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tetrateuch) are also helpful: the patriarchal promises, guidance out of Egypt, guidance in the wilderness, the Sinai revelation, and guidance into the arable land. Or one can follow the markings of the several uses of *tôlĕdôt,* or "generations," formula which structure Genesis (2:4a, 5:1; etc.,—the P tradition). If "promise" is taken as the overarching concept (it certainly dominates the patriarchal stories), one is tempted to include Josh, which tells the story of the fulfillment of the promise of land (hence, with von Rad, a hexateuch). However, Jewish tradition has separated the Law from the (Early) Prophets. The best explanation of this is given by J. Sanders (*Torah and Canon* [Phl, 1972] 44–53). The insertion of Deut in its present place is a deliberate break in the story line of promise/fulfillment, which underlines the figure of Moses as Torah giver, the true leader for the post-exilic community (Mal 3:23 [4:4]; Ezra 8:1).

5 **(II) Authorship.** For almost two millennia the Pentateuch was attributed to Moses as author by both Jewish and Christian tradition. Although significant questions about his authorship were raised at points along the way, it was not until the 18th cent. that the question was seriously broached. Today it is a commonplace that he did not write the Pentateuch, but as we shall see the formation of these books is still shrouded in mystery.

Certain obvious facts suggest that Mosaic authorship is not the right fit. Moses' death is recorded in Deut 34. Various formulas suggest a time after the Mosaic period ("until this day," Deut 34:6; "when the Canaanites dwelt in the land," Gen 13:7; the designation of the land E of the Jordan as "the other side," indicating the point of view of a resident of Palestine, which Moses never entered, Gen 50:10; and various anachronisms, such as the mention of Philistines, Gen 26:14–18). One of the striking features which early on prompted the investigation of the books was the alternation of the sacred name Yahweh with the generic name for divinity, Elohim. This indication of differences is relatively superficial; it has to be supported by some consistent factors that can explain the formation of the Torah. It was when the divine names came to be associated with characteristic vocabulary, narrative styles and content (hence "constants" which suggested different authorial hands), that J (for Yahwist) and E (for Elohist) began to emerge as plausible sources in the actual text. Another telling argument was the recognition of doublets (the same event related twice), such as the call of Moses (Exod 3,6), or the endangerment of the ancestress (Gen 12:9–13:1; 20:1–18; 26:1–17). The complexity of the Torah called for the recognition of various strands within it.

6 This is not the place to rehearse the complicated history of modern biblical criticism (but it should be noted that it was honed on the analysis of the Pentateuch; → OT Criticism, 69:12–50). The differences in names and vocabulary, in style and content, within the Pentateuch were noted, and they called for an explanation. Were they due to various documents, or was it a question of "fragments" that were eventually assembled? Or another possibility: Was there a basic narrative which came to be supplemented (supplementary hypothesis)? Finally, a brilliant synthesis of previous efforts was presented by Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), and it has dominated the field ever since, despite modifications. This "documentary hypothesis" recognizes four documents in the following sequence: J (9th cent.), E (8th cent.), D (Deuteronomist, 7th cent.) and P (Priestly, postexilic). These four major *written* sources were eventually combined in the postexilic period under the guiding hand of the P tradition, and probably a redactor (R). Behind each of these JEDP sigla stands either an individual (esp. urged in the case of Yahwist) or, more likely, a whole school. Later nuances were brought to the theory. First, there is now a tendency to date J and E earlier (10th and 9th cents.). Second, there is a recognition that these "documents" should be conceived more flexibly as "traditions," which incorporate any number of earlier oral and written traditions. Although later scholars tended to fragment J into separate sources (J_1 and J_2, etc.), the tendency has been to hold to the four-fold strand and to recognize the existence of previous traditions that have entered into these sources.

As a reminder that this synthesis remains only a brilliant hypothesis, recent scholarship has raised objections (summarized in *HBMI* 263–96; *JSOT* 3 [1977] 2–60). Rolf Rendtorff (*Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*) can be taken as a typical and formidable example. He claims that J is not a full narrative that weaves through the Pentateuch, attributable to one or more "theologians." It is rather an editorial reworking of many individual pieces (like P, as well). The real redaction of the Pentateuch comes with a deuteronomistic editor. There were first individual stories (e.g., the different patriarchs) which were combined in a larger complex by some unifying theme (e.g., the promises). The integration of all these complexes into the final form was a definitive theological redaction under deuteronomistic influence; see R. Rendtorff, *The Old Testament* (Phl, 1986) 157–64.

The modern consensus on the formation of the Pentateuch has been breached, but not replaced. Certain views still remain as workable hypotheses. There is widespread agreement that Exod 25–Num 10 belongs to the postexilic P tradition, even though much older material is incorporated in it. The book of Deuteronomy has a unique stamp and is appropriately named D, and it was probably formed over the course of the 8th–6th cents. But the distinction between J and E has always been a bone of contention, long before the current uncertainty. The present tendency is to think more in terms of expansions of J, and to recognize the role of a redactor (R). In the *NJBC* the designations J and E are indicated in line with the received views of the present century, but they are intended to serve as guidelines for the reader, rather than as settling issues that are still under judgment.

7 It is helpful to attend to the usual characterization of the four traditions, with the proviso that these generalizations are not absolute. J is marked by lively anthropomorphisms, vivid storytelling, and creative theological vision (promise/fulfillment dynamic). J articulated the old traditions, perhaps in response to the Solomonic enlightenment (so von Rad). The Elohist remains a problem. E has been considered to be merely interpolated independent traditions, or a redaction of J that never existed on its own. It has been associated with the traditions of the northern kingdom and supposedly emphasizes morality and reflects the proper response of Israel: faith, and fear of the Lord. D is a very clear tradition, but its existence in the Pentateuch outside of Deut itself is not very clear. It insists on fear/love of God in terms of obedience to the divine commands and under threat of punishment. Its exhortatory style and its language give it a characteristic stamp, so that it is recognizable even when it appears outside the Pentateuch, as in the typical passages (Josh 1:1–9; 23:3–16) in Dtr (this is the conventional abbreviation for the deuteronomistic history contained in Josh–2 Kgs, which shows strong D influence). P is another clearly marked strand. It is concerned with questions of cult and ritual (Lev), is interested in genealogies (Gen), and in contrast to the "Name" theology of Deut (Deut 12:5,11,21)

speaks of the presence of God in terms of glory and tabernacling (Exod 16:10; 40:34–38). According to F. M. Cross (*CMHE* 293–325), the P tradition never existed as an independent narrative document. Rather, it drew on its own sources to frame and systematize the JE traditions and produced the tetrateuch (Gen–Num) in the period of the exile. Particularly characteristic are its archaizing language (e.g., use of El Shaddai), the systematization of Gen by use of the *tôlĕdôt* (generations) formula, and the periodization of history by means of the covenants which perpetuated the blessing of fertility: with Noah (Gen 9:7), Abraham (17:6), and Moses (Lev 26:9). "The atonement for sin is the function of the elaborate Priestly cultus. . . . The Priestly source . . . was designed to provide overwhelming remorse in Israel and sought by the reconstruction of the age of Moses, its cult and law, to project a community of Israel in which Yahweh could return to 'tabernacle' in their land" (*CMHE* 307).

The characteristic phraseology, themes, and emphases of the traditions are brought out in the commentaries, but the reader should be forewarned of the general nature of this characterization. For details on the four sources see *IDBSup* 229–32, 259–63, 683–87, 971–75; Brueggemann, *Vitality* esp. 127–41.

8 The analysis of the formation of the Pentateuch has many implications for the rest of the OT. It is generally agreed that Gen–Deut never functioned as a complete Torah until the exilic period. Before that time, several traditions, oral and written, would have provided guidance (not to mention the collections of prophetic oracles). The home of the J tradition is usually considered to be Judah, whereas E is assigned to Israel (an affinity with Hosea). The culmination of the deuteronomic movement in the reform of Josiah (641–609) represents a tradition (D) that originated first in the north and then became important in Judah. The various law codes (of the Covenant, Exod 20:22–23:19; Holiness, Lev 17–26; Deuteronomy, Deut 12–26) have many practices in common, but they also show the development, characteristic of law, that took place over several centuries. In the case of the centralization of worship, an emphasis in Deut and Dtr, one has to remember that this was a slow development; it would be an anachronism to understand it as operative in the time of Elijah (9th cent.).

In summary, it should be noted that conclusions can be drawn from the stages through which the Pentateuch passed. Sometimes these conclusions may not really justify statements of fact about history. Thus, one may well wonder if the literary separation of the Sinai tradition from the exodus tradition, as von Rad (*PHOE* 1–26; see H. Huffmon, *CBQ* 27 [1965] 101–13) argues, finds an echo in Israelite history, so that the two traditions were originally quite disparate and only united at a much later time. It is possible to read the Pentateuch in an "interlinear" way, as it were, drawing conclusions concerning Israel's history that are quite hypothetical. Thus, a reconstruction of the nature of the tribes on the basis of data concerning the patriarchs and the "sons of Joseph" is necessarily tenuous (see the attempts of de Vaux in *EHI* 475–749; of course, the Pentateuch forms only part of the data one must work with).

It is undeniable that the Pentateuch contains old covenant traditions that formed the religious charter of the tribes that constituted the people of God. "Ethical monotheism" is not the creation of the 9th-cent. prophets, as Wellhausen claimed. Amos (3:2) and Hosea (4:1–2) judged the people on the basis of covenantal stipulations (no matter when the term covenant, or *bĕrît,* came into common usage).

9 (III) Literary Forms. The traditional acceptance of Mosaic authorship brought in its wake a rigid notion of history in the Pentateuch. Presumably everything occurred in Exod–Deut as Moses wrote it, for he would have been a firsthand witness. The equation of biblical truth with historical truth, as exemplified in this case, is a form of reductionism; it restricts the divine freedom to produce a literature that is as rich as the OT is in fact. This means that one must read the Pentateuch (not to mention the entire OT) with an awareness of the various literary forms that are contained within it. From the time of H. Gunkel's famous commentary on Genesis, scholars have been greatly preoccupied with the question of *Gattungen,* or forms, and the Pentateuch has provided innumerable examples for analysis.

(Coats, G., *Genesis* [FOTL 1; GR, 1983]. Hayes, J. H. (ed.), *Old Testament Form Criticism* [San Antonio, 1974]. Koch, K., *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition* [NY, 1969]. Tucker, G. M., *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* [Phl, 1971].)

Some genres are easier to recognize than others. Among them may be indicated the following (the list is far from exhaustive):

Laws. These take up a large portion of the Pentateuch, from Exod to Deut; see de Vaux, *AI* 143–63.

Etiology. A narrative that provides an explanation for a certain name or situation. The etiology can be wordplay (Exod 15:23, Marah), or it can be a narrative that explains an event, such as the explanation given in Gen 47:13–26 for the land tax established by Joseph.

Ritual. A description of the way in which a community is to carry out (significant) ceremonies, such as the offering of the firstfruits in Deut 26:1–11, or the prescriptions for sacrifices (Lev 1–7).

Genealogy. A list that traces ancestral descent and/or relationship. This can be linear, giving only one line of descent (10 generations from Adam through Seth to Noah, Gen 5), or it can be segmented (branching), as in the list of the sons of Jacob in Gen 46:8–27. It should be noted that ancient genealogies were not intended to be historical records. They include more than blood relationship, for they indicate the ties formed by commerce, geography, and other concerns (see R. R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* [Yale Near Eastern Researches 7; New Haven, 1977]).

Hieros logos. "Sacred words," or sacral tradition, which refer to the origin of a holy place (Gen 28:10–22; 33:18–20).

Blessing. A form of speech that imparts an efficacious power (a performative word) upon someone. When the blessing is given on the deathbed (see Deut 33), it has also been called a "testament."

Other literary genres are more problematic. Scholars differ in their understanding of myth, saga, legend, novella or short story, and some of these can be subdivided into specific types (e.g., family saga, etc.). The purpose here is to indicate the range of possibilities.

Myth. The understanding of this term varies widely. It has been defined as a narrative about gods (H. Gunkel; perhaps only Gen 6:1–4 would qualify in the OT). It is also viewed as the story that accompanies ritual. It can also designate a way of thinking, the mythopoeic quality of human thought; see H. Frankfort, *et al., The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (rev. ed., Chicago, 1977) 3–27.

Saga. G. Coats (*Genesis* 319) defines this as "a long, prose, traditional narrative having an episodic structure and developed around stereotyped themes or objects." This can be further refined as primeval (J strand in Gen 1–11), family (the Abraham story of J in Gen 12–26), heroic (Moses in the J version, Exod 3ff.)

2

GENESIS

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INTRODUCTION

2 (I) Title and Structure. Gen is the first book of the Pentateuch, a five-section compilation of diverse traditions of varied age, given its final editing in the 6th cent. BC. The Eng title is from the LXX title, which is derived from the Greek of 5:1, "this is the record of the generation (genitive of *genēsis*) of Adam." The Hebr title *bĕrē'šît* is simply the first word of the scroll, the ancient way of naming scrolls.

Gen is concerned with origins—of the world of human beings, of Israel in its ancestors. The time of the origin of a reality is a privileged moment in the ancient Near East; the original intention of Fate and the gods is clearer then than at other times. In the beginning the impress of the creating gods upon a thing is still fresh and discernible. In Mesopotamian culture, evidently the model for most of the stories in Gen 1–11, scribes explored beginnings through stories and cosmogonies, not through abstract reasoning. Most of the extant Mesopotamian cosmogonies are brief, but there are several extended compositions that collect accounts of origins: the Gilgamesh Epic, *Enuma Elish,* and the Atrahasis story. The latter is the most relevant for Gen 1–11, for it displays the same basic plot as Gen 2–9. Atrahasis begins in the heavens with a rebellion of the lower-class gods against the higher class, which is resolved by the creation of human beings to do the maintenance the rebels refused to do. The human race then offends the gods by its explosive spread and resulting noise. (Whether the "noise" is a moral fault is disputed.) By a succession of plagues culminating in a great flood that wipes out everyone except Utnapishtim, a divine favorite, the gods finally put an end to the disturbance. From the surviving man a fresh beginning is made, this time with inbuilt safeguards against the untrammeled population growth that led to disaster. The similarity of the Atrahasis plot to Gen 2–9 is clear; equally clear is the biblical nuance in the details (see comment on chaps. 6–9). The biblical writers have produced a version of a common Mesopotamian story of the origins of the populated world, exploring major questions about God and humanity through narrative. The ancient East had a tolerance for versions, for different stories of the same event. Successive editions of the Gilgamesh Epic and of *Enuma Elish,* as well as the Bible's telling of the exodus-conquest differently in the prose passages of the Pentateuch and in the poetry of many psalms, illustrate the tolerance. The J and E

*The introduction and comment on 1:1–25:18 are by R. J. Clifford; the comment on 25:19–50:26 is by R. E. Murphy.

versions of the old national story are another example. Gen 2–9 seems to be introduced by Gen 1 and carried forward by Gen 10–11 (see comment on chaps. 10–11). Gen 1–11 then is a single story, an unusually sustained "philosophical" and "theological" explanation of the human race—its relation to God, its institutions (marriage, languages, ethnic and national divisions, metal working, animal husbandry, etc.), its flaws, its destiny—and of God and God's justice and abiding fidelity to the race. Modern readers, who are not used to narrative as the vehicle of serious thought, often find it difficult to appreciate the profundity and abiding relevance of these chapters. Some readers even end up concentrating their energies in defending a "literal interpretation" of esp. chaps. 1–3 against modern evolutionary theory, something that the ancient authors of Gen, with their tolerance of versions, would never have done.

It is noteworthy that Israel's Bible begins with an extended look at the world prior to Israel (Israel's ancestor Eber is mentioned only fleetingly in 10:21,25) instead of assuming that the world began when it came to be. Israel, however, saw itself as distinct from the nations, a people dwelling apart, not reckoned among the nations (Num 23:9).

The second half of Gen, 11:27–50:26, tells of Israel's origins in its ancestors. Abraham and Sarah (11:27–25:18) labor under the same divine imperatives as the nations—to continue in existence through their progeny and to possess their land (Gen 1:26–28). Their way is different, however: by direct relationship to their God in trust. The double promise of progeny and land is repeated in the story of Jacob and his sons (25:19–36:43), but the emphasis falls rather on the transmission of the blessing of the firstborn and the filling out of the number of sons to 12, the number of the Israelite tribes. It is significant that Jacob, the father of the 12, is called Israel (32:28; 35:10). The third complex of stories concerns the 12 brothers with the spotlight on Joseph (37:1–50:26). The ancient promise is repeated, but the real interest is the relationships of the brothers to each other and to Joseph, their leader-savior. How will this one family, torn by strife, maintain its unity in an alien land and relate to its chosen leader, Joseph? Psychological and family observations, not unexpectedly, mark the story. The ancestral stories adumbrate themes of later biblical literature: living with a just God's promise of increase and of land, the relations of the tribes, the relation of the leader to his people, Israel in Egypt. The question of the historicity of the ancestral stories was raised more than a century ago, and many diverse answers have been given to the question. The position taken in this commentary is that authentic stories of 2d-millennium ancestors have been revised and added to in the long course of their transmission; recovery of the "original" stories is impossible because of the lack of extrabiblical sources.

The final stage in the long process of editing seems to have been in the exile of the 6th cent., when many of Israel's venerable traditions were given final editions. The main themes of the stories had long been clearly stamped, but it was possible to underscore certain themes for the exiled population. Exilic concerns appear: the constant emphasis on the divine intent that each nation continue in existence through progeny and possession of land; the insistence that Israel in its ancestors will receive progeny and land differently from the nations; and the emphasis on God's eternal covenant with Abraham, which is like the eternal covenant with David.

3 **(II) Outline.** Gen is not a random collection of colorful episodes; it is a consciously planned narrative in which the major segments, Gen 1:1–11:26 and 11:27–50:26, are set in deliberate parallel, and in which the components of each segment artistically build up the major segments. Gen 1:11–11:26 describes the origin of the nations, showing how God created the world, a concept that in Gen means the structured community of men and women, acting freely to fulfill their divine destiny to fill the world and possess their land. In parallel but in contrast to the nations, Gen 11:27–50:26 describes the origin of Israel (in the person of ancestors), showing how God created Israel, through fulfilling for the ancestors the human destiny of progeny and land. There are three blocks of traditions in the second segment: (A) Abraham and Sarah (11:27–25:18); (B) Jacob and his sons (25:19–36:43); and (C) Joseph and his brothers (37:1–50:26).

The stories have been edited for different generations—a process that is almost impossible to describe except in general terms. J and E were most probably reductions of an originally oral epic to a written prose form. Even the written forms seem to have been supplemented. Because of the editorial complexity, this commentary does not press the investigation into sources, preferring instead simply to list the standard attributions of sources, J, E, and P. It was P, the final editor (although some postulate a later redactor), who seems to have organized the material into large blocks by the formula, "these are the generations of . . ." (Hebr *tôlĕdôt*, lit., "begettings," but the precise nuance is disputed). It introduces traditional material. The formula occurs five times in the primeval history (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10) and five times in the origin of Israel (11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1 [=v 11]; 37:2). The formula serves as a general guide through the stories.

- (I) The Story of the Nations (1:1–11:26)
  - (A) Preamble: Creation of the World (1:1–2:3)
  - (B) The Creation of the Man and the Woman, Their Offspring, and the Spread of Civilization (2:4–4:26)
    - (a) Creation of the Man and the Woman (2:4–3:24)
    - (b) Cain's Murder of Abel (4:1–16)
    - (c) Cain's Descendants and the Invention of Culture (4:17–24)
    - (d) Seth and the Introduction of Worship (4:25–26)
  - (C) The Pre-flood Generations (5:1–6:8)
    - (a) Genealogy from Adam to Noah (5:1–32)
    - (b) Marriage of Divine Beings with Women (6:1–8)
  - (D) The Flood and the Renewed Blessing (6:9–9:29)
    - (a) The Flood (6:9–9:17)
    - (b) The Character of the Sons of Noah (9:18–29)
  - (E) The Populating of the World and the Prideful City (10:1–11:9)
    - (a) Noah's Descendants Become Landed Peoples (10:1–31)
    - (b) The Prideful City with the Tower (10:32–11:9)
  - (F) Genealogy from Shem to Terah (11:10–26)
- (II) The Story of the Ancestors of Israel (11:27–50:26)
  - (A) The Story of Abraham and Sarah (11:27–25:18)
    - (a) The Family of Terah in Haran (11:27–32)
    - (b) Abraham Is Called to Journey to Canaan and Is Blessed (12:1–9)
    - (c) Abraham and Sarah in Danger in Egypt (12:10–13:1)
    - (d) Abraham and Lot Go Their Separate Ways (13:2–18)
    - (e) Abraham Defeats the Kings and Rescues Lot (14:1–24)
    - (f) God Promises Abraham a Son and Land (15:1–21)
    - (g) Hagar Bears Abraham a Son (16:1–16)
    - (h) God's Covenant with Abraham (17:1–27)
    - (i) The Guests of Abraham and Lot (18:1–19:38)
      - (i) Abraham and the three guests (18:1–5)
      - (ii) Abraham bargains with God (18:16–33)

(iii) The destruction of Sodom and the rescue of Lot (19:1–29)
(iv) Lot the father of Moab and the Ammonites (19:30–38)
(j) Abraham and Abimelech (20:1–18)
(k) The Birth of Isaac and the Expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael (21:1–21)
(l) The Treaty with Abimelech and the Well at Beer-sheba (21:22–34)
(m) God Tests Abraham (22:1–19)
(n) Nahor's Descendants (22:20–24)
(o) Abraham Buys a Burial Site for Sarah (23:1–20)
(p) A Wife for Isaac (24:1–67)
(q) The Descendants of Abraham (25:1–18)
(i) The descendants of Abraham (25:1–6)
(ii) The death and burial of Abraham (25:7–11)
(iii) The descendants of Ishmael (25:12–18)
(B) The Story of Isaac and Jacob (25:19–36:43)
(a) The Birth of Esau and Jacob (25:19–34)
(b) Isaac Stories (26:1–35)
(c) The Blessing of Jacob (27:1–45)
(d) Jacob's Departure for Paddan-aram (27:46–28:9)
(e) Jacob's Vision at Bethel (28:10–22)
(f) Jacob's Marriages (29:1–30)
(g) Jacob's Children (29:31–30:24)
(h) Jacob Outwits Laban (30:25–43)
(i) Jacob's Flight (31:1–54)
(j) Preparation for the Meeting with Esau (32:1–22)
(k) Jacob's Struggle with God (32:23–33)
(l) Jacob's Meeting with Esau (33:1–20)
(m) The Rape of Dinah (34:1–21)
(n) Jacob at Bethel (35:1–15)
(o) Miscellaneous Items (35:16–29)
(p) The Descendants of Esau (36:1–43)
(C) The Story of Joseph (37:1–50:26)
(a) Joseph Sold into Egypt (37:1–36)
(b) Judah and Tamar (38:1–30)
(c) Joseph's Temptation (39:1–23)
(d) Joseph Interprets the Prisoners' Dreams (40:1–23)
(e) Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams (41:1–57)
(f) First Encounter of Joseph with His Brothers (42:1–38)
(g) The Second Journey to Egypt (43:1–45:28)
(h) Jacob's Journey to Egypt (46:1–30)
(i) The Audience with Pharaoh (46:31–47:28)
(j) Jacob Adopts Joseph's Sons (47:29–48:22)
(k) The Testament of Jacob (49:1–28)
(l) The Deaths of Jacob and of Joseph (49:29–50:26)

COMMENTARY

(I) The Story of the Nations (1:1–11:26).

4 **(A) The Preamble: Creation of the World (1:1–2:3 [P]).** The account is an obvious unit, though some scholars speculate that separate accounts, e.g., eight creative acts (*Tatbericht*) and six divine commands (*Wortbericht*) have been combined to form the present text. The P formula in 2:4a, "these are the generations of . . . ," introduces 2:4b–4:26; it does not summarize chap. 1 (against many commentators). Elsewhere in Gen it is an introductory formula. 1:1–2:3 serves as a grand preface to more than one segment: it introduces 2:4b–11:26, the origin of the nations; 11:27–50:26, the origin of Israel's ancestors; and indeed the entire Pentateuch. As a preface it highlights the two themes dominating all parts and the whole: the divinely intended increase of peoples and their possession of land.

God creates the world for humans in six days and rests on the seventh, the first week of human history; the week of six work days ending in sabbath observance is thereby hallowed (Exod 31:17). The repetition of the divine command in the execution is characteristic of ancient Near Eastern literature; P uses the convention ("let there be . . ." and "God made/created . . .") here and elsewhere, notably in the building of the tabernacle (commands in Exod 25–31, execution in Exod 35–40).

In structure, the days are arranged thus:

Formless Water and Night (vv 1–2)

1. Light (day/night)	4. Lights in heaven
2. Separation of upper/lower water	5. Fish/birds from water
3. a. Dry land (earth, seas)	6. a. Animals
b. Plants	b. Humans

7. God rests

In W Semitic enumerations, the seventh place is often climactic; God's sabbath is therefore the climax of the story, which is primarily about God, not humans. Days 4, 5, and 6 match days 1, 2, and 3: the sun and moon mark day and night; from the waters come forth fish and birds; two things are created on the third and the sixth day, earth and plants, animals and humans.

1–3. *When God began to create heaven and earth—the earth being formless and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep, and a wind of God sweeping over the waters—then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.* The translation "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" has been traditional at least since the 3d cent. BC, when the LXX translated it so, but it is unlikely. The first two Hebr words of v 1 syntactically cannot be so translated. Other biblical and ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies use a "when . . . then" construction, e.g., "*When* Yahweh God made the earth and the heaven—when no plant of the field was yet on earth . . .—*then* Yahweh God formed man from the soil of the earth . . ." (2:4–7); the 2d-millennium Akk creation poem *Enuma Elish* begins "When on high the heavens had not been named, firm ground below had not been called by name, . . . then it was that the gods were found within them" (*ANET* 60–61, lines 1–8). **2.** *formless and void:* Hebr *tōhû wābōhû.* The first word occurs 20 times in the OT, meaning without shape or form so as to be uninhabitable by humans—metaphorically, groundless or unreal. The second word, *bōhû,* occurs 3 times to form an assonant hendiadys with *tōhû. Tōhû,* possibly etymologically related to *tĕhôm,* "the deep," suggests that the earth was entirely covered by water, as in Ps 104:6, "The deep (*tĕhôm*) covered it like a garment," (see R. J. Clifford, *JBL* 100 [1981] 87–89 for the translation); the psalm resembles Gen 1 in its description of the curbing first of the deep and then of the night, so that human life might appear. *with darkness over the surface of the deep:* Two chaotic elements obstruct the emergence of the peopled cosmos—the deep and primordial night. Night is vanquished on the first day by the creation of light, and the deep on the second and third days by the separation of waters and the making of the sea. *and a wind of God sweeping over the waters:* Hebr *rûaḥ* ("air in motion"; hence, "wind," "breath," "spirit") here means wind. In *Enuma Elish,* Anu creates four winds (1.114) and Marduk uses seven additional winds when he battles Tiamat (4.42–47); Baal in the Ugaritic text has wind as one of his companions in war (*ANET* 139). The wind of God sweeping

over the waters shows that chaos was never beyond God's control. **3–5.** The first day. Verse 3 is the "then-clause" in the "when–then" construction already noted under 1:1. Light is the first thing created. God names light and darkness "day" and "night," as he names the firmament "heaven," dry land "earth," and the waters "seas"; naming shows God's mastery. God does not destroy darkness, one of the two chaotic forces mentioned in v 2; he relegates it to the nighttime, where it too becomes part of the good world. Day begins with the light; night returns ("and there was evening"). (Jewish feast days, contrary to the calculation of ordinary days, begin in the evening.) God pronounces the light good, beautiful; the phrase will be repeated six times of created elements, climaxing in the seventh climactic occurrence for the whole universe (v 31). The declaration is not a deduction from human experience but a divine declaration that all of creation is good. **6–8.** The second day. God inserts an immense concave plate in the midst of the all-encompassing waters, creating a vast hollow between the upper and the lower waters. The Vg *firmamentum,* "support," translates the LXX literally; both the LXX and the Vg miss the Hebr nuance. The Hebr word is "something hammered out flat," e.g., gold leaf on a wooden statue. Here, and in all the other acts of creation, God first commands, then executes the action.
9–13. The third day. Within the great hollow between the upper and lower waters, God restricts the water to one place, the seas, so that dry land, earth, appears. A second event takes place on the third day: the earth sprouts vegetation. The meaning is probably: let the earth be covered with a fresh green mantle of verdure, seed-bearing plants, and fruit trees with seed-bearing fruit. **11.** *yielding seed according to their own kinds:* Each plant and fruit has inherent power to propagate itself; the phrase has therefore a nuance of procreation. Each species' power to propagate itself explains the sexual differentiation of humans in v 27b. **14–19.** The fourth day, corresponding to the first day. Light has already been created; the sun and the moon are to divide day from night and also to serve for "signs and appointed times," a hendiadys (two nouns for one) for the reckoning of time. **20–23.** The fifth day, corresponding to the second; sea and sky are to bring forth creatures. The seas are to swarm with living creatures, as the earth teemed with vegetative life on the third day. Birds are reckoned as coming from the sea. God creates (Hebr *bārā'*), a word occurring 50 times in the OT, always with God as its subject. **22.** *Be fruitful, increase, and fill the waters of the sea . . . the earth:* God blesses them by empowering them to propagate themselves. The verse anticipates the creation of the human in v 28. **24–32.** The sixth day has two events, corresponding to the two events of the third day. In the first event, the earth is to bring forth animals (distinguished here from birds, who come from the water), cattle, creeping things, and undomesticated beasts. The second event, the creation of the human being, is climactic by its placement and by the large number of verses assigned to it. **26.** The divine intent is expressed by "let us make a human," an echo of the language of the divine assembly; in ancient Near Eastern literature, the gods decided the fate of humankind. The Bible accepts the picture of the assembly, but Yahweh alone makes the decision (Gen 11:3,7; Deut 32:8–9; 1 Kgs 22:19–22; Isa 6; 40:1–11; Job 1–2). The origin of human beings is not simply from the waters on the earth like the plants, fishes/birds, and animals; it is "in our image, according to our likeness." The human is a statue of the deity, not by static being but by action, who will rule over all things previously created (v 26). In the ancient Near East, the king was often called the image of the deity and was vested with God's authority; royal language is here used for the human. Mesopotamian cosmogonies ordinarily portrayed humans as slaves. Verse 27a repeats the divine command of v 26a. **27b.** *male and female he created them:* This ensures the propagation of humanity, just as the divine making of the plants in v 12, the fishes/birds of v 21, and the animals in v 25, "according to their kinds," ensures the continuance of those groups. Sexual differentiation is the humans' way of continuing in existence.

Verse 28 is tied closely to v 27b, repeating the command already given to the fishes/birds in v 22 to "be fruitful and multiply." *Subdue the earth:* The nuance of the verb is "to master," "to bring forcefully under control." Force is necessary at the beginning to make the untamed land serve humans. Humans nonetheless are to respect the environment; they are not to kill for food but are to treat all life with respect. As the rest of v 28 shows, humans are the pinnacle of the created world; the world is made for man and woman. The imperatives in v 28 are a biblical way of defining essence, like the imperatives in Exod 20:2–17; Lev 19:2; Deut 16:18–20, etc. Plants will suffice for food for humans and animals; there will be no bloodshed. The prohibition is modified in the renewal of creation after the flood (9:2–5) because of the disobedience and violence mysteriously present in the human heart. **31.** All creation *tout ensemble,* not only its component parts, is pronounced "very good," the climactic seventh divine pronouncement. There is no evil, only beauty, in the world that God makes. **2:1–3.** Heaven and earth and "all their host," a word usually used of the heavenly population but here of the denizens of earth as well, are now completed. The vb. "complete" fulfills "when God began" of creation in 1:1. God keeps the sabbath, establishing the divine order that Israel will observe by its sabbath. The day is hallowed because God made it so.

The P account of creation differs from modern scientific conceptions, which typically focus on the formation of the planet in its solar system, and leave out of consideration animate life and human culture. Ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies, on the contrary, are mainly interested in the emergence of a people; "nature" is only the environment for the human community. Ancients frequently imagined creation as a conflict between beings endowed with will, e.g., god(s), and cosmic forces like sea or primordial night. Reports of these conflicts are, not surprisingly, often in the form of narratives that vividly depict the battle and victory, from which emerges a defined human community (see R. J. Clifford, "The Hebrew Scriptures and the Theology of Creation," *TS* 46 [1985] 507–23). Gen 1 stays within the categories of the "science" of its time and attempts to see in those categories divine power and purpose, and the unique place of humans. Conflict between chaotic forces (sea, darkness), which characterizes many other biblical and ancient Near Eastern accounts, is absent. There seems even to be a polemic against such conflict cosmogonies. Creation follows effortlessly from God's mere word. Because Gen 1 is a portrait of what God intends, it is also an eschatological statement. This serene, beautiful world, in which all is ordered to humans, and humans are ordered to God, is how it will be at the end. The stories of human sin, which follow Gen 1, cannot permanently disfigure the original divine intent; God's world will triumph. Rev 21–22, the description of God's new world, appropriately draws on this chapter.

(B) The Creation of the Man and the Woman, Their Offspring, and the Spread of Civilization (2:4–4:26 [P: 2:4a] [J: 2:4b–3:24]).

5 (a) Creation of the Man and the Woman

(2:4–3:24 [J]). The P formula "these are the generations of" in 2:4a introduces the entire complex of 2:4b–4:26. P's own preamble in 1:1–2:3 has already underscored the major themes for the reader in the traditional material thus introduced: God's effortless creating of the human race, and their divinely assigned tasks to continue in existence and take possession of their land. **2:4b–7.** *When Yahweh God made earth and heaven—before there were any shrubs of the field in the earth, before any grass of the field sprouted, for Yahweh God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil (a flow rose up from the earth to water the whole surface of the earth)—then Yahweh God made the man from the dust of the earth.* For the "when–then" construction, see 1:1–3. *then:* Lit., "in the day." This does not always mean a 24-hour day. *made earth and heaven:* Prepare an environment for the human community; the focus is on people. There were no plants because there was no rain and no human tillers. The double divine name "Yahweh God" occurs only in this chapter; the precise nuance of the double name for God is unclear. According to source criticism, Yahweh is used only by the J source until Exod 3:14, when the E source begins to use it. **6.** *flow:* Sumerian *ID,* Akk *idu,* the water under the earth that wells up in rivers; this water does not apparently fertilize the earth sufficiently for plant life. **7.** The man (*hā'ādām*) is made from the earth (*hā'ădāmâ*), prompting some scholars to propose the transl. "earth creature" rather than "man," to emphasize that its origin is from the earth and that sexual differentiation does not appear until the creation of woman in v 22 (see P. Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* [Phl, 1978] 72–143).

8–9. There are two trees placed beyond human use—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. The tree of life appears again at the end of the story (3:22) as a remaining temptation, from which danger God expels the couple. Eating it might have enabled the couple to "live forever," i.e., become gods. The story, however, is concerned with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Good and evil is a merism, a literary figure by which totality is expressed by the first and last in a series or by opposites; cf. Ps 139:2, "You know when I sit down and when I stand up," i.e., all my physical movement. "To know" in Hebrew is experiential and relational, not only intellectual. Eating the fruit of the tree, therefore, imparts a mastery of life and an autonomy that is inappropriate to the earth creature, created from dust. The man would cease to be finite and human. **10–14.** The river going forth from Eden to water the garden and thence dividing into the four rivers of the world, may be the "flow" in v 6; in some Ugaritic and Akk texts the high god dwells at the "source of the double deep," i.e., the source of all life-giving waters of the earth. The garden, therefore, is the locale of God. The totality of the world is symbolized by "four," as in the Akk phrase "the four quarters of the earth." The location of Pishon and Havilah in this text is unknown; this verse, Gen 10:7, and 1 Chr 1:9 locate Havilah in Cush in southern Mesopotamia, whereas according to Gen 10:26–29 and 1 Chr 1:20–23, Havilah is a descendant of Shem—therefore, to be located in the east or southeast of Arabia. Gihon is also the name of the spring of Jerusalem (1 Kgs 1:33,38), but here it flows through Cush in southern Mesopotamia. **15–17.** Verse 15 resumes v 8b with the additional remark that the earth creature is to cultivate the garden. A limit is placed on his mastery; he is not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. **17.** *you shall die:* "To die" here means to be cut off, excluded from community with God, as in Ezek 18 and in other P texts; the man and the woman will be driven from the garden of God, not killed. A different anthropology in early Judaism and Christianity insisted that God made humans incorruptible (Wis 2:23; Rom 5:12), and from this arose the Christian theological tradition that death is a result of sin. In the ancient Near East, not to die would mean that one would have to become a god since only the gods were immortal.

18–24. 18. God's observation that it is not good for the earth creature to be alone leads to the creating of a helper corresponding to him. Traditional Eng "helpmate" is a corruption of the archaic "helpmeet" = "meet or fitting helper." **19–20.** God brings to the man all animals and birds so that he might name them, a part of his charge to till and to tend the garden. His naming them shows his God-given mastery over the animals; they are for him. In v 20b, the animals do not prove to be suitable companions, a sly understatement that prepares for the creation of woman in vv 21–24. Not from earth but from the man's own self is the woman fashioned, an explanation at once of sexual attraction between men and women and of the phrase "corresponding to him." The deep sleep is from God (cf. 15:12). The man acknowledges the gift of the woman. *This one at last* [in the series of animals brought before him] *is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, for from man she was taken:* The Hebr pun *'iššâ* and *'îš* is reproduced in Eng "woman" and "man." In the biblical perspective, the origin of a reality often defines the reality. God made marriage part of the creation.

2:25–3:7. The section begins with 2:25 (against many commentators) since 3:1, "subtle [serpent]," plays on the ostensibly similar Hebr root *'ārûm,* "naked" in 2:25; the episode ends in v 7, when the couple's eyes are opened not in wisdom but in shame as they become aware that they are naked. The snake is not Satan, though later traditions so interpreted it (e.g., Wis 2:24). He is simply a mischievous creature made by God, dramatically necessary to awaken in the woman a desire to eat of the forbidden fruit; he recedes into the background when his narrative function is accomplished. The snake's question in v 1b and the woman's answer in vv 2–3 are both inaccurate interpretations of the originally simple divine command in 2:16–17. **5.** *like divine beings knowing good and bad: Elohim,* the ordinary name for God in the OT, means "divine beings" when it is used with a pl. vb., as here. At the snake's deceptive assurance, the woman eats and persuades her husband to eat. Their innocence lost through disobedience, they make primitive loincloths. **8–19.** God appears at the afternoon breeze; their sin is not hid from God, to whom they are accountable. The man blames the woman (in ironic contrast to 2:23) and the woman blames the snake; just punishment will be meted out according to the order of sinning. **14–15.** The snake is cursed, condemned to crawl on its belly, eat dirt, and be forever the enemy of the woman whom he deceived and of her offspring. *he shall strike your head:* "He" refers to offspring, which is masc. in Hebrew. Christian tradition has sometimes referred it to Christ, but the literal reference is to the human descendants of Eve, who will regard snakes as enemies. **16.** Childbearing, a constituent part of woman's nature, will be attended with great pain, symbolizing the loss of original ease with oneself and one's environment. Woman's original equality with her "correspondent," the man, is part of the loss, suggesting that the subordinate place of woman in Israelite society was not intended by God, but is rather a result of human sin (Trible, *Rhetoric of Sexuality* 126–28). **12–19.** The punishment of the man, the central actor in the story, is climactic by its third position in the series and by its length. The man is not cursed, but the earth is cursed because of the man's misdeed; his tilling and tending of it will be laborious. **18.** Thorns and thistles will grow on the ground but man must still find his sustenance

therefrom, enduring a hard life till he returns to the earth whence he came. **20–21.** Punishment is not the last word. In a subtle but significant gesture, the man gives another name to his wife (cf. 2:23): Eve, mother of the living. The couple's sin has not altered the divine intent to make them fruitful. God's clothing them is another conciliatory sign, an accommodation to human limitations. **22–24.** In a wonderfully ironic speech, God notes the harm done by eating the forbidden fruit and removes the couple from the occasion of the further sin of eating of the tree of life. The couple is sent out of the garden to find their way in the ordinary world.

6 (b) CAIN'S MURDER OF ABEL (4:1–16 [J]). The entire chapter, though of diverse traditions, is now a unity: the vb. "to know" introduces sections within it, vv 1–2, 9–16, 17–22, and 25–26. The number seven recurs in vv 15 and 24; Lamech is the seventh in the generation, and several words occur seven times ("Abel," "brother," "name") or 14 times ("Cain"). The chapter also continues the preceding story; disobedience and punishment continue among the children of the man and the woman. The divine names in chaps. 2–4 appear 70 times (Elohim 40 times, Yahweh Elohim 20 times, Yahweh 10 times), the 70th ("at that time people began to call on the name of Yahweh") occurring in the final verse, 4:26 (Cassuto, *Genesis* 1. 178–96).

1–2. The birth of the brothers. *knew:* Connotes concrete experience and can express sexual relations. *I have begotten a man with the help of Yahweh:* Eve exults in her procreative power given by Yahweh. There is a play on the name Cain, something like "I have gained Cain" (*NJV*); the vb. means "to create," "to beget." **2.** *she then bore Abel:* The younger son, often preferred to the older brother in biblical narrative. Abel's name needs no pun like Cain's to explain it; the significance of "(transitory) breath," is sufficiently clear. **3–8.** The murder. **4–5.** *the choice firstlings of his flock:* A hendiadys, lit., "the firstborn of his flock and from their fat parts." Most commentators believe Abel's offering was the choice part and Cain's was not, but the emphasis falls on Yahweh's inscrutable acceptance of one and not the other. **7.** *If you act rightly, acceptance [lit., lifting], but if you do not act rightly, sin is a croucher at the door [i.e., in your path]. Its intent is directed toward you, but you are to master it:* As the literal transl. shows, Yahweh's response to the distressed (not "angry") Cain is extremely difficult to understand and may be corrupt; all transls. are uncertain. **8.** *let us go into the field:* I.e., unfrequented country; this shows that Cain's murder was premeditated. The phrase has dropped out of the MT by haplography but is preserved by the ancient versions. Cain's reaction to God's circumscribing command is to hate his favored brother. **9.** Yahweh confronts Cain, and Cain disavows Abel. **10–12.** *Hark, your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the ground:* The earth, which drank his brother's blood, becomes the instrument of the punishment by not yielding its fruit and by being the place on which Cain wanders. Cain will be a "ceaseless wanderer" (hendiadys; lit., "a fugitive and a wanderer"). **13–15.** When Cain pleads that the effects of his sin are unbearable, God promises protection (implied in the literal "therefore") and gives him a mark. It is one of several gestures in the Bible against the practice of blood vengeance. **16.** Cain settles in the land of Nod, a play on Hebr *nād,* the participle of "to wander" of v 12.

7 (c) CAIN'S DESCENDANTS AND THE INVENTION OF CULTURE (4:17–24 [J]). **17.** *Cain knew his wife:* Shows the continuance of the line despite human sin. *she gave birth to Enoch and he built a city and named it after his son: Enoch* at the end of the MT verse seems to be a gloss; Enoch rather is the builder and Irad is the son after whom the city is named. Irad corresponds to Mesopotamian Eridu, the first antediluvian city according to the Sumerian King List (*ANET* 265). **18.** Another Mesopotamian tradition appearing here is the seven *apkallu*'s, the seven sages prior to the flood, who were believed to have founded the elements of culture, e.g., writing, artistic skill, etc. There are seven generations in the Cainite genealogy. Echoes of a similar Canaanite and Phoenician tradition are preserved in Philo Byblos. The names in chap. 4 are the same as or variants of those in chap. 5: Cain/Kenan; Enoch/Enoch; Irad/Jared; Mehuyael/Mahalalel; Methushael/Methusalah; Lamech/Lamech. Segmented genealogies in the ancient East were generally not for conveying historical information but for determining domestic, politico-jural, and religious matters. In chap. 4, the genealogies attribute the origin of various aspects of civilization to figures of the pre-flood period, as in Mesopotamian lore, and also to show that descendants of Cain inherit the effects of the curse. Sin is increasing, preparing for the flood (see R. R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* [New Haven, 1977] 138–58). **19–22.** Lamech takes two wives, by whom he has the three sons who are the seventh in the line (→ 10 below) and the actual founders of culture. The sons' names rhyme—Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain. **23–24.** Lamech celebrates his own tendency toward violence, a sign that Cain's violence has been transmitted to his offspring. Though God's blessing of progeny is still effective, humans have polluted it, a pointer to the coming judgment in the flood.

8 (d) SETH AND THE INTRODUCTION OF WORSHIP (4:25–26 [J]). Adam and Eve give birth to another son in place of the short-lived Abel, Seth (= "to [re]place"). **26b.** *people began to call upon the name of Yahweh:* The most important cultural institution of civilization, authentic worship, was not founded by a son of the wrathful Cain, but by the replacement of the favored Abel. According to the E source, the name of Yahweh was revealed first to Moses at Sinai (Exod 3:13–15); P also places the revelation of the name in Moses' time (Exod 6:2–8).

9 (C) The Pre-flood Generations (5:1–6:8 [P: 1–32] [J: 6:1–8]). The P formula in 5:1, "this is the document of the generations of Adam," introduces not just the 10-member genealogy of chap. 5 (the view of nearly all commentators) but also 6:1–8 (the view of a minority). Arguments that it introduces the whole section are: the next instance of the formula in 6:9 begins a new section, the flood; "but Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (6:8) sums up both the genealogy and 6:1–8; 6:5–8 refers back in several words and phrases to 5:1–2 (an instance of the device of *inclusio* by which the end of a section refers back to its beginning); the related themes of the transmission of the image of God and blessing in Adam through firstborn sons ending in Noah (and his sons), and of the general increase of the human community (Cassuto, *Genesis* 1. 249–50). The P introductory formula introduces J and E material as well as P material.

10 (a) THE GENEALOGY FROM ADAM TO NOAH (5:1–32 [P]). The 10-member linear genealogy ending in a group of three "executive" persons who act—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—resembles the seven-member linear genealogy of 4:17–22, which also ends in three executives—Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain. P seems to have used a tradition of ancestors similar to J's. See comment on 4:18. Unlike the genealogy of chap. 4, which reflects the tradition of the seven pre-flood *apkallu*'s or culture founders of Mesopotamia and Phoenicia, chap. 5 reflects the tradition of 10 kings in some Mesopotamian lists. The pre-flood list of Sumerian kings was generally eight (*ANET* 265), but lists of kings later became standardized to 10, a number that the P writer adopts

(Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* 347–51). Some Mesopotamian lists attempt to correlate the seven sages and 10 kings, even to the point of resemblance of names; the similar names in the genealogies of chaps. 4 and 5 may be imitating this feature (Wilson, *Genealogy and History* 149–52, 165–66). The great ages of the pre-flood firstborn sons resemble the ages of the pre-flood kings in the Sumerian King List, e.g., Alulim ruled 28,900 years and Alalgar ruled 36,000 years, whereas after the flood kings ruled for a much shorter time, e.g., 200 years, 960 years (*ANET* 265–66). All of the biblical ages, however, with the exception of the seventh (Enoch) and the ninth (Lamech) generations, are about 900 years, short of the divine "day" of 1,000 years (Ps 90:4). The life-spans are lowered to 120 years in 6:3 ("for he is flesh"), but the precise meaning is uncertain. The great ages express the ancient Near Eastern view that "there were giants in those days," that life was on a larger scale in the beginning than now. A different numeration is found in the LXX and in the Samaritan Pentateuch.

The purpose of the J genealogies in 4:17–22 and vv 25–26 and that of the P genealogy in chap. 5 differ. In J's Cainite genealogy, the generations transmit the arrogance of Cain, as is proved by Lamech's bloodthirsty cry (4:23–24). The fresh genealogy in 4:25–26 suggests, however, a curse-free line through Seth. The P genealogy in 5:1–2 demonstrates that the image of God and the blessing of progeny and land given to humanity in 1:26–28 was successfully transmitted through the firstborn sons down to Noah (and his sons), who is saved by the ark from the flood inflicted on the other "sons and daughters." The P genealogy shows the procreative gift of Gen 1:26–28 being exercised, just as chap. 10 will show people exercising their God-given right to land. The two genealogies, juxtaposed, illustrate both the spreading effect of human sin and God's undiminished commitment to the blessing.

5:1–5. 1. *This is the record of the generations of Adam:* Hebr *tôlĕdôt,* lit., "begettings" (only in P in the Pentateuch), is used here in its literal sense of descendants. **1b–2.** A reprise of 1:26–28. Humans were made in the image of God, and made male and female to procreate. **3.** Adam, created in the likeness of God, is able to transmit that likeness since he begets his firstborn in his own likeness and names Seth, just as God named him. **6–31.** The transmission of the divine image is through the firstborn son. The nine firstborns—Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enosh, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah—are all described according to a fixed scheme: the age of the son before begetting his firstborn, the number of years he lived after that birth, his begetting other sons and daughters, his total life-span, and his death. Exceptions to the scheme are the seventh generation, Enoch, and the ninth, Lamech. **22.** Enoch "walked with God," i.e., lived righteously. **24.** *he was no more for God took him:* Enoch did not die like the others, but was "taken (up)" because of his righteousness. In the period from *ca.* 300 BC to AD 300, a vast extrabiblical Enoch literature developed, which celebrated his heavenly secrets (→ Apocrypha, 67:7–15). About this storied figure, the Bible gives us only a single statement. "God took him" seems deliberately elusive, like the mysterious use of the word "took" in Pss 49:15 and 73:24 and the removal of Elijah in 1 Kgs 2:11. Enoch prefigures Noah, who also "walked with God." **28–29.** Lamech fathers Noah and gives him a name. *he will give us relief* [Hebr *niḥam*] *from our work:* The Hebr vb. upon which the pun is based is not the expected *nûaḥ,* "to rest," the actual root of Noah's name. **29.** Apparently a citation of 3:17, for "Yahweh" is not otherwise used by P until Exod 6:2. Noah begets his firstborn son, Shem, ancestor of the Semites, and two other sons, Ham and Japheth. Shem is technically the firstborn, but the image of God seems to be transmitted to all three, founders of the three great races of the author's day. The three will be executives, actors, like the three at the end of the Cainite genealogy (4:22).

11 (b) MARRIAGE OF DIVINE BEINGS WITH WOMEN (6:1–8 [J]). For reasons to regard the section as part of 5:1–32, → 9 above. The J material in 6:1–8 restates the sin that will bring on the flood. **2.** *divine beings:* lit., "sons of god," i.e., members of the class of divine beings, common in religious texts of Canaan. The Bible sometimes borrowed traditional descriptions of the heavenly world without comment (cf. Deut 32:8–9 LXX; 1 Kgs 22:19–23; Job 1–2; Ps 29). The divine beings, attracted by the women's beauty, married them and sired giant offspring, the "mighty men of old" (v 4b). Comparable literatures speak of semidivine heroes of old. Though *human* sin is not expressly mentioned in vv 1–2, the divine judgment in v 3 presumes that there was actually sin. **3.** The phrase is a divine soliloquy like 3:22, by which a limit is put on humans after their rebellion (Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* 374). As in chaps. 2–3, man and woman attempt to be like gods, refusing the obedience due as finite human beings. Though the divine beings take the initiative as powerful beings, the actions of all parties constitute the breaking of the boundary between the human and the divine. Many scholars suggest that v 2 alludes to a longer myth about marriages between heavenly beings and human wives, which produced the pre-flood race of giants. The Bible is reticent about stories of the "gods"; here it alludes to such a story only to show that the mixing of heaven and earth, which had been forbidden to the first man and woman in the garden by the prohibition against eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, and of the tree of life (3:22–24), is taboo. Such heavenly–earthly unions cause God to limit further the age of human beings because "he is flesh." 120 years, in comparison with the great ages of the list of ancestors in chap. 5, is a severe limit upon humans. **4.** The verse seems overloaded and confused. *the divine beings went into the daughters of men and bore [sons] to them . . . :* Perhaps continues directly v 2; v 4a, about the Nephilim, seems to be an ancient variant of "the mighty men of old" at the end of v 4. *the Nephilim:* "The fallen ones [i.e., from heaven]" are the race of giants mentioned in Num 13:33 as the giant preconquest inhabitants of Canaan; they are the children of unholy unions. The ancient inhabitants of Canaan were frequently referred to as giants (Deut 2:10–11,20–21; 3:11; Josh 12:4; 17:15). Here the fabled inhabitants are devalued as the offspring of arrogant unions.

5–8. God judges the human community. In the comparable Akk epic, Atrahasis, the gods are divided on whether to destroy humanity by plague and flood. In monotheistic Israel, the fateful decision is made by Yahweh, who is also the creator. The conflict between saving and destroying is played out within the one God, Yahweh. Some of the divine anguish is caught in the "regret" (vv 6–7) and in the Lord's looking on Noah with favor (v 8). The section looks backward to the incessant sins of the race (chaps. 3; 4; 6:1–4) and forward to the new beginning in Noah (chap. 9). It sums up the first and prepares for the flood, which is at once a destruction and a new beginning. **5.** In 1:1–2:3 God saw the beauty of the world he made, seven times pronouncing it good; now he looks on human wickedness and regrets that he made the world. *every plan devised by his mind (NJV):* Idiomatic English for the dense Hebr phrase. **7.** *I will wipe out:* A severe way of describing what God is about to do; in Judg 21:17 it is used of obliterating an entire tribe from

Israel. The rest of v 7 details the beautifully wrought creation that God is about to destroy. **8.** Like Enoch (5:21–24), who stood out from the others, Noah stands out amid the wicked race. The somber reflection and judgment end on a note of hope.

12 (D) The Flood and the Renewed Blessing (6:9–9:29).

(a) THE FLOOD (6:9–9:17 [P: 6:9–22; 7:6,11, 13–16a,17a,18–21,24; 8:1,2a,3b–5,7,13a,14–19; 9:1–17] [J: 7:1–5,7–10,12,16b,17b,22–23; 8:2b–3a,6,8–12,13b, 20–22]). The third instance of the *tôlĕdôt* formula here introduces the longest of the five segments of the primeval history. This segment tells of the great flood wiping out all flesh except the righteous Noah and his family and the animals with him in the ark. The story as it now stands is coherent but has drawn on a variety of traditions; P and J material can easily be identified. According to P, two pairs of every animal came to the ark, whereas in J Noah takes seven pairs of clean animals and two pairs of unclean animals. For P the waters above and below the earth, confined there in the beginning (1:6–10), burst upon the earth (7:11), whereas in J the floodwaters were the rains lasting 40 days and nights (7:12). P has supplemented traditional material with a narrative of his own; usually P allows J (and E) to stand on their own. Despite the visibility of the old traditions, the redactor has composed an artistic unity.

Most scholars do not include "Noah's drunkenness" (9:20–29; a better title is "the character of Noah's sons"), in the flood account, preferring to include it with the settling of the three sons' descendants in chap. 10. It seems best, however, to place it with the present narrative, both because of its falling under the P rubric of 6:9 and because it limns the character of the three sons of Noah.

The flood (6:9–9:17): Traditions of a widespread flood are found among many peoples all over the world. Some of these traditions echo the biblical flood but many do not (Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* 398–406). The biblical account is within the ancient Near Eastern tradition, esp. as attested in Mesopotamian literature. The theme of the flood that destroys humankind does not seem to belong to the main body of Sumerian traditions. The preface, added to the Sumerian King List (*ANET* 265), contains the phrase "after the flood had swept over (the earth)." The phrase or a variant occurs in a hymn of Ishme-Dagan (1953–1935) and in another text of the same period. The extant bottom third of a Sumerian tablet, probably near in date to the texts just mentioned, tells of the creation of five cities, the singling out of Ziusudra (the Sumerian equivalent of Akk Utnapishtim and the biblical Noah) to build a boat to escape the flood, and his elevation to eternal life among the gods (*ANET* 42–44; M. Civil, in W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atrahasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* [Oxford 1969] 138–45). In Akk literature there appear to have been two versions of the flood. The shorter one, in which the gods decree the flood and then deify the human survivor Utnapishtim (or Ziusudra or Atrahasis), is found in tablet XI of the Gilgamesh Epic and in a small Akk fragment found at Ugarit (*Ugaritica V* 167 = RS 22.421 of *ca.* 14th cent.). The latter tablet is the only record of the Mesopotamian flood tradition found outside Mesopotamia. The flood account in Gilgamesh was probably not part of the Old Babylonian version but was added by the editor of the standard Babylonian or Nineveh recension (*ca.* 1300–1200). A digest of this tradition is found in the writings of the 4th-cent. BC Babylonian priest Berossus (Lambert and Millard, *Atrahasis* 134–37). The longer version, which includes punishment of the rebellious gods and the creation of humans to do their work, several plagues preceding the flood, and the refounding of civilization after the flood, is preserved only in the three tablets of the Atrahasis epic. The longer version has influenced the biblical account.

Though fragments had long been known, it was only in 1969 that W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard arranged the tablets properly and published them (*Atrahasis*). In the longer version, the flood story is prefaced by the story of the rebellion of the lower class Igigi-gods against the seven great Anunnaki-gods (among whom is Anu, Enlil, and Enki), who had forced them to take care for the universe for them. The Igigi go on strike, forcing the Anunnaki to create humans to do the menial work the Igigi refused to do any longer. The human being is created from clay mixed with the blood and spirit of the slain chief rebel god. "Twelve hundred years had not passed when the land extended and the people multiplied. The land was bellowing like a bull, the god [Enlil] got disturbed with their uproar." Exactly what the noise (Akk *rigmu*) signifies in the epic is contested. Most scholars see it as some kind of moral fault, but W. L. Moran has argued persuasively that it is simply noise, the meaning of *rigmu* elsewhere. For him, the noise is the tumult of the rapidly spreading human race, a sign that the gods did not plan wisely in creating humans (*Bib* 52 [1971] 51–61; "Some Considerations of Form and Interpretation in *Atrahasis*," *Language, Literature, and History* [Fest. E. Reiner; ed. F. Rochberg-Halton; AOS 67; New Haven, 1987] 245–55). At any rate, the gods, led by Enlil, attempt to wipe out the race by a series of three plagues, each one cleverly thwarted by Enki, who tells his favorite Atrahasis the secret of escaping it. At length, the angry assembly of the gods decrees a flood to wipe out the race altogether and enjoins Enki from forewarning Atrahasis. Enki cleverly gets around the restriction by innocently soliloquizing before a wall, on the other side of which Atrahasis happens to sit, hearing all. Atrahasis accordingly builds a boat for his family and animals. The floods come. The gods, by now bereft of the labor supplied by the human race, turn against Enlil, whose idea it was to blot out the race. Atrahasis the survivor is at length discovered and from him the human race is renewed. This time, however, there will be checks to untrammeled population growth. Not all women will bear children; infertile women, childbirth demons, and an order of celibate women will check population and hence the noise that disturbed the gods.

Gen has transformed the story. Moral fault, not mere noise, moves the sole God to wipe out the race. God's justice leads him to except the righteous Noah from the punishment. The blessings given to Noah are an unqualified reaffirmation of the original blessings in Gen 1. The only change in the original order is God's permitting the people to kill animals for food, a change introduced for the sake of human weakness rather than divine improvidence. Unlike the gods in Atrahasis, who created by trial and error and capriciously readjusted their ill-conceived plan, Yahweh from the beginning creates with wisdom and justice. The plot of Atrahasis—creation of humans, offense to the gods, flood, re-creation—is the plot of Gen 2–9.

The flood story in Gen is narrated in a chiastic arrangement, i.e., each element in the first part is echoed and elaborated in the second part, with the center, God's remembering of Noah, expressing the main point. Chiasm ("envelope" or "sandwich" construction) is common in biblical narrative. Reprise and repetition unify the long narrative and provide the redundance necessary for an oral culture.

Introduction: Noah, a just man in an unjust generation (6:9–10)
1. Lawlessness in God's creation (6:11–12)
2. 1st divine address: Destroy! (6:13–22)
3. 2nd divine address: Enter the ark! (7:1–10)
4. Beginning of the flood (7:11–16)
5. Rising of the flood waters (7:17–23)
GOD REMEMBERS NOAH
6. Receding of the flood waters (7:24–8:5)
7. Drying of the earth (8:6–14)
8. 3rd divine address: Leave the ark! (8:15–19)
9. God's resolve to preserve order (8:20–22)
10. 4th divine address: Covenant blessing and peace (9:1–17)

(Adapted from B. W. Anderson [*JBL* 97 (1978) 23–29]; cf. also Cassuto, *Genesis* 2. 30–33.) The redactor's masterly chiasm makes the statement.

6:9–12. A just man in an unjust world. The P formula (v 9a) customarily introduces not only the person mentioned but his immediate descendants (Shem, Ham, and Japheth). Like Enoch, seventh in the 10-member genealogy of chap. 5, Noah stands out; he is right with God, alone blameless among his peers, walking with God. The earth that God seven times declared good at the beginning has been spoiled by "lawlessness" (v 11, rather than the too specific "violence"). God sees (v 12) and, as often in the Bible, immediately acts (cf. Exod 2:25; Isa 57:18; 59:16; 63:15). **13–22.** The first divine command: Destroy. Unlike the Atrahasis epic, in which the divine assembly's response to bothersome noise is destruction for all (with only Enki dissenting), God communicates his irrevocable decision to "destroy" the earth (lit., "spoil," as humans had spoiled it). The use of the same word for humans' action (v 11) and God's destruction (v 12) suggests that God is only completing the destruction begun by humans themselves. Differentiating between the corrupt race and the righteous Noah (v 14), God commands Noah to build an ark to escape the flood. The tension between divine mercy and justice finds narrative expression here; destruction will not be the last word. **14–16.** The ark is of gopher wood, a transcription of an unknown Hebr term. *ark:* Used elsewhere in the Bible only of Moses' basket in Exod 2; it too held the hope of the people in a time of danger. It is *ca.* 450 × 75 × 45 ft.; the cubit is a standard ancient Near Eastern measure, the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger (about 1½ ft.). Unlike a boat, the ark is totally enclosed except for a window (v 16a, others "roof") a cubit from the top; it is covered inside and out with pitch as a protection against the vast flood. **17–18.** God now announces he is *now* (the sense of traditional "behold" in v 17) bringing a flood as the instrument of destroying the world. *flood (mabbûl):* Almost the proper name for the flood, it is used only in Gen 6–11 (both J and P) and in Ps 29:10, where it apparently designates the chaotic waters tamed by the victorious Yahweh. **18.** God's covenant with Noah is the first mentioned in the Bible. It is the first in the P scheme of four covenants (J. Wellhausen's term for the Pentateuch is *liber quatuor foederum*), the others being the covenant with Abraham (17:1–14), with Israel at Sinai (Exod 19–24), and with Phineas (Num 26:12–13). A covenant is an agreement between two parties, often oral, sworn before the gods. The god(s) who witnessed the swearing watch over its observance. The full import of the covenant will be detailed in 9:1–17. Its initiative from God is emphasized, but divine sovereignty is not compromised by the free assent of the human partner. **19–21.** For P, all creation is good (Gen 1) and the distinctions between clean and unclean will be given only at Sinai. Hence, Noah takes two of every animal "according to its kind." For the phrase, see under Gen 1:9–13,27b. J on the other hand will stipulate in 7:2 seven pairs of clean and two pairs of unclean animals, presumably envisioning the post-flood sacrifice of 8:20 (J). **22.** Like Moses building the dwelling in Exod, Noah obeys God without question and to the last detail.

7:1–10. Second divine address: Enter! As in 6:13–22, the section begins with a command to Noah. Noah is to enter the newly built ark and take with him seven pairs of clean and two pairs of unclean animals (see comment on 6:19–21). Along with the divine intent to destroy is the divine intent to preserve alive the righteous. **11–16.** The beginning of the flood. As the flood begins—P (v 11) and J (v 12) differing as to its source—the accent on the preserving of righteous life increases. **17–23.** The rising of the flood waters. The drama is heightened by the contrast of the mighty destroying waters covering the highest mountains by 15 cubits (= 23.5 ft.), and the tiny ark, seeds of a new beginning. *all humans:* Appears dramatically in v 21, and "Noah and those with him," climactically in v 23. **7:24–8:5.** God remembers Noah. The receding of the flood waters. **7:24–8:1.** Syntax suggests a single sentence, "And when the waters had swelled 150 days, God remembered Noah. . . ." God's remembering Noah is like his remembering of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the nadir of Hebr fortunes in Egypt (Exod 2:23–25); it is the prelude to divine action in their behalf. **4.** *the mountains of Ararat:* The mountain country of ancient Urartu in NW Iraq—to the biblical writer, the highest part of the world. There is no *Mount* Ararat in the Bible. **7–8.** The drying of the earth. The 1st-cent. AD Roman author Pliny tells of Indian sailors who release birds so to follow them as they turn toward land (*Nat. Hist.* 6.83) In Gilgamesh XI.145–54 [*ANET* 94–95]), Utnapishtim releases a dove, a swallow, and a raven, and all return except the raven. **13–14.** On the first day of the first month, the world was in the state it was in on the day of creation in Gen 1. Noah had to wait another month until the earth was properly dry land as in Gen 1:9.

8:15–19. Third divine command: Leave the ark! **20–22.** God's resolve to preserve order. In both Atrahasis and Gilgamesh (tablet XI), the gods "gathered like flies over the sacrifice" of the flood survivors because they had not been fed and cared for by their human slaves. In a similar but far less anthropomorphic gesture, Yahweh smells the pleasing odor and promises never to repeat the universal punishment. God recognizes the mysterious evil intent within humans (6:5) and resolves to be faithful to the race in spite of it. **22.** A short poem sets forth the divinely ordained pairings that make the earth humanly habitable.

9:1–17. Fourth divine address: Covenant blessings and peace. **1.** The Atrahasis story ends with a renewal of creation but with a condition: Not all women will bear children, so that the overpopulation that provoked the wrath of the gods will never occur again (III.6.41–50, fragmentary). The blessing given to Noah in 9:1 repeats the original blessing in 1:28 verbatim, and 9:6 reaffirms without qualification the human being as the image of God (cf. 1:26–27). **2–6.** There is, however, a qualification of the original blessing: the concession that the originally vegetarian humans may kill animals for food, including fish and fowl (1:29). The qualification of the original blessing is not because of divine miscalculation in the initial creative act, as in Atrahasis, but because of God's willingness to bear with sinfully violent humans (8:21). **8:20–9:17.** An impressive chiasm: (a) 8:20–22, divine promise not to destroy the earth; (b) 9:1, blessing; (c) 9:2–6, divine sovereignty over life (concretized in blood); (b′) 9:7, blessing; (a′) 9:8–17, divine promise not to destroy the earth. The several ideas are aspects of a single intent to create life. **9.** A covenant is a solemn agreement between parties, sworn before the gods who

oversee oaths. In v 9 it is essentially a promise, made originally to Noah (6:18) and now extended to all living creatures. Noah's free acceptance is nonetheless presupposed. To Jews, the prohibition against eating blood binds all people (cf. Acts 15:29). Like the covenant with Abraham, this covenant has a sign: the rainbow, which will signal the end of future rainstorms before they destroy the world.

13 (b) The Character of the Sons of Noah (9:18–29 [J]). The character of the three sons is sketched in the episode of Noah's drunkenness. **20–23.** The fault here is not with Noah—as the first cultivator of the grape he could not have known the intoxicating quality of wine—but with Ham, who looked on his father's nakedness and told his two brothers. In Lev 20:17–21, to "uncover the nakedness" means to have sexual relations, but Ham's act does not imply sexual relations. The act and the telling of it imply contempt for one's father, a serious offense. Canaan's offense prefigures the sexual license of the later Canaanites, against which Israel is repeatedly warned. Shem and Japheth respectfully back into the tent (to avoid looking on their father) and cover him with a cloak. **24–27.** The point of the story is the curse laid on Ham, who is the father of Canaan (10:6) and the blessings upon Shem and Japheth. Hinted at is the later occupation of Canaan by Israel, the descendant of Shem. **27.** *enlarge:* Hebr *yapt* plays on the name Japheth.

14 (E) The Populating of the World and the Prideful City (10:1–11:9).

(a) Noah's Descendants Become Landed Peoples (10:1–31 [J: 8–19,21,25–30] [P: 1–7,20,22–23,24]). The fourth instance of the P formula (2:4; 5:1; 6:9) introduces the section on the populating of the earth. At the creation of humans in 1:26 God had commanded them to be fertile and increase, fill the earth and subdue it. Up to now, esp. in the genealogies, the emphasis has been on "multiplying"; in this section the accent falls on filling the earth. Already 9:19 spoke of the earth's being populated from the three sons of Noah; the same statement is repeated in this section (10:5,18,25,32; 11:8). The view behind the chapter is that each people has a land assigned it by God and that it is the task of each to take possession of its God-given land ("subdue" of 1:28). Deut 32:8–9 illustrates the view: "When the Most High assigned the nations their homes, / when he separated the human race, / he fixed the boundaries of peoples according to the numbers of the sons of God (LXX, Sym); / But Yahweh's portion is his people, / Jacob, his own allotment." In the Deut poem, Yahweh assigns to each of the heavenly sons of the Most High (cf. the "70 sons of El" in Ugaritic texts) a people with its land but keeps Israel as his special people. In Gen 10, the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth add up to 70, a traditional aggregate number in the Bible (Judg 8:30; 9:2; Luke 10:1,17). The number 70 is arrived at by counting all the names in the chapter except Noah and his three sons and counting Sidon (vv 15,19) only once. In Gen 46:27 and Exod 1:5 Israel too numbered 70 persons. "The people of Israel occupies in the plans of Divine Providence a place resembling, on a small scale, that of all mankind; it is a small-scale world, a microcosm similar in form to the macrocosm" (Cassuto, *Genesis* 2. 180).

Contrary to the paragraph divisions of most transls., 11:1–9 directly continues chap. 10; the nations sin by refusing to go forth to possess their lands, preferring instead to band together and build a prideful city at a site of their own choosing. Israel is mentioned indirectly in chap. 10 in its ancestor Eber (cf. "Hebrew" in vv 21, 24–25). Israel's twofold task of begetting children and possessing land will begin in chap. 12 with the charge to Abraham and Sarah. As elsewhere, Israel is contrasted with the nations, e.g, "Lo, a people dwelling alone, and not reckoning itself among the nations (Num 23:9)." The chapter has been called "the table of nations" by scholars; it is a verbal map of the world known to the author. The main principle of division seems to be geographic, secondarily ethnic and linguistic. Many of the peoples and places cannot be identified and may have been vague to the author; identifications will be given when possible. Canaan, for reasons given below, is classed as Hamitic, though on all counts it is Semitic rather than Hamitic.

10:2–5. The descendants of Japheth include non-Semitic peoples in the north, contemporary Greece and the Mediterranean islands, Turkey, and N Iraq and Iran (the Medes). *Javan:* Ionia, the name for the Gk colonies on the W coast of Greece, but here designating all Greece. *Gomer:* Cimmerians. *Madai:* Medes. Tubal and Meshech were in E Turkey, as was Togarmah (Hittite Tagarma). *Ashkenaz:* An Indo-European people; it was the medieval rabbinic name for Germany, now designating one of the great divisions of Jews comprising E European Yiddish-speaking Jews. *Elishah:* Cyprus; Alashia of cuneiform sources. *Kittim:* Seems to refer to Cyprus also. *Dodanim:* Correctly Rodanim in 1 Chr 1:7, the inhabitants of Rhodes (*d* and *r* were easily confused in some ancient scripts). **6–20.** The descendants of Ham are within an arc extending from the mid-Mediterranean through Lebanon-Palestine (both of which had long been under the aegis of Egypt), down to the Arabian peninsula. *Put:* Libya (cf. Nah 3:9; Ezek 30:5). *Cush:* In v 6 this is the upper Nile Valley and Ethiopia, but in v 8 it seems to be Cossaea, the country of the Kassites in NE Babylonia, the proper area of the Mesopotamian Nineveh (E. A. Speiser, *IDB* 3. 236). *Havilah:* The name of more than one place (Gen 2:11; 10:7,29). *Seba:* Contemporary Yemen. **8–12.** Ancient lists sometimes included anecdotes, as in the Sumerian King List (*ANET* 265–66) and as here with Nimrod. Nimrud is the name of several cities in Mesopotamia, including Nimrud, ancient Calah. Nimrod here is the first of the great kings on earth. **10.** The "mainstays" (*NJV*) of his kingdom were the great cities of Babylonia in the S and Assyria and Nineveh in the N. Like another fabled hunter, Gilgamesh, Nimrod was a mighty hunter by the grace of God. The J source (vv 8–19) characteristically is interested in founders of culture (cf. 4:17–26 and 9:20); Nimrod is the founder of the great empires that played so large a role in the ancient Near East. What historical personage, if any, Nimrod represents is unknown. (Tukulti-)Ninurta, a 13th-cent. king who was the first actually to rule effectively Babylonia and Assyria is suggested by some scholars (E. A. Speiser, "In Search of Nimrod," ErIsr 5 [1958] 32–36). **13–14.** *Pathrusim:* Dwelt in upper Egypt (cf. Isa 11:11). Caphtor rather than the "Casluhim" is the place of origin of the Philistines (cf. Amos 9:7). **15–20.** *Canaan fathered:* "Fathered" is used metaphorically, as in Phoenician coins that mention Sidon as the mother of other cities and colonies. *Heth:* The Hittites, originally in Asia Minor but also in Syria-Palestine (see comment on 23:3). **16.** *Jebusites:* The original inhabitants of Jerusalem. Some of the other names are the inhabitants of Canaan before Israel arrived (cf., e.g., Exod 3:8). **19.** The original territory extended along the Mediterranean coast from the Phoenician cities to Gaza and eastward to the region of the Dead Sea. **21–31.** The descendants of Shem inhabit the Middle East, except Egypt and the part of the Arabian Peninsula in Egypt's orbit. **21.** *Eber:* The eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews, as Aram is of the Arameans. **22.** *Elam, Asshur:* Countries in the NE and N of Mesopotamia respectively. **25.** *Peleg:* Mentioned again in the P genealogy of 11:10–26 and also in the genealogy

Gilimninu shall get for Shennima a woman from the Lullu country (i.e., a slave girl) as concubine. In that case Gilimninu herself shall have authority over the offspring" (Speiser, *Genesis* 120). **4.** In a culture that prized motherhood, Sarah could not but feel a loss of esteem (*RSV* "contempt" is too strong). **5–6.** She complains to Abraham, "The wrong done to me is your fault" (not *RSV* "May the wrong be on you!"). She demands justice from Abraham, i.e., to be declared in the right. Abraham takes Sarah's side and lets her have her way. Hagar runs away from the harsh treatment. **7–16.** The angel of God in most OT passages is a figure who meets human beings, gives them messages, and then departs; the figure mediates the divine word (Westermann, *Genesis 12–36* 242–44). Comparable religious literature depicts the heavenly beings as courtiers who surround the great god(s); some OT texts witness to this courtier function (1 Kgs 22:19–22; Isa 6; Job 1–2); later reflection will develop an elaborate angelology, but in Gen angels simply mediate the message of the sender. The messenger tells the fugitive pregnant woman, presumably on her way back to her native Egypt via the Shur road, to return to her mistress. She will be the mother of a great nation; the child's name will be Ishmael (lit., "May God hear/heed"), for God has heeded her suffering. Her son will be "a wild ass of a man," quarrelsome, yet dwelling "alongside" (rather than "against") his kinfolk, i.e., dwelling at the edge of the land promised to Abraham's and Sarah's child (15:18–20). **13.** She calls the God who appeared to her in the messenger "God who sees me." "See" has the sense of see and rescue (cf. Exod 2:25; Isa 58:3; 59:15; Ps 113:6). Verse 13b is corrupt, lit., "Have I not from here seen after seeing me?"—perhaps an expression of wonder that she continues to see after contact with the divine one. She names the well Beer-lahai-roi, perhaps "the well of the living one who sees (i.e., looks after) me." *Kadesh* is about 45 mi. S of Beer-sheba; *Bered* is otherwise unknown but is obviously nearby.

26 (h) God's Covenant with Abraham (17:1–27 [P]). Chap. 17 is one of two extended compositions of P about Abraham and Sarah; P gathers the major motifs of the story so far and sets them squarely within the covenant; "covenant" occurs 13 times in the chapter. There are also links to the first covenant with Noah, "Walk before me and be blameless" (v 1; cf. 6:9); to establish a covenant with Abraham and his descendants (v 7; cf. 6:9); the sign (v 11; cf. 6:12–17). In outline, vv 1–8 promise Abraham numerous progeny and land (vv 1–3a are the condensed statement, and vv 3b–8, the elaboration); vv 9–14 are the instructions for circumcision; vv 15–21 repeat the promise of a son to Sarah, prompting God's differentiating this promise from that to Ishmael; vv 22–27 narrate Abraham's carrying out of God's commands.

1. Since the birth of Isaac will be a year from the encounter (v 21), Abraham will be 100 at the birth. God introduces himself as El Shadday (etymologically probably "God, the One of the mountain"). It is P's favorite designation of God in patriarchal times (17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3). In P's scheme, God is revealed to humankind in Gen 1–11 as Elohim, to the patriarchs as El Shadday, and to Israel as Yahweh (Exod 6:3); it is an instance of P's periodizing of history. Like Noah in his generation (6:9), Abraham is to respond loyally and obediently. **2.** The initiative in the covenant is God's, but the relationship established is reciprocal, as v 1 makes clear. Covenant (Hebr *bĕrît*) implies mutuality, though the Bible may occasionally emphasize divine initiative as it does in this chapter. **4–5.** *as for me, here is my covenant:* Abraham's name is changed in view of his new task. *Abraham:* Linguistically, a dialectal variant of Abram, which has been used in the story up to this point. By a folk etymology "Abraham" is derived from Hebr *'ab hămôn,* "father of a multitude." "Nations" and "kings" occur as a fixed pair also in Isa 41:2; 45:1; 60:3; and Jer 25:14, suggesting perhaps that P is underscoring Abraham's role in world history for the benefit of his exilic contemporaries. **7.** God establishes an eternal covenant like the eternal throne of David in 2 Sam 7:13. **8.** Land is mentioned only here in the chapter; the emphasis elsewhere is on the son and on the multitude and fruitfulness of the descendants. **9–14.** Circumcision was widely practiced in the ancient Near East—in Egypt and Canaan, but not in Assyria or Babylon or among the Philistines. Joshua circumcised all the men on the great day of arrival in Canaan (Josh 5:2–9). Circumcision became an important rite of the chosen people in the exile, denied other symbols of identity—temple, land, and king. As with the rites of Passover and Unleavened Bread in Exod 12–13, P incorporates the later ritual of circumcision into the narrative of institution so that later generations of Israelites can participate in the founder's experience. **15–21.** "Sarah" replaces "Sarai," a dialectal variant, in view of the new role. **16.** The covenant is made with Abraham, who represents the household to God; Sarah is blessed, which here (as often) means bestowing or enhancing fertility. **17–19.** Abraham laughs in incredulity, as Sarah will later (18:12), because of their advanced age, and he asks God to consider the healthy teenager Ishmael as heir. God, however, insists on the literal interpretation of his earlier promise in 15:4: not Ishmael but Isaac (lit., "May God laugh in delight, smile upon!"), a play on Abraham's laugh. Only with Abraham's own son will the covenant be made. **20–21.** Ishmael, however, will be blessed with offspring; the 12 princes descended from him are mentioned in 25:12–18. **22–27.** Abraham carries out the instructions immediately and literally, a characteristic of P style.

27 (i) The Guests of Abraham and Lot (18:1–19:38 [J]). Chaps. 18–19 form a single story; the mysterious guests visit Abraham in Mamre to promise him and Sarah a child the next year (18:1–15), and then they visit Lot in Sodom to investigate and subsequently to punish the corrupt city (19:1–29). Between the two visits, which are meant to balance each other, Abraham questions God about the justice of the act of punishing Sodom (18:16–33). At the end of the destruction in chap. 19 there is a short narrative of how Lot became the father of Moab and the Ammonites (19:30–38). The extensive narrative continues the Abraham and Lot cycle, which began in chap. 13. Lot, Abraham's nephew, allowed to choose any place he desired when their herdsmen quarreled, chose the lush area of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar (13:10–11); Abraham took the less verdant land of Canaan. Chap. 13 pointed to chap. 19 by its ominous statement, "The people of Sodom were very wicked sinners against Yahweh." Throughout these chapters there is a persistent contrast between the patient and obedient old Abraham and the impetuous and foolish young Lot. By every natural measure, the young and aggressive Lot, not the old Abraham, should have been the father of Israel.

28 (i) *Abraham and the three guests* (18:1–15). **1–8.** The prefatory v 1 states that it is Yahweh who appears to Abraham, mediated by the three men of vv 2 and 16, the one speaker of vv 10,13,15,17–33, and the two messengers or angels in chap. 19. The fluidity of actors in the scene is a narrative means of describing both the nearness and the mysterious elusiveness of God. Also expressive of majesty is the initial contrast between the dozing Abraham and the purposefully journeying men, and then Abraham's frantic preparations and their

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commanding silence; they speak only once but authoritatively (v 5b). The entire section is a superb example of Hebr narrative art. **9–15.** The hitherto silent guests, having been served a grand meal by Abraham, now dominate the scene by their questions, all of them about Sarah. One of them avers that he will return next year (rather than "next spring"; cf. Akk *ana balat,* "next year") and Sarah will have a son (v 10). Sarah, overhearing, laughs in disbelief, just as Abraham had laughed in 17:17. Yahweh himself reiterates the promise and rebukes Sarah (vv 13–15).

29 (ii) *Abraham bargains with God* (18:16–33). Many scholars judge this section to be later than the narratives preceding and following it; the concern with God's righteousness is an exilic theme (cf. Ezek 14:12–23 and chap. 18). However its date be assessed, Abraham does not intercede for Sodom (against many commentators) but through his bold questions learns that God, the judge of the world, is indeed just, distinguishing between the righteous and the wicked, as in the case of Noah and sinful humanity in chaps. 6–9. **16.** Abraham accompanies the men from Mamre (near Hebron) to a place where they "looked down" (so the Hebr vb.) over the S end of the Dead Sea (generally presumed to be the site of Sodom and Gomorrah, and also Zoah). **17–21.** Yahweh soliloquizes (vv 17–19), asking the question whether he will hide his plans from Abraham. In the ancient Near East, a servant of the god or king was also a friend, privy to his master's plans. Yahweh's own answer is that since Abraham's people will be great among the nations the servant will receive the gift now of knowing the divine plan. Moreover, the people will "do what is just and right," and it is fitting that the founder of such a people now see God do what is right, i.e., punish only sinners. **20–21.** God announces to Abraham his plan, and the dialogue follows. **22.** The (two) men ("angels" in 19:1) accompanying Yahweh go off to investigate Sodom; Abraham stays behind to stand before Yahweh, into whose confidence he has already been taken (vv 17–21). **22.** *will you destroy the righteous with the wicked?:* Abraham wants to know whether the judge of all the world will deal justly. Abraham, though conscious of the distance between himself and God, dares to bargain with Yahweh (vv 27–32) to the point that only 10 righteous suffice to avert destruction. Ten is the natural limit in Abraham's questioning; below that number God can save the individuals within the city as will happen with Lot. **33.** God has been revealed as just in the dialogue, so each partner departs.

30 (iii) *The destruction of Sodom and the rescue of Lot* (19:1–29). **1–3.** There is a deliberate parallel drawn between Abraham's reception of the three men and Lot's reception of the two. Abraham is privileged to receive Yahweh; Lot receives only the two messengers. Abraham is promised a son; Lot is told to flee. Verses 1–11 strikingly resemble Judg 19:15–21, which suggests dependence of one passage on the other. The time sequence is evening (v 1), dawn (v 15), and sunrise (v 23). **4–11.** All the men of the town, young and old, seek to abuse sexually the two guests of Lot. There is indeed a basis for the outcry that had come up to God (18:21)! The inhabitants' crime is twofold: violation of hospitality and forbidden sexual behavior (Lev 18:22). Lot's actions are those expected of a host trying to protect his guests: his offer of his two daughters to the mob, though horrifying to modern ears, is part of that duty (v 8) as Lot sees it. Lot having failed, the two men take over their own defense by rendering the attackers incapable of finding the door. **12–14.** The angels move quickly to remove Lot before the destruction. The two sons-in-law refuse to go, setting up the story of vv 30–38. **15–16.** At dawn, the angels must drag the dilatory Lot and his family from the doomed city. **17–22.** Once outside, the angels command the still reluctant Lot to flee to the hills, but he does not want to leave the city for the country; he persuades them to let him go to a little city (Hebr *miṣ'ār*), which came to be called Zoar (Hebr *ṣô'ar*). **23–26.** God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah and the entire plain with sulfurous fire. **26.** Lot's wife is as foolish as her husband; violating the taboo against looking on the destruction, she is turned into a pillar of salt, again preparing for the last scene of the story. The S end of Dead Sea is even today a lunar landscape, readily encouraging the popular belief that it had been destroyed by an act of God. **27–28.** A masterful picture of Abraham returning to the place of his previous encounter with Yahweh, the judge of all the earth. Abraham knows that the deed has been just. **29.** As Lot had been rescued by Abraham in chap. 14, so he is rescued again by his relation to Abraham, the just man and friend of God.

31 (iv) *Lot the father of Moab and the Ammonites* (19:30–38). **30–35.** Lot finally obeys the angels' command to flee to the hills; he and his two daughters take up residence in a cave. With Lot's wife and the daughters' prospective husbands gone, the question is raised how Lot will have descendants. As bizarre as the story is, it illustrates the Genesis theme of new life after destruction (cf. Gen 9). The narrative is highly stylized: the names of the daughters ("the older" and "the younger"), the ease with which they dupe their father, the identical description of each encounter. **36–38.** The meaning of the succinct statements of the birth is that the line of Moab and Ammon, genealogically related to Israel, stems from Lot's daughters. The ridicule of Moab and Ammon (who later became enemies of Israel) by ridiculing their birth is typically Eastern. The main thrust of the narrative, however, is to serve as a contrast between Abraham and Lot. The just Abraham waits for the Lord to give him land and a son. Lot and his household are grasping and foolish, managing only to survive. Survive they do only because of Lot's relationship to the chosen Abraham.

32 (j) ABRAHAM AND ABIMELECH (20:1–18 [E: 1b–18] [J: 1a]). Abraham's passing off Sarah as his sister to escape trouble in a foreign land is the theme of 12:10–13:1 (J), of this chapter (E), and, with a change of actors, of 26:1–11 (J). This story is not simply the E version of the ancestral wife in danger; it seems in v 2 and elsewhere to presuppose chap. 12; it is mostly dialogue about the justice of God, Abimelech's fear of the Lord, and Abraham's intercessory power. "It is a search for answers to questions which the old narrative about Abraham raised" (Westermann, *Genesis 12–36* 319). Verses 1–2 set the scene; vv 3–13 are two dialogues, one between God and Abimelech (vv 3–8) and the second between Abimelech and Abraham (vv 9–13); vv 14–18 resume the action and right the wrong.

1–2. Abraham presumably had been at Mamre ("from there"); he now surveys the farthest limit of the holy land. *The Negeb:* A general term for the large S area of Canaan; hot and dry, it has an average annual rainfall of less than eight inches. *Kadesh(-Barnea):* Contemporary Ain Qudeirat, where the Israelites camped in the wilderness period, is about 42 mi. S of Beer-sheba; Abraham is associated with a traditional hallowed place. *Shur:* A desert region, but here probably means "the way to Shur," the road to Egypt. *Gerar:* An unknown town in the region, the site of several Isaac stories (chap. 26). **3–8.** God came in a dream to warn Abimelech that Sarah was Abraham's wife. The dream is a legal process, in which God acts as judge and prosecutor; Abimelech is exonerated of blame but not cleared of the consequence of his act. In the ancient deed–consequence perspective of the