

GENESIS

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Genesis, meaning "origin" (genealogical), covers the time from creation to the descent of Jacob and his sons into Egypt. The book is generally divided into a "primeval history" focusing on all of humanity (chs 1-11) and an "ancestral history" focusing on Abraham and his descendants (chs 12-50).

The primeval history has two major sections that parallel each other: (1) the creation of the cosmos and stories of the first humans (1.1-6.4); and (2) the flood and dispersal of post-flood humanity (6.5-11.9). It features universal traditions similar to myths in other cultures, particularly in the ancient Near East and Greece. For example, the Mesopotamian Atrahasis epic was written hundreds of years before chs 1-11, yet it parallels numerous particulars of the biblical narrative as it describes the creation of the world, a flood, and the vow of the gods (here plural) not to destroy life with a flood again.

The ancestral history picks up where the primeval history left off and tells the story of God's choice of Abraham and the transmission of the promise (12.1-3) down to the twelve sons of Jacob/Israel, the progenitors of the people of Israel. These stories are closest to oral folklore, so it is often difficult to find ancient textual parallels to chs 12-50. Nevertheless, recent scholarship has found similarities between Israelite tales about the patriarchs and patriarchs and modern legends told in oral cultures. For example, there are some striking parallels between the depiction of the clever deceptions of Jacob and others (e.g., 25.27-34; 27.1-45) and the celebration of wily "tricksters" in Native American and other traditions.

These different parts of Genesis are united by a set of "toledot" ("descendants") headings, each of which guides the reader in the major focus of the section that follows it (2.4, 5.1; 6.9; 10.1; 11.10; 11.27; 25.12; 25.19; 36.1, 9; 37.2). They lead from a focus on the world at the outset to the final focus of the book on the twelve sons born to Jacob. In addition, other patterns also characterize these genealogically defined sections, such as the parallels between the pre-flood and flood/post-flood stories of chs 1-11 that were noted above. Using these kinds of guides, we can outline Genesis as follows. The narrative opens with the pre-flood primeval history, creation and its aftermath (including Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, etc.); 2.4-6.8. It then moves to the flood and post-flood primeval history, the re-creation of the world and replay of destructive patterns from before the flood (Noah and his sons, Tower of Babel); 6.9-11.9. Then follows a genealogical bridge to the ancestral history: 11.10-26. The longest part of the narrative is the ancestral history, the giving of the promise to the sons of Jacob/Israel: 11.28-50.26. This is in three parts: First, the gift of the promise to Abraham and divine designation of Isaac (not Ishmael) as heir of the promise (11.28-25.11); second, the divergent destinies of the descendants of Ishmael (25.12-18) and Isaac (Esau and Jacob in 25.19-35.29); third, the divergent destinies of the descendants of Esau (36.1-43) and the sons of Jacob/Israel (Joseph and his brothers in 37.1-50.26).

Genesis has been a major focus of study for almost every approach in biblical scholarship. Two hundred and fifty years of historical-critical scholarship have established that Genesis was written over a long period of time, using oral and written traditions. In particular, most scholars now recognize that Genesis is a postexilic combination of two bodies of material: (1) a "Priestly" editorial

layer or source (P) beginning with the seven-day creation account in 1.1-2.3, and (2) a "non-Priestly" source beginning with the garden of Eden story in 2.4-3.24. In addition to 1.1-2.3, the Priestly layer encompasses most of the genealogies in Genesis, the above discussed genealogical headings, a version of the flood narrative that culminated in the Noah covenant of 9.7-17, the covenant of circumcision with Abraham in 17.1-27, and related promise texts in 26.3-4-35; 27.46-28.9; 35.9-15; and 48.3-6. The non-Priestly layer encompasses almost everything else. In its present form the Priestly layer is integrally related to the non-Priestly material and forms an editorial framework for non-Priestly material, and whether a large portion of the present Priestly layer in Genesis once may have been part of a Priestly source that originally stood separate from the non-Priestly material and had even been designed to replace it.

Ever since the work of Graf and Wellhausen in the late nineteenth century, most scholars have recognized that the earliest origins of Genesis probably are to be found in the non-Priestly material. Nevertheless, there is considerable debate about the history of the formation of that material. Over the last hundred years most scholars have maintained that the bulk of the non-Priestly material of Genesis was formed out of the combination of materials from two hypothesized Pentateuchal sources: a "Yahwistic" document (J) written in the South during the reign of David or Solomon and an "Elohistic" document (E) written one or two centuries later in the Northern kingdom of Israel. Recently, however, many would date crucial elements of the hypothesized "Yahwistic" document four hundred years later to the time of exile. Moreover, many specialists working with Genesis no longer think there was an "Elohistic" source. Rather than non-Priestly material being formed out of interwoven "Yahwistic" and "Elohistic" documents, some scholars think that the earliest written origins of the non-Priestly material are to be found in hypothesized preexilic independent documents focusing on different parts of the story; for instance, a separate, Atrahasis-like "primeval history" or separate Jacob and Joseph stories. Thus, the early history of the written formation of Genesis and other Pentateuchal books remains an unresolved problem in Pentateuchal research.

Recent years have seen a proliferation of other approaches to Genesis, particularly literary studies of Genesis in its present form and feminist rereadings of the plentiful narratives in Genesis featuring women. For example, some feminist scholars have questioned whether the garden of Eden story in 2.4-3.24 is as critical of women as it has often been seen to be. Others have highlighted the crucial role of the patriarchs as actors in the Genesis drama, especially as determiners of which son of a given patriarch will inherit the promise (e.g., Sarah and Rebekah) or as influencers of the levels of privilege among brothers (e.g., Rachel).

Because of the mythic and legendary character of much material in Genesis, it is less often used now than it once was as a reliable source of historical information. Yet, perhaps partly as a result of its long process of formation, the book of Genesis has proven its ability to speak to people of varying cultures and times. It is not just a story about things happening in a bygone age. It is a crystallization of Israel's most fervent beliefs and hopes as expressed in genealogy and vivid narrative.

GENESIS 1.1-1.14

1 In the beginning when God created^a the heavens and the earth,² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God³ swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

1.1-11.26. The primeval history: From creation to the birth of Abraham. This unit is composed of two principal layers, a Priestly source that also provides an editorial framework, and a non-Priestly narrative, identified by many scholars as belonging to (the Yahwist).

1.1-2.3: Creation culminating in sabbath. This Priestly account of creation presents God as a divine ruler, creating the universe by decree in six days and resting on the seventh. **1.1:** Scholars differ on whether this verse is to be translated as an independent sentence summarizing what follows (e.g., "In the beginning God created") or as a temporal phrase describing what things were like when God started (e.g., "When God began to create . . . the earth was a formless void"; cf. 2.4-6). In either case, the text does not describe creation out of nothing (contrast 2 Macc 7.28). Instead, the story emphasizes how God creates order from a watery chaos. **2:** As elsewhere in the Bible, the deep (Heb "tehom") has no definite article ("the") attached to it in the Heb. Some see "tehom" here to be related to the Babylonian goddess Tiamat, a divinity representing oceanic chaos, whom the head god, Marduk, defeated in *Enuma Elish*, a major Babylonian creation story. Christian interpreters have tended to see the "Spirit" of the Trinity later in this verse. *Wind* fits the ancient context better (see 8.1). **3:** The first of eight acts of creation through decrees, themes crucial to this account: the goodness of creation and the idea that creation is accomplished through God's separating, ordering, and naming elements of the universe. These verses introduce two other themes crucial to this account: the goodness of creation and the idea that creation is accomplished through God's separating, ordering, and naming elements of the universe. The seven-day scheme of 1.1-2.3 requires the creation of light, day, and night at the outset. Since in some traditions the Jewish day began with sundown, the order is *evening and morning*. **6-8:** The *dome/sky* made on the second day separates creation can take place. **9-13:** Two creative acts: creation of dry land and command of that land to bring forth vegetation. *Earth* is a feminine noun in Heb. The text thus echoes other ancient mythologies and involved indirectly here, commanding the earth to *put forth*. **14-19:** There is a correspondence between God's creation. Here, God's creation of heavenly *lights* on the fourth day corresponds to creation of light, day, and night on the first. In a critical response to non-Israelite cultures who worshiped these heavenly bodies, the bodies are not named and are identified as mere timekeepers. **20-23:** See vv. 14-19a.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. **11** Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. **12** The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. **13** And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in

^a Or when God began to create or In the beginning God created ^b Or while the spirit of God or while a mighty wind

GENESIS 1.15-1.31

the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons and for days and years,¹⁵ and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so.¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.¹⁷ God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth,¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." 21 So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and ev-

everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make hu-
mankind^a in our image, according to our
likeness; and let them have dominion over
the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the
air, and over the cattle, and over all the
wild animals of the earth,^b and over every
creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."
27 So God created mankind^a in his

image,
in the image of God he created
them;

male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." 29 God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to every thing that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there

a Heb adam
c Heb him

Where the second day featured the dome separating upper and lower oceans, the fifth day features the creation of birds to fly *across the dome* and ocean creatures, including sea monsters (Ps 104.25–26). God's blessing of the swarming creatures (1.22) anticipates a similar blessing that God will give humanity (1.28). 24–30: See vv. 14–19n. Where the third day involved creation of land and plants in turn, this sixth day involves the creation of two types of plant-eating land-dwellers: animals and then humans. 24–25: Again, earth is involved in bringing forth life (see 1.9–13n.). 26: The plural *us, our* (3.22, 11.7) probably refers to the divine beings who compose God's heavenly court (1 Kings 22.19, Job 1.6). *Image, likeness* is often interpreted to be a spiritual likeness between God and humanity. Another view is that this text builds on ancient concepts of the king physically resembling the god and thus bearing a bodily stamp of his authority to rule. Here this idea is democratized, as all of humanity appears godlike. This appearance equips humans for godlike rule over the fish, birds, and animals. 27–28: The text stresses the creation of humanity as simultaneously male and female. This leads to the emphasis in the blessing of v. 28 and the book of Genesis as a whole on the multiplication of humanity in general (6.1; 9.1–7) and Israel in particular (17.2–6; 47.27). 29–30: The text envisions an ancient mythological time before violence disturbs God's perfect order (cf. 6.11), 31: Where individual elements of creation were "good" (vv. 4.10, etc.), the whole is *very good*, perfectly corresponding to God's intention. 2.1–3: This day is the point to which the whole

was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 2 And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. 4 These are the generations of the sons of

generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God said:

the earth and the heavens,⁵ when no plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground;⁶ but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—⁷ then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground,⁸ and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. ⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he

seven-day scheme has led. God does not command this day and bless it, weaving the seven-day rhythm into other ancient creation stories as well.

2.4b-25: Creation in a garden. This tradition is clearly not the conclusion of the Priestly creation story, but a separate superscription introducing the following material, as elsewhere in Genesis (e.g., 5.1; 6.9; 10.1).

evident by the different style and order of events. Though distinct from 1.1-2.3, as (cf. 1.1-2) is common in ancient Near Eastern creation stories.⁷ The word play on Heb "adam" (human nature is not a duality of body and soul; rather God's *breath* animates the *dust* and it becomes a motif *living being* (Is 104:29; Job 34.14-15). 8-9: *Eder* means "delight." This divine garden recalls the "garden of God/the Lord" mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (13.10; Ezek 28.13-16; 31.8-9). In addition, ancient Near Eastern art and texts feature a prominent focus on trees, often associated with feminine powers of fertility. Usually such trees symbolize life, as in the *tree of life* here (3.22; see Pro 3.18; Rev 22.2, 14, 19). But this story focuses more on the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, preceding one describing the "stream" rising up to water the ground (2.6). This section, along with the pre-mentioned here combine world rivers like the *Tigris* and *Euphrates* (both in Mesopotamia) with the local *Gihon* that flowed from Mount Zion in Jerusalem (Ps 46:4; Isa 7.6; 7:20-14.0). Any either Ethiopia or in Arabia. 2:4

GENESIS 2.1-2.16

had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant 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 evil.

¹⁰ A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹² and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

And the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of

^a Heb YHWH, as in other places where "LORD" is spelled with capital letters (see also Exod 3.14-15 with notes). ^b Or *formed a man* (Heb *adam*) of dust from the ground (Heb *adamah*)

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GENESIS 2.17-3.6

the garden,¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner."¹⁹ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.²³ Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;

^a Or: for Adam ^b Heb *ishshah* ^c Heb *ish*
^d Or: gods

this one shall be called Woman,"^e for out of Man' this one was taken."

24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?' "² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.' "⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,⁵ knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was

good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." ¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life."¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,

GENESIS 3.7-3.20

and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children,

yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."¹⁷ And to the man he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve,^a because she was the mother of all living.

^a Or: to Adam ^b In Heb *Eve* resembles the word for living

concludes with a legal prohibition using technical death-penalty language (see Lev 20.9, 11, 12, etc.). 18-20: Animals are created after the first human rather than before (cf. 1.24-25). The human's naming of the animals implies a dominion over them analogous to that seen in 1.26-28. Yet the LORD God here contrasts with the all-powerful deity depicted in ch 1. The LORD God creates the animals in a comical, failed attempt to make a *helper* for the human that "corresponds to him" (compare *as his partner* in the NRSV of vv. 18, 20). 21-23: Just as the connection of humanity to the ground is affirmed in the making of the first human ("adam") from earthly "humus" ("adamah") (2.7), so also the connection of men and women is affirmed here through the crowning event of creation: the making of the woman from a part of the man (2.21-22). The man affirms this connection in a jubilant poem (2.23) featuring a word play on "man" ("ish") and "woman" ("ishshah"). This concluding song of praise of the woman corresponds to God's concluding affirmation of all of creation as "very good" in 1.31. 24-25: Sex between a man and his wife is regarded here as reflecting the essence of the connection God created between men and women. The unashamed nakedness of the man and woman indicates that still uncivilized status.

3.1-24: Garden disobedience and punishment. Though this story is often taken by Christians as an account of "original sin," the word "sin" never occurs in it. Instead, it describes how the marining of humans into civilized life involved damage of connections established in 2.4-25 between the LORD God, man, woman, and earth. 1: This characterization of the snake emphasizes his wise craftiness (Heb "anani"), a characteristic that contrasts with the innocent nakedness ("atum") of the man and woman. Snakes were a symbol in the ancient world of wisdom, fertility, and immortality. Only later was the snake in this story seen by interpreters as the devil. 4-5: The snake introduces doubt through rightly predicting the consequences of eating the fruit—the humans will not be put to death as implied in the language of 2.17 and their eyes will be opened (see v. 7) so they gain wisdom, *knowing good and evil*. 6-7: The woman sees that the pleasant fruit of the tree is desirable to *make one wise*; she eats it and shares it with her husband. The result is enlightenment, the eyes of both were opened. Such wisdom takes them from

[14 HEBREW BIBLE]

[15 HEBREW BIBLE]

GENESIS 3.21-4.14

21 And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man^a and for his wife, and clothed them.

22 Then the LORD God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever!" — 23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

4 Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced^a a man with the help of the LORD." 2 Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. 3 In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you

angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

8 Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field."^a And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" 10 And the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen, your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! 11 And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." 13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! 14 Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and

^a Or for Adam. ^b The verb in Heb resembles the word for Cain. ^c Sam Gk Syr. Compare Vg: MT lacks Let us go out to the field.

humans here reflects care for them in the process of becoming civilized, even though that process involved disobedience. 22: As elsewhere in the ancient Near East, humans here are depicted as having a brief opportunity for immortality. The LORD God's fear of humans becoming godlike (cf. 1.26-27) recalls the serpent's assertions in 3.4-5. The term "us" probably refers to the heavenly court (see 1.26n.). 24 Cf. Ezek 28.13-16. The last echoes of temple imagery occur here. *The cherubim* are winged creatures like the Sphinx of Egypt, half human and half lion. Statues of them guarded sanctuaries like the one in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6.23-28.32,35). The gate to the garden of Eden is in the east, like the processional gate to the Temple (Ezek 10.19).

4.1-16: Cain and Abel. While 2.4-3.24 featured relations between men and women, 4.1-16 turns to relations between brothers, paralleling 3.1-24 in many respects. 1: This first verse emphasizes the wonder of creative power in the first birth of a child. The child's name, "Cain," resembles a Hebrew word for create, "qanah." Ancient Israelites may have associated this Cain with the Kenite tribe (Num 24.21-22). 2: The name "Abel" is the same word translated as "vanity" (or "emptiness") in Ecclesiastes. His name anticipates his destiny. The distinction between Cain and Abel's occupations implies a further step toward culture. 3-5: The story pointedly does not explain why the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Instead, it focuses on Cain's reaction to this unexplained divine preference for the sacrifice of his brother. 6-7: This is the first mention of "sin" in the Bible. It is depicted as a predatory animal, lurking at the door. 10-11: Blood is sacred, for it is the seat of life (9.4; Deut 12.23), and blood of unpunished murders pollutes the ground (Num 35.30-34). 13-14: The importance of arable ground in these chapters can be seen in Cain's conclusion that expulsion from the soil means being hidden from the LORD's face. 16: See 11.1-9n.

[16 HEBREW BIBLE]

anyone who meets me may kill me."

15 Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him. 16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod,^a east of Eden.

17 Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city, and named it Enoch after his son Enoch. 18 To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Methusael, and Methusael the father of Lamech. 19 Lamech took two wives; the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. 20 Adah bore Jabel; he was the ancestor of those who live in tents and have livestock. 21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all those who play the lyre and pipe. 22 Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

23 Lamech said to his wives:
"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, listen to
what I say:

4.17-26: First overview of generations from creation to flood. Though the order is different, the names here are variants of those in 5.1-32. 17: Cain's marriage, along with his fear of others (4.14) presume the presence of a broader population, indicating that the stories about him were once not connected with creation. 19-22: The emphasis on civilization seen in 3.1-24 emerges again here in the depiction of the occupations of Lamech's sons. This tradition does not anticipate a flood narrative. 23-24: The first half of this song may once have been used to brag about the ability of Lamech and his family to avenge their honor. Placed where it is and including v. 24, it now functions to demonstrate a major consequence of the expansion of civilization: a corresponding expansion of the violence with which the family tree began (see 4.1-16). 25: A parallel to 4.1, introducing a new line of Seth. 26: This tradition locates the beginning of use of the divine name "Yahweh" (LORD) in the primal period, in contrast to the Priestly tradition, which does not see the divine name as used until the time of Moses (Ex 6.2-6).

4.1-26, building from the P creation story (1.1-2.3) to the Priestly strand of the flood narrative. 1a: The Priestly writer drew upon for this chapter and used as a model for later notices (6.9, 10.1, etc.). 1b-2: The Priestly writer uses this reprise of 1.26-28 to bind his genealogical source (where "adam" designates a particular person) to 1.1-2.3 (where "adam" designates humanity as a whole). 3: The divine *likeness* (v. 1; see 1.26n.) was continued in Adam's son Seth and thus transmitted to succeeding generations (9.6). 4-32: Ancient Babylonian lists similarly survey a series of heroes before the flood, each of which lived fantastically long times. Like those lists, the list in 5.4-32 postulates extraordinary ages to pre-flood figures, with ages declining over time to the 100-200 years of Israel's ancestors. The names of the figures in this list resemble those of 4.17-26 (see 4.17-26n.). 24: Babylonian traditions also report that certain

GENESIS 4.15-5.5

I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.
24 If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

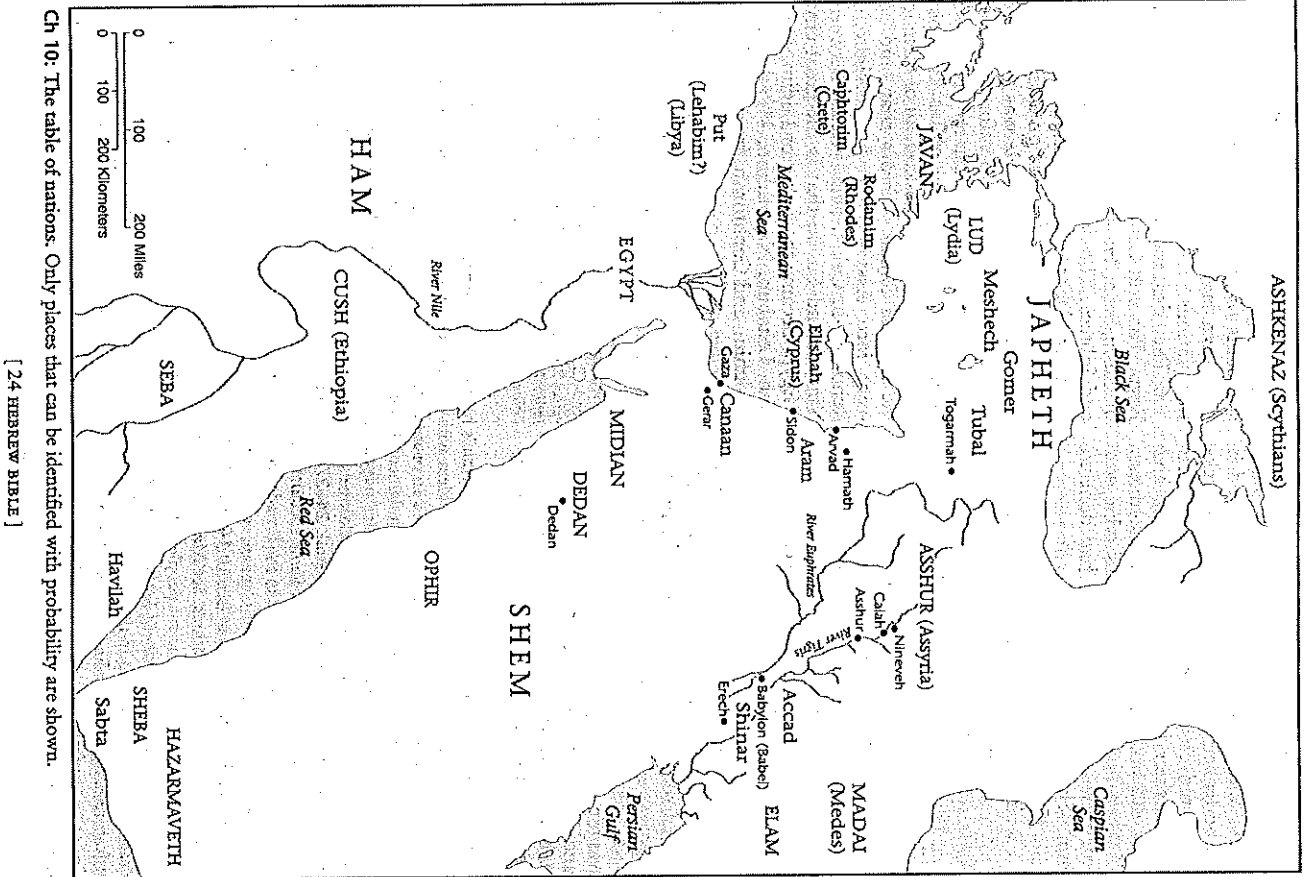
25 Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has appointed^d for me another child instead of Abel, because Cain killed him." 26 To Seth also a son was born, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to invoke the name of the LORD.

5 This is the list of the descendants of Adam. When God created human-kind,^e he made them in the likeness of God. 2 Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them "Human-kind," when they were created.

3 When Adam had lived one hundred thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. 4 The days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years; and he had other sons and daughters. 5 Thus all the days that Adam

^a Gk Syr Vg: Heb Therefore. ^b That is Wandering.
^c The verb in Heb resembles the word for Seth.
^d Heb adam. ^e Heb him.

[17 HEBREW BIBLE]



GENESIS 10.18-11.8

their languages, their lands, and their nations.

32 These are the families of Noah's sons, according to their genealogies, in their nations; and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

11 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And as they migrated from the east,^a they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens; and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." 5 The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. 6 And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the

18 Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, 19 the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. 19 And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon, in the direction of Gerar, as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. 20 These are the descendants of Ham, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

21 To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. 22 The descendants of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. 23 The descendants of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. 24 Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. 25 To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan. 26 Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazaraveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael, Sheba, 29 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the descendants of Joktan. 30 The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar, the hill country of the east. 31 These are the descendants of Shem, by their families,

^a That is *Division*. ^b Or *migrated eastward*.

peoples lists ethnic groups rather than ancestors, including the *Jebusites* (centered in Jerusalem), *Amorites* (natives of the hill country), and the *Hivites* (a tribe in central Palestine). The list resembles later lists of peoples displaced by Israel (e.g., 15.19-21; Deut 7.1) and may be an addition from the same hand that directed Noah's curse toward Canaan (see 9.18-27n.). 21-31: *Shem* is the father of the Semitic peoples, focus on the *children of Eber*. The name *Eber* may be related to "Hebrew." If so, then this text postulates a wider group of *children of Eber* of which the Israelites are a part.

11.1-9: The tower of Babel. This narrative (from the non-Priestly or J source) revisits the theme of preservation of the divine-human boundary. The threat to that boundary, self-reflective speech by the LORD, and act of divine prevention all parallel 3.22-24 and 6.1-4. With 11.2 the human family completes the eastward movement begun in 3.22-24 (cf. 4.16). Yet this story will focus on a scattering of the human family into different ethnic, linguistic, and territorial groups. As such, it now gives background for the table of nations in ch 10, although it was not originally written with that in view. 2: *Shinar*, see 10.8-12n. 4: The humans are depicted as fearful of being scattered and thus aiming to make a name for themselves imperatively to "fill the earth" now found in Priestly traditions (1.28; 9.1.7). 6: The LORD is described here as fearing the human power that might result from ethnic and linguistic unity (see 3.22). 7: *Let us*, see 1.26c. 8-9: The LORD's scattering of humanity and confusing of language is the final step in creation of civilized humanity, with its multiple territorial and linguistic groups. The movement toward cultural

GENESIS 11.9-11.31

face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.⁹ Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused^a the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

10 These are the descendants of Shem. When Shem was one hundred years old, he became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood;¹¹ and Shem lived after the birth of Arpachshad five hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

12 When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became the father of Shelah; 13 and Arpachshad lived after the birth of Shelah four hundred three years, and had other sons and daughters.

14 When Shelah had lived thirty years, he became the father of Eber; 15 and Shelah lived after the birth of Eber four hundred three years, and had other sons and daughters.

16 When Eber had lived thirty-four years, he became the father of Peleg;¹⁷ and Eber lived after the birth of Peleg four hundred thirty years, and had other sons and daughters.

18 When Peleg had lived thirty years, he became the father of Reu;¹⁹ and Peleg lived after the birth of Reu two hundred nine years, and had other sons and daughters.

maturity begun in ch 3 is complete. Each step toward this end has been fraught with conflict and loss. The name "Babel," interpreted here as "confusion," serves as a final testimony to the ambiguous results of this process.

11.20-26: The descendants of Shem. This genealogy from the Priestly tradition closely parallels 5.1-32 (though it lacks death notices). It builds a genealogical bridge from Shem to Terah, the father of Abraham. Parts of the genealogy of Shem (10.21-31) are repeated, but now the text focuses exclusively on those descendants who will lead to Abraham. The text implies that all these descendants are firstborn sons, thus setting up Abraham as the firstborn heir of Shem, the eldest of Noah's sons.

11.27-32: Introduction of the Abraham story. The genealogical heading (v. 27) and the concluding notices regarding Terah's travels and death (vv. 31-32) are Priestly materials, whereas many attributes vv. 28-30 to the non-Priestly source. 27: *Abraham*, see 17.5n. The designation "Abraham" is used here in the annotations as the better-known name of Abraham. Aside from his birth, nothing is told about the early life of Abraham; this lack is filled in by later tradition. 29-30: *Sarai*, see 17.15n. This is the first appearance of the theme of barrenness of the three most central matriarchs: Sarai/Sarah, Rebekah (25.21), and Rachel (29.31). Their initial barrenness helps highlight God's power to provide heirs of the promise. 31: *Haran*, in northwest Mesopotamia, was Abraham's ancestral home, according to 24.10 (cf. 29.4). Nonbiblical sources show that several of the names of Abraham's ancestors in the preceding genealogy were place names in Haran; e.g., Peleg (vv. 16-19; also 10.25), Serug (vv. 20-23), Nahor (vv. 24-25; cf. 26), and Terah (vv. 24-26).

20 When Reu had lived thirty-two years, he became the father of Serug;²¹ and Reu lived after the birth of Serug two hundred seven years, and had other sons and daughters.

22 When Serug had lived thirty years, he became the father of Nahor;²³ and Serug lived after the birth of Nahor two hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

24 When Nahor had lived twenty-nine years, he became the father of Terah;²⁵ and Nahor lived after the birth of Terah one hundred nineteen years, and had other sons and daughters.

26 When Terah had lived seventy years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

27 Now these are the descendants of Terah. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot.²⁸ Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. 29 Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. 30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

31 Terah took his son Abram and his

^a Heb *bald*, meaning to confuse

grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan; but when they came to Haran, they settled there. 32 The days of Terah were two hundred five years; and Terah died in Haran.

12 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 21 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 31 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in

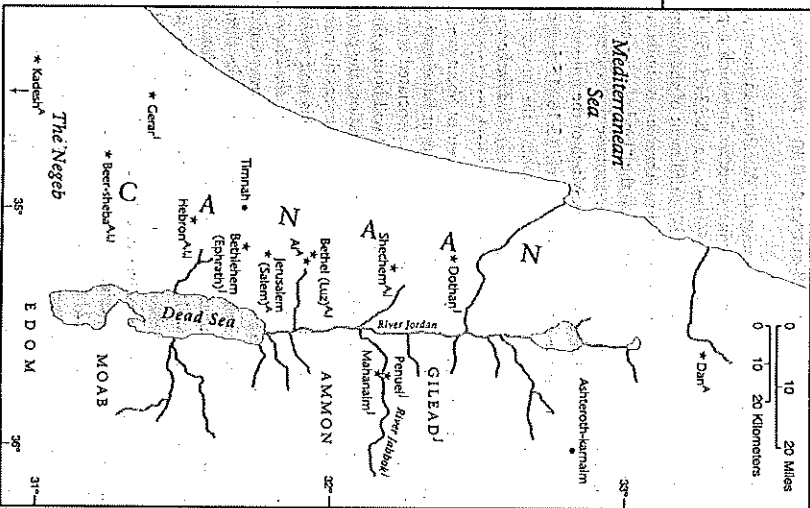
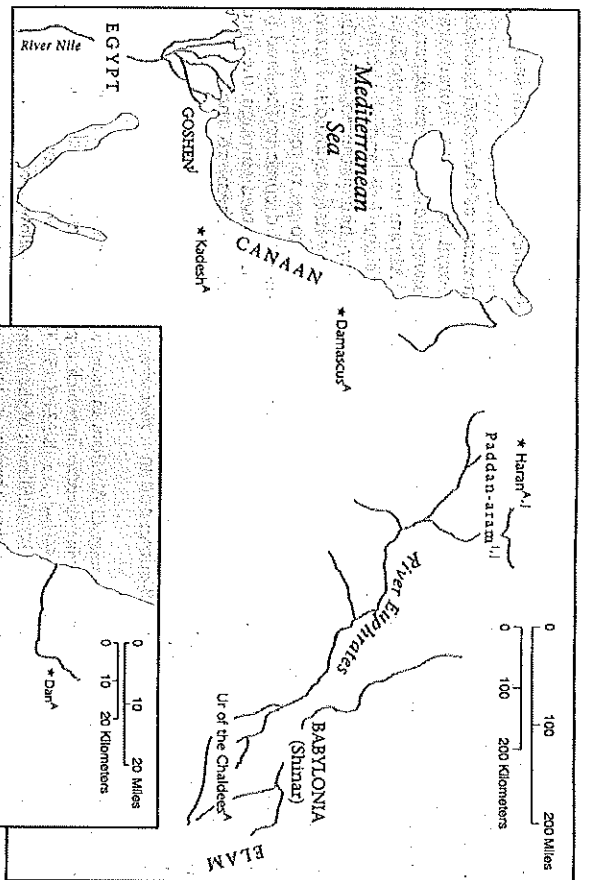
you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak^a of

^a Or: by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves ^b Or *terebinth*

12.1-3: The LORD's call and promise to Abraham initiates a major new movement in the story of Genesis. This is the first of three divine speeches in which a patriarch is given travel directions and promises of blessing (12.1-3; 26.2-5; 46.1-4; see also 31.3, 13). The combination of command (v. 1) and promise (vv. 2-3) implies that the LORD's fulfillment of the promise will follow upon Abraham's fulfillment of the command. 1: This command to Abraham is similar to, and may have been modeled on, the later divine command for Jacob to return to the "land of your ancestors and to your kindred" (31.3) and to "the land of your birth" (31.13). 2: The promise that a great nation will come from Abraham stands in tension with Sarah's barrenness in 11.30. Much of the following narrative revolves around this tension. *Nation* implies not just a numerous people (cf. 13.16; 15.5; etc.), but a politically independent social group. *I will bless you*, involves giving Abraham the power to flourish in flocks, other riches, and offspring (12.16; 13.2, 5, 16; etc.; cf. Job 42.12-13). *And make your name great*, to have one's name made great is to become famous. The LORD promises Abraham a fame similar to that promised to Israelite kings (2 Sam 7.9; 1 Kings 1.47). Thus Abraham, as heir of Shem (see 11.20-26n.),—which means "name" in Hebrew—gains the great "name" that the peoples at Babel had futilely sought for themselves (cf. 11.4). So that you will be a blessing, implies that those associated with Abraham and his heirs will flourish as Abraham's heirs. 3: Though obscured in the translation, the promise to curse the one who curses Abraham is a slight modification of a similar formula. Whereas the parallel texts (e.g., 27.29; Num 24.9) speak of God cursing the one who curses, the LORD in this text promises to curse anyone who even "treats [Abraham] lightly." *For you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* has been a particularly important passage in the Christian tradition. Building on the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, Paul interpreted this as a blessing of the Gentiles through Abraham (Gal 3.8). Yet the closest analogies to this promise suggest that the alternate translation, *by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves*, i.e., they will say "may we be like Abraham," is probably closer to the meaning of the Hebrew. Like 48.20, it envisions other nations of the world looking to Abraham's great blessing and wishing a similar one on themselves (see Ps 72.17). Later in the narrative we see this kind of recognition of Abraham and his heirs' special blessing by foreigners like Abimelech (26.28), Laban (30.27), Potiphar (39.3-5), Joseph's father (39.21-23), Pharaoh (Ex 1.9), Jethro (Ex 18.10-12), and Baalam (24.1).

12.4-9: Abraham's first journey to the land. 4b-5: Part of the Priestly Abraham narrative. 6-8: This brief report of Abraham's journey anticipates the much longer story of Jacob's travels through similar places: Shechem with its oak (cf. 33.18-35.4) and Bethel (cf. 35.1, 9-16; see Map on p. 28 nn). Sacred trees like the oak of Moreh ("oracle giver"; cf. 13.18; 18.1; 35.4; Deut 11.30; Josh 24.26; Judg 9.37) occur elsewhere in Genesis (e.g., 21.33; 35.8) and seem to have played an important role in the religion of the ancient Israelites and surrounding peoples (see 2.8-9n.).



Chs 12-50: The geography of the ancestral narratives. Places associated with a particular ancestor are highlighted with a star, and the initial of the ancestor follows the place name: A (Abraham), J (Jacob), or J (Jacob).

[28 HEBREW BIBLE]

Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD. ⁹And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

¹⁰ Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land. ¹¹When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know well that you are a woman beautiful in appearance; ¹² and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³ Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account." ¹⁴ When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵ When the officials of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶ And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys, and camels.

¹⁷ But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife?"

Now then, here is your wife, take her, and be gone." ²⁰ And Pharaoh gave his men orders concerning him; and they set him on the way, with his wife and all that he had. ¹³ So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.

² Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. ³ He journeyed on by stages from the Negeb as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, ⁴ to the place where he had made an altar at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. ⁵ Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, ⁶ so that the land could not support both of them living together; for their possessions were so great that they could not live together. ⁷ And there was strife between the herders of Abram's livestock and the herders of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites lived in the land.

⁸ Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herders and my herders; for we are kindred. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left." ¹⁰ Lot looked about him, and saw that the plain of the Jordan was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar; this was before the LORD had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself all the plain of the Jordan,

^a Heb seed

¹² 10-13.1: First story of endangerment of the matriarch (cf. ch 20; 26.6-11). Through putting Sarah in jeopardy to protect himself, Abraham appears not to trust the promise of protection just offered him. On Abraham's later claim to be Sarah's half-brother, see 20.12n. Overall, this story of descent into Egypt because of famine and rescue through plagues anticipates many aspects of the later narrative about Israel's descent into Egypt and Exodus from it (Gen 45-Ek 14).

¹³ 2-18: Split of Abraham and Lot 2-7. This narrative describing huge flocks and riches in Abraham's household testifies to the preliminary fulfillment of the promises of blessing in 12.2-3. Lot, see 11.27, 31. 8-13: The narrative anticipates the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative (ch 19) through mention of those cities, the wickedness of their inhabitants (13.13), and references to Zoar (19.19-23). It also notes that Lot, the heir apparent, does not choose to stay in the land of Canaan (vv. 10-12), 14-17. Only after

[29 HEBREW BIBLE]

GENESIS 12.7-13.11

GENESIS 13.12-14.14

and Lot journeyed eastward; thus they separated from each other. 12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the Plain and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the people of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.

14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15 for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. 17 Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." 18 So Abram moved his tent, and came and settled by the oaks^a of Mamre, which are at Hebron; and there he built an altar to the LORD.

14 In the days of King Amraphel of Shinar, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim, 2 these kings made war with King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinar of Admah, King Shemeber of Zebouim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). 3 All these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Dead Sea). 4 Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. 5 In the

fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and subdued the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in the hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the edge of the wilderness; 7 then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and subdued all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar. 8 Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zebouim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim 9 with King Chedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Shinar, and King Arioch of Ellasar; four kings against five. 10 Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits; and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. 11 So the enemy took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way; 12 they also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who lived in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. 13 Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks^a of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner; these were allies of Abram. 14 When Abram heard that his

^a Heb seed ^b Or *terebinths* ^c Heb Salt Sea

Abram has split from Lot and settled in Canaan does God show him the land (cf. 12.7). This certifies that Abraham has fulfilled God's command to go to the land that God "will show" him (12.1). Similarly, Jacob is promised the land after he has split from Esau (28.13-14). 18: Mamre was an ancient Southern sacred place, slightly north of Hebron, from which Abraham was associated (see ch 23).

14.1-24: Abraham's rescue of Lot from the eastern kings. This and ch 15 relate closely to each other and link in multiple ways with late layers of the primeval history (see 9.18-27n; 10.16-18a n.). 1-12: Here an alliance of four eastern kings conquers five Canaanite kings associated with the Dead Sea region where Lot is said to have settled. In a fulfillment of the curse of Noah predicting the enslavement of Canaan by Shem (9.25-26), these Canaanite kings had been subject for twelve years to an eastern alliance of kings headed by the Sennite king, Chedorlaomer (cf. 10.22). When the Canaanite king rebel, the eastern kings crush the revolt and seize Lot and his household and take them back toward their home. Neither the battle nor any of the kings can be identified in nonbiblical sources. 13-16: Abraham's ability to pursue and overcome the Sennite conquerors testifies to his status as heir of Shem and recipient of Shem's blessing (9.25-27). Moreover, this demonstrates the fulfillment of the divine promise to protect Abraham and his household (12.3). 13: *Hebrew*, probably meaning an outsider, as often in the Hebrew Bible (see 39.14; Ex 1.13; 1 Sam 29.3; Jon 1.9). 17-20: This is the only section of Genesis associating

[30 HEBREW BIBLE]

nephew had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred eighteen of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and routed them and pursued them to Hobab, north of Damascus. 16 Then he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his nephew Lot with his goods, and the women and the people.

17 After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18 And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. 19 He blessed him and said,

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,"
maker of heaven and earth;
20 and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies
into your hand!"

And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything. 21 Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the LORD, God Most High, maker of heaven

and earth, 23 that I would not take a thread or a sandal-thing or anything that is yours, so that you might not say, 'I have made Abram rich.' 24 I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me—Aneq, Eshcol, and Mamre. Let them take their share."

15 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." 2 But Abram said, "O LORD God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." 4 But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." 5 He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

7 Then he said to him, "I am the LORD

^a Heb El Elyon ^b Meaning of Heb uncertain ^c Heb he

a patriarch with Jerusalem; indeed, it is the only place in the entire Torah where Jerusalem is referred to by name. As heir of Shem, Abraham now receives the blessing of the priest in what will become Israel's royal and religious center. *Salem* is a name for Jerusalem (Ps 76.2), where the ancient high god of the Canaanite pantheon, El (God Most High), was worshiped in pre- and early Israelite times. The King's Valley is near Jerusalem (2 Sam 18.18), and the priest Melchizedek appears as the founder of a priested eschatologically at Qumran and typologically by the early church (Heb 7.1-17).

15.1-21: The first covenant with Abraham. The LORD promises Abraham protection, reward, and an heir in the wake of his recent military encounter with the eastern kings. 1: The promise to be a shield (Heb "magen") for Abraham echoes Melchizedek's praise of the god who "delivered" ("migga") Abraham (14.20), and the reward replaces the goods he had refused from the king of Sodom (14.21-24). 2-5: Some scholars view the parallel objections from Abraham (vv. 2 and 3) and divine responses (vv. 4 and 5) as and in the rest of the Pentateuch (see the Introduction). 6: This verse indicates that Abraham considered righteousness to Abraham (e.g., Rom 4.9; Gal 3.6), the subject is not specified in Hebrew. *Righteousness* is being true to one's social obligations and commitments. It is possible that it is Abraham here who commitments in 15.1 (cf. 15.2-3). 7-21: This section parallels the promise-objection-reassurance pattern of 15.1-6, but with the added component of a covenant ceremony sealing God's promise to give

[31 HEBREW BIBLE]