

## Notes on the Book of Genesis (one of three)

### Introduction

Like the other series of **Notes** on the Lectio Divina Home Page, the scope of this document is quite specific. I do not examine the Book of Genesis from the scholarly point of view nor offer personal reflections under the guise of spiritual exhortations. Plenty of both exist, especially with such a foundational text as Genesis. In the other series of **Notes**—the Song of Songs, the Psalter, the Book of Revelation and the Book of Hebrews—I have adopted a stance in accord with *lectio divina*. This special prayerful way of reading Scripture is outlined in the Introductions to these other **Notes**. Thus there is no need to repeat the method here since I adopt the same approach with regard to Genesis. The practice of *lectio* allows the meditative reader to assemble scriptural references around a given Genesis verse not with the purpose of gaining knowledge but as a means of being in touch with divine reality. For this reason, the observations are given in a matter-of-fact way. They are just listed in the common sense of being put out there to assist the reader in making his or her own associations with various scriptural passages. Usually such passages have in common a particular Hebrew verbal root. These verbs can be used in different senses which allows for a more subtle appreciation of the texts.

The Hebrew language is especially well suited for *lectio divina*, a fact not fully appreciated from the Christian point of view. Its fundamental strength is that a single word can have multiple meanings allowing for a much wider scope of interpretation...but interpretation at the service of *lectio divina* which finds fulfillment in contemplation. The Hebrew language is largely built upon the verbal root system; nouns are more or less secondary—in the sense of being subordinate—and are best understood in light of the verbs from which they are derived. Thus you cannot get as good a grasp on a Hebrew text as with a Greek one, the New Testament being the chief example. Because of this fluidity, Hebrew excels for speaking about divine reality and the human response to it. The Hebrew language simply refuses to be pinned down, simple as that. Since authors of the Greek New Testament make frequent reference to the Old, it is interesting to situate those verse they quote in light of the Hebrew original because it helps shed new light on the person of Jesus Christ. Attention will be made to those Genesis verses employed by the New Testament.

One side note with regard to the value of Hebrew's verbal root system. Within this Home Page are two sets **Notes** dealing with the book of Hebrews and Revelation, two New Testament texts, and therefore written in Greek. The approach taken there is different because prepositions in Greek are vital both in themselves and as prefixed to nouns and verbs. These prepositions impart a physical, almost geographical, feel to the written text, one very different from a book written in the Hebrew language.

Each and every verse of Genesis is not examined, only those which I have considered as having a direct bearing upon the practice *lectio divina* as an aide to contemplation. As with the non-historical books already posted on this Home Page, it was much easier to do a line-by-line commentary. Much of Genesis is historical, so from time to time only key elements of several verses will be examined. Take, for example, numerous genealogies. Some Church Fathers tended toward an overly allegorical approach in an attempt to drawn more from them than actually present or needed for their audiences. They have value in their own right, but such is not the intent in this document.

The English version used here is the Revised Standard Version taken from **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha** (New York, 1973). For the most part, transliterated Hebrew words are given in the singular (nouns) and present tense (verbs).

A **Supplement** is attached to this document which consists of those (transliterated) Hebrew words commented upon. The reader may wish to consult the other supplements to the Song of Songs and the Psalter. That is to say, these lists of Hebrew words has may be of value to cross reference with the Genesis supplement. In this way a given word may be examined in all three books. (NB: the **Supplement** will be posted only once the entire Book of Genesis has been completed).

## Chapter One

### **Vs. 1: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**

*In the beginning* (bere'sheyth): the preposition b- (*in*) prefixed to the noun re'shyth which also means "first fruits, chief" in the sense of that which is most excellent; it is related to ro'sh (*head*) and is akin to the Greek arche which is used in the LXX. "In the *beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" [Jn 1.1]. Also cf. Is 46.10: "declaring the end from the *beginning* and from ancient times things not yet done." Here the notion of re'shyth is bound up with the *end* ('acharyth) in the sense of that which is after; note that Isaiah inverts the sequence, that is, starting from the "end."

The preposition b- suggests full presence of re'shyth within, that is the creative action of God with regards to his activity; the verb bara' is used for *to create*; it is as though everything which follows has its roots within re'shyth. The verb bara' means "to cut," "to carve out:" the notion is that created things are carved from an intemporal commencement yet participating within it. "Behold, I *create*...carve out...Jerusalem a rejoicing" [Is 65.18].

Two objects of this bara': *heavens* (shamyaym) and *earth* ('eretz). Note the particle 'eth which signifies the object of action by a verb and is untranslatable. It is as though this word—composed of the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet (aleph and tahv)—represented the beginning and completion of creation at God's first creative act. Compare this insight with: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" [Rev 1.8].

In the verse at hand, heavens and earth are two extremes of creation, one above and the other below. The particle 'eth is situated before each; the same applies to subsequent stages of creation.

### **Vs. 2: The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.**

Earth is mentioned first; no word of heaven (i.e., the sky or the firmament) until vs. 8. Two characteristics of 'eretz at this stage: *without form* (tohu) and *void* (bohu), two words which rhyme in Hebrew. The Greek LXX has aoratos and akataskeuastos respectively: *invisible* and (literally) *unstable*. The former Hebrew word refers to what is wasted as well as suggesting water: "*Deep* calls to *deep* at the thunder of your cataracts" [Ps 42.7]. The latter means something void and empty; the only two other references: 1) "and the plummet of *chaos* over its nobles" [Is 34.11]. 2) "I looked on the earth and lo, it was *waste* (tohu) and *void*" [Jer 4.23].

Both tohu and bohu connote lack of life which is re-enforced by the term choshek or *darkness*. "Stretch out your hand toward heaven that there may be *darkness* over the land of Egypt, a *darkness* to be felt" [Ex 10.21]. In the verse at hand, choshek has a specific location: *upon* (hal) not just the *deep* or tehom but upon its face or surface. Compare with Gen 7.11: "All the fountains of the great *deep* burst forth" in reference to the flood and Noah.

The divine *Spirit* or Ruach is next presented as being on this same *face* (penay), only "waters" is inserted. Compare with the "face" of tehom just noted. More specifically, the Spirit was *moving* (rachaph), a verb also meaning "to brood over" in the sense of cherishing. "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that *flutters* over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions" [Dt 32.11].

### **Vs. 3: And God said, "Let there be light;" and there was light.**

Note the frequent use of "and" which continues throughout the discourse of creation; it is intended to link all the pieces together into a unity as well as an aide to make for easier recollection by hearers in a predominantly oral society.

The first utterance by God which associates him with *light* ('or). The words "let there be" which occur throughout the creation narrative lend a certain majesty and intimate involvement in the process. Furthermore, this process is implied as continuous, not static. "And there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; they did not see one another...but all the people of Israel had *light* where they dwelt" [Ex 10.22-3]. For the association of *light* (phos) with Jesus Christ, "The *light* shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" [Jn 1.5].

In the verse at hand, light is coupled with the divine saying ("Let there be"), another way to express the coming into being. This and the verse at hand which pertains to creation may be read in light of Ps 33.6: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth." Here the word for *breath* is the same for Spirit in vs. 2, ruach.

Here at the beginning of God's creative action, keep in mind that the author of Genesis speaks only of physical creation. Col 1.16 intimates a spiritual order: "for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities."

#### **Vs. 4: And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.**

After having "spoken" light and bringing it into existence, God "sees" (the common verb ra'ah is used) that light was *good* (tov). This is the first mention of tov with respect to creation and follows with regard to subsequent days.

Immediately after the four-fold gesture of speaking, bringing into existence, seeing and calling light good, God *separates* (badal)...in the sense of distinguishing...light from darkness; the preposition beyn (*from*) is used which better translates as "between." Beyn connotes less a sharp differentiation of two opposites as an alteration between the two. For another used of the verb at hand, cf. Lev 10.10: "You are to *distinguish* between the holy and the common and between the unclean and the clean."

#### **Vs. 5: God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.**

A further refinement of the most basic creative force, light, in terms of *Day* (capitalized in the **RSV**) or yom. Both day/light God *calls* (qara') in the sense of summoning or crying out, that is, as distinct from the act of imparting a name. Compare this verb used with regard to the first man: "The man *gave* names ('called names') to all the cattle" (etc., 2.20).

The second sentence of vs. 5 differentiates light/darkness into a familiar circadian cycle or *evening* (herev) and *morning* (boqer). "You make the outgoings of the *morning* and the *evening* to shout for joy" [Ps 65.8]. The word *outgoings* or motsa' (singular), pertains to two extremes of the day; the fundamental meaning is that of a source: "I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land *springs* of water" [Is 41.18].

The division between (again, keeping in mind beyn noted in the previous verse) light (day)/darkness (night) results in "one day" which better reads "day one." The presence of the adjective after the noun is more significant; it reads like a chapter of a book as well as imparting a greater formality to the first of seven days of creation. Echad (*one*) is the numeral as well as implying a unity.

#### **Vs. 6: And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."**

The second utterance or "saying" by God, here with respect to a *firmament* or raqeyah; from the verbal root raqah meaning *to spread* or *to beat out* as by a hammer. "And gold leaf was *hammered* out and cut into threads to work into the blue and purple and scarlet stuff, and into the fine twined linen, in skilled design" [Ex 30.3]. Here the action of raqah applies to an overlay of thin material. Also, cf. Job 37.18: "Can you, like him,

*spread out* the skies, hard as a molten mirror?"

In the verse at hand, the firmament is a *separation* (beyn again, for the English verb) between two waters. Such waters are akin to the divine activity of distinguishing between light/day, darkness/night. The firmament is "in the *midst* (betok) of the waters" or in their very center, making an equal division between the two which are composed of the same material.

The firmament is present almost as an animate being in that it has the capacity of making this separation. Note the Hebrew wording: "*from* (min) the waters *to* (l-) the waters."

**Vs. 7: And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so.**

This verse contains the first use in God's creative action through the common verb *hasah* (*to make*) which occurs after his "letting it be;" it suggests a coming into concrete existence as opposed to something more or less intentional. The firmament is again presented as *separating* (badal); it is used with the preposition *beyn* or "in between" with respect to the waters: "under" and "above."

The simple sentence "And it was so" is added to affirm, as it were, the physical gesture of *hasah*. Refer to Noah in Gen 7.11 as noted in vs. 2. While Noah was riding the flood waters, he was, in a sense, *beyn* the two waters, under and above.

**Vs. 8: And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.**

An identification of firmament introduced in vs. 6 and here termed *Heaven* (*shamaym*); also note the verb *qara'* (*to call*) first used in vs. 5. *Shamaym* is also used for *air* in vs. 26: "over the birds of the *air*." This identification perhaps ties in with the measurement of the sun's course throughout a given year as well as astronomical observations, both of which were used for calendar purposes.

Also the bounds of day and night are mentioned (first used in vs. 5 with the **RSV** capitalizing Day and Night). Here we have the "second day" or better, "day two." Note that God does not call "day one" and "day two" *tov* (*good*), a term which applies to the other five days of creation.

**Vs. 9: And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear."**

As with the other creative forces released by God in the Genesis account, this one brings the waters and dry land into existence, letting them develop on their own, as it were, while retaining their rootedness in God.

The waters of which Genesis now speaks are located under the heavens as opposed to those above (cf. vs. 7); presumably the latter do not need to be so gathered. The verb *to gather together* is *qawah*; it also means "to be strong," "to await." For another reference paralleling the Genesis use, cf. Jer 3.17: "At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall *gather* to it." For a verse with the other meaning, cf. Ps 25.3: "Yes, let none who *wait for* you be put to shame." *Qawah* suggests that anything subject to its action once enjoyed a unity which had been fractured.

*One place* (*maqom 'echad*): keeping in line with the more meaningful "day one" (etc.), this phrase can read "place one." *Maqom* (the LXX has *sunagoge*) suggests an abode or habitation. "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will let you dwell in this *place*" [Jer 7.3].

"Place one" is the locus for the *appearance* (*ra'ah*, the verb *to see*; here it reads in Hebrew "to be seen") of *dry land* or *yabashah*, a fundamental differentiation parallel to that between day and night already recounted. This noun is derived from the verbal root *yavash*, *to be dry*; another use of the noun is Ex 14.22: "And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on *dry ground*, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and

on their left.” This piling up of the Red Sea bears a certain correspondence with the primal waters above and below the firmament.

**Vs. 10: God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called seas. And God saw that it was good.**

An equivalent of yabashah with *earth* or ‘ertz which also can mean “country:” “scattered them among the *countries*” [Ezk 11.16]. Note that yabashah is prefixed by the preposition l- (*to*); i.e., God called “*to* the dry land earth.” The verse intimates a sense that ‘ertz as “country” foretells human inhabitation.

*Gathered* (qawah): a second use of this verb first noted in the previous verse with regard to waters under the heavens which in the verse at hand are called (note second use in the same verse of qara’, *to call*) *seas*, hamayim. The waters which had been indistinct up to this point assume the form of oceanic bodies to which the earth gives delineation or shape.

As with the five uses of tov (*good*) or day three onwards, there exists a direct correspondence between divine seeing and goodness which flows from it.

**Vs. 11: And God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth.” And it was so.**

Here ‘ertz is the basis or platform, as it were, for the earth-bound forms of life that will follow. The verse at hand enumerates three types which the earth *puts forth* (dasha’; the only other use is J1 2.22: “Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness *are green*.”):

- 1) *vegetation* (deshe’): in the sense of “fresh sprouts” or herbage which animals eat. Note that it is derived from dasha’ (*put forth*) noted just above. “You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the *grass*” [Is 66.14].
- 2) *plants* (hesev): alternately “herb:” “When no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no *herb* of the field had yet sprung up” [2.5]. In the verse at hand, such plants yield *seed* (zarah) which can also mean *descendant*: “I will establish your *descendants* forever and build your throne for all generations” [Ps 89.4].
- 3) *fruit trees* (hetz pery): these yield *fruit* or pery and contain seed, the same term noted in #2.

Verse twelve fills out the one under discussion and concludes with God seeing that it was good.

Verse thirteen sums up the previous two verses dealing with the theme of vegetation, i.e., “day three.”

**Vs. 14: And God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,**

The theme of *lights* (ma’or) continues through vs. 19; ma’or is related to the common noun of similar meaning (‘or), and the former seems to be a particular instance of the latter. For an example of ma’or, cf. Num 4.9: “And they shall take a cloth of blue and cover the lamp stand for the *light*.” With this verse in mind, the Genesis image bears a certain parallel with God lighting the temple lights. Their function is to *separate* (badal) day from night, this verse having been encountered in vss. 4 & 7.

Not only do lights (in the firmament and temple) embody a separating role (note further use of beyn, *between*), they have a four-fold task related to measurement of space and time:

- 1) *signs* (‘oth): this term can refer to anything which cannot itself be seen, as pointing to something else. “You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a *sign* of the covenant between me and you” [Gen 17.11].
- 2) *seasons* (mohed): also connotes a (religious) festival as well as a place in which an assembly is held. For the latter, cf. Ps 74.8: “They burned all the *meeting places* of God in the land.”

- 3) days: not as specific as the first two but perhaps referring to the division between light and darkness.  
4) years: in the sense of the calendar year.

All four can be summed up by Jer 31.34-6: "Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night...If this fixed order departs from before me, says the Lord, then shall the descendants of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever."

Vs. 15 completes the sentence begun in the previous verse; here the lights in the firmament are intended to "give light upon the earth" as opposed to being markers, as it were, for various occasions and as means to delineate the passage of time.

**Vs. 16: And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also.**

Another use of *ma'or* for *lights* referring to the sun and moon respectively. Both are created to *rule* (*mashal*); the verbal root means "to make like, resemble." With this in mind, *mashal* connotes a making-like by the power in charge over its subjects. "Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall *rule* over you" [Gen 3.16].

The addition of stars are almost an afterthought; perhaps the author of Genesis was wary of astrology which is opposed to the Hebraic religion. For a positive sense, cf. Bar 3.34: "The *stars* shone in their watches and were glad; he called them, and they said, 'Here we are!' They shone with gladness for him who made them."

Vss. 17-9 continue the theme of these two lights and concludes their creation with "day four." Vs. 18 again uses the verb *badal* (*to separate*) with reference to day and night.

**Vs. 20: And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens."**

*Bring forth* (*sharats*): this verb conveys a somewhat uneasy feeling and connotes multiplication as well as creeping on the ground even though the context pertains to fish, etc.; from it is derived the noun "swarms." "But the descendants of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they *multiplied* and grew exceedingly strong so that the land was filled with them" [Ex 1.7].

Here firmament means the sky proper, whereas earlier references as vs. 6 suggest a larger sphere. The Hebrew text literally reads, "on the face of the firmament of heaven;" it is almost as though birds were a permanent feature of this realm.

**Vs. 21: So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves with which the waters swarm according to their kinds and every winged bird according to its kind.**

This verse fleshes out the previous one as in earlier examples by saying that God created these beings after his initial "let" or exercise of divine volition.

In addition to "living creatures," vs. 21 says that God created "great sea *monsters*" (*tanyin*) which could mean a whale or crocodile. "Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great *dragon* that lies in the midst of his streams" [Ezk 29.3].

This same verse mentions "every living *creature*" (*nephesh*), this word commonly translated as "soul" in the sense as having the breath of life. "As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my *soul* out of every adversity" [1 Kg 1.29]. Vs. 21 specifies such a *nephesh* as one which *moves* or *ramas*; this verb means "to creep," "to crawl," and is akin to *sharats* (*to swarm*) and is often used referring to smaller forms of animal life: "...of every *creeping thing* of the ground according to its kind" [Gen 6.20]. Also note the play on words (*nephesh/ramash*)...as though these "souls" were "creeping" on the ground.



*Kinds* (myn): as in vs. 11 with regard to fruit trees.

**Vs. 22: And God blessed them saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”**

This is the first occasion when God *blessed* (barak) his created beings, namely, those in the water and the birds. The verb has the fundamental meaning of “to kneel;” it can be used by God or by persons with respect to God. For a verse similar to this one, cf. Gen 9:1: “And God *blessed* Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’”

The divine blessing has three aspects: *be fruitful* (para’), *multiply* (ravah)—the latter in the sense of being great—and *fill* (mala’) the waters. All three verbs correspond respectively to waters (i.e., filling them) and birds (i.e., multiplying, second use of ravah). Note that birds were mentioned in vs. 20 as situated in the firmament, their proper environment.

Vs. 23 says that the blessing to be fruitful and multiply constitute “day five.”

Vs. 24 speaks of “living *creatures*” (nephesh) along with cattle, creeping things and beasts of the earth followed in vs. 25 by God actually making them. That is, following the sequence of “letting” them come into existence by an act of divine volition.

**Vs. 26: Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after 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 earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”**

The creation of man is the first instance where God uses the first person plural (“let us”); this “day six” (cf. vs. 31) is the final day of creation before God takes his rest (cf. 2.2).

*Man* (‘adam): from a verbal root meaning “to be red” and as pertaining to the color of earth. The noun is often used to describe the human race as opposed to a member of the male sex. The New Testament adapts this term as a title pertaining to Jesus Christ, that is, in his human nature: “...eternal life which the *Son* of man will give to you” [Jn 6.27].

“Man” is endowed with two important characteristics:

- 1) *image* (tselem): also connotes a shadow as well as an idol. For the former, cf. Ps 73:20: “They are like a dream when one awakes, on awaking you despise their *phantoms*.” The LXX has eikon, a central insight developed by the Greek Fathers of the Church.
- 2) *likeness* (demuth): in the sense of an appearance, connoting a “lesser” reality than image. “As for the *appearance* of the wheels and their construction” [Ezk 1.16]. The LXX has homoiosis, an equally important term in the Greek patristic tradition.

Note that the verse at hand has the first person plural pronoun (“our”) attached to both terms. Two observations here: 1) that man as being made in the divine image and likeness is set apart and elevated about the rest of creation described thus far and 2) the words “let us make” combined with “our” can signify a spontaneous exclamation by God, as though he hit upon an extraordinary, fine idea and decided to proceed with its execution.

A distinction is made between the two terms: “in our image” and “after our likeness.” The former suggests a presence/fitting-in of man with regard to image. The latter, that likeness imitates or follows after this “in-ness” and becomes similar to it.

The attribute which flows immediately from man being made in the divine image and likeness is that of domination over the rest of creation. The verb used is radah which has the somewhat negative connotation of

treading something. “The upright shall *have dominion* over them in the morning” [Ps 49.14] for which the RSV has “Straight to the grave they descend.”

Radah is exercised over five categories: fish of sea, birds of air, cattle, all the earth, creeping thing. Note that “all the earth” does not contain a specific kind of animal but the place where land animals live. The preposition *over* (b-) is prefaced to each of the five categories; it signifies presence-*in* as opposed to exercising a type of lordship commonly understood. Also note that b- is prefaced to image and likeness (“in” and “after”). Thus the *over/in* sense of b- suggests a transference of sorts of a human being made in the divine image and likeness into the five categories under which fall the command of radah.

The theme of domination is recounted in Ps 8.6: “You have given him *dominion* over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.” Here the verb masha is used instead of radah; masha connotes the exercise of rule and is a fuller sense than radah.

**Vs. 27: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**

The previous verse had God *making* (hasah) whereas the one at hand has *creating* (bara'). The former is a common verb used for the fabrication of any type of object whereas the latter involves the application of artistic skill. You might say that hasah with regard to image and likeness is a first draft from which the second or final form is derived. Here again the preposition b- is prefaced to image and likeness, full presence of divinity *in* man.

The second part of vs. 27 more or less restates the first part, reversing the terms. The first part has God creating man “in his own image” whereas the second, “in the image of God.” It is as though God wanted to get it right this time after having *made* (hasah) man as first draft which was noted in the previous section.

The second part concerns *man* ('adam) or a human being apart from any sexual distinction who is consequently divided into the genders of *male* (zakar) and *female* (neqevah) which are similarly *created* (bara'). Compare this with Gal 3.18: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

**Vs. 28: And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”**

First a *blessing* (bara') followed by a five-fold injunction which may be outlined as follows:

- 1) *be fruitful* (parah): applies both to fruit-bearing trees as well as to animals and humans. This command bears a parallel to the one after the flood: “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth*’” [Gen 9.1].
- 2) *multiply* (ravah): cf. vs. 22 with respect to “day five” of creation as well as the Noah/flood verse just mentioned.
- 3) *fill* (mala'): cf. vs. 22 and the Noah/flood verse. These first three injunctions refer to the earth.
- 4) *subdue* (kavas): from this verbal root is derived keves or *lamb*; implied is that such subduing is a kind of softening as opposed to forceful compliance.
- 5) *have dominion* (radah): as in vs. 26 after God made man in his image and likeness. In the verse at hand, radah pertains to fish, birds and living things on the earth. Again, the preposition b- (*over* in the sense of “in”) is used for all three. The verb rama (*to move*) more specifically means “to creep” and can apply to small animals as well as to reptiles; cf. vs. 21.

**Vs. 29: And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.**

These words uttered by God continue into the next verse.



*Behold* (hineh): used as a means of getting attention, that is, the man and woman. The verse at hand concerns plants for food as opposed to “every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants” [Gen 9.3]. Perhaps the word *seed* (zerah; cf. its verbal root) as in vs. 11 implies propagation or continued existence which here at the beginning of creation is important to keep in mind. “You caused the grass to grow for the cattle and plants for man to cultivate” [Ps 104.14].

**Vs. 30: And 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.**

The three major divisions of living beings (beasts of earth, bird, creeping thing) receive as their food “every *green plant*” (yereq hesev). “For the land which you are entering to take possession of is not like the land of Egypt...like a garden of *vegetables*” [Dt 11.10]. The first word means anything green and has the alternate meaning “to spit.” The second is found in vs. 11 (*plants*). Each category of beings has the preposition l- (*to, for*) prefaced to it.

“*Breath of life*” (nephesh): cf. vs. 11, “*living creature.*”

“And it was so.” found in vss. 7 & 11.

**Vs. 31: And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.**

*Saw* (ra’ah): only noted in vss. 4 & 10, “day one” and “day three.”

Use of *behold* (hineh as in vs. 29) and *very good* (tov me’od) go hand-in-hand with the divine seeing which effected the similarly divine making. “Day six” is the only day with the adverb me’od which connects anything excessive.

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## Chapter Two

**Vs. 1: Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them.**

*Finished* (kalah): with reference to two extremes of physical creation, heavens and earth, as well as their host. This verb involves a completion, a development of Genesis’ opening words, “In the *beginning*” where, as noted, re’shyth pertains to that divine initiative which set creation in motion. The LXX has sunteleo for kalah; the noun telos derives from this verb which signifies something having come to perfection as well as an end. “In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be *accomplished*” [Ezra 1.1].

*Host* (tsava’): often used in the plural and connotes an army. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of *hosts*; the whole earth is full of his glory” [Is 6.3]. In the verse at hand, tsava’ can mean those animate and/or inanimate beings which populate the two regions...protecting them as an army, as it were.

**Vs. 2: And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.**

*Finished* (kalah): as in vs. 1 which has this verb in the passive (“were finished”); here kalah is active or directly associated with God (“God finished”). Also a day is assigned in accord with the reckoning of Genesis: “day seven.” This day is traditionally held as the Sabbath in Jewish and Christian traditions when no work is to be done. However, note that God seemed to have been still working on “day seven;” i.e., he finished it on that day.

*Seventh* or seven: (shevah): a number signifying perfection; cf. kalah/sunteleo already noted in vss. 1 & 2. It is derived from the verbal root “to swear” (an oath). “...out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I *swore* to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” [Ex 33.1]. The number seven plays an important role in the fall of Jericho (cf. Jos 6): seven priests, seven trumpets, seventh day. Implied in vs. 2 is that “day seven” is a “day of oath.”

*Work* (mela'kah): associated with “finished” and “done;” from the verbal root mala' as in 1.22: “Be fruitful and multiply and *fill* the waters in the seas.” Thus God’s “work” involves a completion as with the verb kalah. “Twenty-four thousand of these shall have charge of the *work* in the house of the Lord” [1 Chron 23.4].

*Rested* (shavath): note the similar sound with shevah, *seven*(th). From this word comes the Sabbath, the Day of Rest. The primary idea is a kind of sitting still, of sitting down after having been in a standing position. “You have founded a bulwark because of your foes to *still* the enemy and the avenger” [Ps 8.2].

In the verse at hand, the divine rest occurs on “day seven (oath).” God rests *from* (m-or min) his work, that is, he separates himself from creative activity characterized by day one through day six. These six days are marked by divine *work* or mela'kah, the second use of this word in vs. 2.

**Vs. 3: So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.**

*Blessed* (barak): as in vss. 22 & 8 of Chapter One, that is, with respect to sea monsters, water creatures and birds as well as man and woman. “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works:” the same verse more or less cited in Heb 4.4 which develops the concept of rest (cf. **Notes on the Letter to the Hebrews** on this Home Page).

*Hallowed* (qadash): in the sense of dedicating “day seven” as distinct from the six days of creation. “...and shall anoint it (altar), to *consecrate* it” [Ex 29.6].

“On it:” as in vs. 2; both instances use the preposition b- (*in*) prefixed to the noun which intimates a presence *in*.

**Vs. 4: These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,**

Chapter Two 4b-3.24 belongs to another tradition from 1.1-2.4a. As a footnote in the **RSV** points out, man is created before vegetation, animals and woman.

*Generations* (toldoth): from the verbal root yalad, *to give birth*. This term applies to a genealogical account or history pertaining to families. “These are the *generations* of Noah” [Gen 6.9]. It corresponds to the genealogy of Jesus Christ which opens Matthew’s Gospel: “The book of the *genealogy* of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Here an account of the human race’s origins gradually narrows down to the birth of Christ, that is, the rise of each generation is a self-perpetuating process compared with the toldoth of heavens and earth of vs. 4 which were *created* (bara’).

The second sentence in vs. 4 continues through the next few verses and comes to a conclusion in vs. 7. Note the preposition b- (*in*) prefixed to “day,” another indication that God is fully present within it. Here the phrase *Lord God* (YHWH ‘Eloheym) is introduced as opposed to the simple use of ‘Eloheym in the earlier creation account. Vs. 4 brings us to “day one” (not explicitly mentioned) and unravels it, so to speak, with man’s creation in vs. 7 onwards.

**Vs. 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 man to till the ground;**

The author speaks of plants, herbs and rain which suggest that he is living in an arid land. The two types are

as follows:

- 1) *plant* (*syach*): from a verbal root “to produce,” “to speak,” “to sing.” The noun refers more to a bush in the sense of a shrub. “When the water in the skin was gone, she (Hagar) cast the child under one of the *bushes*” [Gen 21.15].
- 2) *herb* (*hesev*): as in vss. 11 & 30.

*Rain* (*matar*): note the verbal form or the *hiphil*: “*caused* it to rain” or indirect action by the Lord God almost as though there were an intermediate between him and the rain. Use of the *hiphil* can indicate that the noun performing the action does so on its own accord yet influenced by another (divine) action.

This verse shows a close connection between plants, herbs, rain and *man* (‘adam). Note the association of ‘adam with *ground* (‘adamah). “Until you return to the *ground*, for out of it you were taken” [Gen 3.19]. Compare ‘adamah with ‘*eret* (*earth*), the latter suggesting the planet as a whole or a particular country.

The verb *havad* (*to till*) is used; it commonly means “to labor,” “to work,” and may be taken to anticipate the banishment of man from the Garden of Eden noted just above.

#### **Vs. 6: but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground—**

*Mist* (‘ed): the only other reference is Job 36.27: “For he draws up the drops of water, he distills his *mist* in rain.” Note the difference between ‘ed and the primeval waters upon which the Spirit was moving (1.2): the former has its source from the ‘*ertz*, vapor-like.

The purpose of this mist is *to give water* (*shaqah*): “From your lofty abode you *water* the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work” [Ps 104.13]. A noun derived from this verbal root is *butler*: “Some time after this, the *butler* of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord the king of Egypt” [Ex 40.1]. With this verse in mind, the mist acts as a kind of servant to provide nourishment.

Mention of “face” with respect to *ground* (‘adamah) suggests the earth’s surface, that it is not threatening like the primeval waters at the beginning of Genesis nor like the destructive floods of Noah.

#### **Vs. 7: then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.**

The completion and fulfillment of the lengthy sentence begun in vs. 4.

*Formed* (*yatsar*): compare with the earlier verbs “to create,” “to make.” *Yatsar* has the sense of making a vessel of earthenware: “You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s *vesse!*” [Ps 2.9]. This verb also connotes destiny: “I *formed* you, you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me” [Is 44.21].

The object of divine *yatsar* is *man* or ‘adam, that is, from *dust* (*haphar*) of the *ground* (‘adamah). Compare with Prov 8.26: “Before he had made the earth with its fields or the first of the *dust* of the world.” This verse speaks of Wisdom, the first of God’s creation, who “was beside him like a master workman” [vs. 30]. The dryness of this dust may be situated in the context of the watering of earth in the previous verse.

*Breathed* (*yaphach*): intimates a sighing or panting: “For false witnesses have risen against me, and they *breathe out* violence” [Ps 27.12]. The purpose of this verb is to animate man; God effects this through his nostrils, that is, he exhales or sighs into them.

*Breath* (*neshamah*): from a verbal root meaning “to pant” and akin to *yaphach*. “At your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the *breath* of your nostrils” [Ps 18.15]. In the verse at hand, this breath is associated with life resulting in ‘adam becoming a *living being* (*lenephesh chayah*). The use of this noun (*nephesh* or *being*) was encountered in 1.21: “So God created the great sea monsters and every living *creature* that moves.” Note the

preposition ל- prefixed to this noun, as though God's breath were imparted *towards* 'adam as this "living being."

Compare this second account of creation in Genesis with Ps 104.29: "When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their *breath*, they die and return to their dust." Here the word is ruach (alternately, *spirit*). Note the use of *dust* or haphar in the verse under discussion.

**Vs. 8: And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.**

Creation of this garden in Eden is the first mention in Genesis of a particular place as opposed to general terms such as sea, earth and so forth. The text presupposes that Eden had already existed, almost that it was in existence before physical creation.

*Planted* (natah): in the sense of setting something firm or fixed. For an alternate use, cf. Is 51.16: "*stretching out* the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, 'You are my people.'"

A *garden* (gan) intimates cultivation, of divine or human intervention with respect to the "uncultivated" elements of creation mentioned thus far. "A *garden* locked is my sister, my bride, a *garden* locked, a fountain sealed" [Sg 4.12]. The Song verse speaks of what is typically associated with a garden, an area enclosed by walls to set it apart from that which lies outside. However, the garden in Genesis does not require such protection for nothing hostile to it exists. Perhaps the author has in mind that tohu and bohu of 1.2 which is the furthest reality from a garden.

Note the three-fold description: garden, *Eden* (Heden) and *east* (qedem), the last two terms having a similar sound but have different verbal roots. The former suggests delight or pleasure: "You were in *Eden*, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering" [Ezk 28.13]. An alternate use of the latter is a preposition (*before*), perhaps suggesting being before the sunrise.

God's placing man in the three-fold location of garden-Eden-east suggests that this man was in another place, so to speak, after having been fashioned "from the ground" [vs. 7]. Such a transferal from a non-spatial/temporal realm to a concrete place is, in a sense, reminiscent of the transferal of some Old Testament prophets as well as John the Evangelist: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" [Rev 1.10]. In this instance as with some others, there is a movement from a specified location to one transcending it.

**Vs. 9: And 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.**

*Ground* ('adamah): the source of the first *man* or 'adam; that is, both he, trees providing nourishment as well as the tree containing knowledge with respect to good and evil, have one and the same source.

*Grow* (tsamach): another instance of hiphil as in vs. 6 ("*caused* to rain"). This verb pertains to anything which sprouts: "Let the earth open that salvation may *sprout forth*, and let it cause righteousness to spring up also" [Is 45.8].

The first tree is both *pleasant* (chamad) to the eyes and *good* (tov) for eating. The first adjective pertains to anything which is coveted. "You shall not *covet* your neighbor's house" [Ex 20.17]. Although the text does not explicitly state it, these trees seem to be located in the very *midst* (betok) of the garden, an axis, so to speak, around which the rest of this garden revolves.

The second tree occupies the same betok or central position and is the one of *life* (chayym). Note that in vs. 7 God breathes into the man's nostrils the breath of life. Association of life with a tree is rich in Jewish and Christian symbolism, the latter seeing it an image of Christ's cross. "Through the middle (i.e., betok) of the street of of the city; also, on either side of the river, the *tree of life* with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its

fruit each month" [Rev 22.2].

This tree of life which apparently occupies the same location as the others differs from them in that it is singular (as opposed to the plurality of the others). Another way of viewing this is that the tree of life is central whereas the others cluster around it. The singular tree contains *knowledge* or dahath which connotes an intimate relationship both of *good* (tov) and of *evil* (rah). "She (the personification of wisdom) is a *tree of life* to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy" [Prov 3.18].

**Vs. 10: A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.**

*River* (nahar): reminiscent of Rev 22.1-2; note that one river occurs at the beginning of creation and the other at the end or fulfillment of history: "Then he showed me the *river* of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city." In the verse at hand, the river has its source within Eden or from a subterranean source (cf. vs. 6, "a mist...watered the whole face of the ground"). Note the use of the verb shaqah in that verse as well as vs. 10.

*Divided* (parad): this verb connotes scattering or dispersal which in the verse at hand can apply to the river overflowing, as it were. "From there the coastland peoples *spread*" [Gen 10.5].

*Rivers* (ro'sh): a different term from the singular nahar just noted. This noun derives from the same verbal root as *beginning* (re'shyth) which commences the Book of Genesis. The term ro'sh suggests a head or source which is four-fold derived from a more fundamental source within Eden. Use of ro'sh with the number four implies a reality akin to the traditional four elements which make up creation. Also, these four rivers give form the physical world outside Eden. Compare this image with that of the four-sided heavenly Jerusalem from which the river of life flows.

Verses 11 through 14 name the four rivers which may be outlined as follows:

1) Pishon: as in Sirach 24.25: "It (book of the covenant) fills men with wisdom like the Pishon." In Genesis this river "flows around the whole land of Havilah" which is mentioned historically in

**Vs. 15: The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.**

Compare this *taking* (laqach, the common verb) of man with vs. 8: "and there he put the man whom he had formed." In other words, such taking presupposes man having been made prior to God putting him in Eden. Nuach is the verb for *to place*; another meaning is *to rest*: "for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth...and *rested* the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it" [Ex 20.11].

Along with the notion of rest implied in this divine "putting," note that two verbs of action are used: 1) *to till* (havad, the common verb *to do, to make*). 2) *to keep* (shamar) in the sense of close observation. "My soul has *kept* your testimonies" [Ps 119.167]. Shamar is frequently used in Ps 119 concerning various aspects of the divine Torah. With respect to the garden in Eden, shamar refers to something which had already been made and requires constant vigilance to maintain its current (divine) condition.

**Vs. 16: And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;**

*Commanded* (tsawah): in the sense of God appointing man. "And the Lord has *appointed* him (David) to be prince over his people" [1 Sam 13.14]. The preposition hal (*on, upon*) is prefixed to 'adam, implying that this command is almost physically placed on him.

"Freely" is absent in the Hebrew text; the repetition of 'akal (*to eat*) conveys this sense.

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

Here *knowledge* (dahath) is presented in terms of good and evil as in vs. 9. Such knowledge is associated with the human act of eating, of taking it in through the mouth and passing into the digestive system. The verb *muth* (*to die*) is repeated as with “to eat” in vs. 16 to re-enforce the divine command. “Day” may be taken as a type of *kairos* event, a special occasion signified by this classic New Testament Greek term.

**Vs. 18: Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”**

These words of God are a kind of self-reflection, of uttering to himself a deed he wishes to accomplish in the future.

*Alone* (levad): connotes separation as well isolation. The need for created beings to have mates is stated in Gen 6.19: “And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.”

*Helper* (hezer): this noun and its verbal root pertain to the performance of a task, of carrying out an assignment or chore as distinct to a designation of a member of the opposite (female) sex. “Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our *help* and shield” [Ps 33.20].

God intends to *make fit* (keneged) such a (female) helper; this word is a preposition in the Hebrew, actually two: *k-* (*as*) and *neged* (*before*).

**Vs. 19: So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast 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.**

Not only is the *man* (‘adam) formed from the *ground* (‘adamah) but land animals and birds. *Yatsar* is the verb for *to form* used exclusively for man in vs. 7, there with reference to ‘adamah. The verse at hand suggests a connaturality of ‘adam/‘adamah with other created beings; it is often used in reference to forming an object, a piece of pottery by a potter.

God *brought* (the common word *bu’a*) every beast and every bird to the ‘adam so that he could name them. The text gives the impression that every animal was brought, a considerable number by any standard, but God’s action may be taken as a way of bringing different species to the man. The purpose of such bringing is for God to see what the ‘adam would *call* (*qara’*) them, this verb being first used in 1.5 with reference to “day” and “night.” Thus the human *qara’* parallels the creative, divine *qara’*. There is a sense of curiosity and expectation on God’s part conveyed by the common verb “to see;” i.e., waiting for the names given by man to see if they parallel those given by God. Although the text does not mention this, it can be suggested by the text.

The bestowal of a *name* (*shem*) is of great importance in ancient societies, especially those which are pre-literate or not fully literate. Also, naming animals is akin to the divine command in 1.28: “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.” The verse at hand strongly intimates that once man bestowed a name, it was permanent.

**Vs. 20: The man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of the air and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him.**

Here ‘adam fulfills the divine “bringing” of creatures, that is, he gives them names. The first part of this verse, however, seems intended to accent the second, that the man was alone despite the multitude of creatures.

*Found* (*matsa’*): used to convey that watching by God “to see” what the man will name the creatures; i.e., it



conveys God as an observer and that he is disappointed in no suitable *helper* (*hezer*) for him. Cf. vs. 18 for this noun where God intends to make a *hezer*; the subsequent creation of beasts and birds are almost a trial-run as well as their naming by man.

**Vs. 21: So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh;**

The frequent use of “so,” “then” and “but” are often translations of *wa-* (more commonly, *and*) which shows a continuity of thought helpful for non-literate audiences to retain in memory what they have heard.

*Deep sleep* (*tardemah*): used in conjunction with *naphal* (*to fall*). It is close to the English expression but conveys a more forceful sense here, almost of blacking out. The verbal root (*radam*) means *to sleep* (snore) *heavily*. “For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of *deep sleep* and has closed your eyes, the prophets, and covered your heads, the seers” [Is 29.10]. This complete passing-out may be compared with the taking of ‘adam from ‘adamah, a kind of passing from oblivion into consciousness.

*Slept* (*yashan*): the more common verb as opposed to the root of *tardemah*; perhaps this “secondary” sleep is meant to re-enforce the “primary” one.

*Ribs* (*tselah*): prefaced by the preposition *min* (*from*) to show full separation of this bone from the man, that is, as completely outside him. As a construction term, cf. 1 Kg 6.15: “He (King Solomon) lined the walls of the house on the inside with *boards* of cedar.”

*Closed* (*sagar*): here pertaining to flesh in order to close the open wound in man’s side. “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” [1 Cor 11.8-9]. *Sagar* can apply to the shutting of a gate: “To open doors before him (King Cyrus) that gates may not be *closed*” [Is 45.1].

**Vs. 22: and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.**

*Made* (*banah*): more properly, “to build,” which conveys the idea that the Lord God functioned as a carpenter or mason. Also recall that *rib* (*tselah*) can mean a “board” as the verse from 1 Kg 6.15 just above notes. With this in mind, the man is a kind of quarry or source from which to take building materials.

*Brought* (*buah*): the same verb used in vs. 19 where God brings creatures to the man; he does the same in this verse with regard to the woman. The verb is in the *hiphil* which better reads, “caused to bring.” That is, God acts indirectly but within the woman, so to speak; he doesn’t lead the woman by the hand to the man. *Buah* as used in vs. 19 is not in the *hiphil*; there God acts directly.

Note a play on words: *given* (*built*, that is by God) and *brought her* (*yevi’eha*).

**Vs. 23: Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man.”**

The first utterance of man in the Bible which refers to his missing half or the woman. Better, it is a cry of recognition or a realization that someone has been fashioned from his own body as opposed to the creatures which brought to God and were unsuitable for a mate. Note the transition of woman as “helper” to wife.

*This at last* (*zo’th hapaham*): a vivid expression indicating suddenness. *Hapaham* comes from the verbal root *paham*, *to shrike*, to beat and can suggest a state of turmoil. “You hold my eyelids from closing; I am so *troubled* that I cannot speak” [Ps 78.4]. *Paham* is also the root for *bell*, an object associated with striking: “They also made *bells* of pure gold” [Ex 39.25].

Two features which the *man* or ‘adam recognizes in the woman: *bone* (*heseem*) and *flesh* (*basar*). Perhaps the

man had in mind that rib (“bone”) from which the woman was fashioned by God.

The two-fold nature of woman as well as man leads ‘adam to call her *Woman* (capitalized in the RSV) or ‘ishah; the Hebrew text has a play on words, ‘ish being the noun for *man*. Note the other use of *man* or ‘adam in this same verse; the former is used to distinguish the two sexes. Most likely “woman” can be termed an ‘adam but indirectly since she was taken not from ‘adamah but from the ‘adam.

“Was taken:” the passive indicates that the man did not take her from his side, but it was accomplished by God although the divine agent is not directly mentioned.

**Vs. 24: Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.**

*Leaves* (hazav): note the contrast between such leaving and the divine bringing of animals and the woman to man already discussed. This abandonment pertains to one’s parents which here is lacking because God created ‘adam directly minus human intercourse. Jesus quotes this verse in Mt 19.5 in response to a Pharisee asking him about divorce. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder” [vs. 6]. The Genesis text does not explicitly say that God has caused this joining which occurs through that zo’th hapaham of vs. 23.

*Cleaves* (davaq): the opposite of leaving one’s father and mother in favor of a wife. This verse can apply to something like glue: “When the dust runs into a mass and the clods *cleave fast together*” [Job 38.38]? Cf. Ps 63.8 as pertaining to God: “My soul *clings* to you; your right hand upholds me.” For the opposite sense of davaq, cf. 1 Cor 6.16: “Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two shall become one flesh.”

The result of such cleaving is “one flesh” or in Hebrew, “flesh one” which is akin to the days of creation already noted, that is, the adjective following the noun gives the phrase a greater sense of unity.

**Vs. 25: And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.**

*Wife* is the same noun as *woman*, that is, ‘ishah. This concluding verse of Chapter Two sets the stage for the “fall” by identifying physical *nakedness* (harom) with the lack of *shame* (bush). “A servant who deals wisely has the king’s favor, but his wrath falls on one who *acts shamefully*” [Prov 14.35]. The verbal root of harom means “to be crafty:” “They lay *crafty* plans against your people” [Ps 83.3]. Perhaps the cunning bound up with being naked presages the serpent’s deceit in the next chapter.

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### Chapter Three

**Vs. 1: Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’”**

*Serpent* (nachash): the first mention in Genesis. Since a serpent falls under the category of a reptile, it may be one of the “creeping things” of 1.26. This noun derives from the verbal root which means “to hiss, whisper” as well as “to augur, divine.” As *enchantment*, cf. Num 23.23: “For there is no *enchantment* against Jacob, no divinization against Israel.” Another derivative from the same verbal root is *brass* (nachsheth): “So Moses made a *bronze* serpent and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit an man, he would look at the *bronze* serpent and live” [Num 21.9]. In this verse is a play on the words, “serpent” and “brass.” For the New Testament context: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as *serpents* and innocent as doves” [Mt 10.16].

*Subtle* (harum): in the sense of being crafty, cunning; from the verbal root haram, *to make* (as opposed to being) *naked* as well as *to be heaped up*. For a positive use, cf. Prov 15.5: “A fool despises his father’s instruction, but he who heeds admonition is *prudent*.” Cf. 1 Sam 23.22 which has a parallel with the verse at

hand: “For it told me that he (David) is very *cunning*.”

“*Wild* (sadeh) creature:” the noun for “field” is used, that is, “of the field.” Despite the untamed nature of the serpent, it is nevertheless made by God.

The text has this nachash addressing the woman...“enchanting” her...not the man, perhaps making a not so delicate allusion between it and the female. The serpent reminds her of God’s prohibition about the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The woman correctly responds in 3.2-3 that the prohibition pertained to the that “tree which is in the midst of the garden.” She also adds the ban about *touching* (nagah) it which the Genesis text omits. This verb more specifically pertains to approaching something or someone; in the verse at hand, it would result in death. The serpent acknowledges awareness of death and reassures the woman that she will not die. Thus far there is no mention of death, so presumably the woman did not have a clear idea about its reality.

**Vs. 5: For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**

Here the serpent presumes divine thoughts and intents with respect to the woman and man. The common verb yadah (*to know*; also pertains to intimate knowledge) is used here with a certain foreknowledge in mind, almost in anticipation that the woman and man will eat the fruit.

*Opened* (paqach): with respect to eyes, of vision, the opposite of which is blindness but here we have a kind of beneficial blindness. Paqach is used mostly concerning the eyes: “Then Elisha prayed and said, ‘O Lord, I pray you, *open* his eyes that he may see” [2 Kg 6.17]. Perhaps the use in Genesis parallels not so much physical blindness but perception as in Gen 21.19: “Then God *opened* her (Hagar) eyes, and she saw a well of water.” In the verse at hand paqah is in the niphal: the eyes are opened passively or indirectly, as it were, suggesting that another agent may be at work.

The immediate consequence of paqach (from the serpent’s perspective) is that “you” or the woman (as opposed to the man) “will be *like* (ke-) God” in the sense of being “as” him, another meaning of ke- prefixed to a noun.

*Knowing* (yadah): the second use of this verb in the same verse, the first one with respect to God and this one with respect to the woman or more specifically, concerning good and evil. This “knowing” did occur as 3.22 recounts.

**Vs. 6: So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate.**

This lengthy verse is divided into five sections:

- 1) The tree had an attractive appearance, that is, for eating: the “tree was good *for* (l- or *to*, in the sense of direction-towards-which) food.” This phrasing makes the tree all the more attractive, that it had a compelling reason to attract the woman.
- 2) The tree was a *delight* (ta’awah): used in a positive sense but with a negative outcome. “And they ate and were well filled, for he gave them what they *craved*” [Ps 78.29]. Here the Hebrew text reads literally, “and *desire* came to them.” This verse bears parallel with that of the Genesis one; it is almost as though desire were something alive with independent existence which “came” to those who lusted after food.
- 3) The tree was to be *desired* (chamad): a different word from the noun ta’awah; the former often connotes both a positive and negative sense whereas the latter contains a broader sense as pertaining to anything delightful. “With great *delight* I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste” [Sg 2.3]. In the verse at hand, chamad is related to being *wise* (sakal), a verb suggesting prudence. “David, a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and *deal wisely*” [Jer 23.5]. For another sense, cf. Neh 8.13: “The heads of fathers’ houses

of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order *to study* the words of the law.”

4) The woman takes the tree’s fruit and eats it.

5) The woman then gave some of this fruit to her husband who ate it. Note the play on words: *woman* (‘ishah) and *husband* (‘ysh).

**Vs. 7: Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.**

The previous has the woman seeing the tree as good, whereas vs. 7 says that her eyes, as well as her husband’s, were opened. Presumably this earlier seeing was a type of blindness with regard to the distinction between good and evil.

*Opened* (paqach): noted in vs. 5 when the serpent knows that God foresees this event. The previous verse says that the woman had eaten the tree’s fruit; perhaps her eyes were not yet opened which resulted from giving the fruit to her husband.

*Naked* (harum): from the same verbal root as “subtle” which describes the serpent in 3.1.

At first glance, being naked seems the opposite of subtle which implies hiding or adorning clothes. Here such nakedness is a realization, a *knowing* or yadah, which signifies self-awareness and alienation from God.

*Sewed* (taphar): the only other two references: 1) “A time to rend, and a time to *sew*” [Eccl 3.7]. 2) “Woe to the women who *sew* magic bands upon all wrists” [Ezk 13.18]! The object of taphar in vs. 7: “*fig leaves*” or te’edah which are large as Zech 3.10 implies: “In that day, says the Lord of hosts, everyone of you will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his *fig tree*.” Note that vs. 8 calls God’s servant the “Branch” which may be taken as belonging to a fig tree. For a reference to *leaf*: “For you shall be like an oak whose *leaf* withers and like a garden without water” [Is 1.30].

*Aprons* (chagorah): the only other reference being 2 Sam 18.11: “I (Joab) would have been glad to give you ten pieces of silver and a *girdle*.” A closely related word is chagor: “And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David...and his bow and his *girdle*” [1 Sam 18.4]. These two verses have a military connotation. Positively taken, refer to Lk 12.35: “Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning.”

**Vs. 8: And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.**

*Sound* (qol): also, “voice.” “They (birds) sing among the branches” [Ps 104.12] or literally, “they give their *voice*.” In the verse at hand, qol may represent that which is most characteristic of God not unlike the singing or “voice” of birds. The divine voice brings into existence the various parts of creation in Chapter One.

This qol—from which qahal (*assembly*) is derived or that which is called together—reveals the nearness of God in the garden, more specifically, his *walking* or halak. Presumably the Lord God is taking a stroll not so much as to inspect his creation in the garden but to pay a visit to the man and woman. This instance shows that while the rest of creation may be “outside” the garden, God chose to walk within its confines. It may be taken as a foretaste of Christ’s incarnation. Note the definite time of day, its *cool* period or ruach, a word alternately meaning “spirit.” This term can apply to refreshing breezes around sunset after the day’s heat.

“*Hid* (chava’) themselves:” a direct consequence of hearing God’s ruach walking, almost immediately following it. “But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he *hid* himself” [Jud 9.5]. Both instances of this verb are in the hithpael or reflexive.

*Presence* (panym): connotes face, here the one of God. It is interesting that this word is used instead of simply “the Lord God:” panym has a close association with the divine ruach, as if this ruach were an immediate sign that the Lord God were about to make his appearance.

The man and woman hid *among* (betok) the trees; better, “in the midst” of the trees. These trees were noted in 2.9 (“pleasant to the sight and good for food”) as opposed to the one from which the man and woman ate.

**Vs. 9: But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”**

Here the title “Lord God” vis-a-vis the man, especially in light of the previous verse, assume a kind of ominous picture of God, almost as a giant compared with the two humans. His act of *calling* (qara’) gives a new sense to this verb which earlier was used to bring various parts of creation into existence. Qara’ has a negative connotation here, on the threshold of issuing a sentence for the trespass committed by the man and woman. Note that God directs qara’ to the man as opposed to his wife. Qara’ also connotes the real reason for God walking in the garden although not necessarily bound up with it or God having apparently perceived something awry in the garden. “Where are you” is poignant in that God knows the man’s whereabouts but asks the question in order to elicit a response.

**Vs. 10: And he said, “I heard your sound in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”**

*Sound* (qol): more specifically as “voice;” cf. vs. 8 where it was associated with God’s walking in the garden. The same verse uses ruach for “cool of the day,” so perhaps this sound/voice is a type of wind/spirit which as noted there is an alternate translation of this noun.

Fear and *nakedness* (haram, verb) go hand in hand, the former being triggered by the divine qol. Cf. vs. 1 for an alternate use of haram: “Now the serpent was more *subtle* than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made.” In a sense the hiding which followed fear and the realization of being naked bring out a parallel between the man and the serpent’s “subtle” nature. Similarly, nakedness is often associated with vulnerability and a desire to be concealed.

The same verb chava’ (*to hide*) is used as in vs. 8.

**Vs. 11: He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”**

Two questions by the Lord God posed in rapid succession, almost as if to catch the man off guard and get to the truth of the matter.

*Naked* or harom as noted earlier. Here the Lord God employs a rhetorical question (“Who told you...?”) as though a third person were present with the man in the garden. Perhaps the intent is to have the man respond in just as quick succession as God did to him.

In the second rhetorical question the Lord God asks the man about eating from the tree. Both he and the man realize the situation, namely, man’s nakedness as a sign of having trespassed the commandment.

**Vs. 12: The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”**

Here we have the immediate respond by the man to the Lord God, that is, a response to the two rhetorically-based questions of the previous verse. The man is accurate here: it was the woman (vs. 6) whom the serpent tempted to eat of the tree’s fruit. However, he made a mistake, an kind of insult, to the Lord God which consists in the words “whom you gave to be with me.”

Note the similarity in sound between the two words, *woman* and *which*: ‘ishah and ‘asher, which heightens the man’s attempt to shift blame away from himself.

**Vs. 13: Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.”**

The Lord God addresses the woman after having spoken with the man in vs. 11, the second time in the form of a question which does not intimate a divine lack of knowledge about the situation but to elicit a freely given response. The Lord God has taken the man at his word, that is, that the woman gave him the tree's fruit to eat. The woman rightly says that the serpent had *beguiled* (*nasha'*) him, a verb which also connotes lifting up and taking away. This is the only Old Testament use of the term. "But I am afraid that as the serpent *deceived* Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" [2 Cor 11.3]. The Greek equivalent to *nasha'* here is *exapatao*, the preposition *ex* (*from, out of*) prefixed to the verb as an intensification of its meaning.

The tone of this verse hearkens back to the dialogue between the serpent and woman earlier in chapter three. Such beguiling took place in the context of having one's eyes opened, being like God and knowing good and evil. Contrast the deception of this *serpent* (*nachash*) with the same *bronze* (*nachsheth*) serpent noted in the context of 3.1, that is, from Num 21.9. The latter gives life: "So Moses made a *bronze serpent* and set it on a pole; and if a *serpent* bit any man, he would look at the *bronze serpent* and live" [vs. 9].

**Vs. 14: The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life."**

The beginning of a sentence pronounced against the serpent which continues through the next verse and takes the form of a divine *curse* (*'arar*). "Come now, *curse* this people for me since they are too mighty for me" [Num 22.6]. Thus *'arar* is somewhat akin to casting a spell. It is used in conjunction with the preposition *min* (*m-*) or to signify separating *from*, an intensification of the curse.

In the verse at hand, the divine curse is with respect to two types of animals, tame and wild:

- 1) *cattle* (*behemah*): a term which includes (domestic) beasts of burden in general. "The herds of *cattle* are my lord's" [Gen 47.18]. Mention of cattle can be taken in the context of a nomadic or semi-nomadic audience which puts great importance on these animals.
- 2) *wild animals* or literally, "animals of the *field*" (*sadeh*). "All that moves in the *field* is mine" [Ps 50.10]. Perhaps the wildness of these animals anticipates what lies in store for the man and woman outside the tame nature of the garden of Eden.

*Belly* (*gachon*): the only other reference is Lev 11.42: "Whatever goes on its *belly* and whatever goes on all fours or whatever has many feet, all the swarming things that swarm upon the earth, you shall not eat; for they are an abomination." Since the serpent is presumably a snake and crawls upon the ground, God bids it to eat *dust* (*haphar*) for the duration of its lifetime. This noun usually refers to fine dust blown by the wind. "I beat them fine as *dust* before the wind; I cast them out like the mire of the streets" [Ps 18.42]. *Haphar* is not to be confused with 'adam (*man*) created in the divine image and likeness, 'adam being associated with the red color of the earth.

**Vs. 15: I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."**

The end of the divine curse begun in vs. 13. Here the Lord God puts *enmity* (*'eyvah*) not only between the man and woman but in their future offspring or *seed* (*zereh*). Such enmity is strong, the alternate meaning of which is "enemy." For another reference with the same connotation in the verse at hand, cf. Num 35.21: "in *enmity* he struck him down with his hand so that he died."

It is interesting to note that *zereh* as *seed* here applies to both man and the beast, this term usually being applied to the male (i.e., a mammal as opposed to a reptile) reproductive act.

*Bruise* (*shuph*): this verbal root suggests a gaping upon or laying in wait to make an attack. "If I say, 'Let only darkness *cover* me and the light about me be night'" [Ps 139.11]. That is to say, darkness lays in wait for the



psalmist much like the serpent. The enmity which God brings to the fore is between the serpent and woman as opposed to one between the woman and man. This act of bruising the woman's head implies that the serpent lies in wait, for example, in a tree as opposed to laying on the ground. The woman's bruising of the serpent's head, most likely its tail, can intimate that this head is hanging from the tree.

The Book of Revelation speaks of the hostility originating in the Garden of Eden in terms of the *serpent/dragon* (drakon) who pursued the woman after she gave birth to a child, 12.13-7.

**Vs. 16: To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."**

Now the Lord God turns attention to the man after having addressed the serpent. Note that it is in context of giving birth which seems to have been absent in the garden.

"Greatly *multiply*" (ravah): used twice, the second being taken as an adverb for "greatly" to indicate abundance. It is in conjunction with the *pain* (hetsev) of childbearing; this term suggests heavy, toilsome labor. "...eating the bread of anxious *toil*; for he gives to his beloved sleep" [Ps 127.2]. Hetsev is mentioned a second time in vs. 16 as if to emphasize the connection between childbearing and disobedience to God.

Despite the anguish involved in giving birth, the Lord God says that the woman will manifest *desire* (shoq) towards her husband, a verb also referring to intense desire and longing. It fundamentally means "to run" as well as "to overflow." "You visit the earth and *water* it, you greatly enrich it" [Ps 65.9].

The verse at hand does not say that the man has shoq towards his wife, rather, he shall *rule over* (mashal) her. This verb also means "to make like" perhaps implying that those being ruled submit to the ruler and participate in his authority. "You have *given* him *dominion* over the works of your hands" [Ps 8.6].

**Vs. 17: And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of 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;**

After having addressed the serpent and woman, the Lord God now turns his attention to Adam which continues through vs. 19; to the first two he does not use proper names, only to the man. Adam as associated with the *earth* ('adamah, cf. 2.7), so mention of *ground* ('adamah again) assumes special importance. To *curse* ('arar; cf. vs. 14) this ground is to curse Adam.

The Lord God mentions the woman's voice to which Adam had listened, voice being a kind of intimidation and intensification of the curse as opposed to listening to her.

*Toil* (hetsev): the same word for "pain" in vs. 16 regarding the woman's act of giving birth. There is a double sense of irony here, the first being the association of Adam and earth. The second is his having to eat from the very source or from where Adam had been formed.

The words "all the days of your life" suggest to Adam that he will shortly experience mortality as opposed to being free from death in the Garden of Eden. St. Paul speaks of this tension in Rom 8.20: "For the creation was subject to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope." For a similar sentiment, cf. Hos 4.3: "Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; and even the fish of the sea are taken away."

**Vs. 18: thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.**

Note that these words addressed to the man and the previous to the woman are totally unfamiliar to both which is perhaps the real fear they have.

*Thorns* (qots) and *thistles* (dardar): the opposite of the good produce contained in the Garden of Eden. “For the soil of my people growing up in *thorns* and *briers*” [Is 32.18]. Both are *brought forth* or tsamach: “Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they *spring forth* I tell you of them” [Is 42.9].

To compensate for thorns and thistles, the Lord God adds “*plants* (hesev) of the field” with which the man and woman are already familiar: “Let the earth put forth vegetation, *plants* yielding seed (etc., 1.11).

**Vs. 19: In 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.”**

No mention of bread was made until this point, presumably because the natural produce of Eden is sufficient for human nourishment. *Sweat* (zehch) is the only use of this term in the Old Testament and suggests the labor involved in baking bread, that is, maintaining shelter and gathering fuel for fire to bake it.

Sweat also signifies exhaustive work in contrast to the fruits of Eden readily available. Perhaps the man and woman had to work there but were unaware of the labor involved. Such exertion continues until death, that is, until they return to the *ground* or ‘adamah.

Compare *dust* (haphar) with ‘adamah as noted in vs. 14 in conjunction with the serpent. Haphar can be an allusion to this serpent, of having been deceived by it. “You turn man back to the *dust* and say, “Turn back, O children of men!” [Ps 90.3]. In the psalm verse, daka’ is used instead of haphar. Its verbal root (daka’) means something broken into fine pieces or bruised. “Yet it was the will of the Lord to *bruise* him; he has put him to grief” [Is 53.10].

In the verse at hand, *man* or ‘adam was formed from earth; perhaps use of haphar, in its association with the serpent suggests disgust by the Lord God at having formed him.

**Vs. 20: The man called his wife’s name Eve because she was the mother of all living.**

In the first six days of creation God imparted names to what he had brought into existence. Similarly, the man named his wife “woman” in 2.23 but in the verse at hand he speaks not of his wife directly but of her *name* (shem). Perhaps this indirectness or secondariness is a sign of alienation of that familiarity they had just lost.

*Eve* (Chawah): apparently before this the woman did not have a name except that of Woman (2.23). Her proper name derives from the verbal root chayah, *to live*, because she is the first mother of all the *living* or those who are chayah. One implication here is that childbirth was not present in the Garden of Eden but outside it. This association between birth (sex) and disobedience to God can mistakenly be seen as both sharing the same reality.

**Vs. 21: And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.**

This act of making clothes can be taken as a kind of afterthought from God after the harsh condemnation he just issued. Here man is called by his proper name whereas the woman’s proper name (Eve) is not mentioned.

*Garments* (kutoneth): usually associated with those worn by women. “Now she (Tamar) was wearing a long *robe* with sleeves; for thus were the virgin daughters of the king clad of old” [2 Sam 13.18]. Another reference is Sg 5.3: “I had put off my *garment*, how could I put it on?” In the verse at hand, kutoneth applies to both man and woman. The very fact that these garments completely covered them both serves to heighten the contrast of their nakedness (cf. 2.25).

The verse at hand specifies the garments’ material, *skins* (hor). It is interesting that one meaning of this noun’s verbal root is “to be naked.” Skins come from animals which have been slaughtered, so the Lord God presumably had gotten them from this source which is not precisely given.

*Clothed* (lavash): this act done by the Lord God is both tender and humorous, as though the man and woman did not have the ability to clothe themselves. Better, they did not know the significance of clothes, having seen the skins on animals in the Garden of Eden. Perhaps they thought of themselves as one of these beasts now being adorned with garments of skin.

**Vs. 22: Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever”–**

*Behold* (hen): an exclamation which reveals a kind of astonishment at the results seen by the beholder. It is as though another person equal to the Lord God were present to whom he could express his astonishment. Such is one meaning of the third person plural, “like one of us.” Note that this exclamation is concerned with the man, whereas it is the woman who picked the fruit (cf. vs. 6) and then gave it to her husband.

This verse hearkens back to 2.17: “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” Vs. 22 can stand by itself yet continues into the next verse. This sentence is essential for setting the stage for the actual expulsion of the man and woman from Eden.

**Vs. 23: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.**

The “therefore” is in response to the man’s possibility of extending his hand noted in the previous verse. The divine *sending forth* (shalach) is in response to this threat. Also, the verb laqach (*was taken*) re-enforces God’s decision against the man’s stretching forth of his hand.

*Till* (havd): this is the common verb “to do, make,” and implies wearisome labor. For two references with havd, cf. 2.5 & 15: “and there was no man to *till* the ground.” “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to *till* it and keep it.” Here “ground” is first unspecified and then associated with Eden. Vs. 23 speaks of the ‘adamah from which the man was taken as being outside Eden and thus a third place apart from the first two.

**Vs. 24: He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.**

*Drove out* (garash): in the sense of expelling as used in Ex 34.11: “Behold, I will *drive out* before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites.” It also applies to divorce, this meaning which can also be associated with vs. 24: “neither shall they marry a woman *divorced* from her husband” [Lev 21.7]. Note that garash applies only to the man; no mention of the woman is made of being expelled from Eden. Christian tradition speaks of this banishment in terms of a “fall,” but the expulsion is effected on a lateral or horizontal plane.

*East* (qedem): cf. remarks under 2.8. Qedem can also refer to the sunrise where the Lord God *placed* (shakan) both cherubim and a flaming sword. Shakan suggests a position which is permanent; an alternate meaning is “to dwell” which brings out this permanency.

Shakan has two objects:

- 1) cherubim, which suggests the imagery of Ex 25.18: “And you shall make two *cherubim* of gold...on the two ends of the mercy seat.” While the verse at hand lacks a specified number of cherubim, the Exodus verse may be taken into consideration, that is, as a response to man’s banishment (note first paragraph above, not the woman) and the need for divine mercy.
- 2) “flaming *sword*” (cherev): from a verbal root whose basic meaning is “to dry up.” “Then they utterly destroyed all in the city...with the edge of the *sword*” [Jos 6.21]. This sword *turned every way* or haphak, a verb which means to overturn, change. The hithpael form of haphak is reflexive, almost as though the flaming

sword was endowed with life of its own.

The purpose of both cherubim and flaming sword is to *guard* (shamar) entrance to the “tree of life” which “was good for food, delight to the eyes, desired to make one wise” [vs. 6]. This verb is used in 2.15: “...to till it (Eden) and *keep* it.” Refer to the use of shamar as found in other places, notably Ps 110 with respect to the divine Torah. Shamar is used in conjunction with *way* (derek). “I am the *way* and the truth and the life” [Jn 14.6]. There Jesus puts “way” in the context of knowing his Father if his disciples had truly known him. Note too Jesus identifying himself with life...i.e., “tree of life” of Genesis. He is both the tree (within the Garden of Eden) and the way (entrance to the Garden of Eden).

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## Chapter Four

**Vs. 1: Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.”**

“Now:” the Hebrew text has the term “and” at the beginning of this new chapter to signify that Adam had sexual relations with Eve immediately after his banishment from the garden. Again, keep in mind that 3.24 says that Adam was driven out; no mention that Eve had suffered the same fate.

*Know* (yadah): in the intimate sense of having sexual relations. “Now Samuel did not yet *know* the Lord” [1 Sam 3.7], that is, he did not yet have a mature confidential type of knowledge manifested through relationship.

*Conceive* (harah): for a negative sense which involves scheming, cf. Ps 7.14: “Behold, the wicked man *conceives* evil and is pregnant with mischief and brings forth lies.”

The proper name *Cain* (Qayn) derives from the verb *gotten* (qanah). The Hebrew text lacks “help;” instead it has the preposition ‘eth (*with*). Such jubilation at the first man born outside the Garden of Eden perhaps derives from the fact that Eve was still present there or better, that God assisted her in this conception and birth.

**Vs. 2: And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a tiller of the ground.**

This verse contains no mention of divine help (‘eth, *with*) as in vs. 1. The Hebrew for “and *again*” is a verb, yasaph (*to add*) as if to say that Eve continued the process of childbirth begun with Cain. No allusion to Abel’s name or its meaning is given as with Cain, but it derives from the verb haval, *to breath*.

Abel represents nomadic existence, that is, he was a *keeper* (roheh) of sheep. An alternate meaning is interesting as illustrated by Sg 8.13: “My *companions* are listening for your voice.”

On the other hand, Cain was a *tiller* (hoved), this noun being derived from the verb havad noted in 2.5: “and there was no man to *till* the ground.” In both instances ‘adamah is the object of tilling. Since *man*/adam was taken from ‘adamah, perhaps such tilling could signify a special type of cultivation, one proper to human nature.

**Vs. 3: In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground,**

*Time* (qets): alternately as “end” in the sense of “after which.” Qets intimates the completion of a period of time and is akin to the Greek telos: “The *end* has come upon the four corners of the land” [Ezk 7.2]. This word represents the first introduction of time or the sequence of events which differs from the six days of creation. It applies to life outside the Garden of Eden which apparently did not partake of time as common perceived. In the verse at hand, the Hebrew text literally reads, “at the end of days.”

The context of qets is Cain’s *offering* (minchah) which required a time of maturation, that is, for the fruit to

become ripe. This fruit comes from the 'adamah or *ground*. Minchah is a tribute or a sacrifice without blood: "And the Moabites became servants to David and brought *tribute*" [2 Sam 8.2].

**Vs. 4: and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering,**

Abel's offering also took place "in the course of qets; his offering differs from that minchah of Cain in that it was an animal sacrifice.

*Firstlings* (bekor): it can refer to the first of anything whether animal, plant or human. "But a *firstling* of animals which as a *firstling* belongs to the Lord, no man may dedicate; whether ox or sheep, it is the Lord's" [Lev 27.26].

In addition to bekor, Abel brings to the Lord the *fat portions* (chelev) of such firstlings; like bekor, they signify the best of something. "Curds from the herd and milk from the flock with *fat* of lambs and rams, herds of Bashan and goats with the *finest* of the wheat—and of the blood of the grape you drank wine" [Dt 32.14].

The Lord *had regard* (shahah), a verb often used with respect to prayers or offerings. For another sense, cf. Ps 39.14: "Look away from me, that I may know gladness." In the verse at hand, this divine looking favors Abel and his minchah or *offering*.

**Vs. 5: but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.**

At first glance, one would think that God would *have regard* (shahah, as noted in the previous verse) for Cain's "fruit of the *ground* ('adamah)." Perhaps the close relationship between *Adam* ('Adam) and this 'adamah in light of the recent expulsion from Eden lies behind God's rejection. Note that the preposition 'el (*to*) prefixed to both Cain and *offering* (minchah, as in vs. 4) which intensifies the divine rejection.

Cain became not just *angry* (charar) but *very* much so, me'od being the adverb used here as in 1.31. This verb's fundamental meaning is "to burn" as in Ps 69.3: "I am weary with my crying; my throat *is parched*." Furthermore, Cain's face fell which signifies total rejection.

Cf. Heb 11.1-6 which touches upon the story of Cain and Abel. Note that vs. 6, the form of a question, has the first question put to a human being after Adam's expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Vs. 6 has God asking Cain about his anger and fallen countenance. The preposition 'el (*to*) is used with regard to Cain; cf. vs. 5 where it is used when God had no regard for his offering.

**Vs. 7: If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."**

Compare God's lack of regard for both Cain and his offering plus the possibility of him being *accepted* (nasa'), a verb which suggests something being lifted up. Nasa' may be contrasted with naphal (*to fall*, as Cain's face). The question posed to Cain can refer to correct moral behavior, the verbal root for tov (*good*) being used. Thus far Cain did not do anything wrong; perhaps God foresaw his murder of Abel and is offering him a chance to change his intent.

Sin has a vivid image here, *crouching* (ravats) at a door which can be taken as either outside or inside. "But wild beasts will *lie down* there, and its houses will be full of howling creatures" [Is 13.21]. Ravats pertains to quadrupeds when they gather their legs under them either to sleep or lie in wait for prey. In the verse at hand, sin-as-ravats is ready to spring upon Cain if he fails to do *well* (tov again). The preposition l- (*at*) suggests this crouching is present immediately at the door, almost leaning up against it.

*Desire* (teshuqah): the verbal root for this verb is shoq (*to run*) from which is derived "leg" and is used in 3.16:

“yet your *desire* shall be for your husband.” Despite the threat of sin, God counsels Cain to *master* (mashal) it, a verb also used in 3.16: “and he shall *rule* over you.”

**Vs. 8: Cain said to Abel his brother, “Let us go out to the field.” And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.**

This is the first instance of human dialogue apart from anything exchanged between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Going to the *field* (sadeh) suggests that Cain and Abel were in a house; perhaps it is reminiscent of their parents having been in Eden, the field being external to it.

*Rose up* (qum): Cain did this prior to killing Abel and implies premeditated violence. Consider qum in light of that sin *crouching* (ravats) at the door in the previous verse which it compliments. This verb also pertains to rebellious behavior: “If men *rise up* to pursue you and to seek your life” [1 Sam 26.29].

*Killed* (harag): with respect to murder, not necessarily private but regarding enemies. “Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the *slain*” [Is 10.4]. St. John the Evangelist mentions this incident: “And not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother...Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous” [1 Jn 3.12]. John is reading into the text, that is, there is no prior mention in Genesis that Cain was “of the evil one” unless he was referring to the serpent’s treachery towards his mother in Eden.

**Vs. 9: Then the Lord said to Cain, “where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?”**

This verse is reminiscent of God’s question in 3.9, “Where are you?” There God was walking in the garden but here there is no mention of him “in the field,” as it were. Perhaps this distinction suggests a greater distance between God and human affairs which had begun shortly after Adam’s banishment from the garden.

*Keeper* (shomer): from the verbal root shamar as in 2.15, only with a negative meaning in the verse at hand: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and *keep* it.” For a positive use of the noun, cf. Ps 121.5: “The Lord is your *keeper*; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.”

**Vs. 10: And the Lord said to Cain, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.**

The same question posed to Eve in 3.13 to which she responded, “The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.”

Abel’s blood is personalized here (*voice*, qol) to make the first murder more poignant. Compare with the qol or *sound* in 3.10, “I heard the *sound* of you in the garden.” In the verse at hand, the blood of Abel is *crying* (tsahaq): “And now, behold, the *cry* of the people of Israel has come to me” [Ex 3.9]. It emanates from the *ground* or ‘adamah, the same place from which Adam had been formed. “And to Jesus (that is, the new Adam), the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel” [Heb 12.24].

**Vs. 11: And now you are cursed from the ground which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.**

*Cursed* (‘arar): as in 3.14 & 17 or with respect to the serpent and Adam. Again, note use of ‘adamah (*ground*) from which Adam had been formed. The preposition min (*from*) used with respect to ‘adamah heightens this separation of Cain, a further alienation from the Garden of Eden. Compare with Ps 106.17: “The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan and covered the company of Abiram.” In the verse at hand, such opening is positive much as the earth had done to protect the woman in Rev 12.16: “But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon had poured from his mouth.”

The phrase “from your hand” with regard to Abel’s blood suggests a close connection between the murder Cain had committed and the protective nature of the *ground* or ‘adamah. It is as though the blood of Abel



immediately flowed upon Cain and from there into the earth.

**Vs. 12: When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."**

*Till* (havad): the common verb for "to make;" for a positive sense, cf. 2.15: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to *till* it and keep it." For the negative sense as used here and used in reference to the land lying outside Eden, cf. 3.23: "...to *till* the ground from which he was taken." Vs. 12 uses havad with respect to Cain or when he cultivates his human nature, as it were, or his 'adamah, keeping in mind that this 'adamah had just swallowed the blood of Abel.

*Strength* (koach): here associated with 'adamah or the "nature" of man which is thrown out of synchronization, as it were, when Cain tills it.

Two consequences go hand-in-hand, both terms having a similar sound:

- 1) *Fugitive* (nuah): from a verbal root meaning "to move to and fro." "So two or three cities *wandered* to one city to drink water and were not satisfied" [Am 2.8].
- 2) *Wanderer* (nud): from a verbal root meaning "to be moved, to be agitated." "You have kept an account of my *tossings*; put my tears in your bottle" [Ps 56.9]! Thus both words have the same connotation as pertaining to instability.

Note the use of 'adamah with 'eretz (*earth*), the latter being more general than the former and perhaps signaling a greater alienation from God.

**Vs. 13: Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear.**

*Punishment* (haon): connotes guilt contracted by sinning. "Visiting the *iniquity* of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me" [Ex 20.5]. In the verse at hand, Cain says that such affliction is beyond his capacity to *bear* or nasa'; cf. vs. 7 for another meaning of this verb, but it relates to the carrying or lifting up of a heavy object; here it is in the context of Cain as fugitive and wanderer.

**Vs. 14: Behold, you have driven me this day away from the ground; and from your face I shall be hidden; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will slay me."**

Another contrast between 'adamah and 'eretz, the former being more important to Cain. Perhaps when speaking thus to the Lord he had in mind his father, 'Adam(-ah). *Behold* (hen) is a way of getting the Lord's attention, of beseeching his mercy. It prefixes Cain's grievance at having been *driven* (garash) from the 'adamah. Garash is a refinement, as it were, of Cain being a fugitive and wanderer. "When he (Pharaoh) lets you go, he will *drive* you *away* completely" [Ex 11.1]. The phrase "this day" stresses the three-fold banishment of Cain which in a sense is stronger than that experienced by his father, Adam in 3.24, where the same verb (garash) is used. "This day" can also signify the tragedy of Cain's plight because such a day continues for the rest of his life.

*Hidden* (satar): a similar sentiment is expressed in Ps 30.7: "You *hid* your face, I was dismayed." Implied is that before Cain's murder of Abel the face of God had been revealed and was always accessible. Here Cain still has access to the divine face yet realizes that soon it shall be obscured.

Cain acknowledges God's words about his being a wanderer and fugitive and adds the threat of being *slain* (harag), the same verb used in vs. 8 when he killed Abel.

**Vs. 15: Then the Lord said to him, "Not so! If anyone slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him.**

*Not so* (laken): more properly, “therefore.” If taken literally, this first sentence would read, “Then the Lord said to him, “Therefore!” It leaves the situation open-ended and fraught with possibilities both positive and negative.

*Vengeance* (naqam): as in Jer 51.36, “I will plead your cause and *take vengeance* for you.” With respect to Cain, such divine retribution will be done *sevenfold*, shavah being the verbal root and echoing the sacred nature of the seventh day (“day seven”) when God rested from creation, 2.2. “Then I will chastise you again *sevenfold* for you sins” [Lev 26.17].

*Mark* (’oth): more properly, a sign, which here has a protective significance for Cain. This word was encountered in 1.14: “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for *signs* and for seasons and for days and years.”

The words “lest any who came upon him” suggest the existence of other persons, whereas at this juncture only three exist: Adam, Eve and Cain (Abel having been just murdered). Thus the more immediate future descendants are directly related to Cain; cf. vs. 17+ for the list.

**Vs. 16: Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod, east of Eden.**

*Presence* (lepeney): a preposition composed of the word “face.” Note the wording here, “from the *presence* of the Lord” which can yet be another way of designating greater distance from the Lord as opposed to “from the Lord.”

Nod: the only mention of this place in the Bible; from a verbal root meaning “to be agitated,” “to be moved.” Nod’s root is yet another indication of alienation from the Garden of Eden and the Lord. Despite this, Nod, like ’oth (*mark*), signifies hope for the future because Nod is situated “*east* (qedem) of Eden.” Cf. 2.8 (location of Eden) & 3.24 (location of the cherubim and flaming sword). East is the direction of sunrise, a symbol of hope.

**Vs. 17: Cain knew his wife; and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city and called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.**

The beginning of Cain’s ancestors, the only bloodline, if you will, stemming from Adam and Eve now that Abel is dead. The list continues through the remainder of Chapter Five; highlights of these verses will be noted as follows:

-Vs. 17: No mention of Cain’s wife; if a strict interpretation were maintained, this wife would be his sister conceived by Eve.

-Enoch: not the same Enoch as in 5.21 who was the son of Jared. The Enoch of vs. 17 built a city which may be contrasted with the Garden of Eden.

-Vss. 23-4: An ancient song most likely in praise of Lamech which pertains to his having *slain* (harag) a man. This is the same verb used with respect to Cain having murdered his brother Abel and serves to strengthen that alienation begun by Adam’s banishment from Eden which spilled over to Cain’s homicide. Mention of “seventy-sevenfold” in vs. 24 is an apt description of the “sevenfold” vengeance brought upon anyone who attempts to slay Cain (cf. vs. 15).

-Vs. 25: Here attention turns to Adam “knowing” his wife Eve to bear a third son, Seth. The Lord looked with favor upon Abel (cf. vs. 4); in a way, Seth may be taken as his successor, for “Shem and Seth were honored among men” [Sir 49.16]. Lk 3.38 presents Jesus’ genealogy working backwards in time: “...the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”

-Vs. 25 has a play on words: *Shem* (Shem) and *appointed* (shyth; in the verse it reads shath).

-Vs. 26: Enosh, the son of Seth and noted in the previous verse as “Enos” according to Luke’s genealogy.

Outside this and other Genesis references, Enosh is noted in 1 Chron 1.1 which presents the Genesis genealogy in light of the all the nations.

-*Name* (shem): note the association of this word with the proper name “Shem” who is a son of Noah born (cf. 5.32) before the flood episode. As this verse states, people did not call upon the divine name, that is, as a result of Cain’s murder of Abel. It may be taken as an antidote to vs. 16: “Then Cain *went away* from the

presence of the Lord.”

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## Chapter Five

**Vs. 1: This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.**

Chapter five deals with the period of time between creation and the flood. The word *book* (sepher) refers to that written record begun after the Cain had murdered Abel incident and includes his (Cain's) descendants. Sepher can apply to the divine covenant: “Then he took the *book* of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people” [Ex 24.7].

The author is careful to mention Adam's *generations* (toldoth) which can apply to the concept of history. “These are the *generations* of Noah” [Gen 6.9]. The genealogical account at hand differs from the one of Chapter Four; no mention is made of Cain, but it begins with Seth's descendants (cf. 4.25).

*When* or literally in Hebrew, “in the day” which would be the sixth day when God created man. This brief summary which extends through the next verse is almost as though the author of Genesis wished to recapture the freshness of creation which was marred by the transgression of Adam and Eve as well as the murder of Abel.

“And named them Man when they were created.” The concluding words of vs. 2 take into consideration the beginning words of God when he created the two genders, male and female. Note the singular *Man* (capitalized in the **RSV**) or ‘Adam which is used when speaking of both male and female.

For the first time vs. 3 mentions a definite period of years (130), as though the timelessness of Eden had begun to wear off in those historical years following Adam's banishment. Adam's son Seth is begotten in Adam's likeness and image which is inverse to 1.26 when God created man in “in our image, after our likeness.” The way vs. 3 states Adam's paternity is passive: “he became the father of a son.” It is almost as though fatherhood came to him from an external source. No mention is made of Eve, the presumed mother of Seth. She is still (supposedly) located in the Garden of Eden according to 3.24 which recounts only Adam's banishment. Thus the divine image and likeness are transmitted to the human race albeit in a less than clear form than with the case of Adam himself who was created directly by God.

The mention of “eight hundred years” in vs. 4 is another indication of that temporal approximation to Eden's timelessness. After the birth of Seth we have this long interval after which Adam begat “other sons and daughters” who are not mentioned.

The words of vs. 5 are striking in their simplicity: “And he (Adam) died.” They are to be taken in the context of Adam's lost immortality despite the total sum of nine hundred years for his lifetime. We come across “And he died” several more times with respect to Seth's descendants; they are all the more poignant at this stage between the story of Eden and the beginning of Chapter Six which deals with Noah and the new creation: vss. 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31.

The only exception to “And he died” is Enoch in vs. 24: “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. This notion of *walking* (halak) hearkens back to 3.8: “And they heard the sound of the Lord God *walking* in the garden in the cool of the day.” Of all Adam's descendants, Enoch seemed most able to retain awareness of the divine image and likeness.

The words *he was not* (‘eynenu) suggest a disappearance, of passing out of (temporal) being made all the more suggestive by no mention of Enoch's life span.

Such walking with God has a direct correspondence with God having *taken* (laqach) Enoch. Note the play on words, halak/laqach. “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God” [Heb 11.5]. Since this important verse was touched upon in **Notes to the Letter to the Hebrews** elsewhere on this Home Page, I excerpt that section and include it here, that is, up to the comments on vs. 29 even if there is some overlapping:

In the previous verse mention was made of Cain (who slew his brother Abel) being the father of Enoch. Note: “and he built a city and called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch” [Gen 4.17]. Perhaps a comparison can be made between this city and the heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation, that is, since Enoch was taken into heaven without seeing death, so the heavenly Jerusalem is symbolic of immortality.

*Taken up* (metatithemi): used twice in this verse and once as a noun; it alternately means “to change, transpose, translate.” The literal sense of this verb is a “placing after,” a transposition to a place other than the one which is familiar. For another use of this verb, cf. 7.12: “For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a *change* in the law as well.” Gen 5.24 puts the verse at hand in context: “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.” Here is a correspondence between *walking* (halak), *was not* (‘eynenu) and *taking* (laqach). The striking ‘eynenu almost means that Enoch “was not-ed”...blotted out of existence while he was walking along or living his life. The verb laqach does not imply a *taking up* (halah) as with the prophet Elijah in 2 Kg 2.11.

The words “not see death” suggests a blindness of sorts, a blinding of Enoch’s eyes to the reality of human death.

“Was not found” is not in the Hebrew of Gen 4.24; ‘eynenu takes its place. To be “found” can mean that people were looking for Enoch but were unable to discover him.

*Attested* (martureo): in other words, “was given *witness*” which may apply to those persons attempting to find Enoch but could not.

The Hebrew of Genesis’ account with regard to Enoch does not say that he *pleased* (euaresteo) God, that is, except reference in Sirach 44.16: “Enoch *pleased* the Lord and was taken up.” The only other use of this verb is in 13.16: “for such sacrifices are *pleasing* to God.”

**Vs. 29: and called his name Noah, saying, “Out of the ground which the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands.”**

Lamech is the father of Noah to which this verse refers; it connects the tradition of Eden and Cain and Abel in anticipation of the new period after the flood. Here we have the derivation of the proper name *Noah* (Noach) in light of the verb *to bring relief* (nacham). It also means “to comfort,” “to be revenged.” “When I think of your ordinances from of old, I *take comfort*, O Lord” [Ps 119.52].

Like Adam, Noah-as-relief has his source from the *ground* or ‘adamah, suggesting a kind of re-establishment of that time when God created man in his image and likeness. Lamech had an insight or prophecy here, the first instance of its kind in the Bible. Lamech calls ‘adamah *cursed* or ‘arar noted in 3.17 (Adam) and 4.11 (Cain), that is, a two-fold affliction.

The words “this one” suggests the special role Noah is destined to play in Chapter Six. The relief he will bring is from work and *toil* (hetsev), the latter implying a kind of worship in the sense of being a slave to the object of this worship. Lamech most likely had in mind the words of 3.17-19 addressed by God to Adam just prior to his banishment from Eden.

## Chapter Six

### **Vs. 1: When men began to multiply on the face of the ground and daughters were born to them,**

The word *multiply* (ravav) joined with *when* (ky) intimate that between Adam's banishment from Eden until this point in time the earth was sparsely populated despite the fairly detailed genealogies of the preceding two chapters. The verse at hand speaks of the "face of the *ground*" ('adamah); keeping in mind the earlier associations between Adam and this term, it can be taken as an indirect way of speaking about his descendants. Chapter Six vividly begins with a demonstration concerning the increase of wickedness traceable all the way back to Cain's murder of Abel. After all, it was his blood the 'adamah had received (cf. 4.11). It is almost as though those men who began to multiply were walking in conscious a fashion upon this 'adamah and were influenced by Abel's blood crying out from it.

Note the passive "were born to them," almost as though the 'adamah were that much further detached from the extension of wickedness.

### **Vs. 2: the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose.**

"Sons of God:" perhaps having in mind the descendants of Adam who still retained memory of him, that is, with respect to his divine origin in the Garden of Eden. It is almost as though these men as God's sons were distinct from the "daughters of men" in vs. 1; as noted there, they were passively born to them. Such daughters were *fair* or tov (literally, "good") which echos the still perceived goodness of the human race descended from Adam. Here the "sons of God" are noted as exercising free choice in taking daughters to be wives.

### **Vs. 3: Then the Lord said, "My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years."**

The last mention of "the Lord said" was 4.15 with respect to the protection of Cain. In the creation of Adam and Eve there is no mention of God's *spirit* (ruach) but of his image and likeness (cf. 1.26). Use of the first person singular ("my") is clearly personal; compare with 2.7: "and breathed into his nostrils the *breath* of life" where neshamah is used instead of ruach.

The divine spirit does not *abide* (dun) in *man* ('adam) forever, that is, it is destined to remain in him for a limited temporal duration. Keep in mind the extended life spans in Chapter Five which still is limited; in the verse at hand, this span is a hundred and twenty years which is more in keeping with the extreme limit of human life. The verb dun fundamentally means "to be low, inferior;" it is more commonly used as *to strive*, *to contend*: "My spirit shall not *contend* in man forever." "And all the people were *at strife* throughout all the tribes of Israel" [2 Sam 19.9] or reference to the struggle between King David and his son, Absalom. Perhaps use of dun in the verse at hand intimates that the Lord has *striven* with the human race up to this juncture; the situation has deteriorated too far, so now it is time for judgment. Also keep in mind that dun can mean "to judge:" judge in the sense of the impending worldwide flood.

Vs. 3 heightens the contrast between "my spirit" and the drastically reduced life span by using the term *flesh* (baser) for the first time, that is, compared with man being made in the divine image and likeness. "Days" or a multitude of twenty-four hour cycles compounds the awareness of man's limited existence.

### **Vs. 4: The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also afterward when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown.**

Nephilim: inhabitants who were already "on the earth" (as opposed to "on the *ground*"...'adamah, as it were, vs. 1); it is almost as though they were existing outside the Garden of Eden and created apart from the divinely

created Adam and Eve. For a later reference, cf. Num 13.33: "And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim); and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them." Here the Nephilim are the original residents of Canaan whom the spies sent by Moses had encountered. Their gigantic size suggests enormous physical growth which does not necessarily correspond to spiritual and moral growth. A parallel can be drawn between the Nephilim of Genesis...those "on the earth" and not originating in Eden...and the same people of Canaan prior to Israel's entry there.

Despite the contrast between the "sons of God" and the Nephilim, the latter had intermarried and "bore children." That is, we have a mixture between persons of divine origin and those who are not which can foreshadow later prohibitions against Israelites intermarrying with the inhabitants of Canaan.

*Mighty men* (giborym): both in physical stature and expertise at war as this word suggests. "You shall fall by the sword and your *mighty men* in battle" [Is 3.25].

Compare *of old* (meholam) with *forever* (leholam, vs. 3).

"Men of *renown*" (hashem): the noun for "name" is used here which implies that such persons were well known and had a history parallel to the "sons of God."

**Vs. 5: The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

A parallel to these words may be found in vs. 3: "My spirit shall not abide in man forever." Vs. 5 has a play on words, three of which are similar sounding: *saw* (yare'), *great* (rabah) and *wickedness* (rahath)...almost as if to intensify human evil. This intensification is carried over by the phrase "in the *earth*" ('eretz) which may imply contrasting this term with the frequently noted 'adamah.

*Imagination* (yetser): in the sense of a thought. "You keep him in perfect peace whose *mind* is stayed on you because he trusts in you" [Is 26.3]. This term connotes something fabricated; *idol* is another meaning of yetser: "What profit is an *idol* when its make has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies" [Hab 2.18]?

In the verse at hand, yetser is bound up with two other faculties:

- 1) *thoughts* (machashavah): alternately, "counsel," "purpose." "The *thoughts* of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are treacherous" [Prov 12.5].
- 2) *heart* (lev): the seat of life and center of sense, affections and emotions. Note the sequence in vs. 5: imagination, thoughts and heart. The first two are more intellectual whereas the last pertains more fully to that which constitutes a human being.

*Continually*: literally in Hebrew, "all the day" which can be paralleled with the recent diminution of human life expectancy in vs. 3.

There is a play on words *evil* (rah) and *only* (raq).

**Vs. 6: And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.**

*Was sorry* (nacham): connotes a sense of groaning, taking vengeance as well as comfort. For the last, cf. Is 12.1: "I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with my, your anger turned away, and you *comforted* me." For a reference parallel to the verse at hand, cf. Jer 18.10: "And if it (a nation) does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will *repent* of the good which I had intended to do to it." God's regret is especially moving in light of *man* ('adam) having been made in his image and likeness. "On the *earth*" ('eretz), as in vs. 4 with regard to the Nephilim.

The verb *to grieve* (hatsav) re-enforces God's sorrow made all the more poignant by reference to his heart



which as noted in vs. 5, is the center of one's thoughts and perceptions. The preposition *to* ('el) simply adds to the intensity of God's grief. Hatsav involves the fashioning of an object; from it derives the noun "idol." Perhaps the idea here is that grief is so overwhelming that it becomes an object which one almost worships by reason of excessive attention. "All day long they seek *to injure* my cause; all their thoughts are against me for evil" [Ps 56.5].

**Vs. 7: So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."**

This utterance can be taken as the Lord reflecting to himself as well with the intent of being directed towards the people described here; if the former, it comes across to them indirectly through the mediation of created beings. It also serves to contrast Noah who is mentioned as finding favor, vs. 8.

*Blot out* (machah): best described in 2 Kg 21.13, "And I will *wipe* Jerusalem as one *wipes* a dish, *wiping* it and turning it upside down." The cleansing action here intimates a foreshadowing of the flood. Machah has five objects, man being mentioned twice. *Man* or 'adam: he is singled out as the object of God's creation; other beings were created but this singling out re-enforces the sense of machah. "Face" parallels the smooth service of a dish as noted in the 2 Kings verse. *Ground* or 'adamah again as opposed to 'eret. The other created beings are noted almost as though they had participated in man's wickedness.

*Sorry* (nacham): as in the previous verse, here with reference to the creative act. Both there and here the verb the verb *hasah* (*to make*) is used; it suggests anything fabricated and differs from *bara'* (*to create*). Perhaps *hasah* may be taken as a kind of insult or slight with reference to that which God had brought into existence.

**Vs. 8: But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.**

"But" in Hebrew is "and" which is frequently used to connect sentences and to show the continuity of action. It also serves to facilitate memorization of the orally presented text. Here it has a more forceful sense setting the stage for Noah and the flood story that will follow in this chapter.

*Favor* (chen): alternately, "good will," "grace:" "I will give the people *favor* with the Egyptians" [Ex 3.21]. Mention of the Lord's eyes and the verb "to find" convey the notion that the Lord was anxiously searching for a person who did not share in the general wickedness of humankind. There is no previous mention of a divine-like quality regarding Noah. He was introduced in 5.29 ("Out of the ground which the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands"). If we keep this verse in mind, Noah differs from Abraham: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" [Rom 4.3]. The deliverance of which Noah's father Lamech speaks in 5.29 concerns a reversal of God's curse vis-a-vis the *ground* or 'adamah. The 'adamah (in Lamech's words) was perceived as "work" and "toil." The next verse (9) does bear a parallel between Noah and Abraham with respect to his being righteous and blameless.

**Vs. 9: These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God.**

Compare Noah's generations listed in vs. 10 as well as in 5.32; the text mentions only a few compared with the "generations of Adam" [5.1], as if Noah were being singled out in preparation for the impending flood. Before the generations are listed, vs. 9 is clear to say that Noah was a *righteous man* (tsadyq) like Abraham mentioned in the previous verse in connection with Rom 4.3. Also consider the notion of righteousness in Rom 5.19 regarding Jesus Christ: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous."

In addition to being a tsadyq, Noah was *blameless* (tamym), from a verbal root meaning "to complete," "be whole" in the sense of being perfect. "He who walks in the way that is *blameless* shall minister to me" [Ps 101.6]. Here tamym is used with respect to Noah's generation...singular as opposed to the plural, that is, his descendants.

The verse at hand uses two words for *generation*: *toldoth* (as in vs. 1) and *dor*. The former suggests the notion of history with respect to families; the latter, periods or circuits of time.

Perhaps being a *tsadyq* and *tamym* results from or is concomitant with the fact that Noah “walked with God.” Compare with Enoch in 5.24 who “was not” compared with Noah. “Noah was found perfect and righteous; in the time of wrath he was taken in exchange; therefore a remnant was left to the earth when the flood came” [Sir 44.17].

Vs. 10 enumerates Noah’s descendants as does 5.32: Shem, Ham and Japeth.

**Vs. 11: Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence.**

Two characteristics of the *earth* (‘*ereztz* as distinct from ‘*adamah*): *corrupt* (*shachath*) and “filled with *violence*” (*chamas*). The first, a verb, is *in God’s sight* (*liphnay*) which literally reads in Hebrew, “to the face” and alternately translates as “before.” With this literal sense in mind, the earth’s wicked condition—not the physical planet but its inhabitants—is made all the more outstanding by its full exposure to God.

*Shachath* connotes ruin and destruction as though the earth were already devastated in its corruption. “Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and *destroy* this land” [Jer 36.29]? *Chamas* connotes moral wrong and oppression. “Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness for the *violence* done to the people of Judah” [Jl 3.19]. The former pertains to the earth as a whole and “in God’s sight” whereas the latter “was filled” with *chamas*.

**Vs. 12: And God saw the earth and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.**

The first part of this verse reads in Hebrew, “And the earth was corrupt in God’s sight.” That is, the ‘*ereztz* was *shachath* or *corrupt* as in the previous verse. Again, the preposition *liphnay* is used to stress human wickedness (in the place of ‘*ereztz*) as an affront to God.

God first sees and then beholds; the latter can be taken as a more focused gaze or attention to the wickedness at hand.

*Flesh* (*basar*): a biblical way of distinguishing both human and non-human living beings from the divinity. Note that the verbal root pertains to beauty; it can mean to bear glad tidings: “Get up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of *good tidings*” [Is 40.9]. With this in mind, it is interesting to consider the Gospel as Good News in light of the incarnation...the *basar*...of Jesus Christ.

Flesh has *corrupted* (*shachath* again) its *way* or *derek* upon the ‘*ereztz*, that is, its manner of conducting itself in a moral and religious sense.

**Vs. 13: And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth.**

The beginning of God’s address to Noah which continues through vs. 21.

The first part of this verse reads in the Hebrew, “An end to all flesh has come *before* (*liphnay*, cf. vs. 11) me.” This wording suggests that God had already decided to destroy the human race.

*End* (*qets*): Ezk 7.2 parallels the sentiment of vs. 13: “And *end!* The *end* has come upon the four corners of the land.” The reason for such an end is due to human *violence* or *chamas* as noted in vs. 11; the addition of “full” corresponds to the notion of *qets*. *Chamas* suggests a ferocity and savageness whose source is not the earth but comes “*through them*” (its inhabitants) or *mipneyhem*, this word being related to *liphnay* with the fundamental meaning of “face.”

*Behold* (hinney): used to show God reflecting upon the situation at hand with the intent of making it known to the human race, most likely having in mind the salvation of Noah and his clan. “Behold” introduces the impending *destruction* (verb, shachath; cf. vs. 12 as “corrupt”) not only of “flesh” but the *earth* (‘eret). The Hebrew text lacks “with;” ‘eret follows immediately after “flesh” as if to show that the perversity of human behavior thoroughly permeated the earth.

**Vs. 14: Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.**

The repulsion which God had expressed to Noah in the previous verse shifts seamlessly to a positive attitude, that is, concerning the vehicle of redemption, the ark.

The command “Make yourself” reads in Hebrew “Make to yourself” which intimates a narrow focus, if you will, of God towards one man as opposed to the entire (corrupt) human race.

*Ark* (tevah): alternately, “chest,” “coffer” as in Ex 2.3: “And when she could hide him (Moses) no longer she took for him a *basket* made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch; and she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds at the river’s brink.” In light of this verse, the ark Noah is about to construct bears a certain counterpart and premonition with the salvation of Moses and hence Israel from Egypt.

“*Gopher wood*” (gopher): the only biblical use of this word which can be interpreted as pitch and therefore suited for shipbuilding. A related word (gaphryth, *brimstone*) is used in Gen 19.24: “Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah *brimstone* and fire from the Lord out of heaven.” The ark composed of gopher wood brings salvation; the brimstone rained down upon the two cities brings their destruction.

*Rooms* (qen): more along the lines of “nest” as in Dt 32.11: “Like an eagle that stirs up its *nest*, that flutters over its young.” Thus qen is suggestive of an abode on high and remote from human access which will happen with the ark floating upon the flood waters. Qen is also reminiscent of “In my Father’s house are many *rooms*” [Jn 14.2].

*Pitch* (kopher): the only use of this term in the Bible; a closely related word is *camphor*: “A cluster of *camphor*” [Sg 1.14; also found in 4.13]. The alternate meaning is *ransom* as in Prov 18.8: “The *ransom* of a man’s life are his riches.” In the verse at hand, Noah is bidden to *cover* (kaphar) the ark with kopher, a noun derived from this verb. More specifically, it is to be covered “inside and out” or thoroughly permeated as if to intimate the magnitude of the impending catastrophe.

Vss. 15 and 16 give details as to the ark’s dimensions; some observations may be outlined as follows:

-the full dimensions are 450 x 75 x 45 feet.

-the three chief aspects are length, breadth and height; compare with the dimensions of the heavenly Jerusalem: “And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth; and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia; its length and breadth and height are equal” [Rev 21.15-6]. Also keep in mind Ezekiel’s vision and measurements of the Jerusalem temple described in chapter forty-two.

-the unit of measurement is the *cubit* or ‘amah which is equivalent to the forearm. Cf. frequent uses of this term to describe the ark of God in Ex 25.10: “They shall make an ark of acacia wood; two *cubits* and a half shall be its length, a *cubit* and a half its breadth, and *cubit* and a half its height.” The word for *ark* here is ‘aron, distinct from tevah as with Noah. ‘Aron connotes a wooden chest, more specifically, a coffin or in Ex 25.22, the “*ark of the testimony*.” For another use, cf. Gen 50.26: “And they embalmed him (Joseph), and he was put in a *coffin* in Egypt.” It is interesting to note the use of ‘aron in this last verse of the Book of Genesis, a kind of foreshadowing of the ‘aron of testimony to be constructed after Israel’s Exodus.

-*roof* (tsohar, vs. 16): literally, “light” (i.e., a window). Note the singular, as if one light/window suffices for the ark; its dimensions are not given yet is to be made “to a cubit *above*” or mahal. Cf. Ex 25.21: “And you shall put the mercy seat *on the top of* the ark.”

-*door* (petach): can also refer to an entrance to a tent or city. “Happy is the man who listens to me, watching

daily at my gates, waiting beside my *doors*" [Prov 8.34].

-*side* (tsad): alternately, "arm." "Your daughters shall be carried in the *arms*" [Is 60.4].

-*decks*: not mentioned in the Hebrew text, just the number of them which are three.

**Vs. 17: For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall die.**

*Behold* (hinny): as in vss. 12 and 13, all dealing with the intent God has to destroy the human race due to its corruption.

*Flood* (mabul): waters which are reminiscent (yet different from) of 1.2, that is, the tehom or *deep* over which the Spirit was *moving* in the sense of rachaph described there. "The Lord sits enthroned over the *flood*; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever" [Ps 29.10]. In the verse at hand, the waters which had been separated at the beginning of creation are about to cover the *earth* ('eretz) as if reverting to the earth being "without form and void" [1.2].

*Destroy* (shachath): as in vss. 11, 12 and 13. The object here is "all flesh," more specifically, having the "*breath of life*" or ruach. Again referring back to 1.2, compare the Ruach there with the one here. Also cf. 2.7: "...and breathed into his nostrils the *breath* (neshamah) of life; and man became a living being."

"Under heaven" and "on earth" pertain to the full range of created beings; the second "on the earth" emphasizes the destruction of these created beings. That is to say, they shall *die* (gawah), a verb meaning to breathe out one's life. "Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and *expire*" [Job 3.11]?

**Vs. 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.**

This is the first mention of *covenant* in the Bible (beryth) which is to play such an important role later in Israel's history. The take-off point, as it were, for such a covenant and from which all others take their source is Abraham: "And I will make my *covenant* between me and you and will multiply you exceedingly" [Gen 17.2]. Perhaps Abraham was familiar with stories of God's covenant with Noah.

In the verse at hand, beryth is used with the verb qum (*to establish*) which alternately means "to arise." The establishment of a covenant at this juncture just prior to the destruction of the world and the evil stemming from Adam hints at an increased remoteness between God and humanity which was absent in the Garden of Eden. The verse just noted with respect to Abraham ("between me"/"between you") heighten this distance all the more. Note that the covenant with Noah is not spelled out until 9.12, that is, the rainbow; here it lies in the future.

Immediately after mention of the covenant God commands Noah and his family to enter the ark to ensure propagation of the human race after the flood. "Sons" suggests this propagation will take place in accord with a patriarchal framework.

**Vs. 19: And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.**

This verse echos the creation story which begins Genesis, a type of "day" not when living beings were created but kept alive in the ark. Note the preposition *of* (min, alternately as *from*) prefixed to (according to the Hebrew text) "*from* all living thing," "*from* all flesh," "two *from* all." Thus this choice of male and female to ensure future propagation of the first creation intimates that Noah had to make a correct choice, not just any "living thing of all flesh."

Vs. 20 specifies out "all flesh" into three categories: birds, animals, creeping things. All three were created on "day five" and "day six" respectively. The verse at hand (20) says that they are to be selected "according to

their *kinds*" or *myn* which denotes form as well. *Myn* is mentioned with regard to clean and unclean animals in Leviticus, for example 11.15+.

"Shall come in to you:" these words intimate that the respective kinds make their way into the ark on their own accord. Noah's role is more specified in terms of his responsibility to "keep them alive...with you."

After the command to take animals into the ark, God bids Noah to take "every sort of food." The act of *storing it up* ('asaph) implies a collecting (alternate meaning of the verb) which is in accord with each type of bird, animal and creeping thing. God also bids Noah to lay up food for himself which extends to his family.

**Vs. 22: Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.**

Noah's "doing" is in accord with God's *command* (tsawah, verb). This simple sentence connotes a good deal of work in preparing for the flood. The important point is that such doing agrees with divine commanding, as though the two were carried out simultaneously without temporal disparity between the two.

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## Chapter Seven

**Vs. 1: Then the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.**

*Household* (beyth): although this term means a physical house, it can be used as here for one's family. For a New Testament example, cf. Jn 4.53: "And he himself believed and all his *household*." Note that this "house" is inserted into a larger structure or the ark.

*Righteous* (tsadyq): as in 6.9 ("Noah was a *righteous* man, blameless in his generation"). In the verse at hand, Noah is righteous "*before me*" (liphany; cf. 6.11). The unique quality of Noah's righteousness is emphasized even further by "*in this generation*." Cf. the following verse in the context of the New Testament where Noah is called a *herald* (kerux). More specifically, by God singling Noah out he is intended as a trumpet, so to speak, for future generations: "If he did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a *herald* of righteousness, with seven other persons when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly" [2 Pt 2.5]. For another verse along line: "When the earth was flooded because of him, wisdom again saved it, steering the righteous man by a paltry piece of wood" [Wis 10.4].

**Vs. 2: Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate;**

"Take *with* you:" the preposition *l-* is used, more specifically, *to*; it almost intimates a kind of assimilation as well as assuming responsibility for both clean and unclean animals. God bids Noah to divide the two groupings of animals into *pairs*, a term lacking in the Hebrew text (both instances in this same verse) which literally reads "*seven seven*" (shevah). This adjective is used with regard to "day *seven*" [2.2] and connotes perfection as noted there.

For the first time in the Bible the animals are designated as *clean* (tahor) and *unclean* (same word with the particle *lo'*, *not*), that is, as opposed to the animals within the Garden of Eden. The Book of Leviticus details the use of the two types animals both for eating and sacrifice especially chapter eleven.

The word for *mate* is 'ishah, the same for "wife" as in 2.23 when the man first beheld the woman after God took her from his side.

Vs. 3 continues with the same theme only applied to birds.

**Vs. 4: For in seven days I will send rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground."**

The close of the lengthy address to Noah by God begun in vs. 1.

The Hebrew text lacks “days.” This *rain* (matar, verb) is not sent not for a beneficial purpose as in 2.5 but for *blotting out* (machah) life. Cf. 6.7 for another use of this verb: “I will *blot out* man whom I have created from the face of the ground” (in addition to all living things).

There is a connection between machah and *made* (hasah); it is also noted in 6.7 which is distinct from bara’ (to create). Again, as in that verse “face of the ground” presents an image of wiping the ground clear of all life.

Vs. 5 parallels the close of Chapter Six, vs. 22, with regard to preparing the ark. In both verses note the literal rendering of the Hebrew text: “*as* (ke-) God commanded him.” This “as” indicates an immediate putting into practice the divine mandates as soon as Noah hears them.

In the **RSV**, vss. 6-10 form a paragraph which recapitulates some of what had already been presented, the chief parts being outlined as follows:

-Noah’s age is 600 years; he lives for another 350 years after the flood (cf. 9.28).

-Noah and his extended family enter the ark to “escape” (this word is lacking in the Hebrew text) the flood or literally, “from the face of waters of the flood.”

-The animals go “two and two” with Noah into the ark or literally, “two two went to Noah to the ark.”

-“*as* (ke-) God had commanded Noah:” cf. remarks above, vs. 5.

-The flood comes in seven days, a period of time to make final preparations, a kind of “de-creation” to the divine creation which begins Genesis.

**Vs. 11: In 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.**

A very specific time for the beginning of the worldwide flood. The text presents this timing in light of Noah’s age, almost as if he (and his extended family) as sole human survivors were the standard by which time would be measured after the flood. The phrase “on that day” emphasizes the drama about to take place in addition to telling time.

*Fountains* (mahyn): compare with the earlier rain (vs. 4) which comes from the sky above. The mahyn lie both above and beneath the earth and is reminiscent of 1.7: “And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament.” Also vs. 6 says that this firmament was “in the midst of the waters.” Thus the flood resulting from these two-fold fountains withdraw, as it were, and allows the earth’s position “in the midst” to revert to chaos. In brief, verse 11 is a reverse type of creation or better, a destruction. For another use of mahyn but in a different sense, cf. Ps 84.6: “As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of *springs*.”

The association of fountains with chaos is enhanced by the “great *deep*” or tehom as in 1.2: “and darkness was upon the face of the *deep*.”

This tehom *bursts forth* (baqah), literally, “cleaves open,” which is an accurate description of water gushing forth from beneath the ground. The following gives an striking use of this verb applied to the human body: “When they grasped you with the hand, you broke and *tore* all their shoulders; and when they leaned upon you, you broke and made all their loins to shake” [Ezk 29.7]. For a positive sense, cf. Is 48.21: “He made water flow for them from the rock; he *cleft* the rock and the water gushed out.”

“*Windows* (‘arubah) of the heavens:” as opposed to the just mentioned fountains which come from the earth. Compare ‘arubah with tsohar of 6.14 (*window* in the ark or literally, “light”). The former suggests an interwoven piece of work or lattice which is loosened that water may gush forth. “Therefore they shall be like



the morning mist...or like smoke from a *window*" [Hos 13.3].

Such windows *were opened* (patah): for another use, cf. Gen 9.27, "God *enlarge* Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem." Both the deep is in the active mode ("burst forth) whereas the windows are in the passive mode ("were opened").

**Vs. 12: And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.**

*Rain* (geshem): compare with *matar* of vs. 4; the word at hand connotes a violent storm whereas *matar* means rain in general. "Ask *rain* (*matar*) from the Lord in the season of the spring rain, from the Lord who makes the storm clouds, who gives men *showers* (geshem) of *rain* (*matar*), to every one the vegetation in the field" [Zech 10.1]. The destructive nature of this rain is enhanced by its duration of forty days, a biblical way of saying a long yet determined period. Compare with Moses on Mount Sinai and Jesus Christ fasting in the desert.

The verb "to fall" is lacking in the Hebrew text which literally reads, "rain was upon the *earth* ('*eret*z)." The lack of a verb can suggest the total inundation and blotting out of all life.

Vss. 13-16 restate much of what has already been presented, namely, Noah and his extended family entering the ark along with the animals. "Enter"/"go in" is mentioned four times as if in contrast with the torrential flood which began "on the *very same* day (*hetsem*). This Hebrew word is akin to "bone" and implies strength (cf. use of this word in 2.23); thus *hetsem* suggests an intensity, almost a strength, which here shows the concurrence of Noah's entry into the ark and the flood. Both in turn may be seen in line with the three-fold specification of Noah's life ("six hundredth year," "second month," "seventeenth day of the month," vs. 11).

The "*breath* (*ruach*) of life" may be contrasted with the destructive flood.

"And the Lord *shut* him *in* (*sagar*):" Cf. 2.21 for another use, "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man...and *closed up* its place with flesh."

**Vs. 17: The flood continued forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.**

The Hebrew text lacks "continued" and has the simple "was." Here the text has *flood* (*mabul*) whereas vs. 12 has *rain* (geshem): "And *rain* fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights." Also vs. 17 simply mentions "forty days" as opposed to vs. 12's "forty days and forty nights." Nevertheless, the picture presented is that the water comes from both above and beneath, a way of expressing the intensity of the torrent. As noted elsewhere, *mabul* is associated with water coming from beneath the earth's surface which is consistent with "the waters increased."

Two similar verbs to indicate the drama of this verse: *ravah* (*increased*, with regard to the waters) and *rose* (*rum*, with regard to the ark). Also, *earth* ('*eret*z) is mentioned twice as if in a last farewell to solid ground.

**Vs. 18: The waters prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters.**

The verbs in this verse with respect to the gradual domination of earth by water may be paralleled with the increase of human wickedness which brought on the flood (cf. 6.5).

*Prevailed* (*gavar*): alternately, "to be strong." This verb can apply to human strength: "The Lord goes forth like a *mighty man* (*gibor*), like a man of war he stirs up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he *shows himself mighty* against his foes" [Is 42.13].

"*Increased* greatly:" another use of the verb *ravah* as in vs. 17.

“Floated:” in Hebrew, the simple verb for “to go” is used. Note that the ark “went” on the water’s surface which heightens the sense of its immunity from the destructive nature of this water as well as its separation from the evil on the earth.

The sequence of this verse beginning with an implied sense of a warrior-champion triumphing through the verb *gavar* (cf. the noun *gibor* in Is 42.13 above) connotes that this warrior first overcomes his adversaries and then dominates his newly conquered territory.

**Vs. 19: And the waters prevailed so mightily upon the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered;**

Another use of the verb *gavar* (*prevailed*) to continue the theme of a *gibor* or warrior triumphing.

*So mightily* (me’od me’od): this double use of the adverb which alternately means “exceedingly,” “very,” describes in almost exorbitant terms the thoroughly destructive nature of the flood. The same theme continues with the verb *covered* (*kasah*). This word pertains to putting on a garment or the like: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is *covered*” [Ps 32.1].

“Whole *heaven*” (*shamaym*): as in 1.8 which has the primary name of “firmament.” Note that this verse is preceded by God having separated waters above and below this firmament.

Vs. 20 continues the theme of the previous verse with a further use of the verb *gavar* (*prevailed*) with respect to mountains. The adverb *milmahlah* (*above*) demonstrates the extreme height to which the waters have reached. It is composed of two prepositions m-(in, *from*) and h-(al, *on*) prefixed to the verb *halah*, *to ascend*. This image is one of the waters above and below the firmament on the point of merging and returning to the primeval chaos before creation.

*Cubit* (‘amah or “forearm”): as in 6.15-6 with respect to the ark’s dimensions; here it refers to the waters’ depth above the highest mountain peaks.

Vs. 21 says that “all flesh” had *perished* (*gawah*), thereby fulfilling God’s words in vs. 17 which uses this same verb. The verb *moved* (*ramas*) is found in 1.21 & 28 with regard to creatures which dwell in the ocean; in the verse at hand, *ramas* has it with regard to land animals.

Vs. 22 has the noun *breath* (“of life”) or *ruach* which simply adds to the already strong contrast between living beings and the catastrophic flood.

Vs. 23 uses the verb *machah* (*blotted out*) twice; cf. its first appearance in 6.7 when God first proposes the flood to destroy human wickedness. *Machah* has as its object all created land animals as well as the *ground* (‘adamah) and *man* (‘adam). Mention of ‘adam and his source suggest a total and clean break with the past or the creation of the first man.

*Was left* (*sha’ar*): Noah and his extended family in the ark. “He that is *left* and is preserved shall die of famine” [Ezk 6.12]. The simple sentence concluding vs. 23 (“Only Noah was left and those that were with him in the ark”) has a finality about it paralleled to 6.8, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

Chapter Seven concludes with another use of *gavar* (*prevailed*), this time with respect to the duration of 158 days. Thus *gavar* has a temporal extension as well as a spacial one.

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This section follows Part I and precedes Part III (from Chapters 22 to the end of Genesis; will be added later). Refer to the Introduction in Part I for detailed information as to the purpose of this text. From approximately Chapter Eight onwards many parts of Genesis deal with historical circumstances which fall outside the province of *lectio divina*, that is, as presented in the Introduction. For this reason some sections will be treated insofar as they have relevance with regard to the practice of *lectio*.

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## Chapter Eight

**Vs. 1: But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided;**

A significant use of the verb *zakar* (*to remember*); as noted in 1.28, *zakar* is the verbal root for “male.” It implies the propagation...the remembering...of one generation into another. In the verse at hand, *zakar* takes on special significance in that God is “remembering” Noah and the animals with him after the flood. Such recollection extends backwards and into future generations which will populate the earth after the flood. Actually, this is the first use of the verb and therefore assumes special importance. God uses *zakar* later in 9.15 with respect to the covenant and is a kind of propagation, if you will, of this covenant leading to the one given at Mount Sinai.

*Wind* (*ruach*): the same term for “spirit.” Noah, along with his extended family and animals, represents a new creation now floating over the destructive waters which may be paralleled with 1.2: “and the *Spirit* of God was moving over the face of the waters.” Thus the ark is a kind of *moving...rachaph...not unlike this one*. The motion of *ruach* is *across* (*havar*, verb) the *earth* or ‘*eret*z. Note that earth is used in the context of a completely submerged world, so the *ruach* must be very strong to remove the waters of chaos back under the firmament and above the firmament (cf. 1.7).

*Subsided* (*shakak*): in addition to this verse, the English verb is used in vss. 8 & 11 whereas the Hebrew has *qalal*. *Shakak* denotes more an inclining or stooping. Its reference with regard to anger is revealing as in the following: “After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had *abated*’ [Est 2.1].

**Vs. 2: the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained,**

A continuation of the next verse which follows through into vs. 4.

“Fountains of the *deep*” (*tehom*): a creation of sorts paralleling that of Genesis’ opening verses. In the verse at hand as well as 3 and four, note the verbs of constraint outlined as follows:

-*closed* (*sakar*), that is, the fountains and windows (of heaven) or water which issues forth from below and from above: “for the mouths of liars will be *stopped*’ [Ps 63.11].

-*restrained* (*kala’*), that is, the *rain* or *geshem* noted in 7.12: “Therefore the heavens above you have *withheld* the dew, and the earth has *withheld* its produce” [Hag 1.10].

-*receded* (*shuv*, vs. 3): that is, the waters, in the sense of returning to their original place, most likely to places such as oceans and lakes. The adverb “continually” reads in the Hebrew text as a verb, *halak* (*to go*).

-*abated* (*chasar*): in the sense of lacking something or to be wanting. “Let your garments be always white; let not oil *be lacking* on your head” [Eccl 9.8]. *Chasar* is used with reference to a period of time, one hundred and fifty days. Better, the noun *qatsah* is used (*end*); it can be used in the context of space: “Make one cherub on the one *end* and one cherub on the other *end*” [Ex 25.19].

Vss. 4 and 5 give specific times as in 7.11 (beginning of the flood) with regard to the flood’s cessation ranging *upwards* or from a specific day->month->year. Compare with 7.11 with regard to the beginning of the flood

which ranges *downwards* or from a specific year (Noah's life)->month->day. The beginning of the flood coincides with time in this one person's life.

-*end* (qatsah): as in vs. 3 with respect to 150 days when the flood itself ceased. In the verse at hand (4) it is in the context of the *ark* (tevah) coming to *rest* (nuach) on the (plural) mountains of Ararat. Note the play on words: tevah and tanach, the latter being the form of nuach. Cf. 2.15 where this verb is used with another sense: "The Lord God took the man and *put* him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it."

-“continued to abate:” literally, “the waters were and *to go* (kal, infinite absolute) and *to abate*” (kal, infinite absolute); cf. vs. 3 above with similar constructions of the verbs halak and chasar.

-“tenth month->first day of the month.” The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat on the seventh month->on the seventeenth day. Thus the time span between the ark hitting solid ground until the mountain tops became visible is approximately three and a half months. A continuity of sorts may be posited from “but God remembered Noah” of vs. 1 to “tops of the mountains were seen” of vs. 5. I.e., such divine remembering had extended throughout this duration.

### **Vs. 6: At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made,**

This verse introduces another time span, this one of forty days as used in 7.17, the duration of the flood waters upon the earth. Also, vs. 6 has another use of qatsah (*end*). It is the time when Noah opened the ark's (single) *window* or chalon; compare with 6.16: “Make a *roof* for the ark” where the word tsohar or *light* is used. Also, chalon may be found in 2 Kg 7.2: “If the Lord himself should make *windows* in heaven, could this thing be?” It derives from a verbal root meaning “to be perforated.”

### **Vs. 7: and sent forth a raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.**

This and the previous verse form a unity; the act of Noah opening...of “perforating” (chalon)...the ark's window is significant in and by itself and sets the stage through vs. 12.

The bird which Noah sent forth is a *raven* or horev; from a verbal root with the basic meaning “to set” (also “evening” is derived from it) and thus suggesting the onset of darkness. “There is an outcry in the streets for lack of wine; all joy has *reached its eventide*” [Is 24.11]. As for the noun, cf. Ps 147.9: “He gives to the beasts their food and to the young *ravens* which cry.”

*Went to and fro* (yets'e' yatsu'): the verb yatsa' being used (*to go forth*). Compare this departure from the ark with the dove in vs. 12; the raven departs “until the waters were dried up.” The Hebrew text has the verb shuv (*to return*) implying that the raven did return to the ark. Compare shuv with the similar sounding verb yavash, *to dry up*; it is as though the raven's act of returning was instrumental in effecting the water not simply to recede but to dry up which is emphasized by the Hebrew “from on the earth.”

### **Vs. 8: Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground;**

A second example of *sending* (shalach), this time a *dove* or yonah. A parallel can be made between the dove's departure and the Spirit “moving over the face of the waters” [1.2] which uses the verb rachaph (*to brood over*) and can be associated with a bird cherishing its young. The **RSV** follows a literal translation of the Hebrew—“from him”—as opposed to raven of the previous verse; it is though the dove had a closer connection with Noah. The Song of Songs has several references to yonah, one of which is 1.15: “Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are *doves*.”

Yonah is closely associated with the proper name Jonah who was cast into the sea, not unlike the waters of the flood: “So they took up Jonah and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.”

In the verse at hand, the dove has a mission, namely to determine whether or not the primordial flood waters have abated. In the previous verse, the raven is simply sent forth; it apparently flies back and forth effecting,

as it were, the drying-up process.

*Ground* ('adamah): compare with vs. 7, 'eretz (*earth*).

**Vs. 9: but the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put forth his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.**

*To set* (nuach): as in vs. 4: "the ark came to *rest* upon the mountains of Ararat." In the verse at hand, nuach concerns the dove unable to locate dry land even though the ark had hit upon Ararat. Compare the expression which reads in the Hebrew text, "soul of her foot" with Jos 3.13: "And when the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the Lord...shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be stopped from flowing."

*Returned* (shuv): as with the raven in vs. 7. Here is a two-fold shuv, to the ark and to Noah, because water still covered the *earth* ('eretz) as opposed to 'adamah in vs. 8.

Noah *put forth* (shalach) his hand to receive the dove; cf. vs. 8 for this verb. Two further actions are indicated: a taking in and bringing in of the dove. Both Noah and the dove enter the ark.

**Vs. 10: He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;**

*Waited* (yachal): also connotes a sense of expectation, of hope as in Ps 130.7: "O Israel, *hope* in the Lord!" The period of seven days is not mentioned with regard to the earlier mission of the raven nor dove; it may be taken as in light of that special duration of time signified by "seven" when God rested from his creative work. The adverb hod (*another*) also means "again," "yet again."

*Sent forth* (shalach): the third use of this verb with respect to this episode, here with respect to the dove. The Hebrew text literally reads, "he continued to send."

**Vs. 11: and the dove came back to him in the evening and lo, in her mouth a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.**

"To him:" yet another indication of the dove's close affinity with Noah. The time of her return is *evening* or herev. "Each *evening* they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city" [Ps 59.6]. In the verse at hand, herev may be paralleled with the "cool of the day" [3.8].

*Lo* (hineh): signifies astonishment as in 1.31, the completion of creation.

*Leaf* (haleh, of an olive): despite the devastating nature of the flood, this particular fruit either survived or was the first to grow. The olive is an important source for oil for food as well as fuel and symbolic of prosperity. "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table" [Ps 128.3].

The dove *plucked* the olive leaf or taraph, a verb which can have violent connotations: "Joseph is without doubt *torn to pieces*" [Gen 37.33]. For an example parallel to the use at hand yet which encompasses the verbal root, cf. Ps 111.5: "He provides *food* for those who fear him."

*Subsided* (qalal): a verb used in reference to *earth* ('eretz) whose fundamental meaning is "to be light;" it also means "to curse" in the sense of reckoning someone or something as light or insignificant. Compare with shakak in vs. 1: "and the waters *subsided*."

**Vs. 12: Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove; and she did not return to him anymore.**

A further use of the adverb hod (*another*) in the sense of "again" (cf. vs. 10) with reference to the time frame of seven days, a type of kairos or special event. Noah had yachal..."hope"...in his *waiting* after which he *sent*

*forth* (shalach) the dove.

Note the use of *yasaph* (*to add*) used in the literal translation of vs. 10, “he continued to send” which suggests that a prior action had been taken and which may or may not be taken in the future.

*Anymore*: (the negative particle *lo’* coupled with *hod*), the latter being used at the beginning of this same verse. Action concerns the dove’s *return* or *shuv*; cf. vss. 7 & 9.

**Vs. 13: In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked and behold, the face of the ground was dry.**

The time frame presented here proceeds downwards from year to month to month’s first day which parallels the same method introducing the flood (cf. 7.11). There it was clearly in the context of “Noah’s life” which is lacking in the verse at hand but implied.

*Were dried* (*charav*): often used in the context of a drought and desolation but here in a positive context as returning the primeval waters to the positions above and below the firmament. The preposition *m-*(*min, from*) emphasizes this definitive retreat with respect to ‘*eretz*. “I will lay waste mountains and hills and *dry up* all their herbage; I will turn the rivers into islands and *dry up* the pools” [Is 42.15]. The word “sword” is derived from *charav* suggesting that this weapon dries up...lays waste.

*Covering* (*mikseh*): from the verbal root *kasah* which suggests a putting on as noted in 7.19 with respect to waters covering the earth. For another maritime use, cf. Ezk 27.7: “Blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah was your *awning*.” Thus the *mikseh* of Noah’s ark may be taken as an awning which was a shield against both rain and sun.

“Looked” followed by *behold* or *hineh* which as noted in vs. 11 can convey a sense astonishment or wonder. The object of Noah’s wonder was the ‘*adamah* being dry or *charav*; compare ‘*eretz* used in the first part of this same verse.

Vs. 14 presents another time frame: second month and twenty-seventh day of the month. Here it pertains to ‘*eretz* being *dry* or *yavash* which may be compared with *charav* of vs. 13. This verse suggests complete dryness throughout. “That the people of Israel may go on *dry ground* through the (Red) sea” [Ex 14.16].

Vss. 14 through 19 sets in motion a description of the departure from the ark which may be outlined as follows:

-“and God said:” the simple words which comprise vs. 16 and stand alone to accentuate the divine commission described in these verses.

-*Go forth* (*yatsa’*): as in vs. 7 when Noah sent out a raven; here it pertains to Noah, his wife, his sons and sons’ wives. Note the phrase “with you;” the importance of Noah is stressed in his relationship with his extended family as they exit the ark. The text says nothing about the ark or its fate.

-*bring forth* (*yatsa’*): another use of this verb with a different meaning and affiliated with the phrase “with you” or with Noah; again, it shows Noah’s role with respect to the new earth. Here “all flesh” are associated with Noah for a three-fold purpose: 1) *breed abundantly* (*sharats*) as in 1.20: “Let the waters bring forth *swarms* of living creatures.” 2 & 3) *be fruitful* (*parah*) and *multiply* (*ravah*) as in 1.28: “*Be fruitful* and *multiply*.”

-Noah *went forth* or *yatsa’* with his extended family.

-*went forth* (*yatsa’*): “every beast, creeping thing, bird and everything that moves upon the earth.” Note that this *yatsa’* is according to an order or *families* (*mishpachah*) as opposed to coming from the ark individually. This term can apply to a tribe as well. “And all the *families* of the nations shall worship before you” [Ps 22.27].

**Vs. 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.**

The type of altar—wood or stone—is not mentioned but perhaps the ark may have been used along the lines



described in 1 Sam 6.14: “And they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord.” This is the first mention of an *altar* or *mizbeach* which figures significantly in Exodus: “And Moses built an *altar* and called the name of it, “The Lord is my banner” [17.15].

The offerings upon this altar consist of *clean* animals (*tahor*) first given in 7.2 along with those which are unclean; this anticipates the Book of Leviticus which details the difference between the two types. “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common and between the unclean and the *clean*” [Lev 10.10]. Chapter Eleven goes into great detail as to the distinction between the two distinctions.

*Burnt offerings* (*holah*): coupled with the verb *halah* (*to offer*) which applies to anything lifted on high. “He shall lay his hand upon the head of the *burnt offering*, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” [Lev 1.4].

“*On* (b-) the altar:” note the use of this preposition which fundamentally means “in.” I.e., a full union between the altar and offerings and the act of making this offering.

**Vs. 21: And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.**

*Smelled* (*ruach*)/*odor* (*reyach*): from the same verbal root meaning “to breathe” and from which “spirit” is derived. The picture presented here is the Lord inhaling...breathing in...Noah’s sacrifice of clean animals. For another sense of the same word, cf. Is 11.3: “And his *delight* shall be in the fear of the Lord.”

The odor is specified as *pleasing* or *nychoach*, a noun whose verbal root is *nuach* which is similar in sound to *ruach/reyach*. The literal text in Hebrew reads “odor of rest;” the usual application is with respect to sweetness as in the verse at hand.

The *reyach* or *odor* of vs. 21 passes through the Lord’s nostrils into his *heart* (*lev*); parallel with 6.5: “and it grieved him to his *heart*.” “It is an offering by fire, a *pleasing* odor to the Lord” [Lev 3.5]. Note that *lev* has the preposition ‘el-, *to*, in the sense of “towards which” indicating that Noah’s sacrifice reached the Lord directly.

*Curse* (*qalal*): cf. vs. 11 for another use of the same verb, “so Noah knew that the waters had *subsided* from the earth.” *Qalal* implies making light in the sense of regarding something as superficial. “Because he knew that his sons had brought a *curse* upon themselves” [1 Sam 3.13]. Consider the verse at hand in conjunction with 3.17: “*cursed* is the ground because of you.” Here the verb ‘*arar* is used which intimates the casting of a spell; both this verse and the one at hand deal with ‘*adamah* or *earth*. The former pertains to ‘*adamah* outside the Garden of Eden and the latter to ‘*adamah* after the purging effect of the flood.

Vs. 21 has ‘*adam* for *man* with respect to the curse which the Lord muses “in his heart;” it is as though he recalls having formed man from the ‘*adamah* in 2.7 and promises to himself that he will never apply the curse.

*Imagination* (*yetser*): as in 6.5: “that every *imagination* of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” In the verse at hand *yetser* is from man’s youth as opposed to “continually.”

*Destroy* (*nakah*): in the sense of striking and often with the intent of effecting correction. “And afterward the heart of David *smote* him” [1 Sam 24.6]. The verb ‘*asaph* is used with *nakah* which connotes continuous action and re-enforces the Lord’s intent not to “strike” humankind in the future. For the “as I have done,” cf. 6.7: “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground.”

**Vs. 22: While the earth remains, seedtime and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”**

The conclusion of God’s dialogue or “in his heart” of vs. 21.

“Remains” literally reads in the Hebrew text, “*so long as* (hod) all the days of the *earth* (‘eretz).” Note the use of ‘eretz after ‘adamah/‘adam of the previous verse; this earth implies land distinct from the man’s origins as in 2.7. “Days” can be seen as awareness of temporal succession in contrast to the Garden of Eden.

The two pairs (“seedtime and winter,” “day and night”) are different aspects of “days” and indicate clear awareness of time’s passage but as sustaining human existence in the time after the flood. The Lord promises to himself that they will not *cease* or shavath. From this verb is derived “sabbath;” consider in light of 2.2: “And on the seventh day (i.e., ‘day seven’) God finished his work, and he *rested* on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.”

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