would call a scientific description of the events that took place. He is not concerned with whether “evolution” occurred, or whatever other mechanisms might have been employed.

In the LXX, “Ἐν ἀρχῇ” clearly means “in the beginning.” If we should wish to allow for the possibility that the expression was meant to indicate not *the* beginning but another beginning of some sort, the construction certainly allows for “in a beginning” – which might mean “at first,” but the natural translation from Greek indicates the beginning of the narrative, which is the start of creation.

“The land” is an expression that is used frequently to refer to the area around what would be called Israel, but here it means the “dry place” below the sky as opposed to the things that are found in the sky.

*Now the land was unsightly and unfurnished, and darkness was over the depths of space, and God's spirit moved over the fluid.*

The natural meaning of ἀορατός, translated “unsightly,” is *invisible*. Whatever is unseen is called by that adjective. However, the term may be employed to mean “obscure” or (intellectually) difficult to comprehend. This appears to have been the meaning gleaned

from the Hebrew *tôhû*, which otherwise indicates a wasteland or something worthless. The author was likely conveying that the state of affairs prior to God's organization of his creation was not valuable to God (hence "unsightly") and difficult to understand.

In Hebrew, the word game of *tôhû bôhû* is essentially removed in Greek, but the meaning is preserved in using the word *ακατασκευαστος*. *Σκευαστος* indicates the state of being prepared. Its opposite might indicate something raw. The author uses the intensifier *κατα-* to indicate that the creation was totally undecorated. The two terms together point to a necessity for action on God's part. He was not going to leave it that way.

The creator has only been referred to as *Elôhîym* or *Θεος*. This is all we know of the prime mover. The Hebrew word is a majestic plural form of *Elôha*, which indicates someone or something powerful. The Hebrew author depicts the creator of the universe as a royal, mighty being. The Greek word may have come from a word meaning "observer," but by the time the LXX was translated the word certainly had the meaning of a divine being. The English word, God, is a fair translation of each into English.

At the time there was only darkness, which later scholars would equate with intellectual ignorance. The "deep" refers to any unfathomable depths and usually indicates water or fluid. Here the word indicates the depths of space. The motion of God's spirit like a wind may indicate that action is about to take place.

*3 And God said, "Let there be light," and light happened.  
And God saw the light, that it was nice.*

The author of this section has divided the creative act into two segments of three phases each. Generally speaking, the first three days create "places" for things, and the other three days populate those places. We must say "generally," because we shall see that there are details that will need to be addressed.

The first element of creation is light. At this point in the narrative the universe exists as a mess, and nothing is there. God then makes light. Since nothing exists yet, he is the source of light. It is certainly understandable at this point to construe that since the universe may be regarded as "intellectually incomprehensible," God has shined reason and goodness into such a place.

In traditional Jewish thought, God prepared for creation by planning for both the Torah and the Messiah, among other things. All things were done with this single plan in mind. In the Mishna it is written that God made everything with ten utterances. The phrase "and God said" appears nine times in the first creation account; a tenth implied utterance is the initial formation of the universe itself. In the account itself, however, the first utterance is to create light.

As God speaks, the universe responds. Light simply happened. As God created light, he responded in return to the light by declaring it nice or pleasant.

*And God divided between the light and the darkness.  
And God called the light "day," and he called the darkness "night."  
And evening happened, and morning happened: a first day.*

At the surface, this seems to be an explanation of the origin of the days and nights, with night preceding day in the traditional Jewish reckoning. A difficulty with that viewpoint is that if there is a literal order to the events here, then there are as yet no planets. There is no earth as we know it, and thus no daily rotation of that earth is possible.

Adding to scholars' confusion is the fact that "day" clearly occurs in Genesis 1:1 - 2:4 with three distinct meanings: a period of light (above); an indeterminate, general phase (2:4); and whatever sense is intended to describe the six days of creation. Both in Hebrew and Greek, we might render the concluding expression as "one day" rather than "a first day." This provides little assistance and does not sway the interpretation toward one view or another, leaving the question open for the moment as to whether the author intended to indicate that creation occurred in six twenty-four hour days.

If the author was not intending to lay forth a scientific account, then it would be possible for the "days" to overlap. One day could be a creative event rather than a temporal one. The author likely does not intend to say that these six things took place in this order, during six long temporal periods. Instead, there were six activities, and these activities are ordered based on the author's literary priority.

*6 And God said, "Let there be a solid place in the middle of the fluid, and let it be a division between fluid and fluid," and it happened that way.  
And God made the solid place, and God divided between the fluid that was under the solid place and the fluid that was above the solid place.*

This second important phase of creative activity separates the universe, the sky, and the oceans from one another. The universe will be seen as an abode of light; everything below will be seen as an abode of living creatures. The solid place referenced here is the earth's atmospheric canopy. In the corresponding (fifth) day, God will populate the seas and sky that are created here.

*And God called the solid place "sky."  
And God saw that it was nice.*

Once again there is an importance in naming. Night is named after a period of darkness, and daytime is named after a period of light. Here, the sky is the atmosphere – or, "the first heaven" as the Jewish people would later reckon it.

Once again, we read that God spoke, and that the universe responded. God again looked favorably on what he had done and for a second time blessed what he had created.

*And evening happened, and morning happened: a second day.*

The first time we read of a divine blessing, God blesses the light and continues to work, dividing light from darkness after creating the light. Here, the blessing ends the second event, and the separation between what was above the sky from what was below the sky is portrayed as taking place “after” he created the sky. If this were a literal account, the creation of the sky itself necessarily would force a separation between what was inside the canopy from what was outside.

*9 And God said, "Let the fluid that is under the sky be collected into one gathering, and let dry ground appear," and it happened that way.*

*And the fluid that was under the sky was collected into its gatherings, and the dry ground appeared.*

Prior to the next creative act, the earth is portrayed as a globe covered in water. At this point in the account, God speaks yet again, and land springs forth from underneath the water. This action creates an abode for land creatures.

From descriptions found later in the book, and based on scientific examination, it is likely that the world at this time featured a single, low-lying land mass and shallow seas.

*And God called the dry ground "land," and he called the systems of waters "seas."*

*And God saw that it was nice.*

Once again, the creator has the authority for naming the objects that he creates. “Seas” is a broad word that here includes the lakes and rivers as well as the ocean.

Once God finished making dry land and naming it, again he reflected upon the good work. This day there would be two such blessings.

*And God said, “Let the land produce the herb of the field (which sows seed according to its kind and according to its likeness) and the fruit tree (which makes fruit whose seeds are inside it, according to its kind on the land),” and it happened that way.*

Ocean plants were not mentioned at all during the second creative day, but given what the author expresses here, it is likely that he would have intended to include them there. The author wants us to consider plants as part of the habitation.

The scientist pauses again here. How can there be green plants – which must be fed through the process of photosynthesis? At this point the sun does not exist! The naïve answer would be to declare that God was providing his own light for photosynthesis, but this is not the answer. The author wants the reader to reflect on God’s majesty in action. He portrays God as an organizer of chaos, setting up his own system. The order of events in the account is unimportant. Once again God speaks, and the land becomes habitable.

*And the land brought forth the herb of the field (which sows seed according to its kind and according to its likeness) and the fruit tree (which makes fruit whose seeds are inside it, according to its kind on the land).*

*And God saw that it was nice.*

Yet again, the created order responds to God's statement by doing exactly as he directed it. For the second time this day, God responds to the activity by pronouncing it as nice (beautiful).

*And evening happened, and morning happened: a third day.*

The first half of the period of creation is now concluded.

**14** *And God said, "Let there be luminaries in the solid place called the sky to shine on the land, and to divide between day and night. And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years. And let them exist to shine in the solid place called the sky, so as to shine on the land," and it happened that way.*

Instead of creating simply "light," or a space comprised of light, God now creates bodies of light to fill the space that he made at first. In the universe, the Jewish "second heaven," God has established the sun, the moon, and everything else in space. These objects have a purpose: to shine through the sky into the land. The comment points toward the importance that certain land creatures will have in the later narrative.

*And God made the two great luminaries – the greater luminary to rule the day, and the lesser luminary to rule the night. God also made the stars. And God placed them in the solid place called the sky, so as to shine on the land, and to rule the day and night, and to divide between the light and the darkness.*

*And God saw that it was nice.*

More precisely, the author explains that the sun "rules the day," and the moon "rules the night" – by being the most luminous objects there. The creative activity relating to light has been completed, and God once again reflects on his work, pronouncing it nice.

*And evening happened, and morning happened: a fourth day.*

This fourth day parallels the first one, populating the universe.

**20** *And God said, "Let the waters bring forth living amphibian animals and winged creatures that fly over the land within the solid place called the sky," and it happened that way.*

During the fifth day of creation, God populated the sky and waters with animals. Once again the author depicts him as having accomplished this with a vocal instruction. The skies and seas do exactly as he wishes, so that the creatures found in them are exactly those creatures that God intended to be there.

*And God made great fish, and every living amphibian animal, which the waters brought forth according to their kinds, and every creature that flies with wings according to its kind. And God saw that they were nice.*

All the creatures that live in water and those that fly in the air were made “according to their kind” exactly as God intended. God spoke well again of his creative act, but his work for the day was not quite done.

*And God blessed them, saying, "Increase and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the flying creatures be multiplied on the land."*

A special blessing for reproduction – which is generally sexual – appears in several places in the Torah. The author likely views plant reproduction to be a less complex process than sexual reproduction is. God authorized all types of reproduction and specifically directed the animals to populate their inhabitation. Once again this demonstrates God’s authority and majesty.

*And evening happened, and morning happened: a fifth day.*

Having filled the waters and air that he created on the second day, God completed the fifth creative day. It remains only to populate the dry land.

**24** *And God said, "Let the land bring forth the living animal according to its kind: quadrupeds, and crawling things, and wild animals of the land according to their kinds," and it happened that way.*

Once again the author writes, “and God said.” With a voice, God creates every kind of land animal known. We would call these (land) invertebrates, reptiles and mammals. And still again, everything happened exactly as God wanted it to happen.

*And God made the wild animals of the land according to their kind, and the herd animals according to their kind, and all the land’s crawling things according to their kind. And God saw that they were nice.*

Providing the same kind of detail as before, the author continues to emphasize God’s dominion over creation. Everything of which the reader is aware was made exactly as God designed it. At the end of the creative action, God again reflected upon how nice everything was.

**26** *And God said, "I will make humanity according to my image, and according to my likeness. And let them have rulership over the fish of the sea, and over the flying creatures of the sky, and over the herd animals and all the land, and over the crawling things that crawl on the land."*

*And God made humanity. According to God’s image he made it; male and female he made them. And God blessed them, saying, "Increase and multiply, and fill the land, and subdue it, and have*

*rulership over the fish of the seas, and over the flying creatures of the sky, and over all the herd animals and the land, and over all the crawling things that crawl on the land."*

Everything in the first creation account has led to this point. God will make humanity to be in essence his gardener and shepherd. Human beings will be the crown of creation, and everything in the first account appears in reverse order of prominence, with humanity at the end.

For the author, this action requires a statement of particular authority and majesty. Until now, the wording of the creator's statements has been impersonal, such as, "Let this happen." However, the form of the narrative now changes, indicating both involvement and deliberation on God's part. Instead of, "Let this happen," we read, "I will make."

The author emphasizes God's dominion by putting the verb itself into the plural form. Words indicative of authority, dominion, or majesty were pluralized in early Hebrew as a means of emphasizing that authority. Some people call this the "royal 'we'," but that is actually something a bit different. The plural of authority in Hebrew was emphatic and did not have to appear everywhere. The words that are commonly rendered "lord," "master," and "god" may be pluralized in Hebrew. Where there is particular authority or dominion, the verb is also plural ... even when the subject is clearly singular.

Examples include Potifar in Gen 39:2, who is literally labeled Joseph's "masters." Whoever controls a goading ox (Ex 21:29) – the responsible party – is called its "masters" as well, although most translations simply read "owner." We see this also in Isa 19:4, where a harsh (singular) lord (plural) will rule the people. God's creation of humanity, and his placement of humanity atop all of creation is the pinnacle moment of the creative process.

God made humanity according to his "image." Whereas the plants are depicted as being part of the surrounding habitation, and the animals are more or less made to serve, human beings have the choice and the capacity to love. Therefore, there is a sense in which they are rulers like God. Like the animals, humanity is told to reproduce sexually.

*And God said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing herb (that sows seed which falls on the land), and every tree (which has inside its fruit the seed that is sown). It will be food for you, and for all the wild animals of the land, and for all the flying creatures of the sky, and for every crawling thing that crawls on the land – whatever has a living being in itself. I have also given every green plant for food," and it happened that way.*

Speaking yet again, this time God does not issue a creative direction but speaks to the first human beings. At first, human beings were not to kill animals and eat meat. Humanity was permitted to keep animals for work, or to drink their milk, or even to keep them as pets, but their dominion did not extend at first to the lives of those animals. As loving beings in God's image, humanity was given the power of dominion, but God's



intent was for that authority to be exercised in love. As people came to understand the principle, God eventually (chapter 9) allowed the eating of animals.

*And God saw the things that he had made, and look, they were very nice.*

At the end of the final day of creation, God reflected not only upon the events of the final day but also upon his whole activity. He pronounced it to be very nice.

*And evening happened, and morning happened: a sixth day.*

At that point, with the universe finished, everything was complete and in order. The last creative day was concluded. There were six days in all.

**2:1** *And the sky and the land were finished, and all the universe of them.*

*And on the sixth day God finished the deeds that he was doing, and he stopped on the seventh day from all the deeds that he was doing.*

The first account of creation concludes with a summary of God's incomprehensible work. God created the whole universe and paused afterward. The passage does not say that God stopped doing anything at all; he stopped *creating*. At that point, he took time to reflect on his work, which he had declared to be “very nice.”

*And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because during it he stopped all his deeds that he had set out to do.*

The wording indicates that God had *planned* the creation, and that he executed that plan to completion. The completion of that magnificent plan was worthy of reflection – even on God's part. This established a sabbath-day principle of honoring God through both deeds and rest. The first account of creation is concluded with these words.

## TWO

**4** *This is the scroll of lineage of the sky and the land, when they happened.*

The wording of the second account of creation indicates that it belongs with the material in chapter five, and with the later accounts of “the scroll of the lineage” and “the generations” of various people. The expression appears in the Torah as a direct introduction to a lineage in Gen 5:1 (Adam), 6:9 (Noach), 10:1 (Noach's sons), 11:10 (Shem), 11:27 (Terah), 25:12 (Ishmael), 25:19 (Isaac), 36:1 and 9 (Esau), 37:2 (Yakob), and Num 3:1 (Moses and Aaron). Usually we read, “These are the generations...,” but twice only (here and in 5:1) the wording indicates the *scroll* of the lineage (generations) – as though it is introducing the registry itself.

These scrolls trace humanity from the first couple down through Aaron's descendants. Matthew employed similar wording in Greek when he wrote, “A *scroll of the lineage of Anointed Jesus, son of David, son of Abraham.*” This first occurrence, however, serves

as an introduction to all of the human genealogies, telling the creation story from a different point of view than the first.

*It was the day when God made the sky and the land, and it was before any herb of the field happened on the land. For God had not made it rain on the land, and no human being existed to work it. But a fountain rose up from the ground and watered all the face of the land.*

Since God's priority in creating the land was to put humanity on it as a steward, the author depicts the earth as being more or less barren in the mind of God without humanity. There was no rain in the early days, but the source of water seemed to be the ground itself. The Greek word, fountain, only indicates that there was a source. In Hebrew, the word indicates a fog or mist that covered the land.

While this wording does appear to explain the state of affairs prior to the flood, the overall purpose of the paragraph centers on God's decision to create humanity.

Although the Septuagint does not use it until verse 8, with this introduction the Masoretic Text gives the reader his first use of what has been called the Divine Name. The editor of the present MT seems to have interjected the name at several places where it is absent from the LXX. At any rate, this account employs the Name.

In the order that we have the text, Yahweh seems to have been one of several titles used to refer to God, and prior to the time of Moses he did not select any of them as a specific way of referring to him. In Hebrew the name roughly translates to "the one who is," indicating the self-existent deity. The only place where the LXX attempts to translate the name is in Exodus 3. By the time the Hebrew Bible came to be translated into Greek, the practice was widespread of reading "Adonai" ("lord") aloud where Yahweh appeared in the text. Early copies of the LXX appear to have retained the name in Hebrew letters, but later copies use the Greek word for "lord," *Κυριος*, without an article – when translating Yahweh into Greek.

*7 And God formed the human being out of dust from the ground and breathed into his face the breath of life. And it happened that the human was a living being. And Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, in the East, and there he placed the human being whom he had formed. And God brought forth on the land every type of tree that was beautiful to look at and nice for food, and he brought forth the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and he brought forth the tree of learning knowledge of good from evil.*

We could write, "God created humanity," but the article is present in Greek, and in the context it is clear that the author wished to say *the* human being. The first human being, Adam, has a name indicating that he was human. The Hebrew word, *âdhâm*, is sometimes used as Adam's personal name, while at other times it means a single person or humanity collectively. That word never appears in the plural as "people."

The origin of the Hebrew word *âdhâm* is an uncertain one. With the account here that humanity was taken from the dust, some scholars have noted that *âdhâm* is similar in

form to *adhâmah*, which is one of the Hebrew words for “ground.” *Adhâmah* indicates reddish soil, like that of iron-bearing ore. The word is connected conceptually, but not linguistically, with *âfâr*, the word for “dust” that appears next to *âdhâm* in the Hebrew text. However, the Akkadian cognate word for dust is similar, while the word for humanity is unrelated – suggesting a different origin for the word *âdhâm*. The LXX renders that word by the usual word for human being, ἀνθρωπος.

So in the narrative, God formed the first person from the dust, but it was God’s “breath of life” that made him a living being. The first creation story draws parallels between humanity and the land animals, and there will be similar parallels later in this version. The formation of humanity from the ground was symbolic of the fact that human beings belong to the earth and are one with it.

In this account, too, humanity is given a purpose: to tend a garden. This indicates the role that human beings have as stewards of the universe. In the story, the garden called Eden (in Greek, or Eden in Hebrew) was of God’s own design. The Hebrew word indicates something delightful. In such a place, God located the first human being.

The author also mentions the designation of a specific tree in that garden as one that provides the knowledge of Good from Evil. This name was probably assigned by later generations, as the account will tell us.

*Now a river goes out from Eden to water the garden. From there it separates into four sources. The name of the first is Fison, the one that encircles all the land of Ewilat, where there is gold. Now the gold of that land is nice, and also there are ruby and emerald stone. And the name of the second river is Gaion. This is the one that encircles all the land of Kush. And the third river is Tigris. This is the one that flows over to the Assurians. Now the fourth river is Euphrates.*

The author intended to identify the original location of the garden called Eden. However, only the Tigris and Euphrates are currently known to exist, and the lands that are mentioned there are also obscure. Kush signifies Ethiopia (as it appears in the LXX), but there is clearly no river that runs around Ethiopia today. Since the location was supposed to be clear to the readers who lived in the general vicinity, it is clear that the continent(s) were different prior to the flood than they appear afterward. Based on the description, it may be the case that Eden was located under what is now the Persian Gulf.

*15 And Yahweh God took the human being whom he had formed, and he set him in the delightful garden, to work it and to guard it. And Yahweh God instructed Adam, saying, "You all may eat freely from any tree in the garden, but you will not eat from the tree of knowing good from evil. Now in whatever day you eat from it, you will die a death."*

God instructed the first person, Adam by himself, to till the garden. Here he was also a vegetarian, and his only prohibition was the single instruction not to eat from a certain tree. There was probably nothing special about that tree. That is to say that it was

ordinary in every respect. However, God knew humanity's capacity for moral choice, and the designation of the tree was a lesson about good and evil.

Since Adam was unaware of what these concepts were, he might then have asked, "What do you mean by Good, or by Evil?" The reader is about to learn this, just as Adam himself must somehow learn that lesson. The wording only indicates that as soon as Adam ate from that tree, he would "die a death." The author does not yet tell us what God meant by "death," but we will soon see that he does not mean that the tree was poisonous and would kill Adam.

*18 And Yahweh God said, "It is not a nice thing for the human being to be alone. I will make him a partner of his own kind. And God formed from the ground, still, all of the wild animals of the field, and all of the birds of the sky, and he led them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living being, this was its name. And Adam called the names of all the herd animals, and of all the birds of the sky, and of all the wild animals of the field. But Adam did not find a partner like himself.*

It is interesting that in the second account God created a partner for Adam *after* informing him of his instructions. In this text, God never repeated the instructions to the woman; as far as the reader knows, Adam was expected to relate them to his wife.

The animals, too, were formed from the ground. Like humanity, they belong to the earth and are an integral part of it. Adam's naming of the animals indicates his dominance over them. As in the first account, the animals serve humanity, but here, the primacy of the human species is indicated by his having been formed first.

*21 And God brought a trance to Adam, and he slept, and God took one of his side pieces and refilled his flesh for him. And God constructed the side that he had taken from Adam into a woman, and he led her to Adam. And Adam said, "This now is a bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She will be called woman because she was taken out of a man." (And so this: a person leaves his father and mother, and he joins himself to his wife, and the two will be one flesh.) And the two were naked, both Adam and his wife, and they were not ashamed.*

Finally we read how the first female was made. The author does not wish to convey that God made all the animals male and female but that he simply overlooked humanity. Certainly he did not make Adam a sexual being without a partner. For that reason, the author announces God's intent to make Adam a partner prior to introducing him to every animal species. The account depicts Adam as looking around at every other species on earth and considering that only a human being like himself would be suitable for him.

Her having been taken from her partner is indicative of her status as partner. Two partners are one with one another – spiritually, in purpose, and sexually – and the story provides a basis for the (modern) identification of partners as being one.

Nudity here implies innocence. It is not merely the fact that the two people were naked. Their being unashamed indicates that there was no need for shame. Adam and his wife

belonged together and were united. As the account continues, the author will indicate that the shame associated with nudity was caused by evil. At this point, he emphasizes that there is no evil in Eden.

### THREE

**3:2** *Now the serpent was craftier than any other field animal that Yahweh God had made. And it said to the woman, "So, did God say, 'You will not eat from any tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but God said, 'You will not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, neither will you touch it; otherwise you will die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die a death. For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good from evil."*

This segment introduces a new being to the story. This is one of the animals, called here "serpent" because of its craftiness. The author states that it was an animal of the field – the smartest of them all. There is nothing supernatural about this creature. The author does not portray it as having been "possessed" by a spirit being. When it speaks, the woman perceives its voice as natural and does not appear surprised at its power of speech, nor at its capacity for reason. Like the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the appellation "serpent" was probably given to the animal after this account, to describe its character.

We do not know whether this was the first meeting between humanity and the serpent's race, but neither its appearance nor its voice are surprising. Nor does the animal forebode evil. The serpent's abilities are described and reacted to as natural abilities. This is not the case of the Enemy, "Satan," possessing a dumb animal. In much later passages, the term "serpent" ("reptile") is used descriptively of anyone (including the Enemy) with a crafty character; this serpent was not the Enemy.

This natural animal, by means of its own crafty nature, causes Eva to question what she was taught about the tree. It isn't even called "evil." What it does is to question the substance and meaning of what God said. The serpent, does not tell Eva that she should eat the fruit. In fact, it does not actually suggest that Adam and Eva eat the fruit. The entire conversation between Eva and the serpent may have merely revolved around what exactly God taught. Perhaps it was not the first of such conversations.

Adam and Eva were about to become able to recognize the difference between what was like God and what opposed God. They had been given the ability to choose between following their true spiritual nature, which was God's, or their physical (or fleshly) nature. In short, they could choose between good and evil, and every human being after them would have that choice.

God wanted to teach humanity many things. In fact, he planned from the beginning to call out some as "chosen people" to carry his message -- to teach humans what God is like. That same plan called for a sacrificial system to teach the rudiments about that

other concept of sacrifice -- the kind of sacrifice that Abraham had to make -- the giving up of something, someone so dear. Even before the laying down of creation, God had an anointed one in view, to show us everything about God's nature.

A point which has been argued back and forth for years has to do with the nature of the serpent's deception of Eva. Did it lie to her? That depends on what God meant when he told Adam about the tree. What God told Adam was simple. Don't eat from one particular tree. He doesn't threaten Adam in any way. If Adam interpreted, "you will die" as a reference to physical death, surely he thought the tree to be poisonous. God restricted Adam in no way whatsoever. He was free to eat from the tree if he so chose, but if he ate from that tree, there would be consequences. This is more like a warning than threatening. I imagine God telling Adam, "Don't stick your head in fire, or you will surely die." There was a warning; a consequence attached itself to that warning. We should carefully distinguish between the way God said it and, for example, "If you eat from the tree, I will kill you."

What did happen when Adam and Eva ate from the tree? They did not physically die. However, they immediately lost that natural innocence which was illustrated in their unashamed nudity. They *felt* naked. They felt ashamed. They had died in a spiritual sense. This will be reviewed some when we come to "the punishments." If we can accept a spiritual sort of death, the death of their innocence, how should we understand the serpent's questions and statements?

"*Did God say....*" This is merely a question. It tests what Eva actually knows about what God told Adam. We can see by part of Eva's reply that she did not correctly recall what God had said. She rightly recollects that she and her husband are not to eat the tree's fruit, but she also believes (wrongly) that even to touch it would bring the "death" upon her.

"*You will not die a death.*" God had been talking about this inner sort of death. If the serpent was referring to physical death, then the serpent was not lying here either. It was definitely being deceptive, to say the least, and it clearly avoided explaining what it meant compared to what God meant. However, the serpent may very well have told the truth here as well.

"*God knows that ... you will be like gods, knowing good from evil.*" The serpent could not have been lying here either, for this is precisely what happened. In that one respect and *in that respect only*, Adam and Eve became like gods (or God) when they ate from the tree. Beforehand, they did not understand the distinction between "good" and "evil." They had neither done nor seen anything they could call "evil." But afterward, they surely knew the difference. Here also, the serpent seems to have been deceptive, deliberately withholding the reason why Eva would know good from evil after eating from the tree. Imagine someone telling you that he has knowledge of a drug that will cause the one who partakes of it to be completely free of any pain (s)he is feeling; of course, he doesn't reveal that he is talking about taking a massive dose of cyanide! True, yes, but not exactly informative.

*6 And when the woman saw that the tree was nice for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to think about, she took from its fruit and ate. And she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and they ate. And the eyes of both were opened, and they realized they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin cloths to wrap around them.*

After some plying from the serpent, Eva began to think about the tree itself – apart from anything God had said to Adam. It certainly was an attractive tree. The fruit did not seem to be poisonous. Eva doubted God. On this occasion, while Adam was with her, she picked a fruit from the tree and ate some. She had been tricked into eating it, but Adam said nothing. Not only did he let her eat from the tree, but he ate some of the fruit also. Immediately, both of them knew good from evil – because they had just done something wrong.

This first of moral lessons was a basic one. What is godly, and what is not? God merely designated a tree, saying, "Don't eat from that tree." It was a simple directive -- a test that Adam might fail. In theory, he and his wife could have sought out the reason why God would have made that designation, but he didn't do that. Each time Adam chose not to eat from the tree, he learned nothing, for he was merely doing the only thing he knew to do. Perhaps he was unaware even of the greatness of the power of choice.

Their response was to realize that they were naked. Suddenly they felt shame. They were stripped of their innocence and wished to hide themselves – their bodies – from God.

*And they heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the afternoon breeze, and both Adam and his wife hid themselves from Yahweh God's presence among the trees of the garden. And Yahweh God called to the man, saying to him, "Adam, where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you walking in the garden, and I was afraid because I am naked. And I hid myself."*

Now feeling guilt, the couple was ashamed to talk with God, whom the author portrays as strolling through the garden in a breeze. Since he knew what had transpired, God called out, deliberately, in order to compel Adam to admit his wrongdoing.

Rather than do so, Adam admitted only to having hidden from God. His shame had been uncovered.

*And God said, "Who told you that you are naked, unless you ate from the tree, the only one from which I instructed you not to eat?" And Adam said, "The woman that you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then Yahweh God said to the woman, "Why did you do this?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

The only way that Adam could have felt it wrong to be naked before God is by eating from the tree. Knowing this, God next confronted Adam with the reason for his guilt and shame.

Imagine a relationship so close to God that you could walk and talk with him freely, every day if you so chose. Adam and Eva had it from the start, yet their friendship with God was replaced by fear when they ate from the tree. Adam did not say that what he feared was God's punishment. The reason for his fear is clear: "because I was naked." For the first time, Adam experienced guilt, and it scared him. According to Paul (1 Tim 2; 1 Cor 15), what happened was ultimately Adam's responsibility. He was the one who received the teaching directly from God. He had this knowledge longer than Eva had it. He had not been fooled; he ate from the tree full well knowing what he was doing. And so it was Adam whom God addressed when he "arrived."

"Who told you that you were naked?" Equivalently, "Why do you feel ashamed?" The next inquiry is logical, "Did you eat from the tree?" God knows the answer. OF COURSE, he ate from the tree. Both of them had eaten from the tree and now felt exposed. God wasn't trying to elicit this fact on account of lack of knowledge. Rather, part of the first lesson still remained. Adam and Eve needed to realize their responsibilities for their actions. They needed to fully own up to what they had done.

Adam passed the buck twice. "The woman that you gave ... she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it." His passing of the buck to God was secondary. Perhaps he merely wanted to *remind* God that Adam had never eaten from the tree *before* Eva had come along. Ultimately, Adam blamed his wife and partner. But Eva didn't force Adam to eat any of the fruit. She handed some to Adam, and he scarfed it down unquestioningly.

Perhaps Eva would do better. "Why did you do this?" She immediately blamed the serpent. "Well, there was this animal I was having a conversation with. He confused me." Hmm ... Eva failed to accept her responsibility as well. Perhaps this failure to admit their own culpability was what resulted in their ultimate punishments. The serpent, being an animal, had no such excuse. It could not "pass the buck."

**15** *And Yahweh God said to the serpent:*

*"Because you have done this, you are cursed more than any herd animal and more than any field animal on the land. On your stomach and abdomen you will go, and you will eat dirt all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your descendants and her descendants. They will keep striking at your head, and you will keep striking at their heels."*

First God dealt with the serpent. From now on, all of its race would be regarded as cursed. For all we know, its kind perished in the flood or before. The curse was to suffer defeat in everything. The Hebrew metaphors "on your belly" and "eating dust" have been misconstrued to imply that the animal -- and all of its descendants -- were made into snakes. However, these are mere metaphors of defeat. Furthermore, the serpent's power of speech was not taken away. Its crafty animal intellect was not removed. No, the passage does not reference the physical removal of the animal's legs. It is merely cursed with animosity and defeat.



This is what is intended in verse 15 as well. There would be an ongoing conflict between humanity and the serpent's species. You, your race, will "strike at" them; they will strike at your descendants, too. No victory is promised to humanity. No end to the struggle is forecast. The lives of the members of this species will be no fun from here on – at least for the foreseeable future.

This verse has readily been interpreted since Irenaeus to refer to the coming of the Messiah. However, not only did the Jews never reckon it so, but also the New Testament never cites this verse as being fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. Some point to Jesus' being "born of a woman," but this is only a declaration of his humanity. (The Bible similarly says that John the Baptizer was "born of a woman." Paul says rightly that we all are "from woman.") If the "seed" (descendant) of Eva were a literal descendant, then it is impossible to so construe the "seed" of the serpent. Would there be a specific animal that Jesus would fight? No. That is why Satan has been forced into this passage. There are numerous prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament, but this is not one of them. The serpent itself was punished because the animal **itself** was culpable. What it is cursed with is perpetual animosity with the human race, as long as its species should live. Its species is today extinct.

**17** *And to the woman he said:*

*"I will greatly multiply your pains and your groanings. You will bring forth children in pain, but you will turn to your husband. And he will dominate you."*

Just as the serpent was punished for what it did, Eva was punished for what **she** did. Eva not only ate from the tree but also persuaded Adam to do what he knew was against God's will. She had lesser knowledge, but because of her relationship to Adam, she was able to convince him to eat from the tree, which God had told him not to do. Therefore, her pain was increased. If "your groanings" are taken as "and conception" (as in the MT) Eva may have been made to have multiple births and many children. At any rate, in punishment for wrongly taking a superior position over someone with greater knowledge, she was subjected to Adam for as long as she lives.

**17** *Now he said to Adam:*

*"Because you have listened to your wife's voice and have eaten from the tree that I had instructed you that one alone not to eat, the ground is cursed in your work. In pain you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will yield thorns and thistles for you. And you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, until you return to the ground from which you were taken from. Because you are dirt, and to the dirt you will return."*

As for Adam, no longer would he have the luxury of picking fresh fruit from the trees of the garden. Instead, he would have to forage and till the soil. For several generations the ground was cursed, making his work even harder. (The curse was removed after the flood, q.v. Gen 8:21.) Like many punishments in the Hebrew Bible, the consequences of his sin would extend for several generations and in particular would last as long as he lived. "Until you return to the ground" is a reference to Adam's origin. He alone was

taken from the ground. His fitting punishment was to slave away at cultivating that very ground.

These punishments are individual. They should not be construed as applying to all serpents, all women, and all men. They were punishments to specific beings for specific actions that they took. As Paul says in Romans, we are responsible for our own actions of imperfection and wrongdoing. And by our own wandering, we share in Adam's sin. While we are in the world, we often encounter the consequences of both our own sins and the sins of others. As God would tell Ezekiel, "*The son will not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor will the father suffer for the iniquity of the son.*" The entire chapter of Ezekiel 18 deals with this subject.

**20** *And Adam called his wife's name Life, because she was the mother of all the living. And Yahweh God made garments for Adam and his wife out of skins, and he clothed them. And Yahweh God said, "Look, Adam has become like one of us, knowing good from evil. And now, so that he will not stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live into the next age."*

Many of the names given in Genesis have significant meanings, and this one is no exception. In fact, the Septuagint translates Eva's name into Greek (as Ζωη) rather than transliterate it at this point. In Hebrew, the given name is Khawâh. This is similar to a Hebrew word for "life," but it also appears to be a play on words, for it sounds somewhat similar to Hewa, which would mean "female serpent" and would make more sense in the context. The fact that Adam named his wife is indicative of the authority that God granted Adam over her.

The creation of more permanent clothing for Adam and Eva is also interesting. At this point, Adam and Eva did not kill animals for food, and certainly not for clothing. Thus, the narrative indicates that it was God who made them clothing out of skins. The author doesn't actually say that God killed animals in order to obtain the skins, either.

Speaking to his divine court, Yahweh pronounces the lesson learned, since Adam had learned to discern Good from Evil. Adam and Eva were prevented from returning to the Tree of Life, which for all we know would have prevented bodily decay. The wording, though, indicates that it was the learning of the lesson – and not "sin," per se – that translated into a necessity to leave the garden. It may be the case that the intention of Eden itself was to provide lessons about human and divine nature. Once the place served its purpose, humanity was driven from it. The obstacle to the tree of life, then, may represent the barrier that now existed between humanity and God, with God himself being the source of life. This lesson was learned the hard way, but it was a deliberate and necessary one.

**24** *And Yahweh God sent him out away from the delightful garden to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. He drove Adam out, and he made him dwell opposite the delightful garden, and he placed the cherub and a flaming sword that turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.*

The human journey and the progress toward the maturity of the race had begun. From this point on, there would be more sin and more suffering. Murder, idolatry, and every form of wrong would plague mankind from then to the present. But the same freedom of choice that allows us to do those things allows us to seek after God and to appreciate him. Without being able to appreciate the wonderful gift we have been given, life as a human being would be forever lacking an intangible but important piece of ourselves. Without God's painstaking teaching process, we might never understand who we are!

Adam and Eva lived opposite, that is, facing the garden. They could look at it but could never enter it again. That is, they could never return to their prior state – nor directly to their prior relationship with God.

There may be a word game here regarding the protection given to the garden. The Hebrew Text, which at one point the LXX transliterates, states that the garden was protected by *kerûbim* lahat *khereb* hawak shamar derek. The placement of the words *kerûb* (singular of *kherûbim*) and *khereb* near one another may be deliberate.

As to “cherub,” the word may be a majestic plural form, so that a single cherub is likely to have been intended here. As to what “cherub” means: the closest cognate in any Semitic language is an Akkadian word for “bless.” The word may indicate a “blessed one,” but its function here is as a guardian. There is also a reference to the King of Tyre in Ezekiel 28 as an antitype of the guardian cherub. In later parts of the Hebrew Bible, a cherub is usually depicted as a hybrid animal similar to the Egyptian sphinx.

The cherub appears to be symbolic of God's strength, and in particular of his strength in battle. Therefore, it appears both as a guardian and as a symbol of foreboding. Elsewhere, cherubim are depicted as God's vehicle, as his might carries him. Similarly, a flaming sword (*khereb*) also indicates God's might.

#### FOUR

**4:1** *Now Adam slept with Eva his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Kain and said, "Through God I have gained a person." And then she gave birth to his brother Abel.*

There were no human beings other than Adam's descendents, as attested by Paul, “He gave to all creatures life and breath and all things, and he made from one every nation of people to dwell on the face of the land, fixing the seasons and the limits of their habitation, for them to seek God, if indeed they might feel after him and find him.” (Acts 17)

Some time after their departure from the garden, Eva gave birth to Kain (Qayin), whose name appears to mean “spear.” Some say, though, that it is a play on the word “gained” in Hebrew, which appears as *qanah*. By her reaction to her own pregnancy, it appears to have been Eva's first.

How old was Kain (Qayin) when his younger brother Abel (Havel) was born? The Bible does not say, but the separate sentences tend to make their births separate, so that Abel was one or more years younger than Kain. Adam and Eva could have had several children between the births of Kain and Abel, but for the narrator's purposes, these were the important children.

As Rabbi Aqiba indicated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the additional untranslated word, 'eth (which usually means "near" or "with"), found next to Kain's name in the Hebrew text is indicative of the fact that Kain was one child from a multiple birth. Tradition indicates that this usually happened when the children were girls, and that Kain and Abel were both triplets. It is quite possible that Adam and Eva also had several children after the birth of Abel but prior to his death.

*And it happened that Abel was a shepherd of sheep, while Kain was a worker of the ground. And after some days it happened that Kain brought a sacrifice to Yahweh from the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought him from the firstborn of his sheep and from the healthiest. And God looked on Abel favorably, and on his gifts, but he did not look favorably on Kain or on his sacrifices. And Kain was very sorrowful, and his face was crestfallen.*

Tradition holds that Kain and Abel were relatively young at this time; however, the Bible does not say this. By some traditions Abel had at least one wife and may have fathered children. Other traditions have him dying fatherless. Given that the important descendants of Adam are given in Genesis 5, and that no children of Abel are listed, it is more likely that Abel died childless. This does not mean he was a young man by our standards, however.

Abel's name, Havel, would seem to point to a later name given to the brother in tradition. The name is usually translated as "a vapor" or "worthless" – either indicating that he did not live out a full, natural life, or that he died childless, or both. This later naming scheme could have happened for Kain after he killed his brother; their original names are not given in the text.

Eventually in their lives, Abel became a shepherd, and Kain followed in his father's footsteps – tilling the soil. Since people did not kill animals at the time, it seems likely that Abel kept sheep for wool, and possibly for milk. Kain and Abel together likely supplied food and clothing for their community: for their parents, sisters, and brothers.

It is interesting that the brothers were offering a sacrifice to God, since the text nowhere indicates that God demanded or even asked for sacrifices. The account also does not say that Abel *killed* the sheep that he brought before Yahweh. However, noteworthy is the fact that the brothers had such a close relationship with God that they were able to talk with him in person – as their father had once done.

Why was Kain's sacrifice rejected? The text does not say that Kain brought less than the best of his produce. Had Kain deliberately selected a sacrifice of lower quality,

Yahweh's response would not have surprised him. Instead, we read that he was crestfallen. He was suddenly overtaken by sorrow as his offering was not accepted, because he had expected more.

Kain had worked hard in the field to cultivate his produce. By the sweat of his own brow, he had brought forth life-giving food, and he chose to offer that food to God. Possibly then, he brought his offering with pride and not with humility. In his way, he was boasting before God about his achievements. After all, his brother only fed sheep, but *he* was a hard-working man. Surely his efforts were worthy of praise. He thought that he was better than his brother was.

However, God saw Kain's attitude and did not favor *him* or his offering. He had brought a gift, but his attitude was wrong.

*And Yahweh God said to Kain, "Why are you very sorrowful, and why is your face crestfallen? If you brought it rightly but you did not rightly divide it, haven't you sinned? Be in quietness. He reaches out to you, and you will be his ruler."*

So God tried to comfort Kain. The Septuagint text reads a bit differently from the Masoretic Text here and is more explanative. Kain had offered his work to God, and that was good, but he did not examine himself first. His motives were not what they should have been, and his attitude was wrong. However, God addressed his bitterness toward Abel by telling Kain that his younger brother respected him as a leader.

*And Kain said to Abel his brother, "Let's go out into the plain." And it happened that while they were in the plain, Kain rose up against his brother, Abel, and he killed him. And Yahweh God said to Kain, "Where is your brother, Abel?" And he said, "I don't know. I am not my brother's guardian."*

Kain and Abel had brought their sacrifices at different times, and how long Kain stewed about the matter we do not know. But Kain was not comforted by God's words to him, so he went to find his brother. The account now becomes strikingly like the sin of Adam. Kain makes a conscious decision to murder his brother, and he carries it out. When God questions Kain, he does so rhetorically as he had done with Adam. Just as he had inquired of Adam where he was, now also God asked Kain where Abel was – knowing all along and prompting for an honest answer. But Kain responded with a lie, ignoring again the counsel that God had given him.

Just as Adam had refused to accept responsibility for his actions, so also his son did the same – as he denied being his brother's keeper.

*And Yahweh said, "What have you done? The sound of your brother's blood is calling out to me from the ground. And now I am cursing you from that ground that has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hands. When you work the ground, also it will not continue to give its strength to you, as you groan and tremble over the ground."*

As a result of both the murder and of Kain's refusal to accept responsibility for his own actions, God passed a judgment on Kain that was similar to his judgment on Adam. God had cursed the ground on account of Adam, and now he cursed Kain *from* the ground where Abel's corpse lie. Adam and his descendants had been cursed to work hard in order to obtain the bounty from the ground; this was Kain's proud achievement. Now, as long as Kain worked the ground it would not give the best possible produce.

For him, the fruit would be smaller, the vegetables less tasty, and the berries less numerous – not as good as he knew they could be. This would constantly remind him of what he had done.

*And Kain to Yahweh God, "My crime is too great for me to be forgiven! If you throw me out today from the presence of the land, and if I am hidden from your presence, then I will be groaning and trembling on the land, and it will be that the one who finds me will kill me."*

Kain realized the similarity between his actions and Adam's. God was going to send Kain away from the area near Eden just as he had expelled Kain's parents from the garden. More importantly, he would be farther from God's own presence. Kain thought this to be too great a burden to bear, and he feared that one of his own family members – a sister, or nephew, or niece – would hunt him down and kill him for what he had done.

*And Yahweh God said, "Not so. Anyone who kills Kain will pay seven penalties." And Yahweh God placed a sign for Kain, so that no one who found him would kill him.*

Kain had shown penitence for the murder that he had committed. He was sincerely sorry, knowing that he did not deserve to be forgiven. Truly, Yahweh did not forgive the murder, but insisted on casting Kain out as he had done to Adam. However, he agreed to protect Kain's life from any of his family who might desire to murder him.

Many words have been written about the so-called "mark of Kain." For example, did God change the color of Kain's skin or disfigure him in some way? The most natural meaning of the text appears to be that God warned his family (supernaturally) not to pursue and kill Kain in retribution. His punishment from God was enough for his crime.

*Now Kain went out from God's presence, and he dwelt in the land of Naid, opposite Eden. And Kain slept with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Henoah. And he constructed a city, which city he named after the name of his son, Henoah. Now to Henoah was born Ga'idad, and Ga'idad fathered Mahuya-El, and Mahuya-El fathered Methuselah, and Methuselah fathered Lemech.*

So Kain left *God's presence*. From now on, Yahweh would never speak to him as he had spoken before. Perhaps Kain and God had talked with one another many times before the murder, but this would never happen again. Kain took his wife with him, and they migrated to the land of Naid. "Naid" (Hebrew nôd), signifies "exile" or "wandering."

Most likely, then, Kain's family were nomads until after the birth of his children – the most notable of which was Henoch.

Enoch's name might translate as “devoted” or “disciplined.” It is possible that Kain's punishment had made him more devout – committed to doing right. His family settled down, and the author records his lineage up through Lamech, whose story is told briefly below.

*And Lamech took two wives for himself: the name of the first was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah. And Adah gave birth to Yab-El. This one was the ancestor of those who dwell in tents and feed herd animals. And his brother's name was Yubal. He was the one who popularized the psaltery and harp. Now also, Zillah herself gave birth to Tobel. And he was a smith, a forger of brass and iron. Now Tobel's sister was Na'amah.*

Lamech's name appears not to come from a single Hebrew word, as there is no l-m-k stem elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. However, it may come from le-mâkak, meaning “toward humility.” As his story is told, Lamech had several children by two women.

**23** *Now Lamech said to his wives,  
“Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice;  
wives of Lamech, pay attention to my statements:  
because I have killed a man (for wounding me);  
that is, a young man (for causing me pain).  
Because revenge would be carried out on Kain's behalf seven times,  
on Lamech's behalf it will be seventy times seven.”*

In Hebrew this is a poem, and it deserves to be reproduced as such. The first two lines parallel one another, and the second two lines parallel one another. Finally, the final line of the declaration is an extension of the penultimate line. Lamech had killed a man in self-defense. His wives were worried that others would execute him for the offence, but he reasoned that he had committed no crime. Since indeed his ancestor, Kain, was protected for a deliberate homicide, then (he reasoned) surely he would be protected many times over for killing someone in self-defense. We do not know the outcome of the story, but this is one of the earliest recorded poems in Hebrew.

To an extent, the author intends to point out that from Lamech, a man who was in essence as innocent of murder as Kain had been guilty, came elements of civilization. Lamech's three sons were a rancher, a musician, and a smith. They brought elements of culture to humanity. This is the final legacy of Kain.

**26** *Now Adam slept with Eva his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And she called his name Sheth, saying, “For God has raised up for me another seed, in the place of Abel, whom Kain killed.” And it happened that a son was born to Sheth. Now he called his name Enosh. That one had enough hope to call on Yahweh God's name.*

Since the author informs us of the time span between the expulsion from Eden and the birth of Sheth (just a few paragraphs from now), and since the wording would tend to put Sheth's conception close to the time of Abel's death, Abel was possibly over 200 years old at the time of his death, even if he did have no descendants. Tossing out the possibility that Eva was barren for 200 years, the wording might also suggest that while Eva had many children in the intervening years, she regarded none of them as having been a true replacement for Abel until she gave birth to Sheth.

Sheth's name may mean "compensation," "appointed," or even "substitute." Since the literal meaning has to do with sitting, the word sheth also signifies "buttocks," which may be a coincidence or may indicate that Sheth came out of the womb rear-end first. The double significance of the word may have prompted Eva to make the declaration.

The wording at the end of the paragraph leads to the conclusion that it was Enosh who popularized the title "Yahweh" for God. The word "God" obviously continued to be used, and by God's encounter with Moses (Exodus 3), we observe that "Yahweh" was a less popular name and that none of these titles had been "approved" by God. The people labeled him as they understood him.

## FIVE

**5:1** *This is the scroll of human lineage. In the day when God made Adam, he made him according to God's image. Male and female he made them, and he blessed them. And he named him with the name "Adam" during the day when he made them.*

After relating to the reader the story of Kain and the replacement of Abel by Sheth, the author reboots the story of human life. The whole of Genesis 5 focuses on Adam's descendants through Sheth, leading the reader from the expulsion from Eden to the tenth patriarch, Noah.

*Now Adam lived for two hundred thirty years, and he fathered someone according to his likeness and according to his image, and he called his name Sheth. Now it happened that those days of Adam that he lived after fathering Sheth were seven hundred years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And it happened that all of Adam's days that he lived were nine hundred thirty years. And he died.*

According to the Masoretic Text, 1656 years passed between the expulsion from Eden and the Great Flood in chapter seven; the Septuagint gives the same span as 2242 years. With the date of the Great Flood at about 3150 BCE, the LXX account would place the time of the expulsion from Eden at 5392 BCE.

Adam was 230 years old before he fathered "someone according to his likeness." Kain had also appeared in Adam's image, but Kain had followed too closely in his father's footsteps and had been expelled from God's presence. With Sheth, humanity regained



the dignity that it had lost through both Adam and Kain. The author now leads us to the Great Flood. What time expired between the garden and the flood?

There may be a complex relationship between the three Biblical accounts and the Sumerian and Babylonian “king lists.” Estimates vary as to the world human population during the first year of the common era, but the true value may be somewhere between 100,000,000 and 300,000,000. This broad estimate largely comes from speculations as to how many people were living outside the Roman Empire and the Roman census data regarding the number of citizens living within the empire.

If 45,000,000 people was a good estimate of people living under the power of the Empire in 1 CE, and if there were three times as many people living outside the Empire as in it, then there were 180,000,000 people in 1 CE. If that estimate was somewhat high – being based on the count of citizens only – and/or if there were fewer people outside the Empire than believed, then we arrive at a lower number. If that estimate is slightly low and only accounts for 15% of the world population, we get a number on the higher end.

The wide variation in these estimates leads to a wide variation in the estimate accounting for the time span of the world human population. If we use the high value of 300 million people in 1 CE, and if we use the reasonably well-established value of 1,000,000,000 people in 1804, then the human population function over the period is given by

$F(t) = 300,000,000 e^{(0.0007)t}$ , where  $t$  is in years before or after 1 CE.

Solving this for  $F(t) = 8$ , we find the expulsion from the flood to date circa 24,914 BCE.

On the other hand, if we use the low end of the world population estimate for 1CE, we have:

$F(t) = 100,000,000 e^{(0.0012)t}$ , where  $t$  is in years before or after 1 CE.

Solving this for  $F(t) = 8$ , we find the expulsion from the flood to date around 13,618 BCE.

In order to obtain a value of  $F(-3150) = 8$ , we would have to have a value of  $k$  in the exponent of over 0.005. At the other end of the quandary is the radiometric dating data, which indicate that the oldest human remains are about 400,000 years old, and that the oldest human “ancestor” is perhaps 4,000,000 years old.

Now, radiometric dating is far from flawless, and carbon dating is even more problematical. This certainly explains the problem with population growth on that end, but a constant of exponential growth as high as 0.003 is quite unlikely. The best that we

can say is that the numbers in the Genesis account, while disturbed, are at least more accurate than either the Mesopotamian king lists or the radiometric methods.

Let's return to the lineage from Sheth to Noach.

*6 Now Sheth lived for two hundred five years, and he fathered Enosh. And after his fathering of Enosh, Sheth lived for seven hundred seven years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And it happened that all of Sheth's days were nine hundred twelve years. And he died.*

*And Enosh lived for one hundred ninety years, and he fathered Kainan. And after his fathering of Kainan, Enosh lived for seven hundred fifteen years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And it happened that all of Enosh's days were nine hundred five years. And he died.*

*And Kainan lived for one hundred seventy years, and he fathered Malele-El. And after his fathering of Malele-El, Kainan lived for seven hundred forty years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And it happened that all of Kainan's days were nine hundred ten years. And he died.*

*And Malele-El lived for one hundred sixty-five years, and he fathered Yared. And after his fathering of Yared, Malele-El lived for seven hundred thirty years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And it happened that all of Malele-El's days were eight hundred ninety-five years. And he died.*

*And Yared lived for one hundred sixty-two years, and he fathered Henoch. And after his fathering of Henoch, Yared lived for eight hundred years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And it happened that all of Yared's days were nine hundred sixty-two years. And he died.*

Through this point, the author uses similar language to describe each of the "notable" children. "So and so lived for xx years, had this child, and lived for yy years and died." All we have are their names. These names mean:

Enosh: sickly, or mortal

Kainan: lamenter, or "like Kain"

Mahalale-El: from halal and El – God's praise, or God's glory

Yared: humble, or descending

Enoch: dedicated (as Hanukkah)

*And Henoch lived for one hundred sixty-five years, and he fathered Methuselah. Now Henoch was a delight to God after his fathering of Methuselah for two hundred years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And it happened that all of Yared's days were three hundred sixty-five years. And since Henoch was a delight to God, also he was not found, because God took him away.*

Beginning with Adam, Henoch belonged to the seventh generation: Adam; Sheth; Enosh; Kainan; Mahalale-El; Yared; Henoch. We read earlier the chain: Adam; Kain; Henoch; Ga'idad; Mahuya-El; Methuselah; Lemech. Lemech and Henoch were each part of the seventh generation, and the narrative tells each of their stories, briefly. Lemech had proven himself to be innocent, and his children wound up contributing to

human civilization. On the other hand, legends arose around Enoch because of his close relationship with God.

The Masoretic Text reads, famously, that Enoch “walked with God” or perhaps that he “followed God.” The Septuagint refers to him as having been “well-pleasing” or “fully pleasing” – a “delight.” Genesis says nothing about Enoch’s life or personality apart from that mysterious label. In the New Testament, God uses the same label to describe Jesus.

As a direct result of Enoch’s close relationship with God, he “was not found.” This is universally accepted to mean that his body was not found. That is to say, Enoch did not die a natural death but merely disappeared, “because God took him away.” In Greek, the verb implies that God took Enoch to himself; this is stronger in Hebrew, where we literally read that Enoch “was gone” because he was “taken with God.”

*And Methuselah lived for one hundred sixty-seven years, and he fathered Lamech. And after his fathering of Lamech, Methuselah lived for eight hundred two years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And it happened that all of the days that Methuselah lived were nine hundred sixty-nine years. And he died.*

The eighth and ninth generations of Adam through Sheth were somewhat unremarkable, aside from Methuselah’s extended age. He did not die until the year of the flood.

*And Lamech lived for one hundred eighty-eight years, and he fathered a son. And he named his name Noah, saying, "This one will have us rest from our deeds, and from the labor of our hands, and from the ground that Yahweh God cursed." And after his fathering of Noah, Lamech lived for five hundred sixty-five years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And it happened that all of Lamech’s days were seven hundred fifty-three years. And he died.*

In the tenth generation from Adam, we arrive at Noah. Clearly people were expecting that the curse on the land was going to end with the tenth generation, for Noah’s father gave him a name signifying “rest,” and the statement specifically applies that name to the curse on the ground that had been there for over 1600 years, as the Septuagint reckons it.

*And by the time Noah was five hundred years old, he had fathered three sons: Shem; Ham; and Japheth.*

In order to prepare us for the account of the deluge, the author reports to us three important members of the 11<sup>th</sup> generation: the sons of Noah. A strange series of events now intervenes.

## SIX

**6:2** *And when the people became many on the land, and daughters were being born to them, the following happened. Now God's sons were noticing the daughters of people because they were beautiful. They took women for themselves, all that they chose. And Yahweh God said, "By no means will my breath remain among these people for the age, since they are flesh, but their days will be one hundred twenty years."*

The Septuagint reads as indicated above, but one might interpret the Masoretic Text to say "sons of the gods." Either way, the expressions "sons of God" (divine beings) is deliberately contrast with "daughters of people." Since Jesus seems to portray the divine messengers as not being interested in marriage (Mt 22:30), some believe that the "sons of God" were divine messengers, but that they *raped* human women. This is problematical in one respect, for the text itself notes that this event served as an example of what humans were doing wrong, and the Torah clearly makes rape victims blameless. Also, it is not merely Jesus' understanding that divine messengers are asexual, for nowhere (else) in the Hebrew Bible are the divine messengers ever described as being in rebellion or behaving in a remotely sexual fashion.

For these reasons, most rabbis indicate that the "sons of God" were the sons of princes and judges. These were human beings – men of authority, as we read about in Psa 82:6, where they are called "gods." These men should have defended the poor and the weak. Instead, they raped innocent women. At the time, would-be rulers occasionally made false claims of divinity; this would be true in Egypt, Sumeria, and other places later on. These "sons of God" were deities in their own minds and could take whatever they wanted. Thus, they were indicative of the spread of evil on earth.

The passage goes on to explain how God was going to bring about a calamity that would result in the human lifespan being no more than approximately 120 years. Alternatively, some believe that these events took place exactly 120 years prior to the flood, and that the statement served as a divine warning that God would destroy most of humanity in 120 years.

*Now the titans were on the land during those days – and after that – when the sons of God had intercourse with daughters of people, and they gave birth for them. These children were the titans of the age – the people of renown.*

The term "titan" ("giant") does indicate people of great height, although it is possible that their heights would be exaggerated for the sake of hyperbole. They were large people, yes, but more importantly they were considered heroes: people of renown. The Hebrew word, *nefilîm*, comes from *nâfal*, which means "fall." As we read in TDOT, "The noun seems to embody the notion, so characteristic of ancient Israel, that something gigantic, something exalted, must necessarily fall." Thus, the Hebrew and Greek terms for these titans coincide.

According to Genesis 6, this practice of men in power raping women for the purpose of providing suitable offspring continued after the flood.

**6** *Now when Yahweh God noticed that the bad deeds of human beings were being multiplied on the land, and that each one in his heart was considering evil every day, then also God was deeply emotional because he had made humanity on the land, and he considered it. And God said, "I will blot out humanity, which I made, from the face of the land: from people to herd animals, and from crawling things to the birds of the sky – because I have become deeply emotional because I made them." But Noah found favor in the presence of Yahweh God.*

After what must have been a long time of forbearance on God's part (120 years?), God reconsidered his creation of humanity. He had come to regret having made people as he did, because so many of them had chosen to be evil. Rather than destroy everything, however, Yahweh considered the life of the aforementioned Noah. He was a good man.

**10** *Now these are the generations of Noah. Noah was a just person who was complete among those of his generation. Noah was a delight to God.*

Unlike so many people around him, Noah was a good man. The author employs the language used earlier regarding Henoch: Noah was a delight to God; he followed God. In his life, he was complete – truly worthy of emulation. For this person's sake, God would save humanity, even if not many would be saved.

*Now Noah fathered three sons: Shem; Kham; Yafeth. Now the land was corrupt in God's presence, and the land was filled with wrong. And Yahweh God saw the land, and it was totally corrupt, because all flesh had totally corrupted its way on the land. And Yahweh God told Noah, "All humanity's season has come before me, because the land has been filled with wrong from them. And look, I am destroying them and the land.*

While Shem's name may mean simply, "name" (as ha-Shem is used in the place of Yahweh), more likely it indicates "prosperity" or "honor" here. It is Shem's name that is the root of the word "Semitic." Kham's name is sometimes translated "hot," but it appears to be related to a word that the Egyptians would use to describe their own land: "khem," which means "black." The area of Egypt was characterized by black earth, while the surrounding desert was not. Kham may have had a darker tan than his siblings did. The meaning of Yafeth's name is normally given as "wide" or "enlarged."

The account of the princes of the aristocracy forcing daughters of the people to bear their children was but one indicator of the nastiness that filled the land during the time of Noah. When God observed that people pursued evil all the time, he regretted having made humanity. However, since Noah found favor with Yahweh, God warned him of the upcoming destruction.

The Greek clarifies the Hebrew expression, “all flesh” by translating it as “all humanity.” God did not intend to destroy everything, but he did want to wipe the land clean and kill every human being on it. But Noah was going to be saved:

*"Therefore, make for yourself a chest out of rectangular wood. You will make the chest in living quarters, and you will use pitch on the interior and exterior. And you will make the chest as follows: three hundred pecus for the chest's length; and fifty pecus for its width; and thirty pecus for its height. As you collect wood, make the chest, and complete it from above in one additional pecus. Now make the door of the chest exit from the side. Make it with a second tier and a third tier.*

The term “ark” does not mean a ship. It indicates a kind of enclosure. When God told Noah to build a chest, he meant an enclosed ship. The Masoretic text refers to the chest as being made out of “gôfer” wood. The word has no clear meaning, but linguists say it may signify either enclosure or a type of cypress. The Septuagint clearly uses the word “rectangular” to describe the shape of the chest (tetragonal).

The pecus (Greek πεχυσ), is often translated “cubit” into English, because both words indicate a standard distance between an adult male’s elbow and the tip of his longest finger. Although we often use 18” as a standard cubit today, modern estimates of the length – based on the space needed to row a ship – indicate that the pecus may have been slightly over 19.1” long.

In English measurements, the chest that Noah constructed would have been 477’6” long, 79’7” wide, and 47’9” high. These are only approximations, though, since we cannot know whether Noah measured in “Hebrew pecus,” “royal pecus,” or whether he simply used the length of his own forearm. Also, the rectangular shape may have been merely an approximate description. The Greek description of the additional space corresponds to the description in Hebrew of a space on top for windows. The chest as a whole is the rough shape of a cargo ship.

*"Now look, I am bringing a flood of water upon the land to destroy all flesh under the sky in which there is the breath of life. And whatever things there are on the land will die. And I will set up my covenant with you. Now you -- and your sons, and your wife, and your sons' wives with you -- will enter the chest. And from all the herd animals, and from all the crawling things, and from all the wild animals, and all flesh you will lead into the chest in pairs, so that you may feed them along with yourself; they will be male and female. From all of the winged birds (according to species), and from all the herd animals (according to species), and from all of the crawling things that crawl along the ground (according to their species), a pair from each of them will enter toward you to be fed along with you – male and female. Now you will take for yourself from all of the foodstuffs that you consume, and you will gather them to yourself, and it will be for you and for them to eat." And Noah did all of the things that Yahweh God had instructed him; he did it that way.*

Here the Greek text leaves “all flesh” intact from the Hebrew original, and the reader is expected to understand that land animals will also be killed when God judges humanity.

The wording here allows for the possibility that God was only going to flood the region in the vicinity of Noah's home, although it is also possible that God intended to flood all of the land on earth. This has given rise to the "Global or Local" debate regarding the flood.

Yahweh directed Noah to obtain certain birds, herd animals (essentially mammals), and crawling animals (essentially reptiles). After building the chest, either Noah would have to locate exemplars of every species of mammal, reptile, and bird, otherwise; God would bring those animals to him.

## SEVEN

**7:1** *And Yahweh God said to Noah, "You and your household enter the chest, because in this generation I have seen you justified in my presence. For in only seven days I am bringing rain upon the land, for forty days and forty nights, and I will blot out each one of the offspring (which I made) from the presence of all the land."*

Verses 7:2 and 7:3 appear to have been added by a later editor. They repeat portions of what was already found in chapter 6 but add a reference to "clean" and "unclean" animals. Prior to the time of Moses, God had declared no animals to be "clean" or "unclean," and since human beings did not eat animals during Moses' day, such a distinction would have been unnecessary.

Here God instructs Noah to include his own immediate family – his wife, his sons, and their wives – along with the animals in the chest.

*And Noah did all of whatever things Yahweh God had instructed him. Now Noah was six hundred years old, and the flood of water happened to the land. Now Noah, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, entered the chest on account of the flood water.*

Noah saved the animals, just as God had instructed, and he saved exactly the people whom God had identified for salvation. Noah's family is named explicitly for the first time. Again there is an addition in the text to clean and unclean animals. The seven days' warning for the destruction of the land appear to correspond to the six days of creation and day of rest in chapter one.

*And after the seven days, it happened; that is, the flood water happened to the land. During the six hundredth year of Noah's life, during the second month, on the twenty-seventh of the month, on that day all the fountains of the deep waters were dispersed, and the cataracts of the sky were opened. And rain happened to the land for forty days and forty nights. On that day, Noah – Shem, Kham, Yafeth (Noah's sons), and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons, entered with him into the chest. And all of the wild animals according to species, and all of the herd animals according to species, and all of the crawling things according to species, and every flying bird according to species, entered into the chest to Noah in pairs, male and female – from all flesh in which there is the breath of life. And those who entered were going in male and*

*female, of all flesh, just as God had instructed Noah. And Yahweh God closed the chest from outside of him.*

The passage seems to say that all of the species entered the chest on the same day, but what the author intends to communicate is probably the fact that by the time the flood commenced all of the species were inside the chest as Noah sealed his family in with them. For a third time the narrator indicates that Noah faithfully did exactly as God had instructed for him to do. God “closed the chest” signifies that he prevented the waters from seeping into it.

**17** *And the flood happened to the land for forty days and forty nights, and water was overwhelming, and it lifted the chest. And it was lifted high above the land. And the water was in control and was greatly overwhelming on the land, and the chest was carried on top of the water. Now the water was greatly in control over the land, and it covered all of the rocks, the high ones. And all flesh that moved on the land died: flying things; and herd animals; and wild animals; and every crawling thing that moved across the land; and every human being. And all of the things that had the breath of life; that is, everything on dry land, died. And he blotted out all of the offspring that was on the face of the land, from people to herd animals, and crawling things, and the birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the land, and Noah and those who were with him in the chest remained alone. And the water was elevated over the land for one hundred fifty days.*

The horrifying description of the waters slowly rising to overwhelm the land and every land creature that lived on the land clearly specifies that no land creatures survived the flood. The description here is of a natural event, as it was perceived by Noah’s family and by those living on the land. Earlier, the author gave the precise timing of the event in Noah’s life. Again here we read the exact timing of the flood and of the time when the water was elevated over the highest of the hills. The precision should remove any doubt that the description of the events came ultimately from Noah and his family, who lived through them.

## **EIGHT**

**8:1** *And God remembered Noah, and all of the wild animals, and all of the herd animals, and all of the birds, and all of the crawling things that crawl – as many as were with him in the chest. And God brought a wind over the land, and the water stopped rising. And the fountains of the deep waters were closed, and the sky’s flood gates were closed, and the rain from the sky was held back. And the water subsided and went away from the land. And after the one hundred fifty days the water level receded, and on the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month, the chest came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Now the water was receding until the tenth month, and during the tenth month – on the first day of the month – the heads of the mountains were seen.*

Prior to the flood, there had been no rain. Instead, a thick canopy or “mist” surrounded the earth. Therefore, the water from the sky must have terrified everyone – including Noah. As suddenly as it seemed to have begun, the storm ended, and the waters began to recede.



The chest came to rest somewhere in the mountains of Ararat. The Hebrew word, a-rat, is not of an obvious origin. If the word is connected with the Assyrian Urartu, then the location is somewhere in Armenia. Others put the location somewhere in modern-day Turkey, or in northern Iran. All of these locations are relatively near to one another. If the Hebrew word is related to arar + ratash, it may mean “rip apart the curse.” This would be a reference to the curse on the ground that Noah was supposed to remove; however, the mountains of Ararat could be anywhere in the region if that were the origin of the word.

*And after forty days, it happened that Noah opened the window of the chest that he had made, and he sent a raven out to see if the water was gone. And it kept going out and did not return until the water had dried off of the land.*

The time parallel regarding the flood has worked this way so far:

Warning period	7 days
Rain and flooding, waters rising	40 days
Rain and flooding, over the mountains	150 days (includes the 40 days above)
Waters receding above mountains	150 days
Waters receding below mountains	40 days
Between raven and dove	7 days

A raven is a flesh-eating bird. Had there been dry land exposed, with corpses on the land, the raven would not have returned to Noah. The Hebrew text explains the raven’s motions better here than the Greek, for the Hebrew clarifies that the raven kept going back and forth – looking out for food. The fact that it kept returning meant that it did not find anything to eat.

*And then he sent out a dove after it to see if the water had left the land. And after it did not find a place of rest for its feet, the dove returned to him in the chest, because water was on all the surface of the land. And he stretched out his hand and took her, and he led her into the chest with him. And after waiting for still seven other days, he sent the dove out again from the chest, and the dove returned to him in the evening, and it had a dry olive leaf in its beak, and Noah knew that the water had receded from the land. And after waiting for still seven other days, he sent out the dove again, and it did not continue to return to him anymore.*

Unlike the raven, the dove eats seeds, grains, and even small insects. At first the dove returned, so Noah waited for a week. The second time he sent the dove out, it returned with an olive sprig. This was a clear indication that the trees were free of the water. However, the dove did return, so the ground was not dry. After another week, the dove left the chest without returning. Three hundred sixty-one days had elapsed since the start of the flood. A few days later, Noah and his family would leave the chest.

**13** *And it happened that during the six hundred first year of Noah’s life, on the first day of the first month, the water had left the land. And Noah opened up the roof of the chest that he had made, and he saw that the water had left the surface of the land.*

Once again the author is being time-conscious. He wants the reader to know that the waters were on the earth for exactly one year. The ground outside was muddy, so Noah and his family remained in the chest for 57 more days.

*Now during the second month, on the twenty-seventh of the month, the land was dry. And Yahweh God spoke to Noah, saying, "Exit the chest: you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons wives with you. And all of the wild animals (as many as are with you), and all flesh – from birds to herd animals, and every crawling thing that crawls on the ground, lead them out with you. And increase, and multiply on the land." And all of the wild animals, and all of the herd animals, and every bird, and every crawling thing that crawls on the ground (according to their kind), they went out of the chest.*

And so it was that after one year and fifty-seven days, Noah and his family returned to the dry land. In one sense, everything was the same as it had been before, but the whole land was new again.

So, was the flood a global one? There are many civilizations that tell "flood stories." A representative sample include the following.

Culture:	Kamar (central India)
Flood global or local:	global
Why the flood:	to drown a jackal
Who sent the flood:	Sing Bonga (creator god)
How people were saved:	People carved a large log for their children.
Animals sent out:	birds

Culture:	Yamana (or Yaghan) (southern tip of South America)
Flood global or local:	nearly global
Why the flood:	sins of the people
Who sent the flood:	Hanuxa or Lexuwakipa (ibis goddess)
How people were saved:	People climbed to the mountain tops.
Animals sent out:	none

Culture:	Caingangs (or Coroado) (southern Brazil)
Flood global or local:	nearly global
Why the flood:	no reason given
Who sent the flood:	unknown/natural
How people were saved:	People swam to mountain tops.
Animals sent out:	birds

Culture:	Inca
Flood global or local:	global
Why the flood:	people were evil

Who sent the flood:	Viracocha
How people were saved:	A family floated in a box; alternatively, families were sent into caves.
Animals sent out:	none

Culture:	Embera (Panama)
Flood global or local:	global
Why the flood:	no reason?
Who sent the flood:	natural?
How people were saved:	A family floated in a canoe.
Animals sent out:	none

Culture:	Maya (North America)
Flood global or local:	three global floods
Why the flood:	people forgot their origins
Who sent the flood:	creator god
How people were saved:	A family floated in a canoe.
Animals sent out:	none

Culture:	Vogul (western Siberia)
Flood global or local:	global?
Why the flood:	no reason?
Who sent the flood:	Ulgen (creator god)
How people were saved:	A family made boats and saved animals, too.
Animals sent out:	none

Culture:	Masai (East Africa)
Flood global or local:	global
Why the flood:	people were evil
Who sent the flood:	creator god
How people were saved:	A family made a boat and saved animals.
Animals sent out:	birds

Nearly every civilization in the world has a flood story, with the ones most similar in theme to the Genesis account being those of the Mesopotamian cultures.

### **What about the Epic of Gilgamesh?**

The standard version of the Epic of Gilgamesh may date as early as 1300 BCE or as late as 1000 BCE. Since the original text of the Torah (in whatever form it may have had then) was written down around 1490 BCE, it is possible the standard version may

be dependent in part on the Torah – or at least it might depend on Hebrew oral traditions. The Old Babylonian version is usually dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> century or 17<sup>th</sup> century BCE and therefore cannot depend at all on the Torah; however, the extant tablets of the Old Babylonian epic do not contain any account of the flood. At the conclusion of the last remaining tablet, Gilgamesh seeks to meet with Uta-naishtim – the hero of the flood story. There is no reference to the flood in the tablet, but one presumes that Gilgamesh eventually spoke with Uta-naishtim.

Tablet XI of the later revision of the epic begins with “Gilgamesh spoke to him, to Ut-napishtim the far-distant,” then introducing the story of the flood. The earlier form of the beginning of a speech had been, “Gilgamesh made his voice heard and spoke. He said to so-and-so.” The use of this later form of introduction in the flood story is an indication that the account of the flood was entirely absent from the earliest forms of the Epic of Gilgamesh. Since it is unlikely that the editor of Gilgamesh was using a Torah scroll as a source, most likely the standard version of the Gilgamesh flood story comes from a late recension of the Akkadian story of Atra-Hasis. Let’s begin there.

The oldest known copy of the story of Atra-Hasis is dated internally to the period of Hammurapi’s great-grandson, Ammi-Saduqa, who probably reigned in Babylon c. 1646-1626 BCE. Ammi-Saduqa was a contemporary of Moses.

The hero of the flood is called Atra-Hasis in the earliest account. This name roughly translates to “Extra Wise.” He was later equated with Uta-naishtim = Ut-napishtim, which translates to “he found life.” The story of the flood begins like this:

“And the country became too wide, the people too numerous.  
The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.  
The god grew restless at their clamor;  
Ellil had to listen to their noise.  
He addressed the great gods,  
‘The noise of humanity has become too loud.  
I am losing sleep over their racket.’” (tablet II)

At first, Ellil tries to starve the people out –by famine and by drought. Then the gods, led by Ellil, decide to flood the planet. Enki, a water god, warns Atra-Hasis in a dream. Then he tells Atra-Hasis to take the wood from his house and build a boat (on its site?). Instead of taking his possessions, Atra-Hasis was to “save living things.” He saves animals and his own family, who are called to a banquet as the flood begins.

The storm lasts for seven days, and Ellil is angry that anything living survived the flood. He and Enki wind up agreeing not to control human population by wiping them out, and the story of the flood will be told.

Other than the basic idea of a family surviving a great flood, the Atra-Hasis story does not intersect with the version in the Torah. It is clear that the Genesis account was not borrowed directly from the story of Atra-Hasis; however, it is equally clear that the story of a flood was circulating in Mesopotamia.

Culture:	Akkadian
Flood global or local:	global in this account, local in later ones
Why the flood:	people were noisy
Who sent the flood:	Ellil (Enlil) and other gods
How people were saved:	a man built a boat, saving his family and animals
Animals sent out:	none? There is a gap in Atra-Hasis, but in the standard version of Gilgamesh, Ut-napishtim sends out a dove, a swallow, and a raven.

### **Were there human beings other than Adam's descendants?**

"He gave to all creatures life and breath and all things, and he made from one every nation of people to dwell on the face of the land, fixing the seasons and the limits of their habitation, for them to seek God, if indeed they might feel after him and find him."  
(Acts 17)

### **Is it possible to find any evidence for such a catastrophe in science?**

Possibly. The current scientific majority opinion of plate tectonics has certain flaws.

That is to say that it doesn't explain the actual position of the continents. For example:

- The ocean floors are all very young. Using the usual numbers from geology, the ocean floors are all about 200,000,000 years old and newer. On the other hand, the continents have some land that is much older. For example, scientists discovered fossils in Australia that they claim are 3,400,000,000 years old. The oldest dated rocks come from Canada, Australia, Africa, and a few other places; dating methods make these out to be 4,000,000,000 years old.
- It is possible to fit together the continents on the Pacific Ocean side the same way that geologists usually do for the Atlantic ocean.

If one makes a model of the earth and gradually eliminates all of the younger rock formations, moving the plates as necessary, one arrives at a point where the oceans disappear, and the continents merge all the way around the world. However, a smaller planet would have been necessary in order to accomplish this feat, and it is widely believed that the earth could not have been smaller.

While scientists as early as Hilgenberg in 1933 proposed a model in which the earth continually expands – see these sites:

<http://www.expanding-earth.org/>

and

<http://www.nealadams.com/nmu.html> -- it is also possible that the earth has not been slowly expanding but expanded rapidly over a much shorter time period. See these sites for more:

<http://knol.google.com/k/whole-earth-decompression-dynamics#>

<http://understandearth.com/index.html>

According to Whole Earth Decompression Dynamics, the earth was once surrounded by a thick, gaseous canopy. A solar event stripped away that canopy, and the resulting decompression of the earth caused it to expand in size.

Neither of these theories is necessarily correct, but their presence – which is not connected with Biblical exegesis – does illustrate that the Genesis account is not simply a myth.

*20 And Noah constructed an altar to Yahweh, and he offered a burnt offering on the altar, and Yahweh God smelled a sweet odor. And Yahweh God thought about this, and he said, "I will no longer let the ground be cursed on account of humans' deeds, because the human mind leans strongly toward evil things from his youth. Therefore, I will no longer cause striking to all living flesh, just as I have done. All of the days of the land – sowing and harvest, cold and warm, summer and spring, day and night – will not cease."*

The author shows the readers that Noah remained faithful to Yahweh during the whole flood and thanked him afterward for fulfilling his promise to bring Noah's family safely through the cataclysm.

The foreshadowing has already tipped the readers off to the fact that God was going to remove the curse from the ground. After the flood there are four seasons that were going to continue from that point on (until God may choose otherwise).

## NINE

*And God blessed Noah and his sons, and he said to them, "Increase, and multiply, and fill the land, and be its lords. And the trembling and fear of you will be in all the wild animals of the land, in all the birds of the sky, and in all the things that crawl on the land, and in all the fishes in the sea. I have given them under your hands. And everything that crawls – whatever is living – will be yours for food; I have given all things to you like the herbs of the field. Except that you will not eat meat with the blood of life in it. For also, I will seek out your necessary blood at the hands of the wild animals, and I will seek out the life of a human being at the hands of a human brother. The one who draws human blood, his own will be shed against that blood, because I made humanity in God's image. Now increase, and multiply, and fill the land, and be its lords."*

This represents a change in the relationship between human beings and the animal kingdom. From this point on, as human beings reproduce sexually they will attack and kill animals for food.

At this point God introduced another lesson for humanity. Human beings are to abstain from eating meat cut from living animals. Furthermore, they are not to kill one another. If there are witnesses to a murder, the murderer must be executed, because of the special position of humanity as the bearer of God's image.

*And God spoke to Noah and his sons who were with him, saying, "Now look, I am raising up my covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living being after you (from birds, and from herd animals, to all of the wild animals of the land – as many kinds as are with you; all of those that exited the chest). And I am establishing my covenant with you, that not all flesh will die from flood water, and there will no longer be a flood of water to wipe out the whole land." And Yahweh God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I am giving between myself and you all, and between myself and every living being that is with you – for ageless generations. I am placing my rainbow in the cloud, and it will be for a sign of the covenant between myself and the land. And when I am gathering clouds on the land, it will be that the rainbow is seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant – which is between myself and you, and between myself and every living being in all flesh – and there will no longer be water for a flood to blot out all flesh. But my rainbow will be in the cloud, and I will look at it to remember an eternal covenant between myself and the land – between myself and every living being in all flesh that is on the land." And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have set up between myself and all flesh that is on the land."*

God then made a promise to all living creatures: that he would never flood the earth again, in a manner that would kill everything. The sign of the covenant is the rainbow, which is an indicator that the canopy around the earth (containing a great deal of liquid) is no longer present. Instead, there will be rain on the land. God concludes by affirming the promise.

**18** *Now the sons of Noah who exited the chest were Shem, Kham, and Yafeth. Now Kham was the father of Kana'an. These three are Noah's sons, and from these people were scattered over all the land.*

*And Noah became a man who tilled the ground, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank from the wine and became drunk, and he was naked in his house.*

Although the author does not state it, a considerable span of time has passed since the ship landed on the ground. Kham has already fathered four notable sons (and probably daughters as well). It is likely also the case that Noah's other sons had families of reasonable size by the time this incident took place in Noah's tent. There was no problem here with Noah's own behavior. While indeed he had been drinking and was nude, either he was alone in his tent or only his wife was present. Noah's actions were at worst indiscreet.

*And Kana'an's father, Kham, noticed his father's genitals, and he went out and told his brothers who were outside. And Shem and Yafeth took a garment, placed it on their two backs, and they went in backwards, and together they covered their father's genitals. And they were facing backwards, so that they did not see their father's genitals. Now Noach recovered from the wine, and it was made known what his youngest descendant had done to him. And he said, "The boy Kana'an is cursed. He will be a house-servant to his brothers."*

Kham had shown disrespect to his father by entering the tent without calling out, and (even more so) by observing his father's genitals. Since Shem and Yafeth were nearby when Kham entered the tent, he should have conferred with his older brother(s) prior to doing so. This would have averted the embarrassment. Since he did not show proper respect toward either his father or his brothers, Kham's youngest son was cursed by Noach, compelling him to seek his brothers' wishes in everything. This was not a punishment from God, but the action would compel Kham to reflect on his error for as long as he was alive to see his own youngest son treated like a servant.

**28** *Now after the flood, Noach lived for three hundred fifty years. And it happened that all the days of Noach were nine hundred fifty years. And he died.*

This concludes the story of Noach, who lived through the flood. The following section takes up the lineage of humanity where it had left off prior to chapter six.

## *TEN*

*Now these are the generations of Noach's sons, Shem, Kham, Yafeth; sons were born to them after the flood.*

*The sons of Yafeth were Gomer, and Migog, and Madai, and Yawan, and Elishah, and Thubal, and Moshech, and Theiras.*

*And Gomer's sons were Ashkenuz, and Rhifath, and Thorgarma.*

*And Yawan's sons were Elishah, and Tharseis, Kitti, and Rhodan. [From these people, the islands of the nations were divided in their lands, each according to the languages of their tribes and their nations.]*

One purpose of the genealogical list is to explain the origins of the peoples in the surrounding lands. Yafeth's descendants generally migrated north and west from where the ship appears to have run aground. Shem's descendants traveled south and east. Cham's descendants went further south (and west), with most of them winding up in Africa. The descendants in the list are usually associated with the regions described below:

Gomer (Gomer) is associated with the region around Galatia, according to Josephus.

Ashkenuz may have lived between the Black and Caspian seas; either that or he wound up in Europe in the area that is now Germany.

Rhifath probably traveled to the area later called Pontus.

Thorgarma's descendants are mentioned in Ezek 27:14 as suppliers of horses and mules to Tyre. In Ezek 38:6, Thorgarma's descendants supplied Gog of Lydia.



Til-gari-manu was a city in Kammanu, one of the Hettite states. This information places Thorgarma in the region of Armenia.

Migog apparently means "from the highest place." Based on a later association with Skuthia, Migog may have been associated with what is now Western Siberia. Some commentators place Migog in modern Russia; others put him in Turkey or Iran.

Madai is mentioned in the book of Jubilees. He appears to have traveled the farthest east of Yafeth's sons, winding up along the southern edge of the Caspian Sea. He is supposed to be the ancestor of the Medes.

Yawan went the farthest west, and his sons settled islands in the Mediterranean Sea. He may have been the ancestor of the early Greeks.

Elishah

Tharseis (or Tarshish) may be connected with the islands west of Italy.

Kitti is probably to be connected with Kupros (Cyprus).

Rhodan was associated with the island later called Rhodes.

Elishah is mentioned only in the Septuagint, and not in the Masoretic Text. If the name is not a scribal error, his descendants may have gone further north or west than those of his brothers.

Thubal may be associated with the Iberian Peninsula: Spain; Andorra; and Portugal, although some associate him with Italy.

The name of Moshech appears in several places. He may have gone to modern Georgia or southern Turkey.

Theiras is a name connected later with Thrace, in the area of Bulgaria.

*The sons of Kham were Kush, and Mizraim, Pount, and Kana'an.*

*Now Kush's sons were Shaba, and Euila, and Shabawat, and Rhegma, and Sabathaka. And the sons of Rhegma were Sabah and Dadan.*

*And Kush fathered Nin-Maradda; this one began to be a giant on the land. This one was a giant hunter in Yahweh God's presence; on account of this, they say, "he's a giant hunter in Yahweh's presence like Nin-Maradda." And it happened that he began his kingdom at Bab-ilu and Uruk, and Akkad, and Khalanne, in the land of Sumer. From that land came Assur, who constructed Nineveh (also called the city of wide streets) and Kalhu, and Dasa (between Nineveh and Kalhu, this city is great).*

*And Mizraim was the ancestor of the Loudians, the Naputians, the Anamiteians, and the Labites, and the Pathrosites, and the Khaslonians, and the ones from whom came the Fulistines – the Kaftorians.*

*And Kana'an fathered Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth. He was an ancestor also of the Yebusites, and the Amorites, and the Gergeshites, and the Euites, and the Arukites, and the Asennites, and the Arabian, and the Samaritan, and the Amathian. And after this, the tribes of the Kana'anites were dispersed, and it happened that the Kana'anite boundaries were from Sidon until one comes to Gerara and Gaza, until one comes to Sodom and Gomorrah, Adama and Seboim, as far as Dasa.*

*These were Kham's sons in their tribes, according to their languages, and in their nations.*

Kush is associated with the people of Ethiopia.

Shaba may have been connected with modern Yemen, although some place him in Ethiopia.

Ewila is possibly associated with the pre-flood area in Genesis 2 where gold was located. The word has to do with sand, so his people surely lived in a sandy region of the desert.

Shabawat probably migrated to what is now eastern Yemen. A city there was once called Saubatah (Saubatha).

Rhegma may have had the ancient city of Regmah named for him. If that is true, he went to the southern edge of the Persian Gulf.

Sabah may have been the ancestor of the Sabeans in Arabia.

Dadan probably lived in southern Arabia.

Sabathaka (or Sabtekah) is difficult to place, because the name has no clear meaning in Hebrew. The name exists in Iran, but that would put him out of place. Others have suggested eastern Africa as his settling place.

Nin-Maradda (Nimrod) was the founder of Babilu (Babylon) and other cities in the region of Akkadia/Sumeria.

Mizraim went to Egypt. In Hebrew, Mizraim signified "the two Egypts," indicating his eventual role in uniting Lower and Upper Egypt. It is quite possible that he is to be identified with the legendary pharaoh, Menes.

The name, Loudians, is probably a corruption of Libouim, who lived in Libya. These were among the Berber peoples.

The Naputians may be associated with Na-Ptah, Memphis in Egypt.

The Anamiteians may be related to the Anami, a tribe in Libya.

The Labites (or Lehabites) cannot be positively identified, but they may be another Libyan tribe.

The Pathrosites (from Pa-to-ris) were "southerners" who lived in southern Egypt.

The Khaslonians were probably from northern Libya.

The Kaftorians are associated with Kaftor, in northeastern Egypt. From these people came the Fulistines, who eventually came to give their name to "Palestine."

Pount (or Fut) was called Pwenet by the Egyptians. They may have lived in what is now Somalia or Djibouti, or somewhere in Arabia.

Ka'anan is the ancestor of the Ka'ananites. They settled in the area of modern Israel, Lebanon, and Syria.

Sidon settled in Phoenix (Phoenicia); his name means "fishery."

Heth is the ancestor of the Hettites (Hittites).

The Yebusites lived in the area around Jerusalem.

The Amorites (Amurru) lived in modern Jordan.

The Gergeshites lived west of the Jordan River, according to Josh 24:11; however, nothing else is known of them.

The Hewites (Hivites) are mentioned in Ex 34:11 as living on the land that was given to Abraham's descendants, but beyond that we know very little about them. No similar name is found in the inscriptions of other countries.

The Arqites (descendants of Arqi) lived in and around Tell-Arqa, a city also known as Arkantu and which was located in what is now Lebanon.

The Asennites (Heb. Sinites) were called Siannu, Usana, and Usnu by other cultures. The name may be connected with the Sinai region.

The Aradian is not mentioned in the Masoretic Text, where “Arwadite” appears instead. Arwad was an island near Syria. However, Tell-Arad is a city west of the Dead Sea.

The Samarian does not appear in the Masoretic Text, where “Zemarite” appears instead, although “Zemar” and “Samar” could be mistaken for one another. The Zemarites lived just north of Lebanon, whereas Samaria was in north central Israel.

The Hamathians (Hamathites) appear to have originated along the Orontes River in Syria. Later, they are associated with Asia Minor, and still later they seem to have migrated to Greece. Their city, Hamath, is mentioned by both Sargon and Nabu-kudurri-usur.

*And after this, the tribes of the Kana'anites were dispersed, and it happened that the Kana'anite boundaries were from Sidon until one comes to Gerara and Gaza, until one comes to Sodom and Gomorrah, Adama and Seboim, as far as Dasa.*

The author describes roughly the areas that were occupied by the descendants of Kana'an.

*And also children were born to Shem himself, the ancestor of all the descendants of Heber, brother to Yafeth the older. The sons of Shem were: Elam, and Assur, and Arfach-shad, and Lud, and Aram, and Kana'an.*

*And the sons of Aram were Uz, and Hul, and Gater, and Mosoch.*

*And Arfach-shad fathered Ka-inan, and Ka-inan fathered Shelah. Now Shelah fathered Heber. And Heber fathered two sons. The name of one was Peleg because during his days the land was divided, and his brother's name was Yektan.*

*And Yektan fathered Elmodad, and Saleth, and Sarmoth, and Yarach, and Odorra, and Aizel, and Dekla, [and Obal,] and Abima-El, and Saba, and Oufir, and Ewila, and Yobab. All of these were sons of Yektan.*

Elam's descendants, the Elamites lived in what is now Khuzistan, in Iran.

Assur settled in what became Assyria.

Arfach-shad may have founded Ur of the Chaldees, the Sumerian city in which Abram was born.

Ka-inan (born c. 3010 BCE), along with most of Arfach-Shad's direct and named descendants, remained in the region of Sumeria.

Shelah (born c. 2875 BCE) is mentioned in the LXX and in Luke, but not in the MT.

Heber (born c. 2725 BCE) is the origin of the word “Hebrew,” which originally indicated his descendants.

Peleg (Faleg) (born c. 2585 BCE) means “division,” and according to the account it was during his adulthood that “the land was divided.” This is usually taken to mean that the descendants of Noach's three sons divided up the land surrounding the Mediterranean between them, with the descendants of each settling in the areas allotted to them – or spreading out beyond the nearby region.

Yektan

Elmodad (“measured by God”)

Saleth ("one who draws out")  
Sarmoth (or Hazarmavoth) ("dwelling of death")  
Yarach  
Odorra (or Hodorram) ("south")  
Aizel (Uzal) ("goes [far] away")  
Dekla ("wave"?)  
Obal (Ewal) is omitted by the LXX.  
Abima-El ("God is father")  
Saba (or Sheba) went to Ethiopia.  
Oufir (Ofir) (possibly means "coastal wealth")  
Ewila  
Yobab ("crying out")

Lud may have been associated with Ludia (Lydia) in Anatolia.

Aram's home, Arame, was probably mentioned in the inscriptions of Naram-Sin the Akkadian.

According to Josephus, Uz founded cities, including Damaskus in Syria. Since Job was from the "land of Uz," he may have lived in the region founded by Uz.

Josephus claims that Hul founded Armenia.

Gater (or Geter) may have traveled eastward toward India, to the region later called Baktria; however, there are other traditions that place him elsewhere.

Mosoch (Meshech in 1 Chronicles), meaning "costly," may have settled in the area now called Armenia.

Kana'an is a different Kana'an, and not the ancestor (above) of the Kana'anites.

*And it happened that their domain was from Masseh until one comes to Safira, a mountain in the east. These were Shem's sons in their tribes, according to their languages, and in their nations.*

This concludes the listing of Shem's direct descendants prior to the advent of Abram in chapter twelve.

*These were the tribes of Noach's sons, according to their languages, according to their nations. From these people the islands of the nations were scattered over the land after the flood.*

With the lineage of the last of Noach's sons having been delineated, the author concludes by saying that the lineage of Noach after the flood has been traced out adequately. In some cases, we know nothing of where someone's descendants went. In the cases where they remained nearby, the author often adds details to indicate exactly which cultures developed from the person's progeny.

## ELEVEN

*And all of the land was one in speech, and there was one voice for all. And as they moved from the east, it happened that they found a plain in the land of Sumer, and they stayed there. And people said to their neighbors, "Hey, let's form bricks and bake them with fire." And it happened that the brick was used for stone, and their mortar was bitumen. And they said, "Hey, let's*

*construct for ourselves a city, and a ziqqurat the head of which will be in the sky. And let's make a name for ourselves before we are scattered across the face of all the land."*

The purpose of the passage is to explain the origin of different languages and dialects in the lands surrounding the Middle East. Just as Genesis does not explain what happened to people who traveled far from the area, it likewise does not mean to explain how their languages developed.

The timing of this event is also not stated, nor is the exact location. Based on the descriptions in chapter ten of the spreading of Noach's descendants, a date of about 3000 BCE – during the time of Nin-Maradda – would be a reasonable conjecture. This would be close to the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period, or the end of the Uruk Period, in Sumer. While this event is commonly placed in Babylon, the narrative never mentions Babylon as its location.

At the beginning of the narrative, all of the people in the area spoke a common dialect. This was about to change. Bricks were nothing new to the area, but the wording is there to indicate that they were constructing a permanent city instead of a simple settlement. The use of "ziqqurat" instead of "tower" is based on the location and purpose of the structure. An ordinary defensive tower would not have been called a ziqqurat; however, the ziqqurat was a tall building constructed as a point of pride and as a testimony to the gods. Its core was made of sun-baked bricks, whereas the outer faces were made of fired bricks (to withstand the weather). A single long ramp, or a series of ramps, led to the top of the ziqqurat, where they would have placed a shrine to their local god or gods. It is suggested that some believed that the gods would use a ziqqurat to descend from the heavens to earth, or that human beings might ascend to the gods. This particular ziqqurat would have been the first building of its kind and magnitude. It may have been the first construction of the building called much later E-temen-an-ki, the "Temple of the Foundation of the Sky and Land."

Observe that both the city and the ziqqurat are the product of discussions among the people. This also leads away from the identification of the ziqqurat's location as Babylon. Earlier, when Nin-Marrada founded Bab-ilu (Babylon), it was mentioned properly along with the name of its founder. The founding of Babylon was portrayed as part of the expansion of Nin-Marrada's growing influence (or "empire"). None of that is happening here. It appears therefore unlikely that the ziqqurat's location was in Babylon.

*And Yahweh came down to see the city and the ziqqurat that the mortals had constructed. And Yahweh said, "Look at the one race and the one speech for all of them. They have begun to do this, and now nothing will fail them in all the things that they have set down to do. Hey, I will go down there and confuse their language, so that each one will not hear the voice of his neighbor."*

The passage does not mention the devotion of such buildings to foreign gods; however, that was usually the case. The book of Genesis is sparse in its reference to other gods – only using the word in chapters 31 and 35. It appears more likely that God was upset

at the people's attribution of their success to a false god then at the mere size of the building. As we read later, whenever the people wanted to do something evil, God first tries to dissuade them – in this case by confusing their speech. Afterward, if people insist on doing something, he usually lets them do it. Although no further ziqquratu or large buildings are mentioned anywhere in the book, the author assumes that the reader is aware of their existence. The reader is expected to realize that God disapproves of the construction of large monuments to false deities.

*And Yahweh scattered them from there across the face of all the land, and they stopped constructing the city and the ziqqurat. On account of this, its name is Confusion, because that is where Yahweh confused the speech of all the land, and from there Yahweh scattered them across the face of all the land.*

The scattering here is most likely passive; that is, the people scattered themselves on account of not being able to communicate well with one another. In Hebrew, the name of the structure was called *bâlal*, which means confuse or mix. There may have been in mind a play on words in Sumerian, in which *tabalu* means “take away” (from *ba.al*, tear down”) while one meaning for *baltu* is “splendor.” That is, God took away their splendor. Alternatively, the word itself may have been translated from Sumerian. For example, *du* may mean “speak, converse” while *dù* may mean “build something from the ground.” Also, *sukh* (alternately, *su*) means “confuse,” while *su* means also “grow” or “multiply.” From the Hebrew word, people obtain the notion that *bâlal* was supposed to be a root for Babilu (Babylon), but the passage itself does not say this. The fact that the LXX translates *bâlal* as “confusion” rather than transliterating it as a name may indicate that we should not read the Hebrew word as a name.

*And these are the generations of Shem.*

*When Shem was one hundred years old, he fathered Arfach-shad two years after the flood. And after he fathered Arfach-shad, Shem lived for five hundred years, and fathered sons and daughters, and he died.*

*And Arfach-shad lived one hundred thirty-five years and fathered Ka'inan. And after he fathered Ka'inan, Arfach-shad lived for four hundred thirty years, and he fathered sons and daughters, and he died.*

*And Ka'inan lived for one hundred thirty years and fathered Shelach. And after he fathered Shelach, Ka'inan lived for three hundred thirty years, and he died.*

*And Shelach lived for one hundred thirty years and fathered Heber. And after he fathered Heber, Shelach lived for three hundred thirty years, and he fathered sons and daughters, and he died.*

*And Heber lived for one hundred thirty-four years and fathered Peleg. And after he fathered Peleg Heber lived for three hundred seventy years, and he fathered sons and daughters, and he died.*

*And Peleg lived for one hundred thirty years and fathered Rhagau. And after he fathered Rhagau, Peleg lived for two hundred nine years, and he fathered sons and daughters, and he died.*

*And Rhagau lived for one hundred thirty-two years and fathered Serugh. And after he fathered Serugh, Rhagau lived for two hundred seven years, and he fathered sons and daughters, and he died.*

*And Serugh lived for one hundred thirty years and fathered Nachor. And after he fathered Nachor, Serugh lived for two hundred years, and he fathered sons and daughters, and he died.*

*And Nachor lived for seventy-nine years and fathered Terach. And after he fathered Terach, Nachor lived for one hundred twenty-nine years, and he fathered sons and daughters, and he died. And Terach lived for seventy years and fathered Abram, and Nachor, and Harran.*

*Now these are the generations of Terach.*

*Terach fathered Abram, Nachor, and Harran, and Harran fathered Lot. And Harran died in the presence of his father Terach in the land of his birth, in the country of the Chaldees.*

*And Abram and Nachor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sara'i, and the name of Nachor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Harran (the father of Milcah and of Ischa).*

*And Sara'i was barren and did not give birth.*

*And Terach took Abram (his son), and Lot (Harran's son, his grandson), and Sara'i (his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife); and with them he left the country of the Chaldees to enter the land of Cana'an; and they went to Charran and lived there. And it happened that the days of Terach were two hundred fifty years, and Terach died in Charran.*

This lineage takes the reader from the time of the flood to the time of Terach's death – just before Abram left his ancestral home. Until the narration reaches Terach, the formula is similar at each step. So-and-so lived for a certain time, fathered the next important ancestor of Abram, lived longer, fathered others, and he died.

The Septuagint adds an ancestor not found in the Masoretic Text. Ka'inan (or Ka-inan) is absent in the ancestral list of the extant Hebrew Text, but he is also present in Lukas' list of Jesus' ancestors, indicating either that Lukas employed the LXX or that the most common Hebrew text in the First Century had the additional name. The ages of the patriarchs also differs in several cases from those found in the Masoretic Text.

With the arrival of Terach, the narrative changes to identify three of his children. The narrative then breaks. Instead of "the generations of Shem," we find that we are now looking at "the generations of Terach." The Septuagint differs from the Masoretic Text on an important detail. Whereas the MT explicitly labels Terach's ancestral city as *Ur Kashdim*, "Ur of the Chaldees," the LXX reads in both places "*the country of the Chaldees*," without mentioning a city by name. Since *ûr* indicates "flame" and "sunlight,"

the word is used of “the East.” It is reasonable to conclude that the Greek translators understood Ur-Kashdim to mean a place in the East – not a city called Ur. The location, therefore, is unclear.

The chapter concludes with the death of Terach in his new home in Charran. At the beginning, God spoke regularly to Adam and to Eva. He spoke to Kain. After that, God’s personal involvement appears to diminish considerably. Since the end of the flood, God has spoken to no one in this account...not for ten generations. Just as the flood was recorded as having occurred during the time of Noach – the tenth since creation, so also the first generation born after the flood was that of Arfach-shad, and Abram was a member of the tenth generation on this “new” world. The author will spend a great deal of time telling Abram’s story; it begins in earnest in chapter 12 of Genesis and ends in chapter 25, and so there is a sense that everything from this point leads to the introduction of Abram.

Yet there is clearly much more. The text in these early chapters explains all of the pivotal events in human history in the middle east – leading up to God’s friendship with Abram. The creation, the spread of civilization from Edem, the human propensity toward evil and the ensuing flood, the spread of humanity afterward, the return of evil desire and the development of languages – these events were important and demonstrate God’s involvement in human history. At this point, finally, God will choose a people to whom to deliver a message.

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