

Genesis: A Survey

The Essential Importance of the Book of Genesis

Whether a person is a Jew, a Roman Catholic, an Eastern Orthodox Catholic, a Protestant, or a Restorationist, it is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance of Genesis. All of the rest of the collection of documents labeled, “Scripture,” are based on the assumption of the veracity of the Genesis account. In most instances, the events and things described in Genesis are assumed in the ensuing Scriptures, rather than these later documents’ constantly commenting on the Genesis events and data. Among those assumed elements are:

- The Creation
- The fall and its consequences
- The world-wide flood and God’s reestablishment of the human race through the descendants of Noah
- The Tower of Babel and the birth of many languages, resulting in the dispersion of humanity into all parts of the globe
- The call of Abraham
- The choice of Jacob

These and many other things recorded in Genesis are the foundation of all of the other documents of Scripture and the doctrines contained therein. To remove any of these foundational stones, results in the collapse of the doctrines and truths developed in later Scriptures.

This does not mean that all believers agree about the consequences, or even understand all of the details in the same manner. For example, the doctrine of *original sin* may be understood to mean that every human being in all generations is born with the guilt of Adam and Eve and somehow that guilt must be expunged. Others would argue that the doctrine means that everyone of every race and every generation is born with a tendency toward sin and rebellion against the authority of God. All, however, agree that the human race bears the moral, spiritual, and physical consequences of the fall and that God has provided a means for removing the barrier between Himself and humanity – and there is not agreement as to how the benefits of God’s redeeming action are to be accessed.

The Name of the Book

The name, *Genesis*, is a transliteration of the Greek term, γένεσις, which was the title given to the document in the Septuagint.¹ When Jerome translated the Scriptures into Latin,² he kept the Septuagint title for the document, *Liber Genesis*.³ When Luther translated the Bible into German, he labeled the book, simply, *The First Book of Moses*. Hebrew writings tend to refer to the book by its first Hebrew word, *Bereshith*, meaning, “in the beginning.”

¹ The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Most of the work was done by the Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt

² Later in the 4th Century AD, Jerome translated the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament into Latin – the version known as the Vulgate version. This is the official version of the Roman Catholic Church.

³ *Liber* is the Latin term for *book*.

The Author

The book does not contain any statement identifying the author. Yet, the Mosaic authorship was unchallenged until the Nineteenth Century, when the German radical scholars began to challenge the authorship of all the Scriptures. Without getting into that discussion, which we have treated in earlier studies and summarized in ADDENDUM A, we hold firmly to the view that Moses wrote, not only Genesis, but the entire Pentateuch, with the exception of Deuteronomy 34, and isolated sections such as the parenthetical statement in Numbers 12:3,⁴ which would have been written and inserted after Moses' death.

Chapter One: The Creation Account

Verse 1

The three opening words of Genesis are very telling: *bereshith bara elohim*.⁵

- The first word, *reshith*, refers to the absolute beginning of created things. It is preceded by the preposition, *be*, which indicates, "in," thus, the literal translation is, *in beginning*. The Septuagint, being the Jewish Greek translation of Scripture, uses *en arche*,⁶ (the same terms which John used to begin his Gospel), which carry the same sense – *in beginning*.

Because this word is not preceded by the article, it cannot be understood as being a genitive or construct case, which would be rendered, *in the beginning of God's creating*,⁷

- The second word, *bara*⁸, is a verb, meaning, *to create*. This verb never is used in Scripture for any human action; it is used only in reference to Divine activity.⁹ It does not always refer to something's being created out of nothing. For example, in Isaiah 65:18, this verb is used, *Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy*. However, when no existing material is mentioned as something to be worked over, no such existing material is implied. The view that the verb is used here in the sense of *creatio ex nihilo*, i.e. "creation out of nothing," is consistent with other Scriptures:¹⁰

(as it is written, "A father of many nations have I made you") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. (Romans 4:17)

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. (Hebrews 11:3)

⁴ (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)

⁵ בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים

⁶ Ἐν ἀρχῇ

⁷ See Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, (Columbus, OH, Wartburg Press) 1942, page 39; Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume I, The Pentateuch* (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers) 1989, page 46-47

⁸ בָּרָא

⁹ A second word for God's creative activity is used interchangeably in the Genesis creation account: עָשָׂה *asah* "to make"(1:31; 2:2; 3:1)

¹⁰ Also implied in other Scriptures: Psalm 33:6, 9; Amos 4:13

- The third word, *Elohim*,¹¹ is derived from a root term meaning, *to fear*. *Elohim* occurs 2750 times in the Old Testament.

Elohim implies a Being who by His very nature produces fear and reverence in man. Using this term to introduce the creation account, rather than *Yahweh*, fits the nature of the narrative being presented, i.e., God's omnipotence, His mighty works of power and majesty. *Yahweh*, does not contain this element, but rather signifies *abiding, changeless, eternal*.

Using a plural term for Divinity is not rare. Such a use is called, "potential plural," indicating the potentialities of the Divine Being, which stirs reference and awe in mankind.¹² This, of course, does harmonize with the nature of the term, *Elohim*.

Because the term, *Elohim*, is plural¹³, some argue that it refers to the Holy Trinity. When Moses wrote Genesis, this would not have been understood. However, the fact that the term is plural does allow for the revelation of the Trinity that becomes apparent in the New Testament. For example, the opening section of the Gospel of John states that not only the Father, but the Second Member of the Godhead was active in the creation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-3, 14)

Paul also states this truth.

... yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. (1 Corinthians 8:6)

For by Him (verses 13-15 indicate that this reference is to the Son) all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. (Colossians 1:16)

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.¹⁴ (Hebrews 1:1-2)

This is another of those instances described by the hermeneutical adage, "The Old is the New concealed, and the New is the Old revealed." Yet, even with the New Testament revelation of the Trinity, we must be satisfied with the fact that the details of each member of the Trinity's involvement is unclear.

¹¹ אֱלֹהִים

¹² See Leupold, page 43

¹³ Plural in Hebrew is indicated by ending a noun or pronoun with the appendage, *im*; this serves the same purpose as does the *S* in English.

¹⁴ The Greek term rendered, *worlds*, is *αἰών* (*aion*) literally meaning, *ages*.

Had Genesis been composed in English, the next phrase of verse 1 would read, *the universe*, but there is no Hebrew term for universe. Thus, the text reads, *the heavens and the earth*. The Hebrew word rendered, *heavens*, is *hashamayim*¹⁵, another plural intensive term. Since it is plural intensive, the term describes one sphere's rising above another.

The Gap Theory of Genesis 1

The Gap Theory was popularized in the *Scofield Reference Bible* (first published in 1909) and the *Dake Annotated Reference Bible* (first published in 1963). For many years, through the influence of these two Bible versions, as well as other lesser-known writings, the Gap Theory was entrenched in Fundamentalist circles. It was not until the work of John C. Whitcomb and Henry Morris in the 1960's¹⁶ that young earth creationism dislodged Pember's Gap Theory from Fundamentalist orthodoxy.¹⁷

The Gap Theory argues that

- verse 1 describes God's original work of creation : *in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*
- verse 2 describes the result of the earth's destruction which was brought about by Satan after his fall: *and the earth was without form and void*,
- verse 3 and the rest of the chapter describe the earth's restoration and recreation. The Gap Theory sometimes is called, the *restoration or re-creation* theory.

The theory made its modern appearance in the work of Scottish theologian, Thomas Chalmers, who proposed this view in 1814, but his proposal had very little influence on Bible students.¹⁸

It was not until the Plymouth Brethren writer, G. H. Pember popularized the view in his 1876 book, *Earth's Earliest Ages*, that the Gap Theory had any influence on Bible exegetes.

Pember interpreted Isaiah 14:12ff and Ezekiel 28:13 as being descriptions of Satan's fall and that as a reaction to his fall, Satan brought destruction on God's creation. Thus, Pember interprets *without form and void* (Hebrew: *tohu vobohu*¹⁹), as *ruin or desolation*. He renders verse 2, *and the earth became desolate and void*. He calls the six days of creation as six days of restoration.

By advocating this view, Pember argued that the time between verse 1 and verse 3 allowed for the various geological and ice ages, and the following six days being six 24-hour days.

¹⁵ השמים

¹⁶ John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood and its Scientific Implications* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co) 1961.

¹⁷ The Gap Theory was revived by Arthur C. Constance and given its best exegetical articulation in his book, *Without Form and Void*. However, this was a self-published book and is relatively unknown except among those who are interested in issues of exegesis.

¹⁸ Some Jewish writers had proposed this theory, but for the most part, it had been ignored.

¹⁹ תהו ובהו

NOTE: When Chalmers put forth this theory in 1814, Darwin had not written his influential, *On the Origin of the Species by means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for life* (published in 1859).

Neither had the field of geology developed to the degree that it had achieved by the time of Pember's work. Scotsman James Hutton is considered to be the father of modern geology. Hutton did his writing in the late 18th Century. However, it was Charles Lyell's 1830 publication of, *Principles of Geology*, that had the greatest influence in promoting the idea that most geological change had been very gradual in human history. Lyell popularized *Uniformitarianism* - a geological doctrine stating that processes occur at the same rates in the present as they did in the past and account for all of the earth's geological features. Lyell's works were quite popular and widely read, and through his influence, the concept of Uniformitarianism took a strong hold in geological society.

Thus, Chalmers' motivation for proposing the Gap Theory was not the same as that of Pember.

A great amount of space and time could be invested in discussing the Hebrew terms involved in Pember's argument, as well as exegetical issues related to Pember's exegesis. Rather than presenting that critique here, we have chosen to present as ADDENDUM B an edited version of Dr. Lee Iron's critique of the theory.

One thing to note about the Gap Theory is that it involves only the earth. In the view of many, all of the supposed desolation that the theory describes can more easily be attributed to the world-wide flood, during the days of Noah.

Another rather recent attempt to harmonize the Genesis account with some scientific views was undertaken by John C. Lennox. On pages 39-66 of his book, *Seven Days That Divide the World: The Beginning according to Genesis and Science*,²⁰ Lennox has presented a clear and perceptive summary of the various understandings of the days of creation. Lennox favors the view that Genesis 1 speaks of a sequence of six *creation* days of normal length (with evenings and mornings as the text says) in which God acted to create something new each day. However, according to this view, there were long periods of time that occurred between the days.

Lennox further speculates that the original creation of the heavens and earth in Genesis 1:1-2 may have occurred long before the first "creation day" in Genesis 1:3-5, i.e. that verses 1-2 describe activity that took an undetermined amount of time (perhaps millions of years), whereas verses 3 and following describe activities that took place in one-day sequences. This view would allow for a very old earth and universe.

One challenge to this view is the Hebrew copulative that joins verses 1, 2, & 3 (each verse begins with the conjunction, *and*,²¹). A weakness of this challenge is that almost every phrase in the creation account begins with that copulative, which presents the possibility that most of Chapter One's creation account is one lengthy sentence.

A very valid challenge to some of these views that are alternatives to the traditional understanding of Genesis is the language used by Yahweh when He gave the commandments to

²⁰ John C. Lennox, *Seven Days That Divide the World: The Beginning according to Genesis and Science* (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan) 2011

²¹ *Waw* ױ

Moses. The argument for the seventh day's being a day of rest was based on Yahweh's creating both the heavens and the earth in six days.

"For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore, Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:11)

"It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed." (Exodus 31:17)

Thus, to take Scripture literally, one must understand the creation as taking place in six periods that are labeled, *days*.

All of that being said, even though we need to be aware of these opinions, to become embroiled in this controversy could detract from the importance of the underlying truth of verse 1, *in the beginning God created*.

Verse 2

And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters,

Note that God did not create a perfect universe with a single command. We do not know why He did it this way. Interestingly, we do see an example of Jesus' doing a similar thing in healing a blind man – it was done by degrees.

Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?"²⁴ And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around."²⁵ Then again, He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. (Mark 8:23-25)

Beginning with verse 2, the rest of the account is geocentric – the emphasis being on the earth and presented from the perspective of the creative activity's impact on the earth.

The terms rendered *formless and void*, are *tohu bohu*²².

- The first of these, *tohu*, indicates something that has not been put into any shape
- The second, *bohu*, is from a root meaning, *emptiness*.
- Thus, the need that existed was for the earth to be shaped and formed, then for the earth to be inhabited by various forms of life.

and darkness was over the surface of the deep - Light had yet to be created and so the earth was wrapped in complete darkness.

The Hebrew term rendered *deep*, (*tehom*²³) is derived from a root meaning, *to resound*. Thus, the surface of the water was *surging, raging*. This does not describe any sort of monotonous peace or tranquility.

There is no hint in the text as to the constituency of the earth. Was there a solid core of the earth, with the surface's being covered by turbulent water, – or did the earth consist of a vast thick muddy conglomerate? This question must remain unanswered.

²² תהו ובוהו

²³ תהום

What is meant by *the Spirit of God*? Does the expression mean, *God's spirit* (a mere potency of God), or *God's Spirit* (the Holy Spirit)?²⁴ The argument that the term rendered, *spirit (ruach)*²⁵ means, *wind*, is of little weight²⁶. The verb with which it is connected describes much more than a wind's fanning the face of the waters. Once again, we face language that at the time of its composition could not have been understood as the Holy Spirit – yet, with the revelation of the New Testament, such an understanding seems to be certain.

Verse 3

And (also can be rendered as 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 And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

God spoke, and it happened. The Hebrew of verse 3 is more expressive than the English. The Hebrew is a vigorous imperative: *Become light! And became light!*

We do not know whether or not the *beginning* of verse 1 began with a pronouncement of God, but from this point onward, this pattern is repeated – God spoke, and it happened.²⁷ The manner in which God created was by His Word.

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. (Hebrews 11:3)

In this narrative, we see the truth displayed that God is a God of order.²⁸ Looking to the creation of animals and mankind, God first created those things that are essential for animal life. He proceeded in an orderly fashion, and so He began at a natural starting point.

Verse 4

And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

*Wayyabdel*²⁹ – literally, *God caused a division*. Although it is not displayed in the English translations, the idea of a separation is made more prominent by the insertion of the preposition *ben*,³⁰ (meaning, *between*) before both of the nouns (light/darkness) and both nouns are given the article i.e. *and God caused a division between the light and between the darkness*.

This does not mean, “separated,” in the sense of “disentangled.” They were not commingled together. *God caused a division* refers to a separation in point of time - one functioning at one time, the other at another time. Normally, when light is manifested, darkness is put out of existence, but in this account, there is a sequence of darkness and light, as stated in verse 5.

²⁴ See Psalm 104:30; Isaiah 40:13-14

²⁵ רוּחַ

²⁶ In both Hebrew (see fn 18) and Greek (πνεῦμα), the can be rendered as, *spirit*, or *wind*, or *breath*. The context must determine how the terms are to be rendered.

²⁷ Psalm 33:9

²⁸ I Corinthians 14:33 terms

²⁹ וַיַּבְדֵּל

³⁰ בֵּין

Verse 5

And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

The Hebrew word rendered as, *day*, throughout the creation account, is *yom*.³¹ Note that in this verse the term is used with two meanings:

- *And God called the light day* – here, the term, *yom*, is used as the label for light.
- *And there was evening and there was morning, one day* – here the term is used for the sequence (24 hour?) of day and night – *one day*.

We will encounter another use of the term in Chapter 2:4b *in the day that Yahweh Elohim made earth and heaven*. In this verse, the term, *yom*, refers to the event – it could be paraphrased, *when Yahweh Elohim made earth and heaven*.

Thus, these three uses of the term emphasize the fact that the context (both immediate and remote) must guide us in how a term is rendered and how it is to be understood.³²

Although the idea has been put forth that the term, *yom*, can mean period, or era, or aeon, there is no lexicographical authority for such a meaning. As Leupold has stated,

“reputable Hebrew lexicons such as Buhl,³³ Brown- Driver- Briggs,³⁴ Koenig,³⁵ know nothing of this notion.”³⁶

In addition to these mentioned by Leupold, we add the valuable work of Holladay,³⁷ which does not cite a single instance in which the term could mean era or aeon. Skinner,³⁸ Dillman,³⁹ Keil,⁴⁰ and other Hebrew scholars, in commenting on this topic take the same position.

Thus, it becomes clear that interpreting *yom* to refer to an era or an aeon has no basis in the Hebrew and that only a desire to harmonize the biblical text with some form of an old-creation theory could motivate one to do so.

³¹ יום

³² When preceded by the preposition *be* (the preposition with which the Book of Genesis begins), as occurs in 2:4b, the literal interpretation is, *in the day*, which can be understood as, *when*. To impose on this verse a reference to an aeon could be justified only if the preceding text (the event to which 2:4b refers) had been determined to describe an aeon or aeons.

³³ Frants Buhl, *Gesenius' handwoerterbuch ueber das alte Testament* (Leipzig: F.C.W. Vogel) 1905

³⁴ Brown, Driver, Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [based on Gesenius] (New York, Houghton Mifflin Co.) 1907

³⁵ Eduard Koenig, *Woerterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Leipzig, Dieterich) 1922

³⁶ Leupold, page 57

³⁷ William L. Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1972

³⁸ John Skinner, *International Critical Commentary* [Genesis] (New York, Scribner's Sons) 1925

³⁹ August Dillman, *Die Genesis* (Leipzig, Hirzel) 4th edition, 1882

⁴⁰ Pages Keil & Delitzsch, page 51

Verse 6-8

*Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.*⁴¹

Evidently, the surface of the earth was engulfed in a dense fog of some sort, until God caused a separation between the water that was to remain on the earth and that which was to be contained in the clouds. The expanse would be the atmosphere that immediately surrounds the earth.

The Hebrews had a concept of there being three heavens:

1. The atmosphere that surrounds the earth – where the birds fly
2. The celestial heavens
3. The dwelling place of God

It is a point of interest that Scripture does not mention clouds by that name until after the flood (Genesis 9:13). This, of course, does not mean that they did not exist prior to the flood, since God's statement concerning the rainbow's being in the clouds probably would not have made sense to Noah if he did not know the mean of, "cloud."

Verses 9-13

*Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.*¹⁰ *God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.*¹¹ *Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so.*¹² *The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.*¹³ *There was evening and there was morning, a third day.*

The surging and raging waters noted in verse 2 (*tehom* – see comments on verse 2) still existed until God caused a separation between the water and dry land. The term rendered, *seas*, is *yammim*.⁴² Generally, the term is considered to be used loosely, referring to lakes and rivers as well as oceans.⁴³

Exactly how this was done, no one can answer with certainty. Did God cause depressions, valleys, crevasses, canyons, riverbeds, to form and the waters rush down into them? Did mountains suddenly rise and the waters that were shed by them form the bodies of water?

We would assume the formation of considerable geologic formation to have occurred at that time.

Note that God did not first create seeds, from which plants would grow, but He caused fully grown plants to emerge from the earth. These plants then produced the seed for future plants to develop.

⁴¹ Note that the KJV calls the expanse, *the firmament*. This term is a carry-over from the Vulgate. In rendering the Hebrew into Latin, Jerome used the Latin term, *firmamentum*, which carries the idea of something being firmly put into place.

⁴² יָמִים

⁴³ Leupold, page 64-65

Verses 14-19

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens 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 for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so.¹⁶ God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also.¹⁷ God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,¹⁸ and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

Although most modern English versions render the Hebrew term, *me'oroth*, as, *lights*, a better rendering would be *luminaries*, i.e., objects that bear light within themselves. This is a different Hebrew term from the one used throughout the text to speak of light.⁴⁴

Several questions force themselves upon us, as we read the record of the fourth day.

1. How do these luminaries relate to the light that was created on the first day?
2. How do these luminaries relate to the heavens that were created on the first day?

If we note that both the heavens and the earth are described as being created on the first day, then verses 2-13 (the second and third days) describe the sequential development of the earth, it would be natural to assume that day four describes the further development of the heavens. The purpose for which the heavenly bodies had been created was not in place until the fourth day. These heavenly bodies were in existence but from this point onward, they begin to serve a definite purpose in their relationship with the earth.

Not only are these luminaries to function as givers of light and controllers of the light, they also are to function as *signs and for seasons and for days and years*.

Of special interesting is the fact that these are to function as *signs*. Indeed, they function as signs in a variety of ways:

- They are signs to the devout of faith, declaring the glory of God (Psalms 8 & 19)
- They are signs whereby sea travelers have gotten their bearings – by day or by night
- They may be signs in reference to future events (Matthew 2:2; Luke 21:25)
- Prior to modern weather forecasting, they were the means whereby men forecast the weather (Matthew 16:2-3)
- They may be signs of Divine judgment (Joel 2:30; Matthew 24:29)

In these and a variety of other ways, the luminaries are signs. Scripture does oppose efforts to discover the future by paying attention to the signs of the Zodiac, etc.⁴⁵

Verses 20-23

Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens."²¹ God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its 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 There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

⁴⁴ מְאֹרֹת - *light bearers*, as contrasted with אֹר (a'or) meaning, *light*

⁴⁵ Examples of prohibitions against worshipping the heavenly bodies: Deuteronomy 4:15-19; 19:9-14, 18-22; II Kings 17:16-18; Jeremiah 10:2; Isaiah 47:13-14

The Hebrew reads, literally, *let the waters teem with souls of life*. This is the first time that the term, *soul*, is used in the creation account – the term is, *nephesh*.⁴⁶ A new distinctive thing has been created. According to the biblical view, plants do not have life and the life of living creatures is their *soul*.

Another interesting element in the Hebrew text is the term describing the flight of birds. The term is in the, *polel* form, i.e. intensive (*ye'opheph*).⁴⁷ Thus, the implication is that the birds will fly back and forth.

This is the day when those forms of life that love to move in continual agitation were created. By this creation, the *bohu*⁴⁸ of the heavens and the waters has come to an end.

Note that not only did God create the small fish, but also the great sea monsters (*tanninim*).⁴⁹ This word comes from a root word meaning creatures of great length.

A new form of life has been created on this day. Note that this is the first time that a blessing is pronounced. The blessing empowered them to multiply and continue their species. The blessing is a creative word of power which makes possible what He commands.

Verses 24-25

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so. ²⁵ God made the beasts of the earth 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.

On the sixth and final day of creation, God created what might be termed, “animal life.” It is interesting that the earth was told to bring forth these creatures. Certainly, God could have spoken them into being, but instead He spoke to the earth to bring them forth. Although death was not a reality until after the fall, these creatures are to have such a relationship with the earth that they might be able to return to the earth at the time of their death. The same terms are used for these forms of life as were used for those created on the fifth day: *souls of life*.

Note that three classes of living creatures are mentioned:

- cattle (domestic animals is a better rendering of the Hebrew *behema*⁵⁰)
- creeping things (the Hebrew term, *re'mes*⁵¹ comes from the root meaning *to move about lightly*. Thus, everything that moves upon the earth – close to it, with short legs or with no legs- is described in this term
- beasts of the earth – wild creatures

⁴⁶ נֶפֶשׁ

⁴⁷ יְעוֹפֵף

⁴⁸ See verse 2

⁴⁹ תַּנִּינִים

⁵⁰ בְּהֵמָה

⁵¹ רֶמֶשׂ

Note that the blessing concerning procreation that was given to the creatures that came into being on day five, is omitted at this point, as God hastens to the creation of mankind.

Verses 26-28

²⁶ Then God said, "Let Us make man 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 earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; 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 rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

A Divine Counsel preceded the creation of man. The very special dignity of man and his special relationship with God is indicated by this interruption of the creation narrative.

Let us make man is hortatory, i.e. an exhortation.

The question arises, "To whom is the exhortation addressed?"

- Is God addressing the angels?
- Is God addressing Himself, as one might do when reflecting on some action?
- Does this plural exhortation and the plural terms that follow refer to the Trinity?

We immediately dismiss the first option, because man was made in the image of God (1:27; 5:1), not in the image of angels.

The second option is a possibility and probably the one most likely understood in Moses' day. However, once again we encounter language that is consistent with the fuller revelation given to us in the New Testament (see verses cited earlier indicating the role of the Son in creation).

Note further, that even though mankind is created from the dust of the earth (2:7), the earth was not commanded to bring forth mankind (as had been done with the first animals [verse 24]). God, Himself, in a unique act brought mankind into existence.

We note that the name of the creature to be made in the image of God is, *adham*.⁵² The term finds its root in *adhamah*,⁵³ which refers to ground or soil capable of cultivation.⁵⁴ The name, *adham*, is a fitting name for this creature, since he first formed from the dust of the earth (2:7), and his first commission is to be a caretaker of the portion of the earth that he is given to occupy – perhaps a tiller of the ground.

The question has to be faced, "what is meant by the clause, *make man in Our image, according to Our likeness*"? One thing that can be said immediately that this had nothing to do with physical appearance, since God is Spirit⁵⁵ – including every person of the Trinity until the incarnation of the Second Member of the Trinity.⁵⁶

⁵² אָדָם

⁵³ אֲדָמָה

^{54,54} J. Weingreen, M.A., Ph.D., *Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford, Clarendon Press) 1939. Page 291; Leupold, page 88; Brown, Driver, Biggs, page 9

⁵⁵ John 1:18; 4:24; 6:46; I John 4:12; etc.

⁵⁶ John 1:1-3, 14; Philippians 2:6-8

One of the best comments on this question is found in Keil & Delitzsch:

“Man is the image of God by virtue of his spiritual nature, of the breath of God by which the being, formed from the dust of the earth became a living soul.⁵⁷ The image of God consists, therefore, in the spiritual personality of man, though not merely in unity of self-consciousness and self-determination, or in the fact that man was created a consciously free *Ego*; for personality is merely the basis and form of the Divine likeness, not its real essence. This constitutes rather in the fact, that the man endowed with free self-conscious personality possesses in his spiritual as well as corporeal nature, a creaturely copy of the holiness and blessedness of divine life.”⁵⁸

In simplest terms – man is made spiritually in the image of God.

Obviously, the term, *man*, is understood in the sense of mankind, since *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* Thus, from the beginning, the human race consisted of two genders: male and female.

Jesus used this statement of fact to respond to those who were trying to trick Him with a question concerning divorce.

And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?"⁴ And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female,⁵ and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh'?'⁶ "Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matthew 19:3-6)

The blessing enabling fruitful multiplication that had been given to those beings created on the fifth day is repeated for humanity, *God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it.*

The one thing added to the blessing is the commission to subdue the earth and everything that exists in the earth. Whatever meaning one might put on the command to subdue the earth, mankind clearly is given the role of master over the earth - in a sense, as God's agent.

Verses 29-31

Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;³⁰ and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so.³¹ God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

From the beginning of creation both man and beast were to be vegetarians. It was not until after the flood that both animal flesh and herbs were to be eaten (Genesis 9:3). We would assume that prior to the fall, even animals did not have a predatory nature.

Thus, closes the sixth day. Creation is complete.

⁵⁷ Genesis 2:7

⁵⁸ Keil & Delitzsch, pages 63-64

Chapter Two: Summary and Details

Chapter Two begins with a closing summary statement concerning what has taken place, then begins a lengthy section in which details are given concerning the activity described in Chapter One.

Verses 1-3

Thus, the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. ² By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

This summary paragraph is the first time that the seventh day is mentioned as a sanctified sabbath. Note that in the statement that the seventh day was sanctified, there is no command for mankind to keep the Sabbath. The people of God were commanded to keep the Sabbath in the Law of Moses, and that Sabbath Law prevailed until the New Covenant. Even among Christians, the question of keeping the Sabbath was an issue. Paul discussed this question in Romans 14,

Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ⁵ One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

. . . But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." ¹² So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. ((Romans 14:4-6, 10-12)

Verses 4-6

⁴ This is the account⁵⁹ of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh Elohim made earth and heaven. ⁵ Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for Yahweh Elohim had not sent rain upon the earth; and there was no man to cultivate the ground. ⁶ But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

Chapter Two, beginning with this verse, gives details about the creation of the earth and its inhabitants that are summarized in Chapter One.

The Hebrew terms⁶⁰ indicate that the statement that there was *no shrub of the field* and *no plant of the field* refers to a field that is arable land – that which requires cultivation. This does not refer to plants in the wild.⁶¹ This fits the statement that *there was no man to cultivate the ground*. Thus, it is reasonable to infer that this statement refers to the plants that were to grow in the Garden of Eden, where they would be cultivated and tended by man.

⁵⁹ The term rendered, *account* (NAS, NIV, NLT), *generations* (KJV), *history* (NKJ) is *tholedoth* (תּוֹלְדוֹת), which is used as a heading to initiate several accounts in the Old Testament (ten times in Genesis; Numbers 3:1; Ruth 4:18; I Chronicles 1:29).

⁶⁰ *'siach hassadheh* (שִׁיחַ הַשְּׂדֵה) i.e. "field shrubs"; *esebh hassadheh* (עֵשֶׁב הַשְּׂדֵה) i.e. "field plants." The term, *sadheh* means tillable ground or arable fields.

⁶¹ Keil & Delitzsch, pages 76-78; Leupold, pages 112-113

The *waw*,⁶² with which verse 6 begins, can be rendered as, *and, so, then, when, now, or, but, that*. It is a connective conjunctive. Some scholars are of the opinion that, in the beginning of verse 6, it is best rendered as, *so*⁶³. Such a rendering makes clear the intent of the statement, i.e., how the deficiency of water was met - a mist rose from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.

The Septuagint (3rd Century BC Greek) and the Vulgate (4th Century AD Latin) versions rendered the Hebrew term, *edh*,⁶⁴ as, “spring.”⁶⁵ The NIV and NLT have followed the lead of these two translations and render the term accordingly in their versions.⁶⁶

If we look to Job 36:27, where the term also is used, it seems that mist is the preferred rendering, “*For He draws up the drops of water, they distill rain from the mist,*

In harmony with this statement in Job, Delitzsch regards the mist as being the creative beginning of the rain, i.e, that this was the first form of rain.⁶⁷ If that is true, then it did rain before the flood, although there is no mention of rain until the flood (Genesis 7:4 is the first time that Scripture describes the occurrence of rain).

Verse 7

Then Yahweh Elohim formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

As already noted, Chapter 2 gives details of the creation that are presented in summary form in Chapter 1. In this verse, we are given significant details concerning the creation of man. (see comments on 1:26 and footnotes 52 & 53). This indicates inherent relationship between man’s physical nature and the earth. Man is an earth-creature.

Here, as noted earlier, the literal translation is *man became a living soul*, the same language that was used concerning other forms of so called, animal life.

For all other forms of “animal life,” God spoke life into being and they became living souls (1:20-23). Man, on the other hand, received his living soul as a result of the breath of life’s being breathed into him by *Yahweh Elohim*.

It is significant that in neither the Hebrew text, nor in the Septuagint, is the word for spirit used in this portion of the narrative.

- The term is breath (Hebrew: *nshamah* נְשָׁמָה; Greek: *pnoe* πνοή)
- rather than spirit (Hebrew: *rhua* רוּחַ; Greek: *pneuma* πνεῦμα)

⁶² ו

⁶³ Summary in Leupold, page 113

⁶⁴ טַל

⁶⁵ Greek: *πηγή*; Latin: *fons*

⁶⁶ Note that the NIV and NLT follow the principle of Dynamic Equivalence, rather than Formal Equivalence in rendering their versions.

⁶⁷ Keil & Delitzsch, page 78

We may ponder the significance of this fact, but we cannot draw any firm conclusions concerning it. The important point is that God, personally, imparted life to man by a special and deliberate act. Much discussion among exegetes has swirled around this statement – its meaning, specifics as to how it was done, etc. It seems best to leave such speculations alone and be satisfied with the fact that God acted in a special way in imparting life to man.

Verse 8

And Yahweh Elohim planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

The term, *Eden*,⁶⁸ means, *delight*. Thus, the literal translation of the phrase, *Garden of Eden*, is *Garden of Delight*. The term rendered, *garden*,⁶⁹ literally is *a placed hedged around*. This, Garden of Delight became man's home.

Verse 9

And out of the ground Yahweh Elohim 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 evil.

In addition to trees that were placed in the garden for both beauty and food, two special trees are mentioned:

- The tree of life
- The tree of the knowledge of good and evil

What is the identity of these two special trees and do they have any significance for us?

The tree of life is mentioned again in Genesis after the fall (3:22, 24). It assured ongoing life⁷⁰ and would have served its purpose had man not succumbed to the temptation of Satan to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The next time that the tree of life is mentioned is in the Holy Jerusalem, described in Revelation (2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).⁷¹

The significance of the tree of knowledge of good and evil are revealed in Chapter Three, where we will make appropriate comment.

Verses 10-14

Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. ¹³ And the name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

⁶⁸ עֵדֵן

⁶⁹ גַּן (*gan*)

⁷⁰ *Then Yahweh Elohim, ...and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever "-- (Genesis 3:22)*

⁷¹ In Proverbs some things are figuratively described as a tree of life (Proverbs 3:18; 11:30; 15:4)

The first named river began either in Eden or just outside of the garden. It is common to see several rivers coming together to form a larger river, but it is difficult to discover (perhaps impossible) a large river that has divided into four rivers.

Much effort has been expended in trying to identify the four rivers. We have to ask, "Was Moses describing the rivers as they existed in his day, and thus used the names for them that were current in 1447-1440 BC? Or were these the names of the rivers as they came to exist at the time of creation?"

One thing to remember is that the world-wide flood would have changed completely, the topography of the surface of the earth and rivers that existed prior to the flood probably passed out of existence and others were formed following the flood.

Because the countries through which and around which the rivers flowed are identified specifically by Moses, a strong argument could be made that at least the location of the rivers is given as they existed in Moses' generation. The original readers of Moses' document would have been familiar with these geographical locations.

- All efforts to identify Pishon and the land of Havilah have proven futile.
- Cush, which was encircled by the Gihon, generally is understood to be Ethiopia, but some argue that it refers to a region that extends to the Caucasus.⁷²
- The third river, Hiddekel, usually is understood to refer to the Assyrian, *Hidiqlat River*, which the Persians called, *Tigra*, i.e. *Tigris*⁷³.
- No geographical comment is made concerning the Euphrates, because it was so familiar that Moses did not need to give any explanation.

If these speculations are correct, it would seem that the Garden of Eden was in the Armenian highlands, but any honest exegete must admit that such a claim is speculative.⁷⁴

Verses 15-17

Then Yahweh Elohim took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.¹⁶ And Yahweh Elohim commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."

This verse does not intend to indicate the full scope of man's diet, as was done in 1:29, but is considering only what trees were for food and the dire warning about abstaining from one tree.

Man is given a purpose, a command, and a prohibitive warning. From the very first, it was not God's design for man to be idle. He was given a task. We are reminded of Paul's statement to the Thessalonians,

and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; (1 Thessalonians 4:11)

For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

⁷² Keil & Delitzsch, page 83

⁷³ See Daniel 10:4

⁷⁴ See Leupold, pages 124-127; Keil & Delitzsch, page 83, footnote 2

The command/warning was to refrain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that if this command were disobeyed, death would be the result.

Why did God place the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden? Obviously so that man could choose to obey. An important point to note is that from the first, man has been given the freedom of the will. The moral sense will be developed later, but freedom of choice has been man's condition from the very first.

We are reminded of Jesus' words,

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; ... Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; (John 14:21,23)

God did not wish to have robots who have no will and therefore cannot choose to obey Him. He desired to have beings who chose to obey Him, thus recognizing Him as God and did so because of the relationship that existed between them. This is echoed in Deuteronomy 29:29,

The secret things belong to Yahweh our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

Verses 18-20

Then Yahweh Elohim said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."¹⁹ And out of the ground Yahweh Elohim formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.²⁰ And the man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.

Following the statement that God will make a helper suitable for the man, the narrative is interrupted by the account of man's naming the animals. The point made by this is that even though man had fellowship with God and the company of all of the creatures, he still was alone – and Yahweh Elohim saw that this was not good. This is the first time in the creation account that something is described as being, “not good.”

Verses 21-23

So Yahweh Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place.²² And Yahweh Elohim fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.²³ And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

Here we find details that were summarized in Chapter One, verse 27, *male and female created He them.*

God anesthetized Adam and removed a rib. In all probability, not only the bone, but also some attendant flesh must have been removed, since later, Adam described the first woman, as being, *bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh (2:23).*

Of interest is the term used here. It is *wayyi'ben*,⁷⁵ which means, *to build*. The concept is of building something of a structure of importance. Had the idea been that of molding, as one would do with clay, the word would have been *yatsar*.⁷⁶

The absolute unity of the human race, in its descent from a single ancestor is portrayed in this account. This is another of those basic doctrines of Scripture, provided by Genesis.⁷⁷

As has often been commented, woman is not of inferior substance. She is neither from the foot nor the head – she is neither superior nor inferior to man. When she was created, she was of the same level as the man.

No doubt the original language spoken by humanity has been lost, but, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Moses conveys, in Hebrew the intimate relationship of the man and woman by using the terms *ish* (אִישׁ) and *ishah* (אִשָּׁה) i.e. man and woman (also can mean husband and wife).

Verse 24

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

Because Adam could not have had any experience of propagation, at this time, he would not have had any sense of father and mother. Therefore, it would be best to enclose verse 24 in parenthesis, indicating that it is a comment Moses made concerning the relationship between man and woman.⁷⁸

Verse 25

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

This concluding comment on the creation account is a picture of the primeval state of perfection. The man and the woman were not self-conscious. Neither had anything taken place to arouse in them any sense of guilt or shame. Everything was in harmony – between man and God as well as between man and woman.

Thus ends the account of the creation, both in summary and in detail.

Chapter Three: The Temptation and the Fall

This is the most tragic chapter of the Bible. The consequences of the fall are experienced by both God and mankind, thus it is tragic on every level.

Those who would make this some sort of a skillful allegory, find themselves in opposition to the clear teaching of the New Testament. For example, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians and later Timothy,

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:3)

⁷⁵ וַיִּבֶן

⁷⁶ יָצַר

⁷⁷ For example, Romans 5:18ff

⁷⁸ Other parenthetical comments are made by Moses in the Genesis document (Genesis 10:9; 26:33; 32:32)

For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.¹⁴ And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. (1 Timothy 2:13-14)

Verses 1-6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which Yahweh Elohim had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"² And the woman said to the serpent, "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, lest you die.'"⁴ And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die!"⁵ "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁶ 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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Animals do not talk, and so we wonder at the lack of surprise on the part of the woman when the serpent spoke to her. Clearly, the serpent was possessed by the evil spirit whom is met often in Scripture under the names of Satan (σατανᾶς - opponent) and Devil (διάβολος – slanderer or accuser).

Revelation 12:9 echoes this truth,

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

We can understand why the woman was singled out by the tempter.

- She had not heard directly from God the command to abstain from eating from this forbidden tree. She had heard it only from Adam.
- She was not the one to whom dominion over the animals had been given, nor had she been the one to name them.
- Perhaps, she was not naturally as strong as was man.

Be that as it may, Satan knew the weakest person of the two, the one most vulnerable to his wiles.

Satan's approach is evidence of his clever nature – he begins with a question to elicit a response from Eve that he then can use as an avenue of doubt. Note that the woman's response displays the tendency of legalists, *God has said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die."* God had not forbidden the touching of the tree, only the consumption of its fruit.

Satan then inserted doubt, along with a distrust of God's motives. Notice that the temptation is a bold denial of the Word of God. Satan even goes so far as to make God out to be a liar.

As doubt begins to take hold, the woman sees the tree in a new light – it is good for food, attractive to the eye, and if she ate of it she would become wise. So, with doubt removing all restraints she took of the fruit, and in turn, gave some to the man, who also ate with her.

I John 2:16 summarizes the temptation faced by the woman:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

In Paul's first letter to Timothy (I Timothy 2:13-15), he indicates that the woman had the relative greater guilt, but the sin of the two has so much in common that it is as one sin. Since Adam was

the head of the race, he often is referred to as the originator of sin and the Fall (Romans 5:14; I Corinthians 15:22; i.e. in Adam all die).

Verse 7-8

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.⁸ And they heard the sound of Yahweh Elohim walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh Elohim among the trees of the garden.

The immediate result of their sin was shame. They eat and expect grand results, but what they receive is an instant sense of shame.

God is pictured as casually moving through the garden in the evening. It is safe to assume that this relationship with God had been experienced previously. However, the shame that the man and the woman experienced drove them to hide from God – a futile ploy, but not rare. The free relationship that humanity and God mutually enjoyed had come to an end.

Verse 9

Then Yahweh Elohim called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

Of course, Yahweh knew where they were and what had happened. Note that this pattern is displayed throughout Scripture – mankind may seek to avoid God, but God has sought out mankind, especially through the coming of the Messiah (John 1:14).

Verses 10-13

And he said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."¹¹ And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"¹² And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."¹³ Then Yahweh Elohim said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

God knew that they had eaten of the forbidden tree, but He gave them a chance to confess. Then, when confronted, both the man and the woman sought to pass off blame – the man onto the woman and the woman onto the serpent.

Verses 14-15

And Yahweh Elohim said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly shall you go, And dust shall you eat All the days of your life;¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

The rendering, *more than all cattle... more than every beast of the field*, is somewhat misleading. Even though the Hebrew participle, *min*,⁷⁹ can be used in the sense of comparison, i.e., *more than*, such an understanding is not its most common understanding. The most common understanding of *min* is, *out of*.^{80 81} When we consider that the curse is being directed to the serpent, and not to the entire animal kingdom, *out of* seems to be the best rendering. What

⁷⁹ מִן

⁸⁰ Keil & Delitzsch, page 98; Leupold, page 161; Gesenius, page 119w; Koenig, page 278b

⁸¹ An example of such usage is seen in Deuteronomy 14:2, *Yahweh has chosen to be a people for His own possession out of [min] all of the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*

Yahweh is saying to the serpent is that out of all of the creatures of the earth, you have been singled out for a specific curse.

The curse on the creature, who was Satan's vessel, is two-fold:

1. All serpents will travel sinuously on the belly and inhale dust
2. There will be an instinctive animosity between serpents and the descendants of the woman.

Satan clearly was the perpetrator who had entered the serpent and used the serpent as his agent. This brings to mind the statement made about Judas, *And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.* (Luke 22:3).⁸²

We must recognize that there was a difference between Judas and the serpent. Judas was a moral being with a free will. He must have had tendencies that allowed him to be open to Satan's temptation. The serpent, on the other hand, being an animal, would not have had the free will and the moral sensibilities of a human. The question has to be asked, "Since Satan is the perpetrator and the serpent was an unmoral and therefore irresponsible tool that Satan used, why was the serpent cursed?" Several situations in Scripture shed a bit of light on this question.

- In Haggai, the prophet was instructed to query the priests,

'If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will that which it touches become holy?'" And the priests answered and said, "No."¹³ Then Haggai said, "If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?" And the priests answered and said, "It will become unclean." (Haggai 2:12-13)

A principle is in play here – that which touches anything unclean becomes unclean. By this reasoning we could conclude that serpent became "unclean" by having been inhabited by Satan.
- The Mosaic Law decreed that death was to be the fate of a beast who injures a human.

"And if an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished."²⁹ "If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring, and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. (Exodus 21:28-29)
- Perhaps even a more similar parallel to Genesis 3 is seen in the case of an animal's being used for an unnatural sexual act.

'If there is a man who lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death; you shall also kill the animal.'¹⁶ 'If there is a woman who approaches any animal to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death. Their blood-guiltiness is upon them. (Leviticus 20:15-16)

Here then, is a principle that even unmoral beasts, when used for illicit or evil purposes can be made to bear consequences of their being so used.

⁸² See also John 13:2, 27

The curse concludes with a promise: *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.* ⁸³ The seed of the woman is masculine – *He will ...*

Throughout the centuries, Christians have labeled Genesis 3:15, *The Protoevangelium*, i.e. the first declaration of the Gospel. This is one of the most important verses in the Bible.

Paul's statement to the church at Rome echoes Genesis 3:15, *And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. (Romans 16:20)*

Verse 16

To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."

The various English versions of this verse render the first portion of God's pronouncement in a variety of ways.

KJV *I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children;*

NAS *I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children*

NIV *I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children*

NKJ *I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children*

NLT *I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth*

The KJV and NKJV are closer to the Hebrew. The Hebrew reads, *I will increase very greatly your pain and your conception. In pain, you shall bring forth children.*

Both *pain* and *sorrow* are legitimate renderings of the term (*itstsebhon*⁸⁴). It is left to the discretion of the translator as to which term best fits the thought being communicated. In this passage, it probably includes both physical as well as emotional and spiritual pain (sorrow).

The manner in which the KJV and the NKJV are closer to the Hebrew is that they allow for an understanding of the pain (or sorrow) in the first clause as not being identified only as pain associated with childbirth - although that pain is included.

The conjunction before *conception* is to be understood as, *and in particular, in your conception.*⁸⁵

The idea is that from this time onward, physical infirmities as well as emotional and spiritual pain would be a part of womanhood. Generally, women do experience more emotional and physical pain than men (the operative word is, *generally* – there are exceptions).

⁸³The NIV renders the last clause of verse 15 as *He will crush your head and you will strike His heel.* The NIV's use of the terms, *crush* and *strike*, whereas the same Hebrew term⁸³ is used in both instances is the result of Luther's and some grammarians' considering the term in this passage to be a *zeugma*.^{83 83} This understanding distinguishes the difference between the results of the encounter on Satan, on the one hand, and the Seed of the Woman on the other. This understanding does fit the result of Jesus' crucifixion (Satan was crushed [defeated], but Christ was not – He was resurrected and achieved a victory over Satan), however whether or not this is a *zeugma* is debatable.

⁸⁴ עֲצֻבֹנָה

⁸⁵ For a discussion of this clause, see Leupold, page 173 and Keil & Delitzsch, page 103

Thus, the penalty imposed on woman for her sin is four-fold:

1. Physical, mental, and spiritual pain
2. Pain in childbirth
3. A desire for her husband (Hebrew⁸⁶ better rendered, *yearning*) for her husband
4. Her husband shall rule over her

Verse 17-19

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life.¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow 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, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

Man's misdeeds were twofold:

- He submitted to his wife, whereas he should have had supremacy.
- He disobeyed a direct order from Yahweh and ate of the forbidden fruit

The results of his misdeeds would be obvious:

- The tilling of the soil would be necessary for food.
- The tilling of the soil no longer would be easy, but it would be a difficult and wearing task.
- Thorns, thistles, and other odious plants would grow where man would seek to grow food.
- Death would be the final experience of life – dust to dust.

Verse 20

Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

In English, the name that man gave to his wife is, *Eve*. In Hebrew, the term is, *hava*,⁸⁷ meaning, *life*.

Verse 21

And Yahweh Elohim made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

The term rendered, *garments*⁸⁸ (rendered in various versions as, *coats, tunics, clothing, etc.*) generally means, *tunics* i.e., a long shirt-like garment.

The term rendered, *skin*,⁸⁹ is used for both the skin of humans and the skin of animals. In some contexts, it is rendered as *hide*, or *leather*. The natural assumption is that God made their garments from the hide of animals. Furthermore, it is assumed that animals were slain in order

⁸⁶ (*teshuqah*) תְּשׁוּקָה

⁸⁷ חַיָּה

⁸⁸ (*kothnoth*) כְּתָנוֹת

⁸⁹ (*or*) עוֹר

for their hide to be used to clothe the man and woman. If that is true, and it seems to be a reasonable assumption, this is the first time that death of any creature had occurred.

Some exegetes argue that God did not sew together the skins to make the garments, but gave directions as to how to do it.⁹⁰

God's provision of garments for the couple communicated the message that God acknowledged that the shame experienced as a result of their sin was an appropriate response. He then accordingly provided covering for their nakedness, which had first caused them shame.⁹¹

Another reason for providing the garments made of skin was the fact that they were going to be forced out of the garden and that the garments of leaves that Adam had made would not be sufficient for what they would face, in the larger world.

Verses 22-24

Then Yahweh Elohim said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"--²³ therefore Yahweh Elohim sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.²⁴ So He drove the man out; and at the east 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.

The manner in which mankind had become like God was the knowing of good and evil, and no more than that.

Three merciful provisions of God are seen in God's response to the first sin:

- Provision for food, even though the production of that food would require hard work
- Clothing that would provide protection for them as they entered the world
- Removing them from the Garden and the possibility of eating of the tree of life.

Thrusting the man and the woman out of the Garden and thus, depriving them of the tree of life is a blessing that sometimes is overlooked. For man and woman to live forever in their fallen state and thus live in a degree of eternal misery is not the *everlasting life* that God designed for man. As Keil has stated, "The expulsion from paradise, therefore, was a punishment inflicted for man's good, intended, while exposing him to temporal death, to preserve him from eternal death."⁹²

Not only were the man and woman forced out of the garden, but cherubim were stationed at the entrance to the garden and guarded the entrance with a flaming sword. As noted earlier, the next time that the tree of life is mentioned is in the Holy Jerusalem, described in Revelation (2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).

Chapter Four: The Early Development of the Sinful Human Race

Chapters One through Three record the orderly manner in which God created the heavens and the earth and all contained therein, followed by the necessary testing of the man and woman, resulting in their tragic fall and the results that the human race bears as a result. Chapter Four

⁹⁰ For example, Keil & Delitzsch, page 106; Leupold, page 178

⁹¹ One might see in this a precursor to the ultimate covering and removal of our shame, through the blood shed on the cross, although there is no intimation of that idea in the text.

⁹² Keil & Delitzsch, page 107

records what transpired as the human race developed under the curse of sin, but with the promise of hope contained in the *protoevangelium*.

Chapter Four is divided into three narratives:

- Verses 1-16 present the account of an individual who demonstrated the sinful nature of the fallen creature.
- Verses 17-24 give the account of a very gifted family that was estranged from God
- Verses 25-26 give the account of a godly family

Verse 1

*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from Yahweh.*⁹³

The delicate expression, *knew Eve his wife*, is a consistent biblical euphemism for connubial intercourse. It implies knowledge of experience; this is the same term⁹⁴ applied to man after the eating of the forbidden tree.⁹⁵

Eve rejoiced in the birth of a son, acknowledging the role of Yahweh in the birth. No doubt she remembered the promise in Genesis 3:15 and anticipated this being the fulfillment of Yahweh's promise. The Hebrew term that we alliterate as, "Cain,"⁹⁶ some have defined as, *acquire*. However, the term also can be rendered as, *heroes* or *spear*.⁹⁷

Verse 2

And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

The name of the second son, Abel,⁹⁸ means, *vapor, nothingness, empty*. One wonders if there had been sufficient time between the birth of Can and Abel for Eve to become aware of the vanity of this earthly life or if Abel seemed to be a weak child and thus received this name.

The account of the birth of the two sons leaps many years ahead to the point that they have become men and have taken on their respective tasks.

⁹³ We cite the KJV here, because it displays the Hebrew more accurately than some of the more recent versions (we have removed the KJV, *the Lord*, and replaced it with the Hebrew, *Yahweh*).

⁹⁴ *Yadah* (יָדָה)

⁹⁵ Concerning the topic of "knowing," in the Greek of the New Testament, there are three words that speak of knowing: οἶδα knowing facts (as applied to God, i.e. His Identity, II Thessalonians 1:8; Titus 1:6; Hebrews 8:11; etc); γινώσκω, implying experiential knowledge (as applied to God, Philippians 3:10; I John 2:4; etc.); ἐπιγνώσις, implying full or complete knowledge – this term could encompass the concepts implied in the two other terms (Ephesians 1:17). In the Septuagint, the Greek term employed in Genesis 4:1 is the second of these, γινώσκω, i.e. experiential knowledge.

⁹⁶ *Qayin* (קַיִן)

⁹⁷ Brown, Driver, and Biggs, pages 883 & 884

⁹⁸ הָבֵל

Verses 3-8

So, it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground.⁴ And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And Yahweh had regard for Abel and for his offering;⁵ but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So, Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

Then Yahweh said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"⁷ "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

There are a number of questions surrounding this account. Honesty requires one to admit that a firm answer to some of them is unobtainable.

1. Did God command that an offering be brought, or was this some spontaneous act on their part; what was the motive?
2. Did they build an altar upon which the offerings were placed, and if so, from whence did come the concept of an altar?
3. The nature of the sacrifice was determined by the occupation of the one who brought it. Cain brought the obvious thing for him to bring – produce from the field. Abel brought the obvious thing for him to bring – fat taken from animals in his flock that he had slain. Both brought what was the natural thing for them to bring – why was one accepted and the other rejected?
4. Hebrews 11:4 states, *By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.* What is the meaning of the expression, *by faith Abel offered ...?*
5. What was the sin crouching at the door that Cain should have conquered?
6. The Hebrew of verse 8 reads, *Cain said to Abel his brother,* then immediately launches into a description of the murder. No intimation is given as to what was said. Exactly what did Cain say to his brother?

Although various teachers sometimes make seemingly absolute answers to these questions, such answers would be better viewed as opinions and possibilities. The one fact that we do carry away from this account is that in some manner, Abel's offering expressed faith and Cain's did not, resulting in Cain's anger, his depressed spirit, and ultimately, his murderous act.

Verses 9-12

Then Yahweh said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"¹⁰ And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying 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 cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you; you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

Obviously, God's questions are not to get information, but are to elicit from Cain an admission of wrong doing and some sense of guilt. Cain's response, *am I my brother's keeper*, has the meaning that one might use for one who is a zookeeper – one who looks after and knows the whereabouts of that which he is keeping.

Although Adam and Eve experienced the consequences of their sin, this is the first time that a curse has been pronounced on any human.⁹⁹ The curse was not one of damnation, but it resulted in two things:

1. Even though cultivating the land was hard labor (3:17-19, 23) for Cain it would be more so.
2. He would be compelled to stray and wonder around the earth – to be deprived of a settled and permanent home.

Verses 13-16

And Cain said to Yahweh, "My punishment is too great to bear!"¹⁴ "Behold, Thou hast driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Thy face I shall be hidden, and I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will come about that whoever finds me will kill me."

¹⁵ So Yahweh said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And Yahweh appointed a sign for Cain, lest anyone finding him should slay him.¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of Yahweh, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Cain's bold impudence of his first reply to God is gone. He is overwhelmed with despair. He does not express any repentance for his sin, but despair over the punishment.

He is driven from the fruitful portion of the earth that he and his family have occupied since they were forced out of the garden. His further response hints at the idea that he felt that there was a special relationship with God in the area from which he was being displaced.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, assuming that the family of Abel (who also were Cain's relatives) would learn about the murder of Abel, Cain feared that these relatives, in retribution they would kill him. 5:4 informs us that Adam and Eve had other children, but we do not know how many existed when the murder took place. This is the first hint of the code of the vendetta, which prevailed in all cultures.

The sign appointed for Cain cannot be defined by any honest exegete. It certainly was not a mark put upon him – the Hebrew term that occurs here is *'oth*,¹⁰¹ and this term does not mean, *mark*. It is best rendered as, *sign*. The Hebrew also states that God set a sign **for** Cain; it does not say that God set a mark or sign **on** Cain. Thus, we must conclude that this is one of those matters that we must leave without a specific definition.

The geographical location of the Land of Nod to which Cain migrated cannot be determined. Perhaps it could have been determined before the flood, but not thereafter. Given the portion of the curse that stated that he would be a perpetual vagabond, we assume that he did not find a permanent dwelling place within Nod.

Verses 17

And Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.

Cain's wife would have been his sister who followed him into exile. Marriage to a sister at this early stage of the development of the human race would not be considered wrong or unnatural.

⁹⁹ Previous curses had been on the serpent (3:14) and on the ground (3:17)

¹⁰⁰ This is the attitude of Jonah, who thought that fleeing from the Land of Israel would result in his fleeing from the Presence of God (Jonah 1:3)

¹⁰¹ אֹת

Since the Divine purpose was for the human race to develop from one pair, then the marriage of brothers and sisters, as well as other close relatives would be a necessity. Abraham's wife, Sarah, was his half-sister (Genesis 28:12).¹⁰² Later, such unions were forbidden and as the centuries passed by, the physical and mental consequences of producing offspring from such unions became evident.

The name, *Enoch*, signifies, *dedication* – i.e., *commencement* or *beginner*. When the son was born, Cain was busy building a city, and perhaps with pride, Cain named the city after his son. It also might have indicated that he was initiating a new start.

Perhaps Cain was trying to fly in the face of the curse that he would be perpetual vagabond. The Hebrew word rendered, *city*,¹⁰³ is derived from a root meaning, *to raise an alarm*. Any primitive city consisted only of a walled enclosure with a few houses. The Hebrew indicates that Cain was engaged in the process of building, not that he had completed the building. We might assume that he began building the city, but that if the city (village?) were completed, others would have finished the task.

The descendants of Cain, listed in verses 17-24, become more significant for their growing accomplishments as the generations proceeded:

Cain
 Enoch
 Irad
 Mehujael
 Methushael
 Lamech (married two wives: Adah & Zillah)
 Offspring of Adah
 Jabel – became the father of nomadic cattlemen
 Jubal – was the progenitor of instrumental music
 Offspring of Zillah
 Tubal-Cain – demonstrated great skill in making things out of metal

Verses 23-24

These two verses contain the first occurrence of poetry in the Bible

*And Lamech said to his wives,
 "Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice,
 You wives of Lamech, Give heed to my speech,
 For I have killed a man for wounding me;
 And a boy for striking me;
²⁴If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
 Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."*

Although most English translations contain some form of, *I have killed*, thus referencing some past action, more recent scholars argue that the perfects in this declaration are better understood as an expression of complete assurance or promise – in other words, braggadocio.

¹⁰² The marriage between relatives also is demonstrated in 24:4 and 28:2

¹⁰³ *Ur* (עיר)

Here is how Keil & Delitzsch comment on the terminology:

“The perfect, הַרְגָתִי, is expressive not of a deed accomplished, but of confident assurance (Gesenius @126, 4; Ewald @135c¹⁰⁴); and the suffixes in ¹⁰⁵הַרְגָתִי and ¹⁰⁶פָּצְעִי are to be taken in a passive sense. The idea is this: whoever inflicts a wound or stripe on me, whether man or youth, I will put to death; and for every injury done to my person, I will take ten times more vengeance than that with which God promised to avenge the murder of my ancestor Cain.”

Leupold comments:

“...the present-day approach, which classifies this as “Lamech’s Sword Song,” is correct...which pictures Lamech as handling one of the weapons just manufactured by his son, Tubal-Cain and as sensing the possibilities that lie in possessing such a weapon. For the *waw* conversive which binds the opening *wayy’omer* to the preceding section, bears just this connotation; as a result of his son’s invention of weapons, Lamech seeing what possibilities lay in such weapons, ‘said.’”

Verses 25-26

With the character of the ungodly family of Cain fully developed in Lamech and his children, the account turns to the brief account of the origin of the godly race.

And Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, "God has appointed me another offspring 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 men began to call upon the name of Yahweh.

Seth,¹⁰⁷ carries the idea of, *in place of*, or *substitute*. The name, Enosh,¹⁰⁸ is derived from a term meaning, *to be weak, faint, or frail*, indicating an awareness of the weakness of humanity, the exact opposite of the pride and arrogance displayed by the family of Cain. At this point in the narrative, Moses saw no need to trace the godly family through many generations, but as a prelude to the next section, he emphasizes the godly nature of this family.

Chapter Five: The History of Adam

Adam must have told his descendants about all of his experiences in the garden, his sinful fall, being expelled from the garden, and all associated with that event, including the words spoken by Yahweh. Sometime after the death of Abel and the departure of Cain to the Land of Nod, as already stated, another son, Seth was born. Seth was the progenitor of godly race, which is delineated in this chapter, which Moses labeled, *The Book of the Generations of Adam*.

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.² He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.

¹⁰⁴ George Heinrich August von Ewald, *A Syntax of the Hebrew Language of the Old Testament* (London, T&T Clark) 1891

¹⁰⁵ kill

¹⁰⁶ wound

¹⁰⁷ שֵׁת

¹⁰⁸ אֱנוֹשׁ

After this short summary, there follows the list of descendants of Adam, that culminated in Noah, along with the length of their lives. Here is a chart of the material contained in these verses. Certain things in the chart may not be totally accurate. For example, the column, *Age at birth of first son*, may not be accurate because the one's named in the account may not have been the first born (Seth certainly was not). The genealogy is that of Noah and gives no account of those who were not his ancestors. Also, note that the death of Enoch is in parenthesis, because he did not die. Every account of one of these men ends with, *and he died*, with the exception of Enoch (verse 24). The age of Noah at the time of the birth of his first-born also is in parenthesis, because it is not certain that the three sons mentioned were his first-born. Even so, for what it is worth... here is the chart.

	Age at birth of first son	Year of birth	Years lived after the birth of the first son	Total age	Year of death
Adam	130	1	800	930	930
Seth	105	130	807	912	1042
Enos	90	235	815	905	1140
Kenan	70	325	840	910	1235
Mahalalel	65	395	830	895	1290
Jared	162	460	800	962	1422
Enoch	65	622	300	365	(987)
Methuselah	187	687	782	969	1656
Lamech	182	874	595	777	1651
Noah	(500)	1056	450	950	2006

A striking matter to note is that Noah just missed knowing Adam. All of the other generations listed would have been able to converse with the first man, Adam.

In each of the characters mentioned, there is the consistent expression, *and...begat sons and daughters*. We do not know the names of any of the Sethites except those who were Noah's ancestors. Chapter 5 is the record of Noah's genealogy. The total size of the Sethite family would have been quite large since each of the sons and daughters would have begotten sons and daughters, generation after generation.

Chapter 6:1-8: The Comingling of the Two Races

Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.³ Then Yahweh said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.⁵ Then Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.⁶ And Yahweh was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.⁷ And Yahweh said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.

These verses present several things that need to be addressed. First, who were the daughters of men? Again, we turn to the Hebrew.

The term rendered, *men*, is *ha'adham*,¹⁰⁹ i.e., *mankind*. The term rendered, *to them (born to them)*, is *lahem*.¹¹⁰ This term refers to the collective singular, *mankind*. Note that from the time of the first couple, daughters had been born to mankind (5:4). Obviously, the birth of daughters is presented as having taken place throughout all mankind. Thus, this does not refer to Sethites or Cainites as the source of these daughters – the source was both – all mankind.

The second question that has to be addressed is, “Who were the *sons of God*? Three understandings of this expression have been held by those who seek to adhere to Scripture:¹¹¹

1. The sons of princes
2. Angels
3. Sethites, or godly men

The first view has become the traditional view held by orthodox rabbinical Judaism.

This understanding of the term is totally unwarranted by the language of the account and has no scriptural basis whatever. Therefore, it is easily dismissed.

The second view has had a rather wide following in some Fundamentalist circles, and even among some Evangelicals. It is defended on the basis of the use of the term in other passages of Scripture. Unquestionably, these verses refer to angels.

Job 1:6 *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh, and Satan also came among them.*

Job 2:1 *Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh, and Satan also came among them to present himself before Yahweh.*

Job 38:7 *When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

Daniel 3:25 *He answered and said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"*

The third view, which has the distinction of being the one held by respected exegetes throughout history,¹¹² points out that the term, *sons of God*, or some form of that expression, not only is used for angels, but also for the people of God. Here are some examples:

¹⁰⁹ הָאָדָם

¹¹⁰ לָהֶם

¹¹¹ A fourth view has been presented by those who hold Scripture to be a myth. These have viewed the account as identical to the pagan legends about the gods, who seduced or abducted females for sexual exploits. To these, the sons of God are the same as the gods of the Greek and Roman myths.

¹¹² The ante-Nicene Father, Julius Africanus (160-240 AD), argued that the sons of God were the descendants of Seth. Cyril of Alexandria (376-444 AD) defended this view against those who sought to make the Genesis account a myth, with gods and angels having sexual relationships with women. Chrysostom (349-407 AD) presented the same view as Africanus and calls the view that inserts angels into the account as blasphemous. Augustine, Philastrius, and other of the early Church Fathers held the view that the sons of God were Sethites. See W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, Volume Five (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing) 1976, pages 242-243

Psalm 73:15 In this passage the psalmist is addressing God. *If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I should have betrayed the generation of Thy children (Hebrew – Thy sons [ben]).*¹¹³

Deuteronomy 32:5 The Israelites are called His sons: *They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children (Hebrew – his sons [ben])*¹¹⁴ -, *because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation.*

Hosea 1:10 *Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And it will come about that, in the place Where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God."*

Since this language is used in Scripture for angels and for men who are in a relationship with God (i.e. godly people or those whom God has chosen), we realize that, on the basis of philology, we cannot decide which of these two views to accept. We must decide on the basis of theology and statements made on the subject, elsewhere in Scripture.

Those who argue that the reference is to angels, cite II Peter 2:4-9 and Jude 6.

II Peter 2:4-9 *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;*

⁵ *and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

⁶ *and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter;*

⁷ *and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men*⁸ *(for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul l*

⁹ *then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment...*

Jude 6 *And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.*

Those who use these two passages as an argument that angels married human females are presenting an empty argument. There is not the slightest hint in these passages that the fall of the angels described therein, had anything to do with the account in Genesis 6:1-2. The obvious reference in these passages is to the initial fall of a group of angels, led by Satan.¹¹⁵

Note that the sons of God are not described in Genesis 6 as merely having adulterous relationships with women, but of marrying them. The Hebrew expression, *wayyiqechu' lahem nashim*,¹¹⁶ is the language used for martial union.¹¹⁷ The words of Jesus argue against the marriage of angels, *for in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.* (Matthew 22:30)

¹¹³ בֶּן

¹¹⁴ בֶּן

¹¹⁵ See passages such as Revelation 12:4, 7-9; Ezekiel 28:11-19 (in which Satan was manipulating the Ruler of Tyre, and the rebuke/address is to Satan); Isaiah 14:12-15.

¹¹⁶ וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים

¹¹⁷ Leupold, page 253

Furthermore, there is no hint in the account, or in any other account of angels' taking up a settled habitation on earth.

For these, and other reasons, we must reject the second view, i.e. that angels married human women. The third view is the most viable view and it does fit the narrative that follows.

Thus, the situation described is one in which the male descendants of Seth, the godly race, began to choose wives whose beauty attracted them, without any other consideration – whether they were of the Sethites or the Cainites. This moral indifference is the emphasis of the passage – *whomever they chose*. The result was a comingling of the races and in time, there no longer was a godly race, but all became as one – and this comingled race was driven by sinful desires.

Yahweh extended to the human race a grace period of 120 years: *Then Yahweh said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."*¹¹⁸

Peter references this season of grace in his First Epistle: *who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.*²¹ *And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:20-21)*

We next must ask, "Who were the Nephilim?" Those who argue for the marriage of angels and human females usually consider the Nephilim to be the offspring of these union. Again, the text does not say this. The text says that the Nephilim were in the world at the time that the sons of God came into the daughters of men and they continued to be on the earth afterward.

The term, *Nephilim*, is found only one other time in Scripture, Numbers 13:33. This is the occasion when the spies went into Canaan to spy out the land and brought back a discouraging report. They reported that the land devoured its inhabitants, and then they stated, *"There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."*

The idea that the Nephilim were giants does not come from the Hebrew, but is the result of the Septuagint's Greek rendering of Numbers 13:33 (γίγαντες). No doubt this word was chosen because those who did the work assumed that the reason that the spies saw themselves as grasshoppers was because of their size, rather than their behaviour (which we discuss below).

In 140 AD, Aquilla, seeking to correct errors that he saw in the Septuagint, also translated the Old Testament into Greek. Aquilla's translation became the version that many in the early Church used, rather than the Septuagint. Aquilla rendered Nephilim as ἐπιπίπτοντες, meaning, *they who fall upon*.

Another scholar, Symmachus, a half-century after Aquilla, also translated the Old Testament into Greek, seeking to improve on the Septuagint. He rendered Nephilim as βίοι, meaning, *powerful*. The early Church scholar, Origin, referred to Symmachus' writings and included his version of the Old Testament in his Hexapla and Tetrapla. Jerome admired the work of Symmachus and used his work in preparing the Vulgate, although Jerome did follow the Septuagint in his rendering of Nephilim (*gigantes*).

¹¹⁸ Some have argued that the 120 years refers to the future life-span of humans. This is discounted by the fact that after the flood, quite a few lived longer than 120 years. Examples: Genesis 11:11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25; 25:7; 35:28; 47:9

The best path to follow in seeking to understand the term is to note that its root is the verb, *naphal*¹¹⁹, which means, *fall upon = attack*. This seems to be what was done by both Aquila and Symmachus in their Greek translations of the Hebrew and it is the most reasonable for us as well. This leads us to conclude that the Nephilim were marauders, bandits, those who preyed on others. Perhaps a good contemporary term would be, *gangsters*. Luther rendered the term as *tyrants*. This understanding fits both the passage in Genesis 6 and Numbers 13.

These Nephilim are examples of the fact that *the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*.

This also is in harmony with the summary statement made in verse 11, *Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence*, as well as Chapter 6:11, 13.

The identification of those who are identified as, *the mighty men who were of old, men of renown*, could refer to the Nephilim or to the offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men. The immediate antecedent in the text would lead to the conclusion that the reference is to the latter: *when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown*. However, such an identification is uncertain. It could be that the Nephilim could be the *men of renown*, in that such individuals throughout history have been men of renown. Examples would be the marauding Vikings, the pirate Blackbeard, Jesse James, Billy the Kid, Pretty Boy Floyd (who was somewhat of a hero to Oklahomans living in Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah Counties), etc.

The KJV rendered the term, *naham*,¹²⁰ *it repented the LORD*. This has caused a lot of confusion, in that it would indicate that God changed His mind about creating mankind. The term means, *to grieve, to sigh, to experience sorrow*. This is an instance of *anamanapoia*, i.e., the word sounds like what it means – to sigh.

Yahweh declared that all animal life, including mankind, would be destroyed – then the exception, *but Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh*. Through Noah, Yahweh determined to start over with all animal life and those who were made in His Image – mankind.

Chapter 6:9-22: Construction of the Ark and Preparation for the Flood

Moses divided the Book of Genesis into ten sections. Each one begins with the Hebrew term, *toledoth*¹²¹ (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2). The literal meaning of the term is, *generations*, but it also is used with the sense of history. Thus 6:9-10 reads, *These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth*.

The story in Genesis 6:9-9:29 is not the story of the flood as much as it is the story of Noah. Three elements of Noah's story are presented:

- Noah's piety (briefly mentioned)
- The story of Noah's preservation
- God's covenant with Noah as the father of a new race

¹¹⁹ נָפַל Job 1:15; Joshua 11:7

¹²⁰ נָחַם

¹²¹ תּוֹלְדוֹת

The brief comment on Noah's peity demonstrates one of the most striking examples of character in all of mankind's history. In the midst of his wicked contemporaries, he alone was righteous, blameless, and walked with God.

Verses 11-13

Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.¹² And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.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; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

The expression, *filled with violence*, is a rendering of the Hebrew, *chamas*.¹²² This term refers to highhanded dealing – trampling on the rights of others (consistent with the meaning of *Nephilim*). This was not an isolated condition, but the earth was filled with such deeds.

This description is followed with a restatement of God's intention to destroy not only all flesh, but even the earth itself will undergo destructive violence. As mankind, through Noah, started over and was different after the flood, so the earth will start over and be different after the flood.

Verses 14-17

"Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.¹⁵ "And this is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.¹⁶ "You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.¹⁷ "And behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.

In an orderly fashion Yahweh gave Noah detailed instructions as to how to construct the ark. After giving the instructions, Yahweh revealed, for the first time, how He planned to bring about the destruction – by means of a world-wide flood.¹²³

A cubit is roughly eighteen inches. On that basis, we determine that the ark was to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet in height. To make it water-proof, it was to be covered with bitumen, inside and out. No one can identify with certainty what tree is meant by *gopher wood*. This has puzzled translators throughout the centuries.

It would be inaccurate to call the vessel a ship, or even to call it a boat. It really was a large box, designed to float, but not to sail or to navigate. An *ark* is a container. The Hebrew term used here is *tebhah*.¹²⁴ The only other time the term is used in Scripture is reference to the *ark of bulrushes* into which Moses' mother placed her baby and then put the ark into the reeds in the water near the riverbank.¹²⁵

¹²² חָמָס

¹²³ Of special interest are the oral traditions of the flood that existed in ancient cultures. See ADDENDA C for a summary of two of these.

¹²⁴ תֵּבַת

¹²⁵ Exodus 3:3-5

Verse 18

"But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark-- you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

The promised covenant is that which was given after the flood – the sign of the rainbow (9:9ff)

Verses 19-22

"And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.²⁰ "Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind shall come to you to keep them alive.²¹ "And as for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them."²² Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

In these verses details are given concerning the choice of animals, etc. The thing to note in this summary statement is the instruction to put food on board the ark – since both man and beast were vegetarians at this time, both man and beast would eat the same food.

Chapter 7: The Entrance into the Ark and the Coming of the Flood

The ark has been constructed, the supplies are stored, and only the living cargo remains to be housed on the ark.

Verses 1-6

Then Yahweh said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household; for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time."² "You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female;³ also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth."⁴ "For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made."⁵ And Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.⁶ Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.

When the time came for living creatures to enter the ark, details were given concerning the distinction between clean and unclean animals. This is the first time in Scripture that this distinction is made. The statement is made as if Noah already knew the difference between clean and unclean animals. We must leave unanswered the question as to how this knowledge came about. To do otherwise is mere speculation.¹²⁶

Noah is given seven days to complete what had to be done and then, after his tasks were completed, the rain would fall. Yahweh fixed the exact duration of the rain – forty days and forty nights.

Verses 7-9 are a summary, indicating that Noah did what Yahweh had commanded.

Verses 10-12

And it came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.¹¹ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on

¹²⁶ In the Mosaic covenant, the distinction is clear, but that covenant was not given until many centuries later.

the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. And the rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

There is an exactness in the record of the very day on which the flood began. Also, important information is given concerning the source the flood – both water from above and subterranean waters burst forth, *all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.* No mention of the bursting of the fountains of the deep had been included in God's statements made before the flood. The amount of water that came from these subterranean vaults must have been huge, given the language of the text and the amount of water needed to cover the entire earth to a sufficient depth to cover even the mountains and to destroy all souls (human and animal). In the post-diluvian world, the result of the bursting forth of the fountains of the deep is seen in geological formations, fossils on the tops of mountains, and mountains on the floor of the oceans. Perhaps the manner in which this breaking forth was accomplished was through the depression of the mountains, forcing subterranean waters to the surface, and the floor of the oceans being raised to become mountains.

Verses 13-16

On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark, ¹⁴ they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds. ¹⁵ So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life. ¹⁶ And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and Yahweh closed it behind him.

The most significant statement of these verses is the final one: *and Yahweh closed it behind him.*

Verses 17-24

Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days; and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth. ¹⁸ And the water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark floated on the surface of the water. ¹⁹ And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. ²⁰ The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.

²¹ And all flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; ²² of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. ²³ Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

²⁴ And the water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.

Every existing mountain was covered. All living things that lived on dry land, both man and beast, were slain. Evidently, fish and other aquatic creatures were not slain.

Chapter Eight: The End of the Flood and the Exit from the Ark

Verses 1-3a describe the end of the rain, the cessation of the water's pouring forth from the fountains of the deep, and Yahweh's causing a wind to pass over the earth.

Verses 3b-4

...and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased. ⁴ And in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat.

Note that this verse does not describe the end of the flood, but rather that the waters had begun to decrease, and that as the waters decreased, the ark rested on a mountain peak in Ararat. Since the highest peaks were covered by only twenty feet (7:20 fifteen cubits), the ark must have rested on the peak early in the decrease of water upon the earth. Also, Divine Providence must have kept the ark upright and stable. Because it had no keel, it could have rolled on its side in the midst of the turbulent storm. Had it tilted, especially when landing on the mountain, all onboard could have perished.

In biblical usage, Ararat is a country.¹²⁷ Two feasible views have held sway as the location of the ark's resting place. The Jewish Targum defines it as the "Kardu Mountains," i.e., the mountains of Kurdistan, southwest of lake Van, from which would could be seen the Mesopotamian plain. Others consider the landing place to be the magnificent mountain peak, Masis, in central southwest Armenia. For many years, this particular mountain peak has been known as Mount Ararat.

Regardless of which view one may take, both locations are ideally suited as a place from which the human race can spread abroad. From one perspective, this is a central location: easy excess to the Mesopotamian plain; Asia Minor is accessible; Syria, Arabia, and Africa lie conveniently to the south and southwest; Asia is accessible to the north and northeast; Europe can be approached through Asia Minor; India can be approached through Mesopotamia. This general area is the Scriptural center from which the nations were spread abroad over the earth.

Verses 5-12

The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.⁶ Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made;⁷ and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth.⁸ Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land;⁹ but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself.¹⁰ So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark.¹¹ The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth.¹² Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again.

Many details require our speculation, and that is all that they can be. For example, "how big was the window and where was it located? It must have been small and allowed a somewhat restricted view because the mountain peaks could be seen, but not the condition of the rest of the earth. The window was large enough to allow Noah to release the birds that were sent out as a test, and then retrieve them when they returned.

Verses 13-19 Noah removed the roof of the ark, and thus was able to look abroad and see that the earth was dry. Thereafter, God told Noah's family to leave the ark, to bring out the animals, let them spread abroad and multiply upon the earth.

¹²⁷ II Kings 19:37; Isaiah 37:38; Jeremiah 51:27 – the KJV sometimes renders Ararat as Armenia. This was done in an effort to identify a modern country, but the text reads, Ararat.

Verses 8:20-9:1

Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.²¹ And Yahweh smelled the soothing aroma; and Yahweh said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.²² "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease." And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

The account of the offerings of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 may assume an altar, but this is the first time that Scripture mentions the erection of an altar. The altar and the offering must have been an expression of gratitude for God's mercy, not an offering to appease the anger of God.

Yahweh viewed the sentiments behind the sacrifice with satisfaction. Yahweh also acknowledged the essential nature of fallen man and since that is man's essential nature, never again will Yahweh lease upon the earth such a destruction. One sign of God's gracious mercy is His guarantee that as long as the earth remains, seasons, along with their agricultural accompaniments will be experienced by mankind.

Yahweh then commissioned/commanded the human race to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.

Chapter 9:2-7: Basic Ordinances Governing the Postdiluvian World

"And the fear of you and the terror of you shall be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.³ "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.⁴ "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.⁵ "And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.⁶ "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.⁷ "And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."

Several pronouncements are made in this section:

1. All animals, birds, and fish will have an instinctive fear of humanity.
2. Man is instructed to cease being a vegetarian, but to begin eating animal life.
3. All flesh that is eaten must first be bled-out, because "its life is in its blood."
4. Any beast or any human who kills a human being will be executed because mankind is made in the image of God.
5. Once again, humans are commanded to be fruitful and to populate the earth, abundantly.

Note that #3 and #4 are reiterated in the Law of Moses.

Chapter 9:8-17: The Covenant of the Rainbow

Verses 8-11 God promises to keep his covenant, not only with humans but also with all other living creatures.

Verses 12-17

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations;¹³ I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.¹⁴ "And it shall come about,

when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall 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 destroy all flesh.¹⁶ "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."¹⁷ And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Delitzsch commenting on the redundancy in the promise of the covenant, states, "these words are like blows of the hammer, which make the whole more firm and impress on it more deeply."¹²⁸

Whether or not there were clouds before the flood, and whether or not there had been rainbows before the flood, cannot be known. Even so, the rainbow is a sign of the covenant that even God Himself will observe – until the end of the earth.

Verses 18-19 The entire human race is descended from Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Verses 20-26

Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard.²¹ And he drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.²⁵ So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers."²⁶ He also said, "Blessed be Yahweh, Elohim of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant.

Several years have passed since the flood. The exact number of years cannot be determined. Some consider the birth of children, listed in Chapter 10, to have begun. Clearly, enough time has passed for Noah to plant vineyards and for the vineyards to have matured to the point of producing grapes – then sufficient time transpired for grape juice to have fermented. We assume that grapes were grown before the flood and that Noah was aware of wine, although this is the first time in Scripture that it is mentioned.

The making of wine is not in and of itself wrong. Becoming drunken is. Noah who had maintained his ground in the midst of a wicked and godless world, in a time of safety fell prey to a very simple temptation. Sadly, a tried and true warrior, ripe in experience, is brought low.

The aged patriarch, who from force of habit usually covered himself with his garment when he lay down, in his drunken stupor involuntarily cast open his robe when he lay down. One of the consistent traits of Scripture is how both the faults and the virtues of God's people are displayed.

Ham is described as the father of Canaan. This is significant in that father and son seemed to have the same inclinations, with Canaan exceeding his father in this regard. The Hebrew indicates that Ham did not just harmlessly, or accidentally see his father's nakedness. The Hebrew term¹²⁹ indicates that he looked at, or gazed with satisfaction.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Leupold, page 341

¹²⁹ *Wahhar* ' אַרְיָה

¹³⁰ Leupold, page 346

The actions of both father and son illustrate the truthfulness of God's statement in 8:22 *I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth.*

The actions of the two other sons, Shem and Japheth, is a strong contrast to the heart of Ham. They walked backward into the tent, so that they could not see their father's nakedness, and gently lifted Noah's robe, probably from the floor, then continued to walk backward and placed it over their father.

When Noah awoke, he was aware that something wasn't right. Possibly it was the unusual manner in which his robe had been placed upon him. The implication of the Hebrew term and the narrative is that he "learned" or "found out."

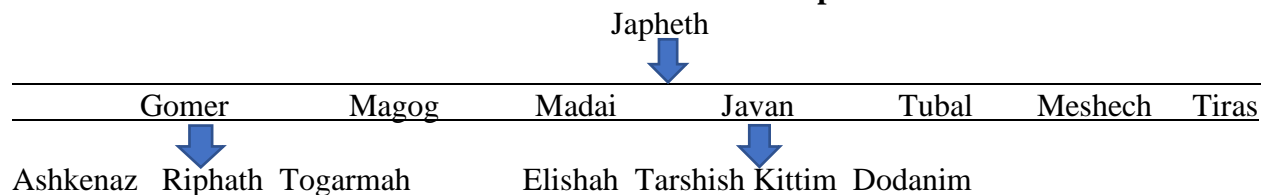
The curse pronounced on Canaan seems to be a prophetic utterance. Of significance is the fact that Ham had at least four children (10:6), but only a dire prophecy concerning Canaan is uttered. The three other children and their descendants do not play much of a role in the record of the development of the human race. The descendants of Canaan were those who later dwelt in Phoenicia, i.e., the land of Canaan. They became races that were accursed in their moral impurity (collectively, they were sometimes known as Amorites) as is indicated in Genesis 15:16; 19:5¹³¹; Leviticus Chapters 18 & 20; Deuteronomy 12:31. By the time of Abraham's call, their cup of iniquity was not yet full, but when Joshua led the Israelites into the land of Canaan, the Canaanites/Amorites were ripe for judgment.

Chapter 10: The History of Noah's Sons

The descendants of Noah's sons spread across the globe and the various nations developed as a result of this dispersion. The names listed in these genealogies give us some clue as to the origin of some of the nations. In some instances, there is uncertainty, but there is a fair amount of unanimity among commentaries concerning the identity of many of the nations that are related to the names of these individuals. In some cases, the text gives relevant geographical information. ADDENDUM D is a map displaying the general geographical distribution of each family.

Of note is the fact that several generations descending from Ham and Shem are given in the text, but only two generations of Japheth's descendants are listed. No explanation is given as to why such a limited list is given to Japheth. Perhaps there just wasn't anything significant to report concerning this family and its place in the biblical record.

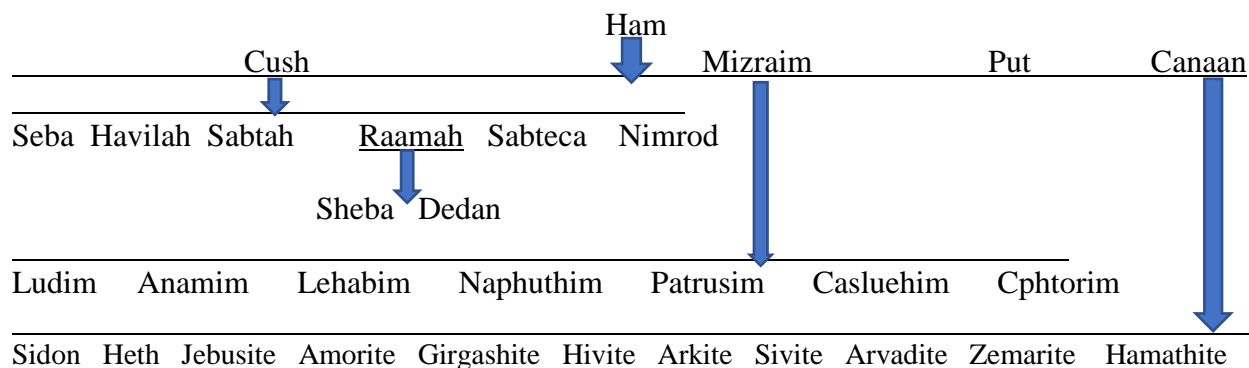
Verses 2-5 the descendants of Japheth



No comment is made concerning specific locations of Japheth's descendants except, *From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations* (verse 5).

¹³¹ Sodomites were Canaanites

Verses 6-20 the descendants of Ham



After describing the first five sons of Cush and their and their descendants, Moses suddenly breaks the pattern that he has been using in presenting the genealogy, and inserts special information about Nimrod.

Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth.⁹ He was a mighty hunter before Yahweh; therefore, it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before Yahweh."¹⁰ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.¹¹ From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah,¹² and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

The name, *Nimrod*, is from a verb form meaning, *let us revolt*.¹³² In the view of some scholars, the term rendered, *hunter*¹³³, is better rendered, *Tyrant*, and that he was a hunter of men.¹³⁴ Jewish tradition interprets the meaning of the expression, *before Yahweh*, as, *in the face of Yahweh*, i.e. a defiant spirit.

The extent of the Nimrod empire was quite extensive. No other records in antiquity give facts about the origin of the Babylonian empire. Both Babylon and Assyria, which became enemies in later centuries, were populated by descendants of Nimrod.

After interrupting his genealogical list, to make special comment on Nimrod, Moses then returned to the first mentioned sons. Mizraim is the father of Egyptians (in Hebrew, that is the name of Egypt). Also, from his lineage came the Philistines (verse 14)

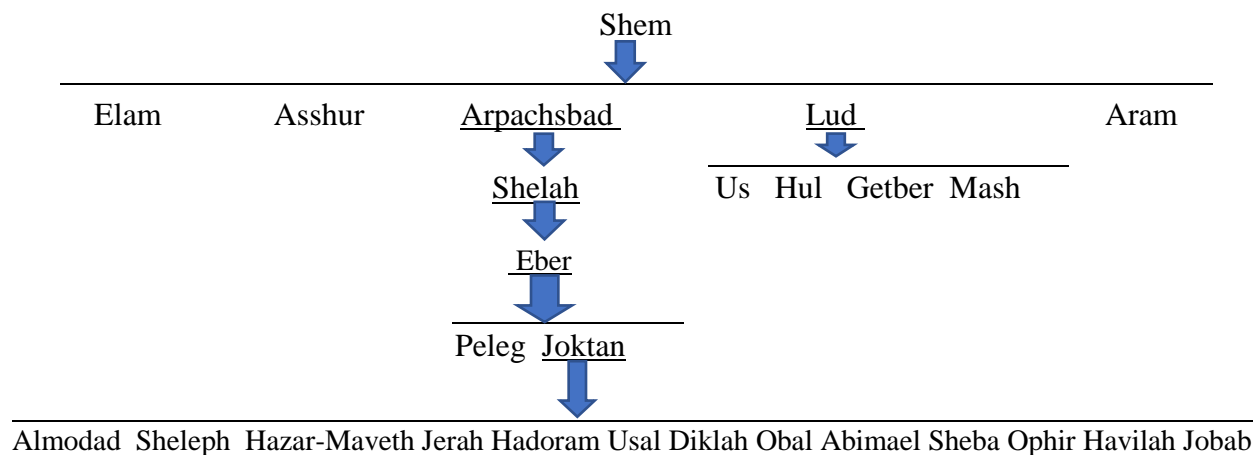
Canaan's descendants are described as being scattered abroad, their territory extending from Sidon in the northwest, to Gaza, in the southwest, and all the way to the Dead Sea in the east (including the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah).

¹³² *marad* מָרַד

¹³³ *Gibbor* גִּבּוֹר

¹³⁴ Leupold, page, 366; Keil & Delitzsch, pages 165-166.

Verses 21-31 descendants of Shem



The descendants of Shem are the most important to Moses. Shem is the progenitor of those who became Israelites. The background for the name, Hebrew, is that of *Eber*.

A special comment is made concerning, Peleg, *because in his days, the earth was divided*. His name means, *division*. Since he received that name because the earth was divided, no doubt the division had taken place before his birth.

Chapter 11:1-9 The Confusion of Languages

Chapter Eleven does not follow Chapter Ten, chronologically. Chapter Ten describes the descendants of Noah and where the various descendants established their homes. Chapter Eleven, describes what caused the dispersion. Thus, it seems that Chapter Eleven precedes Chapter Ten. Three times in Chapter Ten (verses 5, 20, 31) we find the statement, *according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations*. This dispersion did not happen until after the Tower of Babel incident, which is recorded in Chapter Eleven.

The account in Chapter Eleven begins with the human family's leaving Ararat, after the flood, and traveling to the huge plain of Shinar.

Verses 1-2

Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.² And it came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

Peleg was of the fourth generation after the flood and he was born after the division (see comments above) described in Chapter Eleven. Thus, we conclude that the events in Chapter Eleven probably occurred about 100 years after the flood.

Verses 3-4

And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.⁴ And they said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

The region was one in which many stones littered the region. Yet, rather than using the natural products available, they exhorted one another to build with materials of human origin - to make bricks and to burn them well so that they would be durable, like stone.¹³⁵

The Hebrew indicates, *let us build for ourselves a city, and in particular, a tower....* Even though both building a city and building a tower were in view, the building of the tower seems to have been the major purpose of their efforts.

Some have presented the view that the purpose for building a tower was to defeat any efforts to destroy mankind by a flood. This is an untenable argument. The rainbow covenant would have been known to them, so no threat would have existed. Also, only a few people could have ascended to the top of a tower, so it would have provided little protection against another deluge.

Two motives are given in the text:

1. To make a name for themselves
2. To keep from fulfilling God's command to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28; 9:1, 7)

Verses 5-7

And Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.⁶ And Yahweh said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.⁷ "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

After the flood, God had allowed things to take their course, but now He intervened. Concerning the phrase, *Yahweh came down to see*, the Jewish Targum paraphrases, *Yahweh revealed Himself*. As K & D comment, "Yahweh's 'coming down' is not the same here as in Exodus 19:20; 34:5; Numbers 11:25; 12:5, vis. the descent from heaven of some visible symbol of His presence, but is an anthropomorphic description of God's interposition in the actions of men, primarily a 'judicial cognizance of the actual fact,' and then, ver. 7, a judicial infliction of punishment."¹³⁶

The NIV and the NLT, *were building*, are closer to the Hebrew of verse 5, than are other popular English versions. The Hebrew term, *banu*¹³⁷, is in the perfect tense, meaning *had built to this point*.

Again, we encounter the plural language that we have so often encountered, thus far, in the record, *let us go down...*

Recognizing the fallen nature of humans, and the tendency to be self-willed, Yahweh realized that this was just the beginning of what the prideful, rebellious heart of the human race might devise. The remedy for this was to remove the thing that held them together, the unity of language.

¹³⁵ The mortar that they used was asphalt (bitumen) which still abounds in the region in and around Babylon. It is seen in the buildings that exist today in Babylon's ruins.

¹³⁶ Keil & Delitzsch, page 173

¹³⁷ בָּנוּ

Verse 8-9

So Yahweh scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of the whole earth; and from there Yahweh scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

This is the summary description of the initiation of the dispersion of the various families, as depicted in Chapter Ten, and commented on earlier.

The term, *babel*¹³⁸, is derived from the verb, *balal*¹³⁹, meaning, *to confuse*. This became the name of the city, which was the first city to exceed 200,000 in population.

Chapter 11:10-26: The Family of Shem

These verses record the genealogy of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as a prelude to the ongoing story of God's chosen people. As we did with the antediluvian's described in Chapter Five, we present a chart of the genealogical information in these verses. We add to the information given in these verses, data concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The beginning of the genealogy (verse10) states that Shem begat Arpachshad two years after the flood.

	Age at birth of firstborn	Year of birth	Years after birth of first son	Total age	Year of death
Shem	100	1556	500	600	2156
Arpachshad	35	1658	403	438	2096
Shelah	30	1693	403	433	2126
Eber	34	1723	430	473	2187
Peleg	30	1757	209	239	1996
Reu	32	1787	207	239	2026
Serug	30	1819	200	230	2049
Nahor	29	1849	119	148	1997
Terah	70	1878	135	205	2083
Abraham	100	1948	75	175	2123
Isaac	60	2048	120	180	2228
Jacob		2108		130	

The data in these verses and earlier, paint a rather revealing picture. Since Noah died in 2006 (as per earlier chart on page 31), he lived 58 years after the birth of Abraham. Shem did not die until Jacob was 48 years old. Men like Noah and Shem probably were given long lives so that they could give testimony to their sometimes, godless descendants. It also is a point to note how few

¹³⁸ בָּבֶל

¹³⁹ בָּלַל

were the links between Adam and Abraham. Adam lived to the time of Methuselah; Methuselah lived to the time of Shem; Shem lived to the time of Jacob.

Chapter 11:27-32: The Family of Terah

With these verses, we encounter the more focused story of God's plan to fulfill Genesis 3:15, the protoevangelium. From this point onward, from the perspective of New Testament revelation, we see the hand of God directing affairs, in personal lives, in the events of nations, and world-wide conditions.

To summarize the material in these verses:

- Terah lived in Ur and he had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran.
- Haran had a son, Lot, and two daughters: Milcah and Yiscah
- Haran died in Ur
- Abram married his half-sister, Sarai, who was barren until Divine intervention decades later.
- Nahor married his niece (Haran's daughter), Milcah
- Terah left Ur, taking with him, Abram & Sarai, and his orphaned grandson, Lot. It was Terah's intention to settle in Canaan. Haran was the final destination of their journey.
- Nahor and Milcah, as well as Yiscah, do not make the journey. Nahor later moved to Mesopotamia (24:10)
- Terah and his family traveled from Ur to Haran, where Terah died at the age of 205.

Ur was approximately 140 miles southeast of Babylon, and 10 miles west of the present bank of the Euphrates river. In ancient times, the river was much closer to the site. Some of the most extensive archaeological work done anywhere has been done on this site.

Archaeological excavations have demonstrated that Ur and the region surrounding the town, was a very well-developed civilization. The portion of the Tigris-Euphrates valley in which Ur was located was known in that time as *Sumer* (the northern part was Akkad). Archaeologists have discovered that the villages of this area included: adobe houses, stones for grinding flour, ovens for baking bread and pastries, flint weapons and tools, an assortment of pottery vessels and jars with attractive ornamentation, beads and amulets for personal adornment, and many artistic figurines, possibly intended to be goddesses (most ancient nations manufactured miniature replicas of humans and animals for religious and cultic exercises).

Ur was a city of about 150 acres with an estimated population of 24,000. There were two-story houses in Ur, a city sewer system (in some of the homes, archaeologists found bath tubs, similar to what one might find in 21st Century home), and neatly laid-out streets. Abram was not an uncommon name in the region, since several Babylonian texts from that period bear the name, Abram.

The royal tombs of Ur, dated a bit earlier than Abram, have produced a collection of magnificent golden vessels. Ur was a city of literary culture. Tablets have been found that were dictionaries, grammar books, mathematical tables, calculations in square and cubic roots, cuneiform writing, and copybooks for learners.

Ur was idolatrous and polytheistic. The name of the city, *Ur*, also was the name of the moon god. The inhabitants of Ur considered their moon god to be both their god and their king. When there were earthly kings, they often added Ur to the beginning of their name (example Ur-Nammu). It appears that the pagan priests of Ur were harshly oppressive and very demanding. Urukagina, a reforming ruler, found it necessary to issue a decree prohibiting the priests from

taking fruit or wood from a poor woman. The ruler also decreed that burial fees should be cut to one-fifth of what the priests had been charging and that no priests should be allowed to take private ownership of temple land.

The worship temples of the area were ziggurats (towers, no doubt similar to the Tower of Babel) built with various rooms and facilities. The ziggurats also served as locations where industries such as weaving cloth were conducted, no doubt to provide income for the temple.¹⁴⁰

On the journey from Ur to Haran, Terah and his family would have traveled about 600 miles. They would have followed the route of the Euphrates, then followed the Balik river due north, to Haran (see ADDENDUM E).

Abram's supposed residence in Haran is recognized by Mohammedans, who consider Abram to be a saint of Islam.

No one can say with certainty why Terah chose to leave Ur, nor why he chose Canaan as the goal to which they intended to travel. Some speculate that he left because Ur was such an idolatrous city. Yet, Joshua 24:10 states that Terah was an idol worshipper while in Ur. Perhaps he was leaving because he wanted to make a break with idolatry. No one can say for certain.

Neither can anyone say for certain why he did not travel further and settle in Canaan. Haran was/is in Mesopotamia, north of Canaan.

No doubt Yahweh was behind the entire scenario, even though the participants did not know it. As the story unfolds, it is clear that such was the case.

Chapter 12:1-10: The Call of Abraham and the Nomadic Life in Canaan Verses 1-3

Now Yahweh said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you;

² And I will make you a great nation,

And I will bless you,

And make your name great;

And so you shall be a blessing;

³ And 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."

Note that the covenant number, *seven*, is evident in these promises, even though no explicit covenant is involved, at this time. Once again, we encounter promises that can be understood, fully, only in the light of the New Testament revelation. The seventh statement clearly is Messianic. The sixth item, *And the one who curses you I will curse*, reflects the fact that Abram will be so identified with the work of God that to curse Abram will be very close to cursing God.

As has been true in earlier statements that Yahweh had spoken, we are not told how this was done. Did an angel appear? Did Abram hear a voice? We are not given information to guide us in the pursuit of the answer to this question.

¹⁴⁰ L. Thomas Holdcroft, *The Penteteuch* (Oakland, California, Western Book Company) 1966, pages 21-22; Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House) 1954, pages 107-112

Verses 4-6

So Abram went forth as Yahweh had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

⁵ *And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.* ⁶ *And Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land.*

Hebrews, describing this event, uses two words that always are vital to those who are pleasing to God: *faith* and *obey*.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ *By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;* ¹⁰ *for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10)*

The entourage that comprised the caravan must have been significant in that not only the family, but *all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran*. We are not told how many, *persons*, the family had accumulated. From future descriptions of events, there must have been a significant number of servants, probably slaves, as well as flocks large enough to require shepherds.

Verse 7

And Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to Yahweh who had appeared to him.

Again, we ask a question that cannot be answered, "How did Yahweh appear to Abram?"

Note that the land was not promised to Abram, but to his descendants. Verse 6 notes, *the Canaanite was then in the land*. This is another Divine word requiring the recipient to accept in faith. As the descendants grow into a nation, they would need a land to call home. From this point on, it becomes increasingly obvious that every promise that is given is a part of God's Messianic plan.

Abram felt impelled to give a somewhat public testimony to the blessing of God evident in his appearance and the promises that had been given. He built an altar and offered sacrifices. We naturally assume that the sacrifices were from the flocks that he and Lot and brought with them.

Verses 8-10

Then he proceeded from there to the mountain 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 Yahweh and called upon the name of Yahweh.

⁹ *And Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.* ¹⁰ *Now there was a famine in the land; so, Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.*

The term in verse 9 (*nasa*),¹⁴¹ rendered in most English versions by terms such as, *journeyed on, set out, etc.*, literally means, *pulled up stakes*. The term reflects the fact that they were staying in

¹⁴¹ נָסָא

tents, and to begin the journey required the pulling up the stakes that held the tents in place. Also, the tense and combination of Hebrew terms indicate that the pulling up of stakes and traveling was continual.¹⁴² They were nomads.

Chapter 12:11-21: The Sojourn in Egypt

The episode recorded in this portion of Scripture is another example of the total honesty of the Word. Abram, who is presented so often in Scripture as an example of faith, does not display the actions that one would expect from a man of God. Trust in God seems to be absent as Abram attempts to take matters into his hands, rather than leaving things in the hand of God.

And it came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman;¹² and it will come about when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.¹³ "Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."

According to 20:13, Abram and Sarai had this plan in mind from the time that they left Haran. She seems to have been complicit in the deception. Also, 20:12 informs us that indeed, Sarai was Abram's half-sister. Thus, saying that she was his sister was not a lie, however, the reason for telling it and omitting the fact that she was his wife, makes the statement a lie.

How could Sarai be beautiful enough at approximately 65 years of age¹⁴³ to qualify for the complimentary terms written concerning her beauty? According to the longevity of those who were living that time, she was middle-aged and middle-aged ladies do retain their beauty, especially if they have not had the challenge of motherhood.

There is absolutely nothing in this account to justify the cowardly and somewhat mean request that Abram put to Sarai – expecting her to encounter hazards in order that he might avoid danger. Some have argued that Abram's motivation was a noble one - to make possible the promise of Yahweh that all nations would be blessed through him and that he considered his survival to be essential to the fulfillment of that promise. If that were his concern, there still was no justification for his taking matters into his own hands and not leaving these matters in God's hands. Here is an illustration of the principle, *the end does not justify the means*.

There also is the question about whether or not Abram should have taken his family into Egypt, rather than remaining in the Promised Land and trusting Yahweh to provide for them in the time of famine.

Verses 14-16

And it came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.¹⁵ And Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.¹⁶ Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.

¹⁴² The NLT is the contemporary English version that comes closest to the Hebrew in rendering the ongoing travels, *continued traveling*.

¹⁴³ Concerning Sarai's age: Genesis 17:17 indicates that she was 10 years younger than Abram. 12:4 states that Abram was 75 years old when they left Haran, thus, Sarai would have been 65 years old at the time. Assuming that the couple reached the border of Egypt within a year or so of leaving Haran, that means that she would have been about 65 years of age at the time. She died at the age of 127 – see 23:1.

Exactly what the couple anticipated happening, did happen.

Unlike the women in some cultures, it is obvious that Sarai did not wear a veil. Her beauty was on display.

Having a beautiful sister whom Pharaoh took into his harem had political benefits. Pharaoh became quite generous with the beautiful woman's brother. When Abram and Sarai left Haran, as noted earlier (12:5), they had significant possessions as well as a retinue of people attached to them - probably shepherds and servants. Now, when Pharaoh's additional gifts, Abram became increasingly wealthy.

Verses 12:17-13:2

But Yahweh struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.¹⁸ Then 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 go."²⁰ And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him; and Lot with him.² Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.

Yahweh took from human hands, the responsibility of preserving the couple destined to be the ancestors of the Messiah. No information is given as to the nature of the plagues/afflictions that struck Pharaoh and his house. Nor are we told how Pharaoh knew the source and cause of the afflictions.

Here we encounter another instance of God's amazing grace. Abram not only escaped any lasting consequences, but he went away wealthier than when he had come to Egypt.

On Pharaoh's part, here was a man who collected women as one might collect trophies. If he wanted something or someone, he took it, without thought of the consequences experienced by those involved. This time, what he grabbed bit him back. However, he was innocent of the charge of taking another man's wife. Even so, he did know that Abram spoke the truth – that Pharaoh probably would have killed Abram in order to have Sarai.

When Pharaoh realized that Abram and Sarai were under the protection of Yahweh, Pharaoh did not dare to harm to the couple. He rebuked Abram with a curt dismissal. Abram seems to have received the rebuke in silence, knowing that it was deserved. Pharaoh had men escort Abram, his family, and all of the family's vast possessions, out of the land of Egypt – much like a security guard might escort an unwanted person out of a business establishment.

Chapter 13:3-18: Abram & Lot Separate

Verses 3-4

And he went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,⁴ to the place of the altar, which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of Yahweh.

Abram, in a sense, was starting over. He returned to the altar that he had constructed shortly after arriving in Canaan. The expression, *called on the name of Yahweh*, must imply an element of repentance and a renewed submission to the will of God.

Verses 5-13

Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.⁶ And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together.⁷ And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.⁸ Then Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers.⁹ "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me: if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left."

And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere-- this was before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah-- like the garden of Yahweh, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar.¹¹ So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus, they separated from each other.¹² Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.¹³ Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against Yahweh.

The Canaanites and Perizzites in the area lived in houses and villages. They were established and would have claimed much of the pasture land as theirs. Therefore, Abram and Lot had to pasture their flocks on unclaimed land. There wasn't enough free land to accommodate the large flocks of both Abram and Lot. Thus, it is not surprising that conflict would have arisen between the shepherds.

Abram demonstrated a desire to resolve the conflict in a peaceful and equitable manner – even willing to take the less desirable land, if that should be Lot's choice. Lot chose the more desirable pasture land, but with that desirable land came a culture that was exceedingly evil.

Verses 14-17

Yahweh reiterated the promise that he had made to Abram. He told him to look in all directions and all that he saw would someday belong to his descendants, who would become so numerous that they could not be counted. Yahweh told Abram to itinerate throughout the land of Canaan and that every place he walked would become the property of the nation that would be formed from his descendants.

Verse 18

Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to Yahweh.

The Hebrew (*ye'ehal*)¹⁴⁴ literally means, *he tented*. Thus, it seems that Abram moved his tent from place to place and then, after the tour, settled in Hebron, by the oaks of Mamre, where he once again, built an altar to Yahweh.

Chapter 14: Abram's Defeat of a Babylonian Confederation

Verses 1-17

For twelve years, Palestine had been dominated by an Elamite and Babylonian confederation. Chedorlaomar was an Elamite who was the sovereign over both Elam and Babylon. Sometime after Lot had migrated to the region of Sodom, the rulers of five cities/districts of the area

¹⁴⁴ יָאָהַל

(known as the five cities of the plain) chose to revolt against Chedorlaomar. In retaliation, Chedorlaomar and four other Elamite/Babylonian rulers attacked the cities of the plain. The forces of Chedorlaomar were victorious and they carried off all of the valuables of the five cities of the plain. They also took as captives the inhabitants of the cities, including Lot, Abram's nephew.

An escapee made his way to Abram and told him what had happened. In response, Abram took 318 men from his household who were trained in the use of weapons, and pursued the invaders. Arriving at night, he divided his troops and, under the cover of darkness attacked Chedorlaomar's forces. Abram and his troops achieved a total victory in the ensuing conflict.

All of the captives and all of the goods taken from the five cities were retrieved.

The kings of the five cities of the plain came as a delegation to honor Abram and reward him for his having delivered them from the forces of Chedorlaomar.

Verses 18-20

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ *And he blessed him and said,*

"Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

And he gave him a tenth of all.

As the troops were returning from the battle, Melchizedek met them with rations. Bread and wine were the most common staples of the day.

Who was this mysterious person, Melchizedek? We know nothing about Melchizedek, other than what is told us here, and commented on in Hebrews, Chapter 5-7. *Salem* is a shortened form of Jerusalem. Abbreviated forms of proper names frequently are used in Scripture. Note, for example, Psalm 76:2, in which *Salem* is used for Jerusalem. Melchizedek was the king of the city of Jerusalem, and a priest of the true God. It is assumed that Melchizedek had some sort of a sanctuary – a place of worship – in Jerusalem, but this is not spelled out in the text.

The king-priest Melchizedek, was a worshipper of the true God, *The God Most High* (*'El'Elyon*).¹⁴⁵ Obviously, he had received the tradition of the true God from the time of the flood.

Of special interest is that the two roles of priest and king are combined in Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:11ff states that his priesthood is of a higher order than that of Aaron. The blessing that he pronounces on Abram, as Hebrews 7:7 states, is an example of the greater blessing the lesser.

In the blessing, Melchizedek acknowledged that the success of Abram's military campaign was because God had given Abram the victory.

Hebrews 7:4 states that the *tenth of all* was a tenth of the spoils – this was not the same as the tithe under the Mosaic Covenant, which would have required Abram to have tithed from his flocks and his produce, not just from the spoils taken in the battle.

¹⁴⁵ אל עליון

Verses 21-24

The king of Sodom suggested a division of what had been retrieved from the enemy. He proposed that he take the people that had been rescued and that Abram take all of the goods and wealth that had been retrieved. Abram refused, saying that he did not want any human to be able to say that he had made Abram rich. He said that he would accept only the rations needed for the men of his household who had fought in the battle.

Chapter 15: God's Covenant with Abram

Chapter 15 begins a new phase in Abram's life and his relationship with Yahweh.

Verses 1-3

After these things the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."² And Abram said, "O Lord Yahweh, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"³ And Abram said, "Since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."

This is the first time in Scripture that a vision is mentioned. The idea communicated by this term (*machazeh*)¹⁴⁶ is that of an ecstatic state. It must have come in such a way that Abram could not doubt that it was from God, and not just something of his own imagination. In the view of many exegetes, since the chapter is presented as a unit, the entire chapter is included in the vision.¹⁴⁷ Some devote extensive time in arguing that this is true.¹⁴⁸

The opening declaration of the vision contains two elements:

1. a promise of protection
2. a promise of a reward.

The events that have been recorded, thus far, contain many examples of Yahweh's being a shield to Abram – even the episode in Egypt, when Yahweh intervened to cause Sarai to be released from Pharaoh's harem. Thus, Abram could look to the past and see that indeed, Yahweh had been his shield and thus he could trust Him to continue to be his shield

On the other hand, the previously given promise that Abram's descendants would someday inherit Canaan, had no prospect of being fulfilled, since Abram and Sarai were childless.

NOTE: Eliezer must have been the chief steward of Abram's household. This speaks well of the condition of the times, in that after the death of the head of a household, the first heirs would be householder's children, then next in line of inheritance could be the children of the head steward.

Verses 4-6

Then behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."⁵ And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."⁶ Then he believed in Yahweh; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

This amazing promise, given to childless Abram, resulted in one of the most important verses in Scripture, *Then he believed in Yahweh; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness*. Paul cites

¹⁴⁶ בְּמַחְזֵה

¹⁴⁷ Leupold, pages 471-472

¹⁴⁸ Keil & Delitzsch, pages 209-210

this verse in his argument that it was not circumcision that made any Jew righteous, but rather, faith in Christ (Romans 4:3, 20-22; Galatians 3:6-7).

Verses 7-8

And He said to him, "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it."⁸ And he said, "O Lord Yahweh, how may I know that I shall possess it?"

The implementation of God's Messianic plan took a specific direction when Terah left Ur. Terah was unaware of the importance of what he was doing, but as Yahweh stated here, He, God, had been behind the entire venture.

Abram, even though believing, reverently asked for some confirmation. This reminiscent of Mary's asking the angel, *"How can this be, since I am a virgin?"* (Luke 1:34) and perhaps to a lesser degree, Gideon's asking for a sign (Judges 6:17ff) and.

Verses 9-16

So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon."¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.

And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.¹² Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.

And God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.¹⁴ "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions.

¹⁵ "And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.¹⁶ "Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."

Yahweh's instructions to Abram, in preparation for establishing the covenant, in in keeping with the custom of the Chaldeans. Eduard Koenig, for example, cites historical evidence that this particular ceremony was used when North Syrian Mati'lu is put under covenant obligation to Aschschurnirari.¹⁴⁹ In the ceremony cited by Koenig, the covenanting parties passed between the two halves of the beasts, probably indicating that if either of them broke the covenant that the animals of the covenant breaker would be slain.

In a covenant, two parties become as one – what happens to you, happens to me. There are two types of covenants in eastern cultures. These have been given the general labels of *obligatory* and *promissory*.

- An obligatory covenant is an agreement between equal parties.
- A promissory covenant is when a superior (perhaps a king) promises certain things to a subordinate.

Biblical covenants between God and man are promissory covenants. God promises certain things and He does not break his word. Usually, there is some physical sign of the covenant.

¹⁴⁹ Eduard Koenig, *Die Genesis*, (Guetersloh, Bertelsmann, 1919), as quoted by Leupold, page 480

Those to whom the covenant is given, are obligated to keep the terms of the covenant established by God.

Concerning the clause, *a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him*, the Hebrew terms are enlightening. The terms indicate that the sleep fell on Abram quickly, but the terror and darkness (gloom) *kept falling*. Thus, the terror and darkness were enfolding him more fully when the rest of the revelation *is given*.

The information given in the revelation is very definite and detailed. It also is beyond question, *Know for certain*. Indeed, what Yahweh promised/foretold, is exactly what happened to Abram's descendants, in their growing into a nation, their being enslaved in Egypt for four generations, Yahweh's bringing plagues upon Egypt, and the Israelites' leaving that land with sizeable possessions.

The Amorites (a general term for Canaanites) occupied the land of Palestine, at the time that the vision was given. Yahweh said that the guilt of these people was nearing a point where Divine tolerance had almost reached its limit, but not quite yet. When Abram's descendants did come to occupy Palestine under the generalship of Joshua, it was complete and the Israeli troops were told to annihilate certain groups (beginning with Jericho – Joshua Chapter 6).

Verses 17-21

*And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces.*¹⁸ *On that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:¹⁹ the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite²⁰ and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim²¹ and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."*

In the vision, the sun was on the verge of setting in verse 12, and now it finally sets. The smoking oven¹⁵⁰ and flaming torch that passed between the pieces, represent Yahweh. The Hebrew terms refer to a portable clay oven, similar to an inverted bowl, about two feet high, with a hole in the upper side to allow a draft. Out of the opening came a flame, like that of a torch.

Note that Abram does not pass between the halves of the animals – it is all of Yahweh. God does not lie and so a physical expression of a covenant is not necessary, on God's part. However, the covenant was given to lend support to Abram in all that would test his faith in coming years.

By God's sovereignly given covenant, Palestine belongs to the descendants of Abram.

Chapter 16: The Birth of Ishmael

Years pass, and the promise of offspring is not fulfilled. Rather than continuing to wait in faith, at Sarai's suggestion, the couple turned to human ingenuity in an effort to do their part to make it a reality. Perhaps this taking things into their own hands was not as serious as when they did the same thing while sojourning in Egypt (Chapter 12) but it did spring from the same motive.

¹⁵⁰ These symbols are not unusual, in that Yahweh appeared in a burning bush as Horeb (Exodus 3:2-6) and on Mount Sinai as a consuming fire (Exodus 19:18), and during the entire time in the wilderness as a pillar of fire or a cloud (Exodus 13:21ff).

Verses 1-4a

Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar.² So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, Yahweh has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her."

And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.³ And after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.⁴ And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived;

Genesis 12:4 informs us that Abram was seventy-five years old when he and his family left Haran to take up residence in Canaan. Verse 16 of the present chapter informs us that Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born. These facts are consistent with the statement made in the present passage that Abram and Sarai had lived ten years in Canaan. Indeed, the couple had waited a long time for the birth of the promised offspring.

Sarai correctly ascribed to Yahweh her failure to produce children, *Now behold, Yahweh has prevented me from bearing children.*

Barrenness was felt to be a curse and offspring were prized as a manifestation of Divine favor. This attitude is seen in several Old Testament passages (Genesis 19:31ff; 24:60; Exodus 23:36; Deuteronomy 7:14; etc.)

Abram and Sarai were wealthy and women of wealth and position in that culture had their own maids, who were their own personal possession. The maid mentioned here was an Egyptian, no doubt one of those acquired during the family's brief stay in Egypt (12:16, 20). It also was not unusual in that culture for the wife to give her maid to her husband as a second wife, sometimes in the hope of producing offspring, which the first wife promptly claimed as her own.¹⁵¹ Hagar was not to become a concubine, but a wife. There was no stigma attached to the position of the maid/wife, but she would not have the same status as the first wife.

The decision to suggest this, was somewhat self-effacing on Sarai's part. Perhaps this is one reason why Abram so readily assented to the idea.

Regardless of any extenuating circumstances and regardless of any noble motives, the choice was a double sin:

1. It clashed with the concept of a monogamous marriage, which was the only configuration that God had instituted.
2. Demonstrating unbelief, the action took from the hands of God, whom Sarai said had prevented her from having children, the implementation of the promise and resorted to human means.

Verses 4-6

And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight.⁵ And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms; but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May Yahweh judge between you and me.

"⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

¹⁵¹ Leupold, page 494

The Hebrew, *bo'el*,¹⁵² “to go in unto,” is a delicate euphemism for sexual intercourse.

The evils of polygamy begin to rear their ugly head – envy, jealousy, and strife. Hagar probably thought that Yahweh had bestowed upon her what He had denied Sarai and so she thought herself to be superior to her mistress. She began to show this in certain, probably subtle ways.

No doubt this pained Sarai, because she was a woman of high position and Hagar was only an Egyptian slave. Sarai’s judgment became impaired by the bitter feelings aroused in her by Hagar’s attitude. Sin reared its ugly head and she blamed Abram for doing what she, Sarai, had suggested. We cannot charge Sarai with becoming a shrew, in the light of the manner in which Peter describes her (I Peter 3:5-6), but she was blaming her husband for something that she had initiated.

Rather than arguing with his wife, Abram showed amazing restraint, suggesting the natural solution to the problem. This solution fits the facts of the time. Even though Hagar had been given as a wife to Abram, Sarai still was her mistress and was under the authority of Sarai.

Although most English translations state that Sarai did something harsh to Hagar, the Hebrew is gentler in describing her actions. The Hebrew word is the piel form of the verb, *'innah*,¹⁵³ This form of the verb usually is understood to imply *being humbled*, or to *bow down*.¹⁵⁴ Although no information is given concerning what Sarai did to Hagar, in all probability, Sarai took actions to bring Hagar to the realization that she had been presumptuous. Perhaps she made her live with the other slaves and perform menial tasks.

All three parties probably bear some responsibility for the result. Perhaps Sarai may not have shown any tact; perhaps Abram should have urged due caution to Sarai; Hagar, being somewhat self-willed and independent, refused to accept correction.

Verses 7-16

Now the angel of Yahweh found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.⁸ And he said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai."⁹ Then the angel of Yahweh said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority."

¹⁰ *Moreover, the angel of Yahweh said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they shall be too many to count."*

¹¹ *The angel of Yahweh said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son; and you shall call his name Ishmael, Because Yahweh has given heed to your affliction."¹² "And he will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him; and he will live to the east of all his brothers."*

¹³ *Then she called the name of Yahweh who spoke to her, "Thou art a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?"¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.*

¹⁵ *So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.¹⁶ And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.*

¹⁵² בא אֵל

¹⁵³ עִנָּה Brown

¹⁵⁴ Holladay, 4603; Driver, Briggs, 7240, 7241; Harris, 1652;

The Angel of Yahweh seems to be a special angel and when he appears the one to whom he appears is to view the angel as God Himself. He is mentioned multiple times in the Old Testament.¹⁵⁵

Hagar's astonishment at being able to see God and live, indicates that she had some knowledge of Yahweh. Even Moses, when he asked to see God, was not able to see God directly, but was told that no one can see God and live.¹⁵⁶ Jesus said that He was the only one who had seen the father.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the Angel of Yahweh, even though viewed as God Himself, when he does appear, was not Yahweh, but a manifestation of Yahweh.

The Hebrew says that the angel found Hagar by *the* spring, not *a* spring. The implication is that this was a known spring, where travelers on the way to Shur usually stopped. She was on her way back to Egypt. By now, she was far enough away from Sarai for her thoughts to be a bit more settled than they were when she first reacted to her mistress.

Because Eliezer, the chief servant of Abram, displayed excellent faith in the episode recorded in Genesis Chapter 24, it is probable that such faith and respect for Yahweh prevailed in the household. Thus, it is not unreasonable to think of Hagar's being imbued with that same faith.

The angel indicated that neither becoming Abram's wife, nor her pregnancy, nor her flight had altered her relationship with Sarai. Before she did anything else, she should return to her proper place in life and submit to Sarai's authority.

The angel extended to Hagar the same promise that had been given to Abram, concerning the huge number of descendants that would constitute her lineage. He also told her to name her son *Ishmael*, which means, *God hears*. The implication of this name is that Hagar must have cried out to Yahweh in her distress and the scene before us is His response to her cries.

The prediction concerning the character of Ishmael has proven to be true, in that the Arabs who are his descendants historically have manifested that character.

At first, the location of this episode is described as a spring. The closing statement calls it a well. In all probability, the source of the water was a spring, but in coming days, it was walled up and formed a well. Because the experience of Hagar came to be known, in time the well came to be known as *Beer-lahai-roi*, usually interpreted as *the well of seeing alive*, i.e., a human saw God and remained alive.

In obedience to the angel, Hagar returned to Abram's household, gave birth to the son, and Abram gave the boy the name that the angel said should be given to him.

Chapter 17:1-27: The Covenant Sealed by New Names and Circumcision

Chapter 15 records the establishment of the covenant that Yahweh made with Abram. The covenant given at that time promised certain things that would come to pass. Chapter 17 records the beginning of the fulfillment of those promises.

¹⁵⁵ Gen. 16:7, 9ff; Gen. 22:11, 15; Gen. 24:7; Exod. 3:2; Num. 20:16; Num. 22:22ff, 31f, 34f; Jdg. 2:1, 4; Jdg. 5:23; Jdg. 6:11f, 21f; Jdg. 13:3, 13, 15ff, 20f; 2 Sam. 14:17, 20; 2 Sam. 19:27; 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Ki. 13:18; 1 Ki. 19:7; 2 Ki. 1:3, 15; 2 Ki. 19:35; 1 Chr. 21:12, 15f, 18, 30; 2 Chr. 32:21; Ps. 34:7; Ps. 35:5f; Isa. 37:36' Zech. 1:11f, 14; Zech. 3:1, 5f; Zech. 6:5; Zech. 12:8

¹⁵⁶ Exodus 33:20-23

¹⁵⁷ John 1:18; 6:46

Verses 1-5

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty¹⁵⁸; Walk before Me, and be blameless.² "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly."

³ *And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,* ⁴ *"As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.* ⁵ *"No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.*

Twenty-four years had passed since Abram, Sarai, Lot, and their retinue had left Haram. Ishmael was born when Abram was 86 years old, thus, he would be 13 years of age when this episode took place. The ages of Abram and Sarai is information very relevant to the events recorded in this chapter.

Yahweh promised the same thing that had been promised earlier, with one addition – Abram would not be the father of a nation, but he would be the *father of a multitude of nations*. Except in the case of Noah's sons, such a prospect had not been given before. Another new element of the covenant is the change of Abram's name. Abraham means, *Father of a Multitude*.

Verses 6-8

Yahweh promised to keep the covenant and not only to give Abram a multitude of descendants, but also, as the covenant-keeping God, to give his descendants the entire land of Canaan.

Verses 9-10

God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.¹⁰ "This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

The general statement, *you shall keep My covenant*, implies quite a bit. Abraham and his descendants are to live lives befitting those who are bound by the covenant. Then a covenant sign was given – circumcision.

Two things are evident in the language:

1. All males – no males are exempt
2. All females are exempted (female circumcision was and is a practice of some tribes)

By birth, the Hebrew male was a member of the People of God. By circumcision, he was made aware of the covenant obligations and, in circumcision, received a perpetual mark reminding him of that.

¹⁵⁸ *El Shadday* אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי

NOTE: Here is a difference between the Old Covenant and the New.

- In the New Covenant, immersion replaces circumcision.
and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹²having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12)
- Also, circumcision was only for males. All females were a part of the covenant because of the males. In the New Covenant, that distinction is removed.
For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:27-28)

Verses 11-14

Circumcision is to take place when the baby is eight days old. Not only those who are Hebrews, but the children of any slaves who are a part of the household also are to be circumcised; *thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. "But 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."*

Verses 15-16

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶"And I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Both names, Sarai and Sarah, mean, *princess*. Some have stated that Sarah means, *Princess of Many*, but Hebrew scholars discount this addition to the meaning. The significance is that Yahweh is giving her a new name to go along with the covenant. The name, *Princess*, is very appropriate for the one who will be the mother of kings.

Verse 17

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

As in verse 3, Abraham fell on his face in an act of worship and adoration. From what follows it is clear that the laughter is one of joy and surprise, not one of mockery or doubt. As Leupold has written, "A host of glad feelings is called forth in him at this precious promise."¹⁵⁹ His amazement and joy that he, at one hundred years of age and his wife, Sarah's being eighty nine years of age could have a son brings forth internal laughter and joy – the promise is too good to be true, but because Yahweh has promised it, he knows that it will be true.

¹⁵⁹ Leupold, page 527

Verses 18-22

And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!"

¹⁹ *But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.*

²⁰ *"And as for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.*

"But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year."²² And when He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

Abraham's plea for Ishmael cannot be understood as a plea for God to choose Ishmael, instead of the promised son of Sarah. Verses 19-20 indicate that God, at least, did not take it that way. When Abraham realized that God's promise completely passed by Ishmael, he sought a favor for this son, as well as the promised son.

The name, *Isaac*, means, *he laughs*, or *glad*, or *happy* – a name consistent with the emotion that Abraham experienced when he accepted the promise of a son, born to him and Sarah.

History bears testimony to the fulfillment of the blessing pronounced on Ishmael. Interestingly, among his descendants will be twelve princes – not kings. It was the custom of the Ishmaelites to call their rulers, *princes*, rather than, kings. Genesis 25:12-16 lists the twelve princes that descended from Ishmael.

Verses 23-27

Abraham did as he had been commanded to do. That very day, Abraham, Ishmael, and every male in the household was circumcised. This included not only those who had been born while in the household, but also any slaves that had been purchased from foreignors.

Chapter 18: The Appearance of Yahweh at Mamre

Because Sarah was not yet pregnant at the time that this event occurred, and because Isaac was to be born at least one year after this event (verses 10, 14), and because Abraham was past his hundredth birthday but not yet passed birthday one-hundred-one, when Isaac was born (21:5), we must assume that this episode occurred shortly after the appearance of Yahweh described in Chapter 17.

Verses 1-8

Abraham and his retinue were camping near Hebron. Abraham's tent was in a grove of trees, with one large tree directly over his tent. It was mid-day, the time when those of that culture took a break, because of the heat.

As Abraham sat at the door of his tent, probably dozing, suddenly three travelers appeared. In typical oriental custom, Abraham invited them to pause and sit with him. He washed their feet and a meal was quickly prepared for them. Unknown to Abraham, one of the three was the Angel of Yahweh and the two others were angels – all manifested in human form.

Verse 9-15

Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "Behold, in the tent." ¹⁰ And he said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son."

And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. ¹² And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

¹³ And Yahweh said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?' ¹⁴ "Is anything too difficult for Yahweh? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."

¹⁵ Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh."

Either all three of Abraham's guests inquired after Sarah, or one of them did and the others expressed the same curiosity. That these were not mere men is seen in the fact that they knew the wife's name, and that Sarah was in the tent behind them when she laughed to herself, yet the Angel of Yahweh knew that she had laughed.

As to the Hebrew of verse 10, referring to the time that the angel will return and the timing of the birth of the predicted son, the literal rendering is, *according to the time when it revives*, which is best understood as, *when this time of year returns*. Thus, generally speaking, *in about one year*.

Sarah recognized that humanly speaking, procreation for her and Abraham was impossible. She had gone through the menopause and Abraham had reached the age that copulation would have been difficult. When she denied laughing, Yahweh, in essence said, *Sarah, you lie*.

Verses 16-22

The first part of their mission had been completed, and now the three men continue on their journey to Sodom. Abraham walked a short distance with them, to the point that they could look down from Hebron onto the plain in which Sodom was located.

Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off.

Yahweh's soliloquy (verses 17-19) must have been spoken softly, He was talking to Himself. He wanted Abraham to know what He was doing and why, so that Abraham would pass this on to his posterity – a warning example for all times to come.

¹⁷ And Yahweh said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸ since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? ¹⁹ "For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of Yahweh by doing righteousness and justice; in order that Yahweh may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

When Yahweh did speak to Abraham (verses 20-22) He used dramatic language. When sins are said to cry out to heaven, that surely is a drastic way of saying that they call for Divine interference. Only two angels go down from the heights of Hebron to the low-lying cities.

²⁰ *And Yahweh said, "The outcry of 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."*

²² *Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before Yahweh.*

Verses 23-25

And Abraham came near and said, "Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" ²⁴ Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?

²⁵ *"Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"*

Abraham spoke as a man who had received mercy and was pleading for mercy for others. Sometimes in major calamities, the righteous are slain with the wicked and sometimes the wicked are saved because of the presence of the righteous.

Verses 26-33

These verses record Abraham's intercession, perhaps even negotiation with Yahweh. Abraham realized that he was unworthy to approach Yahweh in this manner, describing himself as *dust and ashes*. Even so, he moved from asking if fifty righteous men would be enough to save the city, then he asked about forty-five, then forty, then thirty, then twenty, then ten – and after each number is cited by Abraham, Yahweh replied that he would not destroy the city if that many righteous men could be found, therein.

After this conversation, Yahweh went away, and Abraham returned to his tent.

Chapter 19: 1-28: The Guilt and Destruction of Sodom

This is one of the most horrible accounts found in Scripture. The horrible degeneracy of the people of Sodom and the catastrophic destruction are reminiscent of the account of the flood of Noah. The lesson of II Peter 2:4ff is clearly illustrated by this episode.

Verses 1-2

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. ² And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." They said however, "No, but we shall spend the night in the square." ³ Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

The text clearly identifies these as two angels, although they still kept the appearance of men. In the culture of that day, the gate of the city was a place where men gathered, sometimes to pass the time of day, and sometimes to conduct legal and business matters.

When Lot saw the strangers approaching the gate, he displayed the culture's customary behaviour when one is welcoming others – he bowed down, and in humility, called them, *Lords*. Knowing the wicked practices of the inhabitants of the city, Lot quickly offered to have the strangers stay in his home, telling them that they could spend the night and then be on their way, early in the morning.

When they refused his offer, he pressed them further and they agreed to spend the night in his home. Lot probably was putting himself at some risk to host these two strangers.

Verses 4-8

⁴ *Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter;* ⁵ *and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them."*

⁶ *But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him,* ⁷ *and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly."* ⁸ *"Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof."*

The fires of homosexual lust had so taken over the men of the city, that both young men and old men were aggressive in their attempt to have sexual intercourse with the two strangers.

Lot was not lacking courage. Even so, we are amazed at his offering his daughters in order to quell the mob. In past eras when an exaggerated emphasis on hospitality reigned in some cultures, there might be some understanding of how such a sacrifice could be offered by a father. However, regardless of what good motive may have been behind his offer, it was horribly ignoble – it was an attempt to avoid sin by sin.

The men of Sodom's refusal to accept the offer is evidence of the intensity and the total degradation of Sodom's citizens. It is so evil that it defies comprehension.

Verses 9-11

The Sodomites declared that Lot, an outsider, had shown the gall to judge them. They attempted to grab Lot and rape him, but the angels opened the door enough to pull Lot inside. Then the angels smote the Sodomites with blindness.

Verses 12-14

Then the men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; ¹³ *for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before Yahweh that Yahweh has sent us to destroy it."*

¹⁴ *And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for Yahweh will destroy the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting.*

Note that the angels still were appearing as men, but they had an authority about them as they delivered the message from Yahweh – gather you and yours and get out of town. The two men engaged to marry his daughters scoffed at Lot's urging them to vacate Sodom.

Verses 15-17

And when morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two daughters, who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city."

¹⁶ *But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of Yahweh was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city.*

¹⁷ *And it came about when they had brought them outside, that one said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, lest you be swept away."*

The text reverts back to recognizing the two men as angels. When the angels urged Lot and his family to flee the city, and Lot lingered, the angels grabbed the hands of Lot, his wife, and his two daughters and led them outside the city. Once outside, the angels released their hands. Lot and his family were on their own - flee to the mountains and do not look back!

Verses 18-22

But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my lords!¹⁹ "Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest the disaster overtake me and I die;²⁰ now behold, this town is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved."

²¹And he said to him, "Behold, I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken. ²²"Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar.

Lot's somewhat sniveling plea is not consistent with the bravery that he earlier had shown when he sought to protect the two visitors from the homosexual crowd. He based his plea for an adjustment in the angels' commandment, on the fact that great favor already has been shown to him - then he pled that he was physically unable to make it to the mountains in time to escape the portending disaster. We almost hear him saying, "Please, don't make me do that..."

The statement that the angel can do nothing until Lot is out of danger contains three elements:

- There is an urgency – Divine patience with the cities of the plain had come to an end and annihilation was imminent.
- The angel had authority as God's agent – he was the one to signal the destruction of the cities of the plain.
- Even though he had authority, the angel was under the restriction of not being able to do anything until Lot was safe.

The small town, unnamed thus far in Scripture, is named, *Zoar*, which means, *Tiny Place*.

Verses 23-25

The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar. ²⁴Then Yahweh rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh out of heaven, ²⁵and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

Although only Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned in this passage, Deuteronomy 29:23 (cf. Hosea 11:8) states that Admah and Zebolim also were destroyed. The fifth city of the five cities of the plain was Zoar, and it was spared.

The catastrophe was fully under Yahweh's control. Lot had reached Zoar and the day was well underway, when brimstone and fire fell from heaven. There are bitumen pits in the region (14:10) and these would have been ignited by the fire falling from heaven. This may have facilitated not only the death of animal life, but also all that grew the ground.

In classical and New Testament times, the ruins of these cities were still visible, although covered with water.¹⁶⁰ In recent years, there has been quite a bit of archaeological activity seeking to discover the exact location of the cities of the plain. ADDENDUM F is an article discussing some of the archaeological work in this project prior to the year 2000.

¹⁶⁰ Tacitus, *History*, Volume 7; Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Volume IV: 4

Verse 26

But his wife, from behind him, looked back; and she became a pillar of salt.

Because Lot's wife was behind him, she probably was not making as determined an effort to escape as were the others. Whether she looked back because of curiosity, or because of a longing, or pity, her looking back was a very direct disobedience to the instructions given by the angels (verse 17).

Jesus, as quoted in Luke 17:32, cites this tragic event as a warning to those who are present in Jerusalem when they see the city compassed about by an army preparing to besiege the city.

"On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back."³² "Remember Lot's wife.

Most explain this phenomena as her becoming overcome by the poisonous fumes arising from the catastrophe and then, unable to rush onward, she became encrusted by the vapors of the Salt Sea. That may be true, but it also is possible that Yahweh caused her to become a pillar of salt, by a direct action.

Verses 7-28

Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before Yahweh;²⁸ and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace.

Early in the morning, the day after Abraham and the Angel of Yahweh had looked down on the plain, Abraham went to the place where he and the angel had stood. By this time, the destruction already was underway. The term, *ha'arets qitor*,¹⁶¹ i.e., *smoke of the earth*, indicates that the earth itself was burning, which is consistent with the bitumen deposits in the area.

Verses 29-30

Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.³⁰ And Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters.

In the hills east of Ghor as-Safi (ancient Zoar), in present-day Jordan, is a cave that historically has been known as the cave occupied by Lot and his daughters. A 6th-century Madaba (Ethiopian) map shows a church of St Lot in just this location.

In the 1990s, archaeologists began exploring the site and they confirmed the existence of a 7th-century Byzantine church with a dedication to 'St Lot', and with access to the cave through the north apse. Its floors were covered with six mosaic pavements, one dated 572, another April 605, a third May 691. The church and its associated hostel had been a place of pilgrimage for several centuries, even for a century after the 11th Century Islamic conquest.

The archaeologists found Early and Middle Bronze Age pottery inside the church – encompassing the years that would include the life of Abraham and Lot.

¹⁶¹ הָאָרֶץ בְּקִיטָר

No information is given concerning why Lot was afraid to stay in Zoar. Some speculate that when he arrived in Zoar, he found the same horrible morals that he had seen in Sodom. That being true, and since Zoar, being one of the five cities of the plain, originally had been on the list for destruction, Lot may have been afraid to stay in the city because he feared that it also might be destroyed – it wasn't a safe place to set up residence.

Verses 31-38

Then the first-born said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth."³² "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father."³³ So they made their father drink wine that night, and the first-born went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

³⁴ *And it came about on the morrow, that the first-born said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father."³⁵ So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.*

³⁶ *Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.³⁷ And the first-born bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.³⁸ And as for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day.*

When Lot and his daughters left Zoar, no doubt they took supplies with them. Since wine was a basic part of their food staples, they would have had wine in their stash. We wonder how the daughters *made their father drink wine*. Did they encourage him, after a meal with words such as, *Here, dad, have another cup*, or, did Lot have a tendency toward drink which they had seen before, and so all that they had to do was keep filling his cup – or was it some other ploy? This is a question that cannot be answered. Even so, as with Noah, drunkenness brought about a shameful situation.

The daughter's motivation for incest was not sexual pleasure, but, rather, to insure the family's posterity. We have to wonder, if they had waited, would husbands have been found for them?

In future centuries, the Moabites and the Ammonites, descendants of Lot and his daughters, lived near the Israelites and usually were on friendly terms with God's chosen people.

Chapter 20: Abraham and Sarah at Gerar

Bible critics argue that the episode recorded in Chapter 20 is merely an adjusted tradition of the episode recounted in Chapter 12 – when Abram and Sari went into Egypt. Even though it would be foolish to deny the similarity between the two accounts, H. C. Leupold has pointed out decided differences.¹⁶² Here is a summary of these differences:

- Two different places are involved: Egypt and Philistia.
- Two different monarchs of different character are involved – one was idolatrous and the other was one who feared the true God.
- Different circumstances caused the situation: one, a famine, the other was the result of nomadic migration.

¹⁶² Leupold, pages 579-580

- Different modes of revelation are employed: one king, through some unspecified means, learned the truth; the other king, in a dream, received a revelation from God.
- The reaction of Abram/Abraham is quite different in the two accounts: in one, he silently received the rebuke; in the other, he gave a full explanation to the king.
- The conclusions are totally different: In the first, Abram and his retinue are escorted out of the land; in the second, Abraham and his caravan are invited to remain in the land.

About twenty years had elapsed between the two episodes.

Verses 1-2

Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. ² And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

The last location given for Abraham was in Hebron (18:1). Abraham was a typical nomad. He always was traveling – shifting his camp from one place to another. In this episode, he pulled up stakes and traveled about fifty miles northwest, toward the Negev.

We learn from verses 11-13 that, once again, out of fear for Abraham's life, Abraham and Sarah put forth the same deception they had employed in Egypt. It is no more excusable here, than it was in Egypt. Clearly, a woman past ninety years of age would not have been such a ravishing beauty that a lascivious king would seek for her his harem. Because Abraham was quite wealthy, and, given the size of his caravan (consider the size, implied in 14:14), obviously a person of influence, a natural assumption is that Abimelech sought to form an alliance with this wealthy sheik. So, he decided to add the sheik's sister to his harem.

Verses 3-8

But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married."

Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, wilt Thou slay a nation, even though blameless?" ⁵ "Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister' ? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this."

⁶ Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. ⁷ "Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you will live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours." ⁸

So Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were greatly frightened.

God does not address the issue of a king's having a harem. Yet, we must not construe this silence as meaning approval. God's focus is on Abraham and Sarah, and the role that they are to play in the role of ancestors of the Messiah.

Abimelech must have been a cut above the idolatrous Canaanites among which he lived. The fact that God approached him as He did, and the response and attitude of Abimelech in the ensuing account, indicate that he must have had some knowledge of, and respect for, the true God.

God's pronouncement and Abimelech's response reflects the understanding that to take another man's wife is a deed that involves great guilt. Whether or not Abimelech understood the honor

and sanctity of the marriage bond can be debated. His plea of innocence merely indicates that he did not know of the marriage tie between Abraham and Sarah.

Note that God said that if Abimelech engaged in sexual relations with Sarah, he would have been, *sinning against Me...and, therefore, I did not let you touch her*. God had protected both Abimelech and Sarah.

The dream was of such a nature that Abimelech knew that he was being approached by God. His reporting of the dream must have been quite realistic, because the report caused fear in the hearts of the servants.

It is possible that some months passed between the time that Abimelech took Sarah into his harem and the Divine dream. We are told in verse 18 that an affliction had been experienced in Abimelech's household because of his taking Sarah – none of the women of the household had been able conceive. It would not be out of place to assume that enough time had transpired for the household to realize that for some reason no pregnancies were taking place among them.

Verses 9-13

Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done."¹⁰ And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?"

¹¹ *And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place; and they will kill me because of my wife."¹² "Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife;¹³ and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'"*

Abimelech's rebuke of Abraham asks forthrightly, *What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?* In essence he was asking Abraham what Abimelech and his people had done to merit such a lie. He laid at Abraham's feet the responsibility for the potential sin and for the barrenness that Abimelech's household was experiencing.

Abraham's response presents three excuses:

- He was afraid that the fear of God was absent in this place, as it had been lost in the rest of Canaan.
- He was not speaking, literally, a lie. Sarah was his half-sister.
- He and Sarah had agreed, when they first left Haran, that this deception would be employed when it appeared that Abraham's life might be at risk.

Abram had not given any explanation to Pharaoh, probably because he sensed a different spirit in Pharaoh. Abraham seems to have realized that in Abimelech he was dealing with a man who had some respect for the true God, even though his knowledge of Him might be limited.

Verses 14-18

Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him.¹⁵ And Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please."¹⁶ And to Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared."

¹⁷ And Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children. ¹⁸ For Yahweh had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Abimelech not only restored Sarah to her husband, but was extremely generous toward Abraham, giving him gifts that would be useful to a nomad. It seems that Abraham accepted Abimelech's offer to stay in the land, given the future accounts of his activities (26:18 indicates that Abraham stayed in the area long enough to need to dig wells).

The thousand pieces of silver was another generous act, given that the price of a slave was 30 pieces of silver. Abimelech said that this gift was to vindicate Sarah. Concerning the gift of silver, the Hebrew states, *it is to thee a covering of eyes, to all who are with thee*. The sense of this expression is that this offering put a veil on the eyes of those of Sarah's household who might cast embarrassing glances at her. The generous gift would indicate the level of esteem that Abimelech held for Abraham and Sarah. It also must have been given with some thought of deflecting further discipline from Yahweh.

The illness inflicted on Abimelech and those of his household had made conception impossible. Abraham's intercession, as a prophet, was a gift that he gave to Abimelech.

Chapter 21:1-21: The Birth of Isaac and the Expulsion of Ishmael

Verses 1-8

Then Yahweh took note of Sarah as He had said, and Yahweh did for Sarah as He had promised.

² So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. ³ And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.

⁴ Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵ Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." ⁷ And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." ⁸ And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

The promise in 17:16, 21 and 18:10, concerning Sarah's giving birth, as well as the timing of the birth, are fulfilled as promised: *"And I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." (17:16) "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year." (17:21) And he said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son. (18:10)*

As noted earlier, the name, Isaac, is translated, *he laughs*, signifying the joyous heart of Abraham, and consistent with the statement of Sarah in verse 6. It also is noteworthy that when Yahweh promised the future birth of the son (17:21), He called the boy, *Isaac*.

Verse 9-11

Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. ¹⁰ Therefore she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac." ¹¹ And the matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son.

The Hebrew terms indicate that Ishmael was *always mocking*, indicating his consistent toward Isaac.

Sarah must have had in mind more than just material inheritance, when she said, *the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac*. Sarah must also have been aware of the spiritual inheritance that was attached to Isaac. Otherwise, Galatians 4:29-31, which speaks approvingly of Sarah's action, would be inappropriate. Furthermore, Yahweh's instructions to Abraham to give heed to Sarah's words, indicates that Sarah's demands were in line with Yahweh's plans.

We can almost hear the broken heart of Abraham, when Sarah made her demand. By now, Ishmael would have been about seventeen years of age.¹⁶³ He had been Abraham's son, whom the patriarch had loved in a special way as the son of his old age, until Isaac had been born.

Verses 12-14

But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named."¹³ "And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant."

¹⁴*So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.*

Abraham's immediate obedience, in spite of the feelings of his human heart, are a model for all of us. Obedience always must triumph over feelings, when the two are in opposition to one another. Jesus' twice repeated statement about choosing Him over any other relationship is consistent with this principle.¹⁶⁴

Earlier, when Hagar fled from Sarah's wrath, she did not lose her way. She knew where she was going. Now, when she and her son were involved, she seems to have lost her bearings and ended up wandering about in the wilderness.

Verses 15-19

And the water in the skin was used up, and she left the boy under one of the bushes.¹⁶ Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept.¹⁷ And God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is."¹⁸ "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand; for I will make a great nation of him."¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink.

God had promised Abraham that a great nation would descend from Ishmael. True to His promise, God provided the life-saving water for Hagar and her son. Note that the seventeen year-old boy was the one who became weak, not his more seasoned mother.

Verses 20-21

And God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness, and became an archer.²¹ And he lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

¹⁶³ 16:16, compared with 21:6

¹⁶⁴ During the first Galilean ministry, Matt.10:37-38 and the later Perea ministry, Luke 17:26ff

The temperament of Ishmael is demonstrated by the skills that he developed – an archer living in the wilderness. The wilderness of Paran is in the eastern part of the Sinai Peninsula, not far from his mother’s homeland of Egypt. Thus, his Egyptian mother procured an Egyptian wife for him.

Some Jewish writers have attempted to identify Hagar with Keturah (25:1), arguing that she returned to Abraham’s household. There is no evidence to give such claims any credibility.

Chapter 21:22-34: Abraham’s Covenant with Abimelech at Beersheba

It is clear from this account that Abraham and his caravan had remained among the Philistines, having settled in the vicinity of Abimelech’s kingdom of Gerar. Abraham had become an influential and prominent person in the region.

¹⁶⁵Now it came about at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do; ²³now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, or with my offspring, or with my posterity; but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me, and to the land in which you have sojourned."

And Abraham said, "I swear it."²⁵ But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized.²⁶ And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; neither did you tell me, nor did I hear of it until today."

The deference shown to Abraham by Abimelech and Phicol are consistent with the spirit that Abimelech had displayed following the incident with Sarah. Abimelech recognized that Abraham had a special relationship with God and therefore, he wanted to make certain that he, Abimelech, had a special relationship with Abraham.

When Abraham was asked if he were ready to enter into a covenant with Abimelech, Abraham indicated that he was willing, but that there was one matter that needed to be addressed first. Abraham’s servants had dug a well for the purpose of watering their flocks. Abimelech’s servants (shepherds) had seized the well and driven away Abraham’s shepherds. When charged with this offense, Abimelech had a strong defense – he was being accused unjustly, because he knew nothing about the incident. Although no statement is made about the matter, we would assume that the matter was corrected immediately.

Verses 27-34

And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them to Abimelech; and the two of them made a covenant.

²⁸Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.²⁹ And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?"³⁰ And he said, "You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand in order that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well."³¹ Therefore he called that place Beersheba; because there the two of them took an oath.³² So they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines.

³³And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of Yahweh, the Everlasting God.³⁴ And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days.

¹⁶⁵ See ADDENDUM G for a map of Abraham’s wanderings in Canaan and the location of Gerar.

Interestingly, the Hebrew word, *shaba'*,¹⁶⁶ is the root for the word for *swearing* and also the root for the word for *seven*. This is reflected in that the giving of the seven ewe lambs was, in essence, a swearing of the covenant oath.

Once again, as he often had done previously, through the erection of an altar, Abraham planted a tamarisk tree as a memorial to Yahweh and a reminder of all of the blessings that had been bestowed on Abraham at this location.

Chapter 22: The Sacrifice of Isaac

These verses recount the climax in Abraham's faith. Even though he believed Yahweh and it had been counted to him as righteousness, he had faltered from time to time. Now came the greatest test of his faith, and he passed the test.

Verses 1-2

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."² And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

Although God is opposed to human sacrifice,¹⁶⁷ this was demanded of Abraham as a spiritual sacrifice. Did he love his son so much, that his fatherly love was greater than his loyalty to Yahweh? Was he willing to give back to Yahweh, the gift that Yahweh had given to him? That is the test which is put to Abraham's faith by this demand from Yahweh.

Abraham must have been perplexed. What God was demanding was in direct contradiction to all of the promises that had been given. In order for Abraham to pass this test, both reason and emotion had to become subject to faith, resulting in obedience.

Verses 3-6

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled¹⁶⁸ his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

⁴ *On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. ⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you."⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.*

Obviously, Yahweh had revealed to Abraham the site where the offering was to take place. Samaritan tradition claims that Moriah is in the region of Shechem. However, the distance from Beersheba to Shechem, about eighty miles, is too great a distance to travel in a three-day journey, especially for a man who was near 120 years old. We must be satisfied with not being able to identify, beyond question, the location of the designated site.

Each step in the process must have been an added agony for Abraham. Isaac, being between eighteen and twenty years of age, had the strength to bear the load of wood that the donkey had

¹⁶⁶ שבע

¹⁶⁷ Several passages in the Pentateuch either list human sacrifice as one of the vilest deeds or specifically label it as an abomination (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2ff; Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:10)

¹⁶⁸ *chabhash* (חבש) literally is, *girded* i.e. he secured the firewood on the back of the donkey.

carried. Abraham carried a container with live coals and the fatal knife. No doubt Isaac sensed some sort of emotional burden that was depressing his father as they made their way up the mountain.

Verses 7-8

And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"⁸ And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb¹⁶⁹ for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

As Isaac asked the obvious question, his addressing Abraham as, *my father*, must have been like a knife thrust into Abraham's heart. What could Abraham say to such a tender approach and an obvious question? His answer is a compound of considerate love and anticipative faith.

Verses 9-12

Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

¹⁰ *And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.*

¹¹ *But the angel of Yahweh called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."¹² And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."*

Several things catch our attention in these verses. First, is noted that in the designated spot, Abraham, personally, built an altar of some sort, in preparation for the sacrifice. Then, he carefully arranged the wood on which the sacrifice was to be placed. Then, most amazingly of all, Isaac allowed his father to bind him and place him on the altar, on top of the wood.

Isaac must have had complete trust in his father. Furthermore, since Isaac knew that the entire trip and the details concerning it were in obedience to Yahweh, Isaac himself demonstrated supreme faith in God and trust in his father's ability to hear from God. One could argue that Isaac's submission demonstrated the greatest act of faith in the entire narrative.

Once again, we encounter the Angel of Yahweh – this special angel whose presence is such that it is as if Yahweh Himself were present and speaking. Abraham had passed the greatest test, with flying colors, now *I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.*"

Verses 13-18

Abraham suddenly saw a ram with its horns caught in a bush. He took the ram and sacrificed it in place of Isaac. Indeed, God had provided the sacrifice.

Abraham then named that location, *Yahweh yir'eh*. Although the term generally is understood to mean, *Yahweh provides* the Hebrew terms state, *Yahweh sees.*¹⁷⁰

The angel of Yahweh then repeated the covenant promises that had been given to Abraham concerning his host of descendants and that fact that his descendants would possess the gates of their enemies and that all nations of the earth would be blessed, because Abraham, in obedience, had harkened to the voice of God.

¹⁶⁹ Literally, the Hebrew says, *God will see for Himself the lamb*

¹⁷⁰ The KJV renders the terms, *יְהוָה יִרְאֶה* literally, *Yahweh will see..*

Verse 19

So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Verses 20-24 Word reached Abraham concerning the growing family of his brother Nahor. Nahor's wife, Milchah, had given birth to eight sons; his concubine, Reumah, had given birth to four sons. The insertion of this information at this point is somewhat of an aside. It is not a part of the current narrative.

Chapter 23: The Death and Burial of Sarah**Verses 1-2**

Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.² And Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

Sarah is the only woman whose both her age and death are reported in the Scriptures. It is appropriate for such information to be given concerning this woman, who, according to I Peter 3:6 is presented as the model wife and who is the spiritual mother of all godly women.¹⁷¹

Sarah had lived thirty-seven years after giving birth to Isaac. Almost twenty years had passed since the time of the sacrifice on Mt. Moriah. During this time, Abraham had migrated back to his earlier place of residence. During Abraham's lifetime, the name of the ancient city was Hebron, but when Moses wrote Genesis, the name of the city had become Kiriath-arba.¹⁷² Thus, Moses gave name of the city as it was known when he wrote the document, but also noted the ancient name, as it had been known in Abraham's era.

Although it is obvious that Hebron was/is in the *land of Canaan*, the statement is given as an emphasis of the fact that Sarah, the mother of Abraham's chosen family, died in the land of promise.

Whatever Abraham was doing at the time of Sarah's death, when news of Sarah's death reached him, he *went in* (Hebrew – *came in*)¹⁷³ to mourn for her. As a true and loving husband, Abraham grieved for this dear woman with whom he not only had shared a long life, but with whom he had experienced many varied, difficult, and joyous experiences.

¹⁷¹ The Greek term rendered as *daughters* in some versions (KJV, NKJV, NIV, NLT), but rendered as *children* in others (ASV, HCSB, ESV, NAS, NAU, YLT), is the term, τέκνον (*teknon*), meaning, *child*. The versions that render the term as, *daughters*, do so on the basis of context, not on the basis of the meaning of the word. The context discusses the manner of dress for Christian women, their demeanor, and their being in subjection to their husbands. Therefore, since the context is addressing women, some versions, following a dynamic equivalency principle, have chosen to render the term as, *daughters*. There is a Greek term for daughter, θυγάτηρ (*thugater*), and one has to wonder why Peter used the term for child, rather the term for daughter, if he meant to limit Sarah's spiritual mother role to women. On this basis, some argue that Peter was stating that Sarah was/is the spiritual mother of all believers.

¹⁷² One of the Enakim, named, Arba, had taken possession of the city (Joshua 14:15;15:13; 21:11), and he named the city *The City of Arba*, i.e., *Kiriath-arba*.

¹⁷³ *boah* בּוֹא

Verses 3-9

Then Abraham rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, ⁴ "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

⁵ And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, ⁶ "Hear us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead."

⁷ So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. ⁸ And he spoke with them, saying, "If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me, ⁹ that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site."

It was the custom to bury the dead within a day of their death. In spite of his great sorrow, Abraham had to step away from the body of his beloved wife and attend to the practical business of providing a resting place for her body. Because the Hittites were in possession of Hebron at the time, they had to be consulted. Abraham being a nomad, was a foreigner who did not possess any acreage.¹⁷⁴ He sought a burial site where, not only the body of Sarah, but the remains of other members of his family might be interred.

Abraham must have been deeply touched by the response of the Hittites and the esteem which they expressed for him, especially in their eagerness to provide a burial plot for the body of Sarah. His courteous and humble response to their offer is expressed in his rising and bowing to them, and then in the tenor of his respectful request.

For the first time in his life, Abraham wanted to own a plot of ground – a place where he could place a sepulchre. As was the custom of the times, he sought intermediaries in the matter, but Ephron was in the crowd and he immediately responded.

Verses 10-17

Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth; even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, ¹¹ "No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead."

¹² And Abraham bowed before the people of the land. ¹³ And he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there."

Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, ¹⁵ "My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead."

¹⁶ And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard.

¹⁷ So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over.

These verses picture the oriental custom of such transactions:

¹⁷⁴ Hebrews 11:13-16 states that even though these faithful men looked to Canaan as the land of promise, their real focus was on their heavenly home.

- First, the offer of giving freely, not expecting the offer to be accepted.
- Next is the claim to fix a modest sum, as to the worth of the object being bargained (which in reality is a quite exorbitant figure).
- Everyone understands the figure offered to be a bargaining point for the proceedings to follow, in which both the participants and onlookers find to be great delight.

Abraham aborted the process. Rather than haggling or driving a shrewd bargain, to the astonishment of everyone, Abraham paid the full sum. By so doing, the nobler spirit of a God-fearing man stands out in contrast to the conventional behaviour of the heathen. Not only does he pay the full amount, but he measures out the silver by *commercial standard*. The Hebrew term is *silver current with the merchant*, which is the highest standard of silver.

Verses 17-20

All of the men of the city witnessed the proceedings and thus the field and its contents, including the cave were deeded to Abraham. By the end of the day, Sarah's body was placed in the cave.

Chapter 24: Isaac's Marriage

Isaac was forty years old and Abraham was one hundred forty years old. In that culture and in that era, it was a primary responsibility of parents to provide for the marriage of their children. After the death of Sarah, and given Isaac's age, Abraham was impressed with the importance of fulfilling this responsibility. The account given in this chapter is quite detailed, and somewhat charming.

Verses 1-5

Abraham charged the senior servant in his household with the responsibility of finding a wife for Isaac. He made the servant swear that he would not find that bride among the Canaanites, among whom they lived, but that he would travel to Abraham's relatives, and find a bride in that clan.

Interestingly, the gesture that confirmed the oath was having the servant put his hand under Abraham's thigh (loins). This area of the body was considered to be "the seat of procreative powers."^{175 176}

The servant asked what he should do if the chosen woman would not agree to return to Canaan with him – should he then take Isaac to that place?

Verses 6-9

Abraham's response made it very clear that Isaac should not be taken back to the land from which Yahweh had called him. He expressed trust in Yahweh, that an angel would direct the servant in his mission – yet, if the woman would not return, the servant was released from his oath. The servant indicated that he accepted the commission by doing as Abraham had instructed him, he placed his hand under Abraham's thigh and swore to follow his master's instructions.

Verses 10-14

Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of

¹⁷⁵ BDB as cited by Leupold, page 659

¹⁷⁶ See Exodus 1:5; Judges 8:30 (the term in Judges is, *going out of his thigh*)

*Nahor.*¹¹ *And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.*

¹² *And he said, "Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.* ¹³ *"Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; ¹⁴ now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also';-- may she be the one whom Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and by this I shall know that Thou hast shown lovingkindness to my master."*

Ten Camels are regarded as a proper number for a caravan.¹⁷⁷ Not only were the ten camels needed to carry the servant, his helpers, and presents to be presented to the family of the bride, but they also would be needed to transport the bride and her attendants on the return journey.

In keeping with his master's command the caravan traveled to Mesopotamia, from whence Abram, Sarai, and Lot had come. The specific city is named in the Hebrew, *Aram Naharaim* (as rendered in NIV and NLT). Most versions, rather than giving the name of the city, render it as, *Mesopotamia*, which is the country in which the city is found. The name of the city, literally, is *Aram of the Two Rivers*. A reason for rendering the term as, *Mesopotamia*, is the fact that no one is certain as to the precise identity of the city, nor of its exact location.

After having the camels kneel down, which is the customary manner in which camels are brought to rest, the servant asked for Yahweh to give him a sign concerning whether or not any of the women coming to the well are the chosen bride. The servant even set the terms of the sign: When he asks one of the girls for a drink of water, if she responds that she not only will give him a drink, but also water his camels – then he will know that she is the one. If she does not do or say this, then she would not be the one.

Verses 15-20

As he was concluding his prayer, a beautiful virgin, named Rebekah, who was Abraham's great-niece arrived with a pitcher on her shoulder. The servant asked for a drink of water and she quickly responded, then she watered his camels. He was almost certain that he had found Isaac's bride, but he wanted to make certain.

Verses 21-27

Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether Yahweh had made his journey successful or not.

²² *Then it came about, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold,²³ and said, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father's house?"*

²⁴ *And she said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor."²⁵ Again she said to him, "We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in."*

²⁶ *Then the man bowed low and worshiped Yahweh.²⁷ And he said, "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, Yahweh has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers."*

Wisely, he sought to make certain that he had not made a mistake. He had to learn if, indeed, this young woman was of the right family. The ring is a *ne'zem*, which is a nose-ring. Even

¹⁷⁷ William McClure Thomson, *The Land and the Book* (New York, Harper Brothers) 1860, page 261ff

though verse 47 states that the servant put the ring on the girl's nose, most consider that to mean that he is the one who gave it to her, and she, herself, inserted the ring, because it would have been inappropriate for a stranger to insert a nose-ring into a young woman's nose. Because of the nature of the ring, and other considerations, many exegetes understand the servant's action as having dangled the generous gifts before Rebekah while he is seeking confirmation of her identity.

In response to the servant's questions, the girl described various members of her family – perhaps the stranger has heard of one or the other of them. We can imagine how elated the servant must have felt when everything was confirmed - He had found the bride!

Verses 28-48

In great excitement about the fact that a delegate from Abraham, their relative in Canaan had arrived, Rebekah ran back home and entered her mother's tent¹⁷⁸ and quickly told what had happened. Rebekah's brother, Laban, upon hearing the report and seeing the expensive gifts that had been presented to her, rushed to the well to meet the stranger who had spoken to his sister. He found Abraham's servant and the caravan still at the well and he urged the entourage to come to his home.

The caravan then traveled to Laban's dwelling, where the camels were fed and watered, Laban washed the feet of the servant and his attendants, then had a meal brought before them. The servant refused to eat until he had delivered his message.

Laban told the servant to deliver his message. The servant told the entire story of his being commissioned by Abraham to find a wife for Isaac, and she had to be from the family of Terah, Abraham's father. He then told of his arrival at the well, his request from Yahweh for a sign and that when Rebekah had arrived, she had passed the test. In all of his recitation, he kept referring to the leading and blessing of Yahweh that had been a part of his journey. He repeated the fact that should she refuse to go back to Canaan, that he, the servant, was freed from his oath.

He concluded by saying, *"So now if you are going to deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, let me know, that I may turn to the right hand or the left."*

Verses 50-54

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The matter comes from Yahweh; so we cannot speak to you bad or good."⁵¹ "Behold, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as Yahweh has spoken."⁵² And it came about when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he bowed himself to the ground before Yahweh.⁵³ And the servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.⁵⁴ Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. When they arose in the morning, he said, "Send me away to my master."

According to custom, the father, Bethuel, and the brother, Laban, are the two who had the authority to make the decision. Interestingly, even though they say that since this is from Yahweh that they do not have the right to rule one way or the other, in the next breath they say, *take her and go.*

In joyous response, after the servant's reverent acknowledgement of Yahweh's blessing, the treasures that the camels had borne were unloaded and generous gifts were given, all around.

¹⁷⁸It seems that the women had separate tents or compartments; 31:33ff further illustrates this.

The dowry system in which the family of the bride gave gifts to the groom or the groom's family, is reversed in this situation. Some scholars indicate that the custom of a groom's giving gifts to the bride and her family was not unusual and that it was an indication that the groom was financially able to provide for a wife.¹⁷⁹

Verses 55-60

Rebekah's mother and brother asked if the trip could be delayed for ten days. The servant pled with them to allow him to take Rebekah and be on their way. They said that they would leave that up to Rebekah, and when asked, she said *I will go*.

Thus they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham's servant and his men.⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "May you, our sister, Become thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them."

Verses 61-66

⁶¹ *Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.* ⁶² *Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev.* ⁶³ *And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming.* ⁶⁴ *And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel.* ⁶⁵ *And she said to the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?" And the servant said, "He is my master." Then she took her veil and covered herself.* ⁶⁶ *And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.*

The fact that Isaac had been to *beer-lahai-roi*, catches our attention. This was the well where Yahweh had appeared to Hagar and she was surprised that she had seen God and lived, thus naming the well, *Well of the Living one Who Sees Me*. Since Isaac dwelt in the south, he may have gone to that well to water his flocks, but it could be that he had gone there because it was known as a sacred spot and he was seeking to meditate concerning his potential marriage. This seems to be the mood of Isaac as he *went out to meditate in the field toward evening*. Such a practice indicates the piety of this man. While engaged in this pious act, probably with a bowed head, he lifted his head and saw a caravan approaching in the distance.

Rebekah's dismounting when she saw a man approaching is a Near Eastern custom. Courtesy still demands that a woman riding on a camel or donkey, must dismount when she meets a man. The Hebrew, *naphal*, means, *to fall*, indicating how hurried was her dismounting. She must have suspected that the man coming to meet them was her future husband. She further demonstrated her following the custom of the day by coving her face with a veil, before she met Isaac.

The servant told Isaac the full story of all that happened, during his journey, thus assuring Isaac that, indeed, this was the woman that Yahweh had chosen to be Isaac's wife.

Verse 67

Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Isaac probably had been very close to his mother, since he was her son of her old age and he was her only son. Perhaps some of the meditating that he did in the field, was meditating on the absence of his dear mother, as well as meditating on the question of a wife.

¹⁷⁹ Leupold, page 679

He showed courtesy to Rebekah, by conducting her to his mother's empty tent. It now would be Rebekah's tent and he came to love her. Yahweh had not made a mistake in uniting this couple.

The beautiful comment concerning the love that grew between Isaac and Rebekah is reminiscent of Martin Luther's marriage to Katherine von Bora Luther.

Martin Luther wrote that he did not love Katherine when they married, and he was afraid that she was proud. "I am not madly in love" he said to one friend, "but I cherish my wife." To another he commented, "Other women have worse faults." Yet, he quickly developed deep affection, calling her, "Lord Katie," and "my rib," and declaring "I wouldn't give up my Katie for France or for Venice"¹⁸⁰

Chapter 25:1-10 Abraham's Second Marriage and Death

In this account, the record of Abraham's life is brought to a close. Yahweh had promised that he would be the father of a multitude of nations. A small portion of that promise could have been fulfilled through Ishmael, but for it to be completely fulfilled, other sons would be needed.

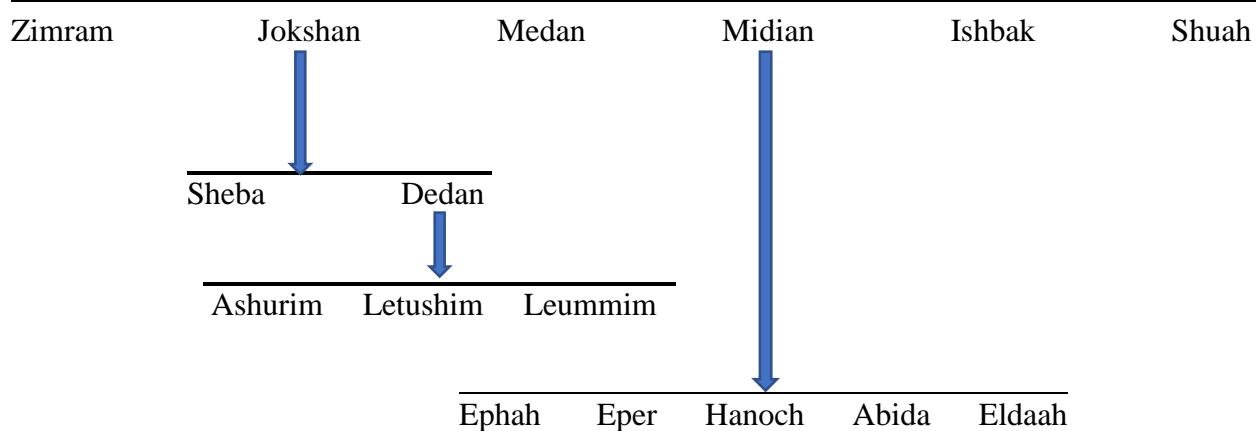
Verses 1-4

Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.² And she bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah.³ And Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim and Letushim and Leummim.⁴ And the sons of Midian were Ephah and Epher and Hanoch and Abida and Eldaah. All these were the sons of Keturah.¹⁸¹

Evidently, the rejuvenation that Abraham experienced enabling him to father Isaac, was not a passing thing. Even at his most advanced age, he still was able to procreate.

Here is a chart displaying how far the descent of Abraham and Keturah is traced in Scripture

Abraham + Keturah



Zimram, Medan, Midian, Sheba, Ephah, Hanoch are clearly identified as tribes or peoples identified by geographical location. The others are assumed to be Arabian tribes not clearly identified.

¹⁸⁰ Beth Kreitzer, "Mother of the Reformation," *Christian History Magazine*, Issue 115, page 35

¹⁸¹ I Chronicles 1:32-33 contains the same information.

Verses 5-6

Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac;⁶ but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east.

Wisely, Abraham disposed of his property while he was still living, thus avoiding conflict between his sons, after his death. As a whole, everything went to Isaac, but generous provision also was made also for his other sons. Then, by his authority, they are separated from Isaac – being told to travel east. Because we can identify the nations that descended from six of those name, it is clear that some went to the southeast and some to the northeast. It is possible that only the sons were living at the time of the dismissal and the next generation was born to these sons after they arrived in their new homes.

Verses 7-11

And these are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years.⁸ And Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people.

⁹ *Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre,¹⁰ the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife.*

And it came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.

Ishmael may have returned home, for a time – perhaps permanently. Even so, these two sons attended to their father's burial. The sense of the picture given here is of two brothers from whom all animosity had been removed. Perhaps time and the experiences of life had remolded them.

It is of note that Isaac made his home at *Beer-lahai-roi*, the site of the well where Hagar had encountered Yahweh when she was pregnant with Ishmael.

Chapter 25:12-18: The History of Ishmael

Twelve princes and their nations descended from Ishmael. He died when he was one hundred thirty-seven years old. This is consistent with the promises of 16:10ff; 17:20; and 21:18, i.e., that Yahweh would make Ishmael a great nation.

Chapter 25:19-34: The Birth and Early History of the Twin Brothers

Verses 19-21

Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac;²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.²¹ And Isaac prayed to Yahweh on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and Yahweh answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Luther, in his comments on this passage, notes that Isaac is the first of the patriarchs whose intercession is recorded and that the reason for this record is that it is concerned with the promised Seed – that without a doubt, the thought of the Messiah to come was involved in Isaac's intercession.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Leupold, page 702

Verses 22-23

But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of Yahweh.²³ And Yahweh said to her,

*"Two nations are in your womb;
And two peoples shall be separated from your body;
And one people shall be stronger than the other;
And the older shall serve the younger."*

Rebekah was pregnant with twins and did not know it. The babies already were displaying their inability to agree with one another, as was true when they became men. We do not know how, where, or when, Rebekah inquired of Yahweh. Perhaps the answer came in a dream or in a vision.

Each of the four clauses in Yahweh's word is clear-cut in its meaning and in their adult lives, and the lives of their descendants, the word proved to be true.

Verses 24-28

When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

²⁵ Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau.²⁶ And afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob;

and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents.²⁸ Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

- *Esau* means, *hairy*
- *Jacob* means, *heeler* but later, it came to have the sense of, *deceiver*.

The two totally different temperaments of the boys became quite apparent when they became adults. Sadly, one became his father's favorite and the other his mother's favorite – that in itself is a predictor of trouble.

Verses 29-34

And when Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished;³⁰ and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom.

³¹ But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright."³² And Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?"³³ And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus, Esau despised his birthright.

Edom (Hebrew – *'adhom*)¹⁸³ is the Hebrew word for *red*. Thus, Esau came to be known by two names, *Esau*, which was his given name, and *Edom*, which was his nickname. Consequently, his descendants came to be known as, *Edomites*.

Because Esau was the firstborn, he was the one who was considered to be the primary heir, the one who would become the patriarch of the family, when the existing patriarch died (Genesis 27:29). The material advantages of the birthright were not clear at this time. Later, under the Mosaic Covenant, the firstborn received a double portion of the father's inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17).

No doubt the question of primogeniture had been under discussion, perhaps even a point of contention, between the brothers before this time. Thus, this encounter was not something that came out of the blue, but was more like, "Ok, whatever, it's of no real value to me – I'm hungry, give me some lentils."

The statement in Hebrews 12:16, describing the character of Esau, makes clear the reason why Yahweh had not chosen Esau to carry on the line of the future Messiah *-that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.*

Chapter 26:1-11 Isaac's Relocating to Gerar

The incidents in this chapter are the only ones in which Isaac is featured as the chief character. This is in keeping with the character of Isaac. He was a quiet and unassuming man, always presented as patient and submissive in his contacts with others. No doubt the experience of Moriah, when he submitted to being bound and placed upon an altar, put its stamp on Isaac and taught him that patient submission to Yahweh's will is the means of seeing the Lord's salvation.

Verse 1

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.

The Abimelech mentioned here could not have been the Abimelech of Abraham's day. That Abimelech had ruled Philistaea eighty years before. It seems that *Abimelech* had become the designation for all Philistine kings, as *Pharaoh* had become the designation for Egyptian kings. Support for this idea is seen in the heading of Psalm 34. In that heading, *Abimelech* is the title for the Philistine ruler who in I Samuel 21:10-15 rejected David (in the I Samuel narrative he is named, *Achish*).

Verses 2-5

Yahweh appeared to Isaac and instructed him to remain in the land of Canaan, which someday would belong to his descendants. Yahweh repeated to Isaac the promises that had been given to Abraham, with the assurance that all would be accomplished through the lineage of Isaac.

Verses 6-7

While Isaac and Rebekah were dwelling in Gerar, Canaan, the men of the city began to ask Isaac about his beautiful wife – sadly, Isaac told the same lie that Abraham had told – *She is my sister*. His motives were the same as that of Abraham – afraid that the men might kill him in order to have Rebekah.

Verses 8-11

And it came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah.

⁹*Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Behold, certainly she is your wife! How then did you say, 'She is my sister'?"*

And Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'Lest I die on account of her.'" ¹⁰ And Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us."

So Abimelech charged all the people, saying, "He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

Abimelech did not take Rebekah into his harem, has had been done twice with Sarah.¹⁸⁴ Even so, he had a strong rebuke for Isaac – one which Isaac deserved. The respect for marriage clearly is demonstrated in the words, *you would have brought guilt upon us*.

The outcome of Isaac's deception is different from the two episodes involving Abraham's deception: In the Abraham episodes, the conclusion included elaborate gifts being given to the patriarch; Isaac received nothing beyond the rebuke.

Chapter 26:12-22: Isaac's Prosperity and Contention with the Philistines

Verses 12-14

Now Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And Yahweh blessed him, ¹³ and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy; ¹⁴ for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him.

Abraham was a nomad. If he cultivated any fields, there is no record of his doing so. Isaac, on the other hand, really settled down and became a prosperous agricultural presence in Gerar. Since Abraham was a man of significant wealth, and the bulk of his possessions had gone to Isaac, this increase in Isaac's wealth must have made him a man of startling prosperity. The envy that the Philistines had toward Isaac explains the next developments.

Verses 15-16

Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth. ¹⁶ Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us."

As the nomad, Abraham, moved from place to place, he had dug several wells to provide water for his herds. Since these had been dug by Abraham, the Philistines expressed their envy of Isaac by filling with dirt the wells that his father had dug.

Isaac's household was so strong, that if he had chosen to use his power selfishly, he would have been a threat to the Philistines. So, Abimelech told Isaac to get away from him and his people because *you are too powerful for us*.

Verses 17-22

And Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar, and settled there. ¹⁸ Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them.

¹⁹ *But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing water, ²⁰ the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with the herdsmen of Isaac, saying, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they contended with him.*

²¹ *Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over it too, so he named it Sitnah.*

¹⁸⁴ Genesis Chapters 12 & 20

²² *And he moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth, for he said, "At last Yahweh has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."*

Then he went up from there to Beersheba. ²⁴ And Yahweh appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham."²⁵ So he built an altar there, and called upon the name of Yahweh, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

Isaac was a pacifist in the best sense of the word. Power was safe in his hands. He showed no inclination to abuse his power, but he moved farther up the valley, to avoid conflict. Even so, conflict followed him. Water rights became a major point of contention between Isaac and the shepherds of Gerar. Isaac probably thought that they were far enough away from Gerar to not have a problem when he reopened the wells that Abraham had dug. He was wrong.

Isaac demonstrated what Jesus blessed in the Sermon on the Mount, *Blessed are the meek.*¹⁸⁵ With each new point of strife, he and his clan just moved on, until they were able to dig a well without its being contested. Then they settled in for the long haul.

Chapter 26:26-33: The Covenant with the Philistines

Abimelech, with his friend, Ahuzzath, and the captain of the army, Phicol, and sought to make a covenant with Isaac. They realized that Yahweh was with Isaac and asked that a covenant be made with the condition of the covenant being that neither of them would hurt one another. They had a feast together, pronounced the oath, and the Philistines left Isaac in peace.

On the very day that this covenant was confirmed, Isaac's servants arrived with the news that they had successfully dug another well.

Chapter 26:34-35: Esau's Hittite Wives

And when Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite;³⁵ and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

Unfortunately, Esau was not concerned about conserving the spiritual heritage of the family. His Hittite wives would have had all of the religious contamination and other spiritual flaws of the Canaanites. From the next chapter in the narrative, it is obvious that Esau and his wives lived in the same encampment with Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob.

Chapters 27:1-45; 28:1-5: The Patriarchal Blessing and the Departure of Jacob

Verses 1-4

Isaac was about 137 years of age. His half-brother, Ishmael had died at that age, fourteen years before this episode. The years were weighing heavily on him and he felt that he needed to take care to pass on the patriarchal blessing before he expired. He called Esau into his presence and instructed him to take his weapons and to hunt some game, prepare tasty dishes and bring them to Isaac. After the celebratory meal, Isaac planned to pronounce the patriarchal blessing.

Because of the intimacy between Rebekah and Isaac, he must have known about the Divine word given to Rebekah during her pregnancy, that the elder would serve the younger (25:23). Even so, he proceeded with his plans to pass the blessing on to his favorite son.

¹⁸⁵ Matthew 5:5

Verses 5-10

Rebekah heard what Isaac had said to Esau and she promptly moved to abort the plans and, through deceptive means to make certain that Jacob, not Esau, received the patriarchal blessing.

Rebekah said to her son Jacob, ...⁸ "Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you."⁹ "Go now to the flock and bring me two choice kids from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves."¹⁰ "Then you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death."

Verses 11-13

Jacob objected, saying that his brother was hairy and that he was smooth skinned and if Isaac felt him, he would be aware of the deception and the result would be a curse, rather than a blessing. Rebekah told Jacob that she would take all the blame if something went wrong and for him to do as she had instructed.

Verses 14-20

So he went and got them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved.¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.¹⁶ And she put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.¹⁷ She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.

Then he came to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?"¹⁹ And Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your first-born; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me."²⁰ And Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because Yahweh your God caused it to happen to me."

Both mother and son entered into the deception. As one lie leads to another, Jacob first lied about his identity, then lied about how the food was obtained.

Verses 21-23

Isaac, in his blindness, wanted to be certain that the person before him was Esau, since the voice that he heard was the voice of Jacob. He asked him to come near and the hairy skins that Rebekah had placed on the hands and neck of Jacob convinced Isaac and so he pronounced the blessing on Jacob.

Verses 24-26

When questioned about his identity, Jacob lied again. After Isaac had eaten the meal, he wanted to kiss his son, and when Jacob came close to him, he smelled the garments of Esau that Jacob was wearing and pronounced the blessing on him.

Verses 27-29

"See, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which Yahweh has blessed;

²⁸ Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, And of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine;

²⁹ May peoples serve 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."

Verses 30-40

Almost as soon as Jacob walked out the door, Esau arrived with the game he had slain in the field and prepared as a meal for his father. Isaac, greatly confused, asked, *Who are you?* Esau identified himself and Isaac, trembling, asked, *Whom did I just bless?* In anguish, Esau cried out bitterly and asked for his father's blessing. Isaac told him that it was too late – he had given the blessing to Jacob.

Esau remembered when he had sold his birthright to Jacob, he lamented that and wept that now Jacob also had taken his blessing. He begged Isaac, asking if he had reserved a blessing for him. Isaac told Esau the reality of the situation.

"Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?"³⁸ and Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." So Esau lifted his voice and wept.

Then Isaac his father answered and said to him,

*"Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling,
And away from the dew of heaven from above.*

⁴⁰ And by your sword you shall live,

And your brother you shall serve;

But it shall come about when you become restless,

That you shall break his yoke from your neck."

The fact that he would live by the sword implies an existence involving violent and continued conflict. Esau's descendants, the Edomites, who later became the Idumeans, had such an experience. The Hebrew is more correctly rendered, *you shall tear off the yoke from the neck.* Concerning the fulfillment of this prophetic word, Keil & Delitzsch have written,

*"The historical relation of Edom to Israel assumed the form of a constant reiteration of servitude, revolt, and reconquest. After a long period of independence, the Edomites were defeated by Saul (I Sam. 14:47) and subjugated by David (2 Sam. 8:14); and in spite of an attempt at revolt under Solomon (I Kings 11:14ff) they remained subject to the kingdom of Judah until the time of Joram, when they rebelled. They were subdued again by Amaziah (2 Kings 17:7; 2 Chronicles 25:11ff) and remained in subjection under Uzziah and Jotham (2 Kings 14:22; 2 Chronicles 26:2). It was not until the reign of Ahaz that they shook the yoke of Judah entirely off (2 Kings 16:6; 2 Chronicles 28:17), without Judah being ever able to reduce them again. At length, however, they were completely conquered by John Hyrcanus about BC 129, compelled to submit to circumcision, and incorporated into the Jewish state (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* xiii. 9: 1; xv. 7:9)."¹⁸⁶*

The Herod family were Idumeans, but Herod's rule did not involve Edom's ruling Israel. Herod ruled alone, as an individual

Verse 41-45

Esau was filled with hatred and he determined that as soon as Isaac died, he would kill Jacob. Rebekah learned of Esau's plans and so she told Jacob to leave home and go to live with her

¹⁸⁶ Keil & Delitzsch, page 279

brother, Laban. She said that after several years had passed and Esau's anger had cooled, she would send for Jacob to come back home.

27:46 – 28:5

In order to have Jacob's departure acceptable to her husband, Rebekah used another of her deceptive ploys to bring it about.

And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land,

So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him,

"You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.² "Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

"And may God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.⁴ "May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you; that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham."

⁵ *Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.*

In this account we see a pattern that several times has been displayed in Genesis – the proper respect for authority.

- When the pregnant Hagar fled the home of Abraham and Sarah, because of Sarah's heavy handedness, Yahweh told her to go back home and submit to her mistress (Genesis 16:9).
- The second time that Hagar left, she was sent away by Abraham, the head of the home (Genesis 21:14).
- Sarah, even though insisting that she have her way, is commended in Scripture for being a submissive wife (I Peter 3:6).
- Rebekah, a strong woman, did not send Jacob to Haran, but employed persuasion to get Isaac, who was husband and father, to send him away.

28:6-9

When Esau saw that his Hittite wives displeased his father, he decided that he needed to marry someone from the family. So, he married Mahalath, Ishmael's daughter. Thus, he had three wives, one of the accepted family and two Hittities.

Chapter 28:10-22: Jacob's Encounter with Yahweh

Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran.¹¹ And he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place.

The journey from Beersheba to Haran was about seventy miles, as the crow flies... but he would have had to travel up and down, over circuitous mountain roads. It is safe to estimate that he arrived in Haran at the close of the third day after he left Beersheba. He would have been exhausted.

As a shepherd, he often had spent the night in the field. The Hebrew term, *mera'ashtaw*.¹⁸⁷ does not mean, *pillow*, which is understood as something soft, but rather the term means, *head place*.

Verses 12-15

And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, Yahweh stood above it and said, "I am Yahweh, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.

"Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ "And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

This is the first of seven theophanies that Jacob experienced.¹⁸⁸

- 2 31:3, cf. 11-13
- 3 32:1-2
- 4 32:24:30
- 5 35:1
- 6 35:9-13
- 7 46:1-4

We have to ask, was Yahweh blessing a man who was a cheat and one who by deception had secured his father's patriarchal blessing? Some exegetes argue that Jacob was repentant over the deception and his part in it.¹⁸⁹ Evidence for that repentance is quite speculative. What is demonstrated in this narrative is that even though men interfere, Yahweh will have His way, and His will was proclaimed when the twins were born – and, in spite of the deception, Isaac's blessing was given to the appropriate son.

In the visionary dream, Yahweh repeated the essential elements of the promise given to Abraham and Isaac, with the addition that He would protect and direct Jacob and ultimately bring him back to Canaan. He promised that he would not leave Jacob until the promises made to Jacob had been fulfilled.

Verses 16-22

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely Yahweh is in this place, and I did not know it." ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

¹⁸ *So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on its top. ¹⁹ And he called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz.*

²⁰ *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, ²¹ and I return to my father's house in*

¹⁸⁷ מְרָאֲשָׁתוֹ

¹⁸⁸ The count varies, slightly, with some scholars.

¹⁸⁹ Leupold, page 773

*safety, then Yahweh will be my God.*²² *"And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house; and of all that Thou dost give me I will surely give a tenth to Thee."*

Jacob, the sinful man, had come near to God and he was filled with fear.

When he first awakened, overwhelmed by the dream, may have been in the middle of the night. It is possible that he fell asleep again, and when he woke up in the morning, he took the stone and consecrated it as a monument.

Abraham and Isaac had not set up memorial stones, but altars. Jacob, on the other hand, set up a stone as a memorial. Later parallels are seen in Genesis 31:45; Joshua 4:1ff; 24:26ff; I Samuel 7:12.

Beth-el means *house of God*. The location was near a city named, *Luz*. Note that the name, *Bethel*, clearly became the name of that location, and Moses, in 12:8, used the name, *Bethel*, for the location because his readers of the BC Fifteenth Century would have known of the location by that name.

Jacob, paraphrasing the promise, promises something himself – as these promises of prosperity are fulfilled, he will give a tenth to Yahweh. Since no sacerdotal system had been established at that time, how that tenth would be given is not clear.

Chapter 29: Jacob's Double Marriage

Verses 1-10

Jacob continued his travel until he reached his destination. When he stopped, he saw a well, with a large stone on top of it. Three flocks of sheep were lying beside the well. It was the custom for shepherds to bring their flocks to the well, and when all of the shepherds and their flocks had arrived, they would remove the stone and after the flocks were watered, they replaced it.

Jacob approached the shepherds that were at the well, who were awaiting the arrival of other shepherds with their flocks. Jacob was about seventy-seven years old. The shepherds who were younger, did not speak until the older man addressed them. Jacob called them, *brethren*, because they were of the same people from which he had descended, and they obviously spoke the same language.

Jacob asked them if they knew Laban, they told him that they did. He asked, *Is all well with him?* They said that all is well and then pointed to a shepherdess who was arriving with her flock and said, *See, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep.*

Jacob urged the shepherds to go ahead and water their sheep and then get their flocks back into the field. They said that they could not do that until all of the flocks had arrived, then they would remove the stone and all of the flocks would be watered. Perhaps Jacob, being an efficient shepherd, was pained to see precious hours wasted and so he was urging them to get on with the watering. However, it is also possible that Jacob was eager to get them on their way so that they would not be spectators to his meeting Rachel and... they were just as eager to witness the meeting.

When Rachel, Jacob's pretty cousin arrived at the well with her flock, Jacob stepped forward, removed the stone from the well, and watered Laban's sheep.

Verses 11-14

*Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept.*¹² *And Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.*

So it came about, when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Then he related to Laban all these things.¹⁴ And Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him a month.

In this culture, it was the custom for cousins to kiss, as a form of greeting. However, Rachel must have been startled by his action, because she did not know that he was her cousin until after the kiss. No doubt the overwhelming joy of seeing his cousin, for the first time, caused his spontaneous kiss, but also, as the story unfolds, there probably is some truth to the idea that it was “love at first sight.”

Jacob’s emotions overflowed – possibly, because, on the one hand, he so sorely missed the loved ones that he had left behind and on the other hand, the anticipated joy of finding new kinsfolk.

No doubt, Rachel had heard the story of Rebekah, her father’s sister, who had left the family to become the wife of her uncle, Isaac, whom she never had met. The arrival of this cousin was such exciting news that she ran home to tell Laban about the arrival of their relative. As he had done a generation earlier, when he had rushed to meet Abraham’s servant who had come seeking a wife for Isaac, Laban ran to meet his nephew, Jacob. Laban seems to have been as emotional in the encounter as was Jacob.

Verses 15-20

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?"¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.¹⁷ And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face.¹⁸ Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."

And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man; stay with me."²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

Jacob probably had begun helping out with the flocks, during the month that he had stayed with the family, and Laban realized that Jacob was a very competent shepherd. Laban, not wanting to lose the services of this industrious relative, wanted to arrive at a clear understanding of expectations, in order to avoid future problems. As we see in the later events, Laban was a selfish and a tricky man. Perhaps Laban had seen that Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel and was planning to maneuver this young man in such a way to acquire him as a son-in-law.

The names of the two daughters catch our attention.

- Rachel is the word for *ewe*
- Leah is the word for *wild cow*

The physical description of the daughters also catches our attention.

- Leah is described as having eyes that are *weak* (NAS, NIV), *tender* (KJV, YLT), *delicate* (NKJ), *no sparkle* (NLT). The NLT probably is closer to the meaning of the expression. As Keil & Delitzsch have written, “bright eyes, with fire in them, are regarded as the height of beauty in Oriental women.”¹⁹⁰ Leupold makes the same comment, “This, according to the oriental standard, did not imply defective vision but merely the absence of that clear-cut brilliance and lustre that the Orientals love.”¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Keil & Delitzsch, page 285

¹⁹¹ Leupold, page 793

- Rachel's attractive figure and beautiful face are the physical qualities mentioned. Even though her eyes are not specifically mentioned, given the oriental standards for a beautiful face, her eyes probably were dark and lustrous.

In the month that he had spent in Laban's home, Jacob had come to know quite definitely what he felt in his heart – he was in love. He presented terms to his uncle that do seem to be a bit extreme. However, he was not in a position to give any gifts, as Abraham's servant had done when negotiating for Rebekah, thus he offered seven years of service. Another factor may have been his relationship with Esau, and he felt the need to stay with Laban for a lengthy period of time – a place of refuge, so to speak.

There is no evidence of there being, at that time, the custom of selling daughters to potential husbands.¹⁹² Laban's avarice, which became evident in his later deeds, was at work – perhaps he already had devised the scheme to marry off his older, less attractive, daughter, for whom finding a husband would be difficult. Also, even today, Orientals, especially Syrians and Arabs, prefer to give their daughters in marriage to someone who has familial ties.

Verses 21-24

After seven years of service, Laban did not take the initiative to give Jacob his promised wife. Jacob had to remind him. Laban agreed. He had a big feast for the men of the place, then, that night, took Leah and presented her to Jacob. He also gave his personal maid, Zilpah, to Leah as her own personal maid.

Leah was brought to Jacob at night, under the cover of darkness. She would have been veiled. The two sisters may have been of similar size and stature. Leah cannot be absolved of guilt in the deception – she knew what was being done to Jacob.

Verses 25-27

So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?"²⁶ But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place, to marry off the younger before the first-born."²⁷ "Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years."

When morning dawned, and Jacob discovered that the woman with whom he had spent the night was Leah, he knew that Laban had orchestrated the plot. Jacob had served Laban faithfully, he had kept his part of the bargain. Even so, after the first outburst, Jacob submitted rather tamely to Laban's response and proposition. Perhaps Jacob was recalling the ruse that he and his mother had used to deceive Isaac – the deceiver, Jacob, had been deceived by one more deceptive than he. Because all of the men of that place had been a part of the big celebratory banquet, they were witness to what had happened and Jacob would be the laughing stock of that region.

Laban's argument that it was an ironclad rule to marry the elder before the younger was a weak argument. Had that been true, the time to state such would have been before he had agreed to the proposed marriage to Rachel.

The week mentioned by Laban, is the bridal week, which Syrians still term as the "king's week," and during that week, the bride and groom are addressed as "king and queen."¹⁹³

¹⁹² Keil & Delitzsch, page 286

¹⁹³ Leupold, page 798

Laban's avarice is so brazen that it is almost beyond belief. He seems to have known how passionately Jacob loved and desired Rachel – to have served seven years, waiting to have her as his wife. So, he took advantage of the situation and agreed to give Rachel to Jacob at the end of the bridal week, but with the caveat that this accomplished shepherd give him seven more years of service.

Verses 28-30

Jacob accepted the proposition and at the end of the week, Laban gave Rachel to Jacob, and he gave Bilhah to Rachel, to be her handmaiden. Jacob served seven more years, as agreed.

The statement, *he loved Rachel more than Leah*, intimates that he had come to have a degree of love for Leah, yet the following verses indicate otherwise.

Verses 31-35

Now Yahweh saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

³² *And Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because Yahweh has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me."*

³³ *Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because Yahweh has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." So she named him Simeon.*

³⁴ *And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi.*

³⁵ *And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise Yahweh." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.*

For the third time in Abraham's line, barrenness occurs and with it, fruitfulness on the part of the less-loved wife. Leah obviously has some spiritual understanding. She gave Yahweh credit for her fertility and that He is a compassionate God, responding to her affliction. The translation of the names of her sons are:

Rueben – *look, a son*

Simeon – *hearing*

Levi – *grow attached to*

Judah – *He will be praised*

In the name that she gave to her last son, Leah gave all praise to Yahweh.

Chapter 30: Jacob's Children and His Increasing Wealth

In this chapter we see the sordid picture of the tragedy of polygamy/bigamy. The envy and competition of the sisters and their resulting behavior is a sad display of fallen human nature.

Verses 1-4

Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die."

² *Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"*

³ *And she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her, that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children."⁴ So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.*

And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.⁶ Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore, she named him Dan.

In all probability, Moses did not follow a strict sequence of time in this section. Surely, Rachel's envy would have begun at some point during Leah's pregnancies, listed in the last chapter, rather than not occurring until the fourth child had been born.

Rachel, the well-beloved wife, found her secure position diminishing, as her sister bore children and she did not. Her jealousy caused an irrational outburst against Jacob. Jacob rightly defended himself, saying that God, not he, is the one who has kept Rachel from becoming pregnant.

Rachel then resorted to the same solution devised by her great-great aunt, Sarah. She gave her handmaid to her husband and asked him to accept Bilhah as a concubine and father children by her. Rachel would take the offspring of Bilhah and Jacob, and set them upon her knees, as if they were her own.

Indeed when Bilhah conceived and she gave birth, Rachel named the boy, Dan, which means, *Vindication*.

Bilhah then had a second son, which Rachel named, Naphtali, which means, *Wrestling*, indicated that she had been wrestling with both God and her sister.

Sad to say, but the two sisters entered into a bit of competition as to which one of them could produce the most children.

Leah ordered her handmaid, Zilpah, to become a concubine/wife of Jacob and out of that event came a son. Leah shouted, *Good luck!* Leah named the boy, Gad, which means, *Luck*.

Zilpah then had a second son, and Leah said, *Good fortune, for daughters shall call me fortunate.* Leah named the boy, Asher, meaning *Fortune*.

Rueben, by now, was a lad of about four years, just old enough to toddle out into the field with the reapers who were reaping the wheat harvest. He saw some mandrakes, sporting their bright yellow berries and so he picked some and took them to his mother. The Hebrew term means, *love apples*. The ancients considered mandrakes to be fruit that had an aphrodisiac quality and promoted fertility. Rachel was present when Rueben gave his mother the fruit and she asked if she could have some. Leah responds in anger and so Rachel agrees to yield Jacob to Leah for the night, if Leah would let her have some mandrakes. Rachel wanted to consume the mandrakes in order to enhance her fertility.

Leah went into the field and met Jacob and told him that he was to spend the night with her because she had purchased the privilege by giving mandrakes to her sister. As a result of that night with Jacob, Leah had another son, whom she named, Issachar, meaning, *reward*.

Later, Leah bore another son and said that since she had borne six sons to Jacob, that he surely would choose to dwell with her. She named this son, Zebulon, meaning, *Dwelling*.

Next, Leah gave birth to a daughter, whom she named, Dinah. Although the meaning of the name is uncertain, it could mean, *Vindication*.

Rachel finally conceived and bore a son, naming him, Joseph, meaning, *May He add*. She said, *May Yahweh add for me another son*. With this pregnancy, Rachel displayed a humility, saying, *God has taken away my reproach*.

Verses 25-26

Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country."²⁶ "Give me my wives and my children for

whom I have served you, and let me depart; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you."

Based on what is said here, it would seem that Joseph was born at the end of the fourteen years of service (seven before the marriages to the two daughters and seven after the marriages).

Jacob had fulfilled his commitment and he now wanted Laban to acknowledge that he had fulfilled his contract. He implies that his service to Laban would bear the closest scrutiny. Jacob's experience with Laban was such that he was not eager to remain with him any longer and so he asked that Laban acknowledge that the contract had been fulfilled and that he release Jacob and his family.

Verses 27-30

Laban acknowledged that he had been greatly blessed during Jacob's service, and that it was because Yahweh was blessing Jacob. He asked Jacob to set his wages and Laban would pay them if Jacob would stay with him.

Jacob replied that when he first came into Laban's home, that Laban had very little, but that under Jacob's administration and service, Laban had become rich. He then said, *Since I have prospered you, when can I begin to provide for my own house?* This was a very fair demand.

Verses 31-34

So he said, "What shall I give you?"

And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything.

If you will do this one thing for me, I will again pasture and keep your flock: ³² let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted sheep, and every black one among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and such shall be my wages.

³³ *"So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, will be considered stolen."*

And Laban said, "Good, let it be according to your word."

The proposition that Jacob offered to Laban put everything in the providence of God. Jacob does not know whether or not God would be pleased to give him wealth. It should be noted that the sheep of this culture normally were white, and goats normally were black or brown-black. The exceptions to this rule are not numerous. Jacob proposed that he taken only the exceptions to the norm. If he is to acquire wealth, the Almighty would have to grant it.

Jacob also expected that from time to time Laban would come among Jacob's flock to investigate the matter. So, Jacob set very clear standards whereby Laban could make such an examination.

Verses 35-36

Even though Jacob said that he would go among the flocks and take care of the separating them according to the plan, Laban, himself, went among the flocks and separated the animals according the Jacob's plan. Laban put his own sons in charge of the animals that obviously belonged to Jacob – isolating them so that, even though Jacob possessed them, he could not use them for breeding and produce more abnormally colored animals. Laban then set a distance of three day's journey between his flocks and Jacob's flocks. Even so, Jacob continued to shepherd the animals that belonged to Laban.

Verses 37-43

Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white which was in the rods.³⁸ And he set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the gutters, even in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink; and they mated when they came to drink.

³⁹ So the flocks mated by the rods, and the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted.⁴⁰ And Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock.

⁴¹ Moreover, it came about whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, that Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the gutters, so that they might mate by the rods;⁴² but when the flock was feeble, he did not put them in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.

⁴³ So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys.

When Laban displayed several acts that caused Jacob to lose all trust in his father-in-law, he resorted to tricky devices to be assured of success.

The device that Jacob employed to produce striped, speckled, and spotted offspring of the flocks was an ancient ploy. Kiel & Delitzsch state,

“This artifice was founded upon a fact frequently noticed, particularly in the case of sheep, that whatever fixes their attention I copulation is marked upon the young (see the proofs in *Bochart, Hieroz*, 1, 618, and *Friedreich zur Bibel* 1, 37 sq.)”¹⁹⁴

Whether or not the devices employed by Jacob produced the reported result is not important. According to 31:12, Yahweh was the one ultimately responsible for producing the striped, speckled, and spotted animals.

"And he said, 'Lift up, now, your eyes and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.

Chapter 31: Jacob's Flight from Laban and Their Treaty

Verses 1-3

Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth."² And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not friendly toward him as formerly.³ Then Yahweh said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

Since the time of the vision at Bethel, Jacob had been living under Yahweh's direct guidance. No doubt Jacob often had wished to leave Laban but without God's direction, he would not have done so. Now, the command to go is given, and with it, the substance of the promise made at Bethel, *"And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."*(28:15)

Verses 4-21

Jacob sent for his two wives, asking them to join him out in the fields where he was tending the flocks. He told them how he noted that Laban's face no longer was friendly toward him. He reminded them of how faithfully he had served Laban and that Laban had been deceitful time

¹⁹⁴ Kiel & Delitzsch, page 293

again, even changing his wages ten times. He pointed out that his flocks had increased, but that Laban's flocks had not grown in number.

He told them about the dream, in which Yahweh told him that He was the one responsible for the growth of Jacob's flocks, partly because of the deceitfulness of Laban.

Then, he told them that Yahweh had told him to return to Canaan.

The daughters responded that their father had defrauded them, as well. Therefore, they said to their husband, *do whatever God has said to you.*"

In all possible haste, Jacob put all of his family on camels, and, accompanied by all of his flocks, he began the journey back to Canaan. Before leaving, Rachel stole her father's teraphim.¹⁹⁵

Laban was not aware of what Jacob was doing, because Jacob's flock was three days' journey (30:36) from where Laban kept his flocks. Also, Laban was busily occupied with shearing sheep. Laban's sons, who had been tending Jacob's flocks, hurried to tell their father about Jacob's departure. Because Laban had set a three-days journey separation between the flocks, it took three days before his sons arrived with the news.

Verses 22-25

When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled,²³ then he took his kinsmen with him, and pursued him a distance of seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead.²⁴ And God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad."

Laban had no difficulty in following the broad trail created by Jacob's large entourage. The exact mountain where Laban overtook Jacob's group, cannot be ascertained because *Gilead* is used as a general term for a mountainous country east of Jordan.

Apparently on the last night of the pursuit, God appeared to Laban in a dream that was of such a nature that he did not doubt that it was from God. He was told to say nothing to Jacob, good or bad, *i.e.* to not say anything of bitter reproach, nor to do anything to influence him to return.

Verses 26-29

In a huff, Laban confronted Jacob for sneaking away without giving Laban the opportunity to send his daughters and grandchildren off with a celebration. He said that he had the power to do Jacob harm, but that *the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, "Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob."*

Verses 30-32

Laban told Jacob that he understood that the reason that he left was because he longed to return to his native land, but one thing he did not understand was why Jacob stole the Teraphim. Jacob told him that he secretly left because he was afraid that Laban, by force, would force Rachel and Leah to remain with Laban. He denied that he had stolen the Teraphim and that Laban was free to search for anything in their caravan that belonged to Laban and he could take it. Not only that, if the Teraphim were found in the caravan, the person who stole it would be executed. Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the Teraphim.

Verses 33-42

Laban when through all of Jacob's tents, and could find nothing that belonged to him. Rachel had put the Teraphim in the camel's saddle (a capacious saddle with wicker attachments on both sides). She was using the saddle as a chair on which to sit in her tent. She told Laban that

¹⁹⁵ Teraphim are small idols, representing the god of the earth, who promoted domestic prosperity. Later, as I Samuel 19:13 seems to suggest, some were larger.

because she was menstruating and in pain, she was not able to get up from off her place of rest. Whether or not she spoke the truth or lied, her words were designed to hide the fact that she had stolen the Teraphim. Laban respected his daughter's condition and did not insist that she get up. Therefore, as was true of the other tents, Laban found nothing in Rachel's tent that belonged to him.

In anger, Jacob verbally attacked Laban, declaring that Laban had found nothing in the caravan that belonged to him. Furthermore, Jacob said that he had served Laban for twenty years – fourteen years for the two daughters and six years after that, caring for Laban's cattle. He declared that he had served Laban in the heat of the day, had missed sleep, and *If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed.*

He concluded by referring to the warning that Yahweh had given to Laban, *God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night.*

Verses 43-47

Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?"⁴⁴ "So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me."

⁴⁵ *Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar.* ⁴⁶ *And Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap.* ⁴⁷ *Now Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed.*

Because Laban suggested the covenant, it would have been assumed that he would have made the witnessing stone and the heap, but Jacob is the one who took the initiative. No doubt Jacob took immediate action because he was eager to preserve peace, even though he may have resented making the treaty with a man who has mistreated and falsely accused him.

The heap would have consisted of a central stone, which stood as a pillar, with other stones heaped around it. This was called a *qal*. The covenant was confirmed with a feast and the *qal* functioned as a table for the feast.

Moses noted that both Laban and Jacob gave a name to the cairn of stones. Each of them gave a name that reflected his personal language.¹⁹⁶

- Laban named it, *Jegar-sahadutha*, Aramaic for, *heap of testimony*
- Jacob named it, *Galeed*, Hebrew for, *heap of witness*

These terms demonstrate that at the beginning of Israel's history, the nation came from a stock that spoke Aramaic, but abandoned Aramaic for Hebrew. Then, after the Babylonian Captivity, the nation reverted back to Aramaic, which was the language spoken by the Jews in Jesus' lifetime.

Verses 48-54

And Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore it was named Galeed;⁴⁹ and Mizpah, for he said,

"May Yahweh watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other.⁵⁰ If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us, see, God is witness between you and me."

¹⁹⁶ *Testimony* is an abstract noun; *witness* is a personal noun, or the name of a person.

⁵¹ *And Laban said to Jacob, "Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me. ⁵² This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. ⁵³ The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us."*

So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.

Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain.

Moses used the two Hebrew names that are applied to the cairn. As noted earlier, *Galeed* means, *heap of witness*; *Mizpah* means, *watch*.

Laban is quite wordy in his proclamation and even goes so far as to take credit for the cairn, which Jacob had taken the initiative to build. Some of his statements seem a bit absurd. For example, throughout the years recorded in this story, he seems to have had little concern for his daughters, and to intimate that he had the need to protect them from Jacob's harshness seems to be bloviating. Jacob had never demonstrated even the slightest inclination to be harsh with his wives. Gentleness and goodness seem to be signal qualities of his character.

Even so, Jacob swore an oath, in which he used the same term, *Fear*, as the name for Yahweh (the same term he had used for the God of Isaac in verse 42)

Chapter 32: Jacob's Preparations for Meeting Esau

Verses 1-8

The next morning, Laban kissed his daughters and his grandchildren and after pronouncing a blessing on them, he went back home. Jacob then continued on his journey to Canaan. Along the way, angels met him and Jacob named the place of that meeting, *Mahanaim*, (*double host*). Not only did Jacob have his own host of servants and family, but he was assured that since he now was following the course prescribed by God, a host of angels also was accompanied by a host of angels – i.e. a double host.

Jacob sent messengers ahead, to inform Esau of his coming. He told them to tell Esau that he had been staying with Laban for many years, but now was returning – not as the vagabond brother who had left home twenty years ago, but as a man of wealth and means. He also told his servants to use language that pictured Esau as the master and Jacob as the servant.

The messengers returned with the message that Esau was coming to meet him and he had four hundred men with him. Jacob was smitten with fear and divided his company into two bands with this thought – If Esau comes to kill us, perhaps while he is attacking one band, the other group can escape.

Jacob then quickly offered a prayerful plea to God.

Verses 9-23

And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, Yahweh, who didst say to me, 'Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,'

¹⁰ *I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which Thou hast shown to Thy servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies.*

¹¹ *"Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me, the mothers with the children.*

¹² *"For Thou didst say, 'I will surely prosper you, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"*

Jacob confessed that he always had been unworthy of the kindness that Yahweh had shown to him. If ever a prayer implied a deep sense of guilt it is this prayer of Jacob's. He then turned his prayer to a petition based on the promise that Yahweh had given to him.

Jacob divided his vast herd into several herds and put each herd under the care of his servants. He then instructed them to go ahead of him and to leave intervals between the herds.

He instructed his herdsmen that when the first herd encountered Esau, if he asked who owned this herd, they were to tell him that it was his servant Jacob, and that these had been sent as a gift to Esau. Then the servants over each herd were given the same instructions. Jacob remained in camp, while the servants left with the herds.

In the middle of the night, Jacob's wives and handmaids, as well as his eleven sons and all that was still left in the camp, were taken to the ford of Jabbok and they crossed over to the other side. Jacob remained in the camp.

Verses 24-28

Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.²⁵ And when he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.²⁶ Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."²⁷ So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob."²⁸ And he said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."

The Biblical commentary on this incident is Hosea 12:4 *Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel, and there He spoke with us...* Since the prophet Hosea describes Jacob's assailant as an angel, we must conclude that this was the Angel of Jehovah in human form – as he had manifested himself in earlier episodes (for example, Chapter 18).

The new name given to Jacob, *Israel*, means, *God Strives*.

This unusual incident is seen by most readers as an example of the power of prevailing prayer. Jacob did prevail, but he was reminded of his need to submit, by the imposition of a dislocated thigh which did not immediately heal.

Verses 29-32

Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.

³⁰ *So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."*

³¹ *Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh.³² Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.*

The reply of Jacob's adversary seems to be a bit mysterious. The fact that Jacob named the place, *Peniel* (meaning, *Face of God*), indicates that he knew the identity of the wrestler. Therefore, the reply probably was spoken in the sense of, *why do you ask, you know who I am?*

In the Mosaic Law, God did not demand the ritual observance of not eating the sinew of the hip. The descendants of Israel, on their own, instituted this practice.

Chapter 33: Reconciliation with Esau and Jacob's Settling in Canaan

Verses 1-3

At daybreak, Jacob crossed the brook and joined his family. He immediately saw Esau coming with four hundred men. Once again, Jacob took action dividing his family into companies. In the lead company, he put the two handmaidens and their children, next, Leah and her children, then, last of all, Rachel and Joseph.

Jacob then stepped out and led them all to face Esau. When he approached Esau, he bowed low seven times. All of Jacob's anxiety was unnecessary fear, for when he met Esau, he was warmly embraced.

Verses 4-7

Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

⁵ *And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, "Who are these with you?"*

So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."

⁶ *Then the maids came near with their children, and they bowed down.* ⁷ *And Leah likewise came near with her children, and they bowed down; and afterward Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed down.*

Whatever thoughts of vengeance that Esau may have had (27:41-45), quickly evaporated when he saw his brother. Esau was an impulsive person and his actions here are examples of that.

When Jacob had left the family, he was unmarried, thus, Esau's question about the women and children is not surprising. Oriental custom is such that a man should not take much interest in another man's wife, so Jacob replies only with respect to the children.

It is of interest that Joseph is mentioned before Rachel, whereas with the others, the mothers are mentioned first.

Verses 8-11

Esau asked Jacob about all of the flocks that had preceded the wives and children. Jacob said that they were his, that God had prospered him greatly and that these were a gift that he was giving to Esau. At first, Esau protested, saying that he also was prosperous, and that Jacob should keep his flocks. Jacob pressed Esau, saying that it was important for Esau to accept the gift, for when Jacob looked on the face of Esau, it was *as one sees the face of God*.

In response to Jacob's plea, Esau accepted the very generous gift of the flocks offered by Jacob.

Verses 12-16

Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey and go, and I will go before you."

¹³ *But he (Jacob) said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds which are nursing are a care to me. And if they are driven hard one day, all the flocks will die.*

¹⁴ *"Please let my lord pass on before his servant; and I will proceed at my leisure, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir."*

¹⁵ *And Esau said, "Please let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord."*

¹⁶ *So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.*

The Hebrew (*leneghdekha*¹⁹⁷ – *over against you*) is better rendered, *go alongside you*, or, *parallel with you*, rather than, *before you*.^{198 199}

What a beautiful picture of the elder brother's full forgiveness for the younger brother's deception, twenty years earlier. Not only did he suggest that they travel together as a company, but when that plan was not accepted, he offered to leave some men with Jacob, to assist him in his travels.

Jacob suggested that each one proceed at the pace that best suited them. The slow pace of Jacob's company probably would have irked Esau's unencumbered warriors. Also, like Abraham (14:23), Jacob may have felt the necessity of his independence, so that others would not think that his wealth had come from someone other than Yahweh.

Verses 17-20

Jacob and his caravan traveled a short distance north, to the point where the Jordan and Jabbok come together. He set up residence there for a few years, not only building a house, but also making booths for his livestock. The name of the place became, *Succoth*, meaning, *booths*.

After a few years, he and his clan migrated to the region around Shechem. The name of the city was not Shechem prior to Jacob's arrival. It later came to have that name, as a result of the events involving Shechem, who was one of the princes of the city (the son of Hamor). Thus, when Moses wrote this account, he used the name for the city as it was known in his day.

Jacob purchased land on the east side of the city, then erected an altar, which he named, *El-Elohe-Israel*²⁰⁰ (*A Mighty God, is the God of Israel*).

Chapter 34: The Ravishing of Dinah and Her Brothers' Revenge

Verses 1-6

This event happened about ten years after Jacob had settled in Canaan.

Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land.

² *And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force.*

³ *And he was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her.* ⁴ *So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young girl for a wife."*

⁵ *Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in.*

Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.

Whether or not Dinah had been inclined to go out to see the women of the country many times before, or if this were the first time that she did so, cannot be determined. Neither are we told

¹⁹⁷ לַנְּגִדָּךְ

¹⁹⁸ The NIV seeks to convey this idea, by rendering the term as, *I'll accompany you*.

¹⁹⁹ See Leupold, page 891; Keil & Delitzsch, page 308; *Holladay Hebrew Lexicon*, entry 5350

²⁰⁰ אֵל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

whether or not she went out with her parent's permission, or even whether or not she went out against their wishes. She would have been at least fourteen, possibly fifteen, years old.

What we do know is that Egyptians and Canaanites regarded unmarried women abroad in the land to be legitimate prey – thus, she should not have gone forth, unattended. Shechem was a Hivite prince and no doubt he felt especially entitled to unattached girls.

Even though his deed was wrong, he found himself deeply attached to Dinah. He tried to comfort her after the rape. Not only had he become infatuated with her, but he also seems to have tried to make things right by seeking to marry her. The young man's urgency is displayed in his language, *Get me this young girl for a wife*. In this culture, parents arranged for the marriages of their children.

We do not know how word of the rape reached Jacob. Dinah could not have told him, because she was kept in Shechem's house (verse 26). By whatever means, Jacob heard of the incident and kept it to himself.

Verse 7

Bad news travels quickly and by some means, Dinah's brothers heard about the rape. Outraged, they came in from the field, and when they arrived they found Hamor already in their home.

Verses 8-12

But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage."⁹ "And intermarry with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves."¹⁰ "Thus you shall live with us, and the land shall be open before you; live and trade in it, and acquire property in it."¹¹ Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me."¹² "Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage."

Hamor had to deal not only with Dinah's father but also her irate brothers. Jacob and his sons must have noted the immorality of the Canaanites – neither Hamor nor Shechem admitted any wrongdoing. The Canaanites were ready to proceed as they would have done for any regular marriage.

No doubt the Canaanites felt that Jacob's clan should be honored at the proposal of an alliance with a princely line. They anticipated that a financial adjustment would smooth out all problems involved in the matter. Shechem, the son, even goes further, in essence, saying, "set your price as high as you will, I want this girl."

Verses 13-24

Intermarriage with the Canaanites would be forfeiting the spiritual heritage of Jacob's clan. So, Jacob's sons answered the Canaanites with cunning. They told them that they could not agree to any sort of intermarriage between the two groups, unless the Canaanite men were circumcised. They said that if all of the men of the city would be circumcised, then they would be willing to give the girls of their clan in marriage to the Canaanites. They told them that if they did not agree to this, then they would take Dinah from them and go on their way.

Hamor and Shechem were delighted with this plan. They returned to their city, spoke to a gathering of the men of the city, telling them that if they would be circumcised that they then could marry girls from Jacob's clan and, they even could begin to claim all of Jacob's cattle and other possessions as Canaanite property. The men of the city thought that being circumcised was a small price to pay in order to receive the potential benefits.

Verses 25-26

Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male.²⁶ And they killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth.

The ploy orchestrated by Dinah's brothers went off exactly as they had hoped. Simeon and Levi were Dinah's full brothers and so they were the main characters in the action. They may have had some servants with them, because two courageous men could hardly have ventured to attack a city.

We are not told why the other brothers did not enter into the slaughter. Four others were full brothers of Dinah. We can only speculate as to why this was so.

Verses 27-29

Jacob's sons came upon the slain and looted the city, because they had defiled their sister.²⁸ They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field;²⁹ and they captured and looted all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives, even all that was in the houses.

Jacob's sons must refer all of the brothers. Those who, for one reason or another, did not enter into the slaughter, had no compunctions about participating in the plunder. Not only did they take all material possessions, but also the women and children. These captives probably became slaves to Jacob's family, for such was the practice in that culture.

Verses 30-31

Jacob rebuked Simeon and Levi, telling them that their action would put all of them in jeopardy. The surrounding tribes would attack the Israelites. The brothers replied, *Should our sister be treated like a harlot?*

Chapter 35: The Final Events of Isaac's Life**Verses 1-15**

God appeared to Jacob and told him to take his family and travel to Bethel, where Yahweh had met him when he was fleeing from Esau (Chapter 28:10ff). In obedience, Jacob made preparations for the journey. He told all in his entourage to get rid of any foreign gods that they might have in their possession, to purify themselves, and to change their garments. No doubt in the sacking of Shechem, they had acquired idols, as well as the Teraphim that Rachel had stolen from her father. It seems that they also had acquired some earrings which would have served as amulets and tokens of some idolatrous practice. Everyone gave Jacob all of the foreign gods that they had collected along the way, as well as their earrings, and Jacob buried them under a terebinth tree.

As Jacob's caravan traveled to Bethel, all of the Canaanites were stricken with the fear of Yahweh and so they did not harass the caravan. When they arrived at Bethel, Jacob built an altar and named it, *El-Bethel*, God of Bethel.

After arriving at Bethel, Rebekah's nurse, Deborah died. She was buried beneath an oak, which was named, *Oak of Weeping*. This nurse is mentioned, but not by name, in 24:59. We do not know how she came to be associated with Jacob, after Rebekah's death. Perhaps, since she had cared for Jacob in his infancy and youth, she chose to attach herself to Jacob. Jacob was 110

years old at this time, and had been born quite late in his mother's life - so Deborah must have been a very old woman (some speculate she must have been 170 years of age).²⁰¹

God appeared to Jacob and ratified the change of his name from Jacob to Israel, as had been declared when he wrestled with the angel (32:24ff). He then confirmed that the promises made to Abraham and Isaac had been passed down to Jacob: *God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you."*¹² *"And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you."*

The memorial stone that Jacob had erected thirty years before this event probably was no longer standing (28:18). Therefore, after God *went up* from him, Jacob erected a new memorial stone, pouring wine and oil upon it. The first time that he had been in this place, he named the place, Bethel. Now, in the presence of his entire company, he declared that the name of the place was to be called, Bethel.

Verses 16-21

Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor.

¹⁷ *And it came about when she was in severe labor that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for now you have another son."*

¹⁸ *And it came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.*

¹⁹ *So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).*²⁰ *And Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.*²¹ *Then Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.*

There is a very tragic note in Rachel's dying word – naming her son, *Ben-oni* (*Son of my sorrow*). It would have been morbid to force a son to bear such a name throughout his life, and so Jacob altered the name to a similar one, *Benjamin*, (*Son of my righthand*).

The region is Ephrath, the specific town of the region was Bethlehem. Moses noted that in his day, (500-600 years later) the pillar noting Rachel's grave still was in place.

Jacob then settled on a southeast hill of Jerusalem, in the region that became the possession of the tribe of Benjamin (Micah 4:8; Joshua 18:28; Judges 1:21)

Verse 22-26

Reuben committed a horrible act. He bedded Bilhah, who had been Rachel's handmaid, and Israel's concubine. Israel heard of it and this prepares us for 49:4 where his disapproval finds a lasting expression for all future time.

Once again, Moses listed all of Jacob's sons, where they were born and their mothers.

Verses 27-29

*And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned.*²⁸ *Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years.*²⁹ *And Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.*

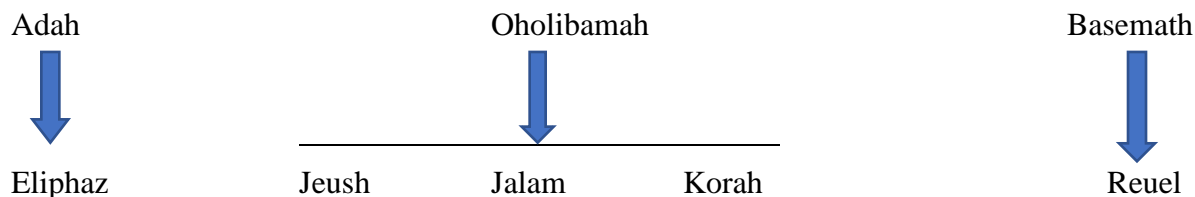
²⁰¹ Leupold, page 919

Isaac did not die until twelve or thirteen years after Jacob moved to Hebron.²⁰² The account of his death is mentioned here, indicating that Jacob/Israel had become the expression of the full patriarchal heritage. Jacob had attained an old age and a spiritual maturity that was befitting that of a patriarch.

Chapter 36: The History of Esau

Verses 1-5

These verses list Esau's three wives and their respective children. The following chart shows the relationship between the names.



The names of Esau's wives are not the same as those given in 26:34 and 28:9. The names listed in these passages were their names prior to their marriage. At that time, and in that culture, it was not unusual for women to change their names when they were married.²⁰³

Verses 6-8

Because both Jacob and Esau had huge herds there was not sufficient pasture in the region to support both groups. Therefore, Esau moved his family and his herds to the region surrounding Mount Seir, the mountainous region south east of the Dead Sea. This region became the nation of Edom.

Verses 9-19

The descendants of three of Esau's sons became significant Edomite chieftains. Here the list as given in the text.

Sons of Eliphaz	Sons of Reuel	Sons of Oholibamah
Chief Teman	Chief Nahath	Chief Jeush
Chief Omar	Chief Zerah	Chief Jalam
Chief Zepho	Chief Shammah	Chief Korah
Chief Kenaz	Chief Mizzah	
Chief Korah		
Chief Gatam		
Chief Amalek		

²⁰² This is determined by the fact that Joseph was seventeen years when he was sold into Egypt. When he stood before Pharaoh he was thirty-seven. Jacob immigrated to Egypt when he was 130 years old (47:9). Thus, Jacob must have been 93 at the time of Joseph's birth and at the time of the event recorded in this chapter about 108 years old (93 + 15). Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob was born (108 + 60 = 168 = Isaac's age when Jacob returned home. With these figures before us, it becomes apparent that Isaac was alive when Joseph was sold into slavery and would have shared in the grief caused by that event.

²⁰³ Leupold, page 934

Verses 20-30

The tribe that inhabited the region around Mount Seir before the arrival of Esau and his clan, were known as the Horites. The name means, *cave dwellers*. They were an ancient and honorable stock, also producing a number of very prominent chiefs. In time the Horites and Esau's descendants blended into the Edomites.

Verses 31-43

Moses, assuming that in time, there would be kings in the Messianic line, listed the Edomite kings who ruled Edom from its founding until Moses authored Genesis. He listed eight kings.

Next, he gave a list of the Edomitish chiefs and the region where each one exercised authority, within Edom.

Chapter 37:1-36: Joseph is Sold into Egypt

Verses 1-4

Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan.² These are the records of the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives.

Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.

³*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.*

⁴*And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.*

At seventeen years of age, Joseph was shepherding some of Jacob's flocks with the sons of Jacob's concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah. Evidently, none of Leah's sons were shepherding these particular flocks. Joseph's half-brothers, with whom he was shepherding, were older than he. Only Benjamin, his full-brother was younger than Joseph.

The fact that Jacob loved Joseph more than all of his sons, was a prescription for trouble. The reason given for Joseph's being Jacob's favorite was the fact that Joseph was his son of his old age. No doubt another added element was the fact that Joseph was the son of Rachel and the other sons mentioned were sons of concubines.

Unwisely, Jacob demonstrated this preference by giving Joseph a special garment. The Hebrew term used by Moses sheds light on the situation – *kethoneth passim*.²⁰⁴ The *kethoneth* was an undergarment or a tunic which normally was sleeveless and was about knee length. The addition of the term, *passim*, indicates that the one made for Joseph had long sleeves and extended to the ankles. Thus, it was not a garment adapted to work, but one that would be worn by a superior or an overseer. By giving Joseph such a garment, Jacob was indicating that Joseph should have preeminence over the rest. The Hebrew verb, *we'asah*,²⁰⁵ is best rendered, *he used to make*, indicating that when one garment wore out, Jacob made a new one for Joseph.

²⁰⁴ כְּתוֹנֶת פַּסִּים

²⁰⁵ וַעֲשָׂה

Verses 5-11

Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

⁶*And he said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; ⁷for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf."*

⁸*Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.*

⁹*Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."*

¹⁰*And he related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?"*

¹¹*And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.*

There is nothing in the text to indicate that the dreams were divinely inspired. Perhaps the father's display of favoritism had caused Joseph to feel somewhat special, and the dreams were a manifestation those feelings. The plans of God were hidden from Jacob and his family, including Joseph, but, whatever the source of the dreams might have been, they did represent what was to become a reality. God's purposes are accomplished in spite of human behavior. In some instances, that behavior is allowed to take place, because it results in His purposes being accomplished. Concerning such things, it can be said:

- God causes something to happen
- God prevents something from happening
- God allows something to happen
- Through His permissive will, His ends are achieved

Through the result of Joseph's behavior and his brother's resentment, he ultimately became the Prime Minister of Egypt and was the means of saving his family in a time of famine, the means of giving the Israelites a place to live, where they became a great people, and ultimately becoming the Messianic Nation that God desired them to be.

Although Joseph's telling his brothers and his father the dreams usually is presented as an act of pride, his recitation may have been just an innocent telling of an unusual dream. Perhaps he longed to be accepted by his half-brothers as just, "one of the boys," and he told the dream as a matter of idle conversation. His future behavior does suggest some innocence on his part.

In the first dream, which Jacob seems to have told only to his brothers, he was presented as lording over the brothers. In the second dream, he is presented as lording over all of the clan, including his father and his deceased mother.

When Joseph recited the second dream to his father, Jacob sharply rebuked him. Even so, Joseph kept in mind the thoughts engendered by the dream (similar to Mary, who *kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart,*²⁰⁶).

²⁰⁶ Luke 2:19

Verses 12-17

At some point, Joseph was back home with Jacob, while all of Jacob's other sons, except Benjamin, were in Shechem, shepherding Jacob's flocks. Jacob wanted to learn about their wellbeing and so he sent Joseph to visit them and then bring back a report.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, the brothers and the flocks were not there. He encountered a man who told him that they had taken the flocks to Dothan, a city several miles north of Shechem. Joseph proceeded to Dothan, where he found his brothers.

Verses 18-24

When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death.¹⁹ And they said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer!"²⁰ "Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!"

²¹ *But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, "Let us not take his life."²² Reuben further said to them, "Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him"-- that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father.*

²³ *So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him;²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it.*

From a distance the brothers recognized Joseph's gait, his shape, and his unusual garment. So, while he was still a distance away, the evil deed was hatched. We are not told which of the brothers initiated the plot, but quickly it became a plan that they began to speak, excitedly, to one another. Again, we see the tragedy of polygamy/bigamy and the fruit of the envy that manifested itself between Jacob's wives. Such feelings, unintentionally promoted by Jacob's preference of Joseph, continued among the sons. Murder was in their hearts.

Evidently Reuben was not a part of the original conversation. He must have been a short distance away from the plotters. However, when he came within earshot of the other brothers, and heard their plans, he acted to prevent the evil deed. Even so, he did not fully resist his brothers. He suggested that they throw the seventeen year-old into one of the dry cisterns that were in the field and leave him there. Being in the cistern and unable to escape, Joseph would die of starvation, or lack of water – or some other destructive fate would befall him. By so doing, Reuben argued, they would not be shedding blood. Behind his plea was his plan to come back to the cistern, no doubt secretly, and save Joseph's life and restore him to Jacob.

The Hebrew presents Reuben as first mildly suggesting, *Let us not take his life*. Then, after this brief statement, he made a stronger plea, beginning with what their plans would require – *shedding blood* – something that would be repulsive to any moral person.

We wonder about Reuben's motive. Reuben had demonstrated his faulty morals by having sex with his father's concubine (35:22ff). Jacob harbored disapproval of Reuben from that time onward (49:4). What was Reuben's motive for seeking to abort the plan to kill Joseph? In all probability, it was because he was the older brother. Even though he had incurred his father's displeasure, as the first-born he was the one on whom responsibility would fall. He probably was the over-seer and thus he felt a responsibility for anything that would happen. Even though he had committed incest, he was not willing to bear the responsibility for the shedding of blood.

His cunning craft did not work out as planned.

Verses 25-28

After Joseph had been cast into the pit, Reuben left his brothers to attend to the business of the flock. While he was gone, the other brothers sat down to eat a meal, not far from the cistern. We wonder if they were hearing cries from Joseph, pleading to be pulled out of the cistern.

As they were sitting and eating, an Ishmaelite caravan passed by. The caravan carried various goods that they were transporting to Egypt, where they would sell them. Judah, quickly suggested that instead of letting Joseph die, they sell him to the caravan. The other brothers agreed, and they pulled Joseph out of the cistern and sold him for twenty pieces of silver.

Verses 29-30

*Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments.
³⁰ And he returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?"*

Reuben's motive for leaving the group earlier may have been to conceal his plans to sneak back and rescue Joseph. It also is likely the other brothers decided to get rid of Joseph while Reuben was away. His tearing of his garment was the traditional manner of expressing grief and sorrow. When he found his brothers, their lack of surprise would have made him aware of the fact that they knew exactly what had happened.

His questioning, *as for me, where am I to go*, shows his complete bewilderment – should he organize some sort of attempt to rescue Joseph – should he go home...?

Verses 31-36

So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat, and dipped the tunic in the blood;³² and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not."³³ Then he examined it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!"

³⁴ *So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days.*

³⁵ *Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him.*

³⁶ *Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.*

The brothers were quite resourceful. No doubt they also wanted to bring pain to their father for the preference that he had given to Joseph. Thus, they sent the garment to their father, with a message that had a rather bluntness to it. They did not try to soften the blow. Jacob must have been so overcome with grief that he did not notice that Joseph's garment was not torn, but only bloodstained. If Joseph had been devoured by a wild beast, some damage would have been done to the garment.

The brothers' cruel plan succeeded too well. Jacob's grief was excessive, and none were able to console him.

In the meantime, the caravan transporting Joseph had arrived in Egypt, where he was sold to one of the most important Egyptians, Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard.

Chapter 38: Judah and Tamar

Verses 1-11

Judah left his father and brothers and relocated to the foothills of what, in later generations, was the western part of the territory assigned to the tribe of Judah. Not long after pitching his tent, he met a Canaanite named Hirah, who became Judah's close friend.

Shortly thereafter, Judah met a Canaanite named, *Shua* (the name means, *opulence*) who had a beautiful daughter, whom Judah married. They had three sons. Judah named the first one, *Er*. Judah's wife named the next two: *Onan*, and *Shelah*.

Judah acquired a wife for Er, a Canaanite woman named, *Tamar*. Er was a very wicked man. We can only speculate as to the nature of the wickedness, but whatever was its nature, it was so severe that Yahweh slew him.

According to the custom of the times, and later in the Mosaic Covenant (Deuteronomy 25:5ff), when a man died leaving behind a widow with no children, his brother was to take the widow as a wife. The first son born of this couple, would be regarded as carrying on the line of the deceased brother.

Onan knew of this rule concerning his first son and so, each time he had conjugal relationships with Tamar, he took preventive measures to prevent a pregnancy. His behavior was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and so Yahweh slew him.

Judah urged his widowed daughter-in-law to stay in her father's house, as a widow, until Shelah was grown. He believed that Tamar was a woman who brought about tragedy - he did not want her in his home because he was afraid that her presence might cause the death of his youngest son. He did not promise to give the youngest son to her in marriage, although that was implied. As Judah requested, Tamar moved into her father's house.

Verses 12-19

Now after a considerable time Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

¹³ *And it was told to Tamar, "Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."* ¹⁴ *So she removed her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife.*

¹⁵ *When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face.* ¹⁶ *So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, "Here now, let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?"* ¹⁷ *He said, therefore, "I will send you a kid from the flock." She said, moreover, "Will you give a pledge until you send it?"*

¹⁸ *And he said, "What pledge shall I give you?" And she said, "Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him.*

¹⁹ *Then she arose and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments.*

When Judah had recovered from his grief, and it was sheepshearing time, he and his friend Hirah went to Timnah, where the sheepshearing was to take place. Sheepshearing was a season of general hilarity and festivity.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Leupold, page 982

A number of years had passed since Tamar had gone to live in her father's house, as a widow. Shelah had become a man and Judah had not made any arrangements for him to become Tamar's husband. Tamar seems to have been desperate to have offspring, and so she devised a plan to thwart her father-in-law. Her plan had but one chance in a hundred to succeed, but she probably knew Judah well enough to believe that he would take the bait. The sheepshearing festivities often led to much wine drinking, and she possibly had heard of some of Judah's past escapades.

After disguising herself as a harlot, she sat down by the wayside, which was the custom of harlots who were offering themselves at the time of such festivities. No doubt she would have refused the advances of any man other than Judah.

Her ploy worked. Before allowing Judah to have his way with her, she demanded payment. Judah promised a young goat. She said that would be enough, but that she needed some sort of guarantee that he would send the kid. She asked for, and received, what would be conclusive evidence that Judah was the father of any children that would be born as a result of their copulation. She asked for:

- his seal, which was used in transactions to guarantee the identity of the one making the transaction,
- the cord, on which the seal was suspended
- his staff, which usually had a distinctive carving on the top.

Judah gave her these things and they had sexual relations. She did become pregnant.

Verses 20-23

After this encounter, she donned her widow's garments and went away. Judah sent his friend Hirah with the promised kid, with instructions to recover the seal, the cord, and the staff. Hirah could not find Tamar. After many inquiries, Hirah returned to Judah with the message that the prostitute could not be found. Judah replied, *Let her¹ keep them, otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her.*

Verses 24-26

Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry." Then Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!"

²⁵ *It was while she was being brought out that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "I am with child by the man to whom these things belong." And she said, "Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?"*

²⁶ *And Judah recognized them, and said, "She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not have relations with her again.*

As the head of the family, Judah was responsible for all that transpired in the family. Even though Tamar was living with her father, she still came under the jurisdiction of her father-in-law. The usual penalty for adultery, in the Mosaic Law, was stoning, but a priest's daughter who was guilty of harlotry was to be burned.²⁰⁸ Even though this event happened centuries before the Mosaic Law was instituted, it is possible that, in that culture, stoning already was the penalty for adultery/harlotry.

Tamar was ready for this outcome. She seems to believe that even though Judah has been somewhat of a knave, he will give her fair play. Judah is presented with evidence that he cannot

²⁰⁸ Deuteronomy 22:20-24 compared with Leviticus 21:9; John 8:3ff

deny. Even though he recognized Tamar's guilt, he realized that his was greater and made a manly confession, *She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah.*

Verses 27-30

And it came about at the time she was giving birth, that behold, there were twins in her womb.

²⁸ *Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first."*

²⁹ *But it came about as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out. Then she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez.*

³⁰ *And afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah.*

Perez means, forging through. No one knows for certain the definition of, *Zerah*.

The information contained in these verses would be of interest to the tribe that descended from Judah and Tamar. Furthermore, Tamar and her son Perez are ancestors of David and, thus, in the Messianic line (Matthew 1:3).

Chapter 39: Joseph's Imprisonment

The events described in this chapter prepared Joseph for the future role that Yahweh had for him. In Potiphar's household, he became familiar with Egyptian life and the elements of successful business administration. In the humiliation of prison, he was seasoned so that he later could fulfill the role of Egyptian prime minister, without being danger of falling into conceit. Joseph, unrefined, would not have been suited for the role that Yahweh had designed for him. Furthermore, he learned to trust Yahweh in a way that would have been foreign to him prior to his time in prison.

Verses 1-6a

As already noted, Joseph was sold to Potiphar. The Hebrew of verse 1, states that Potiphar was a *eunuch*. This seems strange since Potiphar had a wife. Most English versions, using the dynamic principle of translation, render the term, *officer*. This seems to be a legitimate rendering, if one is not committed to strict formal equivalency. Leupold speculates, "eunuch (*saris*) very likely lost its original meaning and came to signify prominent court officials."²⁰⁹

Yahweh blessed everything that Joseph did, and so Potiphar increased Joseph's responsibilities until he finally was Potiphar's personal assistant and was in full charge of everything in Potiphar's household. Potiphar left everything in Joseph's hands to the point that the only thing that Potiphar decided was what he would eat.

Verses 6b-15

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.⁷ And it came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."⁸ But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge.⁹ "There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?"

¹⁰ *And it came about as she spoke to Joseph day after day, that he did not listen to her to lie beside her, or be with her.¹¹ Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work,*

²⁰⁹ Leupold, pages 994-995

*and none of the men of the household was there inside.*¹² *And she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!"*

*And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.*¹³ *When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and had fled outside,*¹⁴ *she called to the men of her household, and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed.*¹⁵ *"And it came about when he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled, and went outside."*

It seems that Potiphar's wife had not noticed Joseph until he began to rise in prominence. The Hebrew states, *she lifted up her eyes to Joseph*, meaning, she began to notice him. Shamelessly, she proposed that he lie with her (a Hebrew euphemism for intercourse). The term rendered, *lie with me (shikhbah*²¹⁰) is a very strong imperative.²¹¹ Leupold states, *Keil and others have pointed out that Egyptian women were noted for their lascivious and unfaithful ways.*²¹²

Joseph's refusal includes three statements that he hoped would cause the woman to honor his refusal. It was not just a rejection of her charms.

- The unlimited confidence that Potiphar has bestowed on Joseph. Joseph is the greatest person in the house.
- The only thing that has been withheld from Joseph is the wife
- Such an act would be a great evil and a sin against the God who had prospered him.

The shameless hussy was not in the least impressed by any of these considerations.

Joseph took care to not even *be with her*. Yet, in spite of his efforts to avoid the woman, he could not avoid his responsibilities and so, on a given day, when only she was in the house, she attacked Joseph, grabbing his garment and ordering him to lie with her. Joseph, realizing that immediate and drastic action was his only way out, fled and let her have the garment.

When others arrived in the home, her spurned love drove her to falsely accuse Joseph of attempted rape, and she presented the robe as evidence.

Verses 16-20

When Potiphar came home, the wife told her husband the same lie that she had told the men of the house, falsely accusing Joseph. Potiphar, in anger cast Joseph into a prison that was reserved for the king's prisoners. Potiphar, even though angry, probably was not fully convinced of his wife's charges against Joseph. Had he been fully convinced, he probably would have had him killed, not imprisoned.

Verses 21-23

Even though Joseph must have felt terrible, Yahweh was using these events to achieve Divine ends. Yahweh was with Joseph in a special way and soon he had the trust of the overseer of the prison. In time, the overseer gave Joseph the same responsibility that he had been given in Potiphar's household. Joseph became responsible for all of the prisoners, as well as every detail involved in running the prison.

²¹⁰ שִׁכְבָּה

²¹¹²¹¹ Gesenius, 48, i

²¹² Leupold, page 997

Chapter 40: Joseph's Interpretation of Prisoners' Dreams

Verses 1-8

Two important prisoners were under Joseph's care and oversight: Pharaoh's chief butler (which would have been his cupbearer) and Pharaoh's chief baker. These two important people had offended Pharaoh. Evidently, the offense was justified, because the Hebrew indicates that they sinned (*hate 'u*).²¹³

One night, both the butler and the baker had very striking dreams. After awakening, neither of them could forget their dreams. Joseph noticed that both of them seemed to be gloomy and when he inquired as to why they had such an appearance, both of them told him that they had experienced an unforgettable dream and that neither of them had any means of obtaining an interpreter. Joseph responded to them, *Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, please.*"

Joseph was aware of the fact that Yahweh always had been with him and had given him favor. He must have surmised that Yahweh was behind these dreams and that he would grant Joseph the favor of giving the interpretations.

Verses 9-11

So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream, behold, there was a vine in front of me;¹⁰ and on the vine were three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out, and its clusters produced ripe grapes.¹¹ "Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

Verses 12-15

Joseph immediately was able to interpret the dream. The three branches stood for three days – in three days, the butler would be restored to his position and once again, would hand Pharaoh his cup, as had been done in the past.

Joseph then spoke of the future. He requested of the butler that when he, the butler, remembered his time in prison and the manner in which Joseph cared for him – and when Joseph interpreted the dream – that the butler speak to Pharaoh about him. Joseph declared that he was stolen from the land of the Hebrews and then, in Egypt, he was imprisoned on false charges.

Verses 16-19

When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, "I also saw in my dream, and behold, there were three baskets of white bread on my head;¹⁷ and in the top basket there were some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

¹⁸ *Then Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days;¹⁹ within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh off you."*

Once again, Joseph immediately was able to interpret the dream. In this case, the meaning of the dream was harsh. In three days the baker was to be decapitated, then his body would be hung on a tree where the birds would devour his flesh.

²¹³ אָטוּן

No doubt, Jacob broke the news to the baker as kindly as he could. Given the examples of Joseph's temperament, his voice would have been filled with sympathy.

Verses 20-23

Three days later, the Pharaoh had a birthday, and during the party, both the butler and the baker were brought from prison. The butler was restored to his former role, but the baker was executed.

Chapter 41: Pharaoh's Dreams and Joseph's Exaltation

Verses 1-8

Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. ² And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. ³ Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. ⁴ And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke.

⁵ And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. ⁶ Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. ⁷ And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

⁸ Now it came about in the morning that his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

Two dramatic dreams in one night! The dreams were so real and so disturbing that he sought someone who could interpret them. None of the Egyptian magicians could do so.

Verses 9-13

The butler, seeing his master under such consternation, suddenly remembered Joseph. He scolded himself for being so involved in his own life, that he had forgotten to speak to the Pharaoh about Joseph. The butler told Pharaoh about the dreams that he and the baker had experienced and how Joseph had interpreted them, and that everything took place, exactly as Joseph had interpreted.

Verses 14-16

Pharaoh immediately sent for Joseph. Before he appeared before Pharaoh, Joseph allowed himself to be shaved, cleaned up, and given new garments. When he did appear before the monarch, Pharaoh informed him that he had learned that he could interpret dreams. Joseph's reply to Pharaoh was similar to what he had said two years before, to the butler and the baker, *It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.*

Verses 17-24

Pharaoh recited the content of the two dreams. He closed his recitation by saying, *there is not a man who can enlighten me.*

Verses 25-32

Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

²⁶ "The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same. ²⁷ "And the seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

²⁸ *"It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do.²⁹ Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt;³⁰ and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will ravage the land.³¹ So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe.*

³² *"Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.*

No doubt Joseph offered a silent prayer to the God to whom he had ascribed all of the ability to produce dreams and to interpret them.

Joseph emphasized that God had chosen to reveal the future to Pharaoh and with that revelation a knowledge of what to do. The fact that the dream was repeated twice was to emphasize that God is going to do this and that there is no question that it is going to happen.

Verses 33-36

The Spirit of God not only gave the interpretation of the dreams, but He enabled Joseph to present a comprehensive plan to meet this unusual emergency.

"And now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

³⁴ *"Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance.*

³⁵ *"Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it.*

³⁶ *"And let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish during the famine."*

The instructions are very specific:

- Appoint a chief administrator who discerning and wise
- Appoint overseers over portions of the land
- These overseers were to collect one-fifth of the produce of the seven years of abundance²¹⁴
- This stored grain is to be under Pharaoh's authority and is to be guarded so that no one can steal it or misappropriate it.

Pharaoh and the other officials who were around him were impressed with the plan. Moreover, Pharaoh stated, *Can we find a man like this, ³in whom is a divine spirit?"*

Pharaoh then stated that since God obviously directed Joseph, that he would be the one to be the chief administrator. He put Joseph over everyone and everything in Egypt, even those of Pharaoh's household were to be obedient to Joseph. Pharaoh made Joseph a dictator. The only thing that Pharaoh reserved for himself was the throne of Egypt.

As a sign of Joseph's authority, Pharaoh removed his signet ring and put it on Joseph's finger, then he clad Joseph in linen robes and put a gold chain around his neck. In a great inaugural parade, Pharaoh rode in a chariot at the head of the parade and Joseph followed him in a second chariot. The spectators cried out in praise of Joseph and bowed down before him.

²¹⁴ It is not clear whether this was a tax or if the one-fifth were purchased by the government, during the period of great supply, when the prices would have been low.

Next Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name, *Zaphenath-paneah*. The name may mean, *abundance of life*. The consonants from which the name is constructed usually are understood to mean, *God speaks and he lives*.²¹⁵

Pharaoh's final act was to give Joseph a wife – Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, a priest in the city of On. *On*, was the common name for *Heliopolis* (Ἡλιούπολις) *City of the Sun*. The city was well known for its temple of the sun (*Ra*), which was administered by a very learned priesthood.²¹⁶ The priests of On and their institutions were regarded as superior to the other priests' colleges of Egypt.²¹⁷ Joseph's marriage to Asenath made him a part of the priestly caste. With an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife, Joseph would have been able to overcome some of the prejudice that proud Egyptians may have had against being ruled by a Hebrew.

After being installed with a new name and an Egyptian wife from a prominent priestly family, the thirty-year-old Joseph undertook an initial tour of inspection of Egypt. Firsthand information was needed for him to fulfill the enormous responsibility that had been laid on his shoulders.

During the seven years of plenty, Yahweh blessed Egypt with a bumper crop. Under Joseph's supervision grain was stored up in preparation for the years of famine. Grain from surrounding fields was stored in each city. The amount of grain stored became so great that it became impossible to tally the inventory.

Verses 50-52

Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore to him. ⁵¹ *And Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household."* ⁵² *And he named the second Ephraim, "For," he said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."*

The record of the birth of Joseph's sons is given because these sons became the fathers of future tribes. Also, the record makes clear that Joseph, the man of faith, viewed these sons as tokens of Divine favor. The name of the mother is important because it displays the fact that in an age of terrible marital irregularities, Joseph remained faithful to the principle of monogamous marriage.

Verses 53-57

After the seven years of plenty, as Joseph had predicted, the years of famine began. The famine not only was experienced in Egypt, but in the surrounding regions as well. When the Egyptians ran out of food, and cried out to Pharaoh, he told them to go to Joseph and do everything that he tells you to do. Joseph ordered the doors of the granaries to be opened and for his supervisors to sell grain to the Egyptians. In time, because the famine was so widespread, people from surrounding nations also came to Egypt to buy grain.

Chapter 42: Joseph's Brothers' First Journey to Egypt

Verses 1-4

Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?" ² *And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there*

²¹⁵ Brown, Driver, Briggs; Eduard Koenig

²¹⁶ Ra was considered to be the creator of all other gods, even having created himself. In time, during the reign of Amenhotep IV, monotheism flourished in Egypt – Ra being the only true God.

²¹⁷ Keil & Delitzsch, page 352

*and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die."*³ Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt.

⁴ *But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "I am afraid that harm may befall him."*

The famine in Canaan had become so severe that something had to be done. Jacob's sons looked at one another with perplexity, each wondering if one of the others had some idea about what could be done. Word had been spread abroad that there was grain in Egypt, but there seems to have been hesitancy on the part of the sons to go to Egypt. Jacob, being a man of decision, who had held firmly his role as head of the household, commanded his sons to go to Egypt and buy grain.

Ten of the sons head off to Egypt. Jacob does not let the youngest son, Benjamin, make the trip. Perhaps his memory of the loss of Joseph was behind his statement, *I am afraid that harm may befall him.*

Verses 5-6

The brothers d in Egypt and when they approached a granary to purchase grain, they encountered the Egyptian who was the head of the entire operation. Unknown to them, the man is their brother Joseph. This, of course, was in the providence of God, because Joseph would not have been present at every granary. When they came into the presence of the powerful Egyptian authority, they bowed low, with their faces touching the ground.

Verses 7-9

When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, "Where have you come from?"

And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."

⁸ *But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him.* ⁹ *And Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and said to them, "You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land."*

No doubt many times Joseph had visualized a scene similar to this, thinking, "What would it be like when and if I see my brothers again – those who sold me into slavery?" Even though it had been more than twenty years since he had seen them, they were easy to recognize. Jacob recalled the dreams about the sheaves and the moon and stars – indeed, they were bowing before him as their sheaves had bowed before his sheaves in the dreams that got him into trouble.

Egyptians tended to view all foreigners with suspicion. Those who entered from the northeastern boundary were regarded as potential enemies. The Egyptians and other Asians frequently clashed with one another. Jacob concealed his identity by treating them as any foreigners coming from that region would have been viewed.

Verses 10-13

The brothers declared that they were honest men who had come for only one reason, to buy food. In effort to further identify themselves, they said that they were the sons of one father and that their father had twelve sons: the youngest son had remained with their father and the other missing son, *is no more.*

Verses 14-17

Joseph continued the game that he was playing with them. He then repeated the accusation that they were spies and declared that he was going to put them to the test. He told them that he was going to imprison all of them, but that one of them would be sent back to their father to bring the

youngest brother to Egypt. If a younger son were not brought back, he said that he would know that they were spies. They were in a spot. They had come to Egypt to buy grain but now they were being imprisoned. After three days, he approached them with a different option.

Verses 18-20

Now Joseph said to them on the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God:

¹⁹ *if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for the rest of you, go, carry grain for the famine of your households,*

²⁰ *and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die."*

And they did so.

Joseph had needed time to think through what he was going to do. His conscience did not allow him to follow the original plan. Of significance is his statement to them, *for I fear God*. No doubt they wondered how this powerful Egyptian came to be a Godfearing man.

Verses 21-24

The brothers began to recall how they had treated Joseph. They recalled how he had pled with them to take him out of the cistern and how he had pled with them to not sell him into slavery, but they had refused to listen. They began to realize that God was causing them this problem because of the way that they had treated their brother. Reuben then reminded them that he had tried to stop what they did to Joseph but that they would not listen. He further stated that satisfaction for Joseph's blood was being required of them. Obviously, God was stirring these thoughts, else how would they have related their present predicament to what they had done a quarter of a century earlier. Perhaps their consciences had been troubling them all of these intervening years.

Joseph, as a means of concealing his identity, had spoken Egyptian when speaking to his brothers. He had an interpreter translate his words into Hebrew and then translate the Hebrew in Egyptian. So, the brothers did not know that he could understand what they were saying to one another, but he did understand them. As he listened to their words, spoken between them, he was overcome with emotion and for a few moments had to leave the room so that they would not see his tears.

The brothers agreed that Simeon would remain in Egypt while they returned to their father. Simeon was one of the cruelest of the sons.²¹⁸ To make the situation more impressive, Joseph had Simeon bound while they watched.

Verses 25-28

Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them.²⁶ So they loaded their donkeys with their grain, and departed from there.²⁷ And as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack.²⁸ Then he said to his brothers, "My money has been returned, and behold, it is even in my sack." And their hearts sank, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

Joseph, out of compassion, did what he longed to do for his family. He gave them ample stores of grain, restored the money that they had paid for the grain, and furnished provisions for the journey. He was giving them a surprise gift.

²¹⁸ Genesis 34:25; 49:5-7

Only too glad to get away, the sons loaded their donkeys and headed out. After they had traveled some distance, they stopped at caravansary, which was an empty shelter built along the roadside to provide a resting area for caravans.

When one of the brothers opened his sack to get grain for his donkey, to his surprise, his portion of the money was lying on top of the grain. The brothers didn't know how to interpret this. It made no sense. Whatever was happening, they feared that in some way God was playing a trick on them, to punish them for what they had done to Joseph, years before.

Verses 29-35

When they arrived home, they told Jacob about how harshly the Egyptian had treated them, accusing them of being spies. They repeated to Jacob the defense that they had offered to the Egyptian, explaining who they were and their family's circumstances. Then they told him the most difficult part of their experience – having to leave one brother behind, bound in Egypt, and being told that they must bring their youngest brother to the Egyptian or else death was in the offing.

After giving Jacob the report, they emptied their sacks, and, behold, all of them found money in their sacks. Now, not only the sons, but Jacob also became afraid of what this might mean.

Verses 36-38

And their father Jacob said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me."

³⁷ *Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you."*

³⁸ *But Jacob said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow."*

Jacob's words indicate that for years he had suspected foul play in the disappearance of Joseph. In his moment of bewilderment, he expressed his suspicion that they had caused the disappearance of Joseph. The sons must have winced at Jacob's words, wondering how much the old man had guessed about the disappearance of Joseph.

Poor Jacob – all he had done was send his sons to Egypt to buy some grain. Indeed, they had returned with grain, but the presence of the money – what did that mean! Simeon was in Egypt, bound and in prison, and what the Egyptian was requiring of them would put Benjamin's life at stake. He could lose the only other son who was born to his beloved Rachel.

Reuben, the eldest son, and the one next to his father most responsible for what happened in the family, made a somewhat extreme declaration. In essence saying, "If Benjamin is lost, which means you will have lost two sons, then you may execute my two sons." He wanted to assure Jacob that he, Reuben, would not let any mishap befall Benjamin.

Sheol later was used to describe the abode of the wicked deceased. At the time that Genesis was written, it was vaguely used to describe the *afterlife*, or the *grave*. Jacob declared that should Benjamin die, he would be steeped in great grief and it would be under that heavy load that he would die.

Chapter 43: The Brothers' Second Journey to Egypt

Verses 1-10

When all of the grain that the brothers had brought from Egypt had been consumed, Jacob told his sons to go buy a bit of grain, once again. Judah emphasized that the Egyptian had been very strict with them and had told them that they could not appear before him again except they had Benjamin with them.

Jacob then acted upset with them because they had told the Egyptian that they had a younger brother. The sons all tried to explain to Jacob that the Egyptian had grilled them and made them tell all about their family – their father, their younger brother, and the fact that one brother was no more.

Judah then took the lead and said that if we don't go, everyone, including Jacob and all of their families would die of starvation. Furthermore, Judah put himself forth as a bond, telling Jacob that if he let him take Benjamin with them, and Benjamin did not return, that he, Judah, would be held guilty before Jacob, forever.

Furthermore, Judah said that if they had not procrastinated so long, they already would have made two more trips to Egypt.

Verses 11-14

Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

¹² *"And take double the money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake.*

¹³ *"Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man; ¹⁴ and may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, that he may release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."*

Judah had summarized the situation very clearly. Jacob faced the reality of the situation and what must be done. Jacob had sought to placate Esau's vengeful wrath with a gift (32:13ff), now he ordered a gift prepared for *the man*. At best, the gift must have been meagre: a little balm, a little honey, etc. The gifts were items that were not produced in Egypt, but were items produced in Canaan. Of special interest is the honey. Honey from bees is produced in abundance in Egypt, but in Hebron, to this day, honey is made from grapes. Fresh grape juice is boiled down to the consistency of syrup. Delitzsch, writing in the late 19th Century stated that in his day, 300 camels' burden of this honey was exported from Hebron to Egypt, each year.²¹⁹

Among the things to be taken was the money that had been found in their sacks. This implies that it had been set aside. Still unable to figure out why the money was in the sacks, Jacob noted that putting the money into the sacks might have been a mistake made by the Egyptians who assembled the sacks of grain.

Jacob then prayed to God Almighty, (*el' Shaddai*) the covenant God of Abraham (17:1), asking that all of the sons would be able to return to him. His grief was beyond expression.

²¹⁹ Leupold, page 1065; Keil & Delitzsch, page 360

Verses 15-22

The sons took everything with them, as Jacob had instructed, including their brother Benjamin. When they arrived in Egypt and stood before Joseph, and Joseph saw his younger brother Benjamin, he told his chief steward to bring the men to his house, and prepare a feast for them.

When the brothers were escorted to Joseph's house, they became afraid, thinking that some dire fate awaited them. They were afraid that because of the money that had been in their sacks when they left Egypt, on their first trip, that this Egyptian lord might force them into slavery.

They spoke to Joseph's chief steward and explained what had happened on the first trip and that they had brought back all of the money, as well as other money that they brought with them to buy more food.

The steward's reply must have startled them.

Verses 23-25

And he said, "Be at ease, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money."

Then he brought Simeon out to them.

²⁴ *Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder.*

²⁵ *So they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there.*

In the Hebrew text, the phrase, *be at ease*, literally, is *peace be with you*, the traditional Hebrew greeting.²²⁰ Perhaps the steward had learned that gracious greeting from his Hebrew master.

They were afraid that the money which they had brought and had been given to the steward had been confiscated, but the steward assured them that he still had their money. Then, to their joy, their brother Simeon was brought to them. Wondering what was ahead, they prepared for a meal with the Egyptian.

Verses 26-31

When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him.²⁷ Then he asked them about their welfare, and said, "Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?"²⁸ And they said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." And they bowed down in homage.

²⁹ *As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "May God be gracious to you, my son."*

³⁰ *And Joseph hurried out for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought a place to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there.³¹ Then he washed his face, and came out; and he controlled himself and said, "Serve the meal."*

Joseph, being the busy administrator, was not able to come to the house until noon. The money and gifts that they had brought with them were presented to Joseph, but he had to control himself, so he did not make much of the gifts. He inquired about Jacob and after they told Joseph that Jacob was still alive, they bowed down before Joseph. Once again, the dream about

²²⁰ שְׁלוֹם לָכֶם *shalom lakem*

their sheaves bowing before his was fulfilled. Upon seeing Benjamin, Joseph was overcome and had to leave the room to weep. When he was once again in control of himself, he joined his brothers and prepared to share the meal with them.

Verses 32-34

So they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians, who ate with him, by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the Egyptians.

³³ *Now they were seated before him, the first-born according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment.*

³⁴ *And he took portions to them from his own table; but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they feasted and drank freely with him.*

The Egyptian exclusiveness determined the protocol to be followed at the meal. It would have been unwise for Joseph to flagrantly disregard Egyptian customs.

- Being married to the daughter of a priest, Joseph was seen as belonging to the priestly cast – thus, he was served alone.
- His brothers, being Hebrews, were served separately
- His Egyptian guests then were served separately

Even though Jacob's brothers sat apart from him, he had them seated in front of him, where he could feast his eyes on them.

Special honor was shown to Benjamin. Spartan kings always received a double portion, Cretan archons a quadruple portion. Among the Egyptians, five was a number indicating special distinction. This action on Joseph's part could have been a test of the brothers – the preference that Joseph had received from his father had caused their resentment. Would preference shown to Benjamin cause such resentment? It did not – they met the test successfully.

Chapter 44: Joseph's Brothers Tested

Verses 1-3

Joseph, once again, prepared a test for his brothers.

Then he commanded his house steward, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack. ² "And put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph had told him.

³ *As soon as it was light, the men were sent away, they with their donkeys.*

Joseph's personal cup was placed in the youngest man's sack, so that it would appear that he had stolen it. Joseph was testing his brothers to see if they would abandon Benjamin to his fate – whatever that might turn out to be.

Verses 4-14

After the brothers had been gone a short while, Joseph told his chief steward to pursue the brothers and when he had overtaken them to say to them, *Why have you repaid evil for good? Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and which he indeed uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this.*

The steward did as he was told. The brothers protested.

...they said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing.

⁸ "Behold, the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?⁹ "With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

¹⁰ So he said, "Now let it also be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and the rest of you shall be innocent."

¹¹ Then they hurried, each man lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. ¹² And he searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

¹³ Then they tore their clothes, and when each man loaded his donkey, they returned to the city. ¹⁴ When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him.

The brothers would have been certain that they were exonerated when all of the sacks had been emptied except that of the youngest. They were overwhelmingly astonished when Benjamin's sack was opened and the cup was found.

The brothers passed the test. They did not attack Benjamin, neither did it occur them that some sort of Egyptian deception has taken place. They did not abandon Benjamin, even though all of the evidence pointed to his probably having stolen the cup. They rend their clothes in anguish, reload their donkeys and return to Joseph's house to face their fate together.

Verses 14-17

Joseph played the part of the offended Egyptian official. When the brothers arrived at his house, he was ready to confront them. They fell before him. He said to them, *What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed practice divination?*

Judah, as he had done with Jacob, took the situation in hand and replied, *What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found.*

Joseph responded that he was not a man who would require innocent people to become his slaves, but that he would require that of the one who had stolen from him. He told them to go in peace to their father, but that he would keep Benjamin as his slave.

Verses 18-34

Judah approached Joseph and asked him to listen, calmly, to what he had to say. He acknowledged that Joseph was as powerful as Pharaoh and could do anything that he chose to do. He reminded Joseph of how he had inquired concerning their father and their family on their first visit to Egypt and that they had replied,

*We have an old father and a little child of his old age. Now his brother is dead, so he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.'*²¹ *"Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.'*²² *"But we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.'*²³ *"You said to your servants, however, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.'*²⁴ *"Thus it came about when we went up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.*

Judah then told Joseph that the famine had become so severe that their father urged them to return to Egypt to buy just a little grain, but that the sons reminded Jacob that they could not return without Benjamin. Judah told Joseph of the heart-rending reply of Jacob, that his dear

wife, Rachel had borne him two sons and one, in all probability, had been slain by a wild beast. He said that he could not bear the thought of losing the other son of Rachel, his youngest son, Benjamin, which might happen if he accompanied them to Egypt.

Judah concluded by saying,

Now, therefore, when I come to your servant, my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life,³¹ it will come about when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die.

Thus your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant, our father, down to Sheol in sorrow .³² "For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then let me bear the blame before my father forever.'

³³ "Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.³⁴ "For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest I see the evil that would overtake my father?"

Obviously, Judah and the other brothers no longer viewed their father as they had viewed him when they sold Joseph into slavery. Through the years, their experiences, and all that had transpired, they had come to love their father. Judah honorably asked to take the place of Benjamin, becoming the slave of the Egyptian lord, in fulfillment of the promise that he had made to his father that he would be a bond guaranteeing the safety of Benjamin.

Chapter 45: Joseph Reveals His Identity and Summons the Family to Egypt

Verses 1-4

These verses record one of the most emotional scenes in Scripture. Even though Joseph had all of the Egyptians leave the room, his loud weeping was such that it could be heard even outside of the building. We can only imagine the confusion that must have filled the minds of the brothers.

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, "Have everyone go out from me."

So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it.

³ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?"

But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

Verses 5-8

Joseph urged the brothers to not experience the double reaction of grief over what they had done and also anger with themselves. He assured them that God had used what they had done in order to preserve the Messianic family. The immediate evidence of this is that God had appointed Joseph, *a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.*

Verses 9-15

To further put their minds at rest, Joseph disclosed, in detail, his plans for the future. The resourceful Joseph, who has been quick at formulating plans – usually with Divine guidance – had everything arranged in his mind. Thus, he told his brothers to go to their father without delay and to reveal Joseph's identity to the father, and then to make no delay in coming to Egypt.

Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay."¹⁰ And you shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have.

¹¹ *There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, lest you and your household and all that you have be impoverished.*

¹² *And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth which is speaking to you.* ¹³ *Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here.*

After this recitation, Joseph fell upon Benjamin's neck and wept profusely – Benjamin also wept as they embraced. Joseph kissed his brothers and all them spent time in discussing all that that happened through the years

Verses 16-20

When Pharaoh heard about the event, he and his servants were quite pleased. Pharaoh urged Joseph's brothers to hurry back go their father and to bring him and all of Jacob's household to Egypt. He said that they would be given the good things of the land of Egypt. They were not to bother with bringing such things as utensils because all of these, and more, would be given to them in Egypt. They were told to take wagons with them, as a means of conveying their families back to Egypt.

Verses 21-25

Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. ²² *To each of them he gave changes of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments.*

²³ *And to his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and sustenance for his father on the journey.*

²⁴ *So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the journey."* ²⁵ *Then they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob.*

In compliance with Pharaoh's instructions, the brothers are sent back to Canaan with generous provisions. Benjamin, once again, is honored as Joseph's full brother.

Knowing human nature, Joseph realized that along the way they may begin accusing one another in the plot that resulted in his being enslaved. Perhaps each one would try to put the guilt on others and to make himself less guilty. Such activity would result in anger and Joseph said, *don't do that.*

Verses 26-28

The first thing that they did when they arrived home with all of the goods that had been given to them was to tell their father that Joseph was still alive. At first Jacob could not believe their report, then, when he came to believe it, he asked to be taken quickly to Egypt to see his son.

Chapter 46: The Emigration to Egypt

Verses 1-4

So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ² *And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."* ³ *And He said, "I am God, (El) the God (Elohim) of your father; do not*

be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. ⁴ "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."

The road from Hebron to Egypt runs directly through Beersheba, where Isaac had offered sacrifices to God (26:25). The name, *Yahweh Elohim*, is the name by which God had manifested himself to Jacob during his first true encounter with the Divine (28:13).

Verses 5-27

The entire clan is transported to Egypt. The text records the names of the direct descendants who traveled to Egypt.

LEAH'S SONS

Reuben	Simeon	Levi	Judah	Issachar	Zebulon
Hanoch	Jemuel	Gershon	Er	Tola	Sered
Pallu	Obed	Kohath	Onan	Puva	Elon
Hezron	Jachin	Merari	Shelah	Shimron	
Carmi	Zohar		Perez		
	Shaul		Zerah		
				Hezron	
				Hamul	

ZILPAH'S SONS

Gad	Asher
Ziphion	Imnah
Haggi	Ishvah
Shuni	Ishvi
Ezbon	Heber
Eri	Beriah
Arodi	Malchiel
Areli	Serah (sister)

RACHEL'S SONS

Joseph	Benjamin
Manasseh	Bela
Ephraim	Becher
	Ashbel
	Gera
	Naaman
	Ehi
	Rosh
	Muppim
	Huppim
	Ard

BILHA'S SONS

Dan
Hushim

Naphtali
Jahzeel
Guni
Jezer
Shillem

The results of these lists:

Leah	33
Zilpah	16
Rachel	14
Bilhah	7

This totals 70 descendants. Making the numbers work out with statements made throughout Scripture concerning the numbers has to take into account certain facts. First, as already noted, Jacob is not figured into the total. Two of the descendants, Er and Onan must be dropped from Leah's descendants because they died in Canaan and thus did not make the trip to Egypt. Dinah must be added to the list. Omitting Jacob and his two sons would result in the number indicated in verse 26, *All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all.* Then, in verse 27, *and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy.*

The seeming contradiction in Acts 7:14 "*And Joseph sent word and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons in all,*" is explained by the fact that Luke quoted the Septuagint. The Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) was the version that was in vogue during the time of Jesus and the apostles. The Septuagint listed five grandsons of Joseph, plus Manasseh's sons, Machir and Gilead; two sons of Ephraim, Soutalaam and Taam. One son of Soutalaam, Edem, also is listed, but he probably was not counted in the total.

Moses seems to emphasize that seventy clans were in existence in these early Israelites. The Greek translators did not have the Hebrew point of view, i.e. that seventy was the perfect number.

Verses 28-30

Joseph sent Judah to guide him and the retinue to Goshen. Joseph then went to Goshen where he met his father, and the two of them embraced one another with tears of gladness.

Verses 31-34

Joseph informed his family that he would tell Pharaoh that the Israelites were shepherds and that if Pharaoh should ask them their profession, they should tell him that for many generations they had been shepherds.

He put forth this information because Egyptians considered shepherds to be an abomination. This view of shepherds was the result of the earlier invasion of the shepherd people, the Hyksos. The Hyksos had invaded and conquered Egypt – for a time, even ruling the nation.

Goshen was perfectly suited for shepherds and it was somewhat isolated from the rest of Egypt. Joseph's desire was to make certain that this was the region of Egypt to which his family would be assigned.

Chapter 47:1-12: The Israelites Settle in Goshen

Joseph presented five of the Israelites to Pharaoh. Pharaoh inquired as to their profession, and, as instructed by Joseph, they responded that they were shepherds. They then asked Pharaoh permission to dwell in Goshen.

Pharaoh graciously responded that Goshen was theirs. He also asked Joseph to find some competent men among the Israelites to take charge of Pharaoh's livestock.

Jacob then brought his father to meet Pharaoh. Pharaoh showed the greatest respect to Jacob. Jacob pronounced a blessing on Pharaoh and after further conversation, Jacob left.

Thus, the Israelites were settled in Goshen and Joseph made certain that each family had sufficient provisions.

Chapter 47:13-27: The Famine Worsens and as a Result, Jacob Increases Pharaoh's Wealth

In contrast to the unusual provisions made for the Israelites, the rest of Egypt, as well as Canaan, experienced the consequences of the relentless famine. When all of the Egyptians' money was used up, they came to Joseph with an appeal – he had been the nation's savior, thus far, and they looked to him for a solution. There is something pathetic about the helpless plea of the Egyptians, who have no money left to purchase grain, and yet were on the verge of starvation. Apparently, none of the Egyptians mistrusted Joseph's motives or even misconstrued them. Joseph told them to bring their livestock and they would be given grain in exchange for their livestock. The Egyptians seemed to have understood that Joseph's course of action was the wisest – they trusted him.

The Egyptians, even though in dire need, had not lost their self-respect. Buying grain in exchange for their livestock was an honorable exchange. Not only that, they were happy to know that under Joseph's supervision, the cattle that he received from them would be fed and cared for.

This exchange provided one year's supply of food for the Egyptians. When the year ended, and the famine continued, once again they came to Joseph asking for help. They said to Joseph that they had nothing left except their bodies and their land. The nature of their plea was not only for food, but for seed to plant so that their land would not be desolate. The people had learned to view these matters as Joseph viewed them – outright donations had no place in the relief program. They offered to sell themselves and their land in order to obtain the needed food and grain. Note that this plan was not put forth by Joseph, but it was from the people themselves.

Joseph accepted the offer and purchased the land from the people – now Pharaoh owned everything. The only land that was not transferred to Pharaoh was the land owned by the priests – an allowance of food was provided regularly for the priests.

Joseph then moved the people into various cities where it was easier to manage the situation. He gave them seed to plant in the surrounding fields. He told them that when they harvested, one fifth of the harvest had to be given to the Pharaoh – the same amount that they were required to give during the seven years of abundance. This was an ordinance that prevailed until the Mosaic age.

The Egyptians understood Joseph's motives, stating, *You have saved our lives*. One thing that puzzles us, but no explanation is given, is the fact that the famine was the result of crop failure.

What had changed so that planting seed at this time would produce a harvest? Evidently, the conditions of weather or other factors had changed.

Chapter 47:28-31: Jacob Prepares for His Burial

After living seventeen years in Egypt, Jacob realized that death was near. He was 147 years old. He called Joseph to him and elicited a vow from him that he would not bury Jacob in Egypt, but would take his body back to Canaan and bury him in the family burial plot. Joseph made the requested vow. In somber reverence, Jacob then bowed down – no doubt in contemplation of the coming end.

Chapter 48: Blessing of Joseph's Sons

Several months had passed, and Jacob continued to live. Even so, he had made the important preparations. In time, a final sickness descended on the aged patriarch.

Verses 1-4

Joseph learned that his father was sick. Realizing that death might be imminent, Joseph took his two sons to see their grandfather. When Jacob was told that Joseph was on his way to see him, Jacob forced himself to sit up in bed.

When Joseph arrived, Jacob recited to him the promise that Yahweh had given to him that his descendants would be huge in number and that Canaan would belong to his descendants as an everlasting possession.

Verses 5-7

Jacob formally adopted Joseph's two sons as his own. The two young men would have been eighteen to twenty years of age. Jacob even stated that Joseph's two sons will be on a par with Jacob's two eldest sons, Reuben and Simeon. Ephraim and Manasseh are not to be viewed as appendages.

Verses 8-16

Jacob's eyesight was failing. He felt the two dim shapes that were before him and asked, *whose are these?* Joseph told Jacob that these two were his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. The two men were brought very close to Jacob, who embraced them and kissed them. Jacob then said that he was blessed in that he had thought that he never would see Joseph again, and now he was able to see Joseph's sons.

Joseph then fell on his knees before his father. Then he brought his sons close to Jacob so that the aged patriarch could pronounce a blessing on his sons.

And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him.¹⁴ But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the first-born.

And he blessed Joseph, and said,

"The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,

The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,

¹⁶The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads;

And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;

And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Verses 17-20

Joseph noticed that his father's right hand was upon Ephraim and he tried to move his father's hand to Manasseh, the eldest son. Jacob told Joseph that he knew what he was doing. He said that both of them would become a great people, but that the younger would be greater than the older and that Ephraim's descendants would be a multitude of people.

Verses 21-22

Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers."²² "And I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

Jacob had a particular word for Joseph – that Egypt is not the land of their destiny. Elohim in His power would bring the Israelites back to the land of their fathers. Then, to his favorite son, Joseph, Jacob bequeathed a double inheritance.

Chapter 49: Jacob Blesses His Own Sons**Verses 1-2**

With what energy he had left, Jacob summoned all of his sons to his bedside. He is prepared to pronounce his patriarchal blessing on each of them. His blessing reflects, not only the character traits that he has seen in them, but also a prophetic element. In some instances, the blessing is almost a curse.

Verses 3-4

In his pronouncement upon Reuben, Jacob noted that Reuben is the first born and the one who was entitled to preeminence, but he would not have that, because of the incestuous act of having sex with Jacob's concubine.

"Reuben, you are my first-born; My might and the beginning of my strength, Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.

⁴ *"Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence,*

Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it-- he went up to my couch.

Verses 5-7

The two brothers, Simeon and Levi had been condemned earlier for their violence and vengeance upon the Schechemites (34:30). No doubt all of his brothers were somewhat shocked over the plain speech used toward Reuben, but now they hear a rebuke that is equally as strong.

"Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence."⁶ "Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly;

Because in their anger they slew men, and in their self-will they lamed oxen."⁷ "Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel.

I will disperse them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Verses 8-12

The blessing that would have been given to Reuben, the eldest, is given to Judah. Jacob recognized in Judah's courage. He is the one who took the lead in difficult situations. In David, all of the tribes of Israel were compelled to admit Judah's superiority.²²¹ Judah's role in the producing the Messianic line is in keeping with Jacob's pronouncement. The colorful language at the end of the pronouncement is a prediction of Judah's prosperity.

²²¹ II Samuel 5:1-3

*"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
Your father's sons shall bow down to you.*

*"Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as
a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?*

*"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until
Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*

*"He ties his foal to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in
wine, and his robes in the blood of grapes.¹² "His eyes are dull from wine, And his teeth white
from milk.*

Verse 13

Little is said concerning Zebulun, other than that the territory that his descendants would occupy would be in northern Canaan, near the seashore.

*"Zebulun shall dwell at the seashore; and he shall be a haven for ships, and his flank shall be
toward Sidon.*

Verse 14-15

Jacob spoke of the past. He described a trait that he had seen in Issachar, but these words also are a prophecy. Issachar is a person with enormous strength. However, there will be a lethargic side to his descendants. They would be willing to become toiling laborers for others as long as a fair measure of ordinary creature comforts would be provided.

*"Issachar is a strong donkey, Lying down between the sheepfolds.¹⁵ "When he saw that a resting
place was good And that the land was pleasant, He bowed his shoulder to bear burdens, And
became a slave at forced labor.*

Verses 16-17

The term, *dan*, carries the idea of *to administer justice*. There is no hint as to why this trait was ascribed to Dan. The next part of the word took on the nature of a wish, i.e., that all who wickedly oppose Dan would find him as deadly as a serpent.

*"Dan shall judge his people, As one of the tribes of Israel.¹⁷ "Dan shall be a serpent in the way,
A horned snake in the path, That bites the horse's heels, So that his rider falls backward.*

Verse 18

"For Thy salvation I wait, Yahweh. Jacob interrupted his blessings to declare his trust in Yahweh. Judah is a lion, Issachar a strong-boned ass, and Dan as deadly as a serpent, but it is not from these that salvation comes. Salvation comes only from Yahweh.

Verses 19-21

"As for Gad, raiders shall raid him, But he shall raid at their heels.

²⁰ *"As for Asher, his food shall be rich, And he shall yield royal dainties.*

²¹ *"Naphtali is a doe let loose, He gives beautiful words.*

Though Gad may be pressed hard by his enemies, he will press harder.

Asher will be able to provide what would grace any king's table.

Naphtali's descendants will be like a liberated deer. They also will be a people who are gifted in lovely speech.

Verses 22-26

Special prayers and blessings were reserved for Joseph. It is difficult to discern whether Judah or Joseph received the greatest blessing. His word described the hardships that Joseph had endured and survived – even conquered. Jacob noted in his word the fact that Yahweh is the one behind all of Joseph’s successes. Then, he closed with a prayer for tender and abundant blessings on Joseph.

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a spring; Its branches run over a wall.

²³ *"The archers bitterly attacked him, And shot at him and harassed him; ²⁴ But his bow remained firm, And his arms were agile, From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), ²⁵ From the God of your father who helps you, And by the Almighty who blesses you With blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.*

²⁶ *"The blessings of your father Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; May they be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.*

Verse 27

The sense of the word given concerning Benjamin, the youngest son, is that he always is successful at despoiling his foes. He is a fierce opponent, like a wolf. Some Benjamites fit this description (Judges 3:15ff; I Samuel 9:1ff).

"Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he devours the prey, And in the evening he divides the spoil."

Verses 28-33

Moses closed this section with a summary of what had just taken place. He then recorded Jacob’s final words, which were followed by his peaceful death.

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him.

Then he charged them and said to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, ³⁰ in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site.

³¹ *"There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah-- ³² the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth."*

³³ *When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.*

Chapter 50:1-14: Jacob’s Burial

Verses 1-6

After Jacob breathed his last breath, Jacob fell upon his father’s body and kissed his face. Joseph then had his father’s body embalmed, which took forty days to complete. The Egyptians themselves declared a seventy day period of mourning for Jacob.

After the days of mourning, Jacob asked permission from Pharaoh to take Jacob’s body back to Canaan, as Joseph had promised to do. Pharaoh told Joseph to go and bury his father, according to the oath that Joseph had given.

Verses 7-14

The funeral cortege that transported Jacob's body to its resting place was something that the inhabitants of Canaan had never seen before. Not only the huge Israelite clan, but also the most significant officials of Egypt accompanied the body.

So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt,⁸ and all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father's household; they left only their little ones and their flocks and their herds in the land of Goshen.

⁹ *There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company*

¹⁰ *When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed seven days mourning for his father.*

¹¹ *Now when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians." Therefore it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan.*

¹² *And thus his sons did for him as he had charged them;¹³ for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite.*

¹⁴ *And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.*

Chapter 50:15-21: Joseph's Brethren Seek and Receive Assurance that Joseph Will Not Seek Revenge on Them for Selling Him into Slavery

Verses 15-17

After the death of Jacob, Joseph's brothers began to be apprehensive concerning Joseph. They were afraid that since their father had died that there would not be anything to restrain Joseph from wrecking vengeance on them for selling him into slavery. They sent a message to him pleading with him to forgive their sin, which they acknowledge clearly was a sin.

When Joseph received the message, he wept.

Verses 18-21

Their sorrow was sincere and their repentance genuine. Not being satisfied with just sending a message to Joseph, they came to him with their plea. Joseph's reply declared that God is not asleep – that He even directs the affairs of men, when their intent is evil. This passage contains one of the most oft quoted sayings of Scripture, slightly modified – *What Satan intended for evil, God intended for good.*

Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants."

¹⁹ *But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?"²⁰ "And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."²¹ "So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

Chapter 50:22-26: Jacob's Final Days and His Death

Verses 22-23

Joseph continued living in Egypt. He saw the birth of grandchildren and even the next generation. He lived to be 110 years old.

Verses 24-26

And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob."

²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here."²⁶ So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

When Joseph knew that the years of his life were coming to a close, he spoke encouraging words of assurance to the Israelites – they will have a Greater One that he, to provide for them. He also spoke words that perpetuated the truth that had been repeated over and over again, since they had been given to Abraham (15:16) – to bring them to the promised land. His statement, which was a request, that they would bring his bones from Egypt to the Promised Land was fulfilled when the Israelites left Egypt (Exodus 13:19).

ADDENDUM A

The Authorship of the Pentateuch

By long tradition and on the basis of internal and external evidence, it is generally agreed by Bible believers that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. It may be pointed out that that this does not mean that he wrote every single word. Written records had been preserved for at least 1500 years before Moses birth, so he probably did incorporate some things (especially in Genesis) as he saw fit. Moses was “trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22) and thus would have been able to understand the cuneiform writings of the ancient Near East as well as the hieroglyphics of Egypt. With this understanding, we present the following evidence, that Moses wrote the Pentateuch.

1. Several sections of the Pentateuch state that they came from the pen of Moses.
 - The account of Amalek’s attack (Exodus 17:14)
 - The contents of the covenant (Exodus 24:4; Exodus 34:27)
 - The report of the journeys (Numbers 33:2)
 - The song of Moses (Deuteronomy 31:22)

These passages indicate considerable literary activity by Moses. Thus, it is not a stretch of the imagination to assume that he is the author of the entire account.

It is rather obvious that some portions were written by someone other than Moses. For example, Numbers 12:3, in a parenthetical statement, declares, (*Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.*) If Moses were that humble, he surely would not have described himself in such glowing terms.

Deuteronomy chapter 34 describes the death of Moses. That chapter must have been written by someone else. Most consider Joshua to have written this closing chapter of Deuteronomy.

2. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, the Mosaic authorship is affirmed.
 - Joshua, who would have known of any fraud, strictly conformed to the precepts of the Pentateuch and frequently mentioned Moses as the author (example: Joshua 1:7).
 - The writer of Judges stated that the Law had been recorded by the “hand of Moses” (Judges 3:4)
 - David exhorted Solomon to conform to the code of life “as it is written in the Law of the Book of Moses” (I Kings 2:3).
 - The Scripture discovered at the time of Josiah, when they were refurbishing the Temple, is called, “a book of the Law of Jehovah given by Moses.” (II Chronicles 34:14)
 - Ezra twice refers to the Book of Moses (Ezra 2:2; 6:18)
 - Nehemiah 8:1-8 describes the public reading of the, *book of the Law of Moses which Jehovah had given to Israel.*
 - Both Daniel (Daniel 9:11, 13) and Malachi (Malachi 4:4) make significant reference to Moses.
 - All in all, fourteen Old Testament books refer to Moses and his connection to the written Law.

3. The New Testament often credits the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

Jesus clearly considered Moses to be the author of the Pentateuch.

Matthew 8:4 *And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."*

Mark 7:10 *"For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death';*

John 5:46-47 *"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"*

When the Jews ascribed the first division of the Old Testament to Moses, Jesus clearly accepted that as being true (Matthew 19:7; Mark 12:19; Luke 20:25; John 9:28)

The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was unquestionably accepted in Jesus' era and Our Lord endorsed that view point (see Mark 10:5; Luke 20:37; John 7:19; Acts 28:23)

4. Moses possessed the qualifications to write the Pentateuch.

- As noted earlier, he had been taught in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:21). He was an educated man.
- He had the necessary information.
- He had the time to write (during the 40 years in the wilderness).
- His exceptional sermons in Deuteronomy demonstrate his literary ability.
- The mention of Egyptian names and reference to Egyptian customs indicate that the author of this material had knowledge not only of Israelite culture, but also Egyptian culture.

5. Ancient authorities consistently ascribed to Moses the authorship of the Pentateuch. For example, the apocryphal book, *Ecclesiasticus*, written c. 250 BC, declares, "He (Jehovah) made him (Moses) to hear his voice and brought him into the dark cloud and gave him commandments before his face, even the law of life and knowledge..."

Second Maccabees, the Talmud, Philo, Josephus, and others, without exception, mention Moses as the author of this literature.

From the first, both the Jewish and the Christian Old Testament canons included the Pentateuch as "The Law of Moses," and gave it respected status.

Critics of Mosaic Authorship

No one questioned the authorship of the Pentateuch until 1521, when Carlstadt of Bodenstein published a work called, *The Canon of Scripture*. It is he who launched the skeptical attitude toward the Bible. Through the succeeding centuries, various ones followed in his footsteps, seeking to explain the origin of Scripture, apart from Divine revelation. Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher, in 1670, wrote what he called, "Tractatus-Theologico-Politicus," in which he impugned the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. It is he who gave birth to the movement which came to be called, "higher criticism."

The first person to propose the "Jehovistic" and "Elohistic" theories was a French medical doctor and sometimes astronomer named Astruc. Because both of these names (Elohim and Jehovah)

are used for God in the Pentateuch, Astruc contended that they were composed by different authors of different documents and that someone, sometime later, combined into a single document. He put forth his ideas in 1753, and thus opened a new era in Bible criticism. He denied the Divine origin of the book of Genesis, contending that it is full of useless repetitions, disorder, and contradictions.

All of those who followed this path, including present-day advocates of this view, have several things in common. They begin their studies with the following religious pre-suppositions:

1. All of them deny the validity of any miraculous action. None of them believe that God, if there is a God, has the power to perform supernatural works.
2. All of them deny the reality of predictive prophecy. Therefore, they have to find some sort of explanation for those Scriptures that predict events that at the time of writing were well into the future, but did come to pass as predicted.
3. All of them deny the reality of revelation. To them, it is completely unscientific to believe that God, if there be a God, would or could reveal Himself to man.

When these critics weave theories that sometimes border on the ridiculous, and seek to present their theories with an air of dignified and scholarly certainty, it must be remembered that these scholars by their pre-suppositions are forced into this sort of explanation.

ADDENDUM B

The Gap Theory of Genesis 1:2

Lee Irons, Ph.D

The gap theory attempts to resolve the apparent conflict between Scripture and modern geology by inserting a gap of unknown time between the first two verses of Genesis 1. The gap theory doesn't just insert a gap of time in order to give room for geological eras; it also theorizes that because of Satan's fall, the original creation became ruined and devastated, which supposedly explains the evidence of mass animal death before the fall as seen in the fossil record. Genesis 1:2 is describing not merely that the earth was formless and void but also that it was in a state of ruin and destruction, an accursed state under God's judgment. The gap theory suggests that verse 1 describes God's original work of creation, verse 2 describes the result of the original creation's destruction, and verse 3 and following describe its restoration or re-creation. For this reason, the theory has also been called the ruin-restoration theory.

Although advocates of the theory claim to have precedent in earlier writers, the view makes its modern appearance in the work of Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers, who proposed it in 1814. His view was popularized by the Plymouth Brethren writer G. H. Pember in his book *Earth's Earliest Ages* in 1876. Pember wrote, "It is thus clear that the second verse of Genesis describes the earth as a ruin; but there is no hint of the time which elapsed between creation and this ruin. Age after age may have rolled away, and it was probably during their course that the strata of the earth's crust were gradually developed" (Kregel edition; p. 32).

Desolation. All of this is read into the Hebrew phrase *tōhû vābōhû* (Gen. 1:2), which many English Bibles render "without form and void" (ESV, RSV, KJV, NKJV). But Pember thinks the first word, *tōhû*, means "ruin" or "desolation," and he translates the verse as a whole: "And the earth *became* desolate and void." He goes on to argue that this happened as a result of Satan's fall from heaven as outlined in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. Then, starting in verse 3, God begins to remake the ruined earth into a habitable place for man. Pember calls the six days of Genesis 1 not the six days of "creation" but the six days of "restoration." Pember argues that this distinction between "creation" and "restoration" is even implied in the different verbs used: in Genesis 1:1, God "created" (*bārā*) the heavens and the earth, but in Genesis 1:3ff, God "made" (*'āšâ*) or refashioned the already existing earth. Having granted geology all the time it needs in verse 2, the six days of "restoration" can now be interpreted as six literal days.

After Pember, the gap theory made its way into the *Scofield Reference Bible* (first published in 1909) and became entrenched as orthodoxy in fundamentalist circles. It was not until the rise of the flood-based, six-day creationism of Henry Morris in the 1960s that the gap theory was dislodged. However, in 1970 the gap theory was revived by Arthur C. Custance and given its best exegetical articulation in his book *Without Form and Void*, although it is not clear how much of an impact his self-published book made.

There are many arguments against the gap or ruin-restoration theory, but I will give three. First, the details of the Hebrew words and grammar in Genesis 1:2 do not support the gap theory. (A) The noun *tōhû* here does not mean "ruin" or "desolation" in the sense of necessarily implying the ruin of an original pristine state. (B) There is little basis for rendering the verb *hāyâ* in Genesis 1:2 "became" (Pember) or "had become" (Custance). (C) Pember's absolute distinction between *bārā* and *'āšâ* is not sustainable on lexical grounds. Both verbs are used in the Old Testament to denote creation in the absolute sense.

Second, because the gap theory wants to take the six days of creation literally, it necessarily places Genesis 1:1–2 outside of the creation week. But the immediate context and subsequent scriptural allusions to Genesis 1 make clear that the initial creation of the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1) marks the starting point of the creation week. This is clear from the context, when we come to the concluding statement: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them” (Gen. 2:1).

Subsequent scriptural allusions to Genesis 1 are just as emphatic, for example, the statement in the Decalogue that “in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (Exod. 20:11; cf. 31:17). Because the gap theory wants to take the six days of “re-creation” as literal days, while making room for long geological eras prior to verse 3, the theory requires that the creation week begin at verse 3 rather than at verse 1. Yet Scripture itself views the first verse of Genesis 1 as narrating the beginning of the creation week.

Third, there is no biblical evidence that God created plants and animals in an original creation, which was then destroyed under God’s judgment prior to Adam’s fall. The gap theory’s appeal to Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 is tenuous at best. To begin with, biblical scholars are not sure that these passages are in fact referring to Satan’s fall. At a surface level, they seem to be about the fall of human kings (the kings of Babylon and Tyre). But even if these passages have a second-order reference to Satan’s fall, does his being cast down from heaven look back to an event in the primeval past or forward to Satan’s defeat by Christ and his ultimate punishment (Rev. 12:9; 20:10)? And is the image of Satan being cast to earth to be taken literally and physically, like the massive meteor that scientists think caused the extinction of the dinosaurs?

Furthermore, there is nothing in those passages about an original creation of plants and animals, or about Satan being cast down to the earth and causing geological catastrophe, mass extinctions, death, chaos, and ruin as indicated in the fossil record. These additional details of the theory have to be manufactured by imagination and speculation. And once manufactured they must then be inserted into the Genesis 1 account. There are too many uncertainties surrounding Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 to warrant linking them with the description of the earth given in Genesis 1:2.

Flawed Exegesis. The gap theory’s fundamental error is that it rests on a flawed hermeneutic. The Scripture itself nowhere teaches the gap theory. The gap theory does not rest on internal exegesis of the text of Genesis 1 interpreted in the light of the subsequent Scriptures that allude to and comment on it. Rather, it rests on postulating, presumably somewhere in Genesis 1:1, the creation of plants and animals in a primeval creation before the re-creation of the plants and animals of days 3, 5, and 6. Then it requires one to take two uncertain passages from Isaiah and Ezekiel and fit them into the white space between the first two verses of Genesis 1 without any clear biblical-theological warrant internal to the logic of Scripture.

The ruin-restoration motif is totally foreign to the Genesis creation account and is forced into that account in a manner that completely disrespects and disrupts the narrative integrity of the creation account. One gets the distinct impression that the motivation for this interpretation is not anything internal to the Genesis creation account itself, but the desire to maintain a literal reading of the six days of creation while satisfying geology’s demand for long ages of time.

Geology versus Gap Theory. Ironically, the gap theory fails to accomplish its own intended goal. To satisfy modern geology, one needs not only long ages but gradual processes of change in the Earth’s crust over those long ages. Geologists look at the Earth’s crust and see evidence of

physical processes that took millions, even billions, of years. Take the Grand Canyon as an example. The various layers that one sees in the walls of the Grand Canyon (e.g., the Kaibab Limestone layer, the Redwall Limestone layer, etc.) were laid down by sedimentary processes that took hundreds of millions of years.

Add to this the fact that in each distinct layer we find correspondingly distinct fossils that, whether viewed as the product of biological evolution or of progressive creation, clearly represent a great passage of time. Then, more recently, the Colorado River had to cut through those sedimentary layers by another geological process called erosion. Erosion is frequently a much “faster” process than sedimentation, and yet Grand Canyon geologists think it still took at least five million years! Geologists would laugh at the suggestion that these sorts of geological formations were produced by a single catastrophic event such as a meteor impact, much less by Satan’s being cast down to Earth.¹

In fact, not only does the gap theory fail to satisfy the requirements of geology, it is internally incoherent. On the one hand, it theorizes a catastrophe of such magnitude that the Earth became “desolate and void,” requiring God to “re-create” the Earth’s atmosphere (day 2), crust, and oceans (day 3). On the other hand, the gap theory claims it is trying to explain the existence of the fossils that we now see. It suggests that the fossils are the result of a mass extinction of all life caused by Satan’s being cast down to Earth. But if the Earth’s atmosphere and crust were completely “re-created” and made new so that God could call it “good,” surely the fossils and any trace of the catastrophe would have been completely wiped away by God’s re-creative activity. But the fossils were not wiped away. The “ruin” part of the ruin-restoration theory may explain where the fossils came from, but the “restoration” part of the theory calls into question their present existence. The theory is self-refuting.

What lessons can be learned with regard to hermeneutics? Clever, seemingly simple solutions such as the gap theory are almost never correct. One must synthesize everything the Bible teaches, not just look at specific verses taken out of context. The solution to the apparent conflict between the Bible and geology is not to fit certain things in the white spaces between verses but to interpret the creation “week” figuratively, since it is characterized by a high degree of literary structuring.²

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Dr. R. Joel Duff (University of Akron) for fact-checking my statements about geology.
2. See my article, “The Framework Interpretation of the Days of Creation,” *Christian Research Journal* 35, 1 (January 2012): 8–9.

Lee Irons, Ph.D., contributed to a book titled *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (ed. David G. Hagopian; Crux Press, 2001). He maintains a website of biblical and theological studies at www.upper-register.com. This article first appeared in the Practical Hermeneutics column of the CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL, volume 37, number 02 (2014).

ADDENDUM C

Non-biblical Accounts of the Flood

The Hebrews, with Abraham as their progenitor, came from the people who inhabited lower Mesopotamia, anciently called, Sumer and Akad. This was the ancestral home of Abraham. The people of this region remembered the Deluge as a great crisis in human history. They preserved the story of the flood through oral tradition as well as inscribing their story on cuneiform tablets. The most remarkable parallels between the Old Testament and the entire body of Mesopotamian cuneiform inscriptions, relating to the flood, are found in the non-Semitic Sumerians, and the later Semitic Babylonians and Assyrians (at least one Sumerian and four Akkadian writings, including the Greek account of Berossus).

Below, we summarize two of these: the Sumerian account and the Babylonian account.

The Sumerian Account

Some of the Sumerian tablets contain the names of Sumerian kings who ruled before the flood (clearly a distorted record of that contained in the Genesis record). The Sumerian King List, after recording the names of eight kings, interrupts the sequence with this statement: “[Then] the flood swept over [the earth] [and] when kingship was lowered [again] from heaven, kingship was [first] in Kish.”¹

The oldest version of the flood in these writings is a Sumerian fragment of a tablet discovered at Nippur, in north central Babylonia. The tablet was created prior to 2000 BC. It is inscribed on both sides with three columns to each side. One column introduces the flood, which, according to the account, made the goddess Ishtar groan for her people. At that time, Ziusudra was king-priest. He is instructed to stand by a wall where he will receive divine communication concerning the impending disaster. He is told that it is the intention of the gods to destroy mankind. In column five, the flood has begun and Ziusudra is riding out the storm in a huge boat. The tablet is broken at this point, but later resumes the narrative describing the storm and how Ziusudra slaughtered oxen, sheep, and made a great sacrificial offering to the Sun-god. When the storm ends and the waters are abated, Ziusudra is given the gift of immortality and taken to a paradise-like home to live forever.

The Babylonian Account

Much more fully developed than the Sumerian account, the Babylonian version of the flood story is a part of the Assyrian-Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh. The copy that we have today came from the library of the Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal (669-626 BC), but it is a transcription of much older originals. The flood tablets were unearthed at Kuyunjik (Ninevah) in 1853, by an archaeologist, Hormuzd Rassam. George Smith was the man who brought them to light, when he was studying and classifying cuneiform finds.

¹ Translation by A. Leo Oppenheim in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ed. by James B. Pritchard (Princeton) 1950, page 265, as cited in Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House) 1954, page 47

This particular oral tradition is closer to the biblical account than any of the others. In the Babylonian rendition, Noah is named, Utnapishtim, i.e. *Day of Life*. In the story, Gilgamesh, the legendary and partly divine king of Urech (the biblical Erech – Genesis 10:10) is searching for the key to eternal life and he ends up talking to Utnapishtim. Utnapishtim explains how he obtained eternal life and in doing so gives a full account of the flood. He explains that after the flood, he is given eternal life by one of the gods.

In Utnapishtim's account, the god of wisdom, Ea, told Utnapishtim about the impending disaster. Ea spoke through the walls of Utnapishtim's home, because the walls were a barrier between him and the voice of deity.

According to the instructions given to him, Utnapishtim constructed a huge boat of six stories. It was to be a cube: 120 cubits in each dimension (160 feet). The exterior was divided into seven parts and the interior into nine parts. It was to be covered inside and out with pitch i.e. bitumen. Oil was taken aboard for food and drink. He took gold, silver, his family, craftsmen, and animals onboard.

When all were onboard, a black cloud arose and the various gods unleashed their fury – rain, lightning, and fierce wind. Ishtar bewails her part in assenting to the destruction of mankind. Then, as the gods view the destruction, all of them mourn. Suddenly, after the sixth day, the storm subsides and Utnapishtim opened a hatch and sunlight fell on his face. Finally, the ship strikes ground on a mountain.

On the seventh day, a dove was sent out. The dove came back because she could not find any place to rest. After a time, he sent out a swallow and it also came back. Then, after a time, he sent out a raven and the raven did not come back. Utnapishtim then departs from the boat and offers sacrifices.

The gods argue about the sacrifices, some of the angry that some humans had sacrificed. The argument goes back and forth until finally, all are agreed that the survival was a good thing and Utnapishtim and his wife are given immortality.

Even though these stories are the written record of oral myth, and in many ways differ from the biblical account, there is a seed of similarity. The most important aspect of these stories is the validation of the flood – it existed in the memory of ancient peoples, who never knew Moses and the Book of Genesis.

ADDENDUM D

The Table of the Nations

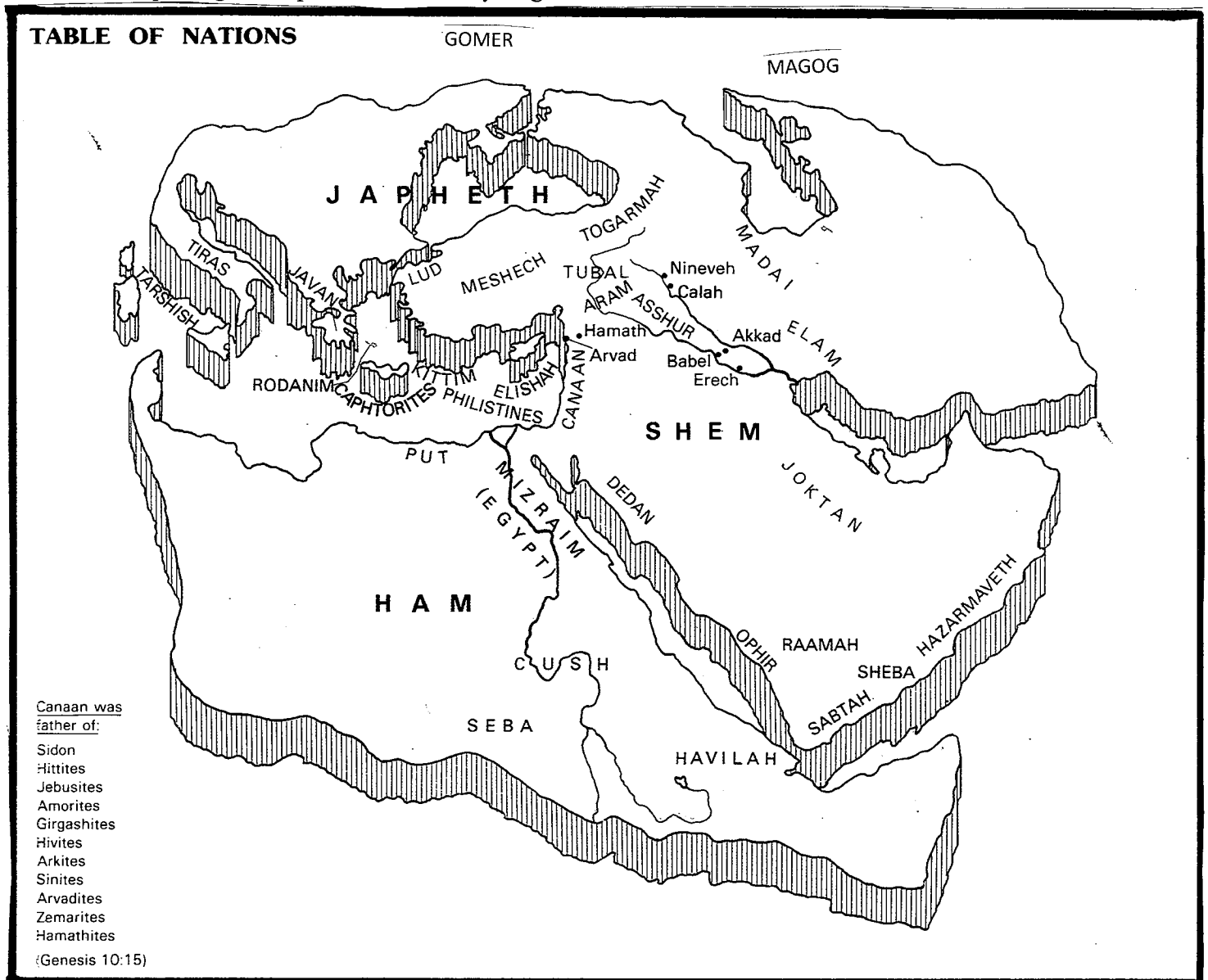
The general distribution of the descendants of Noah's sons, and the nations and tribes that developed from them is rather certain:

The descendants of Japheth settled in what became Europe (the Western nations)

The descendants of Ham settled in Africa

The descendants of Shem settled in the east

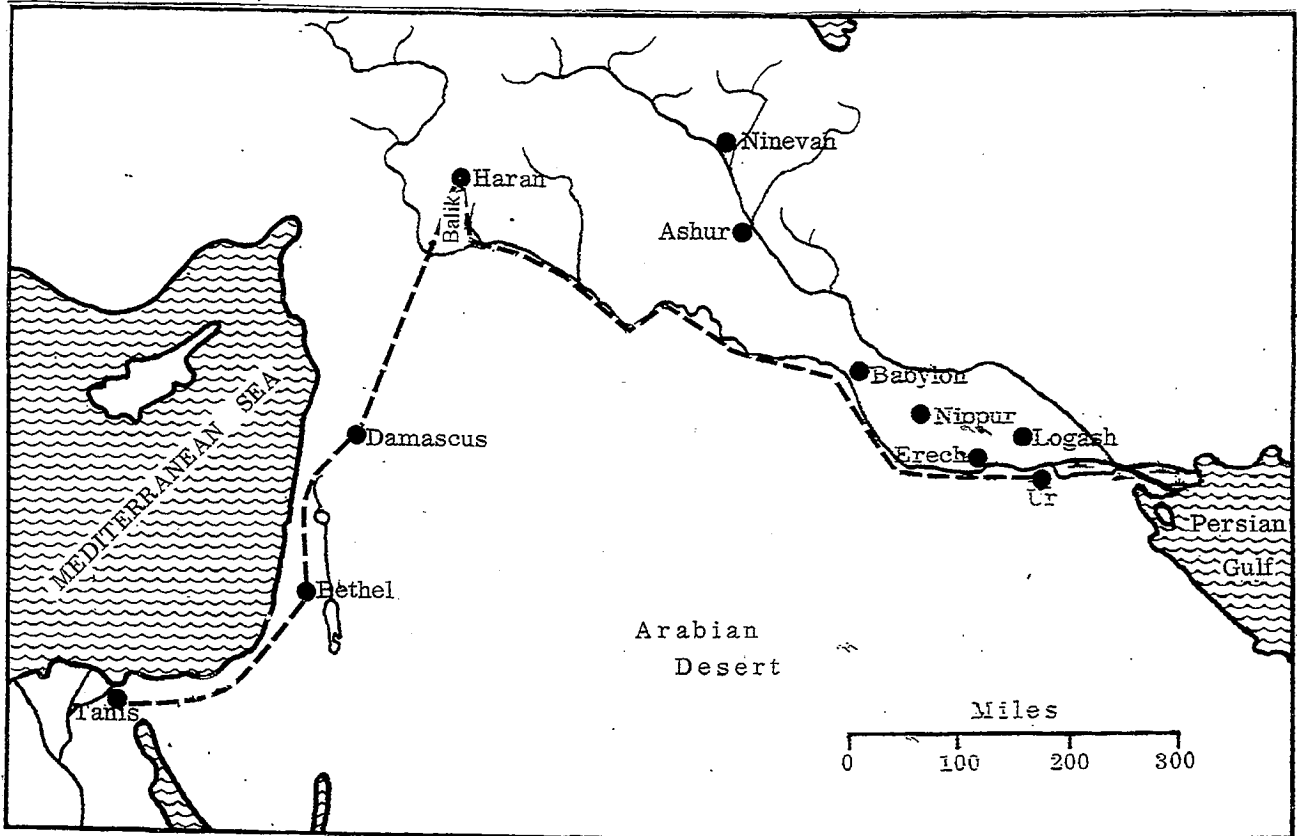
This map is a general picture of the early stages of that distribution.¹



¹ A modification of a map found in Carl G. Rasmussen, *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan) Publishing Company) 1989, page 71

ADDENDUM E

Abraham's Travels Recorded in Genesis



ADDENDUM F

The Discovery of the Sin Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah¹

Apr 16, 2008 Bryant G. Wood PhD

This article was originally published in summer 1999 issue of *Bible and Spade*.

The names Sodom and Gomorrah (1) are bywords in our modern society. An especially wicked place is described as a "Sodom and Gomorrah." Pastors are sometimes said to be preaching "fire and brimstone." And we have the legal term sodomy for unnatural sex acts. These allusions, of course, stem from the Biblical account of events that occurred in the days of Abraham in Genesis 19.

But did these places ever exist and will they ever be found? Most scholars think not. In his Anchor Bible Dictionary article on Sodom and Gomorrah, M.J. Mulder concluded that they were,

Two legendary cities from prehistoric Israel in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea...it is highly uncertain, if not improbable, that the vanished cities of the Pentapolis will ever be recovered (1992: 99, 102).

In their textbook on the history of Israel and Judah, Miller and Hayes state:

The Sodom and Gomorrah story reflects yet another motif pattern known from extrabiblical literature, that of divine beings who visit a city to test the hospitality of its people and eventually destroy the inhospitable city. One can compare in this regard the Greek myth of Baucis and Philemon. The presence of such traditional motifs in the Biblical narratives raises the possibility that at least some of these narratives are purely products of the storyteller's art, which of course raises serious questions about their usefulness for historical reconstruction (1986:60).

Looking for the Sites

Sodom and Gomorrah were two of five cities referred to in Scripture as the Cities of the Plain. From references to the "plain of the Jordan" (Gn 13:10), "the Valley of Siddim (the Salt Sea)" (Gn 14:3) and Abraham looking down to see the Cities of the Plain from the area of Hebron (Gn 19:28), it is clear that the cities were located in the vicinity of the Dead Sea. Since the mountains come close to the shore on both the east and west, the cities must have been located either north or south of the Dead Sea. Various commentators over the centuries have suggested locations both north and south (Mulder 1992: 101-102). The reference to "bitumen pits" in Genesis 14:10, however, tips the scale in favor of a southern location (Howard 1984). Bitumen (a natural petroleum product similar to asphalt) was commonly found in the shallow southern basin of the Dead Sea in antiquity. (Bilkadi 1984; 1994; Clapp 1936a: 901-902; 1936b: 341-342).

One popular theory, repeated yet today, is that the Cities of the Plain were located in the plain south of the Dead Sea and later covered by the waters of the southern basin, never to be seen again. The level of the Dead Sea has receded substantially in recent years, causing the southern basin to dry up. (2) Extensive exploration and activity in the area has produced no evidence to indicate that there were ancient sites there (Rast 1987a: 193).

It wasn't until 1973 that solid archaeological evidence for locating the Cities of the Plain was found. At that time an archaeological survey of the area southeast of the Dead Sea was conducted by Walter Rast and Thomas Schaub in conjunction with their work at Bab edh-Dhra, an Early Bronze (ca. 3300-2000 BC) site on the east side of the Lisan peninsula. (3) Rast and Schaub discovered four additional sites south of Bab edh-Dhra, which they suggested might be related to the Cities of the Plain of the Old Testament (Rast and Schaub 1974). Subsequent excavations at Numeira, 13 km (8 mi) south of Bab edh-Dhra, have verified its close affinity with Bab edh-Dhra. Follow-up work at the other three sites, Safi, Feifa and Khanazir, however, has not been as rewarding.

Explorations at Safi, Feifa and Khanazir

When Rast and Schaub visited es-Safi in 1973 they discovered a large Early Bronze Age cemetery. To the east of the cemetery they observed wall remains and Early Bronze sherds indicative of a settlement site (1974: 911). Unfortunately, in the years following their survey, homes have been constructed on the site and "subsequent visits have been unable to confirm the presence of a [n Early Bronze Age] town site" (Schaub 1992: 895).

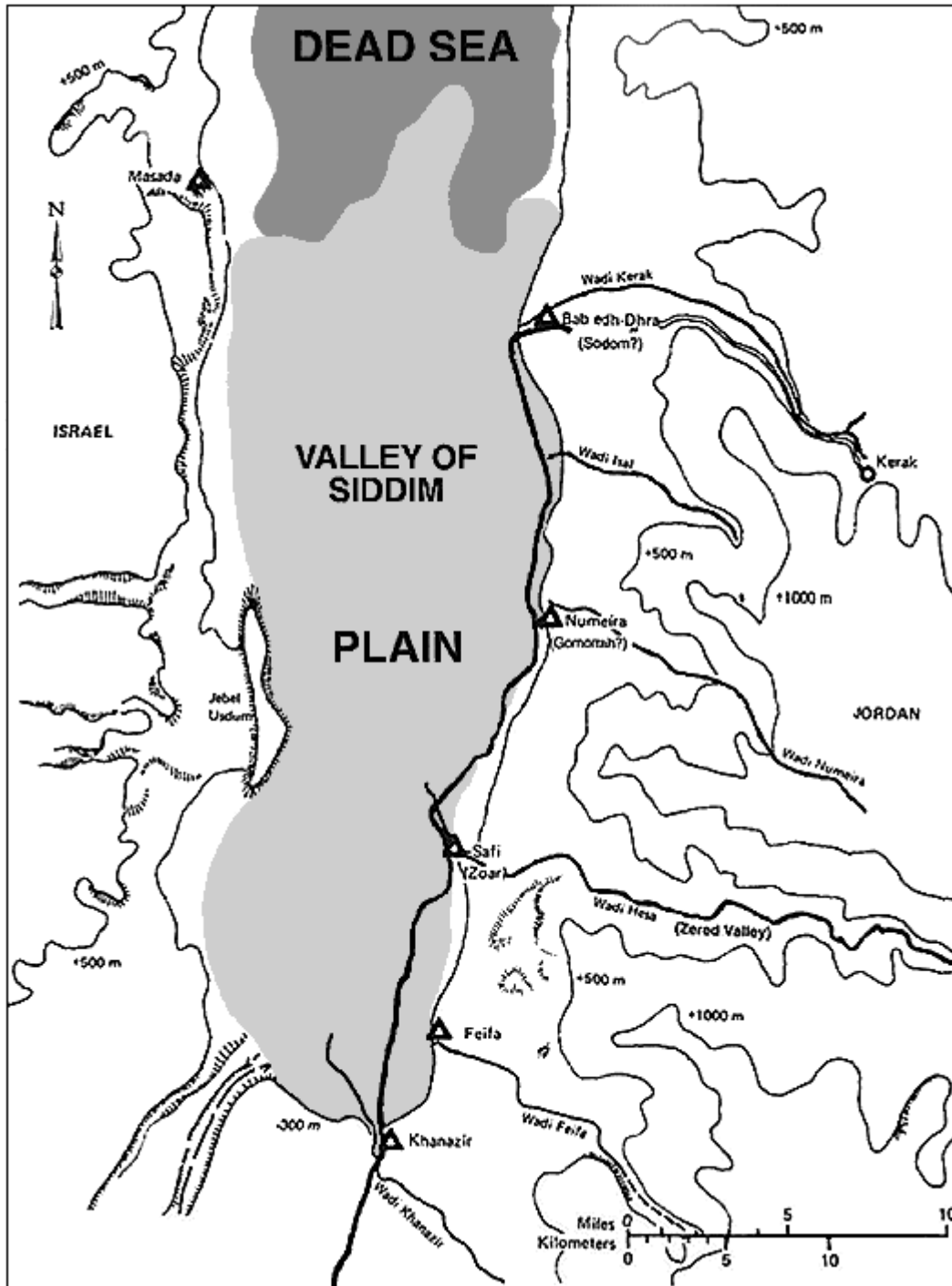
Less than a month of excavation was carried out at Feifa and Khanazir, 16 December 1989-13 January 1990. An enormous Early Bronze Age cemetery was found at Feifa by Rast and Schaub in 1973, as well as a fortified enclosure (1974: 11-12). Upon excavation, the enclosure turned out to be an Iron Age II (eighth century BC) fortress constructed over part of the Early Bronze Age cemetery (de Vries 1991: 262; MacDonald 1997: 65). At

¹ <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/04/16/the-discovery-of-the-cities-of-sodom-and-gomorrah.aspx#Article>

Khanazir, walls observed by Rast and Schaub in 1973 (1974: 12–14) were in reality rectangular structures marking Early Bronze IV shaft tombs (deVries 1991: 262; Rast 1992: 560; MacDonald 1997: 65; Schaub 1997b: 62).

Even though the locations of three of the Cities of the Plain remain elusive, evidence is strong that the two most important, Sodom and Gomorrah, have been found.

Map of the area south of the Dead Sea, showing the proposed locations of the Biblical Cities of the Plain.



Identifying the Sites

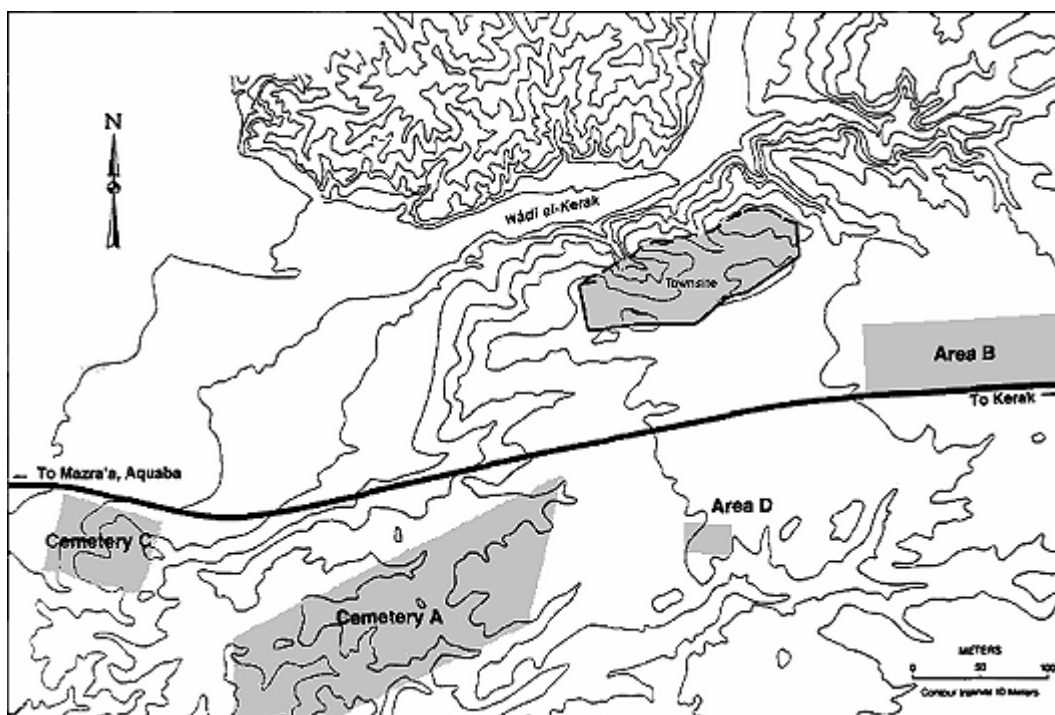
Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira are the only known inhabited towns in the region of the Dead Sea between ca. 3300 and 900 BC. Moreover, Bab edh-Dhra is the largest site from the pre-Hellenistic period in the area (Rast 1987b: 46). The conclusion that these sites are associated with the Cities of the Plain is inescapable (Rast 1987a: 190–94; 1992: 561).

In determining which archaeological site should be identified with which Biblical place name, we begin with Zoar. Because Lot fled to Zoar to escape the catastrophe (Gn 19:21–23), the town was spared from God's judgment. From later references to Zoar in the prophecies against Moab (Is 15:5; Jer 48:34), we know that the town continued to exist. It is further mentioned in various ancient references from the Hellenistic period to the Middle Ages (Schaub 1997b: 63; Astour 1992; Howard 1988b). (4) The most important source for locating the site is the Madaba map, a mosaic map on the floor of a church

Bab edh-Dhra—view east along the south wall. Note the proximity of the mountain in the background. The angels told Lot, "Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!" (Gn 19:17).



Bab edh-Dhra townsite and cemeteries. Although the northern wall was lost due to erosion, it is estimated that the size of the fortified area was 9–10 acres. There was occupation to the east, south and west of the city walls as well. The main burial area throughout the more than 1,000 year history of the town was Cemetery A to the southwest.



in Madaba, Jordan, depicting Palestine in the sixth century. Zoar is shown on the southeast shore of the Dead Sea, just south of the Zared River (Wadi Hesa) (Donner 1992: 42, No. 18). This places ancient Zoar in the vicinity of modern Safi, although its exact location is not known at present (Schaub 1997b: 63–64).

The Bible tells us that Lot and his daughters lived in a cave in the mountains near Zoar (Gn 19:30). At the edge of the mountains just to the east of Zoar, the Madaba Map depicts the Sanctuary of St. Lot, a church built in memory of Lot. H. Donner and E.A. Knauf discovered the ruins of the church in 1983 (Donner 1992: 42), although McDonald claims to have found the site in 1986 (Politis 1993: 338). Built in front of a cave thought to be where Lot and his daughters lived, the church is located 7 km (4 mi) northeast of Safi on the north bank of the Wadi Hesa. The earliest evidence of occupation at the site is from the Early Bronze Age. Since the other four cities are always mentioned in pairs—Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim—it is logical to presume that Sodom would have been located near Gomorrah and Admah near Zeboiim. Thus Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira should be identified with one of these pairs, but which one?

Turning to the site to the north of Safi, Numeira, we can make a linguistic connection with one of the Cities of the Plain. Many times ancient names are preserved in modern Arabic place names. The consonants of the name Gomorrah are ^o(*ayin*) MR and the consonants of Numeira are N M R. The ancient and modern names match, except for the first letter. Initial laryngeals like the *ayin* in ^oMR were commonly lost or transformed in the process of time, or when they came over into other languages or dialects. In this case, it is possible that nasalization took place, so the *ayin* in Hebrew ^oMR became the N in Arabic NMR (Shea 1988: 17).

Jericho has been called the lowest city in the world, being at an elevation of 220 m (720 ft) below sea level. Bab edh-Dhra is at about the same elevation. The title of the world's lowest city, however, must now go to Numeira since it is situated at 280–290 m (920–950 ft) below sea level.

The site to the north of Numeira, Bab edh-Dhra, would then be Sodom. Since Bab edh-Dhra is the largest ancient ruin in the region it stands to reason that it should be identified as Sodom, the most famous of the Cities of the Plain. It was occupied throughout the Early Bronze Age for a period of over 1,000 years.

The Evidence

General

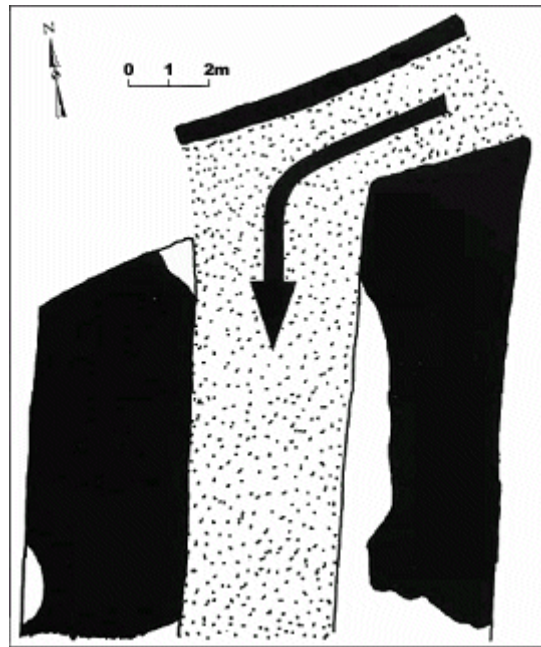
Geological studies have shown that the level of the Dead Sea was at a low point during the Early Bronze Age (Neev and Emery 1995: 62) and thus the shallow basin, or "plain" south of the Dead Sea, would have been dry land and probably cultivated. (5) The location of the Early Bronze Age sites along the eastern edge of the plain fits the Biblical description of the cities as being *of* the plain. "Cities of the Plain" is in the construct state in the Hebrew, which means that the word "cities" has a close association with the word "plain." The cities were not *in* the plain, or *on* the plain. If that were the case, a different construction would have been used. Rather, the cities were "of" the plain—they had a close association, or connection, with the plain. They were doubtless dependent upon the plain for their livelihood.

Paleobotany

The first description of the Cities of the Plain in the Bible is in the account of Lot separating from Abraham in Genesis 13:10–13. There, the plain is described as being "well watered" as far as Zoar (Gn 13:10). The Hebrew words translated "well watered" are *kullah*, an intensive form of the verb meaning "to be complete," and *masqeh*, from the verb meaning "to give to drink" or "irrigate." The meaning of *kullah masqeh*, then, is to be completely and totally irrigated. Paleo-botanical studies have shown that there was a rich diversity of crops grown at Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira. Most common were barley, wheat, grapes, figs, lentils and flax. Less common were chickpeas, peas, broad beans, dates and olives (McCreery 1980:52). Several of these crops could only have been grown with the use of irrigation:

There is little doubt that agriculture was an important component of the economic base of the EB cities in the region and that irrigation was a key element of the agricultural industry (McCreery 1981: 168; cf p. 167, 1980: 52).

City gate at Bab edh-Dhra. Located on the northeast side of the site, this is the gate that was in use at the end of the life of the city. The angels met Lot in the city gate. (Gn 19:1–3). The arrow shows the direction of entry.



It appears that each of the five Cities of the Plain controlled the water from the principal streams that flowed into the plain from the east.

Fortifications

When the two angels came to Sodom to warn Lot of the impending doom, they found him sitting in the city gate (Gn 19:1). This indicates that Sodom was fortified. Bab edh-Dhra, which means "gate of the arm," had imposing fortifications. The city wall, enclosing an area of 9–10 acres, was a massive 7 m (23 ft) wide and made of stones and mud bricks (Schaub 1993: 134). Evidence for settlement was found outside the walls as well. The total population at the time Bab edh-Dhra met its end was between 600 and 1,200 (Rast 1987b: 47; 1992: 560; Schaub 1993: 134). Within the walls were a sanctuary on a high spot at the southwest end of the city, domestic and industrial areas, and a gateway on the northeast side.

The gateway was comprised of two flanking towers with massive stone and timber foundations. They were ca. 4 m (13 ft) wide and 10 m (33 ft) long, with a 3–4 m (10–13 ft) passageway between. When Lot saw the angels, "he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground" (Gn 19:1). He then invited them to his home. Houses at Bab edh-Dhra were of the typical Early Bronze Age "broad room" style. They were rectangular, being about 5 m (16 ft) long and 2–3 m (7–10 ft) wide with an entrance in one of the long sides (Rast 1987b: 46).

At Numeira, a town smaller than Bab edh-Dhra, the city wall was found to be about 4 m (13 ft) wide. Inside were houses very much like those at Bab edh-Dhra. It appears that the residents of Numeira buried their dead in the enormous cemetery at Bab edh-Dhra since no cemetery was discovered at Numeira. Supporting this hypothesis is the fact that pottery from Numeira was found in burials at Bab edh-Dhra (Rast 1987b: 47).

Bab edh-Dhra—view north along the west wall, with the excavation areas at the west gate visible. The main gate was located here throughout most of the history of the city, giving easy access to the agricultural fields in the plain below. About 25 years before the final destruction, however, Bab edh-Dhra suffered a destruction which caused the citizens to purposely block up the west gate and construct a new gate on the northeast. This can be linked to the attack of the coalition of Mesopotamian kings described in Genesis 14.



Two Destructions

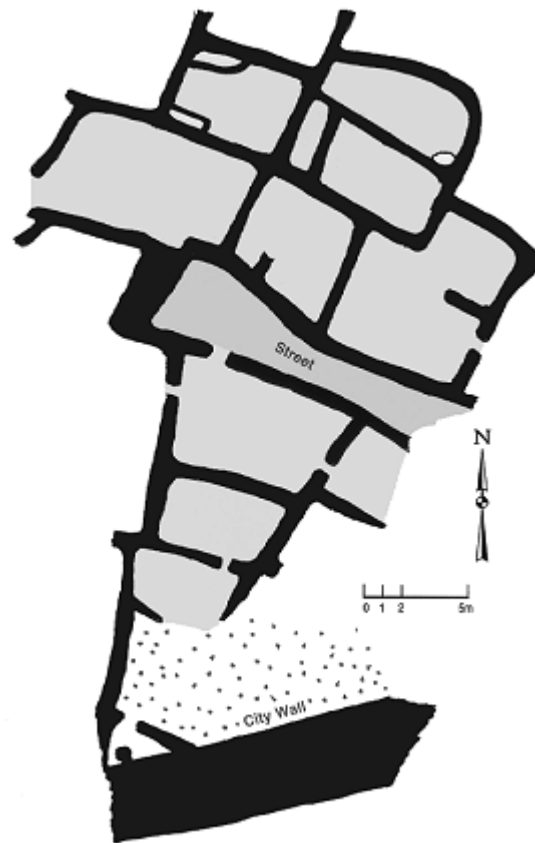
The Bible tells of not one, but two, traumatic events that occurred in the final days of Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 14 describes an attack against the Cities of the Plain by a coalition of four Mesopotamian kings. The battle was joined in the Valley of Siddim, probably at the northern end of the plain. Following their rout of the army of the Cities of the Plain,

The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom (Gn 14:11).

Then, in Genesis 19, we have the record of the final destruction when, because of their sin,

The Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. Thus He overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation of the land. (Gn 19:24–25).

Plan of the excavated areas at Numeira. On the south is a 4 m (13 ft) town wall with an adjacent open area. North of the wall is a residential area, with blocks of houses separated by an east-west street. The entire area was covered with a thick layer of ash from the firestorm that totally destroyed the town.



From the chronological data given in Genesis, it is possible to approximate the time span between the sacking of Sodom and Gomorrah by the kings of Mesopotamia and the final destruction of the cities. The account of the attack of the Mesopotamian coalition comes between the time when Abraham left Haran when he was 75 (12:4) and the conception of Ishmael when Abraham was 85 (16:3). Since Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed at the time of the conception of Isaac when Abraham was 99 (17:1, 21:5), the sacking of Sodom and Gomorrah by the kings of Mesopotamia took place between 14 and 24 years before the final holocaust. There is evidence at both Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira for two destructions. (6)

Excavation area at Numeira as it appeared following the 1977 season.

Occupied for less than a century, the remains were better preserved at Numeira than at Bab edh-Dhra. Textiles, string, rope, seeds, and even a cluster of grapes survived amazingly well. Every room was filled with ash and burned debris from the dreadful holocaust that overtook the city.



Evidence for Destruction at Bab edh-Dhra

Throughout most of the life of Bab edh-Dhra the main entrance to the city was located on the west side, giving access to the plain below. Within the last 100 years of occupation, the west wall and gate area underwent a major destruction (Schaub and Rast 1984: 46; Rast 1987b: 47; Schaub 1997a: 249). This resulted in the citizens intentionally blocking up the west gate and constructing a new gate in the northeast (Schaub and Rast 1984: 46; Schaub 1993: 134). The new gate was founded on a meter of burned destruction debris resulting from the calamity (Rast and Schaub 1980: 28; Rast 1981a: 20).

Shortly thereafter, at the close of the Early Bronze III period, the fortified city at Bab edh-Dhra met a final fiery end. Even though the site is badly eroded, enough evidence remained in several areas to show the severity of the disaster. The northeast gate was destroyed by fire as indicated by charcoal, broken and fallen bricks, and areas of ash (Rast 1981: 21). There was a massive pile-up of mudbrick in the west end suggesting heavy destruction in this part of the city (Rast 1981: 31). At this time the city wall fell and the mudbrick superstructure of the sanctuary collapsed, apparently after burning (Rast 1992: 560). The many stone and boulder fields within the city came from walls that were disrupted and transported downslope (Donahue 1980: 51; 1985:136).

Following the destruction, there was occupation at Bab edh-Dhra in the Early Bronze IV period, but almost exclusively outside the destroyed Early Bronze III fortified town. Following this brief period of extramural settlement, the site was permanently abandoned.

Two victims of the destruction of Numeira. These two skeletons were found adjacent to the east tower, lying in the ashy debris of the conflagration which brought the city to an end. They were buried under the collapsed stones from the tower.



Evidence for Destruction at Numeira

At Numeira, a better preserved site than Bab edh-Dhra, the evidence is even more dramatic. Unlike Bab edh-Dhra, the remnants of the town did not suffer erosional damage. Also in contrast to Bab edh-Dhra, Numeira was occupied for less than 100 years (Rast 1981b: 42; Rast and Schaub 1980: 43). On the east side of Numeira is a large tower 7.4 m (24 ft) wide and at least 10.0 m (33 ft) long (Coogan 1984: 80). It was built over an earlier domestic phase that suffered a heavy burning.

This earliest phase of occupation was destroyed by fire; the walls and rooms that collapsed over the ashy destruction debris consisted of considerable mudbrick detritus, many large wooden beams, and carbonized grasses and reeds still tied by the ropes that had held them together as thatch. On the occupational surface of Room V (NE 10/2 Locus 5) was the skeleton of a mature male who had perished in the destruction of this earliest phase (Coogan 1984: 79).

Similar evidence was found in Room 4 just inside the southern wall. Some 20–30 cm (8–12 in) below the final phase was an earlier phase with fragments of human bones (Rast and Schaub 1980:44).

As with Bab edh-Dhra, Numeira was violently destroyed at the end of the Early Bronze III period. The type of pottery lying on the floors of the houses confirms that it met its end at the same time as Bab edh-Dhra (Rast and Schaub 1980: 45). A thick layer of burnt debris was found in almost every area excavated (Rast 1981b: 41; 1987b: 47). Michael Coogan, one of the excavators of Numeira, described what the archaeologists encountered:

Under the topsoil (desert pavement) and a naturally deposited windblown sandy soil, the entire area was covered by the ashy debris of the final destruction of the town, up to 0.40 m in depth. This ash contained fragments of wooden beams that had supported the roofs of the dwellings and lay immediately over the latest occupational layer within each room, sealing the material beneath it. Not infrequently there was mudbrick detritus over the ash, which had resulted from the collapse of the mudbrick superstructures after the final conflagration (1984: 76).

On the inner side of the tower more startling evidence was found for the tragedy which overcame Numeira.

Over the final layer was a thick (0.50–0.10 m) layer of ashy debris, in which were found the skeletons of two mature males who perished in the final destruction of the town; over this was mudbrick detritus and rockfall (Coogan 1984:80).

In Room 4 just inside the southern wall were fragments of human bones above and on the final surface (Rast and Schaub 1980: 44). Numeira met a tragic end and was never again occupied.

It is possible to estimate the time span between the earlier destruction and the final destruction at Numeira. The area adjacent to the inner (west) face of the tower was used as an outdoor activity area. More than 20 alternating layers of chaff and carbonized material were found between the earlier domestic phase and the final destruction layer. The nature of the layers suggests seasonal activity (Coogan 1984:80). Thus, we can estimate the time span between the two destructions as being a little more than 20 years, which agrees with the Biblical time frame (14 to 24 years) between the events of Genesis 14 and 19 (Shea 1988: 18–19).

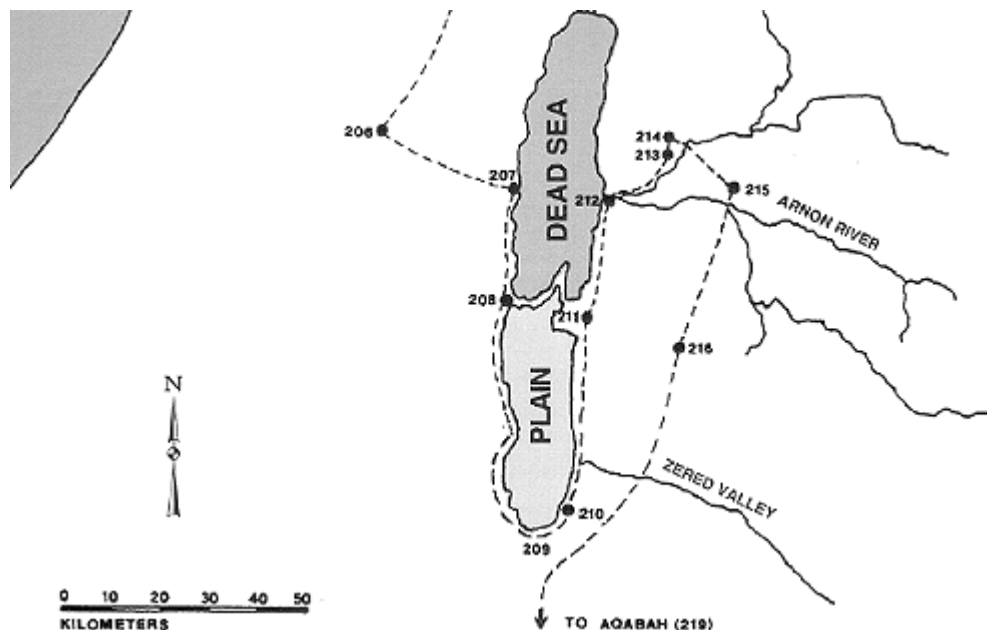
Trade With Syria

In 1975 a great archive of clay tablets dating to 2400–2350 BC was discovered at Tell Mardikh, ancient Ebla, in northern Syria (Archi 1997). One of the tablets is a geographic atlas listing 289 place names. An analysis of two segments of the list by William Shea indicates that they are sites located in Palestine, possibly places visited by merchants from Ebla (Shea 1983). The second segment, sites 188–219, traces a route from Syria south through the central hill country of Cisjordan, along the western shore of the Dead Sea, south of the Dead Sea Plain and then north along the east side of the Plain and Dead Sea. In the area corresponding to the east side of the Dead Sea Plain there are two places named—Number 210, Admah, and Number 211, Sodom. If Shea's readings are correct, this would be the only confirmed mention of the Cities of the Plain outside the Bible. (7) But why were not the other three cities, Gomorrah, Zoar, and Zeboiim, mentioned? The excavations at Numeira perhaps can shed some light on that question. These excavations revealed that Numeira (= Gomorrah) was in existence for only a short period of time, less than 100 years. It appears that the Ebla Atlas was composed prior to the founding of Numeira. The same may true of Zoar and Zeboiim.

There has been some corroborating evidence from Bab edh-Dhra for this proposed contact.

Among the cultural items that reflect foreign contact...the majority—including architectural features, cylinder seal impressions, jewelry, some forms of pottery, and a carved bull's head—show Syrian, if not Mesopotamian, influence (Schaub 1993: 135).

Route traced by the Ebla Geographic Atlas. Site number 210 is Admah and site 211 Sodom—the only known occurrence of names of the Cities of the Plain outside the Bible.



Means of the Destruction of the Cities of the Plain

The Biblical Description

The Bible provides a detailed description of the calamity that befell the Cities of the Plain. In that description are two Hebrew phrases and a Hebrew word that must be examined in order to understand the event: *goprit wa es*, the material that fell on the cities (Gn 19:24), *hapak*, what happened to the cities (Gn 19:25), and *kqitor hakkibsan*, what Abraham observed (Gn 19:28).

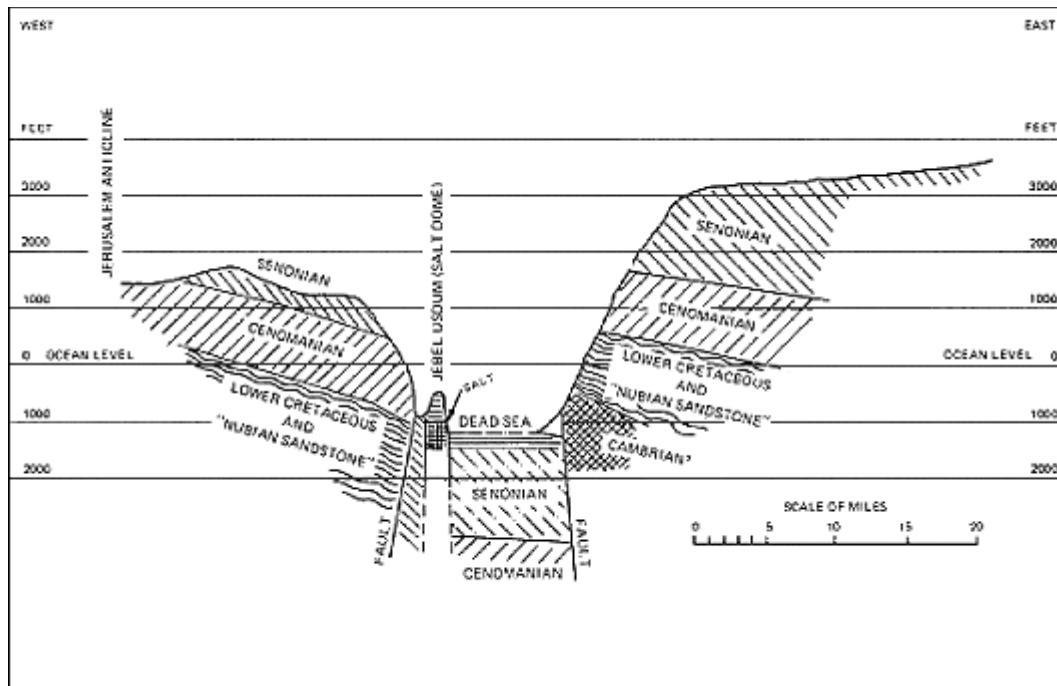
The word *goprit* is a foreign loan word, most likely derived from Akkadian *ki/ubritu*, which means sulfurous oil (black sulfur) (Gentry 1999). The word accompanying *goprit*, *wc es*, simply means "and fire." In other words, the

material that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah and the Cities of the Plain (except Zoar) was a burning petroleum product. The term *hapak* means to overturn, or overthrow.

When Abraham looked down upon the scene of devastation, he observed smoke rising from the land of the plain, *k-qitor hakkibsan*, "like smoke from a furnace." A *kibsan* is a pottery kiln (Wood 1992). Air passing through a pottery kiln does so by means of a forced draft resulting from the heating of the air. The smoke exiting from a kiln is forced out of the exit flue and pushed upward into the air. That is what Abraham observed—smoke from the land of the plain being forced upwards. The word used for smoke, *qitor*, is not the word used for smoke from an ordinary fire. Rather, it is a thick smoke, the smoke that comes from sacrifices. It is clear that something unnatural or extraordinary is recorded here.

The Biblical description, then, of the destruction was of burning material raining down from above, accompanied by an overturning of the cities and thick smoke being forced upward from the land. A rather apocalyptic scene, one that was forever etched in the minds of the ancient Israelites. The awful devastation and destruction that occurred that day became the example *par excellence* of God's judgment of sin.

Cross-section of the Dead Sea area, showing the geological strata and fault lines on either side of the Dead Sea Plain. A possible explanation for the destruction of the Cities of the Plain is that pressure from an earthquake caused underground flammable petroleum products to be forced up through the fault lines. They then become ignited and rained down on the surrounding countryside. The sites of Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira are located precisely on the eastern fault line.



Geological Investigations

At first reading it would seem that the destruction was caused by a volcanic eruption. When geologist Frederick G. Clapp visited the region in 1929 and again in 1934 he found that there was no evidence to indicate that lava or ash eruptions had taken place as recently as 4,000 years ago. He determined that topographic relationships render it probable that the last outburst in the vicinity took place thousands of years before Abraham's time (Clapp 1936a: 906; 1936b: 339–40). More recent assessments support that conclusion (Neev and Emery 1995: 147).

Clapp found that the region south of the Dead Sea is very unstable, being bordered by fault lines on the east and west. Earthquakes are common in this area. After surveying the geology of the district, Clapp concluded that combustible materials from the earth destroyed the cities. He found bitumen and petroleum in the area. Natural gas and sulfur, which normally accompany bitumen and petroleum, are also present. These combustible materials could have been forced from the earth by subterranean pressure brought about by an earthquake resulting from the shifting of the bounding faults (Clapp 1936a: 906; 1936b: 40). Geologists who have studied the area in recent times agree with Clapp's reconstruction (Harris and Beardow 1995: 360; Neev and Emery 1995: 13–14; 33, 37). If lightning or surface fires ignited these combustibles as they came spewing forth from the ground, it would indeed result in a holocaust such as described in Genesis 19. It is significant to note that both Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira lie at the edge of the plain, *exactly on the eastern fault line!*

Abraham, after having previously spoken with the Lord, knew of the impending judgment. Rising early in the morning he looked toward the Cities of the Plain from his vantage point at Hebron, high on the Mount Judah range west of the Dead Sea. Smoke rising from the plain south of the Dead Sea would have been readily visible from Hebron. In fact, mist rising from the Dead Sea can be seen almost any day from there. Abraham's eyewitness description fits the theory of a conflagration of petroleum products, for such a conflagration would result in a thick black smoke being forced into the sky by the heat and pressure of the burning materials shooting out of the fissure in the earth.

Evidence at the Town Sites

That an earthquake occurred at the time the cities were destroyed is clear from the work of geologist Jack Donahue of the University of Pittsburgh. At Bab edh-Dhra he found that during the period of occupation there was sedimentation, or infilling, and a build up of cultural debris (Donahue 1985: 135). Following the destruction, this changed to an erosional regime, brought about by an uplift of the area (Donahue 1980: 50; 1985: 134–36). The uplift produced an increase in the elevation differential between the town site and the Wadi Kerak on the north side of at least 28 m (92 ft) (Donahue 1985: 134). This resulted in severe erosion on the north side of Bab edh-Dhra, causing the north wall to eventually collapse into the wadi (Donahue 1985: 136).

At Numeira the findings were similar: *It is suggested here that the tower collapse and extensive burn layers over the site were caused by an earthquake generated by fault movement (Donahue 1985: 139).*

The earthquake caused either an uplift in the vicinity of the site or a downdropping of the rift valley to the west, resulting in a 50 m (164 ft) increase in elevation differential between the town site and Wadi Numeira to the north (Donahue 1984: 86; 1985: 137). It also caused a change in direction of the Wadi Numeira, which flowed south of the site during the period of occupation (Donahue 1984: 86, 88; 1985: 138). Heavy erosion following the event resulted in the loss of the north part of the settlement, including the north defensive wall (Donahue 1984:87; 1985:138,139).

Evidence found at Numeira suggests the residents fled the town in haste. Most identifiable doorways from the latest phase of occupation had been deliberately blocked. This apparently was an attempt to strengthen the homes against damage. In addition, no valuable small finds were discovered nor were there foodstuffs in the storage facilities. On the other hand, large quantities of pottery were found on the floors of the houses, evidently too heavy and bulky to transport in the hasty evacuation. It appears the residents had some early warning, such as preliminary tremors, and did what they could to prepare. They shored up their houses, gathered up their valuables and as much food as they could carry, and fled their homes never to return (Coogan 1984: 80–81).

Stone-lined grain storage pits at Numeira. Many such pits were found at Numeira, but they were all empty. Evidence suggests the inhabitants fled their homes with as much food as they could carry, with the idea of living out in the open until the earthquake was over. They never returned—Numeira lay in ruins until discovered and excavated by archaeologists in the 1970s.

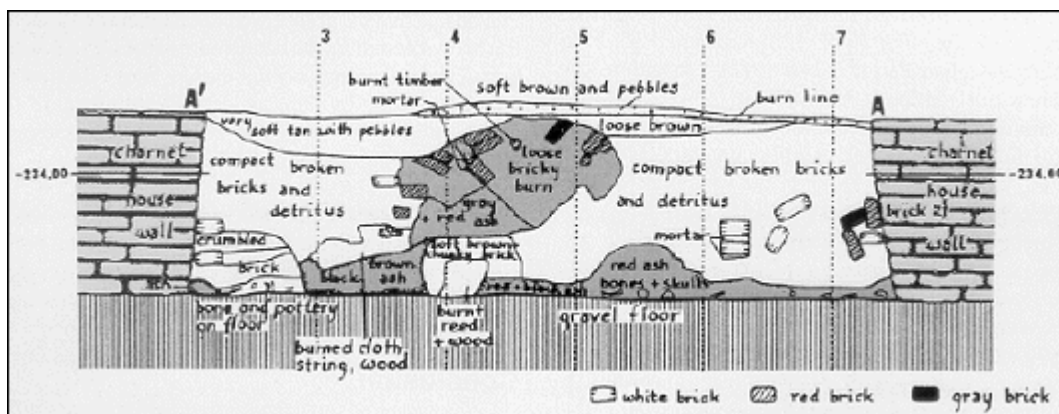
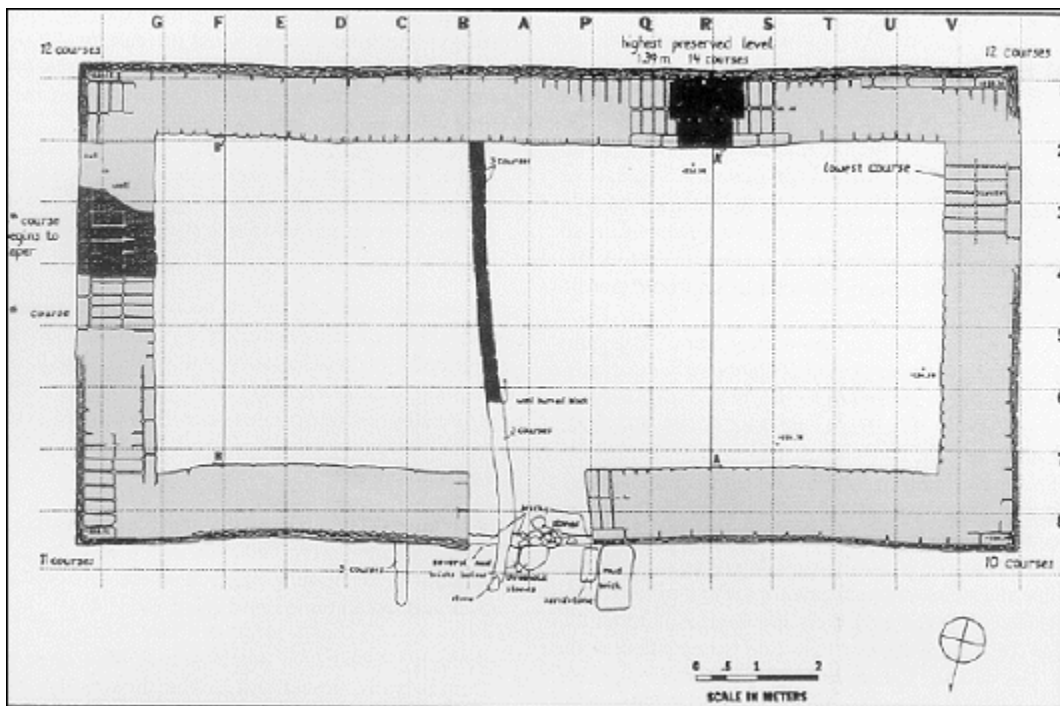


Evidence at the Bab edh-Dhra Cemetery

We have detailed the evidence that both town sites were destroyed by an overwhelming conflagration. Additional evidence from the cemetery at Bab edh-Dhra demonstrates that the destruction included areas outside the towns, thus involving "the entire plain" (Gn 19:25) and that it "came out of the heavens" (Gn 19:24).

During the Early Bronze III period the dead at Bab edh-Dhra were interred in charnel houses built above ground. Five of the buildings that were excavated, A8, A22, A41, A51 and A55, were in use at the end of the life of the city. In each case the building was extensively burned (Schaub and Rast 1989: 326–26, 344, 384; Rast and Schaub 1978: 24; Rast and Schaub 1980: 37). The explanation the excavators offer for this burning is that it was intentionally done by a human agent that also destroyed the town (Rast and Schaub 1978: 24; Rast 1987:49; Schaub and Rast 1989: 396). The evidence we have discussed above points to destruction by earthquake rather than by a human agent. Even if Bab edh-Dhra was destroyed by an enemy, it seems highly improbable that a conqueror would go into a cemetery located several hundred meters away and systematically set fire to and demolish all the burial houses. This would be an unprecedented act for which there are no known parallels. There is a more logical explanation.

Plan and section of Charnel House A22 at Bab edh-Dhra. The largest of the excavated charnel houses, or funerary buildings (51 x 26 ft), the structure was destroyed by fire at the same time the city was destroyed. The fire started on the roof and spread to the interior when the roof collapsed. This provides graphic evidence that "the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens" (Gn 19:24).



During the 1979 season, the last and largest of the charnel houses, A22, was excavated. The building was 15.5 x 7.8 m. (50.8 x 25.6 ft) in size and constructed of mudbricks. The floor consisted of small pebbles and the roof was made up of wooden beams, reed matting and mud. Underneath the rubble, the archaeologists found the interior of the building filled with pottery and other funerary objects, and piles of human skeletal remains and skulls in disarray (Rast and Schaub 1980:36–37).

The building had been severely burned. Remnants of charred posts and beams from the roof were found among the ruins. Much ash was also found, along with bricks that were turned red from the intense heat. More intriguing than the mere fact that the charnel house was destroyed by fire, however, is the way in which it was burned—*from the inside out*. At first, the archaeologists thought this was a deliberate burning associated with some religious or hygienic practice. The excavation of Charnel House A22, however, has laid that theory to rest. It is now evident that the roof, engulfed in flames, collapsed into the building and caused the interior burning:

The extensive burn is clear evidence of the tomb's destruction by fire. Burning was concentrated along the interior wall in the center of both sectors, where the majority of posts and beams were uncovered. Along the south wall impressions of desiccated beams angled down toward the interior transverse wall, indicating that they had collapsed in the center across the interior wall (Rast and Schaub 1980: 37).

The destruction of the charnel houses at Bab edh-Dhra was brought about by the roofs first being set on fire, then collapsing, causing the interiors of the buildings to burn. This is entirely consistent with the Biblical description of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, when "the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens" (Gn 19:24).

Date of the Destruction

A rather precise date for the destruction of the Cities of the Plain can be worked out from the internal chronology of the Old Testament. Since the Lord told Abraham and Sarah about the coming birth of Isaac just prior to the destruction (Gn 18:10–14), the date of the destruction can be calculated based on the birth date of Isaac. If we assume a mid-15th century BC date for the Exodus, the date for the destruction would then be ca. 2070 BC. (8)

The archaeological date for the destruction of Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira, however, is considerably earlier than this. Rast gives the date for the end of the Early Bronze III period and the destruction of the cities as 2350 BC (1987: 47; 1992: 560). Schaub places the date slightly later at 2300 BC (1997: 249). (9) This leaves a discrepancy between the Biblical date and the archaeological date of 230–280 years. Does this mean that we cannot correlate the archaeological findings at Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira with the events described in the Bible?

In reality, the archaeological date for the end of the EB III period cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. Dating for the Bronze Age in Palestine is dependent upon synchronisms with the known history of Egypt. To date, we have no such synchronisms for the EB III period. There are a few correlations for the previous EB II period, suggesting that it was approximately contemporary with the Archaic Period (First and Second Dynasties) in Egypt, ca. 3100–2700 BC (Mazar 1990: 135; Ben-Tor 1992: 122; Kitchen 1996: 11). The dates for the Archaic Period only are known to within 200 years (Kitchen 1991: 202).

Similar connections for the beginning of the ensuing Middle Bronze Age indicate that it was roughly contemporary with the beginning of the 12th Dynasty of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, ca. 1973 BC (Mazar 1990: 151; Ben-Tor 1992: 159–60; Kitchen 1996: 11). Manfred Bietak, based on his important work at Tell el-Daba, Egypt, places the beginning of the 12th Dynasty at ca. 1970 BC and the beginning of the Palestinian Middle Bronze period somewhat later at ca. 1900 BC (1997: 90, 125–26). The dates for the Middle Kingdom are known fairly well, within plus or minus 10 years, according to Kenneth Kitchen, a recognized authority on Egyptian chronology (1996: 9).

How the intervening 700–800 years from the end of EB II to the beginning of MB should be divided between the EB III and EB IV periods is strictly an educated guess. It is thought that EB III was the longer of the two periods because of multiple phases of building and destruction found at a number of sites, including Bab edh-Dhra (Ben-Tor 1992: 123). It is entirely within the realm of possibility, therefore, that the destruction of Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira could have occurred at the Biblical date of ca. 2070 BC. We shall have to await further discoveries before an accurate archaeological date can be assigned to the end of EB III.

Time of Year When the Destruction Occurred

There is one additional correlation that can be made between the Biblical record and the archaeological findings—the time of year when the earthquake occurred. As pointed out by William Shea, the time can be set at late spring or early summer (1988: 21–22). When the angels visited Abraham the Lord announced,

"I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son"..."At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son" (Gn 18:10, 14, RSV).

If we assume that conception occurred approximately one month after the announcement, it would place the visit of the angels, and thus the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, in the late spring or early summer.

The well-preserved ruins at Numeira produced a number of surprises, including whole grapes. (11) During the 1977 season a large cache was found.

It is remarkable, for example, that the grapes in Locus 17 of SE 3/1 were preserved even with their outer skins, due perhaps to the burning material which collapsed over the area and sealed these items (Rast 1981: 43).

Although carbonized whole grapes have been reported from Salamis, Hesban and Jericho, the size of the Numeira hoard, which consisted of over 700 whole grapes, is very uncommon (McCreery 1981: 168).

The fact that the grapes were intact indicates that they were freshly harvested. In the hot climate of the Dead Sea valley the harvesting of grapes occurs earlier than other parts of the country—in the late spring or early summer. In the 1981 season more grapes were found, prompting the excavator to comment on the chronological implications:

The infrequent small finds included...more whole carbonized grapes with the stems attached and what preliminary analysis indicates were carbonized watermelon seeds (both evidence for dating the destruction of the site to late spring) (Coogan 1984:77).

Conclusion

When the archaeological, geographical and epigraphic evidence is reviewed in detail, it is clear that the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah have now been found. What is more, this evidence demonstrates that the Bible provides an accurate eyewitness account of events that occurred southeast of the Dead Sea over 4,000 years ago.

Footnotes

(1) For previous articles on Sodom and Gomorrah in *Bible and Spade*, see Wood 1974, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1983; Shea 1988.

(2) Large pools of water can be observed in the former area of the southern basin, but these are artificial ponds associated with thriving potash industries operated by Israel and Jordan. Water from the Dead Sea is directed to the pools (salt pans) where it is evaporated, allowing valuable salts to be harvested.

(3) The Lisan peninsula divides the main, northern, body of the Dead Sea from the shallow southern basin.

(4) We find such references only for Zoar. There are no later references to the other Cities of the Plain, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah or Zeboiim, as living communities.

(5) The "Valley of Siddim (the Salt Sea)" in Genesis 14:3, 8 and 10 is undoubtedly the shallow basin south of the Lisan Peninsula which, in later times when the level of the Dead Sea was higher, became an extension of the Dead Sea. The valley had many pits of *hemor* or bitumen. This asphalt-like petroleum product was commonly found in the southern basin of the Dead Sea throughout antiquity. The name "Siddim" derives from the verb *saded* which means "to harrow." Wherever the verb is used in the Old Testament, it is in an agricultural context (Jb 39:10; Is 28:24; Hos 10:11) (Howard 1988a).

(6) It is possible that these two events, the attack of the coalition of Mesopotamian kings described in Genesis 14 and the destruction of the Cities of the Plain described in Genesis 19, were significant contributing factors in the demise of the Early Bronze III culture in Canaan.

(7) The original epigrapher of the Ebla expedition, Giovanni Pettinato, claimed in 1976 to have found the names Sodom, Gomorrah and Zoar/Bela in the Ebla tablets. Alfonso Archi, Pettinato's successor as Ebla epigrapher, vigorously contested this. See the discussion in Shea 1983: 608–609.

(8) 1450 Exodus (1 Kgs 6:1; Jgs 11:26) + 430, length of Egyptian Sojourn (Ex 12:40), + 130, Jacob's age when he entered Egypt (Gn 47:9), + 60, Isaac's age when Jacob was born (Gn 25:26), + 1, the pregnancy of Sarah with Isaac = 2071 BC.

(9) Carbon 14 dates for the end of the EB III period at both Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira are much too early and have been disregarded by the excavators (Rast and Schaub 1980: 45–47). Similarly, C14 dates for the end of the succeeding EB IVA period of 2200 BC (Schaub 1993:136), may be too early.

(10) The end of EB III is given as 2350 BC in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Dever 1992: 110), 2200 BC in the *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (vol. 4, p. 1529) (1993), and 2300 BC in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (vol. 5, p. 413) (1997).

(11) The grapes of Sodom and Gomorrah are referred to in Deuteronomy 32:32.

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ADDENDUM G

Abraham's Wanderings in Canaan

