

Ix4 – Flooded by Frozen Myths

Dear: Sorry for this chapter's title, but its silliness (similar to the silliness of many newspaper headlines) amuses me. Better English for a headline (but with too many letters for this computer's file names!) would be: *Climate Warming Leads to Floods of Frozen Myths*. If neither that nor the chapter's title make sense to you, be patient: I'll try to explain – and I'll try to keep you on high ground, above the flood.

In general, what I want to describe in this chapter is one of those “inter-connections of opposites”, specifically, how the enormous change called ‘writing’ caused the opposite: it caused previously ever-changing myths to be frozen – in words and in time. In turn, although I'll delay until later chapters showing you illustrations of what I mean, this immobilization of myths strengthened religious institutions – because then, each priest could then finally get the “official version” of the group's myths “straight”!

But in the long run, I'm sure that this immobilization will eventually lead to the welcome demise of all organized religions. And with that thought, I smile at how much damage “technology” has already done to all religions. Here, by “technology”, I don't mean (for example) all the technology associated with modern electronic communications, such as the internet (which I expect will eventually destroy all organized religions), but the “technology” associated with the printing press, so that not just the clerics but also the rest of us could finally learn the nonsense contained in all “holy books”!

To begin to illustrate what I mean, let me set the stage by quoting David Hume's 1757 essay entitled *The Natural History of Religion* [to which I've added some notes in “square brackets” and in places I've changed the punctuation so that it's “more modern”]:

Another cause, which rendered the ancient religions much looser than the modern, is that the former [the ancient religions] were ‘traditional’ and the latter are ‘scriptural’ [i.e., as written in various “holy books”, such as the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, etc.]... [The] tradition in the [ancient religions] was complex, contradictory, and on many occasions, doubtful – so that it could not possibly be reduced to any standard and canon, or afford any determinate articles of faith. The stories of the gods [i.e., the myths] were numberless like the popish legends; and though everyone, almost, believed a part of these stories, yet no one could believe or

know the whole – while, at the same time, all must have acknowledged, that no one part stood on a better foundation than the rest.

The traditions of different cities and nations were also, on many occasions, directly opposite, and no reason could be assigned for preferring one to the other. And as there were an infinite number of stories, with regard to which tradition was nowise positive, the gradation was insensible, from the most fundamental articles of faith to those loose and precarious fictions. The pagan religion, therefore, seemed to vanish like a cloud, whenever one approached to it and examined it piecemeal. It could never be ascertained by any fixed dogmas and principles. And though this did not convert the generality of mankind from so absurd a faith (for when will the people be reasonable?), yet it made them falter and hesitate more in maintaining their principles and was even apt to produce, in certain dispositions of mind, some practices and opinions that had the appearance of determined infidelity.

That is, Dear, when myths were communicated orally, the resulting errors and modifications in the communications required everyone to hold their “religious beliefs” loosely: for example, a person couldn’t be sure if the “official god” was the sun god or the son god. Consequently, ancient people probably were not so “up tight” about their religions. But once writing was invented, the myths became “frozen” in time – and official “doctrines and covenants” (such as in Mormonism) could be “carved in stone” (as in Judaism).

Stated differently, in “the good old days” before writing was invented (about 5,000 years ago) and before the “new fangled stuff” called paper became readily available (about 4,000 years ago, e.g., from the Phoenician city of Biblos, which is origin of the word “Bible”), myths were “malleable” (i.e., flexible, pliable, adaptable...). In those days, if you didn’t like a particular myth, a particular portion of a myth (e.g., a particular god, his son, or some other member of the god’s family), then you could always introduce appropriate modifications to the myth before you passed it on! Thereby, there was less likelihood that anyone would “get up tight”, bound to any *religion*. But once the myth was written it became “sacred”, the “holy word” of the “most high”, nobody but nobody was allowed to mess with it – and the poor children of the world were indoctrinated with the garbage!

But more to the point of my trying to help you, Dear, I encourage you to avoid spending much of your life involved in any way with any myths. Their numbers, complexities, and interconnectedness have caused an enormous number of people to waste an incredible amount of the most precious resource that anyone has: time. In prior chapters, I suggested that

* Go to other chapters *via*

myths were concocted by our primitive ancestors to try to “answer” various questions that perplexed ancient people: Why can’t animals talk? Why is the mountain erupting? What is thunder? What causes floods? What are the stars? Where did people come from? Why do people die? What happens when we die? And so on. Such questions were common in all cultures, and in every case, some imaginative storyteller concocted “answers” in the form of myths. Thus, originally, our ancient ancestors observed various effects, speculated on the causes (i.e., various gods), and then made up stories about how the observed effects were linked to the assumed causes.

Thereby, although no myth was ever more than a round-about way of saying “I dunno”, for generation after generation, at least these myths were “alive”. They were communicated orally, with each generation of myth tellers no doubt modifying their myths as the storyteller saw fit. If their myths didn’t stimulate the audience, the myth maker could modify them. If the tribe experienced something new (a flood, an earthquake, a volcanic eruption, death of fish, whatever), then the next generation of story tellers could suitably modify the old myths – or create new ones. The myth maker was therefore always challenged: to remind the tribe of its traditions, while keeping the myths entertaining, current – and fun!

In my generation, Dear, Walt Disney was one such myth maker. In your generation, many such myth makers work for the Disney Company, but others draw newspaper comic strips, create popular music, write novels, and so on. And now that I think about it, something is rather strange: when you were “a kid”, you watched at least 3 cartoons on TV per day, at least 1,000 cartoons per year, and therefore, I suspect, you’ve watched at least 10,000 cartoons during your life. In these cartoons, which are just modern myths unpolluted by power-grabbing con-artist clerics, the strangest things happen: animals talk, boats fly in the air, gravity can be temporarily suspended, and so on. In response to such cartoons, you’ve at least smiled at their silliness; in many cases, you’ve laughed at their foolishness; in not even a single case, I’m sure, have you ever “believed” that one of these myths were “true”.

And yet, for the ancient “cartoons” (i.e., myths) described in the Bible, you’ve been “brainwashed” into “believing” that they’re “true” – no doubt because your parents told you so, because these cartoons have always been described by adults with such pomp and ceremony and seriousness, and maybe because you’ve been told that you’ll be punished terribly, in Hell, if

* Go to other chapters *via*

you don't believe them. Well, Dear, it just "ain't so": all the stories in the Bible and all similarly stupid "holy books" are just that: silly stories (TV cartoons without TV and without pictures!) – perpetuated by clerics to try to control gullible people. And worse, the goal of all the cartoons in the Bible isn't to entertain but to entrap: enormously intricate and contrived ways to indoctrinate innocent children with different ways that a bunch of stupid clerics say "I dunno" – so that, when you grow up, you'll pay to carry the carcasses of the useless clerics!

But let me try to settle down. In contrast to the (worse-than useless) clerics in our culture, in groups of hunters and gatherers (for example, in Native American tribes as recently as a few hundred years ago) and in groups of herders (for example, the early Hebrews), the myth maker was probably simply one of the group. If the group was at least fairly successful economically (such as were many Native American tribes), then possibly the group could "afford" to have its myth maker (and myth keeper) "work" fulltime at his or her trade of story telling – quite likely provided that the myth maker also served part time as a "medicine man" (or woman), including knowledge of herbs that in our society would be classified as "illegal drugs". Such people were the "shaman" of what seems to have been the only instance of a single worldwide "religion", namely, shamanism or animism.

To illustrate, and to start toward showing you some of the first myths that were frozen in time by writing, let me give some additional descriptions of one of the gods of your easily identified ancestors, namely, the god Odin (also called Odhinn, Othinn, Othin, Woden, Wodan, Wotan, or Woutan). In a sense, he was considered to be a "super shaman", because as "the wind god" (as well as many other titles!), he was assumed to lead the rushing of souls through the air, which was the assumed cause of the wind. The following description of Odin was written by Eileen Holland and is taken from the web site at www.open-sesame.com; I've added some comments in "square brackets", added some italics, and made a few minor grammatical changes. For reasons to be explained more fully later, Dear, I would especially have you notice the reference (in the following quotation) to "the World Tree", for trees were special in many versions of shamanism, probably explaining the origin of much-later ideas in the Bible about the "Tree of Knowledge" and the "Tree of Life" (which, in turn, refer to a trees whose fruit, when suitably treated, is a hallucinogen, i.e., a narcotic).

Odin [whom, Dear, let me remind you, you still honor every Wednesday!] is the oldest of the gods... The love goddess Frigg/Freya [whom you honor every Friday!] is usually considered his consort, but he had many wives and children: he is [the father of Thor; whence, Thursday] with [the female god] Jord, father of Balder, Hermod, and Hod with Frigg, Vali's [father] with Rind, and Vidar's father with Grid. Odin created the world with his brothers Ve and Vili, from the body of the primeval giant Ymir. They created the first man, Aske, from an ash tree they found on the seashore. They created Woman, Embla, from an elm tree. [Whose names are therefore close to Adam and Eve.]

Odin is a shaman and necromancer [i.e., someone who allegedly communicates with the dead] who obtains answers from the wisest of the dead. His continual search for occult knowledge [i.e., knowledge of "magic"] lead him to trade one eye to Mimir for a drink from the Well of Wisdom. [The "Well of Wisdom", I guess, is right next to the "Tree of Knowledge"!] His remaining eye symbolizes the all-seeing Sun; the eye in Mimir's well symbolizes the full Moon. [So, Dear, this Odin is mighty powerful: his good eye is the Sun; the eye he lost is the Moon!]

To learn the secrets of the dead [a standard capability claimed by any shaman], Odin underwent a ritual spiritual death [also common for all shaman, and it usually meant either getting drunk or getting "spaced out" on some hallucinogen], sacrificing himself to himself [which is a rather neat trick – similar to what the Christian (and Mormon) god allegedly did!]. He pierced himself with his own spear, then hung himself from *Yggdrasil*, the *World Tree*, for *nine* days and nights. [Thereby, with the choice of *nine* rather *seven*, it appears that our easily identified ancestors in Northern Europe didn't spend as many nights staring at the stars – probably because of poor star-gazing weather!] He used magic to free himself, an act of spiritual rebirth... [also required of all shaman!].

Odin is all-seeing and divine but not immortal. He is said to never eat and to live on wine. [And it was therefore possibly the alcohol in the wine that sent Odin into his trance.] He possesses Draupnir [Draupner], a magic ring which produces eight new rings every ninth night. Odin dwells in Asgard, which is sometimes said to be atop *Yggdrasil* [the World Tree]. His hall is called Valaskjalf (Shelf of the Slain). He sits on his throne, Hlidskjalf, with his wife Freya [Frigg] at his side. The throne is a watch-tower from which he observes the nine worlds and sees all events, past and future. It is Odin who must face the Frost Giants at Ragnarok, the doom of the gods. He knows the wolf Fenrir will kill him then.

Odin also presides in the *great hall* at Valhalla where he feasts the Einherjar, the glorious dead. This is his private army, the souls of heroes who will fight on his side at Ragnarok. He is served in Valhalla by the Valkyries, an army of female warrior spirits who fly over battlefields and gather the souls of fallen warriors. Half of them are chosen by Odin, the remaining heroes are feasted by Freya...

Now, Dear, I'm sure you can imagine how this myth about Odin could have been used to entertain your easily-identified ancestors on long rainy evenings, as the group huddled in caves or, during later centuries, assembled in "great halls". Originally, the people were hunters and gathers. Later, some (brilliant!) people obviously got the idea: "Why hunt animals? Let's herd them!" And still later in the development of human communities, some groups started to hobble or pen some ungulates (i.e., animals such as goats, sheep, swine, and cattle that have hoofs) and to cultivate grain crops and other vegetation.

In an earlier chapter, I relayed the suggestion to you (a suggestion made by many anthropologists) that all religions started out as animism or shamanism, that is, the primitive idea that spirits (of essentially everything!) were essentially everywhere. As you are probably aware, Native Americans practiced shamanism, with each tribe's religion led by the tribe's "medicine man" (who in other groups might be called a "witch doctor"). [Incidentally, I wish I could easily find the origin of the word "sham", to learn if buried in the word shamanism, is the derogatory suggestion that animism is a 'sham' – although, in reality, it's no more a sham than any other religion!]

How animism might have started is unknown. Thus, apparently it's unknown if primitive people concluded that there must be some spirits that control the wind, rain, and other elements in their environment, or if primitive people first concluded that they, themselves, possessed "souls", and then, by extension, assumed that everything in their environment was similarly driven by its own "soul" or "spirit". And if the former (that is, if the first step was to assume that individuals had souls), it's unknown if this assumption was derived from the understandable repulsion of the idea that people would die or from some other idea (e.g., fascination with one's own shadow and/or reflection).

Given that primitive people had concluded that "the unknown" (in the forest, in the sea, in the dark, and especially after death) was populated with a huge number of ghosts and goblins or souls and spirits, I suspect that these primitive people also concluded (in analogy with their own experiences) that there must be some organization for "the spirit world", with a leader similar to (but more powerful than) their own tribal leader. That is, I suspect that they speculated that there was some order and organization in "the underworld" similar to their experiences in "the overworld". This, I suspect, is the reason why the people assumed that there was some god who ruled the

* Go to other chapters *via*

underworld, suitably dispensing “justice” according to the god’s prerogative that “might makes right”.

In particular, Dear, archeological data (details of which you can find on the internet) show that, ~8,000 years ago (i.e., ~6,000 BCE), agricultural communities developed in fertile valleys of the Indus River in India, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia (with the lower valleys in what is now Iraq and the headwaters in what is now eastern Syria), and the Nile River in Egypt. By the way, Dear, the word ‘Mesopotamia’ is the Greek description of the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, with *meso* meaning ‘middle’ or ‘intermediate’ and with *po* the Indo-European base word meaning ‘to drink’ (as in the River Po in Italy and as in the word ‘potable’ meaning ‘drinkable’); thus, Meso-po-tamia is the land between the rivers.

The “agriculture revolution” of course started in different times in different parts of the world. For example, data show that corn was domesticated in Mexico ~4,000 BCE, about 2,500 years before Sidney Rigdon’s Book of Mormon and the “prophet” Joseph Smith claimed that the “new world” was first populated! In fact, the Minoan civilization of Mexico peaked in the time period from about 2,000 to 1,500 BCE, a thousand years before Rigdon/Smith assumed anyone arrived! Possibly the women (who were probably the gatherers of early groups) led in this agricultural revolution; that is, possibly it was women who “invented” agriculture.

During the first 2,000 or 3,000 years of these agricultural communities (yes, Dear, two or three *thousand* years!!), the numbers and variations of the myths concocted by these first agrarian peoples were absolutely astounding, probably including many myths about floods of their river valleys. In time, agricultural communities grew into quite large cities (e.g., the Mesopotamian city of Ur, identified in the Bible, had a population of ~50,000 people). With the growth of these cities, many people became “citified”, which is the original meaning of the word “civilized” – although nowadays many of us consider city dwellers to be “uncivilized”!

With the trading in agricultural and other products (as well as trades of services) that developed in cities, a need developed to keep track of the trades. Thereby, ~5,000 years ago (i.e., ~3,000 BCE), writing was invented, again possibly by women. A large number of samples of early writing on clay tablets have been found. As you can see on the internet, Dear, one of

the first examples is a ~3200 BCE clay tablet from Mesopotamia on which is inscribed a recipe – for making beer!

If you want to look into the history of writing, Dear, you can find an amazing amount of information on the internet. For example, the following [long] paragraph, written by Kelley L. Ross, can be found by typing the author's name or "Philosophy of History" or "Mesopotamian Kings" into a internet search engine.

History begins at Sumer because the Sumerians were undoubtedly the first to have a functioning system of writing. The origins of this are now plausibly explained by Denise Schmandt-Besserat (cf. *Before Writing, Volume I, From Counting to Cuneiform*, University of Texas Press, 1992). For purposes of accounting, contracts, shipping, etc., little clay models were made of the kinds of commodities involved. For convenience, these models were then placed in clay wrappers. Then, so that the contents of the wrappers could be known without breaking them, little drawings of the models began to put on the wrappers. Soon it became obvious that the little drawings by themselves made the models superfluous. The stylization of the models had already produced a certain abstraction and stylization in the drawings, which thus became proto-cuneiform – a system already pre-adapted to representing numbers as well as concepts. Since thousands of the clay models have been found, the evidence for the process is abundant. No such antecedents have been found in Egypt or India, where writing began soon after the Sumerian precedent. It is hard not to conclude that Sumerian influence, (with the evidence of Sumerian artifacts to prove it) sparked the development of writing in those places. Where writing developed independently elsewhere, i.e., China and the New World, Middle Eastern influence via Central Asia cannot be discounted on the former, while Mayan glyphs, only recently deciphered at all, had not progressed far, even three thousand years later, beyond the most basic versions of cuneiform or hieroglyphics. Nor were even the Aztecs still using the system at that level, while the Incas had no form of writing whatsoever. The achievement of the Sumerians thus represents a unique and pivotal moment in human history.

Now, Dear, whereas writing is arguably human's greatest invention, let me show you some additional steps in its development. You can explore this history further by typing "+history +writing" in any good internet search engine. For example, from the "World History Timeline" (a web page at www.norton.com/college/history created by Thomas Percy and Mary Dickson), from the "EAWC internet Index" maintained by A.F. Beavers, and from "The Ancient World" (a book posted on the web by Frank E. Smitha at <http://fsmitha.com/h1/>), the following information is available:

- ~3200 BCE: The Sumerians (in Mesopotamia) developed the first pictorial-type of “cuneiform writing” (using wedge-shaped characters), recording information on clay tablets.
- The Egyptians followed soon thereafter (by ~3100 BCE) with their hieroglyphic “writing”, also on clay tablets – but some investigators suggest that the Egyptians were the first writers, perhaps starting as soon as 3400 BCE (although, as you can see from the paragraph quoted above written by Ross, certainly this suggestion is challenged by others).¹
- By 2500 BCE, ceramic seals were being used in the Indus Valley of India, to indicate ownership of bundles of goods.
- ~2000 – 1600 BCE: The Sumerians were conquered by the Amorites; they ruled from the city of Babylon; this is later known as the first (or the “old”) Babylonian period; the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh (some of which I’ll show you below) was rewritten in the Amorites’ semitic language (from which the Hebrew language evolved).
- ~1800 BCE: A group of semitic-speaking nomads (i.e., wandering herders) later known as Hebrews (i.e., ‘wanderers’ or ‘outsiders’ or ‘trespassers’) drifted west from Mesopotamia to near the Mediterranean Sea (to Canaan), and later to Egypt, led by Abraham (the “father” of Israel and the “Abrahamic religions” including Judaism, Christianity, and Mormonism).
- From ~1700 BCE there is evidence of Chinese writing, with some of the first records on turtle shells and ox bones.
- ~1600 BCE: The Syrians (known to the Hebrews as Canaans) developed the first alphabet – with consonants only (as in Hebrew).

¹ Incidentally, Dear, Egyptian hieroglyphics weren’t deciphered until the early 1800’s, after the Rosetta stone was discovered. I’ll give you more details in a later chapter, but I’ll mention here that the discovery of (and all the newspaper reports about) the Rosetta stone is probably what stimulated the “profit” Joseph Smith to propose that he could translate “reformed Egyptian” on “the plates of Nephi” with a “seer stone” – a capability that was later shown to be pure bunk via his totally fictitious “translation” of a portion of the Egyptian Book of the Dead into what he called “the Book of Abraham”!

- ~1400 BCE: The Canaans (known to the Greeks as Phoenicians) developed the full alphabet (i.e., symbols for each sound).²
- Sometime between about 1400 – 1200 BCE: The Hebrews (earlier from Mesopotamia) returned from a ~200- to 400-year (!) stay in Egypt to Canaan.
- ~1300 BCE: The Egyptians wrote with pen and ink on the bark of the papyrus plant.
- ~1200 BCE: Earliest known copy of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* – although portions of it were inscribed on tombs, as much as 2,000 years earlier!
- ~1200 – 800 BCE: Somewhere in this time period, texts of the Hindu religion were written; these are the *Vedas*, including the *Upanishads*. As with the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the writing of the *Vedas* was “just” the recording of myths that had been retold for untold centuries. By ~1000 BCE, the hideous caste system (defined in the *Vedas*) was imposed on the Hindus.
- ~ 750 BCE: Earliest Greek books (by Homer and by Hesiod); these, too, were “just” permanent records of “the myths of old”.
- By ~400 BCE most of the Old Testament (O.T.) of the Bible was written on paper from the Phoenician city of Byblos (from which the name “Bible” is derived). In addition to being “just” a collection of myths (from Mesopotamia, Canaan, Egypt, and from the original tribe of sheep herders), retold for untold centuries, the O.T. contained an undoubtedly biased view of the history of the Hebrews following their return from Egypt.

² Incidentally, Dear, I would have expected that our word for the “sounds in words”, i.e., ‘phonetics’ would acknowledge the huge indebtedness of the world to the Phoenicians, but surprisingly (at least to me), my dictionary shows no relation of the word ‘phonetics’ to the Phoenicians, giving the origin of the word ‘phonetics’ as only the Greek word *phone* for ‘sound’. On the other hand, maybe it evolved the other way: maybe the Phoenicians were honored by describing them as “the people who first recognized and created symbols for all the sounds in speech” – which later was shortened to “the Phoenicians”!

What I want to do, now, Dear, is show you some of the myths that were “frozen in time” by writing, but before I do, I want to make a number of points:

- Foremost, Dear, I encourage you not to become overly interested in myths! Myths are a bunch of silly old stories (much like modern-day TV cartoons) dreamt up by a bunch of old “fuddy duds” who could barely figure out which way is up!
- The number of myths that were “frozen in time” (many of which you can find on the internet) is absolutely “mind boggling”: in the Canaan city of Elba, alone, 15,000 clay tablets reveal myths of their approximately 500 gods – and each city (of maybe 500 cities) had their own set of gods!
- Thousands upon thousands of people still devote their life’s work to uncovering and studying ancient myths; I strongly encourage you not to similarly spend your life.
- Yet, you should at least have a passing acquaintance with some of the most famous myths, because they are embedded in our culture, and if you don’t know something about some of these myths, you will probably feel uncomfortable or unknowledgeable during some conversations.

Finally, Dear, I should mention my purpose in showing you some details of specific myths. Whereas you have been indoctrinated with myths from the Bible and from the Book of Mormon since you were a baby, what I want to do is to show you the origin of some of these myths. In particular, at the end of this chapter I’ll be asking you to read the first part of the *Book of Genesis* in the Bible, to remind yourself of the myths of your indoctrination. In this chapter, therefore, I want to begin to show you the origin of some of these myths. And by the time you’ve finished this “excursion”, **Ix**, then when the next person tells you that the myths of your (or any Abrahamic) religion are “God’s holy truth”, I hope you’ll be able to say something similar to: “Gimme a break – the myths in Genesis were plagiarized from the Ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians, and Persians!”

As you may recall, the Book of Genesis (and therefore the Bible) starts with an “explanation” of creation, alleged to be completed in six days. Quoting here from the New English Bible (because it’s easier to read, and to which I’ve added the italics), it starts:

In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth, the earth was without form and void, with darkness over the face of the abyss, and a mighty wind that swept over the surface of the waters...

The question that I now want to begin to address is: what was the source of this “explanation”?

Now, of course I can’t answer that question (thousands upon thousands of people have wasted their lives trying to answer it!), but I want to make the following summary points: 1) It’s quite likely that this isn’t a myth (preserved by the people) but a cleric’s concoction (and, as I’ll be showing you in a later chapter, probably the cleric was Ezra), written while reading Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Persian creation myths, 2) Trying to determine the origin of either this or the second genesis myth in the Bible (which I’ll get to, soon) is generally a waste of time, because these “explanations” of “creation” are clearly ridiculous (as I’ll show you in a later chapter), and yet 3), I’ll continue, here, with delving into this silliness, because certain grandchildren have been indoctrinated with this junk ever since they were babies!

So, let me get into some details. First, the people who take the Bible literally would probably agree with my opinion that the first few pages of *Genesis* don’t describe a story, i.e., they don’t describe a myth. Yet, I don’t make this suggestion because I think it’s “not a myth, but the true word of God”; in my opinion, it’s not a myth, because it’s not good enough to be a myth! In contrast, Dear, right now, please pause for a minute and try to retell (in your mind, to yourself) the story about Coyote and the Beaver, how the Columbia Gorge was created, and how the Nez Perce Indians obtained crooked smiles. Do you remember that story? Now, Dear, please try to retell (in your mind, to yourself) the story about how God created the world in seven days, starting from “In the beginning...”

Troubles?! Well, Dear, if you had troubles remembering the Bible’s genesis myth that starts “In the beginning...”, then why? How many times have you been taught the biblical “story” about how the world was created? In contrast, previously, had you ever heard the story about Coyote and the Beaver? Is the story about Coyote and the Beaver the kind of story that you could remember and could pass on to the next generation? For comparison, reconsider the story about how God created the world, as given in the Bible.

Is this the type of story that could be retold around camp fires, generation after generation?

I think not. I think that the Bible's creation myth that starts "In the beginning..." is a "literary production", written down by some cleric after writing had been invented. In my mind, I see some old scribe scribbling down the next line, checking to see what he had already written (for even he couldn't remember all the details!), and then pushing on, to "explain" what God did during the next day. That's what I mean by suggesting that the first part of the *Genesis* isn't a myth – because it isn't good enough to be a myth! It's a "ritual", to be memorized by "the initiates". In contrast, the second (and as I'll show you, it's a conflicting) creation story in the Bible, about Eve being made out of one of Adam's ribs and so on, is something that I can imagine that story tellers could retell – but as I'll also show you later, that myth is actually a genesis myth that the writers of the Bible "borrowed" from the myths of other cultures.

Some of the "frozen" genesis myths that almost certainly were available (in written form) to the writer (or writers) of the Bible's genesis myths were from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia. For example, in an earlier chapter in this "excursion (namely, in **Ix1**), I already showed you a portion of the Egyptian genesis myth that starts exactly the same as the Bible's "In the beginning..." In addition, the Persian religion's genesis myth (which you can find on the internet by typing "religion Avesta Bundhahishn", or substitute our word 'creation' for 'Bundhanishn') specifically states (Chapter 1, line 28) in their "holy book" (known as *The Avesta*) the following six "creations" by their "prime god" Ohrmazd (or 'O' Mazda or Ahura Mazda, which literally means "the Lord of Wisdom") during the first six "periods":

Of Ohrmazd's creatures of the world, the first was the sky; the second, water; the third, earth; the fourth, plants; the fifth, animals; the sixth, mankind.

And can't you just see some Hebrew cleric (ordered to generate a "new and revised" genesis myth by his superiors, who in turn were ordered by their Persian superiors, when the Jews were in Babylon, to convert the old Jewish religion into the "true religion" of the Persians), pouring over the Egyptian text "In the beginning..." and then checking his Persian text for what allegedly occurred during the first six "periods", deciding each period was a day, and then "away he went", scribbling out the Bible's first genesis myth.

Such is the wonder of how “God’s holy word” might have been communicated to the world – and how 2500 years later, certain grandchildren became indoctrinated with such nonsense!

But in addition, the Hebrew scribe who first scribbled the Bible’s creation myth didn’t have before him written versions of just the Egyptian and Persian myths to plagiarize, he also had what was probably the most famous genesis myth, which was from Mesopotamia and is known as *The Enuma Elish*. This myth was of relatively recent origin – from only ~1500 years before the Bible was written! And as was the case when I quoted the Egyptian genesis myth (“explaining” how the Egyptian god *Re* created the world when there was just water “In the beginning...”), I want to show you more of the Mesopotamian myth than the part that “explains” creation, because there’s something else in this myth (namely, dealing with the Tower of Babylon) that I want to refer later in this chapter.

In total, *The Enuma Elish* is very long; if I put it here in its entirety, it would extend for at least 10 pages! If you want to see the entire “poem”, Dear, then you can find it using any good internet search engine by typing “Enuma Elish” or “Marduk”. And although you can find all the following information for yourself on the internet, maybe it would be useful if I provide you with a few notes here:

- The name *Enuma Elish* is apparently derived from the original words for the first phrase in this “epic poem”, namely, “When on high...”.
- If you desire to read the entire myth, Dear, you should seek out more than one version on the internet; I found that some translations are much easier to read than others.
- Almost certainly, there wasn’t just a single “Tower of Babylon” (mentioned in the myth). Thus, because the Babylonians (in contrast to the Egyptians) apparently didn’t have a good supply of stone nearby (or didn’t want to waste so much energy hewing and hauling stones!), they built their towers from bricks. But bricks (of dried mud!) aren’t nearly so durable as stone, especially if the baked surface is eroded by sand storms, and then rain water is poorly drained – turning the bricks back into mud! Therefore, it’s unknown to which construction (or reconstruction) of the Tower of Babylon *The Enuma Elish* (and subsequently, the Bible) are referring.

- Also, Dear, I should note that I don't know how old the myth is. The version that I'll show you below is from the translation of a clay tablet dated ~1200 BCE, but Babylon was a thriving city 1,000 years earlier. Probably more significantly, what appears to have happened with early people is that, as the centuries passed, stories about relatively recent events (such as building the Tower of Babylon) were added to older myths. Therefore, possibly the first few "verses" of *The Enuma Elish* were from thousands of years before the building of the Tower of Babylon, whereas near the end of the poem, finally the Tower of Babylon is mentioned.

In outline, *The Enuma Elish* describes wars among six generations of gods – perhaps corresponding to the six days of creation listed in *The Avesta* (mentioned a few paragraphs ago) and then copied into the Bible, or possibly these multi-generations of gods reflect multi-generations of invasions (which seems to have happened in the case of the Greeks and their multi-generations of gods). In any event, the cause of the wars among the gods was imagined to be that the older gods wanted peace and quiet (that much I understand!) and therefore they tried to kill the younger gods, who made too much noise – which is a rather brutal (and self-defeating?) way to gain peace and quiet! In the first part of the "poem" given below,³ the comments in "square brackets" [such as these] were added by someone else, and sometimes indicates that a portion of the original poem are lost; I've added the comment in "curly brackets" {such as these!}.

WHEN on high the Heavens had not been named
 Firm ground below had not been called by name,
 Nothing but 'Primordial *Apsu*', the Begetter, [Fresh Water]
 and 'Mummu *Tiamat*', She Who Bore them All [Salt Water] –
 their waters commingling as a single body.
 No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared,
 Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined –

THEN it was that the Gods were formed within them.
 {i.e., I guess, within fresh water and salt water}
Lahmu ['Mr. Mud'] and *Lahamu* ['Mrs. Mud'] were brought forth,
 by name they were called
 Before they had grown in age and stature.

³ Dear: Now I'm not certain from which website I copied this version; perhaps from <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~ekondrat/mesopotamia.html>; you can find many other versions!

Anshar [‘Upper Firmament’] and *Kishar* [‘Lower Firmament’] were formed, surpassing the others.

They prolonged the days, added on the years.

Anu was their heir, the rival of his fathers;

Yes, *Anu*, *Anshar*’s first-born, was his equal.

He begot in his image *Nudimmud* [*Ea*].

This *Nudimmud* was the master of his fathers;

Of broad wisdom, understanding, mighty in strength,

Mightier by far than his grandfather *Anshar*.

{And we all know that “might makes right”!}

He had no rival among the gods, his brothers.

The divine brothers banded together,

They disturbed *Tiamat* [Salt Water, or the ocean],

as she surged back and forth;

{Possibly a reference to waves or maybe to tides.}

Yes, they troubled the mood of *Tiamat*

By their hilarity in the Abode of Heaven.

{And everyone should know that no “hilarity” is allowed in Heaven!}

Apsu [Fresh Water] could not lessen their clamor

And *Tiamat* was speechless at their ways.

Their doings were loathsome to [].

Unsavory were their ways; they were overbearing.

Then *Apsu*, the Begetter of the Great Gods,

Cried out, addressing *Mummu* his Vizier:

{It’s not clear where this “Vizier” came from;

I suspect that the listener was to infer that *Mummu* was the first, great, wise man and story teller – similar to the person telling this story!}

“O *Mummu*, my Vizier, who makes my spirit rejoice,

Come hither and let us go to *Tiamat*!”

{Don’t you know that Viziers and priests make the gods rejoice – at least, so they tell us!}

They went and sat down before *Tiamat*,

Exchanging counsel about the gods, their children.

Apsu, opening his mouth, said to Resplendent *Tiamat*:

“Their ways are truly loathsome to me,

By day I find no relief, nor sleep at night.

I will destroy, I will wreck their ways,

So that quiet may be restored. Let us have rest!”

Well, Dear, to make a very long story a little shorter, the kids (the rambunctious young gods) got wind of the old god’s plan to permanently silence them, and the story goes on to tell how the grandson, *Ea* (aka

Nudimmud), turned the tables on the old gods, killing the fresh water god *Apsu*. Then, after a few more generations, another war among the gods broke out, culminating in the great-great-... grandson god, *Marduk* (the new chief god) killing his great-great-... grandmother (salt water, *Tiamat*). *Marduk* then made the universe out of her carcass, and was crowned king of the gods.

Now, let me continue with the “poem”, but now I’ll quote another translation (also available on the internet), this one from *Poems of Heaven and Hell from Ancient Mesopotamia* by N.K. Sandars (Penguin Press, 1971), starting at Marduk’s crowning ceremony, when he decided to make humans (to serve the gods):

Now that *Marduk* {the new chief god} has heard what it is the gods are saying, he is moved with desire to create a work of consummate art. He told *Ea* [Marduk’s grandfather, who had earlier killed his own grandfather] the deep thought in his heart:

“Blood to blood I join,
blood to bone I form an original thing;
its name is Man,
aboriginal man is mine in making.

“All his occupations are faithful service,
the gods that fell have rest,
I will subtly alter their operations,
divided companies equally blest.”

Incidentally, Dear, in case you missed that, let me interrupt the flow again by asking you to notice that the plan of the new “chief god”, Marduk, was to make humans so that they would serve the gods! But, Dear, there is a critical idea, here, which I’ll be returning to, again and again: people were never made to serve the gods; instead, gods were always made (i.e., concocted) to serve the people – or at least some of the people, i.e., those in power, along with their henchmen, the clerics!

Further, so long as I’ve interrupted your reading, let me quote an unidentified author⁴ who shows parallels between this *Enuma Elish* “creation myth” and the first creation myth in the Bible’s *Genesis* (which in

⁴ At http://www.meta-religion.com/World_Religions/Ancient_religions/Mesopotamia/genesis_and_enuma_elish_creation.htm.

turn was almost certainly copied from the earlier Persian version as given in *The Avesta*).

One of the two Bible creation myths [the other being the myth about Adam and Eve] was probably derived from the much older Mesopotamian creation myth *Enuma Elish*. The six days of creation in the *Genesis* myth parallel the six generations of gods in the *Enuma Elish* myth: in [the] type of god in *Enuma Elish* that is created (i.e., god of the earth) [similar] to what is created or happens on the corresponding day in *Genesis* (i.e., the waters are gathered together to expose dry land). Marduk the sixth generation god makes man as a slave so the other gods can rest. God (Elohim) makes man on the sixth day and he himself rests.

The Enuma Elish six generations of gods:

- Tiamat and Apsu (1st generation) who created
- Lahamu (2nd generation) who created
- Kishar (3rd generation) who created
- Anu (4th generation) who created
- Ea (5th generation) who created
- Marduk (6th generation).

Similarities Between *Enuma Elish* and *Genesis*

1st generation of gods and 1st day of *Genesis*:

From [the] start of *Enuma Elish*: “When on high the heaven had not been named, Firm ground below had not been called by name, Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter, And Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all, Their waters commingling as a single body...” (Apsu is the god of water; Tiamat is the god of primeval chaos and bearer of the sky and the earth.)

Genesis: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep (or watery chaos), (Tehowm) while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ... And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.”

2nd and 3rd generation of gods and 2nd and 3rd day of *Genesis*:

Enuma Elish: “... Lahmu and Lahamu were brought forth, by name they were called... Anshar and Kishar were formed, surpassing the others... (Lahamu was the god of muddy silt and Kishar was the god of the Earth.)

Genesis: “And God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters’... evening and there was morning, the second day.”

[Here God (Elohim) slices the waters into two with a sky dome to make the sky and the oceans; in *Enuma Elish*, this also parallels Marduk slicing Tiamat (Tehowm in the Bible) into two to make the land and sky.]

Genesis: “And God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.’ And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas... evening and there was morning, the third day.”

4th generation of gods and 4th day of Genesis creation:

Enuma Elish: “Anu was their heir... (Anu was the god of the sky)

Genesis: “God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars... (and set them in the sky dome)... evening and there was morning, the fourth day.”

5th generation of gods and 5th day of Genesis creation:

Enuma Elish: “He who begot him (Marduk) was Ea...” [Ea was the god of all things of the Earth and also of cantations, when he speaks, things are made; God (Elohim) makes things by speaking.]

Genesis: “So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good... evening and there was morning, the fifth day.”

6th generation of gods and 6th day of Genesis creation:

Enuma Elish: “In the heart of holy Apsu was Marduk created. He who begot him was Ea, his father... [Marduk became king of the Gods and creator of man.] Blood I will mass and cause bones to be... I will establish a savage, ‘man’ shall be his name. Truly, savage-man I will create. He shall be charged with the service of the gods That they might be at ease!” [Parallel this with God (Elohim) resting after creating man.]

Genesis: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image...’ evening and there was morning, the sixth day... And on the seventh day, God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.

So, Marduk made man a slave so the gods could rest; after God (Elohim) makes man he rests on the seventh day.

I find that analysis interesting, but let me now get back to the *Enuma Elish*, so that I can get to its story about the Tower of Babylon.

Ea answered with carefully chosen words, completing the plan for the gods’ comfort. He said to *Marduk*, “Let one of the kindred [gods] be taken; only one need die for the new creation. Bring the gods together in the Great Assembly; there let the guilty die, so the rest may live.”

{And notice, Dear, that the ancient people who created this myth repeatedly violated the fundamental characteristic of all gods: they're immortal, i.e., notorious for not dying! This same fundamental error is also in the Bible, when Yahweh (or Jehovah) gets around to killing off all the other gods.}

Marduk called the Great Gods to the Synod; he presided courteously, he gave instructions and all of them listened with grave attention.

The king speaks to the rebel gods, "Declare on your oath if ever before you spoke the truth, who instigated rebellion? Who stirred up *Tiamat* {the great-great... grandmother, the original mother god, called "bitter water", who I assume is meant the mother of the oceans}? Who led the battle? Let the instigator of war be handed over; guilt and retribution are on him, and peace will be yours for ever."

The Great Gods answered the Lord of the Universe, the king and counselor of gods {viz., *Marduk*}, "It was *Kingu* who instigated rebellion; he stirred up that sea of bitterness and led the battle for her."

They declared him guilty, they bound and held him down in front of *Ea*, they cut his arteries and from his body they created man; and *Ea* imposed his servitude. {That is, according to the clerics who concocted this myth, the purpose of humans is to serve the god – and of course, the clerics get to consume what the gods don't want!}

When it was done, when *Ea* in his wisdom had created man and man's burden, this thing was past comprehension, this marvel of subtlety conceived by *Marduk* and executed by *Ea* – {although some skeptics among us might think that this "marvel of subtlety" was conceived and executed by the con-artists clerics!}

Then *Marduk*, as king, divided the gods: one host below and another above, three hundred above for the watchers of heaven, watchers of the law of *Anu* [i.e., *Ea's* grandfather; *Marduk's* great-great grandfather]; five times sixty for earth, six hundred gods between earth and heaven.

When universal law was set up and the gods allotted their calling, then the Anunnaki {the rest of the gods}... opened their mouths to speak to *Marduk*: "Now that you have freed us and remitted our labor how shall we make a return for this? {The myth maker neglected to mention what jobs that the gods earlier had to do!} Let us build a temple and call it *The-Inn-of-Rest-by-Night*. There we will sleep at the season of the year, at the Great Festival when we form the Assembly; we will build altars for him, we will build the Parakku, the Sanctuary."

When *Marduk* heard this his face shone like broad day: "Tall Babel Tower, it shall be built as your desire; bricks shall be set in moulds and you shall name it Parakku, the Sanctuary."

The Anunnaki gods took up the tools, one whole year long they set bricks in moulds; by the second year they had raised its head Esagila, it towered, the earthly temple, the symbol of infinite heaven. {So, Dear, at least according to this myth, the people didn't build the Tower of Babylon; the gods did!} Inside were lodgings for *Marduk* and *Enlil* and *Ea*. Majestically he took his seat in the presence of them all, where the head of the ziggurat looked down to the foot.

When that building was finished the Anunnaki built themselves chapels; then all came in together and Marduk set out the banquet.

“This is Babylon, ‘dear city of god’ your beloved home! The length and breadth are yours, possess it, enjoy it, it is your own.”

When all the gods sat down together there was wine and feasting and laughter {so, Dear, in case you ever wondered, the new generation of gods isn't above a good party!}; and after the banquet in beautiful Esagila they performed the liturgy from which the universe receives its structure, the occult is made plain, and through the universe gods are assigned their places. {That is, as it as always been, the clerics even get to assign the gods to their places!}

When the Fifty Great Gods had sat down with the Seven who design the immutable nature of things, they raised up three hundred {gods} into heaven. It was then, too, that *Enlil* lifted the bow of *Marduk* and laid it in front of them. He also lifted the net; they praised the workmanship now that they saw the intricacy of the net and the beauty of the bow. *Anu* lifted the bow and kissed it, he said before all the gods, “This is my daughter.” And this was the naming of the bow: “One is for Long-wood, two for the Rain-bow, three is for Starry-bow glittering above.” And Starry-bow {which perhaps means the Moon, when it appears as a “bow”, or perhaps means the Milky Way} was a god among gods {whatever that means!}.

When *Anu* had pronounced the bow's triple destiny, he lifted up the king's throne and set *Marduk* above in the gods' Assembly. Among themselves they uttered an execration, by oil and by water, pricking their throats, to abide its fate on pain of death. They ratified his authority as King of Kings, Lord of the Lords of the Universe. *Anshar* praised him, he called him *Asarluhi*, the name that is first, the highest name.

“We will wait and listen, we bend and worship his name! {So, Dear, it's not enough to just worship the god, you must even worship his name – which is a custom picked up by the Hebrews and a custom to which they still cling.} His word is the last appeal, his writ will run from the zenith to the pit. All glory to the son {viz., Marduk – or, later, Zeus or Jove or Mithra or Jesus} our avenger! His empire has no end, shepherd of men {as if men were just sheep – to be sheared by the priests!}, he made them his creatures to the last of time, they must remember. He shall command hecatombs {sacrifices of cattle} for the gods, they shall commend food, for the fathers, and cherish the sanctuary where the odor of incense and whisper of liturgy

echo on earth the customs of heaven. Black-headed men will adore him on earth, the subjected shall remember their god, at his word they shall worship the goddess. {So, at least these primitive people permitted a few goddess; the Hebrews, in contrast, were male chauvinists from the beginning!} Let offerings of food not fail for god and goddess, at his command. {And again: what the gods don't want, the clerics will consume!} Let them serve the gods, at his command, work their lands, build their houses. Let black-headed men serve the gods on earth without remission; while as for us, in the multitude of his names, he is our god."

"Let us hail him in his names, let us hail him by his fifty names, one god."

[The myth concludes with a long hymn extolling the fifty names of *Marduk*.]

As with all myths (as silly as they all are), they do contain some information about the people who created them and about the times in which they lived. For example, these "black-headed people" obviously knew about wine – as well as beer! Also, obviously these people "worked the lands" (were farmers) and the most cherished weapon was the bow and arrow. Further, clearly these people were engaged in many wars, for they describe wars even among the gods. And it seems not unreasonable to speculate that some of the wars were with people with different colored hair, for why else would the Babylonians call themselves "the black-headed people"?

But, meanwhile, Dear, course that's not really how or why The Tower of Babylon was built! It wasn't built by the gods; it was just one of thousands (hundreds of thousands?) of such "temples to human ignorance and folly", which are still being built by people today, under the "guidance" of various clerics, to "honor" various gods – and what the gods don't desire, the clerics still continue to consume! Simultaneously, groups of clerics have been in competition with other clerical groups, snarling over the spoils, trying to outdo the others in their con games.

As an illustration, consider how the Hebrew clerics "explained" the Tower of Babylon, i.e., the Bible's "story" about The Tower of Babel.⁵ This is the

⁵ Actually, Dear, this third name puzzles me – and I'll sketch my puzzlement here, to illustrate why I advised you to be careful not to become too involved in any mythology, because it can absorb so much of your precious time! My dictionary gives "Babel... [Heb. *babel* > Assyr.-Bab. *Babilu*, Babylon, lit., gate of God (? transl. of Turanian *Cadimirra*, Gate of God)]..." It therefore appears that the word Babel has been broken into the Hebrew word for gate, *bab*, plus the identification of the Canaanite's "chief god", El (which is also one of the Hebrew words for 'god' or 'lord', which probably explains the "el" in Israel, Ishmael, Emanuel, and so on). The trouble with this analysis is that, as you can find on the internet, Dear, El wasn't a name of a Babylonian god! The nearest I found was Bel ("The cleverest of the clever, and sage of the gods... This name (meaning 'lord') is most likely referring to [the Babylonian's "chief god"] Marduk").

story in which you've been indoctrinated since you were a baby; it's at *Genesis 11*, 1-10, quoted below. To this quotation, I've inserted some comments in "square brackets" – because I have trouble resisting commenting on such silliness!

Once upon a time all the world spoke a single language and used the same words. [Well, I guess so – in so far as there was a first person who spoke!] As men journeyed in the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar [in Mesopotamia] and settled there. They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them hard" [Why would anyone say "Come, let us make bricks and bake them hard" – without first having a purpose?!]; they used bricks for stone and bitumen for mortar. "Come," they said, "let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and make a name for ourselves; or we shall be dispersed all over the earth." [What a weird idea for why the Tower was built! Because the people wanted to make a name for themselves? If there was only one people, speaking only one language, then compared with what other people would these people be famous?! And why would the people think 1) that a tower would stop them from being scattered, 2) that if they made a name for themselves they wouldn't be scattered, or 3) that there was anything wrong with spreading out?! Something doesn't compute. How about the obvious reason (and the Babylonian's stated reason) for building the tower: as another monument to religious folly!]

Then the Lord came down to see the city and tower which mortal men had build [I'm surprised that he had to "come down": rumor has it that he can see everything from his "throne" – save when it's dark!], and he said, "Here they are, one people with a single language, and now they have started to do this; henceforward nothing they have a mind to do will be beyond their reach. [I should hope so! Is the Hebrew god opposed to progress – or are just the Hebrew shepherders?!]⁶ Come [God is presumably speaking to the other gods], let us go down there [it was already stated that he had already come down!] and confuse their speech, so that they will not understand what they say to one another." [The Hebrew god doesn't want people to

Incidentally, Dear, the god comparable in Canaan to the Babylonian god Bel was Baal, who is mentioned many times in the Bible. If, then, the tower of Babel is referring to the god Bel (as seems reasonable), then the translation should be either Ba + Bel, meaning the Ba (which in Egypt meant soul) of Bel (i.e., Marduk) or the breakout and the revised spelling should be Bab + Bel, meaning the gate of Bel. In his book *The Story of Religious Controversy*, Joseph McCabe states: "From their scattered villages they [the Mesopotamians] looked with pride toward Babel – it is the Greeks who made the name 'Babylon' – or 'The Gate of the God' – a name which ignorant Hebrew scribes long afterwards connected with their own word for 'to confuse' and turned into a myth."

⁶ Actually, Dear, there's more here – which could cause the allegorists a lot of trouble, if they would (for a change) spend some time thinking about the Bible's myths. According to the Bible, man was made in God's image. Well, one thing that their god reportedly did (e.g., during the six days of creation) was to produce quite a bit. And here, man (consistent with his maker's desire) produced something, namely, the Tower of Babel. And so now, what's the allegorical sum of these stories? God produces, he produces a man in his image, man will therefore be a producer, man produces – and god steps in to thwart his future production, by confusing languages. Never let it be said that the god of the Bible is just!

communicate with one another?!] So the Lord dispersed them from there all over the earth, and they left off building the city. That is why it is called Babel [or Babylon], because the Lord there made a babble of the language of all the world; from that place the Lord scattered men all over the face of the earth.

Incidentally, Dear, just as foolish as the Bible's myth about the Tower of Babylon is the comments about it in the Book of Mormon, which (as I'll show you in the "excursions" **Qx & Yx**) was almost certainly written by Sidney Rigdon. Thus, *Helaman 6*, 28 states:

And also it is that same being [the devil] who put it into the hearts of the people to build a tower sufficiently high that they might get to heaven.

To which I would say to Sidney Rigdon (if I could): "No, Sidney, sorry old boy – but the Babylonians didn't build their tower to get to heaven! In fact, the Babylonians didn't even believe in the idea of heaven! Whereas their priests had indoctrinated them with the idea that the purpose of people was to serve the gods (of course via the priests), the Babylonians built the Tower of Babylon, "The-Inn-of-Rest-by-Night", for their gods to feast and sleep – and of course what the gods didn't eat at their feasts, then the clerics managed to consume (just as you and your fellow con artist, Joseph Smith, managed to consume the products of those who were foolish enough to follow you)."

Anyway, Dear, going back to the Bible's myth, the question that I want to address (once again!) is: what if any ideas and information does this myth contain? Unfortunately, the answer is once again: very little. Thus, perhaps the only "information" that can be trusted is: 1) When the Tower of Babylon existed, there were many different tribes of people in the world, who spoke many different languages, 2) the Babylonians (but probably not the Hebrew shepherders!) knew how to make bricks and build such towers, and 3) when the Hebrews wandered through Mesopotamia, the Tower of Babylon had already been built. In addition, there are a few hints about what the Hebrews thought, namely: 4) that the gods (at least the Hebrew gods!) were opposed to progress, and 5) that there were many gods. But let me delay comments about these last two hints until I comment on the first three.

Although certainly the Hebrews were wrong (as certain as one can be about almost anything! – and therefore, just as certainly the Bible is wrong) to state that all the people of the Earth were scattered from a common origin in

the city of Babylon and that the diversity of languages emerged only after the Tower of Babylon was built, yet this myth might provide an estimate for when the Hebrews were in Mesopotamia. That the Babylonians were making bricks and building towers at the time when the Hebrew shepherders wandered by is obvious, but the problem is that from this information, it doesn't seem possible to establish the date with any reliability. Thus, Dear, although (as you can find on the internet) Babylon was established by the Amorites in about 1900 BCE, this only suggests that the Hebrew sheep herders wandered past Babylon some time after 1900 BCE.

That's only a suggestion, though, because who knows when this myth was added to the Bible? That is, perhaps this myth refers to a more famous Tower of Babylon, built more than a thousand years after Babylon was first inhabited (i.e., built when Nebuchadnezzar was King of Babylon). Subsequently, when Ezra and his co-conspirators put the Bible together from old sources in about 425 BCE (evidence for which I'll show you in a later chapter, in **Yx**), they might have just slipped this myth about the Tower of Babylon into the Book of Genesis. Therefore, all that can be discerned about the Bible's Tower of Babylon myth is that the myth was created sometime between about 2000 and 500 BCE – which isn't very informative (except to reinforce the idea that the Bible's myths were created relatively late in the myth-making era).

Now, Dear, let me turn to the hint that the Hebrew gods (or better, the Hebrew people!) were opposed to progress. Otherwise, why would the myth have their (chief?) god say:

“Here they are, one people with a single language, and now they have started to do this [build the Tower]; henceforward nothing they have a mind to do will be beyond their reach. Come, let us go down there and confuse their speech, so that they will not understand what they say to one another.”

At first encounter, this desire to thwart progress seems quite strange. But if you'll let me sketch some characteristics of this tribe of shepherders, perhaps their aversion to progress becomes more understandable.

My dictionary suggests that the origin of the word 'Hebrew' is the Hebrew word *'ibhri*, meaning “one from across (the river)”. But as you can find on the internet, Dear, other peoples (particularly the Ancient Egyptians) seemed to have derived the word 'Hebrew' from the word 'Hiberu', used by people

who lived in Canaan (between the Mediterranean Sea in the west and the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys in the east) meaning ‘wanderer’ or ‘outsider’ or ‘trespasser’, which (of course) is one of the dominant characteristic of shepherders – and certainly the Bible leaves no doubt that the Ancient Hebrews were shepherders.

I expect that therein lies the key to why the Hebrews were opposed to progress (in the form of agriculture and urbanization), symbolized by the Tower of Babylon: shepherders (shepherds) need open grazing lands; meanwhile, farmers can’t tolerate wandering animals. Some of the resulting friction between shepherds and farmers can be seen in Hammurabi’s law code (which I’ll get to in detail in a later chapter). Hammurabi was the King of Babylon from 1795 to 1750 BCE; his Law #57 states:

If a shepherd, without the permission of the owner of the field, and without the knowledge of the owner of the sheep, lets the sheep into a field to graze, then the owner of the field shall harvest his crop, and the shepherd, who had pastured his flock there without permission of the owner of the field, shall pay to the owner twenty gur of corn for every ten gan.

I don’t know what a “gur” of corn is,⁷ nor the size of a “gan”, but certainly this law reveals “friction” between farmers and shepherds – a friction that continued for most of the subsequent 4,000 years!

Another example of this “friction”, this time between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, is available from the Bible. This example is contained in a few lines buried in a long (almost-certainly fictitious!) story about Israel’s youngest son, Joseph, in particular, about how he enslaved the Egyptian people for the benefit of the Pharaoh (and for his own benefit). As the Bible illustrates, Joseph was not above lying, and when his father and brothers came to live with him in Egypt, he warned them (*Genesis 46, 34*):

When Pharaoh summons you and asks you what your occupation is, you must say “My lord, we have been herdsmen [probably what we would call “ranchers”] all our lives, as our fathers were before us.” You must say this, if you are to settle in the land of Goshen [in Egypt], because all shepherds are an abomination to the Egyptians.

⁷ Well, subsequently I bumped into the following: “one-half gur {about fourteen gallons}...” I found that at http://ragz-international.com/reforms_of_urukagina.htm.

Thus, Dear, I suspect that the Egyptians had the same troubles between cattle ranchers and sheep herders that are depicted in many movies about the American West of the 1800s.

I therefore expect that the aversion that the Hebrews had for “civilization” was in reaction to the animosity that farmers and cattle “ranchers” have always had to shepherds. Whereas sheep (and goats) weren’t fenced and therefore could get to the farmers’ crops and the (cattle) ranchers’ (fenced?) range-land, therefore the shepherds were “an abomination”. Meanwhile, with every advance in civilization (such as the building of the Tower of Babylon), the Hebrew shepherds found themselves more and more confined – trapped in a dying occupation. Understandably, then, the Hebrew’s gods were assumed to assist the Hebrews in thwarting “progress”. And maybe one sees here the most significant moral of this story about the Tower of Babylon: just as with the principal moral of all myths, it’s easy to dream up a story to support one’s prejudices!

As an example, for the Ancient Hebrews (later called the Israelites and then called the Jewish people), the change in their beliefs just from many gods to one god didn’t occur until ~500 BCE, and even now, according to results from a 1991 survey (2500 years later!), 43% of Israelites still believe in the primitive idea that God exists (compared with 63% in the United States who agreed with that the statement “I know God exists and I have no doubts about it”, and compared with 23% in Great Britain). That is, in this regard, Americans are clearly less advanced than the Israelites and British. In contrast (as I’ll show you more in later **Ix**-chapters), by ~500 BCE, at least some Ancient Greeks came to the realization that there are no gods – and never were! In later excursions (**Yx**, dealing with “Your Indoctrination in the Mountainous God Lie”), I’ll try to show you at least some the evolution of ideas about gods in other cultures.

Further, Dear, I wouldn’t be surprised if there’s another reason why the Bible’s myths have persisted so long [besides the expected reason (which I’ll show you in more detail, later) that the Hebrews borrowed so many of their myths from other people, thereby “cleansing” the myths of references to specific groups]. In later chapters (dealing with the law), I’ll suggest still other reason, namely, because the Bible became the Hebrews’ law book. Here, to explain another reason, let me outline a story from an entirely different setting.

I don't recall the details of this story (and won't bother to look them up, because the details aren't relevant to the point I want to make), but in outline, the story is this. When some of the first Europeans settled in America, they developed ideas about how valuable a little island at the mouth of the Hudson River would be and therefore asked the local Indians (or "Native Americans") about purchasing what is now called Staten Island. Eventually they "purchased" the island from the Indians, at a total cost of a few beads, mirrors, and other trinkets. Now, of course the Europeans thought that the Indians were crazy, selling what was to become the heart of New York City for a few trinkets, but meanwhile, the Indians thought that Europeans were crazy: to think that anyone could own the land – when all humans should know that people can't own land; land owns people.

Of course the Indians were right: people can't own land; people come and go, live and die, and the land goes on. But meanwhile, of course the Europeans got a tremendous bargain, because for next to nothing, they "bought" what the Indians didn't understand: a legal right, backed up by police or army, to say how the land would be used. And so it is today: nobody buys land, Dear; instead, by purchasing some property, people buy only police protection, to use "one's property" as desired (commonly subject to a number of community restrictions).

Now, Dear, if you're wondering what that little story was "all about", my points are these. First, I suspect that the ancient Hebrew shepherds were similar to the Native Americans: they considered all land to be their "open range". Subsequently, they were confronted by civilizations (in Mesopotamia, Canaan, and Egypt) that had developed "property rights"; thereby, the Hebrews became "outsiders" and "trespassers". And thereby, the Hebrews were opposed to such "progress".

And my second point (or better, my second speculation) is that maybe here is still another reason why the myths of the Hebrews have persisted so long. In general, it seems coded within our DNA molecules to help our children as best we can, which typically includes leaving them an inheritance. Farmers of old (and those of today) typically leave the "property rights" of their land to their children. Of course, all people also try to pass on to their children as much as they can of their understanding, their stories, their myths, and so on (e.g., some grandfathers even... Ah, never mind!). In any event, the most valuable possession that farmers could leave their children was their land. In contrast, without land to leave their children, maybe the ancient Hebrews felt

that the most valuable thing that they could leave their children was their stories, i.e., their myths. Thereby, perhaps each Hebrew generation did its utmost to preserve their myths to pass them on to the next generation.

I'll even mention a third speculation about what happened. In the main, the Jewish people apparently didn't participate in the agricultural revolution, because thousands of years ago, as shepherds, generally they missed the opportunity to own land. Subsequently, especially during the past ~2,000 years, there have been such horrible and stupid Christian prejudices against the Jewish people (as I'll show you in later chapters: blaming people, then alive, for the "death" of a mostly-mythical Jesus, centuries earlier!), so that the Jewish people (in different countries) either weren't permitted to participate in land ownership and agriculture or, where they were, either they chose not to (because they didn't have experience and therefore competence in agricultural) – or their "spiritual leaders" steered their followers away from agriculture (telling them that all agriculture was "dirty" except agriculture in the "holy land").

Thereby, one way or another, the Jewish people became traders, merchants, and professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.). But eventually the pendulum of change swung back in their favor, because the agricultural revolution was surpassed by first the industrial and then the information revolution, in both of which, with the experiences of the Jewish people as merchants and professionals and with their long history of learning (e.g., their myths), the Jewish people have prospered. If there's any truth to this speculation, one has to (once again!) smile at the "connectedness of opposites" – and congratulate the Jewish people on their perseverance. In some case, however and unfortunately, this perseverance of the Jewish people has preserved just their primitive idea about their god and the idea that they, like the Pygmies, are their god's "chosen people" – which has made "pygmies" of the mental development of so many people.

But be that as it may be, let me now turn to the hint in the Tower of Babel myth that the Hebrews weren't monotheists (i.e., that they believed in many gods). Recall that the Hebrews have their principal (?) god say "Come, let us go down there..." Now, of course there's the possibility that their god was just using the "royal we" (i.e., speaking about himself in the plural). Alternatively, he might have been talking to some "side-kicks" (angels or similar). But, Dear, there are many other references in the Bible to many gods, for example:

* Go to other chapters *via*

- In the Hebrew version of the first genesis myth, everything is created in six “periods” by “The Elohim”, which translated correctly means “The Gods”
- *Genesis 6, 1* states: “In those days (before the flood), when the sons of the gods [i.e., plural gods not just plural ‘sons’]...”
- At *Exodus 20, 2* there is: “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt... You shall have no other god [or, the New English Bible adds as a footnote “or gods”] to set against me...” – which is an unnecessary “commandment”, if the people didn’t believe in the existence of other gods
- *Deuteronomy 8, 19* states: “If you forget the Lord your God and adhere to other gods...”
- At *2 Kings 17, 35* there is: “You shall not pay homage to other gods...”

Thus, Dear, the Hebrews apparently acknowledged the existence of (and even had a tendency to worship) many other gods, but at least some of Hebrews (especially the priests!) claimed that Yahweh (or Jehovah) was the special god who would protect the Hebrews (or Israelites).

Later in the Bible (about half way through it, in *Psalms 82, 1-7*), God reportedly sentenced all the other gods to death:

God takes his stand in the court of heaven to deliver judgment among the gods themselves... This is my sentence: Gods you may be... yet you shall die as men die; princes fall, every one of them, and so shall you.

Then, still later in the Bible (in *Isaiah 45, 21,22*) we are led to believe that God’s death sentence of the other gods had been executed: “There is no god but me; there is no god other than I...” But the Israelites apparently didn’t really believe this, because later in the Bible (*Jeremiah 2, 28*) God reportedly said to the Israelites: “For you... have as many gods as you have towns.”

Actually, it’s quite understandable why the Israelites didn’t believe that God killed all the other gods, because surely it’s the silliest idea of them all.

Dear, gods don't die – they can't die! As you'll find by checking your dictionary, the defining characteristic of any god is immortality – that is, gods don't die! Oh, you can have good gods and bad gods, helpful gods and hurtful gods, beautiful gods and ugly gods, faithful gods and unfaithful gods, trusting gods and jealous gods, but, Dear, dead gods you just can't have! Once you believe they exist, then you're stuck with them – unless of course you stop believing in them, then they don't die, they just go “poof”!

In any case, Dear, surely one of the most inconsistent ideas of all the silly ideas in the Bible is that one god proclaimed the death of all the other gods! In his 1891 “poem”, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (or Zoroaster), the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche agreed (with tongue in cheek!) that all the gods did die – they laughed themselves to death:

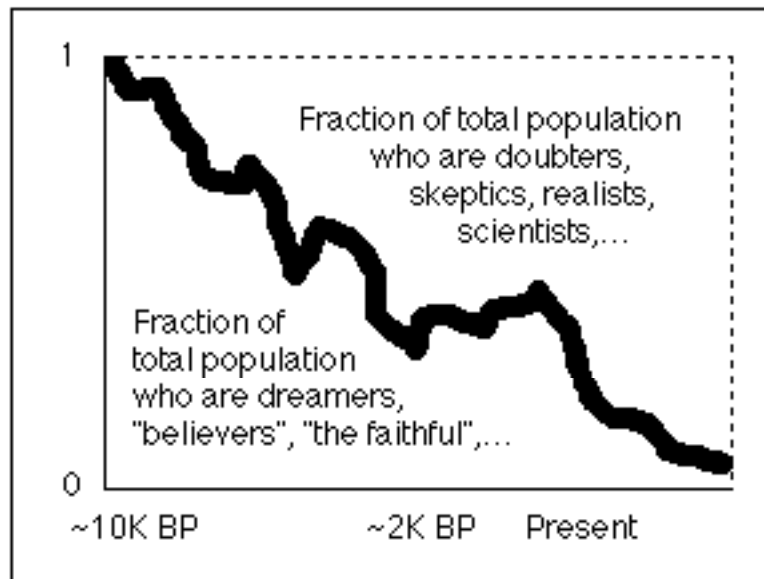
With the old Deities hath it long since come to an end: and verily, a good joyful Deity-end had they! They did not “begloom” themselves to death – that do people fabricate! On the contrary, they laughed themselves to death, once on a time! That took place when the ungodliest utterance came from a God himself – the utterance: “There is but one God! Thou shalt have no other gods before me!”⁸

And actually, Dear, as I already hinted and as I'll show you in later chapters, there's evidence from essentially every culture that at least some people thought that “the god idea” was silly. As a single example (which seems to reflect opinions in two cultures), there's the Old Testament's *Psalms 14*, 1 (probably created, with help from what the Egyptian sage Amenemope wrote in the eleventh century BCE): “The impious fool says in his heart ‘There is no God’.” The derogatory nature of this statement aside, it's doubtful if the statement would have been made if some people hadn't concluded that “the God idea” was silly.

In fact, as I'll also show you in later chapters, in total the changes in people's ideas about “the gods” have been major, but in general, they progressed extremely slowly. For example, to change ideas from many

⁸ Dear, this is one reference that I would discourage you from pursuing at the present time – at least until you finished reading this book (and maybe also the book *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand). This “epic poem” by Nietzsche is available on the internet, but it's quite complicated, very powerful, and has been badly misrepresented or misunderstood by a great number of people. For example, it has been suggested that, with this poem, Nietzsche advocated “Nazi supermen”, but almost nothing could be farther from the truth: the “superman” that he promotes is much closer to the heroes of Ayn Rand's books, such as *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*; in fact, I wouldn't be surprised if Ayn Rand was influenced substantially by Nietzsche. Thus, Nietzsche's “superman” is a producer who loves life and adopts the love of life as the basis of his or her morality.

gods, to one God, and then to zero gods took many thousands of years – and for some people, obviously the change hasn't yet occurred. Let me try to convey that idea with the following crude graph, where please notice that on the horizontal axis (the “abscissa”), time runs from about 10,000 years before the present (BP) out to thousands of years in the future, and that on the vertical axis (the “ordinate”), the fraction falls from unity (everyone “a believer” in gods) to what I expect will eventually occur: with no one believing in gods, the fraction will eventually fall to zero.



But that's enough (too much?) for now – save for my request for you to do a “reading assignment”. Dear: Would you please get one of your dad's copies of the Bible and read the Book of Genesis through Chapter 9 (through to the end of the story about Noah and the Flood). You have been told these stories since you were a baby; now, please read them quietly and carefully for yourself. In the next chapter, I plan to make some comment on this “reading assignment” – but of course that doesn't preclude your own questioning of what you read! For example, what do you think about the Bible's “explanation” for rainbows, compared with Marduk's? Further, what do you think about having an omniscient, omnipotent god controlling this world – who's so absent-minded that he needs to tie a rainbow around his finger (or whatever appendage) to remind himself not to flood the place again?! What stupendous silliness is behind such myths!

* Go to other chapters *via*