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GENESIS

INTRODUCTION

Title. The word Genesis came into English by way of Latin from the Greek. In the Septuagint (LXX), it formed the superscription for the first book of the Bible. The word means "origin, source, or begetting." The Hebrew word *b'r'eshith*, translated "in [the] beginning," is the first word in the Hebrew Bible. It is frequently used to designate the book of Genesis.

Nature. Genesis is the book of origins. It gives a majestic account of the beginnings of all the Creator brought into being. It answers men's questions concerning the origin of the world, and of plant, animal, and human life. It tells of the establishment of the family, the origin of sin, the giving of the divine revelation, the growth and development of the race, and the inauguration of God's plan to bring about redemption through his chosen people. It presents and illustrates eternal truths, and it resolves enigmas, mysteries, and puzzling situations in the light of God's will for his people. In clear, meaningful language the writer sets forth God's revealed plans and purposes, and the marvels of his dealings with men.

Genesis takes the reader back to the all-important moment of creation when the omnipotent Creator spoke into being the matchless wonders of sun, moon, stars, planets, galaxies, plants, and moving creatures, and the one whom he made in his image. In these fifty chapters the inspired writer unfolds the drama of creation; he tells how sin came stealthily and relentlessly to bring ruin, disfigurement, and death; he reveals the tragic fruits of sin in our first parents' pathetic defeat; and he shows how, later, the accumulated wickednesses of men brought destruction and almost annihilation to human society. In the fresh beginning the writer traces the growth of the new race, and finally the exciting careers of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's children. The book ends with the death of Joseph in the land of Egypt.

Genesis 1-11 presents the account of man from creation to the beginning of the life of Abraham. Genesis 12-50 recounts God's dealings with his chosen people—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph,

and their descendants. Throughout the narrative, the author's chief concern is to set forth Jehovah's purpose in creating and providentially guiding such an elect people. Not only Genesis, but the whole Bible shows that through the agency of this people, the Lord sought to reveal his nature and ways to the world, to establish his holy will in the earth, and to bring his "good news" of redemption to all men. Nations and individuals are mentioned and described in the book only as they fit into the Lord's sublime plan and purpose. Sumerians, Hittites, Babylonians, and Assyrians, whenever their history affects that of the chosen people, enter the picture briefly in order to demonstrate God's purpose for the world. At every step, the Spirit sought to make the revelation clear to men of all ages. In the rapidly moving drama, the plan of God was unfolding.

Authorship. It is safe to claim Moses as the responsible author of the book. It is the first book of the Pentateuch, which both Scripture and tradition attribute to Moses. It would be difficult to find a man in all the range of Israel's life who was better qualified to write this history. Trained in the "wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22), Moses was providentially prepared to understand available records, manuscripts, and oral narratives. As a prophet to whom was granted the unusual privilege of unhurried hours of communion with God on Sinai, he was well equipped to record for all generations the Lord's portrayal of his activity through the ages. What other individual in all the centuries possessed such powers and such faith, and enjoyed such intimate fellowship with Jehovah?

The discovery in modern times of such ancient records as the Amarna Letters, the Ugaritic (or Ras Shamra) literature, and the clay tablets from Mesopotamia (Mari and Nuzu), has enabled scholars to reconstruct the historical and cultural background of the Biblical record, and to discover what life was like in Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia during the Biblical epoch. Very likely many oral and written records, reaching far back into antiquity, were available to

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the distinguished Hebrew scholar, whose Egyptian schooling and whose graduate study in the region of Mount Sinai made him aware of significant world movements. According to Jewish tradition, when the great scribe Ezra came back from Babylonia to Jerusalem, bringing the Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament, he set to work with prodigious energy preserving, copying, and editing the old materials in his possession.

Genesis and Science. If a student expects to find in Genesis a scientific account of how the world came into existence, with all questions concerning primitive life answered in technical lan-

guage familiar to the professor or student of science, he will be disappointed. Genesis is not an attempt to grapple with or answer such technical questions. It deals with matters far beyond the realm of science. The author seeks to bring us in touch with the eternal God and to reveal the sacred meaning of his being, his purpose, and his dealings with his creatures as he works out his holy will. This book, so remarkable for its profundity and moral exaltation, its dignity and grandeur, pictures the eternal God at work preparing a place where his beloved creatures can live and grow and reveal the divine glory.

OUTLINE

- I. The early beginnings. 1:1–11:32.
 - A. The creation. 1:1–2:25.
 - B. The temptation and fall. 3:1–24.
 - C. The two brothers. 4:1–26.
 - D. Seth and his descendants. 5:1–32.
 - E. Sin and the Flood. 6:1–8:22.
 - F. Noah's later life, and his descendants. 9:1–10:32.
 - G. The Tower of Babel. 11:1–32.
- II. The patriarchs. 12:1–50:26.
 - A. Abraham. 12:1–25:18.
 - B. Isaac. 25:19–26:35.
 - C. Jacob. 27:1–36:43.
 - D. Joseph. 37:1–50:26.

COMMENTARY

I. The Early Beginnings. 1:1–11:32.

A. The Creation. 1:1–2:25. God is the Creator of all things. From the outset in the Book of Genesis, the focus of the strong light of revelation turns upon the Almighty. He is the Beginning, the Cause, the Source of all that is. He brought into being all the things and the persons that were to fit into his plan for the ages. All the matter necessary for his later working, he miraculously created.

1. In beginning (*b'ēreshūth*). The author takes the reader back before time, into the unfathomable reaches of eternity, though language fails him as he seeks to suggest the state of things before time was. He gives no hint of a tangible date for this beginning. His account reaches back into the time before the dating of events. **God created.** The sublime certainty of revelation is based on this one mighty assertion. God did it. Nothing more astounding could be declared. *'Elōhīm* is the usual word for "God" in

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic. It is actually plural in form, but it is used with a verb in the singular. Perhaps the plural is best explained as indicating "plenitude of might" or exceptional dignity and unlimited greatness. In this One are united all the powers of eternity and infinity.

Created (*bārā'*) is a verb used exclusively of God. Man could not reach up to the powers inherent in this word, for it describes full miracle. By the sovereign, originative power of God something absolutely new was brought into being. **The heavens and the earth.** Here the author focuses interest upon all the areas of the world above, around, and below. In this phrase he includes the completed universe as it was known (or might come to be known) by the Hebrews, and all the raw material needed to make suns, planets, stars, nebulae, galaxies, molecules, atoms, electrons, and all the specific things and beings on the earth.

Men of science reveal that our galaxy

contains more than 100 billion stars, and that our sun is 150 trillion miles from the center of our galaxy. Our galaxy is one of a small cluster of 19 galaxies, the nearest of which is 30 million light years from us (150 million trillion miles). Our research scientists, by using powerful telescopes, have made reasonably sure that there are more than a billion galaxies. They estimate the number of stars in these galaxies as close to 100 quintillion. The candle power of one of the galaxies is equal to that of 400 million suns. As a man looks on this vast creation and compares what he sees with the inspired writer's account of its origin, his heart must be filled with awe. He recognizes the hand of God in the beauty and order of the solar system and in the power at the center of the atom. Whether he looks upon the sun (positively charged), holding the planets (negatively charged), or whether he examines the nucleus (positively charged) at the heart of the atom, holding each electron (negatively charged) in its sway, he senses the wisdom, power, and grandeur of God. In the light of all this, a reverent man bows before his Creator in awe and genuine dedication, and pours out worship, adoration, thanksgiving, and unrestrained praise. The sublime creation of the Lord is that being, greatly beloved, whom he chose to create in his own image.

2. The earth was without form, and void (*tōhū wābōhū*). The inspired author quickly turns his attention to the earth, for his story has to do with God's plans and provision for human life on this planet. He describes the earth in its unfinished state. There was plenty of material at hand for every work God planned to create, though in a chaotic state—waste, void, dark. Six full creative days were to make phenomenal changes. God's purpose could not be satisfied until his miraculous touch had made something of this chaos. Even darkness (often, in Scripture, associated with evil) was to be made subservient to his will. **The Spirit of God was hovering (*rūah . . . m'ērā-ḥepet*).** The words portray the energy-giving presence of God, swathing and caressing the chaos and unfinished earth as he prepared to complete his creation. Like a devoted mother bird, he moved about, lavishing his love on the newborn world.

3. Then said God, Let be light. The author presents God's first creative word. With unbelievable ease and deliberate consciousness, the omnipotent God

brought light into existence. He uttered his word, and instantly his will was accomplished (Ps 33:6,9). Light was God's answer to the dominance of darkness. It was the Lord's first positive move toward completing the full program of creation. Without it, the other steps would have been meaningless. The Apostle John tells us that "God is light" (I Jn 1:5). **4. God saw . . . that it was good.** When the Creator looked upon the product of his will, he found it perfectly complete and admirable; and he was pleased. Seven times this statement is made. Every one of God's creative acts was perfect, complete, pleasing, satisfying. It is good to remember that this was the same light man sees and enjoys today.

5. Evening and morning. In the book of Genesis evening always precedes morning. The creation of light ended the reign of darkness and brought on the first day. Since it was still some time before the creation of the sun and moon, it is incorrect to speak of actual twenty-four-hour days until after that point in the program of the Creator. The reference here is to a day of God, and not to an ordinary day bounded by minutes and hours. The beginning of each act of creation is called morning, and the close of that specific divine act is called evening.

6. A firmament (*expanse*) in the midst of the waters. The Hebrew word *rāq'ā* represents something beaten out or pressed out so as to extend over a wide surface. The writer suggests here an expanse above the earth, holding vast reservoirs of water to be released for rain.

9. Let the dry land appear. At one stage, water covered everything. On the third day, however, the Lord made the land and the vegetable kingdom. By his divine power he caused the land to emerge from the great mass of waters, and formed the earth (cf. Ps 104:6-8; Job 38:8-11). From the soil, at the express command of God, living vegetation sprang forth, and soon clothed the earth with beauty and provided food for living creatures.

14. Let be lights. Hebrew *m'ērōt* describes the luminaries or instruments of light. By means of these luminaries, the earth received the light necessary for maintaining life. They were to rule over the day and the night (v. 16), to be for signs and seasons, and to give light upon the earth. The account makes it clear that God *made* them and then *set* them

in place. According to the divine blueprint, the sun, moon, and stars were all brought into being to carry out his specific will.

20. Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures. This verse describes the sudden coming of hosts of winged things and fishes. They were designed to provide another visible demonstration of the Creator's power. With their appearance, there was life on the earth and also activity. And there was, furthermore, an endless succession of living creatures, all made by God's mighty hand. **21. Sea monsters** (AV, *great whales*). Literally, *stretched-out* animals that creep, crawl, or glide upon the earth, in or out of the water, such as, serpents, eels, fish, and dragons. **22.** The Lord breathed his blessing upon these and commanded them to be **fruitful and multiply**. The progress of God's creative activity was upward toward the creation of man.

26. Let us make man. The supreme moment of creation arrived as God created man. The narrative presents God as calling on the heavenly court, or the other two members of the Trinity, to center all attention on this event. Some commentators, however, interpret the plural as a "plural of majesty," indicating dignity and greatness. The plural form of the word for God, *'Elōhim*, can be explained in somewhat the same way. The Lord is represented as giving unusual deliberation to a matter fraught with much significance.

In our image (*ṣelem*), **after our likeness** (*d'mūt*). Though these two synonyms have separate meanings, there is here seemingly no effort to present different aspects of God's being. It is clear that man, as God made him, was distinctly different from the animals already created. He stood on a much higher plateau, for God created him to be immortal, and made him a special image of His own eternity. Man was a creature with whom his Maker could visit and have fellowship and communion. On the other hand, the Lord could expect man to answer him and be responsible to him. Man was constituted to have the privilege of choice, even to the point of disobeying his Creator. He was to be God's responsible representative and steward on the earth, to work out his Creator's will and fulfill the divine purpose. World dominion was to be granted to this new creature (cf. Ps 8:5-7). He was commissioned to subdue (*kābash*, "tread

upon") the earth, and to follow God's plan in filling it with people. This sublime creature, with his unbelievable privileges and heavy responsibilities, was to live and move in kingly fashion.

31. Very good (*tōb m'ōd*). When the Lord looked upon the completed result of his creative acts, he expressed peculiar delight and extreme satisfaction. Everything in the universe, from the biggest star to the smallest blade of grass, brought joy to his heart. It was a beautiful symphony. The Creator's satisfaction is here expressed in terse yet vivid language.

2:1,2. Finished (*kālāh*) **rested** (*shābāt*) **hallowed** (*kādāsh*). When the Creator had pronounced his approval of everything he had made, including man, the crown of creation, he declared the work finished. For the present, he would undertake no further creation. However, he *sanctified*, or *hallowed*, a day of complete rest. The Hebrew word *shābāt* can be translated "desisted" or "ceased" or "cut off." During this time even God would rest from creative activity (cf. Ex 20:11; 31:17). **3.** The **seventh day** was set apart to be hallowed and honored through the years as a reminder that God had appointed a season of rest, refreshment, and complete cessation of all ordinary work, toil, and struggle.

4. These are the generations (*tōl'dōt*). The Hebrew word comes from a verb meaning to *beget* or *bear children*. It could be translated "begettings." This statement may be a reference to Genesis 1. The LXX translates: *This is the Book of the Genesis*. Some would translate it, *The history of the heavens and the earth*. The offspring of heaven and earth were thus pictured.

Jehovah, the Lord God. For the first time, the name *Yahweh*, or *Jehovah* (cf. Ex 6:2,3) is presented. *Jehovah* is the personal covenant God of Israel, who is at the same time the God of heaven and earth. The name connotes the eternal self-existence of the Author of all existence. It is expressive of God's loving-kindness, his grace, his mercy, his lordship, and his eternal relationship to his own chosen ones who are created in his image. *Jehovah's* special relationship to Israel would be described more distinctly when he would appear at the burning bush near Sinai. Here the Author of life is identified with the divine Creator of Genesis 1.

6. A mist used to go up . . . and wa-

ter. In order to prepare the ground to perform its appointed work, the Creator supplied moisture. The usual translation refers to a very slight drizzle of rain, or a mist. It is possible that the word translated mist in the AV (*'ēd*) could be translated "river" or "stream." The former is to be preferred. In any event, the mist was God's way of working out his will for the soil. Continuous action is expressed.

7. **The Lord God formed (*yāšār*) man of the dust of the ground.** Again the two names for God are joined in anticipation of the epoch-making event. The word *yāšār* is used to give the figure of a potter at work, molding with his hands the plastic material he holds (cf. Jer 18:3,4). The same verb is used to picture the shaping of a people or a nation. Man's body was fashioned from the dust of the ground, while his spirit came from the very "breath" of God. He is literally a creature of two worlds; both earth and heaven can claim him. Notice the three statements: **Jehovah formed (*yāšār*) man of the dust . . . Jehovah God breathed (*nāpah*) into his nostrils the breath of life . . . man became (*hāyāh*) a living soul.** The first step was exceedingly important, but the moistened dust was far from being a man until the second miracle was complete. God communicated his own life to that inert mass of substance he had previously created and molded into form. The divine breath permeated the material and transformed it into a living being. That strange combination of dust and deity produced a marvelous creation (cf. I Cor 15:47-49), made in God's own image. As a living being, man was destined to reveal the qualities of the Giver of life.

This language of Scripture does not suggest that man bore physical resemblance to God. Rather, he was made like God in spiritual powers. To him were given the powers to think and feel, to communicate with others, to discern and discriminate, and, to a certain extent, to determine his own character.

8. **A garden (*gan*) . . . in Eden (*b' 'ēden*).** The author represents God as planting a beautiful garden for his new creatures. The word means an enclosure or a park. The LXX here uses a term that forms the basis for our word "paradise." Man's work in that garden was to exercise dominion while serving — a good combination. The duties probably were rigorous but enjoyable. Eden, or the land of Eden, probably lay in the lower part

of the Babylonian valley. Though many rival claims for the location of Eden have been advanced, the evidence seems to point to the area between the Tigris and the Euphrates as the cradle of civilization. The Hebrew word *Eden* probably means "enchantment," "pleasure," or "delight." In this quiet place of indescribable beauty, man was to enjoy fellowship and companionship with the Creator, and to work in accord with the divine blueprint to perfect His will. Magnificent trees furnished sustaining food, but man had to work to care for them. Adequate water supply was ensured by a vast irrigation system, a network of rivers that flowed in and about the garden with its life-giving waters. In order to lead man to full moral and spiritual development, God gave him specific commands and a specific prohibition to govern his behavior. He also gave him the power of choice and set before him the privilege of growing in divine favor. Thus began the moral discipline of man.

18. **An help meet for him (*'ēzer k'negdō*).** The inspired author indirectly reveals man's natural loneliness and lack of full satisfaction. Though much had been done for him, yet he was conscious of a lack. The Creator had not finished. He had plans for providing a companion who would satisfy the unfulfilled yearnings of man's heart. Created for fellowship and companionship, man could enter into the full life only as he might share love, trust, and devotion in the intimate circle of the family relationship. Jehovah made it possible for man to have **an help meet for him.** Literally, *a help answering to him*, or, *one who answers*. She was to be one who could share man's responsibilities, respond to his nature with understanding and love, and wholeheartedly co-operate with him in working out the plan of God.

21. **Deep sleep (*tardēmā*) . . . made her (*bānā*).** Today physicians use various anaesthetics to produce deep sleep. We do not know what means or method the Creator used to induce in Adam such **deep sleep** that he was unconscious of the events. That remains a mystery. Certainly divine mercy was displayed in this miracle. The Eternal was bringing into being not only another individual, but a new one, totally different, with another sex. Someone has said that "woman was taken not from man's head to rule over him, nor from his feet to be trampled upon, but from his side, under his arm, to be protected, and closest his

heart, to be loved.” She is also represented in the story of creation as wholly dependent upon her husband and not complete without him. Similarly, man is never fully complete without the woman. It is God’s will that it should be so. Since woman was formed from man’s side, she is bound to him and obligated to be a **help** to him. He is obligated to give her the full protection and devoted shielding of his arm. The two beings make up the completed whole, the crown of creation. The author of Genesis declares that God **builded** (*bānā*) the rib which he had taken from man into a woman. The hand that had molded clay into the material for the body of man took a part of the living body of man and builded it into the woman.

22. Brought her unto the man. When God was ready with this new creation, he “gave her away” in marriage to her husband, thus establishing the eternally significant institution of marriage. As the Creator instituted marriage, it was a sacred relationship of man and woman, with deep mystery at its center proclaiming its divine origin. The loving heart of God doubtless rejoiced in the institution of a relationship that was to be high, clean, holy, and pleasant for mankind.

23. This is now . . . flesh of my flesh. The man recognized in this new creation a divinely created companion who was fashioned to provide all that his hungry heart would need to carry out God’s holy will. **Woman** (*ishshā*) . . . **man** (*ish*). These two Hebrew words are much alike, even in sound. The only difference between them is that the word for “woman” has a feminine ending. More recent lexicons declare that these words are not etymologically related. There is, however, no actual ground for rejecting the earlier view that the word for “woman” is derived from the word for “man.”

24. Therefore doth a man . . . cleave (*dābaq*) **unto his wife.** The Creator had established the full basis for monogamous marriage. The great Hebrew commentator, Rashi, declares that these words are a specific comment by the Holy Spirit. The final commentary on the union of man and wife was given by our Lord, when he said: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mk 10:7-9). God planned that

the marriage bond should be forever indissoluble. **Cleave** (*dābaq*) means to “glue himself to” his wife (his own wife). The word for “wife” is singular. The man, who is stronger, is the one who is to **cleave**. The wife will be held when the husband exerts the kind of loving power described in this verse. Love is strong and enduring. “What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” This is an old statement, but it is truly God’s word for all our hearts today, and always.

How remarkable it is that a relationship so accurately described centuries ago by Moses should still be rooted in eternal truth and divine decree! The sacredness of marriage is founded in the very heart of the Scriptures, and eternally underlined as basic by the Holy Spirit. God willed that the beings he created in his image should be his chosen vessels to build a home pleasing to him. In the NT the Spirit reveals: the divinely ordained relationship of man and woman, based on the order of creation; the headship of the family resident in the husband; the eternal sacredness of the marriage vow; the kind of love that should unite husband and wife; and the purity that should characterize those who typify the Bride for whom Christ gave his life.

B. The Temptation and Fall. 3:1-24. The author of Genesis here lists the steps leading to the entrance of sin into the hearts of these divinely created individuals, who had started life with such clean hearts and so much promise. Disobedience and sin becloud the picture. Though these beings were morally upright, they had been given the power of choice; and they were subject to the power of the tempter at any moment. Hence the test was inevitable. The garden was an exquisite creation, filled with plenteous provisions. Man’s environment left nothing to be desired. One prohibition, however, had been placed upon the man and woman. Every tree, shrub, and delicacy could be theirs, except the fruit of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” This prohibition seems to have produced the atmosphere in which human minds welcome the appeal of the tempter.

1. The serpent (*nāhāsh*). The narrative presents the seducer as one of the animals, which was much **more subtil** than the others. The Hebrew word contains the idea of exceptional shrewdness. (Rabbinic legend has it that the serpent

walked erect.) He had the power of speech and talked freely with his victim. He was wily, insidious, crafty. Later exegesis will identify the serpent with Satan or the devil. In the light of later Scripture truths, we are justified in concluding that the serpent was a specially chosen instrument of Satan for this test. In Rev 12:9 the tempter is called "the great dragon . . . that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan" (cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book IX). The word *nāḥāsh*, meaning *to make a hissing sound*, undoubtedly refers to the kind of being known to us as a serpent. Paul declares that Satan fashions himself into "an angel of light" (II Cor 11:14). He chose the craftiest, the most subtle, the most cautious of the animals and took full control of him for his disastrous work. Jesus said of Satan: "He is a liar, and the father thereof" (Jn 8:44, ASV; cf. Rom 16:20; II Cor 11:3; I Tim 2:14; Rev 20:2).

The method of deceit the serpent employed with Eve was to distort the meaning of God's prohibition and then hold it up to ridicule in its new form. The tempter feigned surprise that God should be guilty of issuing such a command. Then he sought to break down the woman's faith by sowing in her mind doubts, suspicions, and false pictures of the Almighty and his motives. It was a deliberate attempt to reflect on God. When faith fails, the sure foundation of moral conduct collapses. It is only a small step from unbelief to sin and disgrace.

2,3. The woman said. To parley with the tempter is always dangerous. Unconsciously, the woman was revealing a willingness to come to terms with the tempter. She did not have the advantage of Jesus' words in Mt 4:10 and James' admonition in Jas 4:7. She was innocent, guileless, and unsuspecting, and no match for the wily antagonist. She was unwilling to stand by and see God misrepresented, and so she courageously attempted to correct the serpent's statement. But she quoted God's prohibition inaccurately, adding the word *touch*.

5. Ye shall be as God (AV, gods). Now that Eve had entered into the conversation, the seducer advanced his more powerful argument. He quickly suggested that man's great desire to be on a par with and truly like God had been deliberately thwarted by divine command. He charged the Creator with selfishness and with a malicious falsehood, representing him as envious and unwilling for his creatures to have something

that would make them like the omniscient One. (The word *'Elōhīm* can be translated *God* or *gods*, since it is plural. The former is preferred.)

6. The woman saw . . . took . . . did eat . . . gave. The strong verbs tell the story vividly and clearly. Something happened in the thinking of the woman. Gradually the fruit took on new significance. It was attractive to the eye, desirable to the taste, and powerful to give new wisdom. She took a new step into the field of self-deception. She not only wanted food that was delicious and attractive, but she was desirous of power. She believed this fruit would satisfy all her desires. The next step was automatic and immediate. **She took . . . and did eat.** The tempter was not needed after that moment. Eve took up his work and presented the well-recommended fruit to her husband, and **he did eat.**

7. The eyes . . . were opened (*pākah*) . . . they knew. The word *pākah* pictures a sudden miracle. The promise of the tempter was fulfilled quickly; instant perception was given. They saw and knew. But what they saw was far different from the rosy picture painted by the serpent. Conscience was rudely awakened. They saw their nakedness, spiritual as well as physical. And then shame and fear were born. When Adam and Eve realized that they were out of touch with God, a terrible loneliness overwhelmed them. Remorse and its inevitable miseries followed. Their loss of faith had subjected them to all these attendant woes. They hastily made *aprons* or *girdles* to provide some measure of concealment as they sought a remedy for their bewilderment, loneliness, and guilt.

8. The voice of the Lord God . . . in the cool of the day. (*Kol*, "voice," is, lit., *sound*; *l'ruah*, "cool," is *wind* or *breeze*.) They might hide from God, but they could not escape him. The loving Creator could not overlook their disobedience, nor could he leave quivering sinners in their poignant need. They were his own. His holiness must come, clothed with love, to seek, find, and judge them. Ordinarily, the approach of God's footsteps brought them joy. Now, terror and dread paralyzed them, though the Lord did not approach in thunder nor call harshly. **9.** It is easy to imagine the sweetness of the divine voice, as it sounded forth through the trees in the stillness of the evening, calling, "Where art thou?" Of course God knew where the man and woman were. But he was appealing to them,

seeking through tenderness and love to win a favorable response. And he was seeking to lead the transgressors gently to a full conviction of their sin. Though Justice was dictating the procedure, Mercy was leading. The Judge would render the decision and pronounce the sentence.

12. The woman . . . gave me of the tree, and I ate. God's questions were direct and unusually specific. Instead of making full confession and pleading for mercy, Adam and Eve began to offer excuses and pass the responsibility on to another. The man somewhat recklessly threw a part of the blame back on God—whom thou gavest . . . me. **13.** The woman, refusing to take responsibility, cast it all on the serpent. The serpent had no way of passing it on. **Beguile** [d] (*hish-shi'ani*). The verb conveys the idea of deception (cf. Paul's use of this concept in II Cor 11:3; I Tim 2:14).

14. Cursed ('ārūr) art thou. The Lord singled out the originator and instigator of the temptation for special condemnation and degradation. From that moment he must crawl in the dust and even feed on it. He would slither his way along in disgrace, and hatred would be directed against him from all directions. Man would always regard him as a symbol of the degradation of the one who had slandered God (cf. Isa 65:25). He was to represent not merely the serpent race, but the power of the evil kingdom. As long as life continued, men would hate him and seek to destroy him.

15. I will put enmity. The word *'ēbā* denotes the blood-feud that runs deepest in the heart of man (cf. Num 35:19,20; Ezk 25:15-17; 35:5,6). **Thou shalt bruise** (*shúp*). A prophecy of a continuing struggle between the descendants of woman and of the serpent to destroy each other. The verb *shúp* is rare (cf. Job 9:17; Ps 139:11). It is the same in both clauses. When translated *crush*, it seems appropriate to the reference concerning the head of the serpent, but not quite so accurate in describing the attack of the serpent on man's heel. It is also rendered *lie in wait for*, *aim at*, or (LXX) *watch for*. The Vulgate renders it *conteret*, "bruise," in the first instance and *insidiaberis*, "lie in wait," in the other clause. Thus, we have in this famous passage, called the *protevangelium*, "first gospel," the announcement of a prolonged struggle, perpetual antagonism, wounds on both sides, and eventual victory for the

seed of woman. God's promise that the head of the serpent was to be crushed pointed forward to the coming of Messiah and guaranteed victory. This assurance fell upon the ears of God's earliest creatures as a blessed hope of redemption. An unfortunate translation in the Vulgate changes the pronoun *his* (v. 15c) from the masculine to the feminine, providing spurious support for unfounded claims concerning "the Blessed Virgin Mary."

16. Unto the woman he said. For the woman, God predicted subjection to the man, and suffering. Pregnancy and childbirth would be attended by pain. The word *'asvon* pictures both mental and physical pain. Eve would realize her womanly longings and desires, but not without agony. In other words, as wife and mother, she was to be subject to the discipline of Jehovah. Woman's love and man's lordship are both presented in the vivid description. We cannot *fully* comprehend the nature of such judgments of the Lord.

17. Unto Adam he said. Physical hardship, painful toil, disappointing vexations, and hard struggle were appointed as the lot of the man, who was definitely adjudged a guilty sinner. Formerly the earth had yielded its produce easily and freely to man, in great abundance. Adam had only to "dress" the garden (2:15) in order to enjoy its luscious fruits. But now God pronounced a special curse on the ground. Henceforth it would yield its grains and fruits reluctantly. Man would have to work hard cultivating the soil to make it produce life's necessities. And he would have to wrestle with troublesome thorns and weeds not previously in evidence. Drudgery, difficulties, and weariness would be his daily lot. For Adam, as well as for Eve, sin exacted a heavy toll.

20. Eve (*hawwā*). The Hebrew word has to do with life, and the verb to which it is related speaks of living. All life originated with the first woman. She was the mother of each person and, therefore, the mother of each clan and people. In accordance with the divine purpose, life must go on, even though the pronouncement of death had been spoken—**unto the dust thou shalt return** (v. 19).

22-24a. So he drove out (*gārash*) **the man.** A necessary and merciful act. The Lord could not allow rebellious man access to the tree of life. With loving care he kept Adam and Eve away from the

fruit that would make them immortal and thus perpetuate the terrible condition into which sin had brought them. From the lovely garden he drove them out into an unfriendly wilderness.

24b. Cherubims, and a flaming sword (AV). The Hebrew interpreter, Rashi, claimed that these instruments were “angels of destruction,” designed to destroy anyone who sought entrance. Hebrew *kerubim* indicates divinely formed figures that serve as bearers of the deity or as special guardians of sacred things. In one instance they are shown upholding the throne on which God sits. In another, they are used to describe the dread unapproachability of Jehovah. In general, their function seems to be to guard the sacred habitation of God from encroachment or defilement. The tree of life was perfectly safe with the cherubim standing guard at the gate. And sinful man was safe from the harm that could have come to him had he not had the majestic protector. **24c. The flame of a whirling sword (*mithhapeket*).** The way back into Eden was guarded not only by the cherubim but also by a revolving sword-like flame. This gave further assurance that man would not make his way to the tree of life. Though man’s paradise was closed to him because he had become a sinner, Jehovah did not forget his creatures. He had already made provision for their triumphant return.

C. The Two Brothers. 4:1-26.

1. Cain (*Qayin*). The word **Cain** is usually associated with the Hebrew word *qānā*, “to acquire” or “to get.” The derivation is based on the resemblance of sound, rather than on basic etymology. It might be called a play on words. The actual meaning of the word possibly came through the Arabic (“a lance” or “a smith”). Eve was overjoyed at the birth of her son. She exclaimed, “I have gotten a man.” **2. Abel (*Hebel*).** The name given to the second son indicates “a fleeting breath” or “a vapor.” The cognate Accadian word *aplu* means *son*. Abel was the originator of pastoral life, while Cain followed his father in the pursuit of agriculture.

3,4. An offering (*minhā*). Each man brought a special present or gift to Jehovah. No mention is made of the altar or of the place of the religious observance. The *minhā*, as the ancients knew it, served to express gratitude, to effect reconciliation with the Lord, and to accompany worship. This account pictures

the first act of worship recorded in human history. In each case the worshiper brought something of his own as an oblation to the Lord.

5a. The Lord had respect (*shā’ā*). The gift brought by Cain was not received by the Lord. No reason is given here for the rejection. And the Scripture does not tell us how God indicated his disapproval. It may be that fire fell from heaven and consumed the accepted offering but left the other untouched. Some have thought that Cain’s offering was rejected because Cain failed to perform the proper ritual. Others have advanced the idea that the nature of the gifts made the difference—the one being flesh and involving death and bloodshed, the other being vegetable, without bloodshed (cf. Heb 9:22). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us the inspired explanation of the difference between the offerings: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain . . . God bearing witness in respect of his gifts” (Heb 11:4). This explanation centers upon the difference in spirit manifested by the two men. Because Abel was a man of faith, he came in the right spirit and presented worship that pleased God. We have reason to believe that Abel had some realization of his need for substitutionary atonement. To all appearances both offerings expressed gratitude, thanksgiving, and devotion to God. But the man who lacked genuine faith in his heart could not please God even though the material gift was spotless. God did not look upon Cain because He had already looked at him and seen what was in his heart. Abel came to God in the right attitude of heart for worship and in the only way sinful men can approach a holy God. Cain did not.

5b. Cain’s unbridled anger showed itself instantly. Furious wrath blazed out, revealing the spirit that was lodged within the heart. Cain became an enemy of God and hostile to his brother. Thus, wounded pride produced envy and a spirit of revenge. And these brought forth the burning hatred and violence that made murder possible. **6,7a. Countenance fallen . . . a lifting up.** The heat that blazed within him caused his countenance to “fall.” It brought on brooding and an unlovely, morose spirit. Gently and patiently God dealt with Cain, seeking to save the rebellious sinner. He assured him that if he would sincerely repent, he might again lift up his face in

happiness and reconciliation. *Nāsā*, "lift up," lends itself to the idea of forgiveness. The merciful Jehovah thus held out to Cain the hope of forgiveness and victory as he faced his momentous decision.

7b. Sin (*hatt'at*) coucheth (*rābaṣ*). Close upon that heartening promise, Jehovah uttered a stiff warning, urging the sinner to control his temper and beware lest a crouching beast (sin) spring upon him and devour him. The danger was real. The deadly beast was even at that moment ready to overpower him. God's word demanded instant action and strong effort to repulse the would-be conqueror. Cain must not let these boiling thoughts and impulses drive him to ruinous behavior. God made his strong appeal to Cain's *will*. The will had to be thrown into the struggle to make victory over sin (*hatt'at*) complete. It was up to Cain to conquer sin in himself, to control rather than be controlled. The moment of destiny was upon him. It was not too late for him to choose the way of God.

9. Where is Abel thy brother? Failing to gain the mastery over the savage monster, Cain soon found himself at the mercy of a force that controlled him completely. Almost immediately one son became a murderer and the other a martyr. Jehovah came quickly to confront the murderer with a question. Seemingly he hoped to elicit a confession of guilt that could prepare the way for mercy and full pardon. Though Cain had willfully sinned, he found himself pursued by a loving God, rich in grace. **Am I my brother's keeper?** (*shōmēr*) A shameful response to a question from a loving Father! Petulantly, defiantly, Cain made his reply. Sin already had him in the grip of a vise. He renounced the claimant rights of brotherhood. He refused to show respect to the eternal God. He brazenly leaned back on his own selfish defiance and spoke that which no one should dare to utter.

10. The voice (*qōl*) of the bloods of thy brother are crying (*sō'qim*) unto me from the ground. Blood spilled by a murderer, though covered by earth, was crying out to God. Jehovah could hear it, and he understood the meaning of the cry, for he knew of Cain's guilt. How plaintively those **bloods** were crying out for vengeance! The author of Hebrews refers to this experience in the phrase, "the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (12:24).

12. A fugitive (*nā'*) and a wanderer

(*nād*). The curse pronounced on the murderer involved banishment from food-producing soil to the unproductive desert. The ground, God said, would be hostile to the murderer, so that he could not derive sustenance from tilling the soil. In his search for subsistence, he would become a Bedouin of the waste lands, wandering about in weariness and despair. Insecurity, restlessness, hard struggle, guilt, and fears, were to be his constant "companions." The word for **fugitive** carries the idea of tottering, staggering, stumbling uncertainly along in a fruitless search for satisfaction. It was a dismal, discouraging prospect.

13. My punishment (*'āwōn*). Though Cain's life was spared, he trembled under the weight of his sin, his guilt, his punishment, and the unending consequences that loomed before him. The Hebrew word *'āwōn* literally refers to his iniquity, but it also contains the thought of the consequences of his sin. Cain was far more concerned with his sentence than with his sin. **Greater than I can bear.** His bitter cry to God called attention to the unbearable weight of his punishment. It was heavier than he could lift and carry. The Hebrew word *nāsa* carries the ideas of "taking away" (forgiveness) and "lifting up" (expiation). Again, it seems clear that the frightened murderer was thinking of the punishment about to come upon him.

14b. Every one . . . shall slay me. Dread and despondency began to overwhelm the sinful man as he thought of the perils of the desert. He imagined that cruel foes would delight to kill him. He could feel the hot breath of the avenger on his neck. His active conscience was already at work. In his fear, he was sure that certain destruction awaited him, for he felt that he would be completely outside the circle of God's care. **15. A sign (*'ōt*) for Cain.** But Jehovah, in mercy, assured Cain of his continuing presence and unending protection. He set a **sign** on him—evidently a mark or designation to indicate that Cain belonged to the Lord God and must be spared bodily harm. There is no evidence that the 'mark of Cain' was a sign to announce to the world that he was a murderer. It was, rather, a special mark of loving care and protection. Cain would continue always in the safekeeping of the covenant God. Though a murderer, he was the recipient of God's favor.

16. Land of Nod (*nōd*). Literally, *land of wandering* or *flight* (cf. 4:12,14).

There is no way to locate this area geographically except to speak of it as being east of Eden. Cain was but fulfilling the prediction God made concerning his future existence. Pathetically and stoically he set out into the trackless wastes. The ideas of "flight" and "misery" are discernible in the Hebrew word for went out.

17. His wife (*'ishtô*). The Book of Genesis does not answer the oft-repeated question: Where did Cain get his wife? It does make it clear that many other sons and daughters were born to Adam and Eve. It also presents the lapse of many years (maybe hundreds of years) before Cain's marriage experience. Since all life came from the first divinely created human pair, it is necessary to conclude that at some time brothers and sisters were married to each other. By the time Cain was ready to set up a home, Adam and Eve had numerous descendants. It is not at all necessary to imagine another race of people already well established in the world. Cain's wife was one of the family of Adam and Eve.

25. Seth (*Shêt*). The divine narrative has preserved the name Seth as that of the third son in Adam's line. The Hebrew word shows marked similarity to the word *shât*, translated "appointed" or "set." In reality, Seth became the one on whom God could depend as the foundation stone for His family. He was "set" or "appointed" to take up the work and mission of Abel. Cain had forfeited his right to carry forward God's sublime hope. Seth would take the burden and the privilege upon his shoulders. Through his line God would perfect His promises.

26. Began to call upon the name of Jehovah. It was a never-to-be-forgotten experience when, under the encouragement of Enosh (or Enos), men began to call upon (or with) the name of Jehovah, the covenant God. Enosh, who was prominent in the line of Seth, was the originator of public prayer and spiritual worship. In it, the ineffable name of the eternal God was used. There was hope for a better day through Seth's descendants.

D. Seth and His Descendants. 5:1-32.

22. Enoch (*Hănôk*) walked with God. Into a narrative of birth and dreary existence and eventual death, the author suddenly introduces a sublime character, Enoch, who pleased the

Lord and lived in his immediate presence. In a deteriorating age, Enoch gave a remarkable demonstration of commendable piety. In thought, word, deed, and attitude he was in accord with the divine will; and he brought joy to the heart of his Maker. The LXX says regarding him: "Enoch was well-pleasing unto God." One striking statement reveals a hint of the beginning of Enoch's walk with God (cf. 22a). It may have been at the moment of the birth of his baby boy, doubtless a high moment in his life, that he set his heart on intimate communion with his God. His close association in such atmosphere brought him heavenly wisdom, which fitted him to understand and appreciate the rich things of God.

24. He was not; for God took him. On account of his genuine piety and his apprehension of divine wisdom, he was lifted from the earth to continue his walk in the sacred regions beyond. His disappearance was sudden and wholly unannounced, and death had nothing to do with it. The LXX says: *He was not found, for God translated him.* "By faith Enoch was translated," says the writer of Hebrews, "that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had translated him" (Heb 11:5). A beautiful and meaningful miracle was wrought so that the one man who had learned to love God and walk with him might continue in that fellowship without interruption.

E. Sin and the Flood. 6:1 – 8:22.

6:2. The sons of God (*b'nê 'Elôhîm*) . . . daughters of men. Wickedness was increasing on every hand. Cain's descendants became exceedingly godless and pagan. A powerful race of giants, called "Nephilim," came into prominence. The verb *nāpal*, "to fall," has been considered the source of the noun, and so these gigantic creatures have been thought of as "fallen ones." The reference to the *b'nê 'Elôhîm* has occasioned marked differences of opinion among scholars. *'Elôhîm* is plural in form. It is usually translated "God." But it can be translated "gods," as, for instance, when it refers to the gods of the heathen neighbors of Israel. It can, also, denote the heavenly circle of beings in close fellowship with Jehovah, residents of heaven, assigned specific duties as God's assistants (see Job 1:6). In some cases in Scripture "sons of God" may be identified with "angels" or "messengers." Jesus

is the Son of God in a unique sense. Believers are called "sons of God" because of their relationship to him. In the OT, however, "sons of God" are a special class of beings that make up the heavenly court.

The reference to the marriages of *b'ne 'Elohim* to the daughters of men has been dealt with in many ways. To translate it literally would make the passage say that members of the heavenly company selected choice women from the earth and set up marriage relationships with them, literally and actually. This can be the only interpretation of Job 1:6. There, the *b'ne 'Elohim* were plainly the members of God's heavenly court. S. R. Driver maintains that this is the only legitimate and correct sense that can be accepted. Jesus' reply to the Sadducees, in Mt 22:30, seems to make this view untenable. He said that the angels "neither marry nor are given in marriage." The statement in Gen 6:2 makes it clear that permanent marriage is described. Women were chosen and forced to become parties to the unnatural relationship. Bible students who have rejected this solution have resorted to other explanations. Some have said that a union of Seth's godly line with Cain's godless descendants is described. Still others hold that these words refer to marriage between persons of the upper class of society and those of a lower or less worthy class. In the light of the facts and the accurate rendering of the words of the text, we conclude that some men of the heavenly group (angels or messengers) actually took wives of the earthly women. They used superior force to overpower them, to make the conquest complete. The "sons of God" were irresistible (cf. II Pet 2:4; Jude 6).

3. My spirit (*ruah*) shall not always strive (*yadon*) with (or act in) man. This Hebrew verb may be translated either *strive with* or *abide in*. The first translation would represent God as continually using force on rebellious man to hold him in line and to keep him from utter destruction as a result of his sinful behavior. The second view would represent God as determined to withdraw the vital breath of life from man, with the result, of course, that death would ensue. The Hebrew word *dun* (or *din*) indicates life expressing itself in action or in evidences of power.

In the first interpretation, the spirit (*ruah*) is considered an ethical principle used to restrain or to control the created

one, the result being ethical behavior. In the other, the spirit (*ruah*) is considered a vital principle given to the inanimate bit of clay to provide life, motivation, and power for living. When that *ruah* is withdrawn by the divine hand, judgment is complete. This divine announcement came from Jehovah when he found his creatures dominated by sin. It is God's declaration that he must abandon man to the doom of death. Sin had set in motion that which would guarantee death.

5.6. Wickedness (*ra'at*) . . . repented (*naham*) . . . grieved (*asab*). The depravity was widespread. And it was inward, continual, and habitual. Man was utterly corrupt, bad in heart and in conduct. There was no good in him. The whole bent of his thoughts and imaginations was completely out of line with the will of Jehovah. Flesh was on the throne. God was forgotten or openly defied. *Naham* in the niphil form describes the love of God that has suffered heart-rending disappointment. Literally, it speaks of taking a deep breath in extreme pain. God's purposes and plans had failed to produce the precious fruit that he had anticipated, because sinful man had prevented their full fruition. *Asab* in the hithpael form means to pierce oneself or to experience piercing. The statement says, then, that God experienced heart-piercing sorrow as he looked upon the tragic devastation sin had produced. His handiwork had been marred and ruined. Through it all, God's love shone clearly, even when the rumblings of divine judgment began to threaten the people of the earth.

7. Blot out (*maha*; AV, *destroy*). The verb indicates a movement that wipes clean or blots out completely. The operation was designed to destroy every living thing that stood in the way. Full destruction was to be executed. Nothing was to be spared. **8. But Noah found grace (*hen*).** One man of all the countless multitudes then on the earth was fit to receive God's gift of grace. The word *grace* certainly means "favor" or "acceptance," at least, and probably has a much richer meaning. It was love and mercy in action. God's extending grace to Noah signified that there was new life and new hope for mankind in the days ahead.

9. Noah was a righteous man and perfect . . . and Noah walked with God. With these words the author describes three characteristics of a godly life—

justice, purity, and holiness (cf. 6:8—he found grace in the eyes of the Lord).

The word **righteous**, from Hebrew *šāddiq*, describes Noah's character as it manifested itself in relation to other human beings. "Straightness" or "uprightness" was evident in his behavior. All his conduct revealed this moral and ethical righteousness (cf. Ezk 14:14,20). Hebrew *tāmim*, **perfect**, describes the perfected product of a wise builder; it is full, complete, and flawless. Viewed objectively, the word *blameless* describes character. In the realm of ethics, the idea of "integrity" comes out as the derived meaning (cf. Job 1:1). The statement, **he walked with God**, opens another area of thought. In walking with God, Noah had displayed a spirit, an attitude, and a character that made him accepted and approved for the most intimate spiritual relationship. He manifested qualities of soul that endeared him to the Lord (cf. Gen 5:22; Mic 6:8; Mal 2:6).

14-16. An ark (tēbā). The English word **ark** came down through the Latin *arca*, "a chest or coffer." The word for the "ark" of the covenant is a different word—'ārōn. *Tēbā* is probably of Egyptian origin. Noah's ark was very likely a kind of large covered raft built of light resinous wood. With its three floors, it reached up to a total of forty-five feet in height. It was four hundred and fifty feet long and seventy-five feet wide. (The cubit was equal to eighteen inches.) Cells, nests, or small rooms, were built along the sides of the three floors. To make the craft watertight, a powerful **pitch**, or bitumen, was used inside and outside, as a caulking compound. The Hebrew word *sōhar* can best be translated a *light* or *window*. This was approximately eighteen inches in height and extended completely around the ark; it admitted light and air.

17-22. Flood (mābbūl). This word has no Hebrew etymology. It was used *only* of the deluge of Noah. It may have come from Assyrian *nabalu*, "to destroy." According to the author of Genesis, God's purpose was certainly to bring to an end the living things of his creation. During the 120 years while Noah was completing his work, he was preaching to the people in an urgent effort to cause them to repent. They saw the ark take shape before their eyes while the preacher delivered his sermons. Noah's immediate family, including his wife, his three sons, and their wives, accompanied him into the haven of safety. In obedience to God's

command, they took with them representative pairs of all the animals of the earth.

7:11a,b. The fountains of the great deep [were] broken up (bāqā'). Enormous reservoirs of water were stored under the earth. This mighty collection of waters was called *t'hōm*, "the great deep" (cf. Gen 1:2). These subterranean waters, confined by creative power on the second day of creation, were unleashed to pour forth in volume and in violence defying description. It was not an ordinary flood, but a giant tidal wave that broke suddenly upon a startled populace. *Bāqā'* indicates a terrestrial convulsion that split asunder every restraining barrier that had existed. It was a tumultuous breaking loose of indescribable destruction. Man cannot imagine the fury and the destructive might of the eruption, nor the awfulness of the display of God's power to destroy sinful beings. The complete corruption of men was far worse than any of us can imagine. The destruction was necessary.

11c,12. The windows of the heavens were opened (pātaḥ). In addition to the terrific upheaval from below, the peoples of the earth witnessed the opening of the gates of the mighty reservoirs of waters above the earth. All the stored-up waters burst forth in torrents. Resistlessly and continuously for forty days and forty nights, the gigantic cloudburst poured down upon the earth. The effect of the deluge on men, women, children, animals, and plants, and the earth's surface cannot be completely imagined.

16-18. The Lord shut him in (sāgar) . . . And the waters prevailed (gābar). In the midst of the raging storm and the flooding torrents, Jehovah, the covenant God, reached out a hand of mercy and shut the door of the ark to keep his people safe. But he poured forth torrents of water to destroy utterly the sinners on earth. The inhabitants of the floating house could ride the waters with a sense of security and safekeeping, for they trusted God. The divine hand that had broken up the deep and opened the windows of the heavens to pour out destruction had also demonstrated God's loving concern for those who were to be the nucleus for his new beginning.

While God's chosen ones nestled safely in the ark, the waters continued to increase and to take over the earth. The verb *gābar* indicates mastery, subjection, and prevailing power. Relentlessly the waters took control and continued to be

in command until the high mountains were completely submerged. Again, the majesty, might, and compelling purpose of the Almighty became increasingly apparent. The divine purpose was being worked out in all the earth. God's will was being accomplished.

8:4. The mountains of Ararat. After 150 days, the ark came to rest upon one of the peaks of the high ranges in Armenia. *Urartu*, Accadian cognate of *Ararat*, is used in ancient documents to designate Armenia. The mountain now called Ararat towers to the height of 16,916 feet.

The Babylonian flood story, a part of the Gilgamesh Epic, relates how its hero, like the Biblical Noah, built an ark, brought into it specimens of the animal kingdom, and, after the flood landed on Mount Nisir east of the Tigris River.

20. Noah builded an altar (*mizbēah*) to Jehovah. As Noah moved out into the bright new day, the most natural thing for him to do was to find a high spot of ground and build a *mizbēah*. It was the first altar built on the cleansed earth. Noah recognized the end of the tragic judgment and the dawning of a new day of hope and promise. Building the altar was his move to pour out to Jehovah praise and thanksgiving.

He offered up burnt offerings (*ōlā*). The word for burnt offerings is derived from the verb *ālāh*, "to go up." The suggestion here is that, as the sacrifice was consumed, the fumes went upward to God, bearing, in a sense, the gratitude and worship of the offerer. It was a truly propitiatory sacrifice (cf. II Sam 24:25), offered in sincere worship, out of deep thankfulness. And so the eternal God was pleased. Noah had found favor in his eyes.

F. Noah's Later Life, and His Descendants. 9:1–10:32.

9:9-15. I established (*mēqim*) my covenant I do set (*nātan*) my bow in the clouds. In solemn manner Jehovah confirmed the covenant promises he had already given. The forming of a covenant involves the solemn binding together of two parties, hitherto free from obligation to each other. God's binding himself to this one family group was a voluntary act of free grace. Noah and his family had done nothing to merit the covenant relation, and God was not obligated to them. Furthermore, this was a covenant with all mankind. By accepting the terms

and becoming obedient, man bound himself to his Creator to keep the divine terms and to observe their inner spirit.

The covenant needed to have an outward and visible sign or token as a constant reminder of the sacred agreement. This sign (*ōt*) would be a pledge of the inner spiritual bond, guaranteeing its unending reliability. The Hebrew perfect tense can be translated *I have set*, or *I now at this moment do set*. The bow in the cloud was to be the "sign." God could have created the rainbow at that moment and invested it with this meaning. It is probable, however, that he pointed to the bow already in the cloud and indicated that it would now take on new meaning, giving assurance of his mercy and grace; it would be a visible reminder of his love. He said: **I will remember** (v. 15).

18. Shem, Ham, Japheth. The author of Genesis makes it clear that these three sons of Noah became the fathers of the three great families of mankind. **Shem** is named first as occupying the place of leadership and prominence in God's plans for the peoples. The Semites (Shemites) were to be the spiritual leaders of men. God's chosen ones of that line would teach the religion of Jehovah to the world. We know that the Messiah was to come from Shem's descendants. **Japheth** was to be the father of one large branch of the Gentile world. His descendants would scatter far and wide in their search for material gain and power. They would be prosperous and exceedingly powerful. **Ham** was to be the father of the other branch of Gentiles, including Egyptians, Ethiopians, Abyssinians, and kindred groups. His son, Canaan, became the father of the groups called Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, later dispossessed by the Hebrews. The curse pronounced upon Canaan by Noah was not, in any sense, designed as a proof text in slavery or segregation discussions.

10:4. Tarshish. The famed city in Spain to which the Phoenician traders went. Centuries later the prophet Jonah boarded a ship bound for that distant city. The Greeks called it *Tartessus*. **6. Mizraim.** The correct Hebrew word for Egypt, comprising the lower and the upper divisions of that land. The two capitals of Egypt were Memphis and Thebes. **8,9. Nimrod.** Son of Cush. He founded the early Babylonian empire and built the city of Nineveh. He was a mighty hunter and a remarkable leader

of armies. His power extended over the cities of Mesopotamia. 11,12. **Nineveh.** Known as early as 2800 B.C., it was the center of the powerful Assyrian kingdom, which attained its height under Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal. It was situated on the Tigris River, about 250 miles from the city of Babylon. It was against this stronghold that Jonah and Nahum directed their prophecies.

14. **The Philistines** (cf. AV *Philistim*) are credited with having given their name to the land of "Palestine." Amos and Jeremiah refer to them as coming from Caphtor. Their five principal cities were Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Gath, and Ekron. The Philistines continued for centuries to be a thorn in the flesh of the Israelites. 15. **Heth.** Ancestor of the Hittites, whose great empire held sway from 1600–700 B.C. The principal cities of the Hittites were Carchemish on the Euphrates and Kadesh on the Orontes. These people settled in the vicinity of Hebron, and witnessed Abraham's purchase of the Cave of Machpelah from Ephron (23:8-10). Esau married into the tribe. The Hittites found their way into the Assyrian and Egyptian inscriptions. Archaeologists have found valuable remains of the civilization of that powerful empire.

21. **The children of Eber** comprised many different groups among the sons of Shem. The name **Eber** has been associated with the word *Hebrew*, the name by which the Israelites were known by other peoples. They were the ones who possessed the knowledge of the true God. The term "Hebrew" is racial, while "Israelite" is national. In later days, these words were used as synonyms.

22. **Aram**, or the Aramean or Syrian people, made up the group around and within Damascus. They figured prominently in the history of the people of Israel. The Aramaic language became the language of trade and diplomatic relations. It gradually displaced the Hebrew language until, at the time of our Lord, Aramaic was the language of conversation and writing.

28. **Sheba** is often mentioned in the OT to denote a wealthy group of people whose principal work was to furnish gold, perfumes, and precious stones for export to Palestine and to Egypt. They are identified with the Sabaeans, who held a prominent place in trade and in governmental achievement. So far as Bible students are concerned, the queen of Sheba was the most famous of the

people of Sheba.

29. **Ophir** was famed for its fine gold. Solomon sent his men along with Hiram's to extract it and to transport it to Palestine. In addition to gold, they found precious metals and gems in great abundance. Soon Solomon's kingdom rivaled all the surrounding lands in wealth. Ophir was probably a seaport on the coast of Arabia. It has been located as far away as the mouth of the Indus. Much of the gold overlay of the Temple of Solomon came from Ophir.

G. The Tower of Babel. 11:1-32.

1,2. **The whole earth was of one language.** Genesis pictures Noah and his sons coming forth from the ark having one language and one set of words. As the descendants of Noah multiplied, they naturally continued with that same language, since it was sufficient. They lived in and about the Euphrates valley, the locality usually regarded as the cradle of civilization. **Shinar.** The Hebrews used the name Shinar, originally a region in northern Mesopotamia, to designate the whole region of Mesopotamia. Migrating nomads moved along the mountains of Ararat to the well-watered plains of Babylonia.

3,4. **Let us build us a city . . . a tower . . . and . . . make us a name.** When Noah's eastward-moving descendants had found a spot where they could begin permanent headquarters, they decided to build a city. They would construct a gigantic tower so high that its top would pierce the "vault" above them. This great structure would give them the place of vantage by which they could establish their importance in the eyes of men, and even in God's sight.

The purpose of the undertaking was twofold. First, they wanted to assure themselves of the strength that comes from unity. The city and the tower would tie them into a solid group, so that they might be powerful—even without God's help. They said: **Lest we be scattered.** On the other hand, they were determined to make themselves renowned—**make for ourselves a name.** The sins of self-sufficiency and pride predominated in their thinking. They wanted to make sure that they would not be forgotten. The tower would hold them together and secure their names from oblivion. They defied God and set out to prove their self-sufficiency. Their towering structure would be a monument to their energy, daring, genius, and resources. Many towering

cities, such as, Babylon, Sodom, Gomorrah, Sidon, Tyre, and Rome, have proved anything but godly structures. When men spurn God's law and grace, and exalt themselves, catastrophe inevitably falls upon them.

7-9. Confound their language. Jehovah understood the spirit, the motive, and the selfish plans of the rebellious people. Immediately he set out to upset their foolish schemes. The very thing they had sought to avoid came suddenly upon them. God directly intervened to see to it that no one understood the words of the others about him. And he scattered them far and wide. Hebrew *bālal*, "confound," indicates that there was a distinct disturbance that left the people greatly confused. The word *Babel* is translated *Babylon*. The best Hebrew lexicographers claim that it could not have come from the Hebrew *bālal*, to "confuse" or "mix," but that it meant "gate of God." Through a play on words it came to mean "confusion." The Aramaic word *balbel* means "confusion." Alan Richardson reminds us that the bestowal of the gift of tongues at Pentecost (Acts 2:5-11) can be thought of as the reverse of the confusion of tongues at Babel. He says: "When men in their pride boast of their own achievements, there results nothing but division, confusion, and incomprehensibility; but when the wonderful works of God are proclaimed, then every man may hear the apostolic gospel in his own tongue" (*Genesis 1-11*, p. 126).

27. Terah. Son of Nahor (a descendant of Seth) and the father of Abram, Haran, and Nahor. His early home was in Ur of the Chaldees, but he spent the later years of his life in Haran, where he died.

28. Ur of the Chaldees. An ancient city of the early Sumerian kingdom, located about 125 miles from the present mouth of the Euphrates, 100 miles southeast of Babylon, 830 miles from Damascus, and 550 miles from Haran. It was the capital of Sumer. In Abram's day it was a thriving commercial city, with unusually high cultural standards. The buildings of the temple area were most elaborate. The inhabitants worshiped the moon-god, *Sin*. Archaeologists have unearthed fabulous treasures from this old city. The royal cemetery has given up art treasures dated as early as 2900 B.C. The Oriental Institute of Chicago has a plaque from Ur that dates back to 3000 B.C. It was in this ancient world that

Abraham was born and grew into manhood. His was a rich heritage.

31. Haran (or *Ḥarran*). An important city in ancient Mesopotamia. It was situated about 550 miles northeast of Ur and 280 miles north of Damascus. Principal routes converged there. Highways to Nineveh, Babylon, and Damascus had their start from it. It was only 60 miles from the stronghold of Carchemish, the capital of the Hittite empire. Haran was one of the chief centers for the worship of *Sin*, the moon-god. Terah and his family moved to Haran, and the record states that Terah died there. Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, and Rachel, the wife of Jacob, grew up in Haran. It still survives as a small Arab village.

II. The Patriarchs. 12:1-50:26.

A. Abraham. 12:1-25:18. In the second principal division of the Book of Genesis, it is evident that in the new order of things God's chosen ones must recognize the direct communication and the direct leadership of the Lord. In chapters 12-50 four characters stand out as men who heard God's voice, understood his directions, and ordered their ways according to his will. The purpose of Jehovah was still to raise up a people who would carry out his will in the earth. In Noah he had made a new start. Shem was the one chosen to carry forward true religion. The Semites (descendants of Shem) were to become missionaries to the other peoples of the earth. In chapter 12 Abram begins to emerge from the line of Shem as Jehovah's chosen representative. On him Jehovah would place the full responsibility of receiving and passing on His revelation for all. From the pagan background of Ur and Haran came forth God's man for the strategic hour of early OT revelation.

1) The Call of Abram. 12:1-9.

1. And Jehovah said. Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house. The Biblical account makes it clear that before migrating to Palestine, Abram had two homes. He spent his early years in Ur and then a long season in Haran. Each community became his home. He had to leave friends, neighbors, and kindred behind him when he left Ur and still others when he departed from Haran. In each case, the threefold tie of land, people, and kindred was severed. Bishop Ryle

says that Abram was commanded "(a) to renounce the certainties of the past, (b) to face the uncertainties of the future, (c) to look for and follow the direction of Jehovah's will" (*Genesis* in the *Cambridge Bible*, p. 155). It was a big demand (cf. Heb 11:8). Severe trials awaited him. This call must have come to him while he still lived in Ur (Acts 7:2). It was renewed many years later in Haran.

Unto the land that I will show thee. Jehovah did not name the land at this time nor describe it. Thus, Abram was to meet a new test of faith. The Lord had found the man for his purpose, one he could subject to heavy strains, a man who would regard the doing of God's will as the one important thing in his life.

2,3. Be thou a blessing (*b'rākā*). The imperative form actually expresses a consequence—"so that thou shalt be a blessing." This distinguished traveler from polytheistic Mesopotamia had been divinely commissioned to go forth into the midst of utter strangers in some new land. He and his descendants would constitute a channel by which God would bless all the peoples of the world.

I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great. God strongly fortified Abram with covenant promises of prosperity, plenteous posterity, and greatness. The promise of divine blessing guaranteed Abram everything he could desire. His every need would be supplied. Even hostile neighbors would come to look upon him as the leader of God's people. Through him would come blessings to all the peoples of the earth. And his name would be honored and revered everywhere. Today, Abram is recognized and honored as a "father" by Christians, Jews, and Moslems. God chose Abram and his descendants to bear His Gospel to the world. From the line of Abram, Christ was to come, to fulfill God's purposes. And through "born-again" men and women, His ideals were to find fulfillment. The plan of God was taking shape.

5. The land of Canaan. Abram interpreted the call of God to involve immediate departure for Canaan. How he knew Canaan was his destination is not explained. But God had said: "Get thee out . . . unto a land that I will show thee." So he obeyed. Without hesitation he gathered together his family and set out on a major migration. Seemingly

he had no fears, no doubts, no misgivings. He journeyed to Carchemish on the Euphrates and turned south through Hamath to Damascus of Syria. Josephus represents Abram during his stay in that capital city as acting in the capacity of a king over the people of Damascus. The land of Canaan is described in Scripture as comprising all the land from the Jordan to the Mediterranean and from Syria to Egypt. Moab and Edom bounded it on the southeast. In the Bible the word "Canaanites" usually refers to the earliest inhabitants of the land, including any group that lived there before the coming of the Hebrews.

6. Shechem. This ancient city was probably a shrine or sacred place. It was an important settlement at the junction of the main commercial highways. It was situated between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, about forty-one miles north of Jerusalem. In later years, Jacob's well was in the immediate vicinity. In more recent times, Shechem has been called Nablus.

Abram made his way to the **terebinth of Moreh**. This was probably a sacred tree, under which a priest or teacher or soothsayer gave his instruction or teaching. **Moreh** is probably a participle of the verb *yārā*, "to teach." The oak and the terebinth trees resembled each other. Shechem became Abram's first principal stop in Canaan. Here he received a special message of assurance and promise from the Lord. God gave the land to him as his possession, and promised that his descendants would possess it after him. With warlike tribes on every hand, Abram would find it difficult to establish his claims to the new land. He made a good beginning, however, by immediately setting up an altar and offering sacrifices to Jehovah. As his life in Palestine took shape, he declared his utter dependence upon the Lord and his whole-hearted dedication to him.

8. Bethel (*Bēt-'ēl*). This ancient sanctuary dates back to the twenty-first century B.C., and is mentioned more often in Scripture than any other city except Jerusalem. It is situated on the road to Shechem, about ten or eleven miles north of Jerusalem. By erecting an altar, the patriarch proclaimed his allegiance to Jehovah, and by pitching his tents, he publicly declared to all observers that he was taking permanent possession of the land. In these two symbolic acts, Abram revealed his resolute faith in the power of Jehovah of