

1 In the beginning when God created^a the heavens and the earth, **2** the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God^b swept over the face of the waters. **3** Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." **7** So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. **8** God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. **10** God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. **11** Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. **12** The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. **13** And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in

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

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

1.1-2.3: Creation culminating in sabbath. This Priestly account of creation presents God as a divine ruler, creating the universe by decree in six days and resting on the seventh. **1.1:** Scholars differ on whether this verse is to be translated as an independent sentence summarizing what follows (e.g., "In the beginning God created") or as a temporal phrase describing what things were like when God started (e.g., "When God began to create . . . the earth was a formless void"; cf. 2.4-6). In either case, the text does not describe creation out of nothing (contrast 2 Macc 7.28). Instead, the story emphasizes how God creates order from a watery chaos. **2:** As elsewhere in the Bible, *the deep* (Heb "tehom") has no definite article ("the") attached to it in the Heb. Some see "tehom" here to be related to the Babylonian goddess Tiamat, a divinity representing oceanic chaos, whom the head god, Marduk, defeated in *Enuma Elish*, a major Babylonian creation story. Christian interpreters have tended to see the "Spirit" of the Trinity later in this verse. *Wind* fits the ancient context better (see 8.1). **3:** The first of eight acts of creation through decree. Like a divine king God pronounces his will and it is accomplished. **4-5:** These verses introduce two other themes crucial to this account: the goodness of creation and the idea that creation is accomplished through God's separating, ordering, and naming elements of the universe. The seven-day scheme of 1.1-2.3 requires the creation of light, day, and night at the outset. Since in some traditions the Jewish day began with sundown, the order is *evening* and *morning*. **6-8:** The *dome/Sky* made on the second day separates an upper ocean (Ps 148.4; see Gen 7.11) from a lower one. This creates a space in which subsequent creation can take place. **9-13:** Two creative acts: creation of dry land and command of that land to bring forth vegetation. *Earth* is a feminine noun in Heb. The text thus echoes other ancient mythologies and the life cycle in having a feminine earth bring forth the first life in the universe (cf. Job 1.21). God is only involved indirectly here, commanding the earth to *put forth*. **14-19:** There is a correspondence between days one to three and days four to six (1 || 4, 2 || 5, 3 || 6), which heightens the symmetry and order of God's creation. Here, God's creation of heavenly *lights* on the fourth day corresponds to creation of light, day, and night on the first. In a critical response to non-Israelite cultures who worshiped these heavenly bodies, the bodies are not named and are identified as mere timekeepers. **20-23:** See vv. 14-19n

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

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

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

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

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make humankind^a in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,^b and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

²⁷So God created humankind^c in his image,

in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

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

^a Heb *adam* ^b Syr: Heb *and over all the earth*

^c Heb *him*

Where the second day featured the dome separating upper and lower oceans, the fifth day features the creation of birds to fly *across the dome* and ocean creatures, including sea monsters (Ps 104:25–26). God’s blessing of the swarming creatures (1:22) anticipates a similar blessing that God will give humanity (1:28). **24–30:** See vv. 14–19n. Where the third day involved creation of land and plants in turn, this sixth day involves the creation of two types of plant-eating land-dwellers: animals and then humans. **24–25:** Again, earth is involved in bringing forth life (see 1:9–13n.). **26:** The plural *us, our* (3:22; 11:7) probably refers to the divine beings who compose God’s heavenly court (1 Kings 22:19; Job 1:6). *Image, likeness* is often interpreted to be a spiritual likeness between God and humanity. Another view is that this text builds on ancient concepts of the king physically resembling the god and thus bearing a bodily stamp of his authority to rule. Here this idea is democratized, as all of humanity appears godlike. This appearance equips humans for godlike rule over the fish, birds, and animals. **27–28:** The text stresses the creation of humanity as simultaneously male and female. This leads to the emphasis in the blessing of v. 28 and the book of Genesis as a whole on the multiplication of humanity in general (6:1; 9:1–7) and Israel in particular (17:2–6; 47:27). **29–30:** The text envisions an ancient mythological time before violence disturbs God’s perfect order (cf. 6:11). **31:** Where individual elements of creation were “good” (vv. 4, 10, etc.), the whole is *very good*, perfectly corresponding to God’s intention. **2:1–3:** This day is the point to which the whole

was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

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

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

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

had formed. **9** Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

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

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

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

seven-day scheme has led. God does not command the sabbath, but does rest (Heb “shabat”) on the seventh day and bless it, weaving the seven-day rhythm into creation. The “creation” of institutions is found in other ancient creation stories as well.

2.4a: Probably not the conclusion of the Priestly creation story, but a separate superscription introducing the following material, as elsewhere in Genesis (e.g., 5.1; 6.9; 10.1).

2.4b–25: Creation in a garden. This tradition, often identified as J, is different from 1.1–2.3, as evidenced by the different style and order of events. Though distinct from the Priestly account of 1.1–2.3, it nevertheless reflects ancient temple imagery. **4b–6:** A description of how things were prior to creation (cf. 1.1–2) is common in ancient Near Eastern creation stories. **7:** The word play on Heb “*adam*” (human being; here translated “man” [cf. 1.26]) and “*adamah*” (arable land; here *ground*) introduces a motif characteristic of this tradition: the relation of humankind to the soil from which it was *formed*. Human nature is not a duality of body and soul; rather God’s *breath* animates the *dust* and it becomes a single *living being* (Ps 104.29; Job 34.14–15). **8–9:** *Eden* means “delight.” This divine garden recalls the “garden of God/the LORD” mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (13.10; Ezek 28.13–16; 31.8–9; Isa 51.3; Joel 2.3), and such sacred gardens are known in other ancient Near Eastern temple traditions. In addition, ancient Near Eastern art and texts feature a prominent focus on trees, often associated with feminine powers of fertility. Usually such trees symbolize life, as in the *tree of life* here (3.22; see Prov 3.18; Rev 22.2,14,19). But this story focuses more on the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, symbolizing wisdom (2 Sam 14.17; 1 Kings 3.9). See 12.6–8n. **10–14:** This section, along with the preceding one describing the “stream” rising up to water the ground (2.6), may draw on the ancient tradition that a temple is built on a primal mountain of creation from which the waters of the earth flow. The rivers mentioned here combine world rivers like the *Tigris* and *Euphrates* (both in Mesopotamia) with the local *Gihon* that flowed from Mount Zion in Jerusalem (Ps 46.4; Isa 7.6; Zech 14.8), although *Cush* is generally either Ethiopia or in Arabia. *Pishon* is unknown; *Havilah* is probably in Arabia. **16–17:** The speech

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

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

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

this one shall be called Woman,^b
for out of Man^c this one was
taken.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,

and between your offspring and hers;

he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶ To the woman he said,

"I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,

yet your desire shall be for your husband,

and he shall rule over you."

¹⁷ And to the man^a he said,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,

and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you,

'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;

and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face

you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,

and to dust you shall return."

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

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

the unashamed nakedness of before (2.25) to clothing, a mark of civilization in nonbiblical primeval narratives. **8-13:** Legal forms again predominate as the LORD God interrogates first the man and then the woman (see 2.16-17n.). The disintegration of earlier connectedness is shown by the hiding of the humans from the LORD God and the tendency of the man to blame the woman (and implicitly the LORD God) for his action. Later interpreters of the story have shown a similar tendency to blame the woman. **14-19:** A proclamation of sentence follows the interrogation, starting with the snake and concluding with the man. **14-15:** Here the crawl of the snake is linked to the LORD God's punishing curse. As a result, later audiences can look to the crawling snake as a reminder of the story and testimony to its truth. **16-19:** Though this is often understood as a "curse" of the woman to pain in childbirth, the word "curse" is not used in these verses. Others have suggested that this text sentences the woman to endless "toil" (not *pain*) of reproduction, much as the man is condemned in vv. 17-19 to endless toil in food production. The man's *rule* over the woman here is a tragic reflection of the disintegration of original connectedness between them. **21:** The LORD God's clothing of the

GENESIS 3:21–4:14

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

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

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

angry, and why has your countenance fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

⁸Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field." ⁹And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. ¹⁰Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹¹And the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! ¹²And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹³When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." ¹⁴Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! ¹⁵Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and

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

humans here reflects care for them in the process of becoming civilized, even though that process involved disobedience. **22:** As elsewhere in the ancient Near East, humans here are depicted as having a brief opportunity for immortality. The LORD God's fear of humans becoming godlike (cf. 1.26–27) recalls the serpent's assertions in 3.4–5. The term "us" probably refers to the heavenly court (see 1.26n.). **24:** Cf. Ezek 28.13–16. The last echoes of temple imagery occur here. *The cherubim* are winged creatures like the Sphinx of Egypt, half human and half lion. Statues of them guarded sanctuaries like the one in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6.23–28, 32, 35). The gate to the garden of Eden is in the east, like the processional gate to the Temple (Ezek 10.19).

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

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

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

23 Lamech said to his wives:

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
 you wives of Lamech, listen to
 what I say:

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.1-32: Second overview of generations from creation to flood. This Priestly genealogy parallels 4.1-26, building from the P creation story (1.1-2.3) to the Priestly strand of the flood narrative. **1a:** *The list of descendants of Adam* (lit. “the scroll of descendants”) was evidently a separate source which the Priestly writer drew upon for this chapter and used as a model for later notices (6.9; 10.1; etc.). **1b-2:** The Priestly writer uses this reprise of 1.26-28 to bind his genealogical source (where “adam” designates a particular person) to 1.1-2.3 (where “adam” designates humanity as a whole). **3:** The divine *likeness* (v. 1; see 1.26n.) was continued in Adam’s son Seth and thus transmitted to succeeding generations (9.6). **4-32:** Ancient Babylonian lists similarly survey a series of heroes before the flood, each of which lived fantastically long times. Like those lists, the list in 5.4-32 postulates extraordinary ages to pre-flood figures, with ages declining over time to the 100-200 years of Israel’s ancestors. The names of the figures in this list resemble those of 4.17-26 (see 4.17-26n.). **24:** Babylonian traditions also report that certain

GENESIS 5.6–6.4

lived were nine hundred thirty years; and he died.

6 When Seth had lived one hundred five years, he became the father of Enosh. ⁷Seth lived after the birth of Enosh eight hundred seven years, and had other sons and daughters. ⁸Thus all the days of Seth were nine hundred twelve years; and he died.

9 When Enosh had lived ninety years, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰Enosh lived after the birth of Kenan eight hundred fifteen years, and had other sons and daughters. ¹¹Thus all the days of Enosh were nine hundred five years; and he died.

12 When Kenan had lived seventy years, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³Kenan lived after the birth of Mahalalel eight hundred and forty years, and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Thus all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years; and he died.

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

18 When Jared had lived one hundred sixty-two years he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹Jared lived after the birth of Enoch eight hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Thus all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty-two years; and he died.

21 When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²²Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had

other sons and daughters. ²³Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty-five years. ²⁴Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.

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

28 When Lamech had lived one hundred eighty-two years, he became the father of a son; ²⁹he named him Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands." ³⁰Lamech lived after the birth of Noah five hundred ninety-five years, and had other sons and daughters. ³¹Thus all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy-seven years; and he died.

32 After Noah was five hundred years old, Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

6 When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, ²the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. ³Then the LORD said, "My spirit shall not abide^a in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years." ⁴The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans,

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

figures—e.g., Emmeduranki (a pre-flood figure), Etana, and Adapa—were taken up into heaven by God. Later Jewish tradition speculated at length on Enoch's travels. **29:** This (non-Priestly) verse links the curse of the ground in 3.17–19 and viticulture, which was inaugurated by Noah (9.20).

6.1–4: Divine-human reproduction illustrates the kind of breaching of the divine-human boundary which the LORD God feared in 3.22. There the LORD God drove humans away from the tree of life. Here, in an abbreviated narrative often attributed to J, the LORD God limits their life-span to *one hundred twenty* years; others suggest that the *one hundred twenty* years refer to a reprieve from punishment for several generations. Nothing appears to happen to the *sons of God* (see the "heavenly court" in 1.26n.) who started it all. **4:** The products of divine-human intercourse are legendary *warriors of renown*. They are distinguished here from the *Nephilim*, a race of giants said to exist both prior to and after those times (cf. Num 13.33; Deut 2.10–11).

who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.

5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. 6 And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7 So the LORD said, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." 8 But Noah found favor in the sight of the LORD.

9 These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. 14 Make yourself an ark of cypress^a wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. 15 This is how you are to make it: the

length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. 16 Make a roof^b for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. 17 For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. 19 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 according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. 21 Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them." 22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. 2 Take with

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain ^b Or window

6.5-8.19: The great flood. This story describes God's un-creation and re-creation of the world. The version preserved here is an interweaving of parallel accounts, one of which links with the Priestly traditions of 1.1-2.3; 5.1-32 and the other of which links with the non-Priestly traditions, often identified as J, of 2.4b-4.26. This type of intertwining of traditions is less usual, but is necessary here, to avoid describing two consecutive floods. **6.5-8:** This introduction links with the non-Priestly material, particularly 2.7 (compare 6.7). **5:** Though the biblical account is quite close in many respects to Mesopotamian flood stories, one significant difference is that this text attributes the flood to God's judgment on *the wickedness of humankind* rather than divine frustration with human overpopulation and noise. **9-22:** This section begins the Priestly account of the flood. **11-13:** Here the Priestly writers attribute the flood to corruption of the earth and *violence* filling it (see 4.8,10,23-24). **14-16:** In the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, the hero is told to build a similar houseboat, sealing it with pitch. The description of a three-leveled ark may be based on an ancient idea that the ark reflects the three-part structure of both universe and temple. It is about 133 x 22 x 13 m (437 x 73 x 44 ft). **19-20:** See 7.2-3n. **7.1-5:** This non-Priestly text parallels P in 6.11-22 and continues the tradition seen in 6.5-8. **2-3:** The provision of extra *clean* animals allows for the sacrifice that will occur in 8.20. If only one pair of each animal were taken, every sacrifice would eliminate a species. In contrast, the Priestly tradition presumes that sacrifice and the distinction between clean and unclean animals (see Lev 11) was not introduced until Sinai. Therefore only one pair of each species is taken in that tradition (6.19-20; 7.14-15; cf. 7.9), and

GENESIS 7.3-8.3

you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and its mate; ³and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. ⁴For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.” ⁵And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

⁶Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth. ⁷And Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. ⁸Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, ⁹two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰And after seven days the waters of the flood came on the earth.

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. ¹²The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. ¹³On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons entered the ark, ¹⁴they and every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every bird of every kind—every bird, every

winged creature. ¹⁵They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. ¹⁶And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.

¹⁷The flood continued forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. ¹⁸The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. ¹⁹The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; ²⁰the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. ²¹And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all human beings; ²²everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. ²³He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, human beings and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. ²⁴And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred fifty days.

8 But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; ²the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, ³and the waters gradually receded

there is no concluding sacrifice (9.1-17). **6-16:** Noah, his family, and the animals enter the ark twice (7.7-9 || 7.13-16), reflecting the interweaving of the two flood accounts discussed above. Whereas the non-Priestly account has the flood caused by forty days of rain (7.12; 7.4), the Priestly account attributes the flood to God's opening of the protective dome created on the second day (1.6-8), thus allowing the upper and lower oceans to meet (7.11). **17-24:** The P and non-P strands are thoroughly interwoven in this description of the flood itself, including multiple descriptions of the extinction of life outside the ark (7.21-23). Such flood imagery seems to have been a powerful image of chaos worldwide. Though many world traditions speak of floods, there is no geological evidence of a global flood of the sort described here. **8.1-5:** With the exception of 8.2b-3a, this unit comes from the Priestly writer. **1-2a:** God's wind echoes the first creation (1.2) in the process of starting the re-creation process. The closing of the *fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens* reestablishes the space for life that was first created on the second day (1.6-8). **4:** In the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh epic the boat also rested on a mountain.

from the earth. At the end of one hundred fifty days the waters had abated; ⁴and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵The waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared.

⁶ At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made ⁷and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. ⁸Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; ⁹but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. ¹⁰He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; ¹¹and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. ¹²Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more.

¹³ In the six hundred first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and saw that the face of the

ground was drying. ¹⁴In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. ¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶“Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. ¹⁷Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” ¹⁸So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. ¹⁹And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odor, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.

²² As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

9 God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply,

Ararat, a region in Armenia. **6-12:** Part of the non-Priestly account. In the Gilgamesh epic (see v. 4) the hero sent out two birds, a dove and a swallow, each of which came back; the third, a raven, did not return. **13-19:** The Priestly account resumes here with a description of the exit from the ark of Noah, his family, and the animals.

8.20-9.17: Divine commitments after the flood. This section features two accounts of God’s commitments after the flood (8.20-22 non-P; 9.1-17 P), both of which include God’s promise not to destroy life through such a flood ever again. **8.20-22:** The non-Priestly tradition describes Noah’s *burnt offerings* of clean animals (see 7.2-3n.). In the Gilgamesh epic (see 8.4n.; 8.6-12n.) the hero offered sacrifices and “the gods smelled the pleasant fragrance” and repented of their decision to destroy humanity. Here the LORD smells the *pleasing odor* of Noah’s offering and resolves never again to curse the ground or destroy all creatures (v. 21). The LORD does this despite full recognition that the human heart has not changed (cf. 6.5-7). The final result of Noah’s sacrifice is the LORD’s promise to preserve the cycle of agricultural seasons (v. 22). A central aim of temple sacrifice in Israel and elsewhere was to preserve that cycle. The echo of that idea here is yet another way in which the “non-Priestly” primeval history reflects temple concerns (see also the focus on responses to sacrifice in 4.1-8 and notes on 2.8-9, 10-14; 3.24). **9.1-17:** The Priestly tradition lacks an account of sacrifice (see 7.2-3n.). Instead it focuses on affirmations of some aspects of the creation in 1.1-31 and revisions of others. **1-7:** This section begins and ends

GENESIS 9:2-9:22

and fill the earth. ²The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. ³Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life.

⁶Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.

⁷And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound on the earth and multiply in it."

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹"As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark." ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall

there be a flood to destroy the earth."

¹²God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." ¹⁷God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

¹⁸The sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was peopled.

²⁰Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. ²¹He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and he lay uncovered in his tent. ²²And Ham, the father

a Gk: Heb adds every animal of the earth

with a reaffirmation of the fertility blessing (vv. 1,7; cf. 1.28). **2-6:** Here God revises the earlier command of vegetarianism (1.29-30). This is a partial concession to the "violence" observed prior to the flood (6.11,13) and an extension of the human dominion over creation described in 1.26-28. At the same time, God regulates this violence through stipulating that humans may not eat the blood in which life resides (see 4.10-11n.) and that humans as bearers of God's image (1.26-27) may not be killed. Since these laws are given to Noah and his sons, the ancestors of all post-flood humanity, they were used in later Jewish tradition as the basis for a set of Noachide laws that were seen as binding upon Gentiles as well as Jews (see Acts 15.20; 21.25). **8-17:** This is the first "covenant" explicitly described as such in the Bible, and it encompasses all of humanity. Indeed, the animal world (vv. 10,12,15) and even the earth (v. 13) are included as well. A "covenant" is a formal agreement, often between a superior and inferior party, the former "making" or "establishing" (vv. 9,11) the bond with the latter. This agreement is often sealed through ceremonies. In this case, God sets his weapon, the bow (Ps 7.12-13; Hab 3.9-11), in the sky facing away from humanity as a sign of God's commitment not to flood the earth again.

9.18-27: Noah and his sons. Aside from P in vv. 18-19, this text is a non-Priestly narrative, often attributed to J, that repeats major themes from the pre-flood period: farming (see 3.17; 5.29), nakedness, alienation in the family, curse, and domination. **22-23:** Some have speculated that Ham had sex with his father, since seeing nakedness refers to incestuous behavior in Lev 20.17. Nevertheless, a more common expression for sexual intercourse in Leviticus is "uncover nakedness" (e.g., 18.6; 20.18) or "lie with"

of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;
lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers.”

²⁶He also said,
“Blessed by the LORD my God be Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave.

²⁷May God make space for^a Japheth,
and let him live in the tents of Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave.”

²⁸After the flood Noah lived three hundred fifty years. ²⁹All the days of Noah were nine hundred fifty years; and he died.

10 These are the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; children were born to them after the flood.

²The descendants of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. ³The descendants of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. ⁴The descendants of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish,

Kittim, and Rodanim.^b ⁵From these the coastland peoples spread. These are the descendants of Japheth^c in their lands, with their own language, by their families, in their nations.

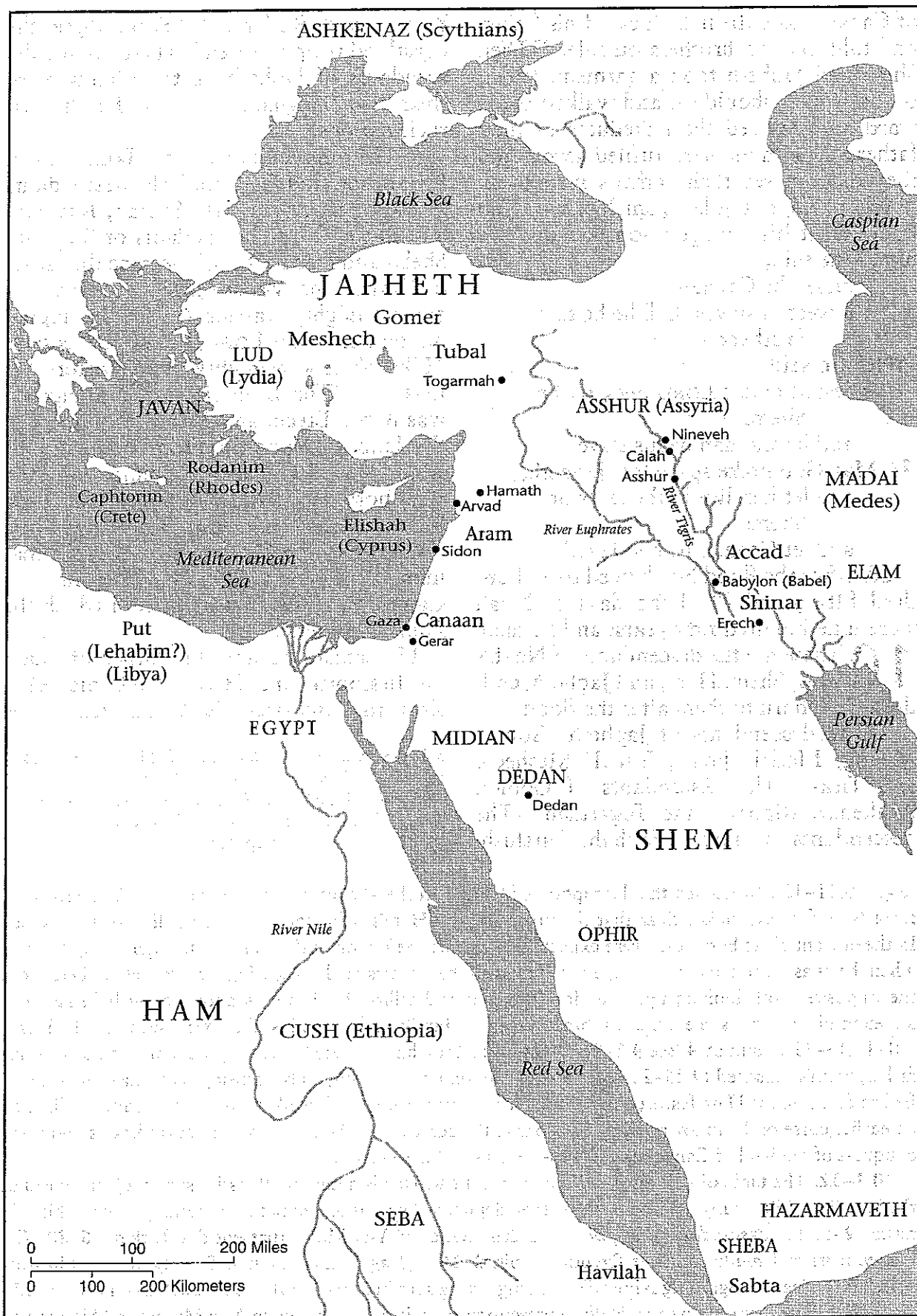
⁶The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. ⁷The descendants of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. ⁸Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first on earth to become a mighty warrior. ⁹He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD.” ¹⁰The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, and Accad, all of them in the land of Shinar. ¹¹From that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and ¹²Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. ¹³Egypt became the father of Ludim, Ananim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, ¹⁴Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, from which the Philistines come.^d

¹⁵Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, ¹⁶and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁷the

a Heb *yapht*, a play on *Japheth* *b* Heb Mss Sam Gk See 1 Chr 1 7: MT *Dodanim* *c* Compare verses 20, 31. Heb lacks *These are the descendants of Japheth* *d* Cn: Heb *Casluhim*, from which the *Philistines come, and Caphtorim*

(e.g., 20.11-12). Moreover, the description of Ham's brothers' contrasting behavior in v. 23 (*their faces were turned away*) makes clear that the problem with Ham's behavior was that he did not look away. In the ancient Near East, sons were expected to protect the honor of their father through caring for him when he was drunk (with no negative judgment being attached to getting drunk). Ham here does the opposite, both looking upon his father naked and telling his brothers about it. Such behavior is an example of the same kind of breakdown of family relationships that was seen in ch 3 (see 3.8-13, 16-19n.) and ch 4 (see 4.1-16n.). **24-27**: Many have puzzled over why Canaan is cursed for his father, Ham's, misdeed (9.25-26). Some speculate that a story originally focusing on Canaan was modified to focus on the Ham featured in the broader context. Yet it is more likely that a later editor redirected an earlier curse on Ham toward Canaan, so that the curse could then anticipate later traditions about the conquest of the land of Canaan (see 10.16-18a; 14.1-12, 13-16n.).

10.1-32: The table of nations. See Map on p. 24 HB. This is a (largely Priestly) survey of the world of the Israelites. Like many ancient peoples, they depicted the relations between national groups in kinship terms. **2-5**: *The descendants of Japheth* had their center in Asia Minor (present day Turkey). **6-20**: *The descendants of Ham* lived in the Egyptian orbit. **8-15**: A fragment of the non-Priestly primeval history. It features a legend regarding Nimrod's building a kingdom in *Shinar* (Babylonia) and Assyria (vv. 8-12). Canaan is the father of two sons, *Heth* (representing the Hittites originally of Asia Minor) and *Sidon* (who represents the Phoenician coastal cities). **14**: See Jer 47.4; Amos 9.7. **16-18a**: This survey of Canaanite



Ch 10: The table of nations. Only places that can be identified with probability are shown.

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

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

their languages, their lands, and their nations.

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

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

a That is Division b Or migrated eastward

peoples lists ethnic groups rather than ancestors, including the *Jebusites* (centered in Jerusalem), *Amorites* (natives of the hill country); and the *Hivites* (a tribe in central Palestine). The list resembles later lists of peoples displaced by Israel (e.g., 15.19–21; Deut 7.1) and may be an addition from the same hand that directed Noah's curse toward Canaan (see 9.18–27n.). **21–31:** *Shem* is the father of the Semitic peoples, including Israel. Another pair of fragments of the non-Priestly primeval history (vv. 21,24–30) feature a focus on the *children of Eber*. The name *Eber* may be related to "Hebrew." If so, then this text postulates a wider group of *children of Eber* of which the Israelites are a part.

11.1–9: The tower of Babel. This narrative (from the non-Priestly or J source) revisits the theme of preservation of the divine-human boundary. The threat to that boundary, self-reflective speech by the LORD, and act of divine prevention all parallel 3.22–24 and 6.1–4. With 11.2 the human family completes the eastward movement begun in 3.22–24 (cf. 4.16). Yet this story will focus on a scattering of the human family into different ethnic, linguistic, and territorial groups. As such, it now gives background for the table of nations in ch 10, although it was not originally written with that in view. **2:** *Shinar*, see 10.8–12n. **4:** The humans are depicted as fearful of being scattered and thus aiming to make a name for themselves through a tower reaching into heaven. The humans' intention here to stay together contradicts the divine imperative to "fill the earth" now found in Priestly traditions (1.28; 9.1,7). **6:** The LORD is described here as fearing the human power that might result from ethnic and linguistic unity (see 3.22). **7:** *Let us*; see 1.26n. **8–9:** The LORD's scattering of humanity and confusing of language is the final step in creation of civilized humanity, with its multiple territorial and linguistic groups. The movement toward cultural

GENESIS 11.9–11.31

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

31 Terah took his son Abram and his

^a Heb *balal*, meaning to confuse

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

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

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

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

12 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I 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."^a

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

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

12.1-3: The LORD's call and promise to Abraham initiates a major new movement in the story of Genesis. This is the first of three divine speeches in which a patriarch is given travel directions and promises of blessing (12.1-3; 26.2-5; 46.1-4; see also 31.3,13). The combination of command (v. 1) and promise (vv. 2-3) implies that the LORD's fulfillment of the promise will follow upon Abraham's fulfillment of the command. **1:** This command to Abraham is similar to, and may have been modeled on, the later divine command for Jacob to return to the "land of your ancestors and to your kindred" (31.3) and to "the land of your birth" (31.13). **2:** The promise that a *great nation* will come from Abraham stands in tension with Sarah's barrenness in 11.30. Much of the following narrative revolves around this tension. *Nation* implies not just a numerous people (cf. 13.16; 15.5; etc.), but a politically independent social group. *I will bless you*, involves giving Abraham the power to flourish in flocks, other riches, and offspring (12.16; 13.2,5,16; etc.; cf. Job 42.12-13). *And make your name great*, to have one's *name* made *great* is to become famous. The LORD promises Abraham a fame similar to that promised to Israelite kings (2 Sam 7.9; 1 Kings 1.47). Thus Abraham, as heir of Shem (see 11.20-26n)—which means "name" in Hebrew—gains the great "name" that the peoples at Babel had futilely sought for themselves (cf. 11.4). *So that you will be a blessing*, implies that those associated with Abraham and his heirs will flourish as well. Later Laban (30.27-30) and Potiphar (39.5) will both gain blessing through their association with Abraham's heirs. **3:** Though obscured in the translation, the promise to curse *the one who curses* Abraham is a slight modification of a similar formula. Whereas the parallel texts (e.g., 27.29; Num 24.9) speak of God cursing the one who curses, the LORD in this text promises to curse anyone who even "treats [Abraham] lightly." *In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* has been a particularly important passage in the Christian tradition. Building on the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, Paul interpreted this as a blessing of the Gentiles through Abraham (Gal 3.8). Yet the closest analogies to this promise suggest that the alternate translation, *by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves*, i.e., they will say "may we be like Abraham," is probably closer to the meaning of the Hebrew. Like 48.20, it envisions other nations of the world looking to Abraham's great blessing and wishing a similar one on themselves (see Ps 72.17). Later in the narrative we see this kind of recognition of Abraham and his heirs' special blessing by foreigners like Abimelech (26.28), Laban (30.27), Potiphar (39.3-5), Joseph's jailer (39.21-23), Pharaoh (Ex 1.9), Jethro (Ex 18.10-12), and Balaam (24.1).

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