God's Perspective on Man
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Philosophy and science are both bafflingly inclusive in their subject-matter. Yet each of these disciplines is essentially an attempt to answer a simple question. Taken in its broadest sense, science is dedicated to the task of answering that question which perpetually haunts our minds, "How?" A simple question indeed! But to explain how grass grows on our earth or how a machine functions or how galaxies zoom through the vast emptiness of space has been one of the great enterprises of modern civilization, perhaps its greatest. On the other hand, philosophy, taken in its broadest sense, is also dedicated to the task of answering a simple question which never quits plaguing us, "Why?" Though the why-question like the how-question is deceptively simple, it often teases us nearly out of thought. So, for example, a child asks innocently, "Why was anything at all?"--and the sages are reduced to silence.

We who are amateurs in the philosophical enterprise find ourselves bewildered as we glance at its profusion of rival schools and listen to their in-group jargon. Fortunately, though, one of its most illustrious practitioners, Immanuel Kant, provides us with helpful orientation. In the Handbook which he prepared for the students who studied with him at the University of Koenigsburg a century and a half ago, Kant points out that philosophy, a disciplined attempt to explain why, concerns itself with four key-problems. First, what can we know? Second, what ought we do? Third, what may we hope? Fourth, what is man? In a way that last question, "What is man?", the problem of anthropology or the nature of human nature, includes the other three. For man is that curious creature who
insists on asking questions. Man is that unique animal who tirelessly cross examines himself about himself. Man is that relentless interrogator who probingly wonders what he can know and what he ought to do and what he may hope. Philosophy, therefore, twists and turns around the person and the philosopher. Every question he raises is inescapably enmeshed with the question concerning himself as the questioner, "What is man?"

The fourth key-problem in Kant's succinct outline of philosophy echoes a recurrent Biblical theme. In
Job 7:17 that very question appears. In Psalm 8:4 that question re-emerges, and Hebrews 2:5 repeats that same question. Thus we are not surprised that philosophy, which like theology is a why discipline, puts anthropology or the problem of man front and center. But whether we label ourselves philosophers or theologians or scientists, every one of us is a human being who grapples with the issue of self-identity. Hence the question, "What is man?", concerns us individually at the deepest levels of our existence; for that question is really the haunting question, "Who am I?"

**Man as Garbage**

Before proceeding to present God's perspective on man, which can be done only because we presuppose that the Bible is God's Word spoken to us through human words, let me remind you of some competing models of man that are widely accepted today. There is of course the purely materialistic concept which holds that man is nothing but, as Bertrand Russell elegantly phrased it, an accidental collocation of atoms. This concept, though advanced with the blessing of contemporary science, is by no means excitingly novel. In the 18th century self-styled illuminati scoffed that man is nothing but an ingenious system of portable plumbing. In pre-Hitler Germany an unflattering devaluation of Homo sapiens was jokingly circulated: "The human body contains enough fat to make 7 bars of soap, enough iron to make a medium sized nail, enough phosphorus for 2000 matchheads, and enough sulphur to rid oneself of fleas." When human bodies were later turned into soap in the extermination camps, the grim logic of that joke was probably being worked out to its ultimate conclusion.

Today, tragically, that concept, apparently certified by science, is articulated by a celebrated novelist like Joseph Heller. In Catch 22 he describes a battle. Yossarian, the book's hero, discovers that Snowden, one of
his comrades, has been mortally wounded. Hoping that none of us will be unduly nauseated by it, I quote this vivid passage.

Yossarian ripped open the snaps of Snowden's flack suit and heard himself scream wildly as Snowden's insides slithered down to the floor in a soggy pile and just kept dripping out. A chunk of flack more than three inches big had shot into his other side just underneath the arm and blasted all the way through, drawing whole mottled quarts of Snowden along with it through the gigantic hole it made in his ribs as it blasted out. Yossarian screamed a second time and squeezed both hands over his eyes. His teeth were chattering in horror. He forced himself to look again. Here was God's plenty all right, he thought bitterly as he stared-liver, lungs, kidneys, ribs, stomach and bits of the stewed tomatoes Snowden had eaten that day for lunch. Yossarian . . . turned away dizzily and began to vomit, clutching his burning throat. . .

"I'm cold," Snowden whimpered. "I'm cold."

"There, there," Yossarian mumbled mechanically in a voice too low to be heard. "There, there."

Yossarian was cold too, and shivering uncontrollably. He felt goose pimples clacking all over him as he gazed down despondently at the grim secret Snowden had spilled all over the messy floor. It was easy to read the message in his entrails. Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret. Drop him out a window and he'd fall. Set fire to him and he'll burn. Bury him and he'll rot like other kinds of garbage. The spirit gone, man is garbage. That was Snowden's secret.²

Man is garbage. That, crudely stated, is a common view of human nature today. In the end, man is garbage-
an accidental collocation of atoms, destined, sooner or later, to rot and decay. To guard against any misunderstanding, let me say emphatically that from one perspective man is indeed garbage or will be. That appraisal is incontestably valid, provided man is not viewed as garbage and nothing but that. Man has other dimensions to his being which no full-orbed anthropology can ignore.

**Man as Machine**

A second concept, apparently endorsed by science, holds that man is essentially a machine, an incredibly complicated machine, no doubt, yet in the end nothing but a sort of mechanism. Typical is the opinion of Cambridge astronomer, Fred Hoyle, who writes in *The Nature of the Universe*:

> Only the biological processes of mutation and natural selection are needed to produce living creatures as we know them. Such creatures are no more than ingenious machines that have evolved as strange by-products in an odd corner of the universe. . . Most people object to this argument for the not very good reason that they do not like to think of themselves as machines.³

Like it or not, however, Hoyle insists, that is the fact. What is man? An ingenious machine-well, a whole complex of machines. R. Buckminster Fuller, whose genius seems to belie the truth of reductive mechanism, pictures man as

> a self-balancing, 28 jointed, adapter-based biped, an electro-chemical reduction plant, integral with the segregated storages of special energy extracts in storage batteries, for the subsequent actuation of thousands of hydraulic and pneumatic pumps, with motors attached; 62,000 miles of capillaries, millions of warning signals, railroad and conveyor systems; crushers and cranes. . .

and a universally distributed telephone system needing no service for seventy years if well managed; the whole
extraordinary complex mechanism guided with exquisite precision from a turret in which are located telescopic and microscopic self-registering and recording range finders, a spectroscope, et cetera.\textsuperscript{4}

That man from one perspective is a complex of exquisitely synchronized machines cannot be denied and need not be, provided human beings are not exhaustively reduced to that, and nothing but that. Man has other dimensions to his being which no full-orbed anthropology can ignore.

**Man as Animal**

Still another current concept of man holds that he is essentially an animal. Loren Eiseley, a distinguished scientist whose prose often reads like poetry, eloquently sets forth this model of humanity in his 1974 *Encyclopedia Brittanica* article, "The Cosmic Orphan." What is man? He is a cosmic orphan, a primate which has evolved into a self-conscious, reflective, symbol-using animal. Man is a cosmic orphan, a person aware that he has been produced, unawares and unintentionally, by an impersonal process. Thus when this cosmic orphan inquires, "Who am I?", science gives him its definitive answer.

You are a changeling. You are linked by a genetic chain to all the vertebrates. The thing that is you bears the still-aching wounds of evolution in body and in brain. Your hands are made-over fins, your lungs come from a swamp, your femur has been twisted upright. Your foot is a re-worked climbing pad. You are a rag doll resewn from the skins of extinct animals. Long ago, 2 million
years perhaps, you were smaller; your brain was not so large. We are not confident that you could speak. Seventy million years before that you were an even smaller climbing creature known as a tupaiid. You were the size of a rat. You ate insects. Now you fly to the moon.

Science, when pressed, admits that its explanation is a fairy tale. But immediately science adds:

That is what makes it true. Life is indefinite departure. That is why we are all orphans. That is why you must find your own way. Life is not stable. Everything alive is slipping through cracks and crevices in time, changing as it goes. Other creatures, however, have instincts that provide for them, holes in which to hide. They cannot ask questions. A fox is a fox, a wolf is a wolf, even if this, too, is illusion. You have learned to ask questions. That is why you are an orphan. You are the only creation in the universe who knows what it has been. Now you must go on asking questions while all the time you are changing. You will ask what you are to become. The world will no longer satisfy you. You must find your way, your own true self. "But how can I?" wept the Orphan, hiding his head. "This is magic. I do not know what I am. I have been too many things." "You have indeed," said all the scientists together.

Something still more must be appended, though, science insists as it explains man to himself.

Your body and your nerves have been dragged about and twisted in the long effort of your ancestors to stay alive, but now, small orphan that you are, you must know a secret, a secret magic that nature has given you. No other creature on the planet possesses it. You use language. You are a symbol-shifter. All this is hidden in your brain and transmitted from one generation to another. You are a time-binder; in your head the symbols that mean things in the world outside can fly about untrammelled. You can combine them differently into a
new world of thought, or you can also hold them tenaciously throughout a life-time and pass them on to others.\textsuperscript{5}

Expressed in Eiseley's semi-poetic prose, this concept, while confessedly a fairy tale, has about it an aura of not only plausibility but nobility as well. Sadly, however, when man is reduced to an animal and nothing but an animal, the aura of nobility vanishes and bestiality starts to push humanity into the background. Think of man as portrayed in contemporary art and literature and drama. Take, illustratively, the anthropology which underlies the work of a popular playwright like Tennessee Williams. What is the Good News preached by this evangelist, as he calls himself? His Gospel, interpreted by Robert Fitch, is this:

Man is a beast. The only difference between man and the other beasts is that man is a beast that knows he will die. The only honest man is the unabashed egotist. This honest man pours contempt upon the mendacity, the lies, the hypocrisy of those who will not acknowledge their egotism. The one irreducible value is life, which you must cling to as you can and use for the pursuit of pleasure and of power. The specific ends of life are sex and money. The great passions are lust and rapacity. So the human comedy is an outrageous medley of lechery, alcoholism, homosexuality, blasphemy, greed, brutality, hatred, obscenity. It is not a tragedy because it has not the dignity of a tragedy. The man who plays his role in it has on himself the marks of a total depravity. And as for the ultimate and irreducible value, life, that in the end is also a lie.\textsuperscript{6}

These, then, are three contemporary models of man,
all of them rooted in a philosophy of reductive naturalism. First, man is nothing but matter en route to becoming garbage. Second, man is nothing but a complex of exquisitely synchronized machines. Third, man is nothing but an animal, a mutation aware that, as a cosmic orphan, it lives and dies in melancholy loneliness.

**Man as God's Creature**

Now over against these views let us look at man from God's perspective, unabashedly drawing our anthropology from the Bible. As we do so, please bear in mind that we are not disputing those valid insights into the nature of human nature which are derived from philosophy, no less than science. Suppose, too, we take for granted that psychology and sociology are properly included within the scientific orbit. In other words, we are assuming that man is multidimensional and that anthropology therefore requires God's input if it is to give us a full-orbed picture of its subject. To begin with, then, the Bible asserts that man is God's creature. So in Genesis 2:1 this statement is made: "The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." Exactly how God formed man Genesis does not tell us; it does tell us, though, that man is not an accident, a happenstance, a personal mutation ground out by an impersonal process. On the contrary, Genesis tells us explicitly that man owes his existence to God's limitless power, wisdom, and love. It tells us explicitly that man-dust inbathed by deity-cannot be explained except in terms of creaturehood. Which means what? As creature, man is qualitatively different from God, utterly dependent upon God, and ultimately determined by His creator. It is God Who determines man's nature and determines, likewise, the laws and limits of human existence. Obviously, the implications of this Creator-creature
relationship are enormous. Few reductive naturalists have perceived them as penetratingly as Jean-Paul Sartre, the foremost spokesman for atheistic existentialism now living. Realizing what follows if indeed man has been made by God, Sartre repudiates the very notion of creation. Understandably so! If there is no Creator, then there is no fixed human nature, and man has unbounded freedom. He can decide who he will be and what he will do. That is why Sartre postulates atheism without stopping to argue for it.

Atheistic existentialism, which I represent, states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that this being is man, or, as Heidegger says, human reality. What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence. . . . If existence really does precede essence, there is no ex-
plaining things away by reference to a fixed and given human nature. In other words, there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom. On the other hand, if God does not exist, we find no values or commands to turn to which legitimize our conduct. So, in the bright realm of values, we have no excuse behind us, nor justification before us. We are alone, with no excuses.\(^7\)

Thus in Sartre's opinion only if man is not a creature can he be genuinely free, free to shape his own nature, free to run his own life, free to pick and choose his own values. And Sartre is right. Grant that man is a creature, and you must grant that he can never sign a declaration of independence, cutting himself free from God. He is inseparably related to God, finding fulfillment and obedience to his Maker's will. Hence Paul Tillich, in tacit agreement with Sartre, argues that the modern repudiation of God springs from man's fierce desire to renounce his creaturely status. In Tillich's own words:

God as a subject makes me into an object which is nothing more than an object. He deprives me of my subjectivity because he is all-powerful and all-knowing. I revolt and try to make him into an object, but the revolt fails and becomes desperate. God appears as the invincible tyrant, the being in contrast with whom all other beings are without freedom and subjectivity. He is equated with the recent tyrants who with the help of terror try to transform everything into a mere object, a thing among things, a cog in the machine they control. He becomes the model of every thing against which Existentialism revolted. This is the God Nietzsche said had to be killed because nobody can tolerate being made into a mere object of absolute knowledge and absolute control. This is the deepest root of atheism.\(^8\)
Tillich, alas, grossly misconceives the Creator-creature relationship; but one thing he profoundly apprehends. Man as God's creature can never sign a declaration of independence from his Creator. That is the basic fact of human existence.

**Man as God's Image**

In the next place, the Bible asserts that man is *God's image*. Genesis 1:26 announces this second momentous fact of human existence rather undramatically. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." To interpret the full significance of the intriguing phrase, the image of God, is plainly beyond my competence. But its central thrust is undeniable. Man was created not only by God and for God but also like God. He was created a finite person reflecting the being of infinite Personhood. Qualitatively different from God and absolutely dependent upon his Creator, man was endowed with the capacity of responding to the divine Person in love and obedience and trust, enjoying a fellowship of unimaginable beatitude.

My purpose is not to defend the audacious claim that the unimpressive biped whom Desmond Morris labels the naked ape is indeed God's image. But that audacious claim loses at least some of its initial incredibility when one takes into account man's extraordinary characteristics. These have been succinctly summarized by Mortimer J. Adler in that study, *The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes*, which challenges reductive naturalism to rethink its inadequate anthropology.

1. Only man employs a propositional language, only man uses verbal symbols, only man makes sentences; i.e., only man is a discursive animal.  
2. Only man makes tools, builds fires, erects shelters, fabricates clothings; i.e., only man is a technological animal.
3. Only man enacts laws or sets up his own rules of behavior and thereby constitutes his social life, organizing his association with his fellows in a variety of different ways; i.e., only man is a political, not just a gregarious, animal.

4. Only man has developed, in the course of generations, a cumulative cultural tradition, the transmission of which constitutes human history; i.e., only man is a historical animal.

5. Only man engages in magical and ritualistic practices; i.e., only man is a religious animal.

6. Only man has a moral conscience, a sense of right and wrong, and of values; i.e., only man is an ethical animal.

7. Only man decorates or adorns himself or his artifacts, and makes pictures or statues for the non-utilitarian purpose of enjoyment; i.e., only man is an aesthetic animal.

Man, the animal who is discursive, technological, political, historical, religious, ethical, and aesthetic, certainly seems unique enough to lend some plausibility to the Biblical claim that he was created in God's image. That audacious claim, which does not impress Adler as preposterous, also receives powerful endorsement from the well-known physicist, William G. Pollard. How better, he inquires, can man be designated than the image of God? His cogent argument for this position cannot now be rehearsed; but his conclusion, it seems to me, deserves to be heard even by those of us who are anti-evolutionists:

Starting from the perspective of the mid-twentieth century, we are able to see two very fundamental aspects of the phenomenon of man which would not have been evident before. One of these is the conversion of the biosphere into the noosphere. The other is the miraculous correspondence between the fabrications of man's mind
and the inner design of nature, as evidenced by the applicability of abstract mathematical systems to the laws of nature in physics. Both of these quite new perspectives strongly support the contention that man is after all made in the image of God. What we have come to realize is that there is no scientific reason why God cannot create an element of nature from other elements of nature by working within the chances and accidents which provide nature with her indeterminism and her freedom. We also see in a new way that the fact that man is indeed an integral part of nature in no way precludes his bearing the image of the designer of nature. Or to put it another way, there is nothing to prevent God from making in His image an entity which is at the same time an integral part of nature.\(^{10}\)

Regardless of how persuasive or unpersuasive we may judge Pollard's argument to be, the belief that man is God's image supplies the only solid ground for that much-praised, much-prized value of Western civilization-man's inherent dignity. For what is it that imbues man with dignity? If he is nothing but garbage or a complex mechanism or an over-specialized animal, why ascribe to him a worth that is literally incalculable? Why follow the teaching of Jesus Christ and impute to human beings a dignity which is best articulated by the phrase, the sacredness of personality? That Jesus Christ does impute so high a dignity to human beings is indisputable in the light of the Gospel. Indeed, He imputes to human beings a dignity so high as to dichotomize nature. On the one side, Jesus Christ puts the whole of created reality; on the other, He puts man; and axiologically, or in terms of his worth, man outweighs nature. Thus in Matthew 6:28-30 our Lord as-
signs to man a worth above and beyond the whole botanical order. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" But why is man, if merely one more emergent in the evolutionary process, valued above and beyond rarest roses or exotic orchids? Again, in Matthew 10:29-31 our Lord imputes to man a worth above and beyond the whole avian order. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." But why is man valued above and beyond parakeets and falcons?

Once more, in Matthew 12:12 our Lord imputes to man a worth above and beyond the whole zoological order as He exclaims, "How much more valuable is a person than a sheep!" Come to Denver for the National Western Stock Show held annually in January, and you will be astonished at the fabulous prices paid for champion steers, as much as $52,000. Remember by contrast that an average person even in today's inflated economy is worth about one dollar chemically. Then why is man valued above and beyond blue-ribbon steers?

Furthermore, in Matthew 16:26 our Lord imputes to man a worth above and beyond the whole sweep of created reality. "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Why does Jesus Christ value man above the entire planet and beyond all the cosmos? Why? Man is unique because he alone is God's image-bearer; and as such he possesses
inherent dignity and incalculable worth. As finite person reflecting the inexhaustible realities and mysteries of infinite Personhood, he cannot be valued too highly. Yet of what practical significance is this evaluation of man, grounded in his dignity as the image of God? Is not this belief just one more element in an outmoded theology? Let Leslie Newbigin answer.

During World War II, Hitler sent men to the famous Bethel Hospital to inform Pastor Bodelschwingh, its director, that the State could no longer afford to maintain hundreds of epileptics who were useless to society and only constituted a drain on scarce resources, and that orders were being issued to have them destroyed. Bodelschwingh confronted them in his room at the entrance to the Hospital and fought a spiritual battle which eventually sent them away without having done what they were sent to do. He had no other weapon for the battle than the simple affirmation that these were men and women made in the image of God and that to destroy them was to commit a sin against God which would surely be punished. What other argument could he have used?\(^{11}\)

Yes, and what other argument was needed? Abandon belief in man as God's image, and in the long run you abandon belief in human dignity.

**Man as God's Prodigal**

In the third place, the Bible asserts that man is *God's prodigal*. Plants, birds, animals are instinctually programmed. They move in a predictable course from birth to death. But man is that peculiar creature who, possessing intelligence and freedom, may choose to behave in ways that are self-frustrating and self-destructive. The Spanish philosopher, Ortega Y. Gasset, remarks that, "While the tiger cannot cease being a tiger,
cannot be deterred, man lives in a perpetual risk of being dehumanized." Why, though, is man always in danger of failing to become what he potentially could be? Why does he, as a matter of fact, live in a state of ambivalence and contradiction, the animal whose nature it is to act contrary to his nature? Back in 1962 Dr. Paul MacLean suggested, some of you may recall, the theory of schizophysiology, speculating that man is radically self-divided because he has inherited three brains which are now required to function in unity. The oldest of these is reptilian; the second is derived from the lower animals; the third and most recent is the source of man's higher mental characteristics. Hence the brain of Homo sapiens is the scene of unceasing tension. Why wonder, therefore, if unlike other animals he is erratically unpredictable?


When one contemplates the streak of insanity running through human history, it appears highly probable that homo sapiens is a biological freak. . . the result of some remarkable mistake in the evolutionary process. . . Somewhere along the line of his ascent, something has gone wrong.13

I will not stop to consider Koestler's suggestion that with the help of psychopharmacology the evolutionary mistake which is man may hopefully be corrected. I simply inquire as to what has gone wrong. Koestler has his own conjecture, but I prefer to accept the explanation advanced in Scripture. Man, instead of living in a self-fulfilling fellowship with God, a fellowship of trust and obedience and love, misused his freedom. He did as the younger brother did in our Lord's parable of
the prodigal son: he turned away from his Father in the name of freedom. Man chose in an aboriginal catastrophe to transgress the laws and limits established by his Creator. He became a rebel. Thus God cries out in Isaiah 1:2, "I have brought up children and they have rebelled against me," a lament which echoes beyond the Jewish nation and reverberates over the whole human family. A planetary prodigal, man is thus in self-willed alienation from God, an exile wandering East of Eden, squandering his patrimony (think of our problems of pollution and starvation), living in misery and frustration, unable to be what he ought to be and to do what he ought to do, self-divided and self-destructive. The Biblical view of man as God's image who is now God's prodigal, a rebel and a sinner, impresses many of our contemporaries as incredibly mythological. Yet it impresses some of us as more congruent with the realities of history, psychology, and sociology, that any of its secular rivals.

**Man as God's Problem**

In the fourth place, the Bible, which we believe gives us God's perspective on man, asserts that man, God's creature, God's image, God's prodigal, has become God's problem through the aboriginal catastrophe of
self-chosen alienation. Joseph Wood Krutch, a noted student of literature who retired to Arizona and there devoted himself to the study of nature, sat one day on a mountain pondering a wild idea. What if in the creative process God has stopped after the fifth day? What if there had been no sixth day which saw the advent of man? Would that have been a wiser course for infinite wisdom to follow? After all, we read in Genesis 6:5, 6 that God indulged in some sober second thoughts about man, His own image turned into a prodigal. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." One might interpret the judgment of the flood as a sort of huge eraser which God used to rub out His mistake! Moreover, the Bible does not hesitate to say that man, God's image and God's prodigal, has become God's heartache. Yes, unhesitatingly, the Bible describes the divine reaction to human sin as a reaction of intensest grief. So in the prophecy of Hosea 11 we come across a text which, granting that the language is anthropopathic or attributing human emotions to God, portrays a heartbroken Creator:

When Israel was a child I loved him as a son and brought him out of Egypt. But the more I called to him, the more he rebelled, sacrificing to Baal and burning incense to idols. I trained him from infancy, I taught him to walk, I held him in my arms. But he doesn't know or even care that it was I who raised him. As a man would lead his favorite ox, so I led Israel with my ropes of love. I loosened his muzzle so he could eat. I myself have stopped and fed him. . . . Oh, how can I give you up, my Ephraim? How can I let you go? How can I forsake you like Adam and Zeboiim? My heart cries out within me; how I long to help you!
Listening to that pathetic outpouring over the people of Israel and by extension over people everywhere, we turn back in memory to the day in the first century when God incarnate looked upon the city of Jerusalem and wept.

God's creature and God's image, self-constituted as God's prodigal, man is not only God's heartache but also God's problem. What can the Creator do with the creature who has rebelliously prostituted his God-bestowed capacities? Should God admit failure? Should God destroy man as a tragic blunder? Should He send this sinful creature into eternal exile? God, if I may be allowed an anthropomorphism no more crude than those the Bible uses, has a God-sized problem on His hands. In His holiness He cannot wink at sin, pretending it does not matter. He cannot lightly pardon man's guilty disobedience. No, His justice requires that the sinner be punished; and yet to send man into eternal exile would mean the frustration of God's very purpose in creating this creature. For as best we can infer from the Bible, God Who is love was motivated by love to expand the orbit of beatitude by sharing His own joyful experience of love with finite persons who could respond to His love with their love. So what can God do? Blot out His blunder and stand forever baffled in the fulfillment of His desire by the will of a mere creature? God's dilemma is brought to a sharp focus in Romans 3:25, where the apostle Paul writes that God must be just while at the same time somehow justifying the sinner. God must remain loyal to the demands of His holiness and justice, yet forgive man, cleanse him, transform him, and only then welcome him into the eternal fellowship of holy love. This is certainly a God-sized problem, a dilemma which might seem to baffle even the resources of Deity.

But the Gospel is Good News precisely because of the amazing strategy by which God resolves His own
God-sized dilemma. And that strategy is the amazing strategy of the Cross. Incarnate in Jesus Christ, a Man at once truly divine and truly human, God dies on the cross bearing the full burden of the punishment human sin deserves. But in His Easter victory He breaks the power of the grave. And now He offers forgiveness, cleansing, transformation, and eternal fellowship with Himself to any man, who magnetized by Calvary love, will respond to the Gospel in repentance and faith. This, most hastily sketched, is God's solution to the problem of man. What a costly solution! Its cost, not even a sextillion of computers could ever compute!

I am one of those rather weakminded people who find chess too exhausting for their feeble brains. But I admire those intelligences of higher order who can play that intricate game with ease and pleasure. Paul Morphy, in his day a world champion chessman, stopped at an art gallery in England to inspect a painting of which he had often heard, "Checkmate!" The title explained the picture. On one side of the chessboard sat a leering devil; opposite him was a young man in despair. For the artist had so arranged the pieces that the young man's king was trapped. "Checkmate!" Intrigued and challenged, Morphy carefully studied the location of the pieces. Finally he exclaimed, "Bring me a chess board. I can still save him." He had hit on one adroit move which changed the situation and rescued the young man from his predicament. That is what God has done for all of us in Jesus Christ. By the mind-stunning maneuver of the Christ-event He has provided salvation from the consequences of our sin. He has opened up the way for His prodigals in their self-imposed exile to return home, forgiven, restored, welcomed unconditionally into the Father's loving fellowship.

**Man's Possibility**

Having discussed man's origin, and nature--man as
God's creature, image, prodigal, and problem--may I merely mention man's possibility as Biblically disclosed? For Scripture asserts that by repentance and faith man may enter into a new relationship with God, becoming *God's child, God's friend, God's colaborer*, and so being *God's glory* in this world and the world beyond time and space.

Instead of existing as Eiseley's cosmic orphan, man can enter into a filial relationship of obedient love with the Heavenly Father. Instead of existing in hostile estrangement from God, man can enter into a relationship with his Creator which is akin to the intimacy of mature friendship on its highest plane. Instead of existing in frustration, feeling that all his labor is a futile business of drawing water in a sieve, man can enter into a relationship of cooperative creativity with God; he can find fulfillment as he develops the potentials of our planet and eventually perhaps those of outer space. He can find fulfillment, too, functioning in his society as salt and light and yeast. He can also find fulfillment as he follows the law of neighbor love, sharing what-
ever good he may have, and sharing especially the Good News that God in love longs for the human family to be coextensive with His divine family. Instead of anticipating blank nonentity after he has died, man can enter into a relationship with God which will last through death and on through eternity as a conscious union of finite persons with infinite Person.

What a magnificent model of man this is! What a gulf stretches between it and those models of man proposed by reductive naturalism! So I close by voicing my agreement with that perceptive Jewish scholar, Abraham Heschel,

It is an accepted fact that the Bible has given the world a new concept of God. What is not realized is the fact that the Bible has given the world a new vision of man. The Bible is not a book about God; it is a book about man.

From the perspective of the Bible:
Who is man? A being in travail with God's dreams and designs, with God's dream of a world redeemed, of reconciliation of heaven and earth, of a mankind which is truly His image, reflecting His wisdom, justice and compassion. God's dream is not to be alone, to have mankind as a partner in the drama of continuous creation.  

I agree with that enthusiastically--except that in my opinion the Gospel of Jesus Christ adds to Heschel's statement heights and depths which Old Testament anthropology only intimates.

In all of our work, then, whether in science or any other vocation, may we strive to see man from God's perspective, remembering that God's model of authentic personhood is Jesus Christ. May our anthropology be more than a theoretical conviction. May it serve as a dynamic which shapes our own lives.
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8Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 183-184.
13Quoted in Denis Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COSMOLOGY IN
GENESIS I IN RELATION TO ANCIENT NEAR
EASTERN PARALLELS

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When in 1872 George Smith made known a Babylonian version of the flood story, which is part of the famous Gilgamesh Epic, and announced three years later a Babylonian creation story, which was published the following year in book form, the attention of OT scholars was assured and a new era of the study of Gn was inaugurated. Following the new trend numerous writers have taken it for granted that the opening narratives of Gn rest squarely on earlier Babylonian mythological texts and folklore. J. Skinner speaks, in summing up his discussion of the naturalization of Babylonian myths in Israel, of "Hebrew legends and their Babylonian originals." More specifically he writes "... it seems impossible to doubt that the cosmogony of Gn I rests on a conception of the process of creation fundamentally identical with that of the

1 The first news of this flood account was conveyed by Smith in 1872 through the columns of The Times and a paper read to the Society of Biblical Archaeology on Dec. 3, 1872, which was printed in the Society's Transactions, IT (1873), 13-34.
2 In a letter by Smith published in the Daily Telegraph, March 4, 1875.
4 John Skinner, Genesis (ICC; 2d ed.; Edinburgh, 1930), p. xi, who followed H. Gunkel, Genesis (HKAT; Gottingen, 1901), p. i; an English translation of the introduction of the commentary is published as The Legends of Genesis. The Biblical Saga and History, Schocken Book (New York, 1964). The term “legend” is the unfortunate translation of the German term “Sage” by which Gunkel meant the tradition of those who are not in the habit of writing, while “history” is written tradition. Gunkel did not intend to prejudge the historicity of a given narrative by calling it “legend.”
"Enuma elish" tablets.\textsuperscript{5} Thus by the turn of the century and continuing into the twenties and thirties the idea of a direct connection of some kind between the Babylonian and Hebrew accounts of creation was taken for granted, with the general consensus of critical opinion that the Hebrew creation story depended on a Babylonian original.

The last six decades have witnessed vast increases in knowledge of the various factors involved in the matter of parallels and relationships. W. G. Lambert and others\textsuperscript{6} remind us that one can no longer talk glibly about Babylonian civilization, because we now know that it was composed of three main strands before the end of the third millennium B.C. Furthermore, it is no longer scientifically sound to assume that all ideas originated in Mesopotamia and moved westward as H. Winckler's "pan-Babylonian" theory had claimed under the support of Friedrich Delitzsch and others.\textsuperscript{7} The cultural situation is extremely complex and diverse. Today we know that "a great variety of ideas circulated in ancient Mesopotamia."\textsuperscript{8}

In the last few decades there has been a change in the way in which scholars understand religio-historical parallels to Gn 1-3. In the past, scholars have approached the ancient Near Eastern creation accounts in general from the point of view that there seems to be in man a natural curiosity that leads him to inquire intellectually, at some stage, "How did

\textsuperscript{5} Skinner, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 47.


\textsuperscript{8} Lambert, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 289.
everything begin? How did the vast complex of life and nature originate?" In the words of a contemporary scholar, man sought "to abstract himself from immersion in present experience, and to conceive of the world as having had a beginning, and to make a sustained intellectual effort to account for it." Here the speaking about creator and creation in the ancient Near Eastern creation accounts is understood to be the result of an intellectual thought process. Over against this understanding of the ancient Near Eastern creation myths and myths of beginning there are scholars who believe that in these myths the existence of mankind in the present is described as depending in some way on the story of the origin of world and man. This means that in the first instance it is a question of the concern to secure and ensure that which is, namely, the world and man in it. It recognizes that the question of "how" man can continue to live and exist has prior concern over the intellectual question of the world's and man's beginning.

Correspondences and parallels between the Hebrew creation account of Gn 1:1-2:4 and the cosmogonies or Israel's earlier

10 This has been well summarized by R. Pettazoni, "Myths of Beginning and Creation-Myths," in Essays on the History of Religions (Supplements to Numen; Leiden, 1967), pp. 24-36; cf. C. Westermann, Genesis (Neukirchen- ‘luyn, 1966 ff.), pp. 28, 29. N. M. Sarna (Understanding Genesis, Schocken Book [New York, 1970], pp. 7-9), points out correctly that the so-called Babylonian Epic of Creation, Enem elfish, was annually reenacted at the Babylonian New Year festival. However, the "inextricable tie between myth and ritual, the mimetic enactment of the cosmogony in the fore: of ritual drama ... finds no counterpart in the Israelite cult" (p. 9).
12 C Westermann explained the complementary relationship between Gen. 1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-2d in the following way: "In Genesis 1 the question is, F3-om where does everything originate and how did it come about? In Genesis 2 the question is, Why is lean as he is?" The Genesis Accounts of Creation (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 24. Thus the complementary nature of the two creation accounts lies in the fact that Gn 1 is more concerned with the entirety of the creation of the World and Gn 2 more with the entirety of particular aspects of
and contemporary civilization in the ancient Near East have
to be approached with an open mind.\textsuperscript{13} The recognition of
correspondences and parallels raises the difficult question of
relationship and borrowing as well as the problem of evaluation.
N. M. Sarna, who wrote one of the most comprehensive recent
studies on the relationship between Gn and extra-biblical
sources bearing on it, states: ".. to ignore subtle differences
[between Genesis and ancient Near Eastern parallels] is to
present an unbalanced and untrue perspective and to pervert
the scientific method."\textsuperscript{14} The importance of difference is, there-
fore, just as crucial as the importance of similarity. Both must
receive careful and studied attention in order to avoid a
misreading of elements of one culture in terms of another,
which produces gross distortion.\textsuperscript{15}

The method employed in this paper is to discuss the
similarities and differences of certain terms and motifs in the
Hebrew creation account of Gn 1 over against similar or
related terms and motifs in ancient Near Eastern cosmologies
with a view to discovering the relationship and distinction
between them. This procedure is aimed to reveal certain
aspects of the nature of the Hebrew creation account.

\textit{Tehom--Tiamat}

Since the year 1895 many OT scholars have argued that
there is a definite relationship between the term \textit{tehom} (deep)
in Gn 1:2 and \textit{Tiamat}, the Babylonian female monster of the
primordial salt-water ocean in \textit{Enuma elish}.\textsuperscript{16} Some scholars
\textsuperscript{13} Cf. K. A. Kitchen, \textit{Ancient Orient and Old Testament} (Chicago,
1968), pp. 31-34.
\textsuperscript{14} Lambert, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 289, makes this point in reaction to
earlier excesses by scholars who traced almost every OT idea to
Babylonia.
\textsuperscript{15} See Kitchen, \textit{off. cit.}, pp. 87 ff.; Sarna, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. xxii ff.;
Lambert, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 287 ff.
\textsuperscript{16} This identification was made especially by H. Gunkel, \textit{Schopfung
and Chaos in Urzeit and Endzeit} (Göttingen, 1895), pp. 29 ff.
to the present day claim that there is in Gn 1:2 an "echo of the old cosmogonic myth,"\textsuperscript{17} while others deny it.\textsuperscript{18}

The question of a philological connection between the Babylonian \textit{Tiamat} and the Biblical \textit{tehom}, "deep," has its problems. A. Heidel \textsuperscript{19} has pointed out that the second radical of the Hebrew term \textit{tehom}, i.e., the letter \(\Pi\) (h), in corresponding loan-words from Akkadian would have to be an \(\text{K} (\text{t})\) and that in addition, the Hebrew term would have to be feminine whereas it is masculine.\textsuperscript{20} If \textit{Tiamat} had been taken over into Hebrew, it would have been left as it was or it would have been changed to \textit{ti/e'ama} (\(\text{P} \text{N} \text{X} \text{M}\)).\textsuperscript{21} Heidel has argued convincingly that both words go back to a common Semitic root from which also the Babylonian term \textit{tiamtu}, \textit{tamtu}, meaning "ocean, sea," is derived. Additional evidence for this has come from Ugarit where the word \textit{thm/thmt}, meaning "ocean, deep, sea," has come to light,\textsuperscript{22} and from Arabic \textit{Tihamatu} or


\textsuperscript{19} A. Heidel, \textit{The Babylonian Genesis}, Phoenix Book (Chicago, 1963), p. 100. Heidel's argumentation has been accepted by Westermann, \textit{Genesis}, p. 146; Schmidt, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 8o, n. 5; Payne, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 10, 11; and others.

\textsuperscript{20} Sarna, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 22, agrees that \textit{tehom} is not feminine by grammatical form, but points out that "it is frequently employed with a feminine verb or adjective." See also the discussion by M. K. Wakeman, "God's Battle With the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery" (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1969), pp. 143 ff.

\textsuperscript{21} Heidel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 100.

Tihama which is the name for the low-lying Arabian coastal land. On this basis there is a growing consensus of opinion that the Biblical term tehom and the Babylonian Tiamat derive from a common Semitic root. This means that the use of the word of tehom in Gn 1:2 cannot be used as an argument for a direct dependence of Gn I on the Babylonian Enuma elish.

In contrast to the concept of the personified Tiamat, the mythical antagonist of the creator-god Marduk, the tehom in Gn 1:2 lacks any aspect of personification. It is clearly an inanimate part of the cosmos, simply a part of the created world. The "deep" does not offer any resistance to God's creative activity. In view of these observations it is unsustainable to speak of a "demythologizing" of a mythical being in Gn 1:2. The term tehom as used in vs. 2 does not suggest that there is present in this usage the remnant of a latent conflict between a chaos monster and a creator god. The author of Gn 1 employs this term in a "depersonalized" and "non-mythical" way. Over against the Egyptian cosmogonic mythology contained in the Heliopolitan, Memphite, and Hermopolitan theologies, it is of significance that there is in Gn 1:2 neither a god rising out of tehom to proceed with creation nor does this term express the notion of a pre-

25 With Westermann, Genesis, p. 146.
26 For a detailed discussion of the relationship between tehom and corresponding Sumerian, Babylonian, and Egyptian notions, see the writer's forthcoming essay, "The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," to be published in VT, XXII (1972).
27 Stadelmann, op. cit., p. 16.
28 Galling, op. cit., p. 151.
existent, personified Ocean (Nun). With T. H. Gaster it is to be observed that Gn 1:2 "nowhere implies...that all things actually issued out of water."

In short, the description of the depersonalized, undifferentiated, unorganized, and passive state of tehom in Gn 1:2 is not due to any influence from non-Israelite mythology but is motivated through the Hebrew conception of the world. In stating the conditions in which this earth existed before God commanded that light should spring forth, the author of Gn 1 rejected explicitly contemporary mythological notions. He uses the term teh6m, whose cognates are deeply mythological in their usage in ancient Near Eastern creation speculations, in such a way that it is not only non-mythical in content but antimythical in purpose.

The Separation of Heaven and Earth

The idea of a separation of heaven and earth is present in all ancient Near Eastern mythologies. Sumerian mythology tells that the "earth had been separated from heaven" by Enlil, the air-god, while his father An "carried off the heaven." Babylonian mythology in Enuma elish reports the division of heaven and earth when the victorious god Marduk forms

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31 On the distinction between the Hebrew world-view and that of its neighbors, see Galling, op. cit., pp. 154, 155; Wurthwein, op. cit., p. 36; Stadelmann, op. cit., pp. 178 ff.


33 Kramer, History Begins at Sumer, p. 82.
heaven from the upper half of the slain *Tiamat*, the primeval salt-water ocean

IV: 138 He split her like a shellfish into two parts
139 Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky.\(^{34}\)

From the remaining parts of *Tiamat* Marduk makes the earth and the deep.\(^{35}\) The Hittite Kumarbi myth, a version of a Hurrian myth, visualizes that heaven and earth were separated by a cutting tool:

> When heaven and earth were built upon me [Upelluri, an Atlas figure] I knew nothing of it, and when they came and cut heaven and earth asunder with a copper tool, that also I knew not.\(^{36}\)

In Egyptian mythology Shu, the god of the air, is referred to as he who "raised Nut [the sky-goddess] above him, Geb [the earth-god] being at his feet."\(^{37}\) Thus heaven and earth were separated from an embrace by god Shu (or, in other versions, Ptah, Sokaris, Osiris, Khnum, and Upuwast of Assiut), "who raised heaven aloft to make the sky."\(^{38}\) In Phoenician mythology the separation is pictured as splitting the world egg.\(^{39}\)

The similarity between the Biblical account and mythology lies in the fact that both describe the creation of heaven and earth to be an act of separation.\(^{40}\) The similarity, however, does not seem to be as significant as the differences. In Gn 1 the firmament (or heaven) is raised simply by the fiat of God. In contrast to this, *Enuma elish* and Egyptian mythology have water as the primal generating force, a notion utterly foreign to Gn creation.\(^{41}\) In Gn, God wills and the powerless, inani-

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\(^{34}\) ANET\(^3\), p. 67.

\(^{35}\) According to a newly discovered fragment of Tablet V. See Schmidt, op. cit., p. 23.


\(^{37}\) Coffin Texts (ed. de Buck), II, 78a, p. 19, as quoted by Brandon, *op. cit.*, p. 28. The date is the Middle Kingdom (2060-1788 B.C.).

\(^{38}\) Morenz, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-182.


\(^{40}\) Westermann, Genesis, pp. 47 ff., 160 ff.

\(^{41}\) Sarna, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Stadelmann, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
mate, and inert waters obey. Furthermore, there is a notable
difference with regard to how the "firmament" was fashioned
and the material employed for that purpose, and how Marduk
created in Enuma elish. The separation of waters in Gn is
carried out in two steps: (1) There is a separation of waters
on a horizontal level with waters above and below the firma-
ment (expanse) (Gn 1:6-8) ; and (2) a separation of waters on
the vertical level, namely the separation of waters below the
firmament (expanse) in one place (ocean) to let the dry land
(earth = ground) appear (Gn 1:9, 10).

These notable differences have led T. H. Gaster to suggest
that "the writer [of Gn 1] has suppressed or expurgated older
and cruder mythological fancies." But these differences are
not so much due to suppressing or expurgating mythology.
They rather indicate a radical break with the mythical
cosmogony. We agree with C. Westermann that the Biblical
author in explaining the creation of the firmament (expanse)
"does not reflect in this act of creation the contemporary
world-view, rather he overcomes it." Inherent in this
presentation of the separation of heaven and earth is the
same antimythical emphasis of the author of Gn 1 which we
have already noted.

Creation by Word

It has been maintained that the concept of the creation of
the world by means of the spoken word has a wide ancient
Near Eastern background. It goes beyond the limits of this
paper to cite every evidence for this idea.

42 T. H. Gaster; Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament

43 Westermann, Genesis, p. 160, against G. von Rad, Old Testament
Theology (Edinburgh, 1962), I, 148 "This account of Creation is, of
course, completely bound to the cosmological knowledge of its time."
(New York, 1965), I, 98: Gn 1 "borrowed from the ideas of those days
about the physical constitution of the world,..."
In *Enuma elish* Marduk was able by word of mouth to let a "cloth" vanish and restore it again.\(^{45}\) "A creation of the world by word, however, is not known in Mesopotamia."\(^{46}\) This situation is different in Egypt. From the period of Ptolemy IV (221-204 B.C.) comes a praise to the god Thoth: "Everything that is has come about through his word."\(^{47}\) In Memphite theology it is stated that Atum, the creator-god, was created by the speech of Ptah. The climax comes in the sentence

Indeed, all the divine order really came into being through what the heart thought and the tongue commanded.\(^{48}\)

The idea of creation by divine word is clearly apparent.\(^{49}\) This notion appears again. ". .. the Creator [Hike = magic itself] commanded, a venerable god, who speaks with his mouth... . "\(^{50}\) G. F. Brandon points out that the notion of creation by word in Egyptian thought is to be understood that "creation was effected by magical utterance."\(^{51}\) Further-

\(^{46}\) Schmidt, *Ohb* cit., p. 174. Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp. 79, 80, makes the point that the Near Eastern idea of the creative power of the divine word was a Sumerian development. "All that the creating deity had to do... was to lad- his plans, utter the word, and pronounce a name" (p. 79). This he believes was an abstraction of the power of the command of the king.
\(^{48}\) ANET\(^{3}\), p. s.
\(^{49}\) Detailed discussions of the Egyptian idea of creation by divine word in relation to the OT idea of creation by divine word have been presented by K. Koch, "Wort und Einheit des Schopfegottes in Memphis and Jerusalem," *ZThK*, 62 (1965), 251-293, and Frame, *op. cit.*, pp. 2 ff. Koch claims that the OT idea of creation by divine word is derived from the Memphite cosmogony. But a direct dependence is to be rejected. C.f. Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 56; Schmidt, *Ohb* cit., p. 177. In Egypt creation comes by a magic word, an idea alien to *Genesis* creation.
\(^{50}\) Brandon, *Ohb* cit., p. 37, from a Coffin Text dated to 2240 u.c.
\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 38.
more, creation by magical power of the spoken word is only one of many ways creation takes place in Egyptian mythology.\textsuperscript{52}

N. M. Sarna considers the similarity between the Egyptian notion of creation by word and the one in Gn 1 as "wholly superficial."\textsuperscript{53} In Egyptian thought the pronouncement of the right magical word, like the performance of the right magical action, is able to actualize the potentialities inherent in matter. The Gn concept of creation by divine fiat is not obscured by polytheistic and mantic-magic distortions.\textsuperscript{54} Gn 1 passes in absolute silence over the nature of matter upon which the divine word acted creatively. The constant phrase "and God said" (Gn 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26) with the concluding refrain "and it was so" (Gn 1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30) indicates that God's creative word does not refer to the utterance of a magic word, but to the expression of an effortless, omnipotent, unchallengeable word of a God who transcends the world. The author of Gn I thus shows here again his distance from mythical thought. The total concept of the creation by word in Gn I is unique in the ancient world. The writer of Gn I attacks the idea of creation by means of a magical utterance with the concept of a God who creates by an effortless word.\textsuperscript{55} It is his way of indicating that Israelite religion is liberated from the baneful influence of magic. But he also wishes to stress the essential difference of created being from divine

\textsuperscript{53} Sarna, op. cit., p. 12.
\textsuperscript{55} E. Hilgert, "References to Creation in the Old Testament other than in Genesis 1 and 2," in The Stature of Christ. Essays in Honor of E. Heppenstall, ed. by V. Carner and G. Stanhiser (Loma Linda, Calif., 1970), pp. 83-87, concludes that in Gn 1 there is a complete lack of a primeval dualism, i.e., a cosmic struggle from which a particular god emerged victorious. Yahweh is asserted always to have been the supreme omnipotent God. This is true also of other OT creation passages.
Being, i.e., in Gn 1 creation by word is to exclude any idea of emanationism, pantheism, and primeval dualism.

The Creation and Function of the Luminaries

Astral worship was supported in a variety of forms by the entire civilization of the ancient Near East, especially in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Among the Sumerians the moon as the major astral deity was born of Enlil and Ninlil, the air-god and air-goddess respectively. He was known as Nanna. Nanna, the moon-god, and his wife Ningal are the parents of Utu, the sun-god or the sun. In Egypt the sun in its varied appearances was the highest deity, so that in the course of time many gods acquired sun characteristics. On the other hand, the moon had an inferior role. The daily appearance of the sun was considered as its birth. The moon waned because it was the ailing eye of Horus, the falcon god. It goes without saying that both sun and moon as deities were worshiped. In Hittite religion the "first goddess of the country" was the sun-goddess Arinna, who was also the "chief deity of the Hittite pantheon." In Ugarit the deities of sun and moon are not as highly honored as other deities. One text asks that sacrifices be made to "the sun, the lady [= moon], and the stars." The great Baal myth has a number of references to the sun-goddess who seeks Baal. A separate hymn celebrates the marriage of the moon-god Yarih, "the One Lighting Up Heaven," with the goddess Nikkal.

In Enuma elish one could speak of a creation of the moon only if one understands the expression "caused to shine" as indicating the creation of the moon. It is to be noted that

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56 Kramer, Sumerian Mythology, p. 41.
58 Schmidt, op. cit., p. 117.
59 Text 52 (= SS), 54.
60 Text 62 (= IAB); 49 (= IIIAB).
61 Text 77 (= NK).
62 ANET³, p. 68.
the order of the heavenly bodies in *Enuma elish* is stars-sun-moon. The stars are undoubtedly referred to first because of the astral worship accorded them in Babylonia and "because of the great significance of the stars in the lives of the astronomically and astrologically minded Babylonians." The stars are not reported to have been created; the work of Marduk consists singularly in founding stations for the "great gods ... the stars" (Tablet V: 1-2). There is likewise no mention of the creation of the sun.

Against this background the contrast between the Biblical and the non-Biblical ideas on sun, moon, and stars becomes apparent. "Indeed," says W. H. Schmidt, "there comes to expression here [in Gn 1:14-18] in a number of ways a polemic against astral religion."

(1) In the Biblical presentation everything that is created, whatever it may be, cannot be more than creature, i.e., creatureliness remains the fundamental and determining characteristic of all creation. In *Enuma elish* Marduk fixes the astral likenesses of the gods as constellations (Tablet V:2), for the gods cannot be separated from the stars and constellations which represent them.

(2) In the place of an expressly mythical rulership of the star Jupiter over the other stars of astral deities in *Enuma elish*, we find in Gn the rulership of a limited part of creation, namely day and night through the sun and the moon, both of which are themselves created objects made by God.

(3) The heavenly bodies in the Biblical creation narrative are not "from eternity" as the Hittite Karatepe texts claim for the sun-god. The heavenly bodies do have a beginning; they are created and are neither independent nor autonomous.

(4) The author of the Biblical creation story in Gn 1 avoids

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63 Not as Heidel, off. cit., p. 117, says, "stars, moon, sun."
64 Ibid.
65 ANET³, p. 68.
the names "sun" and "moon," which are among Israel's neighbors designations for deities. A conscious opposition to ancient Near Eastern astral worship is apparent, for the common Semitic word for "sun" was also a divine name.68

(5) The heavenly bodies appear in Gn 1 in the "degrading" status of "luminaries" whose function it is to "rule." They have a serving function and are not the light itself. As carriers of light they merely are "to give light" (Gn 1:15-18).

(6) The Biblical narrative hardly mentions the stars. The Hebrew phrase "and the stars" is a seemingly parenthetical addition to the general emphasis on the greater and smaller luminaries. In view of star worship so prevalent in Mesopotamia,70 it appears that the writer intended to emphasize that the stars themselves are created things and nothing more. An autonomous divine quality of the stars is thus denied. They are neither more nor less than all the other created things, i.e., they share completely in the creatureliness of creation. With von Rad and others we may conclude that "the entire passage vs. 14-19 breathes a strongly antimythical pathos"71 or polemic. Living in the world of his day, the writer of Gn 1 was undoubtedly well acquainted with pagan astral worship, as were the readers for whom he wrote. The Hebrew account of the creation, function, and limitation of the luminaries demonstrates that he did not borrow his unique thoughts from

68 Stadelmann, op. cit., pp. 57 ff.
69 Von Rad, Genesis, p. 53.
70 E. Dhorme, Les Religions de Babylonie et d'Assyrie (Paris, 1949), p. 82, presents evidence for the general tendency of giving divine attributes to the stars. T. H. Gaster, Thespis (2d ed.; New York, 1961), pp. 320 ff., links certain characteristics of astral worship with the seasonal myth of the dying and rising god of fertility (Tammuz, Osiris, Adonis, Attis, etc.).
the prevailing pagan mythical views. Rather he combats them while, at the same time, he portrays his own picture of the creatureliness of the luminaries and of their limitations.

The Purpose of Man's Creation

We need to discuss also the matter of the purpose of man's creation in Sumero-Akkadian mythology and in Gn 1. The recently published Atrahasis Epic,\(^ {72}\) which parallels Gn 1-9 in the sequence of Creation-Rebellion-Man's Achievements-Flood,\(^ {73}\) is concerned exclusively with the story of man and his relationship with the gods.\(^ {74}\) It should be noted, however, that this oldest Old Babylonian epic\(^ {75}\) does not open with an account of the creation of the world. Rather its opening describes the situation when the world had been divided among the three major deities of the Sumerian-Akkadian pantheon. The seven senior-gods (Anunnaki) were making the junior-gods (Igigi) suffer with physical work.

\[
I : i : 3-4 \text{ The toil of the gods was great}, \\
The work was heavy, the distress was much--\(^ {76}\)
\]

The work was indeed so much for the junior-gods that they decided to strike and depose their taskmaster, Enlil. When Enlil learned of this he decided to counsel with his senior-god colleagues upon a means to appease the rebel-gods. Finally, the senior-gods in council decided to make a substitute to do the work:

"Let man carry the toil of the gods."\(^ {77}\)

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74 Ibid., p. 6. Note now also, the article by W. L. Moran, "The Creation of Man in Atrahasis I 192-248," *BASOR*, 200 (1970), 48-56, who deals with the origins and nature of man in Atrahasis.
75 In its present form it dates to ca. 1635 s.c.; see Lambert-Millard, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
76 Ibid., p. 43.
77 Ibid., p. 57.
In *Enuma elish* the gods were also liberated from work by the creation of man.\(^7\) The idea that man was created for the purpose of relieving the gods of hard labor by supplying them with food and drink was standard among the Babylonians.\(^8\) This motif may derive from Sumerian prototypes. In the Sumerian myth *Enki and Ninmah* we also find that man is created for the purpose of freeing the gods from laboring for their sustenance.\(^9\)

The description of the creation of man in Gn 1:26-28 has one thing in common with Mesopotamian mythology, namely, that in both instances man has been created for a certain purpose. Yet this very similarity between Gn 1 and pagan mythology affords us an excellent example of the superficiality of parallels if a single feature is torn from its cultural and contextual moorings and treated independently. T. H. Gaster makes the following significant statement:

> But when it comes to defining the purpose of man's creation, he [the scriptural writer] makes a supremely significant advance upon the time-honored pagan view. In contrast to the doctrine enunciated in the Mesopotamian myths. .. , man is here represented, not as the menial of the gods, but as the ruler of the animal and vegetable kingdoms (1:28) ...

In Gn 1 "man is the pinnacle of creation," to use the words of N. M. Sarna.\(^10\) On the other hand, in Mesopotamian mythology the creation of man is almost incidental, presented as a kind of afterthought, where he is a menial of the gods to provide them with nourishment and to satisfy their physical needs. The author of Gn 1 presents an antithetical view. The very first communication between God and man comes in the form of a divine blessing.

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\(^7\) Tablet IV: 107-121, 127; V:147, 148; VI:152, 153; VII 27-29; ANET\(^3\), pp. 66-70.
\(^8\) For other Babylonian texts which contain this idea, see Heidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-63, 65, 66.
\(^9\) Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, pp. 69, 70.
Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the earth (1:28 NEB).

This is followed by the pronouncement that all seed-bearing plants and fruit trees "shall be yours for food" (1:29 NEB). This expresses divine care and concern for man's physical needs and well-being in antithesis to man's purpose to care for the needs and well-being of the gods in Mesopotamian mythology. In stressing the uniqueness of the purpose of man's creation the Biblical writer has subtly and effectively succeeded, not just in combatting pagan mythological notions, but also in conveying at the same time the human-centered orientation of Gn 1 and the sense of man's glory and freedom to rule the earth for his own needs.

The Order of Creation

There is general agreement that there is a certain correspondence between the order of creation in Enuma elish and Gn 1. In Gn 1 the order is light, firmament, seas and dry land with vegetation, luminaries, animal life in sea and sky, animal life on earth, and man. A comparison with Enuma elish indicates certain analogies in the order of creation: firmament, dry land, luminaries, and lastly man. These orders of creation certainly resemble each other in a remarkable way. But there are some rather significant differences which have been too often overlooked. (1) There is no explicit statement in Enuma elish that light was created before the creation of luminaries. Although scholars have in the past maintained that Enuma elish has the notion of light before the creation of the heavenly luminaries, such a view is based on dubious interpretations of certain phenomena.

83 See the convenient summary of the order of creation in Heidel, op. cit., pp. 128, 129, which is, however, not correct on all points.

84 Against Heidel, op. cit., pp. 82, 101, 102, 129, 135 and E. A. Speiser, Genesis, "The Anchor Bible" (Garden City, N.Y., 1964), p. 100, n. 5, points out correctly that the reference in Tablet 1:68 concerning the halo which surrounded Apsu and which...
in *Enuma elish* to the creation of the sun. To infer this from Marduk's character as a solar deity and from what is said about the creation of the moon in Tablet V is too precarious.  

(3) Missing also in *Enuma elish* is the creation of vegetation, although Marduk is known to be the "creator of grains and herbs." Even if the creation of vegetation were mentioned in the missing lines of Tablet V, its appearance would have been after the luminaries whereas in Gn it is before the luminaries.  

(4) Finally, *Enuma elish* knows nothing of the creation of any animal life in sea and sky or on earth.  

A comparison of creative processes and their order indicates the following: (1) Gn 1 outlines twice as many processes of creation as *Enuma elish*; and (2) there is only a general analogy between the order of creation in both accounts; it is not identical.  

We can turn only briefly to the question of dependence. Against the view of earlier scholars, A. Heidel, C. F. Whitley, J. Albertson, and others seem to be correct in pointing out that the general analogy between both stories does not suggest a direct borrowing on the part of Gn 1 from *Enuma elish*. It is not inconceivable that the general analogy in the order of creation, which is far from being identical, may be accounted was put on by Marduk, the solar deity, has nothing to do with the creation of light as Gn 1:3f. describes it.  


86 Tablet VII:2; *ANET*, p. 70.  

87 Whitley, op. cit., p. 34.  

88 Heidel, op. cit., pp. 117 f., has given reasons for doubting that the missing lines of Tablet V could have contained an account of the creation of vegetation, of animals, birds, reptiles, and fishes. His doubts have since been justified; see B. Landsberger and J. V. Kinnier Wilson, "The Fifth Tablet of Enurna Elis," *JNES*, XX (1961), 154-179.  

89 Whitley, op. cit., pp. 34, 35, is correct in concluding that "there is no close parallel in the sequence of the creation of elements common to both cosmogonies."  

90 For a recent discussion on the various views with regard to the question of dependence, see Albertson, op. cit., pp. 233-239.  

91 Heidel, op. cit., pp. 132-139; Whitley, op. cit., p. 38; Albertson, op. cit., p. 239; Payne, op. cit., p. 13; etc.
for on the basis of the assumption that both stories may have sprung from a common tradition of remote origin in the pre-patriarchal period when the Hebrew ancestors dwelt in Mesopotamia.\(^92\)

As a matter of fact, a comparison of the general thrust of *Enuma elish* and Gn 1 makes the sublime and unique character of the latter stand out in even bolder relief. The battle myth which is a key motif in *Enuma elish* is completely absent in Gn 1. J. Hempel seems to be correct when he points out that it was the "conscious intent" of the author of Gn 1 to destroy the myth's theogony by his statement that it was the God of Israel who created heaven and earth.\(^93\) Along the same line W. Eichrodt sees in the use of the name Elohim in Gn 1 a tool to assist Israel to clarify her concepts of God against pagan polytheistic theogony.\(^94\) E. Wurthwein suggests that the placing of the creation accounts in Gn at the beginning of a linear history emphasizes a contrast to the cyclical nature of mythology, which is especially significant in view of the fact that creation in Gn 1 comes to a close within a certain non-repeatable period of creative time that closed with the seventh day. In his view this should be understood as a polemic which marks off, defends, and delimits against such mythical speculations that maintain a constantly repeating re-enactment of creation.\(^95\) Furthermore, it should not go unnoticed that the creation of the *tanninim*, "sea monsters," in Gn 1:21 reflects a deliberate effort to contradict the notion of creation in terms of a struggle, which is a key motif in the battle myth of pagan cosmogony. It also puts emphasis upon the creatureliness of

\(^{92}\) This view has been held in some form or other by, among others, Ira M. Price, *The Monuments and the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1925), pp. 129 f.; Heidel, *op. cit.*, p. 139; Albertson, *op. cit.*, p. 239.


\(^{95}\) Wurthwein, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
the *tanninim* as being identical to that of other created animals.96

Our examination of crucial terms and motifs in the cosmology of Gn 1 in comparison with ancient Near Eastern analogues indicates that the author of Gn 1 exhibits in a number of critical instances a sharply antimythical polemic. With a great many safeguards he employs certain terms and motifs, partly taken from his ideologically incompatible predecessors and partly chosen in contrast to comparable concepts in ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies, and fills them in his own usage with new meaning consonant with his aim and world-view. Gn cosmology as presented in Gn 1:1-2:4a appears thus basically different from the mythological cosmologies of the ancient Near East. It represents not only a "complete break"97 with the ancient Near Eastern mythological cosmologies but represents a parting of the spiritual ways which meant an undermining of the prevailing mythological cosmologies.98 This was brought about by the conscious and deliberate antimythical polemic that runs as a red thread through the entire Gn cosmology. The antimythical polemic has its roots in the Hebrew understanding of reality which is fundamentally opposed to the mythological one.

96 For a detailed discussion, see the writer's forthcoming essay, *supra*, n. 26.

97 So Sarna, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 ff., who points out that the Genesis creation account in its "non-political," "non-cultic," and "non-mythological" nature and function "represents a complete break with Near Eastern tradition" (p. 9). Independent of the former, Payne, *off. cit.*, p. 29, maintains that "the biblical account is theologically not only far different from, but totally opposed to, the ancient Near Eastern myths."

98 Childs, *op. cit.*, pp. 39 ff., speaks of the "concept of the world as present in Genesis z" being in "conflict with the myth" (p. 39). "The Priestly writer has broken the myth ... " (p. 43). However, he also claims that the Biblical writer "did not fully destroy the myth," but "reshaped" and "assimilated" it in a stage of "demythologization" (pp. 42, 43). Later he concludes that "Israel succeeded in overcoming myth because of an understanding of reality which opposed the mythical" (p. 97). However, myth was "overcome" already in Gn 1 and not merely "broken" there.

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THE GENEALOGIES OF GEN 5 AND 11 AND THEIR ALLEGED BABYLONIAN BACKGROUND

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Andrews University

With the discovery in the early 1870's of the Babylonian flood account, which was recognized to be closely related to the flood story in Genesis,¹ there was opened a new chapter of comparative studies relating the various aspects of the book of Genesis to materials uncovered from ancient Near Eastern civilizations. Attention was drawn to the report of the Babylonian priest Berossos concerning ten antediluvian kings who ruled for vast periods of time.² H. Gunkel, among others, considered this as a background for the ten antediluvian patriarchs of Gen 5. In the year 1901 he suggested agreement between Gen 5 and the report of Berossos in the following four major areas: (1) the time before the flood, (2) the number "ten," (3) the large numbers, and (4) the correspondence of names (Nos. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 in the enumeration of Berossos).³ At about the same time the well-known Assyriologist H. Zimmern concluded, "It can hardly be doubted that the Biblical tradition of Gen 5 (P) concerning the antediluvian patriarchs is basically identical with the Babylonian tradition about ten antediluvian primeval kings."⁴ These views became dominant and in the course of time, upon the publication of the Sumerian King List, were applied to the genealogies of

¹ On Dec. 3, 1872, G. Smith read a paper to the Society of Biblical Archaeology on the Babylonian flood story which was printed in the Transaction of the Society in 1873.
³ H. Gunkel, Genesis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1901), pp. 121-123.
both Gen 5 and 11. E. A. Speiser's commentary, which is particularly noted for sensitivity in the relationship to ancient Near Eastern backgrounds, suggests that the biblical genealogies are dependent upon a Mesopotamian source.

1. New Ancient Near Eastern Data

The year 1923 was the beginning of a new era as regards the alleged Babylonian background of Gen 5 and 11, because S. Langdon published in that year the first cuneiform text of what is now known as the Sumerian King List. About a decade and a half later T. Jacobsen produced the standard publication, entitled The Sumerian King List (1939). These cuneiform materials surprisingly supported much of the information known from Berossos but at the same time brought about significant corrections.

Since 1952 a steady stream of additional texts and fragments of the Sumerian King List has come to light and seen publication.


6 E. A. Speiser, Genesis, AB, p. 41.


The Sumerian King List is now available in more than one version, with significant differences in the sequence of cities and of kings and their lengths of reign. These facts have made it evident that a "canonical" form of the Sumerian King List was never in existence. Such texts as the genealogy of Hammurapi and the rulers of Lagas, the Assyrian and Babylonian King Lists, and cuneiform chronicles throw new light on the respective literary genres and the relationship of the biblical genealogies to their ancient Near Eastern analogues.

2. Comparison of Gen 5 and 11 with the Sumerian King List

The new set of cuneiform data relating to the Sumerian King List and the information given by Berossos provide new insights into the alleged Babylonian background of the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11. There remains a formal similarity between the


genealogies in Gen 5 and 11 and the Sumerian King List in terms of listings\textsuperscript{14} divided by a flood. The listings of antediluvian and postdiluvian rulers in the major recension of the Sumerian King List are separated by but one sentence: "The Flood swept there-over [the earth]."\textsuperscript{15} The genealogies in Gen 5 and 11 are also separated, but by extensive and various materials: (1) the marriage of the sons of God with the daughters of men (6:1-4), (2) an intricate story of the flood (6:5-9:7), (3) the universal covenant (9:8-17), (4) the Table of Nations (10:1-32 ), and (5) the story of the tower of Babel (11:1-9).

There are a number of significant areas where comparison may be made between the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 and the Sumerian King List from Old Babylonian times. It is helpful and revealing to develop these areas as follows

1. \textit{Semitic Names versus Sumerian Names}. The claim of the correspondence of the names between the listings by Berossos and Gen 5 could not be sustained with the discovery of cuneiform materials relating to the listing of Berossos. H. Zimmern himself acknowledged that "the beautiful combinations (with the names in Gen 5) ... have come to a merciless end."\textsuperscript{16} The names turned out to be Sumerian instead of Semitic. J. J. Finkelstein has recently noted, "Certainly, the earlier attempts to harmonize the Biblical and Mesopotamian names proved utterly futile."\textsuperscript{17} The reason for this radical change from the early position of Gunkel and others rests in the fact that no less than six different cuneiform versions are now at hand for comparative purposes on the basis of which the Greek version of Berossos could be reassessed.

Research into the origin of the Sumerian King List has led to the conclusion that the list of kings before the flood and the list of kings after the flood, were originally separate.
\textsuperscript{17} Finkelstein, "The Antediluvian Kings," p. 50, n. 41.
All of these versions agree on the Sumerian origin of the names and the distance from those in Gen 5 and 11.

2. Longevity versus Reigns. C. Westermann noted correctly that among the differences between Gen 5 (and 11) and the Sumerian King List is that the former provides the numbers in terms of "years of life" whereas the latter gives the numbers in terms of "years of reign." The distinction between longevity and rulership is an important one. Each has its own independent functions in the context in which it appears.

3. Line of Descent versus Succession of Kings. Gen 5 follows the standard line of descent formula, "When PN₁ had lived x years, he became father of PN₂. Then PN₁ lived y years after he became the father of PN₂ and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of PN₁ were z years, and he died." Gen 11 employs the same line of descent formula with the exception of the last sentence. At times additional information is inserted in Gen 5 and 11. Both Gen 5 and 11 have "a descending type of genealogy" in which the generations are traced in a supposedly unbroken line of descent from the first person mentioned to the last one. The Sumerian King List, on the other hand, lists kings and seeks to trace a succession of them in various cities. The flexible pattern employed is as follows: "In CN, RN₁, ruled x years, RN₂, ruled x years, RN₃ ruled x years, x king(s) ruled y years." One antediluvian section concludes: "There are x (5) cities, x (8) kings ruled x (241,200) years. Then the flood swept thereover." The succession of kings with their reigns differs radically from the line of descent genealogy in Gen 5 and 11, which is totally unconcerned and uninterested in kings, dynasties, and cities.

4. Lengths of Life versus Lengths of Reign. The relatively high figures of life-spans of Gen 5 which nevertheless do not ever
exceed a single millennium "turn out to be exceptionally moderate by comparison" with the Sumerian King List where the respective lengths of reigns of the kings run from 18,600 years for king Ubarutu (WB 444) to 72,000 for kings Alalgar, [. . .] kidunnu, and Enmeduranna. In many instances there are great divergencies regarding the lengths of reigns and the number of kings in the respective witnesses to the Old Babylonian tradition. The following comparison may be helpful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King</th>
<th>WB 444</th>
<th>WB. 62</th>
<th>UCBC 9-1x19</th>
<th>BERossos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alulim</td>
<td>28,800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aloros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alalgar</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alaparos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entnenuanna</td>
<td>13,200</td>
<td>. . .</td>
<td>Ammeluanna</td>
<td>Amelon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enmengalanna</td>
<td>28,800</td>
<td>. . .</td>
<td>En sipazianna</td>
<td>Amenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumuzi</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Megalaros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensipazianna</td>
<td>28,800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Daonos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enmedurunki</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Euderachos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubarutu</td>
<td>18,600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Xisuthros</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total:

Kings-8
Years-241,200

Kings-10
Years-456,000

Kings -7 [or 8]
Years-186,000+

Kings - 10
Years-432,000

One notices the striking differences in total years of reigns in some texts. The total years are exceeded by 200,000 in some recensions. Of course, these fabulous lengths of reigns are not trustworthy. It has been thought that there has been use of some kind of scheme built on the Sumerian duodecimal system, where all figures can be divided by 1 SAR = 3,600 (60 x 60) or through a sixth of it (600), or other systems. In view of this, "It would seem fair to conclude that no significance at all is to be

20 Speiser, *Genesis*, p. 42.
21 ANET, p. 265.
25 RTAT, p. 113, n. 107.
attributed to the total number of years given for the entire antediluvian period in the different texts [of the Sumerian King List]."26

5. Ten Antediluvian Ancestors versus Seven-to-Ten Kings. As recently as 1965 the Assyriologist W. G. Lambert pointed to the number of "ten long-lived patriarchs from Adam to Noah" that span the time to the flood as a point of borrowing on the part of the Hebrews from Mesopotamia.27 However, the major recension of the Sumerian King List (WB 444) contains only eight and not ten kings.28 One text contains only seven kings (W) and another (UCBC 9-1819) either seven or eight,29 whereas a bilingual fragment from Ashurbanipal's library has but nine kings.30 Berossos and only one ancient tablet (WB 62), i.e. only two texts (of which only one is a cuneiform document), give a total of ten antediluvian kings.31 On the basis of the cuneiform data it can no longer be suggested that the Sumerian King List contained originally ten antediluvian kings after which the biblical genealogies were patterned. In addition, the supposedly unbroken line of descent in Gen 5 is in stark contrast to the concurrent or contemporaneous dynasties of the Sumerian King List.32 We must also note that Gen 11 lists ten postdiluvians from Shem to Abraham whereas the Sumerian King List enumerates thirty-nine kings.

6. Tracing of Ancestors versus Unification of the Land. The basic ideology of Gen 5 and 11 appears to be to trace the ancestors in a supposedly unbroken line of descent (i.e. linear genealogy) from the first man (Adam) at creation to the last man (Noah)

28 Jacobsen, Sumerian King List, p. 77; ANET, p. 265; RTAT, p. 114.
before the flood (Gen 5) and from one son of the flood hero (Shem) to the first Hebrew patriarch (Abraham) (Gen 11). There is a radical difference between this and the basic ideology of the Sumerian King List. Various scholars have pointed out that the latter's ideology is built upon the principle of "a widely accepted political idea which cherished the concept of long-continued unification of the land." W. W. Hallo has pointed out that the Sumerian King List is "a political tract, designed to perpetuate the perfectly transparent fiction that Sumer and Akkad had, since the Flood, been united under the rule of a single king, albeit that king might come at any given time from any one of eleven different cities." There is not the slightest hint in either Gen 5 or 11 that it shares with the Sumerian King List a political ideology or ideal. The Mesopotamian texts have a purpose totally different from that of the supposed biblical counterparts.

7. Genealogy versus King List. Gen 5 and 11 are commonly recognized as belonging to the type of literature designated by the term "genealogy." A "genealogy" in the Bible consists of a list of names indicating the ancestors or descendants of a person or persons by tracing lineage through an ascending scale (individual to ancestor) or a descending one (ancestor to individual). It has been noted correctly that the Sumerian King List is not a genealogy at all. Indeed, "The decisive difference lies in the fact that both texts [Gen 5 and the Summerian King List] belong to a different genre: Gen 5 is a genealogy, the Old Babylonian [Sumerian] King List is a presentation of the sequence of dynasties of a series of cities with the sequence of their kings and their spans of reigns." It is an undisputed fact that none of the six currently known recensions of the Sumerian King List

33 Hartman, "Sumerian King List and Genesis 5 and 11B," p. 27.
34 W. W. Hallo, "Royal Hymns and Mesopotamian Unity," JCS 17 (1963): 112.
37 Westermann, Genesis, p. 472.
contains any genealogical notices at all for the antediluvian period, and in the postdiluvian period such notices are sporadic and limited to two generations only. \(^{38}\) The Sumerian King List is a "political tract"\(^{39}\) of the "king list" genre, but Gen 5 and 11 belong to the "genealogy" genre. Both of these genres are distinguished also in cuneiform literature.\(^{40}\)

8. *History of Mankind versus History of a People.* The genealogy of Gen 5 has the repeated clause "and he had other sons and daughters."\(^{41}\) This, along with other indicators, seeks to express the growth of mankind from generation to generation.\(^{42}\) It also emphasizes the spread of mankind from Adam to Noah. Essentially the same emphasis is evident in the Table of Nations (Gen 10), which presents a remarkably accurate picture of the origin and interrelationship of the various races along the line of complementary criteria of classification.\(^{43}\) The universal or worldwide outlook is a typical feature of the whole of Gen 1-11, as is customarily acknowledged.

The Sumerian King List, on the other hand, not only lacks this universal emphasis concerning the growth and spread of mankind, but it is in particular, and by design, geared as a political document\(^{44}\) which emphasizes that the dynasty of Isin is the successor of all the previous dynasties. Its primary concern is with "kingship" in various cities. From the time that "kingship" was

\(^{38}\) The brief genealogical notices (A NET, pp. 265-266) consist of a two-generation genealogy in the form of "RN\(_1\) son of RN\(_2\),, ruled x years." In no instance is there a statement linking more than one ruler to the next in a simple "father-son" relationship. Cf. Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, pp. 92-101.

\(^{39}\) Hallo, "Royal Hymns," p. 112.

\(^{40}\) Rollig, "Typologie," pp. 266-273.

\(^{41}\) Gen 5:4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26, 30; 11:11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25.

\(^{42}\) Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 472.

"lowered from heaven," it resided in various cities until it came to rest in Isin. The Sumerian King List is tendentious.\textsuperscript{45} It seeks to prove that "kingship" belongs to Sumer and nowhere else.\textsuperscript{46} In this sense the Sumerian King List is a local history which seeks to legitimize the primacy of the kingdom of Isin over rival kingdoms.

9. Beginning with Creation versus Beginning with the Lowering of Kingship from Heaven. The genealogy of Gen 5 makes a distinct point of tracing mankind from the point of the creation onward. This is particularly emphasized through the usage of the temporal clause, "When God created man" (5:1) and the identification of Adam as the father of Seth (5:3). After dealing first with the creation of man, the author of Gen 5 traces a continuous genealogical chain from Adam to Noah. The idea appears to be to emphasize the continuity of the line directly created by God, "in his image" (5:1), down to Noah, the "righteous" man (6:9) who survives the flood and through whom the human race is preserved for the world.

The Sumerian King List, to the contrary, knows nothing of a creation of man. It traces "kingship" from the time it descended from heaven. Its beginning reads: "When kingship was lowered from heaven, kingship was (first) in Eridu."\textsuperscript{47} For the period after the flood had come, the narrative continues as follows: "After the flood had swept over (the earth) (and) when kingship was lowered (again) from heaven, kingship was (first) in Kish."\textsuperscript{48} Both of these sentences may actually be beginnings of separate entities\textsuperscript{49} which were later joined into the presently

\textsuperscript{45} Kraus, "Lisle der alteren Konige," pp. 45-49.
\textsuperscript{46} Jacobsen, \textit{Sumerian King List}, pp. 140-141.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{ANET}, p. 265; RTAT, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{49} It is presently debated whether the Old Babylonian version of the post-diluvian King List began originally with i.43: "In Kish, Ga[... ] ur ..." (so Jacobsen, \textit{Sumerian King List}, pp. 6-1, 77) or with i.41: "When kingship was lowered (again) from heaven" (so Hallo, "Beginning and End," pp. 56-57) or with i.40: "After the flood had swept over (the earth) (and) when kingship was ..." (so Lambert and Millard, Atra-hasis, p. 25) on the basis of the
known Sumerian King List.\footnote{Jacobsen, \textit{Sumerian King List}, pp. 55-68; Kraus, "Liste der alten Konige," pp. 31, 51; Rowton, "Date of the Sumerian King List," pp. 161-162; Finkelstein, "Antediluvian Kings," pp. 44-45; Hallo, "Beginning and End," pp. 52-57; Nissen, "Fine neue Version," pp. 1-5; Hartman, "Sumerian King List and Gen 5 and 11B," p. 27.} The lowering of "kingship" from heaven was not coincident with the initial creation in Mesopotamian tradition,\footnote{This is argued effectively on the basis of the Etana epic (\textit{ANET}, p. 114) by Hartman, "Sumerian King List and Gen 5 and 11B," p. 27.} so that it can be concluded that the Sumerian King List, in contrast to Gen 5, was not intended to make a statement anywhere in terms of an absolute beginning of man. It merely traces kingship from the beginning of civilization.\footnote{Lambert, "The Babylonian Background of Genesis," p.:299: "The Sumero-Babylonian tradition is of a line of kings from the founding of civilization to the flood, not of a line of patriarchs . . . from creation onward."}

10. \textit{Concluding with the Man Noah versus Concluding with the City of Suruppak}. The genealogy of Gen 5 terminates with the man Noah (vss. 28-29, 32), who becomes the hero of the flood (Gen 6:5-9:7). As pointed out already, there is no mention of cities or of kingship. The Old Babylonian tradition of the antediluvian period was never fixed in "canonical" form,\footnote{Note the sequence and last city in the following texts: WB 444 has Eridu, Bad-Tibira, Larak, Sippar, Suruppak. WB 62 has Eridu (?), Larsa, Bad-Tibira, Larak, Sippar, Suruppak UCBC 9-1819 has Eridu, Bad-Tibira, Sippar, Suruppak CT 46:5 has [Eridu?], Bad-Tibira, Sippar, Larak, Suruppak Ni 3195 has [Eridu], Larak, [Bad-Tibira], rest lost} because the sequence and number of kings and cities differ in the cuneiform texts. There is, however, a uniform consensus in all available cuneiform texts regarding the last antediluvian city, namely the city of Suruppak,\footnote{Berossos has the sequence Babylon, Bad-Tibira, and Larak. The absence of Sippar and Suruppak from Berossos' account has been variously explained. See Jacobsen, \textit{Sumerian King List}, pp. 74-75, nn. 24, 27, 31; Finkelstein, "Antediluvian Kings," pp. 46-47.} in which kingship last resided before the flood. In contrast to the cuneiform texts, Berossos has the city of Larak as his third and last city.\footnote{Berossos also has Xisuthros genealogy of the rulers of Lagas (Sollberger, "The Rulers of Lagas," pp. 280-290) which begins with what is i.40 in the Sumerian King List.}
(Ziusudra) as the last king of Larak, whereas the flood hero Ziusudra of the Sumerian flood story\textsuperscript{56} is the last antediluvian king of Suruppak in only one complete cuneiform text (WB 62).\textsuperscript{57} The other complete cuneiform text (WB 444) has Ubartutu as the last king of Suruppak. Ubartutu never figures as a flood hero. In view of these divergences it is evident that the cuneiform consensus places emphasis on the last antediluvian city of Suruppak but is ambiguous regarding the last antediluvian king--who may be the flood hero (so Ziusudra ), or who may not be the flood hero (so Ubartutu).\textsuperscript{58}

What counts in the various recensions of the Sumerian King List is the "kingship" that continues to reside in various cities down to Suruppak; what counts in the genealogy of Gen 5 is the personal lineage which continues in a supposedly unbroken chain of antediluvian descendants from Adam down to Noah, the flood hero. It is once more apparent that the ideology, function, and purpose of the Hebrew and Sumerian documents are quite different. The end of the genealogy of Gen 5 is as different from that of the Sumerian King List as is the beginning of the former from that of the latter.

3. Conclusion

This comparison of the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 with the several newly discovered versions of the Sumerian King List appears to demonstrate that aside from the "superficial similarity"\textsuperscript{59} of the sequence of listing-flood-listing, which is a later


\textsuperscript{57} For discussions of this problem, see Jacobsen, Sumerian King List, p. 76, n. 34; Finkelstein, "Antediluvian Kings," pp. 47-49.

\textsuperscript{58} Unfortunately, two cuneiform texts (UCBC 9-1819 and Ni 3195) are broken at the crucial point and do not help to fill in information on the last king and last city. It is a striking fact that in y-VB 111 Ziusudra is deliberately omitted from the dynasty of Suruppak, as is clear from the summary provided at the end of the antediluvian section of this tablet. See Jacobsen, Sumerian King List, p. 77; Finkelstein, "Antediluvian Kings," p. 47.

\textsuperscript{59} Hartman, "The Sumerian King List and Gen 5 and 11B," p. 32.
construct in the Sumerian King List and which is in itself different in Gen 5-11, there is a complete lack of agreement and relationship. This is manifested through a comparison of names, longevity and reigns, line of descent and royal succession, number of antediluvians, chronographic information, ideology, genre, historical emphasis, and the beginning and end of the respective documents.

The rich current cuneiform data significantly facilitate the precision of the evaluation of the relationship between the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 and the traditions of the Sumerian King List. On the basis of limited cuneiform data, A. Deimel wrote over five decades ago that "it may be better to admit honestly, that until now there is no evidence for any connection of any kind between the Babylonian and Biblical traditions regarding the antediluvian-forefathers." 60 Recent cuneiform finds have led to a reinvestigation of the ideology of the Hebrew and Sumerian traditions, causing T. C. Hartman to conclude that the Sumerian materials relating to the king list cannot have been a source for the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11. 61 My above investigation of additional aspects and essential details appears to show that the Hebrew genealogical picture of Gen 5 and 11 is totally devoid of any influence from the currently available data relating to the Sumerian King List. 62

It is not only evident that the structure,

61 Hartman, "The Sumerian King List and Gen 5 and 1113," p. 32. W. F. Albright's suggestion (Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan [Garden City: Doubleday, 1968], p. 98) that "the variations in numbers and ages prove some sort of connexion-though not through written tradition" is in need of revision in view of the materials now available. Aside from the material published by Jacobsen, Sumerian King List, Albright was apparently aware of only the text W 20030 7 published by van Dijk (p. 98, n. 118).
62 In view of this, the popular Babylonian influence on Gen 5 "in establishing a line of succession" and "a list of names with extraordinary numbers for the antediluvian period," as suggested still by Johnson (The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies, pp. 30-31), as well as with regard to "the ten antediluvian figures" and the "long life spans of these figures" as also mentioned by Wilson (Genealogy and History, p. 201), calls for revision.
purpose, and function of the Hebrew and Sumerian documents are different, but the new data of ancient Near Eastern literature\textsuperscript{63} seem to indicate that they belong to different types of literature, each of which has its own matrix and serves its own aims.

\textsuperscript{63} Supra, nn. 10-11.

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Interpreting Genesis One*†

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Like other parts of Scripture, Genesis 1 must be interpreted in terms of its historical and literary context. This creation account was given to the Israelites in the wilderness, after the exodus from Egypt but before the conquest of Canaan. What the message meant then to the original hearers must govern the application of what it means now to us today. The historico-artistic interpretation of Genesis 1 does justice to its literary structure and to the general biblical perspective on natural events.

From time immemorial people have speculated about how the world began. Many fascinating myths and legends date from the dawn of civilization in the Middle East. Reflecting polytheistic religion, they feature violent struggles by a variety of deities for supremacy over the world.

For example, Sumerian tablets around 2500 B.C. present a pantheon of four prominent gods, among them Enki who leads a host of the gods against Nammu, the primeval sea. In one Egyptian myth the sun god Re emerges from the deep to create all other things. The best known of the creation myths is the Babylonian national epic Enuma Elish, which was composed primarily to glorify the god Marduk and the city of Babylon. Amid such a mythological environment Israel fled from Egypt, wandered in the wilderness and took possession of Canaan.

The biblical creation accounts in Genesis have some similarities with those of Israel's pagan neighbors as well as several radical differences. The relative importance of those elements has been a focal point of theological controversy for more than a century. Some issues have been resolved, but considerable confusion persists over the nature and purpose of Genesis 1.

Genesis is a book of beginnings: the origin of the universe, birth of the human race and founding of the Hebrew family. Yet the book is more than an account of origins. It provides a foundation for many themes prominent throughout the Old and New Testaments.
Here one learns about God, humanity and nature in their mutual relationships. The Creator and Controller of the universe reveals himself as the Lord and judge of history, which has both a purpose and goal. Such great doctrines as creation, sin and salvation trace their beginnings to this remarkable book. Concepts of covenant, grace, election and redemption permeate God's saving activity to overcome the consequences of evil and sin. It should not surprise us that Genesis, more than any other part of the Bible, has been a scene of historical, literary, theological and scientific battles. Some of those battles have made their way out of church and seminary into the schools and courts.

† This article is taken from chapter 10, "Genesis One: Origin of the Universe," of the book *The Galileo Connection*, recently released by InterVarsity Press (Downers Grove, Ill.: 1986, 296 pp., paper, $8.95).
Much of the controversy arises from a misunderstanding of what the Genesis account of creation intends to teach. What message was it meant to convey to ancient Israelites in their struggle against the pagan mythologies of the surrounding countries? How does that meaning apply in a post-Christian culture whose gods and values infiltrate even the church?

**Approach to Genesis**

An interpretation of Genesis 1 must deal with three elements: historical context, literary genre and textual content. Many commentaries skip lightly over the first two in an eagerness to grasp the meaning for today. As a result their interpretations at critical points would hardly have been intelligible to ancient Israel, much less equip God's people to resist the influence of pagan mythologies. Therefore, we will adhere to the following principle: What the author meant then determines what the message means now.

**Historical Context**

What was the situation of the Israelites who received the message of Genesis, especially their cultural and religious environment? The answer to that question depends to a large extent on certain assumptions about the authorship and date of the document. Two main approaches have dominated the interpretation of Genesis during the last century.

One position rejects the Mosaic authorship and early date of the Pentateuch along with its divine inspiration and trustworthiness. The developmental view of the nineteenth century treated those five books as the culmination of a long process of social growth. It assumed that, culturally and religiously, humankind has moved through evolving states from savagery to civilization. But, as new data provided by archeology tended to discredit that view, the comparative religion model became increasingly popular. It holds Genesis 1-11 to be a Jewish borrowing and adaptation of the religions of neighboring nations. Both views consider the Pentateuch to be writing of unknown authors or redactors (editors) long after Moses, probably late in the period of the Hebrew monarchy.
A contrasting position holds that Moses wrote most of the Pentateuch (though he may have used earlier sources) and that some editing took place after his death. The historical-cultural model used in this paper assumes that the Genesis creation narratives were given to the Israelites in the wilderness, after the exodus from Egypt but before the conquest of Canaan. This view considers the Pentateuch to be a revelation from God, through his prophet Moses, to Israel en route to the Promised Land. An understanding of the historical context and primary purpose of that revelation lays the foundation for our interpretation.

For more than four hundred years the Hebrews had languished in Egypt far from the land promised to Abraham. Those centuries took a spiritual as well as physical toll. The people had no Scriptures, only a few oral traditions of the patriarchs. Devotion to the God of their forefather Joseph had largely been, supplanted by worship of the gods of other nations. The incident of the golden calf suggests that fertility cults may have been part of Hebrew religious life in Egypt (Ex. 32:1-6). Even though they were miraculously delivered from slavery and led toward Canaan, many of the people may have had a minimal understanding of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When the wanderers arrived at Horeb, their worldview and lifestyle differed little from that of the surrounding nations. Their culture was essentially pagan. Now God was calling them to keep his covenant, to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). Although the people responded, their yes was just the beginning of a long, painful process by which God would create a new culture.

Although trained by God in Pharoah's house and then in the hills forty years, Moses faced a formidable
task. His people needed a radically different theology for a knowledge of God and his purposes; a new cosmogony to restructure their attitudes toward the created order; a new religious institution to guide their worship; a new anthropology to understand the human of condition; and a different lifestyle for moral and ethical living. The five books of Moses were designed to make his the Hebrews a people of God through a divinely instituted culture.

The location of God's people at that point is significant. In each pagan nation the gods, of which there were hundreds, permeated and dominated every aspect of life. A people and their gods formed an organic whole with their land. Religion existed for the welfare of society, not primarily for the individual. Religious change was not possible; it occurred only when one nation conquered another. Even then the defeated gods were usually absorbed into the victorious pantheon. In Egypt, for example, only Egyptian gods were worshiped. Hence Moses had initially asked Pharaoh to permit the Hebrews to go three days' journey into the wilderness to worship their God; there the Egyptian gods had no power and need not be feared. Now God had created for the Hebrews a religious crisis that opened them to the new order he desired to institute. The events of Sinai could never have taken place in Goshen.

Although Israel had left Egypt behind, they still retained its world-view. Paganism is more than polytheism; it is a way of looking at the whole of life. So a complete break with Israel's past required the strong antipagan teaching provided in the Pentateuch, beginning with Genesis.

*Literary Genre*

What kind of literature are we dealing with? Is it prose or poetry, history or parable? Only after that question is answered can the appropriate interpretive guidelines be applied.

The style of Genesis 1 is remarkable for its simplicity, its economy of language. Yet to ask whether it is prose or poetry is a serious oversimplification. Although we do not find here the synonymous parallelism and
rhythms of Hebrew, poetry, the passage has a number
of alliterations. The prominence of repetition and of its
corollary, silence, brings the writing close to poetry; its
movement toward, a climax places it in the order of
prose. Sometimes called a "hymn," it appears to be a
unique blend of prose and poetry.¹

Although it has no trace of rhetoric, the passage does
use figurative language for describing God's activity:
anthropomorphisms which represent God as if he were
a human being-speaking and seeing, working and
resting. Yet a conclusion that Genesis 1 is semipoetic
and has figurative language by no means determines
the main question--the connection of the narrative
with actual events.

Once for all we need to get rid of the deep-seated
feeling that figurative speech is inferior to literal
language, as if it were somewhat less worthy of God.
The Hebrew language is rich in figures of speech.
Scripture abounds with symbols and metaphors which
the Holy Spirit has used to convey powerfully and
clearly the message he intended. What would be left of
Psalm 23, for example, if it were stripped of its
figurative language? Further, we must give up the false
antithesis that prose is fact while poetry is fiction (prose
= literal = fact, and poetry = figurative = fiction).
Indeed, prose writing often has figures of speech and
can recount a legend or parable as well as history; by
the same token, poetry may have little if any figurative
language and narrate actual events. The prophets, for
example, recalled past facts and predicted future
events with a welter of symbols and images as well as
literal description. (See Ezekiel 16 and 22 for two
versions of the same events.) Jesus summarized centu-
ries of Hebrew history in his parable of the wicked
tenants (Mt. 21:33-41). Good biblical interpretation
recognizes and appreciates this marvelous and effective
variety of literary expression.
Genesis 1 appears to be a narrative of past events, an account of God's creative words and acts. Its figurative language is largely limited to anthropomorphisms. (For a highly imaginative and figurative account of creation, read Job 38:4-11.) The text does not have the earmarks of a parable, a short allegorical story designed to teach a truth or moral lesson. That genre generally deals with human events and often starts with a formula like "There was a man who had two sons" in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-31).

Genesis 1 is "historical" in the sense of relating events that actually occurred. Modern historians distinguish between "history," which began with the invention of writing or the advent of city life, and "prehistoric."
According to that definition, the events in Genesis 1 are prehistorical. Nevertheless the writing can be called historical narrative, or primeval history, to distinguish it from legend or myth, in which ideas are simply expressed in the form of a story.

Our interpretation of a passage should also be guided by its structure. Narrators have the freedom to tell a story in their own way, including its perspective, purpose, development and relevant content. The importance of this principle comes to focus in the Genesis 1 treatment of time. The dominating concepts and concerns of our century are dramatically different from those of ancient Israel. For example, our scientific approach to the natural world seeks to quantify and measure, calculate and theorize, about the mechanism of those events. For us time is as important a dimension as space, so we automatically tend to assume that a historical account must present a strict chronological sequence. But the biblical writers are not bound by such concerns and constrictions. Even within an overall chronological development they have freedom to cluster certain events by topic. For example, Matthew's Gospel has alternating sections of narrative and teaching grouped according to subject matter, a sort of literary club sandwich. Since Matthew did not intend to provide a strict chronological sequence for the events in Jesus' ministry, to search for it there would be futile.

By the same token our approach to Genesis 1 should not assume that the events are necessarily in strict chronological order. An examination of the phrases used by the author reveals his emphasis on the creative word: "And God said" appears eight times, in each case to begin a four-line poem (figure 1). These poems form the basic structure of the narrative. (The third and seventh poems do not have the final line, "And there was evening, and there was morning," since they are combined with the fourth and eighth creative words, respectively, to link with the third and sixth days.) Although the eight poems vary in length and minor details, they have the same basic format.

It also becomes evident that the eight words are linked with the six days in an overall symmetrical structure (figure 2). The second half of the week (fourth to sixth days) parallels the first half. Augustine noted this literary framework early in the church's
history. He believed that everything had been created at once and that the structure of the days is intended to teach the "order" in creation. Two centuries ago J. G. von Herder recognized the powerful symmetry between the two triads of days. The two have been contrasted in several ways: creation of spaces and then their inhabitants forming of the world followed by its filling. Such a sequence is indicated by the conclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Verse</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(a) And God said, &quot;Let. . . “</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) and there was ...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) God saw that ... was good.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d) And there was evening, and there was morning--the first day.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(a) And God said, &quot;Let. . . “</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) And it was so.</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(c)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d) And there was evening, and there was morning--the second day.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(a) And God said. &quot;Let. . .”</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) And it was so.</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) And God saw that it was good.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(a) Then God said, &quot;Let . . .”</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) And it was so.</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) And God saw that it was good.</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d) And there was evening, and there was morning--the third day.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(a) Then God said, &quot;Let. . .&quot;</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) And it was so.</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) And God saw that it was good.</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d) And there was evening, and there was morning--the fourth day.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(a) Then God said, &quot;Let . . .”</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) And God saw that it was good.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d) And there was evening, and there was morning--the fifth day.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 6 (a) Then God said, "Let . . .” (b) And it was so. (c) And God saw that it was good. (d) 
8 (a) Then God said, "Let . . .” (b) And it was so. (c) God saw ... it was very good. (d) And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Figure 1. Eight Poems of Genesis 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Words</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Creative Words</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (verse 3)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>light</td>
<td>5 (verse 14)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>luminaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (verse 6)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>firmament</td>
<td>6 (verse 20)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 verse (9)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>seas</td>
<td>7 (verse 24)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>fishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (verse 11)</td>
<td></td>
<td>land &amp; vegetation</td>
<td>8 (verse 26)</td>
<td></td>
<td>animals &amp; humankind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Literary Structure of Genesis 1
of the narrative in Genesis 2:1 (RSV): "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed [days 1-3] and all the host of them [the crowds of living organisms, days 4-6]."

The writer's use of the significant numbers 3, 7 and 10 also highlights the careful construction of the creation account. It starts with three problem elements (formless earth, darkness and watery deep) which are dealt with in two sets of three days; the verb "create" is used at three points in the narrative, the third time thrice. Both the completion formula, "and it was so," and the divine approval, "God saw that it was good," appear seven times. The phrase "God said," the verb "make" and the formula "according to its/their kind" appear ten times.

In both its overall structure and use of numbers the writer paid as much attention to the form as to the content of the narrative, a fact which suggests mature meditation. The historico-artistic interpretation of Genesis 1 does justice to its literary craftsmanship, the general biblical perspective on natural events and the view of creation expressed by other writers in both Old and New Testaments.

**Interpretation of Genesis 1**

The third step, after determining the historical context and literary genre, is to discover what this account of creation means to the first readers. Although a thorough exegesis cannot be done in a few pages, we can note the narrative's development and the meaning of several key words.

**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (v. 1)**

God is not only the subject of the first sentence, he is central to the entire narrative. It mentions him thirty-four times. The phrase "God created" can also be translated "When God began to create," but the latter translation is linguistically cumbersome; it also seems to connote a dualism incompatible with the rest of the chapter."

The meaning of the word "create" (bara) in this context is determined in the light of its meanings elsewhere in the Old Testament. Its subject is always God; its object may be things (Is. 40:26) or situations (Is.
The specific context determines whether the creation is an initial bringing into existence (Is. 48:3, 7) or a process leading to completion (Gen. 2:1-4; Is. 65:18).

The Bible's opening statement may be taken as either the beginning of God's creative activity or a summary of the account that follows. Either way, the "beginning" includes not only the material universe but also time itself. Since all of our thought and action occurs within a time scale of past/present/future, we find it difficult if not impossible to conceive of timelessness. Yet as Augustine observed many centuries ago, God created not in time but with time.⁶

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep. (v. 2)

The writer expands on his initial statement, making the earth his vantage point (compare Ps. 115:16). He uses two rhyming words, tohu and bohu,⁷ to describe a somber scene: a trackless waste, formless and empty in the utter darkness. Those two words signifying a lack of form and content provide a key to the chapter's literary structure.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light .... And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. (vv. 3-5)

Here is the first of eight creative commands distributed over six days. A major focus of the narrative is the word of God: God "speaks" and it is done. The Hebrew amar has a variety of meanings.⁸ Its use in Genesis 1 emphasizes God's creative command, his pledge to sustain the creation and his revelation as the Creator (this theme is echoed in Psalm 148:5 and Hebrews 11:3). The words leave no room for the divine emanation and struggle so prominent in pagan religions. Nevertheless there has been too much emphasis on God's creating simply by command. Only verses 3 and 9 report creation by word alone; the other six occurrences include both a word and an act of some kind, indicated by verbs such as make, separate and set.
The creation of light marks the first step from primeval formlessness to order. "God saw that the light was good" (v. 4). There is no hint of ethical dualism, good and evil coexisting from eternity. To some of the pagans day and night were warring powers. Not so here. The Creator assigns to everything its value (4a), place (4b) and meaning (5a).
And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." ... And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. (vv. 6-8)

An expanse or firmament separates the waters below (the seas and underground springs) from those above in the clouds which provide rain. Unlike the first day, the creative command here is followed by an action: "So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so" (v. 7). That combination of word and act also occurs on the fourth day: "God made two great lights ... made the stars ... set them in the expanse of the sky" (vv. 16-17); and on the fifth day, "God created the great creatures of the sea ... " (v. 21). The wording for the sixth day is unusual in that God commands himself, so to speak, and then does it: "Then God said, 'Let us make man'. .. So God created- man. .. " (vv. 26-27). This variety of wording for the eight creative events/processes should caution against an attempt to formulate one basic procedure or mechanism for the creation.

And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. (vv. 9-10)
Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees." ... And it was so ... And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. (vv. 11-13)

Two events are linked to the third day. In the first, a creative command continues to give form to the world through differentiation, the land from the sea. In the second, a procreative action of the land, empowered by God, brings forth vegetation in an orderly fashion "according to their various kinds." That phrase, also used for the reproduction of animals (v. 24), would be especially meaningful to the Hebrews, since pagan
mythologies featured grotesque human-beast hybrids. (The concept fixity of species, often read into this phrase, would have been unintelligible to the original hearers.) Here God commands the earth to produce something, and it does so.

The emphasis has begun to shift from form toward fulness, which becomes prominent in the remaining creative words. Originally formless and empty, the earth is now structured (through the division of light from darkness, upper from lower waters, dry land from the seas) and clothed with green, ready for its inhabitants. What God has formed he now fills. The second half of the week generally parallels the events of the first.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night." . . . God made two great lights ... to govern the day and ... the night. . . And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day. (vv. 14-19)

The expanse of the sky is now filled with the stars, sun and moon "to give light on the earth." (Our problem of how the earth could be lighted [v. 4] before the sun appeared comes when we require the narrative to be a strict chronological account.) It is significant that the sun and moon are not mentioned by name—because those common Semitic terms were also the names of deities. This description may be seen as a protest against every kind of astral worship, so prevalent in the surrounding nations. 9 Here the heavenly bodies do not, reign as gods but serve as signs (see Ps. 121:6). They "govern" (vv. 16, 18) only as bearers of light, not as wielders of power. These few sentences undercut a superstition as old as Egypt and as modern as today's newspaper horoscope.

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." . . . And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day. (vv. 20-23)

The sea and sky are now filled with their inhabitants. The word for birds literally means "flying things" and includes insects (compare Dent 14:19-20). The special reference to great creatures (tanninim, "sea monsters") also serves a polemic purpose. To the Canaanites the
word was an ominous term for the powers of chaos confronting the god Baal in the beginning. In the Old Testament the word appears without any mythological overtones; it is simply a generic term for a large water animal.

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds." . . . And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds. (vv. 24-25)

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." . . . So God created man in his own image, . . . male and female he created them . . . . God saw all that he had made and it was
very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day. (vv. 26-31)

The seventh and eighth creative acts are linked to the sixth day. The former populates the land with three representative groups of animals: "livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals." The creative action here parallels that in verse 20-23, but is unique in one respect: God commands the earth to do something, yet he himself makes it. Here as elsewhere in the Bible, what we call "natural" reproduction and God's creative activity are two sides of the same coin.

The eighth act produces man and woman both in nature and over it. They share the sixth day with other land creatures, and also God's blessing to be fruitful and increase; yet their superiority is evident in the words Let us make (instead of "Let the land produce") and in the mandate to "fill the earth and subdue it." Human uniqueness lies in the relationship to God: "Let us make man in our image"--that of a rational, morally responsible and social being. The words male and female at this juncture have profound implications. To define humanity as bisexual makes the partners complementary and anticipates the New Testament teaching of their equality ("There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"--Gal. 3:28).

The culmination of creation in man and woman who are to rule over the earth and its inhabitants is especially significant to Israel. In pagan mythology the creation of mankind was an afterthought to provide the gods with food and satisfy other physical needs. But in Genesis 1 the situation is reversed. The plants and trees are a divine provision for human need (v. 29). From start to finish the creation narrative challenges and opposes the essential tenets of the pagan religions of Egypt, where the Hebrews stayed so long, and of Canaan, where they would soon be living.

At each stage of creation, six times, God has pronounced his work to be good. "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array" (Gen. 2:1). The creation narrative then concludes with a seventh day.
By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. (vv. 2:2-3)

The word rested means "ceased" (from sabat, the root of "sabbath"). It is a rest of achievement or pleasure, not of weariness or inactivity, since God constantly nurtures what he has created. Nature is not self-existent but is constantly upheld by his providential power.

This part of the narrative has an immediate application embodied in the Ten Commandments. The seven-day format is given as a model for Israel's work week and sabbath rest:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.... For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. (Ex. 20:8-11)

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. (v. 2:4a)

The narrative finally ends with a "colophon," a statement that identifies a document's contents, which we generally put at the beginning of a book.

The Creation Days

Much controversy over the interpretation of Genesis focuses on the meaning of the word day. Many commentaries wade into that question first and soon bog down in a hermeneutical quagmire. First one's perspective on the chapter should be defined. Since no one is completely objective, it is not a question of whether we have an interpretive model but which one we are using.

The comparative religion approach views Genesis 1 as the work of an unknown author long after Moses, and considers its creation account as being similar to the primitive stories in other Semitic religions. The concordist model assumes a harmony between the Genesis 1 and scientific accounts of creation, and seeks to demonstrate the Bible's scientific accuracy. The historical-cultural approach views the narrative as given by Moses to Israel in the wilderness, and tries to discover
what the message meant then without any attempt to harmonize it with either past or present scientific theories.

Throughout the Old Testament the word "day" (yom) is used in a variety of ways. Usually meaning a "day" of the week, the word can also mean "time" (Gen. 4:3), a specific "period" or "era" (Is. 2:12; 4:2), or a "season" (Josh. 24:7). We have already noted the literary symmetry of eight creative words linked to six days, which occur in two parallel sets of three. The six days mark the development from a dark, formless, empty and lifeless earth to one that is lighted, shaped and filled with teeming varieties of life, culminating in the creation of man and woman.

The author's purpose--teaching about God and his creation in order to counteract the pagan myths of neighboring countries--has become clear in our exposition of Genesis 1. Israel's God is the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth. His world is orderly and
consistent. Man and woman are the culmination of creation, made in the image of God, to enjoy and be responsible for their stewardship of the earth.

The literary genre is a semipoetic narrative cast in a historico-artistic framework consisting of two parallel triads. On this interpretation, it is no problem that the creation of the sun, necessary for an earth clothed with vegetation on the third day, should be linked with the fourth day. Instead of turning hermeneutical handsprings to explain that supposed difficulty, we simply note that in view of the author's purpose the question is irrelevant. The account does not follow the chronological sequence assumed by concordist views.  

The meaning of the word day must be determined (like any other word with several meanings) by the context and usage of the author. A plain reading of the text, with its recurring phrase of evening and morning, indicates a solar day of twenty-four hours. That would have been clear to Moses and his first readers. The context gives no connotation of an era or geological age. Creation is pictured in six familiar periods followed by a seventh for rest, corresponding to the days of the week as Israel knew them. But the question still remains whether the format is figurative or literal, that is, an analogy of God's creative activity or a chronological account of how many hours He worked.

God is a spirit whom no one can see, whose thoughts and ways are higher than ours. So (apart from the Incarnation) we can know him only through analogy, "a partial similarity between like features of two things, on which a comparison may be based." In the Bible the human person is the central model used to reveal God's relationship and actions in history. God is pictured as seeing, speaking and hearing like a person even though he doesn't have eyes, lips or ears. Those figures of speech (anthropomorphisms) assure us that God is at least personal and can be known in an intimate relationship. (Science also uses analogies; for example, a billiard-ball model in physics helps us understand the behavior of gas molecules which we cannot see.)

The human model appears throughout Genesis 1, The writer also links God's creative activity to six days, marked by evening and morning, and followed by a day of rest. In the light of the other analogies, why
should it be considered necessary to take this part of the account literally, as if God actually worked for six days (or epochs) and then rested? Biblical interpretation should not suddenly change hermeneutical horses in the middle of the exegetical stream.

A stringent literalism disregards the analogical medium of revelation about preation, raising meaningless questions about God's working schedule. For example, did he labor around the clock or intermittently on twelve-hour days? If God created light instantaneously, was the first day then mostly one of rest like the seventh? How did the plant and animal reproductive processes he constituted on succeeding days fit so neatly into that schedule?

The fact that the text speaks of twenty-four-hour days does not require that they be considered the actual duration of God's creative activity. Even on a human level, when we report the significant achievements of someone in a position of power, the length of the working day is generally irrelevant. For example, a historian might write, "President Roosevelt decided to build the atomic bomb and President Truman ordered its use to destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end the war with Japan. Two days radically changed the entire character of modern warfare." The exact details of how and when the commands were implemented over years or weeks are unimportant to the main concern of who and why, and what resulted.

Preoccupation with how long it took God to create the world, in days or epochs, deflects attention from the main point of Genesis 1. Such "scientific" concerns run interpretation onto a siding, away from the main track of God's revelation. Once we get past arguments over the length of the days, we can see the intended meaning of these days for Israel. First, their significance lies not in identity, a one-to-one correlation with God's creative activity, but in an analogy that provides a model for human work. The pattern of six plus one, work plus rest on the seventh day, highlights the sabbath. In doing so, it emphasizes the uniqueness of humanity. Made in the image of God, and given rule over the world, man and woman are the crown of creation. They rest from their labor on the sabbath, which is grounded in the creation (Gen. 2:2, Ex 20:11).
metaphor uses the commonplace (or commonly understood, if you wish) meaning of a word in a figurative manner. When, for example, Jesus calls Herod "that fox" (Lk. 13:32), the word does not refer vaguely to any animal but to that one whose characteristics are well known; yet Jesus doesn't mean that Herod is literally a fox. Likewise, when David in Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my shepherd," he refers not to just any kind of animal keeper but to one who cares for sheep. It is the commonplace meaning of fox and shepherd that makes the metaphor understandable. So the fact that the day in Genesis 1 has its ordinary work-a-day meaning, and does not refer to an epoch of some kind, makes possible the metaphor of God's creative activity as a model for human work of six days followed by sabbath rest.

Linking God's creative activity to days of the week serves as another element in the antipagan polemic. “By stretching the creation events over the course of a series of days the sharpest possible line has been drawn between this account and every form of mythical thinking. It is history that is here reported--once for all and of irrevocable finality in its results.”

Genesis 1 contrasts sharply with the cyclical, recurring creations described by Israel's pagan neighbors. Two other interpretations of the days have been advanced. P. J. Wiseman considers them days of revelation with the narrative given over a period of six days, each on its own tablet. He notes a precedent for that literary form in other ancient literature. It has also been suggested that Genesis 1 was used liturgically somewhat like the narratives in other religions. Whatever the merits of those views, they at least use the historical-cultural model to focus on what the narrative could have meant to the first hearers.

The Significance of Genesis 1

During the last century, Genesis 1 has suffered much from Western interpreters. Liberal literary criticism removes the divine authority of its message through Moses; conservative concentration on implications for science misses its intended meaning. Scholars from the theological left, armed with scissors and paste, have rearranged supposed authors and dates into a variety of configurations. Commentators from the right, scientific
texts in hand, have repeatedly adjusted their interpretations to harmonize with the latest theories. In the process, the message of Genesis 1 has been so muffled that the average reader wonders what it means and whether it can be trusted. Hence we conclude by summarizing the significance of its account for ancient Israel, biblical theology, modern science and the church's life today.

Israel at Mount Sinai

Genesis 1 achieves a radical and comprehensive affirmation of monotheism versus every kind of false religion (polytheism, idolatry, animism, pantheism and syncretism); superstition (astrology and magic); and philosophy (materialism, ethical dualism, naturalism and nihilism). That is a remarkable achievement for so short an account (about 900 words) written in everyday language and understood by people in a variety of cultures for more than three thousand years. Each day of creation aims at two kinds of gods in the pantheons of the time: gods of light and darkness; sky and sea; earth and vegetation; sun, moon and stars; creatures in sea and air; domestic and wild animals; and finally human rulers. Though no human beings are divine, all—from pharaohs to slaves—are made in the image of God and share in the commission to be stewards of the earth.

For Israel those were life-and-death issues of daily existence. God's people do not need to know the how of creation; but they desperately need to know the Creator. Their God, who has brought them into covenant relationship with himself, is no less than the Creator and Controller of the world. He is not like the many pagan gods who must struggle for a period of time in their creative activity. He is stronger than all the powers that stand between his people and the Promised Land, the only One worthy of their worship and total commitment. Creation is the ground of Israel's hope for preservation as God's chosen people. For them the doctrine of creation is not so much a cosmogony as a confession of faith repeatedly expressed in psalms and prophecies throughout the Old Testament.
Biblical Theology

Both Old and New Testaments connect God's creative power with his redeeming love.

Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—the Lord, who remains faithful forever.

(Ps. 146:5-6)
In last days he has spoken to us by his Son ... through whom he made the universe.... sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

(Heb. 1:2-3)

God the Creator of the universe is the Lord and judge of history who comes in Jesus Christ to demonstrate his saving love and power. Three great creeds emerging from the church's early theological controversies-the Apostles', Nicene and Chalcedonian--affirm that fundamental connection. It has provided the basis for creativity and meaning in human life, and for Christian confidence in ultimate victory over all forms of evil. Thus creation is also closely connected with eschatology, the doctrine of the end-times in which God ultimately vindicates his own creativity.

Eschatology is more than futurology, despite prevalent fascination about time tables of future events. It deals with the fulfillment of what God initiated in creation. God creates through his eternal Word; he also redeems and brings to completion through the incarnation and glorification of the same Word in Jesus of Nazareth. "Creation, as the going forth from God, is simultaneously the first step of the return to God; and the return is the completion of the journey begun in creation. God creates for a purpose which becomes known as the future of the world in the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ." Even though creation has scientific and philosophical implications, its central significance is theological.

The Scientific Enterprise

The positive contribution of biblical teaching about God and the world to the development of modern science has been well documented. Yet a certain kind of modern theology has considered the biblical description of nature a liability, requiring "demythologizing" to make it acceptable to a scientific age. Actually, Genesis 1 prepared the way for our age by its own program of demythologizing. By purging the cosmic order of all gods and goddesses, the Genesis creation account "de-divinized" nature. The universe has no divine regions or beings who need to be feared or placated. Israel's intensely monotheistic faith thor-
roughly demythologized the natural world, making way for a science that can probe and study every part of the universe without fearing either trespass or retribution. That does not mean that nature is secular and no longer sacred. It is still God's creation, declared to be good, preserved by his power and intended for his glory. The disappearance of mythical scenes and polytheistic intrigues clears the stage for the great drama of redemption and the new creation in Christ.

The Contemporary Church

Meanwhile, the doctrine of creation has profound implications for contemporary Christian thought and life. Study of Genesis 1 illuminates two major questions that should concern Christians in modern culture. First, what false gods command a following in our society and even in our churches? Although they differ radically from the false deities of ancient Israel's neighbors, their worship can produce similar results. In order to escape the influence of current unbiblical philosophies, religious ideas and superstitions, the message of Genesis 1 is urgently needed.

Second, in a day of increasing environmental concerns, what actions should Christians take as stewards of the earth? Environmental problems have scientific and technological, political and economic, social and legal aspects. Important moral and ethical concerns derive from the biblical doctrines of creation and human responsibility for the earth. Basic to such concerns is our understanding of nature. Most other religions view the world as spiritual in itself or as irrelevant to spiritual concerns. But in the biblical view, the natural world is created, material and significant in God's purposes. From that teaching come basic principles which are belatedly receiving attention from Christian writers." Surely the church needs a solid contemporary theology of creation to help define our human relationship to the natural world.

The doctrine of creation is foundational for God's providential care of his creation, for his redemption of humanity and for his re-creation of a new heaven and earth. Its teaching of God's transcendent sovereignty
and power is embodied in a hymn in the last book of the Bible:

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.

(Rev. 4:11)
Before 1750 it was generally held that God created the world in six twenty-four-hour days, although some early church fathers like Augustine viewed them allegorically.\textsuperscript{17} Archbishop Ussher around 1650 even calculated the date of creation to be 4004 B.C. But as the science of geology matured in the 1800’s, many were shocked to discover that the earth was millions of years old. Since modern science had gained so much prestige, many interpreters strove to retain credibility for the Bible by attempting to demonstrate its scientific accuracy. Therefore, a variety of concordistic (harmonizing) views were proposed to correlate biblical teaching with current scientific theories.

For example, "flood geology" attempted to account for fossil discoveries through the catastrophe of a universal flood.\textsuperscript{18} When new geological discoveries questioned that view, it was replaced by the "restitution" or "gap" theory popularized by a Scottish clergyman, Thomas Chalmers, in 1804. According to that view a catastrophe occurred between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 to allow the necessary time for the geological formations to develop. Eventually it became necessary to assume a series of catastrophies or floods to account for newer scientific findings.

Although such theories accounted for the time that science required, they could not explain the sequence of the geological record. The "day-age" interpretation considered the Genesis days to be metaphorical for geological ages. That view was advocated by influential North American geologists J. W. Dawson and James Dana as well as many theologians. The Genesis days were then correlated, more or less accurately, with the proposed epochs. Another version retained literal twenty-four-hour days of creative activity, but separated them by geological epochs.

The above views, with varying degrees of credibility, have in common three major problems. First, they attempt to find answers to questions the text does not address, about the how or the mechanism of natural forces. (To see how inappropriate such an approach is, consider its opposite: suppose one tried to derive information about the meaning and purpose of life from a technical treatise on astronomy in which the author had no intention of revealing his philosophy.) The biblical accounts of creation do not provide scientific data or descriptions. John Calvin emphasized that point: "The Holy
Spirit had no intention to teach astronomy.... He made use by Moses and the other prophets of the popular language that none might shelter himself under the pretext of obscurity. "Adapting Calvin's principle to the present we can affirm, The Holy Spirit had no intention of teaching geology and biology.”

Second, not only do the concordistic views strain Genesis by importing concepts foreign to the text, but any apparent success in harmonizing the message with "modern science" guarantees a failure when current scientific theory is revised or discarded. During the last two centuries, that pattern has been evident in the continual efforts of harmonizers to keep abreast of rapidly changing scientific views. The credibility of the Bible is not enhanced by thrusting it into the scramble of catch-up in a game it was never intended to play. What is the point of trying to correlate the ultimate truths of Scripture with the ever-changing theories of science? No wonder that when those theories go out of date, in the minds of many people the Bible joins them in gathering dust on the shelf.

Third, any extent to which Genesis teaches modern scientific concepts would have made its message unintelligible to its first readers, and to most of the people who have lived during the last three thousand years. Even in our own century, what per cent of the people understand the abstract language of science? And of those who do, how many use it in the communications of daily life with which the biblical writers are primarily concerned?

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The Narrative Form of Genesis 1: 
Cosmogonic, Yes; Scientific, No

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A basic mistake through much of the history of interpreting Genesis 1 is the failure to identify the type of literature and linguistic usage it represents. This has often led, in turn, to various attempts at bringing Genesis into harmony with the latest scientific theory or the latest scientific theory into harmony with Genesis. Such efforts might be valuable, and indeed essential, if it could first be demonstrated (rather than assumed) that the Genesis materials belonged to the same class of literature and linguistic usage as modern scientific discourse.

A careful examination of the 6-day account of creation, however, reveals that there is a serious category-mistake involved in these kinds of comparisons. The type of narrative form with which Genesis 1 is presented is not natural history but a cosmogony. It is like other ancient cosmogonies in the sense that its basic structure is that of movement from chaos to cosmos. Its logic, therefore, is not geological or biological but cosmological. On the other hand it is radically unlike other ancient cosmogonies in that it is a monotheistic cosmogony; indeed it is using the cosmogonic form to deny and dismiss all polytheistic cosmogonies and their attendant worship of the gods and goddesses of nature. In both form and content, then, Genesis I reveals that its basic purposes are religious and theological, not scientific or historical.

Different ages and different cultures have conceptually organized the cosmos in different ways. Even the history of science has offered many ways of organizing the universe, from Ptolemaic to Newtonian to Einsteinian. How the universe is conceptually organized is immaterial to the concerns of Genesis. The central point being made is that, however this vast array of phenomena is organized into regions and forms—and Genesis 1 has its own method of organization for its own purposes—all regions and forms are the objects of divine creation and sovereignty. Nothing outside this one Creator God is to be seen as independent or divine.

In one of the New Guinea tribes the entire universe of known phenomena is subdivided into two groupings: those things related to the red cockatoo, and those related to the white cockatoo. Since there are both red and white cockatoos in the region, these contrasting plumages have become the
focal points around which everything is conceptually organized. The religious message of Genesis relative to this "cockatoo-cosmos" would not be to challenge its scientific acceptability, but to affirm that all that is known as red cockatoo, and all that is known as white cockatoo, is created by the one true God.

Or, one may take a similar example from traditional China, where all phenomena have, from early antiquity, been divided up according to the principles of Yang and Yin. Yang

This is the second of two essays on interpreting the creation texts, the first of which appeared in the September 1984 issue of the journal.
is light; yin is darkness. Yang is heaven; yin is earth. Yang is sun; yin is moon. Yang is rock; yin is water. Yang is male; yin is female. It would be inappropriate to enter into a discussion of the scientific merits of the Chinese system relative to the organization of Genesis 1; for what Genesis, with its own categories, is affirming is that the totality of what the Chinese would call Yang and Yin forces are created by God who transcends and governs them all.

There are certain uniquenesses in the 6-day approach to organizing the cosmic totality, spacially and temporally, but the point of these uniquenesses is not to provide better principles of organization, or a truer picture of the universe, in any scientific or historical sense. It is to provide a truer theological picture of the universe, and the respective places of nature, humanity and divinity within the religious order of things. In order to perform these theological and religious tasks, it was essential to use a form which would clearly affirm a monotheistic understanding of the whole of existence, and decisively eliminate any basis for a polytheistic understanding.

The Cosmogonic Form
The alternative to the "creation model" of Genesis was obviously not an "evolutionary model." Its competition, so to speak, in the ancient world was not a secular, scientific theory of any sort, but various religious myths of origin found among surrounding peoples: Egyptian, Canaanite, Hittite, Assyrian, Babylonian, to name the most prominent. The field of engagement, therefore, between Jewish-monotheism and the polytheism of other peoples was in no way the field of science or natural history. It was the field of cosmology which, in its ancient form, has some resemblances to science, but is nevertheless quite different.

Given this as the field of engagement, Genesis 1 is cast in cosmological form—though, of course, without the polytheistic content, and in fact over against it. What form could be more relevant to the situation, and the issues of idolatry and syncretism, than this form? Inasmuch as the passage is dealing specifically with origins, it may be said to be cosmogonic. Thus, in order to interpret its meaning properly, and to understand why its materials are organized in this particular way, one has to learn to think cosmogonically, not scientifically or, historically—just as in interpreting the parables of Jesus one has to learn to think parabolically. If one is especially attached to the word "literal," then Genesis 1
"literally" is not a scientific or historical statement, but is a cosmological and cosmogonic statement which is serving very basic theological purposes. To be faithful to it, and to faithfully interpret it, is to be faithful to what it literally is, not what people living in a later age assume or desire it to be.

Various patterns, themes and images used in Genesis 1 are familiar to the cosmogonic literatures of other ancient peoples. To point this out does not detract in the least from the integrity of Genesis. Rather, it helps considerably in understanding the peculiar character and concern of this kind of narrative literature. And it indicates more clearly where the bones of contention are to be located, and what the uniquenesses of the Genesis view of creation are.

The act of creation, for example, begins in Genesis 1:2 in a way that is very puzzling to modern interpreters, yet very natural to ancient cosmogonies: with a picture of primordial chaos. This chaos--consisting of darkness, watery deep and formless earth--is then formed, ordered, assigned its proper place and function, in short, cosmocized. Chaos is brought under control, and its positive features are made part of the cosmic totality.

If one is determined to interpret the account as a scientific statement, then one would need--to be consistent--to affirm several undesirable things. There is no scientific evidence whatsoever, whether from geology or astronomy, that the initial state of the universe was characterized by a great watery expanse, filling the universe. Nor is there any evidence that the existence of water precedes light (day 1) and sun, moon, and stars (day 4). Nor is there any evidence that the earth in a formless state precedes light (day 1), or sun, moon and stars (day 4). On the theological side, one would also be affirming--if this is to be taken completely literally--that water is co-eternal with God, since nowhere does the account specifically speak of God as creating water. Day 2 refers to water as being separated by the creation of the firmament, and Day 3 only speaks of water as being separated from the earth in order that the formless earth may appear as dry land.

The only viable alternative is to recognize that Genesis 1 is intentionally using a cosmogonic approach, and to reflect on
the logic of the account in its own cosmological terms—not in geological or biological or chronological terms. The account is not pre-scientific or un-scientific but non-scientific—as one may speak of poetry (unpoetically) as non-prose. This does not mean that the materials are in any sense irrational or illogical or fantastic. They are perfectly rational, and have a logic all their own. But that logic is cosmological, and in the service of affirmations that are theological.

So the issue is not at all, How is Genesis to be harmonized with modern science, or modern science harmonized with Genesis? That kind of question is beside the point, if by the question one is proposing to try to synchronize the Genesis materials with materials from the various fields of natural science: biology, geology, paleontology, astronomy, etc. That would presuppose that they are comparable—that they belong to the same type of literature, level of inquiry, and kind of concern. But they do not. Trying to compare them is not even like comparing oranges and apples. It is more like trying to compare oranges and orangutans.

The questions then, are: Why is this cosmogonic form being used, and how does a cosmogonic interpretation make sense of the passage?

Like anything else in biblical literature, the cosmogonic form was used because it was natural, normal and intelligible in that time period. For some, it has been an offense to call attention to ancient Near Eastern parallels of the Genesis materials. This approach has appeared to undermine acceptance of the Bible as a unique vehicle of divine revelation. Yet the Bible, obviously, does not speak with a divine language—which, to say the least, would be unintelligible to all. The biblical authors necessarily used the language forms and literary phrases immediately present and available in Israel, which included materials available through the long history of interaction with surrounding peoples. They did not use a whole new vocabulary, or fresh set of metaphors and symbols, suddenly coined for the purpose or revealed on the spot. When one speaks of the Word of God, one must be careful not to suggest by this term that what is being delivered is some sacred language, complete with heavenly thesaurus and handbook of divine phrases, specially parachuted from above.

Jewish scripture abounds in literary allusion and poetic usage which bear some relation, direct or indirect, to images and themes found among the peoples with which Israel was in
contact. An analogy may be drawn from contemporary English usage which contains innumerable traces of the languages and literatures, myths and legends, customs and beliefs, of a great many cultures and periods which have enriched its development. Thus one finds not only a considerable amount of terminology drawn from Greek, Latin, French, German, etc.—including the terms "term" and "terminology"—but references derived from the myths, legends, fables and fairy tales of many peoples: the Greek Fates, the Roman Fortune, the arrows of Cupid, Woden's day and Thor's day, and even Christmas and Easter.

The issue, then, is not where the language (Hebrew) and certain words and phrases came from, but the uses to which they are put, and the ways in which they are put differently. The cosmogonic form and imagery, in this case, is not chosen in order to espouse these other cosmogonies, or to copy them, or to ape them, or even to borrow from them, but precisely in order to deny them. Putting the issue in terms of "borrowing" or "influence" is to put matters in a misleading way. Various familiar motifs and phrasings to be found in surrounding polytheistic systems are being used, but in such a way as to give radical affirmation to faith in one God, a God who transcends and creates and governs all that which surrounding peoples worship as "god."

Such a God, furthermore, is not only transcendent but immanent in a way that the gods and goddesses could not be. These divinities were neither fully transcendent nor fully immanent, for all were finite, limited, and localized, being associated with one aspect and region of nature. The gods and goddesses of light and darkness, sky and water, earth and vegetation, sun, moon and stars, each had their own particular abode and sphere of power. One or another divinity, such as Marduk of Babylon or Re of Egypt, might rise to supremacy in the pantheon and be exalted above every other name. But they were still restricted and circumscribed in their presence, power and authority.

The biblical affirmation of One God is decisively different from all finite and parochial attributions of divinity. In the words of the Apostle Paul, this God is "above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:6). The very fact that God is "above all" makes possible a God who is at the same time "through all and in all." Radical immanence presupposes
radical transcendence. At the same time all things are in God, for apart from God they have no being; they do not exist. As Paul also says, citing a Greek poet: "He is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28).

Genesis 1 is, thus, a cosmogony to end all (polytheistic) cosmogonies. It has entered, as it were, the playing field of these venerable systems, engaging them on their own turf, with the result that they are soundly defeated. And that victory has prevailed, first in Israel, then in Christianity, and also Islam. and thence through most of subsequent Western civilization, including the development of Western science. Despite the awesome splendor and power of the great
empires that successively dominated Israel and the Near
East--Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome--
and despite the immediate influence of the divinities in
whose names they conquered, these gods and goddesses have
long since faded into oblivion, except for archeological,
antiquarian or romantic interests. This victory belongs, in
large part, to the sweeping and decisive manner with which
the Genesis account applied prophetic monotheism to the
cosmogonic question.

The Plan of Genesis 1

How, then, does an understanding of this cosmogonic
form--as radically reinterpreted in Genesis--help in under-
standing the organization and movement of the passage?
The emphasis in a cosmogony is on the establishment of
order (cosmos), and the maintenance of that order, and
therefore upon the ultimate sources of power and authority.
Given these concerns, there are three amorphous realities that
are seen as especially threatening to order: the watery
"deep," darkness, and the formless earth ("waste" and
"void"). These potentially chaotic realities must be cosmo-
cized. They are not, however, simply threatening or demonic,
but rather ambiguous. They have a potential for good as well
as evil, if controlled and placed in an orderly context. The
particular organization and movement of Genesis 1 is readily
intelligible when this cosmological problem, with which the
account begins, is kept clearly in mind.

Water, for example, has no shape of its own. And,
unchecked or uncontained, as in flood or storm or raging sea,
water can destroy that which has form. Darkness, also, in
itself has no form, and is dissolvent of form. Only with the
addition of light can shapes and boundaries and delineations
appear. Similarly, earth is basically formless--whether as
sand, dust, dirt or clay. And it is doubly formless when
engulfed by formless and form--destroying water and darkness.

These fundamental problems confronting the establish-
ment and maintenance of an orderly cosmos, therefore, in the
logic of the account, need to be confronted and accommo-
dated first. The amorphousness and ambiguousness of water,
darkness and formless earth must be dealt with in such a way
as to restrain their negative potential and unleash their
positive potential. Otherwise, it would be like building a
house without giving careful consideration to potential
threats in the region, such as the adjacent floodplain, or
shifting sand.
The structure of the account, then, is that of beginning with a description of a three-fold problem (the chaotic potential of darkness, water and earth) which is given a solution in the first three days of creation. The first day takes care of the problem of darkness through the creation of light. The second clay takes care of the problem of water through the creation of a firmament in the sky to separate the water into the waters above (rain, snow, hail) and the waters below (sea, rivers, subterranean streams). The third day takes care of the problem of the formless earth by freeing earth from water and darkness, and assigning it to a middle region between light and darkness, sky and underworld.

This then readies the cosmos for populating these various realms in the next three days, like a house which has been readied for its inhabitants. In fact, the third day also takes care of providing food for its forthcoming residents through the creation of vegetation. We thus observe a symmetrical division of the account into three movements (Problem, Preparation, Population), each with three elements. The account could be read as if written in three parallel columns as shown in Table 1.

The problem of the three "chaotic" forces is resolved in the first three days by circumscribing their negative potential and making use of their positive potential. As a result a harmonious context is established in preparation for the population of these three regions. Darkness is contained and counterbalanced by light; water is separated and confined to its proper spheres by the firmament; and the earth is demarcated from the waters, allowing dry land and vegetation to appear.

Thus, with everything readied and in order, the inhabitants of these three cosmicized regions are created and invited to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darkness (vs. 2)</td>
<td>Creation of light (Day)</td>
<td>Creation of Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separation from Darkness (Night)</td>
<td>Creation of Moon, Stars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watery Abyss</td>
<td>Creation of Firmament</td>
<td>Creation of Birds</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Separation of Waters above from Waters below</td>
<td>Creation of Fish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formless Earth</td>
<td>Separation of Earth from Sea</td>
<td>Creation of Land Animals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Creation of Vegetation</td>
<td>Creation of Humans</td>
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Table 1
Outline of Genesis 1
take their proper places. The light and darkness of day one are populated by the sun, moon and stars of day four. The sky and waters of day two are populated by the birds and fish of day five. The earth and vegetation of day three make possible a population by the land animals and human beings of day six.

In this way of reading the account, the dilemmas that arise for a literalist (i.e., scientific and historical) interpretation disappear. The three problems, which are envisioned as difficulties for cosmicizing, are dealt with first, followed by a sketch of the way in which these cosmocized regions are then inhabited. This is the logic of the account. It is not chronological, scientific or historical. It is cosmological.

The procedure is not unlike that of a landscape painter, who first sketches in with broad strokes the background of the painting: its regions of light and darkness, of sky and water, and of earth and vegetation. Then within this context are painted birds and fish, land animals and human figures. It would be quite inappropriate for anyone to try to defend the artistic merit and meaning of the painting by attempting to show that the order in which the painting was developed was scientifically and historically "correct." That order is irrelevant to the significance of the painting as a whole and the attribution of its authorship. It is a painting of the totality. And the critical concern is to sketch in all the major regions and types of creatures, so as to leave no quarter that has not been emptied of its resident divinity, and no elements that have not been placed under the lordship of the Creator.

**The Numerology of Genesis 1**

In this way of organizing the material, Genesis has used a numerological structure built around the number three—a hallowed number, as is apparent in the sacred formula, "Holy, holy, holy." Three is the first number to symbolize completeness and wholeness, for which neither number one nor two is suitable. Three also symbolizes mediation and synthesis, as the third term in a triad "unites" the other two. These symbolic uses of three are evident in the way in which phenomena are organized in terms of two sets of opposite forms which are separated from one another (days 1 and 2, 4 and 5), then completed and mediated by days 3 and 6. Light
and darkness of day 1, and sky above and waters below of day 2, are completed and mediated by the earth and vegetation of day 3. The triadic movement is then repeated as the first three days are populated by the second three: the sun, moon (and stars) of the day and night skies (day 4), and the birds of the air and fish of the sea (day 5), are completed and mediated by the land animals and humans of day 6.

The ultimate mediation is then given to human beings who, while belonging to the earth and with the animals (and therefore in the "image" of the earth and the "likeness" of animals), are also created in the "image and likeness" of God. Humanity is thus placed midway between God and Nature--which has now become nature by being emptied of any intrinsic divinity. Hence the traditional theological phrasing of "Nature, Man and God." As the Psalmist in a parallel passage put it with enthusiastic exclamation:

\[
\text{Thou has made him little less than God} \\
\text{and dost crown him with glory and honor.} \\
\text{Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;} \\
\text{then has put all things under his feet,} \\
\text{all sheep and oxen,} \\
\text{and also the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,} \\
\text{whatever passes along the paths of the sea.} \\
\text{Psalm 8:5-8}
\]

This triadic structure of three sets of three points up another problem with a literal reading of the account. Literalism presumes that the numbering of days is to be understood in an arithmetical sense, whether as actual days or as epochs. This is certainly the way in which numbers are used in science, history and mathematics--and in practically all areas of modern life. But the use of numbers in ancient religious texts was often numerological rather than numerical. That is, their symbolic value was the basis and purpose for their use, not their secular value as counters. While the conversion of numerology to arithmetic was essential for the rise of modern science, historiography and mathematics, the result is that numerological symbols are reduced to signs. Numbers had to be neutralized and secularized, and com-
pletely stripped of any symbolic suggestion, in order to be utilized as digits. The principal surviving exception to this is the negative symbolism attached to the number 13, which still holds a strange power over Fridays, and over the listing of floors in hotels and high rises.

In the literal treatment of the six days of creation, a modern, arithmetical reading is substituted for the original symbolic one. This results, unwittingly, in a secular rather than religious interpretation. Not only are the symbolic associations and meanings of the text lost in the process, but the text is needlessly placed in conflict with scientific and historical readings of origins.

In order to understand the use of the imagery of days, and the numbering scheme employed, one has to think, not only cosmologically, but numerologically. One of the religious considerations involved in numbering is to make certain that any schema works out numerologically: that is, that it uses, and adds up to, the right numbers symbolically. This is distinctively different from a secular use of numbers in which the overriding concern is that numbers add up to the correct total numerically.
In this case, one of the obvious interests of the Genesis account is to correlate the grand theme of the divine work in creation with the six days of work and seventh day of rest in the Jewish week. If the Hebrews had had a five-day or a seven-day work week, the account would have read differently in a corresponding manner. Seven was a basic unit of time among West Semitic peoples, and goes back to the division of the lunar month into 4 periods of 7 days each. By the time Genesis was written, the 7-day week and the sabbath observance had been long established. Since what is being affirmed in the text is the creative work of God, it was quite natural to use the imagery of 6 days of work, with a 7th day of rest. It would surely have seemed inappropriate and jarring to have depicted the divine creative effort in a schema of, say, 5 days or 11 days.

It was important for religious reasons, not secular ones, to use a schema of seven days, and to have the work of creation completed by the end of the sixth day. "And God ceased on the seventh day from all work which he had done" (Genesis 2:2). The word "ceased" is shabat, a cognate of the term shabbat, sabbath. The "creation model" being used here is thus in no sense a scientific model, but a liturgical-calendrical model based on the sacred division of the week and the observance of sabbath. This is the religious form within which the subject of work is to be treated, even the subject of divine work.

The seven-day structure is also being used for another, not unrelated, reason. The number 7 has the numerological meaning of wholeness, plenitude, completeness. This symbolism is derived, in part, from the combination of the three major zones of the cosmos as seen vertically (heaven, earth, underworld) and the four quarters and directions of the cosmos as seen horizontally. Both the numbers 3 and 4 in themselves often function as symbols of totality, for these and other reasons. Geometrically speaking, 3 is the triangular symbol of totality, and 4 is the rectangular symbol (in its perfect form as the square). But what would be more "total" would be to combine the vertical and horizontal planes. Thus the number 7 (adding 3 and 4) and the number 12 (multiplying them) are recurrent biblical symbols of fullness and perfection: 7 golden candlesticks, 7 spirits, 7 words of praise, 7
churches, the 7th year, the 49th year, the 70 elders, forgiveness 70 times 7, etc. Even Leviathan, that dread dragon of the abyss, was represented in Canaanite myth as having 7 heads—the "complete" monster.

Such positive meanings are now being applied by Genesis to a celebration of the whole of creation, and of the parenthesis of sabbath rest. The liturgically repeated phrase "And God saw that it was good," which appears after each day of creation, and the final capping phrase "And behold it was very good," are paralleled and underlined by being placed in a structure that is climaxed by a 7th day. The 7th day itself symbolizes its completeness and "very-goodness."

The account also makes use of the corresponding symbol of wholeness and totality: 12. Two sets of phenomena are assigned to each of the 6 days of creation, thus totalling 12. In this manner the numerological symbolism of completion and fulfillment is associated with the work of creation, as well as the rest from it on the 7th day. The totality of nature is created by God, is good, and is to be celebrated both daily and in special acts of worship and praise on the Sabbath day. The words "six" and "seven" are themselves words of praise: six expressing praise for creation and work; seven for sabbath and rest.

Uses of the number 12, like 7, abound throughout the Bible. Not only is there a miscellany of references to 12 pillars, 12 springs, 12 precious stones, 12 gates, 12 fruits, 12 pearls, etc., but it was important also to identify 12 tribes of Israel, as well as 12 tribes of Ishmael, and later the 12 districts of Solomon, as well as Jesus' 12 disciples.

Though in the modern world numbers have become almost completely secularized, in antiquity they could function as significant vehicles of meaning and power. It was important to associate the right numbers with one's life and activity, and to avoid the wrong numbers. To do so was to surround and fill one's existence with the positive meanings and powers which numbers such as 3, 4, 7 and 12 conveyed. In this way one gave religious significance to life, and placed one's existence in harmony with the divine order of the cosmos. By aligning and synchronizing the microcosm of one's individual and family life, and the mesocosm of one's society and state, with the macrocosm itself, life was tuned to the larger rhythms of this sacred order.
For twentieth century, western societies the overriding consideration in the use of numbers is their secular value in addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. We must therefore have numbers that are completely devoid of all symbolic associations. Numbers such as 7 and 12 do not make our calculators or computers function any better, nor does the number 13 make them any less efficient. Our numbers are uniform, value-neutral "meaningless" and "powerless."

What is critical to modern consciousness is to have the right numbers in the sense of having the right figures and right count. This sense, of course, was also present in the ancient world: in commerce, in construction, in military affairs, in taxation. But there was also a higher, symbolic use of numbers. In a religious context, it was more important to have the right numbers in a sacred rather than profane sense. While we give the highest value, and nearly exclusive value, to
numbers as carriers of arithmetic "facts," in religious texts and rituals the highest value was often given to numbers as carriers of ultimate truth and reality.

Those, therefore, who would attempt to impose a literal reading of numbers upon Genesis, as if the sequence of days was of the same order as counting sheep or merchandise or money, are offering a modern, secular interpretation of a sacred text--in the name of religion. And, as if this were not distortion enough, they proceed to place this secular reading of origins in competition with other secular readings and secular literatures: scientific, historical, mathematical, technological. Extended footnotes are appended to the biblical texts on such extraneous subjects as the Second Law of Thermodynamics, radiometric dating, paleontology, sedimentation, hydrology, etc. These are hardly the issues with which Genesis is concerning itself, or is exercised over.

**Phenomenal Language**

Since Genesis is teaching creation over against procreation, and monotheism over against polytheism, it cannot be said to be teaching science, or any one form of science over against any other. Insofar as Genesis deals with relationships within nature, it does so in a phenomenal manner: as things appear to ordinary observation. Genesis is not in the business of teaching a "young earth" theory of sudden creation in 6 literal 24-hour days. Nor is it teaching some form of "progressive creation" with a mix of fiat creation and epochs of gradual development. Nor is it teaching "theistic evolution" or "pantheistic evolution" or "panentheistic evolution." It does not teach any of these views of science and natural history because it is not using language in that way, for that purpose, or out of that concern.

If scientists wish to take such positions on their own, it is certainly within their province and right as scientists to do so, and to debate such positions within scientific forums. But it should not be done for religious reasons, or motivated by a supposed greater fidelity to the Bible. Nor should anyone presume that such efforts in any way confirm or deny biblical teaching. It is a linguistic confusion to try to argue that any of these scientific positions, or any other scientific positions, past, present or forthcoming, represent the biblical position, and can therefore be questioned by science, verified by science, or falsified by science.

A prime example of this confusion is the energy expended by certain biologists in construing the frequent reference to
reproducing "each according to its kind" as a statement concerning biological species and speciation. The phrasing is repeated 10 times in Genesis 1 with reference to vegetation, birds, sea creatures and land animals. If one may take this to be a biological statement, then it would be appropriate to introduce extended discussion of fixity of species, genetic mutations, natural selection, missing links, stratigraphic evidence, and the like. If not, then the discussion, however interesting and important, is beside the point. And it is not. The repeated stress upon "kinds" is not a biological or genetic statement. It is a cosmological statement. While that may appear to modern interpreters very much like a biological statement, it is actually a different "species" of statement that cannot be "cross-bred" with scientific statements. The type of species-confusion involved here is not that of biological species but linguistic species!

Since cosmologies are concerned with the establishment and maintenance of order in the cosmos, central to the achievement of order is the act of separating things from one another. Without acts of separation, one would have chaos. Thus ancient cosmologies commonly begin with a depiction of a chaotic state, where there are no clear lines of demarcation, and then proceed to indicate ways in which the present world-order (cosmos) with its lines of demarcation has been organized. In other cultures this was achieved by divine births, wars, etc. Here cosmos is accomplished by separating things out from one another, and by creating other things (e.g., light or firmament) that aid in the separation. Everything is thus assigned its proper region, allowing it to have its own identity, place and function in the overall scheme. The imagery used in Genesis 1, in fact, is drawn largely from the political sphere. It is that of a divine sovereign, issuing commands, organizing territories, and governing the cosmic kingdom.

In Genesis 1 the inanimate features of the first four days are achieved by being "separated" or "gathered together." On the first day "God separated the light from the darkness." On the second day "God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament." On the third day God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And on the fourth day God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night." The same theme is then pursued on the third, fifth and
sixth days in dealing with plant and animal life. "Each according to its kind" is a continuation on the animate level of the acts of separation on the inanimate level. The process is then climaxed by the creation of human beings who are granted their unique place in the cosmos by being separated from the rest of the animals by virtue of being in the image and likeness of God, yet at the same time separated from God as creatures of divine creation.

Beyond this general cosmological concern to attribute all types of beings, and all types of order, to the creation and control of God, there is no specific interest in or reference to what we might recognize as a biological statement on species, genera, phyla, etc., or a geological statement on the history of water and earth, or an astronomical statement on the relationship between sun, moon, stars and earth. The language used is phenomenal and popular, not scientific and technical. As John Calvin wisely noted, early in the growing controversies over religion and science: "Nothing is here treated of but the visible form of the world. He who would learn astronomy and the other recondite arts, let him go elsewhere."¹

This observation on biblical usage is very important for the doctrine of revelation. The biblical message offers itself as a universal message. It is addressed to all human beings, whatever their knowledge or lack of it. It is therefore couched in a form that employs the universal appearances of things
which anyone anywhere can identify with. As Calvin also states: "Moses does not speak with philosophical (i.e., scientific) acuteness on occult mysteries, but states those things which are everywhere observed, even by the uncultivated, and which are in common use." Thus when Genesis 1 discusses the "separating" or "gathering" of inanimate forces, these are not astronomical or geological terms, but cosmological ones, which draw upon everyday observations of nature. Similarly, the word "kind" (min) is not functioning as a genetic term, but describes the animate order as it is perceived in ordinary experience. Biblical statements in all these areas are the equivalent of phenomenal statements still commonly in use, despite centuries of astronomy, such as "sunrise" and "sunset."

Calvin pointed out, for example, that the biblical statement--if construed as a scientific statement--that the sun and moon are the two great lights of the heavens, cannot be reconciled with astronomy, since "the star of Saturn, which, on account of its great distance, appears the least of all, is greater than the moon." And, as we now know, there are many suns greater than our sun. But, Calvin insisted, "Moses wrote in a popular style things which, without instruction, all ordinary persons, endued with common sense, are able to understand." Similarly, in his commentary on the reference to the two "great lights" in Psalm 136, Calvin affirmed that "the Holy Spirit had no intention to teach astronomy; and in proposing instruction meant to be common to the simplest and most uneducated persons, he made use by Moses and the other prophets of popular language that none might shelter himself under the pretext of obscurity."

As Francis Bacon perceptively argued in 1605, addressing the apparent flat earth teaching of the Bible, there are two books of God: "the book of God's Word" and "the book of God's Works." These books, however, must not be confused in their nature, language and purpose. We must not, Bacon warned, "unwisely mingle or confound these learnings together." Religion and science are not necessarily running a collision course along the same track, except when someone mistakenly switches them onto the same track. Religious language and scientific language intersect at many points, to be sure, as they touch upon many of the same issues and realities. But they do not move along the same plane of
inquiry and discourse. They intersect at something more like right angles.

Science, as it were, moves along a horizontal plane, with its steadfast attention to immediate causes and naturalistic explanations for phenomena. Religion moves along a vertical plane that intersects this horizontal plane from beginning to end-and not just in certain "gaps" which are defended so as to make room for God at intermittent points along the line. Science, with its eyes focussed on the dimensions of the horizontal plane, tends to have a naturalistic bias, and to see all experience and knowing, and all affirmation, as reducible to this plane. Religion, however, adds another dimension, a supernatural dimension, which it insists intersects this horizontal plane at every moment, and in fact is the ultimate source of its being, meaning and direction. It is a dimension which, along its vertical axis, is both transcendent and immanent. It is simultaneously present with the natural, and without it the natural does not exist. But it is not reducible to the natural, nor is language about it reducible to natural forms.

If one wishes to argue for deeper meanings and mysteries in scripture, they are certainly there. But they are not scientific in character. They are theological and spiritual. They are not meanings and mysteries hidden from the ancients, but now revealed to 20th century scientists, which lie along the horizontal plane. They are rather inexhaustible depths of meaning and mystery which lie along the vertical plane. "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways.... For from him and through him and to him are all things" (Romans 11:33, 36).

NOTES
2. Ibid., p. 84.
3. Ibid., p. 85.
4. Ibid., p. 86.

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The Promised Land: 
A Biblical-Historical View

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.

In the Old Testament few issues are as important as that of the promise of the land to the patriarchs and the nation Israel. In fact, "land," is the fourth most frequent substantive in the Hebrew Bible. Were it not for the larger and more comprehensive theme of the total promise with all its multifaceted provisions, the theme of Israel and her land could well serve as the central idea or the organizing rubric for the entire canon. However, it does hold a dominant place in the divine gifts of blessing to Israel.

Yet there is more to the promise of the land than religious significance and theological meaning; an essential interrelationship exists between the political and empirical reality of the land as a Jewish state and all biblical statements about its spiritual or theological functions. The land of Israel cannot be reduced to a sort of mystical land defined as a new spiritual reality which transcends the old geographic and political designations if one wishes to continue to represent the single truth-intentions of the writers of the biblical text. Instead, the Bible is most insistent on the fact that the land was promised to the patriarchs as a gift where their descendants would reside and rule as a nation.

The Land as Promise

The priority of the divine Word and divine oath as the basis for any discussion of the land is of first importance. From the
inception of God's call to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, God had marked out a specific geographical destination for him (Gen. 12:1). This territorial bequest was immediately reaffirmed and extended to his descendants as soon as Abraham reached Shechem (Gen. 12:7).

Thus Alt was certainly wrong in rejecting the land as a part of the original promise. Noth was closer to the mark when he declared that the promise of both the land and the seed was part of the original covenant to the patriarchs.4

So solemn was this covenant with its gift of the land5 that Genesis 15:7-21 depicted God alone moving between the halves of the sacrificial animals after sunset as "a smoking furnace and a flaming torch" (v. 17; all translations are the author's unless noted otherwise). Thus He obligated Himself and only Himself to fulfill the terms of this oath. Abraham was not asked or required likewise to obligate himself. The total burden for the delivery of the gift of the land fell on the divine Provider but not on the devotion of the patriarch. As if to underscore the permanence of this arrangement, Genesis 17:7, 13, 19 stress that this was to be א denounced,"an everlasting covenant."

**Boundaries of the Land**

The borders of this land promised to Abraham were to run "from the River Egypt [מֵאֵר אַרְאֵי] to the Great River, the River Euphrates" [מִין אֵר אַרְאֵי חָרוּץ] (Gen. 15:18). Or in the later words of the oft-repeated pairs of cities, the land included everything "from Dan to Beersheba" (Judg. 20:1; 1 Sam. 3:20; 2 Sam. 3:10; 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1 Kings 4:25 [Heb. 5:5]; and in reverse order, 2 Chron. 30:5). These two cities marked the northernmost and southernmost administrative centers rather than sharply defined boundary lines.

Even though a number of evangelical scholars have wrongly judged the southern boundary of the "River Egypt" to be the Nile River,6 it is more accurately placed at the Wadi el-'Arish which reaches the Mediterranean Sea at the town of El-'Arish, some ninety miles east of the Suez Canal and almost fifty miles southwest of Gaza (cf. Num. 34:2, 5, Ezek. 47:14, 19; 48:28). Amos 6:14 likewise pointed to the same limits for the southern boundary: the "brook of the Arabah" (נהר עֲרַבָּה) which flows into the southern tip of the Dead Sea. Other marks on the same southern boundary are the end of the Dead Sea (Num. 34:3-5),
Mount Halak (Josh. 11:17), the Wilderness of Zin (Num. 13:21), Arabah (Deut. 1:7), Negeb (Deut. 34:1-3), and "Shihor opposite Egypt" (Josh. 13:3-5; 1 Chron. 13:5).7

The western boundary of the land was "the Sea of the Philistines," that is, the "Great Sea" (Num. 34:6; Josh. 1:4; Ezek. 47:20; 48:28) or Mediterranean Sea, while the eastern boundary was the eastern shore of the Sea of Kinnereth, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea (Num. 34:7-12).

Only the northern boundary presented a serious problem. The river that bordered off the northernmost reaches of the promised land was called "the great river" which was later glossed, according to some, to read "the River Euphrates" in Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7; and Joshua 1:4. In Exodus 23:31 it is simply "the river."

But is the Euphrates River to be equated with the Great River? Could it not be that these are the two extremities of the northern boundary? This suggestion proves to have some weight in that the other topographical notices given along with these two river names would appear to be more ideally located in the valley which currently serves as the boundary between Lebanon and Syria. The river running through this valley is called in modern Arabic Nahr el-Kebir, "the great river."

One of the most difficult topographical features to isolate is the "plain of Labwah [or ‘toward, in the coming to’] Hamath" (לָבָה (הָמָת) (Num. 13:21), or just simply Labwah Hamath (Num. 34:8; Josh. 13:3-5; 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Kings 14:25; 1 Chron. 13:5; Amos 6:18; Ezek. 47:15; 48:1-28). Mazar (Maisler) has identified "Labwah Hamath" or "toward Hamath" as the modern city of Labwah in Lebanon. This city, in a forest just to the south of Kadesh and northeast of Baalbek, was of sufficient stature to be mentioned in Amenhotep II's stele, as Rameses II's favorite hunting grounds8 and in Tiglath-pileser III's text along with Hamath. Numbers 13:21 seems to point to the same "plain" (לָבָה), a district further defined by 2 Samuel 10:6, 8 and Judges 18:28.

Added to this site are Mount Hor (which may be the same as Mount Akkar), just south of the "great river" in Lebanon; and the towns of Zedad, Ziphron, Hazer Ainon (all referred to in Num. 34:3-9; cf. Ezek. 47:15-19; 48:1-2, 28), and Riblah (Ezek. 6:14). All these towns may be bearers of names similar to some Arabic village names today, for example: Riblah, Sadad, Qousseir (= Hazer) or Qaryatein (Hazer Spring).9
While the precise details on the northern border remain extremely tentative, the evidence favors some line far to the north of Dan which would include old Canaanite settlements such as Sidon (Gen. 10:15) and indeed the whole Phoenician coastal section from Sidon to the Philistine Gaza (Gen. 10:19).

Meanwhile, the settlement of Transjordania by the two and one-half tribes seems to be clearly outside that territory originally promised to Israel. Joshua 22:24-25 clearly implies that Gilead was outside the borders of Canaan and the portion allotted by promise. The same implication is sustained in Lot's removal to Transjordania's Sodom (Gen. 13:12) and in the instructions Moses gave to Reuben and Gad: "We will cross over ... into the land of Canaan, and the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us across the Jordan" (Num. 32:32, NASB). Even when three of the six cities of refuge were assigned to Transjordania, they were distinguished from the three that were "in the land of Canaan" (Num. 35:14). Thus the most that could be said for Israel's occupation of these lands on the eastern bank of the Jordan is that it was a temporary occupation but that they did not belong to the land of promise. Likewise the Negeb in the south was also outside the parameters of the promise.

The Land as the Gift of God

Leviticus 25:23, in a context dealing with the Year of Jubilee, declares that the owner of the land is none other than the Lord. Indeed the God of Israel is the Giver of whatever the land yields (Deut. 6:10-11). Thus one of the central theological affirmations about the land is that it is the gift of God to Israel. Eighteen times the Book of Deuteronomy refers to the promise of the land made with the patriarchs, and all but three of these eighteen references emphasize the fact that He likewise "gave" it to them.10

This land was "a good land" (Deut. 1:25, 35; 3:23; 4:21-22; 6:18; 8:7, 10; 9:6; 11:17), for it was filled with brooks, springs, wheat, barley, grapes, vines, figs, pomegranates, olives, honey, iron, and copper.

Yet what God gave He then termed Israel's "inheritance" (חליה). It was "the good land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance" (Deut. 4:21; cf. 4:38; 12:9; 15:4; 19:10; 20:16; 21:23; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1). Thus the Owner of all lands (Ps. 24:1) allotted to Israel the land of Canaan as their special "inheritance."
Whereas the land had been granted to the patriarchs by virtue of the divine Word and oath, it was still theirs in theory and not in actuality. For over half a millennium it was only the land of their sojourning; they did not as yet possess it. Then under Joshua's conquest the ancient promise was to be made a reality.

Since the land was a "gift," as Deuteronomy affirmed in some twenty-five references (Deut. 1:20, 25; 2:29; 3:20; 4:40; 5:16; et passim), Israel had but to "possess" (קדש) it (Deut. 3:19; 5:31; 12:1; 15:4; 19:2, 14; 25:19). This does not mean that the idea of taking the land by force or conquest was contradictory to the idea of its bestowal as a gift.11 As Miller correctly reconciled the situation, God's overthrow of the enemy would be the way in which He would finally allow Israel to take possession of the land.12 The two notions come together in the expression, "The land which Yahweh gives you to possess."

If it be objected, as it surely has, that such action on God's part is pure chauvinism and unfair partiality, it should be remembered that Deuteronomy had already spoken of the same divine replacement of former inhabitants in Transjordania. The Emim, Horites, and Zamzummim had been divinely dispossessed and destroyed (Deut. 2:9, 12, 21) and their lands had been sovereignly given to Moab, Edom, and Ammon. The comparison of their situation with Israel's had not been missed by the writer (2:12). In fact Amos 9:7 reviews several other exoduses Yahweh had conducted in the past: the Philistines from Crete and the Syrians from Kir of Mesopotamia, not to mention the Ethiopians.

Accordingly, as the conquest came to an end, what the patriarchs had enjoyed solely in the form of promissory words except for a burial plot or two was now to be totally possessed.13 Yet this introduced another enigma, namely, the gap between the gift of the whole land and the reality of Israel's partial conquest and control of the land. On the one hand Yahweh promised to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan "little by little" (מאז ההמונים) (Exod. 23:30-33), and Joshua made war "a long time" (יואל הרעים) (Josh. 11:18). On the other hand the Canaanites were destroyed "quickly" (פח) (Deut. 7:22; 9:3).14 Furthermore not only is the speed with which the conquest was completed an issue; but also the extent of the conquest is a problem (cf. Josh. 12:10-23 with 15:63; 17:12; Judg. 1:21-22, 29). But the contrasting statements on the speed of the conquest are relative only to the magnitude of the work that was to be done. Where the conquest
is presented as *fait accompli*, it is so from the standpoint of the territory having been generally secured from the theocratic perspective (even though there were many pockets of resistance that needed to be flushed out and some sites that needed to be recaptured several times since the fortunes of warfare tended to seesaw back and forth as positions frequently changed hands).

Nevertheless the inheritance remained as a gift even when the actual possession of the land lagged far behind the promise. An identical conundrum can be found by comparing the various provisions for "rest" (נַחַם, Exod. 33:14; נַחַת, Deut. 12:9) in the "place" that the Lord had chosen to "plant" His people. Whereas Israel had not yet come to the "resting place" and to the inheritance of the land (Deut. 12:9), by the time Joshua had completed his administration "The LORD [had given] them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers .... Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed: all came to pass" (Josh. 21:44-45, NASB).15

Why then, it might be asked, was David still expecting this rest as a future hope (2 Sam. 7:10-11)? And why was Solomon, that "man of rest," expecting it (1 Kings 8:56; 1 Chron. 22:9)? The solution to this matter is that even the emphasis of Joshua in 21:44-45 was on the *promised word* which had not failed Israel, nor would it. But whether any given generation has remained in the land has depended on whether it has set a proper value on God's promised inheritance.

Such conditionality did not "pave the way for a declension from grace into law," as von Rad suggested16; neither does the conditional aspect of any single generation's participation in the blessings offered in the Davidic covenant contradict the eternality of their promises. The "if" notices in this covenant (1 Kings 2:4; 8:25; 9:4-5; Pss. 89:29-32: 132:12; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14-15) referred only to any future generation's participation in the benefits of the covenant, but they did not affect the transmission or the certainty of God's eternal oath.17 The ownership of the land (as a gift from God) is certain and eternal, but the occupation of it by any given generation is conditioned on obedience.

Therefore neither the days of Joshua nor those of David could be used as a kind of blank check for any subsequent generation to rest on their fathers' laurels. Indeed, the word of promise could also be theirs, if they would enter not only into the material resting place, but if they too would appropriate that rest by faith as did Caleb and Joshua (Ps. 95:7-11; cf. Rom. 9-11).
Loss of the Land

The history and theology of the land divides right at this point. In the succinct vocabulary of Brueggemann,\textsuperscript{18} the Jordan is "the juncture between two histories." In the one "history is one of \textit{landlessness on the way to the land}" and in the other it is "\textit{landed Israel in the process of losing the land}." Thus the \textit{sine qua non} for continued enjoyment of life in the land is obedience that springs from a genuine love and fear of God. Failure to obey could lead to war, calamity, loss of the land, or death itself (Deut. 4:26).

Many of the laws were tied directly to the land and Israel's existence on it, as indicated by the motive clauses or introductory words found in many of them.\textsuperscript{19} In fact when evil was left unchecked and was compounded, it caused the land to be defiled and guilty before God (Deut. 21:23; 24:4). This point could not have been made more forcefully than it is in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Naturally no nation or individual has the right to interpret any single or isolated reverse or major calamity in life as an evidence of divine love which is seeking the normalization of relationships between God and man. Yet Israel's prophets were bold to declare with the aid of divine revelation that certain events, especially those in related series, were indeed from the hand of God (e.g., Amos 4:6-12 and Hag. 1:4-7).

The most painful of all the tragedies would be the loss of the land (Lev. 26:34-39). But such a separation could never be a permanent situation; how could God deny Himself and fail to fulfill His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Lev. 26:42)? As surely as the judgments might "overtake" (Deut. 28:15, 43; cf. Zech. 1:6) future generations, just as surely would every promised blessing likewise "overtake" (Deut. 28:2) them the moment "repentance" (\textit{bUw}) began (Deut. 30:2, 6, 8, 10; cf. Zech. 1:6).\textsuperscript{20} Forsaking the covenant the Lord made with the fathers would lead to an uprooted existence (Deut. 30:24-28) until God once more restored the fortunes of Israel.

The Prophets and the Promise of a Return

The "headwaters" of the "return" promises, as Martens states in one of the first studies of land theology in the prophets,\textsuperscript{21} are in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Both of these men had experienced firsthand the loss of land; yet together they contain twenty-five
explicit statements about return to the land and five texts with indirect announcements of return.

Jeremiah's characteristic formula for the restoration of Israel to the land is "restore the fortunes (or captivity)" (הובש). Twelve of its twenty-six occurrences in the Old Testament are found in Jeremiah (e.g., 29:14; 30:3; 32:44). Ezekiel on the other hand usually casts his message in a three-part formula (e.g., Ezek. 11:17; 20:41-42; 36:24; 37:21): (a) "I will bring (Hiphil of אכ) you from the people"; (b) "I will gather (Piel of יב) you from the lands"; (c) "I will bring (Hiphil of וב) you into the land of Israel."

In one of the most striking passages in the prophets, Yahweh pledges that His promise to restore Israel's fortunes (Jer. 33:26) will be as dependable and as certain as His covenant with day and night (33:20, 25).

While the sheer multiplicity of texts from almost every one of the prophets is staggering, a few evangelicals insist that this pledge to restore Israel to her land was fulfilled when Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah led their respective returns from the Babylonian Exile. But if the postexilic returns to the land fulfilled this promised restoration predicted by the prophets, why then did Zechariah continue to announce a still future return (10:8-12) in words that were peppered with the phrases and formulas of such prophecies as Isaiah 11:11 and Jeremiah 50:19?

Such a return of the nation Israel to the land could come only from a literal worldwide assemblage of Jews from "the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12). The God who promised to bring spiritual and immaterial blessings will also fulfill the material, secular, and political blessings in order to demonstrate that He is indeed Lord of the whole earth and all that is in it.

The question as to whether the return follows a national spiritual awakening and turning to the Lord or vice versa is difficult. Sometimes the prophets seem to favor the first, as in Deuteronomy 30, and sometimes it appears that the return precedes any general repentance, as in Ezekiel 36:1-37:14 and perhaps in Isaiah 11. But there can be no question about a future return in any of the prophets.

The New Testament and the Promise of the Land

For Paul, no one of the previous promises has changed--not even the promise of the land. Since the Old Testament has an
authority equal to that of the New Testament, the permanency and directness of the promise of the land to Israel cannot be contravened by anything allegedly taught in the New Testament. Tal is wide of the mark when he summarizes the view that the Old Testament can be set aside now that the New Testament era has dawned. He holds that all geopolitical rights promised in the old covenant have been cancelled and that the best that Israel can hope for now is to be part of the new people of God, the church, but without nationality, land, or statehood. But such a view does not square with either the Old covenant or the New covenant.

The most significant passage on this subject in the New Testament is Romans 9-11, especially 11:11-36. For Paul, Israel's restoration to the favor and blessing of God must come in "full number" or as the RSV puts it, "full inclusion" (πληρωμα, Rom. 11:12; cf. πληρωμα των εθνων in 11:25). Thus Israel is and remains God's link to her own future as well as the link to the future of the nations. For if her temporary loss of land and failures have fallen out to the spiritual advantage of the world and their reconciliation to God, her acceptance will signal her "life from the dead" (11:15).

"And so all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26) in accordance with the predictions of Isaiah 27:9 and 59:20-21. The "and so" (και οὕτως) probably points back to verse 25 and the "mystery" of the temporary failure of Israel until the full number of the Gentiles comes in (cf. Luke 21:24). Then, in that future moment, "all Israel will be saved" πᾶσι Ισραήλ σωθησοναι. This is not a matter of individual salvation nor a matter of converting to a Gentile brand of Christendom, but it is a matter of God's activity in history when the nation shall once again, as in the days of blessing in the past, experience the blessing and joy of God spiritually, materially, geographically, and politically.

The main lines of Paul's argument in Romans 9-11 are clear and in complete agreement with the promise of the land to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Therefore one ought not detract from or minimize the full force of this blunt witness to God's everlasting work on behalf of Israel. For herein lies one of the greatest philosophies of history ever produced: Israel is God's watermark on secular history that simultaneously demonstrates that He can complete in time and space what He promised to do and that He, the Owner and Ruler of all nations, geography, and magistrates, will deal severely with those nations that mock, deride, parcel up, and attack Israel (e.g., Joel 3:1-5). Those that
attempt to do so either in the name of the church or the name of political and economic expediency will answer to the God of Israel. Yes, Israel is the "navel" of the earth (Ezek. 38:12; cf. 5:5) in more ways than one. The mark of God's new measure of grace, not only to Israel as a nation but also to all the nations and Gentiles at large, will be Israel's return to the land and enjoyment of it in the millennium.

Notes
2 For a discussion which organizes the total message of the Bible around the promise, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Toward an Old Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978).
7 Simons argues that Shihor is not a branch of the Nile, the old Pelusiac or easternmost branch of the Nile - which is never a הָנָה according to K. A. Kitchen ("Egypt, Brook of," Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 197512:224-25), but is the Wadi el-'Arish (Simons, Geographical and Topographical Texts, p. 104).
26:8 of sufficient weight to offset this interpretation, or is it merely an imitation of the older as Simons argues (Geographical and Topographical Texts, p. 101)?


13 For further development of this thought see Kaiser, Toward an Old Testament Theology, pp. 124-36.


17 See Kaiser, Toward an Old Testament Theology, pp. 61-66, 92-94.


26 But seethe brilliant essay by Shermaryahu Talmon, "The 'Navel of the Earth' and the Comparative Method," in Scripture in History and Theology: Essays in Honor of J. Coert Rylaarsdam, eds. Arthur L. Merrill and Thomas W. Overholt (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1977), pp. 243-68. He concluded that does not mean a mountain peak that serves as the center of all the surrounding landscape, but that it is a plateau, a level plain nested on a mountain. The Septuagint , "navel," is unwarranted when judged by biblical and contextual considerations.
BECAUSE IT HAD NOT RAINED

MEREDITH G. KLINE

THERE are no signs that the debate over the chronological data of Genesis 1 is abating. Among those who hold biblical views of the inspiration of the Scriptures certain interpretations of that chronology have, indeed, long been traditional. These may disagree as to the duration of the "days" of Genesis 1 but they have in common the opinion that the order of narration in that chapter coincides with the actual sequence of creation history. Although these traditional interpretations continue to be dominant in orthodox circles there also continues to be debate and its flames have recently been vigorously fanned by the bellows of the dissenters.¹

At the heart of the issue, though its crucial character appears to be generally overlooked is the question of whether the modus operandi of divine providence was the same during the creation era as that of ordinary providence now. This is not to raise the question of whether Genesis 1 leaves the door open for some sort of evolutionary reconstruction. On the contrary, it is assumed here that Genesis 1 contradicts the idea that an undifferentiated world-stuff evolved into the present variegated universe by dint of intrinsic potentialities whether divinely "triggered" or otherwise. According to Genesis 1, the divine act of absolute beginning—or creation in nihilum—was followed by a succession of divine acts of origination, both ex nihilo and intra aliquid.²

¹ Two discussions in particular have evoked animated reactions among evangelicals in this country: B. Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture (Grand Rapids, 1954), pp. 173 ff. and N. H. Ridderbos, Is There A Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science? (Grand Rapids, 1957).
² In nihilum serves to distinguish the initial creative act as alone having had no setting of prior created reality. Intra aliquid has the advantage over ex materia (for productions like that of Adam's body out of existent dust) that it does not obscure the pure creativeness of the divine act. There should be no hesitation in classifying such works as creation in the strict sense. The opinion that Calvin refused to do so is mistaken. (Cf. the criticism of B. B. Warfield on this point by J. Murray in "Calvin's Doctrine
BECAUSE IT HAD NOT RAINED 147

world with the fulness thereof is the net result of this succession of discrete creation acts of God completed within the era of the "six days" (Gen. 2:1-3).

Though this closed era of the "six days" was characteristic-ally the era of creation, it was not exclusively so. That is, the works of creation were interlaced with the work of providence --in a manner analogous to the mingling of natural and supernatural providence in the structure of subsequent history. As a matter of fact, one aspect of the creative acts themselves (excepting the act of absolute beginning) may properly be subsumed under the rubric of providence. They were works of providence in that they were part of the divine government of the world in so far as that world was already existent before each new creative act occurred. In the discussion which follows, however, predications made concerning the modus

of Creation", *WTJ* XVII, 1954, pp. 29 ff.). Calvin does on occasion insist that the word "create" be restricted to *ex nihilo* fiat. Thus, in commenting on the use of the word "create" in Gen. 1:21 for the origin of creatures of sea and air, which Calvin interprets (mistakenly) as having involved the use of existent water, he accounts for this usage solely on the ground that the material employed belonged to the universal matter created *ex nihilo* on the first "day". However, in such a passage it must be observed that Calvin is exclusively concerned with the precise meaning of the Hebrew word ניב not at all with the general theological use of the word "create".

There have been acts of creation since the creation of man which terminated the era of the "six days"; cf., e. g., the origin of souls and such miracles as the multiplying of the loaves and fishes. None of these, however, has added to the "kinds" originated within the "six days".

Cf. B. B. Warfield, "Christian Supernaturalism" in *Studies in Theology* (New York, 1932), pp. 37 ff. The likeness of creation acts to subsequent supernatural acts is profound. They are alike highways to consummation. It is by the road of his successive creation acts that God has betaken himself to the Sabbath of the seventh "day". In the sequel, it is by the way of supernaturalism that God directs his image-bearer to union with him in his consummation rest. Adam wakes to the supernatural voice and it is to him from the very beginning a voice that speaks to him out of God's Sabbath, challenging him with the invitation, "Come up hither"--to consummation. And every supernatural word thereafter issues from and beckons covenant-man unto that same Sabbath dwelling-place of God, while every supernatural work propels him towards it. The redemptive principle becomes necessary in the supernaturalism that conducts fallen man to consummation rest and it is, therefore, prominent in biblical revelation; but it is nevertheless subordinate to the eschatological thrust that marks all supernaturalism.
operandi of divine providence during the creation era will have in view only the work of God other than his acts of creation.

The traditionalist interpreter, as he pursues his strictly chronological way through the data of Genesis 1, will be compelled at one point or another to assume that God in his providential preservation of the world during the "six days" era did not operate through secondary means in the manner which men now daily observe and analyze as natural law. The question, therefore, is whether the Scriptures justify this traditional assumption of supernatural providence for the creation era or whether they contradict it--or whether possibly they leave it an open question. It will be the central contention of this article that a clear answer to that question is available in Gen. 2:5 and that that answer constitutes a decisive word against the traditional interpretation.

**GENESIS 2:5ff.**

The major English versions exhibit marked divergence in the way they translate Gen. 2:5 and relate it grammatically to verses 4 and 6-7.

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<th>Authorized</th>
<th>American Revised</th>
<th>Revised Standard</th>
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<td>(4) These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, (5) and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. (6) But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. (7) And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground ...</td>
<td>(4) These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that Jehovah God made earth and heaven. (5) And no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for Jehovah God had not caused it to rain upon the earth: and there was not a man to till the ground; (6) but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. (7) And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground ...</td>
<td>(4) These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, (5) when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up--for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; (6) but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground--(7) then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground ...</td>
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Of these versions the treatment of verse 5 in the ARV is alone acceptable. A Hebrew idiom for expressing an emphatic negative found in the original of this verse has been muffed by the AV with the result that it is obscure at best. The RSV like the ARV correctly renders the negative element but has other serious defects. It treats verse 5 as though it were part of an involved temporal section extending from 4b through 6, all subordinated to the action of verse 7. This is an old interpretation which Delitzsch properly rejected because it required "a clumsy interpolated period" such as is "not to be expected in this simple narrative style". The RSV rendering would also compel Genesis 2 to teach that man was created before vegetation, whereas the ARV permits the exegete to regard the arrangement of its contents as topical rather than chronological. If the arrangement of Genesis 2 were not topical it would contradict the teaching of Genesis 1 (not to mention that of natural revelation) that vegetation preceded man on the earth.

Set against the vast background of creation history, these verses serve to bring together man and the vegetable world in the foreground of attention. This prepares for the central role of certain objects of the vegetable kingdom, i.e., the Garden of God and especially the trees in the midst of it, in the earliest history of man as recorded in the immediately following verses (cf. 2:8ff. and 3:1ff.).

Verse 5 itself describes a time when the earth was without vegetation. And the significant fact is a very simple one. It is the fact that an explanation—a perfectly natural explanation—is given for the absence of vegetation at that time: "for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth". The Creator did not originate plant life on earth before he had prepared an environment in which he might preserve it without by-passing secondary means and without having recourse to extraordinary means such as marvellous methods of fertilization. The unargued presupposition of Gen. 2:5 is clearly that the divine providence was operating during the

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6 That much is deducible from Gen. 1:26-30 whatever one's view of the chronological character of the order of narration in Genesis 1 as a whole.
creation period through processes which any reader would recognize as normal in the natural world of his day.

The last clause of verse 5 cites as a second reason for the lack of vegetation the absence of men. Though there be no rainfall, if man is present "to till the ground" and, in particular, to construct a system of artificial irrigation, he can make the desert blossom as the rose. The effect of this last clause of Gen. 2:5 is to confirm and strengthen the principle that normal providential procedure characterized the creation era.

Verses 6 and 7 then correspond respectively to the two clauses in verse 5b and relate how the environmental deficiencies there cited were remedied. First, "flooding waters"7

7 This verse reflects conditions in the East where irrigation is of the essence of farming and distinct terms are found to distinguish land that is naturally irrigated from land that is artificially irrigated. Cf. T. H. Gaster, Thespis (New York, 1950), pp. 123, 126.

8 If the view of some exegetes were adopted that the sphere of Gen. 2:5 is limited to such cultivated plants as were found in the Garden of Eden, the concept of providential operations involved would remain the same. The text would still affirm that at a point prior to the creation of man and, therefore, within the creation era the absence of certain natural products was attributable to the absence of the natural means for their providential preservation. It may here be added that this avoidance of unnecessary supernaturalism in providence during the "six days" accords well with the analogy of subsequent divine providence for the latter too is characterized by a remarkable economy in its resort to the supernatural.

9 The meaning of the Hebrew word 牖 is uncertain. It probably denotes subterranean waters which rise to the surface and thence as gushing springs or flooding rivers inundate the land. The watering of the Garden of Eden by a river in the immediate sequel (v. 10) may be intended as a specific localized instance of the 牖 phenomena (v. 6). Note the similar advance in the case of man, viewed in verse 5b as the artificial irrigator, from the general statement of verse 7 to the specific assignment in the Garden (vs. 8, 15). The word 牖 appears elsewhere in the Old Testament only in Job 36:27. That passage is also difficult; but 牖 there seems to denote the underground ore, as it were, from which the raindrops are extracted and refined, i. e., by the process of evaporation in the cycle of cloud formation and precipitation. (For the translation of the preposition 牖 as "from" see C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Manual (Rome 1955), p. 75). The Hebrew -in is probably to be derived from the Akkadian edu, a Sumerian loanword which denotes overflowing waters. (Cf. E. Speiser, Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 140 (1955), pp. 9-11). Other views are that it comes from Akkadian id, "river", also a Sumerian loanword (used in the
began to rise from the earth and watered all the face of the ground" (v. 6). Here was a source of natural irrigation to compensate for the want of rain. The first verb is a Hebrew imperfect and the inceptive nuance--"began to"--is legitimate for that form and is required in this case if verse 6 is not to neutralize the first clause in verse 5b. The English versions of verse 6 convey the impression that there was an ample watering of the earth during the very time which verse 5 describes. If that were so, the explanatory statement of verse 5, "for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth", would be stranded as an irrelevance. Actually, verse 6 reports the emergence of a new natural phenomenon, the necessary preliminary to the creation of the florae described in verse 5a.

Verse 7 then records the creation of man. With adequate natural irrigation already available, the mere preservation of vegetation does not require man's husbandry. But its full horticultural exploitation does. Besides, the mention of man at this point need not be accounted for solely in terms of his services to the vegetable kingdom for he was not made for it but it for him.

GENESIS 2:5ff. AND THE INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS 1

Embedded in Gen. 2:5ff. is the principle that the *modus operandi* of the divine providence was the same during the creation period as that of ordinary providence at the present time. It is now to be demonstrated that those who adopt the traditional approaches cannot successfully integrate this revelation with Genesis 1 as they interpret it.

In contradiction to Gen. 2:5, the twenty-four-hour day theory must presuppose that God employed other than the ordinary secondary means in executing his works of providence. To take just one example, it was the work of the "third day" that the waters should be gathered together into...
seas and that the dry land should appear and be covered with vegetation (Gen. 1:9-13). All this according to the theory in question transpired within twenty-four hours. But continents just emerged from under the seas do not become thirsty land as fast as that by the ordinary process of evaporation. And yet according to the principle revealed in Gen. 2:5 the process of evaporation in operation at that time was the ordinary one.

The results, indeed, approach the ludicrous when it is attempted to synchronize Gen. 2:5 with Genesis 1 interpreted in terms of a week of twenty-four-hour days. On that interpretation, vegetation was created on what we may call "Tuesday". Therefore, the vegetationless situation described in Gen. 2:5 cannot be located later than "Tuesday" morning. Neither can it be located earlier than that for Gen. 2:5 assumes the existence of dry land which does not appear until the "third day". Besides, would it not have been droll to attribute the lack of vegetation to the lack of water either on "Sunday" when the earth itself was quite unfinished or on "Monday" when there was nothing but water to be seen? Hence the twenty-four-hour day theorist must think of the Almighty as hesitant to put in the plants on "Tuesday" morning because it would not rain until later in the day! (It must of course be supposed that it did rain, or at least that some supply of water was provided, before "Tuesday" was over, for by the end of the day the earth was abounding with that vegetation which according to Gen. 2:5 had hitherto been lacking for want of water.)

How can a serious exegete fail to see that such a reconstruction of a "Tuesday morning" in a literal creation week is completely foreign to the historical perspectives of Gen. 2:5? It is a strange blindness that questions the orthodoxy of all who reject the traditional twenty-four-hour day theory when the truth is that endorsement of that theory is incompatible with belief in the self-consistency of the Scriptures.

But any strictly chronological interpretation of Genesis 1, even if the "days" are regarded as ages, forces the exegete inescapably into conflict with the principle disclosed in Gen. 2:5. The traditional day-age theorist must, for example, imagine that during the creation era plants and trees flourished on the face of an earth spinning alone through a sunless,
moonless, starless void. Now it will be recognized that that is not ordinary botanical procedure - and yet Gen. 2:5 takes for granted ordinary botanical procedure.

In the vain attempt to avoid such a reconstruction, according to which vegetation (product of the "third day") thrives without benefit of the sun (product of the "fourth day"), the most unwarranted notions of the work of the "fourth day" have been substituted for the straightforward statements of the text. Gen. 1:14-19 declares that the heavenly bodies were on the "fourth day" created and set in their familiar positions. Moses is certainly not suggesting merely that hitherto hidden heavenly bodies now became visible on earth. He knew how to express such an idea in Hebrew if that had been his intent (cf. his account of the appearance of the continents from under the seas, v. 9). The very least that transpired on the "day" in question is that the sun was brought into a radically new relationship to the earth wherein it began to govern earth's times and seasons and in general to affect life on earth as men now observe it to do. But the strictly chronological view of Genesis 1, even with such a minimizing exegesis of the "fourth day", must still suppose that prior to this re-ordering of the universe on the "fourth day", plant life had flourished on the earth contrary to present natural law.

On this traditional reconstruction it is impossible to make sense of Gen. 2:5. Surely if vegetation could have flourished without the sun it could have survived without rain. Laws quite unlike any we know would then have prevailed. For that matter, God could have preserved forests in space without so much as roots in a dry earth. It would then, however, be completely irrelevant for Gen. 2:5 to assign natural reasons for the absence of vegetation. Indeed, the very fact that it offered a perfectly natural explanation would bring Gen. 2:5 into principal contradiction to Genesis 1.

To the divisive higher critic this might mean only that there is another item to add to his list of alleged contradictions between the two variant creation accounts he supposes he has discovered in Genesis 1 and 2. But the orthodox exegete, having been confronted with the evidence of ordinary providential procedure in Genesis 2:5 will be bound to reject the rigidly chronological interpretations of Genesis 1 for the reason
that they necessarily presuppose radically different providential operations for the creation period.

If Gen. 2:5 obviates certain traditional interpretations of Genesis 1, by the same token it validates the not so traditional interpretation which regards the chronological framework of Genesis 1 as a figurative representation of the time span of creation and judges that within that figurative framework the data of creation history have been arranged according to other than strictly chronological considerations.

To be sure, certain features are found in their proper relative positions chronologically. But where that is so it must be determined by factors other than the order of narration. It is perfectly obvious, for example, that the rest of the "seventh day", expressive of the divine joy in creation consummated, must follow chronologically the creation labors themselves. Again, the implications of man's position as lord of creation, the scope of the cultural mandate, and other considerations require that the creation of man concluded the creative acts of God in the actual historical sequence as well as in the order of narration.

Nevertheless, Genesis 2:5 forbids the conclusion that the order of narration is exclusively chronological. The rationale of the arrangement involves other factors. To some extent a topical approach informs the account. As has been frequently observed, a succession of correspondences emerges when the contents of "days" one to three are laid alongside the contents of "days" four to six. Another literary interest at work within this parallelism is that of achieving climax, as is done, for example, in introducing men after all other creatures as their king.

Of greater significance for the life of man than these merely literary devices is the Sabbathic pattern of the over-all structure of Gen. 1:1-2:3. For the Creator's way in the day that he made the earth and the heavens must be the way, of his image-bearer also. The precise ratio of man's work to his rest is a matter of following the chronological structure of the revelation in which God was pleased to record his creation triumph. The aeons of creation history could have been divided into other than six periods. For temporally the "days" are not of equal length (cf., e.g., the seventh "day")
BECAUSE IT HAD NOT RAINED

which is everlasting), and logically the infinitely diversified creative works were susceptible of analysis into other than six divisions. But the Creator in his wisdom, adapting the proportions of the ordinance, it would seem, to the constitutional needs of man, chose to reveal his creative acts in terms of six "days" of work followed by a seventh "day" of rest.

The divine demand for human imitation inherent in the Sabbathic pattern of that revelation becomes articulate in the fourth word of the decalogue. The comparison there drawn between the divine original and the human copy is fully satisfied by the facts that in each case there is the Sabbathic principle and the six-one ratio. The argument that Genesis 1 must be strictly chronological because man's six days of labor follow one another in chronological succession forces the analogy unnecessarily. The logic of such argument would not allow one to stop short of the conclusion that the creation "days" must all have been of equal duration and twenty-four hours at that.

THE LITERARY GENRE OF GENESIS 1

Quite apart from the evidence of Gen. 2:5 the figurative framework interpretation of Genesis 1 which it demands would commend itself to us above the traditional interpretations. Only brief mention will be made here of other lines of evidence since it is the main burden of this article to center attention on Gen. 2:5 whose decisive import for the Genesis 1 problem has (to the writer's knowledge) been hitherto unappreciated.

The literary character of Gen. 1:1-2:3 prepares the exegete for the presence there of a stronger figurative element than might be expected were it ordinary prose. This passage is not, of course, full-fledged Semitic poetry. But neither is it ordinary prose. Its structure is strophic and throughout the strophes many refrains echo and re-echo. Instances occur of other poetic features like parallelism (1:27; 2:2) and alliteration (1:1). In general then the literary treatment of the creation in Genesis 1 is in the epic tradition.

Having made such an observation concerning the literary
genre of the creation record, it is imperative (especially in the present theological scene) that one convinced of the genuinely historical nature of the events recorded in the opening chapters of Genesis promptly add that the disregard for historical truth associated with the usual epic is not imported along with the formal literary aspects of the epic style into the divine revelation. Such importation was no more inevitable than that the polytheism of pre-biblical psalmody, for example, must have been carried over with the religious lyric form into the biblical Psalter. Though Genesis 1 be epic in literary style, its contents are not legendary or mythical in either a Liberal or Barthian sense. The semi-poetic style, however, should lead the exegete to anticipate the figurative strand in this genuinely historical record of the origins of the universe.

It also needs considerable emphasis, even among orthodox exegetes, that specific evidence is required for identifying particular elements in the early chapters of Genesis as literary figures. The semi-poetic form of Genesis 1 does not make it an exception. Exegesis which disregards this degenerates into allegorizing and these chapters are not allegories.

The specific exegetical evidence for the figurative character of the several chronological terms in Genesis 1 has been repeatedly cited. The word "day" must be figurative because it is used for the eternity during which God rests from his creative labors. The "day's" subordinate elements, "evening" and "morning", must be figurative for they are mentioned as features of the three "days" before the text records the creation of those lights in the firmament of heaven which were to divide the day from the night. (From the position taken in this article the last argument is, of course, only ad hominem. But on the other hand, if the validity of the interpretation advocated here is recognized, the figurative nature of the "evenings" and "mornings" follows with equal necessity.)

Purely exegetical considerations, therefore, compel the conclusion that the divine author has employed the imagery of an ordinary week to provide a figurative chronological framework for the account of his creative acts. And if it is a figurative week then it is not a literal week of twenty-four-hour days. Furthermore, once the figurative nature of the chronological pattern is appreciated the literalness of the sequence is
no more sacrosanct than the literalness of the duration of the days in this figurative week.

Whether the events narrated occurred in the order of their narration would, as far as the chronological framework of Genesis 1 is concerned, be an open exegetical question. The question is actually closed in favor of the non-chronological interpretation by the exegetical evidence of Gen. 2:5. But if the exegete did not have the light of Gen. 2:5, he would certainly be justified in turning to natural revelation for possible illumination of the question left open by special revelation. And surely natural revelation concerning the sequence of developments in the universe as a whole and the sequence of the appearance of the various orders of life on our planet (unless that revelation has been completely misinterpreted) would require the exegete to incline to a not exclusively chronological interpretation of the creation week.

The exegete could then find confirmation of this view in the evidence of a topical interest in the arrangement of Genesis 1 and in the non-chronological mode of representing history which is certainly common enough elsewhere in Scripture. He might also well observe the likeness between Moses' record of the creation "week" and certain visions of John, the seer of the Apocalypse, which are heptad in structure with successively numbered divisions and yet are not strictly chronological in sequence. It appears that the God of revelation chose to reveal the primeval ages of creation and the eschatological ages of re-creation in similar literary form.
THE HA-BI-RU--KIN OR FOE OF ISRAEL?
THIRD ARTICLE

MEREDITH G. KLINE

II. Ha-BI-ru--HEBREW RELATIONS

A fascination with the possibilities of illuminating Hebrew origins has characterized studies of the ha-BI-ru. As observed at the outset, popular theory has it that the Hebrews were one offshoot of the ha-BI-ru. This theory may start with the supposition that the ha-BI-ru were a social class or an ethnic group. Although some form of either approach can be developed without the assumption that the terms ha-BI-ru and 'Ibri can be equated phonetically or at least semantically they are greatly strengthened if such equation can be established. It is necessary in this connection to survey the usage of 'Ibrim in the Old Testament and to face the question of the phonetic relation of ha-BI-ru and 'Ibri.

A. The Usage of 'Ibrim in the Old Testament.

Support for the view that the term ha-BI-ru denotes a larger whole from which the biblical Hebrews originated has been claimed in the usage of the term 'Ibrim in the Old Testament. There is no doubt that the gentilic 'Ibri is ordinarily used in the Old Testament as an ethnicon for Abraham and his descendants of the Isaac-Jacob line.\textsuperscript{178} In a

\textsuperscript{178} The word is found almost exclusively in a few clusters which suggests that particular circumstances account for its employment. One such group appears in the narrative of the Egyptian sojourn and bondage; a second in the record of Israelite-Philistine relationships during the days of Samuel and Saul; and a third in a series of texts dealing with the manumission of Hebrew servants. There are besides only the isolated appearances in Genesis 14:13 and Jonah 1:9. The great majority of these are instances of non-Israelites speaking to or about Israelites, or of Israelites speaking to foreigners, or of declarations of God destined for foreigners. Where it is
few passages, however, some have judged that 'Ibrim is used in a non-Israelite or even appellative sense and that in such texts an original, wider (i.e., ha-BI-ru) connotation emerges. These passages must be examined.

1. The 'Ebed 'Ibri Legislation.

In the legislation of Exod. 21:2 and Deut. 15:12 and in the references to these laws in Jer. 34:9, 14 the term 'Ibri has been thought to denote not the ethnic character of the servant but a particular variety of servanthood. J. Lewy develops this theory on the basis of his interpretation of the term ha-BI-ru in the Nuzu contracts as an appellative meaning "foreign-servant", and his judgment that the parallels between the status of the ha-BI-ru servants and the 'ebed 'Ibri of Exod. 21:2 (and the associated passages) are so close and numerous as to indicate identical institutions and identity of meaning for ha-BI-ru and 'Ibri.\(^{179}\)

the Israeliite author who employs the term he is often adapting his terminology to the usage in the context. In several passages a contrast is drawn between Israelites and other ethnic groups.

It has been suggested that 'Ibri uniformly possesses a peculiar connotation. For example, DeVaux (RB 55, 1948, pp. 344 ff.) maintains that it has a derogatory nuance and finds the common element in the fact that the 'Ibrim are strangers in the milieu, while Kraeling (AJSL 58, 1941 pp. 237 ff.) suggests that 'Ibri is an alternate for "Israelite" in situations where the designee is not a free citizen in a free community or on free soil. The latter formulation seems to be successful in unravelling a strand common to all the 'Ibri contexts but it remains uncertain whether such a nuance necessarily attached to the employment of the word. Cf. Greenberg, op. cit., p. 92.

\(^{179}\) HUCA XIV, 1939, pp. 587 ff.; XV, 1940, pp. 47 ff. Cf. his note in Bottero, op. cit., pp. 163-4, where he translates ha-BI-ru as "resident alien". Lewy supports his thesis with the considerations that the ha-BI-ru are present in the Mitannian orbit in the period during which the 'Ibrim became a nation and that the whole area in question had been unified under the Hyksos with the result that the same technical terms and analogous institutions are found throughout. He holds that this social-legal appellative usage of Ibri represents the earliest stage (noting its appearance in the first paragraph of Israel's Book of the Covenant) but that later the term was used in an ethnic sense for the descendants of the "Hebrews par excellence". Cf. supra WTJ XIX, pp. 183, 184.
But is the situation on the Nuzu side clearly as Lewy has reconstructed it? There are texts in which the person(s) concerned is not designated as an *ha-BI-ru* and yet the essential clauses of the contract are those characteristic of the contracts where the persons are labeled as *ha-BI-ru*. It is, therefore, difficult to insist that we are dealing with a specifically *ha-BI-ru* type of servanthood. While, therefore, *ha-BI-ru* are found in the great majority of these contracts, they are not necessarily involved in all of them, and one may not assume then the existence in the Nuzu area of a specifically *ha-BI-ru* brand of slavery.

Moreover, even if Lewy's view of the Nuzu evidence were to be adopted, the biblical evidence would contradict the translation of 'Ibri as "foreign-servant" in the 'ebed 'Ibri legislation. For the biblical law is patently not dealing with foreign servants but with those who were their masters' brethren. The Deut. 15:12 expansion of the original statement reads, "If thy brother a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee"; while Jeremiah, further expanding it urges "that every man should let go free his man-servant and every man his maid-servant, that is a Hebrew or Hebrewess; that none should make bondmen of them, namely, of a Jew, his brother" (34:9, cf. vs. 14). While one may then recognize the instructive parallels in the conditions of servanthood at Nuzu and in the biblical legislation, it is impossible to hold that 'Ibri is in this legislation a technical term for a

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180 JEN VI, 610, 611, 613 (cf. JEN V, 456:9-23); JEN V, 446, 449, 457 and 462.
181 An alternate interpretation has been advocated in the present study. See supra WTJ XIX, pp. 179, 180, 183, 184.
182 Especially relevant is the figure of Attilammu the Assyrian in the servant contract JEN VI, 613:2. Even when this text in abbreviated form is included in the Sammelurkunde JEN V, 456 between two contracts in which the persons are specifically designated as *ha-BI-ru* (i.e., in a situation where there would be a tendency to uniformity), Attilammu is not described as an *ha-BI-ru*. It is further to be observed in connection with the use of *as-su-ra-a-a-u* for Attilammu in JEN VI, 613 that when *ha-BI-ru* from Ashur are so described it is as *sa-um as-su-ur*.
183 Note the clear distinction drawn in verse 3 between "the foreigner" and "thy brother" in the law of the seventh year release with respect to debt.
specific type of servanthood and least of all for the idea of "foreign-servant". Its usage is rather ethnic, as always.


It has been affirmed that the 'Ibrim here (cf. 13:3, 7, 19; 14:11, 21) are quite clearly non-Israelites. The proper interpretation of these verses is, indeed, difficult; nevertheless, to distinguish between the ‘Ibrim and the Israelites would be at odds with the decisive evidence in this context of their identity. Thus, in 13:3, 4, לְכָלָּא חֵרְבָּרָּו and לְכָלָּא חֵרְבָּרָּו are obvious equivalents (cf. מִיְּרָבָּת וְעָרָבָּת: מִיְּרָבָּת וְעָרָבָּת). Moreover, it is apparently in reference to the hiding of those described in 13:6 as the "men of Israel" that the Philistines say, "Behold, the ‘Ibrim are coming out of the holes where they had hid themselves" (14:11b). Again, the equivalence of מִיְּרָבָּת with the inhabitants לְחֵרְבָּרָּו and with לְכָלָּא חֵרְבָּרָּו in 13:19, 20 is evident.

To find, then, in the ‘Ibrim of 13:7 a group ethnically distinct from the "men of Israel" in 13:6 would involve for the term ‘Ibrim a change from its contextual significance too abrupt to be plausible. Verses 6 and 7 are concerned with two groups of Israelites. Verse 6 refers to those excused by Saul from military service (cf. vs. 2). These hide in the hills and caves west of Jordan. Verse 7 refers to certain of the selected troops who were with Saul at Gilgal near the Jordan. These, deserting, cross over the river to the land of Gad and Gilead east of Jordan.

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184 The 'ebed in the phrase 'ebed 'Ibri (Exod. 21:2) would then be tautological, and Alt feels obliged to excise it from the text.
185 Cf. e. g., A. Guillaume, PEQ, 1946, p. 68.
186 The LXX rendering of the end of verse 3, θετηκασιν οi δουλοι (as though the Hebrew were מִיְּרָבָּת וְעָרָבָּת: מִיְּרָבָּת וְעָרָבָּת) seems to be a conjectural emendation occasioned by the fact that מִיְּרָבָּת comes somewhat unexpectedly on the lips of Saul.
187 13:4b does not describe a regathering of those sent home but simply indicates the new location of Saul and his chosen army at Gilgal.
188 There were originally 3000 chosen by Saul (13:2), but after the approach of the Philistines in force and Samuel's delay there were only 600 left (13:11, 15; 14:2).
In 14:21 it is not necessary to follow the English versions in regarding the ‘Ibrim as men who had been serving in the Philistine army. Even if such a translation were adopted, it would still be gratuitous to identify these ‘Ibrim as non-Israelites for they might be Israelite turn-coats.

But verse 21 may be translated: "Now the Hebrews were towards the Philistines as formerly when they went up with them in the camp round about; both they were with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan and...". The antecedent of מָצְאִים, "with them", appears to be "Saul and all the people (or army)" of verse 20. Another possibility is to regard "the Philistines" as the antecedent of "them" but to translate the preposition "against". In either case this passage would contain no mention of ‘Ibrim as having served in Philistine forces. Verses 21 and 22 rather distinguish as two elements swelling the unexpectedly triumphant remnants of Saul's army those who had deserted after being selected by Saul to encamp against the Philistines (vs. 21) and those who, after being dismissed by Saul, were frightened into hiding by the alarming course of the conflict (vs. 22).

This distinction in 14:21, 22 is the same as that found in 13:6, 7a. Indeed, the terminology in the two passages is deliberately made to correspond. ‘Ibrim is used in both 13:7a and 14:21 for the deserters; and "men of Israel" in 13:6 and 14:22 for the people who hid in the hill-country of Ephraim. The ‘Ibrim of 14:21 will then be the deserting soldiers of Saul who had crossed over the Jordan but now resume their former position in the Israelite ranks against the Philistines.

190 Is this an allusion to the circumstance that the original three Israelite positions at Bethel, Michmash, and Gibeah surrounded the Philistine garrison at Geba? If the Massorete text and accentuation (קֶפִּים) stand, the next clause will be a pseudo-verbal construction (as translated above). The LXX and Syraic would read Προσίδος, "they also turned", which would provide a parallel to Προσίδος (vs. 22).
191 Cf. Brown, Driver and Briggs, op. cit., under צְפִים lc.
192 For a similar military development see Judg. 7:3-7, 23, 24.
193 The use of מָצַה in 13:7a suggests the possibility of מָצַה מִצְלָה, "those who passed over", as the original in 14:21 (cf. the participle, מָצַה מִצְלָה,}

Is ‘Ibri in this its earliest biblical appearance used ethnically? This question may be dealt with in connection with an inquiry into the origin of the term ‘Ibri. Broad contextual considerations indicate that in his use of ‘Ibri in Gen. 14:13, the author had in mind ‘Eber of the line of Shem (cf. Gen. 10:21, 24, 25; 11:14-17). The direct descent of Abraham from ‘Eber had already been traced in the genealogy of Gen. 11:10-26. Moreover, the departure from the stereotyped presentation of the genealogical data in Gen. 10 to describe Shem as "the father of all the children of ‘Eber" (vs. 21) is most readily accounted for as an anticipation of the author's imminent concentration (cf. Gen. 11:27 ff.) upon the Semitic Eberites par excellence, i.e., the "Hebrews" whom Yahweh chose to be the channel of revelation and redemption. In Gen. 14:13 then, ‘Ibri is a patronymic, applied in this isolated way to Abraham perhaps to contrast him with the many other ethnic elements which play a role in this context.

On the other hand, many regard this usage of ‘Ibri as appellative and then find their interpretations of the term ha-BI-ru reflected in it. The appellative view is ancient, for the LXX renders יִרְבַיָא as ὁ περάτης; Aquila, as περατης; Jerome, as transeuphratensis; and the prevailing view of the rabbis a generation after Aquila was that יִרְבַיָא in the corresponding member of 14:21). Such a change in the Massoretic pointing would support a corresponding change to יִרְבַיָא in 13:7a. If the Massoretic יִרְבַיָא is original, the author perhaps employed this designation of the Israelites to produce a word play with יִרְבַיָא.

194 יִרְבַיָא (‘ibri) is the gentilic formation of יִרְבַיָא (‘eber).
195 Cf. also the additional remark in Gen. 10:25.
196 For example, W. F. Albright, JAOS 48, 1928, pp. 183 ff., once found in both the idea of "mercenary"; and DeVaux, op. cit., pp. 337 ff., that of "stranger". Kraeling, op. cit., held that ‘Ibri is used to underscore Abraham's role as a sojourner who pays tribute to Melchizedek.
197 Parzen, AJSL 49, pp. 254 ff., is mistaken in his opinion that the LXX actually found יִרְבַיָא in the Hebrew text. Noth, "Erwagungen zur Hebraerfrage", in Festschrift Otto Procksch (Leipzig, 1934), pp. 99 ff., is probably correct in stating that the LXX translator simply regarded it as desirable at this first appearance of ‘Ibri to indicate what was, in his opinion, its significance.
All of these derived 'Ibri from the substantive meaning "the other side" rather than from the verb 'br. In line with this view of the etymology is the emphasis in Joshua 24:2, 3 on Abraham's origin "beyond the River". But these facts are far from possessing the weight of the more immediate contextual considerations cited above. Here too then 'Ibri is not appellative but ethnic.

4. Conclusion.

It has appeared from this study that, the term 'Ibrim in the Old Testament has uniformly an ethnic meaning and denotes descendants of Eber in the line of Abraham-Isaac-Jacob exclusively. Deriving from the eponymous ancestor 'Eber the term is probably early; in particular, its application to Abraham need not be proleptic. To judge from its characteristic association with foreigners in the biblical contexts and the general avoidance of it by the Israelites, it possibly originated outside the line of Abraham. Originally it may have been of wider application than is the usage in the Old Testament, denoting other descendants of Eber than the Abrahaimites. This is perhaps suggested by the use of 'Eber in Gen. 10:21 and Num. 24:24. In that...
case the appearance of such gentilic but non-Abrahamic ‘Ibrim in some non-biblical text of the patriarchal age need not come altogether unexpectedly.

Do the ha-BI-ru qualify? According to the conclusions already reached in this study concerning the probable geographical and ethnic origins of the ha-BI-ru they do not qualify as Semitic let alone Eberite kin of the Hebrews. On the other hand, a final judgment on this larger issue is

Eber is challenged by DeVaux's contention (op. cit.) that there are divergent views within the Old Testament. He grants that the composer(s) of the biblical genealogies derives ‘Ibri from the ancestor ‘Eber, but finds in the reference to Jacob as a "wandering Aramean" (Deut. 26:5) a conflicting tradition of Aramaic origin (cf. Gen. 10:22-24). DeVaux believes the latter to be further supported by the description of Laban, grandson of Abraham's brother Nahor, as an "Aramean" (Gen. 31:20). According to the record, however, the term "Aramean" could have been applied to both Jacob and Laban in virtue of their long residence in Paddan-aram and so construed would say nothing about their lineage. DeVaux also insists, but unnecessarily, on identifying the Aram of Gen. 10:22 and the Aram of Gen. 22:21, which would then bring the two passages into hopeless confusion. Finally, DeVaux appeals to the prophetic denunciation of Jerusalem in Ezek. 16:3, "your origin and your nativity are of the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was your father and the Hittite your mother". Actually, as is apparent from the context (cf. especially vss. 45 ff.), Ezekiel is using a scathing figure to say that from the first Israel was just as much disqualified spiritually from enjoying a covenantal relationship with Yahweh as were her despised heathen neighbors--the point being that Israel's election must be attributed solely to the principle of divine grace. But even if Ezekiel were speaking of literal racial intermixture, the reference would be not to Abraham's family origins but to the subsequent mingling of the racial strain of his descendants with those of the inhabitants of Canaan. DeVaux's view is that the Hebrews and ha-BI-ru were of common Aramaean descent. Starting with the notion that the ha-BI-ru were desert nomads, DeVaux seeks to relate the ha-BI-ru to the Aramaeans by a partial identification of them with proto-Aramaean nomadic Ablamu.

202 Greenberg, op. cit, pp. 93 ff., provides an example of how the biblical usage of ‘Ibrim can be regarded as consistently ethnic, and ha-BI-ru be deemed an appellative for a social class, and yet the terms be equated and the Hebrews derived from the ha-BI-ru. He suggests that Abraham was an ha-BI-ru, but this epithet as applied to Abraham's descendants became an ethnicon. Later biblical genealogists, unaware of this, invented the ancestor ‘Eber, man of many descendants, in order to explain at one stroke the known kinship of the Hebrews to other Semitic tribes and the origin of their name!
bound to be seriously affected by one's opinion on the phonetic question of whether the term ‘ha-BI-ru’ can be equated with the term 'Ibri' (and so be derived from 'Eber').

B. Phonetic Relation of Ha-BI-ru to 'Ibri.

1. Consonants. The common cuneiform spelling of the name is ha-BI-ru the final u being, according to the usual assumption, the nominative case ending, which yields as the grammatical relations require to other case or gentilic endings. In this cuneiform rendering the identity of the first two radicals is ambiguous. The initial consonant is ambiguous because Accadian h may represent other letters than Hebrew נ; among them, Hebrew ת. The second is ambiguous because

203 In addition to the supposed phonetic equivalence of ha-BI-ru and 'Ibri, support has been sought for the derivation of the Hebrews from the ha-BI-ru by appeal to certain parallels in the careers of the two. But the similarities are for the most part superficial or based on misinterpretations of the data on one side or the other. For a recent popular example see H. Orlinsky, Ancient Israel, 1954; cf. De Vaux RB 55, 1948, pp. 342 ff.; H. H. Rowley From Joseph to Joshua, 1952, p. 53, n. 1. Items like the following have been or might be mentioned: (a) In each case there is a westward movement about the Fertile Crescent. (But this cannot be demonstrated for the ha-BI-ru and, in the case of the Hebrews, it applies not to the group as such but only to Abraham.) (b) The chronological span of the use of the terms ha-BI-ru and 'Ibri is roughly the same. (c) Both groups move in the Hurrian cultural orbit and exhibit the influence of this fact. (d) The military activity of Abraham the Hebrew in Genesis 14 and the attack of Simeon and Levi on Shechem are comparable to ha-BI-ru razzias. (But this involves a superficial estimate of both biblical instances.) (e) The ha-BI-ru mercenary activity is paralleled by the Hebrews in the Philistine army. (But this is a misinterpretation of the biblical data.) (f) Both groups are in Egypt forced into the corvee. (g) The ha-BI-ru are frequently strangers in the milieu and such are the Hebrew patriarchs in Canaan. (h) Both groups deprive Egypt of its holdings in Canaan by military operations during the Amarna Age.

204 Cf. supra, WTJ XIX, pp. 9-11.
205 Indeed, as A. Ungnad observes, "Bisweilen wird h für 3 gebraucht" (Grammatik des Akkadischen, 1949, p. 9).
206 In the Canaanite glosses in the Tell el Amarna tablets are found, for example: hu-ul-lu (EA 296:38) = יֵּשׁ (cf. XXX) ; and hi-na-ia (EA 144:17) = יִּשׂ (cf. XXXX). Cf. E. A. Speiser, Ethnic Movements in the Near East in the Second Millennium B.C., 1933, p. 39.
BI represents among other values that of \( pi \) as well as that of \( bi \) in all periods of the cuneiform literature.

Further evidence is available, however, for in some cases other signs of the cuneiform syllabary are used to write this name and, moreover, the name has appeared in other systems of writing, syllabic and alphabetic. From Ras Shamra\(^{207}\) comes the form 'prm written in the alphabetic cuneiform common in texts from that site, in which the 'Ayin is distinct from other gutturals and the b is distinct from \( p \). This form is, therefore, unambiguous. But the question has been raised whether this form, in particular the second consonant, is original or secondary. If the phonetic equivalence of 'prm and 'ibrím were to be maintained, the primacy of the \( p \) would still have favored by the fact that Ugaritic often preserves a more primitive Semitic form than does the Hebrew.\(^{208}\) On the other hand there is evidence of an original \( b \) becoming \( p \) in Ugaritic.\(^{209}\)

In Egyptian hieroglyphics appears the form 'pr.\( w \) which is also without ambiguity. But here again the question arises as to whether the \( p \) is primary or secondary. It can be shown that Egyptian \( p \) may represent foreign, including Semitic, \( b \), especially when the \( b \) is immediately preceded or followed by \( l \).

\(^{207}\) Virolleaud, Syria 21, 1940, p. 132, pl. 8 and p. 134, pl. 10.

\(^{208}\) So Kraeling, AJSL 58, 1941, pp. 237 ff. Cf. W. F. Albright, BASOR 77, 1940, pp. 32-3; DeVaux, RB 55, 1948, p. 342, n. 3. In an effort to show that it is "quite possible that the isolated Ugaritic as well as the Egyptian 'pr are secondary forms due to Hurrian influence" J. Lewy observes that "the population of Ugarit included Hurrian elements and that the Hurrians, wherever they appear, are responsible for a confusion in the rendering of Semitic \( 2 \) and \( 3 \) because their scribes did not distinguish between voiced and voiceless stops" (HUCAl 15, 1940, p. 48, n. 7). C. H. Gordon, however, informs me that the Ugaritic scribes who wrote the tablets bearing 'prm carefully distinguish \( r \) and \( b \). J. W. Jack (PEQ, 1940, p. 101) attributes the Ugaritic spelling to Egyptian influence at Ugarit.

\(^{209}\) There are, e. g., the variants lbs/lps and nbk/npk. Cf. Greenberg, op. cit., p. 90, n. 24. For evidence of confusion in Ugaritic between \( b \) and \( p \), and that in the very name ha-BI-ru, attention has been called to the Ugaritic text 124:14, 15 (Gordon, Ugaritic Manual, 1955). Cf. Virolleaud, Syria XV, 1934, p. 317 n., and La Legende de Keret, 1936, p. 74; and H. H. Rowley, From Joseph to Joshua, 1950, p. 50. Actually, the text has nothing to do with the ha-BI-ru or with the Hebrews (as suggested by Virolleaud).
or $r$.\footnote{For the evidence see B. Gunn apud Speiser, op. cit., p. 38, n. Cf. J. A. Wilson, AJSL 49, 4, pp. 275 ff. W. F. Albright (JAOS 48, 1928, pp. 183 ff.) argues that the equation of Egyptian 'pr with 'eber is difficult since Egyptian of the New Empire regularly transcribes Semitic $b$ by Egyptian $b$. As for Egyptian hrp for Can. harb (Heb. hereh), he says that it only shows there was the same tendency for a final vowelless sonant stop following a consonant to become voiceless that there is in the modern Arabic dialect of Egypt; but the $b$ in 'eber is medial and cannot have been pronounced as a voiceless $p$. It should be noticed, however, that in some instances of the use of Egyptian $p$ for foreign $b$, the $b$ is medial: thus, isbr varies with ispr ("whip") and Kpn (O. K. Kbn) = Can. Gbl ("Byblos").} Such, however, is not the rule\footnote{Op. cit., p. 237 ff.} , and, as Kraeling observes,\footnote{Op. cit., pp. 237 ff.} in the case of the 'pr, a people present in Egypt itself, it is difficult to assume an error of hearing on the part of the scribe.

The spelling $ha$-$BIR$-$a$-$a$ is found twice in Babylonian documents of the 12th and 11th centuries B.C.\footnote{Rawlinson, Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, IV, 34:2, 5; and Hilprecht, Old Babylonian Inscriptions, I, 2, pl. 66, no. 149, 22.} Commenting on this form, B. Landsberger observes that "$b$ nicht $p$ als mittlerer Radikal steht durch die Schreibung $ha$-$bir$-$a$-$a$ (IV R 34 Nr. 2, 5) fest".\footnote{ZA, N. F. 1, 1923, p. 214, n. 1.} In signs, however, of the variety consonant-vowel-consonant there is not only vocalic variability but flexibility of both consonants within the limits of their type.\footnote{See the remarks of C. H. Gordon, Orientalia 19, 1950, pp. 91 ff. There is specific evidence that BIR was used (though not commonly) for pir in the neo-Assyrian period and possibly (the evidence is doubtful) in the middle-Assyrian period. Cf. Von Soden, Das Akkadische Syllabar, 1948, p. 73, no. 237. Bottero, op. cit., p. 132 urges against reading pir here the absence of specific Babylonian evidence for this value to date, plus the availability of the sign UD (pir). However, he acknowledges (p. 156) that this form is not decisive for a root 'br. It may be additionally noted that J. Lewy in defense of reading the second radical as $b$ appeals to the occurrence of the god "$Ha$-$bi$-$ru$ in an Assyrian text (Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts, no. 42), i. e., in a text in which $ha$-$bi$-$ru$ can hardly stand for *$ha$-$pi$-$ru$" (HUCA 15, 1940, p. 48, n. 7). Bottero (op. cit., p. 135) agrees on the grounds that in the neo-Assyrian era one normally}
By way of conclusion, there can be no doubt that the Ugaritic and Egyptian forms of the name definitely require that the consonant represented in the cuneiform syllable ha be read as 'Ayin. They also strongly support an original p. While there is a possibility that 'br is primary, it is highly probable that 'pr is the original form. In fact, unless it can be shown that ha-BI-ru is to be equated with the biblical 'Ibri there is no unquestionable evidence for 'br as even a secondary form.

2. Vowels. That the first vowel is A-type and the second is I-type is obvious from the cuneiform, ha-BI-ru; but it is more difficult to determine the length of these vowels. This question requires examination before one attempts to draw conclusions concerning the possibilities of phonetic equation with 'Ibri.

used PI to signify pi. For evidence that BI = pi in all periods see Von Soden, ibid., p. 53 no. 140. Also J. W. Jack states, "In the Hittite documents, for instance, habiru clearly has bi" (PEQ, 1940, p. 102). E. Laroche (in Bottero, op. cit., p. 71, n. 2) argues, "D'apres le systeme en usage a Boghazkoy, ha-bi-ri note une pronunciation habiri (sonore intervocalique non geminee)". But ha-ab-bi-ri appears twice. Moreover, P. Sturtevant maintains that in cuneiform Hittite "the Akkadian distinction between ... p and b did not exist", adding, "To all intents, therefore, Hittite has dispensed with the means of writing b" (Comparative Grammar of the Hittite Language, 1933, p. 66). Similarly, J. Friedrich, Hethitisches Elementarbuch I, 1940, p. 6(21). Accordingly, even the form ha-ab-bi-ri (KBo V, 9, IV, 12) is quite ambiguous, as it would also be in Akkadian cuneiform where AB stands in all periods for both ap and ab. Greenberg (op. cit., p. 90, n. 20) suggests the possibility that a Hittite scribe utilized a native convention, doubling the labial to indicate a sound heard by him asp. Also ambiguous is the sign BAD (bi or pi) used in the Alishar text.

217 Speiser (op. cit., p. 40), writing at a time when he did not have the benefit of the Ugaritic evidence, begged the question of the phonetic equation with 'Ibri in concluding, "The second consonant is ambiguous both in cuneiform and in Egyptian, but not so in Hebrew: since the latter has b, the labial must be read as voiced in cuneiform, while the voiceless correspondent in the Egyptian form of the name is to be ascribed to local developments".

218 As far as it goes the Egyptian data is compatible. Gunn (op. cit., p. 38, n.) concludes from a survey of the evidence that "we seem to have the alternatives 'apar, 'apir, 'apur, with a possible indication in" the Beth-shan stele of Seti I "in favor of 'apir".
a. The A-Vowel: According to Gustavs,\(^{219}\) the form \(ha-AB-BI-ri\)^{220} shows that the \(a\) is short. He explains the doubling of the middle radical on the ground that consonants in Akkadian are often doubled after an accented short vowel.\(^{221}\) This possibility, however, rests on the doubtful opinion that the following I-vowel is short, for otherwise the penult would receive the accent.\(^{222}\) Another possible explanation of the doubling of the middle radical, although the phenomenon is rare and late, is that it indicates that the preceding vowel is long.\(^{223}\)

Other unusual forms have appeared which suggest that the A-vowel is long. One is \(ha-a-BI-ri-ia-as\).\(^{224}\) Another is \(ha-a-BI-i-ri-a[n?]\) (cf. \(ha-a-BI-i-ri-ia-an\)).\(^{225}\) Finally, from Alalah comes the form \(ha-a'-BI-ru\).\(^{226}\)

b. The I-Vowel: Inasmuch as short unaccented vowels between single consonants often drop out\(^{227}\) and the name

\(^{219}\) ZAW, N. F. 3, 1926, pp. 28 f.
\(^{220}\) KBo V, 9, IV, 12. Cf. also \(ha-AB-BI-ri-ia-an\) (KUB XXXV, 43, III, 31).
\(^{221}\) Cf. Ungnad, op. cit., p. 18 (6p); W. Von Soden, Grundriss der Akkadischen Grammatik, 1952, p. 21 (20g).
\(^{222}\) Cf. Von Soden, op. cit., p. 37 (38 f).
\(^{223}\) Cf. Ungnad, op. cit., p. 7 (3d).
\(^{224}\) HT 6, 18. This text is a variant of KUB IX, 34, IV. Greenberg (op. cit., p. 90, n. 20) comments, "Were this writing not unique and not in a word foreign to the Hittites it might have deserved consideration as indicative of a participial form".
\(^{225}\) KUB XXXXI, 14 (XXXIV, 62), 10; and KUB XXXV, 49, I, 6 ff. (cf. IV, 15).
\(^{226}\) AT 58:29. E. A. Speiser (JAOS 74, 1954, p. 24) observes that the main purpose of this unique form may be to indicate a form like \(\#Habiru\).
He suggests that even if the sign be given its value ah4 instead of \(d\) the \(h\) might be a graphic device signifying a long vowel or stressed syllable. Cf. Greenberg (op. cit., p. 20): "Assuming that the scribe was West Semitic he may have noted that his alephs became long vowels in Akkadian: hence, by a sort of back analogy he may have converted what he took to be a long vowel into an aleph". Wiseman (in Bottero, op. cit., p. 37) "The word is unusually written \(ha-\)'\(a\)-\(bi-ru\). This may be either a case of \(HAR=AB\), or, as I am inclined to think, a case of the scribe erasing by the three small horizontal strokes of the stylus".
\(^{227}\) Cf. Ungnad, op. cit., pp. 12, 13 (5c). The possibility that the \(i\) is short but accented is obviated by the fact that were it short, the antepenult with its long \(a\) (as maintained above) would receive the accent.
ha-BI-ru is never found without the i, it would seem that this i is long.\(^{228}\)

Further support for this is found in the spelling ha-BI-i-\(\text{ra}\)\(^{229}\) used for the Nuzu personal name (assuming this name may be identified with our ha-BI-ru). There are also the forms noted above: ha-a-BI-i-ri-[n?] and ha-a-BI-i-ri-ia-an.

**c. Conclusion:** The vocalization is largely a question of how much weight to attach to the exceptional spellings. Quite possibly they require two long vowels, producing the (apparently non-Semitic) form, 'apir. Perhaps only one vowel is long. It would be precarious, however, to assume that every indication of a long vowel is misleading and to adopt the form 'apir --or still less likely-- 'abir.

3. The Hebrew Equivalent. The difference in middle radicals between ha-BI-ru (read as ha-pi-ru) and 'Ibri would not be an insuperable obstacle for the phonetic equation of the two. There are a few examples of a shift in Hebrew from \(p\) to \(b\).\(^{230}\) Nevertheless, this shift is not the rule\(^{231}\) and the difference in labials must be regarded as a serious difficulty in the case for equation.

If we allow the consonantal equation and examine the vowels it will be found that the difficulties increase and the equation can be regarded as at best a bare possibility. The following are the possible vowel combinations of ha-BI-ru (reading \(bi\) for the moment and listing the more probable combinations first) along with their normal Hebrew gentilic equivalents: 'abir, יָבִיר; 'abir, יָבִיר; 'abir, יָבִיר; 'abir, יָבִיר; 'abir, יָבִיר; and 'abr, יָבִיר.

Attempts have been made, however, to derive 'Ibri from one or other of these vowel combinations. The most plausible efforts are those which assume two short vowels, 'abir.\(^{232}\)

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\(^{228}\) So C. H. Gordon (*Orientalia* 21, 1952, p. 382, n. 2) : "That the i is long follows from the fact that it is not dropt to become *hapru*".

\(^{229}\) JEN 228:29.


\(^{231}\) Cf., e. g., מֵר, מֵר, מֵר, מֵר.

\(^{232}\) J. Lewy (*op. cit.*), assuming the form Habiru, suggests that it "is
Speiser suggests that "the form qitl may go back to an older qatil" with the restriction that such forms derive from stative, not transitive, verbs.²³³ In line with this, attention has been called to the derivation of late Canaanite milk, "king", from older malik, "prince".²³⁴ “Whatever validity there may be in the theory of a qatil to qitl shift,²³⁵ it must be remembered that such is not the dominant tendency. Moreover, the degree of plausibility in applying such a principle in the present case is greatly diminished by the following considerations: a) The combination of two short vowels ('abir) is one of the less likely possibilities; b) The supposed shift from 'abir to 'ibr did not occur according to our evidence in extra-biblical documents either earlier than, or contemporary with, the appearances of 'Ibri in the Bible. It is necessary to assume that the shift took place first and only with the Hebrew authors. And if we may not assume that the Hebrew form is based on a previous shift to 'ibr elsewhere, then proof is required within the Hebrew language itself, and not merely, for example, from inner-Canaanite developments, of a shift from qatil to qitl.²³⁶


²³⁴ So, e. g., Albright, Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible (New York, 1935), p. 206, and Bohl, Kanaander and Hebraer 1911, p. 85. In an earlier article (JBL 43, 1924, pp. 389 ff.), Albright stated that Hebrew 'Eber for 'Ibr stands by epenthesis for *'Apir, adding that the philological process is familiar in all the Semitic languages; e. g., Arab. bi'sa from ba'isa. Cf. the alternation of ma-si-ri and mi-is-ri in syllabic texts from Ugarit.

²³⁵ DeVaux (op. cit.) goes to the extreme of describing the passing of 'apir into 'ipr as "normal".

²³⁶ The qatil type of noun does appear at times in Hebrew like a segholate; cf. Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar, 1910, 93 hh, ii. Most of these are of the getel-type which is usually the A-type but is sometimes the I-type (e. g., יִדָּר יִדָּר יִדָּר לֹא דָּרִי; but יִדָּר (Eccles. 5:7; Ezek. 18:18) is also found and that is clearly I-type. This phenomenon is, however, confined to the construct
**Conclusion:** The complete phonetic equation of ha-BI-ru and ‘Ibri is at most a bare possibility. If a difference in morphology were to be allowed while identity of denotation was assumed the difference in the vowels could be explained and only the labial problem would remain as a phonetic obstacle for the theory of common derivation. Even that assumption, however, is implausible in dealing as we are not with appellatives but proper names. The phonetic situation, therefore, is such as would weaken an otherwise strong case for tracing Hebrew origins to the ha-BI-ru, not such as to strengthen a theory already feeble.

C. Amarna Age Encounter.

In spite of the negative conclusions reached thus far the investigation of ha-BI-ru--Hebrew relationships is not much ado about nothing. For history apparently did witness an ha-BI-ru--Hebrew encounter.

How is the ha-BI-ru activity in Palestine as reflected in the Amarna letters to be integrated with the Israelite conquest of their promised land as described in the books of Joshua and Judges? That is the question.

1. Conquest. The Amarna activity of the ha-BI-ru has been identified by some with the Hebrew Conquest, more specifically, with its first phase led by Joshua. But quite apart from all the aforementioned obstacles to any identification of the two groups, the Conquest under Joshua differed from the Amarna military operations of the ha-BI-ru even in broadest outline and fundamental character.

(a) The Hebrew conquerors were a people which had long been in Egypt and were newly arrived in Canaan. The Ugaritic and Alalah evidence reveals that the ha-BI-ru were state. This restriction would not, of course, be significant so far as the gentilic form יִבְרִי is concerned. It becomes significant though when account is taken of the derivation of יִבְרִי from the patronymic יִבְרִי which is found in the absolute state.

237 Albright compares a development of gentilic ‘Ibri from an appellative ha-BI-ru to Levi, "Levite", probably derived from *lawiyu, "person pledged for a debt or vow"; Qeni, "kenite", from qain, "smith"; or hopshi, "free-man", from hupshu.
in Syria for a long while before the Hebrew Conquest (on any view of its date). Moreover, since in Syria the ha-BI-ru had long enjoyed permanent settlements of their own in well-regulated, peace-time integration with the local population and authorities, while the Amarna letters show the ha-BI-ru in Palestine to be on the move, quartered here and there, without absolute loyalty to any one party, it seems clear that the Amarna ha-BI-ru were in Canaan as professional militarists to exploit the anarchy there for their northern lords.

(b) Also in conflict with this picture of the ha-BI-ru operating in relatively small, detached companies and fighting as mercenaries with no apparent national aspirations of their own as ha-BI-ru is the biblical picture of the Hebrew Conquest as an invasion by a united multitude, advancing in their own name in a concerted effort to achieve a common national goal. (c) The natives of Canaan were to the Israelites an enemy to be exterminated; the acceptance of them as allies would directly contravene Israel's purposes. But the ha-BI-ru had no special antipathy for the Canaanites as such. Quite the contrary, the Canaanites were their employers, and for the most part the ha-BI-ru are found abetting the attempts of those Canaanites who strove to gain independence from Egyptian domination. Complaints are frequently heard from the loyalists that Canaanite rebels are going over to the cause of the SA-GAZ.

(d) The goal of Israel in Canaan with respect to the land was to gain possession, and agreeably their general policy in dealing with cities was to exterminate the population and seize the spoil but to refrain from destroying the cities by fire. The ha-BI-ru, however, after conquering and plundering, frequently set the city on fire, apparently having no designs to acquire territory or to build an empire.

The difference between the two movements can also be traced in matters of detail.

238 Cf. Josh. 11:19. Nothing underscores this more than the anomalous character of the Gibeonite alliance. It should not be overlooked, however, that after the days of Joshua's leadership the original determination gave way frequently to a fraternizing attitude (e. g., Judg. 3:5-6).
239 So repeatedly in EA 185.
(a) Names: None of the names of the Israelite leaders is found in the Amarna letters.\textsuperscript{240} Moreover, where the names of the rulers of specific Canaanite cities can be checked (as at Jerusalem, Lachish, Gezer, and Hazor) there is in every case disagreement between the Bible and the Amarna texts.

(b) Numbers: In the pleas of the loyalists for military assistance it appears that Egyptian support in the form of fifty or so men will be adequate to turn the tide of battle. It seems unlikely then that these Canaanite kings were confronted with an assault on the scale of Joshua's army.\textsuperscript{241}

(c) Places: The \textit{ha-BI-ru} operated successfully in Phoenicia and Syria, but neither the Conquest under Joshua nor later tribal efforts penetrated that far.\textsuperscript{242}

(d) Military Technology: The Israelites made no use of chariots,\textsuperscript{243} whereas chariots were a standard division of the \textit{ha-BI-ru} corps at Alalah and in Palestine.\textsuperscript{244}

2. \textit{Pre-Conquest.} An alternative must be found then to identifying the biblical Conquest under Joshua with the Amarna disclosures. The procedure of the majority of scholars is to place Joshua after the Amarna events. Thus Meek,

\textsuperscript{240} Proposals to equate Joshua with Yashuia and Benjamin with Benenima (or Ben-elima) are phonetically impossible. Furthermore the Amarna men were pro-Egyptian.

\textsuperscript{241} Cf. Exod. 12:37; 38:26; Num. 1:46; 2:32; 26:51. At the same time it should not be overlooked that even fifty professional soldiers might provide adequate leadership to defend a walled garrison. Moreover, there are larger requests like that of Rib-Addi (\textit{EA} 71:23-24) for fifty pair of horses and 200 infantry as a merely defensive measure.

\textsuperscript{242} The way in which this argument is developed by Rowley (\textit{op. cit.}, pp. 42 ff.) is an illuminating exhibition of rewriting history to one's taste. He argues that the exploits of Joshua were mainly if not entirely confined to the central districts while the \textit{ha-BI-ru} trouble was in the south and north and only at Shechem in the center. It will be recognized that this is the precise opposite of the \textit{prima facie} biblical account, according to which Joshua's campaigns were notably in the south (Josh. 10) and in the north (Josh. 11:1-14). Rowley rejects Joshua 10 in favor of the supposedly conflicting account in Judges 1; and Joshua 11, in favor of the supposed variant in Judges 4. According to the record itself, Judges 1 records events after the death of Joshua and the events of Judges 4 fall well over a century after those of Joshua 11.

\textsuperscript{243} Cf., e. g., Josh. 11:9.

\textsuperscript{244} Cf. \textit{EA} 87:21; 197:2-11.
though he believes the Amarna *ha-BI-ru* and Joshua's campaign belong to one movement, specifies that "the Amarna account marks the beginning of the movement, while the Old Testament account has to do largely with its final accomplishment". An odd quirk of Meek's view is that the Exodus from Egypt under Moses follows Joshua by more than a century.

Albright, though he posits an earlier, pre-Amarna exodus from Egypt and entry into Canaan on the part of the Joseph tribes and finds their presence in central Palestine before the major Hebrew arrival reflected in the *ha-BI-ru* of the Amarna letters, dates the (second) exodus (i.e., Moses leading out the Leah tribes) and the campaigning of Joshua in the 13th century, long after the Amarna correspondence.

To cite one further variety of this approach, there is Rowley's intricate reconstruction. He also espouses a theory of a two-fold entry into the land, according to which certain Hebrew groups, notably Judah, press northward from Kadesh c. 1400 B.C. (these Rowley would identify with the *ha-BI-ru* of the Amarna letters) while kindred tribes, including Asher, Zebulon, and Dan, exert pressure in the north (these, Rowley conjectures, are the *SA-GAZ* of the Amarna letters). But the exodus from Egypt under Moses and the entry of Joshua into central Palestine he dates late in the 13th century B.C.

It will be observed that all these efforts to locate Joshua after the Amarna episode involve drastic recasting of the biblical data—the rejection not merely of points of detail but of the biblical history in its basic structure. It requires some ingenuity, indeed, to produce one of these elaborate creations by weaving together a host of miscellaneous data sublimated from their original contexts, but the result is fiction not history. Under the mask of a claim of controlling the biblical sources by means of archaeological and extra-biblical sources an almost totally undisciplined biblical exegesis has been introduced. But why the penchant for the hasty rejection of the Old Testament source in favor of

246 BASOR 58, 1935, pp. 10 ff.
interpretations of archaeological evidence which are themselves so uncertain and disputed at countless points?

3. Post-Conquest. There is another alternative for the integration of the Amarna and the biblical histories. It is the reverse of those just surveyed in that it locates the Conquest under Joshua before rather than after the Amarna letters, at least before those of Abdi-Hepa.\textsuperscript{248} This is in

\textsuperscript{248} The historian is at this juncture always embroiled in the complex question of the date of the Exodus. Aware of the difficulties of the early date (i. e., locating Joshua in or before the Armarna Age) and not aware of the proper solution of them all, the writer nevertheless finds insuperable the difficulties of a later date. Relevant as the problem is, limitations of space allow only brief comment on a few salient points: a) The case presented by H. H. Rowley (in \textit{From Joseph to Joshua}) against a Hebrew entry into Egypt in the Hyksos period has not been answered. If valid, that majority of scholars which is certainly correct in dating the patriarchal period early in the second millennium B.C. rather than (with Rowley) in the middle of it must date the beginning of the sojourn before the Hyksos period, not (with Rowley) after it. And that, in turn, virtually necessitates the early date of the Exodus. b) Advocates of a 19th dynasty Exodus constantly appeal to the archaeological evidences of royal building operations at the sites of Pithom and Raamses. G. E. Wright, for a recent example, states, "We now know that if there is any historical value at all to the store-city tradition in Exodus (and there is no reason to doubt its reliability), \textit{then Israelites must have been in Egypt at least during the early part of the reign of Rameses II}" (\textit{Biblical Archaeology} (Philadelphia and London, 1957), p. 60. Italics his.) That is a curiously misleading statement. Is it not rather the case that, if one has no reason to doubt the reliability of the record in Exodus 1:11 that Pharaoh forced the Israelites to build Pithom and Raamses as store-cities, he cannot possibly identify that pharaoh with Ramses II? For it is inconceivable that anyone should have described the magnificent operations of Ramses II at these sites, transforming one of them into the capital of Egypt, in the "store-cities" terms of Exodus 1:11. The Hebrew building and the Hebrew Exodus must then precede Ramses II. c) Albright has dated the destruction of Canaanite Bethel, Lachish, and Debir, all by conflagration, in the 13th century B.C., and would identify this destruction with Joshua's campaigns as evidence of a late Exodus. Such a deduction does not do justice to the biblical facts that Canaanite reoccupation frequently followed Joshua's conquest of Canaanite cities and that destruction by fire was exceptional in Joshua's campaigns. (Apparently only Jericho and Ai among the southern cities were burned and only Hazor was burned in the Galilean campaign. Josh. 11:13.) The evidence of these Palestinian excavations, therefore, actually requires a date for Joshua considerably earlier than the
precise agreement with the chronological data in Judges 11:26 and 1 Kings 6:1 and assumes a fairly brief period for Joshua's campaigns which also agrees with the biblical record.²⁴⁹

Even more compatible with this view than with the identification of Joshua's campaigns and the Amarna activity are certain facts which have long constituted a popular argument in favor of the latter view.²⁵¹ Giving it a somewhat different turn than the advocates of identification, the argument is as follows: Precisely those cities which appear in the Amarna letters as under Canaanite control, whether pro-Egyptian or rebel (and, therefore, likely allied to the SA-GAZ), are those which were not permanently dispossessed either by Joshua²⁵¹ or the early tribal efforts after the death of Joshua.²⁵²

13th century fall of these cities. A propos of Josh. 11:13, Yadin's recent report of the second season of excavations at Hazor is of interest (cf. Biblical Archaeologist, XX, 1957, pp. 34 ff.). In addition to the latest Canaanite city which was destroyed in the 13th century (perhaps then, according to an early Exodus, in the days of Deborah, cf. Judges 4 and 5), remains were found of a 14th century city "approximately in the el-Amarna period" (p. 44) and of an earlier city of the Middle Bronze Age which "was effectively destroyed by fire, most probably by one of the Egyptian pharaohs of the New Kingdom, Amenophis II or more probably Thutmose III" (p. 44). The supposition that a pharaoh of the New Kingdom captured Hazor is questionable; for in spite of their many campaigns into Canaan their ignorance of the techniques of siege warfare made the capture of a fortified city a rarity. But according to the early date of the Exodus, Joshua was a contemporary of Amenophis II and as for Hazor, "that did Joshua burn".

²⁴⁹ Josh. 14:7 and 10 indicate that the initial phase was completed within five years of the entry into Canaan.
²⁵⁰ Cf., e.g., Olmstead, History of Palestine and Syria (New York, 1931), pp. 196-197; Meek, op. cit., p. 20.
²⁵¹ Joshua 10 and 11.
²⁵² The situation at Shechem is problematic. Nothing is said about an Israelite conquest of central Palestine, but if the transaction of Joshua 24 implies Israelite control of Shechem, they subsequently lost their foothold, for Labaya ruled Shechem some thirty years after the Israelite entry (cf. EA 289:22 ff.). Similarly, if Albright (BASOR 87, 1942, p. 38) is correct that Debir became the seat of a local chieflain after the Amarna period, not only Joshua's raid but even Othniel's capture of that city (Josh. 15:15-17; cf. Judg. 1:11 ff.) failed to be permanently effective. Again, though Joshua's raid had depopulated Lachish and Gezer, these cities fell again into Canaanite hands according to EA 287:14-15, whether these lines mean that these cities had been assisting Pharaoh's enemies or
Albright has concluded that in southern Palestine of the Amarna period the main city-states were Gezer, Lachish, Jerusalem, and Hebron-Keilah. In the period of Joshua there are in this area five additional city-states: Jarmuth, Makkedah, Libnah, Debir, and Eglon, with still others like Jericho, Bethel and Gibeon nearby. Albright then theorizes that from c. 1375-1250 there had been a gradual reduction in the power of the city-states combined with an increase in their number, which he attributes to a settled Egyptian policy of divide et impera. This decrease in the power of the Canaanite city-states is then judged to have aided Israel in her Conquest. Indeed, this is seized upon as compelling evidence that the Hebrew Conquest was late.

It will be recognized that this reconstruction of the 14th century situation in southern Palestine is based in part on silences in the Amarna letters. Such a procedure is precarious, however, for the silences might readily be accounted for by the fact that the authors of the Amarna letters simply had no occasion to mention the towns in question. To the extent, however, that there may actually have been fewer city-states in the Amarna period than in Joshua's day, a more plausible explanation would be that between Joshua and the Amarna situation the Israelites had been encroaching on the territory of the old Canaanite city-states, reducing their number by conquest.

Furthermore, the spontaneous confederation of Canaanite kings described in Joshua 10 is difficult to explain if it be supposed that Joshua's campaigns were contemporary with or subsequent to the ha-BI-ru activity of the Amarna letters. For these letters graphically exhibit the mutual distrust and growing antagonism among the Canaanite kings during this period. Is it not apparent that neither in the midst of, nor soon after, such intrigues and civil strife could a king of Jerusalem so easily consolidate the surrounding city-states for were to provide for Pharaoh's archers. Such developments indicate that Israel's permanent acquisition of territory in Canaan was a gradual process only initiated by Joshua's campaigns.

253 Besides these, Jarmuth was a minor independency and an Egyptian garrison and official were stationed at Eglon. BASOR 87, 1942, pp. 37-38. Cf. Wright, op. cit., pp. 75, 76.
a joint military venture against a common foe? Abdi-Hepa's futile efforts during the struggle with the *ha-Bi-ru* is a witness that a king of Jerusalem would find such a task impossible. Again a more plausible reconstruction is that the collapse of the five-city alliance against Joshua terminated the southern confederation and prepared for the Canaanite disunity evidenced in the Amarna letters.

If Joshua is to be placed before the Amarna period, the problem still remains of synchronizing the later Israelite tribal efforts to take actual possession of their allotted inheritances (i.e., the Book of Judges) with the Amarna *ha-BI-ru* movements. The arguments already presented against the possibility of identifying the *ha-BI-ru* with the Israelites of Joshua's day for the most part hold against any such identification at this point as well. However, in view of the known tendency of the authors of the Amarna letters to stigmatize the cause of all enemies (or at least all accused of disloyalty to Egypt) with the *SA-GAZ* label, we ought not to be too dogmatic in denying the possibility that some Hebrew activity might be hidden in the Amarna letters under that label.

More significant is the fact that on the chronology followed here the first oppression of Israel in Canaan falls in the late second and in the third decade of the 14th century B.C. This corresponds with part of the era of the *ha-BI-ru* in Canaan. Israel's first oppressor was "Cushan-rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim." The area designated by "Aram Naharaim" would include within its southwestern limits the region about Alalah (and probably still farther south) which was a strong *ha-BI-ru* center in the 14th century B.C. Though styled

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254 Judg. 3:9-10.
255 part of this era corresponds to the career of Labaya which can be dated in the second and third decades of the 14th century on either Albright's or Knudtzon's reading of the date on the hieratic docket on Labaya's letter, *EA* 254.

256 Judg. 3:8. It is possible that the additional מִישְׁרַנְתָּא, "double wickedness", was appended by Cushan's victims, perhaps as a pun on מְדִינָה. Cf. Burney, *The Book of Judges*, 1920, pp. 65-66.

melek, Cushan-rishathaim need not have been more than one strong chieftain among several in Aram Naharaim.  

Moreover, the name Cushan is attested in this area both as the name of a geographical district and as a personal name. That there was a district in northern Syria in the 13th and 12th centuries B.C. called Qusana-ruma, is known from the list of Ramses III.  Still more pertinent is the 15th century tablet from Alalah which contains the personal name ku-sa-an.  This tablet is a fragment of a census list of unspecified purpose, on which 43 personal names remain along with the phrase found on the left edge, "owner of a chariot". The list then might well be one of the numerous military lists and probably includes the names of several maryannu.

Within the framework of synchronization proposed here for Hebrew and ha-BI-ru careers, it is difficult to dissociate the oppression of Israel by Cushan-rishathaim from the ha-BI-ru menace of the Amarna letters. The facts rather suggest that elements of the ha-BI-ru corps from Syria active in southern Canaan as the terror of the loyalist Canaanite city kings began in time to raid the settlements of the more recently arrived Israelites. The Israelites were becoming, like the Egyptians, too dominating a power in Palestine to suit the interests which the ha-BI-ru were engaged to further. It appears then that it was from plundering ha-BI-ru mercenaries that Othniel delivered oppressed Israel.

If so, the ha-BI-ru, certainly not the kin of Israel, were actually Israel's foe--the first oppressors of Israel in Canaan. And then, far from offering a Canaanite version of the Hebrew

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258 Such is the usage elsewhere in judges. Thus Jabin of Hazor is called "king of Canaan" (Judg. 4:2; cf. 4:23, 24), though he was but one of several Canaanite kings (cf. Judg. 5:19). So also, O'Callaghan, op. cit., p. 123.
260 Wiseman, AT 154.
261 Ibid., p. 140. 36 names end in -an (ibid., p. 10).
262 Since Othniel is associated with the south, this first oppression probably centered there.
march of conquest, the Amarna letters dealing with the ha-BR-ru are a Canaanite portrait of the first scourge employed by Yahweh to chastise the Israelites for their failure to prosecute the mandate of conquest.

It is not difficult to surmise what verdict the biblical historians would have given if they had left to us their interpretation of the data of the ha-BR-ru oppression of the theocratic people in the early 14th century and the almost total disappearance of the ha-Br-ru as a social-political entity by about the close of that century. Surely they would have judged that the brief Amarna Age encounter with Israel was for the ha-Br-ru a crucial hour of more than ordinary political decision. It was an encounter that sealed their destined fall.

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THE TEST OF ABRAHAM
GENESIS 22:1-19

JOHN I. LAWLOR

The incredible story of the ordeal of Abraham and Isaac begins, presumably, with Abraham sojourning in the land of the Philistines (Gen 21:34) and concludes with Abraham, the main character in this drama, returning to Beer-sheba with the two young men and Isaac.1

The pathos of this account is unequaled by any other portion of the Abraham sequence and perhaps the entire Pentateuchal tradition. The reader emotes with Abraham, for the entire story radiates great tensions, strong reactions, and human emotions. Skinner felt this, for he remarks that parts of it "... can hardly be read without tears."2

The manner in which the narrative has been put together evidences great literary artistry. Two factors unite to make the case. First, the use of repetitious statements seems intentional. The use of one such repetitious statement in v 1 ("'Abraham!' And he said 'Here I am.'") and v 11 ("'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.'") naturally divides the story into two general movements. The use of another "... your son, your only son..." used three times (vv 2, 12, 16) tends to increase the gravity of the situation. Such redundancy creates great tension; it seems as if God almost strains to remind Abraham that the stakes are high. Such obvious repetition, it seems, is premeditated, perhaps for the purpose of raising the anxiety level of the reader. Still another, "So the two of them walked on together" (vv 6 and 8), puts the reader off; it also heightens the tension that builds toward the climax.

Second, there is a certain symmetry to the story which is, in part, achieved through the use of both triplets and tensions/resolutions. With respect to the former, the imperatives "take," "go," and "offer" (v 2) are a case in point. Vv 3, 6, and 10 are further examples.

1The text is actually silent on the matter of Isaac's return to Beer-sheba with Abraham and the two young men; however, later episodes in the Abraham cycle have Abraham and Isaac together, a point which at least suggests his return with the rest.

Furthermore, the blessing formula of vv 17 and 18 appears as a triplet. With respect to the tensions/resolutions, several examples are apparent. The "only son" at the beginning is contrasted by the "greatly multiplied" seed at the conclusion. The initial command of God underscores the fact that the son whom Abraham was being called upon to offer was his only son. In one sense that was not true, for Ishmael was also his son. But he was the only son through whom the promises already given to Abraham could be realized. As the story closes, Abraham receives an emphatic enunciation of blessing (הָרָוֶלֶת הַשָּׁלוֹם) which would result in his "only son" being multiplied into descendants that would number "as the stars of the heavens and the sand which is on the seashore" (v 17). The text supplies the key element to the transition; v 16 says: "... because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son..." The nature of the experience is initially described as a "test"; at the end it is turned into a "blessing." The crisis point of the story (v 10) divides the two motifs. The first half (vv 1-9) lays an emphasis upon the "testing" motif; the use of the term הַשָּׁלוֹם in v 1 clearly signals this point. The סְמֻכָּה הַשָּׁלוֹם of v 17 confirms the blessing motif of the second half.

There is a sense in which the story begins with a child sacrifice motif, but in the second half of the narrative that fades and the concept of animal sacrifice surfaces. For this reason, it has been suggested that the purpose of the entire account is to present an etiology on animal sacrifice, and to set up a prohibition of child sacrifice.3

The employment of these various techniques not only improves the readability and interest level of the narrative, but also helps to generate meaning in one's understanding of the text. This point will be further discussed following a closer look at the text itself.

TEXT

An acquaintance with the text of the story seems to be the basis for an attempt to understand some of the concepts it is intending to communicate. The episode of Gen 22:1-19 reads like a two-act play, with both a prologue and an epilogue. The literary structure of the passage suggests the following arrangement of the material:

Prologue, 22: 1
Act I: Ordeal/Crisis, 22:2-10
Scene 1, 22:2-5
Scene 2, 22:6-10

Prologue, 22:1

That there is a conscious effort on the part of the writer to establish relationship between the Abraham cycle up to this point and the particular passage in focus seems evident from his opening statement: "Now it came about after these things..." Its place in the saga of Abraham will be discussed later, so further detail is not necessary at this point. Suffice it to say that this opening line supplies an internal, textual connection to the preceding context, in addition to the more literary relationship presented in the later discussion.

An important observation is made by the writer at the outset of the narrative; it is an observation primarily for the benefit of the reader. The narrator is careful to explain that what he is about to describe represents a "test" (הָסַנִּי) of Abraham. This not only informs the reader of an important point, but also seems to give some direction to the significance of the story. It is an account of a test of Abraham by his God. Testing in regard to what? For what purpose? The answers to these questions are to a certain extent inherent within the text, and will be considered later.

While Abraham's response to God's address, seen in v 1, is undoubtedly a normal one, its appearance both here and again in v 11 seems too obvious to be viewed merely as "accidental." As previously suggested, it functions as a "formulaic expression" which helps to shape the narrative.

4This is a debated point. Von Rad says that "this narrative . . . has only a very loose connection with the preceding" (G. von Rad, Genesis; trans. J. H. Marks [OTL; revised edition; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972] 238; hereafter cited as von Rad, Genesis). However, Coats remarks: "A patriarchal itinerary scheme provides context for this story. . . . Unity with the context derives, however, not simply from structural context provided by an itinerary pattern, but of more importance, from unity in theological perspective with other Abrahamic tradition" (G. W. Coats, "Abraham's Sacrifice of Faith: A Form-Critical Study of Genesis 22," Int 27 [1973] 392; hereafter cited as Coats, Abraham's Sacrifice").

The main body of the narrative reads like a two-act drama, vv 2-10 forming the first act which has two scenes, vv 2-5 and vv 6-10. Act I, Scene 1 (vv 2-5) conveys the basic instructions given to Abraham along with his initial response. In "rapid-fire" succession the three imperatives ("take," הָקַח; "go," הִדַּל; "offer," הִנֵּה נֹשַׁע;) of v 2 inform Abraham what it is that God expects of him. This is the test. Both the "hard-hitting" style of the divine instructions as well as the content of the instructions surface an issue that is perhaps one that the story is intended to explore. What is the nature of Abraham's God? Twice (cf. Genesis 12) he has instructed Abraham to take certain actions which would result in close family ties being broken. What is of almost equal amazement is the relative passivity, the "cool detachment" with which Abraham is seen to respond. By two sets of triads the writer methodically records the calculated actions of the patriarch: he "rose early" (מקאوحו;), "saddled his donkey" (שָׁבַך), "took lads" (שיא), and "split wood" (♒)., "arose" (מָקָא), and "went" (לך).

Upon arriving at a place that was within eyesight of the destination (v 4), Abraham utters a statement that is most intriguing: "Stay here... I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you." The first person plural verbs "worship" and "return to you" (וָכָא הָעֲבֹד, והָעֲבֹד נָא) raise an important question: Was this a hollow, evasive comment on Abraham's part, or was it an expression of an honest faith which he genuinely possessed, based upon the promises which led up to and culminated in the birth of the son whose life was now seemingly in jeopardy? Perhaps the reader is to see some correlation between the manner in which Abraham responded to the divine directive and the statement in question.

Scene 2 (vv 6-10) of this portion of the narrative brings about an intense heightening of the tension; this is accomplished both through the development of the sequence of events as well as the various literary techniques employed by the writer to describe the sequence of events. As now seems characteristic of the writer, another triplet is employed in v 6: Abraham "took the wood" (שיא), "laid it on Isaac" (מעש), and "took... the fire and the knife" ( configFile). The reader is then put off by the interlude: "So the two of them walked on together." It is a statement which seems designed to continue the account, but more so to allow the anxiety level of the reader an opportunity to level off momentarily before introducing the next build-up of tension.

There are two possible approaches to the dialogue between father and son of vv 7 and 8 -- the only recorded conversation between Abraham and Isaac in the entire story. The more traditional view
takes this, together with the "prediction" of v 5, as an evidence of Abraham's growing faith in his God and that he was expressing his firm belief that Isaac would either be spared or miraculously raised up, a la Heb 11:17-19. As one reviews the complete saga of Abraham, it is to be recognized that several indications of an "evolving faith" on the part of Abraham do appear; this may be cited in support of the understanding just referred to. On the other hand, however, many regard this as an "unconscious prophecy" by Abraham, a statement which in actuality was intended either to evade the question or to deceive the son.6 Again, it is true that deception was a part of Abraham's way of dealing with crisis situations (cf. Gen 12:10-20 and Gen 20:1-18). However, that this was a situation in which the truth could not be long withheld from Isaac must be kept in mind. This fact raises a question as to whether or not deception was even a viable option for the patriarch. Perhaps it is true that Abraham was trying to side-step the question and in so doing gave an answer which gave Isaac no cause for alarm yet in the end became reality.

The second use of the formulaic expression, "So the two of them walked on together," gives the reader an opportunity to prepare for the climax.

Father and son arrive at the appointed place. The slow, deliberate, calculated, blow-by-blow description of events at this point is most impressive, "The details are noted with frightful accuracy," says von Rad.7 However, not only is the reader impressed by the manner of description, he is also impressed by what is not said or what is only implied. The writer alludes to the passivity of Abraham in binding Isaac; that is accomplished by the lack of any particular emphasis being placed on that part of the description. Yet nothing is said about Isaac's conduct. The implied non-resistance of the son along with the willingness of the father suggest the idea that there was a commitment to the belief that God had the absolute right to make this demand upon both.

The narrative of v 10 is a continuation of the previous verse; this is seen in the fact that the long string of waw consecutives continues. Another triad is employed at the peak of the description of the crisis. Individual details at this point characterize the description: "... he stretched out his hand and took the knife..." At the very peak of the story a noticeable change in the descriptive method takes place, a change which seems to serve as a mediating factor between some of the binary elements which are found on either side of the crisis point.

6Von Rad, Genesis, 241; Coats, "Abraham's Sacrifice," 394.
7Von Rad, Genesis, 241.
A "string" of imperfects, apparently based upon the perfect of v 1 (יַעֲשָׂה) characterizes the account up to this point. While the change at this point to the infinitive, הָעַלְלוּת, is necessitated by the fact that he did not, in fact, slay his son, it also seems to denote inner disposition.\(^8\) He fully intended to carry through with the action initially required. For all intents and purposes, Isaac had been slain.

_Act II: Resolution, 22:11-18_

The intervention by the angel of YHWH, which is seen in Scene 1 (vv 11-14), is a welcome turn of events. In spite of the opening statement of the story, the reader tends to wonder by the time he reaches v 10, whether God was actually going to let Abraham carry out his intention. Though great relief is experienced by the reader and presumably Abraham, the patriarch, nevertheless, continues to act in the same "restrained" manner as before. Crenshaw remarks: "Most astonishingly, we do not hear a word of rejoicing when the ordeal is ended by an urgent command. . . ."\(^9\) For the first time he notices the ram, he retrieves it, and offers it in place of his son. There is no hint that this sacrifice was rendered in response to divine directive.

A good example of paronomasia is evident at this point in the narrative. In response to Isaac's question, Abraham had responded, "elahim yir'eh." According to v 14, Abraham called the name of the A place "ywhwh yir'eh." To add to this, the comment of the angel is noteworthy: "... I know that you fear God..." (yere' 'elahim) (v 12). This latter comment by the angel signals an important link to the statement of purpose for the testing.

Scene 2, vv 15-18, records the divine response to the now proven patriarch. That the blessing pronounced in vv 17-18 is directly related to Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac is clearly established by the redundant expression of v 16: "... because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son. ..." The announcement of the blessing is presented in the now characteristic style of the writer, another triad. The blessing formula which appears in the narrative is not entirely new to the Abraham cycle (cf. Genesis 12, 15, 17). However, the form in which it is seen here is somewhat intensified over previous similar formulas. As an example, the "I will bless you" \(\text{יִהְרַעֲבֵ֖ב} \) of Gen 12:2 now becomes "I will greatly bless you"

\(^8\)"A noteworthy shift from finite verb to infinitive takes place in the description of Abraham's intention. Thus one cannot miss the purpose of these actions described with such minute detail and in technical language of the sacrificial cult" (J. L. Crenshaw, "Journey into Oblivion: A Structural Analysis of Genesis 22:1-19," Sounding 58 [1975] 248; hereafter cited as Crenshaw, "Journey").

\(^9\)Crenshaw, "Journey," 252.
(וַיִּבְרֶאֶל), Gen 22: 17. As Speiser suggests, the promise that Abraham's descendants would "... possess the gate of their enemies ..." (v 17) "... refers to capture of the opponent's administrative and military centers."\(^{10}\) A similar blessing was invoked upon Rebekah by her brothers prior to her departure for Canaan to become the wife of Isaac (cf. Gen 24:60).

_Epilogue, 22:19_

The notice that "Abraham returned to his young men" and that together they returned to Beer-sheba is of special interest because of what it _does not_ say. Rather obvious is the complete lack of any reference to Isaac in this epilogue. There is no clear indication that he returned with his father; neither is there any clear indication that he remained at Moriah. The text is silent. For this reason Crenshaw refers to this as the "Journey into Oblivion."\(^{11}\) This fact seems to point the reader's attention toward Abraham rather than Isaac, and justifiably so, for this is not a story of the sacrifice of Isaac, it is the story of the testing and obedience of Abraham.

**PURPOSE/INTENT**

It is doubtful that anyone would deny the moving nature of this account, but what contribution does it make to the Abraham cycle in particular and to Hebrew thought in general? How does it make that contribution? It is not only important to discover the meaning, but also to discover how it has meaning. The narrative of Genesis 22 conveys meaning as it is read both diachronically and synchronically: diachronically, it seems to take on meaning as it is seen as the climax to the Abraham cycle; synchronically, it generates meaning as it is viewed as a paradigm on certain sociological issues.

_The relationship of this incident to the entire Abraham cycle_

One's appreciation of this moving account is increased when it is viewed diachronically in the light of the entire Abraham cycle: Gen 11:27-25:11. It appears as the climax to the saga of Abraham. All that precedes this event leads up to it; what follows almost seems anticlimactic. The introduction to the Abraham cycle (Gen 11:27-30) emphasizes the point that Sarai, Abram's wife, is barren. After long years of barrenness, anxiety and struggling, a son is born to Abraham and Sarah (Gen 21:1-7). Almost as though with a vengeance, the saga leaps over several years and hastens to the story which portrays the

\(^{10}\)E. A. Speiser, _Genesis_ (AB; New York: Doubleday, Inc., 1964) 164.

\(^{11}\)Crenshaw, "Journey," 245.
fruit of the once barren womb as being in grave danger. However, it is not just a son who is in danger; it is an entire future, a potential nation. All that Abraham had lived for is suddenly at stake. If his God's word is to be believed, all the nations of the earth would somehow be affected by this demanding order. Either way Abraham might respond, it appeared as though the covenant was in danger. If he were to disobey, the covenant may be in jeopardy; on the other hand, if he were to obey God and slay Isaac, the covenant likewise stood in jeopardy. Abraham, indeed, was on the horns of a dilemma; and the demands that were placed upon him placed him in a situation in which it appeared that he could not win.

When viewed as a whole the Abraham cycle is a study in progression, development, maturing. Perhaps as a regular reminder that the patriarch is very human, there appear stories, strategically located, which clearly portray his vulnerability. While these accounts are in no way to be minimized, the overall trend of the saga is upward; each segment seems to build upon and add to the previous ones. A call and promise are issued, to which there is response (Gen 12:1-9); Abram demonstrates graciousness to Lot (Gen 13:1-13), after which Jehovah appears to him and reiterates the promise (Gen 13:14-18). In turn, Abram spares Lot (Gen 14:1-16); later, the promise is formalized as a binding covenant (Gen 15:1-21). The covenant is expanded (Gen 17:1-21) and sealed by circumcision (Gen 17:22-26). The seed aspect of the covenant is particularized (Gen 18:1-15); Abraham intercedes for Lot (Gen 18:16-33). At last the promised son is born (Gen 21:1-7).

The sequence of these events suggests that both Abraham and the reader are being prepared for something. The cycle is going somewhere; it is not static. At almost any point along the way, the reader can stop, look behind him, and see that the plot has advanced; Abraham has progressed. Difficult circumstances have consistently presented themselves, and at times the patriarch has reacted in a very immature and deceitful manner. Yet overall, the relationship of these individual stories one to another makes the point that Abraham was "growing up."

Then comes the ordeal. One is inclined to believe that had such a sore test come earlier in his experience, Abraham would not have been able to cope with it. Hence, the climax of the cycle comes and with it the most formidable test of the patriarch's life: God orders
him to slay his long-awaited son. The nature of the test and the manner in which Abraham faced it are issues which are taken up in the following portions of the study. Suffice it to say here that there seems to be some evidence that this event marked a change in the patriarch's life.

What the term הנה contributes to the narrative

That the narrator is so careful to introduce his account as a "test" is both obvious and important. It is obvious because it is the first statement employed by the writer in this narrative sequence. The importance of this point is seen in several different ways. First, it is important for the reader's benefit. So it was viewed by the writer, for he informs the reader from the very outset that this is "only a test." Abraham, of course, was not privy to that information. The reason for that appears obvious. It would not have been a genuine test if he had been informed that it was "only a test." Nothing would have been proven through it, had he known.

Second, it is important because it contributes to one's understanding of the God-man relationship; specifically, it gives insight into an apparently new dynamic in the Elohim/Yahweh-Abraham cycle. This is the first, and the only, time in the Abraham saga where the nature of a particular event is so labeled. Nevertheless, its use here suggests that from Yahweh's perspective, Abraham needed to be tested.13 There is no clear indication why He deemed such a test necessary; only that He did. No unusually troublesome flaws in Abraham's character have been brought to the surface up to this point. On the contrary, Yahweh appears to have looked with favor upon the patriarch.14

With no clear explanation of this question coming from the text itself, one is left to offer several possibilities for consideration.15 One possibility is that the test is a clear indication of the somewhat tyrannical nature of Abraham's God. Yahweh, a young, ambitious deity, was perhaps attempting to demonstrate his rather cynical

13Crenshaw makes the following thought-provoking remarks: "In a sense the story bears the character of a qualifying test. The fulfillment of the promise articulated in Genesis 12 and reaffirmed at crucial stages during Abraham's journey through alien territory actualizes the divine intention to bless all nations by means of one man. Abraham's excessive love for the son of promise comes dangerously close to idolatry and frustrates the larger mission. Thus is set the stage for the qualifying test." Crenshaw, "Journey," 249.

14That this is true is evidenced by the initial promises of Gen 12:1-3, the formalizing of the promises into a covenant in Genesis 15, the statement that "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6), the fulfillment of the promise of a son, the manifold blessings of Yahweh on Abraham, et al.
attitude toward one of his subjects/devotees. In this writer's opinion, to establish such a suggestion as legitimate would require much more evidence than this one passage can be construed to present. Another suggestion is that the key to understanding the reason behind the test is to be found in a study of the term הָסַנּוּ, which the writer employs. This suggestion brings our attention back to the original point regarding the importance of the identification of this as a "testing" experience by the writer.

A third reason why the writer's opening statement is important, therefore, is that it may hold the key to understanding the reason why God tested Abraham as he did. The term הָסַנּוּ is employed, in addition to the usage in Genesis 22, eight other times in a context where Elohim/Yahweh is said to be the "tester." In six (Exod 15:22-26; 16:4; 20:18-20; Deut 8:2, 16; Judg 2:21-22; 3:1-4) of these cases, Israel was the object of His testing; in 2 Chron 32:31 Hezekiah, king of Judah, was the one tested; in Ps 26:2 David appealed to Yahweh to test him. In five of the six cases where Yahweh/Elohim speaks of "testing" Israel, the context of each clearly shows a relationship between the motif of "testing" and his concern over the nation's obedience to his commandments/statutes/law/ways. In Exod 20:18-obedience concept is implied though not specifically stated, and interestingly enough, the subject of the nation's fear of God is a central issue, as it is in Gen 22:1, 12. Again in the Ps 26:2 occurrence of the term, the obedience concept is implied when David says: "Prove me, a Lord, and try (הָסַנּוּ) me; test my heart and my mind." Of Hezekiah, the Chronicler observes:

And so in the matter of the envoys of the princes of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, in order to try him and to know all that was in his heart (2 Chron 32:31).

If the pattern seen in the use of the term הָסַנּוּ, when Yahweh/Elohim is said to be the "tester," can serve as a legitimate key for understanding its use in Gen 22:1, then one may conclude that the reason Yahweh deemed it necessary to test Abraham was to know what was in his heart, to test his obedience to and fear of Yahweh when his promised and beloved son was at stake.


Exploring relationships

One of the functions of this particular story seems to be that of exploring relationships: relationships between man and his God as well as relationships between a father and his sons. Both of these areas of investigation are in themselves fairly complex. An attempt will be made here to probe both realms in an effort to understand the dynamics involved in these two areas of relationships. The latter one seems to be the result of or the outgrowth of the former; therefore, they will be analyzed in the same order as they have initially been mentioned.

The God/man relationship is explored at different levels in this narrative. The images of both God and man are studied to some degree; the demands of God are seen in contrast to the response of man. Fundamental to the account is an obvious question: "What kind of a God would subject a man to such an ordeal?" This, of course, immediately raises the whole issue of the image of God as seen in Genesis 22. Responses to the question vary. In large measure one's response depends upon which aspect of the narrative is emphasized. If the emphasis is upon the initial command to sacrifice Isaac and the concept of the divine deception involved, the view of the image of God obviously will be somewhat negative. On the other hand, if the emphasis is placed upon the fact that Yahweh stayed the hand of Abraham and subsequently increased his blessing upon the patriarch, one's conclusions concerning the image of God would agree with de Vaux, who commented: "Any Israelite who heard this story would take it to mean that his race owed its existence to the mercy of God, and its prosperity to the obedience of their great ancestor."^17

More, however, is to be gained by viewing the image of God as portrayed in Gen 22:1-10 in a broader context. When seen in the perspective of both that which precedes and follows these verses, a noticeable "role reversal" occurs in this problematic section. In Genesis 12-21 Yahweh is depicted as the deity who desires to bless greatly the patriarch; the promises abound in these chapters. Not only is he seen as one who promises blessing; he is unmistakably set forth as the one who fulfills the promised blessings. Genesis 21 records the birth of the son of promise, Isaac. Suddenly, a reversal of roles occurs. The God of promise and blessing appears to become the antagonist, the tyrant, the adversary, the God of contradiction. In the minds of some, the problem is not so much in the initial demand

which Yahweh/Elohim made on Abraham as with the fact that he allowed Abraham to think right up to the very last moment that he was actually serious when in fact he was only testing Abraham.

Just as the careful student of the saga of Abraham must see the role reversal just described, he is also obliged to see another drastic reversal in Gen 22:11-18 -- a reversal in the portrayal of the image of God back to that which prevails in Genesis 12-21. This second reversal sheds a different light on the first reversal. Certainly there should be no attempt to minimize the image of Yahweh in Gen 22:1-10. There is no question that a "different side" of Yahweh is to be seen there. At the same time, however, one must reckon with the double role-reversal which is evident in the story. But, as demonstrated elsewhere in this study, Yahweh/Elohim is to be understood as a God who sorely tests his subjects. According to Exodus 15, Israel needed water; in Exodus 16 and Deuteronomy 8, the nation needed bread; Judges 2 and 3 suggest that the nation needed military assistance. While the exact circumstances differ in the Genesis 22 incident, the basic point is the same. Yahweh/Elohim is set forth by the biblical writers as a God who takes his servants through perilous situations for the purpose of testing them. In almost every one of these examples, including Genesis 22, there is evidence of divine provision as a means of survival through the experience. This is not at all unusual in the realm of religion. The religions of the ancient Near East were characterized by deities who demanded devotion; in some cases demonstration of one's devotion was evidenced through child sacrifice. The unique feature in Abraham's experience was that his God stopped him from completing the act. Thus the double role-reversal shows itself to be significant in the story.

A second fundamental question must be asked concerning the story: "What kind of a man would respond to such a command in the manner in which Abraham did?" Almost as important as the image-of-God motif is the image of man in relationship to his God as it is explored in this fascinating account. Once again, there is difference of opinion on this question. In fact, the same individual sometimes experiences mixed emotions in this regard, as Kierkegaard demonstrates:

Why then did Abraham do it? For God's sake and (in complete identity with this) for his own sake. He did it for God's sake because God required this proof of his faith; for his own sake he did it in order that he might furnish the proof. The unity of these two points of view is perfectly expressed by the word which has always been used to characterize this situation: It is a trial, a temptation. A temptation - but what does that mean? What ordinarily tempts a man is that which would keep him from doing his duty, but in this case the temptation is itself the ethical. . . which would keep him from doing God's will.
Therefore, though Abraham arouses my admiration, he at the same time appalls me. . . . He who has explained this riddle has explained my life.18

An interesting and perhaps significant ingredient is to be gleaned by tracing the role-reversal pattern in the case of Abraham. With one major exception, it is opposite that of Yahweh/Elohim's. It is not at all unusual to find Abraham arguing with Elohim throughout Genesis 12-21. Whereas in that segment of the cycle God is the "blessser," Abraham is somewhat the "antagonist." However in Genesis 22, where he is called upon to do something of a far more severe nature than anything else up to this point, a clear reversal is seen. He does not argue with God, in spite of the fact that to obey would mean the death of his long-awaited and dearly loved and favored son. There is no hint even of any hesitancy on Abraham's part, though to actually follow through would place the covenant in jeopardy in addition to suffering the loss of his son. How is this phenomenon to be explained? Does his response represent a "blind obedience," which in present times seems to have been operative to some degree in Jonestown, Guyana? Or does his response indicate that he had reached a level of maturity and obedience which enabled him to carry out God's instructions and at the same time leave the consequences to God? In answer to this perplexing problem, it may be significant to note that there is no evidence in Genesis 22, or in the remainder of the Abraham cycle, of a reversal back to the image which characterized Abraham prior to the Genesis 22 incident. It is true that there is no strong or positive evidence in the rest of the Abraham saga that he was a "different Abraham" from this point on. However, the failure of the text of the cycle to allude to a second role reversal may be significant in this respect.

Further evidence that the tale seems to be exploring relationships between God and man is the heavy emphasis which is placed upon testing/obedience and fear of God/love of son. It seems quite apparent that there is a direct relationship between the discussion concerning the image of God/image of man and testing/obedience as well as fear of God/love of son. Both of these latter issues seem to be engaged at a level different from the former matter. Allusion has already been made to the fact that the writers of the OT portray Yahweh as a God who tested his subjects. That is not so unusual or surprising. Abraham's unflinching obedience is somewhat more puzzling. He appears as a man who believed that the God whom he

worshipped had the right to make such a demand of him and that the sacrifice of Isaac was the right thing for him.

It seems significant that both comparisons and contrasts can be drawn between this experience and Abraham's initial encounter with Yahweh, as told in Gen 12:1ff. Both experiences began with a divine emphatic imperative, "go."19 Both situations involved going to an "undesignated place": "... to the land that I will show you" (Gen 12:1); "... upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (Gen 22:2). In both cases a "sacrifice of family" was required: in the former experience, it was to leave family behind; in the latter, it was an actual sacrifice of his son. This final confrontation by Yahweh was, in a sense, not a completely new experience for the patriarch, although obviously the most trying. Abraham's entire experience with Yahweh, beginning with the initial call and promise, may be viewed as preparing him for this final, supreme test. While the general direction of Abraham's response in both cases was toward obedience, in the first situation there was only partial obedience, while in the last situation there was total obedience. This fact "puts a little distance" between the two experiences. The major contrast, of course, between the two is the fact that the first imperative was accompanied by a promise of blessing; there was no such promise which came with the imperative of Gen 22:2. In fact, this latter imperative seemed to place all the foregoing promises in jeopardy. This set of facts greatly increases the distance between the two situations. But that distance is then reduced by the fact that both responses are followed by blessing from Yahweh. Sarna, commenting on a comparative study of these two passages, draws some conclusions which deserve consideration because they relate the study to the matter of exploring the relationship between Yahweh and the patriarch:

The great difference between the two events is what constitutes the measure of Abraham's progress in his relationship to God. The first divine communication carried with it the promise of reward: The final one held no such expectation. On the contrary, by its very nature it could mean nothing less than the complete nullification of the covenant.

19The form is שָׁבַע. Cassuto remarks that this form "... is not without specific signification." He further observes: "In both cases Abram undergoes an ordeal: here he has to leave behind his aged father and his environment and go to a country that is unknown to him; there he has to take leave of his family circle for a little while, and of his cherished son forever; his son, it is true, will accompany him for the first part of the way but only so that he might bid him farewell forever. Thereafter he must go on his way alone, the way of absolute discipline and devotion. In both instances the test is made harder by the fact that the destination of the journey is not stated beforehand." Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part II: From Noah to Abraham; trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964) 309-10.
and the frustration forever of all hope of posterity. Ishmael had already departed. Now Isaac would be gone, too. Tradition has rightly seen in Abraham the exemplar of steadfast, disinterested loyalty to God.20

A third level of interest in regard to the Yahweh/man relationship is the set of binary elements: fear of God/love of son. There appears to be something of a relationship between this and the testing/obedience motif; yet the fear of God/love of son struggle goes beyond or becomes more particularized than the former. Gen 22:2 sets up the frustration by the way in which Yahweh referred to Isaac, "... your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love." At the point where the angel stops Abraham, the clear pronouncement is made, "... now I know that you fear God..." (Gen 22:12). The implication seems to be that the fear of God on Abraham's part was in question because of his love for his son. Two factors in the text unite to mediate between these two elements. The description of the raised knife in the hand of the patriarch together with the writer's employment of the infinitive נתן ל from אשת ל תathed clearly indicates Abraham's intention of slaying his son. An inner disposition reduces the distance between Abraham's fear of God and love of Isaac.

A second major realm of relationships is explored through this narrative: a horizontal realm. The relationship of a father to his sons is a theme that is investigated. At this point it is instructive to place two incidents side-by-side. The expulsion of Ishmael, as recorded in Genesis 21, and the binding of Isaac, described in Genesis 22, lead to an interesting study in comparisons and contrasts when analyzed together. Generally speaking, these two segments of the Abraham cycle illustrate the pattern, seen often in the OT, of the younger son becoming the favored son over the firstborn.21 As a matter of fact, this case sets the pace for those which follow in the patriarchal sequence. Ishmael, the result of Abraham's attempt to "help God fulfill His promise," was rejected by Yahweh and eventually expelled by Abraham. Isaac, the younger of the two sons, is described as having been sovereignly chosen by Yahweh and favored by Abraham. This, in itself, is not foreign to the biblical record; but the paradox is seen in the fact that Abraham became quite distressed over Sarah's instructions to cast Hagar and Ishmael out, yet when God instructed him to slay Isaac, the favored son, there was no evidence of any reluctance whatsoever on the father's part.

21See Genesis 27 (Jacob) and Genesis 37 (Joseph).
A number of interesting comparisons and contrasts can be observed between the two events. The following chart summarizes the main details:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ishmael in danger</th>
<th>Isaac in danger</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genesis 21</strong></td>
<td><strong>Genesis 22</strong></td>
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**CONTRASTS.**

- Crisis created as a result of a human directive: Sarah tells Abraham to cast out Hagar and Ishmael (v 10) vs. Crisis created as a result of a divine directive: God tells Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering (v 2)

- Abraham shows real reluctance to follow through (v 11) vs. Abraham shows no real reluctance to follow through (vv 3ff.)

- God refers to Ishmael as "Abraham's seed," הָיוּ (v 13) vs. God refers to Isaac as "Abraham's son," הָיוּ (v 2)

- Sarah aware of the circumstances; she was the "perpetrator" (vv 9-10) vs. Sarah apparently not aware of the circumstances

- Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, could not stand to watch her son die (vv 15-16) vs. Abraham, the father of Isaac, did not shrink from observing (in fact, participating in) the death of his son

- Action takes place in the wilderness of Beer-sheba (v 14) vs. Action takes place in the land of Moriah (vv 2-4)

**COMPARISONS**

- Firstborn cast out, becomes a nation vs. Firstborn cast out, becomes a great nation

- God promised to make a nation of Ishmael because he was Abraham's seed (v 13) vs. God promised to make a great nation of Isaac because Abraham had not withheld him (vv 16-18)

- Abraham "rose up early in the morning" to follow through (v 14) vs. Abraham "rose up early in the morning" to follow through (v 3)

- Divine intervention occurs; angel of God calls out to Hagar; reversal of danger (v 17) vs. Divine intervention occurs; angel of Yahweh calls out to Abraham; reversal of danger (vv 11 ff.)
Water (life-preserving) was providentially provided (v 19)  
Ram (life-preserving) was providentially provided (v 13)  
Hagar saw the heretofore unseen well (v 19)  
Abraham saw the heretofore unseen ram (v 13)  
Hagar appropriates the water without a specific divine directive (v 19)  
Abraham appropriates the ram without a specific divine directive (v 13)  
Hagar, an Egyptian, takes a wife from Egypt for Ishmael (v 21)  
Abraham, a Mesopotamian, takes a wife from Mesopotamia for Isaac (Genesis 24)  

CONCLUSION

It seems apparent that one of the themes that the story presents as it is read diachronically is the testing and obedience of Abraham. That concept keeps reappearing in several different ways. That is not meant to imply that this diachronic motif exhausts the contribution of this celebrated story. One is inclined to ask the question: Is it really possible, on the basis of the details of the story as they are given, to know what was going on in the heart and mind of the patriarch? What do his unusual reactions mean?

In the synchronic direction, the account contributes to the exploration of certain religious and sociological relationships: God/man and father/son. But is there more? After some fairly extensive study, looking at the passage in many different ways and from several perspectives, it is obvious that the passage warrants further attention.

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SERMON

Sacrificing Our Future  
(Genesis 22)

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Introduction

Not inappropriately, the story of Abraham being called to sacrifice Isaac is titled by Elie Wiesel "Isaac, a survivor's story."1 If we were to question people in the pew concerning the ultimate value in life, after the expected pious answers, many would finally (and perhaps most honestly) answer: life itself. Survival is a dominant factor in our modern world. However, the importance of survival is not a new phenomenon. In one of the better known wisdom tales from Egypt The Dispute of a man with his Ba, we overhear a dialogue between a man contemplating suicide and his inner being. As the man marshals arguments favoring suicide, the inner being counters with arguments against suicide. After extended discussion, the debate is finally won by the inner being with the argument that life, namely this life, is a known entity--and the known is always preferable to the unknown! Even we who claim a confidence regarding the future can understand such thinking, for in our lives we have known that anxiety concerning the future. For many of us, to survive is preferable to loss of life. Because of this, Genesis 22 makes us uncomfortable, for it presents us with a reality at odds with the dominant world view.

However, this passage may also make us uncomfortable because of its disharmony with modern religion. We live in a religious society in which virtually all talk centers on what God can and will do for us. God the giver dominates our religious scene. (This is most clearly manifested in the popularity of such programs as PTL and the 700 Club.) Little, if any, talk discusses the demanding God. In response, modification of a famous charge is most appropriate: "Ask not what your God can do for you; ask what you can do for your God."

In this context, the message of Genesis 22 must be heard. The passage throbs with drama, for it contains the stuff of which life is made. It treats fear and faith; it pulsates with conflict--conflict of the past, present, and future; of faith and justice; of obedience and defiance; of freedom and sacrifice.

We cannot help being struck with the pathos of this account. If we are honest, we read this account with fear and anxiety (even though we know the outcome), for it raises nagging questions which continue to haunt us. What kind of father would seriously consider killing his son? What kind of God would ask of a father the murder of his son? The pathos is heightened as the account progresses. Three times the term "together" (vss. 6, 8, 19) appears. Each successive movement is charged with drama, from the saddling of the pack animal to the splitting of the wood to the long, wordless trip. The anguish comes to a crescendo as the son and his father journey alone the final leg of the trek, the son with the wood for his own sacrificial fire and the father with the flint and knife. As E. Speiser has so aptly stated, " . . . ‘and the two walked on together,’ (8) covers what is perhaps the most poignant and eloquent silence in all literature."2 Never was so much and so little said. Soren Kierkegaard, in Fear and Trembling, attempts to delve into the "conversation" (or lack of it) between Abraham and Isaac as they journeyed on alone to Mt. Moriah. Kierkegaard struggles with the dilemmas presented in this story and rightly concludes that we too quickly solve the dilemma through abstraction and moralization. To say "the great thing was that Abraham loved God so much that he was willing to sacrifice to him the best remains a problem when we concretize the account once again and realize that the best is his own son!3

And yet, if we can get beyond the initial repulsion of a father being called to sacrifice his son, we discover that this passage involves in reality a much larger issue. For in ancient Hebrew mentality, Abraham is being called to sacrifice more than just his son; he is really being called to sacrifice himself, his very future. For Abraham, this was a call to end his story, to end the promise he had embraced in faith. Isaac was more than just the child of Abraham's old age; he was the only link to that far-off goal to which Abraham's life was dedicated.4 And so, if we read the story aright, we can only agonize with Abraham as he comes to grips with the reality that the God in whom he has put his hopes is in fact calling in the very substance of his hope. For some inexplicable reason, God is recalling the heart of the promise.

2 Genesis (AB Doubleday, 1964), 164-165.
3 As Kierkegaard (Fear and Trembling [Princeton Univ. Press, 1941], 36) states: And there he stood, the old man, with his only hope! He knew that God Almighty was trying him ... and that it was the hardest sacrifice that could be required of him ... but that no sacrifice was too hard when God required it-and he drew the knife.
4 Speiser, Genesis, p. 164.
And yet as we shrink back at the intensity of this account, we remember that in a very real sense this issue has been central to Abraham's life from the beginning. The issue of obedience (or as Breuggemann would call it, "embracing the promise")\(^5\) is central in the accounts treating Abraham. Whereas this incident is the climax of the issue, in a sense Genesis 22 simply epitomizes the extended relationship of God and Abraham. We see in Verses 1-12 a movement in the relationship between God and Abraham, a movement revealed in two ways: (1) "take your son, your only son Isaac" ... (vs. 2) "you have not withheld your son, your only son..."(vs. 12) (2) "God tested Abraham ..."(vs. 1) "for now I know that you fear God" (vs. 12). At the center of this movement is the affirmation in Verse 8 ("God will provide"). Verse 8 provides both movement and disclosure.\(^6\)

*The New Testament Perspective*

We may be tempted as New Testament Christians to smugly dismiss this ancient text as a somewhat embarrassing reminder of an era plagued with barbarity. However, if we are honest, there are passages in the New Testament which should terrify us as much as Genesis 22. Mark 8:31-38 is such an example. Surely we shrink back as we seriously contemplate the call to follow and to emulate a crucified Messiah!

In Mark 8,\(^7\) we see the question of Jesus' identity intimately related to the question of his disciples' identity and call. In the confrontation between Peter and Jesus, Peter rebukes Jesus for his inappropriate definition of Messiah. Jesus responds that to profess "Christ" is to relinquish any right to define what "Christ" means. Disciples are not to guide, protect, or possess Jesus; they are to follow him. Thus we see a movement in this passage from the issue of "who Jesus is" to "what being Christ means" to "what being a disciple means."

This passage demands the utmost from us, for we are called to sacrifice everything that would insure our own vision, our own sense of our future. Just as Jesus left (sacrificed) everything (his family, possessions) for the cause of God, so we are called to sacrifice our future. The invitation of Jesus to us strikingly resembles God's call to Abraham. The call to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Jesus is a call to give up our future.

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\(^5\) *Genesis* (John Knox, 1982).

\(^6\) As Brueggemann (*Genesis*, p. 187) states: We do not know why God claims the son in the first place nor finally why he will remove the demand at the end. Between the two statements of divine inscrutability stands verse 8, offering the deepest mystery of human faith and pathos.

The call is not to deny ourselves something, but to deny ourselves. This is the great paradox of the call. It attacks the fundamental assumption of our human existence. We can never possess our own life! The significance of the passage lies in its paradox. I learn who I am by discovering who Jesus is; the way to self-fulfillment is the way of self-denial. As D. Bonhoeffer so aptly stated, "When Jesus calls a man, he bids him come and die."

He [Jesus] begins with a condition: "If anyone wants to come after me . . ." The condition is gracious in its openness.... It is expressed in three phrases: "let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." The symmetry of this offer with the vocation of Jesus is obvious. His vocation must become the vocation of those who name him "The Christ," . . . Taking up one's cross is not a pious interpretation of the usual woes of mortality as "the cross we have to bear." All these notions can be thought and enacted apart from Jesus. The call rather means that Jesus is to become the disciples' passion. It is the exposition of the only authentic sense in which one can say to him, "You are the Christ." It is the possibility of a new state of being in which one can say, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me ..."(Gal. 2:20)

The cross in the call of Jesus makes it a contradiction of the best human wisdom and a threat to the basic human instinct. Who can want to choose crucifixion of the self, when the will of man is set on saving his own life from whatever threatens or on finding some savior in whose power to take refuge? In four interdependent sayings Jesus attacks the essential assumptions of human existence in an appeal to the will of those he confronts. Expressed in each saying is the core wisdom of faith in God: A person can never possess his own life. One cannot enact or fulfill it as an expression of the sovereign self.8

Conclusion

Genesis 22 deals with something much larger than child sacrifice. It treats the issue of response to a giving God who also demands. It issues a call to Abraham to relinquish the gift of promise. The call to sacrifice goes to the core of Abraham's existence. It is a call to see the gift of promise for what it truly is--pure gift.

8 Ibid.: 177-178.
However, this passage is not simply about God and Abraham. In it Israel, saw the story of her own relationship with God. Israel could see her own existence as solely a gift from her gracious God. She who had been "no people" had been brought from death to life by a freely saving God. However, Israel learned that the God who is graciously faithful is also incredibly demanding, and she was forced repeatedly to renew her commitment to this demanding God who allows no rivals. In hearing Genesis 22, Israel was reminded that her giving God was a God demanding undivided loyalty.

In like manner, we are called by the same God. The God who gives us a future in the miracle of the resurrection is the same God who calls us to sacrifice our future. As we sacrifice our future, our very selves, we are given a "future" by God. And yet, the only thing going for us is our conviction (faith) in our God's ability to recreate that miracle in us (1 Cor. 15). In an age of self-fulfillment, the call of Jesus remains resolutely firm and radical: He who would save his life must lose it and he who would lose it for my sake will find it.

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An Exegetical Study of Genesis 38

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Introduction

Although Benno Jacob has called the Judah-Tamar story "the crown of the book of Genesis and Tamar one of the most admirable women," Genesis 38 has generated more frustration than enthusiasm among its interpreters. This frustration has ensued from the story's position amidst the Joseph narrative. Many commentators describe the positioning of Genesis 38 by terms such as "unconnected, independent, interruption." Von Rad asserts, "Every attentive reader can see that the story of Judah and Tamar has no connection at all with the strictly organized Joseph story at whose beginning it is now inserted." Similarly Brueggemann alleges, "This peculiar chapter stands alone, without connection to its context. It is isolated in every way and is most enigmatic." Bowie says that Genesis 38 "is like an alien element, suddenly and arbitrarily thrust into a record which it serves only to disturb. Certainly few people would choose this chapter as a basis for teaching or preaching."

This is not merely the sentiment of recent writers. As far back as the second century B.C., the writer of the pseudepigraphal Book of Jubilees repositioned the Judah-Tamar account later in the Joseph story after the events of Genesis 41:1-49. Moreover, Josephus, in the second book of his Antiquities of the Jews, gave considerable attention to the Joseph story and omitted Genesis 38 in the process. The concern of his second book was "the descent of the Israelites into Egypt and their eventual liberation therefrom." Apparently Josephus did not consider Genesis 38 germane to this theme. Furthermore, as Goldin has observed, even the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi wondered why Genesis 38 was "placed here to interrupt the account about Joseph." Indeed the location of the Judah-Tamar story has a long history of being considered problematic. Unfortunately the "views of the function and purpose of Genesis 38 have remained relatively static through the years." Recently there has been a renewed interest in Genesis 38 and its related is-


For a fuller discussion of this point, see Steven D. Mathewson, "The Relationship of Genesis 38 to the Joseph Story" (MA thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1986), pp. 1-10.

Susan Niditch, "The Wrong Woman Righted: An Analysis of Genesis 38," Harvard Theological Review 72 (January-April 1979): 143. One exception to this trend is Umberto Cassuto's fine study, first published in 1929, which considered the problem of Genesis 38's location in the Joseph story. He too noted that scholars of his day paid much attention to the origin and construction of Genesis 38 but "have not dealt at all, or only superficially, with the problem of the relationship between this section and its context" (Biblical and Oriental Studies, vol. 1 [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 19731, pp. 29-40).
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Yet this has come almost exclusively from scholars whose critical approach to the text colors the conclusions they offer. On the other hand, conservative writers have given scant attention, at least in written form, to the Genesis 38 problem.

The purpose of this article is to examine the interconnection between Genesis 38 and its context. The present writer seeks to demonstrate that Moses, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, carefully interwove the Judah-Tamar story with the Joseph narrative for the purpose of further developing his theme in Genesis. This will be accomplished by examining the chronological, literary, and theological relationships between Genesis 38 and its context.

An Exegetical Overview of Genesis 38

Any such discussion of the relationship between Genesis 38 and its context must build on an understanding of the chapter itself. Thus the following overview of the Judah-Tamar story is offered.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

The Judah-Tamar story takes the form of a comedy, a type of story characterized by a "U-shaped" plot that moves from tragedy to a happy ending. Of the plot devices familiar to comic structure, this story contains at least the following: disguise, mistaken identity, surprise, sudden reversal of misfortune, rescue from disaster, and reversal of conventional expectations (specifically, the younger over the older). Furthermore its ending with the birth of two sons is simi-


12 This writer uses "purpose" here as defined by John A. Martin: "the reason the author wrote his material for his original readers and for those who would enter into the original readers' experience down through the ages. The purpose includes the desired effect the material would have on the original readers. The purpose is to be inferred from the text itself and should not be imposed on the text from the outside" (The Structure of 1 and 2 Samuel," Bibliotheca Sacra 141 [January-March 1984]: 42, n. 12).

13 Leland Ryken suggests four major types of stories: the heroic narrative, the epic, the comedy, and the tragedy. For further discussion and explanation, see his work How to Read the Bible as Literature (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985) pp. 75-86.
lar to the types of endings usually found in a comic plot.\textsuperscript{14}

THE FUTURE OF JUDAH'S LINE IN JEOPARDY (38:1-11)

General introduction (38:1). The opening verse informs the reader that Judah went down (תְּנָנָה) from his brothers and turned aside (חָבוּב) to an Adullamite man named Hirah.\textsuperscript{15} Stigers calculates that Judah was about 20 years of age at this time.\textsuperscript{16}

The establishment of Judah's family (38:2-5). The plot heightens as Judah, who had already associated himself with a Canaanite man,\textsuperscript{17} took a Canaanite wife.\textsuperscript{18} The subsequent births of three sons are "recorded in breathless pace," indicating the subordinate role of these events as they establish the context for what is to come.\textsuperscript{19}

The tragedy in Judah's family (38:6-11). The account now jumps from the birth of the sons to the marriage of the first. At this point in the narrative, Tamar, the second main character, is introduced. After Judah took Tamar to be a wife for his son Er, tragedy struck. Because Er was evil in the sight of Yahweh, He took Er's life.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 82.
\textsuperscript{15} Assuming that the events of Genesis 38 began transpiring soon after Joseph was sold into slavery, the story would have occurred around 1898 B.C. For a helpful chart on the chronology from Solomon back to Joseph, cf. Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 2 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983, 1985), 1:89. This sets the story near the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age 11 A (ca. 1900-1750 B.C.), a period that witnessed a movement toward a seminomadic and even a sedentary lifestyle. Urban centers began to develop in Palestine, and the culture was in a state of flux, being influenced from the north and the east (G. Herbert Livingston, The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974], p. 16; Keith N. Schoville, Biblical Archaeologic in Focus [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978], p. 40).
\textsuperscript{16} Harold G. Stigers, A Commentary on Genesis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 278.
\textsuperscript{17} The designation "Hirah the Adullamite" in Genesis 38:1 identifies Hirah as a resident of Adullam, a Canaanite city mentioned in Joshua 12:15 and 15:35. The location of this site appears to be at the western edge of the hill country about 16 kilometers northwest of Hebron (Emerton, "Some Problems in Genesis 38," p. 343; L. H. Grollenberg, Atlas of the Bible, trans. and ed. Joyce M. Reid and H. H. Rowley [London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 19571, pp. 29, 60).
\textsuperscript{18} Mixed marriage with the Canaanites was understood by the patriarchs to be a threat to the Abrahamic promise. In both Genesis 24:3-4 and 28:1, 6, the warnings by Abraham and Isaac not to take a Canaanite wife were expressed by הֵרָנָה with the imperfect (of הָרָנָה), which denotes permanent prohibition. See Thomas O. Lambdin, Introduction to Biblical Hebrew (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 114.
\textsuperscript{19} Robert Alter notes, "Here, as at other points in the episode, nothing is allowed to detract our focused attention from the primary, problematic subject of the proper channel for the seed" (The Art of Biblical Narrative [New York: Basic Books, 19811, p. 6).
\textsuperscript{20} H. Freedman suggests that Er's wickedness may be "deduced" from the wickedness and death of Onan mentioned in 38:10. He bases his argument on the terms "also," taking it to mean "for the same reason" ("The Book of Genesis," in The Soncino Chumash:
After Er's death Judah commanded Onan to go to Tamar and "do your duty as a brother-in-law" (יִּשָּׂא) to her with the intent of raising up offspring for Er (v. 8). Behind this verse lies the plight of a childless widow and the resulting custom of levirate marriage. But as 38:9-10 reveals, Onan refused to perform this duty, knowing that the offspring would be considered his dead brother's and not his. Driver has pointed out that the construction בָּאָה-יִשָּׂא should be understood as a frequentative use of the perfect and translated "whenever he went in" instead of "when he went in." Thus the action by Onan was done repeatedly and was not just a one-time event. Because this was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, He took Onan's life.

Genesis 38:11 draws to a close this sad chapter in Judah's family. Judah instructed Tamar to go back to her father's house until Shelah, the third son, grew up. Judah feared that Shelah would die as had his two older brothers. Stigers suggests that Judah was...
quite "spiritually unperceptive" at this point, refusing "to connect the evil conduct of his sons with their early demise."26

The groundwork has been laid for the real drama to unfold in Genesis 38:12-30. Moving at a rapid pace, the author has for the most part presented the facts without reference to causes or motives.27

THE CONTINUATION OF JUDAH'S LINE THROUGH TAMAR (38:12-30)

Tamar's deception of Judah (38:12-23). This section records the bold actions of Tamar, who deceived her father-in-law Judah into unknowingly performing the levirate duty. Disguise, an element common to comic structure, dominates this part of the narrative. Also the plot now unfolds at a slower pace here in the heart of the story.28

Verses 12-15 describe Tamar's cunning move when circumstances in Judah's life afforded her an opportunity to act. Judah, whose wife had died, had finished his time of mourning and was preparing to join his sheepshearers. The hard and dirty work of shearing sheep was accompanied by a festival that was noted for hilarity and much wine-drinking.29 No doubt Tamar calculated that the flavor of this festival and the sexual unfulfillment that resulted from being a widower would make Judah quite susceptible to sexual temptation.30

So Tamar removed her widow's garments, veiled her face, enveloped herself in disguise, and proceeded to wait at the entrance of Enaim.31 The latter part of 38:14 indicates Tamar's motive for this action: She had not been given in marriage to Shelah even though he had grown up. She was being deprived of conception through the law of levirate duty, so she decided to take matters into her own hands.32

perstition which we find in Tobit iii. 7 sqq., that either she herself, or marriage with her, had been the cause of her husbands' deaths" (Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1: The Pentateuch [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949], p. 340).

26 Stigers, A Commentary on Genesis, p. 279.
27 Von Rad, Geneiss, p. 352.
28 Von Rad views Genesis 38:12-30 as the "real story" which is set against the "necessary facts" provided by 38:1-11 (Genesis, p. 352).
30 Leupold, Genesis, 2:982-83. Kidner notes that sexual temptation would be sharpened during this festive time by the "Canaanite cult, which encouraged ritual fornication as fertility magic (Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary, p. 188).
31 The term (38:14) has been problematic and subject to many suggestions. From the context of 38:21, it is apparent that alone was sufficient to identify a place of meeting known to the characters of the story.
32 Middle Assyrian Law number 33 and Hittite Lawn number 193 suggest inclusion of
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Judah was fooled by Tamar's disguise (38:15), considering her to be a prostitute.\(^{33}\) So he had sexual relations with her (v. 16). Then in lieu of payment Judah left a pledge which would become an important piece of identification later in the story. This pledge consisted of Judah's cylinder seal and his staff. Vawter explains, "What Judah does is surrender his ID card, which he expects to be quickly redeemed, but which Tamar retains for her own purposes."\(^{34}\)

As a result Judah attempted to honor his pledge to a prostitute who seemingly had vanished (vv. 20-23).

Judah's discovery about Tamar (38:24-26). In these verses the story's descent into tragedy is brought to a climax as Judah, still reckoning the pregnant Tamar to be part of his family, sentences her to burning.\(^{35}\) But precisely at this point enters the surprise that the father in the line of levirate responsibility. While the extant copies of these laws are dated a few hundred years later than the time of the Judah-Tamar story, they at least suggest that Tamar's action of seeking conception by Judah may have been in accord with a similar custom existing during her time. A translation of these laws appears in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 182, 196.\(^{33}\) Though Judah recognizes her as a מָזִיק (38:15), Hirah refers to her as נְעַי (38:21).

The verb מָזִיק is used regularly in the Old Testament for the activity of a prostitute and refers to illicit heterosexual intercourse. Primarily it denotes a sexual relationship outside a formal union or outside the marriage bond (Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907], p. 275; S. Erlandsson, "נְעַי," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980], 4:99-100). On the other hand the term נַעַי denotes a "temple prostitute" who functioned in association with the fertility cult in Canaanite religion (Thomas E. McComiskey, "נַעַי," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:788). While Judah was certainly out of fellowship with Yahweh, it is not necessary to suppose that he was actively practicing Canaanite religion in this situation. He was simply seeking sexual gratification. Though he certainly assumed the disguised Tamar to be a temple prostitute, the less technical term מָזִיק in 38:15 emphasizes that he recognized her as a prostitute with whom he could fulfill his sexual desires. See also Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), pp. 60-61.\(^{34}\)

Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1977), p. 398. Cylinder seals were usually between one and two inches in length and were made of hematite or else basalt, marble, ivory, or even wood. The outer face of the seal was engraved with a design which would make an impression when it was rolled on damp clay, thus creating marks of identification. They were often attached to a cord which was strung around the owner's neck. See D. J. Wiseman and A. R. Millard, "Seal, Sealing in the Old Testament," in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1980), 3:1407; "Seal, Seals in the Ancient Period," in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), 14:1972-74.\(^{35}\)

Later, in the Mosaic Law, burning was prescribed only in the case of a man who married both a woman and her mother (Lev. 20:14) or a priest's daughter involved in harlotry (Lev. 21:9). Stoning was the usual punishment for adultery (Deut. 22:20-24). Stigers points out that the Code of Hammurabi, as well as the Hittite and Middle Assyrian laws, never prescribes burning for adultery. He suggests, though, that "we..."
changes the course of the story. Tamar produced her evidence, revealing that the one who impregnated her was none other than Judah! The participle נָקָם expresses simultaneous action with the Qal perfect form נְתָן. Tamar sent her telling items to Judah even as she was being brought out to receive her death sentence. Judah in turn was forced to admit that "she is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." (v. 26)

Though the root קָדוֹשׁ ("righteous") often has moral connotations when applied to God's standards, its basic meaning is conformity to a standard, whether ethical or moral. The standard in this case would be the accepted social custom and duty of levirate marriage. The verdict from Judah in verse 26 is the normative (authoritative) viewpoint of the story. That is, Judah's statement is the "key utterance," which "we intuitively recognize as summing up what the story as a whole is asserting."40

Tamar's delivery of twin sons (38:27-30). The story concludes with the birth of twin sons by Tamar. Because of the bursting out of the second boy over the first one, he was named "Perez" (פרץ), which means "an outburst, bursting forth, a breach."41 The name given to the boy with the scarlet thread tied on his hand was "Zerah" (זרח), a name meaning "dawning, shining, brightness" and perhaps allud-

should see here 'a reflection of his [Judah's] patriarchal predecessors or of their own ancestral culture. Here is a clear case of adultery, and the penalty is but one. There seems to be no reason to seek others. Judah's judgment was the correct one. More final conclusions probably will have to wait for further archaeological discoveries" (A Commentary on Genesis, p. 281).

36 For classification and examples of simultaneous action expressed by the participle and the perfect tense, see sections 220 and 237 in Williams, Hebrew Syntax, pp. 40, 43.

37 This verse itself, through the two statements of Tamar, creates suspense for the reader. In her first statement, her items of proof are simply identified by the term נְתָן. Then her second statement brings her shocking revelation to a climax as the items referred to by נְתָן are revealed to be Judah's cylinder seal and staff which Tamar had in her keeping.

38 Harold G. Stigers, in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 2:752-54.

39 E. Jacob understands this standard to be that of prostitution, the rules and customs of which Judah has not respected (Theology of the Old Testament, trans. Arthur W. Heathcoate and Philip J. Allcock [New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 19581, p. 95]). However, one wonders in what way Judah did not respect the rules and customs of prostitution. Jacob's view does not adequately account for Judah's confession "inasmuch as I did not give her to Shelah my son." This confession hardly refers to any customs associated with prostitution, but has reference to the custom of levirate marriage.

40 This terminology is borrowed from Ryken, How to Read the Bible as Literature, p. 62. Brueggemann also recognizes the importance of this verdict, proposing that it "constitutes the main turn in the narrative" (Genesis, p. 309).

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The Chronological Relationship

Two alleged chronological problems have led some scholars to suggest that Genesis 38 was inserted into its present location by a later redactor or editor. Despite the chronological problems this insertion would pose, the editor who wanted to include the Judah-Tamar story could find no better place to do so without causing even more difficulty.

As to the first alleged problem, it is often argued that the time between the sale of Joseph (Gen. 37:25-36) and the migration of Jacob's clan into Egypt (46:1-7), which included Judah and his twin sons, would have been insufficient for the events of Genesis 38 to have transpired. In the space of 22 years, Judah would have had to marry, father three sons, see them grow old enough to be married, and then father the twin sons born to Tamar.

The second problem stems from Genesis 46:12, which mentions two grandsons of Judah, sons of Perez, among the sons of Israel who

42 Ibid., p. 280.
43 Von Rad, Genesis, p. 356.
44 Ross, "Genesis," p. 89.
45 Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chronicles 2:3-15; and Matthew 1:3-6.
46 That a space of 22 years occurred between Joseph's sale and the family of Jacob's migration into Egypt can be established from references to the age of Joseph at various points in his life. Genesis 37:2 indicates that Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold by his brothers to the Midianites and subsequently taken to Egypt. In 41:46, Joseph's appointment by Pharaoh came when Joseph was 30 years of age. Thus 13 Years had elapsed. Genesis 41:46-49 then describes the seven years of abundance at the end of which 20 years would have passed since Joseph was sold by his brothers. Genesis 45:6-7 indicates that Joseph's revelation of himself to his brothers and the subsequent move of Jacob's family into Egypt came two years into the famine. This brings the total to 22 years which had elapsed between Joseph's sale and Jacob's move to Egypt.
migrated to Egypt. If Perez and Zerah were born near the end of the 22-year period, as Genesis 38 implies, it would have been impossible for Perez to produce the offspring mentioned in 46:12 before or during the migration to Egypt.

In reference to these alleged problems of the events in Genesis 38 and 46:12 taking place in a 22-year period, Bush's comments represent the opinion of many critical scholars: "This period is evidently too short for the occurrence of all these events, and we are therefore necessitated to refer the commencement of them at least as far back as to about the time of Jacob's coming to Shechem, Gen. 33:18; but the incidents are related here because there was no more convenient place for them."47

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

On further examination, however, these two supposed chronological difficulties may be satisfactorily resolved.

In response to the first problem, it would not have been impossible for the events of Genesis 38 to have taken place during the 22-year span between the end of Genesis 37 and the commencement of Genesis 39. Judah could have married within six months or so after Joseph's sale into Egypt and could have had three sons within three years.48 Or Judah could have married before Joseph was sold into Egypt. Since young people married at early ages in comparison with today,49 Er, the first son, could have married Tamar when he was about 15 or 16. He may have died a short time later, at which point Onan was commanded to perform the levirate duty for Tamar. Onan's sin and death may have occurred between 16 and 18 years after Joseph's exile. This leaves a couple of years for Shelah to reach marriageable age and to be withheld from Tamar. Time is still left

47 George Bush, Notes on Genesis, 2 vols. (New York: Ivison, Phinney & Co., 1860; reprint, Minneapolis: James Family Christian publishers, 1979), 2:238. Bruce Vawter concurs: "The [Judah-Tamar] story concerns an adult Judah who is separated from the rest of his brothers and leads a life apart in the south of Palestine. This combination of circumstances hardly allows for a positioning of the story anywhere earlier in the saga, when Judah was too young, or is presumed still part of the common family, or in any case is in the wrong part of the country. Neither could it be put immediately before the Joseph story, for in the Yahwist's version of that story Judah must be on hand with the rest of his brothers to get the thing launched, as we have just seen. Once the story of Joseph in Egypt is well begun with chapter 39 there is no longer any opportunity-to interrupt it without inflicting literary violence to revolt a less sensitive artist than the Yahwist" (On Genesis, p. 390).


for Tamar's deception, her pregnancy, her delivery of two sons, and Judah's two trips into Egypt with his brothers to buy corn. No doubt the coming of the famine forced Judah to rejoin his father's clan.\(^{50}\)

So it is possible for the events of Genesis 38 to have taken place in such a time frame. In fact, Cassuto has further observed that the opening words of Genesis 38, אֲבַלֶּה יֵשָׁבָה, reflect an awareness on the part of the author of the short time in which the events of the chapter must occur. He comments:

From the opening words of the section we immediately note that the author was not unaware that the period of time, with which he was dealing, was short and that the happenings that occurred therein were many, and that he must consequently bring them into the closest possible harmony. Hence he did not begin with the formula commonly found in ... Genesis, "And it came to pass after these things," nor does he write simply "And Judah went down from his brethren," but he uses the expression "And it came to pass at that time," as though he wished to emphasize that immediately after the selling of Joseph, at that very time, Judah went down from his brothers and married the daughter of Shua.\(^{51}\)

The second chronological difficulty concerns the mention of Judah's grandsons in Genesis 46:12. Obviously Judah's sons Perez and Zerah were quite young, perhaps just a few months old, when they traveled to Egypt. Therefore it would have been impossible for Perez to have fathered Hezron and Hamul, his two sons mentioned in Genesis 46:12, before the journey into Egypt.\(^{52}\)

A close look, however, at Genesis 46:12 reveals a variation in the mention of Hezron and Hamul. The end of the verse reads: "And the sons of Perez were (וִיהוּדָה) Hezron and Hamul." Yet throughout Genesis 46, the listing of descendants was done without the use of a verbal form. For example, verse 12a reads, "And the sons of Judah: Er and Onan and Shelah and Perez and Zerah."

\(^{50}\) If Cassuto is right in suggesting that Er did not marry Tamar until he was 18, the chronology becomes even tighter. Er's marriage and subsequent death would have been in the sixth year of plenty when Joseph was 36. Onan, at 17 years of age, could have then married Tamar and died in the same year. Meanwhile Shelah would have only been 16. Two years could then pass by until Shelah was 18, convincing Tamar that Judah would not give her to Shelah. This would have been Joseph's 38th year and the first year of the period of famine. Then in the second year of the famine Tamar would have given birth to the twins. Later that year, when the twins were a few months old, the family of Jacob would have migrated to Egypt (U. Cassuto, Biblical and Oriental Studies, pp. 39-40).

\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 79.

\(^{52}\) Even if the events in Genesis 38 began to take place shortly after Jacob's return from Shechem (which could not have been more than six years before Joseph's sale), Perez could not have been any older than 11 when Jacob's family went to Egypt (Keil and Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, p. 371).
Cassuto comments on the "special phraseology" employed in the mention of Hezron and Hamul: "This external variation creates the impression that the Bible wished to give us here some special information that was different from what it desired to impart relative to the other descendants of Israel." Cassuto then explains the intention behind this special phraseology:

It intended to inform us thereby that the sons of Perez were not among those who went down to Egypt, but are mentioned here for some other reason. This is corroborated by the fact that Joseph's sons were also not of those who immigrated into Egypt, and they, too, are mentioned by a different formula.

While the author considered it necessary to mention Hezron and Hamul in the list of Jacob's family, it was done in such a way as to distinguish them from the descendants who actually migrated to Egypt with Jacob.

The Literary Relationship

THE LITERARY DIFFICULTIES

Scholars who consider Genesis 38 as having no literary connection with the Joseph story whatsoever generally assume it to be a later intrusion. Speiser, for example, asserts, "The narrative is a completely independent unit. It has no connection with the drama of Joseph, which it interrupts at the conclusion of Act I." With similar sentiment, Vawter writes:

53 Cassuto, Biblical and Oriental Studies, p. 34.
54 Ibid., p. 35. Cassuto has also treated at length the reason for the mention of these sons. He finds the rationale for the inclusion of their names in the purpose of levirate marriage. Usually the brother of the deceased provides a son for the deceased. But when the father of the deceased provides a son, the son ranks with the deceased himself and not with his sons. According to Cassuto, Judah had five sons, each of whom had the right to establish a family of his own in Israel. Perez and Zerah, as his sons, clearly possessed this right. In other words they did not merely replace Er and Onan, but stood alongside them. If they had replaced Er and Onan, the families of the sons of Judah would have numbered only three. So two special families were needed to succeed the name of the dead. Hezron and Hamul, who would have ranked equally with the sons of Er and Onan, took their uncles' place. Cassuto finds support for this hypothesis in Numbers 26:19-21 which mentions the Perezites, the Hezronites, and the Hamulites. He explains, "This means that each of the first two sons of Perez founded a separate family of its own, and that only the children that lie begot after established a third family, which was called by his [Perez's] name" (ibid., p. 38; the entire argument is given on pp. 36-38).
55 E. A. Speiser, Genesis (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1981), p. 299. However, in attributing the insertion of this chapter to the Yahwist, Speiser does admit that "the place of the present account was chosen with keen literary sensitivity" (ibid.).
Scarcely has the distinctive Joseph story been begun when it is interrupted by a chapter that apparently has nothing to do with it. There can hardly be any doubt that this chapter did, as a matter of fact, originally have no connection with the Story of Joseph and that it is, therefore, in some sense an intrusion here.

THE LITERARY INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Though Genesis 38 obviously interrupts the sequence in the Joseph story, it possesses a literary interconnectedness with its context. While Genesis 37-50 is often identified as the "Joseph story," 37:2 identifies this section as "the generations (נִדְרַנָּית) of Jacob." So while the "focal element" of these chapters is the Joseph story, the basic unit of narration in Genesis 37-50 is "unified around Jacob and his sons." Genesis 38 "shows a very definite angle of Jacob's history." Therefore it is wrong to deny categorically any connection or relationship between Genesis 38 and the Joseph story as a whole.

Furthermore in response to the charge that Genesis 38 breaks a bond between Genesis 37:36 and 39:1, the language of 37:36 and 39:1 allows for a gap into which Genesis 38 nicely fits. Delitzsch suggests that this was done as a literary convention by the author:

It is historiographic art to break off in the history of Joseph at xxxvii. 36. We thus get to experience with him the comfortless darkness of the two decades, during which hopeless and sorrowful longing was gnawing at the heart of the aged father, and the secret curse of deadly sin deceitfully concealed was weighing on the souls of his children.

56 Vawter, On Genesis, p. 389. Furthermore, G. W. Coats, in discussing the "redactional unity" in Genesis 37-50, contends that the "bond" between Genesis 37 and 39 is "cemented" by 37:36. This verse, he suggests, must be viewed as "an anticipation of the introductory sentence in Genesis 39, similar to the recapitulation as a redactional method for cementing a distinct narrative into a larger context" ("Redactional Unity in Genesis 37-50," Journal of Biblical Literature 93 [March 1974]: 16).

57 Conservative scholars do not deny that there is a sense in which the Judah-Tamar story "interrupts" the Joseph narrative. Even Derek Kidner labels Genesis 38 "a rude interruption" (Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary, p. 187).

58 For a discussion of the structure of Genesis based on the i. i formula, see Ross, "Genesis," pp. 22-26.

59 Coats, "Redactional Unity," p. 15.

60 Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, 2:970.

61 Genesis 39:1 reiterates the information given in 37:36, explaining that Joseph had been taken into Egypt and sold to Potiphar. Though restatement is common in Hebrew narrative, such a specific rehearsal by 39:1 of the details given in 37:36 would not be expected if the former followed right on the heels of the latter.

Even Wright acknowledges, "Of course it must be conceded that there is a sense of the dramatic in the positioning: it provides an interlude for the Joseph story to incubate and develop after the manner and function of a Shakesperian sub-plot."63

Moreover, a logical time gap between Genesis 37:36 and 39:1 is quite appropriate in light of the fact that "the scene is about to be shifted from Canaan to Egypt."64 The Judah-Tamar story quite masterfully prepares the reader for this shift.65

Another strong argument for the interconnectedness of Genesis 38 with its context is what Cassuto calls "a kind of internal nexus between the story of Tamar and Judah and the selling of Joseph."66 This relationship between chapters 38 and 37 is "reflected in the correspondence of certain details in the two sections and is clearly manifested in the parallel expressions that denote these details."67 In particular there is a strong literary parallel between 37:32-33 and 38:25-26. This can be seen in the following layout which lifts out the key corresponding terms and shows the structure of the verses:

"And they sent ... and they said.... Please examine.... Then he examined it and said" (37:32-33).
"And she sent . . . saying.... Please examine.... Then Judah examined and said" (38:25-26).

As Cassuto remarks, "It is difficult to suppose that such a parallel is merely fortuitous; it was undoubtedly intended by the author of the section."68 Likewise, Alter concludes:

This precise recurrence of the verb [דָּאַב] in identical forms at the ends of Genesis 37 and 38 respectively is manifestly the result not of some automatic mechanism of interpolating traditional materials but of careful splicing of sources by a brilliant literary artist. The first use of

63 See Wright, "The Positioning of Genesis 38," p. 523, n. 3. With similar sentiment Leupold says, "We are struck ... by the rhetorical skill of the author who snakes this chapter serve the purpose of letting us feel the lapse of time after the sale of Joseph" (Exposition of Genesis, 2:976).
65 According to Aalders, "it was these events [i.e., Genesis 381 that especially bring to light the critical danger that threatened the 'chosen seed' if they remained in Canaan at this time. Mixed marriages with the Canaanites could lead only to the people of Israel losing their identity among the Canaanites and eventually being absorbed by them. This chapter clearly indicates that Jacob's descendants had to leave Canaan it they were to develop as a separate and distinctive people" (Genesis, 2:191).
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., p. 31.
the formula was for an act of deception; the second use is for an act of unmasking. Judah with Tamar after Judah with his brothers is an exemplary narrative instance of the deceiver deceived.69

Alter points out one more literary pattern linking chapters 38 and 37 of Genesis. "In the most artful of contrivances, the narrator shows him [Judah] exposed through the symbols of his legal self given in a pledge for a kid (gedi 'izim), as before Jacob had been tricked by the garment emblematic of his love for Joseph which had been dipped in the blood of a goat (se'ir 'izim)."70

Also Genesis 38 has at least two notable parallels with chapter 39. The first, as explained by Alter, is a contrast: "Finally, when we return from Judah to the Joseph story (Genesis 39), we move in pointed contrast from a tale of exposure through sexual incontinence to a tale of seeming defeat and ultimate triumph through sexual continence-Joseph and Potiphar's wife."71

The second connection between chapters 38 and 39 of Genesis is the verbal root דָּרֶך in both 38:1 and 39:1. Alter observes:

The story begins with Judah parting from his brothers, an act conveyed with a rather odd locution, vayered m’et, literally "he went down from," and which undoubtedly has the purpose of connecting this separation of one brother from the rest with Joseph's, transmitted with the same verb-root (see, for example, the very beginning of the next chapter: "Joseph was brought down [hurad] to Egypt").72

In summary, what many view as an intrusion was actually an account carefully, logically, and purposefully interwoven into the Joseph story.

The Theological Relationship

In considering the theological relationship between Genesis 38 and its context, the question may be asked, What was the writer's purpose in including this account, especially in its location in the Joseph story?

VARIOUS PROPOSALS FOR THE PURPOSE OF GENESIS 38

Regarding the purpose of Genesis 38, some scholars have offered proposals colored by their adherance to the "clan theory." This approach understands the patriarchal narratives in Genesis to relate to

70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., p. 6.
tribal history. The patriarchs are not necessarily historical individuals but are seen as representing tribes.73 Applied to Genesis 38, this theory considers the story's purpose to be the recording of the tribal history of Judah in which two clans disappear and two others appear. According to McKane, Er and Onan "represent older clans which no longer retain their independence," while Shelah, Perez, and Zerah comprise "the chief Judaean clans at the time of the origin of the narrative."74

However, as Kidner has pointed out, "the narrative [Genesis 38] has a coherence and a precision of detail which argue strongly for the actuality of its persons and events."75 Aalders also argues than Genesis 38 is "actually history dealing with real persons," since Judah is portrayed in an unfavorable light.76 "If this was a matter of Jewish myth or nationalistic fantasy, the later Israelites certainly would have laundered out such tales."77

Some have proposed a secondary purpose. Dillmann, for example, writes, "A secondary purpose of the narrative is found in the desire it exhibits of impressing the duty of marriage with a deceased brother's wife."78 However, Emerton, while observing that this suggestion cannot be disproved, responds that "there is not much in the story to suggest the didactic intention of inculcating such a general principle."79

Other scholars have proposed that the purpose of Genesis 38 is to influence in some way the "moral fabric of society."80 According to Coats, "to present a helpless widow whose just claim eventually receives a hearing from a judge who has the power of life and death over her casts a model for any audience."81

77 Ibid.
It should be noted that none of the above proposals as to the purpose of Genesis 38 builds on or depends on the chapter's position in the Joseph story. That is, in these proposals the placement of Genesis 38 in the Joseph story has no direct bearing on the purpose of the chapter.

THE PURPOSE OF GENESIS 38 IN LIGHT OF THE THEOLOGY OF GENESIS

However, in the view of this writer, Genesis 38 possesses a theological purpose that harmonizes with and contributes to the developing theology in Genesis and in the Joseph story.82

An overview of the theology of Genesis. The central theme of Genesis is the sovereignty of Yahweh in His establishment of a nation through which to bless all the peoples of the world.83

This is borne out in the literary structure of Genesis. As Ross has pointed out, Genesis is structured by an initial section and then 11 sections headed by the term תְּנִינָא ("generations").84 This term, he argues, introduces the "historical result" of an ancestor rather than merely introducing a genealogy. Each תְּנִינָא explains what became of a line, all the while narrowing down and following the line through which God would bring blessing. In addition, each תְּנִינָא shows a marked deterioration. Up to Genesis 12, the deterioration ends in judgment by God. After chapter 12, there is a continual deterioration among those striving for a place of blessing.85

Genesis 12 is a pivotal chapter, for it reveals Yahweh's choice of one man to found a nation through which He will bless all the peoples of the earth. Genesis 1-11 forms the prologue, giving the

82 Here Genesis 38 is being approached from the discipline of "biblical theology," which focuses on what the texts of Scripture reveal about the person and work of God especially in relationship to mankind. In contrast to systematic theology, which begins with topics (externally imposed categories of study), biblical theology begins with the text, observing what topics are considered and how they are developed by the biblical text. John A. Martin describes biblical theology as "a study of the text of Scripture for the purpose of discovering and describing what the text meant as well as what it means. It attempts to draw out universal theological principles. The biblical theologian draws his categories from the biblical text itself and not from any outside philosophical system or other sources" ("The Theology of Samuel," Bibliotheca Sacra 141 [October-December 1984]: 313, n. 1). For a helpful overview of the development and methodology of biblical theology, with particular attention to its attending issues, see Gerhard Hasel, Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate, 3d rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), pp. 15-183.
84 Ibid., p. 22.
85 Ibid., pp. 22-26.
background out of which the story in Genesis 12-50 arises.\textsuperscript{86}

The final section in Genesis, the תָּנִית of Jacob in 37:2-50:26, continues the emphasis on the sovereignty of Yahweh. According to Brueggemann, the theme of this section is "God is working out his purpose through and in spite of Egypt, through and in spite of Joseph and his brothers."\textsuperscript{87} Though the theology in this section is somewhat "subdued and mostly implicit," Brueggemann emphasizes that "nonetheless, the narrative [Genesis 37-50] has an identifiable and singular intention. It urges that in the contingencies of history, the purposes of God are at work in hidden and unnoticed ways. But the ways of God are nonetheless reliable and will come to fruition."\textsuperscript{88}

The theology of Genesis 38. Yet despite Brueggemann's magnificent treatment of the purpose of Genesis 37-50, he misses the point of Genesis 38 entirely, failing to see its contribution to that purpose. He writes, "It is not evident that it [Gen. 38] provides any significant theological resource. It is difficult to know in what context it might be of value for theological exposition."\textsuperscript{89}

However, in the viewpoint of the present writer, Genesis 38 fits beautifully within the theme and purpose Brueggemann described for Genesis 37-50. It further develops and contributes to the theology being unfolded in Genesis.

First, this chapter teaches that Yahweh would accomplish His purpose, even if He had to use a Canaanite woman to do it. Surprisingly, Plaut is one of the few commentators to pick up on this emphasis. Even though he approaches the text from a critical perspective, he has noted the theological import of Genesis 38. Stressing that "God in His wisdom turned fate to His own design," Plaut concludes:

\begin{quote}
The Judah-Tamar interlude is, therefore, not merely an old tribal tale but an important link in the main theme: to show the steady, though not always readily visible, guiding hand of God who never forgets His people and their destiny.

In this story, Tamar is His unlikely tool. She is a Canaanite, a daughter of the very people against whom Abraham had warned and whom the children of Israel would later displace. Tamar is treated with respect; her desperate deed draws no condemnation from the Torah. What she did fulfilled the requirements of Hebrew law and, in addition, appeared to serve the higher purposes of God.\textsuperscript{90}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{87} Brueggemann, Genesis, p. 293.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 289.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., pp. 307-8.
\textsuperscript{90} Plaut, Genesis, p. 376.
The closing verses of Genesis 38 confirm that Yahweh's purpose was being carried out. Here the recurring motif of the elder serving the younger is worked out in the birth of Tamar's twin sons. God's designs cannot be thwarted.91

The full significance of God's continuation of the line of Judah through Tamar is revealed later in Scripture. The genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22 indicates that the Davidic line was introduced by Tamar's son Perez.92 And into the Davidic line, Jesus the Messiah was eventually born.

Second, Genesis 38 develops the theology of Genesis by emphasizing the need for Yahweh to remove His people to Egypt. The events in this chapter "especially bring to light the critical danger that threatened the 'chosen seed' if they remained in Canaan at this time."93 Eventually they would be absorbed into the culture of the Canaanites and their identity would be lost. Thus Genesis 38 provides an important link between Genesis 15:13-16, the promise to Abraham of his descendants' sojourn in a foreign land, and Genesis 46, which records the removal to Egypt. The Judah-Tamar story brings to light the reason behind the promise given in Genesis 15:13-16. Because of the growing deterioration among the progenitors of the nation Israel, Yahweh would have to remove His people from the land of blessing for a time.

Along this line the contrast between Judah and Joseph cannot go unnoticed. "Parallel to Joseph's spiritual ingenuousness, patience, hopeful trust in the future, appears Judah's strong and daring self-dependence, fulness of life, sensuality combined with strong abstinence."94 Through the triumph over temptation, Joseph was eventually placed in a strategic position that enabled him to be God's instrument in bringing his father's clan down to Egypt. Judah's lifestyle, in contrast, revealed the need for the family to be removed in the first place.

To summarize, Genesis 38 describes Yahweh's accomplishment of His purpose (in the continuation of the Abrahamic line) despite the unfaithfulness of Judah--the fourth link in that line. The continuation of Abraham's line, and its narrowing by the introduction of the Davidic line through Perez, was accomplished by using a most unlikely person--a Canaanite woman.

91 Ross, "Genesis, pp. 89-90.
93 Aalders, Genesis, 2:191.
Therefore the normative meaning\(^95\) of this story may be stated as follows: Yahweh will carry out His purpose(s) despite His people's unfaithfulness and its tragic consequences on their lives. His purposes will not be frustrated, even if He has to use means other than His people to accomplish them. But at the same time, His people will experience a loss of joy and blessing in their relationship with Him.

**Conclusion**

Rather than relating to its context as "a dog among ninepins,"\(^96\) as Bentzen has suggested, Genesis 38 bears distinct chronological, literary, and theological relationships to its context. It bears all the marks of being purposely included at its present location in the Joseph story by the writer of Genesis. Its theological message, a further development of the theology of Genesis, has relevance for God's people today.

\(^{95}\) Biblical theology has a twofold task. Its "descriptive" task is "to discover and describe what the text meant," while its "normative" task is "to explicate what it means for today" (Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 169).

SHORT STUDIES

JACOB'S BLESSING ON PHARAOH: AN INTERPRETATION OF GEN 46:31-47:26

BRIAN ALEXANDER MCKENZIE

Claus Westermann has done a great service for biblical studies by calling attention to the long-neglected concept of blessing in OT theology. Salvation consists of blessing as well as deliverance. God not only rescues man from oppression, danger, and evil; he also bestows positive benefits of many kinds.¹ Westermann correctly observes that blessing is an important theme in three of the four major divisions of Genesis. The primeval history (Genesis 1-11), which begins by introducing the concept of blessing at the climax of its first chapter (1:28), repeatedly notes that God continues to bless man.² The Abrahamic cycle (chaps. 12-26) centers on the promise of blessing and its fulfilment in the birth of Isaac; the Jacob-Esau cycle (chaps. 27-36) treats the "procedure of blessing and its consequences."³ Although Westermann is aware that Genesis concludes with two lengthy blessing passages (chaps. 48 and 49), surprisingly he gives no indication that blessing plays an important role throughout the Joseph cycle (chaps. 37-50).⁴

² Gen 5:2; 9:1. Westermann (Blessing, 30) suggests that even the genealogies of Genesis 1-11 are related to the theme of blessing since, in light of Gen 1:28, "blessing . . . signifies fertility." The close relationship between blessing and fertility is discussed in more detail in Claus Westermann, Die Verheissungen an die Vater: Studien zur Vatergeschichte (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976) 119-21 and 141-45.
³ Westermann, Blessing, 55.
⁴ Westermann (Blessing, 29), who identifies shalom as the major motif of the Joseph narrative, makes only a passing reference to the concept of
A study of Gen 46:31-47:26 will demonstrate that the theme of blessing has an important function in the Joseph cycle. This study will also show how the theme of blessing explains a number of perplexing aspects of Gen 46:31-47:26. First, it will explain why the author of Genesis included a report of Jacob's audience with Pharaoh, a report which does not contribute to the Joseph story's function of bridging the gap between Genesis 12-36 (set primarily in Canaan) and Exodus (which begins with an Egyptian setting). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, this study will explain why the account of Joseph's agrarian reforms is included and given great prominence.

Before examining our passage, it is important to be aware of one aspect of the theme of blessing as it is developed in the long patriarchal section of Genesis. In the blessing of Abraham (12:1-3), which begins the patriarchal section, prominent references are made to the blessing of others besides Abraham and his descendants. Gen 12:3b states that blessing will extend to all nations through Abraham. It is especially

blessing in Gen 47:7-10 and no reference to 39:5. Even Westermann's recently completed third volume in his monumental commentary on Genesis (Genesis 37-50 [BKAT 113; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982]) does not grasp the extent and full significance of the blessing theme in the Joseph cycle in general and in the interpretation of 47:13-26 in particular.


6 "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (marginal reading for 12:3b in the RSV). The Niphal form of brk, "to bless," in 12:3b also allows a reflexive translation as is found in the RSV and NEB. The NEB interpretation ("All the families on earth will pray to be blessed as you are blessed") is improbable since in Semitic thought words of blessing release power or incline God to act. (See J. Scharbert, "brk," TDOT 2.298-99, 304, and 287. But also see Anthony Thiselton, "Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings," JTS 25 [1974] 283-99.) The RSV interpretation ("by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves") makes v 3b a re-statement of v 3a. The major argument for interpreting the Niphal form of brk reflexively in v 3b is that the Hithpael form is used in the parallel passages of Gen 22:18 and 26:4. However, O. Allis, "The Blessing of Abraham," Princeton Theological Review 25 (1927) 263-98, cogently argues that the Hithpael form can have a passive as well as a reflexive meaning in both Hebrew and other Semitic languages.
important to note a second reference to the blessing of those standing outside the chosen line. Gen 12:3a states that those who bless Abraham will be blessed by God: "I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse" (RSV).

Genesis is not lacking illustrations of this principle. The restoration of fertility after Abimelech returned Sarah and gave Abraham gifts is apparently an example of the principle that blessing follows positive action towards Abraham or his descendants standing within the chosen line. Gen 20:14 and 17 are best interpreted in this way even though the term brk "to bless" is not present, since the concept of curse for curse and blessing for blessing is implicitly present in this chapter.7

A second and more explicit illustration appears in the Joseph cycle, the more immediate context of the passage to be exegeted. Gen 39:4-5 states that blessing came to Potiphar's household because Potiphar favoured Joseph and raised him to a place of prominence and authority. This text clearly indicates that the blessing of individuals in response to their treatment of Abraham or his descendents is present in the Joseph cycle as well as in the earlier Abrahamic cycle.

I. The Structure and Meaning of Gen 46:31-47:6

Gen 46:31-47:6 breaks down into two sections. The preparation of the brothers for an audience with Pharaoh (46:31-34) is naturally followed by the account of the audience and its results (47:1-6). Upon careful examination a more detailed structure is discernible. Gen 47:1-6 subdivides into three sections. The account of the brothers' audience (vv 2-4) is framed by verses in which the brothers and Jacob are referred to in the third person (vv 1 and 5-6).8 A related, but less

What is the function of this passage? Its primary significance lies in its contribution to the bridging function of the Joseph story which links Genesis 12-36 (set primarily in Canaan) and Exodus 1-15 (set in north-eastern Egypt). The account of the audience of Jacob's sons with Pharaoh informs the reader how Israel came to settle in the sensitive border province of Goshen in the eastern section of the Nile delta. The occupation of Joseph's brothers was repulsive to the Egyptians.

v 6b would also have been lost along with the additional LXX material. But v 6b is present in the MT. For other arguments favouring the LXX version see Lothar Ruppert, Die Josephserzählung der Genesis. Eine Beitrag zur Theologie der Pentateuchquellen (SANT 11; Miinchen: Kosel-Verlag, 1965) 143 and S. R. Driver, The Book of Genesis (5th ed.; Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen, [1906]) 370. For the MT version see Harold Stigers, A Commentary on Genesis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 318, and Westermann, Genesis 37-50, 188.

9 See note 5.

10 It is generally agreed that Palestinian sojourners would not normally have been allowed to settle in Goshen (or the land of Rameses [47:11] as it became known in the Nineteenth Dynasty, at the end of the thirteenth century B.C.). See Robert Davidson, Genesis 12-50 (Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979) 283, and Gerhard von Rad, Genesis: A Commentary (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961) 399. But see Speiser (Genesis, 446) who claims that Asiatics "frequently" settled in Goshen in the northeastern Nile delta.

11 Contra John Skinner (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis [ICC; 2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1930] 496) who contrasts "shepherds" and "keepers of cattle." These terms are used synonymously in this passage. For Joseph's instructions (46:34) to make sense, this must be the case. It would be counterproductive for Joseph, who wants to convince the king that his brothers should settle in Goshen, to instruct them to represent themselves 'as keepers of cattle rather than as shepherds. Franz Delitzsch, A New Commentary on Genesis (Clark's Foreign Theological Library New Series; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1894) 2.343 correctly reads all of v 34 as part of Joseph's speech. This is a more natural reading of the passage than the hypothesis that "every shepherd is an abomina-
A second purpose of this passage can also be identified. A minor theme in the patriarchal section of Genesis is that the Israelites have always been a separate people. In the Abrahamic and Jacob cycles attention is given to the fact that Israel's ancestors avoided marital relationships with the inhabitants of Canaan (24:3; 26:34-35; 27:46-28:1). In the Joseph cycle Gen 46:34 (and also 43:32) reminds the Israelite reader that because of their "detestable" occupation they could not and did not mix with the Egyptians even when they lived in Egypt. Thus this passage contributes to one of the minor themes of Genesis, a theme which would be of sociological and hence theological importance for every period of Israel's history after it settled in Palestine and especially when it found itself in exile in Babylon.

This passage is significant in a third way for the concerns of Genesis. It contributes to the theme that blessing comes as a result of positive action towards the chosen line. Pharaoh has just issued the benevolent command to settle Jacob and his sons in "the best of the land" (47:6 and 11). This raises the reader's expectation that blessing will come to Pharaoh as it did to Potiphar in Gen 39:5. As will now be seen, this expectation is heightened by the account of Jacob's audience with Pharaoh before the blessing upon Pharaoh is described.

II. Gen 47:7-10: Jacob's Audience with Pharaoh

The account of Jacob's audience with Pharaoh contrasts in many ways with the description of his son's audience in Gen 47:1-6. First, 47:7-10 possesses a formal conclusion in v 10 in contrast to the abrupt ending of vv 2-4. Secondly, although his sons were relatively passive, speaking only after they had been addressed, Jacob appears quite active, taking the initiative at the beginning of the audience (v 7b).
Thirdly, this passage makes no contribution to the role of the Joseph story as a bridge between Genesis 12-36 and Exodus. The favourable impression that a man of Jacob's age--20 years more than the age Egyptians hoped and longed to attain--would have made on Pharaoh cannot be seen as an additional factor in the decision to let Jacob and his sons settle in Egypt. This decision had already been made before Jacob's audience began (47:5-6). What then is the purpose of recounting Jacob's audience?

Since any determination of the function or meaning of a text should begin with a grasp of points stressed in that text, it is appropriate to carefully examine Gen 47:7-10. There is evidence of chiasmus in this text which breaks down into five symmetrically arranged parts. Verses 7a and 10b introduce and conclude the account. The central section of the passage, which presents Jacob's great age (vv 8-9), is both preceded and followed by the statement "Jacob blessed Pharaoh" (vv 7b and 10a). Thus two points are emphasized in this passage, namely Jacob's age (since it occupies over half the passage and is found at its center) and the fact that Jacob blessed Pharaoh (since it appears twice).

The true significance of brk in this passage has often been missed. It has, for instance, been translated as "paid respects" and "took his leave" in vv 7 and 10 respectively. Similarly, Roland de Vaux states that in this passage brk "ne signifie pas plus que 'presenta ses compliments' comme dans I Sam. 13,10; 2 Reg. 4,29." These are just two examples of a significant modern trend.

13 J. Vergote, Joseph en Egypte: Genese chap. 37-50 a la lumiere des etudes egyptiologiques recentes (Orientalia et Biblica Lovaniensia 3; Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1959) 200-201, reports there are "27 temoignages oil il est dit qu'un personnage a atteint Page de cent dix ans ou dans lesquels le voeu est exprime de vivre cent dix ans sur terre. On est donc en droit de conclure que les cent dix ans etaient consideres comme Page ideal par les Egyptiens."

14 Similarly, Ruppert, Josephserzählung, 149.

15 It is not sufficient to appeal to the fact that Jacob's audience would naturally be associated with the audience of his sons. This association would influence the location of the passage once the decision was made to include it, but it does not explain why this decision was made.

16 Speiser, Genesis, 348-49.

17 Roland de Vaux, La Genese (SBJ 1; Paris: Editions du Cerfs, 1953) 204.

18 Similarly, Driver (Genesis, 371) interprets brk as "saluted" and Bruce Vawter, On Genesis: A New Reading (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977) 446,
Although this position is willing to grant that Jacob offered an ancien
t counterpart to "God save the king" at the beginning and end of
the audience, it holds that this was nothing more than a formal cour-
tesy. The basis of this interpretation appears to be the assumption
that no writer would depict Jacob, the father of a lowly band of
shepherds, as having the presumption to bless the visibly superior king
of Egypt.\textsuperscript{19}

This interpretation has not gone without challenge, however. Joseph
Scharbert, for instance, asserts,

\begin{quote}
The pattern A (inferior) \textit{brk} B (superior) appears relatively rarely. Ac-
cording to Gen. 47:7, 10 (E), Jacob "blesses" Pharaoh at the beginning
and at the end of their interview. Here, "to bless" certainly has in mind
a wish for blessing directed to God.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Although Scharbert does not give any supporting argumentation, this
can be supplied, in part, by Clyde Francisco

\begin{quote}
Verses 7-12 have the characteristic style and vocabulary of the Priestly
account. . . . Although Speiser contends that to bless may, like the word
\textit{shalom}, mean either to greet or to bid farewell (cf. 2 Kings 4:29), it is
doubtful that it carries such a meaning in a Priestly context. The verb
\textit{barak} usually means to bless and certainly carries this significance here.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

The observation that \textit{brk} usually means to bless is correct and of some
significance, but by itself this would not be conclusive. The second
argument, being based on the assumption that vv 7-10 come from the
P document, will not settle the issue since other scholars, such as
Scharbert (see the above quotation), attribute them to E.\textsuperscript{22} Furthermore,
Francisco's argument is not cogent for the growing number of

\begin{quote}
is content with "paid respects" while Stigers (\textit{Genesis}, 319) will allow \textit{brk}
at most to carry the idea of peace but not of "blessing with the sense of
benediction." Similarly the \textit{NAB}, \textit{SBJ}, and \textit{NIV} (margin), but not the \textit{RSV},
\textit{NASB}, or \textit{NEB}.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{19} Although supporters of the "greeting" interpretation generally do not
reveal the reasoning behind their position, this is likely the most significant
consideration. For instance, J. Blenkinsopp, "Genesis 12-50," in \textit{The
Pentateuch} (ed. L. Bright; London: Sheed and Ward, 1971) 130, writes,
"Jacob's audience with Pharaoh rings true enough, though we may doubt
whether he would have blessed the divine monarch, source of life, blessing
and every good to his subjects."

\textsuperscript{20} Scharbert, "\textit{brk}," 291.

\textsuperscript{21} Clyde T. Francisco, "Genesis," \textit{Broadman Bible Commentary}, (rev. ed.;

\textsuperscript{22} Similarly, Noth, \textit{Pentateuchal Traditions}, 36.
scholars who hold that the Joseph story is not the product of a compilation of various source documents.\textsuperscript{23}

Fortunately, there are considerations which can resolve the issue of the meaning of \textit{brk} in 47:7-10. First of all, since this term usually means "to bless,"\textsuperscript{24} it is slightly more probable than not that \textit{brk} carries this meaning in vv 7 and 10. Secondly, it is not necessary to choose between "to bless" and "to greet" since \textit{brk} can carry both senses\textsuperscript{25} and thus be translated as "to greet with a blessing" or "to bless in greeting." Thirdly, given the protocol of ancient Near Eastern society, it is unlikely that Jacob's sons would have entered Pharaoh's presence without offering some sort of formal greeting.\textsuperscript{26} The fact that


\textsuperscript{24} Speiser (\textit{Genesis}, 203) acknowledges this fact even though he prefers to interpret \textit{brk} as "to greet" in 47:7-10.

\textsuperscript{25} Similarly Westermann, \textit{Genesis 37-50}, 189. Westermann (p. 190) presents a second argument based on the observation that \textit{brk} always carries the meaning of blessing in situations involving death or extended temporal separation: "Fur Jakob ist es, auch wenn er hier dem Pharao zum erstenmal begegnet, die Situation des Abschieds. Er stedt vor seinem Tod; an dem Segen, den der aus dem Leben Scheidende weiterzugeben hat, erhalt auch der Pharao des agyptischen Reiches Anteil." This argument, however, is not cogent since the larger context indicates Jacob was 17 years away from his death at the time of this audience (47:28a) and since the immediate context provided by 47:9 need not be interpreted as an expectation of impending death as will be seen in the last third of note 29.

\textsuperscript{26} The present argument does not require that the formal greeting of the sons be in the form of an explicit blessing. The el-Amarna letters (c. 1400-1360 B.C.) usually begin with a formal greeting although not necessarily in the form of a blessing. Note, for instance, the beginning and ending of letter 288: "To the king, my lord, my Sun-god, say: Thus says Abdiheha, thy servant. At the feet of the king, my lord, seven times and seven times I fall. . . . [To] the scribe of the king, my lord, [Thus] says Abdiheha, the servant. . . . Take in very (?) clear words to the king . . . " (D. Winton Thomas, ed., \textit{Documents from Old Testament Times} [New York: Harper and Row, 1961] 43-44). This letter indicates that it was important to offer greetings even in proxy audiences with Pharaoh. Cf. 1 Sam 25:24 and 2 Kgs 4:37. Also see Thomas, \textit{Documents}, 39, 214-16, 251, and 262.
the author of the Joseph story includes Jacob's greeting of blessing cannot thus be attributed to a desire for completeness. Since it is impossible to identify any reason why the narrative would emphasize that Jacob "paid respects" at the beginning and end of the audience, brk should be interpreted as "to bless" or "to greet with a blessing" in our text.  

The import of Jacob's audience with Pharaoh can now be easily grasped. Verses 7 and 10 assert that Jacob blessed Pharaoh. The reference to Jacob's age apparently serves to heighten the significance of this blessing. A man whose closeness to God and favour in God's eyes is attested by his attainment of an age greater than any Egyptian dared to hope for blesses Pharaoh. Gen 47:7-10 is thus designed to teach that Pharaoh received a powerful blessing through Jacob.

27 This argument should also be cogent for those holding a multiple-source theory for the Joseph story. No matter what sources vv 2-4 and 7-10 are attributed to, it must be granted that the redactor probably made a conscious decision to include the references to blessing in vv 7 and 10.

28 Ruppert, *Josephserzählung*, 149-50, mistakenly views 47:9 as asserting the shortness of Jacob's life and thus sees a contrast between it and 47:28 which presents Jacob's long life. This tension leads Ruppert to conclude that v 9 (and thus vv 8 and 10 also) must be attributed to a different author (PS) than v 28 (P).

29 The work of Gustave Lefebvre, "L'age de 110 ans et la vieillesse chez les Egyptiens," *Comptes Rendus de l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* [Paris] (1944) 107-19, provides examples indicating an intimate connection between advanced age and divine favour in Egyptian thought. During the reign of Ramses II (New Kingdom), Bakenkhonsou (died c. 1233 B.C. according to Gustave Lefebvre, *Histoire des Grand Pretres d'Amon de Karnak* [Paris: Libraire Orientaliste de Paul Geuther, 1929] 134) sought the aid of Amon-Re to reach 110 (p. 110). Bakenkhonsou's successor also prayed to Amon for this privilege (p. 111). In the 5th dynasty (Old Kingdom), one of Pharaoh's officials wrote, "j'ai passe 110 annees de vie que m'a donnees le roi" (p. 108). Since the idea that the Pharaoh was the divine son of the sun god had developed by the 5th dynasty (Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Land of Egypt," *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* [ed. M. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975] 2.234), this text suggests the link between longevity and divine favour was firmly rooted in Egyptian thought. (This conclusion is not invalidated by the research of George Posener, *De la divinite du Pharaon* [Cahiers de la Societe Asiatique; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1960] 22, who presents a nuanced interpretation in which the pharaoh was not actually divine in his own right but rather the earthy representative, "l'image vivante, le fils, le substitut, etc." of the god.) Lefebvre's examples do not indicate whether a blessing from a man of 110 years or more was seen as being especially significant. Jacob's reference
A powerful blessing should have a significant effect. The reader of Genesis does not have long to wait before this blessing bears fruit. Within three verses of the conclusion of the report of Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh, there is an extensive account of Joseph's agrarian reforms.

III. *Gen 47:13-26: Joseph's Agrarian Reforms*

This passage breaks down into four sections of increasing length, each of which describes one aspect of the blessing which came to Pharaoh through the work of Joseph, one of Jacob's sons. In 47:13-14 Joseph collected all the money of Egypt and Canaan and brought it "into Pharaoh's house." In the next section (vv 15-17), all the livestock of the Egyptians was traded for food. Although it is not explicitly stated, it is clearly implied that Pharaoh was again the beneficiary.

In the much larger third section (vv 18-21), Pharaoh gains both land and slaves through Joseph's management. In this section three explicit references (vv 19, 20a, 20c) emphasize that the land became Pharaoh's. Verse 22, an appendage to the third section, indicates that only the priestly land was exempt from this process of royal acquisition.

In the final section (vv 23-26), Joseph sets up an arrangement whereby Pharaoh received one-fifth of future harvests. This additional benefit is stressed by its twofold repetition (vv 24 and 26). This final section, which also reinforces the fact that the land became Pharaoh's and the people his slaves (vv 23 and 25), ends as did the third section by noting that the priestly lands did not come under Pharaoh's control.

*Gen 47:13-26* should be interpreted as the fulfillment of the blessing on Pharaoh anticipated by both *Gen 46:31-47:6* and *47:7-10*. The absence of the term "blessing" in *Gen 47:13-26* does not imply that the concept is also absent. As Redford has noted, the narrative of the Joseph story is often allowed to convey its meaning without the

to the shortness of his life compared with his ancestors likely indicates that he expected to live for a number of additional years, thereby heightening the impression that a great degree of divine favour rests on him. The references to the shortness, trouble, and sojourning of Jacob's life (47:9) only pertain to his life before coming to Egypt where his sorrow at the loss of Joseph is healed (46:30), his sojourning is replaced by land possession (47:11), and he can expect to live for a number of additional years. *Gen 47:28* notes Jacob continued to live for seventeen additional years in Egypt.
addition of explicit editorial comments. Since Gen 47:13-26 immediately follows two passages which raise the reader's expectation of a blessing for Pharaoh, it would appear that the author (or, if one wishes, the final redactor) thought that the full meaning of the agrarian reforms, which place the stress on Pharaoh's gains, would be sufficiently clear.

There are two other considerations which confirm the validity of this interpretation of Gen 47:13-26. First, this passage appears to be the third in a series of blessings which came to various Egyptians through Joseph. After coming to Egypt, Joseph worked for three different individuals, namely Potiphar, the keeper of the prison, and Pharaoh. Gen 39:1-6, which begins this series, sets the pattern by explicitly stating that Potiphar received a blessing upon his house because he showed favour to Joseph. Although the term brk is not present in Gen 39:19-23, this passage indicates that the keeper of the prison relieved himself of numerous administrative burdens by placing Joseph in a position of authority. There is no reason why the pattern established in Gen 39:1-6 to illustrate Gen 12:3a should fail when Joseph is elevated to the highest authority by Pharaoh (41:39-45). If this consideration is valid, the blessing upon Pharaoh in 47:13-26 is anticipated by three events in the Joseph cycle, namely Pharaoh's elevation of Joseph, Pharaoh's favour to Jacob and his other eleven sons, and Jacob's verbal blessing of Pharaoh.

Secondly, there is no other adequate explanation for the inclusion of an extensive account of Joseph's land reforms. This passage does not contribute to the bridging function of the Joseph story. It is

30 Redford (Biblical Story of Joseph, 247) notes that the author of Genesis 37-50 "lets the story convey his message without trying to ram it down the readers' throats at every turn of the plot." Cf. note 7.

31 Many commentators, overlooking the key provided by the emphasis placed on Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh in 47:7-10, have either offered no explanation for 47:13-26 or have ventured into speculative interpretations which bear little relationship to the themes and concerns of Genesis. For instance, Davidson (Genesis 12-50, 287) writes, "But why trace this system of land tenure back to Joseph? It could be that to the writer this is but another illustration of Joseph's wisdom and political skill. It is also possible, however, that he is taking an ironic delight in tracing to Joseph a system which made slaves of the Egyptians in a land in which the Hebrews themselves were to be slaves."

32 A favorite explanation of the function of Gen 47:13-26 during the past century was to see this passage as a contribution to the bridging func-
not possible to follow Coats who, seeing no theological import in this passage, suggests that it was included for aetiological reasons.\textsuperscript{33} Although the formula "until this day" is present in the final verse of the passage, Childs has demonstrated that throughout the OT the biblical formula, "until this day," seldom has an aetiological function of justifying an existing phenomenon but in the great majority of cases is a formula of personal testimony added to, and confirming a received tradition.\textsuperscript{34}

Gen 47:13-26 is not an exception to this general rule. The basic aspects of the story are not presented from an aetiological perspective. In addition, "until this day" only appears as a secondary element in the final verse of the passage. Apparently its function is to confirm the factuality of the story concerning the agrarian reforms. The only visible
tion of the Joseph story. For example, R. S. Candlish, \textit{The Book of Genesis} (3rd ed.; Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1884) 550-52, writes, "The account of Joseph's conduct [in Gen 47:13-26], as ruler in Egypt, is an altogether irrelevant, not to say impertinent, interruption, unless we hold that it is brought in with a view to its bearing on the fortunes of Israel. ... It concentrated authority in one royal head. And so it made it easier for the Pharaoh who was Joseph's friend to secure the peaceful settlement of the family in Goshen; while it also made it easier, long afterwards, for the Pharaoh 'who knew not Joseph' to enslave and oppress the nation into which the family was then fast growing." Similar explanations are presented by M. M. Kalisch, \textit{Genesis} (Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament 1; London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Robert, 1858) 699-704, and W. H. Griffith-Thomas, \textit{Genesis XXXVII-L: A Devotional Commentary} (London: Religious Tract Society, 1909) 142-43 and 147-48. Three considerations are against this interpretation. First, it does not explain why 47:13-26 does not immediately follow chapter 41. Secondly, this view assumes Pharaoh was relatively powerless before the reforms took place. However, a king who could exact a tax of one-fifth of the harvests for seven years (41:34, 48) would likely have the power to settle a band of 70 shepherds and their flocks in Egypt. Thirdly, 47:13-26 gives the impression that Pharaoh only got control of the land during the seventh year of the famine. (The fact that it is only at the time of the sale of the land that there is any concern for seed to plant [47:19 and 23] suggests this event took place in the final year of the famine.) Thus, the settlement of Jacob and his household in Goshen, which took place during the famine (47:12), apparently occurred \textit{before} Pharaoh had gained control of the land and people of Egypt.


\textsuperscript{34} Brevard S. Childs, "A Study of the Formula 'Until this Day,'" \textit{JBL} 82 (1963) 292.
explanation for the inclusion of the story of Joseph's agrarian reforms is that it was intended to fulfill a theological role by demonstrating that substantial blessing came to Pharaoh.

It is thus best to interpret Gen 47:13-26 as a blessing upon Pharaoh.35 If this interpretation is rejected, then Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh is left unfulfilled, a major pattern in the Joseph story is broken, and Gen 47:13-26 remains without an adequate explanation.

**Conclusion**

A brief exposition of the meaning of Gen 46:31-47:26 will serve as an appropriate conclusion to this study. A major function of this passage is to contribute to the bridging function of the Joseph story. It explains how, through Joseph's skillful use of the fact that his brothers were shepherds by occupation, Jacob and his sons came to settle in Goshen, a north-eastern border province that would not normally have been available to them. In this way the passage contributes to the transition from the patriarchal stories to the account of the exodus.

A second function is served by this passage. The account of the brothers' audience places additional stress on the fact that Israel was separated from the Egyptians by her occupation. This makes a con-

35 Of all the works consulted for this paper only three showed any awareness of the theological meaning of Gen 47:13-26. Commendation must be extended to M. Kline, "Genesis," *The New Bible Commentary: Revised* (ed. by D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer; 3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 112, who entitles 46:28-47:27 as "Israel, Blessed and Blessing." Kline supports his interpretation with the observation that "the economic measures instituted by Joseph were viewed by the Egyptians themselves as a favour, indeed, as their salvation (cf. v. 25) in the desperate famine emergency." He does not, however, note that Pharaoh is seen as the primary recipient of blessing in vv 13-26 or that this is in response to Jacob's blessing in the first half of the chapter. Although W. L. Humphrey ("The Joseph Story," *IDBSup*, 490) approaches this interpretation, he does not grasp it firmly: "Israel is seen functioning as a source of blessing for the nations (cf 12:1-3). This narrative [the Joseph story] is remarkably open to the possibility of creative interaction with the Egyptians; it is in Egypt that the sons of Israel find sustenance, it is for the pharaoh (47:13-26) that Joseph works, and the patriarch Jacob himself blesses the Egyptian ruler." Finally, P. Ellis (*The Yahwist: The Bible's First Theologian* [Notre Dame: Fides, 1968] 48) identifies 47:13-26 as a contribution to the "Blessing on the Nations" motif. Unfortunately, Ellis does not expand on this suggestive note nor does he offer any support for its validity.
tribution to one of the minor themes of Genesis, the distinctiveness of the Israelite line.

Thirdly, the passage illustrates the principle set forth in Gen 12:3a. Nations and individuals bring blessing upon themselves by their response to the chosen line. Pharaoh's twice recounted command to settle Jacob and his sons in the best of the land (47:6 and 11) awakens the reader's expectation that a significant blessing will fall on Pharaoh. The account of Jacob's audience, which stressed that Jacob blessed Pharaoh, provides further preparation for the reader's proper interpretation of Joseph's agrarian reforms as a divine blessing upon Pharaoh.

The concluding chapters of Genesis are thus highlighted by three, not just two, major blessing passages. The blessing of Pharaoh by Israel (47:7-10 and 13-26) precedes the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh (48:8-22) and the blessing of the twelve tribes (49:1-27).

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The Function of Jacob's Encounter at Peniel in the Jacob Cycle

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Although the passage in Genesis 32:23-33 has been frequently treated by scholars using a variety of analytical tools, the question of the function of the passage in the context of the Jacob cycle has not received the attention which it merits. This article deals primarily with that question and proposes a more comprehensive solution to it, a solution which demonstrates the intimate relationship of the tradition history of the passage, its theology; and its purpose in the Jacob cycle.

Scholars are generally agreed that this passage has had a long, complex tradition history. However, there is a wide divergence of opinion about the point in the history of the tradition at which different elements of its present form entered. The parallels cited by Gunkel to various elements of the story have established to

1 Genesis 32:22-32 in English Bibles. The verses in Hebrew are always one ahead of the verses in English in Genesis 32. The verse enumeration in this article corresponds to that of the Hebrew Bible.

a relative degree of certainty that those elements are ancient. The parallels include: 1) the attack by a deity, often a river god, upon a man; 2) the victory by the human hero over the deity and the extortion from the deity of some blessing or gift; 3) the fact that the deity roams only at night and must disappear at daybreak; 4) the reluctance of the deity to give his name as a result of the belief that to know a name is to have power over its bearer. It has been argued that the story was originally a Canaanite myth not associated with Jacob and probably not associated with Peniel. Although the story pattern is certainly ancient, the Israelite tradition cannot begin any earlier than the point at which Jacob is identified as the hero. There is little possibility of precise reconstruction earlier than this point. It is also relatively certain that the final element of the passage, the aetiology in verse 33, is late. It stands outside of the *inclusio* which encloses the story and adds no essential information to the story in terms of its purpose in the Jacob cycle as a whole. The earliest and latest elements of the passage, then, have been established to a relative degree of certainty. Scholars have proposed a number of reconstructions detailing the points at which the remaining elements of the present tradition entered. No one reconstruction is completely accepted, and it would be difficult to propose a reconstruction that is particularly new or convincing.

Scholars have also pointed out a large number of the literary devices, especially word plays, contained within Genesis 32:23-33 and its immediate context. The words *mahaneh*, "camp," and *minhah*, "gift," are important words in Genesis 32. The story of the place name, *Mahanayim* in 32:2f. anticipates the events narrated in the chapter. The reference to "two camps" seems to be deliberately ambiguous. Are the two camps Jacob's and Yahweh's, Jacob's and Esau's, or the two divisions of Jacob's caravan? The verb *'abar*, "to cross," also occurs frequently in this context (32:11, 17, 22, 23, 24; 33:3, 14), and statements using the verb form an *inclusio* around the narrative of Jacob's encounter with the *'elohim*. The names *ya'aqob* and *yabboq* form a lovely word play with the verb *ye'aqeb*, "he wrestles," in verse 25. In fact, the two uses of the verb *'abaq* with

6 See the discussion of Fokkeiman, pp. 199ff.
'immo, "with him," form a framework around the narration of the wrestling match itself in verses 25f. The noun *paním*, "face," occurs five times in verses 21f. and twice in 33:10, aside from its use in the Penuel/Peniel (vss. 31f.). Finally, the root *nsl* "to deliver," found in verse 31 is the same verb used in Jacob's prayer in verse 12. It is obvious that Genesis 32:23-33 represents a sophisticated literary piece with intricate connections with the passages which surround it.

Some scholars have argued that the story in Genesis 32:23-33 is completely out of place, that it has nothing to do with the meeting of Jacob and Esau. Thus the passage is nothing more than a collection of aetiologies about the names Israel and Penuel/Peniel and the Israelite tradition against eating the sinew of the thigh. Noth is representative:

... the Penuel episode (Gen. 32:23-33 [J]), which is bound very firmly to a specific place, was inserted still later in a rather loose fashion and intrinsically has nothing at all to do with the narrative theme "Jacob and Esau." Rather, it is a distinctly separate narrative which originally was concerned with cultic matters and all sorts of etiological secondary interests.

Elsewhere Noth refers to the passage as having an "infelicitous place in the midst of the story of Jacob's encounter with Esau." Others have argued that the narrative functions as an answer to Jacob's prayer in 32:10ff. Jacob knows that Esau will not harm him, because he has prevailed over a stronger opponent, the *'elohim*, from whom he has also extracted a blessing (vs. 29). Thus Jacob compares seeing the face of Esau, who has received Jacob favorably, with seeing the face of *'elohim* (33:10). This understanding of the function of Genesis 32:23-33 is good as far as it goes, but it does not take into account the entire Jacob cycle and the significance of the story of Jacob's encounter at the Jabbok in relation to the themes which run throughout the Jacob cycle.

Fishbane has attempted to deal with the entire Jacob cycle. He argues that the Jacob cycle (Gen. 25:19-35:22 according to Fishbane) consists of a chiasm. In general, Fishbane's scheme is quite correct, especially with regard to the narratives in Genesis 27-33. Genesis 27:1-

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7 Noth, p. 95.  
8 Noth, p. 7.  
9 See especially Fokkelman, p. 220, who argues that the use of the root *nsl* in vs. 31 is a direct reference back to Jacob's prayer for deliverance in vs. 12, where *nsl* has been used.  
28:9 contains traditions about the competition between Jacob and Esau. Jacob's encounter with God and his angels is told in 28:10-22. In chapter 29 Jacob meets with Laban and is deceived by him, and 30:1-24 contains an interlude about the birth of Jacob's children. The material which then follows in 30:25---33:20 corresponds in reverse order to the material in 27:1---30:24. In 30:25-31:55, Jacob and Laban again rival one another. Chapter 32 tells of two encounters of Jacob with supernatural beings and of Jacob's preparations to meet Esau. The next chapter contains Jacob's meeting with Esau.

The chiastic structure of the Jacob cycle is significant in terms of the theme and purpose of the cycle as a whole. At the structural center of the chiasm lies the story of the birth of Jacob's children, the founders and namesakes of the twelve tribes of Israel. As various scholars have observed, the individuals, Esau and Laban, here represent the political entities of Edom and Aram, respectively. The Jacob cycle tells how the nation of Israel, represented in its ancestors Jacob and his sons, contends with Edom and Aram, represented in their ancestors Esau and Laban. It further describes how Jacob/Israel prevailed over all opponents and gained control of the land. The specifying of the children of Jacob, the fathers of the tribes of Israel, lies at the center of the narrative both structurally and functionally. The Jacob cycle is the story of the perseverance and prevalence of Israel.

The narrative in Genesis 32:23-33 corresponds to the theophany in 28:10-22 thus filling a needed link in the chiastic structure. But it also serves a much more important function. Throughout the Jacob cycle three themes predominate: strife, deception, and blessing. Before their birth, Jacob and Esau struggle within the womb of their mother (Gen. 25:22). Jacob is born holding onto the heel of Esau (25:26). His name, "Jacob," characterizes him both as a fighter ("heel-grabber") and as a deceiver ("supplanter"; cf. 27:36). Jacob deceives Esau into trading his birthright (bekorah, 25:29ff.) and then deceives his father, Isaac, into granting the blessing (berekah) to him instead of Esau (27:5-45). Jacob's dealings with Laban are also seen as a struggle. Laban strikes first, deceiving Jacob by giving him Leah instead of Rachel (29:15-30).11 Yahweh blesses Laban on Jacob's account so

11 The irony here deserves comment. In the case of Jacob and Esau, the younger brother is favored, and the older serves the younger. Now, Jacob is appropriately deceived into marrying the older sister, Leah, first rather than the younger, Rachel, for whom he has worked.
that Laban is reluctant to release Jacob (30:27). Jacob reciprocates by deceiving Laban (30:27-31:16). Again, God blesses Jacob so that he becomes wealthy in spite of Laban's deceptions (31:5ff.). Laban accuses Jacob of deceiving (31:27). He comes apparently to fight with Jacob, but God protects Jacob and warns Laban against doing him harm (31:24, 29ff.). Even Rachel deceives her father by stealing the household gods (31:33ff.). Jacob responds to Laban's accusations with his own complaints that Laban has deceived him by changing his wages numerous times, but God has thwarted Laban's attempts by blessing Jacob and protecting him (31:36-42). Finally, the encounter with Esau is feared by Jacob because of Esau's superior strength in battle (32:7). Even here Jacob acts craftily in the arrangement of his caravan and in sending a train of gifts to Esau (32:7, 14ff.). The Jacob cycle ends with a reiteration of the promise of blessing for Jacob (35:9-15).

These themes of strife, deceit, and blessing come to a climax in the narrative of Genesis 32:23-33. Jacob now faces the most difficult conflict of his life, because his opponent is no longer simply a man, but 'ēlohim. Deception is involved in the struggle when the opponent apparently employs a trick of fighting to put Jacob's thigh out of joint.12 Jacob receives the most important blessing of his life in the change of his name to Israel. The climactic verse is verse 29. Jacob's name is changed to Israel, because he has prevailed in his struggles with human as well as divine. The narrative which follows about Jacob's meeting with Esau helps to fill out the chiastic structure of the Jacob cycle, but it is clearly anticlimactic. Jacob has persevered. Assuredly, he will not come to harm or defeat at the hands of Esau. He has prevailed and is supremely blessed.

It is important to recall at this point that the Jacob cycle, according to those who follow standard source analysis, is really the story of

12 Gunkel, HKAT, p. 361, argued that the original story had Jacob using a trick of fighting to injure the opponent. This would be better in line with the comparative material in which the human tricks the deity into defeat. It also fits well the character of Jacob as a deceiver in the Jacob cycle. But it is difficult to see why the original story would be altered at this point, unless the change came about merely by confusion (note the confusing use of pronouns in vs. 25a to denote subjects and objects). At any rate, if such a confusion did occur, it clearly took place before the incorporation of the story into the Yahwistic Epic and thus does not alter the Yahwist's theology or the importance which he gives to the story.
the nation Israel. The point made by the writer is that the nation of Israel has prevailed, prevailed over all opponents, not just Edom and Aram. This theological point indicates that the Jacob cycle in its present form stems largely from a time when the nation of Israel could identify with the patriarch as having come out of all its struggles as victor. This notion accords well with the conditions of Israel during the Davidic and early Solomonic age, the era in which the Yahwistic Epic is usually dated. Most of the Jacob cycle is, in fact, attributed to the Yahwist. Thus, the Yahwist, writing during the era of Israel's greatest supremacy, describes the nation through the life story of the patriarch Jacob/Israel. The Yahwist describes his nation, like its ancestor, as having acquired the blessing of Yahweh, as a result of which they have endured against all their opponents, and have become preeminent. Yahweh's covenant with Abraham and his promise to bless the patriarch, linked in Yahwistic material with, Yahweh's

13 Despite the lack of scholarly consensus in regard to details, Wellhausen's classical formulation of the documentary hypothesis remains the standard approach to the Tetrateuch (Genesis-Numbers). Brevard Childs has observed: "Of more influence-on the history of scholarship was the work of scholars who continued to operate within Wellhausen's general framework but sought further to refine the sources. In the course of the refinement important weaknesses emerged which often unintentionally began to dissolve the reigning consensus. . . Long after the early confidence in the classic documentary theory had disappeared, critical scholars continued to work with Wellhausen's source analysis largely because of the lack of any new consensus by which to replace it." Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) p. 114. F. M. Cross has offered a significant modification of the documentary hypothesis. He prefers to speak of J and E as variant prose forms of a single, older Epic cycle. He also holds that P was never a separate source, but only the post-exilic editor of the Epic traditions. Cross' view is important for understanding the purpose of the story in Gen. 32:23-33 in the various levels of tradition. See Cross' discussion in his Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 293-325.

14 F. M. Cross, Canaanite Myth, pp. ix, 124, 263ff., 293.

15 Most of the Jacob cycle is J material. There are sections which can only be characterized as Epic material, that is, J and E combined. P material exists in the Jacob cycle, but it is not common. Material generally attributed to P is: 25:19f.; 26:34f.; 27:46-28:9; 31:18b; 35:9-13, 15, 22b-29.

16 I have referred to Jacob's opponent throughout simply as 'elohim. It is a common notion among scholars that the Yahwist identified the opponent with Yahweh, but I am not convinced that this was the case. The name Yahweh is never mentioned in 32:23-33. It also seems unlikely that J would have accepted the idea that Yahweh was defeated by a human. It seems more likely that J has inherited a tradition about Jacob defeating a minor deity and that J has remained faithful to the language of the older tradition, though he may not have understood it (cf. Hos. 12:4f., where the opponent is seen as an angel, and 'elohim and mal'ak, "angel," are found in parallel. The el element in the names 'Israel' and 'Peniel' can clearly be used as a generic appellative (see Cross, Canaanite Myth, pp. 45ff.).
covenant with and blessing of David, has been observed and discussed by various scholars.\textsuperscript{17} In the Jacob story the Yahwist provides a similar link between the patriarchs, especially Jacob, and the Davidic kingdom. The blessing of Yahweh over Jacob brings about his prevalence over all opponents, his safe return to Canaan, and his establishment in the land. The blessing of Yahweh over the nation of Israel results in their successful return to Canaan from Egypt and, under David, their victory over all enemies and hegemony over the entire land promised to the patriarchs. For the Yahwist, Israel's blessing under David is foreshadowed in Yahweh's blessing of Jacob.

In editing the Epic sources, J and E, the Priestly tradent(s) attached another meaning to the Jacob cycle, one that communicated a message relevant to the Israel of his time. The P school probably edited the Epic sources in the Tetrateuch in the sixth century B.C., when Israel was in Babylonian exile.\textsuperscript{18} The present chias tic arrangement of the narratives in the Jacob cycle is possibly the result of the editorial work of P. At any rate, for the Priestly tradent(s) also the nation of Israel was embodied in the patriarch Jacob. The major importance of the Jacob story for P was in the return of Jacob to the land of Canaan. In Jacob, P saw the hope that exiled Israel would also return to the land of their heritage and again prevail over their opponents.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} See Cross, pp. 293-325.
\textsuperscript{19} For P, this tradition must have posed difficult theological problems. Since P was monotheistic, Jacob's opponent could not have been another deity. The opponent could have been understood as an angel of Yahweh, but for P, e1 consistently refers to Yahweh (Cross, p. 46). Also, for P, this tradition about Jacob's struggle with God and particularly the name 'Israel' were truly representative of the nation's character and history. Israel's continual struggles with God had resulted in their exile in Babylon. Thus, in contrast to J, P took a negative view of the tenacity common to the patriarch and the nation of Israel. Yahweh's blessing of Jacob and returning him to Canaan in spite of himself furnished P's hope that God would deal similarly with Jacob's descendants.

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COVENANT AND THE KINGDOM:
GENESIS 1-3 AS FOUNDATION
FOR BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

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The thesis of this paper is that the key to a proper biblical hermeneutic and theology is to be found in the covenant concept of both the OT and NT, especially in the form that concept takes in Genesis. The centrality of the covenant to biblical theology has, of course, been recognized for years by biblical theologians, but only since the relatively recent recovery of comparative covenant materials from the ancient Near East have biblical covenant form and content been reevaluated and tied in closely to the meaning and even structure of the biblical message. M. Kline, in a publication entitled The Structure of Biblical Authority, has argued, on the basis of his own previous studies of biblical and ancient Near Eastern treaty and covenant forms, that the entire Bible is formulated on the model of an extensive and expansive covenant. That is, the Bible does not merely contain covenant records, but is itself and in its entirety a covenant text.


4 Ibid., 75.
While this may be an overstatement, it does suggest the dominance of the covenant idea in certain segments of biblical scholarship.

I. Biblical Concept of Covenant

By "covenant" is meant "a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action." The Hebrew word used to express "covenant" is יְדִיבַּר a term that first occurs in Gen 6:18 and that appears about 285 times in the OT. It is translated by Greek σπαλικ in the LXX and in the NT. Though the terms are not exactly synonymous, the Greek referring more to a "will" or "last testament," the concept of a legal contract at least is common to both.

Until the advent of 19th century archaeological research, very little was known of covenants in the ancient East apart from the OT and even these (including the biblical) were little understood. The discovery, publication, and study of cuneiform tablets and other inscriptive material, especially from Boghazkoy, the old Hittite capital, have shed considerable light on international treaty and covenant arrangements from the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (ca. 1400-1200 B.C.). This is particularly instructive to biblical scholarship because according to the traditional dating the Mosaic covenants fall within this period or a little earlier.

The Hittite treaties reveal that such contracts existed in one of two forms: (1) The parity treaty between equals and (2) the sovereign-vassal (or suzerainty) treaty which was drawn up by a superior power and imposed upon an inferior. Both types generally contain at the minimum certain clauses including a preamble, an historical prologue, the list of stipulations, the witnesses, the curses and blessings, and provision for deposit and public reading of the covenant text. The major difference, of course, was that the superior party in the suzerainty treaty coerced the vassal into acceptance of the fidelity to the covenant terms while he himself had no such obligations except as he voluntarily subscribed to his own stipulations.

The significance of all this to biblical studies is the fact that biblical covenant form resembles almost exactly Hittite treaty form, specifically the sovereign-vassal type. The Covenant Code of Exodus 20-23 and the entire Book of Deuteronomy are the most outstanding

6 BDB 136-37.
8 For the following, see especially Mendenhall, *BA* 17 (n. 2 above).
examples of this type. It is quite apparent that Moses undoubtedly utilized already existing treaty formulas in the construction of biblical treaty contracts between God and individuals or God and Israel. And the comparison does not end with the literary correspondences. An essential feature of certain ancient Near Eastern treaty-making was the slaughter of an animal, often an ass, as, perhaps, an example of the fate to be expected by the covenant party who violated his treaty obligations.9 There was also the sense of the binding together of the contracting parties through the mutuality of the animal sacrifice and the sprinkling of its blood upon the treaty participants or their representatives. The importance of slaughter and blood to biblical covenants is, of course, well known.

The reader of the OT who examines it from this covenant stance will see that covenant texts occupy a very significant portion of biblical composition. Deuteronomy, for example, is recognized as being almost entirely covenantal in its form and content,10 as are substantial parts of the rest of the OT. And, if Kline is correct, the entire Bible might be so analyzed. What is important now is to see that these individual covenants, far from being isolated and unrelated, are parts or successive elaborations of a basic covenant theme. All covenant references in the Bible are then but progressively revealed modifications and explanations of that motif. This, we feel, is the interpretive key to Scripture, a key which, applied consistently and skill fully, will unlock the mysteries of God's Word to one who sincerely wishes to understand and communicate God's redemptive message with authority and conviction.11

II. Covenant in Genesis 1-3

Let us turn now to a systematic examination of the covenant theme in the early chapters of Genesis with the end in view of establishing our thesis that it is at the heart of divine revelation and that it can provide the organizing principle around which a consistent and comprehensive biblical theology may be developed. Because Genesis is the book of beginnings it is not surprising that covenant should first be found there, and, in fact, found in more specific

10 For an excellent commentary structured along covenant lines see J. A. Thompson, Deuteronomy (TOTC; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1974).
11 This notion has been picked up and published recently by W. J. Dumbrell, Covenant and Creation (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984).
instances than anywhere else in the Bible. So fundamental is the
covenant theme there it is not an exaggeration to say that Genesis
provides the principal statement of God's purposes of which the
remainder of the biblical witness is an enlargement and interpretation.
The understanding of his creative and redemptive ways must issue
from their initial statement in Genesis and not from a stance that
considers Genesis to be only prolegomenon or retrojection.

The climax of God's creative work as revealed in Genesis 1-2 was
the creation of man, an event reserved for the last part of the sixth
day. In conjunction with the creative act appears the statement by
God concerning its meaning and purpose. "Let us make man in our
image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and
the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all
the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his
own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he
created them. God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and
increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of
the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that
moves on the ground" (Gen 1:26-28, NIV).

In its broadest sense, this mandate is a greatly abbreviated cove-
nant expression in which the sovereign (God) outlines to his vassal
(man) the meaning of the vassal's existence and the role that he is to
play in the sovereign's eternal plans. Man was created, then, to serve
as the agent of God in implementing God's sovereign will and sway
over the universe. His subsequent fall into sin made him incapable
of adequately fulfilling the covenant requirements, as we shall see, so
he was forced to attempt to do so with great difficulty and struggle.
The history of the human race is testimony to the miserable failure of
man to accomplish the covenant mandate, a failure overcome only by
the Second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, who perfectly demonstrated
on earth the authority that was inherent in the Adamic covenant and
who, moreover, by his perfect obedience to it has guaranteed the
ultimate restoration of redeemed man to the original covenant privi-
leges. Let us consider several ramifications of this covenant statement.

Mankind as God's Vice-Regent

That man is to serve as vice-regent of God is seen clearly in the
fact that he is the "image" and "likeness" of God. The former of these
terms, מִלְכוֹת, is the word ordinarily used in the OT to speak of an idol

12 In all its forms יִרְדָּב occurs twenty-seven times in Genesis or about one-tenth of
all the OT uses.
1. 146-47.
or other object carved or fashioned to resemble the deity that it presents. The Greek, both in the LXX and NT, usually translates it εἰκών, from which English "icon" is directly derived. The word translated "likeness" in our versions is ἴματις a term that is equally as common (25 occurrences), and that appears occasionally as a synonym for ἰματις (Gen 1:26; 5:3; Ezek 23:14-15). In our text the two words seem to be in a parallel relationship, indicating their synonymity. That this imago dei represents is, of course, a matter of divergent opinions, but at the least it is that quality in man that makes him different from and superior to all else in the created universe. It is our judgment that much more is involved, for the context of the passage is quite suggestive in this respect. For example, the first person plural pronoun is used by God consistently throughout the narrative. This cannot be explained by reference to the plurality of Elohim, for that plural of the divine name is nearly universally interpreted as the pluralis maiestatis or plural of majesty. Moreover, ordinarily the name Elohim occurs with singular personal or relative pronouns. The appearance of "us," then, rather than "me" is a clue that points to a plural of number, a plural that suggests the divine Godhead-Father, Son, and Spirit. The Spirit had already been introduced as that person of God who "moved" (better "hovered" or "brooded") over the face of the deep (Gen 1:2). It would appear appropriate that the Son should here be identified as that divine person of whom man is the image. The OT speaks elsewhere of Wisdom who is hypostatized and described as at least a co-Creator with God (cf. Prov 8:30). And, of course, the NT specifically identifies Jesus Christ as the Creator (Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). There is clearly a straight line of development from OT to Mishnaic to NT Logos.

There is, furthermore, explicit evidence that both the Father and the Holy Spirit are invisible, spiritual entities and that only the Son is attributed with any bodily manifestation. This may be seen in the aT appearances of God as the Angel of the Lord or as the "Son of Man." Most fully and unequivocally, it is seen in the NT incarnate Christ.

15 BAGD 222.
16 H. D. Preuss, """"TDOT 3 (1978) 77-00.
18 GKC #124g.
We would suggest, therefore, that the image of God entails also a phenomenal aspect, a relationship between man and the Son of Man so close that the former could be said in the strictest sense of the term to be the image of the latter.21

If man of the covenant is to fulfill his covenantal mandate, we must attempt to discover how this fulfillment is described. Unfortunately, the evidence is sparse because man sinned before realizing the potentialities involved. We do learn, however, that he was to cultivate the ground (2:5, 15), that he had access to everything in Eden but the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (2:17), and that he had the incredible ability to name all the animals (2:19), a feat that presupposes either the skill of writing and recording or the possession of a phenomenal memory! Tragically, however, sin marred the image in at least the area of man's covenant capacities, so that we can only guess at the powers that man could have exercised had he been obedient. Or need we only guess? Paul on several occasions refers to a Second Adam, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:14-17; 1 Cor 15:22, 45). This Second Adam presumably was more than one who came to undo the work of sin in human life; He came also to demonstrate the possibilities inherent in sinless man. In other words, Jesus Christ, often described as the Son of Man, was not only God but was man par excellence, the man whom God intended Adam to be. Should we not seek in the life of Jesus, the Perfect Man, some insights into the type of man created by God to carry out the Adamic covenant?

*Jesus as Second Adam*

A few examples from the Gospels must suffice. In the story of Jesus' calming of the stormy sea, the disciples are so amazed at what they see that they ask incredulously, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him" (Matt 8:27; cf. Mark 4:36-41; Luke 8:26-75)? Or one is reminded of the need for the payment of taxes to Caesar. Jesus on one occasion told Peter to go to the sea, throw in a hook, and find a coin in the mouth of the first fish caught (Matt 17:24-17). When Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem in triumph at the beginning of Passion Week, He first of all amazed His disciples by riding on an unbroken donkey (Matt 21:7) and then proceeded to show His lordship over a fig tree by cursing it so that it withered immediately (Matt 21:18-22). These evidences of power over nature are usually attributed to His deity, but there is every reason to believe

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21 For the view that human-form theophanies are limited to Christ see J. A: Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1978) 65-72. Borland correctly; does not limit man as the image of God to the physical appearance of the Son (pp. 106-7) for, as he suggests, Christ did not exist permanently in human form in OT times.
(“What kind of man\textsuperscript{22} is this?”) that Jesus was exercising the God-
given authority of Adam, an authority designed for the entire human
race, forfeited by sinful Adam, and restored in and through Christ (cf.
also Ps 8), That man will once again possess these powers may be
seen in the beautiful eschatological pictures of the OT prophets in
which, for example, "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard
will lie down with the goat, the calf and the young lion and the
yearling together; and a little child will lead them" (Isa 11:6, NIV).

**Mankind as Nature's Sovereign**

Another feature to note in the covenant of Gen 1:26-28 is that of
the command to rule over the fish, the birds, and large and small land
animals (1:26) and to "subdue" the earth (1:28). The verb "to rule" is
\textit{hdr} usually used in connection with the absolute domination of one
party by another (Lev 25:43, 46, 53; 26:17, 1 Kgs 5:4, 30; Isa 14:2;
Ps 110:2).\textsuperscript{23} "To subdue" is \textit{šḇn} which means "to tread down." The
same word is used in Mic 7:19 to speak of God treading iniquities
underfoot. In, another form it occurs in Jer 34:11 in the sense of
bringing one into bondage or subservience.\textsuperscript{24} Hence, these two verbs
are practically synonymous. This prerogative of man was seen, of
course, in his naming of the animals and his care of the garden. And
we have already suggested that Jesus, the perfect Son of Man,
demonstrated in his own life on earth His ability to dominate the
various aspects of the natural world. Moreover, man, when fully
redeemed, will resume his covenant responsibilities and privileges, by
the grace of God, and forever will reign over the universe as God's
agent in fulfillment of the reason for his very creation.

In stark contradiction to the idealized situation of the covenant
stipulation of Genesis 1 is the reality of human existence vis-a-vis the
covenant after the fall. Man now knows that he is naked, an under-
standing which not only derives from his possession of the knowledge
of good and evil, but which makes him acutely aware that he cannot
fulfill the covenant terms.\textsuperscript{25} He was told to have dominion over all
things, but he failed to govern even his wife and his own appetites.
He has forfeited the right to reign and therefore does not have the
ability to reign. His attempt to undo his nakedness and, hence, recover
his dignity and lordship is frustrated by the Lord who shows him, by
covering him with the skins of a slaughtered beast, that another

\textsuperscript{22} No explicit word for "man" is used in Matt 8:27 but the Greek \textit{ποιηματός} ("sort," "kind") is a common substitute for the term "person" (see BAGD 694-95).
\textsuperscript{23} See W. White, “\textit{hdr}”, \textit{TWOT} 2 (1980) 833.
\textsuperscript{24} J. N. Oswalt, “\textit{šḇn},” \textit{TWOT} 1 (1980) 430.
way—a super-human way—must be found. God must do the covering and the restoring or there is no hope at all.

The Fall and Covenant Modification

But to move more directly into the covenant terms as they are modified for fallen man in Gen 3:14-19, we observe that the original mandate ("to reign, to multiply, to subdue") is preserved but in an obviously qualified way. That is, man still has the rights and obligations of the original covenant, but will accomplish them only with pain and arduous labor. And, moreover, even this pain and labor could not bring about the desired ends for which man was created were God not to intervene in history in the seed of the woman and to fulfill in this seed His sovereign purposes. The second Adam was to do what God had required of the first, and impute to every Adam of every age the perfect obedience of the mandate which he achieved by his life, death, and resurrection.

In the first place, because an animal (the serpent) was the vehicle of man's temptation and fall, animals must, in general, be condemned for insubordination though the serpent is especially cursed (3:14). Man the sovereign had become the slave, a monstrous imbalance which must be righted.

A result of this imbalance was a hostility between man and animal, an antagonism suggested here but explicitly spelled out later on in the Noahic covenant (Gen 9:2). Animals would be docile only by training and discipline, not as a matter of course. Only with the reestablishment of the paradise world could there be the compatible relationship between man and animals that God had originally intended.

Satan, incarnate in the serpent, is, of course, the real object of the rebuke of the Lord, for it was he who had attempted to subvert the covenant arrangement, possibly because he himself had originally served as vice-regent of God (cf. Isa 14; Ezek 28). The enmity between man and the serpent was only an illustration of the more profound and consequential enmity between man and Satan, and indeed, between the Seed of the woman and Satan. The underlying cause of the disruption of the covenant would be its chief victim when the covenant was renewed and perfected by the Seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the second act of insubordination, that of the woman to the man and both to God, the result would entail the on-going covenant stipulations but with the added ingredients of pain, a powerful attrac-

[26 G. Vos, Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 64.]
tion of wife to husband,27 debilitating labor, and death. Man must carry out the mandate but the cost would be high-too high in fact for him actually to bring it to completion himself. The promise of the seed and the evidence of divine grace in the garments of skin pointed to a covenant completeness that would be a future reality.

In the meantime, the command to be fruitful and multiply would be complicated by the pain of the woman in childbirth. The injunction to man and woman to rule over all things would be tempered by the rule of the man over the woman, by the subordination of her desires to his. The earth which was to be subject to man and the ready source of his nourishment now would yield its riches only with toil. And the very soil which he tilled, and from which he originated, would eventually master him and cover him in death.

*Fallen Man's Covenant Capacity*

We are still left, however, with the intriguing question of the extent of unredeemed man's ability and right to pursue the covenant stipulations of Gen 1:26-18. At the outset we must be reminded that unregenerate man is generally not even aware of a covenant mandate, except possibly “intuitively,” to say nothing of a command to pursue it. But it cannot be argued that he does pursue it even in his blindness. Man's environmental struggles all represent his endeavors to . . . be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it." Ironically (or perhaps even predictably) he appears to be waging a losing battle as the present-day ecological concern so eloquently testifies. Man carries out the mandate, but as is true with every thing else that he does as fallen creature without divine orientation, he perverts it, misunderstands it, exploits it, and finally seems to be in danger of destroying it. But this is not to be, for the Adamic covenant was without condition—man was created to fulfill it and he will, both partially and imperfectly as fallen first Adam, and fully and perfectly in and through Second Adam. The ecological crisis is not, fatal, but only witnesses to the inadequacies of rebellious man. Christ has triumphed not only over death and sin but over the environment. He will undercut the ecological peril by bringing in the fruits of His redemptive work, even a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

One thought that is staggering in the face of man's inability to the Adamic covenant perfectly is his sheer accomplishment

27 This seems to be the best understanding of the phrase אַלּ אִשְׁתֶּךָ חֲשֹׂא ("unto your husband [will be] your desire"). So W. C. Kaiser: Jr., Toward an Old Testament Ethics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 204-5. As Kaiser points out, the wrong m this is that in turning in such a way to her husband the woman will turn from dependence on God.
scientifically and technologically in spite of his limitations. He has, by, dint of creative and imaginative genius, risen to heights of achievement undreamed of by his predecessors of only a century ago. He has not only been able to dominate this planet with his superior intellectual powers, but has now planted his feet on the moon and his implements of discovery on the planets as well. All this, we feel, is part of the mandate, but only its superficial, external part. The factor that is missing is the ascription to God of the glory and praise due His name. Man fulfills the covenant, even to a remarkable degree, but at the same time he does not fulfill it at all for he does not operate as the conscious agent of God. Part of the meaning of the image of God is to act for God and represent God, but man will not have God to rule over him.

III. The Prospects of Covenant Fulfillment

The Christian man, on the other hand, is able to understand the covenant and even largely to fulfill it in points. And where he cannot fulfill it or overcome the liabilities built into it because of sin, he can, at least await with patience and perseverance the redemptive day: when these liabilities will be removed in fact and when he will enter into the covenant relationship with the saints of all the ages, and with them pursue its goals and purposes eternally. Christ, who showed by example what it meant to keep the covenant and whose obedience retrieved it and made it a viable vehicle of divine intercourse with man, has pioneered the way that all men can follow. He is the first-fruits not only of them who sleep but of them who will in the day of His glory share with Him the joy of covenant-keeping, the joy of reigning forever and ever as the agents of the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.

If God is immutable; if the covenant of Gen 1:26-28 is inviolable, unconditional, and eternal; if Christ as Second Adam has showed His earthly life and ministry what it meant to keep the covenant perfectly—all of which is true—then we should expect some biblical statement about the fulfillment of the Adamic covenant by redeemed man. But before such an investigation is undertaken some consideration of the biblical view of time must be made.

Biblical View of Time

Basically, there are two ways in which time can be understood—the linear and the cyclical. The former sees time plotted on a non-
ending straight line with only accidental or coincidental repetitions of events and these only of an insignificant nature. The latter, however, interprets time as occurring in series of repeatable, nearly identical events. It is measured in terms of aeons which, though lasting for thousands of years, have decisive and dramatic beginnings and endings. Time in the linear sense, an understanding that originated in the 17th century,\textsuperscript{29} views history as a continuously ongoing process with little or no theological significance. The religions and philosophies of the ancient world, particularly those of the Graeco-Mesopotamians, conceived of history as a cyclical phenomenon. Worlds and men are created to live, interact, and die, only to be recreated time and time again. Reincarnation is only one feature of such a world view.

Biblical notions of time are not properly either linear or cyclical, but a combination to be described, perhaps, as a "loop." Eternity is linear while the parenthesis that we call time, a sort of interruption of eternity, is cyclical in nature, though only unicyclical.\textsuperscript{30} God, eternally existent, created all things to serve his own interests. His creation, however, through its disobedience, has temporarily intersected the continuum of eternity, but through Christ the promise of a resumption of the linear has been made. When history has run its course, the Kingdom of God will be established, the cycle now having swung full turn. In one sense, time will have been blotted out, and the linear aspect of the divine historical process will appear as never having been broken at all. Or, to put it another way, the establishment of a new heavens and a new earth will be nothing more or less than a reconstitution of the pristine heavens and earth known by sinless Adam. Because human history since the fall has been characterized by sin, and since sin will be eradicated completely from the universe: it follows that the cycle of human history between the fall of First Adam and the advent of Second Adam is to be as a bubble on a string--when the bubble is pricked, the string alone remains.

\textit{Redeemed Mankind and the Age to Come}

In order to visualize what qualities will be characteristic of man in the Age to Come, we need only refer to the Paradise setting of the original covenant of Genesis once again. Man will be in the unimpaired image of God and will exercise lordship, under God, of all the universe. Specifically, however, it is instructive to search out the eschatological teaching of the prophets, for there they detail man-to-man, man-to-nature, and man-to-God relationships that are only suggested in Genesis. There will be no war (Isa 2:4; MIC 4:3; Joel 3:10),

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 145-46.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 136-30.
but justice and righteousness will prevail (Isa 9:7). The "natural"
animosities between animals and between men and animals (which,
after all, are not natural) will end (Isa 11:6-9; 65:25; Ezek 34:25; Hos
2:18). There will be no death or sorrow (Isa 25:8) and even the desert
lands will come alive and produce abundance (Isa 35:1-2; Joel 3:18).
Man will then rule with God and for God over all things (Dan 7:27;
Rom 5:17; 1 Cor 6:2; 2 Tim 2:2; Rev 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4). In Paul's
great exposition of the truth concerning human redemption in Romans
8, he goes on to speak of the redemption of the creation as a whole.
He suggests that "the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons
of God to be revealed" (8:19, NIV). This revealing is certainly to be
understood as the full, final restitution of the elect to their position as
partners with God in the covenant plan (cf. 1 Pet 1:7,13).

The Apostle continues by showing how that all creation was
"subjected to frustration" or made to partake of the divine curse
because of man's sin (cf. Isa 24:6; Jer 12:4). There is hope, however,
for nature, a hope that will be realized following the completion of
the redemption of man. The corruption of the earth (suggested by the
thorns and thistles of Gen 3:18) will be undone and nature will be set
free from its bondage (cf. Acts 3:21). In the meantime, Paul says, "the
whole creation has been groaning as in pains of childbirth..." (Rom
8:22). This Image suggests that from the old will come something
new. The cursed universe will give birth to a new one, a birth
associated with the rebirth of the redeemed ones in their glorified
state.31 Can it be that the violence and upheavals associated with the
last days of this era, those signs of the end of the world, are at the
same time the birth throes of nature which agonizes to deliver a new
heaven and earth worthy of the King and his subjects who reign with
him (cf. 2 Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:1)?

We would not suggest, of course, that the new heavens and new
earth will be identical to those described in Genesis. There are many
factors which would necessitate differences. For example, Adam lived
in a garden, a life of pastoral, agricultural pursuits. The citizens of the
New Earth will live both in this kind of environment and also in a
great city, New Jerusalem, come down from God out of heaven. We
are led to speculate, however, as to whether or not such might have
been the case in the original Paradise as well if sufficient time had
elapsed for a population large enough to be conducive to urban life
had emerged. For Adam and Eve to have lived by themselves in a
city as extensive as that described in Revelation would be little short

31 C. Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,
1955) 274-75.
of absurd (cf. Rev 21:16), And yet it is important to note that the Tree of Life, central to the Garden of Eden, is also a major feature of New Jerusalem (Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). The externals of the setting are different, but the underlying and essential content is the same.

Also, there is no sun or moon in the world to come, for the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev 21:23). Let us remember here also that there was sunless light on the earth before man was created (Gen 1:3), and that the function of the heavenly lightholders was not only to give light on the earth, but to serve as time indicators (Gen 1:14-18). They may have been prepared for this latter function in anticipation of the “interruption” of time mentioned previously, a kind of proleptic indicator that day and night, summer and winter, are testimonies to the continually alternating pattern of life in time, life as lived by fallen man. As we see later, part of the Noahic Covenant is the promise by the Lord that day and night shall not cease "as long as the earth endures" (Gen 8:22). Is it too much to propose that the sun would have become unnecessary and therefore nonexistent even in Eden had man successfully passed the probation of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? The absence of a sea in the renewed earth might also be explained on this basis. Perhaps it had been reserved by the Lord as a means of judgment and not as a necessary part of the creation (cf. 2 Pet 3:5-7).32

A third contact is that of God's dwelling among men. Rev 21:3 states explicitly that the tabernacle of God will be among men and "he will live with them. . . . But Genesis also describes man’s fellowship with God in terms that suggest that he was among them in a unique way, a way not paralleled after man’s exile from the Garden (Gen 3:8-10).

Finally, John the Apostle visualizes the fact that there will be no curse in Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 22:3), a decided contrast to the curse of Genesis 3, but nonetheless a reminder that the resumption of the covenant relationship will hark back to the perfect, uncursed state of affairs that formed the backdrop of the original declaration of the

III. Conclusion

The proposition that covenant is a dominant theme of the Bible has, we trust, been at least partially demonstrated by this brief look at

32 For the sea as a symbol of chaos out of which came (comes) the created order see B. K. Waltke, Creation and Chaos (Portland: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974) 13-15.
early Genesis. It is much more than mere coincidence that Genesis and Revelation, the first and last books of Scripture, should share in common the idea of man in contractual relationship with God, the OT book rehearsing the covenant command to rule over all things, and the NT prophetically revealing that man shall indeed fulfill that covenant requirement perfectly and eternally.33 Everything in between—from Genesis 4 through Revelation 20—speaks of sin and redemption the violation of the covenant by First Adam and its obedience and fulfillment by Second Adam. By the grace of God we may now exult with David who exclaimed:

What is man that you are mindful of him,  
The son of man, that you care for him?  
You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
And crowned him with glory and honor?  
You made him ruler over the works of your hands;  
You put everything under his feet. . . .

(Ps 8:4-6, NIV)

33 See now the stimulating and provocative connection of Revelation 21-22 to the OT by N. J. Dumbrell, The End of the Beginning (Homebush West, Australia: Lancer, Books, 1985).

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THE ANCIENT EXEGESIS OF GENESIS 6:2, 4

ROBERT C. NEWMAN

The exegesis of Gen 6:2, 4 in ancient times is surveyed among extant sources, both Jewish and Christian. These interpretations are categorized as either "supernatural" or "nonsupernatural" depending upon the identification of the "sons of God." It is observed that the interpretation of "sons of God" as angels and "Nephilim" as giants dominates. This interpretation also seems to be that of the NT: almost certainly in Jude 6 and 2 Pet 2:4, and probably in 1 Cor 11:10 and Matt 22:30. Some suggestions regarding the source of this interpretation and its validity are made.

*    *    *

Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with men forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown (Gen 6:1-4 NASB).

This passage has been a center of controversy for at least two millennia. The present form of the dispute is rather paradoxical. On the one hand, liberal theologians, who deny the miraculous, claim the account pictures a supernatural liason between divine beings and humans. 1 Conservative theologians, though believing implicitly in angels and demons, tend to deny the passage any such import. 2 The


2 E.g., G. Ch. Aalders, Genesis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981); H. G. Stigers, A Commentary on Genesis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); J. Murray, Principles of Conduct (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 243-49.
liberal position is more understandable with the realization that they deny the historicity of the incident and see it as a borrowing from pagan mythology. The rationale behind the conservative view is more complex: though partially a reaction to liberalism, the view is older than liberal theology. Moreover, the conservative camp is not unanimous in this interpretation; several expositors see supernatural liaisons here, but ones which really occurred.\(^3\)

The concern in this article, however, is not to trace the history of interpretation of this passage, nor (basically) to discuss modern arguments for and against various views. Rather, the concern is to see how it was understood in antiquity and (if possible) why it was so understood.

Gen 6:1-4 seems to be something of an "erratic boulder" for all interpreters, standing apart to some extent from its context. The preceding chapter consists of a 32-verse genealogy extending from Adam through his son Seth to Noah and his sons. God is mentioned in three connections only: he creates man (5:1), walks with Enoch (5:22, 24) and curses the ground (5:29). If we include the last two verses of chapter 4, we pick up two more references: Seth is God's replacement for Abel (4:25); and men begin to call upon the LORD at the time of Enosh (4:26). Following our passage, the context leads quickly into the flood, beginning with God's observation that both man and beast must be wiped out because man's wickedness has become very great.

From the passage and its context a number of questions arise. Who are the "sons of God" mention in 6:2, 4? The phrase occurs nowhere else in the context or even in Genesis. Who are the "daughters of men"? This phrase at least seems to be related to v 1, where "men" have "daughters" born to them. Why does the text say "sons of God" and "daughters of men" rather than "sons of men" and "daughters of God"? How is God's reaction in vv 3 and 5 related to all this? Are these marriages the last straw in a series of sins leading to the flood or not? Who are the "Nephilim" in v 4? Are they the offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men or not? Are they the "mighty men" mentioned in the same verse? Is it their sin which brings on the flood?

The scope of this article does not permit an investigation of all these matters. We shall concentrate on two: the phrase בנים האלים, usually translated "sons of God" (vv 2, 4) and the word נפלים, here transliterated "Nephilim" (v 4). Though other matters are of interest

and will influence one's interpretation, these two seem to constitute an interpretive watershed.

For ease of discussion we shall divide the various interpretive schemes into two broad categories which we label "supernatural" and "nonsupernatural" (this rather clumsy term being used to avoid the connotation of "proper" which "natural" would give). The supernatural category will include any views in which the sons of God are not human, and the nonsupernatural those in which they are human. Within each category we shall proceed more or less chronologically from the earliest extant examples to late antiquity, giving greater attention to earlier materials. The NT will be omitted from this preliminary survey, but we shall return to it later to see if it favors one of these interpretations. Thereafter we shall examine possible exegetical bases for the various views and seek to draw some conclusions regarding not only what was done in antiquity but how we should interpret the passage. We hope also to provide some general methodological suggestions.

THE SUPERNATURAL INTERPRETATION

Among extant materials interpreting Gen 6:2, 4, the supernatural view is older, though we cannot be sure in which work it appears first, the LXX or I Enoch.

LXX

The Old Greek version of the Pentateuch, traditionally known as the LXX, was probably produced in the middle of the 3rd century B.C. Extant MSS of Genesis render מִלְחַת הַאֱּלֹהִים variously as οἱ τῶν θεοῦ and ἄγγελοι τῶν θεοῦ. The latter alternative clearly moves the

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5See the relevant textual footnotes in A. Rahlfs, Septuaginta (7th ed.; Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1962) 8, and especially in J. W. Wevers, Genesis (Gottingen LXX: Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1974) 108. The variant ἄγγελοι is the minority reading among extant MSS and versions, but it is supported by many witnesses, including Codex Alexandrinus (4th century A.D.), as well as Philo and Josephus, both writing in the 1st century A.D. though extant only in much later MSS. These latter comment on the passage in such a way that their reading cannot be dismissed as a scribal error from later Christian copyists. οἱ is the majority reading, for which the most important witnesses are papyrus 911 (3rd century A.D.) and Codex Coislinianus (7th century). The Gottingen LXX favors the latter reading since it is supported by all the MS groups, though none are as early as Philo and Josephus. Yet the influence of the MT on the transmission of the LXX might well explain οἱ, even if ἄγγελοι were the original translation. It is therefore impossible to be certain whether ἄγγελοι was the original translation or an early midrashic corruption.
text in a supernatural direction, even though ἄγγελος sometimes
means a human messenger (e.g., Gen 32:3, 6). This variant is already
cited and discussed by Philo,6 so apparently predates the 1st century
A.D. In Gen 6:4 מִלְּנָה is translated γίγαντες; without textual variation.
The Greek word, usually rendered "giant," indicates a warrior of
large stature7 and translates דַּגֶּנֶן in Gen 10:8, 9.

I Enoch

Possibly older than the LXX is the book of Enoch, an apocalyptic
work of great diversity organized around revelations allegedly given
to the patriarch of this name. The particular material we are concerned
with is thought to be pre-Maccabean by Charles and from the early
2nd century B.C. by Eissfeldt. In any case, fragments from this part of
Enoch have been found at Qumran in a style of handwriting that
dates to the pre-Christian era.8

The first five chaps. of Enoch present a mostly poetic picture of
the coming of God to earth in judgment and what this will mean for
the wicked and the righteous. Chap. 6 begins:

And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied, in those
days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the
angels, the children of heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to
one another: 'Come, let us choose wives from among the children of
men and beget us children.' (1 Enoch 6:1-2)

The account goes on (chaps. 6-8) to tell how two hundred angels
came down on Mt. Hermon, led by their chief Semjaza, took wives,
taught them science, magic and technology, and begot by them giants
over a mile high! Along with Semjaza, principal attention is given to
the angel Azazel, who taught mankind metallurgy for weapons and
jewelry.

The good angels report these things to God (chap. 9), who sends
Uriel to warn Noah of the coming flood, Gabriel to destroy the
giants, Raphael to take charge of Azazel, and Michael to deal with

7H. G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. Drissler, A Greek-English Lexicon. Based on the
German Work of Francis Passow (New York: Harper and Bros., 1879) 292. [Not in
recent edition.]
8R. H. Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament (Oxford:
Clarendon, 1913), 2. 163; O. Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction (Oxford:
this section later, ca. 100 B.C. In any case, fragments of this part of Enoch have been
found at Qumran: see O. Betz, "Dead Sea Scrolls," IDB I (1962) 796; J. T. Milik, The
Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) 6,
139-40, 164.
Semjaza and his fellows. The instructions given to Raphael and Michael are of particular interest:

Bind Azazel hand and foot, and cast him into darkness: and make an opening in the desert, which is in Dudael, and cast him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there for ever, and cover his face that he may not see light. And on the great day of judgment he shall be cast into the fire. (*1 Enoch* 10:4-6)

Go, bind Semjaza and his associates who have united themselves with women so as to have defiled themselves with them in all their uncleanness. And when their sons [the giants] have slain one another, and they have seen the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them fast for seventy generations in the valleys of the earth, till the day of their judgment and of the consummation, till the judgment that is for ever and ever is consummated. (*1 Enoch* 10:11-12)

Thus *Enoch* presents an interpretation of Gen 6 in terms of angelic cohabitation with women, resulting in gigantic offspring. The angels who sinned are bound to await the final judgment.

**Jubilees**

The Book of Jubilees [*Jub.*] is an expanded retelling of Genesis and part of Exodus. It provides an elaborate chronology based on sabbatical cycles and jubilees, plus a theory that the patriarchs observed various Mosaic regulations even before they were given at Sinai. Charles and Tedesche date the book in the last half of the 2nd century B.C., while Eissfeldt puts it about 100 B.C. More recently VanderKam has presented detailed arguments for a somewhat earlier date, around 150 B.C.9

Though apparently dependent on *1 Enoch* or one of its sources, *Jub.* differs from *Enoch* on the reason for the angels' descent to earth:

...and he called his name Jared; for in his days the angels of the Lord descended on the earth, those who are named the Watchers, that they should instruct the children of men, and that they should do judgment and uprightness on the earth. (*Jub.* 4:15)

Chap. 5 follows with an expansion of Gen 6, in which these Watchers cohabit with women and the offspring produced are giants. The sinning angels are not named, but God's response to their sin is described:

And against the angels whom He had sent upon the earth, He was exceedingly wroth, and He gave command to root them out of all their dominion, and He made us [one of the good angels is speaking] to bind them in the depths of the earth, and behold they are bound in the midst of them and are (kept) separate. (Jub. 5:6)

Other Pseudepigrapha

The other works included in Jewish pseudepigrapha which refer to this view are late. Both 2 Enoch 18 and 2 Baruch [Bar] 56 mention the angels of Gen 6 as being punished by torment, the former indicating that they are under earth, the latter as being in chains.

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs [T. 12 Patr.] make reference to this view more than once, but the date and nature of these works are problematical since they are Christian in their present form. Whether the Testaments are basically pre-Christian with some later editing, or basically Christian using some older Jewish materials, is still hotly debated.10 In any case T. Reub. 5:5-7 presents an unusual variant of the supernatural view: the actual cohabitation is between humans, but the spiritual influence of the angels produces giants:

Flee, therefore, fornication, my children, and command your wives and your daughters, that they adorn not their heads and faces to deceive the mind: because every woman who uses these wiles hath been reserved for eternal punishment. For thus they allured the Watchers who were before the flood; for as these continually beheld them, they lusted after them, and they conceived the act in their mind; for they changed themselves into the shape of men, and appeared to them when they were with their husbands. And the women lusting in their minds after their forms, gave birth to giants, for the Watchers appeared to them as reaching even unto heaven.

T. Naph. 3:3-5 gives a supernatural interpretation of Gen 6: 1-4 in a grouping of examples which parallels those in Jude and 2 Pet:

The Gentiles went astray, and forsook the Lord, and changed their order, and obeyed stocks and stones, spirits of deceit. But ye shall not be so, my children, recognizing in the firmament, in the earth, and in the sea, and in all created things, the Lord who made all things, that ye become not as Sodom, which changed the order of nature. In like manner the Watchers also changed the order of their nature, whom the Lord cursed at the flood, on whose account he made the earth without inhabitants and fruitless.

**Qumran**

Among the materials found in caves near the Dead Sea, both the Genesis Apocryphon [IQapGen] and the Damascus Document [CD] refer to the supernatural interpretation. The former is a retelling of Genesis in popular style, extant only in one fragmented MS, which has been dated paleographically to the late 1st century B.C. or early 1st century A.D.\(^1\) On the basis of a detailed comparison of contents with 1 Enoch and Jub., Vermes believes that apGen is older and a source for both, "the most ancient midrash of all." Fitzmyer disagrees, dating apGen in the same era as the extant MS.\(^2\) Certainly it is no later than the Roman destruction of Qumran about A.D. 68. In what little remains of the scroll's col. 2, Lamech is fearful that his wife's pregnancy (her child will be Noah) is due to "the Watchers and the Holy Ones," but she stoutly denies it.

The CD is a sort of covenant-renewal document: the history of the community (presumably Qumran) is sketched, and its members are exhorted to covenant faithfulness. Cross and Vermes date the work to about 100 B.C.\(^3\) Speaking of the "guilty inclination" and "eyes of lust," the author says:

> For through them, great men have gone astray and mighty heroes have stumbled from former times until now. Because they walked in the stubbornness of their heart the Heavenly Watchers fell; they were caught because they did not keep the commandments of God. And their sons also fell who were tall as cedar trees and whose bodies were like mountains. (CD 2:16-19)

**Philo**

In his treatise On the Giants, the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo (20 B.C.-A.D. 50)\(^4\) quotes the Old Greek version of this passage with the readings ἀγγέλοι τοῦ θεοῦ and γίγαντες. Unfortunately Philo is not always a clear writer. Apparently he takes the literal meaning of the verses to refer to angels and women since, immediately after quoting Gen 6:2, he says:

> It is Moses' custom to give the name of angels to those whom other

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\(^4\) All dates are approximate throughout.
philosophers call demons [or spirits], souls that is which fly and hover in the air. And let no one suppose that what is here said is a myth.15

After a lengthy discussion arguing for the existence of non-corporeal spirits, however, Philo proceeds to allegorize the passage:

So, then, it is no myth at all of giants that he [Moses] sets before us; rather he wishes to show you that some men are earth-born, some heaven-born, and some God-born.16

Roughly speaking, these three categories Philo enumerates correspond to people primarily concerned about the physical, the intellectual and the mystical, respectively. Philo's sympathies definitely lie with the second and third. He has no interest in stories about physical mating, and is probably best understood as rejecting the literal meaning of this passage.17 If so, we have in Philo a literal exegesis which gives the supernatural interpretation and an allegorical exegesis which provides a very unusual sort of nonsupernatural view.

Josephus

From late in the 1st century A.D. comes the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37-100). The first eleven books of the Antiquities retell the biblical history with various elaborations based on Jewish traditions. In book one, just before recounting the flood, Josephus says:

For many angels of God now consorted with women and begat sons who were overbearing and disdainful of every virtue, such confidence had they in their strength; in fact, the deeds that tradition ascribes to them resemble the audacious exploits told by the Greeks of the giants.18

In addition to this clearly supernatural interpretation, Franxman sees evidence for a nonsupernatural interpretation involving Sethite-Cainite intermarriage: in the immediately preceding sentences of Josephus, we are told that the Sethites continue virtuous for seven generations and then turn away from God and become zealous for wickedness, a feature of later Sethite-Cainite views.19 Yet nothing about intermarriage of Sethites and Cainites appears in the extant

15Philo, Giants 6-7.
16Ibid., 60.
18Josephus, Antiquities 1.73.
19T. W. Franxman, Genesis and the 'Jewish Antiquities' of Flavius Josephus (BibOr 35; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979) 80-81.
copies of Josephus, so Franxman must postulate this in a non-extant source he used.

**Targum Pseudo-Jonathan**

It is difficult to know where to place the targumim. These Aramaic translations of Scripture (often paraphrases or even commentaries) have an oral background in the synagogue services of pre-Christian times, but their extant written forms seem to be much later. Among these, the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* [*Tg. Ps.-J.*] presents at least a partially supernatural interpretation. Although in its extant form this targum is later than the rise of Islam in the 7th century A.D., early materials also appear in it. In view of the rabbinic reactions to the supernatural view by the 2nd century A.D. (see below), our passage is probably one of its early parts:

And it came to pass when the sons of men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and beautiful daughters were born to them, that the sons of the great ones saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, with eyes painted and hair curled, walking in nakedness of flesh, and they conceived lustful thoughts; and they took them wives of all they chose. . . . Shamhazai and Azael fell from heaven and were on earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of the great ones came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them: the same are called men of the world, the men of renown. (*Tg. Ps.-J.* 6:1-2,4)

Here the phrase "sons of the great ones" may reflect a nonsupernatural interpretation, but the reference to Shamhazai and Azael falling from heaven certainly does not. The names given are close to those in 1 Enoch, considering that the latter has gone through two translations to reach its extant Ethiopic version. Notice also that the Nephilim are here identified with the angels rather than their offspring as in Enoch, Jub., and Josephus.

As we shall see below, the supernatural interpretation was eventually superceded in Jewish circles by a nonsupernatural one, probably in the century following the fall of Jerusalem. Yet remnants of the former can still be seen in later rabbinic literature.

**Early Christian References**

Passing over the NT for the time being, we find abundant early evidence for the supernatural interpretation in Christian circles. Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-160) says, in his *Second Apology*:


God, when He had made the whole world, and subjected things earthly to man, . . . committed the care of men and of all things under heaven to angels whom He appointed over them. But the angels transgressed this appointment, and were captivated by love of women, and begat children who are those that are called demons.22

Justin goes on to tell how the human race was subdued to the angels by being introduced to magic, fear, false worship and lust, and how they were trained in all sorts of wickedness. Justin accepts the pagan mythologies as having some historical veracity, describing the acts of these angels and demons rather than the gods.

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215) alludes to the supernatural interpretation in his Miscellanies: "... the angels who had obtained the superior rank, having sunk into pleasures, told to the women the secrets which had come to their knowledge. . . ."23

Tertullian (A.D. 160-220) speaks of the incident several times. In On Idolatry 9, he says that "those angels, the deserters from God, the lovers of women," revealed astrology to mankind. In his work Against Marcion 5.18 he argues that Paul's reference to "spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph 6:12) does not refer to Marcion's wicked creator-god, but to the time "when angels were entrapped into sin by the daughters of men." And in his treatise On the Veiling of Virgins 7, he argues that Paul's reference to veiling "because of the angels" (I Cor 11:10) refers to this incident.

Lactantius (A.D. 240-320), in his Divine Institutes 2.15, teaches that God sent the angels to earth to teach mankind and protect them from Satan, but that Satan "enticed them to vices, and polluted them by intercourse with women." This is closer to Jub. than Enoch. The sinning angels, Lactantius continues, could not return to heaven, so they became demons of the air. Their half-breed offspring could not enter hell (hades?), so they became demons of the earth. All of this Lactantius connects with pagan mythology and the occult.

Similar materials are found in the Clementine Homilies 8.11-15 and the Instructions of Commodianus (chap. 3), neither of which is likely to predate the 3rd century.24 The Homilies add the unusual idea that the angels had first transformed themselves into jewels and animals to convict mankind of covetousness. Perhaps this was derived from some of the stories about Zeus, as the writer says: "These things also the poets among yourselves, by reason of fearlessness, sing, as they befell, attributing to one the many and diverse doings of all" (8:12).

22Justin, Apology 2.5.
23Clement, Miscellanies 5.1.10.
THE NONSUPERNATURAL INTERPRETATION

The earliest extant examples of the nonsupernatural interpretations of Gen 6:2, 4 come from the 1st century A.D. and thus are later than the earliest specimens of the supernatural interpretation. Since all come centuries after Genesis was written, it is not possible to be sure which is the oldest.

First Century Sources

As mentioned previously, Philo prefers an allegorical interpretation of Gen 6:1-4 in which God-oriented persons (sons of God) may fall and become earth-centered (beget giants, the "earth-born") by consorting with vice and passion (daughters of men).

The Biblical Antiquities of Pseudo-Philo is another work which retells biblical history, in this case from Adam to Saul. By an unknown writer, it was attributed to Philo because it circulated with his genuine works. It is usually dated shortly before or after the fall of Jerusalem.25 Chap. 3 begins:

And it came to pass when men had begun to multiply on the earth, that beautiful daughters were born unto them. And the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were exceeding fair, and took them wives of all that they had chosen. And God said: My spirit shall not judge among all these men forever, because they are of flesh; but their years shall be 120. (Bib. Ant. 3:1-2)

On the surface this does not appear to be an interpretation at all, and perhaps it is not. The writer does not mention the Nephilim, but this may be merely a case of epitomizing. Yet the rendering of the biblical T נ (Gen 6:3) by "judge" at least foreshadows Targum Neofiti, to be discussed below. Likewise the rabbinical exegesis of Gen 6:2--"they took wives of all they chose"--is anticipated in an earlier remark of Pseudo-Philo: "And at that time, when they had begun to do evil, everyone with his neighbor's wife, defiling them, God was angry" (2:8).

Second Century Sources

Three translations of the OT into Greek were made in the 2nd century A.D.: one by Aquila, a student of R. Akiba, about A.D. 130;26 another by Symmachus, said to be an Ebionite, late in the century;27

and a third by Theodotion, of whom little is known. Theodotion reads \( \text{υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ} \) and \( \gammaάντες \) like many MSS of the LXX, adding nothing new and not clearly either supernatural or nonsupernatural.\(^{28}\) Aquila has \( \text{υἱοὶ τῶν θεῶν} \), which looks more like an attempt to avoid the problem of the one true God having sons than it does a preference for either of the interpretations we are considering. Symmachus has \( \text{υἱοὶ τῶν δυναστεύοντων} \), meaning either "sons of the powerful" or "sons of the rulers," rather like the targumic views to be discussed below and that of Meredith Kline.\(^{29}\) For the Nephilim, Aquila has \( \epsilonπιπιπτοντες \), meaning "those who fall upon," which might be either supernatural "those who fall upon (earth)" or nonsupernatural "those who attack." Symmachus has \( \betaιαοι \), "violent ones." Both the second translation of Aquila's rendering and that of Symmachus fit Gen 6:11 -- "the earth was filled with violence."

The Targumim

_Targum Neofiti_ [Targ. Neof] is the only complete extant MS of the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch. The MS is from the 16th century, but its text has been variously dated from the 1st to the 4th centuries A.D.\(^{30}\) In place of the Hebrew \( \text{בְּנֵי הָאָלָהָה} \) is the Aramaic \( \text{בְּנֵי} \) \( \text{יָשָׁבֵר} \), "sons of the judges," using a cognate noun to the verb \( \text{יָשָׁבֵר} \) appearing in the MT of Gen 6:3.\(^{31}\) Nephilim is rendered by \( \text{נֵפְיהִים} \), "warriors." The text of the targum seems to reflect a nonsupernatural interpretation, unless we press the last sentence of 6:4--"these are the warriors that (were there) from the beginning of the world, warriors of wondrous renown"--so as to exclude human beings. However, the MS has many marginal notes, which presumably represent one or more other MSS of the Palestinian Targum.\(^{32}\) One such note occurs at 6:4 and reads: "There were warriors dwelling on earth in those days, and also afterwards, after the sons of the angels had joined (in wedlock) the daughters of the sons."\(^{33}\) Thus the text of _Targ. Neof_ seems to be nonsupernatural while a marginal note is clearly supernatural.

\(^{28}\) See the lower set of footnotes in the Gottingen LXX for the readings of these other Greek versions.


\(^{31}\) A. Diez Macho, _Neophyti I. Genesis_ (Madrid and Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1968) 33, 511.

\(^{32}\) S. Lund and J. Foster, _Variant Versions of Targumic Traditions Within Codex Neofiti_ 1 (SBLASP 2; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977) 12, 14; our passage and marginal note are not discussed.

\(^{33}\) Diez Macho, _Neophyti_ 511.
The *Targum of Onkelos* [Tg. Onq.] became the official targum to the Pentateuch for Judaism. According to the Babylonian Talmud [Bab. Talm.] (Meg. 3a) it was composed early in the 2nd century A.D., but this seems to be a confusion with the Greek translation of Aquila. Although the relations between the various targumim are complicated by mutual influence in transmission, Onq. was probably completed before A.D. 400 in Babylonia using Palestinian materials as a basis. In our passage Onq. reads בְּנוֹת הֶהתַּרְפִּים, "sons of the great ones," probably referring to rulers. For Nephilim it has מַלְאָךְ. Etheridge's translation "giants" for this is possible, but not necessary, as Aberbach and Grossfeld prefer "mighty ones."

*Christian Interpretations*

Meanwhile, the nonsupernatural interpretation begins to show up in Christian circles. Julius Africanus (A.D. 160-240) wrote a *History of the World* which has survived only in fragments quoted by later authors. In one of these Julius says:

> When men multiplied on earth, the angels of heaven came together with the daughters of men. In some copies I found "sons of God." What is meant by the Spirit in my opinion, is that the descendants of Seth are called the sons of God on account of the righteous men and patriarchs who have sprung from him, even down to the Saviour Himself; but that the descendants of Cain are named the seed of man, as having nothing divine in them. . . .

There is no context to work with here, but it sounds as though Julius has derived this view on his own.

Augustine (A.D. 354-430) discusses Gen 6:1-4 in his *City of God*. His basic approach is seen in 15.22:

> It was the order of this love, then, this charity or attachment, which the sons of God disturbed when they forsook God and were enamored of the daughters of men. And by these two names (sons of God and daughters of men) the two cities [city of God and city of man] are sufficiently distinguished. For though the former were by nature children of men, they had come into possession of another name by grace.

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34 Bowker, *Targums* 22-26; McNamara. *Targum and Testament* 173-76.
Augustine goes on (15.23) to admit that angels do appear in bodies, and that stories were at this time being told of women being assaulted by sylvans and fauns, but he says "I could by no means believe that God's holy angels could at that time have so fallen." He interprets 2 Pet 2:4 as referring to the primeval fall of Satan. The word "angel," he points out, can with scriptural warrant be applied to men. Besides, the giants were already on earth when these things happened, and so not the offspring of the sons of God and daughters of men. Also the giants need not be of enormous stature but only so large as sometimes seen today. God's response in Gen 6:3 is directed against men, so that is what the "angels" were. He dismisses with contempt "the fables of those scriptures which are called apocryphal."

**Rabbinic Literature**

The Mishnah is a concise topical summary of the oral rabbinic legal traditions written about A.D. 200. It contains no reference to Gen 6: 1-4 to the best of my knowledge, but this is not surprising in view of the preponderance of halakah rather than haggadah.

The Midrash Rabbah [Midr. Rab.] is a collection of interpretive comments on the Pentateuch and the five Megillot (Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and Lamentations). The earliest of these is Genesis Rabbah [Gen. Rab.], which Strack puts "not much later than the Palestinian Talmud" (ca. A.D. 400) and Epstein sees as mainly from the 3rd century A.D. 38 We have an extended discussion of our passage in Gen. Rab. 26.5-7. R. Simeon b. Yohai (A.D. 130-160) is quoted as identifying the "sons of God" as "sons of nobles" and as cursing all who call them "sons of God." The reason for their title "sons of God" is their long lifespans. To explain why marrying women would be such a sin as the context indicates, R. Judan (A.D. 325) explains that נכד, "beautiful" (Gen 6:2), should be taken as a singular adjective: the noblemen enjoyed the bride before the bridegroom could. The phrase "they were beautiful" meant they took virgins; "they took wives for themselves" meant they took married women; "whomever they chose" meant they indulged in homosexuality and bestiality. Regarding the interpretation of "Nephilim," the rabbis apparently used Num 13:33, where the term is associated with the Anakim at the time of the Exodus. With this hint and the aid of Deut 2:10-11, 20-21, they obtained five other names for the Nephilim by which to describe them using etymological word-play. Two of these are rather supernatural sounding: "Gibborim: . . . the marrow of each one's thigh bone was eighteen cubits long"; "Anakim: . . . their necks

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reached the globe of the sun." The term "Nephilim" is understood as teaching that "they hurled (יוּל הָדַּל) the world down, themselves fell (לוּל הָדַּל) from the world, and filled the world with abortions (נֵפֶל לַיִל) through their immorality."

A few scattered references occur in the Babylonian Talmud, a compilation of the Mishnah and its commentary finished in the 6th century A.D. A relatively clear allusion to the nonsupernatural view occurs in Sanh. 108a, in a context of the corruption of the generation at the time of the flood. R. Jose (A.D. 130-160) is quoted:

They waxed haughty only on account of covetousness of the eyeball, which is like water, as it is written, And they took wives from all they chose. Therefore he punished them by water, which is like the eyeball, as it is written, All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

There is a word-play here on נְפֶל, which can mean either "fountain" or "eye." The main point, however, is that the punishment was designed to fit the crime. Thus those who died in the flood are understood to be those who took the wives. If the attribution to R. Jose here is trustworthy, then this view was in circulation by the middle of the 2nd century A.D., in agreement with the testimony of Symmachus and Gen. Rab.

Elsewhere in the Talmud there are scattered remnants of the supernatural view. Yoma 67b refers to the scapegoat being called Azazel because it atones for the "affair of Uza and Aza'el," probably a reference to the Shamhazai and Azael of 1 Enoch and Tg. PS.-J.39 Nid. 61a speaks of an Ahijah, son of Shamhazai.

**NT INTERPRETATION**

The supernatural interpretation clearly existed before NT times, as did Philo's peculiar nonsupernatural view. Whether or not the later rabbinic view (that the sons of God were judges or noblemen) or the later Christian view (that the sons of God were Sethites) existed at this time, we cannot say, but there is no positive evidence for them.

What does the NT have to say? Does it refer to Gen 6:2, 4 at all? If so, how does it interpret the passage? First, unlike hundreds of other OT passages, the NT nowhere explicitly quotes this passage. Any NT reference will therefore have to be merely an allusion. What will count as an allusion? Proponents of a nonsupernatural view will be at something of a disadvantage: references to the wickedness of men at the flood are not decisive in favor of the nonsupernatural.

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39L. Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews (Philadelphia: JPS, 1937), 5, 152, explains how "Shamhazai" may be derived from "Uza,"
view, but references to wicked angels will have to be assigned to some other event if this view is to stand.

2 Pet 2:4
For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment . . .

Is this a reference to Gen 6 or to the primeval fall of Satan before Eden as proposed by Augustine? This example precedes a reference to the flood and to Sodom and Gomorrah, so the order would be chronological in either case. It is given as an example of judgment to the readers of the epistle, and examples, when not explained, can be presumed well-known to the original readers. The other two examples are both well-known because they occur in Scripture. The primeval fall, however, would be almost totally inference, whereas the supernatural view would see this as a popular understanding of Scripture at the time. Certainly some measure of popularity is to be inferred from its occurrence in the pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo and Josephus.

The word "pits" (σιρόαις) is a variant; some MSS read σιροῖς, "chains." Either word would fit the description of the angels' punishment in 1 Enoch and Jub., but this must be a new revelation (which happens to match an old view of Gen 6!) on the nonsupernatural view. Similarly for the details about "darkness" and the angels' being "reserved for judgment." The verb translated "cast into hell" is ταρ-ταρών, derived from Tartarus, "a subterranean place lower than Hades where divine punishment was meted out."40

This passage seems strongly to support the supernatural interpretation of Gen 6, even though it raises problems regarding the extra detail it shares with Enoch and Jub. not found in Genesis. We will address this question later.

Jude 6
And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

Jude 14-15 contains a quotation that appears almost word-for-word in 1 Enoch 1:9,41 so it is difficult to argue that Jude knew nothing of 1 Enoch 6. All the features of Jude 6 fit 1 Enoch better

40BAGD, 805.
41With attestation in the Qumran fragments; see Milik, Books of Enoch, on 4QEn".
than they do *Jub.*, where the angels were on earth before sinning, and were even sent there by God. To explain Jude 6 of the primeval fall, one must see further new revelation here also, namely that this fall involved leaving their ὀἰκήτηριον, "dwelling" or "abode." On the other hand, this is not necessary for the supernatural view, as the angels would at least have to come to earth to get their wives (Gen 6:2) and their offspring the Nephilim are explicitly said to be "on earth" (Gen 6:4).

In addition, Jude's next example (v 7) of Sodom and Gomorrah seems to refer back to this example when it says "they [Sodom and Gomorrah] in the same way as these [angels] indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh." One might seek to avoid this by reading "they [the cities around Sodom and Gomorrah] in the same way as these [Sodom and Gomorrah] indulged. . . ." But "these" is τοῦτοις, which more naturally refers to the angels (masculine) than to Sodom and Gomorrah, as the latter have just been referred to in the same verse by the feminine pronoun αὐτάς. Likewise "gross immorality" and "strange flesh" are two points of real parallelism between the violent homosexuality of Sodom and the angel-human liaisons of the supernatural interpretation. It seems that Jude 6 strongly indicates a supernatural interpretation of Gen 6:1-4.

1 Cor 11:10

Therefore the woman ought to have (a symbol of) authority on her head, because of the angels.

This verse has puzzling elements for any interpreter because of its briefness and lack of explanation. So little is known about the activity of angels that one cannot rule out some obscure allusion to the presence of good angels at Christian worship who would be offended by unsubmitive women. Yet one can easily find more serious offenses for the angels to be upset about in the Corinthian worship services, e.g., misuse of tongues (chaps. 12-14) and disorderly conduct at the Lord's Supper (11:17-34). Yet the supernatural interpretation of Gen 6 would supply an excellent reason why this phrase would occur in this context and the statement would become far less cryptic. Tertullian so understood the passage by A.D. 200. This context might also fit the context tangentially, with woman being made for man (v 9) perhaps suggesting she was not made for angels, and the veiling indicating she was under the authority of father or husband.

I Pet 3:19-20

For Christ also died for sins. . . that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits (now) in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah. . . .

This, too, is a puzzling passage which bristles with uncertainties no matter how one interprets Gen 6: 1-4. Yet it seems clearly to point to spirits disobedient at the time of Noah. The word "spirit" may have been chosen by Peter to picture disembodied men (cf. Luke 8:55; Acts 7:59), but it could also refer to or include non-humans. If the passage concerns a "descent into hell," the supernatural interpretation might at least suggest a rationale for singling out those particular spirits associated with the time of Noah: the events of Gen 6:1-4 may have been an attempt to thwart or pre-empt the incarnation. By itself the passage hardly proves the NT favors the supernatural interpretation.

Matt 22:30

For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven.

This is probably the most common passage on which the supernatural interpretation is refuted.43 It is quite naturally understood to teach that angels cannot marry and therefore they never have. Likewise, the terminology recalls Gen 6:2, since "to take a wife to oneself" is a standard OT idiom for marriage. But perhaps the term "angels" is intentionally qualified by the phrase "in heaven." In the supernatural interpretation it was not the angels in heaven that took wives, but those who left heaven (cf. Jude 6: "abandoned their abode") and came to earth to do so. This would not be so obscure an allusion in NT times as it seems to us today if the supernatural interpretation were then common knowledge as the evidence indicates. The same phrase "in heaven" occurs in the parallel passage in Mark (12:25). It does not occur in Luke (20:36), but the context strongly implies good angels are in view.

Other NT Passages

No other passages strongly favor either interpretation. References to the abyss-as an unpleasant abode for demons (Luke 8:31), as a

prison for some sort of supernatural locusts (Rev 9:1-11), and as the source for the beast (Rev 11:7)—are consistent with either view, though somewhat parallel to the binding beneath the earth described in 1 Enoch and Jub. So is the reference to the binding of Satan in Rev 20. A Sethite-Cainite view of Gen 6:1-4 might serve as a basis for Paul's remarks about mixed marriages in I Cor 7:9, 15, but these could easily be generalized from OT regulations against intermarriage with Gentiles. In spite of the interpretation commonly given to Matt 22:30 and parallels, the evidence seems strong that the NT adopts a supernatural interpretation of Gen 6:1-4.

**SOURCES OF THE INTERPRETATIONS**

Here we move from the solid ground of extant sources to the thin ice of speculation. Since the authors rarely write anything directly about their sources or methods, we are left to inferences from what they do write. Patte summarizes the situation nicely for the Qumran commentators

> At first one wonders what is the actual relationship between the biblical text quoted and its interpretation, The author is giving us the results of his use of Scripture without emphasizing the process itself.44

Studies in the NT and the intertestamental literature indicate that this situation is not confined to Qumran.

Several sources for these interpretations can be imagined: (1) pure invention; (2) borrowing from another source, whether an earlier writing, an oral tradition, or even pagan mythology; (3) extra-biblical revelation, whether divine or occult; and (4) influence from other OT passages thought to be relevant. This list is probably not exhaustive.

The first category is doubtless important: new ideas for the interpretation of a given passage will continue to arise until at least the simpler alternatives are exhausted. Borrowing from an earlier written or oral source may also be important. As long as these sources are interpretations of the passage at hand, this will merely serve to push the origin of the interpretation back into non-extant sources. Charles believes this is what happened for our passage in 1 Enoch, which he attributes to a non-extant Book of Noah.45 The idea that the Jews borrowed from pagan myth is popular among liberals. Where Jews believed that the event reported in a pagan myth really happened, they might have done so, though this is hard to imagine for the Pharisees or Essenes. Indeed, in some of these cases, the events reported may actually have happened!

Regarding extra-biblical revelation, Patte and Russell believe that some of the apocalyptic literature may be based on actual visions experienced by the author.\textsuperscript{46} Whether Patte accepts the miraculous or not is not altogether clear: he speaks of these visions as "psychical"\textsuperscript{47} yet also as being put together by "creative imagination" from materials in the author's memory.\textsuperscript{48} Frederic Gardiner favors earlier unrecorded divine revelation as a source for some of the materials in 2 Pet and Jude:

Particulars of their [fallen angels'] history may have been from time to time incidentally revealed which have not been mentioned in the volume of inspiration, but may nevertheless form a true basis for various traditions concerning them. This seems probable from the way in which both St. Peter and St. Jude speak of them, citing certain facts of the history, not elsewhere revealed, as well-known truths.\textsuperscript{49}

Neither should occult activity be ruled out in some Jewish sectarian circles at this period.

Yet some of the interpretations which we see here may be based on other OT passages thought to be relevant to Gen 6:1-4. Both the NT and the Jewish literature throughout this period often weave together OT passages from various locations.\textsuperscript{50} This may even be the case when it is not so obvious:

\ldots in many cases where we cannot understand the reason for a targumic interpretation, one should resist the temptation to conclude that it is the product of the mere fancy of either the targumist or of the community.\ldots. On the contrary, we should assume that in most instances the targumic interpretations are the result of an explanation of Scripture by means of Scripture.\textsuperscript{51}

This fourth category is the most easily investigated since the OT is extant.

Consider first the interpretation of בנים אלהים, "sons of God."
The various interpretations are most easily seen as a combination of categories (1) and (4) above, working out the simple alternatives on the basis of Scriptural parallels. The phrase occurs in Job 1:6 and 2:2 in a heavenly context, and Satan is associated with them. Thus the

\textsuperscript{47}Patte, Hermeneutic 183, 201.
\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 183.
\textsuperscript{49}F. Gardiner, The Last of the Epistles: A Commentary Upon the Epistle of St. Jude (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856) 72.
\textsuperscript{50}See Patte, Hermeneutic 184, and throughout, on anthological style.
\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., 67.
supernatural view "angels" arises easily. On the other hand, הָלוֹא תַּחְתָּם לָעִם is occasionally used of rulers and judges in the OT (e.g., Exod 22:8, 9), from which the Jewish nonsupernatural interpretation may be derived. It is possible that the targumic rendering "sons of the great ones" in Tg. Ps.-J and Tg. Onq. may have another origin--an etymological translation to protect the transcendence of God by denying that he has any sons. Philo's mystical and moralizing exegesis of Gen 6:1-4 is a general characteristic of his technique. It is borrowed from the ethical and anti-historical, anti-physical side of hellenistic Greek philosophy. Perhaps it might be said to be influenced by pagan mythology by way of negative reaction. The Christian nonsupernatural view--"sons of Seth" or believers--is most likely based on the NT use of "sons of God" for believers (e.g., in John 1:12), coupled with Gen 4:26 and 5:24.

The interpretation of מִן לַמִּים by "giants" is easily understandable for both the supernatural and nonsupernatural views. The word Nephilim only occurs elsewhere in the OT in Num 13:33, where it is associated with the large size of the Anakim. Perhaps the reference here to the Israelites being like grasshoppers in their sight explains the rabbinic remark (Gen. Rab. 26.7) that the "marrow of each one's thigh was eighteen cubits long." If we take the grasshopper's "thigh" as one inch long and the human thigh as one cubit long (ca. 18 inches), the proportion is exact!

Regarding the binding of the angels mentioned in 1 Enoch, Jub., 2 Pet and Jude, this feature may depend on an earlier source going back to explicit revelation, or it may be derived from Isa 24:21-22:

So it will happen on that day,
That the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high
And the kings of the earth, on earth.
And they will be gathered together
Like prisoners in the dungeon [lit. "pit"]
And will be confined in prison
And after many days they will be punished.

We would normally interpret this passage eschatologically because of the context. Yet it might be understood as the eschatological punishment for an earlier sin, especially if we follow the Qumran Isaiah MS 1QIṣa², which reads תָּבָא (perfect) instead of the usual תָּבָא (perfect with waw), giving a past tense instead of future:\n
They were gathered together . . .
And will be confined . . .
And after many days they will be punished.

\[BH\], 64ln.
In any case the passage refers to the confinement in a pit of what appear to be angelic beings, like prisoners (chained?), with an eschatological punishment after many days. The reference in the context (Isa 24:18-19) to "windows above" being opened and the earth being split is certainly reminiscent of events at the beginning of the flood (Gen 7:11), though the terminology is not identical. Even if this passage is seen as strictly eschatological, its parallels with the flood may have suggested a parallel mode of punishment to interpreters favoring a supernatural view of Gen 6:1-4.

Most of the angelic names in Enoch are modeled on the biblical angelic names "Michael" and "Gabriel," using the theophoric element "El" for God and either angelic spheres of authority or divine attributes. One exception is "Shamhazai," but Ginzberg sees the first syllable as מַע, "name," a common targumic substitute for the divine name. "Azazel," too, is of special interest, and it may suggest that other angelic names are derived from OT texts. The name (or something close to it) occurs in the scapegoat passage in Lev 16:8. One goat is for the LORD, the other for Azazel, taking לַחֳזָה as a proper noun instead of a term meaning "entire removal." The word may well have been puzzling, and the reference in Lev 17:7 to goats as objects of worship might have led early interpreters to speculate that there was something supernatural about "Azazel." Charles notes that "Dudael," the place of Azazel's binding in 1 Enoch 10:4, is in the wilderness and on "rough and jagged rocks" just like the place to which the scapegoat is taken in Tg. Ps.-J.

Thus it appears that a number of details appearing in the various interpretations of Gen 6:2, 4 can be derived--rightly or wrongly--from other OT passages. This does not prove that they actually arose in this way.

CONCLUSIONS

We have now examined the ancient interpretation of Gen 6:2, 4 in Jewish literature, in Christian literature and in the NT in particular. The earliest extant view is the supernatural one, that the "sons of God" were angels and that the "Nephilim" were their gigantic offspring. The sin in this case was the unnatural union between angels and humans. Going beyond the text of Genesis, this view pictures the offending angels as being bound and cast into dark pits until the day of judgment. This interpretation seems to have been popular at the time of Christ. The nonsupernatural interpretations are not extant.

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53See Charles, Pseudepigrapha 191; Ginzberg, Legends, 5, 152-53; Milik, Books of Enoch, on 4QEn\a, BDB, 736.
54BDB, 736.
55Charles, Pseudepigrapha 193.
until later and take two basic forms which we may for convenience label "Jewish" and "Christian." The Jewish view sees the "sons of God" as judges or noblemen and the "Nephilim" as violent warriors. The sin involved is unrestrained lust, rape, and bestiality. The Christian view sees the "sons of God" as Sethites or believers in general, the "daughters of men" as Cainites or unbelievers, and the sin as mixed marriage.

After investigating possible NT references to this passage, it appears highly likely that the NT does refer to this incident, almost certainly in Jude 6 and 2 Pet 2:4. Other passages are less certain, but 1 Cor 11: 10 and Matt 22:30 are probable. Though serious questions can be raised whether Matt 22:30 and parallels endorse or oppose the supernatural interpretation, Jude and 2 Pet clearly favor the supernatural position.

Do Jude and 2 Pet endorse this interpretation or only mention it? One might be inclined to dismiss Jude's reference as an *ad hominem* argument against opponents who accepted the OT pseudepigrapha since he apparently quotes 1 Enoch 1:9 in v 14 and cites a no longer extant portion of the *Assumption of Moses* in v 9. Yet there is no hint in the context that Jude in any way distances himself from these citations. In 2 Pet 2, the whole structure of the argument (vv 4-9) indicates that Peter endorses the historicity of this angelic sin: if God judged those notorious sinners of antiquity, then he will judge these current false prophets who engage in similar activities.

Not only do Jude and 2 Peter seem to endorse the supernatural interpretation of Gen 6, they also mention some of the details found in 1 Enoch and *Jub.* which do not occur in the Genesis account. Liberal theologians have no difficulty here, since they treat all of this as superstitious nonsense, but how are those who believe in the Bible to respond?

Although part of the evangelical resistance to the supernatural interpretation is exegetical and part is theological, some resistance seems to be due to rationalistic assumptions. Especially in the fields of science, history and Biblical studies, a "minimal-miracle" stance may be adopted, if for no other reason than that miracles pose a roadblock to investigation. However, whenever a minimal-miracle approach begins to produce a crop of problem passages, we should consider the possibility that we are wresting Scripture or other data.

It is also possible that evangelicals along with liberals have adopted too readily the enlightenment-evolutionary view that the

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ancients were ignorant and superstitious. Perhaps an over-reaction to the excesses of the medieval Catholic Church is also to blame. Of course the ancients (except in the case of inspiration) were fallible and influenced by the dominant worldviews of their times, but so are we. They did not have the leisure, technology, communications, and libraries that we have, so we should not expect their scholarship to be as impressive as ours. But they weren't fools! When all of human history testifies against our times to the reality of the supernatural and the occult, we evangelicals (of all people) would be foolish to dismiss this testimony out of hand, especially when it corroborates biblical testimony.

May it not be possible that we enlightened, 20th-century Christians can learn something positive from the ancient exegetes? Perhaps they were right in seeing an angelic incursion in Gen 6:1-4 and we are wrong in denying it. Perhaps with a great interest in the supernatural and angels some ancient interpreters scoured the Scriptures to locate any hints it might contain on this subject. In such a case, they might well have reached some valid insights which God preserved by inscripturation in the NT.

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THE EARTH OF GENESIS 1:2
ABIOTIC OR CHAOTIC?
PART I

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Introduction

The famous German scholar Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932), well-known advocate of Formgeschichte, tried to demonstrate that the battle in which Yahweh defeated the sea monster of the chaos was related to the Hebrew account of creation in Genesis 1. He assumed that the Babylonian creation account, with its Chaoskampf or battle between the creator-god and the powers of the chaos, was the basis for the mythical imagery that appears in the Bible.1

Since the discovery of the Ugaritic myths, the existence of a conflict between Yahweh and the sea dragons (Leviathan and Rahab in poetical texts of the OT) has been widely accepted.2 This Canaanite conflict motif has been related to the biblical creation story as "a missing link" which supports the apparent Chaoskampf in Gen 1:2. Frequently, the Chaoskampf that appears in the Babylonian Enuma elish and the Ugaritic Baal myth is considered the main foundation of any cosmogony in the Ancient Near East (ANE).3 For instance, J. Day assumed that Gen 1:2 is a demythologization of the original Chaoskampf myth of ancient Canaan.4 R. J. Clifford and J. J. Collins have proposed that Genesis 1 begins with a mythical combat between the dragon

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4 Day, 53.
of chaos and the divine sovereign.  

Gunkel stated that the Hebrew term *tohu* in Gen 1:2 had a Babylonian background. He suggested that *tohu* derived directly from *Tiamat*, the Babylonian goddess of the primordial ocean in the *Enuma elish*. Since Gunkel's statement, many scholars have assumed some kind of direct or indirect connection between the Babylonian *Tiamat* and the Hebrew *tohu*. Many have accepted that the Hebrew *tohu* in Gen 1:2 has a mythological foundation in *Tiamat*, the goddess of the *Enuma elish*, in which *Marduk* the storm god fights and defeats *Tiamat* the sea dragon, thus establishing the cosmos. 

The expression *tohu wabohu*, "emptiness and waste," in Gen 1:2 is often considered a reference to this primordial "chaos," in strict opposition to "creation." The phrase is taken to refer to the earth in an *abiotic* or lifeless state, with no vegetation, animals, or human beings.

Gunkel also posited the theory, later supported by other scholars, that the *ruah elohim* in Gen 1:2c corresponds to the winds that *Marduk* sends against *Tiamat*, thus assuming that it is an expression that describes the primordial chaos.

The object of this three-part article is to discover whether in Gen 1:2 there is any evidence for the mythological battle between the creator-god and the powers of the chaos, *Chaoskampf*, such as Gunkel and many other scholars maintain. If we found such evidence, we would need to take heed

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10 See for example, B. K. Waltke, *Creation and Chaos* (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974). This author points out that there are three main
to Gunkel's affirmation: "If it is the case, however, that a fragment of a cosmogonic myth is preserved in Genesis 1, then it is also no longer allowable to reject the possibility that the whole chapter might be a myth that has been transformed into narrative." But if, on the contrary, there is no linguistic or biblical foundation for that assumption, the creation account would no longer be a myth or compilation of myths similar to those of ANE literature. The creation story would then be a true, reliable, literal, and objective account of the origin of life on this planet.

To achieve this goal, these articles about the earth described in Gen 1:2 will analyze the Hebrew terms tohu wabohu, tehom, and ruah elohim in the OT and their equivalents in the ANE literature.

The Hebrew Text of Gen 1:2

Weaare hayeta tohu wabohu wehosek al--p'ne t'hom
w'ruah 'lohim merahepet 'al--p'ne hammayim
Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (NIV).

Gen 1:2 is formed by three circumstantial clauses:
(1) W' ha'ares hay'ta tohu wabohu: "Now the earth was formless and empty"
(2) w'hosek al--p'ne t'hom: "darkness was over the surface of the deep"
(3) w'ruah 'lohim merahepet 'al- p'ne hammayim: "and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

In Semitic languages a circumstantial clause describes a particular condition. Verse 2 presents three clauses that describe three circumstances or conditions that existed at a particular time, which is defined by the verb interpretations of Gen 1:1-3 within Protestant thinking. These he calls the theory of the postcreation chaos (or theory of the restitution), in which chaos occurred after the original creation; the theory of the initial chaos, according to which chaos occurred in connection with creation; and the theory of the precreation chaos which he himself defends, according to which chaos occurred before the original creation (18, 19); and other authors such as: A. P. Ross, Creation and Blessing (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 106-107, 723; V. P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-11, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 117. As can be seen, the explanation and interpretation of Gen 1:2 are founded on chaos, whether before, during, or after creation.

form of the three clauses. In this verse the three coordinated clauses begin with a **waw** followed by a noun that functions as the subject of the clause.

The theme of the verse 2 is the earth; this is the great central theme, not only in the rest of Genesis 1, but also of the whole Bible. The earth is the center and object of biblical thought.

The exegesis of Gen 1:2 has been considered by scholars such as M. Alexandre, P. Beauchamp, V. P. Hamilton, D. Kidner, S. Niditch, A. P. Ross, N. M. Sarna, L. I. J. Stadelmann, G. von Rad, G. J. Wenham, Westermann, and E. J. Young.

15 "Clauses describing concomitant circumstances are introduced by the conjunction **v** of accompaniment... When the circumstances described are past or future, a finite form of a verb is employed. For the past a perfect aspect is used, e.g. הָיָּתָה הָאָרֶץ הָיָּה “the earth having been a formless void” (Gen 1:2)" (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, 2d ed. [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976, 1992]), 83. In this case the verb **hayya** is in Qal perfect 3 feminine singular **hayta**. As C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch point out: "The three statements in our verse are parallel; the substantive and participial construction of the second and third clauses rests upon the **htyhv** of the first. All three describe the condition of the earth immediately after the creation of the universe" (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. J. Martin ([Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986], 1:49).

14 For further bibliographical references on Gen 1:1-3 from 1885/86 to 1966, see C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 75-76.

15 So Keil and Delitzsch, 1:48.
18 Hamilton, 108-117.
21 Ross, 106-107.
26 Westermann, 102-111.
The Semichiastic Structure of Gen 1:2

The Hebrew text of Gen 1:2 presents an incomplete antithetical chiastic structure (i.e., a quasi- or semichiastic antithetical structure, because it lacks the section A' which is antithetical to A) marked by the following linguistic and semantic parallelism:

\[\text{A} \quad \text{Weha'ares hayeta tohu wabohu: "Now the earth was formless and empty"} \]
\[\text{B} \quad \text{wehosek 'al--pene tehom: "darkness was over the surface of the deep"} \]
\[\text{B'} \quad \text{weruah elohim merahepet 'al--pene hammayim: "and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."} \]

The grammatical, semantic, and syntactic chiastic parallelism is clearly defined by the microstructures B \ B'(\ stands for antithetic parallelism) in which the expression "over the surface" \('al - p'ne\) is repeated. Grammatically speaking, this expression is a preposition + plural masculine noun construct (prep. + p.m.n. cstr.).

The grammatical and semantic parallel \('al --p'ne tehom // 'al - p'ne hammayim\) represents a second example of paired words, \(\text{tehom} // \text{hammayim}\) that appears in Ezek 31:4; Hab 3:10; Jonah 2:6; Ps 33:7; 77:17; Job 38:30. Notice also the parallelism between \(\text{mayim} // \text{tehom}\) that appear in Ezek 26:19 and Ps 104:6; and \(\text{hosek} // \text{ruah elohim}\) that appears in Ezek 31:4; Hab 3:10; Jonah 2:6; Ps 33:7; 77:17; Job 38:30. The antithetic concept is clearly indicated by the opposite or contrasting pair of words hosek "darkness" \(\text{ruah elohim} "\text{Spirit of God."}\) The noun hosek is grammatically a masculine singular (m.s.n.), and ruah elohim is a feminine singular noun construct (f.s.n.cstr.) plus a masculine plural noun (m.p.n.). However, they present an exact syntactic correspondence and parallelism. Both have the same syntactic function, that of a subject.

Another syntactic aspect is important in this antithetic chiasm: the construct relation in \(\text{al --p'ne tehom} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{al p'ne hammayim}\). This aspect of the Hebrew syntax is of great importance to the significance and the semantic and etymological origin of \(\text{tehom}\), as will be seen in the second part of this article.

A particular type of parallelism used in prose is the gender-matched parallelism. Gen 1:2 is an example of this type of parallelism, since it represent

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28 Williams, 10-11.
30 For a study of the biblical grammatical, semantic, and syntactic parallelism, see A. Berlin, \textit{The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).
the gender-matched pattern: Feminine + masculine // masculine + feminine // feminine + masculine.32

Tohu wabohu in the Old Testament and the Literature of the Ancient Near East

Before specifically considering this point, we must briefly analyze the Hebrew terms ha'ares and hayta in Gen 1:2. The most used Egyptian term for "earth" is t3. The antithesis for this term is the formula pt-t3, "heaven" and "earth," by which it makes reference to the whole cosmos. The usual hieroglyphic symbol t3 represents a flood plain with grains of sand all around. In Sumerian and Akkadian there is a distinction between "earth" (ki or ersetu) and "country" (kur, kalam, or matu). In Akkadian ersetu means "earth," in opposition to "heaven." "Heaven and earth" (samu u ersetu) means the universe. In Ugaritic 'rs means "earth, ground, inferior world." The earth is also opposed to "heaven" and the clouds.33 Ugaritic literature also gives an extraordinary example of a pair of words, ars // thmt, chiasitically related as in Gen 1:2: tant s'mm 'm ars // thmt 'mn kkkm.34

The pair of words 'eres // 'ēhom also reveals an example of inclusive structure in the six days of the creation, where 'al -- p'ne 'ēhom before the first day (Gen 1:2) matches 'al -p'ne ha'ares after the sixth (Gen 1:29).35

The Hebrew 'eres occupies the fourth place among the most frequent nouns in the OT. The term appears 2,504 times in Hebrew and another 22

33 TDOT, 1:388-392.
35 Kselman, 164. For this type of inclusion or construction see D. N. Freedman's "Prolegomenon" to G. B. Gray, The Forms of Hebrew Poetry (New York: KTAV, 1972), xxxvi-xxxvii. However, according to D.T. Tsumura the nature of the relationship between ha'ares "earth" and 'ēhom "abyss, ocean" in Gen 1:2 is a hyponym. According to Tsumura, in modern linguistics, the relationship of meaning is called hyponym which sometimes is explained as inclusion. (i.e., what is referred to in the term A includes what is referred to in the term B). The former is preferred over the latter because a relationship of sense exists among lexical items rather than a relationship of reference. Thus the hyponym can be used also in a relationship between terms that have no reference. In Tsumura's own words: "Our term 'hyponym' therefore means that the sense [A] of the more general term 'A' (e.g. 'fruit') completely includes the 'sense' [B] of more specific term 'B' (e.g. 'apple'), and hence what 'A' refers to includes what 'B' refers to. In other words, when the referent [B] of the term 'B' is a part of/belongs to the referent [A] of the term 'A', we can say that 'B' is hyponymous to 'A,' ('A' 'Hyponymous' Word Pair: 'rs and thm (i) in Hebrew and Ugaritic" [Bib 69 (1988): 258-269, esp. 259-260]). Therefore, in Gen 1:2 there is a hyponym in which 'ēhom "ocean" is a part of the ha'ares "earth."
times in the Aramaic sections. The word tires designates: (1) cosmologically, the earth (in opposition to heaven) and solid ground (in opposition to water); (2) physically, the soil on which humans live; (3) geographically, certain regions and territories; (4) politically, certain sovereign regions and countries. In the most general sense, ‘eres designates the earth that together with the "heaven," samayim, comprises the totality of the universe. "Heaven and Earth" is an expression designating the whole world (Gen 1:1; 2:1, 4; 14:19, 22; etc.).

In addition to a bipolar view of the world, there is also a tripolar view: for instance, heaven-earth-sea (Exod 20:11; Gen 1:10, 20 and others); heaven-earth-water beneath the earth (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8). But what is important to the OT is not the earth as part of the cosmos but what lives on it (Deut 33:16; Isa 34:1; Jer 8:16; etc.): its inhabitants (Isa 24:1, 5-6, 17; Jer 25:29-30; Ps 33:14; etc.), nations (Gen 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; Deut 28:10; etc.), and kingdoms (Deut 28:25; 2 Kgs 19:15; etc.). Thus the term "earth" may designate at the same time—as it does in other languages—the earth and its inhabitants (Gen 6:11; etc.). In its physical use, ‘eres designates the ground on which human beings, things, dust (Exod 8:12), and reptiles (Gen 1:26; 7:14; 8:19; etc.) are.36

The verb haya (to be) that appears in Gen 1:2 as hayta in Qal perfect 3 f.s. is translated by the majority of the versions as "was" but may also be translated "became," as it appears in some versions. However, the syntactic order and the structure of the clause do not allow this translation here. The syntactic order in Gen 1:2 (first the subject and then the verb) is used to indicate the addition of circumstantial information and the absence of chronological or sequential occurrence. For that reason the translators of the LXX translated hayta as "was" and not as "became."37 Besides, the Hebrew letter waw that appears at the beginning of Gen 1:2 is a "circumstantial waw" because it is joined to the subject "the earth" and not to the verb. Therefore it is better translated as "now." The translators of the LXX, who were very careful in the translation of the Pentateuch, translated it in that way.

The initial state of the earth in Gen 1:2 is described as tohu wabohu. This expression is translated into English as "formless and empty" (NIV). In the Greek versions it is translated as αορατος και ακατασκευαστος, "invisible and unformed" (LXX); κενωμα και ουθεν, "empty and nothing" (Aquila); θεν και ουθεν "nothing and nothing" (Theodotion); and аργουν


37 F. Delitzsch comments that the perfect preceded by the subject is the most usual way of describing the circumstances in which the subsequent account takes place (A New Commentary on Genesis [Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978],1:77).
Etymology and Usage of *Tohu* in the OT

*Tohu* is a masculine singular noun (m.s.n.) that means "formlessness, confusion, unreality, emptiness,... formlessness of primaeval earth in Gen 1:2"); "wasteland, solitude or emptiness"; "emptiness, waste, desert, chaos, confusion"; "Wuste, Ode, Leere,... Gen 1:2 es ‘bedeutet die ode Wuste, and ist als Grundbegriff zur Schopfung gebraucht’", "caos, lo que no tiene forma ni medida, informe, inmensidad. Lo desmesurado; formulacion clara y directa de la negacion: nada, la nada, vacio, el vacio, nulidad,... caos informe en Gen 1:2." 

The term *tohu* appears 20 times in the OT, 11 of them in Isaiah. The different uses of the term can be classified, according to Westermann, in three groups that go from the concrete meaning of "desert" to the abstract "emptiness": (1) "Desert," the terrible and barren desert that leads to destruction: Deut 32:10; Job 6:18; 12:24 = Ps 107:40; (2) "Desert or devastation that threatens": Isa 24: 10; 34:11; 40:23; Jer 4:23; "the state that is opposed to the creation and precedes it": Gen 1:2; Isa 45:18; Job 26:7; 3; (3) "Nothing": 1 Sam 12:21 (2x); Isa 29:21; 40:17; 41:29; 44:29; 45:19; 49:4; 59:4.

The first and third groups are simple enough to define and describe. In the first, *tohu* is "earth, desert ground" (Deut 32:10), the "untilled land" where caravans die (Job 6:18), a "barren ground without roads" where people wander (Job 12:24; Ps 107:40). Therefore, the term refers to the desert as a "barren ground
or land." In the third group *tohu* refers to a situation in which something that ought to be there is lacking. It is used in an abstract sense in which it appears in parallel with other nouns such as 'epes, "nothing" (Isa 41:29), *riq*, "empty" (Isa 49:4), and "empty arguments" (Isa 59:4, NIV). In these passages *tohu* is better understood as "lack or emptiness" rather than "nothing."

Of special interest to this study are the uses of *tohu* in Westermann's second group, where the word describes the situation or condition of places such as the planet earth, land (region), or city. In Isa 24:10 we have *qiryat-tohu*, referring to the "desolate or deserted" state of a city, almost equivalent to the term *samma* in v. 12, which refers to the desolation of a city: "The ruined city lies desolate; the entrance to every house is barred" (NIV). In Job 26:7, Westermann thinks 'al -- *tohu* is directly opposed to the creation, though he does not translate it as chaos. But the expression *al -- tohu* is parallel to the expression 'al - beli -- ma "a place where there is nothing." Therefore, in this context a possible translation of *tohu* would be "a desert-like or empty place."48

Westermann points out that in Isa 45:18 *lo- tohu* is in direct opposition to the creation. However, here *tohu* is in parallelism with *lasebet*, Qal infinitive construct (Qal inf. cstr.), "to be inhabited" (NIV), from the verb *yasab* "to dwell." The text does not indicate anything about a chaotic state in the earth: "he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited" (NIV). Instead, *tohu* in this text also means "a desert, an uninhabited place." Thus this verse may be better translated as "[earth] not to be a desert or uninhabited place he created it, to be inhabited he formed it."51 In other words, this verse explains that God

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46 E. J. Young translates *tohu* in Isa 44:9 as "unreality" and explains that the word "suggests an absence of all life and power" (*The Book of Isaiah*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 3:172).

47 Westermann, 103.

48 Job 26:7a: *noteh sapon* a1-*tohu* //Job 26:7b: *toleh ères al-b'li-ma*.

49 Westermann, 103.

50 BDB, 442; Holladay, 146.

51 Isa 45:18: to -*tohu* be ra'ah // Isa 45:18g: *lasebet y'sarah*. We can verify that it is a structure in parallel panels which is marked by the following microstructure:

\[A \quad \text{lo--*tohu* [Earth] not to be a desert or uninhabited place} \]

\[B \quad \text{b'ra'ah he created it} \]

\[A' \quad \text{*lasebet* to be inhabited} \]

\[B' \quad \text{y'sarah he formed it} \]

We observe a clear antithetical parallelism between A / A', lo'-*tohu* "[Earth] not to be a desert or uninhabited place" //*lasebet* "[Earth] to be inhabited." As Watson points out when referring to the parallel types of words: "antonymic word pairs are made up of words opposite in meaning and are normally used in antithetic parallelism" (131). At the same time, there is a synonymous parallelism between B // B', b'ra'ah "he created it" //
did not create the earth to be uninhabited or desert but to be inhabited. Gen 1:2 can be understood in the same sense, that God created the earth to be inhabited, but "it was still desert or uninhabited" during the initial stage of the creation though it was in no sense in a chaotic state.

In Isa 45:19 the term tohu has been interpreted in two ways: concrete (locative) and abstract. The syntax is always understood in the same way: tohu as an adverb that modifies the verbal clause baggesuni, as part of the direct speech.\(^{52}\) The Tg. Isa. analyzes tohu in the same way: "Buscad en vano (lryqnw) mi temor!"\(^{53}\) However, its meaning and grammatical function must be analyzed by considering the parallel structure of the complete verse.\(^{54}\) Therefore, from the literary structure in parallel panels, B' tohu is parallel with B bimeqom ‘eres hosek "in a land of darkness" (NIV). In Tsumura's words: "Tohu without a preposition directly corresponds either to ‘eres hosek or to hosek.... In this case, the term tohu, corresponding directly to hosek ‘darkness,’ probably means ‘desolation.’"\(^{57}\) To conclude, we must point out that in the Targums, the Talmudic and the Midrashic literature tohu is interpreted as "waste, desolation; vanity, idleness."\(^{57}\)

*Thw in Ugaritic Literature*

Once we have analyzed the etymology and the usage of tohu in the OT, we consider its etymology and usage in the Ugaritic literature. Until recently, y’sarah "he formed it." In Watson's words: "synonymous word pairs comprise a large class with a broad spectrum.... Its components are synonyms or near-synonyms and therefore almost interchangeable in character" (ibid.).


\(^{54}\) Isa 45:19a: lo'basseter dibbarti // Isa 45:19c: lo' amareti lezera 'ya aqob. Isa 45:19b: bim'gom 'eres hosek // Isa 45:19d: tohu baqq'suni. We can observe that it is a structure in parallel panels that is marked by the following microstructures:

A lo'basseter dibbarti I have not spoken in secret

B bim'gom 'eres hosek from somewhere in a land of darkness

A' lo' amar' ti f' zera 'ya aqob I have not said to Jacob's descendants

B' tohu baqq'suni’ Seek me in vain' (NIV)

The syntactical and morphological parallelism is evident between A \ A' in the negative sentence, and the tense and the person of the verb, lo' dibbarti negative+Pi'el perfect 1 common singular // lo' amar' ti negative+Qal perfect 1 common singular. Meanwhile, there is a semantical parallelism between B // B', ‘eres hosek // tohu, with the same nouns as in Gen 1:2 (for a linguistic study of the different types of biblical parallelisms, see Berlin, 32-58).

\(^{57}\) Tsumura, 362-363.

\(^{57}\) M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York: Title, 1943), 1651.
recently, the etymology of tohu was explained in the light of the Arabic
tih, waterless desert, trackless wilderness. However, as Tsumura points
out, the Arabic term, with a second weak consonant h, does not explain
the final long u of the Hebrew tohu.

The Ugaritic term equivalent to the Hebrew tohu is the thw nominal
form that appears only once in the Ugaritic literature, in the cycle of Baal
and Mot as follows:

\[\text{pnp.s.nps.lbim [15] thw}\]

"But my appetite is an appetite of lions (in) the waste,
hm.brlt.anhr[16] bym"

"just as the longing of dolphin(s) is in the sea."

Del Olmo Lete presents the following translation of the same text: "Tengo,
si, el apetito del leon de la estepa, o la gana del tiburon (que mora) en el mar."

In the context of the two lines of Ugaritic text, lbim.thw "of a lion in the
steppe [desert]" corresponds to anhr.bym, "of a shark in the sea," since nps
and brlt are a well known idiomatic pair. Del Olmo Lete maintains that
the Ugaritic term thw is a cognate of the Heb tohu.

Considering the evidence presented, we can affirm that the Ugaritic
term thw is a cognate of the Heb tohu and both have a common meaning:
desert." They are probably nouns with a common Semitic root, *thw. In
relation to this, Huehnergard points out that the text or alphabetical form
thw is probably /tuhwu/ "wasteland."

\[58\] Klein, 692.
\[59\] D. T. Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation,
\[60\] See C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook, Analecta Orientalia 38 (Roma: Pontificium
Institutum Biblicum, 1965), 178. It is the transliteration of the text 67.1.15:
thw.ham; brlt.anhr; also M. Dietrich, O. Loreto and J. Sanmartin, Die keilalphabetischen Texte
aus Ugarit, 2d ed., ALASP 8 (Munster: Ugarit, 1995), 22. It is the transliteration of the text
1.5 115: thw.hm.brlt.anhr.
\[61\] Ugaritic text 5 115, in J.C.L. Gibson, Canaanite Myths and Legends (Edinburgh: T.
Translation: "I have, yes I do, the appetite of a lion on the steppe, the longing of a shark
(who lives) in the sea."
\[63\] On p. 635 Del Olmo Lete says: "thw: n.m., ‘estepa, desierto’ (cf. heb. tohu; cf. Gibson,
159)."
\[64\] Dietrich, Loreto and Sanmartin, 1.18 IV 25, 36-37, 55, 58. Del Olmo Lete notes that
thw "steppe, desert" is antonymous to ym, "sea."
\[65\] J. Huehnergard, Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription, Harvard Semitic Series
32 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 84, 287.
Etymology of *bhw

*bohu is similar to *tohu because it is a m.s.n. which means "'emptiness' of primeval earth".66 "emptiness (// formlessness, + earth) ... formlessness and emptiness";67 "Heb. bohu 'vacuité, vide'; Arab. 'bahw' - 'espace dégagé, trouée, etc.', bahiya 'être vide, desert', bahi 'vide, desert'";68 "void, waste",69 "emptiness, chaos";70 "Leere, Ode";71 "vacio, caos, caos informe."72

The term *bohu appears only 3 times in the OT, always with *tohu: Gen 1:2; Isa 34:11; Jer 4:23. Its meaning will be considered in the section on the usage of phrase *tohu wabohu. In the Targums, as well as the Talmudic and the Midrashic literature, Jastrow finds that *bohu is interpreted as "chaotic condition; always with הָוָה."73

*Bhw in the Ancient Near Eastern Literature

The etymology of *bohu has been explained through the Arabic bahiya, "to be hollow, empty."74 This Arabic term is used to describe the "empty" state of a store or house that has little or nothing in it.75 Therefore, its meaning is more concrete than abstract, "nothing, empty."

Albright suggested that the Akkadian term *bubutu, "emptiness, hunger," comes from *buhbuhtu and is possibly a cognate of the Heb *bohu.76 However, the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary does not list "emptiness" as a meaning of *bubutu. It translates the term as: "famine, starvation, want, hunger, sustenance"77

66 BDB, 96.
69 Holladay, 34.
70 Klein, 65.
71 Koehler and Baumgartner,107.
72 Schockel, 102. Translation: "empty, chaos, shapeless chaos."
73 Jastrow, 142.
74 According to Klein, *bohu comes from the root of הָוָה , Arabic bahw, "hollow, empty" (65).
75 E. W. Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1863; reprinted 1968), 269f.
77 CAD, B:301-302.
and Von Soden suggests "hunger" as a possible meaning of bubutu. Neither of these Akkadian terms is a cognate of Heb bohu.78

It has been also suggested that the term bohu is related to Phoenician divine name bāəu, the goddess of "night."79 Tsumura indicates that it is phonologically possible to propose an original "Canaanite" form /bahuw/ for both Heb bohu and Phoenician /bahuw/, which was apparently represented in Greek script as ba-a-ū.80 But he adds that there is no evidence that the Hebrew term had any connection with the Phoenician divine name, except for its possible origin. in a common root, *bhw.81 Likewise, Cassuto, after indicating that the word is found in the earlier Canaanite poems, adds: "but there is no connection apparently with the Mesopotamian goddess Ba-ū."82

Recently Gorg suggested that tohu and bohu must be explained by the Egyptian terms th3 and bh3.83 This proposal is highly speculative since no hendiadys of these terms in is known."

In conclusion, taking into account available evidence, although there is no final etymological explanation, the Heb bohu seems to be a Semitic term based on the root *bhw and is probably a cognate of Arabic bahiya, "to be empty."

*Thw and *bhw in the OT

Albright's affirmation that the clause tohu wabohu means "chaos" and

79 Albright, 366, n. 7.
80 Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters, 22. This author proposes the following evolution of the original form for the Heb bohu: */bdhwu/ > /buhwu/ > /buhuu/ > /buhu/ > /bohu/. But he immediately adds the possible origin of bohu in an original form */bihwu/ from a Ugaritic example written syllabically (ibid., n. 26).
81 Ibid.
84 Hendiadys is defined as: "The use of two substantives, joined by a conjunction, to express a single but complex idea. The two words may be collocated, be joined by a copula or be in apposition. Hendiadys is used very often in Hebrew.... The important aspect of hendiadys is that its components are no longer considered separately but as a single unit in combination" (Watson, 324-325). Such is the case of tohu wabohu in Gen 1:2. E. A. Speiser explains: "The Heb. pair tohu wa--bohu is an excellent example of hendiadys, that is, two terms connected by 'and' and forming a unit in which one member is used to qualify the other" (Genesis, AB [New York: Doubleday, 1962], 5, n. 2a).
that *tohu* refers to a watery chaos is shared by many modern scholars, including Cassuto.\(^8^5\) According to most modern scholars, the expression *tohu wabohu* in Gen 1:2 is understood as the primeval "chaos, confusion, disorganization" and is, therefore, in direct opposition to creation.\(^8^6\) On the other hand, Burner--Klein points out that *tohu wabohu* describes the state of the earth immediately after God had created the world. From the LXX and the ancient Greek versions, as well as the Qumran materials, he concludes that the phrase refers to a created, yet shapeless earth.\(^8^7\)

To complete the study we must consider Isa 34:11 and Jer 4:23, where *tohu* and *bohu* appear. In Isa 34:11 tohu and bohu appear in parallel expressions \(^8^8\):

\[
\text{qaw} - \text{tohu} \ "\text{the measuring line of thw}" \ (\text{NIV}) \ \text{II} \ \text{’abne} --- \text{bohu} \ "\text{the plumb line of bhw}" \ (\text{NM}).
\]

This passage clearly refers to an uninhabited place. Basic


\(^8^6\) See Alexandre, 77; Beauchamp, 162-163; Hamilton, 108; Kidner, 44; Niditch, 18; Ross, 106; Sarna, 6; Stadelmann, 12; Wenham, 15; Westermann, 103; Young, 33-34.

\(^8^7\) D. Burner-Klein, "Tohu u and bohu: Zur Auslegungsgeschichte von Gen 1,2a," *Henoch* 15 (1993): 3-41. Burner-Klein analyzes the LXX, Origen, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, which use a variety of images to translate the clause: "the earth was invisible," "uncultivated," "a desert," "an empty space," "nothing." His study of Qumran materials renders the following interpretations: "a desolate country," "vanity" and "empty." Rabbinic literature interprets the clause as a negative principle, primeval matter that God already found at creation, i.e., a substratum of the *creatio ex nihilo*, created matter but shapeless yet. In a Karaite commentary on Genesis he found the idea of an empty earth, without buildings. His study included Christian Bible commentaries that develop similar concepts in opposition to Aristotle's doctrine of the eternity of the world.


\(^8^9\) Isa 34:11a: *wièresuha qaat w'qippod* // Isa 34:11b: *w'yansop w' 'oreb yisk努-bah*; Isa 34:11c: *w'nata aleyha qaw-tohu* // Isa 34:11d: *we'abne--bohu*. The structure in parallel panels is marked by the following microstructures:

A *wièresuha qaat w'qippod* The desert owl and screech owl will possess it

A' *w'yansop w' 'oreb yiskenu --- bah* the great owl and the raven will nest there

B *w'nata aleyha qaw-tohu* ... the measuring line of chaos

B' *w' 'abne - bohu* and the plumb line of desolation (NIV)

There is a semantic and syntactic synonymous parallelism between A // A', *wièresuha qaat w'qippod* "The desert owl and screech owl will possess it" // *w'yansop w' 'oreb yiskenu - bah" the great owl and the raven will nest there." In both cases, at a semantic level, the lines refer to birds. On the syntactic level, there is also a subject+verb (+suffix) // subject+verb (+suffix) parallelism, but with the components of the clauses inverted. Likewise, there is semantic and syntactic synonymous parallelism between B // B', *w'nata
to the understanding of Isa 34:11 as a land uninhabited by human beings is the grammatical and semantic parallelism of the verbs יָרָּה, "take possession of,"90 Qal perfect 3 common plural יָרָּה-ם "will possess it"; and יָשָׁר "live in, settle,"91 Qal imperfect 3 masculine plural יָשָׁרַּה, "will dwell," in Isa 34:11a and Isa 34:11b. Besides, an exegesis of the immediately preceding verse, Isa 34:10cd, clearly shows the meaning of Isa 34:11: an uninhabited land." In Young's words: "the land will become a desolation and waste so that it can no more receive inhabitants."93 Therefore, in Isa 34:11 we do not find linguistic or exegetic evidence for any chaotic situation. Jer 4:23 contains the following parallel structure:94

A: raiti et –ha'ares I looked at the earth,
B: w̃hinneh—tōhu w̃abohu and it was formless and empty;
A': w̃ 'el -hassamayim and at the heavens,
B': w̃ 'en 'oram and their light was gone (NIV).

It has often been stated that Jer 4:23-26 describes a return to the primitive chaos.95 But this point of view is highly influenced by the traditional exegesis of the expression tōhu wabohu as "chaos" in Gen 1:2 and not on the analysis of the context of Jer 4:23. In vv. 23-26, each of the verses begins with raiti,

'aleyha qaw– tōhu: "the measuring line of chaos" // w̃ 'abne- bohu "and the plumb line of desolation." In both lines we find the same nouns that appear in Gen 1:2, tōhu and bohu. Finally, both nouns are in a construct relation (on grammatical, semantic, and syntactic parallelism, see Berlin, 31-102).

90 BDB, 439; Holladay, 145.
91 BDB, 1014-1015; Holladay, 371.
92 Isa 34:10cd: middor lador teh'rab ħnesah n'sahim eyn ' ober bah "From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again" (NIV). Thus Isa 34:10d interprets Isa 34:10c and 34:11 in a definite semantic parallelism to: middor laddor teh'rab, "From generation to generation it will lie desolate."
93 Young indicates that the prophet Isaiah uses the language of Gen 1:2 (Book of Isaiah, 2:438).
94 There is an antithetical semantic parallelism between A // A', raiti 'et- ha'ares "I looked at the earth" // w̃'el-hassamayim "and at the heavens." These are the basic components of the Hebrew conception of the bipartite structure of the universe, earth and heavens. There is also a grammatical and semantic parallelism between B // B', w̃'hinneh-tōhu w̃abohu "and it was formless and empty" // w̃ 'en 'oram "and their light was gone." This parallelism can be observed at a grammatical level between the nouns tōbu and bohu in 4:23b, and or in 4:23d, both are m.s.n.; at a semantic level, both concepts imply the lack of something, both on the earth ("formless and empty") and the heavens ("light").
95 For example, Holladay affirms that Jeremiah "envisages a ‘de-creation’ of the cosmos, the world again become the chaos before creation began" (W. L. Holladay, Jeremiah [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 1:164; see also W. McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986], 1:106-107).
"I saw," and the word w'hinneh, "and behold," is repeated in each verse. The exegesis of verse 23 is completed and confirmed by the interpretation of verses 25-26, which are translated: "I looked, and there were no people; every bird in the sky had flown away. I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert; all its towns lay in ruins before the Lord" (NIV).

There is a precise positive-negative syntactic parallelism\(^96\) between the vv. 23 and 25-26, "I looked at the earth" (4:23 a) // "I looked and there were no people (4:25a); "I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert" (4:26a) and "and at the heavens" (4:23c) // "every bird in the sky had flown away" (4:25b). Therefore, v. 23a, "I looked at the earth," is interpreted in vv. 25a-26a, "I looked, and there were no people"; "I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert." Likewise, v. 23c, "and at the heavens" is also interpreted by v. 25b, "every bird in the sky had flown away." Therefore, the earth or land of Jer 4:23 was uninhabited, with no human beings on it; "there were no people." It was also arid and unproductive: "the fruitful land was a desert." On the other hand, the heavens of Jer 4:23 are empty, without light ("their light was gone") and without birds ("every bird in the sky had flown away").\(^97\)

The interpretation of tohu wabohu in the Targums also helps solve the difficulties inherent in the interpretation of Gen 1:2. On Gen 1:2 the Tg. Neof reads as follows, according to two translators: Diez Macho and G. Anderson.

Y la tierra estaba tehi’ y behi’ deshabitada de hombres y bestias y vacia de todo cultivo de plantas y arboles.\(^98\)
Now the earth was tehi’ and behi’ [meaning it was] desolate (sdy) with respect to people and animals and empty (rygn ')in respect to all manner of agricultural work and trees."

On his translation of Tg. Neof. Anderson says:
This text first reproduces the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew pair tohu wabohu and then interprets them. The first term, tohu, is interpreted to mean an absence of faunal life; the second term, bohu, the absence of

\(^96\) See Berlin, 53-57.
\(^97\) Jer 4:23a: raiti 'et---ha'ares //Jer 4:25a-26a: raiti w'hinneh 'en ha'adam ... raiti w'hinneh hakkarmel hammidbar; Jer 4:23c: w'el-hassamayim // Jer 4:25b: of kol- op hassamayim nadadu. The following microstructures are evident.
A raiti et -haares I looked at the earth
B w'el--hassamayim and at the heavens
A'ra itl w'hinneh en ha'adam ... raiti w'hinneh hakkarmel hammidbar I looked, and there were no people ... I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert
B'w'kol- op hassamayim nadadu every bird in the sky had flown away (NIV).
floral life. No longer do *tohu wabohu* connote a primeval substrate "chaos." Rather they simply describe the earth in an unfinished state. The earth was not created as a state of chaos; rather it is simply devoid of the living matter which will be created in days 3, 5 and 6. Exegesis has brought order to the unordered. All other targums follow this general exegetical direction.100

In brief, the expression *tohu wabohu* refers to a "desert-uninhabited" (Isa 34:11; Jer 4:23) and "arid or unproductive" (Jer 4:23) state.101 Neither text gives any linguistic or exegetical evidence to support the existence of a situation of mythic chaos in the earth.

*Thw and *bhw in the Ugaritic Literature

Several studies have pointed to the similarity between the Heb *tohu wabohu* and the Ugaritic *tu-a-bi[u(?)].*102 Tsumura proposes a possible explanation of the morphological correspondence between the Hebrew expression *tohu wabohu* and the Ugaritic *tu-a-bi[u(?)].*103 It is, therefore, possible that the Ugaritic *tu-a-bi [u(?)]* and the Hebrew *tohu wabohu* are two versions of the same idiomatic expression in the Northwestern Semitic.104

However, scholars such as J. Huehnergard have proposed a different morphological relation, considering the Hebrew expression *tohu wabohu* as an equivalent of the Ugaritic *tu-a pi [ku(?)],*105 since the verb form *hpk*, "to upset or overthrow," is identified in the Ugaritic alphabetical texts.106 In this way, both interpretations *to-a-bi (u(?))and to-a pi [ku(?)]* are possible from a phonological and morphological point of view.

Conclusion

To conclude, considering OT and ANE literature, the expression *tohu*

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100 Ibid.
101 See also Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters, 41.
102 According to Tsumura, the first half of the syllabic orthography, *tu-a*, probably represents /tuha/ since in the Ugaritic syllabic orthography the grapheme <a> can be used as a syllable /ha/. In the second half of the syllabic orthography, *bi [u]*, if the second sign is correctly restored, it can represent /bihu/ since the grapheme <u> of the syllabic orthography is used in syllables /hu/ (ibid.)
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 UVST, 84, 121, 315, 322.
106 Ibid; Gordon, 392a n° 788; Dietrich et al., 1.103:52. Sumerian: BAL = Akkadian: *nabal-ku-tu,* = Hurrian: *tap-su-hu-um-me* = Ugaritic- *tu-a pi [ku(?)].*
wabohu in Gen 1:2 must be interpreted as the description of a "desert, uninhabited, arid and unproductive" place. The earth of Gen 1:2, which "was" hay'ta tohu wabohu, refers to the earth in an "empty" state with no vegetation, animals, or people. Hence the title of this series of articles: "The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic or Chaotic." The concept that appears in Gen 1:2 is an abiotic concept of the earth; i.e., Gen 1:2 describes an earth in which there is no life; it presents the absence of life-vegetable, animal, and human. That life appears in the following verses of Genesis 1 by the fiat of God. The Hebrew idiomatic expression tohu wabohu refers to an earth that is "uninhabited and unproductive," owing to the absence of life, of fauna, and of flora at this stage of the creation. At a later stage the earth will be "inhabited and productive." In no case does the phrase describe a chaotic state of the earth as the result of mythical combats between the gods of the myths and legends of Israel's neighbors.

The main reason why the author describes the earth as tohu wabohu is to inform the audience that the earth "is not yet" the earth such as they know it. Westermann puts it this way: "Creation and the world are to be understood always from the viewpoint of or in the context of human existence." In other words, it is necessary to use literary language and figures common to the audience to communicate to human beings the theme of creation. Therefore, the author uses in this verse language originating in his life experience (desert, empty, uninhabited, unproductive places) to explain the initial situation or condition of the earth.

The words of Westermann summarize well the findings on Gen 1:2:

There is no sign of either personification or mythological allusion in the biblical use of הַתּוּ... The course of the debate about the mythical explanation of הַתוּ הָאָרֶץ indicates clearly that the arguments for a mythical background are becoming weaker and weaker. The discussion can now be considered closed.

107 See also N. H. Tur-Sinai, The Book of Job: A New Commentary (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1967), 381: "in Gen 1:2 ... [tohu] describes the barrenness of the earth before anything grew on it."

108 Westermann, 104.

109 Westermann, 103.
THE EARTH OF GENESIS 1:2
ABIOTIC OR CHAOTIC?

PART II

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1. Hosek and ‘al ~ pene in Gen 1:2

Etymology of *hsk

Before specifically considering the Hebrew term †hom in the OT and in the literature of the ANE, we analyze the Hebrew words hosek and ‗al-pene in Gen 1:2. Hosek is a masculine singular noun that means "darkness, obscurity,"1 "darkness,"2 "darkness, obscurity,"3 "Finsternis kosmich,,"4 "oscuridad, tinieblas, lobreguez, sombra."5

Words similar to the Heb root hsk exist in Phoenician, Punic, biblical and extrabiblical Aramaic, as well as in later Semitic languages. This root does not appear in Ugaritic and Akkadian texts. In the MT the verb only appears in the Qal form "to be/come to be dark" and Hiphil "make dark, darken." The noun hosek means "darkness, obscurity." The derived nouns include haseka "darkness," mahsak "dark, secret place," and the adjective hasok "dark."

The root appears 112 times in the OT, once in Aramaic (Dan 2:22). The verb appears 17 times (11 x in Qal and 6x in Hiphil). The noun hosek appears 79 times, haseka 8 times, mahsak 7 times, and the adjective only once (Prov 22:29).6

In Egyptian, the term for darkness is kkw, in Sumerian it is kukku.

1 BDB, 365.
6 TDOT, 5:245.
which is represented by the double writing of the sign GI₆, which means "black" and "night." In the Targums and in Talmudic and Midrashic literature hosek is interpreted as "darkness." In Gen 1:2 hosek is used to refer to the primeval "darkness" that covered the world. In Gen 1:3ff, God created light and "separated the light from the darkness." The separation is conceived both in spatial and temporal terms. In Gen 1:5 God "called the darkness night." This name is more than an act of identification; by naming darkness God characterized it and expressed its nature and even indicated his control over it. God, who created light and darkness as separate entities, on the fourth day of creation put them under the "laws" of the heavenly lights which separated "light from darkness" (Gen 1:18).

The function of darkness in the cosmos is later explained in texts such as Ps 104:20, where the function of the light and the darkness is to indicate the amount of time for the everyday life routine of animals and human beings. In many texts, hosek is equivalent or parallel to "night" (Josh 2:5; Job 17:12; 24:16; Ps 104:20). The word appears more times in Job, Psalms, and Isaiah than in all of the other biblical books together.

The OT emphasizes that darkness is under God's control (2 Sam 22:2; Ps 18:2 [28]; Job 1:8; Isa 42:16; Jer 13:16). The ninth plague of Egypt (Exod 10:21-23) illustrates: "So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness [hosek-"apela] covered all Egypt for three days."

This event was extraordinary since Pharaoh, the son and the representative of the sun-god, was considered the source of light for his country. The darkness directly attacked the great sun-god of Egypt. Another example of God's power over darkness occurs in the desert when the Lord used darkness to protect his people (Exod 14:20; Josh 24:7).

7 Ibid., 246-247.
9 TWOT, 1:331.
10 N. H. Ridderbos, "Genesis i.1 and 2," in *Studies on the Book of Genesis*, ed. Berend Gemser, Oudtestamentische Studien, v. 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 239. This author notes that God gave a name to darkness and discusses the importance of giving a name in the OT.
11 TWOT, 1:331.
12 TDOT, 5:249.
13 TWOT, 1:331.
14 All scriptural texts are taken from the New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).
15 TDOT, 5:249-250.
Past studies tended to see in Genesis 1 an antagonism between light and darkness, the scheme of Marduk's fight against the monster of chaos that is described in the Babylonian creation myth. It must be emphasized that nowhere in the OT is mention made of a battle or dualism between light and darkness. Neither is the primeval ocean or darkness considered a chaotic power or mythical enemy of God. God is the creator of both light and darkness (Isa 45:7); his kindness transcends the antithesis of light and darkness (Ps 139:12).

E. J. Young indicates that darkness in Gen 1:2 was merely one characteristic of the unformed earth. Man could not live in darkness, and the first step in making the earth habitable was the removal of darkness. Moreover, Young presents the theological meaning of darkness by stating that God named the darkness, just as he did light. Both are therefore good and well-pleasing to him; both are created, and both serve his purpose, making up the day. Thus, darkness is recognized in Genesis 1 as a positive good for man.

In a recent study about darkness in Gen 1:2, based on the text rather than on past exegesis, Nicolas Wyatt proposes some interesting points: (1) The literary structure of the verse is important to the interpretation and the meaning of hosek; therefore, "darkness" corresponds in some way to ruah 'elohim "God's spirit." (2) If ruah 'elohim denotes some divine quality, hosek must denote some similar quality; an example is Ps 18:1, where darkness appears as the place of invisibility and possibly the place of the Deity (see Deut 4:11, 23, where darkness seems to be the appropriate environment for the divine voice); darkness is a figure of invisibility. (3) The logical structure of the verse implies the initial stages of the Deity's self-revelation: it is an unusual account of a theophany. Gen 1:2 refers to God's invisibility in the context of a primeval cosmogony.

In short, the term hosek "darkness" refers to an uninhabited Earth, where human beings could not live until God created light. Furthermore, the logical structure of the verse implies the Deity's self-revelation, an unusual account of a theophany.

17 TDOT, 1:157.
19 Ibid, 21, 35 n. 33.
22 Ibid, 550-552.
'al ~ pene

'al~pene is a preposition + masculine plural noun construct which means "face ... surface, upon the face of the deep,"'23 "face = visible side: surface, p'ne tehom, p'ne hammayim,'24 "face, surface," "superficie del ocean = superficie de las aguas."26

In Hebrew, as in other Semitic languages, the noun appears only in plural. Panim is one of the most frequent words in the OT, appearing more than 2100 times. However, in the vast majority of the texts panim is joined to a preposition (which may be 'l, min or 'al) thus making a new prepositional expression. In many such texts the nominal meaning ("face") has been lost.27

Panim, especially when related to concepts such as country, land, sea, and sky, means "surface," mainly in the construction 'al~pene. The preposition 'al~pene related to concepts such as "'adama "land, ground"; 'eres "land, country"; mayim "water" (Gen 1:2); 'hom "primeval abyss" (Gen 1:2) means "on (the surface of)" or 'towards (the surface)."28 This construction is important in determining the etymology and the meaning of the Hebrew word tehom.

2. Etymology of *thm

The Hebrew word tehom in Gen 1:2 is translated into English as "deep." In the Greek LXX it is translated δαφυσος "abyss."28 Tehom is a feminine singular noun that means "primeval ocean, deep," "deep sea, primeval ocean," "Urmeer, Urfullt, als ein der Schopfung voransgehendes Element," "oceano, abismo, sima, manantial. Especialmente el oceano primordial, abisal, en parse subterranecoe, que

BDB, 816, 819.
Holladay, 293.
Klein, 513-514. It is related to the Phoenician דנ (= face), see Z. S. Harris, A Grammar of the Phoenician Language (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1936), 137; Ugaritic pnm (= into); Akkadian panu (= face, surface); Syriac סומ (-(-) (= side).
Schockel, 793. Translation: "surface of the ocean - surface of the waters."
Ibid., 2:561, 563.
BDB, 1063; Holladay, 386.
Klein, 693.
KBS, 1558.
aflora en lagos, pozos, manantiales, y esta presente en mares y ríos (de ahí su uso en plural), . . . superficie del océano."[^32]

T'hom is the Hebrew form of the Semitic word *tiham-(at) "sea," which in Akkadian appears as the usual term for "sea" ti'antum (later tamtu).[^33] In the Targums, as well as the Talmudic and the Midrashic literature, t'hom is interpreted as "deep, depth, interior of the earth."[^34]

The construct relation between 'al-pene and t'hom (as well as e'al-p'ne and hammayim) contributes to the determination of the meaning of t'hom.[^35]

Arguing against taking t'hom as a personified being, A. Heidel points out:

If t'hom were here treated as a mythological entity, the expression "face" would have to be taken literally; but this would obviously lead to absurdity. For why should there be darkness only on the face of t'hom and not over the entire body? "On the face of the deep" is here used interchangeably with "On the face of the waters," which we meet at the end of the same verse. The one expression is as free from mythological connotation as is the other."

Thus the expression 'al-pene t'hom, "on the surface of the t'hom," indicates that it does not refer to a mythical being but to the mass of waters."[^36]

**Supposed Babylonian Origin of tehom**

B. W. Anderson, among others, assumes that there is some kind of relationship or linguistic dependence between the Babylonian Tiamat and the Hebrew t’hom.[^38] Scholars who followed Gunkel have maintained that the

[^32]: Schockel, 792. Translation: "ocean, abyss, chasm, spring. Especially the primeval, abyssal ocean which is partly underground, and outcroppings in lakes, wells, springs, and is present in seas and rivers (hence its use in plural) ... surface of the ocean."

[^33]: Jenni and Westermann, 2:1286.

[^34]: Jastrow, 1648.

[^35]: See B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns,1990), 240-241. See R. Ouro, "The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic or Chaotic, Part 1," AUSS 36 (1998): 259-276. Paul Jouon and T. Muraoka indicate: "A noun can be used in close conjunction with another noun to express a notion of possession, of belonging, etc.... The genitival relationship is expressed by the close phonetic union of the two nouns, the first of which is said to be constructed on the second.... The two nouns put in a genitival relationship form a compact unit, and theoretically nothing must separate them" (A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew, Subsidia Biblica 14/1,11 [Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991],1:275; 2:463). Finally, C. L. Seow points out: "The words in such a construct chain are thought to be so closely related that they are read as if they constituted one long word" (A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew, rev. ed. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995], 116).


[^37]: Jenni and Westermann, 2:2190.

[^38]: B. W. Anderson, Creation versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism
author of Genesis borrowed the Babylonian name *Tiamat* and demythologized it. But, as Tsumura points out, if the Hebrew *ṭ‘hom* were an Akkadian loan-word, it should have a phonetic similarity to *ti‘amat*. In fact, there is no example of Northwestern Semitic borrowing Akkadian /ṭ/ as /t/. Moreover, it is phonologically impossible for the Hebrew *ṭ‘hom* to be borrowed from the Akkadian *Tiamat* with an intervocalic /ḥ/, which tends to disappear in Hebrew (e.g., /ḥ/ of the definite article /ḥa-/) in the intervocalic position.

Therefore, *ṭ‘hom* cannot linguistically derive from *Tiamat* since the second consonant of *Ti‘amat*, which is the laryngeal alef, disappears in Akkadian in the intervocalic position and would not be manufactured as a borrowed word. This occurs, for instance, in the Akkadian Ba‘al which becomes Bel.

All this suggests that *Tiamat* and *ṭ‘hom* must come from a common Semitic root *ṭhm*. The same root is the base for the Babylonian *tamtu* and also appears as the Arabic *tihamatu* or *tihama*, a name applied to the coastline of Western Arabia, and the Ugaritic *t-h-m* which means "ocean" or "abyss." The root simply refers to deep waters and this meaning was...
maintained in Hebrew as a name for water in the deep ocean. Thus, the popular position that the Hebrew 흉ومة was borrowed from the Babylonian divine name Tiamat, to which it is mythologically related, lacks any basis.

Well-known Assyriologists such as W. G. Lambert, T. Jacobsen, and A. W. Sjoberg have discussed the supposed connection between Genesis 1 and the Enuma elish. These scholars doubt the influence of Mesopotamia on the mythological and religious concepts of peoples living along the Mediterranean coast; instead, they see a strong influence of that region on Mesopotamia. W. G. Lambert pointed out that the watery beginning of Genesis is not an evidence of some Mesopotamian influence. Moreover, he saw no clear evidence of conflict or battle as a prelude to God's division of the cosmic waters. T. Jacobsen also maintains that the story of the battle between the thunderstorm god and the sea originated on the Mediterranean coast, and from there moved eastward toward Babylon.

Furthermore, in some ancient Mesopotamian creation accounts, the sea is not personified and has nothing to do with conflict. In those traditions, the creation of the cosmos is not connected to the death of a dragon as it is in the Enuma elish. Tsumura concludes that since some accounts never associated the creation of the cosmos to the theme of the conflict, there is no reason to accept that the earlier stage, without the conflict-creation connection, evolved into a later stage with this connection. Frankly, the evolutionary process should be reversed: from an earlier stage with the mythological conflict-creation connection to a

45 TWOT, 2:966.
46 See also Tsumura, 47.
49 Lambert, 96-109.
51 Tsumura quotes as an example a bilingual version of the "Creation of the World by Marduk," which belongs to the Neo-Babylonian period and describes the creation of the cosmos without mentioning any theme of conflict or battle. In this myth, the initial circumstances of the world are described simply as "all the earth was sea" (49).
52 Ibid.
more recent stage without the mythological conflict-creation connection.

In conclusion, the Hebrew term 'tehom' is simply a variant of the common Semitic root *thm "ocean," and there is no relation between the account of Genesis and the mythology of *Chaoskampf*.

**Supposed Canaanite Origin of tehom**

Since the discovery of the Ugaritic myths, a Canaanite origin for the conflict between Yahweh and the sea dragons has been widely propounded. This motif is thought to be related to creation and is proposed as a basis of a supposed *Chaoskampf* in Gen 1:2.

Recently, J. Day stated that Gen 1:2 was a demythologization of an original myth of *Chaoskampf* coming from the ancient Canaan. He suggested that the term 'tehom' can be traced back to the early Canaanite dragon myth. Therefore, he understands the Hebrew term 'tehom' as a depersonification of the Canaanite mythological divine name.

However, scholars have pointed out that the myth of the Baal-Yam conflict in the existing Ugaritic texts is not related to the creation of the cosmos; the storm god Baal is not a creator-god as is Marduk in the *Enuma elish*. In the Baal cycle there is no evidence that he creates the cosmos from the bodies of defeated monsters as does Marduk. In Ugaritic mythology, El is the creator-god; as the creator of humanity he is called "Father of humanity." No other god fulfills any role in the creation of the cosmos.

Finally, if the account of the creation in Genesis were a demythologization of a Canaanite dragon myth, the term *yam"sea"* should appear at the beginning of the account, but this term does not appear in the text.

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54 Ibid., 50.
55 Ibid.
57 Tsumura, 64.
60 See also P. D. Miller, Jr., "El, the Creator of Earth," *BASOR* 239 (1980): 43-46.
appear until Gen 1:10, in the plural form *yammim*. As Tsumura points out, if the Hebrew term *t'hom* came from a Canaanite divine name and was later depersonified, the term would be something like *tahom*. There is no evidence that the term *t'hom* in Gen 1:2 is a depersonification of a Canaanite mythological deity.

3. *Thm in the Old Testament*

The term *t'hom* appears 36 times in the OT, 22 in singular and 14 in plural. This Hebrew term appears without an article in all texts but Isa 63:13 (singular) and Ps 106:9 (plural). *T'hom* always means a flood of water or ocean (abyss); there is no type of personification. The word appears in a context of creation with no mythical reference. The word is used to designate a phenomenon of nature. Many times *t'hom* is parallel to *mayim* "water" or *yam* "sea.

*T'hom* also means "deep waters, depth" as in Ps 107:26: "They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths." Translated as "depth" it acquires in some contexts the meaning of "abyss or depth" that threatens human existence. The depth of the ocean is also presented as bottomless. Thus, *t'hom* is conceived in some texts as a source of blessing. The texts that consider *t'hom* a source of blessing make it impossible to believe that the basic

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61 Tsumura, 62, 65.
62 See A. Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1990), 1219-1220. The 22 texts in singular are: Gen 1:2; 7:11; 8:2; 49:25; Deut 33:13; Job 28:14; 38:16, 30; 41:24; Pss 36:7; 42:8 (2x); 104:6; Prov 8:27, 28; Isa 51:10; Ezek 26:19; 31:4, 15; Amos 7:4; Jonah 2:6; Hab 3:10.
64 Job 38:16; Pss 33:7; 104:6; Prov 3:30; 8:24, 27-28.
65 Westermann, 105.
66 Job 38:30: "when the waters become hard as stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen?"; *t'hom* is, in this instance, the mass of water that freezes due to intense cold.
67 Exod 15:8; Ps 77:17; Ezek 26:19; 31:4; Jonah 2:6; Hab 3:10.
69 Exod 15:5; Neh 9:11; Job 41:23; Pss 68:23; 69:3, 16; 88:7; 107:24; Jonah 2:4; Mic 7:19; Zech 1:8; 10:11; "marine depth" Isa 44:27; "depths" Pss 69:3, 15; 130:1; Isa 51:10; Ezek 27:34. *T'hom* has this meaning in the song of the Sea in Exod 15:5, where the destruction of the Egyptians is described: "the deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone."
70 Gen 49:25: "blessings of the deep that lies below"; Deut 8:7; 33:13; Ps 78:15; Ezek 31:4.
meaning of the Hebrew term is a "hostile mythical power."

In some texts, *tehom* refers to "subterranean water," as in Deut 8:7: "a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills." This is a description of the land of Canaan being watered by fountains and springs fed by subterranean waters. We find a similar picture of *tehom* in Ezek 31:4: "The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field."

The texts generally used to explain the term *tehom* are Gen 1:2 and the verses related to the flood (Gen 7:11; 8:2). Before considering the word in the flood story, it must be noted that H. Gunkel had a powerful influence on the exegesis of these verses through his *Schopfung and Chaos in Urzeit and Endzeit* (1895). In that work he derived the term directly from the Babylonian Tiamat, the mythical being and the feminine principle of chaos, thus maintaining a basically mythical meaning. Hasel has rightly pointed out that this direct derivation is unsustainable, for in the OT *tehom* never refers to a mythical figure.

Gen 7:11 notes that *nibq e'u kkol~ma'yenot tehom rabbah wa'a rubbot hassamayim niptahu*, "all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened." The verb *baqa* appears here in the Niphal perfect 3 plural common; it means "burst open," "be split, break out," "to split, to break forth," "was cleft, was split, was broken into," "sich spalten, hervorbrechen." This verb frequently appears in the biblical literature in connection with the outflowing or expulsion of water. In Gen 7:11 the phrase refers to the breaking open of the crust of the earth to let subterranean waters flow in unusual quantity. The parallelism in Gen 7:11b is marked by a precise

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71 Jenni and Westermann, 2:1290.
73 BDB, 132.
75 Holladay, 46.
76 Klein, 81. Ugar. *baq* (= to cleave, to split), Arab. *facqa*a (= he knocked out, it burst, exploded), *ba'aja* (= it cleft, split).
77 KBS, 143.
79 Hasel, 70.
chiastic structure. In short, when considering the Hebrew terminology and the literary structure of Gen 7:11b, it is evident that the bursting forth of the waters from the springs of the "great deep" refers to the splitting open of springs of subterranean waters.

The Hebrew of Gen 8:2 is similar to that of Gen 7:11b in terminology, structure, and meaning. The two Niphal verbs in 8:2 (wayyissak'ru "had been closed" and wayyikkale' "had been kept back") indicate the end of the impact of the waters on the earth; in the chiasm they correspond to each other both grammatically, with the two Niphal verbs of Gen 7:11b (nibq' u "burst forth" and niptahu "were opened"), and semantically, with the inversion of the phenomenon that begins with the flood in Gen 7:11b (nibq' u, a "burst forth" and niptahu "were opened") and ends in Gen 8:2 (wayyissak'ru "had been closed" and wayyikkale' "had been kept back"). The quadruple use of the verb in passive voice

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80 A nibqe' u burst forth
B kkol~ma 'y'not tehom rabbah all the springs of the great deep
B' wa 'rubbot hassamayim and the floodgates of the heavens
A' niptahu were opened

The chiastic structure A:B:B':A' indicates that the waters below the surface of the earth flowed (were expelled) in the same way that the waters on the earth fell (were thrown). In B: B' there is a pair of words which are common parallels in biblical literature, tehom // hassamayim (Gen 49:25; Deut 33:13; Ps 107:26; Prov 8:27). But above all there is phonological, grammatical, and semantic equivalence between nibqe' u // niptahu (Job 32:19; Num 16:31b-32a; Isa 41:18), rabbah // rubbot (see J. S. Kelman, "A Note on Gen 7:11," CBQ 35 (1973): 491-493); and between, nibq' ukkol~ma 'y'nat tehom rabbah
wa 'rubbot hassamayim niptahu, verb +subject \ subject +verb (\ antithetical parallelism).

See also A. Berlin, The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 107.

81 Hasel, 71.
82 "Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky."
A wayyissak'ru now had been closed
B ma 'y'not tehom the springs of the deep
B' wa 'rubbot hassamayim and the floodgates of the heavens
A' wayyikkale' had been kept back

The verb "had been closed" corresponds to "had been kept back" (A:A'); "the springs of the deep" correspond to "the floodgates of the heavens" (B:B'). The chiastic parallelism indicates that the waters below the surface of the earth stopped flowing (being expelled) just as the waters on the earth stopped falling (being thrown). The same pair of parallel words appears as in Gen 7:11b tehom // hassamayim. Above all there is a phonological, grammatical, and semantic equivalence between wayyissak'ru // wayyikkale' and between ma 'y'not tehom
wa 'rubbot hassamayim wayyikkale', verb+subject \ subject+verb (\ antithetical parallelism).

83 Hamilton, 300.
indicates clearly that the flood was not a caprice of nature, but that both its beginning and end were divinely ordered and controlled. The Hebrew terminology and literary structure of Gen 8:2 give it a meaning similar to that of Gen 7:11b: the splitting, open of springs of subterranean waters is envisaged.85

Thus, not even here is *tehom* used in a mythical sense. The word designates subterranean water that breaks the surface of the earth, thus producing the catastrophe. In a similar way, modern scholarship understands the use of the term in Gen 1:2 is widely understood as "ocean, abyss, deep waters," therefore, as purely physical. *tehom* is matter; it has no personality or autonomy; it is not an opposing or turbulent power. There is no evidence of demythologization of a mythical concept of *tehom*.87 Jenni and Westermann conclude their discussion of *tehom* by pointing out that "if one wishes to establish the theological meaning of *tehom*, one must conclude that *tehom* in the OT does not refer to a power hostile to God as was formerly believed, is not personified, and has no mythical function.88

4. *Thm in Ancient Near Eastern Literature

The Ugaritic term equivalent to the Hebrew term *tehom* is *thm* which appears in Ugaritic literature in parallel with *ym*. It also appears in the dual form *thmtm*, "the two abysses," and in the plural form *thmt*. The basic meaning is the same as in Hebrew, "ocean, abyss."89

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84 Ibid
85 Hasel, 71.
86 See also Jenni and Westermann, 2:129 1.
90 Gordon, 497. See also S. Segert, *A Basic Grammar of the Ugaritic Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 203. Segert points out that the meaning of the dual *thmtm* is "(primeval) Ocean, Deep."
Thm appears in the cycle of "Shachar and Shalim and the Gracious Gods" (Ugaritic text 23:30). The parallel use of ym and thm is evident. Del Olmo Lete points out that the Ugaritic thm is a cognate of the Hebrew īhom and translates the word as "oceano."92

The plural thmt appears twice. Line 3 c 22 of "The Palace of Baal"

reads:

[22] thmt. ‘mn. kbkbm of the oceans to the stars.93

The other example appears in the cycle of Aqhat (17 VI 12)-
[12] [ ] mh g’t. thmt. brq [ ] the ocean(s) the lightning.94

The dual thmtm is found in the cycle of "The Palace of Baal" (4 IV 22)

[22] qrb. apq. thmtm amid the springs of the two oceans.95

It also appears in the cycle of Aqhat (Ugaritic text 19 45):
[45] bl. sr’. thmtm without watering by the two deeps.96

Other ANE languages use forms of the thm root to describe a large body of water. The Akkadian ti’amtum or tamtum also means "sea" or "ocean" in the earliest texts, dated before the Enuma elish.97 In the Babylonian account of the flood, the Atra-Hasis epic, the expression "the barrier of the sea" (nahbala tiamtim) appears 6 times. In turn, tiamta "sea" is used in parallel to naram "river," with a common meaning for both.98

92 G. Del Olmo Lete, Mitos y Leyendas de Canaan (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1981), 443. In this he agrees with Gibson, 159; cf. Del Olmo Lete, 635. In his study, this author notes also the occurrences of the plural thmt and the dual thmtm.
93 Gibson, 49.
94 Ibid., 108.
95 Ibid., 59.
96 Ibid, 115.
97 D. T. Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2, JSOT Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 55. Tsumura quotes the example from an ancient Akkadian text in which the term tiamtim is used in its common meaning "sea, ocean":

\[\text{Lagaski atima tiamtim in’ar (SAG.GIS.RA)} \quad \text{he vanquished Lagas as far as the sea}
\]
\[\text{kekki (’}g\text{ TUKUL-gi)-su in tiamtim imassi} \quad \text{He washed his weapons in the sea.}\]
98 Ibid.
In Eblaite *ti-*‘a-ma-tum commonly means "sea" or "ocean." The evidence indicates that the Ugaritic term *thm* is a cognate of Hebrew term *tehom* and both mean "ocean." In addition, cognate words from other ANE languages have the same meaning and come from a common root, *thm*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both the OT and the Ancient Near Eastern Literature indicate that the term *tehom* in Gen 1:2 must be interpreted as a lifeless part of the cosmos, a part of the created world, a purely physical concept. *Thom* is matter; it has no personality or autonomy and it is not an antagonistic and turbulent power. The "ocean/abyss" opposes no resistance to God's creating activity. Certainly there is no evidence that the term *tehom*, as used in Gen 1:2, refers at all to a conflict between a monster of the chaos and a creator-god.

There is no evidence of a mythical concept in *tehom*. Therefore, it is impossible to speak about a demythification of a mythical being in Gen 1:2. The author of Genesis 1 applies this term in a nonmythical and depersonified way.

The Hebrew term *tehom* in Gen 1:2 has an antimythical function, to oppose the mythical cosmologies of the peoples of the ANE. This antimythical function is confirmed by the clause in Gen 1:2c, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Here there is no fighting, battle, or conflict. The presence of the Deity moves quietly and controls the "waters," the "ocean, abyss" to show his power over the recently created elements of nature. This interpretation is further confirmed in the following verses, particularly in Gen 1:6-10 where God "separates water from water" (v. 6); then says, "let the water under the sky be gathered" (v. 9); and calls the "gathered waters" by the name "seas" (v. 10). The whole process concludes in v. 10: "and God saw that it was good." All that God does on the surface of the waters and the ocean is good. These two elements are lifeless; they do not offer resistance or conflict to his creative

99 Ibid., 56.
fiat; they respond to his words, orders, acts, and organization with absolute submission. All this is contrary to what happens in the mythologies of the ANE, where creation is characterized by conflict or battle between powers (or gods) of nature.

In short, the description of tehom in Gen 1:2 does not derive from the influence of any Ancient Near Eastern mythology but it is based on the Hebrew conception of the world which explicitly rejects the mythological notions of surrounding nations.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{103} Stadelmann agrees: "The subsequent acts of creating the heavenly bodies manifest the same antmythical view as we have noted in the cosmological presuppositions of the Priestly writer" (17). On the distinction between the Hebrew conception of the world and that of other peoples of the ANE, see ibid., 178ff.

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THE EARTH OF GENESIS 1:2
ABIOTIC OR CHAOTIC?
PART III

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Introduction

As the third and final part of the study of Gen 1:2, this article seeks to analyze the impact of the phrase *ruah "elohim merahepet al p" ne hammayim* on the question of the state of the earth as depicted in this verse. Gunkel, along with other scholars after him, assumed that *ruah "elohim* refers to winds that Marduk sends against Tiamat. Others have postulated that this phrase refers to divine creative activity. To reach my conclusion, I will analyze the phrase and its use in the Hebrew Bible and in languages cognate to Hebrew.

*Etymology of ruah "elohim*

The Hebrew expression *ruah "elohim* is commonly translated in English Bibles as "Spirit of God" (KJV, NASB, RSV, NIV). In the Greek LXX the phrase is translated as *pneuμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο*. Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion use the same translation. The Vulgate coincides, translating *spiritus Dei ferebatur*.

The term *ruah* appears in the OT 378 times in Hebrew, generally in feminine, and eleven times in Aramaic (only in Daniel). The basic meaning of *ruah* is "wind [something that is in motion and has the power to set other things in motion] and breath." According to BDB, *ruah "elohim* means "spirit of God, energy of life." Holladay translates "spirit of God," whereas Klein allows for "breath, wind,

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2 H. Gunkel, *Schopfung and Chaos in Urzeit and Endzeit* (1895); see notes in first article of the series.


4 Ibid., 2:917; see also *TWOT*, 2:836-837.
spirit."\(^5\) KBS has "'Der Geist Gottes'; als Wiedergaben sind möglich: a) der Geist Gottes schwebte, b) der/ein machtiger Wind (= Sturm) wehte, c) der/ein Gotteswind (= Gottessturm) wehte; b) und c) sind dabei nicht streng zu scheiden." Schokel translates: "aliento, halito, aliento vital, respiracion, resuello, soplo, resoploido, . . . aliento de Dios."\(^6\) It is evident that the word ruah can mean both spirit and wind.

Western Semitic languages contain words cognate to the Heb ruah: the Ugaritic rh, "wind, aroma"; the Aramaic rwh, "wind, spirit"; and the Arabic ruh, "vital breath"; and rih, "wind." The word is absent in the Eastern Semitic; for instance, in Akkadian saryi is used for "wind, breath."\(^7\) Jastrow observes that in the Targumim, Talmudic, and Midrashic literature ruah is interpreted as "spirit, soul; the holy spirit, prophetic inspiration, intuition."\(^9\)

**Ruah הָלֹהִים in the OT**

The phrase ruah הָלֹהִים appears sixteen times in Hebrew and five times in Aramaic.\(^10\) Its natural meaning would be spirit or wind of Elohim.

The term הָלֹהִים is the usual Hebrew word for "God"; however, J.M.P. Smith has suggested that it may also function as a superlative meaning "strong," "powerful," "terrible," or "stormy."\(^11\) However, as D. W. Thomas remarks, it is difficult or even impossible to find OT examples of the use of the divine name only as an epithet of intensity.\(^12\)

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\(^8\) Jenni and Westermann, 2:914-915.


G. J. Wenham clearly affirms that reducing *elohim to merely a superlative seems improbable since in other biblical texts the word always means "God." Moreover, there is no other example in the OT in which the expression *ruah *elohim means "strong or powerful wind"; in fact, it always refers to God's Spirit or Wind.  

Contemporary scholars are divided between two basic interpretations of *ruah *elohim. One understanding is that *ruah *elohim refers to the Creator of the Universe, to the Deity's presence and activity. The second holds that *ruah *elohim refers to an element sent by God, as part of the description of the chaos.15 In a similar vein, E. A. Speiser translates:


"an awesome wind sweeping over the water."16

The suggestion that ruah should be interpreted in Gen 1:2 as "wind" appears already in the Tg. Onq.: "And the wind from the Lord was blowing over the surface of the waters." However, this translation is not found in the Tg. Ps.-J. and Tg. Yer. McClellan finds the translation "wind" supported by Rabbinic literature originally attributed to Rabbis Ibn Ezra and Saadiah.17 However, Cassuto rejects this interpretation as inappropriate to the text.18

H. M. Orlinsky defends the translation "wind" in Gen 1:2c by affirming that the biblical version of the creation derives to a great extent from the Mesopotamian creation stories in which wind has an important role.19 In the Enuma Elish, Anu begets the four winds, which are associated with Tiamat and created earlier than the universe (I:105, 106). When Marduk resolves to destroy Tiamat, the four winds help him: "The south wind, the north wind, the east wind, (and) the west wind" (IV: 3). Then Imhullu is created: "the evil wind, the whirlwind, the hurricane" (lines IV: 45, 46).20 Later Marduk sets the evil wind free and leads it to the mouth of Tiamat (IV: 96-99). The north wind, then, helps to carry the remains of Tiamat to "out-of-the-way places" (IV: 132). This account deals with a theme totally different from the one found in Gen 1:2; therefore, the mention of the winds in the Enuma Elish does not truly support the translation "God's winds" in Gen 1:2.21

In the same article Orlinsky also appeals to Rabbi Judah (third century A.D.), who affirms that on the first day of Creation ten elements were created. Among these were rwh wnym, translated as "wind and water." As Young points out, if this translation is correct, it simply shows ancient Hebrew exegetical use.22

17 McClellan, 518.
18 Cassuto, 24.
22 Ibid.; for an analysis of the inconsistency in Orlinsky's arguments, see Hamilton, 112-114.
Contrary to Orlinsky's proposal, 34 of the 35 times that *elohim* appears in the Gen 1 Creation account, it refers undoubtedly to the Deity.\(^{23}\) Moreover, in Gen 1:1 and 1:3, which are the immediate context of 1:2, *elohim* clearly refer to the Creator.\(^{24}\) It would be difficult to accept that Gen 1:2c does not refer to divinity, especially when the Hebrew has numerous other clear ways to describe a powerful wind or a heavy storm.\(^{25}\) In addition, when *ruah* appears in the Hebrew genitive construction with *elohim* (or YHWH) it always refers to some activity or aspect of the deity.\(^{26}\) As Moscati indicates, *elohim* in Gen 1:2c has a personal meaning, and the attempt to exclude God from this important stage of the Creation fails completely.\(^{27}\)

Recently DeRoche suggested that the use of *ruah*, "wind," in Gen 8:1 and Exod 14:21 "leads to the division within the bodies of water, and consequently, the appearance of dry land"; therefore, "the *ruah* *elohim*, "wind or spirit of God" of Gen 1:2, "must also be a reference to the creative activity of the deity."\(^{28}\) DeRoche concludes:

The *ruah* *elohim* of Gen 1:2c refers to the impending creative activity of the deity. It is neither part of the description of chaos, nor does it refer to a wind sent by Elohim, if by wind is meant the meteorological phenomenon of moving air. It expresses Elohim's control over the cosmos and his ability to impose his will upon it. As part of v. 2 it is part of the description of the way things were before Elohim executes any specific act of creation.\(^{29}\)

Nicolas Wyatt, in a recent article about the darkness in Gen 1:2, concluded his exegetical study by pointing out that the logical structure of the verse implies the initial stages in the manifestation of the deity; it is an unusual account of a theophany. In this way, according to Wyatt, Gen 1:2 refers to God's invisibility in the context of a primeval cosmogony.\(^{30}\)

\(^{23}\) M. DeRoche, "The ruah *elohim* in Gen 1:2c: Creation or Chaos?" in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, ed. L. Eslinger and G. Taylor, JSOTSS 67 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 307.

\(^{24}\) Moscati, 307.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.; cf. also Davidson, 16; Hamilton, 112. Whenever the biblical Hebrew refers to a "strong, powerful or stormy wind" it uses expressions with no ambiguity at all such as *ruah gadol* (1 Kgs 19:11; Job 1:19; Jonah 1:4; etc.); *ruah se'ara* or *se'arot* (Pss 107:25; 148:8; etc.); *ruah qadim* is the stormy wind that destroys the ships (Ps 47:7; Jer 18:17; etc.)


\(^{27}\) Moscati, 308.

\(^{28}\) DeRoche, 314-315.

\(^{29}\) Ibid, 318; emphasis added.

Finally, the concept "wind of God" becomes unsustainable when the rest of Gen 1 is considered. Sarna points out that "wind" has no function in the rest of the story." The uninhabited and empty earth is covered by vegetation, animals, and human life. Darkness is separated from light under the regulation of the luminaries. Throughout Gen 1 there is a clear development of the elements that appear in Gen 1:2.

**M'rahepet in Gen 1:2**

**Biblical Use of m'rahepet**

*M'rahepet* is a Pi'el feminine singular participle of the verb *rahap*, "hover" (BDB); "hover, fly, flutter"; "Zitternd schweben" (KBS). In addition, the Targumic, Talmudic, and Midrashic literature interpret *mrhpt* as "to move, hover, flutter." This meaning is supported by the Ugaritic in which eagles are pictured as hovering over their prey, ready to dart down upon it.

Deut 32:11 uses this verb, also in the Pi'el. Here the Lord is pictured as leading Israel, "like an eagle [Heb רענ / Ugaritic nsr] that stirs up its nest, that flutters [rahap] over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions" (RSV) The verb describes the actions of the mother eagle after the young are out of the nest or, when they are compelled to leave the nest. In this text *m'rahepet* can only be construed as hovering or fluttering and cannot describe the action of a "mighty wind." Following this analogy, *ruah "lohim* in Gen 1:2 is described as a living being who hovers like a bird over the created earth.

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32 Klein, 614.
33 Jastrow, 1468.
34 Young, 36, n. 36.
35 Ibid. Other scholars who agree with this interpretation are Hamilton, 115; McClellan, 526-527; Ross, 107; Wenham, 1:17; and Westermann, 107. T. Friedman points out that the interpretation of *ruah "lohim* in Gen 1:2 as "strong wind" is inappropriate for this text because both in the biblical and Ugaritic texts the root *rhp* describes the actions of birds (living beings) and not the actions of the winds (inanimate phenomena); see his "*Wruah "lohim m'rahepet al-pene hammayim* [Gen 1:2]," Beth Mikra 25 [1980]: 309-312.
36 Young, 37.
Rhp in Ugaritic Literature

The Ugaritic term equivalent to the Heb rahap is the verb rhp. In Ugaritic texts this verb is always associated with eagles. While C. H. Gordon suggests the meaning "to soar" for the Ugaritic rhp, Gibson prefers the verb "hover" in his translation of two sections of the Epic of Aqhat.

[Above him] eagles shall hover, [a flock] of hawks look down.
Among the eagles I myself will hover.

Del Olmo Lete points out, just as Gibson does, that the Ugaritic rhp is a cognate of Heb rahap.

In conclusion, the use of rhp in the Ugaritic literature agrees with the idea that this is an activity carried out by a living being. Thus the appropriate translation of Gen 1:2c is "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." To complete the analysis of the verse, its place within its context must be studied.

Gen 1:2 in the Context of Gen 1

The interpretation of Gen 1:2 perfectly fits the literary structure of the chapter. In v. 2 the author does not turn his attention to the "heavens," but to the earth, where his audience is, and presents "the earth"--the familiar earth with vegetation, animals, and human beings--as not yet existing. Therefore, both the third (vegetation) and the sixth (animal and human life) days of Creation are the climax of the literary structure of the Creation account, while its zenith is reached with the creation of human beings on the sixth day.
Gen 1:2 shows the earth as unproductive and uninhabited (*tohu wabohu*) within the literary structure of Gen 1.\(^{43}\)

| DAY 1    | light and darkness | DAY 4  | "sun" and "moon"
|----------|--------------------|--------|------------------
| DAY 2    | two waters         | DAY 5  | fish and birds   |
| DAY 3    | earth and seas     | DAY 6  | animals and man  |
|          | vegetation         |        | on the earth     |

The earth became productive when God said, *tadse’ ha’ares dese’* ("let the land produce vegetation," v. 11) on the third day. The "empty" earth, i.e., "yet uninhabited" became inhabited when God said *watose’ ha’ares nepes hayya* ("let the land produce living creatures," v. 24) and *na’aseh ‘adam besalmenu kidmutenu* ("let us make man in our image, in our likeness," v. 26). Therefore, the "unproductive and empty/uninhabited" earth became productive, with vegetation, animals, and man created by God's fiat. The Gen 1 creation account affirms that God created human beings "in his image" and provided an inhabitable and productive earth for them.\(^{44}\)

**Conclusion**

This analysis of the Heb of Gen 1:2 has sought to find answers to difficult questions. Does Gen 1:2 describe a watery chaos that existed before the Creation? Is there a direct relationship between Gen 1:2 and the mythology called *Chaoskampf*? Do *tobu wabohu, tehom* and *ruah ‘elohim* in Gen 1:2 suggest a chaotic state or an abiotic state of the earth?

Our study of the OT and ANE literature has found that Gen 1:2 must be interpreted as the description of the earth as it was without vegetation and uninhabited by animals and humans. The concept that appears in Gen 1:2 is an abiotic concept of the earth, with vegetable, animal, and human life appearing in the following verses.

Additional support for the abiotic state of the earth is found in the parallel between Gen 1:2 and 2:5, which is generally admitted.\(^{45}\)

Gen 1:2: "The earth was formless and empty" //
Gen 2:5: "No shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for ... there was no man to work the ground."

Gen 1:2 provides the background for the development of the narration,


\(^{44}\) Tsumura, 42-43.

which shows the earth full of life and inhabitants (Gen 1:11-12, 20, 24, 26).\textsuperscript{46} The earth is not described as being in a chaotic state after a previous destruction, but as being barren and not yet developed. In addition to showing the initial state of creation, the verse presents God as author of life, without whom there can be no life. Life is present only in God's Spirit; the elements of the earth are lifeless and awaiting the Spirit's command. Here God's Spirit is about to create life, to change an abiotic state to a biotic state of vegetable, animal, and human life through the divine \textit{fiat}.

The objective of this research was to discover if Gen 1:2 contains evidence of the existence of a mythological battle (\textit{Chaoskampf}) between the creator-god and the powers of the chaos, such as Gunkel and others have suggested. This is an important question, for if Gunkel's presuppositions are true, "it is also no longer allowable in principle to reject the possibility that the whole chapter might be a myth that has been transformed into narrative."\textsuperscript{47} On the contrary, if there is no linguistic and biblical foundation for the assumption, it is more difficult to insist that the Genesis account is a myth such as those of ANE literature.

In conclusion, it is of utmost importance to reiterate the differences between the Hebrew cosmology and the Mesopotamian cosmogony. Sarna explains: "The Hebrew cosmology represents a revolutionary break with the contemporary world, a parting of the spiritual ways that involved the undermining of the entire prevailing mythological world-view. These new ideas of Israel transcended, by far, the range of the religious concepts of the ancient world."\textsuperscript{48} Sarna found that "the supreme characteristic of the Mesopotamian cosmogony" was "that it is embedded in a mythological matrix. On the other hand, the outstanding peculiarity of the biblical account is the complete absence of mythology in the classical pagan sense of the term. ... Nowhere is this non-mythological outlook better illustrated than in the Genesis narrative. The Hebrew account is matchless in its solemn and majestic simplicity.... The clear line of demarcation between God and His creation was never violated. Nowhere is this brought out more forcefully than in the Hebrew Genesis account."\textsuperscript{49}


\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 9-11, emphasis added.

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ARE THE DAYS OF GENESIS LONGER THAN 24 HOURS?
THE BIBLE SAYS, "YES!"

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I believe in God the Father, Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

So reads the first statement of the Apostles's Creed. This declaration basically restates the first verse of the Bible, and it is universally accepted by Christians. Nevertheless, whereas Christians uniformly agree to the fact of God as creator, they disagree on the length of time God took to create and mold the universe into its present form. Some Christians hold that God took six literal days to accomplish this task, while others are convinced that God used processes that spanned millions and billions of years.

Why the difference of opinion? The answer is that ample evidence exists, both scientific and biblical, that raises questions about a literal six day creation period. I will not discuss the scientific evidence. After all, regardless of scientific opinion, if the Bible is clear that creation occurred in six literal days, then we would be required as Bible believers to accept this verdict. There are, however, abundant biblical data indicating that the Bible does not require belief in a literal creation week. This evidence comes from the usage of the terms "day," "morning," and "evening," and from the events that occurred during day six.

Usage of the Terms "Day," "Morning," and "Evening"

In Hebrew (the language of most of the Old Testament), as in English, a single word can have several meanings. The Hebrew word "day" can mean a period of daylight as opposed to night (Genesis 1.5,14), a twenty-four hour period (many examples), and a period of time of unspecified length. The last usage, which is figurative, occurs many times in the Old Testament. An example appears in the creation account itself: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord made the earth and the heavens" (Genesis 2.4). As we can see from this verse, regardless of the meaning of "day" in Genesis chapter one, scripture uses "day" for the entire week of creation, thereby illustrating the figurative meaning of the word.
At first, this may seem strange, for English speakers do not often use "day" figuratively. It does, nevertheless, appear at times in expressions like "back in my day," "in this day and age," and "in the days of FDR." It should be noted that the plural form "days" occurs figuratively numerous times in Hebrew. In fact, consulting a concordance will show that about a quarter of all the uses of "day" and "days" are figurative. Hence there is no doubt that "day/days" can denote a period of time longer than twenty-four hours.

On the other hand, what about the terms "morning" and "evening"? Does not their use in conjunction with "day" strengthen the literal interpretation of "day?" The answer is "no," because Hebrew also uses "morning" and "evening" figuratively. For example, we read in Psalm 90, attributed to Moses, that human beings are like the grass that "though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered" (verse 6). I know of no grass that literally springs up in the morning and then is dead by the same evening. Rather, the psalmist has in mind the life cycle of grass in the Levant, which begins its growth with the November rains and dies with the hot, dry, March, desert winds. In this psalm, therefore, "morning" stands for the period of growth and "evening" stands for the period of death. This interpretation fits in with the tenor of the entire psalm which encourages humans to be mindful of their time on earth; for just as the life cycle of grass is short with respect to human life, human life itself is short with respect to the ongoing activities of God. The same comparison is made between humans and grass in Isaiah 40.6-8 and 1 Peter 1.24,25.

"Morning" and "evening" are also used figuratively in Psalm 30.5. In this verse we read that God's anger "lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night [literally: evening], but rejoicing comes in the morning." In context, "evening" corresponds to the time of weeping over God's anger, and "morning" corresponds to the time of rejoicing over God's favor. The writer envisions a time longer than a literal morning or evening.

Finally, we read in Psalm 49.14,15 that the wicked are

like sheep ... destined for the grave, and death will feed on them. The upright will rule over them in the morning; their forms will decay in the grave far from their princely mansions. But God will redeem my soul from the grave; he will surely take me to himself.

Again, "morning" must be interpreted figuratively, for in what way can the upright literally rule over the dead the morning after they die? After all, one rules over those who are alive, not over those who are dead. I would suggest that the psalmist is looking ahead to the time of his ultimate redemption -- his resurrection -- spoken of in verse 15. In short, he is looking forward to a new age that he calls "morning."

As with the word "day," English speakers do not regularly use "morning" and "evening" figuratively, but perhaps the expressions "the dawning of a new age" and "in the twilight of his/her years" parallel the Hebrew idiom that uses portions of a day figuratively for periods of time.

In summary, we find evidence from the biblical usage of the terms "day," "morning," and "evening" that the "days" of the first chapter of Genesis may not be literal. If not, then what do the terms mean? I would suggest the following: "Evening" represents the waning
of one "day's" creative activity and "morning" represents the beginning of the next "day's" creative activity. This activity has taken place in a period of time called a "day."

The argument for figurative days will be reinforced when we consider the events that occurred on the sixth day.

**The Events of the Sixth Day**

In Genesis 1.27 it appears that man and woman were created at the same time, but in Genesis chapter two we learn that a period of time elapsed between the creation of the man and that of the woman. This is not a contradiction. Chapter one only gives an overview of the creation of human beings, whereas chapter two fills in the details. Let us examine each detail while asking ourselves if all the events presented in chapter two could reasonably fit into twenty-four hours.

First, after Adam was created, God planted the garden of Eden in the east. He then made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. At this point we have to pay very careful attention to the terminology describing God's activities. Notice that we are not told that God "created" the garden or the trees. Rather, God "planted" and "caused the trees to grow." The terms "planted" and "grow" imply activity that took time. Of course, God has the power to create Eden in an instant, but the language of the narrative suggests a process, not an immediate creative act.

Second, in spite of the garden's perfection, it could not take care of itself; man still needed "to work it and to take care of it." (verse 15) The nature of the work is not stated, but one wonders why the garden needed any work at all if the sixth day was only twenty-four hours. Could not the garden take care of itself for such a short period? Again, the narrative implies a time longer than a literal day, unless the command was given at this time but was meant to be fulfilled at a later date. The perception is, however, that Adam was to begin his work forthwith.

Third, in verse 18 the Lord declares that "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." The Lord, however, did not create Eve immediately. Instead, he brought the beasts of the field and the birds of the air to Adam to name them, which he did. This naming process would have taken time, both because there were many kinds of animals, and because names in the Bible describe a characteristic of the object being named. Note, for example, that the name "woman" is not arbitrary; it brings out a characteristic of woman -- "she was taken out of man." (verse 23) Note also the meanings of "Cain" and "Seth" in Genesis 4.1,25. From these and other scriptural examples, it is not unreasonable that Adam's name for each animal would have expressed a characteristic of the animal, and this implies that Adam would have had to observe each animal for a while in order to select a name that summarized one of its characteristics. Thus it is hard to believe that Adam could have named all the beasts of the field and the birds of the air in twenty-four hours.

Of course, one wonders why the Lord had Adam name the animals before He created the woman. I would suggest that God's purpose was to show Adam that he was incomplete without a mate (after all, the other animals had mates); in this way he would love and appreciate Eve all the more.
The final evidence that the sixth day was longer than twenty-four hours comes from Adam's expression after he sees Eve: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." The English translation "this is now" misses the emphasis which belongs to the word used in the original Hebrew. A better rendering would be "now at length" or "now at last," as we can see by tracing the use of this word in other portions of the Old Testament.

Uses of "This is now":

1. *Genesis 18.32:* As Abraham argues with the Lord about the impending destruction of Sodom, he ends the long bargaining session by asking the Lord not to be angry "this time," or "now at last," when he requests that Sodom not be destroyed if only ten righteous individuals are found within the city.

2. *Genesis 29.34,35:* Leah uses this expression after the birth of her sons Levi and Judah. Recall that Leah was not loved by Jacob, but she felt that now she would be loved after giving birth to these two sons.

3. *Genesis 30.20:* Again, the expression is used by Leah after the birth of Zebulun.
4. *Genesis 46.30:* For many years Israel (Jacob) thought that his beloved son Joseph was dead, but finally he learns that Joseph was alive in Egypt. Upon seeing his son, Israel states, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive." The word "now" is the same word used by Adam in Genesis 2.23.

5. *Exodus 9.27:* After the seventh plague, Pharaoh urges Moses to end the plague by declaring, "This time I have sinned." The expression "this time" is the same word used in Genesis 2.23.

6. *Exodus 10.17:* Again, after the eighth plague, Pharaoh tries the same tactic as before.

7. *Judges 6.39:* Our expression is used twice by Gideon when requesting that "now at last" the Lord not be angry with him for asking that the dew avoid the fleece and condense on the ground.

8. *Judges 15.3:* Samson had experienced a time of contention with the Philistines which ended in his leaving his wife with her father and returning to the land of Israel. Some time later, Samson returned to his wife's house only to find that she was given to another man. Samson responds by declaring that "this time," or "now at last" he has a right to get even with the Philistines.

9. *Judges 16.18:* Samson finally succumbs to Delilah's enticements and he confesses to her the source of his strength. Delilah calls the Philistine leaders to come "this time," for he told her everything.

10. *Judges 16.28:* After Samson was taken to the temple to be mocked by the Philistines, he asks God "now at last" to give him the strength to bring down the temple.
In each instance above, except for Abraham and Gideon, the narrative relates a series of events that lasted longer than twenty-four hours. In some cases, a considerable period of time elapsed. That is why the term is better translated "now at last." It is difficult, therefore, to believe that Adam would use this expression if only a fraction of a day passed between his creation and that of Eve's. Unlike Abraham or Gideon, Adam was neither arguing with God nor seeking a sign; his use of "now at last" parallels those which involve a longer period of time. In Adam's case, this period included the naming of the animals and the recognition that he was incomplete without a mate. Surely these events took longer than a day. And if the sixth day was not a twenty-four hour period, what right do we have to insist that any other day of creation was twenty-four hours?

We have seen two powerful evidences that the "days" of Genesis are figurative. First, we have investigated the usage of the terms "day," "morning," and "evening," and we have seen that these terms can be used figuratively. Second, we have examined the terminology used to describe the activities of the sixth day, and we find substantial testimony that the events of the sixth day do not fit into twenty-four hours.

We conclude that scripture itself attests that the "days" of Genesis need not be taken literally.
Appendix: Two Common Arguments against the Non-literal View

One argument often encountered is as follows: In all instances outside of Genesis one, when a number appears with the term "day," a literal day is meant. Because a number appears with the days of Genesis one, they must be literal.

This argument fails on two counts. First, the premise is false. There are at least two instances where a number appears with a figurative use of "day," Isaiah 9.14 (9.13 in Hebrew) and Hosea 6.2. In the Isaiah passage, the expression "one day" is exactly the same in Hebrew as the one often translated as "the first day" in Genesis 1.5. "One day" in this passage, as well as the numbered "days" in Hosea, are clearly figurative.

Second, in all cases purportedly illustrating the number/literal day correlation, it is already apparent from the context that a literal day is intended. The number is simply descriptive; it does not define "day." Hence the proposed connection between the presence of a number and the meaning of "day" does not exist.

A second argument against non-literal days arises from the fourth commandment (Exodus 20.9-11):

Six days you will labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. You will not do any work .... For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth ... and rested on the seventh.

A parallel is observed between the literal days of human work and rest and the days of creation. But can we conclude from this that the days of the first chapter of Genesis are literal? The theologian J. Oliver Buswell provides an excellent answer:

If we had no other example of Moses' language, this passage might be taken as evidence for a twenty-four hour creative day, but we have Scriptural evidence that Moses made a radical distinction between God's attitude toward time and the attitude of man. What Moses is saying, in the total Scriptural context, must be understood as teaching that man should observe a periodicity in the ratio of work to rest, of six days to one day, because God in the creation set an example of an analogous periodicity of six and one of his kind of days. Surely the fourth commandment gives no right to say that God's days always must be understood to be of the same length as man's days, when we have so much evidence to the contrary.

The ninetieth Psalm is ascribed to Moses and it is probable that the ascription is correct. In verse four of the Psalm we read, "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." It would appear then that Moses himself was accustomed to a figurative use of the word; for a thousand years could equal "yesterday," or "a watch in the night" of three or four hours. Peter brings out the same thought. "This one thing must not be forgotten, beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 2:8).

To the above one might add that it appears as though God's rest on the seventh day is used as a basis for three sabbath principles: rest on the seventh day (Exodus 20.8-11), the seventh year (Leviticus 25.8-17), and the jubilee year, after 7 x 7 = 49 years (Leviticus 25.8-17). It is invalid to pick out just one of these applications of the sabbath principle and apply it to the days of Genesis.
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THE NAMING OF ISAAC:
THE ROLE OF THE WIFE/SISTER EPISODES
IN THE REDACTION OF GENESIS

JOHN RONNING

THE patriarchal narratives of Genesis contain three accounts of a patriarch passing his wife off as his sister out of fear for his own life (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18; and 26:1-11). For the source critic, this is a classic example of multiple versions of the same original story, demonstrating a multiplicity of sources underlying our present book of Genesis. For the OT form critic, they provide a rare opportunity to compare three parallel accounts and postulate an origin and development in the oral and literary tradition. For the redaction critic, they present a challenge to explain how the accounts function in their present contexts; i.e., not as variant versions of one event, but as different episodes in the lives of Abraham and Isaac.


2 The work of K. Koch (The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form Critical Method [New York: Scribner, 1969] 115-28) will be described as an example, though his methods and conclusions have been criticized by other form critics. In particular, the view that the three incidents came to their present form due to changes in one prototype in the process of oral transmission has been challenged by others who see clear evidence of literary dependence. E.g., T. Alexander ("The Wife/Sister Incidents of Genesis: Oral Variants?" *IBS* 11 [1989] 2-22), building on the more detailed work of P. Weimar (Untersuchungen zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Pentateuch [Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977] 4-111), on J. Van Seters (Abraham in History and Tradition [New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1975] 167-91), and others, concluded, "Unfortunately, in the past, many scholars have jumped too quickly to the assumption that the wife/sister episodes must all relate to one original incident, and that the differences between them are due to the process of oral transmission... The task of reconstructing the oral and redactional history of these accounts is much more involved than is generally acknowledged" (p. 19). For other form critical approaches and bibliographies, see C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985) 159-68; G. Coates, *Genesis: With an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 109-13; 149-52; 188-92; D. L. Petersen, "A Thrice-Told Tale: Genre, Theme, and Motif," *BR* 18 (1973) 30-43.

3 Methods bearing some resemblance to those of redaction criticism can be seen in the works of defenders of the unity of authorship of the book of Genesis. Perhaps the most detailed and comprehensive of these (at least in English) is W. Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis* (New York: Scribner, 1897) 182-85, 250-62, 322-28. Both Van Seters (Abraham, 183-91) and Weimar (Redaktionsgeschichte, 43-55, 75-78, 95-102) discuss the relation of the episodes to their contexts, but their acceptance of the multiple-source hypothesis prevents them from trying to
For ease of reference, K. Koch's annotation will be followed, so that the three accounts will be A, B, and C, referring to the first, second, and third, respectively, in the order in which they appear in Genesis. The names Abraham and Sarah will be used throughout, even when referring to passages prior to their name change (Genesis 17).

I. Conclusions of Source Criticism

Numerous apparent inconsistencies with the respective narrative contexts, as well as the seeming redundancy of the accounts, are explained by source critics as due to the redaction of three sources containing variants of one story during the formation of the book of Genesis. Thus in A, where Sarah's beauty puts Abraham in fear of his life in Egypt—a plausible theme in the story itself—the overall chronology imposed makes the whole episode incongruous; for we learn from comparing Gen 17:17 and 12:4 that Sarah had to have been at least 65 years old! There is a similar chronological problem in C, where, though we do not know Rebekah's age, she must have been married for at least 35 years, and therefore presumably not one who would be looked at as a great marriage prospect. Furthermore, the same chronology indicates that Jacob and Esau were already born, so how could the parents feign brother and sister for "a long time"? Worse yet, we have the same king Abimelech and his general Phicol, who appear also in B, at least 76 years earlier! The most serious difficulties, however, occur in B. There, not only does the context require Sarah to be 89 years old (17:11, 17), compounding the same problem as in A and C, but two chapters earlier Sarah has described herself in terms that are clearly incompatible with the situation presumed in B. Did she not laugh, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure ['ahare beloti hayeta li ̊ ̃cDNA], my lord being old also?" (Gen 18: 12)? Is it plausible then, that Abraham should fear for his...
life because of this old woman, or that the king would want to marry her? Furthermore, only a few months may be allowed between chap. 18 and the end of B, or else Sarah would be visibly pregnant with Isaac. But 20:18 seems to require an extended period of time to elapse within B itself in order to notice the infertility of Abimelech's household since the time he took Sarah.

Unfortunately for source analysis, the three accounts cannot be assigned to the three sources of classical Wellhausenism. While B is assigned to E (on the basis of its use of Elohim; vv. 3, 6, 11, 13, 17 [twice]; Yhwh in v. 18 is ascribed to the redactor), and indeed is said to be the first extended narrative of that source, both A and C are assigned to separate J sources. C. Westermann summarizes the earlier views on whether A or C was the older of the two, and concludes, "the question can now be considered as settled: Gen. 12 is the earliest of the three variants."9

II. Conclusions of Form Criticism

Form critics accept that the difficulties mentioned above are due to the redaction of different source documents; the casting of individual narratives into contexts originally foreign to them. They concentrate their study on the content and history of the stories themselves, studying the episodes in relation to each other, more than in relation to their respective contexts. Since the focus of this paper is on redaction criticism, I will outline the approach only of Koch as representative.

Koch discusses "The Ancestress of Israel in Danger" under the headings, "Defining the Unit," "Determination of the Literary Type," "Transmission History," "Setting in Life," and "Redaction History." He concludes that they were all originally independent narratives based on the relation to their present contexts. For example, A is felt to be an intrusion on its context, since it is "odd" that Abraham would leave the promised land right after receiving the promise of the land.10 Gen 13:2 is really a continuation of 12:9, with 13:1 being added to compensate for the intrusion. Gen 12:10

mid-ninth-century BC bilingual inscription where the Aramaic uses a verbal form of  개념, which corresponds to the Akkadian mutahhidu, "to enrich, make abundant." This idea of abundance would give a closer parallel to giving birth than would sexual pleasure, since offspring are associated with "fruitfulness" (Gen 1:28, etc.). M. Jastrow cites a later Hebrew verbal usage of the root with the idea of rejuvenation, which would thus provide an opposite to bilh, and would have interesting implications for the thesis of this paper (A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature, [2 vols.; Brooklyn: Shalom, 1967] 2.1045). Such a usage, however, might seem just as remote from "give birth" as is the concept of sexual pleasure. The NIV ("will I now have this pleasure?") seems to refer the pleasure to the giving birth just promised, i.e., the joys of motherhood.

8 So E. Speiser, Genesis (AB 1; Garden City: Doubleday, 1964) 150; Skinner, Genesis, 315.
is satisfactory as an introduction to an independent unit, and vv. 19-20 are a fitting conclusion since "the Hebrew often ends a tale with a speech which is intended to abate the suspense, and a subsequent short narrative remark on the future fate of the hero."\(^{11}\) Similar conclusions are reached for B and C. The mention of famine was left out of B because "he did not want to mention it too often."\(^{12}\) In the introduction of C, a later writer inserted "beside the previous famine that was in the days of Abraham," as is evident from the fact that it "has a clumsy ring to it in the Hebrew."\(^{13}\) What betrays it as clumsy Koch does not tell us.

As for literary type, Koch assigns the narratives to Gunkel's category "ethnological saga," in which

The position of the nomadic Abraham and Isaac, including their strikingly beautiful women and their people, is contrasted with the soft, lascivious people of an established land. . . . In such sagas the predominant fact for the Israelite is that his God, the God of Israel, has influence on what happens between nations, and reveals himself as a divine leader.\(^{14}\)

Various smaller component types are used, such as the simple command from God (26:2-3a), a divine benediction (26:3b-5), divine communication in a dream (20:3, 6-7), a lament of a king (20:4-5), etc.

Under "Transmission History" Koch compares the content of the three narratives and seeks to reconstruct the content of the original story. A is thought to be the most archaic of the three. What happened to Sarah in Pharaoh's palace is only hinted at (he assumes she was involved in adultery); "the delicacy of the situation has been least noticed by the writer of this version."\(^{15}\) In A, it is not a bad thing that Abraham should induce his wife to lie. No explanation is given as to how Pharaoh knew the plagues were because of Abraham's wife-Koch suggests that an account of Pharaoh divining the reason by a soothsayer consulting his gods was removed later. Episode B is supposed to reflect views of a later period. In it, Abraham is a chosen man of God, a Nabi. Here, he does not lie (thanks to an editor who obviously inserted the explanation of the half truth in v. 12). The account has been modified so that Sarah has not been defiled, since v. 9 ("you have brought great sin on me") presumes that adultery took place; v. 6 of course is a clumsy later addition to remove the offense. The description of Sarah's beauty has also been removed since it is contrary to the context. The chief difference between A and B, however, is in the long conversations in B. Episode C is scarcely even a story anymore, as it is broken up by

\(^{11}\) Ibid.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., 117.
\(^{13}\) Ibid., 118.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 120. D. Petersen calls Koch's assertion that all three stories are the same type "rather puzzling," and notes that Gunkel himself did not identify them with the "ethnological saga" type ("A Thrice-Told Tale," 30).
speeches. There is nothing dangerous in the story, no direct threat from the
king, no need for divine intervention. "Everything points to a later stage in
the development of the saga, where the story has lost its original form."16
The blessing of vv. 3-5 was taken almost word for word from other J
passages. As to who the original characters were and the original setting,
the conclusion is that the less well known should be the original. Thus,
contrary to the rule, C, which is supposed to be the most modified and the
latest, retains the original characters and setting, while A, the most archaic,
which has no later additions, has undergone modification from Isaac and
Rebekah to Abraham and Sarah, and from Abimelech king of Gerar to
Pharaoh king of Egypt. The original version is reconstructed as follows:

Because of famine Isaac travelled from the desert in southern Palestine to the
nearby Canaanite city of Gerar, to live there as a 'sojourner', i.e. to keep within
the pasturage rights on the ground belonging to the city. He told everyone that
his wife was his sister so that his life would not be endangered by those who
desired her. However, Rebekah's beauty could not pass unnoticed. The king of
the city, Abimelech, took Rebekah into his harem, amply compensating Isaac. As
a material sin was about to be committed, God struck the people of the palace
with a mysterious illness. Through the medium of his gods, or a soothsayer,
Abimelech recognized what had happened. Abimelech called Isaac to account:
"What is this that you have done to me?" He then restored him his wife and sent
him away, loaded with gifts.17

Comparing this reconstruction with the three versions in Genesis, Koch
then proposes a "history of the literary type of the ethnological saga." Four
points are observed: (1) narratives become elaborated by speeches; (2) moral
sensitivity becomes gradually stronger; (3) God's intervention is less tan-
gible in later versions; (4) there is a tendency to transfer the action of the
story to more familiar people and powers.18

The setting in life of this original story is said to be the desert of Southern
Palestine before the conquest, told by those tracing their descent from Isaac.
"Such a story would perhaps have been related by men before the tents,
when it was evening, after the herds had been settled and the children
slept."19 These people felt themselves superior to those of the city, to whom
they sometimes had to turn for permission to graze in hard times. As the
story changed, the setting in life changed; Isaac was supplanted by Abra-
ham when the tribe of Judah was formed by the union of Isaac's people with

16 Ibid., 124.
17 Ibid., 126. This appears to contradict his earlier assumption that adultery did occur in
the most primitive version.
18 Ibid., 126-27. R. Polzin ("'The Ancestress of Israel in Danger' in Danger," Semeia 3
[1975] 82) says of Koch, "A particularly circular aspect of his analysis consists in describing the
evolutionary development of this particular 'ethnological saga' largely by means of general
assumptions about how such stories developed in Israel, ... and then using this analysis as a
basis for tracing 'a history of the literary type of the ethnological saga.'"
Abraham's. Nomads became farmers (see 26:12). Narrative B is taken up by prophetic circles, and becomes a "legend about the prophets."²⁰

III. Redaction Criticism

1. The Redaction-Critical Procedure

Though Koch's conclusions have been criticized by a number of scholars, some of whom we have cited in the accompanying notes, they have in common with him what seems to be an automatic assumption that the object of study is to find out how the three episodes relate to each other, more than to their differing contexts. Our disagreement is more fundamental. The only relationship that we positively know existed among the three accounts is the one that now exists in the book of Genesis: a literary one, where they are three different episodes in the lives of the patriarchs, separated from each other by many years and considerable narration. Any other relationship among them is, and can only be, hypothetical, and the wide divergence of opinion as to such hypothetical relationships does not give much confidence in the certainty of anyone position.²¹ We will attempt to demonstrate here that the critical emphasis on studying the narratives in relation to each other at the expense of their relevance to their respective contexts and to the themes of the patriarchal narratives has obscured the literary genius of the one responsible for giving us the patriarchal narratives in their present form. Our procedure was well described by Van Seters, who did not carry it out to its logical conclusion because of his acceptance of source criticism:

The stories about the patriarch's beautiful wife in a foreign land should not be treated in isolation from other episodes connected with the same dramatis personae. The reason for many doing so in the past is the presupposition that the stories in Genesis are virtually all based directly on specific folktales and were put into their present form by narrators working quite independently of each other. Since such a proposition has been rejected in this study there is every reason why they should be treated together.²²

To begin, we will focus on some of the difficulties mentioned by source critics and ask the question, "What would a reader presuming the unity and integrity of Genesis 12-26 conclude?" One difficulty that has been ade-

²⁰ Ibid., 128.
²¹ Alexander lists 24 different possibilities for the dependence (or lack thereof) among the three narratives ("The Wife/Sister Incidents," 2-3), enough to keep scholars occupied for several more centuries.
²² Van Seters, Abraham, 183-84.
quately dealt with in the past is the age of Sarah in A. 23 She is at least 65 years old, yet she is so attractive that she is taken into the harem of Pharaoh himself. This attractiveness is certainly remarkable— but why is it felt to be problematic? Why should we exclude the possibility that the placement of this account in its chronological framework is intended to convey meaning—that from it we are to understand that Sarah, "our ancestress," was indeed remarkable not only for her beauty, but for the prolonging of her beauty? The lives of the patriarchs were long; would this fact not make probable a delay in the aging process, a lengthening of the time of youthful beauty? And such a prolongation of life would remind readers that God had made provision for Adam and Eve to enjoy eternal youth. The same analysis pertains to the age of Rebekah in C.

Another source of comment by critics in A are two things that appear to be "left out." Much is made of the fact that there are two major, unanswered questions: (1) What happened to Sarah in Pharaoh's house—was she defiled or not? (2) How did Pharaoh find out that the plagues came upon him because Sarah was married to someone else? 24 As for the first question, the ancients affirmed that Sarah could not have been defiled because righteous Abraham would not have taken her back. 25 Most moderns presume that she was defiled, supposing that this conclusion is the natural implication and that we would have been told if it were otherwise. This disagreement reveals the obvious: the text does not say. As for the second question, we have already observed Koch's conclusion that the method used to divine the reason for the plagues was left out because it demonstrated efficacy of pagan methods of divination—thus revealing the primitive character of the prototype of A. A much simpler reason was suggested by H. Ewald: the author intended the reader to get the answer to both of these questions from B. 26 The paternalism of the notion that the ancient Hebrews would not have cared (or even would have gloated at the successful trick) whether or not the wife of Abraham was involved in adul-

23 E.g., W. Green, Unity of Genesis, 166-67; "The only point of any consequence in this discussion is not what modern critics may think of the probability or possibility of what is here narrated, but whether the sacred historian credited it. On the hypothesis of the critics, R believed it and recorded it. What possible ground can they have for assuming that J and E had less faith than R in what is here told of the marvelous beauty and attractiveness of the ancestress of the nation?"

24 Alexander ("The Wife/Sister Incidents," 7) adds a third, "Did Abraham actually allow Pharaoh to take Sarah without objecting?" But Abraham's own words in Gen 12:11-13 certainly imply that this was part of the plan.


26 H. Ewald, Die Komposition der Genesis kritisch untersucht (1823) 228f., quoted by Green, Unity of Genesis, 257 n. 1.
tery may account for its popularity among moderns, but from a perspective of overall unity, it cannot survive comparison with chap. 20. There we have an unambiguous answer in universal terms in God's words to Abimelech: "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against me; therefore I did not allow you to touch her. Now therefore restore the man's wife" (vv. 6-7a). The same circumstances prevailed in A, since Pharaoh, too, acted in ignorant integrity. Should we not therefore conclude that God should have also kept Pharaoh from touching her? The logic is compelling; the same Abraham and Sarah, the same conditions, the same God. If the answer to this major question in A is not to be found in B, then we must conclude that it is not answered at all, and we would have no clue as to why such a major question is left unanswered. Additionally, to assume that adultery was committed in Pharaoh's palace would make the purpose of divine intervention in A much different than in B, i.e., the purpose of God's intervention in A would not have been to prevent Sarah from being defiled, as in B, but rather to punish Pharaoh because she was defiled. Perhaps implied also from B, then, is that Pharaoh found out the same way Abimelech did: in a dream. Why narrative A should be dependent on B like this will be explained later.

27 S. Warner ("Primitive Saga Men," *VT* 29 [1979] 325-35) cites two works that demonstrate Gunkel's dependence on anthropological views of his time (p. 325 n. 3) which Warner summarizes as follows: "Modern man was not only different from primitive man, he was superior. Compared to modern man, primitive man was a child. And, like a child, primitive man was incapable of thinking complicated thoughts, of reasoning in any great depth, or of developing any sophisticated moral awareness" (p. 326). He goes on to show that without this view of "primitive" man, which no anthropologist holds today, "Gunkel's conception of the oral transmission process, . . . has no meaning, and should be abandoned" (ibid.). He concludes, "At present we see no reason to assume that the narratives of Genesis bear any close resemblance to orally transmitted data at all" (p. 335). His comments are also applicable to Koch's procedure.

28 J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) 1.363: "When he was in similar danger, (Gen. xx. I,) God did not suffer her to be violated by the king of Gerar; shall we then suppose that she was now exposed to Pharaoh's lust?" As discussed later, another reason for making it clear that adultery did not occur in B concerns the legitimacy of Isaac's birth, which of course was not of concern in chap. 12. This does not make Calvin's reasoning any less valid, however.

29 Van Seters (*Abraham*, 171-75) argues for a literary dependence of B on A, saying, "The only way in which the cryptic character of v. 2 can be explained is that the other story [A] is known and can be assumed, and therefore Abraham's plan and its execution need not be recounted again in full" (p. 171). But methodologically it is equally compelling to argue that A is literarily dependent on B because of the "cryptic character" of the former. This Van Seters does not do. He assumes without discussion that adultery occurred in A (p. 169), whereas the opposite is inferred from B.

30 Polzin argues strongly for a synchronic study of the three accounts but is immediately led astray by the assumption that adultery occurred in A, resulting in a moral improvement from A to B and the blessing of God in B as opposed to A ("The Ancestress of Israel," 81-98). There is a strange implication here: Abraham is rewarded in chap. 20 because God intervened before the adultery occurred, whereas in chap. 12 he is punished because God did not intervene until after the adultery. Abraham's behavior was the same in both cases.
The setting of B is more problematic. Here, Sarah is not 65, but 89 years old. In principle, the objection of her age might be dealt with in the same way as in A—that the preservation of Sarah's beauty is indeed even more remarkable than as portrayed in A. And this is how other writers have explained the problem.31 This resolution is excluded, however, by Sarah's own comments in 18:12. When Yhwh announces the coming birth of her son, Sarah scoffs, saying, "after I have become worn out [blh], shall I have pleasure [\textit{cedna}], my lord being old also?" Her use of \textit{blh} suggests physical deterioration, not just chronological advancement.32 The majority of uses of the root \textit{blh}, which occurs 11 times in the \textit{qal} and 4 times in the \textit{piel}, refer to worn-out clothing, or something being compared to worn-out clothing, with such parallels as cracked wineskins and moth-eaten garments (e.g., Josh 9: 13; Job 13:28; Isa 50:9). Her use of \textit{cedna} suggests to most interpreters that she considers herself too old for sexual intercourse (see n. 7). Either one of these considerations precludes the situation suggested in B, that Abimelech would be attracted to Sarah and add her to his harem of beautiful women. But actually, we notice that in B the author does not quite come out and say anything about Sarah's beauty. Was it omitted, as Koch suggests, because it was too ridiculous in this context? That does not solve the problem, for no reason is given in its place. The redaction critic must ask the same question that any reader would: "Why did Abraham pass off his wife as his sister? What was he afraid of?" If we follow the previous establishment of dependence of A on B, in which we allowed B to provide answers to questions raised in A, then perhaps we should now let A provide the answer to this great, unanswered question in B. The answer from A would have to be that Abraham feared for his life in Gerar because of the surpassing beauty of Sarah, his 89-year-old wife fit to be a queen: "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman. . . . they will kill me, but will let you live; so say that you are my sister, so that it may go well with me." As in the former case, if we do not let A explain B, then we will have no answer to our question. But how can such a conclusion be reconciled with Sarah's own self description just two chapters previously? And why were the accounts constructed so that neither is complete or can be understood without the other?

2. The Naming of Isaac

As everyone knows, Isaac got his name from his parents' laughter at the pre-announcement of his birth (17:17; 18:12); but the reason for their laughter is generally misunderstood. The apostles assure us that the reason

31 E.g., Green, \textit{Unity of Genesis}, 254.
32 Cf. BDB, 115, "After I am worn out"; Speiser, \textit{Genesis}, 128, "withered as I am, am I still to know enjoyment?"
was not unbelief (Rom 4:19; Heb 11:11), but what else could it be but unbelief, considering their words? Let us consider their respective cases of laughter, one at a time. In Genesis 17, Abraham is currently laboring under his third incorrect interpretation of who his heir is going to be. The identity of this heir is important, since the promises of Gen 12: 1-3 require an heir for their fulfillment. The first false candidate was Lot; and the separation of Lot from Abraham indicated that he was not the promised heir. That he is not the heir is shown in the timing of the repetition of the divine promise to Abraham—"after Lot had separated from him" (13:14). That is, the promise is unaffected by his departure; its fulfillment is elsewhere.33 The next candidate is Eliezer of Damascus. When Abraham expresses this understanding to the Lord, Eliezer is excluded by the additional revelation that Abraham will in fact have an heir "who shall come forth from your own body" (15:4). The next chapter narrates the birth of Ishmael by Sarah's servant girl Hagar. Ishmael would naturally be thought of as the fulfillment of the promise of an heir from Abraham's own body in 15:4, especially since the promise of innumerable offspring given to Abraham (Gen 13:16) is applied to Ishmael (16:10). And as is clear from Sarah's own words ("perhaps I will be built from her"); Ishmael was also considered Sarah's son.34 When the vision of chap. 17 occurs, then, Abraham interprets the promise there received in light of his incorrect interpretation that Ishmael is the heir through whom the promises will be fulfilled. He would interpret these promises as, "I will multiply you exceedingly [through Ishmael]" (v. 2), etc. In vv. 1-14 there is not the slightest hint that Ishmael is


34 T. L. Thompson (The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham [Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1974]) discusses Genesis 16, 21: 1-21, and 29:31-30:24 under the heading "Nuzi and the Patriarchal Narratives" (pp. 252-69). In the course of his discussion he says: "contrary to the opinion of the commentators, the children that are borne by the maids are not attributed to the wives. In Gen 30:20 Leah says: 'I have borne him six (not eight) sons; it is not until the birth of Joseph by Rachel herself that Rachel's disgrace is removed (Gen 30:23), and the children of Rachel are the children she herself bore: Joseph and Benjamin. In Gen 21:10f., Sarah could hardly be more explicit that she did not consider Ishmael her son" (pp. 256-57). This conclusion, however, is based on a selective listing of the evidence, since he does not provide an explanation for what Sarah meant when she said, "Perhaps I will be built from her," and since Rachel's explicit statement at the birth of Dan through the surrogate Bilhah ("God. . . has listened to my voice and given me a son"); 30:6) so clearly establishes the fact that Rachel considered Dan to be her son. Nor does he explain in what sense Rachel "prevailed" over Leah when Bilhah bore Naphtali (30:8), or why other women would count Leah blessed because of the birth of Asher by Zilpah (30: 13). These passages are meaningless unless we see that some type of vicarious participation in motherhood was recognized by the nonbearing wives in these situations. In this regard, Gen 21:10 constitutes a clear repudiation by Sarah of her former views. Additionally, there is the subjective argument that a much more satisfying exegesis of Genesis 17 and 18 is arrived at by postulating that Sarah did consider Ishmael her son—not exclusively hers, but at least to the extent of remedying her barrenness. The validity of this inductive argument, of course, depends on the persuasiveness of the exegesis presented in this essay.
not the heir of promise that Abraham assumes him to be; thus he is being further "hardened" in that interpretation. In v. 15, Sarah is mentioned for the first time in any of the promises: she too will have a new name. Then God says, "I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her" (v. 16). This promise of a son to be born to Sarah presents a challenge to Abraham to abandon his current interpretation of God's promises which identifies Ishmael as the promised heir. What is not clear in the translations, however, is that the promise leaves some room for maneuvering, allowing Abraham to cling to the interpretation to which he is already predisposed. The verbs used in the series of promises concerning Sarah are *uberakti* . . . *natatti* . . . *uberaktiha wehayeta* . . . *yihyu* (v. 16). We normally would expect the imperfect to be used in such a series when the *waw* is not joined to the verb (thus *yihyu*, not *hayu* at the end of the verse). But "I will give you a son by her" is translated not from *etten*, but from *natatti*. This usage is really not surprising, since the form *natatti* without *waw* has already been used with a future sense in this chapter (v. 5; cf. v. 6, *unetattika*; also in Gen 15: 18; 23:11, 13). But one who is inclined to interpret divine revelation according to a certain paradigm will try to fit any new revelation into that same old paradigm. Thus Abraham could seize on the word *natatti* and force the promise into fitting an "Ishmael interpretation": "I will bless her—indeed I have already given you a son by her [Ishmael, who was her son, according to their way of thinking], and I will bless her [the same way I will bless you, by blessing Ishmael her son]" etc. That he recognizes there is another interpretation is clear from his thoughts which are revealed in v. 17; "Abraham fell on his face and laughed, thinking, 'Shall one be born to a 100 year old man? Or Sarah-shall a 90-year-old woman give birth?' " The inertia of 13 years of misinterpretation, combined with the seeming impossibility of the latter interpretation, cause him to cling to his identification of Ishmael as the heir of promise. Abraham's laughter should thus be seen as a rejection of what he thought was just one possible (even if more probable) interpretation; and his statement "May Ishmael indeed live before you" (v. 18) should be viewed not only as the expression of his choice of interpretations, but also as a seeking of affirmation from God that his interpretation is correct. Having succeeded in getting him to laugh, the Lord then gives him the promise in a manner that cannot be misunderstood: "Sarah your wife is going to bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac" (v. 19). This cannot be misinterpreted; only believed or disbelieved. We can imagine Abraham feeling that he was "set up" to laugh. If he had been told outright in the beginning of the vision that the promised heir would be born by Sarah (literally), he would have believed—as in Gen 15:6. As it was, however, he was led into a trap by a promise that left some room for his old interpretation, and he ended up laughing at God's announced intention. But perhaps the point is, Abraham set himself up for this trap. If he had not resorted to the Ishmael solution contrary to God's
standards for man and wife, set in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:24, a man "shall cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"), there would have been no ambiguity in the promises of chap. 17, for there would not have been any Ishmael to whom to refer them. They would have to refer to a son yet to be born to Sarah. Abraham is thus being taught to interpret God's promises according to God's nature, and not to laugh at their implications in preference to interpretations derived from pagan cultural assumptions.

Sarah learns the same lesson in chap. 18. She, like her husband, does not see any conflict between her barrenness and God's promises. She has already "solved" that problem; she has a son, Ishmael. One day, three strangers happen by, for whom Abraham and Sarah prepare a meal. The three sit down to eat, with Sarah at the tent door behind them, so that they cannot see her (v. 10). Then comes the set-up: "Where is Sarah your wife?" This question does two things. First, the mention of her name ensures her complete attention to what is about to be said. Second, the question continues the pretense of the visitors that they are mere human beings—were they otherwise there would be no need to ask where Sarah was. After Abraham points her out, the promise comes from one stranger: "I will surely return to you at this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son" (v. 10). Unlike the promise to her husband, the meaning of this promise is not ambiguous. But she is not aware of the identity of the one giving the promise—it's just a stranger who happened by, as far as she knows. Predictably, she laughs; under such circumstances, who wouldn't? As far as she is concerned, the promise of an heir for Abraham has been fulfilled, for she already has a son. After 13 years, the correctness of the Ishmaelite interpretation would seem to have been validated by her progression from barrenness to the post menstrual phase of her life. So if a man comes by and gives a crazy promise, why shouldn't she laugh? Only after she laughs does she learn that it was not a mere man who has just made this promise. He knows she laughed, even though she did so silently, and he can read her mind and tell her her thoughts (v. 13). And the one who can read her mind asks, "Is anything too difficult for Yhwh?" (v. 14).

Sarah was set up to laugh in a manner different from her husband, appropriate to her different position. Abraham the prophet received God's word directly—thus he was set up to laugh directly at God's word. Sarah received God's word indirectly, through a man, her husband. Consequently she is made to laugh at the words of a mere man (apparently). The suggestion is that she is just as much to blame for doing so, for not correctly responding to her barren condition by patiently waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. For if she had not resorted to the Ishmael solution, faith in

35 The narrator likewise does not identify Yhwh as one of the three men until v. 13, when he reveals himself to Sarah by reading her mind. The NIV translators, following their occasional practice of inserting the subject's name when it is not in the original, undo this literary device in v. 10.
God would have led her to believe even a stranger who came by and announced the impending and long-expected fulfillment of the promise. There is a third group that receives the word of God: neither prophet (Abraham), nor audience of a prophet (Sarah), but those who merely read God's word handed down to them. They, too, will be caught laughing. The set-up for this group occurs in our second wife/sister episode: "Abraham said of Sarah his wife, 'She is my sister.' So Abimelech king of Gerar took Sarah" (Gen 20:2). Can anything be more worthy of laughing at than the thought of a king taking this withered old woman into his harem, to join the most beautiful women of his realm? And so multitudes have laughed (or scoffed) at this report down through the ages. But we should know better by now not to be caught laughing. For a little reflection shows that the reader who laughs at the idea of Sarah being desirable to Abimelech has not laughed at anything different from what Abraham and Sarah laughed at. Sarah said, "After I am old, shall I have pleasure?" for which she was rebuked by Yhwh, who said, "Is anything too difficult for Yhwh?" And now we see Abimelech anticipating the very thing Sarah laughed at. How dare we laugh, too? The question not answered in B would be readily supplied to the mind of the reader who read A: "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and it will come about that when [they] see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. So say that you are my sister, so that... I may live on account of you" (Gen 12: 11-13). The paging back and forth between chap. 12 and chap. 20 which is necessitated by the incompleteness of each episode leads us to conclude that Sarah is the same in both cases. She is no longer the wrinkled old lady of chap. 18, but rather the exceptionally beautiful Sarah of some 24 years earlier when she entered the promised land. The reader of chap. 20 is to refer back to chap. 18 not to see what Sarah is like, but to see what she has been changed from. And he refers to chap. 12 and its description of her beauty to see what she has been restored to. Rather than stating that fact outright, the author has abruptly presented the reader with a seemingly incongruous and impossible situation; the brief statement of v. 2 would instantly let the reader remember the previous account and let it fill in the details, causing him, after sitting in judgment on Abraham and Sarah for their laughter, to join them in being caught laughing at the word of God. Isaac is indeed well named! The implication should not escape us that the author is teaching us to treat his written words as equivalent to God's words spoken directly to Abraham. Abraham is taught not to laugh at the direct pronouncements of God; Sarah at the word of God pronounced by man. Then future generations are taught not to laugh at the written word of God. From a redaction-critical perspective, then, the genre classifications of the form critics, such as "Tale told to entertain" and "Legend," must be rejected. The one responsible for placing the accounts in their present context wants us to treat them as the written oracle of God. And we would do well to remember that there is no hard evidence that they ever existed in any other form or context.
Also highly dubious is the source-critical contention that Abraham's and Sarah's laughter indicates two different sources' explanations for how Isaac got his name. For the text has been clearly set up so that not only Abraham and Sarah laugh, but multitudes down through the ages laugh as well. At this point one might wonder whether such an important matter as the rejuvenation of Sarah should be recognized without an explicit mention of it in the text. Is there anything else in the context to support this interpretation besides the mutually interdependent construction of A and B? At least two lines of evidence support this interpretation. First is the case of Abraham himself. In Gen 17:17 he regarded himself as too old to father a child. For Isaac to be conceived, then, what happened to Abraham? Was he given a one-time ability to generate offspring, or was his bodily state rejuvenated, as I suggested Sarah's was? The answer to this is made clear in Gen 25:1-2, where we read that after the death of Sarah, long after describing himself as too old to father a child, he takes another wife and fathers six more children!\(^{36}\) Rejuvenation is thus clear in the case of Abraham, and this lends credence to the same conclusion for Sarah.

A second line of evidence comes from proposing a test to the rejuvenation hypothesis. If Sarah were made 24 years younger at the age of 89, then, all other things being equal, she should live at least another 24 years after that point to get back to the same place she was when she laughed. But if she died just a few years after Isaac was born, that would cast doubt on the whole rejuvenation hypothesis. But how can we apply this test, since Scripture does not indicate the life span of women? We know how long Adam lived, but not Eve; Isaac, but not Rebekah; Moses and Aaron, but not Miriam; etc. Never does the Bible give us the age at which a woman died. With one exception, that is. Sarah just happens to be the only woman in the Bible whose life span is recorded; she lived another 38 years after the events of chap. 20 (Gen 23:1). And because she is the only woman so treated, we have a means of testing the rejuvenation hypothesis. Perhaps, then, that is the reason we are told how long she lived. If one rejects this explanation, then he should come up with some other one in its place for why Sarah's life span is given, while no other woman's is.

The suggestion that Sarah was rejuvenated was made by some of the rabbis, according to M. Zlotowitz.\(^{37}\) It has also had at least two proponents in modern times: J. Kurtz and G. Aalders.\(^{38}\) Neither offered any evidence

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36 Predictably, this has been taken as another contradiction indicating multiple sources behind Genesis; see, e.g., Spurrell, *Text of Genesis*, xvi.

37 "It may be that, as the Rabbis assert, . . . her youthfulness returned in preparation for conception (Radak, Ramban; . . .). . . . Cf. Bava etzia 87a: . . . her skin became smooth, her wrinkles disappeared, and her former beauty was regained" (N. Scherman and M. Zlotowitz, *Bereishis / Genesis: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources*, vol. 1(a) [The ArtScroll Tanach Series; Brooklyn: Mesorah, 1986] 722).

38 J. Kurtz wrote, "The matter admits of ready explanation. Since the visit of the angels in Mamre when Sarah was set apart to become mother, and through the creative agency of God
for the view, except that it seemed like an obvious way out of the difficulty. Kurtz's view was rejected without explanation by Keil, who said that Abimelech wanted to marry Sarah not for her beauty, but in order to make a marriage alliance to gain favor with the great prince (per Gen 23:6) Abraham.\(^{39}\) But this view, which also goes back to the rabbis,\(^{40}\) is incredible, since it ignores the fact that Abraham lied because he was afraid of something. Keil's view leads to the conclusion that he was afraid that Abimelech would kill him to make an alliance with him to gain his favor, which of course is ridiculous.

Another support for this interpretation is that it dovetails with another theme of promise-fulfillment in the Abraham cycle. In addition to the promise of offspring, Abraham received the promise of land. The incongruity of this promise is brought out in the juxtaposition of the situation and the promise in Gen 12:6b-7a, "Now the Canaanite was then in the land. And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' " He had not been brought to inherit a vacant lot; this land was already inhabited. In Gen 13:15 the promise of land is both "to you. . . and to your offspring." In chap. 15 Abraham is again promised the land, "I am Yhwh who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it" (15:7). Does this mean that Abraham is personally going to inherit the land, not just indirectly through his offspring? Since it seemed quite unlikely for a single nomad, powerful though he was, to dispossess an inhabited land, he asks, "how may I know that I will possess it?" (v. 8). He is then instructed to bring some animals for sacrifice. What follows is a covenant ceremony, with a solemn promise of the land as Yhwh passes a flaming torch between the carcass pieces. The references to time of day require some comment. The promise of v. 7 occurs while it is very dark, rendered capable of it, her youth and beauty had returned: this new life would manifest itself in her appearance, and lend it fresh beauty and new charms" (\textit{History of the Old Covenant}, T. & T. Clark, 1870) 250). Similarly, G. Aalders: "We believe that Sarah experienced a physical miracle that enabled her to bear a child at an extremely advanced age. This miracle of physical rejuvenation could well have caused Sarah also to retain or, if need be, to regain her physical attractiveness to such an extent that she would draw the attention of Abimelech" (\textit{Genesis}, [2 vols.; Bible Student's Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981] 2.27). J. Quarry suggested, "perhaps this story is introduced to indicate that. . . she had acquired such a renewal of the natural concomitant physical attributes, as would render her childbearing a matter of less curiosity" (\textit{Genesis and its Authorship: Two Dissertations}, [London: Williams & Norgate, 1866] 449 n. I). G. von Rad did not know the truth of what he wrote: "Obviously the narrator imagines Sarah to be much younger" (\textit{Genesis: A Commentary} [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964] 222).


\(^{40}\) "According to \textit{Ran}, Abimelech took Sarah, not because of her beauty, but because she was Abraham's 'sister' and he wished to marry into so distinguished a family" (Zlotowitz, \textit{Bereishis}, 722.
since the stars can be seen well (v. 5). In v. 12, however, the sun has not yet set, and in v. 17 it is dark again. What has happened, then, seems to be that in the early morning darkness Abraham is given the promise, then told to bring the animals. When he does so, nothing happens. He waits around all day, and nothing happens except that some vultures try to get the animals. Finally, the sun sets and he falls into a deep sleep. Then comes the covenant ceremony and a revelation of the future. The rest of Abraham's life will be spent just as this day has been; he will wait, and nothing will happen as far as inheriting the land. Then he will fall asleep (die; v. 15). After 400 years of exile and oppression of his descendants, they will return and inherit the land.

First he is told he will inherit the land. Then when he asks how he can know for sure, he is told he will die before it is inherited by his offspring. So will Abraham inherit the land or not? Is the Lord less able to reward his servants than the kings of that age, who in the style of Genesis 15 gave grants of land to their faithful servants which were effective while they were still living? Genesis 15 makes it clear that if Abraham is going to inherit the land, it has to be in the resurrection. If he is not going to inherit it, then what is God's promise worth to Abraham? To imply a resurrection from Genesis 15 may seem like reading into the text, but some meaning must attach to the fact that Abraham is made to wait all day, doing nothing, and to the sequence of events in chap. 15. A source-critical explanation of sloppy editing strikes us as the lazy way out.

The two themes of son and land parallel each other. When Abraham and Sarah entered the promised land with a promise of offspring they were "alive" with respect to being able to have children. This is shown on the one hand by Abraham later fathering Ishmael, and on the other by the fact that Sarah, though barren, did not give up hope of giving birth until 16:2 (and her youthful beauty surely gave her reason to hope). But while waiting for the promise, they both "died" with respect to being able to have children (17:17; 18:12). After they "died" they were "brought back to life" so that Isaac could be born and the promise fulfilled. This sequence forms a paradigm of the promise of the land. They entered the land and received a promise to inherit that land. Then they wait the rest of their lives, the promise unfulfilled, and die without receiving it. It is only in the resurrection that they can receive it. Rejuvenation is thus a token, or type, of resurrection. This link between the two was evidently on Paul's mind when he penned Rom 4:17-19, "in the sight of Him whom [Abraham] believed, even God, who gives life to the dead... he believed, in order that he might

41 Not surprisingly, this is held to indicate a multiple-source background to the account. See Speiser, Genesis, 114-15. Discrepancies in time of day are one factor which led him to say, "the whole is clearly not of a piece, though now intricately blended,"

42 G, Wenham also notes this symbolic meaning of Abraham's sleep (Genesis 1-15 [WBC 1; Waco, TX: Word, 1987] 335).

become a father. . . he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead, and the deadness of Sarah's womb" (also see Heb 11:12-13).

Paul seems to have been preceded as a witness to the rejuvenation interpretation by Isaiah the prophet. In Isa 51:2-3, the only OT passage outside of Genesis that refers to Sarah, the righteous remnant is exhorted to consider the example of their ancestors:

Look to Abraham your father,
And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain;
When he was one I called him,
Then I blessed him, and multiplied him.
Indeed the Lord will comfort Zion;
He will comfort all her waste places.
And her wilderness he will make like Eden,
And her desert like the Garden of the LORD;
Joy and gladness will be found in her,
Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.

The example of Abraham and Sarah seems especially appropriate once we recognize a rejuvenation, a physical transformation analogous to changing a desert into a paradise. Rejoicing also followed that transformation (Gen 21:6). It is also appropriate to cite Eden ['eden], since Sarah had said, "Shall I have 'edna?"

There is therefore no problem in viewing chap. 20 as properly following chaps. 18 and 19. Likewise, there are two features of chap. 21 which are incomprehensible without chap. 20. The first of these is the emphasis with which Isaac is said to be the son of Abraham in Gen 21:2-5 (four times using the verb yld with the preposition le; three times using the possessive suffix with ben). Zlotowitz explained this redundancy as follows: "The repeated emphasis on born to 'him' testifies against the scoffers that the child was born of Abraham's seed and none other."44 The "other" would obviously be Abimelech, since Sarah had just been in his harem. Zlotowitz cites Rashi to this effect in the latter's commentary on Gen 25:19: "Cynics of Abraham's generation had been saying that Sarah, who had lived so long with Abraham without bearing a child, must have become pregnant by Abimelech."45 This leads to the second feature of chap. 21 explained by chap. 20. It was clearly not "cynics" in general asserting Isaac's illegitimacy, but Ishmael, as is clear from the following context, where we find Ishmael mocking Isaac with some taunt not mentioned, but which deeply offends Sarah and is so serious an offense that Ishmael is disinherited by divine

44 Zlotowitz, Bereishis, 747.
45 Ibid., 1044. The citation reads, "Tanchuma; Rashi as explained by Mizrachi." Cf. A. Levine, trans., The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951) 92-93: "But in the case of Abimelech, he mentions explicitly that he did not draw near unto her, because as she was already pregnant with Isaac, it should not be thought that it was from another and not from Abraham."
decree. What could offend Sarah more than to assert that Isaac was Abimelech's son? Ishmael's interest (also Hagar's) in asserting such a claim would be obvious, since it would involve a denial of Isaac's legitimate inheritance rights in favor of his own, contrary to God's revealed will. The punishment imposed (loss of his own inheritance) is quite appropriate to the offense.  

The more trivial contextual "discrepancies" of B can now be dealt with. Some critics cite the implausibility of Abraham twice falling into the same error. But in whose opinion is it implausible? Certainly not the author's; to maintain that he was merely in the business of collecting variant traditions would contradict the "evidence" cited by critics to indicate that the re-dactor has edited the material precisely to present the accounts as two different episodes in the life of Abraham. Besides, we should know by now that we should not label what we read as "implausible," lest we be caught laughing again.

This is not to say that no conclusions should be drawn from the fact that Abraham erred in this way twice. Though outwardly the offense appears the same in both cases, several considerations indicate that the second lapse was much more blameworthy than the first. It was suggested earlier that in A the promise of the heir could have been considered as being fulfilled through Lot, so that it did not depend on Abraham's continued existence. Likewise no mention had been made of Sarah's involvement in the promise. These factors mitigate Abraham's actions somewhat; he failed to do what is right no matter the consequences, which could have been death. In B, however, the same error indicates flat unbelief in God's explicit promise; he had by now received the promise that he would die "in peace" (15:15), yet he fears that he will be murdered. And God had just told him that in a year's time Sarah will bear him a son. Finally, the experience of God's intervention in plaguing Pharaoh's house on his behalf in a similar situation gives him even less excuse for unbelief. Even if he just proceeded in the same way because he knew God would rescue him again, then he was guilty of testing God. These considerations make very dubious Polzin's view that the situation in B is transformed into a morally better situation than A (see n. 30; his reason for this is the erroneous assumption that adultery occurred in A).

Another objection was that it must have taken quite some time to discover that "the Lord had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech" (v. 18), whereas only a few months could conceivably be involved in chap. 20, according to the chronological framework. But those who presume that a period of years was involved run into trouble in the story itself. We are told that Abimelech had not approached Sarah (v. 4); but that was obviously the purpose for which he had taken her. Would he

46 As my wife Linda pointed out to me, John 8:41 might be a NT counterpart to this, if it is in fact a slur on the legitimacy of the birth of Isaac.
wait years to do so? The more likely explanation is that, as in A, there were "plagues"; here Green suggested some kind of physical affliction preventing intercourse, requiring healing. 47

We have shown how A and B are interdependent, and this militates against Koch's treatment of them as independent units. But an even greater dependence on the Exodus narrative can be shown for A. It was well known to the ancients that Gen 12:10-20 is typologically related to the account of the Exodus, a fact that has not been dealt with by most moderns. If Abraham went down to Egypt because of famine; the sons of Israel went down to Egypt because of famine, where they became the nation of Israel. Abraham prospered in Egypt; Israel prospered in Egypt. Abraham feared that he would be killed, while Sarah would be spared; Pharaoh commanded that the Hebrew male children be killed, while the females should be spared. Yhwh sent plagues on Pharaoh because of Sarah; Yhwh sent plagues on Pharaoh because of his treatment of Israel. Pharaoh sent away Abraham and Sarah with much property; Pharaoh sent away Israel with much property. Abraham and Sarah returned to Canaan; Israel returned to Canaan. Additionally, though he let Abraham go to Egypt, God told Isaac not to go (Gen 26:2); likewise Israel was told not to return to Egypt (Deut 17:16), thus involving C in the typology as well. It is evident, then, that virtually every detail of A has a typological connection with the Exodus narrative. That being the case, one has to wonder what is the justification for and the value in studying it primarily as an independent unit, as the form critics do. It is thoroughly dependent on the Exodus narrative and interdependent with Genesis 20, and its unique features are explained at least in part by these dependencies.

So far little has been said about C. It certainly lacks the drama of the other two passages, since no one tries to take Rebekah away from Isaac, and there is no divine intervention to save her. It does look like it could be another version of B, since Abimelech (and Phicol immediately following) reappears here, over 76 years after B. And the line of reasoning that says Abraham would not make the same mistake twice, concludes likewise that Isaac would not make the same mistake as his father.

47 Green, Unity of Genesis, 257. He says such a plague is implied in the fact that Abimelech required healing as well as his wife and servant girls (20:17).

Let us begin a redaction-critical approach by agreeing that it is indeed a remarkable thing that this Abimelech should have such a long reign. The difficulty cannot be avoided by supposing that "Abimelech" is a dynastic title such as "Pharaoh" (appealing to Psalm 34, title), or that it is the same name given to a son or grandson. While such a solution might be plausible for the king himself, the same could not be maintained for his general Phicol, who is with the king after both accounts. The question to ask is, what would account for such a remarkably long reign?

Here we can again profit from a comparison of the three accounts. In A, Pharaoh expelled Abraham from his country. The gifts given to Abraham were because of his (supposed) relation to Sarah, not because of his relation to the Lord. Abimelech, however, gave gifts to Abraham after God intervened for him, and he told Abraham to settle wherever he wanted in his land (Gen 20:14-15). In the next chapter, Abimelech and Phicol say to Abraham, "God is with you in all that you do; now therefore swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, or with my offspring, or with my posterity; but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me" (21:22b-23). Recall that God had said to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you" (12:3). Would it be surprising to find recorded the fulfillment of that promise? Abimelech and Phicol certainly fit the category of those who blessed Abraham. And in chap. 26, we find it was not only Abraham who honored the request "according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me," but God honored it as well, blessing them with very long lives and reigns. This is just another example of God exercising his sovereignty and creative power over the aging process.

Clearly the Abimelech of C has changed since the one of B, inconsistent with the notion of duplicate versions. The Abimelech of B is a harem-building king eager to acquire Sarah. But in C, where the whole town is stirred over the beauty of Rebekah, Abimelech is not interested. He seems to spend his time peeping through windows (v. 8), consistent with the idea of a much older man. The title "king of the Philistines" rather than "king of Gerar" may indicate some blessing of a greater kingdom as well.

Another objection has been that C presumes that Isaac and Rebekah are childless—for how could they pretend to be brother and sister with their two boys there? Yet the chronology places the event after the death of Abraham (26:18), making Jacob and Esau at least 16 years old. But this objection assumes what is plainly false—that only the family of four entered town, so that the boys would have appeared conspicuously without parents. Like his father, Isaac had many—perhaps hundreds—of men working for him and travelling with him (26:14-15, 19; see 14: 14), some no doubt with families of their own. Surely we can credit Isaac with enough intelligence to figure out a way to pass off his sons (who may have been fully grown anyway) as someone else's. Bible scholars likewise ought to be able to figure it out.
Having shown that C suitably fits its context, we still need to ask what contribution it makes to the development of the great themes of Genesis. If the only purpose were to show God's blessing on those who bless Abraham it could have been omitted, since Abimelech and Phicol are mentioned in the following narrative. Perhaps a clue to the importance of the story can be obtained from the critics' observation about the son repeating the mistake of his father. Certainly any reader of C would instantly realize that Isaac is following in his father's footsteps, and the narrative itself points back to A in v. 1: "there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham," referring back to 12:10. But the references to Abraham's life do not stop with C. Through the rest of chap. 26 we see Isaac doing what his father did. "Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, . . . and he gave them the same names which his father had given them" (v. 18); "The Lord appeared to him the same night and said, 'I am the God of your father Abraham' " (v. 24). Also like his father he grew wealthy (vv. 12-14), and made a covenant with Abimelech and Phicol at Beersheba (vv. 26-33). "Like father, like son" is an obvious inference, and the inclusion of the wife/sister motif lets us know that Isaac is like his father in every respect, including his failings.

The significance of this duplication can be seen in considering the development of the promises of the new Adam in the book of Genesis. The reason for the new Adam, of course, is the failure of the first Adam. The commission given to Adam was to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it as man in the image of God. The result of Adam's sin was that instead the earth was filled with wickedness and then destroyed (6:11-13). After the flood, the commission is given anew to Noah (9:1-7), leading us to think of him as another Adam, the father of the race that will fulfill God's purpose in creation. Disappointment soon comes, however, as the sin of Ham, the cursing of Canaan, and the tower of Babel incidents are narrated. It seems that things are going to turn out just as the first time; that Noah is not the new Adam after all. Then the commission of Adam is given to Abraham in the form of a promise (the aspects of fruitfulness and dominion can both be seen in 17:2, 4, 6). Here there is not a command for men to fulfill, but God's declaration of his intention to make Abraham the new Adam, the father of the righteous seed (which is why Paul said that Abraham received a promise that he would inherit the world; Rom 4:13). But here again there is disappointment: Abraham the father of the righteous fathered Ishmael the wicked, who is expelled from the family and his inheritance because of his persecution of Isaac, who inherits the promise of Abraham. If Abraham is not the new Adam, then maybe Isaac is. That would certainly explain all the attention given to him: his conception from

49 Green (Unity of Genesis, 325) also noted, "Isaac's life was to such an extent an imitation of his father's that no surprise need be felt at his even copying his faults." But the significance of the repetition requires explanation.
his rejuvenated parents, the stress on the covenant passing to Isaac, not Ishmael (17:19-21), and the expulsion of Ishmael for mocking his younger brother (21:9-12; see p. 17 for a suggestion as to the content of this mocking). Will the promise of the new Adam then be fulfilled through the miracle son, Isaac? Will he be what his father was not? The phrase "she is my sister" (26:7) is enough to dispel that notion, along with the previous narrative of Jacob and Esau, another Isaac and Ishmael pair. "Like father, like son" thus has an important function in the development of the messianic promise. It continues the cycle of expectation/disappointment which points the faithful reader toward a future fulfillment, the coming of the true new Adam who will be greater than Abraham and Isaac, who only symbolically represented him. This cycle of expectation/disappointment is encapsulated within C itself, which records the giving of the messianic promise to Isaac (vv. 3-5), followed immediately by Isaac's moral lapse (vv. 6-7). Note also the irony of juxtaposing v. 5, "because Abraham obeyed me and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws," with vv. 6-7, "so Isaac . . . said 'she is my sister,' for he was afraid" (the full irony of this would not be present without the knowledge that Abraham who "obeyed me" had lapsed as Isaac did). Likewise the first lapse of Abraham in A occurred right after the giving of the promise (12:7).50

The interpretation of these accounts as showing that Abraham and Isaac were really like the first Adam, though spoken of as the new Adam, is corroborated by W. Berg, who calls A "The Fall of Abraham," pointing back to Genesis 3.51 Among other clues is the recurrent question, "What is this you have done?" in 3:13 (God to Eve), 12:18 (Pharaoh to Abraham), and 26:10 (Abimelech to Isaac). Berg's essay on A followed an earlier analysis of Genesis 16 with similar conclusions.52 In both cases, Abraham's lapse is a violation of the Edenic ordinance of marriage. Such an analogy with the fall of Adam in Genesis 3 would make the lapse in B even more significant, since in that case Abraham and Sarah had been restored to "Eden" (Isa 51:3), yet fell again. The point to observe is that their rejuvenation did not undo the effects of the fall of Adam, and so they just grew old again and died. It is also noteworthy that the "Fall of David" (perhaps another "new Adam," for the promise of fruitfulness and dominion given to Abraham are also found in 2 Samuel 7) is ironically reminiscent of B (as P. Miscall has noted),53 since king David did to the foreigner Uriah what

50 As noted above, Koch felt that it was "odd" that this sequence would occur. It has a theological, not form-critical, explanation.
53 P. Miscall, "Literary Unity in Old Testament Narrative," Semita 15 (1979) 27-44. "What the patriarch, the elect, fears of the foreigners because of his wife is just what David, the elect, the Israelite king, does to Uriah the Hittite because of his wife" (p. 39).
Abraham was afraid the foreign king Abimelech would do to him (2 Samuel 11). The irony is not only in the role reversal, but that Abraham's fears were unfounded. Abimelech the pagan protested his innocence and rebuked Abraham for exposing him to God's wrath by his subterfuge; Abraham responded that he did it because he was sure there was no fear of God in that (pagan) place (20:9-11). What does that say when such a thing actually did happen in Israel, under its greatest king, the one after God's own heart, the one who did more to fulfill the Adamic commission than Abraham or Isaac? Such a series of lapses in the "new Adams" would certainly create a realization that a "greater" new Adam was required to fill the role. When the true new Adam came, instead of exposing his bride to defilement to save his own life, he "gave himself up for her to make her holy" (Eph 5:25-26).

When Paul goes on to say, "This is a profound mystery" (Eph 5:32), perhaps he means for us to make this comparison with the patriarchs. John 4, following John the Baptist's designation of Jesus as the bridegroom (John 3:25-30), certainly provides the basis for such a comparison, since a man meeting a woman at a well is the classic OT courtship scene (see Genesis 24; 29; Exodus 2). The most detailed of these accounts, Genesis 24, finds a number of striking parallels in John 4. (1) A man is by a well when a woman comes along to draw water, and he asks her for a drink (Gen 24:33; John 4:7). (2) The woman runs back and tells her family (Gen 24:28), or her townspeople (John 4:28-29). (3) The man is met and invited to the home (Gen 24:29-32), or the town (John 4:30, 39-40). (4) The man refuses to eat (Gen 24:33; John 4:27, 31-32). (5) The man stays overnight (= 2 days; Gen 24:54; John 4:40). The overall theme, brought out in the conversation between the man and woman, may also be compared: in Genesis 24 a father is seeking a virtuous bride for his son; in John 4 the Father seeks true worshipers (v. 23).

Once the parallels are accepted, the contrasts between the two brides are equally striking. Rebekah was from a good family, not a Canaanite; a Samaritan woman would be off-limits as a bride for a Jew. Rebekah was a virgin; her NT counterpart had been married five times, and was currently living with a man to whom she was not married. Rebekah was in every way the model bride, but Isaac compromised her virtue, "because I thought I might lose my life on account of her" (Gen 26:9), reflecting a value system he learned from his father. The one greater than Isaac willingly gave up his life for his most unworthy bride.

54 A detailed comparison between the two accounts might yield further parallels, as might analysis of the other OT courtship scenes. For example, J. H. Bernard notes a "striking parallel" with Josephus' account of Moses at the well, where Josephus specifies the time as noon, as in John 4:6 (J. H. Bernard, A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According St. John [2 vols.; ICC; New York: Scribner, 1929] 1.136).
3. Confirmation from Another "Contradiction"

Examination of another apparent contradiction in Genesis, while not directly related to the wife/sister episodes, will aid the thesis presented here by showing that apparent contradiction is a means of bringing out recurring themes of the patriarchal promises. The apparent contradiction deals with the scene of Isaac's blessing of Jacob. In Isaac's instructions to Esau of Gen 27:1-4, he made it clear that he considered his death to be imminent (as did Rebekah and Esau; Gen 27:41-45). Yet the patriarchal chronology indicates that Isaac did not die soon after, but lived at least 40 more years. Before rushing to the conclusion that this is a contradiction, perhaps we should first try the assumption that the apparent contradiction is simply meant to cause us to inquire as to what happened that gave Isaac a new lease on life. Once we ask such a question, the answer is not far away. Something indeed did happen which would explain such a lengthening of life. We are told that of his two sons, Isaac favored Esau, which was to the detriment of Jacob, whom God favored (Gen 25:23, 28). The Lord said to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, but the one who curses you I will curse" (Gen 12:5). The same thing is spoken to Isaac himself, then later to Jacob. While Isaac certainly does not fit into the category of a wicked man, persecuting Jacob, it is reasonable to infer that his favoring of (the rejected) Esau over Jacob would not be without penalty. And what would be a suitable penalty for Isaac treating Jacob like he should have treated Esau, and vice versa? Would it not be for God to treat Isaac as Ishmael? That is in fact what he did, for the patriarchal chronology indicates that Isaac was about 137 years old when this incident took place (see n. 55). His older brother Ishmael had died at the age of 137 (Gen 25:17), and it looked as if Isaac would do the same. Since Isaac treated Jacob like he should have treated Esau, God was treating Isaac like he treated Ishmael in terms of life span. He was going to die "young." And we would not know that unless Ishmael's life span were given, contrary to the pattern of Genesis, where as a rule only men in the line from Adam to Joseph have their life span given. As we saw earlier, Sarah is an exception to this pattern, and there was a definite reason for that. Likewise in the case of Ishmael some explanation seems to be called for as to why his life span should be given. The explanation offered here is that it shows how and why Isaac's life was going to be cut short. Isaac said to Jacob, thinking he was speaking to Esau, "Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you" (Gen 27:29). How ironic that he himself was under penalty for blessing the wrong one up
to this point. Ironic also that the physical degradation he experienced (his blindness) was what prevented him from recognizing that he was blessing the "wrong" (actually right) son. It is only now when he comes to understand that it is God's will to bless Jacob, and he willingly does so (Gen 28:3), that he is released from this penalty and given an extension of life. In this episode, then, we have reinforced several themes dealt with earlier. First, as already mentioned, we see the use of apparent contradiction to cause the reader to ask certain questions. Then, we see the answer to that contradiction in terms of God's exercising control over the aging process in fulfilling the patriarchal promises. In connection with this, we also see the deliberate departure from a general pattern in terms of giving life spans to assist in the elucidation of the theme. All of this reinforces the conclusions reached earlier.

4. Structural Considerations

G. Rendsburg has recently shown how our three narratives fit into the framework of the "Abraham cycle" and the "Jacob cycle." In the former he builds on the work of U. Cassuto, who identified ten trials of Abraham that are in a basically chiastic order of five pairs. Rendsburg combined two pairs into one in order to form a more perfect chiasm, then included the genealogies at the beginning and end as framing the cycle. The structure is as follows:

A Genealogy of Terah (11:27-32)
B Start of Abraham's Spiritual Odyssey (12: 1-9)
C Sarai in foreign palace; ordeal ends in peace and success; Abram and Lot part (12:10-13:18)
D Abram comes to the rescue of Sodom and Lot (14:1-24)
E Covenant with Abraham; Annunciation of Ishmael (15:1-16:16)
E' Covenant with Abraham; Annunciation of Isaac (17: 1-18: 15)
D' Abraham comes to the rescue of Sodom and Lot (18:16-19:38)
C' Sarah in foreign palace; ordeal ends in peace and success; Abraham and Ishmael part (20:1-21:34)
B' Climax of Abraham's Spiritual Odyssey (22:1-19)
A' Genealogy of Nahor (22:20-24) 57

This does not leave chap. 26 as an orphan, for that is part of the Jacob cycle, for which Rendsburg essentially reproduces M. Fishbane's work. 58 Again, there is a multimember chiasm, in which chap. 26 ("Interlude: Rebekah in

While not wanting to minimize the importance of this type of analysis, which suggests solutions to a number of important critical problems, it seems to me that it is quite incorrect to conclude from it, as Rendsburg does (quoting Cassuto): "all this shows clearly how out of the material selected from the store of ancient tradition concerning Abraham a homogeneous narrative was created in the text before us, integrated and harmoniously arranged in all its parts and details." This seems to presume that if a narrative can be fit into a chiasm, then it is "harmonious." But it is clear that the chiasm does not solve the chronological problems identified at the beginning of this paper, problems which gave credence to the multiple source hypothesis. Such a statement also seems to imply that an ancient Hebrew reader would tolerate the most blatant contextual discrepancies as long as they were due to a chiastic order being followed. In fact, instead of concluding that the redactor was a genius for constructing this chiasm, we might rather conclude that he was so superficial, driven only by a desire to arrange his material into a chiasm, that he would tolerate the most illogical and incongruous chronological sequences. In short, the structural analysis and the thematic analysis must complement each other.

Two other points should be made about Rendsburg's analysis of the Abraham cycle. First, the consistent chiasm is achieved only by combining sections which seem to be thematically distinct, but which taken separately would not follow the chiastic order (C/C' has three parts and E/E' has two parts, where the inverse order is not followed where it "should" be). This departure from chiasm is somewhat masked by combining the elements under one head, though Rendsburg does discuss the reasons for the varying orders. Perhaps the structure departs from chiasm precisely because Lot and Ishmael depart! Second, such a structural analysis puts the emphasis on finding parallels between members. But as we saw, a key to understanding the relationship between chaps. 12 and 20 is that one left out what is found in the other. Rendsburg is interested in what is common to both, i.e., their redundancy. Overzealousness for parallels can perhaps also be seen in the title, "Rebekah in foreign palace"; Rebekah was not in a foreign palace. As suggested by T. Longman, perhaps the "parallelism" of chiasm should be understood along the lines suggested by Kugel for poetic writings: the A and B lines are not parallel in the sense of equivalent, but complementary, supplementary, etc.

The structure revealed by Rendsburg tends to support the thematic development of this paper in one important respect. I argued that the

59 Rendsburg, The Redaction of Genesis, 56.
60 Ibid., 45.
61 The suggestion was made in a "Critical Methodologies" class at Westminster Seminary, for which this paper was originally written.
rejuvenation of the patriarchs was due to a connection between the themes of the promise of Isaac and the promise of the land. Both depend on a kind of resurrection for their fulfillment, and the rejuvenation resulting in the birth of Isaac is therefore a token or type of the resurrection in which the land will be inherited. Significantly, in Rendsburg's analysis, the counterpart to the birth of Isaac is not the birth of Ishmael, but the promise of the land.52

IV. Conclusion

The three wife/sister narratives fit in their contexts and play a significant role in the development of the themes of the patriarchal narratives. Apparent contradictions, instead of leading to an exegesis that despairs of trying to make sense out of the narratives as they are, have been shown to bring out these themes. Acceptance of the source and form-critical explanations for these data tend to prevent discovery of their true role. We seem to have reached the point feared by the orthodox redaction critic (one who accepts the results of source criticism as the basis for his work). As J. Barton noted, if redaction criticism is too "successful," it can undermine its own foundations:

The more impressive the critic makes the redactor's work appear, the more he succeeds in showing that the redactor has, by subtle and delicate artistry, produced a simple and coherent text out of the diverse materials before him; the more he also reduces the evidence on which the existence of those sources was established in the first place. No conjurer is required for this trick: the redaction critic himself causes his protege to disappear. . . . if redaction criticism plays its hand too confidently, we end up with a piece of writing so coherent that no division into sources is warranted any longer, and the sources and the redactor vanish together in a puff of smoke, leaving a single, freely composed narrative with, no doubt, a single author.63

In the present case, if our understanding of the laughter in connection with the birth of Isaac is correct, we have done more than simply uncover coherency amid apparent chaos; we have uncovered an author who has played a highly successful joke on readers and scholars down through the centuries.

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63 Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 57.

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Genesis 1:1-3:
Creation or Re-Creation?
Part 1 (of 2 parts):

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An issue that has taunted mankind through the ages is the question of origins. Since ancient times people have been keenly interested in understanding and explaining their provenance. The ancient creation mythologies of Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India, Iran, Japan, or Mexico,1 or a child's question to his parents about who made the world shows that this concern is intrinsic to human nature.

The Bible clearly portrays God as the Creator of all that exists. In fact this issue is so important in the biblical revelation that it is the first issue addressed, for it is mentioned in the opening lines of Scripture. However, these opening verses have not been understood unilaterally in the history of interpretation. In his book Creation and Chaos, Waltke, after thoroughly investigating existing views, argues that there are three principal interpretations of Genesis 1:1-3 open to evangelicals. He designates these as the restitution theory, the initial chaos theory, and the precreation chaos theory.2 Of primary importance in distinguishing these views is the relationship of Genesis 1:2 to the original creation: "And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters." As Waltke stated, "According to the first mode of thought, chaos occurred after the original creation; according to the second mode of thought, chaos


occurred in connection with the original creation; and in the third mode of thought, chaos occurred before the original creation.\(^3\) This article examines the theory of a period of chaos after creation (often called the gap theory) and the initial chaos theory, and the second article in the series analyzes the precreation chaos theory, the view endorsed by Waltke and other recent commentators on Genesis.\(^4\)

**The Gap Theory**

The restitution theory, or gap theory, has been held by many and is the view taken by the editors of *The New Scofield Reference Bible*.\(^5\) This view states Genesis 1:1 refers to the original creation of the universe, and sometime after this original creation Satan rebelled against God and was cast from heaven to the earth.\(^6\) As a result of Satan's making his habitation on the earth, the earth was judged. God's original creation was then placed under judgment, and the result of this judgment is the state described in Genesis 1:2: The earth was "formless and void" (ףֹדְהוֹ הָיוֹת). Isaiah 34:11 and Jeremiah 4:23, which include the only other occurrences of the phrase פֹדְהוֹ הָיוֹת, are cited as passages that substantiate the understanding of "formless and void" in Genesis 1:2 in a negative sense, because these words occur in both passages in the context of judgment oracles.

Waltke points out that this view conflicts with a proper understanding of the syntactical function of the וָאָב conjunction in the phrase וַיָּרָא הַשָּׁמַיִם הָיוֹת, "and the earth" (Gen. 1:2). The construction of וָאָב plus a noun does not convey sequence but rather introduces a disjunctive clause. The clause thus must be circumstantial to verse 1 or 3. It cannot be viewed as an independent clause ("And the earth became")\(^7\) as held by the supporters of the gap theory.

Furthermore Waltke rejects the proposal that the occurrence of "formless and void" in Jeremiah 4:23 and Isaiah 34:11 proves that Genesis 1:2 is the result of God's judgment. Scripture nowhere states that God judged the world when Satan fell.\(^8\)

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\(^3\) Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*, 19.
\(^6\) Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 are often cited as biblical support for this teaching.
In view of these objections, the gap theory should no longer be considered a viable option in explaining the meaning of Genesis 1:1-3. The view is grammatically suspect, and Scripture is silent on the idea that the earth was judged when Satan fell. Waltke's critique of the gap theory is devastating.9

The Initial Chaos Theory

Proponents of the initial chaos theory maintain that Genesis 1:1 refers to the original creation, with verse 2 providing a description of this original creation mentioned in verse 1 by the use of three disjunctive clauses. This is the traditional view held by Luther and Calvin, and it is the position mentioned in the renowned Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley Hebrew grammar.10

Waltke argues that this view is unacceptable because it requires that the phrases "the heavens and the earth" in verse 1 and "without form and void" in verse 2 be understood differently from their usual meaning in the Old Testament.11 In the initial chaos theory "the heavens and the earth"12 in verse 1 were created without form and void. However, as Waltke observes, this "demands that we place a different value on 'heaven and earth' than anywhere else in Scripture. . . Childs concluded that the compound never has the meaning of disorderly chaos but always of an orderly world."13

A second objection proceeds from the first. If verse 2 describes the condition of the earth when it was created, then the phrase "without form and void," which otherwise appears to refer to an orderless chaos, must be understood as referring to what God pro-

12 It is generally accepted that the phrase constitutes a merism and thus refers to all things, that is, the universe (Westermann, Genesis. 1-11: A Commentary, 101; Nahum M. Sarna, Genesis: The JPS Torah Commentary [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 5; Ross, Creation and Blessing, 106; John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 23; Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Plain Meaning of Genesis 1:1-3," Biblical Archaeologist [1983]: 208; and Waltke, Creation and Cosmos, 26). Similar expressions to denote the universe occur in Egyptian, Akkadian, and Ugaritic literature (Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 15).
duced along with the darkness and the deep, which likewise have negative connotations.\textsuperscript{14} But this would not be possible in a perfect cosmos. As Waltke argues, "Logic will not allow us to entertain the contradictory notions: God created the organized heaven and earth; the earth was unorganized."\textsuperscript{15} It is also argued that Isaiah 45:18 states explicitly that God did not create a הַדְּגָה.

The remainder of this article discusses these objections to the initial chaos theory.

THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH

In reference to Waltke's objection concerning the use of the phrase "the heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1 one may ask, Must the expression "the heavens and the earth" have the same meaning throughout the canon, especially if the contextual evidence explicitly refers to its formulation? It is a valid question to ask whether the initial reference to the expression in question would have the meaning it did in subsequent verses after the universe had been completed. It should be emphasized that this is the first use of the phrase and one could naturally ask how else the initial stage of the universe might be described. The phrase here could merely refer to the \textit{first stage} of creation. This idea that Genesis 1:1 refers to the first stage in God's creative activity might be supported by the context, which clearly reveals that God intended to create the universe in progressive stages. Furthermore early Jewish sources attest that the heavens and the earth were created on the first day of God's creative activity.\textsuperscript{16} Wenham nicely articulates this position in addition to replying to the objection raised by Waltke and others:

Here it suffices to observe that if the creation of the world was a unique event, the terms used here may have a slightly different value from elsewhere….Commentators often insist that the phrase "heaven and earth" denotes the completely ordered cosmos. Though this is usually the case, totality rather than organization is its chief thrust here. It is therefore quite feasible for a mention of an initial act of creation of the whole universe (v. 1) to be followed by an account of the ordering of different parts of the universe (vv. 2-31).\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} Waltke, \textit{Creation and Chaos}, 24. Waltke and others maintain that Genesis 1:2 refers to something negative. This will be dealt with in the subsequent article, which will analyze the precreation chaos theory more critically.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 26. Similarly, Skinner wrote, "A created chaos is perhaps a contradiction" (Skinner, \textit{A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis}, 13).

\textsuperscript{16} Second Esdras 6:38 and \textit{b. Hag}, 12a. Sailhamer also maintains that Genesis 1:1 was part of the first day of creation. This is the reason the author referred to \textit{יָמִי}, "day one" (Gen. 1:5) instead of the expected \textit{יָמִיָּאָרְכָּאָרְכָּאָרְכָּאָרְכָּאָרְכָּאָרְכָּאָרְכָּאָרְכָּאָרְכָּאָרְכָּאָרְכָּa}, "first day" ("Genesis," 26, 28).

\textsuperscript{17} Wenham, \textit{Genesis 1-15}, 12-13, 15. Also see Eduard Konig, \textit{Die Genesis} (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1925), 136.
This is also Luther's understanding of the meaning of the phrase in Genesis 1:1: "Moses calls 'heaven and earth,' not those elements which now are; but the original rude and unformed substances."

If the phrase "the heavens and the earth" does not refer to the completed and organized universe known to subsequent biblical writers, the premise on which Waltke rejects the initial chaos theory is seriously undermined.

FORMLESS AND VOID

As previously mentioned the words יָם and בֹּהַ הָוֶּעָה occur together in only three passages in the Old Testament. The word בֹּהַ הָוֶּעָה occurs only in combination with יָם, while בֹּהַ הָוֶּעָה may occur by itself. The most current and comprehensive discussion of the phrase in reference to cognate Semitic languages as well as biblical usage is given by Tsumura:

Hebrew תֹּהַ הָוֶּעָה is based on a Semitic root *thw and means "desert." The term בֹּהַ הָוֶּעָה is also a Semitic term based on the root *bhw, "to be empty." . . . The Hebrew term בֹּהַ הָוֶּעָה means (1) "desert," (2) "a desert-like place," i.e. "a desolate or empty place" or "an uninhabited place" or (3) "emptiness." The phrase תֹּהַ הָוֶּעָה wāh bōhāh refers to a state of "aridness or unproductiveness" (Jer. 4:23) or "desolation" (Isa. 34:11) and to a state of "unproductiveness and emptiness" in Genesis 1:2.

Thus both the etymological history and contextual usage of the phrase fail to support Waltke's view that the situation described in Genesis 1:2 is that of a chaotic, unorganized universe. He overstates the force of the phrase "formless and void."

But what about the evidence from Isaiah 45:18? Does not this imply that God was not responsible for creating the state described in Genesis 1:2? The text reads, "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place [בֹּהַ הָוֶּעָה], but formed it to be inhabited)." Does not this passage explicitly state that God


19 David Toshio Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters in Genesis I and 2: A Linguistic Investigation, JSOT Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 155-56. See also יָם "וָּה לָוֶּעָה," in Encyclopedia Migrat, 8:436 (in Hebrew); and Johann Fischer, Das Buch Isaias. II. Teil: Kapitel 40-66, Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testamentes (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1939), 83. The understanding of בֹּהַ הָוֶּעָה as "empty" is reinforced by the Aramaic Targum rendering of the word as כָּפִיר. The New International Version renders the phrase "formless and empty."
Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? did not create a 福祉? Waltke and others argue that this parallel passage substantiates the claim that God did not bring about the state described in Genesis 1:2 by His creative powers. The answer to this objection appears to be found in the purpose of God's creation as seen in the context of Isaiah 45:18. It could be argued from the context that God created the earth to be inhabited, not to leave it in a desolate 福祉 condition. Rather than contradicting the initial chaos theory, Isaiah 45:18 actually helps clarify the meaning of 福祉 in Genesis 1:2. Since 福祉 is contrasted with 타바, "to inhabit," one should conclude that 福祉 is an antonym of "inhabiting." The earth, immediately after God's initial creative act was in a condition that was not habitable for mankind. Tsumura nicely summarizes the contribution of Isaiah 45:18 to the understanding of Genesis 1:2: 福祉 here is contrasted with lasebet in the parallelism and seems to refer rather to a place which has no habitation, like the term semamah "desolation" (cf. Jer. 4:27; Isa. 24:12), hareb "waste, desolate" and 'azubah "deserted." There is nothing in this passage that would suggest a chaotic state of the earth "which is opposed to and precedes creation." Thus, the term 福祉 here too signifies "a desert-like place" and refers to "an uninhabited place." It should be noted that lō-福祉 here is a resultative object, referring to the purpose of God's creative action. In other words, this verse explains that God did not create the earth so that it may stay desert-like, but to be inhabited. So, this verse does not contradict Gen 1:2, where God created the earth to be productive and inhabited though it was still 福祉 wāb обыти in the initial state.

20 Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 27. Also see Ross,, Creation and Blessing, 106, 722.
25 Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters in Genesis I and 2, 33-34. This would also pertain to the phrase in Isaiah 34:11. The threat would be that the land would become a
The early Jewish Aramaic translation Neophyti I provides an early attestation to this understanding in its expansive translation of 𐤃𐤊𐤄 𐤉𐤄𐤊: "desolate without human beings or beast and void of all cultivation of plants and of trees." Tsumura writes, "In conclusion, both the biblical context and extra-biblical parallels suggest that the phrase 𐤉𐤄𐤊𐤄 𐤋𐤉𐤄 in Gen 1:2 has nothing to do with 'chaos' and simply means 'emptiness' and refers to the earth which is an empty place, i.e., 'an unproductive and uninhabited place.'" This understanding of verse 2 fits well with the overall thrust and structure of Genesis 1:1-2:3.

As the discourse analysis of this section indicates, the author in v. 2 focuses not on the "heavens" but on the "earth" where the reader/audience stands, and presents the "earth" as "still" not being the earth which they all are familiar with. The earth which they are familiar with is "the earth" with vegetation, animals and man. Therefore, in a few verses, the author will mention their coming into existence through God's creation: vegetation on the third day and animals and man on the sixth day. Both the third and the sixth day are set as climaxes in the framework of this creation story and grand climax is the creation of man on the sixth day. . . . The story of creation in Gen 1:1-2:3 thus tells us that it is God who created mankind "in his image" and provided for him an inhabitable and productive earth.

The structure of Genesis 1 shows that God in His creative work was making the earth habitable for man. He did not leave the earth in the initial 𐤃𐤊𐤄 𐤉𐤄 component. This is seen clearly from the following table, which shows the six days of creation can be divided into two parallel groups with four creative acts each. The last day in each group, days three and six, have two creative acts each with the second creative act on these days functioning as the climax of each. This intentional arrangement shows that making the earth habitable for man is the purpose of the account by improving on the earth's initial status as desolate and empty.


26 See Sailhamer, "Genesis," 27.
27 Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2, 156. For a similar understanding in postbiblical Jewish literature, see Jacob Newman, The Commentary of Nahmanides on Genesis Chapters 1-6 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 33.
28 Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2, 42-43. Also see Sailhamer, "Genesis," 24-25.
29 Many commentators have observed this general structure (e.g., U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, trans. Israel Abrahams [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961], 17; Ross, Creation and Blessing, 104; and Wenham, Genesis 1-15). The present chart most closely resembles Sarna, Genesis: JPS Torah Commentary, 4.
The Six Days of Creation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waste</th>
<th>Empty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1: Light</td>
<td>Day 4: Luminaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2: Sky</td>
<td>Day 5: Fish and fowl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3: Dry land</td>
<td>Day 6: Land creatures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>Humankind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lowest form of organic life)</td>
<td>(Highest form of organic life)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This supports the claim that הַרְבֹּעַ הָאָרֶץ is restricted to the earth's unlivable and empty condition before these six days. God converted the uninhabitable land into a land fit for man. He was not seeking to reverse it from a chaotic state. This is the point Isaiah 45:18 supports by presenting habitation as the reverse of הָאָרֶץ. The sequence in Isaiah 45:18 parallels that of Genesis 1. There is movement from an earth unfit to live in (Gen. 1:2 = Isa. 45:18a) to the finished product, to be inhabited by man (Gen. 1:3-31 Isa. 45:18b).

However, what of Waltke's objection that a perfect God would not make a world that was "formless and void." This charge loses its force when one considers the creation account itself. For one could also ask why God did not make the universe perfect with one command. He surely could have done so. And yet there was a progression, for He spent six days changing the state described in Genesis 1:2 into the world as it is now known. As Sarna has stated, "That God should create disorganized matter, only to reduce it to order, presents no more of a problem than does His taking six days to complete creation instead of instantaneously producing a perfected universe."30

Conclusion

This article has analyzed Waltke's treatment of two principal evangelical interpretations of Genesis 1:1-3—the gap theory and the initial chaos theory. Waltke's criticism of the gap theory is legitimate, as this theory conflicts with principles of Hebrew grammar. On the other hand Waltke objected to the initial chaos theory based on his understanding of the phrases "the heavens and the earth" and "formless and void." However, as has been shown, these phrases can be understood differently from the way Waltke understands them, so that the so-called initial chaos theory should not be dismissed on the basis of Waltke's objections to it. The subsequent article will critique the increasingly popular position advocated by Waltke and others, the precreation chaos theory.

Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation?

Part 2 (of 2 parts)

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In the preceding article in this series,1 two options regarding the interpretation of Genesis 1:1-3—the restitution theory and the initial chaos theory—were examined. The present article examines the precreation chaos theory, which has been extensively argued and advocated by Waltke in his work, Creation and Chaos.2 The four major theses of the precreation chaos view are these: (1) Genesis 1:1 constitutes a summary statement, (2) the Hebrew verb רָאָתָה in Genesis 1:1 should not be understood as creation out of nothing (creatio ex nihilo), (3) Genesis 1:2 describes something that is not good, (4) the Israelite view of creation is distinct among the other cosmogonies of the ancient Near East.

Precreation Chaos Theory

The first feature of the precreation chaos view concerns the grammatical understanding of Genesis 1:1-3. The opening statement, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," is viewed as an independent clause3 that functions as a summary statement for

2 Bruce K. Waltke, Creation and Chaos (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974).
the narrative that ends in Genesis 2:3.4 The first line of evidence Waltke puts forth for this rendering is the parallel structure in the subsequent Genesis narrative, Genesis 2:4-7.5 Waltke argues that the narrative account of Genesis 2:4-7 is parallel to the construction of Genesis 1:1-3 in the following way: (1) Introductory summary statement (Gen. 1:1 = 2:4). (2) Circumstantial clause (1:2 = 2:5-6). (3) Main clause (1:3 = 2:7).6 In addition, a similar structure is employed in the introduction to Enuma Elish, an important cosmological text from Mesopotamia. Waltke concludes, "The evidence therefore, seems overwhelming that we should construe verse 1 as a broad, general, declaration of the fact that God created the cosmos, and that the rest of the chapter explicates this statement. Such a situation reflects normal Semitic thought which first states the general proposition and then specifies the particulars." 7

A second important tenet for the precreation chaos theory concerns the meaning of the verb יכָּבָּר "to create," in Genesis 1:1. Waltke argues that יכָּבָּר does not necessarily mean "creation out of nothing" and that the ancient versions did not understand this to be the meaning of יכָּבָּר.8 Thus Waltke concludes, "From our study of the structure of Rev. [sic] 1:1-3 I would also conclude that bārā‘ in verse 1 does not

Beginning," in Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 3-4, 6; and John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 20-21. This has been the traditional understanding since the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek by the Jews of Alexandria (Harry M. Orlinsky, Notes on the New Translation of the Torah [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969], 49). The Greek phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ at the beginning of the Gospel of John reflects the Septuagint's translation of יכָּבָּר from Genesis 1:1. This usage also reinforces the idea that the absolute beginning is what is in view (Walter Wifall, "God's Accession Year according to P," Biblica 62 [1981]: 527; and Marc Girard, "La structure heptaparite du quatrième evangelge," Recherches de Sciences religieuses 5/4 [1975-76]: 351).


5 Waltke also cites the narrative that begins in Genesis 3:1 as having an analogous grammatical structure, though it lacks the initial summary statement (Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 32-33).


7 Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 33.

8 Ibid., 49.
include the bringing of the negative state described in verse 2 into ex-
istence. Rather it means that He utilized it as a part of His cre-
ation. In this sense He created it."9 In addition, "no mention is made
anywhere in Scripture that God called the unformed, dark, and wa-
tery state of verse 3 [sic] into existence."10

The third interpretive feature proceeds from and is intrinsically
linked with the immediate discussion of the meaning ofֳמ"מ. Because
Waltke dismisses the possibility of creatio ex nihilo in Genesis 1:1,
he says God was not responsible for the state of affairs described in
verse 2. Waltke argues that verse 2 seems to depict something nega-
tive, if not sinister. "The situation of verse 2 is not good, nor is it ever
called good. Moreover, that state of darkness, confusion, and life-
lessness is contrary to the nature of God in whom there is no darkness.
He is called the God of light and life; the God of order."11 A per-
fectly holy God would not be involved in creating or bringing such a
condition into existence. Furthermore other passages such as Psalm
33:6, 9 and Hebrews 11:3 refer to God creating by His word, which in
the Genesis narrative does not begin until verse 3. No mention is
made in Scripture of God's calling the chaotic state described in Gen-
esis 1:2 into existence.12 Deep and darkness "represented a state of
existence contrary to the character of God."13 Moreover, in the es-
chaton the negative elements of Genesis 1:2, the sea and the dark-
ness, will be removed in the perfect cosmos (Rev. 21:1, 25). This
transformation that will occur at the world's consummation substan-
tiates the fact that the darkness and the sea are less than desirable
and hence not the result of God's creative activity.14 The existence of
this imperfect state in Genesis 1:2, Waltke says, reinforces the view
that verse 2 is subordinate to verse 3 and not to verse 1:

It is concluded therefore, that though it is possible to take verse 2 as a cir-
cumstantial clause on syntactical grounds, it is impossible to do so on

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9 Ibid., 50.
10 Bruce K. Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3, Part III: The Initial Chaos
Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory," 221.
11 Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 58. Darkness is understood to represent evil and death
(ibid., 52; and Allen P. Ross, Creation and Blessing [Grand Rapids: Baker, 19881,106,722]).
Also see P. W. Heward, "And the Earth Was without Form and Void," Journal of the
Transactions of the Victoria Institute 78 (1946): 16; and John C. L. Gibson, Genesis
and the Precreation Chaos Theory," 221.
13 Bruce K. Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3, Part IV: The Theology of
14 Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3, Part III: The Initial Chaos Theory
philological grounds, and that it seems unlikely it should be so construed on theological grounds, for it makes God the Creator of disorder, darkness, and deep, a situation not tolerated in the perfect cosmos and never said to have been called into existence by the Word of God.  

The fourth tenet of the precreation chaos theory concerns the distinctiveness of the Israelite view of creation in contrast with other ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies. While Waltke maintains that there is some similarity between the pagan cosmogonies and the Genesis account of creation, such as the existence of a dark primeval formless state prior to creation, he maintains that the Genesis account is distinctive in three ways: (1) the belief in one God, (2) the absence of myth and ritual to influence the gods, and (3) the concept of God as Creator, which means that the creation is not coexistent and coeternal. This belief in God as Creator separate and above His creation "was the essential feature of the Mosaic faith" and "distinguished Israel's faith from all other religions." Waltke comments on the apologetic need to have a word from Moses about the origin of creation in the ancient Near Eastern setting. "If, then, the essential difference between the Mosaic faith and the pagan faith differed precisely in their conceptualization of the relationship of God to the creation, is it conceivable that Moses should have left the new nation under God without an accurate account of the origin of the creation?"

**Evaluation of the Precreation Chaos Theory**

"GENESIS 1:1 IS A SUMMARY STATEMENT”

In relation to the first line of evidence for viewing Genesis 1:1 as a summary statement, it should be noted that while the correspondence between 1:1-3 and 2:4-7 is indeed similar, it is not exact. Not only is the relationship and correspondence between 2:4b and 2:7 different from the relationship and correspondence between 1:1 and 1:3, but also the lengthy circumstantial clauses in Genesis 2:4b-6 indicate that the styles of the two narratives are distinct. Furthermore Waltke argues that beginning a narrative with a summary statement

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15 Ibid., 221.
16 Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*, 44.
17 Ibid., 51.
18 Ibid., 49.
19 Ibid., 43.
and then filling in the details is commonplace in Semitic thought. He does not, however, supply references to support this generalization. Beginning a narrative with a summary statement is, in any case, a literary device that is evident in Indo-European literature as well as in literature stemming from Semitic authors. Pearson summarizes the evidence against the view, that Genesis 1:1 should be taken as a summary.

The first verse of Gen 1 cannot be regarded with Buckland and Chalmers as a mere heading of a whole selection, nor with Dods and Bush as a summary statement, but forms an integral part of the narrative, for: (1) It has the form of narrative, not of superscription. (2) The conjunctive particle connects the second verse with it; which could not be if it were a heading. No historical narrative begins with "and" (vs. 2). The "and" in Ex. 1:1 indicates that the second book of Moses is a continuation of the first. (3) The very next verse speaks of the earth as already in existence, and therefore its creation must be recorded in the first verse. (4) In the first verse the heavens take the precedence of the earth, but in the following verses all things, even sun, moon, and stars seem to be appendages to the earth. Thus if it were a heading it would not correspond with the narrative.... the above evidence supports the view that the first verse forms a part of the narrative. The first verse of Genesis records the creation of the universe in its essential form. In v. 2, the writer describes the earth as it was when God's creative activity had brought its material into being, but this formative activity had not yet begun.

In the summary-statement view of Genesis 1:1, grammatical structure is intricately connected to the interpretation of the phrases "heavens and earth" (v. 2) as the completed heavens and earth and "formless and void" as the antithesis of creation. In the previous article these interpretations were shown to be open to serious question. In addition Waltke asserts that the subordination of Genesis 1:2 to verse 3 should not be viewed as an anomaly, arguing that Young listed several illustrations of the circumstantial clause preceding the main verb. This evidence is problematic, however, as none of

22 Anton Pearson, "An Exegetical Study of Genesis 1:1-3," *Bethel Seminary Quarterly* 2 (1953): 20-21. Hasel argues that the *waw* conjunction that begins Genesis 1:2 is an argument against understanding verse 1 as a summary statement. The importance of the copulative *waw* of verse 2a is given its full due by linking verse 1 and verse 2 closer together than is possible with the position which considers verse 1 as merely a summary introduction expressing the fact that God is Creator of heaven and earth (Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1: A Critical Look," 165). Also see Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Tyndale; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 44.
23 Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 1."
the examples cited has the same structure as Genesis 2:2-3, that is, a 
*waw* disjunctive clause followed by *waw* consecutive prefixed form.25

On the other hand it seems that such passages as Judges 8:11 and 
Jonah 3:3 are more helpful parallels to the grammatical structure re-

flected in Genesis 1:1-2, where a finite verb is followed by a *waw*
disjunctive clause containing the verb הָיוּ. This clause qualifies a
term in the immediately preceding independent clause. The inde-

pendent clause makes a statement and the following circumstantial 
clause describes parenthetically an element in the main clause. This 
would confirm the traditional interpretation that verse 1 contains 
the main independent clause, with Genesis 1:2 consisting of three 
subordinate circumstantial clauses describing what the just-men-

tioned earth looked like after it was created.

"**֤֛֚֝֡אָבָי IN GENESIS 1:1 IS NOT CREATIO EX NIHILO**"

The second important feature of the precreation chaos theory is 
the assertion that the Hebrew root הָיוּ, "to create," should not be un-
derstood as creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) in Genesis 1:1. 
This semantic understanding is critical for the precreation chaos 
theory, since it maintains that what is described in Genesis 1 is not 
the original creation but rather a re-creation of the raw material 
that exists in Genesis 1:2.

The cognate of the Hebrew root הָיוּ is rare in the Semitic cognate 
languages, and thus its meaning in the Old Testament must be deter-
mained from its usage in the Old Testament corpus.26 Finley has re-

cently provided a thorough examination of the usage and meaning of 
the term.27

The verb הָיוּ is applied to the creation of a nation, to righteousness, to re-

generation, and to praise and joy.... Nearly two-thirds of the instances of 
֤֛֚֝֡אָבָי refer to physical creation. . . . God's original creation encompassed all 
of heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1).... Fully one-third of all the citations of 
physical creation refer to the creation of man (including Gen. 1:27; 5:1-2; 
6:7; Deut. 4:32; Ps. 89:47 [Heb. 48]; Eccles. 12:1; Isa. 45:12.... In the Gene-

sis 1 account of creation הָיוּ is used only five times, and of these occu-

rences three are in a single verse and refer to the creation of man (1:27).... 
The verb is also used of the creation of the great sea monsters (Gen. 1:21).

227, Waltke erroneously states that the list of examples of this grammatical phe-
nomenon is in E. J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and 
Reformed, 1964), 15. The references are actually found on page 9, n. 15.

25 The passages Young lists are Genesis 38:25; Numbers 12:14; Joshua 2:18; 1 Samuel 

26 It may be that the lack of cognates with this root in other Semitic languages con-
firms the term's uniqueness. Other Hebrew words for "create" have broader cognate evidence.

27 Thomas J. Finley, "Dimensions of the Hebrew Word for 'Create' (יָיוֹ)," *Bibliotheca 
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The Israelites greatly feared these creatures, and it was reassuring to know that their God had created them and is Lord over them.28

In the examination of the occurrences of this verb some salient observations emerge. First, the only subject of the verb in the Hebrew Bible is God. Whereas God may be the subject for the semantic synonyms of הערב, these synonyms have other subjects (creatures) in addition to God.29 "A number of synonyms, such as 'make,' 'form,' or 'build,' are used of creation by God, but הערב is the only term for which God is the only possible subject."30 Usage supports the contention that the Hebrew verb הערב is the distinct word for creation.

The Hebrew stem ב-ר- is used in the Bible exclusively of divine creativity. It signifies that the product is absolutely novel and unexampled, depends solely on God for its coming into existence, and is beyond the human capacity to reproduce. The verb always refers to the completed product, never to the material of which it is made.31

Furthermore since the verb never occurs with the object of the material, and since the primary emphasis of the word is on the novelty of the created object, "the word lends itself well to the concept of creation ex nihilo."32 This idea is reinforced by the fact that even when the context clearly indicates that what is being created involves preexisting material, that material will not be mentioned in the same sentence with הערב.33 Since this Hebrew verb has a semantic

28 Ibid., 411-12. See also Ross, Creation and Blessing, 725-28, and Wenham, Genesis I-15, 14.
29 As Ross states, "Humans may make ['asa], form [yasar], or build [bana]; to the Hebrew, however, God creates" (Creation and Blessing, 105-6).
30 Finley, "Dimensions of the Hebrew Word for 'Create' (הערב)," 409.
33 Passages such as Genesis 1:27 and Isaiah 45:7 would be examples of the usage not meaning creatio ex nihilo. These were noted by the medieval Hebrew exegete Ibn Ezra. See Pearson, "An Exegetical Study of Genesis 1:1-3," 17.
range, as do most other biblical Hebrew verbs, the context of any particular usage becomes determinative for meaning. In Genesis 1 there is no explicit connection of this creative activity with any pre-existing materials. As Leupold aptly states, "When no existing material is mentioned as to be worked over, no such material is implied." Thus this lexeme is distinct and is the best lexical choice to express the unprecedented concept of creatio ex nihilo. As the Jewish exegete Nahmanides wrote, "We have in our holy language no other term for 'the bringing forth of something from nothing' but bara." Waltke's argument that the verb does not inherently mean creatio ex nihilo is besides the point, as it is doubtful that any word in any language does. The point is that while this is not the inherent meaning of this word or of any word, for that matter, קָנָה would be the best candidate from the semantic pool of Hebrew verbs for expressing a creation that is unprecedented, namely, creatio ex nihilo. Sarna nicely summarizes the significance of the use of the verb קָנָה in Genesis 1:1 as meaning creatio ex nihilo in the larger cultural context of the ancient Near East. Precisely because of the indispensable importance of preexisting matter in the pagan cosmologies, the very absence of such mention here is highly significant. This conclusion is reinforced by the idea of creation by divine

34 Both Kidner and Ross specifically mention the importance of context for determining the meaning of קָנָה for an individual passage (Kidner, Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary, 44; Ross, Creation and Blessing, 728).

35 Finley, "Dimensions of the Hebrew Word for 'Create' (קָנָה),"410. This would be true even if one agreed with Waltke and understood verse 1 to be a summary statement. If the verse functions in this manner, it would be logically separated from its context in that it referred in a general way to the entire process of Genesis 1. In addition in Waltke's view Genesis 1:2 is subordinated to verse 3, leaving verse 1 as an independent clause, which does not contain any reference to materials being used with a קָנָה creation.

36 Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, 40-41.


38 Jacob Newman, The Commentary of Nahmanides on Genesis Chapters 1-6 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 33. Similarly, Young, 'The Relation of the First Verse of Genesis One to Verses Two and Three," 139. Winden argues that understanding Genesis 1:1 as referring to creatio ex nihilo was considered the orthodox understanding of the verse by the early church fathers (J. C. M. van Winden, "The Early Christian Exegesis of 'Heaven and Earth' in Genesis 1,1," in Romanitas et Christianitas, ed. W. den Boer, P. G. van der Nat, C. M. J. Sicking, and J. C. M. van Winden [Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1973], 372-73).

39 See George Bush, Notes on Genesis, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: James & Klock, 1976),1:26-27. Hence Waltke's objection that the ancient versions did not understand the verb in this way is undermined. Furthermore Waltke's statement that other Hebrew verbs may describe creatio ex nihilo does not diminish the fact that קָנָה as the distinctive verb for creation, having God as its only subject, also may dearly have this nuance (Waltke, 'The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3, Part IV: The Theology of Genesis 1," 336-37).
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fiat without reference to any inert matter being present. Also, the repeated biblical emphasis upon God as exclusive Creator would seem to rule out the possibility of preexistent matter. Finally, if bara' is used only of God's creation, it must be essentially distinct from human creation. The ultimate distinction would be creatio ex nihilo, which has no human parallel and is thus utterly beyond all human comprehension.40

Also the contextual joining of the verb בָּרָא, "to create," with the preceding phrase בָּרָא בֵּית, "in the beginning," in the alliterative phrase בָּרָא בֵּית בָּרָא (berēš'it bārā) clarifies the connotation of each and thus helps elucidate the meaning of בָּרָא.

The word "beginning" is, of course, a relative term. It must imply the beginning of something. On that account, some say it refers only to the beginning of human history that we see unfolded round about us. But the content of the term is given to us by the word bara', create, and vice versa. This is a beginning that is characterized by creation, and this is a creation that is characterized by the beginning. Here it means "the absolute beginning."... It refers to the absolute beginning, just as John, beginning his Gospel, takes over the phrase "in the beginning" and refers it to the absolute beginning.41

As noted, Waltke avoids attributing the meaning of creatio ex nihilo to בָּרָא in Genesis 1. Thus God's role as Creator in that chapter refers only to His reshaping preexisting matter. And yet if Moses wanted to refer to God as the Reshaper of existing matter, there were better lexical choices at his disposal to convey this idea. It does not seem that he would want to employ the distinctive verb for God's creative activity, the verb בָּרָא. In his attempt to play down the distinctiveness of the verb בָּרָא Waltke mentions that other verbs that are not as distinctive as בָּרָא may refer to creation out of nothing.42 It almost seems that what Waltke really wants to say about the distinctiveness of בָּרָא is that it never means creation out of nothing.43

The use of בָּרָא without any mention of preexisting matter in Genesis 1:1 conveys something stronger than Waltke's interpretation of the verse.44

40 Sarna, Genesis, 5. Creatio ex nihilo was also distinct from Greek philosophy. See especially Plutarch's denial of creatio ex nihilo (John Dillon, The Middle Platonists [London: Duckworth, 1977], 207, cited by Young, "Creatio Ex Nihilo': A Context for the Emergence of the Christian Doctrine of Creation," 139-40). See also Winden, "The Early Christian Exegesis of 'Heaven and Earth' in Genesis 1,1," 372-73.
41 Young, In the Beginning, 24-25.
42 Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 50.
43 Westermann's caveat that "we should be careful of reading too much into the word; nor is it correct to read creatio ex nihilo out of the word" may be appropriate here (Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 100).
44 Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1:: A Critical Look," 165. The occurrence of the verb following the phrase "in the beginning" gave rise to the Jewish and Christian traditions of creatio ex nihilo (Wifall, "God's Accession Year according to P," 527).
"GENESIS 1:2 IS NEGATIVE"

The precreation chaos theory advocated by Waltke assumes that the chaotic state of Genesis 1:2 was in existence before God began His creative activity in Genesis 1:3.\(^{45}\) The contention that the state described in verse 2 is negative and consequently not the result of the activity of God was addressed in the previous article in connection with the phrase גַּם הָעָנָן הַנָּחָל ("formless and empty"). There it was shown that the phrase גַּם הָעָנָן הַנָּחָל need not be understood as an orderless chaos as Waltke proposed but rather that the earth was not yet ready to be inhabited by mankind.\(^{46}\) As Tsumura stated, "There is nothing in this passage that would suggest a chaotic state of the earth which is opposed to and precedes creation."\(^{47}\)

But what of Waltke's objection that the darkness over the face of the deep also suggests the antithesis of creation and thus was not brought into existence by God? The significance of this occurrence of darkness is conveyed more forcefully by Unger.

Of special importance in the seven-day account of creation is the calling forth of light upon the earth about to be renewed. Sin had steeped it in disorder and darkness. God's active movement upon it in recreation involved banishing the disorder and dissipating the darkness. Only when sin came, darkness resulted. Darkness, therefore, represents sin, that which is contrary to God's glory and holiness (1 John 1:6).\(^{48}\)

Waltke maintains that the presence of the uncreated state with darkness over the deep in Genesis 1:2 is a mystery, since the "Bible

\(^{45}\) Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 19. Similarly, Hershel Shanks, "How the Bible Begins," Judaism 21 (1972): 58, n. 2. In reference to this assumption Waltke states that chaos occurred before the original creation. What does he mean by original here? If matter is already in existence, then subsequent creation should not be viewed as original. The same applies to his use of the term "creation." He speaks of preexisting matter in existence before God began to work in Genesis 1 and yet he calls the work that of creation. Similarly, in discussing Isaiah 45:18 Waltke states, "The Creator did not leave His job half-finished. He perfected the creation, and then He established it. He did not end up with chaos as Isaiah noted" (Creation and Chaos, 60). When Waltke says that God "did not leave His job unfinished," he seems to be arguing that God was involved in bringing the state described in Genesis 1:2 into existence. On the other hand, elsewhere he indicates that the presence of the state described in verse 2 is a mystery, as the Bible never says that God brought the unformed state, the darkness, and the deep into existence by His word (Creation and Chaos, p. 52).


\(^{47}\) David Toshiro Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation, JSOT Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 33-34.

\(^{48}\) Merril F. Unger, "Rethinking the Genesis Account of Creation," Bibliotheca Sacra 115 (1958): 30. Payne suggests that if the author had desired to make a statement about the darkness expressing evil, the stronger word for darkness would be used. The darkness is פָּחָן, not the stronger synonym פָּאר פָּר (D. F. Payne, "Approaches to Genesis i 2," Transactions 23 [1969-70]: 67.)
never says that God brought these into existence by His word."\footnote{Waltke, \textit{Creation and Chaos}, 52.}

The problems that arise with this view are more numerous and difficult than the theological problem its advocates are attempting to alleviate. First, the immediate question arises, To what should be ascribed the existence of the darkness over the face of the deep?\footnote{Wiseman, as quoted by Bruce, suggests that this position leads to an inevitable comparison with pagan views (F. F. Bruce, "Arid the Earth Was without Form and Void," \textit{Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute} 78 [1946]: 26). Westermann notes that the opposition between darkness and creation is widespread in the cosmogonies and creation stories of the world (Westermann, \textit{Genesis 1-11}, 104). The connection between the \textit{Enuma Elish} account of creation because of the similarity between the Hebrew word \textit{xxxx} ("deep") and the name of the goddess Tiamat is not etymologically defensible (see Westermann, \textit{Genesis 1-11}, 105; and Ross, \textit{Creation and Blessing}, 107).}

Who made the darkness and the deep if they were not made by God? The fact is noteworthy that God named the darkness in Genesis 1 without the least indication that there was something undesirable about its existence.

God gives a name to the darkness, just as he does to the light. Both are therefore good and well-pleasing to him; both are created, although the express creation of the darkness, as of the other objects in verse two, is not stated, and both serve his purpose of forming the day.\footnote{Edward J. Young, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:2," \textit{Westminster Theological Journal} 23 [1960-61]:157, n. 114.}

Later in the same article Young addresses the theological tension felt by Waltke.

In the nature of the case darkness is often suited to symbolize affliction and death. Here, however, the darkness is merely one characteristic of the unformed earth. Man cannot live in darkness, and the first requisite step in making the earth habitable is the removal of darkness. This elementary fact must be recognized before we make any attempt to discover the theological significance of darkness. And it is well also to note that darkness is recognized in this chapter as a positive good for man. Whatever be the precise connotation of the \textit{ָּנָנָן} of each day, it certainly included darkness, and that darkness was for man's good.\footnote{Ibid., 170-71, n. 33. Waltke does acknowledge that the darkness from this context must later be viewed as good. "Though not called 'good' at first, the darkness and deep were called 'good' later when they became part of the cosmos" (Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3, Part IV: The Theology of Genesis 1," 338-39). The explanatory phrase, "became part of the cosmos," is difficult to understand, and it should be admitted there is no explicit support to this effect from the context.}

Waltke states that the darkness and the deep were not brought into existence by God's word, and yet Isaiah 45:7 states that God created the darkness. In this verse \textit{גָּּפִי}, the same word used for darkness in Genesis 1:2, is said to have been created (\textit{אַּנְּבָּד}) by God.\footnote{Wiseman, "And the Earth Was without Form and Void," 26.}
To disassociate the physical darkness mentioned in Genesis 1:2 from God because darkness came to symbolize evil and sin is to confuse the symbol with the thing symbolized. It is like saying yeast is evil because it came to represent spiritual evil. The fact that a physical reality is used to represent something spiritual does not mean that every time this physical reality is mentioned, it must be representing that spiritual entity. Those who claim that darkness in Genesis 1:2 is evil have confused the spiritual symbol as used elsewhere with the physical reality in this passage.

In addition the syntactical structure of verse 2 would seem to argue against understanding the verse in a negative tone. The three clauses in the verse each begin with a waw followed by a noun that functions as the subject of the clause. All the clauses appear to be coordinate. Waltke would not view the last phrase describing the Spirit of God hovering over the waters in a negative sense, and yet he does not offer an explanation for not treating all the clauses in verse 2 as parallel. As Keil and Delitzsch state, "The three statements in our verse are parallel; the substantive and participial construction of the second and third clauses rests upon the ḥtyhv of the first. All three describe the condition of the earth immediately after the creation of the universe." The presence of darkness illustrates, as does the preceding clause, "formless and empty," that the earth was still not ready to be inhabited by man.

As the first word in this clause ḫṣn is emphasized, it stands as a parallel to ṣlAh in the previous clause. There are thus three principal subjects of the verse: the earth, darkness and the Spirit of God. The second clause in reality gives further support to the first. Man could not have lived upon the earth, for it was dark and covered by water.

Waltke's argument that the state in Genesis 1:2 was not created by God because passages like Psalm 33:6, 9 and Hebrews 11:3 state that God created everything by His word is not convincing. Indeed, it should be observed that these passages do not in any way suggest that the universe was created in two distinct stages, a creation and

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54 Fields, Unformed and Unfilled, 132-33.
55 Whitcomb, The Early Earth, 125--27.
56 Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, 1:49. Also see Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 102, 106, and Fields, Unformed and Unfilled, 83-84. Since the three clauses are coordinate, Westermann and Schmidt would argue that they should be viewed in the same light, either positively or negatively. See Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 17, and Payne, "Approaches to Genesis i. 2," 66.
58 Young, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:2," 170.
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and a re-creation, as Waltke must maintain. Furthermore where is the evidence in these passages for the presence of preexisting matter before the re-creation of Genesis 1:3?

Verse 2 should be taken as a positive description, not a negative one. And though the earth was not yet suitable for man to inhabit, "there is no reason, so far as one can tell from reading the first chapter of Genesis, why God might not have pronounced the judgment, 'very good,' over the condition described in the second verse." According to the traditional interpretation, as noted in the previous article, however, Genesis 1:2 states the condition of the earth as it was when it was first created until God began to form it into the present world.

"THE ISRAELITE VIEW OF CREATION IS DISTINCT"

In stressing the importance and significance of creation in Israelite theology Waltke wants to distinguish the Old Testament concept of creation from the creation mythologies of the ancient Near East. Because other accounts explaining the origin of the world were prevalent and would probably have been known to the Israelites, Waltke states that it would have been "inconceivable that Moses should have left the new nation under God without an accurate account of the origin of creation." The essential difference between the pagan ideas and the Mosaic revelation is in the "conceptualization of the relationship of God to creation." Numerous scholars have noted, for example, that the other cosmogenies of the ancient Near East have nothing so profound as the opening statement of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But why is this so unique? Part of the answer

60 Wiseman, cited in Bruce, "And the Earth Was without Form and Void," 26.
61 Westermann, Genesis I-11, 94,102; Young, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:2," 170; Sailhamer, "Genesis," 24; and Augustine who along with other ancient scholars understood the darkness in Genesis 1:1 as a reference to heaven (Windon, "The Early Christian Exegesis of 'Heaven and Earth' in Genesis 1:1," 378).
62 Young, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:2," 174. Childs and Hasel suggest that the verse must be viewed in a negative light if one argues that Genesis 1:1 is merely a summary statement (Bervard S. Childs, Myth and Reality in the Old Testament [Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1960], 39, and Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1: A Critical Look," 165). Childs also hints at the need to play down the significance of הָאָרֶץ if one views Genesis 1:2 as indicating something negative (ibid., 40).
63 Young, "The Relation of the First Verse of Genesis One to Verses Two and Three," 144 and n. 20.
64 Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 43.
65 Ibid.
surely lies in the fact that these mythologies all assume preexisting matter when the god(s) begin to create. In other words the uniqueness of the phrase "in the beginning" is not primarily in its distinctiveness literally but in the fact that no other creation account in the ancient Near East described the absolute beginning of creation when nothing else existed. Though Waltke would deny the eternality of matter, he opens the door to the idea of preexisting matter in Genesis 1 by saying the creation account in Genesis 1 assumes that physical existence is present at "the beginning." Since Waltke does not believe that Genesis 1 refers to the initial creation before the existence of matter, his statement about the distinctiveness of Israel's view loses force, even though God as Creator is fundamental to the Israelite faith.

What then is distinctive about the meaning of the Mosaic revelation of creation according to Waltke's interpretation of the passage? According to Waltke the account begins with a watery chaos already in existence, which God overcomes. This is virtually identical to the sequence of events in the Babylonian Enuma Elish. The existence of matter at the beginning of creation could easily be understood as the principle of evil coexisting with God from eternity, hence denying the Judeo-Christian concept of God (Winden, The Early Christian Exegesis of 'Heaven and Earth' in Genesis 1,1," 372-73).

Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 58. Waltke does maintain that one of the purposes of the Mosaic account is a polemic against the myths of Israel's environment (Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3, Part IV: The Theology of Genesis 1," 328).

Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 45.
creative activity of God described in Genesis 1 is limited to a sculpturing or reshaping of material that is chaotic and unorganized.

In distinguishing Israel's view of creation from the creation accounts of the ancient Near East, Waltke states, "The faith that God was the Creator of heaven and earth and not coexistent and coeternal with the creation distinguished Israel's faith from all other religions." This theological deduction, however, cannot come from Genesis 1, according to the precreation chaos position. Such a credo could only result from a belief in creatio ex nihilo, a doctrine Waltke denies the Israelite consciousness until several hundred years later.

While the degree of distinctiveness should not be a controlling exegetical grid to impose on a passage (the interpreter should objectively investigate what the text is saying in its historical and literary context), it is fair to bring out that the traditional view of creation is more distinctive in the environment of the ancient Near East than is Waltke's precreation chaos theory. The key difference between pagan cosmogonies and Genesis 1 is creatio ex nihilo and the absence of preexisting matter. Waltke can claim neither fact for Genesis 1, though he views Genesis 1 as the most significant text regarding the Israelite theology of creation. Jacob brings into focus more clearly the distinctiveness of the Israelite account of creation in Genesis 1.

It is the first great achievement of the Bible to present a divine creation from nothing in contrast to evolution or formation from a material already in existence. Israel's religious genius expresses this idea with monumental brevity. In all other creation epics the world originates from a primeval matter which existed before. No other religion or philosophy dared to take this last step. Through it God is not simply the architect, but the absolute master of the universe. No sentence could be better fitted for the opening of the Book of Books. Only an all pervading conviction of God's absolute power could have produced it.

**Conclusion**

In this article the four primary features of the precreation chaos theory were examined. It was concluded that these four precepts pose philological as well as theological difficulties. The conclusion

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71 Ibid., 49.

72 Furthermore, Fields observes that Waltke had not considered the impact of passages such as Exodus 20:11; 31:17; and Nehemiah 9:6, which fit all that exists in the universe within the six days of creation (*Unformed and Unfilled*, 128, n. 43).


should be drawn, therefore, that the traditional view, defended in the previous article in this two-part series, is the most satisfactory position regarding the interpretation of Genesis 1:1-3. According to this position, the Bible speaks with one voice about the creation of the universe. Genesis 1:1-3 describes the same events as other passages such as Psalm 33:6, 9; Romans 4:17; and Hebrews 11:3, and they describe *creatio ex nihilo*. This understanding of Genesis 1:1-3 prevailed among the early Jewish and Christian interpreters. Genesis 1:2 describes the initial stage of what God created, the state He then transformed (vv. 3-31) to make the earth into a place that could be inhabited by man.

The first article in this series began by acknowledging that the question of origins is a question repeated in history and in human experience. This truth was graphically illustrated after NASA'S Cosmic Background Explorer satellite-COBE-shot back pictures of the most distant objects scientists have ever discovered. These pictures were alleged to reveal evidence of how the universe began. Ted Koppel of "ABC News Nightline" questioned Robert Kirshner, chairman of Harvard University's department of astronomy on the significance of this discovery by asking a question about origins.

**Ted Koppel:** The big bang theory, to what limited degree I understand it, calls for something infinitesimally small, so small that it cannot be measured to have exploded into the universe as we now find it, in other words, something tiny exploded into the reality of everything large that exists in the universe today. Now, how does that work?

**Robert Kirshner:** Well, you're trying to answer the hardest part at the beginning. It might be easier to think about some of the observational facts and see why the big bang is such a simple explanation for them. The thing that we see today is a universe which is expanding,

75 Waltke labeled the view as the initial chaos view, but because of the uncertainty of what is meant by chaos this title is not so useful as referring to the position simply as the traditional one. See Young, "The Relation of the First Verse of Genesis One to Verses Two and Three," 145. Indeed, Waltke's recent assertion that Genesis 1:2 depicts an earth that was uninhabitable and uninhabited may indicate a shift in his own thinking about the meaning of the chaos. See "The Literary Genre of Genesis, Chapter One," 4.


77 For references in apocryphal literature as well as early Jewish interpreters and church fathers, see Wifall, "God's Accession Year according to P," 527; Young, "'Creatio Ex Nihilo': A Context for the Emergence of the Christian Doctrine of Creation," 145; Pearson, "An Exegetical Study of Genesis 1:1-3," 24-26; and Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled*, 26.

galaxies getting farther from one another, and if you imagine what that was like in the past, it would be a picture in which the galaxies were getting closer to one another. And if you take that picture far enough back, and we think the time scale is about 15 billion years, far enough back, then you get to a state where the universe is much hotter and denser than it is today. That's the thing we're talking about when we talked about the big bang. The details of exactly the structure of space and time at that-in that setting are a little tricky, but the basic picture is that the universe that we see today is very old, and had come from a state which was very different than we see around us today.79

At the conclusion of the program Koppel, unsatisfied with the previous evasion to the essential question, returned the central issue of the origin of the universe:

Ted Koppel: And in the 40 or 50 seconds that we have left, Professor Kirshner, you want to try another crack at that first question, how we get everything out of next to nothing?

Dr. Kirshner: No, I don't think that's the question I really want to answer. That's the one I want to evade....80

The question that is asked by both ancient and modern man alike--the question that cannot be ignored--is answered adequately only from the revelation of Scripture. God created all that exists and He created out of nothing. The Bible is unified on this issue. God is the Creator who existed before all His creation and who brought forth from nothing all that exists. The only biblical event that might rightly be called a re-creation begins with the experience of the new birth and is consummated in the realization of the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21:1-2). This work from beginning to end is brought about by the One who was there "in the beginning," who creates and brings light and life through the redemption victoriously proclaimed on the first day of the week.81

79 Ibid., 2.
80 Ibid., 4.