Classroom

Adam to Noah

Exploring Genesis 2-5

Dr. Tim Mackie

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Prologue to Eden: Genesis 1:1-2:3

God brings cosmic order to create sacred space.

The Literary Design of Genesis 1

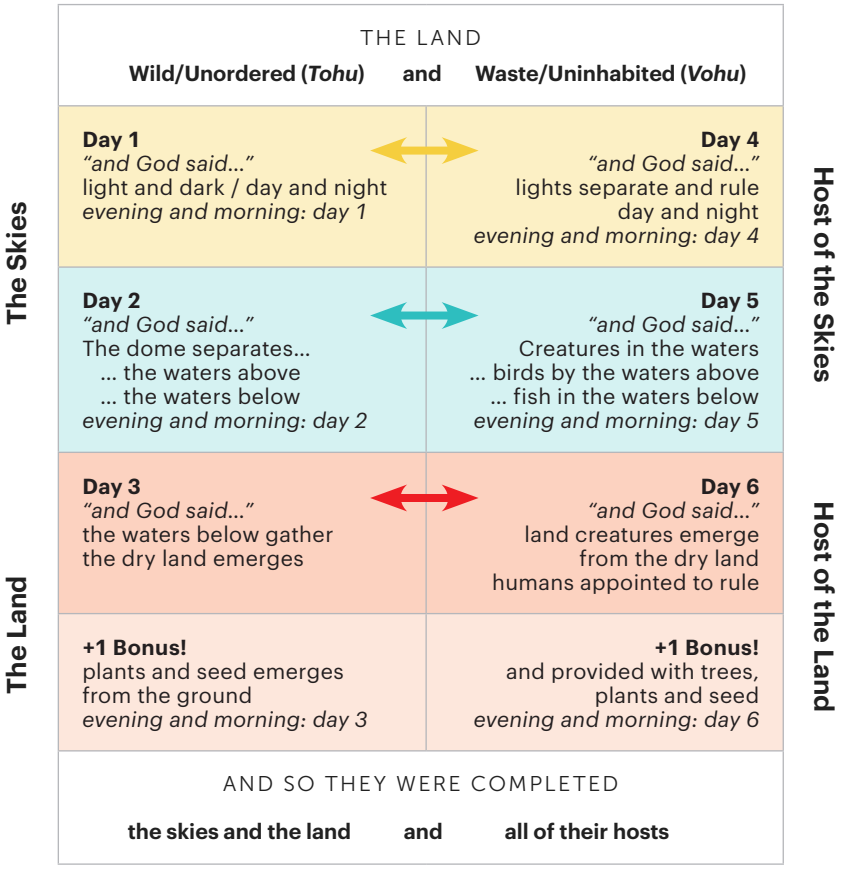
The prologue of Genesis 1 (1:1-2) and the epilogue (1:31-2:3) have been designed as a macro-frame around the internal sequence of six days.

This design structure acts as an envelope around the sequence of six days, with a clear strategy of emphasizing the seven-fold symbolism of God's actions and the culmination of the entire narrative in the seventh day.

- Notice how the key words of the opening prologue ("created" "skies" "land") as well as the 1x7 and 2x7 design of 2:1-2 are taken up and completed in the prologue with the same words and the 3x7 design.

The Cosmos of Genesis 1: Days 1-6

Days 1-6 have been neatly organized as two triads that each address the "problems" with the cosmic order presented in Genesis 1:2: disorder and uninhabited, darkness and disorder. Days 1-3 address the problem of disorder as God organizes the cosmos into distinct realms: the heavens above, the middle Heaven/Earth, and the land below. Days 4-6 then supply each of these realms with their appropriate inhabitants: the heavenly realm with lights, the middle Heaven/Earth with birds and fish, and the dry land with creatures and humans!



Humanity in Genesis 1 (Anthropology)

Within the framework of the six days of Genesis 1, the appointment of humanity as God's image is clearly the climactic act of God's work, as this moment is saved for the last. The key moment in Genesis 1:26-28 is designed as a literary symmetry.

[26] And God said,
"Let us **make human**
in our image,
according to our likeness;
and let them ***rule***
over the fish of the sea
and over the birds of the sky
and over the cattle
and over all **the land**,
and over every creeper that creeps on the land."

---

[27] And **God created human** ***in his image,***
in the image of God **he created him;**
male and female **he created them**.

---

[28] And **God blessed them**,
and God said to them,
"**Be fruitful and multiply**,
and fill the land,
and ***subdue*** *it;*
and ***rule*** *over the fish of the sea*
and over the birds of the sky
and over living creature that creeps on **the land**."

Genesis 1:26-28

1. The literary symmetries invite the reader to compare the corresponding sections:

    - The image of God statements are immediately followed by sections that unpack the meaning and significance of the divine image:

        2. "and let them rule over..." — In Hebrew grammar and syntax, when you have a verb of command or invitation (called a jussive) followed by a clause that also has a jussive ("and let them rule..."), it is meant to be understood as a purpose statement:
        "Let us make human in our image... ***in order that they may rule***..."

            - For this point, see Thomas Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (1971 edition), section 107c.

3. "male and female" = "in his image": In 1:27, notice how the three-line poem has three key elements in each line:

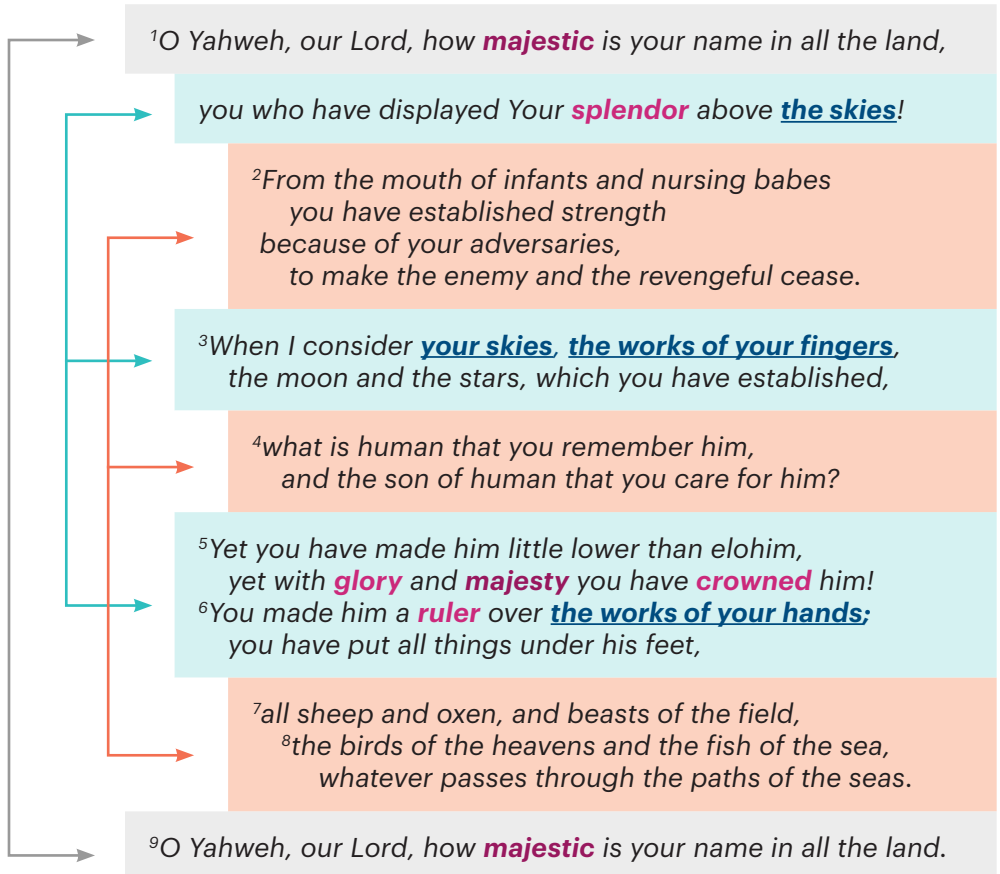
God created	*human*	*in his image*
he created	*him*	*in the image of God*
he created	*them*	*male and female*

   - This poetic parallelism makes clear that the divine image is constituted in some crucial way by the duality of gender. Somehow God is "imaged" in a special way through the unity of humanity as one species that consists of a duality of distinct others. Humanity is one and more than one at the same time, and this offers an important image of God's divine identity.

4. The preposition "in" (Hebrew *be-* / -ב) attached to "his image" means "in the place of" or "instead of" (called *beth pretii,* see Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, sec. 102p).
   "God created human in the place of his image"
   OR "...as his image."

This portrait of humans as divine and royal image of Yahweh is precisely the claim of Psalm 8, which is the product of a sustained meditation on Genesis 1 and 2.

Psalm 8



Creation as a Macro-Temple in Genesis 1

In Genesis 1, creation is depicted as the cosmic prototype of which all later temples are symbolic miniatures. In each later biblical temple, the seventh day is when God's presence fills the sacred space.

Creation's Completion (GEN 1:31-2:3)	**Tabernacle Instructions** (EXOD 25-31)	**Completion of the Tabernacle** (EXOD 39-40):	**Jerusalem Temple Completion** 1 KINGS 6-8
Seven days open with divine command: "And God said..." Day 1 - 1:5 Day 2 - 1:8 Day 3 - 1:13 Day 4 - 1:19 Day 5 - 1:23 Day 6 - 1:31 Day 7 - Gen 2:1-3 SABBATH	Seven speeches open with divine command: "And YHWH spoke to Moses..." Speech 1 - Exod 25:1 Speech 2 - Exod 30:11 Speech 3 - Exod 30:17 Speech 4 - Exod 30:22 Speech 5 - Exod 30:34 Speech 6 - Exod 31:1 Speech 7 - Exod 31:12 SABBATH	Seven acts of obedience to the divine command complete tabernacle: "And Moses did ... *just as YHWH commanded Moses*." Act 1 - Exod 40:19 Act 2 - Exod 40:21 Act 3 - Exod 40:23 Act 4 - Exod 40:25 Act 5 - Exod 40:27 Act 6 - Exod 40:29 Act 7 - Exod 40:32-35 DIVINE REST	Seven petitions of Solomon upon the completion of the temple: "Blessed be Yahweh *who spoke to my father David*." Petition 1 - 1 Kgs 8:31-32 Petition 2 - 1 Kgs 8:33-34 Petition 3 - 1 Kgs 8:35-37a Petition 4 - 1 Kgs 8:37b-40 Petition 5 - 1 Kgs 8:41-43 Petition 6 - 1 Kgs 8:44-45 Petition 7 - 1 Kgs 8:46-53 SEVEN-DAY FEASTS
Seventh day culminates in Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3)	Seventh speech emphasizes the "sign of Sabbath" (Exod 31:12-17) Priesthood installed after a seven-day ordination (Exodus 28-29)	Seventh act of obedience "completes" the tabernacle	Solomon hosts two seven-day feasts to dedicate the temple (1 Kgs 8:65)
"And God *saw all that he had done, and behold,* very good. And there was evening and morning, the *sixth day*." [Gen 1:31] + "And God ***blessed*** the seventh day."		"And Moses *saw all the work they had done, and behold,* just as YHWH commanded, so they did, and Moses ***blessed*** them." [Exod 39:43]	"Then the king faced about and ***blessed*** all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing." [1 Kgs 8:14]
"And the skies and the land *were completed* (כל״ה)." [Gen 2:1]	"And it came about when he *completed* (כל״ה) speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai." [Exod 31:18]	"And Moses *completed* (כל״ה) the *work* (מלאכה)." [Exod 40:33]	"And Solomon built the temple *and he finished* (כל״ה) it." [1 Kgs 6:14]
"And God *rested* (שב״ת) *on the seventh day...*"		"And the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of YHWH filled the tent." [Exod 40:34]	"And the cloud filled the house of Yahweh." [1 Kgs 8:10-11]

"...*from all his work* (מלאכה)... and God *blessed* (בר״ך) the seventh day and *made it holy* (קד״ש)." [Gn 2:2-3]	"You shall keep the Sabbath for it is *holy* (קדש) for you... Six days let *the work* (מלאכה) be done, and on the *seventh day* it is a Sabbath of Sabbath." [Exod 31:14-15]	Aaron and his sons are brought before the tent *for seven days* in the ordination ceremony [Lev 8-9, see 8:35]	"In the eleventh year, in the ...eighth month, the temple *was finished* throughout all its parts and according to all its plans. So he was *seven years* in building it." [1 Kgs 6:38] "And *the work* (מלאכה) of the pillars was finished." [1 Kgs 7:22] "Thus all *the work* (מלאכה) that King Solomon performed *in* the house of the Lord was finished." [1 Kgs 7:51]

> *"The function of these correspondences is to underscore the depiction of the sanctuary as a world, that is, an ordered, supportive, and obedient environment, and the depiction of the world as a sanctuary, that is, a place in which the reign of God is visible and unchallenged, and his holiness is palpable, unthreatened, and pervasive... The temple was conceived as a microcosm, a miniature world. But it is equally the case that in Israel, the world, or I should say, the ideal world... was conceived as a macro-temple, the palace of God which is permeated with his presence and in which all is aligned with his will."*— JON LEVENSON, CREATION AND THE PERSISTENCE OF EVIL: THE JEWISH DRAMA OF DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE, P. 86.

In a similar way, the temple in Israel was spoken of as the place of God's rest.

Psalm 132:7-8, 13-14

*[7]Let us go into his **dwelling place/tent** [משכן, mishkan];*
let us worship at his footstool.
*[8]Arise, O Lord, to your **resting place** [מנוחה, me**nukh**ah],*
you and the ark of your strength.

[13]For the Lord has chosen Zion;
he has desired it for his habitation.
*[14]This is my **resting place** [מנוחה, me**nukh**ah] forever;*
here I will sit **enthroned**, *for I have desired it.*

> *"The role of the temple in ancient Israel was not only a place where people gathered for worship. It is first and foremost a place for the deity—sacred space. It is God's home, but more importantly, his headquarters—the control room. When the deity rests in his temple, it means that he is taking command, that he is mounting his throne to assume his rightful place and his proper role..... So what did God do on the eighth day? In this view, on the eighth day, and every day since then, he is in the control room from where he runs the cosmos that he set up. This is the ongoing work of creation. If one thinks of Genesis 1 as an account of material origins, God's*

creating is an action in the past that is now over and done with. God made they physical universe and now the cosmos exists. But viewing Genesis 1 as an ancient account of the cosmos' functional origins offers a more faithful account to the scriptural depiction of God's creational "rest" as ongoing."

— [ADAPTED QUOTE FROM JOHN WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF GENESIS 1, 75, 77]

Concluding Summary of Genesis 1:1-2:3

Genesis 1:1-2:3 paints a large-scale picture...

1. ...of God's establishment of cosmic order,
2. so that the world becomes sacred space for his presence to dwell...
3. ...with his divine images who represent his rule.

This is the ideal cosmic setup that precedes Genesis 2:4, which focuses on God's establishment of a sacred center within the cosmos he has prepared in Genesis 1.

Unit 1: The Eden Story as the Introduction to the Hebrew Bible

SESSIONS: 1-7

Session 1: Considering the Authors' Intentions for Genesis

Key Question

Tim uses the example of people having all sorts of different questions when they visit the Mona Lisa. What does it mean to "step out of the Mona Lisa line" when talking about studying the Bible?

Session Quote

"The biblical authors actually had a purpose for telling this story the way that they told it, as the introduction to the Hebrew Bible, as the story that set the agenda for the whole Hebrew Bible."

Notes

No notes included in this session.

Session 2: Genesis 2-5 as the Introduction to the Hebrew Bible

Key Question

How is the Hebrew Bible like a family quilt? What might the patches, or the whole quilt, represent?

Session Quote

"It's about context. It's about reading these texts the way they were designed to be read and the way that Jewish communities, including Jesus, did read them."

The Tanak as a Composite Unity

The Hebrew Bible is a set of ancient Israelite scrolls that were formed into an editorial unity over the course of their composition and collection. Their final shape dates to somewhere in the 3rd-2nd century B.C.

They were given a three-part macro design, an order that is preserved in modern Jewish tradition and is well attested in Second Temple Jewish texts and in the New Testament.

When Jesus alludes to the order of the Hebrew Bible, he assumes a three-part design, which agrees with other contemporary Jewish authors who allude to the ordered sections.

Luke 24:44: "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Torah of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Luke 11:51: "Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary."

- Abel was murdered by Cain in Genesis 4, and Zechariah son of Jehoiadah was murdered by Joab in 2 Chronicles 24, which corresponds to the Tanak order.

TORAH
Genesis - Exodus - Leviticus - Numbers - Deuteronomy
NEVI'IM — THE PROPHETS
Former Prophets Joshua - Judges - Samuel - Kings
Latter Prophets Isaiah - Jeremiah - Ezekiel Hosea - Joel - Amos - Obadiah - Jonah - Micah - Nahum - Habakkuk - Zephaniah - Haggai - Zechariah - Malachi
KETUVIM — THE WRITINGS
Psalms - Job - Proverbs Ruth - Song od Songs - Ecclesiastes - Lamentations - Esther [The *Megillot*] Daniel - Ezra - Nehemiah - Chronicles

Prologue to the Wisdom of Ben Sirah: "Many great teachings have been given to us through the Law [= Torah], and the Prophets [= Nevi'im], and the others that follow them [= Ketuvim]... So my grandfather Yeshua devoted himself especially to the reading of the Law and the Prophets and the other scrolls of our Ancestors."

Dead Sea Scrolls (4QMMT): "The scrolls of Moses, the words of the prophets, and of David."

Philo of Alexandria (De Vita Contempletiva, 25): "The laws and the oracles given by inspiration through the prophets and the Psalms, and the other scrolls whereby knowledge and piety are increased and completed."

The Editorial Design of the Tanak

The three-part shape of the Hebrew Bible isn't simply a matter of arrangement. Rather, the books themselves have been designed to fit into this particular shape. If you look at the editorial seams of the major sections (remember the technology was papyrus or leather scrolls), you'll find intentional design clues at the beginning and ending of these sections.



Seam #1: The final sentences of the Torah and opening sentences of the Prophets:

- Deuteronomy 34:10-12: Anticipation of a coming Moses-like prophet who was promised but never came.
- Joshua 1:1-9: God's appointed leader, Joshua, who will lead the people into the promised land, must meditate on the Torah day and night to find success.

Seam #2: The final sentences of the Prophets and the opening sentences of the Ketuvim:

- Malachi 4:4-6: Anticipation of a coming Elijah-like prophet who will call the people back to the Torah and restore the hearts of Israel before the Day of the Lord.
- Psalm 1-2: The righteous one who will be vindicated in the final judgment is one who meditates on the Torah day and night to find success (Psalm 1). This righteous one is the future messianic king from the line of David, who is appointed by God to rule the nations and overcome evil once and for all (Psalm 2).

Session 3: The Difference Between Meaning and Significance

Key Question

What is the difference between meaning and significance when talking about understanding a part of the Bible?

Session Quote

"The Adam and Eve story has been crafted, intentionally, as part of the introduction to the storyline of the Hebrew Bible. As an entire work, it is doing exactly what Jesus said it's doing. It is pointing to the need of Israel and all humanity for some kind of deliverer figure who can do for Israel and for every human what we can't do for ourselves."

The Hebrew Bible as a Family Quilt



A quilt is made of many pre-existing materials, consisting of individual pieces (like the Eden story or the Abraham stories) or sub-collections of pieces (the laws at Mount Sinai, the David stories, or the Psalms), or entire books (like Ruth or Esther). These earlier materials could be incorporated into the collection as they stand or editorially reshaped to fit the new context. But, and this is the key point, *it is this new overall context of the "final quilt" that gives each individual piece its meaning* when viewed in light of the whole. Regardless of the meaning of any individual piece outside of or before its incorporation into the quilt, the entire context of the quilt is now the proper frame of reference for understanding every smaller piece.

In the case of Genesis 2-5 (the focus of this class), we must force ourselves to ask this at every step of our reading: What is the meaning of Genesis 2-5 that is intended by the authors who framed the final shape of the Tanak, as far as we can discern it? For the authors, Genesis 1-11 formed an introduction to the entire Tanak, placing the basic themes, vocabulary, and plot elements that would be developed throughout the rest of the collection.

The Many Potential Contexts of the Adam and Eve Story

In our modern cultural setting, the Adam and Eve story has been made to speak to many topics that the biblical authors did not mean to address. We must be vigilant to make a distinction between asking what Genesis 2-5 means *within the context of the Tanak*, versus what what it means for other areas of interest. The difference is one of intention. The biblical authors actually intended the stories to address the main issues of concern at work in the Tanak, not our modern concerns. However, Genesis 2-5 may have significance for how we think about other topics in light of the biblical perspective, but we should not mistake this for the "meaning" of Genesis 2-5 in its native context.

The ***Meaning*** of Genesis 2-5 As the Introduction to the Tanak

Genesis 2-5 Tanak



The ***Significance*** of Genesis 2-5 for Other Areas of Interest

Introduction to Anthropology



A Primer on Gender Theory



A Theology of Original Sin



Session 4: Pieces and Patterns in Biblical Narrative

Key Question

Tim uses two analogies to show us some important Bible study skills. What can the photomosaic help us pay attention to? What about the ring temptations from The Lord of the Rings?

Session Quote

"We are going to walk through these little scenes and identify each smaller photo. But what is significant isn't just each smaller photo or quilt piece, it's the pattern of how they are arranged."

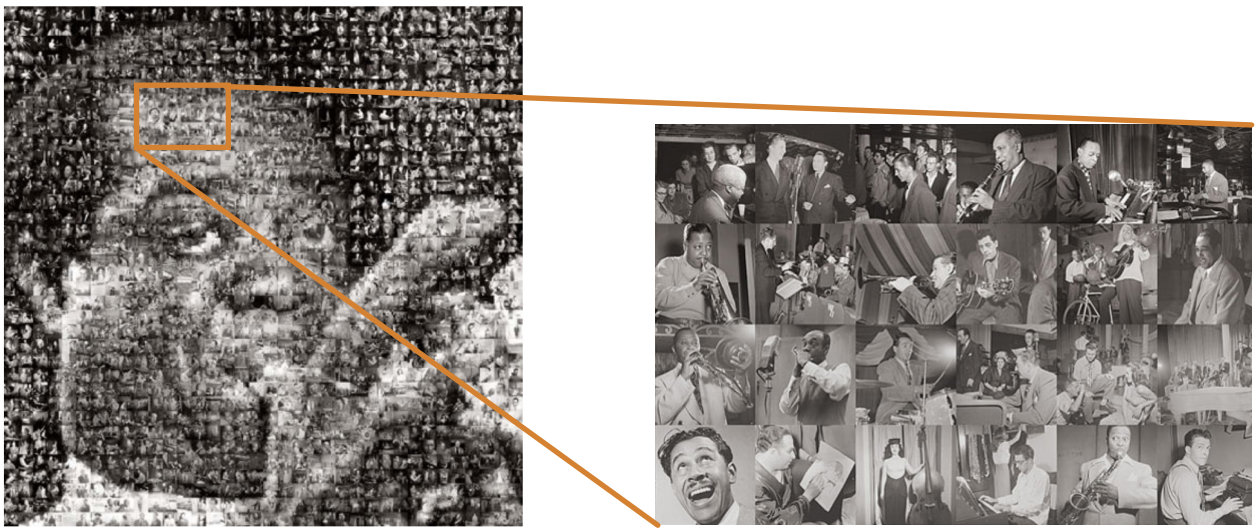
Design Patterns and Literary Analysis

Recall our earlier exploration of the origins of the Hebrew Bible, how it's a collection of collections that has been written, adapted, and edited into a unified whole. Consider two additional analogies that will help us understand the significance of this fact for how we read and interpret biblical literature.

Analogy #1: The Photomosaic

Portrait of Louis Armstrong, created by Robert Silvers (www.photomosaic.com).

It consists of hundreds of smaller photos taken from actual recording sessions with Louis Armstrong.



- The unique "unity" of the larger photomosaic is achieved precisely by its composite nature. The thematic arrangement of light/dark/great tiny squares becomes a tool in the artist's hand to create larger patterns of color that provide an ordered, unified picture of the subject.
- The Hebrew Bible displays this kind of "mosaic unity" on a large and small scale level.

Analogy #2: Repeated Motifs and Themes in Film



- Movie directors often create a cohesive unity to the themes and plot line of a story by repetition and variation. By building up viewer expectations through repetition, the artist can introduce variation and surprise.
- In the Lord of the Rings trilogy, consider the motif of the ring temptation scene.
- Some characters are tempted by the ring's power, and they succumb to it (Smeagol, Boromir, Frodo).
- Other characters resist its power, but in different ways: Bilbo (just barely), Gandalf and Galadriel (through fear and trembling), and Aragorn (like it's no problem!).
- This diverse set of responses to the ring's power creates a rich palette of characters and a complex portrait of power in the story.

The biblical authors were masters of this technique. In fact, this basic principle of patterned repetition and analogy is the most fundamental tool in their repertoire. And it's accomplished through the simplest of means: strategic repetition of key words.

These two analogies illustrate different features of the TaNaK collection that create the need for two related reading strategies:

1. *Identifying literary units [segmentation]*
    - Just as a photomosaic consists of hundreds of smaller photos, so the epic biblical narrative consists of hundreds of smaller episodes. Learn to identify the beginning and ending of literary units that make up the larger mosaic of a biblical book.
2. *Identifying repeated words and themes that weave the literary units together [coordination]*
    - Just as the smaller photos in a photomosaic are organized according to patterns of color, light, and tone, so the literary units of the biblical narrative are woven together through patterns of repeated words, themes, and images. These repetitions invite the reader to see continuity and an ongoing argument that develops throughout the course of the story.

Identifying Literary Units [Segmentation]

If we imagine the individual images in a photomosaic or the smallest pieces of a quilt, then "segmentation" means paying attention to the boundaries of the smallest literary unit. The biblical authors have a wide variety of techniques to indicate the opening and conclusion of literary units, depending on literary genre and context. The most helpful introduction to this method of study is found in David Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, chapters 1-5.

Markers of Literary Units in Narrative:

Shift in character, time, setting, or plot:

- Abram, Sarai, Pharaoh go to Egypt in Genesis 12:10-20
- Plot: The action initiated in the unit's beginning comes to resolution: Joshua 2:1 (the spies are sent), Joshua 2:23-24 (the spies return).

Conclusion marked by the next unit's introduction:

- Genesis chapters 14-15-16. The conclusion of the narrative is clearly marked by the beginning of the following unit (see 14:1, 15:1, 16:1, etc.)

Hierarchies of Literary Units in Biblical Narrative

When all of the above principles are applied to a literary analysis, it yields the following outline of the Eden narrative.

<table>
<tr><td>2:4-6 - No garden, humans, or rain</td><td rowspan="4">2:4-17
From wasteland to Eden</td><td rowspan="7">2:4-25
From isolated wasteland to communion in Eden</td><td rowspan="15">2:4-3:24
The Eden Narrative: From Garden to Exile</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:7-9 - God plants a garden and forms human</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:10-14 - The Eden river flows to become 4 rivers</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:15-17 - Human put in the garden + divine command</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:18-20 - Problem: a human alone</td><td rowspan="3">2:18-25
From isolation to communion</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:21-23 - Solution: two humans out of one</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:24-25 - Two humans married</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:1-5 - Dialogue between snake and woman</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="3">3:1-13
Folly and the Fall</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:6-7 - Woman and man eat from the tree</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:8-13 - Dialogue between God and humans</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:14-15 - Curse on the snake</td><td rowspan="4">3:14-24
The fallout</td><td rowspan="5">3:14-24
The fallout and exile from Eden</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:16 - Consequences for the woman</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:17-19 - Consequences for the man</td></tr>
<tr><td>3:20-21 - Provision of garments</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">3:22-24
Humans exiled from Eden</td></tr>
</table>

When the same information is displayed in a vertical form, you can begin to see the “hierarchy” of context for any given story, which is itself made up of many nested layers of smaller episodes and scenes.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="12">Genesis 1-50</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="12">Genesis 1-11</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="12">Genesis 2:4-3:24 - The Eden Narrative</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">2:4-25</td><td colspan="3">3:1-13</td><td colspan="3">3:14-24</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">2:4-17</td><td colspan="3">2:18-25</td><td>3:1-5</td><td>3:6-7</td><td>3:8-13</td><td colspan="2">3:14-21</td><td>3:22
-24</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:4-6</td><td>2:7-9</td><td>2:10-14</td><td>2:15-17</td><td>2:18-20</td><td>2:21-23</td><td>2:24-25</td><td></td><td></td><td>3:14-15</td><td>3:16</td><td>3:17-19</td><td>3:20-21</td></tr>
</table>

This segmentation of biblical narrative is immensely helpful as a first step in understanding, but it raises the need for the next step: studying how all these different literary units have been woven together with developing themes and ideas. This is the study of “coordination” in biblical narrative.

Session 5: The Cyclical Pattern of Genesis 1-11

Key Question

Genesis 1-11 introduces important biblical themes through a cycle that repeats twice. What are some of these repeated themes?

Session Quote

"Studying Genesis 1-11 is giving you everything you need to understand what the rest of the biblical story is going to be about."

The Adam and Eve story in Genesis chapters 2-5 fits within a larger pattern at work in Genesis 1-11, so that chapters 1-5 play out a cycle of themes and chapters 6-11 replay and develop the cycle.

A^1	1:1-2:3: Creation of sacred cosmos from chaos waters / human image of God / blessing / fruitful and multiply			Creation and Blessing
	B^1	2:4-3:24: Mount-garden temple / sin, nakedness, curse, exile		Failure
	B^2	4:1-16: Next generation sins / brothers divide / firstborn not chosen / curse and exile		Failure of Next Generation
		C^1	4:17-26: Adam to Lemek: 7 generations + 3 sons / city of Cain / murder / 70 x 7	Non-Chosen
		C^2	5:1-32: Adam to Noah: 10 generations + 3 sons / promise of comfort	Chosen
	B^3	6:1-8: Cosmic rebellion in Heaven and Earth: sons of God invade the land, leading to the flood		Cosmic Rebellion
A^2	6:9 -9:19: De-creation by chaos waters and recreation / Noah as new humanity / blessing / fruitful and multiply			Re-Creation and Blessing
	B^1	9:20-21: Garden vineyard / sin / naked		Sin
	B^2	9:22-27: Next generation sins / brothers divide / firstborn not chosen / curse, scattering		Failure of Next Generation
		C^1	10:1-32: Noah + 3 sons / 7 generations to Peleg / city of Babylon and Assyria / 70 nations	Non-Chosen
	B^3	11:1-9: Cosmic rebellion in Babylon: sons of Adam invade the heavens, leading to the scattering		Cosmic Rebellion
		C^2	11:10-26: Shem to Abram: 10 generations / 3 sons	Chosen
A^3	12:1-9: Abram as new humanity / blessing / fruitful and multiply			Re-Creation and Blessing

These symmetrical patterns are created by the dense repetition of key words that indicate the thematic arguments at work in the narrative and show important comparisons.

> *[T]he episodes culled from Hebraic traditions of early history were conceived in two matching sequences (Genesis 1-6 and 6-11). . . Each one of these sequences describes the manner in which humanity was removed progressively from the realm of God [i.e. the Garden of Eden and Flood], in which he initiated fraternal (and hence human) strife [i.e. Cain and Abel, and Noah's sons], then divided into tribal and national groupings [Cainite and Shemite genealogies and the Table of Nations], then attempted to restore his divine nature or gain access to the divine realm, but was foiled in this by God [Sons of God and Tower of Babel]. In each case, it is the consequence of this hubris which launched God into a decision to focus his relationship with humanity on one person. In the first case [Genesis 6], God destroys mankind, allows it to survive through his choice of Noah, but almost immediately recognizes (Gen 8:21) that His measure was a shade too drastic. . . . [In the second case,] [d]istressed by man's repeated attempt to unbalance the cosmological order, and no longer allowing Himself the option of totally annihilating mankind, God finally settles on one individual, uproots him from his own kin, and promises him prosperity and continuity in a new land.* — ADAPTED FROM JACK SASSON, "THE TOWER OF BABEL AS THE CLUE TO THE REDACTIONAL STRUCTURING OF GENESIS 1-11," P. 456–57

Genesis 1-3 as the Introduction to the Tanak

> *"When understood as the introduction to the Torah and to the Tanak as a whole, Genesis 1-3 intentionally foreshadows Israel's failure to keep the Sinai covenant as well as their exile from the promised land in order to point the reader to a future work of God in the "last days." Adam's failure to "conquer" (Gen 1:28) the seditious inhabitant of the land (the serpent), his temptation and violation of the commandments, and his exile from the garden is Israel's story in miniature.... Just as it was in the beginning...so it will be in the end. In the conclusion to the Pentateuch, Moses presents Israel's future apostasy and exile as a certainty (see Deut 30:1-10)... This inclusio of pessimism at both ends of the Pentateuch with respect to human abilities to "do this and live," not only supplies the context for interpreting the Sinai narrative, but also provides the rationale for the need of a new work in the "last days," whereby God will heal the human heart. Moreover, the groundwork is also laid for the expectation of another "Adam" (a future priest king) to arise from among the people of Israel who will fulfill the creation mandate in the last days. In other words, Genesis 1-3... forthrightly prepares the reader to expect that Israel will fail its covenant with God, and so to wait expectantly in exile for a new work of God in the last days."* — ADAPTED FROM SETH POSTELL, ADAM AS ISRAEL: GENESIS 1-3 AS THE INTRODUCTION TO THE TORAH AND TANAKH, P. 3-4.

Key Steps for Reading Ancient Biblical Literature

See the notes for the BibleProject class Introduction to the Hebrew Bible.

Step 1: Read and re-read, keeping track of two parallel sets of observations.

a. Study the text's cues to discern the design and boundaries of the literary unit.

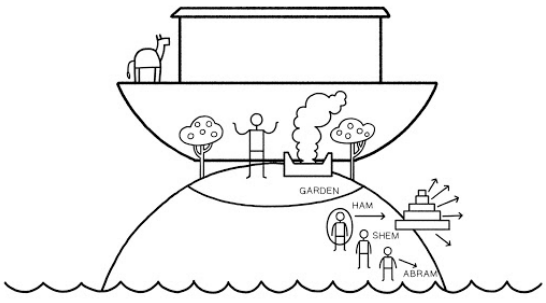
b. Pay close attention to repeated words, images, and narrative elements (plot, character, setting) within each individual literary unit.

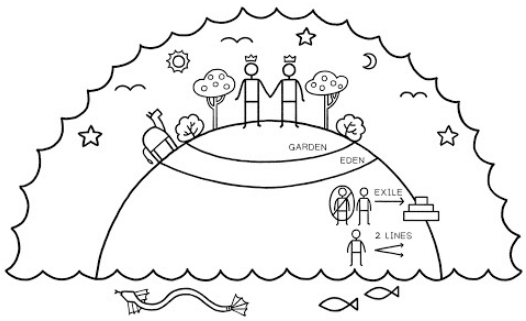
Step 2: Let the literary design guide your attention to how repeated words connect multiple literary units together.

Step 3: Repeat, repeat, repeat...

Step 4: Find someone to help you learn about the ancient cultural context of the main themes of the literary units you're studying.

1:1 Summary Prologue	
In the beginning, God **created** *the skies and the land* *[7 words]*	
1:2 Exposition of Prologue in Three Lines	
Now, the land was wild and waste (תהו ובהו tohu va-vohu) *and darkness was over the face of the deep abyss (תהום tehom) [7 x 2 words]* *but the breath of Elohim was hovering over the face of the waters (המים hamayim)*	
Day 1	**Day 4**
Day 2	**Day 5**
Day 3	**Day 6**
2:1 Summary Epilogue	
"Thus were finished the skies and the land and all their host	
2:2-3 Exposition of Epilogue in Three Lines	
1. And God completed on the seventh day his work which he had **made** *[7 words]* *2. And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had* **made** *[7 words]* *3. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it [7 words]* *because on it he rested from all his work which God* **created to make** *[key word of 1:1]*	





Session 6: The Genesis 1-11 Pattern Throughout Scripture

Key Question

Genesis 1-11 introduces a tension between God's justice and his mercy. Think of God's just judgment and exile of Cain in tension with the mercy of protecting Cain's life. Is this a contradiction? What do you think this says about the character of God?

Session Quote

"This is the tension driving the biblical storyline. We might see them as opposites, God's judgment and God's mercy, but the biblical authors want us to see these playing in tandem with each other—that God is going to fulfill both of these somehow. What else is the story of Jesus except for the story of God's justice and mercy meeting together in one life, one death, and one resurrection? Genesis 1-11 is giving you these key concepts of God's justice and mercy."

Notes

No notes included in this session.

Session 7: Reflecting on the Macro Structure of Genesis 1-11

Key Question

For Simeon, the Scriptures built an expectation for the arrival of God's chosen one (Luke 2:25-26). What themes from Genesis 1-11 laid the groundwork for Simeon's expectation?

Session Quote

"You can't imagine a more perfect conclusion to the narrative of the Hebrew Bible than the story of Jesus."

Notes

No notes included in this session.

Unit 2: The Eden Story - Part 1 (Genesis 2:4-17)

SESSIONS: 8-14

Session 8: The Structure of the Eden Narrative

Key Question

Genesis 2:5 says, "Now no shrub of the field was yet on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground." How do these details compare to the account in Genesis 1?

Session Quote

"The question is this: How does the narrative that follows—the creation of the human and the creation of the garden—relate to the literary unit you just finished reading?"

Design of Literary Unit

There are seven distinct scenes that have been ordered in a chiastic symmetry [adapted from Jerome Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*, 21-23, and David Dorsey, *Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 49-50]

The Macro-Design of the Eden Narrative in 2:4-3:24

2:4-17	**Humanity is Created and Placed in the Garden** *Characters*: Yahweh, the human *Setting*: From outside the garden to inside the garden			
	2:18-25	**Man and Woman Created and Unified** *Characters*: Yahweh, the human, animals, woman *Setting*: Inside the garden		
		3:1-5	**Dialogue Between the Snake and the Woman** *Characters:* Snake, woman *Setting:* Inside the garden	
		3:6-7	**The Woman and Man Eat from the Forbidden Tree** *Characters:* Snake, woman, man *Setting:* The center of the garden	
			A B C C' B' A'	And the woman saw that **the tree** was good for eating and desirable to ***the eyes*** and desirable for becoming ***wise*** and she took from its fruit and she ate and she gave also to her husband and he ate and ***the eyes*** of the two of them were opened and they knew they were ***naked*** and the leaves of a **fig tree** and made garments
		3:8-13	**Dialogue Between God and the Humans** *Characters:* Yahweh, man, woman *Setting:* Inside the garden	
	3:14-21	**Consequences for the Snake, Man and Woman Divided** *Characters:* Yahweh, the man, woman, snake *Setting:* Inside the garden		
3:22-24	**Humanity is Banished from the Garden** *Characters:* YHWH (active), the human (passive) *Setting:* Inside the garden, moves to the land outside the garden			

This design invites the reader to contrast each scene with its corresponding partner:

A. *ha'adam* is placed in the garden
  B. God/man/woman/animals relationships exist in harmony
    C. the snake talks with woman about eating from the tree
      D. the humans eat from the tree
    C.' YHWH dialogues with humans about eating from the tree
  B.' God/man/woman/animal relationships are fractured
A. *ha'adam* is driven from the garden

Translation and Literary Design: Genesis 2:4-17

2:4a These are the generations of the skies and the land:

A — The Waters

In the day when Yahweh made the land and skies,
5 **now,** *no shrub of* **the field** *was yet in* **the land**,
and no plant of **the field** *had yet sprouted,*
for the Lord God had not sent rain upon **the land**,
and there was no **human** *to work the ground,*
6 but **a stream/flow would go up** *from* **the land**
and it would water *the whole face of the ground,*

B — Humans in the Garden + Tree of Life

A
B
A′
B′

7 and Yahweh God formed the **human** *of dust from the ground,*
and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;
and the **human** *became a living being.*
8 and Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east/
from of old,
and he placed there the **human** *whom he had formed.*
9 and Yahweh God caused to sprout from the ground
every tree that is desirable to sight and good for eating;
and **the tree of life** *also in the middle of the garden,*
and **the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.**

A′ — The Waters

A
B
a
b
a′
A′
B′
A′
B′
A′
B′

10 **Now**, **a river went out** *from Eden* **to water** *the garden;*
and from there it separated and became four heads:
11 The name of the **first** *is Pishon;*
it goes around the whole land of Havilah,
which has there gold
12 and the gold of that land is good;
there are the bdellium and the onyx stone.
13 and the name of the **second** *river is Gihon;*
it goes around the whole land of Cush.
14 and the name of the **third** *river is Tigris;*
it goes east of Assyria.
and the **fourth** *river,*
it is the Euphrates.

B′ — Humans in the Garden + Tree of Death

15 and Yahweh God took the **human**
and he rested him in the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.
16 and Yahweh God commanded the **human**, *saying,*
"**From every tree of the garden**
you may surely eat;
17 but from **the tree of the knowledge of good and bad**
you shall not eat from it,
for in the day that **you eat from it**
you will surely **die**."

Notes

This symmetrical design invites the reader to compare the pre-garden waters (A) with the garden waters (A′). The stream/flow by itself does not create Eden in 2:4b-6, but it does create the clay and generates potential for Eden to exist. For Eden to emerge, God must direct the waters toward a purpose and then plant a garden (B), which then (B′) creates an overflow of value for the nations (Israel, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Assyria).

The double placing (B and B') of humanity in the garden is intentional. The first placement in 2:7-9 + 2:10-14 is about God setting humanity in a cultivated environment which is ripe with potential. The second placement in 2:15-17 focuses on the ***test*** that the garden represents:

- 2:15: "and he rested him" (וינחהו) points forward to the story of Noah (נח), who will have to bring comfort (נחם, 5:29) to the land that is cursed because of humanity's folly in the garden by offering a sacrifice on top of the sacred mountain. This comparison invites the reader to see how God is placing this human atop a sacred mountain of Eden in this story as well. It also hints forward to Noah's own failure in his garden vineyard (9:20-24).

2:16: The divine command to eat from all trees except for one sets up the plot tension of the test.

Notice that the first introduction of the trees in (B) emphasizes the tree of ***life***, while the introduction of the divine command (B') emphasizes the tree that could bring ***death***.

Notice the coordination of water/humans/plants by their common origins "from the ground."

2:5	No *human* (אדם) to work the ground (אדמה)
2:6	A *spring* (אד) would go up from the land (מן הארץ) to water the ground (אדמה)
2:7	Yahweh formed (ויצר) *human* (אדם) as dust from the ground (מן האדמה)
2:9	And Yahweh sprouted (ויצמח) from the ground (מן האדמה) every tree

The Hinge Function of Genesis 2:4

Genesis 2:4 has a hinge function between the two large literary blocks of Genesis 1:1-2:3 and Genesis 2:4-3:24.

GEN 2:4A	*"These are the generations*	
	A	*of the* **skies** *and the* **land**
	B	*when they were* ***created:***
GEN 2:4B	B	*in the day Yahweh Elohim* ***made***
	A	*the* **land** *and* **skies**..."

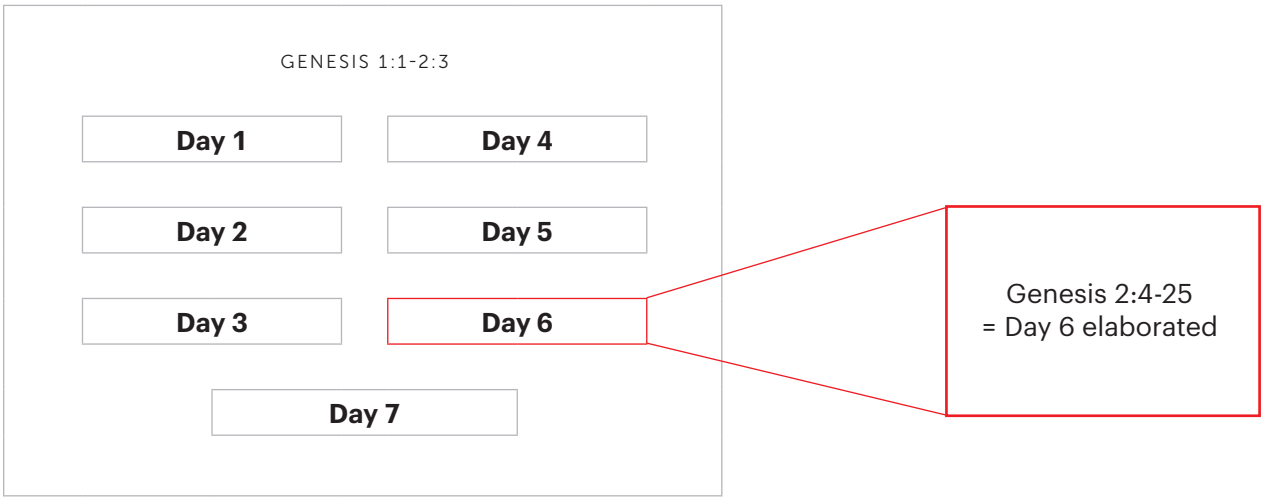
On its own, this line seems like a parallel design of two paired statements; however, when 2:4b is joined to the following verses, it becomes clear that the phrase "in the day Yahweh Elohim made the land and the skies" is a subordinate temporal clause that introduces all of 2:4b-6, in order to set up the main clause that begins the narrative action in 2:7 with the creation of the human.

The point of Genesis 2:4a is to situate the following narrative of Genesis 2:4b-3:24 as taking place *after* the creation of the skies and land recounted in Genesis 1:1-2:3. The point of Genesis 2:4b is to link *backward* so that Genesis 1:1-2:3 becomes a prologue to the following narrative.

The Relationship Between Genesis 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-3:24

Many interpreters throughout history have read the Eden narrative (Gen 2:4-25) as a recursive elaboration of day six in Genesis 1, where animals and humans are created on the land. In this view, the narrative technique of the author is to first present an overview narrative (Gen 1:1-2:3) and then double back and provide a more in depth presentation of a key moment in the previous narrative (Gen 2:4-25).

View #1: Genesis 2:4-25 Elaborates Day Six of Genesis 1:1-2:3



There are, however, several problems with this interpretation

- If Genesis 2 is a recapitulation of day six of Genesis 1, the statement in Genesis 2:5-6 makes little sense: "...and no plant of the field was yet in the land, nor had any vegetation of the field yet sprouted." In Genesis 1, God generates plants from the ground on day three not day six.
- In Genesis 1, the animals are created first, then humans. In Genesis 2, the human is created first, then the animals.
- If Genesis 2 is re-presenting day six, it is hard to imagine that the author wants us to think of all the events of Genesis 2:4-25 as taking place in one day.
- The heading used in Genesis 2:4a "these are the generations of..." occurs 10 time in Genesis in a similar way Genesis (and 3x outside of Genesis). [adapted from John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, p. 65]

	Text	Narrative Role	Relation to Previous Literary Unit
GEN 2:4A	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.	To be determined...	To be determined...
GEN 5:1	This is the scroll of **the generations of humanity**. When God created human, he made him in the likeness of God.	Transition from Cain's line to Seth's line	Recursive/Sequel
GEN 6:9	These are **the generations of Noah.**	Transition from pre-flood rebellion to Noah's story	Sequel
GEN 10:1	Now these are **the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth**, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.	Transition from Noah and three sons to the descendants of Noah's three sons	Sequel
GEN 11:10	These are **the generations of Shem.**	Transition from descendants of Noah's three sons to Shem's line	Recursive/Sequel
GEN 11:27	Now these are **the generations of Terah.**	Transition from Shem's line to Terah's line and to Abraham	Sequel
GEN 25:12	Now these are **the generations of Ishmael,** Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham;	Transition from Abraham to Ishmael's line	Sequel
GEN 25:19	Now these are **the generations of Isaac**, Abraham's son:	Transition from Abraham to Isaac's line	Sequel
GEN 36:1 GEN 36:9	Now these are **the generations of Esau** (that is, Edom)... These then are **the generations of Esau** the father of Edom in the hill country of Seir.	Transition from Jacob to Esau's family line	Sequel
GEN 37:2	These are **the generations of Jacob.**	Transition from Jacob to Jacob's family	Recursive/Sequel

This transitional heading is used in two primary ways in Genesis:

1. A sequel: To introduce a new literary unit by naming a key person who, along with their children, will be the focus on the following literary unit.

2. A recursive/sequel: To introduce the non-chosen son's family line through history (Cain in 4:17-22; Japeth and Ham in 10:1; Ishmael in 25:12; Esau in 36:1, 9), and then double back and focus on the chosen son: Seth, Shem, Isaac, Jacob's sons (5:1; 11:10; 25:19; 37:2).

- Even in the recursive/sequel, the point of the overlapping text is not to elaborate or give a more detailed account. Rather, it aims to profile the non-chosen son's line far forward in narrative time, so that the narrative can come back and focus on the chosen son's lineage.

> *"[T]here is therefore no precedent by which to conclude that the introductory formula in Genesis 2:4 is bringing the reader back into the middle of the previous account to give a more detailed description of a part of the story that was previously told. Such introductions never do this in the rest of Genesis... Furthermore, Genesis 2 does not follow the pattern of the recursive examples that follow a genealogy of the unfavored line before returning to the story of the favored line. This evidence then leads us to give strong preference to the view that Genesis 2 is not adding further detail to what happened during the sixth day in Genesis 1."* — JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE: GENESIS 2–3 AND THE HUMAN ORIGINS DEBATE (DOWNERS GROVE, IL: IVP ACADEMIC: AN IMPRINT OF INTERVARSITY PRESS, 2015), 66.

Genesis 2:4a: "these are "the generations of" the skies and the land..."

- The phrase ***generations of*** in Hebrew is *toledoth* (תולדות), from the root *yalad* "to give birth." It is used to refer to *what issued and generated from* the key character named in the formula.
- The phrase "these are the generations of..." is used three times (Gen 2:4a, 5:1; Num 3:1) and is *always used as a narrative introduction that refers back to the previous narrative as providing the conditions of the following sequel narrative.* [See T.J. Stordalen, "Genesis 2:4, Restudying a *Locus Classicus*," in *Vetus Testamentum* (vol. 104, 1992), p. 171.

View #2: Genesis 2:4-25 Follows as a Sequel From Genesis 1:1-2:3



The implications of this conclusion are extremely significant for the interpretation of Genesis 2:4-4:26, the Adam and Eve and the Cain and Abel story.

1. It means that Genesis 2:4b-25 is not another "cosmic creation story" parallel to Genesis 1. Rather, *the narrative focuses on one particular spot of the already created dry land* and shows God preparing it as a special Heaven-on-Earth place. Genesis 1 begins with a disordered cosmos, while Genesis 2 begins with a disordered land. Genesis 1 portrays the entire cosmos as a sacred space, Genesis 2 portrays one particular place within the cosmos as God's special dwelling place.

2. It means that Genesis 2-3 is focused not on the creation of the cosmos as such but on the story of how God's ideals for creation in Genesis 1 were ruined and distorted into the reality that the reader inhabits.

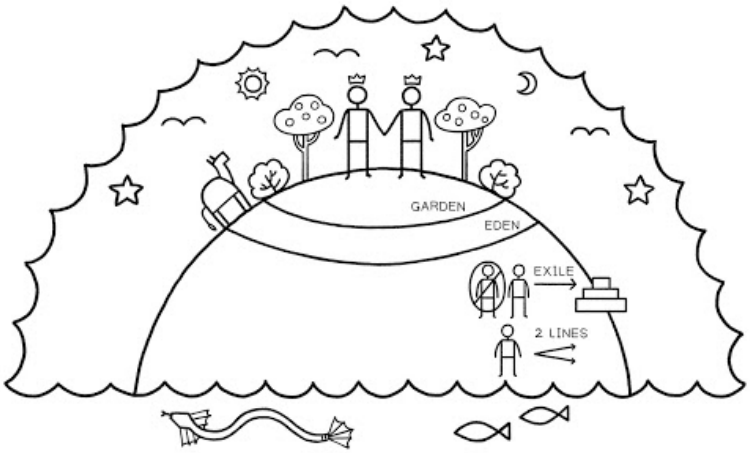
3. It means that Genesis 1:26-28 describes the creation and vocational role of humanity as a whole. This opens the interpretive possibility that Genesis 1 describes the creation of general humanity in the narrative past, distinct from the narrative of Adam and Eve's creation in Genesis 2:4-25. According to this interpretation, *it is from among an already created humanity that God "forms and appoints" one particular human family* as his royal priests to oversee the Heaven-on-Earth place.

4. It means that once Cain is exiled east of Eden, he is joining this wider "Genesis 1 humanity" as he marries, begins a family, and build a city and flourishing civilization.

5. It means that God's creation of a cosmic mountain temple (Eden) and the creation of a royal priesthood is presented as a terrestrial creation story, similar to other ancient Near Eastern temple building accounts: *The Ba'al Epic* from Ugarit (13th century B.C.) and *Enuma Elish* (18th and 13th centuries B.C.).

For resources on this interpretation, see:

- John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*
- Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and Symbolism of the Garden of Eden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*
- Seth Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1-3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh*



Session 9: The Relationship Between Genesis 1 and 2

Key Question

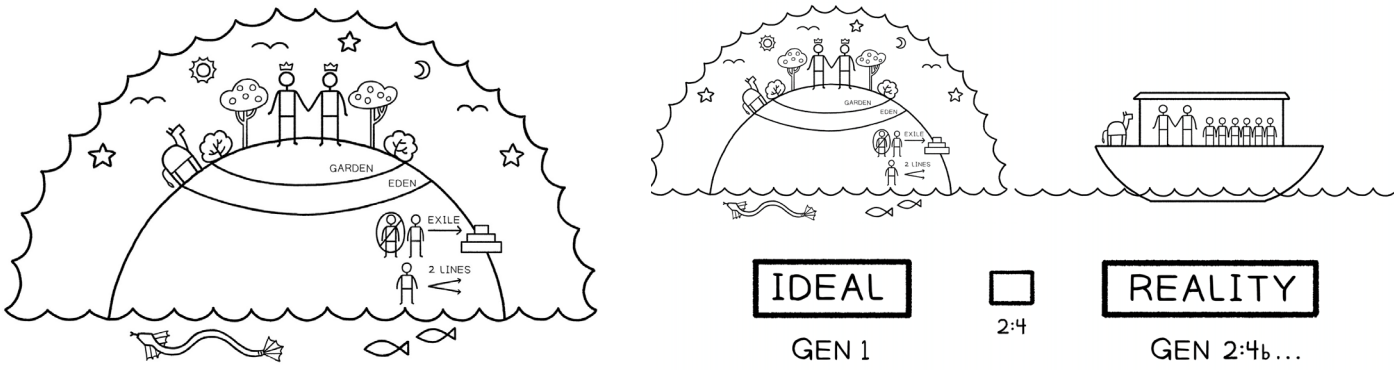
How do Genesis 1 and 2 relate to one other? How would you describe the different purpose of each chapter?

Session Quote

"It's as if Genesis 1 is giving us the whole story in one opening movement, like an ideal. And it's as if Genesis 2:4 gets us into reality."

Notes

No notes included in this session.



Session 10: Literary Design in Genesis 2:4-17

Key Question

What are the three things that come up from the dirt in Genesis 2:4-17?

Session Quote

"We're already planting the seed of a human, in the divinely-provided refuge, who is going to be put to a test to do for himself and others. It's a representative role, being rested in the place of divine sanctuary and refuge. This is the first instance of a much greater pattern."

Notes

No notes included in this session.

Session 11: Formed of the Dust

Key Question

What idea is being emphasized in Genesis 2 when God forms the human from the dust?

Session Quote

"The whole point of the creation of the humans outside of the garden is that these are frail mortal creatures. But they have an opportunity to become "Human 2.0" when they hang out, not just in Eden and not just in the garden but in the middle of the garden—that's where life is."

The Not-Yet Existent Plants of Genesis 2:5

Genesis 2:5 paints a portrait of the unproductive dry land that is devoid of plant life (cf. day 3 of Genesis ch. 1) and human life (cf. day 6 of Genesis ch. 1). This line returns us to a state of *tohu-vavohu* from Genesis 1:2, but here is focused in on the dry land.

What is the difference between "shrub of the field" (שיח השדה) and "plant of the field" (עשב השדה)?

- "Shrub" (שיח): non-edible shrubs, used mostly of uncultivated land, wilderness areas (see Gen 21:15). In Job 30:4, 7, the scene involves starving people in desolate areas, eating plants that are hardly edible in order to survive. The shock of the scene is of people trying to eat and live off of "shrub."
- "Plant" (עשב): this refers to edible plants and vegetables. In Genesis 1:11, it is the growth from the dry land after it emerges from the sea, and in Genesis 1:29-30, these are the plants given to humans and animals as food (see also Gen 9:3; Exod 10:15).

The dual plant reference is a way of talking about any and all plant growth. Inedible or edible, none of it was growing in the land because of the lack of water.

Two reasons are given for the lack of any kind of plants:

1. No rain (preview forward to the flood narrative)
2. No human to work the ground (preview forward to the human's purpose in Eden in 2:15 and after the exile from Eden in 3:23)

Humanity Formed From Clay: Genesis 2:7

There are two biblical motifs about human nature that are rooted in the language and imagery of Genesis 2:7:

> "And Yahweh *formed* (ויצר) the human of dust (עפר) from the ground."

Is this line describing a literal special creation of the first human, focusing on the material substance from which he was made? Or is this an archetypal description focusing on the nature and mortality of the human species as a whole?

We can focus on the key words "formed" (*yatsar*) and "dust" (*'aphar*) and ask if (1) the verb *form* focuses on material substance and (2) if "formed of dust" is used to describe only the human of Genesis 2 or if it includes other humans as well.

1. Does the verb *yatsar* focus exclusively on the material substance of what is created? The verb appears 45 times in biblical Hebrew. And it takes a variety of direct objects, not all of which are material.

2 Kings 19:25 *Have you not heard that I made it long ago? **I formed <u>it</u>** from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should turn fortified cities into heaps of ruins...*	A series of events providentially arrange by God (see also Isa 22:11; 46:11)
Isaiah 27:11 *For this is a people without understanding; so their maker has no compassion on them, and **the One who formed <u>them</u>** shows them no favor.* **Isaiah 43:1** *But now, this is what the Lord says— he who created you, Jacob, **he who formed <u>you</u>**, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."*	The entire nation of Israel was "formed" and "made" by Yahweh (see also Isa 29:16; 43:7, 10, 21; 44:21, 24; 45:11; Ps 95:5)
Isaiah 45:6-7 *I am Yahweh, and there is no other. **I form <u>the light</u>** and create darkness, I bring good and create bad; I, the Lord, do all these things.*	Light and darkness, good and bad, metaphorical descriptions of historical events of abundance and peace, or war and defeat See Jeremiah 18:1-10
Isaiah 45:18 *For this is what the Lord says— he who created the heavens, he is God; **he who formed <u>the land</u>**, and made it; he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited— he says: "I am the Lord, and there is no other."*	The entire cosmos is formed by Yahweh (see also Jer 10:16; 33:2)

Amos 4:13 *He who **forms the mountains**, who creates the wind, and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth— the Lord God Almighty is his name.*	The mountains and the wind are elements within the cosmos
Amos 7:1 *This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: **He was forming swarms of locusts** after the king's share had been harvested and just as the late crops were coming up.*	Swarms of locusts
Zechariah 12:1 *Thus declares the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and **forms the breath of a human within him**...*	The breath of life that animates humans
Psalm 74:16-17 *The day is yours, and yours also the night; you established the sun and moon.* *It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; **you formed both summer and winter.***	Summer and winter, seasonal orders of time
Psalm 139:16 *Your eyes saw my unformed body; all **the days you formed for me** were written in your book before one of them came to be.*	A person's "days," that is, the course of their lives, are formed by God

2. Does dust describe the unique material substance of the first human, or is this an archetypal description of the nature and mortality of the human creature? The words dust and clay are regularly used to describe humanity as a whole and every human, not just the human in Genesis 2.

Genesis 3:19

*By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; **for you are dust, and to dust you shall return**.*

Job 33:4-6

*The **Spirit/Breath** (רוח) of God has made me, and the **breath** (נשמה) of the Almighty gives me life.*
Refute me if you can; array yourselves before me, take your stand.
*Behold, I belong to God like you; **I too have been pinched out of the clay**.*

Psalm 103:14

*For he himself knows **our form**;*
*he is mindful that **we are but dust**.*

Psalm 119:73

***Your hands made me and fashioned me**;*
give me understanding, that I may learn your commandments.

Job 4:19 (NASB95)

*How much more those who dwell in **houses of clay** (חמר), whose **foundation is in the dust** (עפר), who are crushed before the moth!*

Job 10:8-9

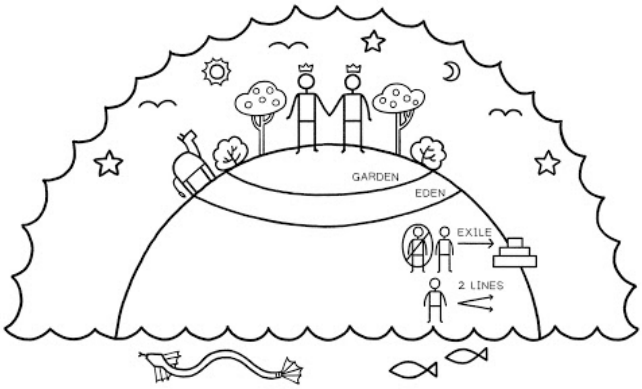
***Your hands fashioned and made me altogether**, and would you destroy me? Remember now, that **you have made me as clay**; and would you **turn me into dust** again?*

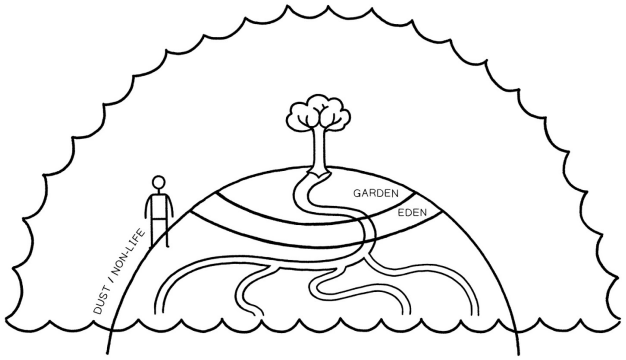
Isaiah 64:8

*Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are **the clay**, **you are the former/potter;** we are all the work of your hand.*

Notice that in all these texts, the language of the Eden narrative is used to describe humanity's nature.

> *"Being formed from dust is a statement about [human] essence and identity, not our substance. In this, Adam is an archetype… If we are all formed from dust, yet at the same time we are born of a mother through a normal birth process, we can see that being formed from dust, while true of each of us, is not a statement about each of our material origins. One can be born of a woman yet still be formed from dust; all of us are… "Formed from dust" is not a statement of material origins for any of us, and there is no reason to think that it is a statement of Adam's material origins. For Adam, as for all of us, that we are formed from dust makes a statement about our identity as mortals. Since it pertains to all of us, it is archetypal."* — JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE, 76–77.





Session 12: Garden Imagery in the Ancient Near East

Key Question

The garden of Eden is more than just a safe and fertile piece of land—it's a symbol of a bigger reality. What does the garden of Eden represent?

Session Quote

"Seeing it as a design pattern of Heaven on Earth, seeing it in its ancient context has been so helpful for understanding why garden imagery is so pervasive from the beginning to the end of the Bible. It was the language of Heaven on Earth in the time of the biblical authors."

Eden and the Three-Part Geography of the Land in Genesis 2:4-17

Eden (עדן) is used in two overlapping ways in the Hebrew Bible.

1. Eden as "luxuriance" or "delight"

2 Samuel 1:24

O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet with ***luxuries*** **(lit. "edens"),** *who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.*

Psalm 36:7-8

How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of **delights (lit. "edens").**

Jeremiah 51:34

"Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured us, he has thrown us into confusion, he has made us an empty jar. Like a serpent he has swallowed us and filled his stomach with our **delicacies (lit. "edens"),** *and then has spewed us out.*

2. The cosmic land called "Delight/Eden" is consistently referred back to in the Hebrew Bible as a meeting place of Heaven and Earth, which is the source of all life and abundance "outside of Eden."

Isaiah 51:3

The Lord will surely comfort **Zion** *and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts* **like Eden**, *her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.*

Ezekiel 36:35 (NIV)

*They will say, "***This land** *that was laid waste has become* **like the garden of Eden**; *the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited."*

Ezekiel 31:3-3, 9

Consider **Assyria**, *once a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest; it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage.*
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....
I made it beautiful with abundant branches, the envy of all **the trees of Eden** *in* **the garden of God**.

Ezekiel 28:13-14 (NASB95)

You were in **Eden**, **the garden of God...***You were on* **the holy mountain of God**; *you walked in the midst of the stones of fire.*

"Planted in the east/of old" (מדקמ)

The word *qedem* can be used geographically ("east") or temporally ("before).

- The geographical use is picked up and elaborated in Genesis 3:24 and 4:

Genesis 3:24

So he drove the man out; and **at the east** *(מקדם) of the garden of Eden he stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Genesis 4:16

Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, **east** *(קדמת) of Eden.*

- This geographical use of Eden is clear, but the question is whether in Genesis 2:8 the word *miqeddem* has a double meaning, because the temporal use of this word is very common.

Isaiah 45:21

Declare what is to be, present it — let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the ***distant past*** *(מקדם)? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.*

Habakkuk 1:12

Lord, are you not from ***antiquity*** *(מקדם)? My God, my Holy One, you will never die. You, Lord, have appointed them to execute judgment; you, my Rock, have ordained them to punish.*

Micah 5:2

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are ***from of old*** *(מקדם), from ancient times.*

Psalm 77:11-12

I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles ***of long ago*** *(מקדם).*
I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.

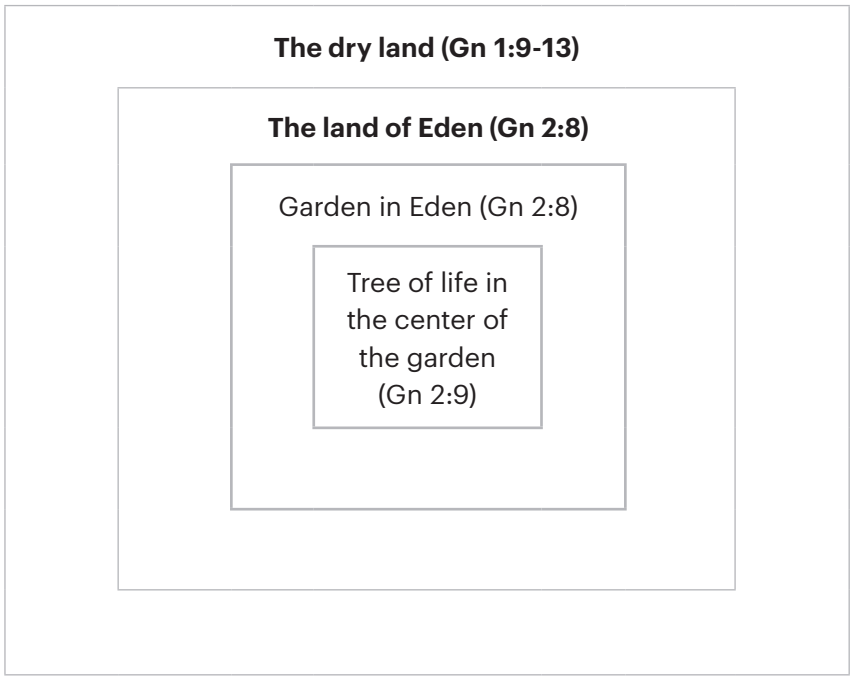
In the earliest history of interpretation, the word was understood both ways.

- Geographical: Old Greek (κατα ἀνατολας)
- Temporal: Latin Vulgate (*a principio,* "from the beginning"), and early Septuagint revisers (Aquila ἀπο ἀρχηθεν, Symmachus ἐκ πρωτης, Theodotian ἐν πρωτοις), and all of the Aramaic Targums (Neofiti, Pseudo-Jonathan)

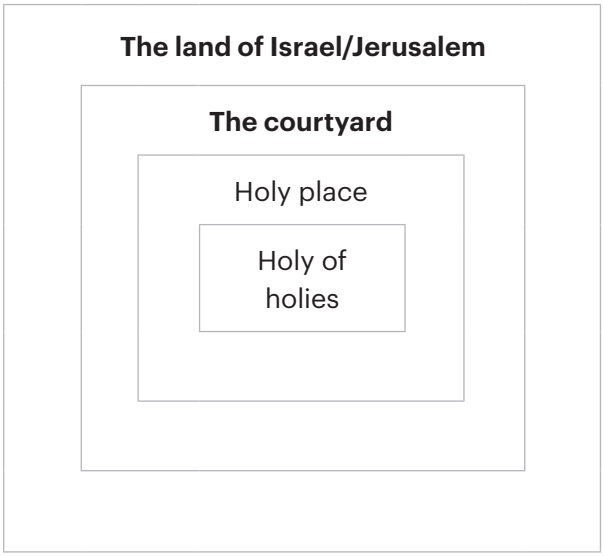
> *"Before the creation of the world a garden had been planted by the Memra of the Lord God from Eden for the righteous" — "The view expressed here by Pseudo-Jonathan that the Garden of Eden was created before the creation of the world is debated in Genesis Rabbah 15,3. The Garden of Eden is included among the ten things that were created on the eve of the first Sabbath. According to Jubilees 2, 7 and 2 Enoch 30, 1, the Garden of Eden was created on the third day."* — KEVIN CATHCART, MICHAEL MAHER, AND MARTIN MCNAMARA, EDS., THE ARAMAIC BIBLE: TARGUM PSEUDO-JONATHAN: GENESIS, TRANS. MICHAEL MAHER

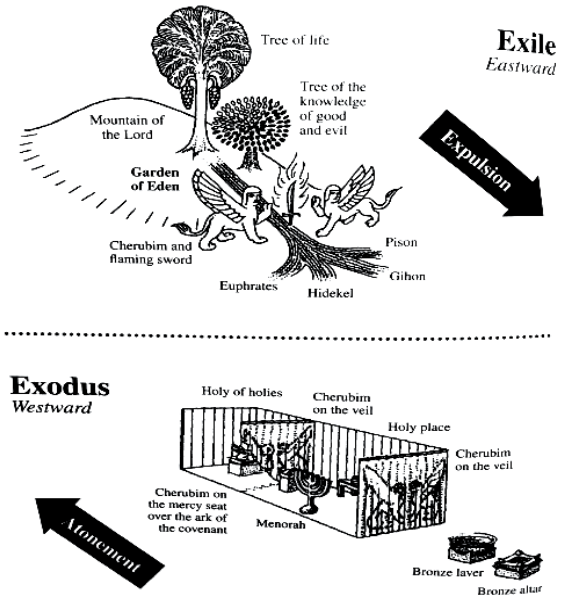
The Three-Part Geography of Eden

The geography of Eden within the dry land of Genesis 1-3 depicts a three-part topography:



This conception of the garden of Eden on the dry land provides a symbolic template for Israel's tabernacle temple, especially as described in Ezekiel's ideal/restored temple (Ezek 40-48).





Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord*, p. 54.

The Tree of Life

The tree of life is the tree in the center of the garden that imparts "eternal life."

Genesis 2:9

And Yahweh God caused to sprout every tree from the ground that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; **and the tree of life was in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowing of good and bad**.

Genesis 3:22

Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, **he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever."**

God is the author of all life in Genesis 1-2, and trees are potent images of God giving the gift of "self-regeneration" to his creation. The reader knows that the tree of life cannot be magical in the sense of offering its own life to the eater. Rather, God is the giver of life, and the tree is at the center of the temple garden, so that proximity to the tree means proximity to the author of life.

> *"[The tree of life] represents life that is beyond the original life that God breathed into human. The first human by nature is susceptible to death.... Nevertheless, continued eating from the tree could renew life and prevent death. Apart from disobedience to God's command, mortals had access to this tree... The tree of life allows humanity to transcend its mortality, the state in which it was created on the sixth day, so it can move to a higher dimension... to eternal life and immortality. As one partakes of this...fruit by faith, one participates in this eternal life. This highest potency of life was available in the garden and becomes once again available to us as we reenter the temple-garden through the second Adam... and look forward to the resurrection of our bodies."* — BRUCE WALTKE, OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, 257.

The Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Perspective

The tree of life was an iconic image in the ancient world. It's helpful to compare and contrast this tree's significance in Mesopotamian, Canaanite, and Egyptian culture with the biblical portrait.

William Osborne, Trees and Kings: A Comparative Analysis of Tree Imagery in Israel's Prophetic Tradition and the Ancient Near East.

> *"As any astute tourist quickly observes, the landscape of much the Near East is predominantly stark and barren. The land is comprised of innumerable shades of brown, with only brief interjections of green and blue. The higher in elevation one goes, the greener the picture becomes. Consequently, mountains and rivers, along with the forests that adorn them, seem to be natural focal points anyone who lives or travels in these lands. The ancient peoples, from the remote western world of Egypt to the eastern river marshes of Babylonia, lived in the land, not simply on it. They were all agrarian cultures, whose livelihood was found and maintained among the shade, fruit, shelter, and beauty of their trees. As a result, there can be little doubt that this lifestyle had a significant effect on these ancient cultures and the way they perceived the world. Trees were some of the most sacred elements in ancient near Eastern civilizations."*
>
> — OSBORNE, TREES AND KINGS, 31.

Sacred Trees in Ancient Egypt

Nut, the sky goddess, who is often associated with the sky-dome and the gift of rain, is also often portrayed as a tree that supplies fruit, water, and life for the land.

> *"These images and strong associations between the tree and the goddess do not indicate that the ancients necessarily believed the tree was equal to the deity, but that the god was like the tree, or at least that the tree was an embodiment of the deity..."* — OSBORNE, TREES AND KINGS, 38

Egyptian Kings as Trees

The productivity of ancient Egypt was completely dependent upon the Nile, which annually flooded and irrigated the shores and deltas. Osiris was the deity associated with the Nile, the one who provided fertility for the land through the waters. In Egyptian mythology, Osiris was believed to have a son, named Horus, who was incarnate as the Pharaoh: the king stood as the sole mediator between the gods and the people, responsible for fertility and order.





Temple of Karnak: King Sety I (early 1200s B.C.) is sitting in the middle of a tree, being crowned and given a scepter by Thoth who is writing his name on the leaves of the tree. It's an image for the king's role as a god giving life to the land through the sacred tree.



Trees in Mesopotamian Culture (Assyria and Babylon)

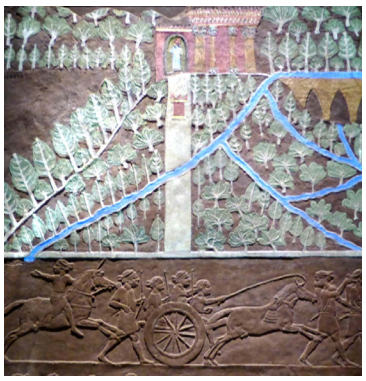
Trees and gardens were associated with the royal gardens of imperial kings.



Wall relief of Assyrian king Asshurbanipal's garden parties (7th cent. B.C.)

Asshurbanipal's Royal Garden in Nimrud Designed a Microcosm of his Empire

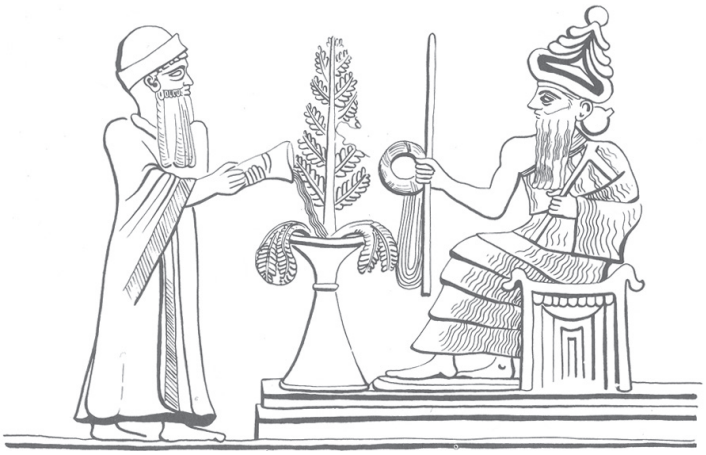
> *"By the will of the gods, vines, fruit trees of all kinds, olive trees, aromatic trees, flourished greatly in my gardens. Cypress trees...grew tall and sent out shoots. I created a marsh for the flow of water for the gardens... Birds of the heavens, herons...boars and deer...gave birth in abundance.`"*— ROYAL INSCRIPTIONS OF SENNACHARIB, TEXT #8



Trees and the Gods

Ur-Nammu of Ur (2060–1955 b.c.) offering a libation to a tree, which apparently represents the moon god Nanna, who sits enthroned behind it (cf. *239*). The beneficent power of the god is present in the tree (cf. *253–55*). The king, in strengthening the tree by a drink offering, enhances that power. In return, the tree dispenses life-giving water.

Othmar Keel, The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms, 135.



The Motif of a Divine Tree Protected by the Gods Comes from Mesopotamia

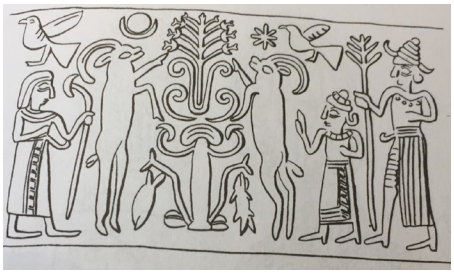
A carving from Nimrud shows goats around a tree of life, symbolizing its vitality, and then cherubim, showing that it's also the domain of the gods (also below, a plaque stitched to the chest of a deceased person in a tomb.)





Trees of Life in Syria-Canaanite Tradition

Syrian seal (1750-1550 B.C.) Two goats flank and eat from the cosmic world tree, symbolizing food given to all creatures of the land (birds, goats, fish) by the gods who stand nearby. To the right, the giant is the storm god with his plant-scepter. From Othmar Keel, *Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of the Ancient Near East*, image #21.



Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Sinai Peninsula), 9th-8th Century B.C.

This image was found in fortress in the Sinai peninsula, with an inscription that mentions Yahweh and Asherah. The image was certainly drawn by an Israelite, who here shows familiarity with the Ancient Near Eastern motif of the tree of life.



Osborne's Conclusions: Tree imagery in the Ancient Near East is associated in three interwoven ways:

1. Abundance and prosperity from the gods is depicted as abundants gardens and tree-filled forests
2. Deities and their powers to give fertility are regularly associated with tree symbols
3. Kings who mediate the power of the gods are either the caretakers of trees or symbolized as trees themselves

Comparison and Contrasts with Genesis 1-2

In Genesis 1-2, all humanity is given the royal task of stewarding the garden and its trees. This fits with the pattern of the **image of God**: all humanity assumes the role of the king.

The tree is not divine but a symbol of divine life and abundance that can be internalized (eaten). The tree is not magic but an image of proximity to the source of divine life.

The Rivers of Genesis 2:10-14

The description of the primordial river in Eden has an intentional literary design. Each river is described with decreasing length, imitating a spring running out over the land.

10 **Now, a river went out** *from Eden* **to water** *the garden;* *and from there it separated and became four heads:*		
1	A	*11 The name of the* **first** *is Pishon (פישון= "leaper/springer")*
	B	*it goes around the whole land of Havilah,* *a which has there gold* *b 12 and the gold of that land is good;* *a' there are the bdellium and the onyx stone.*
2	A'	*13 And the name of the* **second** *river is Gihon (גיחון = "gusher")*
	B'	*it goes around the whole land of Cush.*
3	A'	*14 And the name of the* **third** *river is Tigris;*
	B'	*it goes east of Assyria.*
4	A'	*and the* **fourth** *river,*
	B'	*it is the Euphrates.*

Each of the names is associated with various regions of the ancient biblical map.

RIVER	REGION	PEOPLE GROUPS AND EMPIRES
Pishon	Havilah = South and East of Canaan, the NW edge of the Arabian desert	Cainites, Ishmaelites, Edomites, Arabs
Gihon	Cush = Southern Egypt, the upper Nile, Ethiopia	Egyptians and Ethiopians
Hiddeqel	Assyria = The Tigris River	Assyria
Euphrates	Babylonian flood plains	Babylon

This Eden-sourced river prepares the reader to view each of these regions (Egypt, Jerusalem and surroundings, Mesopotamia) as extensions of Eden's life-giving waters, places that are graced with the life of Eden. This makes perfect sense of the Eden analogies applied to Canaan (Gen 13:10), Mesopotamia (Gen 11:1-4), and Egypt (Gen 13:10; 45:18, 20).

2:11-12: The **Pishon** is given the longest description, which prepares the reader for understanding the significance of future stories.

- "Goes around the land of Havilah": Where Ishmael's descendants will settle (Gen 25:18) and where Hagar will wander in her flight from Sarah (Gen 16:7)
- "Good gold" + "aromatic resin" + "onyx stone": These are all associated with the symbolic Eden gifts given to Israel in their wilderness wanderings
    - Gold for the tabernacle
    - Aromatic resin (בדלח) the appearance of the manna (Exod 16:33 and Num 11:7)
    - Onyx stone (אבן שהם): the stones in the high priest's ephod (Exod 25:7; 28:9)

Question: Is there significance in the fact that these treasures are *not* located in the garden but just outside the garden? Does this communicate that the garden creates value in the world but is not to be mistaken with those actual treasures? Are we to view these treasures as signals that one is near to the garden but understand that these should not be identified with the real treasure of the garden, namely that one can be with God there? [suggestion from Jacob Stromberg]

- 2:13: The **Gihon** is associated with the land of Cush
    - "Cush" has multiple references in the Hebrew Bible.
        - Southern Egypt (= modern Ethiopia): 2 Kings 19:9; Esther 1:1; 8:9; Ps 68:31; Isa 18:1; 20:3-5; 45:14; Ezek 29:10; 30:4-5, 9; Nah 3:9.
        - The son of Ham, who has as his descendants people of southern Egypt: Gen 10:6-7; but this very Cush is the father of Nimrod, who goes East to Mesopotamia to build the empires of Assyria and Babylon.
    - The name of "Gihon" spring/river is only elsewhere associated with the spring that supplies water to Jerusalem and the temple (1 Chron 32:30; 33:14), which is where Solomon was crowned king of Israel (1 Kgs 1:33, 38, 45).

- 2:14: The **Hideqel** and **Euphrates** are associated with the two Mesopotamian empires.
    - The Tigris flows "to the east of Assyria."
    - The Euphrates is left to the reader's imagination, which is of course supposed to make us think of Babylon.

> *"The description of the rivers has been outlined in decrescendo form, as each successive description becomes shorter and shorter... The same pattern is evident in Hebrew word counts, as the four river descriptions are given in 20, 10, 8, and 4, Hebrew words successively. The second river's description (10 words) is exactly half the length of the first (20 words), and the fourth (4 words) is half the length of the third (8 words). The impression of this most striking feature of Gen 2:10-14 is precisely that of a spring welling up and dissipating as it flows out all over the land—that is, verses 11-14 demonstrate literarily what is stated explicitly in v. 10."* — MICHAEL MORALES, THE TABERNACLE PRE-FIGURED: TABERNACLE IDEOLOGY IN GENESIS-EXODUS.

Eden as a Cosmic Mountain

The depiction of Eden as a high place, from which flows a river of divine life that provides life for all of the nations, is foundational for the biblical storyline. Eden is "Heaven on Earth" in the form of a cosmic high place, where the life of Heaven is one with Earth.

1. Eden is a high enough place for a river to flow out and water various distant regions of the land.

> **Genesis 2:10**
> **Now**, **a river went out** *from Eden* **to water** *the garden; and from there it separated and became four heads...*

2. Eden is referred to by later biblical authors as a mountain.

> **Ezekiel 28:13-14**
> *You were in* **Eden**, *the* **garden of God**...*you were on the* **holy mountain of God**.

3. The plans for the tabernacle, which was designed as a micro-Eden, were revealed to Moses on top of Mount Sinai where he encountered Yahweh in the burning tree.

> **Exodus 24:16-18**
> *16 The glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day he called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. 17 And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. 18 Moses entered the midst of the cloud as* **he went up to the mountain**; *and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights....*

> **Exodus 25:8-9**
> *Let them construct a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell among them.* **According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture**, *just so you shall construct it.*

4. The Jerusalem temple, which was designed as "Heaven/Eden on Earth," was built on Mount Zion, a high hill which is constantly likened to Eden.

Joel 2:1-3

Blow the trumpet in **Zion**, *sound the alarm on* **my holy mountain**...[3]*before them [the army] the land is like the* **garden of Eden**; *behind them, a desert wasteland.*

Isaiah 51:3 (NIV)

[3]*The Lord will surely comfort* **Zion** *and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts* **like Eden**, *her wastelands* **like the garden of the Lord.** *Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.*

Ezekiel 36:34-35 (NASB95)

[34]*The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by.* [35]*They will say, "This desolate land has become* **like the garden of Eden**; *and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited."*

> *"In Genesis 2-3 Eden is not explicitly described as a mountain, but this can be best understood by a careful reading of many biblical texts that symbolically identity Eden with Zion. Through the temple ritual on Mt. Zion, the cosmic images of Eden became an earthly reality. Genesis 2:10-14 mentions the four great rivers that proceed from Eden and water all the earth. One of these cosmic streams is the Gihon, which appears only elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in reference to the main source of Jerusalem's water... This connection between the Gihon of Eden and of Jerusalem is not the result of fuzzy or illogical mode of thought on the part of the biblical authors. This symbolic matching reflects Zion's cosmic and spiritual importance... The image of Jerusalem's cosmic stream is no more inappropriate than similar imagery applied to Jerusalem in Psalm 48:1-3 ("Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the entire earth, Mt. Zion in the far north") or Isaiah 2:1-4 ("Mt. Zion will be raised up as the highest of all mountains on earth"). In the symbolic world of Israel's temple liturgies, ordinary space became sacred space, the meager water spring of the city became a cosmic river, and the little knoll of Jerusalem became Mt. Zion, the highest mountain on the earth, and Jerusalem a peripheral city in the ancient world, became the center of the earth (Ezek 38:12)."* — GARY ANDERSON, "THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN: EDEN AND ITS EARLY INTERPRETERS IN SYRIAC CHRISTIANITY," 192-93.

5. The heavenly Jerusalem, that is, renewed Eden on earth, is described as a high mountain garden city that flows with the river of life.

Psalm 46:4

There is **a river** *whose streams make glad* **the city of God**, *the holy place where the Most High dwells.*

Psalm 48:1-2

[1]*Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, in* **the city of our God, his holy mountain**.
[2]*Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like* **the heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King**.

Ezekiel 47: The River of God Flowing Out of Eden

Joel 3:18

[18]And in that day the **mountains will drip with sweet wine,** *and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; and* **a spring will go out from the house of the Lord** *to water the valley of Shittim.*

Revelation 21:9 and 22:1

And he carried me away in the Spirit to **a mountain great and high***, and he showed me* **the holy city***, Jerusalem coming down* **out of heaven from God**. *[1]Then he showed me* **a river of the water of life***, clear as crystal* **coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb**.

The Cosmic Mountain and the Primeval River in the Ancient Near East

> *In the ancient Near East, the union of heaven and earth was conceived as a mountain whose base was the bottom of the earth and whose peace was the top of heaven, making it the axis mundi…the center of the world… The cosmic mountain was the meeting place of the gods, the source of water and fertility…the meeting place of heaven and earth. The cosmic mountain motif appears in the literature and religious rituals of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Hittites, Canaan, and ancient Israel." —* MICHAEL MORALES, THE TABERNACLE PRE-FIGURED: COSMIC MOUNTAIN IDEOLOGY IN GENESIS AND EXODUS, P. 8.

> *Ancient Near Eastern temples "were the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain… [The] pyramids and ziggurats were architectonic representations of the archetype of the cosmic mountain, often decorated with portrayals of the cosmic waters and fertile trees. The connection between temples and cosmic mountains is related to their function as links between heaven and earth, as attested by the names of the Babylonian sanctuaries ("Mountain of the house," "House of the Mountain of all Lands"), so that the ziggurat was literally and symbolically a cosmic mountain." —* MICHAEL MORALES, THE TABERNACLE PRE-FIGURED: COSMIC MOUNTAIN IDEOLOGY IN GENESIS AND EXODUS, P. 11.

This image is from a carving on a fountain from an Assyrian temple (8th-7th cent. B.C.). It depicts a deity whose body is a tall forest mountain, and four primal rivers go out into the world as a gift of his own divine life.



From Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, p. 118.

A highly interesting wall painting from Mari (191) shows a rectangular space surrounded by a wall... flanked by date palms and trees... four cherubim, and two bulls. One foot of each bull is planted on a mountaintop. The two mountains probably indicate that the center of the court is located on a mountain. The two fountain deities in the lower of the two smaller rectangles correspond to the two mountains. A stream with four branches (as in Gen 2:10) rises from the vessels held by the deities. A stylized plant grows out of the stream. This is the place from which all life issues. In the center of this region, in the upper rectangle, stands Ishtar, the goddess of fertility, love, and war... Her right foot is set on a lion. The king stands in greeting before her. She appears to be presenting him with ring and staff. In any case, the picture depicts all parts of an entire temple complex. The temple building is a broad-room with a wide antechamber (cf. 172–73, 207).

The anteroom and the forecourt incorporate all those features which characterize the temple as a sphere of life. We find these features repeated—almost without exception—in the Solomonic temple and in the description of paradise: the mountain (Ezek 28:13–16), the rivers, the trees, the cherubim. Even the bulls are present. In the Jerusalem temple they carried the bronze sea (1 Kgs 7:25). Belief in the presence of the living God supplied the temple forecourts with all the symbols which had already played a role in the Ishtar temple of Mari. — OTHMAR KEEL, THE SYMBOLISM OF THE BIBLICAL WORLD: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ICONOGRAPHY AND THE BOOK OF PSALMS, TRANS. TIMOTHY J. HALLETT (WINONA LAKE, IN: EISENBRAUNS, 1997), 142–144.





Assyrian relief found in a fountain in the Temple of Asshur (patron god of Assyria, 1800-1500 B.C.). A combination of two river deities (four streams total), who issue from the mountain god, who supplies all plant life (notice the tree of life goat motif). This image depicts Asshur as the chief of the cosmic mountain, supplying vegetation and water to the cosmos.

Kassite cylinder seal (14th cent. B.C.): Between forested mountain tops, the mountain god rises and provides rivers of life and vegetation for his realm. The rain waters come from his hands, and the primeval river flows from his skirt.

Both images from Othmar Keel, *Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of the Ancient Near East*, p. 31.

The Design Pattern of the Primeval River

Because the garden of Eden represents the union of Heaven and Earth, its river is portrayed as the source of all the world's fertility and abundance. When later biblical authors portray the arrival of God's deliverance and restoration of Jerusalem and all creation, it is no surprise that they draw upon this river imagery.

Joel 3:18

[18]And in that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; and **a spring will go out from the house of the Lord To water** *the valley of Shittim.*

Isaiah 30:23-26

*[23]***He will also send you rain** *for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows... when the towers fall,* **streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill**. *[26]The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the Lord binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted.*

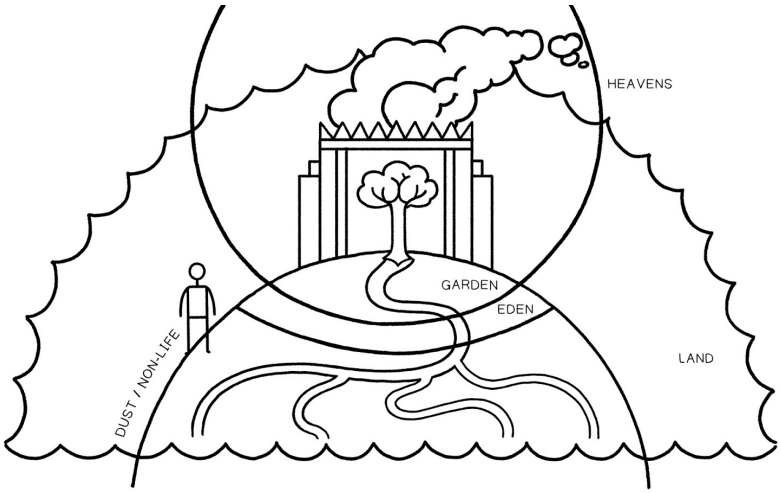
Zechariah 14:6-9 (NIV)

[6]On that day there will be neither sunlight nor cold, frosty darkness. [7]It will be a unique day—a day known only to the Lord—with no distinction between day and night. When evening comes, there will be light.
[8]On that day ***living water will flow out from Jerusalem****, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter. [9]The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.*

Psalm 36:7-9 (NIV)

[7]How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
[8]They feast on the abundance of your house; ***you give them drink from your river of delights****.*
[9]For ***with you is the fountain of life****; in your light we see light.*

Ezekiel 47 and the River of Life



Session 13: The Human's Priestly Role and the Divine Command

Key Question

What is the very first command God gives to humanity in the garden?

Session Quote

"This is the fulcrum, or the lynchpin, of human access to eternal life. Again, it's not perfect eternal beings who fall from immortality. It's dirt beings who are given a chance to become Human 2.0—one with God. But there is a choice that could ruin it all that will lead to exile from the realm of eternal life."

"To Work and to Keep": Genesis 2:15

Genesis 2:15: and Yahweh Elohim took the human and placed him into the garden of Eden **to work it and keep it.**

- These two verbs are packed with significance, as they portray the ideal vocation of humanity.
- *'Abad* (עבד): "to work," "to serve," "to worship"

'abad **= to work**	**Exodus 20:8-10 (NIV)** *[8]Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. [9]Six days you shall labor and do all your* ***'abad****, [10]but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any* ***'abad****, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.*
'abad **= to serve**	**Genesis 27:29** *[29]May peoples* ***'abad*** *you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you.*
'abad **= to worship**	**Exodus 3:12 (NIV)** *[12]And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will* ***'abad*** *God on this mountain."*
'abodah **= priestly service**	**Numbers 18:7** *[7]But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to do your* ***'abodah.*** **1 Chronicles 24:3** *[3]With the help of Zadok a descendant of Eleazar and Ahimelek a descendant of Ithamar, David separated them into divisions for their appointed order of* ***'abodah****.*

"To serve and ***keep*** (*shamar /* שמר)" = a priestly service of worship. These verbs are used together as a phrase only elsewhere in descriptions of the priests and Levites working in and around the temple.

Numbers 3:5-9 (NASB95)

5Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,
6 "Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him.
*7They shall **shamar** the **mishmeret** for him and the **mishmeret** of the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to **'abad** the **'abodah** of the tabernacle. 8They shall also **shamar** all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to **'abad** the **'abodah** of the tabernacle.*
9You shall thus give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the sons of Israel."

Numbers 8:26

*26They may, however, assist their brothers in the tent of meeting, to **shamar** the **mishmeret**, but they themselves shall **'abad** no **'abodah**. Thus you shall deal with the Levites concerning their obligations.*

Numbers 18:7

*7But you and your sons with you shall **shamar** to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to **'abad** the **'abodah.** I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service...*

> "עבד, *to serve till" is a very common verb and is often used of cultivating the soil (2:5; 3:23; 4:2, 12, etc.). The word is commonly used in a religious sense of serving God (e.g., Deut 4:19), and in priestly texts, especially of the tabernacle duties of the Levites (Num 3:7–8; 4:23–24, 26, etc.). Similarly,* שׁמר *"to guard, to keep" has the simple profane sense of "guard" (4:9; 30:31), but it is even more commonly used in legal texts of observing religious commands and duties (17:9; Lev 18:5) and particularly of the Levitical responsibility for guarding the tabernacle from intruders (Num 1:53; 3:7–8). It is striking that here and in the priestly law these two terms are juxtaposed (Num 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6), another pointer to the interplay of tabernacle and Eden symbolism already noted."*
> — GORDON J. WENHAM, GENESIS 1–15, 67.

> *"[T]he tasks given to Adam are of a priestly nature: caring for sacred space. In ancient thinking, caring for sacred space was a way of upholding creation. By preserving order, non-order was held at bay... If the priestly vocabulary in Genesis 2:15 indicates the same kind of thinking, the point of caring for sacred space should be seen as much more than landscaping or even priestly duties. Maintaining order made one a participant with God in the ongoing task of sustaining the equilibrium God had established in the cosmos.Egyptian thinking attached this not only to the role of priests as they maintained the sacred space in the temples but also to the king, whose task was "to complete what was unfinished, and to preserve the existent, not as a status quo but in a continuing, dynamic, even revolutionary process of remodeling and improvement." This combines the subduing and ruling of Genesis 1 with the ʿbd and šmr of this chapter.* — JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE, 106-107.

Throughout the history of Jewish literature, Adam is depicted as a high priest in Eden, performing the work of the temple. [see Crispin Fletcher-Louis, A*ll the glory of Adam,* ch. 4]

- 4Q504
- Jubilees 3:27

Genesis 2:16-17: The Divine Command Given About the Tree

Notice the symmetrical pairing of the divine command:

a - from every tree of the garden
*b you will **surely** eat (אכל תאכל)*
a' - and from the tree of knowing good and bad
b' you will not eat (לא תאכל)
a'' - for in the day of your eating (אכלך)
*b'' you will **surely** die (מות תמות)*

Observations

Notice that the first command is to eat from all of the trees, not the prohibition. The divine command is not arbitrary but is directly linked to humanity's continued enjoyment of life in the garden of Eden.

The prohibition serves the purpose to safeguard the divine intent, that humanity enjoy God's own life in the garden.

Magical Fruit?

The divine command does not assume that the fruit has "magical powers" to give knowledge. *Rather, the choice to eat is itself the act of "knowing good and bad."*

"No fruit *per se* is magically conveying life or death; it is the *eating* from one or the other tree that brings about life or death, that is, the choice to strike a path independent of divine wisdom." — adapted from Andre Lacoque, *The Trial of Innocence,* 96.

Session 14: The Tree of Knowing Good and Bad

Key Question

Was the knowledge of good and bad something that God wanted to keep from humanity? Why did God command the humans not to take from this tree?

Session Quote

"It's not a question of whether knowing good and bad is itself, as an end, a good or bad thing. It's about whose wisdom are you going to trust for how you attain it."

The Tree of Knowing Good and Bad

This Edenic state is fragile and conditional upon trusting and living by God's command.

In Genesis 1, God alone is the provider and "knower" of what is good and not good. That is, he has the wisdom to know what is necessary for humanity to fulfill their role as God's partners in the "gardenizing" all of creation. This dignified role for the humans, however, comes with a great responsibility and choice: Will they learn wisdom from God, or will they take it for themselves?

In the "**good**" garden, there are trees loaded with fruit for eating and cultivating, and in the center of the garden (from which flows the river) is the tree of life. It's an image of God's ultimate gift to creation: the opportunity to share in and receive God's own goodness and life into oneself.

But ongoing access to the tree of life is conditional upon not taking from the tree of knowing ***tov*** and ***ra***. The meaning of this phrase is important for the logic of the narrative, so we must take a deep dive into the meaning of the key words.

Genesis 2:9

Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and **good** *for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of* **good** *and* **bad**.

"**Good**" (Heb. *tov*): (1) what is morally/ethically good, (2) what is beneficial, pleasant or in good condition

"Bad/Evil" (Heb. *ra'*): (1) what is morally/ethically bad, (2) what is harmful, unpleasant, or in poor condition

Good/Bad = Condition or Quality

Jeremiah 24:1-2

*The Lord showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the Lord. One basket had very **tov** figs, like those that ripen early; the other basket had very **ra'** figs, so **ra'** they could not be eaten.*

Proverbs 25:19

*A **ra'** tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.*

Good/Bad = Pleasant/Unpleasant, Beneficial/Harmful

1 Kings 5:4

*But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no enemy or **ra'**.*

Judges 16:25

*It so happened when they were **tov** of heart, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may amuse us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he entertained them. And they made him stand between the pillars.*

Ecclesiastes: 2:16-17

*For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die! So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was **ra'** to me.*

Good/Bad = Morally Good/Evil

Psalm 140:1-2

*Rescue me, O Lord, from **ra'** humans; preserve me from violent men*
*who devise **ra'** in their hearts; they continually stir up wars.*

Esther 7:5-6

*Then King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?" Esther said, "A foe and an enemy is this **ra'** Haman!"*

Creative Combinations

Deuteronomy 1:35

No one from this ***ra'*** generation shall see the ***tov*** land I swore to give your ancestors

Jeremiah 18:7-10

*At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its **ra'**, I will relent concerning the **ra'** I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does **ra'** in my sight by not obeying my voice, then I will think better of the **rai** with which I had promised to [verb] **tov** it.*

Knowing *tov and ra* is a sign of maturity. This rare phrase appears elsewhere to describe children.

Deuteronomy 1:39

*…Your **little ones**… and your **sons**, who today **do not know good or evil**, shall enter there, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it.*

1 Kings 3:7-9

*Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, yet **I am but a little child**; I do not know how to go out or come in. So give your servant an heart that listens, to judge your people, **to discern between good and evil**. For who is able to judge this great people of yours?*

Isaiah 7:15-16

*[Immanuel] will eat curds and honey at the time he **knows** to refuse **evil** and choose **good**. For before **the boy** will **know** to refuse **evil** and choose **good**, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.*

The narrative in Genesis 1-2 shows that God knows what is "pleasant/beneficial" and that he will provide ***tov*** when something is not ***tov*** (the woman), that is, ***ra'.*** So the tree represents a choice:

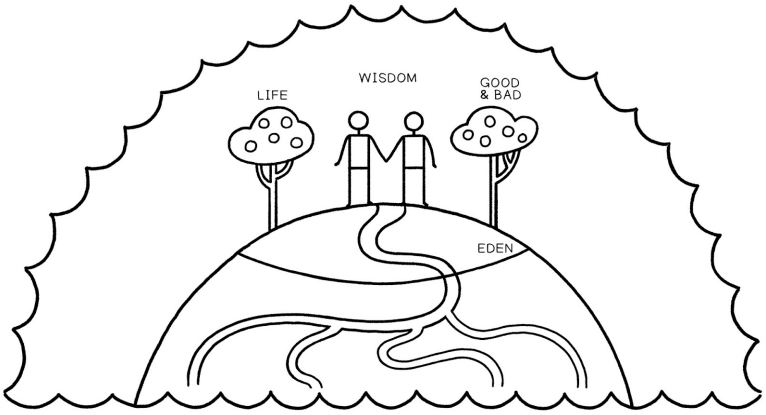
- Will they live with God, allowing him to know/define *tov and ra'*? Presumably they need this knowledge as they mature, but the question is who will teach it to them? Will they learn from watching God's knowledge at work?
- Adam and Eve are portrayed as "children." The tree of knowing *tov and ra* represents two options/modes for *how to know/experience tov and ra*. Will they take this knowledge for themselves so that they "become like *elohim*" knowing what is *tov and ra'*? Or will they allow God to teach them wisdom?

The two trees at the center of the garden will later be set in analogy to the role of the Torah in Israel's covenant with God.

Genesis 2:9 And God caused to sprout…the tree of life in the center of the garden, and the tree of knowing good and evil. Genesis 2:16-17 And Yahweh commanded the human saying, "From the fruit of every tree you may surely eat. But from the fruit of knowing good and evil you may not eat from it, for in the day of your eating, you will surely die."	Deuteronomy 10:4-5 Yahweh wrote on the tablets… the ten words which the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire…Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets inside the ark which I had made; and there they are, as the Lord commanded me. Deuteronomy 31:26 Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. Deuteronomy 30:15, 19 Behold, today I have set before you life and good, death and evil…life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life that both you and your seed may live.

"Within the garden Yahweh had set both a tree of life and a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Taken together, with their fruits connected to life and death respectively, the trees may be seen to function like the Torah, imploring Adam to choose life, just as Moses implored Israel in Deuteronomy 30. Resisting the second tree, the fruit of which offered wisdom independent from God, was Adam's wisdom, allowing him to perfect the fear of Yahweh through submission of his will to God's… Just as for Solomon and his foreign wives (1 Kings 11), so too for Adam: the choice between the two trees is cast as a choice between allegiance to Yahweh and his wife, with whom he is "one flesh." This, through the cunning orchestration of the serpent, is the test for Adam." — MICAHEL MORALES, WHO CAN ASCEND THE MOUNTAIN OF YAHWEH, 54.

"[The tree of life] represents life that is beyond the original life that God breathed into human. The first human by nature is susceptible to death.... Nevertheless, continued eating from the tree could renew life and prevent death. Apart from disobedience to God's command, mortals had access to this tree... The tree of life allows humanity to transcend its mortality, the state in which it was created on the sixth day, so it can move to a higher dimension... to eternal life and immortality. As one partakes of this...fruit by faith, one participates in this eternal life. This highest potency of life was available in the garden and becomes once again available to us as we reenter the temple-garden through the second Adam... and look forward to the resurrection of our bodies." — BRUCE WALTKE, OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, 257.



Unit 3: The Eden Story - Part 2 (Genesis 2:18-25)

SESSIONS: 15-17

Session 15: The Man and the Woman as One Flesh

Key Question

Summarize how the two becoming one flesh in Genesis 2:24 is a picture of God's ultimate plan for humanity.

Session Quote

"When you get those many, who realize that they are also one, not in spite of their difference but because of their difference, their oneness images God in a way much more richly than one could do."

Translation and Literary Design: Genesis 2:18-25

[Adapted from Jerome Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*]

		[18]*And Yahweh God said,* *"It is not good for* **the human** *to be alone (לבדו)* *I will make a help-counterpart for him."*	**Problem** A lone human + no help-counterpart
	A	[19]*And Yahweh* **formed** *from the ground* *every living creature of the field* *and every bird of the skies.*	Yahweh acts
	B	*And he brought them to the human to see what he would call it,* *and everything which the human would call it a living being,* *that was its name."*	Animals brought - no counterpart
	A'	[20]*And the human called the names* *of every* ***beast*** *and bird of the skies* *and every living creature of the field,*	Human names
		[20] *but for the human there was not found a help-counterpart.*	**Problem Not Solved** No help-counterpart
		[21]*And Yahweh caused to fall a deep sleep on the human, and he slept* *and he took one from his sides* *and he closed the flesh of its place.* [22]*And Yahweh* **built** *the side which he took from the human into woman* *and he brought her to the human,* [23]*And the human said,* *"This time, bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh.* *This one will be called (קרא)* **woman** *for from* **man** *this one was taken."*	Yahweh acts Woman brought - counterpart! Human names
		[24]*For this reason,* *a* **man** *will leave his father and his mother,* *and he will cling to his* **woman**, *and they will become* **one** *flesh.* [25]*And the* **two** *of them were naked,* **the human** *and his* **woman**, *and they were not ashamed.*	**Problem Solved** Lone human is now two

This two-step divine provision of the "help" (עזר) is crucial. It mimics Genesis 1 (days 1-3 are step one, days 4-6 are step two), and it creates a model/expectation.

Interpretive Notes for Genesis 2:18-25

No-Good in the Garden: A Human Alone

- God is the first one to notice "no-good" in his creation. The lone human is apparently unable to fulfill his vocation without an other.

From "Alone" to "One Flesh": Genesis 2:24

Genesis 2:24

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother,
and clings to his wife;
and they shall become one flesh.

The narrative design of Genesis 2:18-25 goes from problem to solution. A solitary human cannot accomplish the calling placed upon "the image-statue of Elohim" in Genesis 1:26-28: to rule creation as God's partners, to image God through gender difference, and to be fruitful and multiply.

To fulfill this task, the human family must simultaneously become "many" and "one/unified," and all of this as an image of God.

Genesis 2:24 addresses a foundational question about human relationships: Why would a person leave their closest biological relationship (a child to their parent) and join themselves to one who is not in their family? The claim of Genesis 2:24 is that marriage overcomes this biological divide and recovers an original, unified state of humanity. The woman is not a "helper" or simply a mating partner in Genesis 2. She is half of him and he is half of her; only together can they become the unified humanity that God has called us to be.

The "one flesh" of Genesis 2:24 transcends the union of the sexual act (thought it is one way the "one flesh" unity may be experienced). It is a prime example of how two humans who are genuine *others* to one another may experience unity and oneness.

Notice the highly surprising roles of man and woman in Genesis 2:24: It is *the man who leaves his family* to join a biological stranger, his wife, to create a new family. This formulation is the opposite of every marriage in the Old Testament, where the woman leaves her family to join the man (e.g. Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, etc.).

- The words "abandon" (*'azab* / עזב) and "cling" (*dabaq* / דקב) are covenantal terms that speak to the forsaking of previous bonds and "clinging" to one's covenant partner (Deut 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 22:5; 23:8).

Genesis 1-11 will go on to explore the fracturing of this ideal unity on all levels of the human family, setting up the reader's expectation that God will solve again this "no good" situation of a humanity unable to do what God has called them to do.

- Genesis 2-3: Fracturing the unity between a man and a woman (marriage)
- Genesis 4a: Fracturing the unity between two siblings (family)
- Genesis 4b: Fracturing the unity of a city (community)
- Genesis 6:1-4: Distorting the unity of Heaven and Earth (cosmos)
- Genesis 9:18-27: Fracturing the unity of the extended family (tribes)
- Genesis 11: Distorting the unity of the human family (nations)

To repair these many-layered distortions of the ideal unified humanity, future narratives will explore how the fractured human family becomes one again: through covenant commitment.

Why the two-step solution—animals first then the matching human?

This scene first allows the human to come to their own awareness of the solitude. When God "brings" the animals to the human, we can infer that he observed that they come in pairs. The next repetitions of this motif, when God brings the animals to Noah and the ark, emphasizes that animals come "two by two" (Gen 6:19-20; 7:2-3).

> *Despite God's identification of man's need, there is a delay in his provision: contrast the instantaneous fulfillment of the divine word in chap. 1. This hold-up creates suspense. It allows us to feel man's loneliness. All the animals are brought before him, and we see him looking at each one in the hope it would make a suitable companion for man. Ber. Rab. 17:5 pictures the animals passing by in pairs and man commenting, "Everything has its partner but I have no partner." The pathos is heightened in the narrative's emphasis on the fact that the animals, like man (v 7), are shaped from the land (v 19), and, like him, are "living creatures." Furthermore, the word for "animal" and "living," ḥayyāh, anticipates "Eve," ḥawwāh. Though in Hebrew these creatures' names sound so similar to Eve's, they are not what man is looking for. Despite man's superiority to the other creatures, demonstrated by his naming of them (to give a name to something is to assert authority over it; cf. 1:26, 28), no suitable helper is found. Once again the narrative is laying the ground for chap. 3, establishing man's place in the world, a little lower than the angels and a little higher than the animals.* — GORDON J. WENHAM, GENESIS 1–15, 68.

> *"[Some] commentators consider that this scene implies that the Lord God made, as it were, a number of unsuccessful attempts, by creating various kinds of creatures and by passing them in review before Adam, to see if the man would find in one of them a helper corresponding to him; but it was all in vain, for not one of them satisfied him. This interpretation is unacceptable for the following reasons...*
>
> *"[I]t would be strange... to declare that God did not understand, so to speak, what man understood, that among the animals there was none... corresponding to him... it is [also] inconceivable that the experiment was carried out with all the beasts of the field and all the flying creatures of the air without exception, that is, even with creatures that were most unlike man...*
>
> *[I]t is explicitly written in v. 20 that the purpose of the Lord God in bringing the creatures before man, was only to see what he would call each one. It would seem that the text intends to tell us only that the Lord God wished to engender in the heart of man a desire for a helper who should correspond to him exactly. When the man would inspect all the species of animals in turn, and would find that some of them were indeed suited to serve him and help him to some extent, but yet there was not one among them that was his like [כְּנֶגְדּוֹ kᵉneghdō], he would become conscious of his loneliness and would yearn for one who could be his true companion... in the full sense of the words, and, in consequence, he would be ready to appreciate and cherish the gift that the Lord God was to give him."* — U. CASSUTO, A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS: PART I, FROM ADAM TO NOAH (GENESIS I–VI 8), 128.

The Naming of the Animals in Genesis 2:19-20

In Genesis 1:1-2:3, God's creative activity involves naming entities, that is, separating them out and conferring upon them a distinct identity and purpose. Here, God invites the human to imitate the divine creative act by naming the animals.

The portrait of God in this scene is of a Creator who wants to share responsibility with his creation, so that it can become what it is made to be.

> *"This portrayal of God, the creator of heaven and earth, leading all the animals one by one, and then the woman, to a face-to-face meeting with the 'adam, is truly remarkable...God the Creator places the divine self at the service of the 'good' of the human being... God's role is to place the various possibilities before the human, but it is the creature that is given freedom to decide. God so values human freedom that God will take into account the free human response from within the creative process in shaping the future...The human being's naming of each creature is meant to be parallel to the divine naming in Gen 1:5-10. This act is not perfunctory, like labeling the cages of a zoo. Naming is a part of the creative process itself... human decisions are shown to be important to the ongoing development of the created order."* — TERENCE E. FRETHEIM, GOD AND THE WORLD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, PP. 57-58.

Session 16: Key Words from Genesis 2:18-25

Key Question

Did any of these word studies unlock a new way to read Genesis 2:18-25 for you? Do you still have any pressing questions about the meaning of any of these words?

Session Quote

"In Genesis 2, you have one who, if they remain alone, cannot bring about the thing that God called them to. So God causes them to pass out, and God, as ezer, provides an ezer through which the divine promise can come into existence."

What is the Meaning of "Help-Counterpart" in Genesis 2:18, 20?

The phrase *'ezer kenegdo* (עזר כנגדו) has been translated in different ways through the history of the English versions: "help meet" (KJV), "helper suitable" (NIV, NAS), "helper fit" (NRSV), "a helper to bear him company" (Tyndale).

The earliest translations show a variety of interpretations:

- Old Greek: "a help according to him" (βοηθὸν κατ᾽ αὐτόν)
- Targum Neofiti: "a partner who comes as one with him" = "a partner similar to him" (ביה זוג כד נפק)
- Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Onkelos: "a support according to him" (סמך כקבליה)
- Latin Vulgate: "a helper similar to him" (*adiutorium similem sui*)

The word "help" (עזר) does not mean "assistant" or "helper," rather, it describes someone who plays the role of the *indispensable other, without whom the desired good cannot happen*. The noun is masculine in grammatical gender, which means the word is a kind of title or role descriptor, not an adjective (female assistant).

- The noun "help" occurs 21 times in the Hebrew Bible, and outside of Genesis 2, it is only used to describe Yahweh as a deliverer of his people, or of useless humans who provide "no help" compared to Yahweh.

Exodus 18:4 (NIV) *4And the other was named Eli**ezer**, for he said, "My father's God was my **'ezer**; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh."*	**Psalm 20:1-2 (NIV)** *1May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. 2May he send you **'ezer** from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion.*
Deuteronomy 33:7 (NIV) *7And this he said about Judah: "Hear, Lord, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his **'ezer** against his foes!"*	**Psalm 33:18-20 (NIV)** *18But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, 19to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. 20We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our **'ezer** and our shield.*
Deuteronomy 33:26-27 (NIV) *26There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens as your **'ezer** and on the clouds in his majesty. 27The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemies before you, saying, "Destroy them!"*	**Psalm 121:1-2 (NIV)** *1I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my **'ezer** come from? 2My **'ezer** comes from the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and Earth.*
Deuteronomy 33:29 (NIV) *29Blessed are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is your shield and **'ezer** and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will tread on their heights.*	**Psalm 146:5-6 (NIV)** *5Blessed are those whose **'ezer** is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God. 6He is the Maker of Heaven and Earth, the sea, and everything in them—he remains faithful forever.*
Hosea 13:9 (NIV) *9You are destroyed, Israel, because you are against me, against your **'ezer**.*	

It is used to describe military backup, though in context it always portrays such military power as powerless compared to Yahweh's ***'ezer.***

Isaiah 30:3-5 (NIV)

*3But Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame, Egypt's shade will bring you disgrace. 4Though they have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, 5everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them, who bring neither **'ezer** nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace.*

Ezekiel 12:13-14 (NIV)

*13...I will bring [Zedekiah] to Babylonia, the land of the Chaldeans, but he will not see it, and there he will die. 14I will scatter to the winds all those around him—his staff and all his **'ezer**—and I will pursue them with drawn sword.*

"Corresponding to him" (כנגדו)

- This is a compound word *ke-* (כ) "like, as, according to" + *neged* "in front of, opposite" (נגד)
- The word *neged* means most basically "in front of, before"

Exodus 19:2

…And Israel camped there in the desert in front of (neged) the mountain.

Exodus 34:10

Before (neged) all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world.

Genesis 2:18 and 20 are the only occurrences of this preposition with *neged,* though the preposition's meaning of "like, as" indicates *similarity*. Given the spatial imagery of "in front of," the meaning seems to be "similar to what would face him." We might use a metaphor of "mirroring" to get the core idea.

> *"The last part of v. 18 reads literally, "I will make him for him a helper as in front of him (or according to what is in front of him)." This last phrase, "as in front of him (or according to what is in front of him)" (k^{e}neḡdô), occurs only here and in v. 20. It suggests that what God creates for Adam will correspond to him. Thus the new creation will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal. The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity, and will be to man as the south pole is to the north pole."* — VICTOR P. HAMILTON, THE BOOK OF GENESIS, CHAPTERS 1–17, 175.

If we combine our study of these two words, we produce the following paraphrase of Genesis 2:18:

It is not good for the human to be solitary. I will make one who can deliver *him from his inability to fulfill the divine commission alone,* ***one who mirrors him***.

> *"This new creation which man needs is called a helper (ʿēzer), which is masculine in gender, though here it is a term for woman. Any suggestion that this particular word denotes one who has only an associate or subordinate status to a senior member is refuted by the fact that most frequently this same word describes Yahweh's relationship to Israel. He is Israel's help(er) because he is the stronger one (see, e.g., Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29; Ps. 33:20; 115:9–11; 124:8; 146:5; etc.)… The word is used less frequently for human helpers, and even here, the helper is one appealed to because of superior military strength (Isa. 30:5) or superior size (Ps. 121:1). The verb behind ʿēzer is ʿāzar, which means… "save from danger," "deliver from death." The woman in Gen. 2 delivers or saves man from his solitude."* — VICTOR P. HAMILTON, THE BOOK OF GENESIS, CHAPTERS 1–17, 175–176.

The Human's "Deep Sleep" (*Tardemah*) (תרדמה)

This uncommon word appears only a handful of times in the Bible, and it is not the normal word for "sleep" (*yashan* / ישן).

There is both a noun, deep sleep, and a verb, to fall into a deep sleep (radam). Both refer to a comatose state of helplessness and vulnerability that is attributed to God's power. Adam's *tardemah* begins an important design pattern in the Hebrew Bible connected to this word. God causes *tardemah* to fall upon either (a) his partners, to demonstrate their inability to "help" themselves and bring about God's plan and blessing, or (b) his enemies, so that they are reduced to helplessness.

God Causes Deep Sleep to Fall on His Partners

Adam in Genesis 2:21: God prevents Adam from providing his own "help"
Abraham in Genesis 15:12: God prevents Abram from walking down the aisle of animal pieces
Daniel in Daniel 8:18 and 10:9: Daniel goes into a deep sleep as he experiences his visions of the coming of God's Kingdom

God Causes Deep Sleep to Fall on His Enemies

Sisera in Judges 4:21: He is in a deep sleep in Jael's tent when the kills him
Saul and his soldiers in 1 Samuel 26:12: Saul is prevented from waking a capturing David
Judah's leaders in Isaiah 29:10: God cuts off all communication through prophets to Judah's leaders
Jonah in Jonah 1:5-6: Jonah runs from God and tries to escape to his self-made Eden
Psalm 76:6: God rebukes enemy warriors and reduces them to deep sleep

People often experience *tardemah* when they are having a dream or vision (see Daniel 8:18 and 10:9; Job 4:13 and 33:15; Isa 29:10).

> *"[Tardemah] sleep blocks all perception in the human realm. In each of these passages there is either danger in the human realm of which the sleeper is unaware, or there is insight in the visionary realm to be gained. Pertaining to the latter possibility, it is of interest that the Septuagint translators chose to use the Greek word ekstasis in Genesis 2:21. This word is the same as the one they used in Genesis 15:12, suggesting an understanding related to visions, trances and ecstasy... From these data it is easy to conclude that... the description of the man being cut in half and the woman being built from the other half (Gen 2:21–22) would refer not to something he physically experienced but to something that he saw in a vision. It would therefore not describe a material event but would give him an understanding of an important reality, which he expresses eloquently in Genesis 2:23. Consequently, we would then be able to conclude that the text does not describe the material origin of Eve. The vision would concern her identity as ontologically related to the man. The text would therefore have no claim to make about the material origin of woman."* — JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE, 79–80.

A Rib or a Side? the Hebrew Word *Tsela''* (צלע)

> *The word [tsela'] is used about forty times in the Hebrew Bible but is not an anatomical term in any other passage. Outside of Genesis 2, with the exception of 2 Samuel 16:13 (referring to the other side of the hill), the word is only used architecturally in the tabernacle/temple passages (Ex 25–38; 1 Kings 6–7; Ezek 41). It can refer to planks or beams in these passages, but more often it refers to one side or the other, typically when there are two sides (rings along two sides of the ark; rooms on two sides of the temple, the north or south side; etc.). On the basis of Adam's statement, combined with these data on usage, we would have to conclude that God took one of Adam's sides—likely meaning he cut Adam in half and from one side built the woman.* — JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE: GENESIS 2–3 AND THE HUMAN ORIGINS DEBATE (DOWNERS GROVE, IL: IVP ACADEMIC: AN IMPRINT OF INTERVARSITY PRESS, 2015), 78.

> *"[T]he text says that God took one of the ṣēlāʿ of man. Almost without exception this word has been translated as "rib" (hence even today the many puns on "Adam's rib" and "women's lib"). A better translation of ṣēlāʿ is side. The word designates a side or the shell of the ark of the covenant (Exod. 25:12, 14; 37:3, 5), the side of a building (Exod. 26:20; 36:25) or even a whole room ("side chamber, arcade, cell," Ezek. 41:5–8), or a ridge or terrace on a hill (2 Sam. 16:13). Gen. 2:21 is the only place in the OT where the modern versions render this word as "rib" ... the passage states that woman was created from an undesignated part of man's body rather than from one of his organs or from a portion of bony tissue."* — VICTOR P. HAMILTON, THE BOOK OF GENESIS, CHAPTERS 1–17, 178.

God "Builds" the Side into a Woman

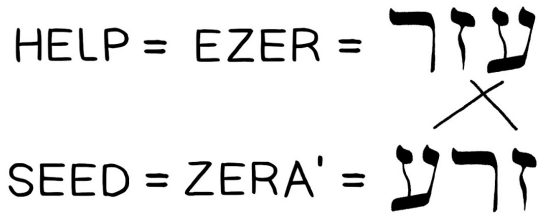
Interpreters have long noticed the architectural vocabulary of Genesis 2:21-22:

> *And [God] took one from [the human's] **sides**, and he **closed** flesh in its place, and he **built** the **side**...**into** a woman.*

All of these terms are used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to describe the construction of a building—and not just any buildings! This same vocabulary occurs in precisely the narratives where God provides a sacred space where he will meet with his people and deliver them.

The ark of Noah: Genesis 6:14-22 and 7:15-16
The tabernacle and the ark of the covenant: Exodus 25:10-22
The temple: 1 Kings 6:1-38
The new temple and the new Jerusalem (a.k.a. "lady Zion"): Isaiah 54 and 60

The “building” of the woman deliverer begins a design pattern that is fundamental to the biblical narrative: God’s provision of a blessing or deliverance or sacred gift that is meant to bring the protagonist into closer union with God. But tragically, God’s provision ends up being abused or distorted in some way and thus causes a downfall. As a result, the future deliverance becomes bound up with the hope of a future seed who will be born from the “woman/building” (the ark, the tabernacle, temple, house of David, etc.).



Session 17: How Paul References Genesis 2

Key Question

Tim points out that in 1 Timothy 2:13-14, the apostle Paul is making a contrast between the order of creation and the order of deception. This contrast highlights that Adam, being first, was the one to receive proper instruction from God, so Eve must have gotten bad or inadequate teaching from Adam. In what way was Eve's situation similar to that of the Ephesian women Paul is talking about?

Session Quote

"The mystery of Genesis 2:24 is a preview of where the biblical story is going. Humanity needs to become many and different from each other. But for the ideal of Genesis 1 to be realized, those many have to learn how to make peace and become one through covenant. And in case you forget that, let's let every single marriage ceremony you ever go to remind you about the hope of new creation and Heaven and Earth being remarried."

Notes

No notes included in this session.

Unit 4: The Eden Story - Part 3 (Genesis 3:1-24)

SESSIONS: 18-24

Session 18: The Shrewd, Talking Snake

Key Question

Genesis 3:1 tells us that "the snake is more shrewd than any beast of the field." Does this shrewdness imply that the snake is evil?

Session Quote

"The snake's story is told here from the gift of wisdom to rebellion leading to curse and dishonor. It's parallel to the human's story... Both characters have their fail moments here."

Translation and Literary Design: Genesis 3:1-7

*2:25*And the **two** *of them were* **naked** *(ערום)*, **the human** *and his* **woman**, *and they were not ashamed.*
*3:1*Now the snake was more **shrewd** *(ערום) than any beast of the field which Yahweh God had made.*

Naked and Unashamed

A	a		And it [the snake] said to the woman,
	b		"Indeed, has God said,
	c		'You shall not eat from any **tree of the garden**'?"
B	a		2And the woman said to the snake,
			"From the fruit of the **trees of the garden** we may eat;
	b		3but from the fruit of **the tree** which is in the middle **of the garden**, God has said,
	c		'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or **you will die**.' "
A	a		4And the snake said to the woman,
			"**You surely will not die**!
	b		5For God knows
			that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened,
	c		and you will be like elohim, knowers of good and bad."

The Dialogue

A			6And the woman saw that the tree was good for eating,
B			and that it was desirable to the eyes,
C			and that the tree was desirable to make one wise,
D			and she took from its fruit and she ate;
D'			and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.
C'			7and the eyes of both of them were opened,

The Act

B'	and they knew that they were **naked** *(ערום)*;
A'	and they sewed leaves of fig tree together and made themselves loin coverings.

Naked and Ashamed

Naked and Unashamed and Shrewd

This potent narrative detail is offered to describe the new ideal state of the human creature, who is now a unified plurality. Nakedness in the biblical world is a state of ultimate vulnerability. To be naked outside of the garden ideal is to be exposed to the leering eyes of non-trusted people and is associated with humiliation and shame (see Isaiah 20:2-4; Hosea 2:5; Amos 2:16). To be naked and unashamed is an image of pure trust, openness, vulnerability, and safety.

"Naked and unashamed" is a kind of commentary on "the two becomes one flesh." When one is truly unified with another, there is no need for self-protection or projection of a false self.

Notice the wordplay between human nakedness (Heb. *'arom*) and the snake's "shrewdness" (Heb. *'arum*). It is precisely this characteristic of the snake that will transform the humans' nakedness from vulnerability into shame.

A Shrewd, Talking Snake

The character of the snake is a rich and dense narrative image with many layers of meaning. There are two narrative descriptors in Genesis 3:1.

- "Shrewd" or "crafty": Hebrew *'arum* (ערום)
    - This word is morally neutral, as it can describe the righteous and wise in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 22:3 (NASB95)

*3The **'arum** sees the evil and hides himself, but the naive go on, and are punished for it.*

Proverbs 12:16 (NIV)

*16Fools show their annoyance at once, but the **'arum** overlook an insult.*

Proverbs 14:15 (NASB95)

*15The naive believes everything, but the **'arum** considers his steps.*

Proverbs 8:5 (NIV)

*5You who are simple, gain **'ormah** ; you who are foolish, set your hearts on it.*

When the word is used of people with questionable character, the nuance of "crafty" is evident.

Psalm 83:2-3 (NIV)

2See how your enemies growl, how your foes rear their heads.
*3With **'ormah** they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish.*

Job 5:12-13 (NIV)

*12He thwarts the plans of the **'arum**, so that their hands achieve no success.*
*13He catches the wise in their **'ormah**, and the schemes of the wily are swept away.*

> *[The 'arum] is one who "conceal what they feel and what they know (Prov 12:16, 23). They esteem knowledge and plan how to use it in achieving their objectives (Prov 13:16; 14:8, 18); they do not believe everything that they hear (Prov 14:15); and they know how to avoid trouble and punishment (Prov 22:3; 27:12). In sum they are shrewd and calculating, willing to bend and torture the limits of acceptable behavior but not to cross the line into illegalities. They may be unpleasant and purposely misleading in speech but are not out-and-out liars (Josh 9:4; 1 Sam 23:22). They know how to read people and situations and how to turn their readings to advantage. A keen wit and a rapier tongue are their tools."* — ZIONY ZEVIT, WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN? P. 163.

Notice also the wordplay between the snake's introduction and its final destiny in 3:14.

3:1	And the snake was *shrewd* (ערום) *more than every animal of the field* (מכל חית השדה).
3:14	You are *cursed* (ארור) *more than* every beast and *every animal of the field* (מכל חית השדה).

The shrewdness of the snake is a portrait of a creature endowed with the blessing of wisdom, who then abuses that power for selfish ends.

> *"Although it is assumed by all the English translations that ערום has a negative sense ("crafty") in Genesis 3:1, a closer examination suggests otherwise. The description of the serpent commences with its being "more prudent ('arum) than all the creatures of the field" (Genesis 3:1), and after having tempted Eve, concludes with its bing "more cursed ('arur) than all the creatures of the field (3:14). The two lines are nearly identical in Hebrew, suggesting an intentional contrast between them: the cursed serpent is a negative contrast to an initially positive shrewd serpent. Not only does "prudent" make more sense of the narrative flow of events, it also distances God from any responsibility with respect to the origin of evil. God did not make a 'crafty' creature; he made a wise creature. The serpent's "prudence" may even be a sign of God's special favor toward the serpent above the other animals. The serpent's decision to use its prudence for evil intentions, however, resulted in a fall from divine favor to eternal humiliation, and this offers a solution to the age-old question of the serpent's (and Satan's) fall. When did the serpent rebel and fall? It "fell" in Genesis 3. Thus, Genesis 3 depicts the fall of Adam, and Eve, and the serpent."* — SETH POSTELL, ADAM AS ISRAEL, 123.

Session 19: Humanity Fails the Test

Key Question

The snake casts doubt on God's goodness and generosity by implying that God is depriving humanity of good things. Compare the snake's words in Genesis 3:4-5 to God's command in Genesis 2:16-17. What does God say in his original command that shows the snake is wrong about God's generosity?

Session Quote

"The question is: what's your source of wisdom? From the snake—wisdom from below or wisdom from above? God apparently wants humans to become something more, but the whole question is how and by what means—by taking it for themselves or by allowing God to lift them up to the high place?"

The Dialogue Between the Snake and the Woman

The dialogue is designed in three steps:

a b c	*And it [the snake] said to the woman,* *"Indeed,* **has God said**, *'You* **shall not eat *from any* tree of the garden***'?"*	THE SNAKE
a b c	[2]*And the woman said to the snake,* *"**From the fruit** of the* **trees of the garden we may eat**; [3]*but **from the fruit** of* **the tree** *which is in the middle* **of the garden**, **God has said**, *'You* **shall not eat** *from it or touch it, or* ***you will die***.*' "*	THE WOMAN
a b c	[4]*And the snake said to the woman,* ***"You surely will not die**!* [5]*For* **God knows** *that in the day* **you eat *from it*** *your eyes will be opened,* *and you will be like elohim, knowers of good and bad."*	THE SNAKE

Notice how the snake first twists the divine command of 2:16-17, so that God's generosity ("eat from all the trees of the garden") is portrayed as protective scarcity. His first tactic is to undermine God's character by creating an easy opportunity for correction.

> *"The serpents obvious inaccuracy in his rendition of God's prohibition sounds like cunning or lack of subtlety. In fact, it is a well-known trick of the con-man to appear stupid to put others in a position of sham superiority. Any hustler knows that she better start by losing some games and give the impression to other that they will be easy winners."* — ANDRE LACOQUE, THE TRIAL OF INNOCENCE: ADAM, EVE, AND THE YAHWIST, 145.

The woman's response is to correct the snake, clarifying that God invited them to eat from all of the garden trees except one. The snake has directed the conversation so that the single prohibition now becomes the focus. She first provides God's rationale for avoiding the tree: choosing to eat from it will constitute an act of rebellious autonomy, taking into one's own hands the wisdom and authority to discern between good and bad.

The snake's response is to offer an alternative interpretation of both God's words and his intentions. God is actually withholding an ultimate good from his creatures, preventing them from becoming "like *Elohim*."

> *"[I]n Genesis 2–3 Adam and Eve's sin is a departure from a relationship of love and trust of their creator. The ser-pent offers them a fake deification; a tragic imitation of a divine nature that they already have. They are already God's divine image (both in Gen 1:26–28 and also in Gen 2…), carrying the divine breath (2:7), with divine privileges (such as the ability to name parts of creation as God himself did on Days 1–3) and wisdom (see esp. 2:25 where they are* ערומים*: "naked" or "shrewd"). God has already showed them the difference between good and evil and would continue to guide them in that discernment. They are the image-idols of the creator Yahweh God, the serpent offers them a shot at becoming only like "gods" (elohim, so, correctly, the LXX). In apparent ignorance or forgetfulness of—or in rebellion against—their true identity they fall prey to the serpent's insinuations that their creator had deceived them (Gen 3:1–5). The tree that should have proved their discernment between wrongdoing and faithfulness to God, becomes instead a tree that leads to their experience of… both evil and, lingering, good. In the same way that idolaters become like what they worship (Pss 115:4–8; 135:15–18), so the humans become like the (leaf-clad) tree (3:7). They give up the splendor of their creator, inclining to the voice of the creature, and are left bereft of the glory that was theirs by rights. Their action strikes at the heart of their identity. In succumbing to the lie that they need something they already have, they annihilate themselves, and, so, "after sin there is nothing for it but death."* — CRISPIN FLETCHER-LOUIS, "2 ENOCH AND THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON APOCALYPTIC," P. 138-139.

The narrative of the woman and man's actions is precisely design as an inverted symmetry.

A	And the woman saw that **the tree** was good for eating	
B	and desirable to ***the eyes*** and desirable for becoming ***wise*** (שכל).	
C	And she took from its fruit and she ate	
C′	and she gave also to her husband and he ate.	
B′	And ***the eyes*** of the two of them were opened and they knew they were ***naked*** (ערום "naked" or "shrewd")	
A′	and they sewed leaves of a **fig tree** and made garments.	

What the woman "sees" is filled out in three steps:

1. "And she saw that [it]... was good": This is in deliberate contrast to God's "seeing that it is good" seven times over in Genesis 1:1-2:3.

2. "Desirable (הואת) to the eyes": What the woman sees generates desire. She "wants" now the thing that will kill her because she has embraced the snake's alternate narrative. Instead of realizing her true desire will only be fulfilled in trusting God and eating from the tree of life (see Proverbs 13:12), she mistakes the tree's beauty for the Creator to which it points.

3. "Desirable (נחמד "to covet") for becoming wise (שכל)": By embracing the snake's interpretation of the tree, she sees the knowing of good and bad as desirable and a path to true wisdom. In reality, it is the path of folly that will lead to death.

> *"Precisely at this point the author raises the issue of becoming "wise": "And the woman saw that the tree was . . . also desirable for gaining wisdom" (3:6). Thus, the temptation is not presented as a general rebellion from God's authority. Rather, it is portrayed as a quest for wisdom and "the good" apart from God's provision."* — JOHN H. SAILHAMER, THE PENTATEUCH AS NARRATIVE: A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY, P. 104.

- Notice that the snake was not lying about "the eyes being opened" but about what kind of enlightenment would result. The humans become aware of their own nakedness and vulnerability with each other, and so hide their bodies from one another.
- Their folly and rebellion was caused by the idolatrous desire of a forbidden tree, so now the humans become like trees, covering their bodies with leaves.

Session 20: The Snake in Genesis and Beyond

Key Question

Who was created last in Genesis 1, humans or animals? What about in Genesis 2? Was it the animals or the woman?

Session Quote

"By the time you work through just Genesis and you come back and read this, we are meant to see a spiritual being in disguise, deceiving, failing along with the humans, abusing his wisdom and God-given place in creation, and the humans follow suit."

The Identity of the Snake in the Hebrew Bible

Genesis 3:1

Now the snake (Heb. nakhash /נחש) was more shrewd than any living creature of the field which the Lord God had made.

The image of the snake as a "living creature of the field" is a dense narrative image that invites the reader to ponder from many angles. Here are some of the layers of meaning that seem intended by the author's choice of the snake as the tempter.

1. The Snake Among the Animals of Genesis 1

On day six of Genesis 1, God populates the dry land with creatures: first the animals, and after that, humanity.

Genesis 1:24-26

[24] And God said, "Let the land bring forth **living creatures** *after their kind: cattle and* ***creeping things*** *and beasts of the land after their kind"; and it was so.*
[25] God made the ***living creatures*** *of the land after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that* ***creeps on the ground*** *after its kind; and God saw that it was good.*
[26] And God said, "Let us make **human** *in our image, according to our likeness; and <u>let them rule over</u> the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over* ***every creeping thing*** *that creeps on the earth."*

Notice the animals are called "the living creatures" (Heb. *khayyot,* תויח) and specified by rough categories: domesticated animals, "creepers" (the wild ones that run and hide), and the wild beasts.

Notice that humans are the last thing to be created in Genesis 1, yet they are the ones elevated to rule over all creation, the sea and sky **and land creatures.** This establishes a major design pattern in the biblical story: God's elevation of the late-comer to a role of honor above the early-comers.

In the book of Genesis, the theme of the late-comer's elevation often focuses on the jealousy and anger of the "elder." Think of Cain and Abel, or Jacob and Esau ("the older will serve the younger," Genesis 25:23), or of Joseph's older brothers who hate him because of his dreams of ruling over them

(Genesis 37:1-11). Or think, later in the Bible, of David's jealous older brothers who were not chosen to be king (1 Samuel 16-17), and so on.

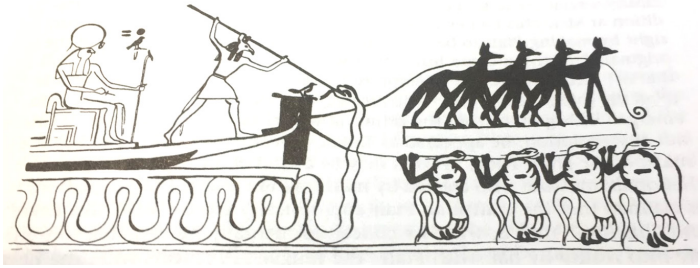
When you come to Genesis 3 after considering this pattern throughout the Hebrew Bible, you're prompted to notice the beasts of day six, who are created first yet summoned to come under the rule of humans who came second. Will any of them be like Cain or Esau or Joseph's brothers and resent being ruled by a creature who has only come to the dry land **after them**?

2. The Snake As a Symbol of Disorder and Sorcery

In the Ancient Near East, snakes were powerful symbols of "chaos creatures," a creature that doesn't properly belong to the divinely ordered world. The snake is both a water and land creature, yet it has no legs, making it look out of place on the dry land. But it also doesn't have fins, making it also out of place in the water.

This "out of order" nature of the snake is why it is included among the ritually impure animals in Israel's Kosher food laws (see Leviticus 11:42). Animals that do not properly "fit" in their category are liminal and belong to the non-ordered realm.

Snakes were potent symbols of immortality (rebirth through shedding of skin), death (poisonous bite), and the underworld realm of the dead (the crawl on the ground and descend into holes). To have mastery of snakes was to be master of death. This explains the pervasive snake imagery in Egyptian royal art.



The sun-god Re is pulled through the underworld sea at night. The god Seth spears and defeats the death-god Apophis (a snake), while the boat is pulled by subjugated night demons (jackals and snakes).

From Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, p. 55, fig. 55.

Epic of Gilgamesh, *Tablet 11*



'This plant... is the "Plant of Heartbeat", with it a man can regain his vigour.... 'Its name shall be "Old Man Grown Young", I will eat it myself, and be again as I was in my youth!'... Gilgamesh found a pool whose water was cool, down he went into it, to bathe in the water. Of the plant's fragrance a snake caught scent, came up [in silence], and carried off the plant. As it turned away it shed its skin. Then Gilgamesh sat down and wept, down his cheeks the tears were coursing. — STEPHANIE DALLEY, MYTHS FROM MESOPOTAMIA (OXFORD WORLD CLASSICS), P. 119.

> *"Throughout the ancient world, [the serpent] was endowed with divine or semidivine qualities; it was venerated as an emblem of health, fertility, immortality, occult wisdom, and chaotic evil; and it was often worshipped. The serpent played a significant role in the mythology, the religious symbolism, and the cults of the ancient Near East."* — NAHUM SARNA, GENESIS (JPS COMMENTARY).

The word *nakhash* (נחש) also contains a double meaning, as it is also the word for "sorcery, divination."

Deuteronomy 18:9-11

9When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. 10Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who ***practices divination*** *(nakhash) or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.*

2 Kings 21:5-6

5In the two courts of the temple of the Lord, [Manasseh] built altars to all the starry hosts. 6He sacrificed his own son in the fire, ***practiced divination*** *(nakhash), sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord, arousing his anger.*

2 Kings 17:16-17

16They forsook all the commands of the Lord their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal.
17They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They ***practiced divination*** *(nakhash) and sought omens and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, arousing his anger.*

3. The Snake As a Figure in the Heavenly Throne Room

The garden of Eden is a high mountain garden temple where Heaven and its creatures overlap with the Earth and its creatures.

The garden in Eden is the source of a single river that leaves the garden and divides into four rivers that water the main regions of the biblical world (see Genesis 2:8-14). This has a fairly obvious implication: The garden of Eden is portrayed as the highest place on the dry land.

Eden is described as the host land of the ultimate temple garden. It's a land of gold, fruit trees, precious gems, and abundance (Genesis 2:9-14). These are precisely the images and materials used in the construction of the tabernacle (Exodus 25-31) and the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6-7).

The Heaven and earth Eden-temple is the same place Israel's prophets saw in their visions (Isaiah 6, 1 Kings 22, Ezekiel 1), a place where God's heavenly presence overlaps with Earth. We're told that there are cherubim in this garden (Genesis 3:22-24), just as they populate God's throne room (see Ezekiel 10:1-15).

All of this leads the reader to expect Adam and Eve to live together in the garden with spiritual beings of the hybrid animal variety! So when a talking snake appears in Genesis 3, we have a category for this kind of creature.

The Snake of Genesis 3 Is Introduced with a Dense and Important Statement

Genesis 3:1

Now the snake (Heb. nakhash /נחש) was more shrewd than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

Observations on Genesis 3:1

This comment invites us to consider that there is more to this snake than just an animal. For starters, it can talk!

The phrase "more shrewd than any beast of the field" could mean (1) that the snake belongs to the beasts of the field and is more sly than the rest. Or it could also mean (2) that it isn't technically a beast of the field. Rather, it's a different kind of creature that is simply more shrewd than any kind of beast. With either interpretation, the comment means, "This is not your average snake!"

The snake also appears to have knowledge of God's decisions and purposes ("God knows that in the day you eat [the fruit] you will be like divine beings, knowing good and bad," Genesis 3:5).

Notice that when God curses the snake in Genesis 3:14, he says something that has puzzled readers across the centuries.

Genesis 3:14

Because you have done this,
cursed are you more than all cattle,
and more than every beast of the field;
on your belly you will go,
and dust you will eat
all the days of your life;

If it was a normal snake, didn't it already crawl in the dust on its belly? Why does God say the snake's *future state* will be to go in the dust if it already crawls on the ground? This statement could be taken to infer that the snake that approached the humans *wasn't on the ground*.

This puzzling image of a snake that doesn't crawl on the ground finds its confirmation much later in the biblical story. When the prophet Isaiah has a vision of God's heavenly throne room, he sees heavenly creatures surrounding God's throne. In Ezekiel's visions of the same space, these beings are called "cherubim" and "living creatures," but Isaiah calls them "seraphim" (Heb. שרפים).

Isaiah 6:1-3

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne,
lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple.
Seraphim *stood above him,* **each having six wings***: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.*
And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory!"

This is the only place in the entire Bible where the heavenly throne room creatures are called in Hebrew *seraphim*. All modern English translations leave this word untranslated, which is strange, because it is a normal Hebrew word for (get ready for it!) **venemous snake**!

Hebrew: *seraph* = singular noun / *seraph**im*** = plural noun

Numbers 21:6

Yahweh sent snakes (Heb. nakhash),
venemous snakes *(Heb. seraphim) among*
the people, and they bit the people.

Deuteronomy 8:15

Yahweh led you in the great and terrifying wilderness, of the snake, **the venemous snake** *(Heb. seraph).*

Later in the book of Isaiah, the prophet describes the ruler of Babylon as a "snake" (Heb. *nakhash*) and a "flying snake" (Heb. *saraph me'opheph*). This appears in the same section as Isaiah's accusation against the ruler of Babylon, which refers both to the human king of Babylon and a spiritual power that lurks behind Babylon.

Isaiah 14:29

Do not rejoice, O Philistia, all of you,
because the rod that struck you is broken;
for from the **snake** *(Heb. nakhash) root a viper will come out,*
and its fruit will be a **flying snake** *(Heb. saraph).*

Flying snakes were a common religious icon in the Ancient Near East, and images of them have even been found in ancient Israelite art (see below: images from Othmar Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst*, 1977; and Robert Deutsch, "Six Hebrew Fiscal Bullae from the Time of Hezekiah").







Also important is that the prophet Ezekiel looks out at Tyre (a powerful seaside kingdom of his day) and accuses its leader of acting like an ancient spiritual rebel. Ezekiel first accuses Tyre's king of claiming to be a deity.

Ezekiel 28:6-9

Therefore thus says the Lord God,
"Because you have made your heart like the heart of God,
therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you,
the most ruthless of the nations.
And they will draw their swords against ***the beauty of your wisdom***
and defile ***your splendor.***
They will bring you ***down to the pit****,*
and you will die the death of those who are slain in the heart of the seas.
*Will you still say, '***I am an *elohim****,'***
in the presence of your slayer, though ***you are a human and not elohim****,*
in the hands of those who wound you?"

Ezekiel then likens the king of Tyre to an ancient spiritual rebel *who inhabited Eden*.

Ezekiel 28:12-17

Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him:
"This is what the Sovereign Lord says:
*'**You were the seal of perfection,***
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
You were in Eden,
the garden of God;
every precious stone adorned you:
carnelian, chrysolite and emerald,
topaz, onyx and jasper,
lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl.
Your settings and mountings were
made of gold; on the day you were
created they were prepared.

You were anointed as a covering cherub,
for so I ordained you.
*Y**ou were on the holy mount of God;***
you walked among the fiery stones.
You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created
till wickedness was found in you.
Through your widespread trade
you were filled with violence, and you sinned.
So I drove you in disgrace from the mount
of God,
and I expelled you, guardian cherub,
from among the fiery stones.
Your heart became proud
on account of your beauty,
and you corrupted your wisdom
because of your splendor."

Ezekiel provides us with the earliest interpretation of the Genesis 3 snake within the Bible itself. The snake is understood to be a spiritual being, one of the winged throne guardians, a "living creature" (a.k.a. cherubim) in the garden temple. But as we learned from the "last will be first" design pattern in Genesis, it seems that we're meant to infer that this snake resented coming under the authority of the human creatures whose origins were of dirt. And so this glorious creature misused its honored place of God-given authority and rebelled by seducing the humans into misusing their authority in the same way. In this way, the snake represents a spiritual rebellion that **coincides with** the earthly rebellion of the humans. Genesis 3 portrays the fall of humanity **and the fall of the spiritual rebel.**

For more discussion of Genesis 3 as the fall narrative of humanity and the snake, check out Seth Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1-3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh*, chapter 6.

> *"How are we supposed to understand the serpent's function in the story? On the one hand the author wants to convey the idea of a actual snake, one of the animals Yahweh had made. But it is precisely this referential comment that raises a clear tension: What about this snake's ability to speak? And how is it that the snake is more shrewd and knowledgable than humans? If the text intentionally raises such questions and then leaves them unanswered, it's clear that this is a purposeful and deliberate means of creating a mystery. More than that, the narrative wants to present the temptation's power and effectiveness as resting on this mysterious nature. Therefore, we may not expect the text to satisfy our curiosity. It seeks to not only communicate the scene from Eve's point of view, but also seeks to evoke curiosity in the reader as a literary device to draw them into the narrative. The author wants the readers to experience the power and elusiveness of the snake "first hand," as it were."* — MARTIN EMMRICH, "THE TEMPTATION NARRATIVE IN GENESIS AS A PRELUDE TO THE PENTATEUCH AND HISTORY OF ISRAEL," P. 8.

SIBLING RIVALRY

	FIRST BORN	LATE COMER
	CAIN	ABEL
	SARAH	HAGAR
	ISHMAEL	ISAAC
	ESAU	JACOB & MOM
	ALL BROTHERS	JOSEPH
GEN. 1	LAND CREATURES	HUMANS

Session 21: God's Response to Human Failure

Key Question

God's response to the first humans' failure is to seek them out and pursue relationship with them. What does this say about God's character?

Session Quote

"This is not just God's response one time. This is God's fundamental response to human failure—pursuit of relationship and invitation to come out of hiding."

Trial in the Garden: Genesis 3:8-13

"Wisdom is good, and we can safely assume that God did not intend to withhold it from humanity. But true wisdom must be acquired through a process, generally from instruction by those who are wise. The fall is defined by the fact that Adam and Eve acquired wisdom illegitimately (Gen 3:22), thus trying to take God's role for themselves rather than eventually joining God in his role as they were taught wisdom and became the fully functional vice-regents of God involved in the process of bringing order. If humans are to work alongside of God in extending order ("subdue" and "rule" [Gen 1:28]), they need to attain wisdom, but as endowment from God, not by seizing it for autonomous use. If…from the start people were mortal, and pain and suffering were already a part of a not yet fully ordered cosmos, we cannot think of death and suffering as having been foisted on us by Adam and Eve's malfeasance… Instead, we can have a much more charitable attitude toward Adam and Eve when we realize that it is not that they initiated a situation that was not already there; it is that they failed to achieve a solution… that was in their reach. Their choices resulted in their failure to acquire relief on our behalf. Their failure meant that we are doomed to death and a disordered world full of sin. These are profoundly significant consequences for what was a serious offense. In contrast, Christ was able to achieve the desired result where Adam and Eve failed. We are all doomed to die because when they sinned we lost access to the tree of life. We are therefore subject to death because of sin. Christ succeeded and actually provided the remedy to sin and death. Some would follow this same line of reasoning to suggest that what we call original sin is the result of our ancestors "pulling out of the program" prematurely. James Gaffney identifies these approaches as involving a view that our human condition is underdeveloped, failing to achieve the intended goal because we wanted to do it our way—"not paradise lost, but, as it were, paradise ungained." — JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE, 144–145.

Translation and Literary Design

[8]*And they* **heard the sound** *of* **Yahweh God** *walking* **in the garden** *in the wind of the day.*	Yahweh's Entrance
And the human and his woman **hid themselves** *from before the face of Yahweh God among the trees of the garden.*	Human Response
[9]*And* **Yahweh God** *called to the human, and said to him,* *"***Where** *are you?"*	Yahweh's First Question
[10]*And he [the human] said,* *"I* **heard the sound of you in the garden**, *and I was afraid because I was* **naked** *(ערום); and* **I hid myself.**"	Human Response
[11]*And he [***Yahweh God***] said,* *"***Who** *told you that you were* **naked** *(ערום)? Have* **you eaten** *from the tree of which I commanded you not* **to eat***?"*	Yahweh's Second Question
[12]*And the human said,* *"The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and* **I ate.**."	Human Response
[13]*And* **Yahweh God** *said to the woman,* *"***What** *is this you have done?"*	Yahweh's Third Question
And the woman said, *"The snake deceived me, and* **I ate.**"	Human Response

- Notice how the scene unfolds in an alternating fashion, juxtaposing **Yahweh's** actions with multiple evasive human responses.

The Sound of Yahweh Walking with the Wind of the Day

The vocabulary of Genesis 3:8 was chosen in order to paint the portrait of Yahweh's first personal appearance (= a "theophany"). Later theophany stories will draw upon and develop the imagery of this scene.

- "The sound/voice of Yahweh" (Heb. *qol* / קול): This word describes the sound of Yahweh's voice when he appears to address his people. It is usually loud, intimidating, and indistinguishable from thunder. The voice of Yahweh is sometimes depicted as a character in its own right.

Exodus 19:16-17

16So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were **sounds** *(Heb. קול) and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.*

Exodus 20:18-19

18All the people saw the **sounds** *(Heb. קול) and the lightning flashes and the sound (Heb. קול) of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. 19Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die."*

Numbers 7:89

89Now when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with him, he heard the **voice/sound** *(Heb. קול) speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; so he spoke to him.*

Psalm 29:3-4

3The **voice** *of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord is over many waters.*
4The **voice** *of the Lord is powerful, the* **voice** *of the Lord is majestic.*

- "Walking" (Heb. *hithalek /* התהלך): This picture of Yahweh "walking about/strolling" in the garden, waiting for the humans to join him, is a powerful image of divine and human intimacy idealized in the garden. The righteous of later generations who live outside of Eden are those who "walk/stroll with Yahweh," that is, they relate to God in the Eden ideal.

Genesis 5:23-24

23So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.
24Enoch **walked with God***; and he was not, for God took him.*

Genesis 6:8-9

8But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. 9These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah **walked with God**.

Genesis 17:1

1Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; **walk before me and be blameless."**

Leviticus 26:9-12

9...I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm my covenant with you...
11Moreover, I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul will not reject you.
*12***I will walk among you** *and be your God, and you shall be my people.*

- "The wind of the day" (Heb. *ruakh hayom /* רוח היום): Yahweh's personal appearances are often associated with storms and thunder, and so the fact that the "sound" of Yahweh appears with wind is key to the storm imagery later in the Hebrew Bible.
    - Some interpreters take the phrase to mean the breezy time of day, that is, in the morning or evening, in contrast to "the heat of the day" (see Gen 18:1).
    - Others take it to mean a storm because the words "wind" and "sound" are sometimes associated with thunderstorm theophanies (see Jeremiah 10:13; 51:16). The words "wind" and "day" are also associated with "storm" (see Isa 27:8; Zeph 2:2).

> *"The time of the Lord's visit is often translated as "the cool of the day" or "the time of the evening," but the text reads only "at the wind of the day." Indeed, nothing in the context suggests that this refers to a time of day. In the light of the general context of the picture of God's coming in judgment and power, the "wind" which the author envisions is more likely intended to resemble that "great and powerful wind" which blew on the "mountain of the LORD" in 1 Kings 19:11. Thus the viewpoint of the narrative would be much the same as that in Job 38:1, where the Lord answered Job "from the whirlwind."* — JOHN H. SAILHAMER, THE PENTATEUCH AS NARRATIVE: A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY, P. 105.

Yahweh's Seven Speeches and Many Questions

Just as God spoke 10 times over the course of seven days to establish the cosmic order as a sacred space, so here in Genesis 3, God speaks seven times to address the problem of disorder that has been introduced by the snake and the humans.

3:9	And Yahweh Elohim called to the human **and he said** to him, "Where are you?"
3:11	**And he said**, "Who told you that you are naked?"
3:13	**And** Yahweh Elohim **said** to the woman, "What is this you have done?"
3:14	**And** Yahweh Elohim **said** to the snake...
3:16	**And** to the woman, **he said**...
3:17	**And** to the man, **he said**...
3:22	**And** Yahweh Elohim **said**, "Look, the human has become like one of us..."

Yahweh's three questions display a patient desire that gives the humans an opportunity to own their failure. "*Where...? Who...? What...?"* At each turn, Yahweh invites the humans to acknowledge their violation of the divine command, and the humans evade the questions every step of the way.

> *"[T]he question, "Where are you?," is essentially rhetorical.* איה *"where?" is often used in this way in poetry (e.g., Isa 33:18; 36:19; Ps 42:3, 10), and a very close parallel is found in Gen 4:9, where "Where is Abel your brother?" is followed by "Listen, your brother's blood is crying to me from the land," showing that God knows perfectly well what has happened to Abel.... Just as a parent who sees where his children are hiding may shout out, "Where are you?," in effect inciting them to come out, so does God. [W]e presume that this is what happened here: the couple emerge shamefaced from the trees. Their reply to God's inquiry shows that they understood the question as an invitation to come out and explain their behavior."* — GORDON J. WENHAM, GENESIS 1–15, 77.

The humans blame shift at each step of the conversation: "the woman!" "the snake!" No one is able to take responsibility for their own choices. Notice how the man blames the one whom God provided as his *ezer,* and the woman then blames the snake for her own misdirected desire.

Session 22: God's Lament

Key Question

Who or what is cursed in Genesis 3:14-19? Who or what is not cursed?

Session Quote

"It's as if every generation, every book is somehow replaying this primal conflict between the woman and the snake."

Translation and Literary Design

[14] **And Yahweh God said to the snake,**
"Because you have done this thing,
you are cursed *more than every beast and more than every living creature of the field*
on your belly you will go,
and **dust you will eat**,
all the days of your life.

a	[15] *And I will set hostility*
a'	*between you and the woman,*
b	*and between your seed and her seed;*
b'	*he will strike your head*
	and you will strike his heel."
a	[16] **And to the woman he said,**
a'	*"I will greatly multiply* **your grief** *and your conception,*
b	**in grief** *you will birth children,*
b'	*and your desire will be for your husband,*
	and he will rule over you."

[17] **And to human he said,**
"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
and you have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying,
'You shall not eat from it'
cursed is the ground *on account of you;*
in grief *you will eat from it*
all the days of your life.

a	[18] *thorns and thistles it shall sprout for you;*
b	*and you will eat the plants of the field;*
a'	[19] *by the sweat of your face*
b'	*you will eat bread,*
a	*until you* **return** *to the ground,*
b	*because from it you were taken;*
b'	*for* **you are dust**,
a'	*and* **to dust you will return**."

Although much can be said about the curse on the snake, the woman, and the man, it is important to note that the text says very little. In this passage we can see most clearly the artful composition that produced the Pentateuch.... The narrative gives nothing to help us understand their plight as individuals. The snake, the woman, and the man are not depicted as individuals involved in a personal crisis; rather, they are representatives. We are left with the impression that this is not their story so much as it is our story, the story of humankind. With great skill the author has presented these three participants as the heads of their race. The snake on the one hand and the man and the woman on the other are as two great nations embarking on a great struggle, a struggle that will find its conclusion only by an act of some distant and as yet unidentified "seed." — JOHN H. SAILHAMER, THE PENTATEUCH AS NARRATIVE: A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY, P. 106.

A Programmatic Poem: Genesis 3:14-19

[adapted from John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*]

The poetic speech of God makes clear a pattern that has already been at work in Genesis 1-3, and will in fact continue for the rest of the book of Genesis and on through the large narrative work of the Torah and Former Prophets (Genesis-2 Kings).

Strategic narratives in the Torah often begin or conclude with poems that condense the core themes and images of the surrounding stories while carrying forward the plot. These poems occur on the micro-level within individual stories, but they also occur at the macro-level that determines the larger plot and themes of the entire story of the Torah and Prophets.

	Narrative	**Embedded Poem**	
GENESIS	1:1-2:3	1:27	Image of God poem
	2:4-24	2:23	Song of Adam about Eve
	3:1-13	3:14-19	Curses Add Consequences
	4:1-26	4:23-24	Lemek's Murderous Boast
	5:1-9:28	9:25-27	Noah's Farewell Speech
	10:1-11:32	12:1-3	God's Promise to Abram
	24:1-67	24:60	Farewell Blessing for Rebekah
	25:19-34	25:23	Rebekah's Birth Oracle
	27:1-28:7	27:27-29	Isaac's Blessing for Jacob
	37:1-50:26	49:1-28	Jacob's Farewell Speech

	Narrative	Embedded Poem	
EXODUS	1:1-15:21	15:1-22	Song of the Sea
NUMBERS	22:1-24:25	23:7-10 23:18-24 24:2-9 24:15-24	Balaam's Oracles of Blessing
DEUTERONOMY	Deuteronomy 1-34	32:1-43 33:1-29	Moses' Final Warning Speech Moses' Farewell Blessing for Israel

Each of these poems has a riddle-like character in summarizing the themes of the narrative up to that point and also in directing the reader's attention to the main themes in the following story.

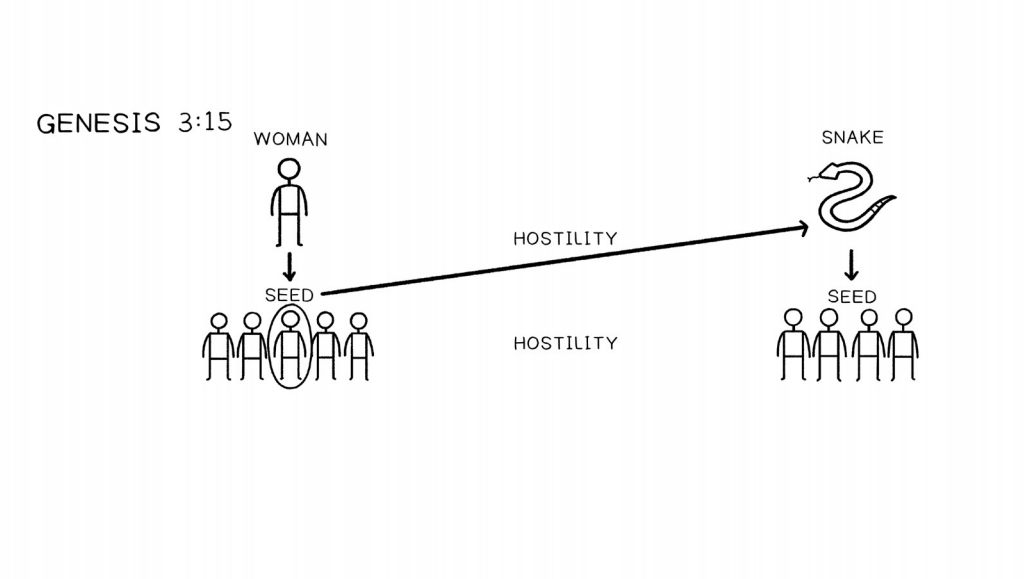
Yahweh's Curse on the Snake: Genesis 3:14-15

- "On your belly you will go, you will eat dust": This is imagery of humiliation and defeat (see Micah 7:17) that is drawn upon by later biblical authors when they depicted the messianic age (see Isaiah 65:25).

John Sailhamer's reflections on Genesis 3:15 are full of insight.

> *"As representatives, the snake and the woman embody the fate of their seed, and the fate of their seed is their fate as well... At first in verse 15 the "enmity" is said to have been put between the snake and the woman and between the "seed" of the snake and the "seed" of the woman. But the second half of verse 15 states that the "seed" of the woman ("he") will crush the head of the snake ("your head")... Though the "enmity" may lie between the two "seeds," the goal of the final crushing blow is not the "seed" of the snake but rather the snake itself—his head will be crushed. In other words, it appears that the author is intent on treating the snake and his "seed" together, as one. What happens to his "seed" in the distant future can be said to happen to the snake as well. This identification suggests that the author views the snake in terms that extend beyond this particular snake of the Garden. The snake, for the author, is representative of someone or something else, and is represented by his "seed." When that "seed" is crushed, the head of the snake is crushed. Consequently, more is at stake in this brief passage than the reader is at first aware. A program is set forth. A plot is established that will take the author far beyond this or that snake and*

his "seed." It is what the snake and his "seed" represent that lies at the center of the author's focus. With that "one" lies the "enmity" that must be crushed... If one looks at the passage within the larger scope of the purpose of the Pentateuch... much more appears to lie in these words... [I]t seems likely that the author intends these words to be read as programmatic and foundational for the establishment of the plot and characterization of the remainder of the book. In the narrative to follow, there is to be war ("enmity"). The two sides are represented by two seeds, the "seed" of the snake and the "seed" of the woman. In the ensuing battle, the "seed" of the woman will crush the head of the snake. Though wounded in the struggle, the woman's "seed" will be victorious. There remains in this verse a puzzling yet important ambiguity: Who is the "seed" of the woman? It seems obvious that the purpose of verse 15 has not been to answer that question, but rather to raise it. The remainder of the book is, in fact, the author's answer." — JOHN H. SAILHAMER, THE PENTATEUCH AS NARRATIVE: A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY, P. 108.



Session 23: Consequences of the Fail

Key Question

In Genesis 3:16-17, God says to the woman that she will experience "pain" related to bearing children. What kind of pain does it seem like God is talking about?

Session Quote

"You could call these punishments, but in a way, it's Yahweh naming the new normal in light of the decisions they've made. In this new normal, Yahweh will use this new environment to test the faith of his people so they come to see he is the one who gives them life, not their schemes to produce children or to produce the fruit of the ground."

The Juxtaposition of Genesis 3:15 and 3:16

Genesis 3:15 told us that there will be struggle between personal forces of rebellion that carry on the legacy of the snake and the "seed of the woman." We also learn that this struggle will eventuate in a conflict that wounds both the snake and the seed.

However this comes about, it's clear that *childbirth* is at the heart of this conflict and also the strange vehicle of God's rescue.

Genesis 3:16 follows by focusing on this very reality: childbirth, which is the unique and privileged role of the woman, is similarly described as a fraught reality. It will take place in the midst of much struggle and grief, yet at the same time, the birth of the promised seed is the hope of future restoration.

The pain surrounding the entry of every child into the world is a paradoxical reminder of the future hope of creation's rescue. It makes perfect sense, then, why the pain of childbirth becomes a powerful biblical image of suffering leading to redemption (see Romans 8:22-24 or Matthew 24:8).

Consequences for the Woman: Genesis 3:16

> *I will greatly multiply your grief and your conception,*
> *in grief you will birth children.*

1. The word "grief, pain" (Heb. *'itsabon*) **IS NOT** the Hebrew word for labor pains:
    - The same word *'itsabon* is used in the next verse (Gen 3:17) to refer to the frustrating toil the man will experience in the field (see also Gen 5:29; Isa 14:3).
2. The word "grief, pain" is applied to the noun "conception" (Heb. *heryon*) which is explicitly **NOT** labor pain.

(1) The root "grief, hurtful" (*'atsab* / עצב) is widely used in biblical Hebrew:

Verb: (*'atsab* / עצב): the emotional experience of grief, sadness

Genesis 6:6

*[6]The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was **'atsab**.*

Isaiah 54:6 (NIV)

*[6]The Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and **'atsab** in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected" says your God.*

2 Samuel 19:1-2 (NIV)

[1]Joab was told, "The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom."
*[2]And for the whole army the victory that day was turned into mourning, because on that day the troops heard it said, "The king is **'atsab** for his son."*

Nouns

(1) *'Otseb* or *'etseb* (עצב): can be used of a combined physical/emotional pain that results from difficult work circumstances.

Proverbs 15:1

*[1]A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a word of **'otseb** stirs up anger.*

Psalm 147:2-3 (NIV)

[2]The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel.
*[3]He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their **'otseb**.*

Proverbs 10:22 (NIV)

*[22]The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, without **'etseb** for it.*

Proverbs 14:23 (NIV)

*[23]All **'etseb** brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.*

> *"[The word 'etseb] is used of emotional pain and the pain involved in work. It can also be used of a more generalized kind of pain. Is is never used elsewhere in the Old Testament, however, to refer to labor pains, or 'birthpangs.' Conversely, there is a well-established vocabulary which is routinely used to labor pain: tsarar (צרר), khebel (חבל), and khul (חול)... If we take our lead from the meaning of 'etseb (עצב) elsewhere in the Old Testament, Gen 3:16 refers to the agony, hardship, worry, and anxiety of the circumstances in which children are conceived, born and raised, and in which they die... This is the same word's clear meaning when describing the man's work in the field in the very next verse (Gen 3:17)."* — IAIN PROVAN, "PAIN IN CHILDBIRTH?", P. 290.

> *"The "pain" of 3:16 ought not be understood as the physical pain of childbirth, but of the unrelenting labor required even of pregnant mothers in a pre-industrial, agrarian subsistence economy, and the concomitant psychological stresses of motherhood in such a milieu"* — CHRISTOPHER HEARD, "AN INTERTEXTUAL READING OF JABEZ' PRAYER IN 1 CHRONICLES 4:9-10."

This interpretation of Genesis 3:16a makes even more sense in the light of Genesis 3:16b.

> *Your desire will be for your husband, but he will rule over you.*

The key interpretive question is whether this is a *comparison* or a *contrast,* and whether the key words "desire" and "rule" are to be taken as positive or negative. This results in ***four different interpretations*** of this sentence.

#1: Contrast

*Your **desire** **[negative]** will be for your husband,*
*but he will **rule** **[positive]** over you.*

The woman's "desire" is a negative one to control and manipulate her husband, in line with her deceptive behavior in giving him the fruit that she took. In contrast, and as a punishment of sorts, God appoints that man rules woman as her authority.

The ESV translation provides an interpretive translation that points in this direction: "Your desire will be *contrary to* your husband, but he will rule over you."

Problems

- Genesis 3:6-7 does not portray the woman as acting against the will of her husband. On the contrary, he is right next to her! And God holds both of them accountable for the act, not just the woman. She is not portrayed as more culpable than the man, so that these words are a punishment.
- The man "ruling" the woman is a direct inversion of God's ideal will humanity in Genesis 1:26-28: that male and female *rule together.*

#2: Contrast

*Your **desire** **[positive]** will be for your husband,*
*but he will **rule** **[negative]** over you.*

The woman's desire is viewed as a natural or instinctual kind of submissive desire, while, unfortunately, the man's desire is for aggressive control of the woman.

This interpretation sees Genesis 3:16b as a kind of reflection on the "nature" of gender relations.

Problems

- This is a very narrow and biased view of gender relations that is way too sweeping in its assumptions. As if all men have power complexes in relation to women and all women have positive feelings about men?!
- It is hard to see how this interpretation contributes to the context of Genesis 3:16a or the broader context of the story, where the man and woman are clearly at odds with each other in Genesis 3:8-13.

#3: Comparison

*Your **desire** **[positive]** will be for your husband,*
*but he will **rule** **[positive]** over you.*

The woman's positive desire will be a submissive one for her husband's love, and in return, he rules her with divinely granted authority.

This view describes the ideal relation between genders from a Christian Hierarchical point of view.

Problems

- Nobody actually thinks that Genesis 3:16b is making a positive, ideal statement. This interpretation is a logical possibility, but not likely given the context that God is giving bad news in Genesis 3:14-19.

#4: Comparison

*Your **desire** **[negative]** will be for your husband,*
*but he will **rule** **[negative]** over you.*

The woman's desires will be in contrast to her husband's desires, generating conflict between them, and in response, the man will make a power play over the woman to control and subdue her.

This is God's sad and realistic warning of the new normal for the man and woman outside of Eden. Now that each person "does what is good in their own eyes," the ideal of Genesis 1:26-28, that male and female rule *together,* is tragically distorted. Women desire to subvert their husbands, and men return the favor.

This interpretation has multiple strengths that the others lack.

1. It fits into the larger context perfectly, as it represents a sad inversion of both ideals in Genesis 1:26-28 (ruling together) and Genesis 2:18-25 (naked intimacy and desirable union).

2. The rare word "desire" (*teshuqa*h / תשוקה) is used only two times elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, both hyperlinked to Genesis 3:16b.

    - Genesis 4:7 is a clever hyperlink: "[sin's] *desire is for you, and you can rule it.*" Here the desire of "sin" for Cain is a negative desire to control his actions and consume him like an animal.
    - Song of Songs 7:10: "I belong to my beloved, and his *desire* is for me." This is also a clever hyperlink back to Genesis 3:16, where the idealized male and female lovers (in the garden of the Song!) reverse the tragic reality of Eden back into its ideal. Song 7:10 represents the undoing of the fracture between man and woman in Genesis 3:16! Here the "desire" is positive, precisely in contrast to Genesis 3:16.

3. The man "ruling" the woman is the precise opposite picture of God's ideal in Genesis 1-2, where male and female rule together (Gen 1:26-28), and where the woman is set apart from the animals not as the man's inferior but as his equal (from his "side").

4. The rest of the book of Genesis is a series of narrative embodiments of this interpretation of Genesis 3:16. Every generation will experience moments where a woman desires power and control over her husband, which is met by a response of manipulation and power play in return: Abraham and Sarai (Gen 12:10-20 and ch. 16), Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 27), Jacob and Rachel and Leah (Genesis 29-30), Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38), etc.

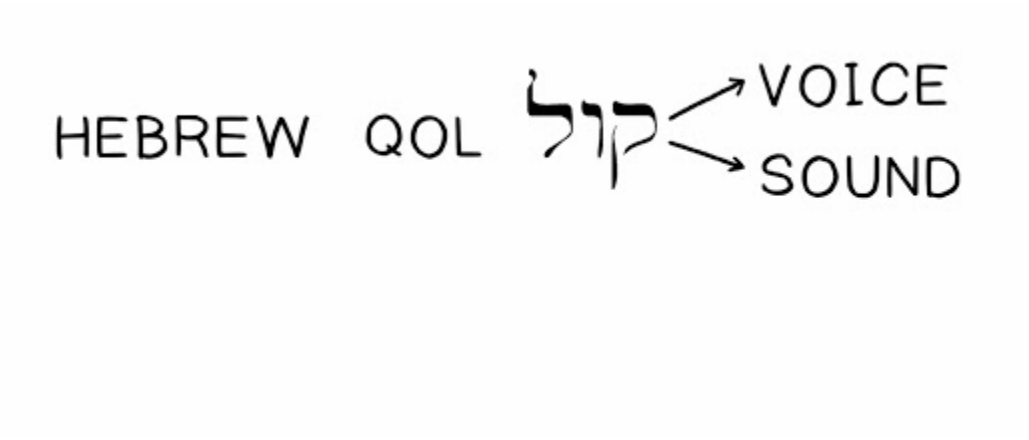
"The man's fate [in Gen 3:17]...matches the woman's. He will know grievous toil ('etseb) as she does. Here it certainly refers to challenging economic circumstances, as the man is locked in a struggle with the land, hoping through "painful toil" to grow sufficient green plants in the midst of "thorns and thistles" to survive. The work done in the field corresponds to the work done at home (notice that the woman's 'etseb is said to increase, not to begin)... The man is not only in a struggle with the land, but Gen 3:16 tells us that he's also locked in a struggle with his spouse... Men and women are created to work and rule in partnership... but now the man relates to the woman as if she were a part of the creation, rather than a co-ruler over creation with the man. And she, for her part, is not portrayed as blameless in this increased dysfunctionality in male-female relations... Intended for partnership, they will in fact find themselves embroiled in a struggle for dominance... This is why family life will be more "painful" for the woman... dysfunction now marks not only the human relationship with God and with the land, but also with each other. There remainder of the book of Genesis powerfully illustrated this dysfunction and the sorrow that it brings." –
ADAPTED FROM IAN PROVAN, "PAIN IN CHILDBIRTH?", P. 291-292.

Consequences for the Man: Genesis 3:17-19

- "Because you listened (*shama'* / קול) to the voice (*qol* / קול) of your wife"
    - This phrase refers back to his "taking and eating" in Genesis 3:6, which also provides a contrast to his fearful response when God entered the garden in Genesis 3:10: "I listened (*shama'* / קול) to your sound/voice (*qol* / קול) in the garden."
    - Instead of "listening to the voice of God" about the tree, his eating from it was "listening to the voice" of his wife. This introduction of the key phrase prepares the reader for many later narratives where "listening to the voice" becomes a synonym for someone's moral failure on analogy with Genesis 3 (see Gen 16:2; 27:8), or their moral victory that reverses Genesis 3 (see Gen 22:18).
- "Cursed is the land on account of you..."
    - Instead of experiencing God's uninhibited blessing of abundance in the land, outside of Eden, humanity will have to struggle with a land that easily produces inedible plants ("thorns and thistles") and grows edible food only with "grievous toil."
- "You will the vegetation of the field (*'eseb hassadeh* / עשב השדה)"
    - Outside of Eden, humanity is reduced to the food that was explicitly assigned to the animals in Genesis 1:30: "to every living creature of the land, every bird...and creeper on the land...the green *vegetation* (*'eseb* / עשב) will be for food."
    - Instead of eating from the easily cultivated fruit trees of Eden that produce food by themselves, humanity will be forced to coax the ground to produce vegetation (3:18) that can be made into "bread" (3:19).

> *The punishment is "that work will now involve more pain than before. The work will be experienced in a different way— as a struggle with an earth that is more reluctant to give up good things, and that insists on producing "thorns and thistles <u>for you</u>" (Gen 3:8). The wording of this verse is strange, and underlines that it is not the world that has changed but people's experience of this world... The land will still provide food, but only at a greater cost."* — IAIN PROVAN, SERIOUSLY DANGEROUS RELIGION, 121.

- "By the sweat of your brow...until you return to the ground, for from it you were taken" (3:19)
    - Subsistence agriculture is body-breaking work that reduces humans to servants of the ground and grinds them back into the dust. This is in contrast to the easily enjoyed food of the cultivated garden.
    - These words also link forward to 3:22, that state that humanity would have only achieved immortality *if they had access to God's presence through the tree of life.* The profound implication is this: **The Eden narrative presents the dirt humans as <u>mortal by nature</u>, not immortal. Immortality was not inherent to human nature but a gift that was forfeited and never attained. Instead of "falling from perfection into death," Genesis 2-3 is a story about a "failure to receive God's gift of eternal life."**
    - Perhaps we should begin calling Genesis 3 "**The Fail**" instead of "**The Fall**."



Session 24: Key Takeaways From the Eden Story

Key Question

God doesn't stop working in and with humanity after he banishes them from the garden. What does this show us about God's heart? What should we expect from God as we continue reading Genesis and the rest of the Bible?

Session Quote

"This is a narrative about paradise 'ungained,' paradise that has yet to be gained. Which really transforms what you are hoping for as you turn the page to chapter 4."

Eve's Name and a Divine Mercy: Genesis 3:20-21

Translation

[20]*And the human called the name of his woman "**Hawwah**" (חוה),*
*"for she is the mother of all **living**" (חי).*

[21]*And God made for human and his wife, garments of skin,*
and he clothed them.

These two verses seem randomly placed here, but in fact, they are strategically located in order to create a frame around the entire fall narrative of Genesis 3:1-19 by matching and inverting multiple elements in Genesis 2:18-25.

Genesis 2:18-25		**Genesis 3:20-21**
1. Adam named the woman "*woman*"	**3:1-19** The snake, the woman, and the man	1. Adam names the woman "*Hawwah*"
2. God provides woman as an *'ezer* (עזר)		2. The deception of the *'ezer* (עזר) creates the need for "skin" (עור)
3. They are naked and not ashamed		3. Human nakedness is covered by God
4. Humanity at peace with the animals		4. An animal is killed to "clothe" humans

After the failure of the man and woman, the story concludes with these two short details. The naming of the woman in 2:23 is now furthered by a dual wordplay.

- She is named "Eve" (Heb. *hawwah* / חוה) for she is the mother of all "life" (Heb. *hay* / חי).
- The semitic root *hawwah* also means "snake" in Jewish Aramaic (חויה) and Syriac [see Kohler-Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament,* p. 296].

In replacement of the leaf garments the humans made to hide their nakedness from each other, God provides "garments of skin (עור)." This last word is a wordplay on God's provision of the woman as a deliverance of help for the man (עזר).

The provision of garments for the humans happens before their expulsion from Eden and is portrayed as an act of divine generosity in the midst of judgment. Now that the humans have made the irreversible decision, God accommodates their non-ideal situation and provides them with a gift. And this "garment" (Heb. *ketonet* / כתנת) is not just a tunic but a robe (Joseph's technicolor dream coat is a *ketonet* as well: Gen 37:3).

This scene also plants the seed of a key motif in the book of Genesis: deception and garments. In the Eden story, the snake's deception of the naked woman results in her need for a garment. In later stories:

- Rebekah and Jacob trick Isaac with deceptive garments and food (Gen 27:15-17).
- Joseph's brothers deceive Jacob with a bloodied garment (Gen 37:31-33).
- Tamar deceives Judah by "covering" herself with deceptive garments (Gen 38:14).
- Joseph is elevated from prison and gets new garments (Gen 41:42) that disguise him from his brothers so that he can deceptively get them to tell the truth (Gen 42:8, chs. 43-44).

This provision of garments for the one whom God, exiles from Eden is also reversed in Israel's priesthood. They are also assigned "divine garments (*ketonet*)" by God which will cover their nakedness when they work at the altar or enter the tabernacle (Exod 21:26; 28:39-43).

Exile from Eden: Genesis 3:22-24

Translation and Literary Design

22And Yahweh God said,
"Look, the human has become like one of us, knowing good and bad,
and now so that he won't send out his hand and take also from the tree of **life** *(חיים),*
and eat and **live** *(חי) forever..."*

23And Yahweh God ***sent him out*** *from the garden*
to work the ground from which he was taken,
24and he ***banished*** *the human.*

And he made to dwell at the east of the garden of Eden
cherubim and the flame of the whirling sword to guard way to the tree of **life** *(חי).*

This concluding unit represents the inversion of the Eden story's introduction:

- God created the human and placed him in the garden > the human is banished from the garden
- God causes the tree of life and knowing good and bad to grow > humans are cut off from them
- Before the garden, there was no human to work the ground > outside Eden, the human works the ground
- Humanity was made mortal, so that by obeying God, they could remain in the garden and receive the gift of eternal life > now they are cut off and sent into the land of mortality
- Humanity was directed to "guard/keep" the garden > humanity is now guarded/kept from the garden

The story's final line about the "cherubim" and "flame of the whirling sword" is a condensed hint that sends the reader forward to the design of the tabernacle and temple and into the prophetic visions of the divine throne room.

- Cherubim flank the ark of the covenant on the holy of holies (Exod 25:17-22), and in the temple, the are designed on the walls of the holy place and on the front doors into the temple (1 Kgs 6:29-32).
- The "sword" will appear in the hand of the angel of Yahweh again when David goes to the hilltop in Jerusalem, which at the time was the threshing floor of Ornan (1 Chronicles 21:16).

Key Takeaways From the Eden Story in Genesis 2:4-3:24

God's ideal for creation is that his transcendent and eternal life-giving presence (Heaven) be united with our material creation (Earth) so that it is transformed into eternal life.

Eden is the key biblical image of the place where Heaven and Earth are one. It is both Heaven and Earth simultaneously, so is the tabernacle and the temple in Jerusalem. This is why the imagery of Heaven is pervaded by garden and temple imagery throughout the Bible.

Outside of Eden, the reality of Heaven on Earth is hidden from us most of the time, though we experience its gifts of blessing in every birth of a baby, in every abundant harvest, in every good meal, in every experience of beauty and laughter, in every feeling of intimacy and communion with family and someone we love. These gifts of Eden are small tastes of ultimate goodness that pervade our world and point humanity to their Creator if they have eyes to see.

The story of Genesis 3 is more about "the fail" than "the fall." It is about a misguided attempt to seize divine wisdom.

> *"Wisdom is good, and we can safely assume that God did not intend to withhold it from humanity. But true wisdom must be acquired through a process, generally from instruction by those who are wise. The fall is defined by the fact that Adam and Eve acquired wisdom illegitimately (Gen 3:22), thus trying to take God's role for themselves rather than eventually joining God in his role as they were taught wisdom and became the fully functional vice-regents of God involved in the process of bringing order. If humans are to work alongside of God in extending order ("subdue" and "rule" [Gen 1:28]), they need to attain wisdom, but as endowment from God, not by seizing it for autonomous use. If...from the start people were mortal, and pain and suffering were already a part of a not yet fully ordered cosmos, we cannot think of death and suffering*

> *as having been foisted on us by Adam and Eve's malfeasance…Instead, we can have a much more charitable attitude toward Adam and Eve when we realize that it is not that they initiated a situation that was not already there; it is that they failed to achieve a solution… that was in their reach. Their choices resulted in their failure to acquire relief on our behalf. Their failure meant that we are doomed to death and a disordered world full of sin. These are profoundly significant consequences for what was a serious offense. In contrast, Christ was able to achieve the desired result where Adam and Eve failed. We are all doomed to die because when they sinned we lost access to the tree of life. We are therefore subject to death because of sin. Christ succeeded and actually provided the remedy to sin and death. Some would follow this same line of reasoning to suggest that what we call original sin is the result of our ancestors "pulling out of the program" prematurely. James Gaffney identifies these approaches as involving a view that our human condition is underdeveloped, failing to achieve the intended goal because we wanted to do it our way—"not paradise lost, but, as it were, paradise ungained."* — JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE, 144–145.

Evil is a semi-personal presence that causes doubt about the Creator's goodness and intentions and compels humans to declare themselves to be the author of their own identity and of good and evil. This results in a tragic irony, as humans give their divine dignity over to creation with its animal-like appetite for survival and control.

The story sets the main plot conflict that drives the rest of the biblical story: God had purposes to rule creation through his human images, but now they are in rebellion and the cause of chaos and disorder in God's good world. The solution: We need a new kind of human, who can (1) deal with the problem humanity has generated, and (2) restore humanity back to its ideal role. We need a new kind of human!

Unit 5: Literary Design of Genesis 4

SESSIONS: 25-29

Session 25: Literary Design of Genesis 4

Key Question

Genesis 4 begins and ends with Eve giving birth to a son. Compare what Eve says in Genesis 4:1 to her words in Genesis 4:25. What do you notice? How would you describe the differences between the two statements?

Session Quote

"The whole of chapter 4 is developing themes right out of what emerged from chapters 1-3. But it's also a hinge in that it is going to set a whole bunch of new things in front of us that will lay down patterns for the next few chapters."

Cain and Abel: A Tale of Two Seeds: Genesis 4:1-26

The Literary Design of Genesis 4:1-26

Genesis 4 is broken into two large narrative panels, punctuated by three birth scenes:

4:1-2	"And the human ***knew his wife*** Eve, and ***she conceived*** and she ***gave birth***..." - Two sons born: (1) Cain **+ wordplay on son's name** (2) Abel (= "vapor")
4:3-16	**Cain murders his brother Abel** vv. 3-7: The sacrifices and Cain's test vv. 8-11: Cain murders his brother and dialogue with Yahweh vv. 12-16: God's punishment and his mercy on Cain — God's mercy: 7x blood vengeance declared for Cain
4:17-18	*"And Cain **knew his wife** and she **conceived** and **gave birth** to* **Enoch**..." **+ builds a city named after his son**
4:19-24	**Lemek murders a young man** v. 19: Lemek's two wives vv. 20-22: Lemek's three sons vv. 23-24: Lemek's murderous poem — Lemek declares 77x blood vengeance on himself
4:25-26	*"And the human **knew again his wife** and she **gave birth** to a son..."* - Two sons born: (1) Seth + **wordplay on sons' name** (2) Enosh (= "humanity")

> *"Throughout the Pentateuch, the sevenfold use of divine speech formulae is commonplace, and within this chapter the number seven is clearly significant (cf. vv 15, 24). Unusually full details about Lamek, the seventh generation from Adam (vv 18–24), may illustrate another convention associated with biblical genealogies, a tendency to draw attention to the seventh generation. Indeed various keywords in the narrative appear a multiple of seven times. Within 4:1–17, "Abel" and "brother" occur seven times, and "Cain" fourteen times. Within the whole of 2:4–4:26, ארץ "earth," not "land of," is mentioned seven times, אדמה "land" fourteen times, and "God" "the Lord" or "The Lord God" some thirty-four times, exactly matching the thirty-five occurrences of "God" in 1:1–2:3. The last verse of chap. 4, "At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord," thus contains the seventieth mention of the deity in Genesis and the fourteenth use of the key word "call"... In all these respects chap. 4 is entirely typical of the editorial techniques used throughout Genesis, and its present form must owe much to the final editor."*
>
> — GORDON J. WENHAM, GENESIS 1–15, 96-97.

Eve's Many Sons: Genesis 4:1-2 and 4:25-26

Translation and Literary Design

4:1-2	a b c b′	[1]*Now, the human knew his wife Eve,* *and she conceived and she gave birth to* **Cain**, *and she said, "I have* **created** *a man (in comparison) with Yahweh."* [2]*And again she gave birth to his brother*[1] **Abel**,

4:25-26	[25]*and Adam knew his wife again* *and she gave birth to a son,* *and she named him "Seth (שת)," because,* *"God has appointed (שת) me another seed in place of Abel, for Cain killed him."* [26]*And to Seth, to him also a son was born;* *and he called his name Enosh.* *Then it was begun, to call on the name of Yahweh.*

Two Birth Scenes

The opening and closing birth scenes provide a matching frame of Eve's pregnancy, birth, and the naming of sons. The similarities also highlight some important contrasts.

Eve's words in 4:1 could be taken as a celebration of divine assistance ("with Yahweh" = "with Yahweh's *assistance*"). More likely, they are a statement of budding arrogance: "I have created a man, alongside/in comparison with Yahweh"). The likelihood of this interpretation is supported by many observations of the following narrative:

Eve's words "I have *created* a man…": The Hebrew root קנ״ה appears elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to describe God as Creator of the world (14:19, 22), of Israel (Deut 32:6), of people (Ps 193:13), or of wisdom (Prov 8:22). Since divine procreation is often connected with this verse, and it is never used of "acquiring" children, it's more likely that Eve is attributing the "creation" of Cain to her own power and ability (cf. the warning against attributing God's power to oneself in Deut 8:11-18).

"…*with Yahweh*": Many translations interpret the "with" (את) as Yahweh's agency, so that Eve is attributing her pregnancy to Yahweh (Septuagint διὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ; "with the help of the LORD" NASB; ESV; NIV). The word is more likely implying a comparison, "beside, *in comparison with* Yahweh." This is a common use of "with." Exodus 20:23: "Do not make any gods *alongside/in comparison with me* (אתי); Genesis 39:6: "And Potiphar left everything in the hand of Joseph and didn't know anything *alongside/in comparison with* him (אתו)."

With this interpretation, the narrative is portraying Eve (once again) as a human who uses their God-given abilities to create their own blessing by their own wisdom and power. Eve would then be the first of many mothers in Genesis to try to achieve or attribute the divine blessing of children by their own plan or power. Compare Sarai in ch. 16, Rebekah in ch. 27, and Leah and Rachel in ch. 30. This would also explain why God accepts the younger son's offering, to subvert human wisdom and power, as he does in each of the generations.

> *"The first woman, in her joy at giving birth to her first son, boasts of her generative power, which approximates in her estimation to the Divine creative power. The Lord formed the first man (2:7), and I have formed the second man. Literally, 'I have created a man with the Lord' = I stand together [i.e. equally] with Him in the rank of creators."* — U. CASSUTO, A COMMENTARY ON GENESIS: , FROM ADAM TO NOAH, 201.

Eve's words about her sons open and close the chapter (4:1 and 4:25), and they form a contrast: 4:1: "I have created a man alongside Yahweh" // 4:25: "God has given me a seed, another one in the place of Abel, for Cain murdered him." Her opening words of hubris are subverted, while her closing words accept Seth as a generous gift after the tragic loss of Abel that ironically overturned her presumptive words.

4:25 (A3) provides a kind of reversal of Abel's death. "Although Seth is not Abel, he is said to stand "in the place of" the dead son in a more profound sense... Seth is Abel *redivivus* [= "revived"], the slain son restored to his parents. His birth is proof that the loss of the son favored by God's inscrutable grace is not final. The death of the beloved son, even when it is not averted, can still be reversed." [Levenson, "Favor and Fratricide," 78]

Session 26: Offerings at the Door of the Garden

Key Question

Is there something wrong with Cain's offering? Was Cain rejected by God?

Session Quote

"In the normal course of offerings, there's a moment for jealousy. The question is: how will the human respond to this decision? Notice that it's a decision between tov and no tov."

Cain and Abel's Offering: Genesis 4:2-7

Translation and Literary Design

a	*And* **Abel** *was a shepherd of flocks,*
b	*but* **Cain** *was a tiller of the ground.*
c	[3]*And it came from the end of days,*
b′	*and* **Cain**
	brought from the fruit of the ground
	an offering to Yahweh.
a′	[4]*And* **Abel**,
	also he brought from the firstborn of his flock
	and from their fat portions,
a	*and Yahweh gazed*
b	*upon* **Abel** *and for his offering;*
b′	[5]*but upon* **Cain** *and upon his offering*
a′	*he did not gaze.*
a	*And there was heat-anger to Cain,*
b	*and his face fell,*
	[6]*and Yahweh said to Cain,*
a′	*"Why is there heat-anger to you?*
b′	*and why has your face fallen?*
a	[7] **If you do good,**
b	***won't there be lifting up?***
a′	**and if you do not do good,**
b′	***at the door, sin is a croucher,***
c	*and its desire is for you,*
c′	*but you can rule it."*

Farmers vs. Shepherds, the City vs. the Wilderness

Cain and Abel are first introduced in terms of their economic and cultural domains: Cain is a farmer who works the ground, and Abel is a shepherd who works among migrating flocks.

These two vocations have important associations throughout the biblical narrative:

- *Farming and cities:* organized agriculture in the Ancient Near East was associated with the world's first empires (Babylon and Egypt), where slave labor and infrastructure provided the groundwork for mass farming. It's no accident that Cain will become associated with the first cities of the Bible (Gen 4:17) and the advent of technology and civilization (Gen 4:20-22).
- *Shepherding and the desert:* shepherds who migrated with their grazing animals were nomads that lived on the borders of urban society. They tended to be viewed as lower class (though they could produce great wealth) and outside the value systems of the great cities and empires (shepherd were viewed as despicable by urban Egyptians (Gen 43:32; 46:34).

On the whole, Yahweh identifies himself with the shepherd underdog throughout the Bible and consistently reveals himself to people in the desert, to shepherds outside of the imperial systems of organized human power and prestige.

- Abraham the shepherd is called out of the cities of Babylon (= "Ur of the Chaldeans") and Haran in Syria (Gen 11:31-12:4).
- Isaac and Jacob and his many sons are all shepherds living on the edge of urban centers in the land of Canaan.
- Moses meets Yahweh in the desert of Sinai while shepherding his flock (Exod 3).
- Yahweh "creates" the people of Israel by leading them out of Egypt (where they farm and build cities) and constituting them as his covenant people in the desert of Sinai.
- Israel's first true king, David, was a shepherd (1 Sam 16:11), while their illegitimate king Saul was a farmer of the field (1 Sam 11:5).
- Yahweh himself is portrayed as Israel's shepherd (Psalm 23), and he dwells in a tent (2 Sam 7:6).

This contrast is sustained throughout the rest of the Hebrew Bible, and it is introduced in the Cain and Abel story in order to prepare us for what happens next. It should strike us as no surprise that God favors the shepherd and that the "city boy" (a.k.a. "farmer boy") is the negative character.

Yahweh's Favor for Abel but Not for Cain

The narrative is very spare, but it's precise in directing the reader's attention that what is supposed to be noticed.

- The nature of the offerings:
    - Cain brings "the fruit of the ground."
    - Cain is, like Adam his father, a tiller of the ground, *which has been cursed*.
    - Cain's offering, while legitimate, is an undifferentiated vegetable and grain bundle.
- Abel's offering is "from the firstborn of the flock, and from the fat portions."
    - Notice the extra detail devoted to the description, which highlights two layers of value: (1) the firstborn of the flock (of greatest symbolic value), and (2) the fat portions, the tastiest and most nutritious portions. The narrative implies a direct contrast here between Cain's bundled veggies and Abel's carefully selected and valuable animal offering.

- "By giving the first-born and the best of the animal (i.e. the fat), Abel would be understood as having given everything to God." — Richard Hess, "Abel" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary,* vol. 1, p. 9-10.

- **Conclusion**: While both offerings are legitimate (cereal and animal offerings are both described in the sacrificial rules of Leviticus 1-7), the lavish value ascribed to Abel's offering makes Cain's gift pale in comparison. But the fault isn't simply in the ingredients of the offering but what they indicated about the character of the one offering.

The Character of the Offerers

When God makes his decision, notice the word order:

"God gazed upon Abel,
and upon his offering,
and upon Cain,
and upon his offering,
he did not gaze."

The emphasis is God's perception of the *people* offering the gift. The "gazing" is, so to speak, the moment of God "reading" the hearts of the two brothers, and upon examination, God's favor goes to the one who was willing to offer what's most valuable.

The following narrative bears out the wisdom of God's assessment: Cain's character is such that when he does not receive favor, he gets violently angry.

God Does Not "Reject" Cain

God's favorable gaze upon Abel does not constitute a rejection of Cain, though he seems to experience it as such. God immediately reaches out to Cain, continues a long dialogue with him, and *tells him that this moment is not permanent*.

God tells Cain the way to favor: "do what is good." The implication is that God can discern, somehow, in Cain's offering that all is not well in his heart and mind and character. So he works with Cain and invites him to do the right thing and find himself experiencing divine favor.

> *"The issue in Genesis 4 is one of ethics, not of sacrificial ingredient… Nonetheless, there exists a possibility that a comparative ethical value is reflected in the quality of the sacrifices offered… With the same ingredients, the human roles could have been reversed…. Cain would have selected the best of what the earth can offer, and Abel would killed an animal picked gingerly from the heard… The emphasis is not on the ingredient of the sacrifices but on the disposition of the one offering."* — ANDRE LACOQUE, ONSLAUGHT AGAINST INNOCENCE: CAIN, ABEL, AND THE YAHWIST, 20-22.

The Firstborn Rivalry and Yahweh

Cain's birth story draws attention to him as the firstborn. His mother boasts of her ability to "create" a man, and this man goes on to take the place of Adam as "worker of the ground."

Cain is also the first to bring an offering, as the patriarch or firstborn male always does as their prerogative. The firstborn was to be acknowledged as the one who received the greater share of the inheritance (Deut 21:17) as the father's representative (Gen 49:3). In Genesis, the male head of the family offers sacrifices (Noah in 8:20; Abraham in 12:4-10) and passes on the blessing and right of the firstborn (Gen 27).

In Genesis 4:3, we're told first that Cain brought his offering, and then, all of a sudden, "And Abel, he also brought *from the firstborn of his flocks*..."

If Abel's offering is not an effort at usurpation of his elder brother (and it may well be), the narrator at the least is showing us that the firstborn is being shown up by his younger brother. And to top it all off, Yahweh favors Abel!

This begins a major theme in the book of Genesis, that God carries forward his promises in ways that subvert and challenge traditional wisdom in human societies, and he loves to elevate the underdog and the disadvantaged.

Sacrifices at the Door of the Garden

Cain and Abel are introduced in a narrative about worship, as they make their offerings before Yahweh. *Where is this story taking place?*

- Genesis 3:22-24 told us that the humans were sent out from the garden of Eden "to the east" and that on that eastern border of Eden Yahweh stationed cherubim and a sword.
- When Cain is exiled after murdering his brother in Genesis 4:16, we're told he went "east of Eden." This means that Genesis 4:1-16 is taking place within Eden, near the eastern edge of the garden.
- There are numerous clues in this narrative, and in later design patterns about the tabernacle and temple, that we are to envision this offering taking place at the "door" of the garden of Eden, which is mentioned in Genesis 4:7.

The "door" of Genesis 4:7 is often taken to metaphorically refer to the door of Cain's heart or mind, where the sinful urge is urging itself upon him. But this is not what the Hebrew text says.

- Genesis 4:7 consists of three words in Hebrew: "at the door (לפתח), sin (חטאת) is a croucher (רבץ)."
- The metaphorical "door of the heart" is used nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, whereas the narrative context provides us with a perfectly plausible explanation.

Cain and Abel are depicted as offering their sacrifices at the door of the garden of Eden, in front of the cherubim and the entrance into the holy place of God's heavenly presence on Earth. The sinful, animal-like temptation to fail God has exited the garden with them and is "at the door" alongside them.

On this reading, the later tabernacle and temple mirror this precise scene, as the altar was placed directly east in front of the "door" (פתח) to the sacred space, where offerings were made before the priests could enter into sacred space.

On all this, see J. Azevedo, "At the Door of Paradise: A Contextual Interpretation of Genesis 4:7," in *Biblische Notizen,* vol. 100 (1999), p. 45-59.

Session 27: Cain Fails His Test

Key Question

Cain is biologically "the seed of the woman," but he becomes "the seed of the snake" by his choices. Based on this, does bloodline determine faithfulness? What can we expect from chosen families or chosen individuals in the rest of the Hebrew Bible?

Session Quote

"There are two wills at work: anti-creation and creation, death and life, flourishing and self-destruction. And my choices show my allegiances."

Yahweh's Dialogue with Cain: Genesis 4:8-16

Translation and Literary Design

a	[8]*And* **Cain** *spoke to* **Abel** *his brother*[2]*,*
b	*and it came about when they were in the field,*
a′	*and* **Cain** *rose up to* **Abel** *his brother*[3]
b′	*and he* **killed** *him.*
a	[9]*And Yahweh said to Cain,*
b	*"Where is Abel your brother*[4]*?"*
a′	*and he said,*
b′	*"I do not know.*
	Am I the keeper of my brother[5]*?"*
	[10]*And he said,*
	"What have you done?
a	***The voice of the shed-blood of your brother***[6]
b	*is crying out to me from the ground.*
b′	[11]*And now, you are cursed from the ground,*
a′	*which* ***has opened its mouth***
	to receive the shed-blood of your brother[7] *from your hand.*

	12 *When you work the ground,* *it will no longer yield its strength to you;* *you will be a vagrant and a wanderer in the land."* 13 *And Cain said to the Lord,*
a	*"My punishment is too great to lift up.*
b	14 *Behold, you have banished me this day*
c	*from the face of the ground;*
c'	*and from your face I will be hidden,*
b'	*and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer in the land,*
a'	**and whoever finds me will kill me**."
	15 *And Yahweh said to him,* *"Therefore whoever* **kills** *Cain,* *seven times he will be avenged,"* *and Yahweh established a sign for Cain,* **so that anyone who finds him would not strike him**. 16 *And Cain went out from the face of Yahweh,* *and he dwelt in the land of Wandering/Nod, east of Eden.*

Yahweh's words to Cain turn his anger into a moment of testing that is modeled closely upon the story of his parents' testing and failure.

The Blood Cries Out

In Genesis 4:10-11, God tells Cain that the the voice of his brother's blood is crying out from the ground. Notice that the ground has become an active character (it "cries" and "opens its mouth" and "receives") that witnesses Abel's murder, is defiled by it, and testifies as a witness.

Humanity was made from clay made by water and dust (Genesis 2:7), but now a human returns to the dirt in the form of blood, which results not in the ground being cursed but Cain being cursed from the ground.

This begins an important design pattern throughout the Hebrew Bible, related to the "city of blooshed." When human societies build themselves upon the blood of the innocent, God hears their cry and responds.

The Land	**Genesis 6:13** *Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh* **has come before me**; *for the earth is filled with* **violence** *because of them..."*
Sodom	**Genesis 18:20-21** 20 *And the Lord said, "The* **outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah** *is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave.* 21 *I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to* **its outcry, which has come to me**; *and if not, I will know."*
Egypt	**Exodus 2:23** 23 *Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and* **their outcry for help because of their bondage rose up to God.**

God Shows Mercy and Gives a Sign

In 4:13-14, Cain complains of the severity of the consequences and then blames God for his exile.

Cain also raises the important factor that he has blood on his hands and that an "avenger of blood" may "find" him and exact justice. His language hints forward to the kinsmen redeemer whose family responsibility it was to avenge the murder of a relative (see Numbers 35:12, 19, 21, 24-25).

God "sets a sign for Cain" (not "on" him).

- The history of interpretation is littered with imaginative speculations that are not grounded in the text. The earliest collection of interpretations is found in an early Jewish commentary on Genesis (4th-6th century A.D.) called *Genesis Rabbah*.

There are seven different opinions on the sign of Cain:

1. God caused the sun to rise (as a sign that Cain was not to be slain by animals)
2. He marked him by inflicting leprosy on him
3. He gave him a dog to protect him against animals
4. He marked him with a horn on his forehead (as a degradation of his human form
5. He punished Cain as a sign (= warning) to future murderers
6. He partly pardoned his sin as a sign (= example) for future sinners who repent
7. He allowed him to live until the flood

Genesis Rabbah 22:12-13, cited in Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews, 2nd ed.,* p. 107.

The "sign for Cain" begins a design pattern motif in the Hebrew Bible. When God confronts humanity's evil, he usually brings justice while also showing mercy. And he marks this distinction by means of a sign (*'ot* / אות), a symbol that itself communicates the meaning of the event on a deep level.

The rainbow (Gen 9:12-13) is a sign of God's judgment and rescue.

Genesis 9:12-15

[11]*"I set up **my covenant** with you;*
*and all flesh shall **never again be cut off by the water of the flood**,*
neither shall there again be a flood to ruin the earth."

[12]*And Elohim said,*
*"This is **the sign of the covenant***
which I am giving between me and you and every living creature that is with you,
for all successive generations;
[13]***I give** my bow in the cloud*,
*and it shall be for **a sign** of a covenant between me and the earth.*

[14]*It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that* **the bow will be seen in the cloud**,
[15]*and I will remember **my covenant**,*
which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh
***and never again shall the water become a flood to ruin** all flesh*."

Circumcision is a sign of God's judgment and of his eternal promise to raise up seed for Abraham.

Genesis 17:10-14

10"This is my covenant, which you shall keep,
between me and you and your seed after you:
every male among you shall be circumcised.
11And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin,
*and it shall be **the sign of the covenant** between me and you.*

12And every male among you who is eight days old
shall be circumcised throughout your generations,
a servant who is born in the house
or who is bought with money from any foreigner,
who is not of your seed...

*thus shall **my covenant** be in your flesh*
for an everlasting covenant.
14But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin,
that person shall be cut off from his people;
*he has broken **my covenant**."*

The plagues that God sends on Egypts are signs (Exod 10:2, see also Ps 78:43 and 105:27) of God's judgment and of his commitment to save the Israelites. God also gives a "sign" of the distinction between Egypt and Israel.

Exodus 10:1-2

*1Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that **I may set my signs among them**, 2and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how **I set my signs among them**, that you may know that I am the Lord."*

Exodus 8:21-23

21"For if you do not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and on your servants and on your people and into your houses...
22But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, the Lord, am in the midst of the land.
*23**I will set a division** between my people and your people. Tomorrow **this sign** will occur."*
24Then the Lord did so. And there came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh and the houses of his servants and the land was ruined because of the swarms of flies in all the land of Egypt.

The passover lamb's blood on the doorposts is a sign (Exod 12:12-13) of God's judgment and his mercy.

Exodus 12:12-13

12"For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night,
*and will **strike all the firstborn** in the land of Egypt, both human and beast;*
and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments.
I am Yahweh.
*13The blood shall be **a sign for you** on the houses where you live;*
and when I see the blood I will pass over you,
*and **there will be on you no plague to ruin you***
*when **I strike** the land of Egypt."*

Rahab's scarlet cords in Jericho are a sure sign (Josh 2:12) that God will spare her family when he brings his judgment on the city.

Joshua 2:12-13

*12"Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. **Give me a sign**, a reliable one 13that you will preserve the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will deliver us from death."*

Joshua 2:17-19

*17Now the men had said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us 18unless, when we enter the land, you have **tied this cord of scarlet thread** in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family* **into your house** *(הביתה). If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them."*

Cain's sign is the archetype of all these "signs of sparing." In each instance, Yahweh could strike and bring ruin indiscriminately, but instead ***he makes his mercy available to a remnant and he marks it with a visual sign***.

It just so happens that the first story to set up this design pattern *does not tell us what the sign is but only what it means:* that Cain stands under God's judgment for his murder and no one else has the legal or moral right to exact vengeance on him. But Cain also stands under God's mercy, which is marked by "a sign for Cain."

This is a good example of how design patterns work in the Hebrew Bible. In this case, the first appearance of a motif *is the most ambiguous*, and it is only through repetition that the motif gains clarity. Notice that all of the signs are visual phenomena (bow in the sky, cutting of flesh, blood on door frame, cord of scarlet thread on window).

It could be that in Genesis 4:15 we are given the content of the sign *in the form of Yahweh's declaration of protection for Cain*.

Gen 4:14b-15

And Cain said,
"...it will come about that **anyone who finds me**,
he will murder me!"

And Yahweh said to him,
"On account of this, **anyone who** *murders Cain,*
he will be avenged seven times."

And so Yahweh set for Cain a sign,
so that there would be no striking him,
anyone who finds him.

> *"Avenged seven times" — "[T]he meaning is not: whoever slays Cain will be punished seven times as much as one who kills any other person; such a penalty would not be in accord with justice. Seven [שֶׁבַע šebhaʿ] is the number of completeness (see Genesis 1); and* שִׁבְעָתַיִם *šibhāthayim—that is, seven times—connotes in complete measure, with the full stringency of the law. Compare Psalm 12:6 "gold that is purified seven times;" or Psalm 79:12 "return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbors." The one who slays Cain will deserve to be punished with the utmost severity, because he will be guilty of a dual offense: the crime of shedding blood, and the sin of contemning the Lord's judgement by augmenting the divine punishment."*
>
> — UMBERTO CASSUTO, A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS: PART I, FROM ADAM TO NOAH, 226.

It is Yahweh's verdict this this first human murderer, who should experience just consequences, is spared. This, Yahweh says, is "a sign for Cain." If Yahweh, who has full rights to eliminate Cain, does not do so, there is no right for anyone else to kill him. ***This is a potent sign: Yahweh does not want to take away life.***

This interpretation has the advantage of taking on board the meaning of all the future signs of mercy that repeat the design pattern which begins right here. It has the disadvantage of not being a visual cue, which all the later signs are.

> *"The precise nature of the sign remains uncertain, but its function is clear. As the clothing given to Adam and Eve after the fall (3:21) served to remind them of their sin and God's mercy, so does the mark placed on Cain. As a protective device against potential enemies it may stay death; in that sense, the anticipated punishment is softened. But at the same time it serves as a constant reminder of Cain's banishment, his isolation from other people."*
>
> — GORDON J. WENHAM, GENESIS 1–15, P. 110.

God's Mercy, Cain's Wife, and Cain's City

Immediately after God provides a protective sign for Cain, he "went out from before the face of Yahweh, and he settled in the land of 'wandering' (*nod* / נוד), *east of Eden"* (Gen 4:16). That is, he leaves the scene of 4:1-16, outside the "door" of the garden, and he leaves Eden, and therefore his family.

Outside of Eden, Cain does two things that surprise the reader that may have assumed Adam and Eve were the only/first human beings: (1) he impregnates his wife (where did she come from?), and (2) he builds a city (for whom?!).

Cain's wife: While no other siblings of Cain or Abel are mentioned in the story, we do learn in Genesis 5:4 that Adam and Eve did have other sons and daughters after Cain and Abel. But it is not likely that we are meant to think that Cain married one of his sisters. His exile from Eden is also an exile from his family; this seems to be the whole point of his punishment—isolation ("a vagrant and wanderer you will be," Genesis 4:12). Instead of assuming that Cain is going into a world empty of humans, this detail is one of the main indicators that Genesis 2:4-3:24 is an archetypal account of the first human priests, not of the first humans as such. In that case, Cain is returning the humanity from which his parents were selected.

Cain's City

Genesis 4:17: "and he built a city, and he called the name of the city, according to the name of his son, "Inauguration" (Heb. *khanok* / חנוך). There are multiple clues that this city is a negative, or at least as highly ambiguous, development.

After God's declaration of protection over Cain, Cain leaves Eden and provides his own form of protection by means of a city (= a walled collection of homes). The building of the first city, then, is a display of Cain's lack of trust in Yahweh's ability to "be his keeper."

This city protects the murderer Cain, much like the later cities of refuge (Numbers 35). And after multiple generations, Khanok will become the kind of place that protects an even more heinous murderer, Lemek.

In the literary design of Genesis 1-11, Cain's city corresponds to the building of the city of Babylon, which also represents a negative development.

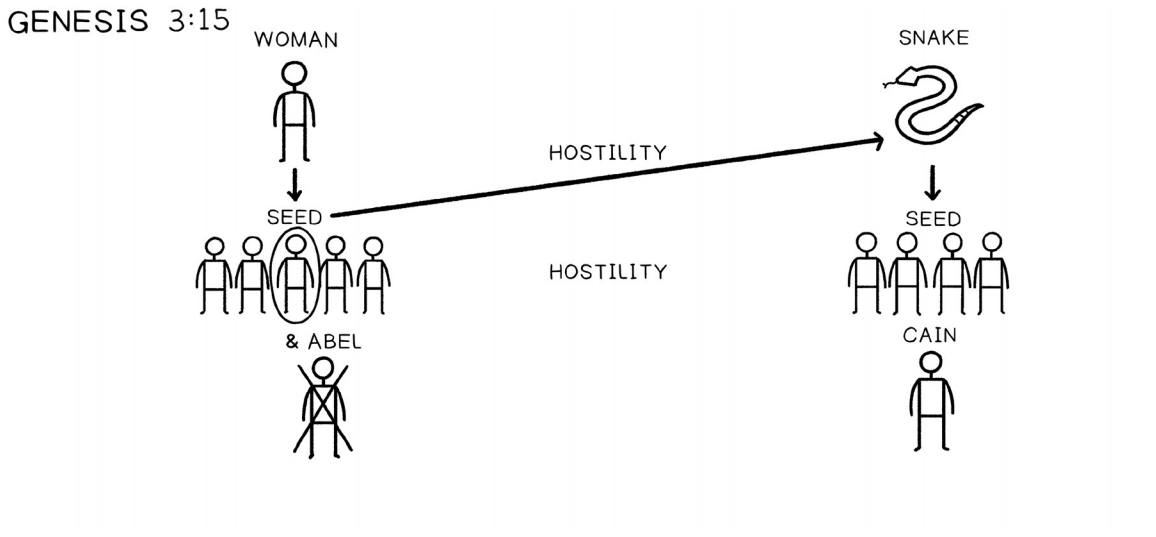
> *"Perhaps Cain's act is one of defiance. He has had enough of the life of the nomad. He refuses any longer to abide under God's terms. The only other reference to building a city in Gen. 1–11 is the incident at Babel: "Come, let us build ourselves a city ..." (11:4). Here the whole city-building, tower-erecting project is one that God condemns... Cain's act of city building is an attempt to provide security for himself, a security he is not sure that God's mark guarantees. In the words of J. Ellul, Cain "wants to find alone the remedy for a situation he created, but which he cannot himself repair because it is a situation dependent on God's grace."* — VICTOR P. HAMILTON, THE BOOK OF GENESIS, CHAPTERS 1–17, 238.

Genesis 3 and 4 As Mirror Stories

The story of Cain's murder has been designed as a mirror that develops and intensifies the story of his parents' failure inside of Eden.

	GENESIS 2-3: ADAM AND EVE	GENESIS 4: CAIN AND ABEL
Human given a significant choice about "good"	*2:14 From any tree of the garden you may eat, but from the tree of knowing* ***good*** *and evil you should not eat, because the day you eat from it you will surely die.*	*4:5-6 But Yahweh did not regard Cain's offering, and Cain was very angry... Yahweh said "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? Isn't it the case that if you do* ***good****, you will be lifted up?"*
Humans tempted by an "animal"	*3:1 Now the* **snake** *was more crafty than any creature of the field...and he said to the woman, "Did God really say not to eat from any tree in the garden?"*	*4:6 But if you don't do good,* **sin is crouching at the door***, and its desire is for you.*
Human gives into temptation with destructive consequences	*3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and desirable to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom... she took...*	*4:5 And Cain was very angry... [4:8] And Cain spoke to Abel his brother and while they were in the field Cain rose up against Abel his brother and murdered him.*

God shows up to ask a leading question	*3:9 And God called out to the human, and said "**Where are you** (איכה)?"* *3:12 And God said to the woman, "What have you done (מה עשית)?"*	*4:9 And God said to Cain, "**where is your** (אי) brother Abel?"* *4:10 And God said, "What have you done (מה עשית)?"*
Human dodges the question	*3:12 The human said, "The woman who you set with me, she gave to me and I ate."*	*4:9 I don't know! Am I my brother's keeper?*
The perpetrator is cursed	*3:14 God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, **you are cursed** from every beast and from every creature of the field."*	*4:11 And now **you are cursed** from the ground...*
Inverted desire	*3:16 Your desire will be toward your husband, and he will rule you.*	*4:7 Sin...its desire is toward you, and you will rule it.*
Working the ground will now be more difficult	*3:17b In pain you will eat from the **ground**.* *3:23 And God sent him from the garden of Eden to **work the ground.***	*4:12 For you will **work the ground**, and it will no longer give its strength to you.*
The human is banished from the divine presence	*3:24 And [God] banished the human and he camped east of the garden of Eden...*	*4:14 Behold, you have banished me from the face of the ground and from your presence... [4:16] And Cain settled in the land of Nod, **east of Eden.***



Session 28: Tale of Two Seeds

Key Question

Compare and contrast Cain and Lemek. How are their actions similar? Describe the trajectory the story takes while following Cain's descendants.

Session Quote

"This is the line of the snake. Cain and Lemek are both choosing the same path as the seed of the snake."

The Murderous Lemek: Genesis 4:19-24

a b b'	[19]And Lemek took for himself two wives: *the name of the one* was **Adah**, and *the name of the other*, **Zillah**.
a b a' b' a'' b'' c	[20]And **Adah** gave birth to *Yabal;* **he was the father** of those who **dwell in tents and have livestock**. [21]And his brother's name was *Yubal;* **he was the father** of all those who **play the lyre and pipe.** [22]And **Zillah**, *she also* gave birth to *Tubal-Cain*, **the forger** of all implements **of bronze and iron**; and the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.
a b a' b' a a' b b'	[23]And Lamech said to his wives, "**Adah** and **Zillah**, listen to my voice, wives of Lemek, hear my speech, for I have killed a *man* **for wounding me**; and a *boy* **for striking me**; [24]if Cain is avenged seven times, then Lemek seventy-seven times."

Lemek is the seventh generation from Adam through Cain, and his life culminates and distorts two God-given realities in the narrative.

- God provides the woman for the human in Genesis 2 > Lemek takes two wives for himself
- God provides Cain with mercy and a mark of protection > Lemek declares his own mark of protection

4:20-22: Lemek has three sons from his two wives, and each is associated with the development of human civilization in important ways.

All three sons' names are wordplays from two Semitic roots "water canal" (*yabal*) or "tribute offering" (*yobil/yubal*).

- Yabal (לבי) = "stream, river" (see Isaiah 30:25; 44:4) *or* "tribute, offering" (see Zeph 3:10)
- Yubal (לבוי) = "water course, canal" (see Jer 17:8) *or* "tribute, offering" (see Isaiah 18:7)
- Tubal-Cain (וקי לבות) = "tribute offering of Cain"
- Naamah = "pleasant"

Each of the three sons is titled the "father" of a cultural institution. The interest of the narrative is in the origins of human civilization and its diverse institutions.

YABAL	*"Father of those dwelling in tents and among herds"*	Animal husbandry on a mass scale
YUBAL	*"Father of those using the harp and the flute"*	Musical art
TUBAL-CAIN	*"Hammerer of those fashioning with iron and bronze"*	Metallurgy
NA'AMAH	*"Pleasant, sweet"*	See Genesis 6:1-2

This account would have stood in contrast to Israel's surrounding neighbors and their accounts for the origins of animal husbandry, music, and metallurgy. These are all viewed as divine wisdom received from the gods.

> *"[T]he development of the arts of civilization in the ancient Near East was typically attributed to the gods. [In Mesopotamian mythology] they were introduced to the human race by the seven divine sages (called the apkallu). In the Myth of Inanna and Enki, the patron goddess of Uruk, attempts to procure the arts of civilization from Enki, the lord of Eridu. Among the ninety-four 'arts' mentioned in the text are offices such as kingship and priesthood; objects such as sword and quiver; actions such as running, kissing, and lovemaking; qualities such as heroism or dishonesty; and abstractions such as understanding and knowledge. But pertinent to this passage, the list also includes the craft of the coppersmith (along with other crafts), the resounding lute and the art of singing, and the sheepfold."*
>
> — JOHN H. WALTON, GENESIS, 277.

> *"In the end, city building was a divine enterprise. Within this tradition, city building was related to, and a part of, creation, because creation involved the establishment of the world as the Mesopotamians knew it—not only in terms of the physical cosmos, but also including the civilized aspect of the social and economic world. In contrast, Genesis sees city building in purely human terms."* — JOHN H WALTON, ZONDERVAN ILLUSTRATED BIBLE BACKGROUNDS COMMENTARY, VOL. 1, 40.

> *"[T]he Mesopotamians believed that humankind was initially barbaric and primitive. Civilization, consisting of cities, kingship, arts, sciences and technology, among other things, was a gift from the gods, given to humans by the gods. Once humans received these civilizing elements from the gods, they moved beyond their initial state of primitivism and became civilized. For many of these cultural rudiments, the creator god and god of wisdom Enki is said to have passed them to humans, and the apkallu were often the instruments of this transmission. The Mesopotamians spoke of these cultural components as the M'E , a term used to quantify in concrete terms their conception of the various aspects of civilization.* — DANIEL DEWITT-LOWERY, TOWARD A POETICS OF GENESIS 1-11, P. 226.

Lemek's third son's name brings up Cain the murderer. The additional fact that he is associated with metallurgy, right before his father's murderous song gives an ominous and dark tone to Tubal-Cain's "metal work." One's mind immediately goes to the sword, which is precisely the interpretation offering in ancient Jewish tradition (see *Genesis Rabbah* 22:2-3).

The literary design of Genesis 4 leads the reader to view the advent of the city and metallurgy as highly ambiguous, or even negative, developments because of their association with the murderous violence of Cain and Lemek.

4:1-16: Cain's **murder** *(הרג) of his brother - avenged 7x*
4:17: Cain's <u>son</u>/city "Enoch" = civilization that multiplies murder
4:21-22: Lemek's <u>son</u> "Tubal-Cain" = civilization that invents weapons
4:22-23: Lemek's **murder** *(הרג) of a young man - avenged 77x*

The mention of Naamah as the sole daughter of Lemek, and the meaning of her name as "sweet, pleasant," is a link forward to Genesis 6:1-2. She is one of the "daughters of humanity," who will attract the unwanted attention of the sons of God. This is how Naamah's "sweetness" was understood by some ancient Jewish interpreters (see *Midrash Hagadol, vol. 1, p. 118)*, whereas others understood her to be Noah's wife (see *Genesis Rabbah*, 22:4).

4:23-24: Lemek's murder is also presented in language that previews the Sinai covenant legislation about limits of revenge, particularly the laws given in Exodus 21:25.

Genesis 4:23

I have killed a man for **wounding** *(פצע) me;*
and a young man for **bruising** *me (חבורה).*

Exodus 21:23-25

[23]But if there is any injury, then you shall assign:
life for life,
[24]eye for eye, tooth for tooth,
hand for hand, foot for foot,
[25]burn for burn, **wound** *for* **wound** *(פצע),*
bruise *for* **bruise** *(חבורה).*

Lemek has both exceeded the divinely ordained limit of retaliation, and he has redefined the divine law by his own authority. It is interesting that both Cain and Lemek's murders and the consequences are defined in the language of the later Sinai covenant laws.

A1 4:1-2 **Birth of Cain and Abel**	B1 4:3-16 **Cain Murders Abel**	A2 4:17-18 **Cain's Family Line**	B2 4:19-24 **Lemek Murders Another**	A3 4:25-26 **Birth of Seth to Replace Abel**
"And the human knew Eve his wife and she conceived and gave birth..."		"And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and gave birth..."		"And human again knew his wife and she gave birth..."
Eve boasts in her "divine" power (4:1) to create a "man" (איש)			Lemek boasts in his "divine" authority (4:24) to kill a "man" (איש)	Eve humbly receives the gift of another son (4:25)
	Narrative of murder and remorse		Narrative of murder and celebration	
	Cain's response is described in terms of Sinai covenant law about cities of refuge: Deut 19:10-12 **Seven times**		Lemek's response is described in terms of Sinai covenant law about retaliation: Exodus 21:25 **Seventy-seven times**	
Child is named in relation to Yahweh (4:1)		City is named in relation to humans ("the name of his son" 4:17)		Child named in relation to God (4:26), resulting in true worship

"Seventy-sevenfold [literally, 'seventy-seven'] /—that is, seventy-seven times as much. The number, needless to say, is not to be taken literally. Sevenfold means in perfect measure (see above, on v. 15); seventy-sevenfold signifies in overflowing measure, more than is due, many for one." — U. CASSUTO, A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS: PART I, FROM ADAM TO NOAH, 243.

"While Cain, Lamech's ancestor, would be avenged seven times over by God, Lamech takes it into his own hands to satisfy his desire for vengeance through a seventy-sevenfold retaliation. At this point, the principle of retributive justice is pushed to the point of becoming the caricature of itself. Moreover, there is a profound irony in Lamech's effrontery to refer to the divine protection of his ancestor Cain. As Lamech's 'immunity,' by contrast, is at the cost of unlimited violence, he has turned the divine grace to Cain into its ugly counterfeit... Any trivial inconvenience is occasion for Lamech to yield to violence. What he demands is not an eye for an eye, but a life for a wound. Lamech's song is the last spasm, so to speak, of Cain's murder story...bringing the horror of fratricide to its apex... The clouds are gathering that will soon bring about the Flood. " — ADAPTED FROM ANDRE LACOQUE, THE ONSLAUGHT AGAINST INNOCENCE: CAIN, ABEL, AND THE YAHWIST, 137-138.

"Unlike his ancestor several generations earlier who felt the desperate need of divine protection, Lamech feels he is his own security. He can handle any difficulty or any mistreatment quite adequately by himself. If Cain is avenged only sevenfold, he will be avenged seventy-sevenfold. He has no scruples about taking the law into his own hands. Lamech's chief characteristics, in line with his irregular marriages, are not commendable. He is not only replete with a spirit of vindictiveness, but he is also a proud man who backs away from nobody and does not hesitate to kill anybody. Cain's mind-set now surfaces in his great-great-great grandson." — VICTOR P. HAMILTON, THE BOOK OF GENESIS, CHAPTERS 1–17, P. 241.

If Adah and Zillah watched with pride as their sons developed husbandry, music, and metalworking, they listened with horror to their husband's violent blood lust. Lamek's seventy-sevenfold vengeance stands in contrast with the law of talion which limits retaliation to exact equivalence (Exod 21:25 "bruise for bruise," "hit for hit" echoes the terminology of Gen 4:23 exactly). By placing this comment at the end of the story of Cain, the editor suggests that all his descendants are under judgment and hints at the disaster to come. — GORDON J. WENHAM, GENESIS 1–15, 114.

[25]*And Adam knew his wife again*
and she gave birth to a son,
and she named him "Seth (שת)," because,
"God has appointed (שת) me another seed in place of Abel, for Cain killed him."

[26]*And to Seth, to him also a son was born;*
and he called his name Enosh.
Then it was begun, to call on the name of Yahweh.

Hope Reborn: The Arrival of Seth: Genesis 4:25-26

In contrast to Cain's birth, which Eve attributed to her own creative powers (4:1-2), and in contrast to Cain, who uses his son's name to memorialize his own city (4:17), this chapter ends with a chastened Eve, who now highlights God's generosity in giving her another son to replace the murdered Abel (and, less directly, the exiled Cain).

This portrait of Seth as the substitute of Abel is crucial. It begins a design pattern motif that echoes throughout Genesis-2 Kings.

- Seth is "in place of" (תחת) Abel
- The ram is offering "in place of" (תחת) Isaac
- Judah offers himself "in place of" (תחת) Benjamin...

In contrast to Cain's son Enoch, Seth now has a son, Enosh (אנוש), which means, "human." It's as if humanity gets a fresh start with Seth, which helps us understand the bright note on which this dark chapter concludes: the worship of Yahweh.

> *"The statement [is] saying that the worship of Yahweh began in the primeval time. With the birth of Seth, the child of promise, people started to invoke Him. Beforehand, to be sure, Yahweh has intervened in the course of history...But, properly speaking, no one had called on the Name of God, that is, until the end of Genesis 4 there is no prayer... Until Seth, it is here intimated, the humans had taken intercourse with the deity for granted... With the advent of Seth, however, something has changed in the relationship...the Name of God can now be called upon for help and to honor... What is of primordial import here is that...the invocation of Yahweh preceded the advent of the people of Israel. It is a theological statement: Yahweh is the God of the whole of humanity... Abram did not inaugurate the calling upon of Yahweh's name... rather Abram's conversion led him to join a chorus that began with Seth."* — ADAPTED FROM ANDRE LACOQUE, THE ONSLAUGHT AGAINST INNOCENCE: CAIN, ABEL, AND THE YAHWIST, 140-141.

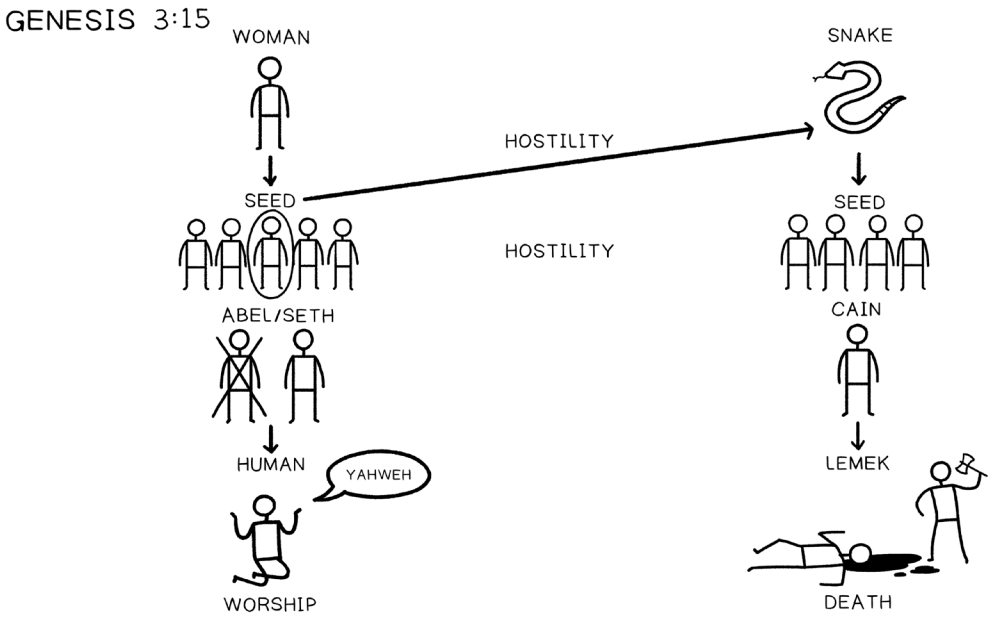
The two lines of Cain (Gen 4:17-24) and Seth (Gen 4:25-26; 5:1-32) are juxtaposed so that the reader notices all sorts of comparisons and contrasts.

Cain's Line: 4:17-24		Seth's Line: 4:25-26, 5:1-32
		0. God (+ repeat of 1:26-27)
1. Adam		1. Adam (אדם)
2. Cain (קין)		2. Seth (שת)
3. Enoch (חנוך)		3. Enosh (אנוש= "humanity")
4. Irad (עירד)		4. Kenan (קינן)
5. Mehuya'el (מחויאל)		5. Mehalelel (מהללאל)
6. Methusha'el (מתושאל)		6. Yered (ירד)
7. Lemek I (למך) [70 x 7]	contrast	7. Enoch (חנוך = "dedicated")
8. Yabal		8. Methuselah (מתושלח)
9. Yubal		9. Lemek II (למך) [700 + 70 + 7yrs]
10. Tubal-Cain [= "Produce of Cain"] *Three sons*		10. Noah (נח) *Three sons - Shem, Ham, Japheth*
Lemek's Perversion (4:23-24) Adam had 1 wife // Lemek has 2 wives Cain: divine blessing of 7x venegeance // Lemek: human curse of 7x + 70x vengeance		**Lemek's Promise (5:29)** Noah (נח) will bring comfort (נחם) to our "painful toil" (עצבון) and the cursed ground (אדמה/אררה) ➡ 3:17 Lemek lives 7 + 70 + 700 years
Blessing Becomes Curse		Curse Becomes Blessing

> *"The effect of the whole of Genesis 5, is to replace Cain with Seth as the second father of humanity. The human race continued only through the lineage of Adam's third son, Seth, the descendants of his first son Cain presumably having perished in the flood... Here we see a programmatic principle laid out...as the people of Israel and its royal and priestly dynasties are not derived from their families first-born, but from late-born sons. The people are descended not from Ishmael and Esau, but from Isaac and Jacob. The royal line is derived from Jacob's fourth son, Judah, and from David and Solomon, none of whom are the firstborn. The priest-hood is derived from Levi, Jacob's third son, and the priest's third and fourth sons Ithamar and Eleazar, not Nadab and Abihu the first and second born. In Cain and Seth, we can see that the same principle pertains not only within the chosen family, but with universal humanity as a whole: humankind is descended not from Cain but from Seth, not from Adam and Eve's first son, but from their third... In that case, Abel's death in the field is not final or irreversible, for upon it follows his assumption of the exalted status of ancestor of all who live. God's favor at the altar leads to more than fratricide. It leads also to the survival of the human family through the younger brother."* — JOHN LEVENSON, "FAVOR AND FRATRICIDE," 81

"The genealogy in Genesis 4:17-24 leading from Cain to Lamech, from one murderer to another, is by contrast an anti-genealogy which expresses through the list the whole sequence of human decisions undertaken outside of the order established by God at creation. The use of the genealogy to link two murderers is highly ironic. Their actions in bringing life to an end contradict the whole logic of the genealogies, which normally record the orderly continuation of life from one generation to the next. The irony, in turn, highlights a fundamental theme in Genesis, that human sin stands in profound contradiction to the created order of God. Cain's and Lamech's murders subvert the very nature of genealogical succession, which rests on the com- mand to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 1:28. Significantly, the genealogy of Seth, which reasserts the created order, appears after the subversion of the genealogical order in chap 4, so that the created order has the last word." — ROBINSON, "THE LITERARY FUNCTION OF GENEALOGIES IN GENESIS," P. 600.

"[C]omparing the two genealogies in Gen 4 and Gen 5... confirms our suspicions regarding the negative light cast on the first in contrast to the positive of the second. [T]he final editor juxtaposes these two genealogies for communicative effect... a "genealogical doublet": Whatever the origins of the two lines . .. the texts of Genesis 4 and 5, and particularly the recurrent similarity in names, invite an examination of their relationship. The text attaches Cain's Enoch to a city but Seth's Enoch moves beyond human culture to the world of the divine. . . Both Lamechs play pivotal roles in their lines and both have statements recorded in the text. But Cain's Lamech utters a cry of vengeance and with that terminates his line; while Seth's Lamech expresses the hope for a better life for his descendants, and with that introduces the offspring who will continue his line and play a role in trying to fulfill his wish. — DANIEL DEWITT-LOWERY, TOWARD A POETICS OF GENESIS 1-11: READING GENESIS 4:17-22 IN ITS ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CONTEXT, P. 108.



Session 29: 10 Generations from Adam to Noah

Key Question

What is the difference between Enmeduranki, a hero of the Sumarian King List, and Enoch, the corresponding character in the Genesis 5 genealogy?

Session Quote

"The author of Genesis 5-11 is going to tell a story that everyone would recognize, but at every turn, it's satire and parody on the Babylonian version of the story."

Ten Generations from Adam to Noah: Genesis 5:1-32

Literary Design and Translation of Genesis 5:1-32

After the humans are exiled from Eden, and after the drama that splits Adam and Eve's family into two lines, the narrative reboots and begins again. This time the genealogy follows the line of Seth, Cain's line having been concluded with Lemek and his sons. This genealogy has a highly schematic form, which makes the three narrative inserts stick out.

1	5:1-2, 3a	Narrative Insert	930 years
	5:3-5	Adam	
2	5:6-8	Seth	912 years
3	5:9-11	Enosh	905 years
4	5:12-14	Cainan	910 years
5	5:15-17	Mahalalel	895 years
6	5:18-20	Yared	962 years
7	5:21-24	Enoch	365 years
	5:22, 24	Narrative Insert	
8	5:25-27	Methuselah	969 years
9	5:28-31	Lemek	777 years
	5:29	Narrative Insert	
10	5:32	Noah	TBD...

Translation of Genesis 5:1-32

1 This is the scroll of the generations of Adam:
In the day when Elohim created humanity,
he made him as the likeness of Elohim,
2 male and female he created them,
and he blessed them
and he named them 'human'
in the day when they were created.

3 And Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years,
And he caused the birth of one
in his own likeness,
according to his image,
and named him Seth.
4 and the days of Adam after he caused the birth of Seth were eight hundred years,
and he caused the birth of sons and daughters.
5 and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years,
and he died.

6 and Seth lived one hundred and five years,
and he caused the birth of Enosh.
7 and Seth lived eight hundred and seven years after he caused the birth of Enosh,
and he he caused the birth of sons and daughters,
8 and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years,
and he died.

9 and Enosh lived ninety years,
and he caused the birth of Cainan.
10 and Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years after he caused the birth of Cainan,
and he caused the birth of sons and daughters.
11 and all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years,
and he died.

12 and Cainan lived seventy years,
and he caused the birth of Mahalalel.
13 and Cainan lived eight hundred and forty years after he he caused the birth of Mahalalel,
and he caused the birth of sons and daughters.
14 and all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years,
and he died.

15 and Mahalalel lived sixty-five years,
and he caused the birth of Jared.
16 and Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Jared,
and he caused the birth of sons and daughters.
17 and all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years,
and he died.

18 and Yared lived one hundred and sixty-two years,
and he caused the birth of Enoch.
19 and Yared lived eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch,
and he caused the birth of sons and daughters.

20 and all the days of Yared were nine hundred and sixty-two years,
and he died.

21 and Enoch lived sixty-five years,
and he caused the birth of Methuselah,
22 and Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah,
and he caused the birth of sons and daughters,
23 and all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years,
24 and Enoch walked with God;
and he was not, for God took him;

25 and Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years,
and he became the father of Lamech,
26 and Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of Lamech,
and he caused the birth of sons and daughters.
27 and all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years,
and he died.

28 and Lemek lived one hundred and eighty-two years,
and he caused the birth of a son,
29 and he called his name "Noah," saying,
"This one will give us rest from our work
and from the toil of our hands from the ground
which the Lord has cursed."
30 and Lemek lived five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah,
and he caused the birth of sons and daughters,
31 and all the days of Lemek were seven hundred and seventy-seven years,
and he died,

32 and Noah was five hundred years old,
and Noah he caused the birth of Shem, Ham, and Japheth...

Literary Design of Each Generation

A. This genealogy lists ten generations from Adam to Noah, each one given in an identical literary form:

and ____ lived _____ years,

and he caused the birth of [son's name].

and _____ lived _____ years after he caused the birth of [sons' name],

and he he caused the birth of sons and daughters,

and all the days of ____ were _____ years,

and he died.

Three Special People in Genesis 5

B. There are three figures whose genealogical entry deviates from this form, and at precisely these three points we find narrative inserts that highlight significant themes of Genesis:

#1 Adam

and ____ lived _____ years, and he caused the birth of [son's name].	3 And Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, and he caused the birth of one **in his own likeness,** **according to his image,** **and named him Seth**.
and ____ lived _____ years after he caused the birth of [sons' name], and he he caused the birth of sons and daughters,	4 And the days of Adam after he caused the birth of Seth were eight hundred years, and he caused the birth of sons and daughters.
and all the days of ____ were ____ years, and he died.	5 And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.

#7 Enoch

and ____ lived _____ years, and he caused the birth of [son's name].	21 and Enoch lived sixty-five years, and he caused the birth of Methuselah,
and ____ lived _____ years after he caused the birth of [sons' name], and he he caused the birth of sons and daughters,	22 and Enoch **walked with God three** **hundred years** after he became the father of Methuselah, and he caused the birth of sons and daughters,
and all the days of ____ were_____ years, and he died.	23 and all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years, 24 **and Enoch walked with God;** **and he was not, for God took him;**

#9 + #10 Noah

and ____ lived _____ years, and he caused the birth of [son's name].	28 and Lemek lived one hundred and eighty- two years, and he caused the birth of a son, 29 **and he called his name "Noah," saying,** **"This one will give us rest from our work** **and from the toil of our hands from the** **ground** **which the Lord has cursed."**

and ____ lived _____ years after he caused the birth of [sons' name], and he he caused the birth of sons and daughters,	30 and Lemek lived five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah, and he caused the birth of sons and daughters,
and all the days of _____ were _____ years, and he died.	31 and all the days of Lemek were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died,
and ____ **lived** (ויחי) _____ years, and he caused the birth of [son's name]. and ____ lived _____ years after he caused the birth of [sons' name], and he he caused the birth of sons and daughters, and all the days of ____ were _____ years, and he died.	32 and Noah **was** (ויהי) five hundred years old, and Noah he caused the birth of Shem, Ham, and Japheth... ... continued in 7:6 and 9:28-29

The Genealogy of Genesis 5 in Ancient Near Eastern Perspective

It seems very probable that the author of Genesis has drawn upon ancient Mesopotamian traditions about the generations of humanity before the flood and strategically adapted them to his own theological and communication purposes.

There was a widespread tradition in ancient Assyria and Babylon that the most ancient roots of civilization and kingship came from the gods from before the time of the flood. These traditions are expressed in a series of ancient texts called "The Sumerian King Lists," which are found in multiple versions [see Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King Lists*, 1939; and James VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition,* ch. 2].

Similarities to Genesis 5

THE SUMERIAN KING LISTS	GENESIS 5
There are ten kings from the creation of kingship to the flood and right after the flood	There are ten generations from Adam to the flood of Noah, who lives after the flood
The first king, Alulim, is appointed by the oldest gods	Adam and Eve (= *'adam,* "humanity") is appointed as the royal image of God to rule all creation
The final king is chosen to survive the flood	Noah, the tenth, is chosen to survive the flood

The ten kings rule for hyperbolically long periods of time (two versions are based on WB 62 and WB 444, see Jacobsen, *Sumerian King Lists*, 70-77) Alulim - 67,200 or 28,000 Alalgar - 72,000 or 36,000 Kidunnu - 72,000 or 43,200 Alimma - 21,600 or 28,800 Dumuzi - 21,600 or 36,000 Enmenluanna - 21,600 or 28,800 **Enmeduranki** - 36,000 or 21,000 Enmeduranna - 72,000 or 18,000 Ubartutu - 28,000 or [NA] Ziusudra - 36,000 or [NA]	The ten patriarchs live for long periods of time Adam - 930 years Seth - 912 years Enosh - 905 years Qenan - 910 years Mahalalel - 895 years Yared - 962 years **Enoch** - 365 years Methushelah - 969 years Lemek - 777 years Noah - 950 years
The seventh king Enmeduranki lived through the flood and has a unique role among the gods	The seventh patriarch Enoch does not die but is translated to God's realm because of his special relationship with God

This last connection between Enoch and Enmeduranki is important and has been the focus of much scholarship [see James VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, pages 33-51].

Enmeduranki is the seventh king who ruled in the ancient city of Sippar, whose patron deity was *Shamash*, the sun deity. Enoch is the seventh generation in Genesis 5, and his curiously shorter life corresponds exactly to the days of the solar year: 365.

Enmeduranki passed on traditions of divination and techniques for discerning the will of the gods. He received this ability because of a special experience he is said to have had.

> *"Shamash [the sun-god] in Ebabbarra [appointed] Enmeduranki [king of Sippar], the beloved of Anu, Enlil, [and Ea]. Shamash and Adad [the storm-god] brought him into their assembly, they honored him, and they set him on a large throne of gold...they gave him the tablet of the gods...a secret of heaven and the underworld...He is the learned sage, who guards the secrets of the great gods..."* — CITED FROM W.G. LAMBERT, "ENMEDURANKI AND RELATED MATTERS," IN JOURNAL OF CUNEIFORM STUDIES, VOL. 21 (1967), PAGES 126-138.

This text from the 12th century B.C. goes on to make Enmeduranki the founder of the guild of Mesopotamian diviners who are able discern the will of the gods. He was elevated to the divine realm to given secret knowledge of the gods, which was inscribed in texts that he then passes onto his descendants in Nippur, Sippar, and Babylon.

In the same period of the 12th century, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon makes a public claim that he is the descendant of Enmeduranki.

> *I am "distant heir of kingship, of seed preserved from before the flood, offspring of Enmeduranki, king of Sippar...who sat in the presence of Shamash and Adad, the divine judges..."* — CITED FROM W.G. LAMBERT, "ENMEDURANKI AND RELATED MATTERS," IN JOURNAL OF CUNEIFORM STUDIES, VOL. 21 (1967), PAGES 126-138.

These traditions have a clear similarity to the traditions of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who has a close association with God and is "taken" into the divine realm of eternal life. However, the role of Enoch in the story of Genesis has been strategically adapted to the theological message of the author, who is making a very different set of claims, ones that outshine the claim of Nebuchdnezzar!

While these traditions are hinted at in Genesis 5:21-24, it is clear that there was also a larger set of ancient traditions about Enoch as the master sage elevated to the divine realm, where he learned divine mysteries and revealed them to his son Methuselah. These traditions are found in the texts compiled together in 1 Enoch and 2 Enoch.

> *"Every indicator points to the conclusion that the author of [1 Enoch chs. 72-82] has fixed in writing a very old state...of Enochic lore... By presenting the seventh biblical patriarch as the person to whom God chose to reveal astronomical information, the writer ranks Enoch alongside other culture heroes from the various peoples of the ancient world. There was a widespread belief in the ancient Near East and in the classical world that knowledge about the sun, moon, and stars had been divulged to special individuals at the dawn of history." And here Enoch is set among their ranks.* — JAMES VANDERKAM, ENOCH AND THE GROWTH OF AN APOCALYPTIC TRADITION, P. 102.

Conclusions About Genesis 5 in Comparison With the Sumerian King List

It appears that the author of Genesis 5 is adapting a common Mesopotamian tradition about the ten generations from the origins of kingship to the flood. At each step, the story launches an implicit critique of Babylon's claim to divine origins and offers an alternative story instead.

- The gods of Babylon did not originate humanity or kingship. Rather, Yahweh the God of Israel created "humanity" (*'adam*) as male and female in God's image. All humanity was made to rule.
- The fantastically long reigns of the Sumerian kings were literary images of their divine nature and rule. In contrast, the long lives of the patriarchs in Genesis 5 are all ended by death. This is part of a strategy showing that the loss of Eden and the increasing distance and alienation from the Creator results in the diminishment of life.
- The seventh king Enmeduranki was elevated to the realm of the gods where he became the source of secret divine knowledge given to the elite Babylonian diviners. In contrast, the seventh patriarch Enoch is unique for his piety and communion with God, which results in his evasion of death and the gift of eternal life in Eden.

Genesis 5 is an Israelite version of the concepts being expressed in the Sumerian King List tradition that claimed divine authority for Babylon's kings. The biblical author subverts those claims and offers a revisionist version which places Israel's origins within these royal-priestly patriarchs, whose stories foreshadow the unique role that Israel will play among the nations later on in the story.

- The king and high priest will become "new Adams" who restore Eden through their royal and priestly ministries.
- The priests will embody a "new Enoch" who "walk with God" in the temple on behalf of Israel and opens the way to eternal life in the holy of holies.
- Moses, the priests, and David will embody "new Noahs" who will call out to God in the midst of divine judgment and be delivered so that they can offer intercession on behalf of others.

Adam, Seth, and the Image of God

In Genesis 5:1-3, we are shown that this promised line of the seed will be carried on through Seth, Adam and Eve's third son.

Genesis 5:1-3

[1]This is the scroll of the generations of 'adam:

In the day when God created adam,
in the likeness of God he made him,
[2]male and female he created them,
and he blessed them
and he named them 'adam
in the day when they were created.

[3]And Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years,
and he became the father of a son **in his own likeness, according to his image**,
and named him Seth.

Notice that *'adam's* relationship to *God* is described as "image and likeness," and this recalls all of the meaning and significance of Genesis 1:26-28. Now here in Genesis 5:1-3, Seth is describes as his father's image and likeness, on analogy to Adam's relationship to God.

The analogy illuminates in both directions:

1. If Seth is the "son of Adam" and can be called the image of Adam, then *'adam* too can be thought of as the "son of God," which becomes a synonym for "image of God."
    - ***Bonus***: Notice that Luke's genealogy of Jesus is constructed on this very conviction, tracing Jesus as "son of God" all the way back to Adam as "son of God" (see Luke 3:23-38).
2. If *'adam* (consisting of male and female) was the image of God, called to rule and represent God in the world, then now too Seth and his descendants are identified with the promise of Genesis 3:14-15, a future seed who will subdue the snake, rule the world on God's behalf, and undo what happened in Genesis 3.
    - ***Bonus:*** This connection between a future seed of the woman and the victory over the snake is exactly how the apostles came to see the victory of Jesus over death, (see 1 John 3:7-8).

This set of ideas in Genesis 1-5 formed the template for later narratives in the Hebrew Bible that depict certain human rulers as a "new Adam" who are given a chance to be the "image of God" and who rule the world on God's behalf and overcome the forces of "animal-like chaos" in the world.

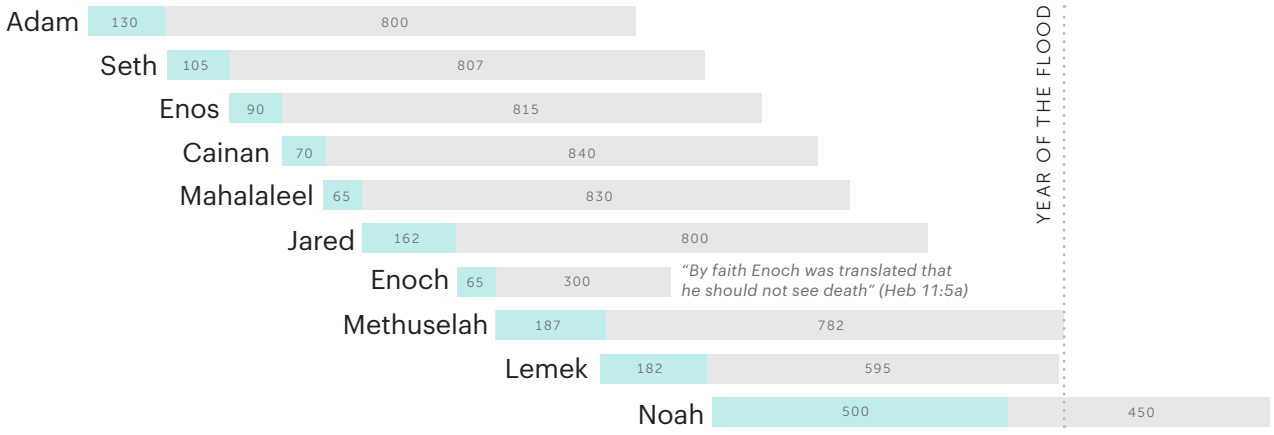
The Unique Role of Enoch in Genesis 5

1. Enoch lives the shortest time span of all ten patriarchs in Genesis 5 and is in fact placed in between the two longest-lived figures in the genealogy:

(Gn 5.3)	Adam	130 + 800 = 930
(Gn 5.6)	Seth	105 + 807 = 912
(Gn 5.9)	Enosh	90 + 815 = 905
(Gn 5.12)	Kenan	70 + 840 = 910
(Gn 5.15)	Mahalalel	65 + 830 = 895
(Gn 5.18)	Jared	162 + 800 = 962
(Gn 5.21)	Enoch	65 + 300 = 365
(Gn 5.25)	Methuselah	187 + 782 = 969
(Gn 5.28)	Lamech	182 + 595 = 777
(Gn 5.32)	Noah	500
(Gn 7.6; 9.28)	age at flood	600 + 350 = 950

Chart adapted from Jeremy Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology*, p. 7

2. If one follows the numbers of the years for each of the patriarchs and when he had children, a fascinating fact becomes clear.
    - All of the patriarchs who came before Enoch *were still alive when he was born*.
        - Enoch was born 622 years after Adam and Eve's creation according to the Masoretic Hebrew chronology in Genesis 5 [chart from viz.bible].
        - This means that among all of the patriarchs, including Adam, Enoch is singled out as *the one* who "walked with God" in a unique way. There is something superior about Enoch and his relationship to God that is, apparently, not true of his ancestors.



3. In Genesis 5:18-27, Enoch's story is modeled after all the others but differs at two strategic points:

#6 JARED	#7 ENOCH	#8 METHUSELAH
[18]And Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years,	[21]And Enoch lived sixty-five years,	[25]And Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years,
and became the father of Enoch.	and became the father of Methuselah.	and became the father of Lemek.
[19]And Jared ***lived*** eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch,	[22]And Enoch ***walked with God*** three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah,	[26]Then Methuselah ***lived*** seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of Lemek,
and he had sons and daughters.	and he had sons and daughters.	and he had sons and daughters.
[20]And all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years,	[23]And all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.	[27]So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years,
and he *died*.	[24]And Enoch ***walked with God***; and he *was no more*, for God took him.	and he *died*.

- Notice how Jared and Methuselah's "living" is in parallel with Enoch's "walking with God." This sets up an analogy between life and union with God: walking with God is true life.
- Notice also that Jared and Methuselah's "death" is contrasted with Enoch's "was not, for God took him." If one's life is defined by a close union with the author of life, then Enoch's "being taken" is not death but transformation into a new mode of existence.
- Notice also the double repetition of the phrase "Enoch walked with God." The first statement in 5:22 makes clear that this was his pattern of life for all 300 years, while the second statement in 5:24 implies that it was this special relationship with God that was connected to his "departure."

Why Enoch, the Seventh from Adam?

- "Enoch" (חנוך) means "dedicated" in Hebrew (used as a verb in Deut 20:5 and 1 Kings 8:63, both about "dedicating" a house or temple).
- Enoch's total age surely has symbolic significance: 365 years is the same as a solar calendar year.
- Enoch's piety is linked to that of Adam and Eve's in the garden of Eden and sets a pattern for later characters to attain.

Genesis 3:6, 8

"And [Eve] took (לקח) from its fruit and she ate."

"And [Adam and Eve] heard the voice of Yahweh walking (מתהלך) in the garden."

Genesis 5:22, 25

"And Enoch walked (ויתהלך) with the-Elohim..."

"And Enoch walked (ויתהלך) with the-Elohim, and he was not, because Elohim took (לקח) him."

- Enoch's way of life embodies the communion with God that Adam and Eve experienced and forfeited in the garden.
- Notice the inversion of "taking": Adam and Eve's "taking" results in the loss of walking with God, while Enoch's walking with God results in his being "taken."

What Does it Mean to "Walk with God"?

This phrase is used of Noah in Genesis 6:8-9, and in 1 Samuel 25:15-16, the phrase is used to refer to friendly and close contact between people.

Genesis 6:8-9

8But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. 9These are the records of the generations of Noah. **Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time***; Noah* ***walked with God****.*

1 Samuel 25:14-16

14But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Behold, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, and he scorned them. 15Yet the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything as long as ***we walked with them****, while we were in the fields. 16They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep."*

> *"[T]he meaning of the phrase... is obvious from 1 Sam 25:15-16, where it describes friendly everyday conduct with regard to one's neighbors. The [author of Genesis 5] understood the words in the sense that Enoch stood in a direct and immediate relationship to God..., and so was entrusted with God's plans and intentions. This is the starting point for the significance that the figure of Enoch had in a tradition that began early and reached its fullness only in the Apocalyptic literature."* — CLAUS WESTERMANN, A CONTINENTAL COMMENTARY: GENESIS 1–11, 358.

"With Elohim"

Although it is not reflected in English, the word *elohim* in 5:22 and 5:24 has the definite article "the" in front of it (האלהים). The phrase "the *elohim*" can be used to refer to the single deity Yahweh, but it can also be a way of referring to spiritual beings, members of the divine council, or angels (see Psalm 8:6; 82:1, 6; 97:7; 138:1).

Notice also that in the phrase "for God took him," the word *elohim* does not have the definite article (כי לקח אתו אלהים). In other words, Enoch walks with "the elohim" and so "Elohim" takes him.

This distinction seems like a meaningful one: Enoch's life was marked as one with friendly and intimate relations with the beings of the spiritual realm ("*the* elohim"), and so the chief elohim (named "Yahweh" later in the story) takes him.

This was how the story was universally understood in ancient Judaism (see 1 Enoch, or 2 Enoch).

"And he walked with the elohim, and he was not, because God took him."

In the middle of a genealogy that focuses on death as the sad curtain-closer on God's blessing for life, Enoch's evasion of death in the seventh generation sticks out. He is marked as the seventh (= "complete") human whose allegiance and union with God results in eternal life.

The word "took" (לקח) is a reference back to Genesis 2:15, where God "took" the human he had created and "rested" (wordplay on Noah's name: וינחהו) him in the garden. Enoch is set in analogy to the human of Genesis 2, that is, Enoch is transferred to the garden of Eden, the realm of eternal life. This is how

the earliest interpretation of the Enoch story goes, preserved in 1 Enoch chapters 24-32, in which Enoch is taken up in the Spirit and tours the cosmos until he arrives in Eden, the mountain of God.

Notice that the phrase is repeated in 5:22, but also in 5:24 which speaks of his "removal." This indicates that Enoch's intimacy with *the elohim* marked both his 365 years, and also during, and presumably after, his translation to another realm.

In a later story modeled after Enoch's divine disappearance, Elijah's departure happens in a similar way and with similar vocabulary.

2 Kings 2:9-11

*9When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before **I am taken** from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." 10He said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me **when I am taken** from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so."*
*11As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And **Elijah went up in a storm to the heavens**.*

Psalm 49:15

*But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for **he will take me**.*

The parallels between Adam and Enoch's being "taken" to Eden where they "walk with God" and the later design pattern of Elijah's departure suggest that Enoch is "taken" to Eden the cosmic mountain in the skies. This is the primary image of "the heavens" where God's space and human space are one. This is how Enoch is portrayed in Jewish literature outside the Hebrew Bible (see 1 Enoch 14, 71 and 2 Enoch).

> *"The passage, to be sure, gives the impression of being only a brief reference to a much more extensive tradition; it is an open question, therefore, whether much of the apocalyptic Enoch tradition is not really very old and precedes in time (not follows) the Priestly narrative."* — GERHARD VON RAD, GENESIS: A COMMENTARY, TRANS. JOHN H. MARKS, REVISED EDITION, 72.

Noah as the Promised "Comforter" of Humanity in Genesis 5

28 And Lemek lived one hundred and eighty-two years,
and he caused the birth of a son,
29 **and he called his name "Noah," saying,**
"This one will give us rest from our work
and from the toil of our hands from the ground
which the Lord has cursed."

Lemek's anticipation of a future descendant who will bring an end to the curse picks up the macro-theme of (1) humanity's exile from Eden and the curse of death and (2) the promise of a coming "seed" who will overcome the snake and its work.

Every line of Lemek's words has significant hyperlinks back to various texts in Genesis 1-3:

And he called his name "**Noah** (נח)," saying, *"This one will give us* **comfort** *(נחם) from our work (מעשה) and from the painful toil (עצבון) of our hands, from the ground (האדמה) which the Lord has cursed (אררה)."*	*2:15 And Yahweh Elohim took the human and he* **rested him** *(וינחהו) in the garden of Eden, to work it (עבד) and to keep it.* *3:17 Cursed is the ground (ארורה האדמה) because of you, with painful toil (עצבון) you will from it…until you return to the ground (האדמה), for from it you were taken…* *3:23 And Yahweh Elohim sent him out from the garden of Eden to work (עבד) the ground (האדמה) from which he was taken…*

Noah's name is given significant theological meaning by means of a wordplay.

"Noah" (נח) // "rest" (נוח) // "comfort" (נחם)

Noah's name is spelled like the word "rest" and rhymes with the first two letters of the word "comfort."

By means of this association, Noah's role in the story is previewed and given a theological interpretation. His obedient actions and his role as the surviving remnant in the generation of the flood are the ways that God is bringing rest and comfort to his world.

Rest (נוח) is a major theological theme in the Tanak in describing the restoration of Eden conditions on Earth as in Heaven. When God brings rest, it involves restoring a realm of order and sacred space where God can dwell with his people (see Deut 3:20; 12:10; Josh 1:13; 21:44; 2 Sam 7:1, 11; 1 Kgs 5:18). Comfort (נחם) is a major theme in the Prophets, especially Isaiah, and it describes the era of restoration when the failure of God's people is forgiven, their exile is over, and God renews the covenant with them in a restored Eden.

All of this points forward to Noah's crucial act of worship and obedience as he emerges from the ark in Genesis 8:20-22. In the narrative arc of Genesis 2-9, Noah is placed before the reader as an image of the promised seed of Genesis 3:15:

> *He is the righteous seed who, passes the test through obedience to God's will, survives as a remnant through the waters of death to offer a precious sacrifice. This qualifies him to become the new humanity at the helm of a renewed creation that lives in a new covenant relationship with its Creator.*

This narrative forms the thematic template for every single story to follow in the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

The Abraham Story

- Called out of "Ur of the Chaldeans"
- Given the promise of blessing and for all nations
- Fails many of his tests…
- …until he passes the ultimate test by offering a sacrifice
- His sacrifice releases God's covenant blessing to all nations

The Moses Story

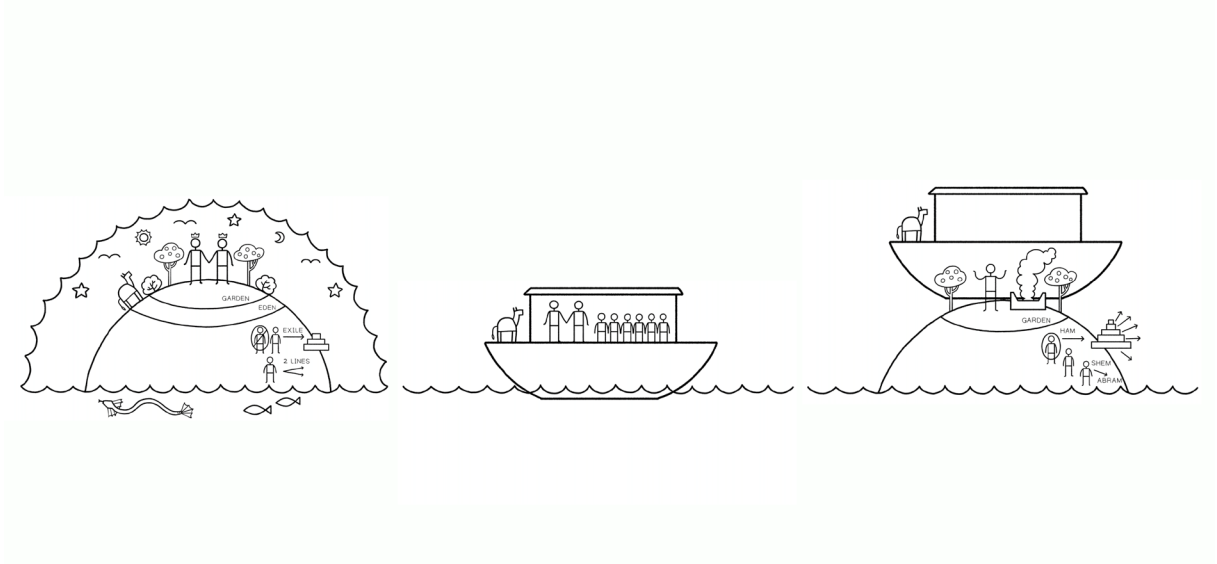
- Rescued in an “ark” through the waters of death
- Leads Israel to offer the Passover lamb
- God leads all the people through the waters to dry land
- Mediates a covenant with Israel to be priests for the nations
- Israel fails its test, Moses offers himself as a sacrifice
- God comes to take up residence with his people in a micro-Eden

The Story of Judah and Exile

- Joshua leads the people to “subdue” the land of rest
- The people are given “rest” in the land
- The Israelites fail their many tests in the land and are exiled
- An obedient remnant survives exile and receives a message of comfort and restoration
- Restoration comes through the obedient self-sacrifice of the servant
- The servant’s obedience unto death released blessing and new covenant to the nations

The Story of Jesus

- A new Joshua who will lead Israel into the new creation
- Jesus warns of a great flood of divine justice that is coming to Israel
- Jesus offers himself as a sacrifice, suffering the flood of exile and death
- Jesus’ obedience unto death leads to resurrection life and releases blessing and a new covenant for all nations



Unit 6: Engaging With Genesis 2-5 Today

SESSIONS: 30-32

Session 30: How Biblical Authors Tell the Truth

Key Question

Summarize what John Walton means when he says Hebrew Bible narrative is "imagistic." Does Walton's description help you understand Genesis better?

Session Quote

"There is something that the biblical authors believe is real and truthful here, but what makes it difficult is that how they represent truth is so different than how we conceive of historical truth. It's hard for us not to kill the butterfly as we seek to analyze it."

Two Asides: Eden, Mythology, and the Historical Adam Debate

The Eden Story as Imagistic Narrative (Instead of "Mythology")

The debate about the literary style of Genesis 1-11 "goes beyond the labeling of a genre of literature; it concerns the process by which literature of any genre is conceived and composed. The ancients think differently; they perceive the world in different ways, with different categories and priorities than we do.

In our culture, we think "scientifically." We are primarily concerned with causation, composition and systematization. In the ancient world they are more likely to think of the world in terms of symbols and to express their understanding by means of imagery. We are primarily interested in events and material realia whereas they are more interested in ideas and their representation.

[To describe this way of representing history] the word group image/imagery/imagination/imaginative would work well (though imaginary would be incorrect). A rhetoric using mythical imagery is easily discernible in biblical poetry (e.g., "from the heavens the stars fought" or "crushed the heads of Leviathan" [Ps 74:14]), and it becomes formalized in the genre of apocalyptic. Nevertheless, it is not absent from prose. To describe this sort of thinking, I would like to adapt the term imagistic.

Rather than attempting to define it, in accordance with true imagistic thinking, I will instead describe it by illustrations. Imagistic thinking and representation would stand in contrast to scientific or analytical thinking. We can see the difference if we compare two visual representations of the night sky—one taken by the Hubble telescope, the other presented by Vincent van Gogh's The Starry Night. People would never consider doing astronomy from the van Gogh and could not do so even if they wanted to; the image contains nothing of the composition or position of stars. At the same time, we would not say that it is a false depiction of the night sky. Visual artists depict the world imagistically, and we recognize that this depiction is independent of science, but not independent of truth. The ancients apply this same imagistic conception to all genres of literature, including those that we cannot conceive of as anything other than scientific. Imagistic history, like that preserved in Genesis, is to history as The Starry Night is to a Hubble photograph...

Imagistic thinking presents difficulties [for modern people]. Israelites found no problems thinking about Ezekiel's vision of Egypt as a cosmic tree (Ezek 31). This does not warrant labeling the literature mythology, nor does it concern questions of reality or truth. Some might consider the trees, the garden and the snake to be examples of imagistic thinking without thereby denying reality and truth to the account. The author understands trees in a way that does not simply indicate a botanical species of flora with remarkable chemical properties. When we put these elements in their ancient Near Eastern context and recognize the Israelite capacity, and even propensity, to think in imagistic terms, we may find that we gain a deeper understanding of important theological realities.

Some scholars today believe that Israel was in the habit of borrowing other people's myths and transforming them into a mythology of their own. I do not share that perspective. What is sometimes perceived as a shared mythology is more often a shared propensity to think imagistically about the same issues using a shared symbolic vocabulary." — JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE, 136–139.





Session 31: Discussion on Different Ways of Representing Reality

Key Question

What are your biggest challenges or questions when reading Genesis? Has this discussion helped you resolve some of those challenges or at least hold them in tension with the message of the biblical authors?

Session Quote

"We are always bringing some greater, transcendent narrative to bear to describe what happened."

Notes

No notes included in this session.

Session 32: Discussion on Different Ways of Representing Reality

Key Question

Tim outlined three different ways to answer the historicity question: literary-symbolic, first ancestor, and archetypal. Briefly summarize each view.

Session Quote

"Each of these views are paying attention or highlighting certain things in the text but having to underplay others."

The Historical Adam and Eve Debate

The two most common underlying issues:

- (a) Concern for the historical truthfulness of the Bible's narratives
- (b) Concern for the integrity of the good news about Jesus that (a) his life, death, and resurrection brought about a divine rescue from (b) a terrible fate that traps all humanity
- The debates about the historicity of Genesis 1-3 are not simply about how to interpret an ancient text. They are animated by concern to protect and promote the good news about Jesus that presents itself as a solution to the problems introduced in Genesis 1-3.

(a) Historical Truthfulness of the Bible's Narratives

- The modern debates often equate historical truthfulness with a common sense, *literal* reading of Genesis 1-3 in English. In other words, they don't always honor the ancient historical and cultural context of the narratives and what the authors mean to communicate in Hebrew.
- We should care more about the *literary meaning:* the meaning intended by the ancient author within their own context. When we do this, we find that a spectrum of views are currently put forward by scholars who all embrace orthodox Christian beliefs and who hold the conviction that the Scriptures are the result of divine inspiration.

1. **The Literary-Symbolic View**

- *Description*: Adam and Eve are purely literary figures in a divinely inspired story meant to prefigure the identity and failure of all the following failure narratives in the Bible.
- With this view, the Eden story is intended as a parable prologue to the rest of the biblical story, and Adam and Eve are symbols of the patriarchs and matriarchs of Genesis, and of the Israelites in the promised land.

- Current representatives:
    - Daniel Harlow, "After Adam: Reading Genesis in an Age of Evolutionary Science," in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith,* vol. 62 (2010), 179-195.
    - Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Origins*.
    - Dennis Lamoureux, *Evolutionary Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution*.
    - Dennis Venema and Scot Mcnight, *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science*.
    - Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*.

2. **The First Ancestor View**

- Description: Adam and Eve are two actual people, specially created (*"de novo"*) by God in precisely the way the text describes, and apart from any previous hominid ancestors. They are also the actual first ancestors of all following human beings.
- With this view, the narratives do not contain metaphorical imagery or symbolism but are offering a description of what actually happened at the origins of the human race on planet earth.
- Current Representatives:
    - William D. Barrick, "The Historical Adam: A Young-Earth Creation View," in *Four Views on the Historical Adam*.
    - Kevin DeYoung, "Ten Reasons to Believe in a Historical Adam," [Essay posted on gospelcoalition.org, Feb 7, 2012]

3. **The Aarchetypal View**

(3a) The archetypal, first ancestor of all humanity

- *Description*: Adam and Eve are both the archetypal representatives and the first biological ancestors of all human beings, but the narratives are told in style and imagery of ancient Hebrew culture. We should not assume a simple reference between textual imagery and what we might consider historical reality.
- Current representatives:
    - C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who Were They and Why Should You Care?*
    - William Stone, "Adam and Modern Science," in *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin*.
    - Fazale Rana with Hugh Ross, *Who Was Adam? A Creation Model Approach to the Origin of Man*.

(3b) The archetypal representative of all humanity

- *Description:* Adam and Eve are real archetypal representatives of humanity, but not necessarily the first biological ancestors. The narratives are told in the ancient Hebrew style that uses imagery and metaphor to communicate truths about history. The narrative refers to a "real" history through an image-expressive medium.
- Current Representatives:
    - John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*.
    - Derek Kidner, *Genesis: Tyndale Old Testament Commentary*.
    - Joshua McNall, "Where Are You, Adam? Recapitulation and the Human Origins Debate," p. 48-73.

(b) Does the integrity of the good news about Jesus depend on a first ancestor Adam and Eve or on a representative Adam and Eve?

In the New Testament, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is portrayed as a divine resolution to the problems of death and sin that began in the Adam and Eve story.

- Luke presents the baptism and mission of Jesus (Luke 3:1-22, 4:1-44) with a genealogy that traces his lineage back to Adam and God (Luke 3:23-38).
- In Romans 5:12-21, Paul presents Jesus as a "second Adam."

Romans 5:12-21

[12]Therefore,
just as ***through one human sin entered into the world,***
and death through sin,
and so death spread to all humans, because all sinned...

[13]For until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.
[14]Nevertheless ***death reigned from Adam*** *until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of* ***the offense of Adam, who is a pattern of him who was to come***.

[15]But the free gift is not like the transgression.
For if by ***the transgression of <u>the one</u>***
the many died,
How much more did the grace of God
and the gift by ***the grace of <u>the one</u> human, Jesus Christ****,*
abound to the many.

[16]The gift is not like that which came through **the one who sinned***;*
for on the one hand the judgment
arose from one transgression
resulting in condemnation,
but on the other hand the free gift
arose from many transgressions
resulting in justification.

[17]For if by the transgression of the one,
death reigned through the one*,*
How much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness
reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

[18]So then,
*just as **through one transgression***
there resulted condemnation to all humans,
*even so **through one act of righteousness***
there resulted justification of life to all humans.

*[19]For just as **through the one man's disobedience***
the many were made sinners,
*even so **through the obedience of the one***
the many will be made righteous.

[20]The Law came in so that the transgression would increase;
but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

*[21]so that, **just as sin reigned***
in death,
*even so **grace would reign** through righteousness*
to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

[21]For since by a human came death,
by a human also came the resurrection of the dead.
[22]For as **in Adam** *all die,*
so also **in Christ** *all will be made alive.*

It is clear that in Paul's thinking, Jesus provides a solution for a problem that all humanity has—it began with Adam and was intensified by the gift of the Torah to Israel.

In Romans 5:12, Paul's statement that through the sin of one human, death spread to all is capable of multiple interpretations:

- (a) Eden represents an idyllic state of creation pre-fall, where there was no death, disease, or pain of any kind. The first human sin spoiled this ideal, perfect state by introducing sin and with it, death.
- (b) Death was a reality outside the garden in the wilderness, but Adam and Eve were chosen out of the realm of non-order and placed in proximity to eternal life. The introduction of "death" in Romans 5:12, then, has to do with humanity's loss of the gift of eternal life that was offered to the first image of God, royal priests. It does not infer that biological death was not present outside the garden before the narrative of Genesis 2:4 and following.

Adam and Original Sin and Original Guilt

In the early Latin translation of the New Testament, called the *Vulgate* (produced throughout the 4th century A.D.), Romans 5:12 was translated incorrectly:

Romans 5:12 in Greek and English

...Through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and in this way death spread to all humans, ***because*** (Grk. *eph ho* / ἐφ᾽ ᾧ) everyone sinned...

In the Latin Vulgate, the word "***because***" was incorrectly translated, resulting in the following:

...By one man sin entered into this world and by sin death: and so death passed upon all men, ***in whom*** all have sinned.

- This translation was in the Bible of Augustine of Hippo, a north African Bishop in the 4th century. In his influential *City of God,* book, he formulated the doctrine today called "original sin."
- More important was his conclusion that Romans 5:12 implies that all humans who descend from Adam are held accountable for his sin and so inherit biologically from him both (a) original sin (the inclination toward sin) and (b) original guilt (the consequences for his act).
- This is the logic behind his theological view that the vast majority of humanity is non-elect, including unbaptized infants who are destined for eternal death (*On the Soul and Its Origin,* ch. 10).

However, this formulation of original sin and original guilt has questionable biblical foundations. For the details, see Stanley Porter, "The Pauline Concept of Original Sin," in *Tyndale Bulletin,* vol. 41 (1990), 22-26; and Oliver Crisp, "On Original Sin," in *International Journal of Systematic Theology,* vol. 17.2 (2015), p. 1-15.

- Paul does not say that all humanity sinned "in Adam." Rather, he says Adam's first sin began a domino effect that led to "everyone sinning" and so bringing the consequences of *their own choices* upon themselves.
- When Paul says that Adam's sin lead to "condemnation for all" (Rom 5:18), this does not necessarily mean that every person is now "condemned" for their distant ancestor's sin. Rather, it seems that Paul is offering a straightforward explanation of the narrative design of Genesis, in which every following generation replays the sin of Adam and Eve in their own way, and so experience divine judgment and grace as a result.

Adam and Eve can still be archetypal representatives for all humanity without being the first biological pair of humans.

- Adam and Eve are portrayed as priests. In the Torah, the priest's representative role *does not depend on their biological priority over those whom they represent*. Rather, it is their shared humanity that qualifies them (as in the argument of Hebrews 1-8).
- Jesus is clearly portrayed as humanity's high priest, even over those who do not descend from him (he didn't marry!). If Jesus' right standing before God can be attributed to us apart from biological descent, then our covenant relationship with God stands independent of ancestry. Why should Adam's act have relevance only for his biological descendants if, in fact, he was appointed as a representative priest?
- Priests are selected from a larger group to represent the many. If this is the model on which the Adam and Eve story is formed, then it explains the sudden presence of other humans outside of Eden (Cain's wife, the inhabitants of his city), and perhaps before Eden (the humanity of Gen 1).

> *"If other homonins lived before Adam, then one must account for what makes Adam distinct. The divine image is an excellent candidate... This creature is patterned after the one who is the true image of the invisible God... [Resulting in] a relationship that never before existed...a vocation of authentic moral responsibility that allowed Adam to transcend animal instinct in order to mirror (or fail to mirror) the image of [God]... If these image bearers were indeed selected from the mass of (nonhuman) homonins, then the parallels between Adam and Israel are deepened... Just as God chose Israel from the rest of mankind for a strange, special, demanding vocation, so perhaps what Genesis is telling us is that God chose one pair from the rest of early hominids for a similar vocation. In this way the election of Adam bears a relation to the vocation of Israel, just as the bestowal of the image upon Adam's 'collaterals' bears a resemblance to the New Testament inclusion within God's great family."* — ADAPTED FROM JOSHUA MCNALL, "WHERE ARE YOU ADAM? RECAPITULATION AND THE HUMAN ORIGINS DEBATE," P. 72-73.