

Ix5 – Flood & Genesis Myths in the Bible

Dear: With the hope that you completed the previous chapter's "reading assignment", I now want to turn to some of the myths detailed in that assignment, i.e., in the first part of the Bible's *Book of Genesis* (usually referred to just as *Genesis*). In previous chapters, when you read outlines of various flood and genesis myths from other cultures, I suspect that they failed to pass your "snicker test" – although maybe you just smiled a little at their silliness. Personally, as I already mentioned, I rather liked some of those myths, especially the one about Coyote and the Beaver, "explaining" how the Columbia Gorge was formed. The source of my mirth, however, wasn't so much the silliness of the myths; instead, I found them to be just entertaining little stories, which nowadays essentially no one takes seriously. Would that similar were the case for all myths in all "holy books"!

By the way, Dear, when in earlier chapters I quoted the myths of other cultures, then believe it or not, I tried to be reasonably respectful. Yet, sometimes I had trouble resisting poking fun at such silliness. On the other hand, when it comes to the myths in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, I don't feel similarly constrained – not because I have any desire to make fun of those who concocted or believe such myths, but because certain children that I happen to know have been indoctrinated with the idea that such silly myths are to be taken seriously! Stated differently, I don't desire to insult anyone, but I'll be damned if I'm going to stand by and do nothing while lame-brained clerics attempt to harm my grandchildren.

Thus, you've been indoctrinated since you were a baby not to make fun (or even to smile) at "God's holy words" as given in the myths of the "holy Bible", which spread like a plague through the Roman Empire (courtesy the "butcher emperor" Constantine, c.274 – 337), infecting your easily identified ancestors in northern Europe. Worse by far, through the centuries, unknown millions of "atheists, heretics, heathens, infidels, and pagans" (i.e., people such as a certain grandfather and grandmother) have been horribly tortured and murdered – in the most atrocious ways imaginable – simply because they thought that such myths were silly. Further, as I write this, people continue to kill each other in wars (in India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel... listing only those countries whose names start with the letter 'I!'), because people still take their silly myths seriously – while considering other people's myths to be stupid.

Actually, though, I wouldn't be surprised if your easily-identified ancestors found it fairly easy to accept at least the Bible's two (conflicting!) genesis myths, because (as I'll be showing you and unlike genesis myths of other cultures) the Bible's creation myths contain essentially zero information about the people who created the myths. Maybe this lack of specificity contributed to the longevity of these myths (although, I'll later examine other reasons in more depth), because if these myths mentioned, e.g., the slanted mouths, black hair, or other features of certain people, then obviously many groups of people would feel estranged.

Of course, "true believers" will respond that this lack of specificity attests to the "universal truths" in these myths, but for reasons mentioned in the previous chapter and to be described in more detail in this and subsequent chapters (especially the chapters in the "excursion" **Yx**), closer to the truth seems to be that the Hebrew myths of our culture were patched together from myths of so many other cultures that, thereby, information about a specific group of people was probably purposefully suppressed. Below I'll list a few examples to show you what I mean.

- As I indicated in the previous chapter, the first genesis myth in the Bible (proposing that the world was created in six days) seems to have been patched together from the genesis myths of the Egyptians ("In the beginning, before there was any land of Egypt, all was darkness, and there was nothing but a great waste of water..."), from the Persians (e.g., quoting from the Zoroastrian's *Avesta*, "Of Ohrmazd's [God'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"), from the Babylonian's *Enuma Elish* (with its six generations of gods finally leading to the creation of humans), and as I also indicated in the previous chapter, quite likely all of those myths were in turn derived from speculations by the Sumerians!
- As I also suggested in an earlier chapter and will show you in more detail in this and later chapters, the second genesis myth in the Bible (dealing with Adam and Eve) seems to have been plagiarized from another Egyptian myth (dealing with the first man, Atum, and the "tree of knowledge") plus from two Mesopotamian myths, one dealing with Adapa and the other dealing with "the lady of the rib".
- As I'll show you in detail in the next chapter, it's totally obvious that the Hebrew cleric (or clerics) who wrote the flood story (about Noah) in *Genesis* plagiarized, almost in its entirety, a Mesopotamian myth that was well known throughout the Middle East for at least a thousands years before the Noah myth was recorded, changing almost nothing but the "hero's" name (to Noah); yet, they managed to totally mangle the important morals of the original myth!

- And as I'll show you in later chapters (see especially **Yx12** and **Yx13**, dealing with “the mythical monster Moses”), there's no doubt that Hebrew clerics just “borrowed” the myth about a future leader of the Hebrews being set adrift in a cradle of reeds in a river when he was a baby: in the Mesopotamian myth, this baby was Sargon the Great (~2400 BCE); in the Hebrew myth, the baby was Moses, who quite likely was just a mythical figure, alleged to have lived ~1200 BCE.

But temporarily setting aside details about the origins of the Bible's myths, what I'd like to do, now, is begin to comment on the silliness of such myths.

THE SILLINESS OF THE BIBLE'S 1st GENESIS MYTH

In what follows, I'll quote from *The New English Bible*, because it's easier to read. To show you the silliness of the Bible's first genesis myth, I'll “pick away” at it, adding comments as I go. Thus, similar to the Egyptian genesis myth, it starts with:

In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth...

And that's as far as I can get without inserting: Hey, wait a minute! Similar to question about creation myths that start with an egg or a cow, where did the egg, the cow, or in this case, the god come from?! If God was there, at “the beginning”, what was God made from? If he was made from something, then whatever this “something” was, obviously “it” was already there – before “the beginning”. So why call this “the beginning”? What were heaven and earth made from, and who made whatever it was? Why is it assumed that there's a god-like “maker”? If there were a total void, then what were things created from? And if things were created from a total void, how did even the void come into existence – and when?

You might recall, Dear, that in the first chapter, **A**, I sketched some possible but tentative answers to such questions (succinctly, that what's here actually still sums to zero); in **Z** (dealing with the “Zen of Zero”), I'll try to show you more. Here, I'll just mention that stars can “make themselves” by collecting mass, mass can “make itself” from energy, and as I sketched in **A** and will show you more in **Z**, positive and negative energy seem to have initially made themselves *via* a symmetry-breaking quantum-like fluctuation in a total void (simultaneously starting time and leading to the Big Bang). But, Dear, the “truth” is that we don't yet know all the answers. That's why we make grandchildren: so they can figure it out and tell us!

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And I'll add the obvious. The old Hebrews who created this myth (or borrowed it from the Persian, Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Sumerians...) didn't have a clue about what they were talking about – or better, the priest who first wrote this myth, relying on earlier myths, didn't have a clue about “the beginning”. And exactly the same is true for all clerics who have parroted this same nonsense for the past multi-thousands of years. Pity they all didn't shrug and honestly state: “I dunno!” But let me continue:

In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth, the earth was without form and void...

Hello?! How could the Earth not have “form”? Was it there or not? If it was there, it must have had some “form”! And what does it mean that the Earth was “void”? “Void” as in no vegetation? “Void” as in vacuum? If the Earth truly had no form and truly was a void, then there was nothing there – so why call it “the Earth”? But let me continue:

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.

Whoa! Slow down! Where did all this wind (i.e., air) and water come from – besides from earlier Sumerian, Egyptian, Persian... myths?! You just finished saying that “the earth was without form and void”, and yet, now, “the void” apparently includes water, air, and wind? Further, if the Earth had no form, what structure supported the water and how could the waters have a surface? Something doesn't compute!

And while you're at it, you silly old mythmaker, pray tell not only where the air came from but also what caused the wind? In the real world (something that apparently you know very little about) winds are caused by unbalanced pressures. In the atmosphere, these unbalanced pressures are predominantly caused by temperature differences, in turn caused by unequal heating from the sun. But you just said “there was darkness everywhere”; so, what caused the temperature differences, the pressure differences, and thereby, the wind?

Further, how could there be “darkness over the face of the abyss”? If there was water, the water's temperature must have been at least above freezing (you didn't say “the water” was ice at absolute zero temperature). Therefore, the “abyss” would have been filled with thermal radiation. Do you mean

that your god can't see infrared radiation, when even my dog can? It's said that a dog is a "backwards god", but it sounds as if your god is a backwards dog! But let me continue:

God said, "Let there be light", and there was light...

So you DO mean it! You're telling us that your "all-powerful" God, who you claim can cause things such as light to come into existence just by naming them (just like the Egyptian god Ra), can't see infrared radiation?! He should have gone down to the local Army-Surplus store and bought himself some night-vision goggles. But let me continue:

God said, "Let there be light", and there was light; and God saw that the light was good, and he separated light from darkness. He called the light 'day', and the darkness 'night'. So evening came, and morning came, the first day.

Well, it certainly was "good" in the sense that, from then on, God would be able to see (for apparently he's unable to see in the dark), and it was also "good" in that, now, he'd be able to explain what caused the winds! But otherwise, what silliness: light is only "good" if there is darkness! Saying that light is "good" is like saying that one side of a coin is "good". If God likes light, then he should have said that the darkness was equally "good", for if it weren't for the darkness, there'd be no light! But let me continue:

God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters, to separate water from water." So God made the vault, and separated the water under the vault from the water above it, and so it was; and God called the vault heaven. Evening came, and morning came, a second day.

So there you have it, Dear! If ever you wondered about the location of heaven, then now you know. I can just see the foolish old mythmaker who concocted this nonsense trying to figure out where rain came from. With no inkling of the concept of water vapor, he decided that there must be a source of water "above the vault" – i.e., in the clouds – with rain caused by a leaking vault! Of course, now we know that this "vault between the waters, to separate water from water" doesn't "separate the water"; it's the water vapor below the clouds that feeds the condensed water in clouds (which, in turn, feeds the precipitation).

But that silliness aside, Dear, we now have a really important new piece of information. According to the Bible (and who am I to question the "truth" of the "holy Bible"!) heaven is the "vault" below cloud base! Therefore,

Dear, the altitude of heaven is in the range of between about 1,000 and 10,000 feet (depending on the “cloud condensation level”). Didn’t you always have the impression that heaven was quite near? I did – especially when your grandmother makes lemon meringue pie, with graham-cracker crust! But let me continue:

God said, “Let the waters under heaven be gathered into one place, so that dry land may appear”; and so it was. God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters he called seas; and God saw that it was good.

Well, I must admit that I’m getting rather tired of God’s judgment of his work as being “good” – especially because, later (according to the “holy Bible” itself), God said that his creation was no good, and therefore, he destroyed it in a flood!

But more significantly, this suggestion of the ordering of appearance of land *versus* ocean is essentially certainly wrong. Instead, almost certainly, the Earth “originally” was nothing but gravitationally-gathered debris from exploded stars, with water locked in the debris as bubbles and hydrates. When the mass of the Earth (i.e., this mass of star debris) became big enough so that gravitational forces were sufficient to melt the rocks in the Earth’s interior, the bubbles and hydrates were freed, and water was released by injections of magma from the Earth’s interior. Today, water vapor is still the major component of volcanic eruptions; in addition, water was apparently delivered to the rocky Earth by asteroid and comet impacts.¹ Thus, almost certainly, the land was first; the oceans appeared later. But let me continue:

Then God said, “Let the earth produce fresh growth, let there be on the earth plants bearing seed, fruit-trees bearing fruit each with seed according to its kind.” So it was; the earth yielded fresh growth, plants bearing seed according to their kind and trees bearing fruit each with seed according to its kind; and God saw that it was good. Evening came, and morning came, a third day.

Great! Now we have an answer to the age-old question: which came first, the chicken or the egg? Thus, here we have the unquestionably valid concept (as given in the “holy Bible” itself) that the plants came first; then, the seeds. Again: who am I to question the Bible?

¹ See, e.g., <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/10/111005145549.htm>.

Actually, though, Dear, the Bible is wrong again. The similar (age-old) question is: “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” Recently (I can’t find the reference easily), the obvious answer was given: it was the egg! That is, some animal (some bird or fish or turtle or...) laid a genetically “malformed” egg – which became the first chicken! Therefore, similarly, the Bible is wrong: plants didn’t come first, seeds did. That is, some plant (e.g., some sea weed) produced a genetically “malformed” seed – which, upon drifting to land, became a new plant (e.g., grass).

Further, there’s something else, here, that’s “misordered”. We’re told (by no less an authority than the “holy Bible” (or is it spelled “holey Bible” – because it has so many holes in it?!) that on the third day, God made all these plants that survive by photosynthesis – and yet, it’s not until the next day that God gets around to making the sun! Now, that might not be a very serious error if the “days” mentioned in the Bible have the same length as our present days (it would mean that the plants would need to survive only overnight without sunlight), but it sure blows a hole in any argument (to try to make this Genesis myth consistent with the fossil record) that each one of these “days” (which the Zoroastrians called “periods”) was about a billion years long! That’s a long time for plants to go without sunlight!

Still another “misordering” is to have God first create the land plants. It’s a pity that the speculators who concocted this myth didn’t at least perceive of the value of going from something simpler to something more complex; if they had, it might have led them to guess the correct order. Thus, on the fifth day, the mythmakers will have God busy himself making creatures of the sea, but the fossil records clearly show that the simpler sea creatures (God’s efforts on Day 5) appeared before complex plants on land (God’s efforts on Day 3) – those of the sea being generally simpler, because they don’t need special structures (skeletons) for supporting themselves (without water’s buoyancy) and for clinging to and gaining nutrients from the land.

Furthermore, going back to the chicken *versus* egg question, it appears that the mythmakers didn’t realize that many land plants don’t have seeds, for example, most mosses and ferns. It’s understandable that shepherds in the desert wouldn’t be familiar with ferns (the approximately 10,000 different species are found mostly in damper climates, especially in the tropics), but I’m a little surprised that the old shepherds who spent most of their life outdoors didn’t notice mosses. And for that matter, given the later stories in the Bible about these old shepherds getting drunk on wine, it’s a wonder that

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they didn't speculate about some life on earth that individually they couldn't see but collectively they could, for example, the population explosions that occur during decomposition of plants and animals (i.e., bacteria) and during the formation of wine (i.e., fungi such as yeasts). But let me continue:

God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to separate day from night, and let them serve as signs both for festivals and for seasons and years. Let them also shine in the vault of heaven to give light on earth." So it was; God made the two great lights, the greater to govern the day and the lesser to govern the night; and with them he made the stars. God put these lights in the vault of heaven to give light on earth, to govern day and night, and to separate light from darkness; and God saw that it was good. Evening came, and morning came, a fourth day.

This is getting ridiculous! If God is only now (on the fourth day) getting around to making the sun and the moon, "the two great lights, the greater to govern the day and the lesser to govern the night", then how did He previously identify the difference between day and night?! For the rest of us, evening comes when the sun goes down, and morning comes when the sun comes up. In turn, most of us understand that the sun appears to set in the evening and rise in the morning because the Earth is spinning. Yet, somehow, "evening came, and morning came, the first day" – and so on, for every day until the fourth day (for four billion years?!), when God finally got around to making the sun? But then, I guess I'm forgetting that, in those days, the sun went around a flat earth... How silly of me.

But still: if God only now (on the fourth day) got around to making the stars, where did He get the heavy elements to make the earth? Something tells me that the mythmakers who concocted this story didn't know that the earth is predominantly silicon and oxygen, and that these elements are made in stars. Yet, that's not so silly as the proposed reason for these "lights" in the vault of heaven: "let them serve as signs... for festivals"! Sounds like the mythmakers are in a partying mood (too much wine?), because they forgot that, as yet, they didn't have their God make any people to party at the festivals! Of course, maybe that's why God made people: what's kind of a party would it be if nobody showed up?! But let me continue:

God said, "Let the waters teem with countless living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of heaven." God then created the great sea-monsters and all living creatures that move and swarm in the waters, according to their kind, and every kind of bird; and God saw that it was good. So he blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase, fill the waters of the seas; and let the birds increase on land." Evening came and morning came, a fifth day.

So, Dear, there you have it: 1) if ever you wanted to know “God’s holy truth”, then first came the sea, then the land, then plants on land, then life in the sea (never mind what the data show; this is “God’s holy truth”!), and 2) if you ever want to get to heaven, then never mind following all the Bible’s commandments, just rent a airplane and follow the birds “across the vault of heaven” (although be careful not to puncture “the vault” with your aircraft’s wings or tail, cause doncha know, the vault is loaded with water and you could cause another worldwide flood). Of course, if you think that all of this is just silly stuff made up by primitive people who barely knew which way was up, then... But let me continue:

God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures, according to their kind: cattle, reptiles, and wild animals, all according to their kind.” So it was; God made wild animals, cattle, and all reptiles, each according to its kind; and he saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image and likeness to rule the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all wild animals on earth, and all reptiles that crawl upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living that that moves upon the earth.” God also said, “I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours for food. All green plants I give for food to the wild animals, to all the birds of heaven, and to all reptiles on earth, every living creature.” So it was, and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Evening came, and morning came, a sixth day.

So, amazingly enough, God made humans in His image – or could it possibly be, I wonder, the other way around?! And God gave humans a purpose: be fruitful and increase (“Okay, God, we did that – now what? It’s getting awfully crowded down here!”). And we’re supposed to eat only plants and fruits that yield seeds; we’re not to eat green plants; those are for the animals. No wonder a certain grandchild refused to eat her spinach: the “precious little gift from God” knew that eating green vegetables was a sin!

But while I’m at it, I wonder why so many fish and other animals became such “sinners” as to eat other animals! And I wonder, too, why later in the Bible, the good guys are the ones who roast animals for God. Does God like roast beast or not? Were we made in his “image and likeness” or not? Then, just as with God, do we like to eat meat? Or is it that God told us to stick to seedy stuff because he wanted all the meat? But let me conclude this nonsense:

Thus heaven and earth were completed with all their mighty throng. On the sixth day God completed all the work he had been doing, and on the seventh day he ceased from all his work. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on that day he ceased from all the work he had set himself to do. This is the story of the making of heaven and earth when they were created.

And a nice neat little story it is – so long as everyone realizes it’s just a story – so long as no one takes it seriously – so long as no one thinks it’s “true”!

Yet, Dear, as I wrote in the previous chapter, I don’t think the above “genesis myth” is good enough to be a myth. I suspect that it was written by some cleric (probably ~400 BCE). I don’t think this myth would keep a group of kids around a campfire entertained: it has no action, it has no plot, it reads like a recipe, it’s no fun! You try it, Dear: try to recall the above “myth”. I can’t. All I remember is “In the beginning...”, something about various stuff being judged “good”, and marching through boring details, day after day. On the other hand, let me tell you about how the Columbia Gorge was formed. Once upon a time there was this big bad Beaver who wouldn’t let the people fish in the river. So, the people went to the trickster god Coyote, and he... Oh, you heard the story – and you remembered it! QED.

Further, Dear, please consider some ramifications of promoting this first genesis myth from the Bible. Someone (the mythmaker – probably a priest writing at his desk) is playing the role of “the authority”. “In the beginning... [this is the way it happened].” I can just see the little kid in the front row, trying to be intellectually honest, asking:

“If you please, Sir, can you tell us how you know that this is the way it happened? I mean, where you there? Did you see it?”

“Of course I wasn’t there, you silly child, only God was there.² But I know it happened this way, because I was told by so-and-so, and he was told by so-and-so, and so-and-so said that God almighty himself told him that it was so.”

“Really”, responds the inquisitive child, “and you know that so-and-so isn’t a liar and that this isn’t just some silly story made up by some stupid cleric or some drunken shepherd?”

² Although as you know, Dear, Sidney Rigdon decided that God dictated the whole story to Moses (as given in the Mormon’s “Pearl of Great Price”). But can you imagine poor old Moses (famous for carving stuff in stone) trying to keep up with the dictation?!

“Absolutely I know that it occurred, exactly as described. It isn’t a myth; this is God’s holy truth; anyone who says that it’s a myth is a liar, a nonbeliever, an infidel – and you know what happens to infidels: even if we don’t have the fun of torturing them to death, the Devil tortures them for eternity.”

And can you imagine, Dear, that the people in this country who take the Bible to be the “literal truth of God” (viz., the “creationists” aka “intelligent designers”) want this silly stuff taught as “science” in our schools?! Can you imagine what would happen when kids started asking questions:

“What data support these ideas? Why do the fossil data conflict with these speculations? Is there any evidence to support your contention that heaven is below cloud base? What stops the vault of water, above, from falling? Before the beginning (that you’re talking about) what was going on?”

But even those “believers” who don’t take the Bible literally, only allegorically (thereby dodging the obvious errors in the Bible’s first genesis myth), have difficult questions to answer. These allegorists always seek out “the moral of the story”; so, for this genesis myth, what’s the moral?

- Is the moral of the story that, because we humans were made in God’s “image and likeness”, therefore we, too, are to be “creators”? Well, if so, why does God then interfere in our creations (e.g., as in the Bible’s Tower of Babel myth, God purposefully made it more difficult for people to communicate, because humans had created the Tower!)?
- Or is the moral of the story that although creations are “good”, yet resting is “holy”? So, if we “goof off” (like clerics), would we then be “holy”?
- Or is the moral of the story that even God gets tired – for, after snapping his fingers (or whatever) to create the universe, then he had to take a day of rest? But then, how could God be omnipotent (“all powerful”), if snapping his fingers obviously wore him out so badly?
- Or is the moral of the story that the purpose of humans is to “go forth and multiply”? Really? Any guidance for the males about inquiring if the females are willing? Any restrictions on rape? Any thoughts about proposing marriage? Any suggestions about having sufficient economic and other resources to ensure that one’s children get a good start? Any concerns about population control? Keep being “fruitful” until the Earth is filled to the brim? Standing room only? Even people in China and India are to keep on multiplying? Just “go forth and multiply”? That’s quite a moral!

But all that silliness aside, the only serious question is: what if any ideas and information does this genesis myth contain? As far as I can see, Dear, the answer is: very little. Further, there are a number of hints (listed below)

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that this myth was made relatively late in the myth-making period (i.e., the myth was made relatively recently).

- 1) Because of the reference to “festivals” in the line *God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to separate day from night, and let them serve as signs both for festivals and for seasons and years”*, this myth was almost certainly created after the hunting and gathering era. That is, feasts (not festivals) were held after successful hunts; festivals were held after successful harvests, which in turn depended on the seasons (and therefore “the lights in the vault of heaven” could be used to “schedule” the festivals). In contrast, it’s rather difficult to “schedule” a successful hunt! Therefore, this myth was almost certainly written during the agricultural era.
- 2) Whereas there’s no indication elsewhere in the Bible that the Hebrews were competent astronomers (in contrast to evidence, which I’ll show you in a later chapter, of amazing competence of both the Sumerians and Egyptians – who could even predict eclipses!), therefore, the Hebrews almost certainly “borrowed” the significance of the number “seven” from the Sumerians and/or Egyptians, who identified the seven moving astronomical bodies (the Sun, the Moon, and the five planets visible with unaided eyes: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn). That is, this myth (which obviously gives special significance to the number “seven”) was almost certainly written not earlier than when Mesopotamians and Egyptians had identified five of the planets.
- 3) Because the seventh day was made “holy”, the myth was probably written by one or more clerics – because what’s truly special about the seventh day is that the priests collect their “protection money” without fear of being arrested for running a protection racket!

There are also more problems in this first genesis myth, but they’re seen more clearly when compared with the Bible’s second genesis myths, to which I now turn.

SUGGESTED ORIGINS OF THE BIBLE’S 2nd GENESIS MYTH

Dear, I want to show you just a little about the Bible’s second genesis myth, because here is one of the many times in my investigations for this book where I ended up just shaking my head, in amazement, in a sense of awe, and maybe somewhat in a sense of defeat. That is, as I dug (mostly on the internet) to try to find information about various myths, I came across so many amazing studies that I just ended up shaking my head: a great many, very competent people have apparently spent years (if not decades and if not their entire lives) investigating these topics, and there’s just “no way” that I’ll ever learn all that is known – and there’s also “no way” that I’ll ever

want to know all that's known! All of which is my way of saying: in what follows, I plan to quote extensively from what others have learned about these topics.

The second genesis myth in the Bible deals with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Quoting again from *The New English Bible* (because it's easier to read), the myth starts as follows.

When the LORD GOD made earth and heaven, there was neither shrub nor plant growing wild upon the earth, because the LORD GOD had sent no rain on the earth; nor was there any man to till the ground. [I don't know why the silly mythmakers thought that nothing would grow if there wasn't rain (hadn't they ever seen an oasis?) and if there wasn't someone to till the ground (hadn't they ever seen a wild pasture or forest?!)] *A flood used to rise out of the earth [so they did know what springs were!] and water all the surface of the ground. Then the LORD GOD formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life...*

For now, Dear, I don't want to quote any more of this myth; I assume you remember the story – because it, unlike the Bible's first genesis myth, is an easily remembered little story [about Adam and Eve, a talking (!) snake, the apple, and so on]. Yet, in a later chapter, I'll dig into details about this second genesis myth, to show you some of the absolutely horrible moral messages it contains. Instead, here and for now, let me show you just a tiny fraction of what has been written about its possible origins, written by people who have obviously invested huge efforts trying to understand these origins – much more effort than I would ever want to spend on the subject.

First, I'll quote from Martin Luther King's essay "Light on the Old Testament from the Ancient Near East", to which I've added a couple of notes in brackets.³

If we delve further into Babylonian literature[,] we will find a myth entitled *Adapa*, which is strikingly similar to the Biblical story of the fall of man. This story "seems intended to explain the mortality of man as opposed to the immortality of the gods." [Footnote:] *Hasting, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. II (1910) p. 314.\

The story opens explaining the qualities and functions of Adap[a], the son of [the god] Ea. He was a semi-divine being and a priest of the temple of Ea at Eridu. It was his duty to provide the ritual bread and water for this temple. In carrying out this duty

³ Available at http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/papers/vol1/481124-Light_on_the_Old_Testament_from_the_Ancient_Near_East.htm

he did quite a bit of fishing. One day while [he was] fishing the south wind blew and overturned his boat. Becoming angry because of this event he broke the “wings of the south wind.” At this point [the god] Anu calls Adap[a] to account for this misdeed.

Adap[a]’s father [the god, Ea] immediately warns him what is about to happen and tells him how to gain the pity of [the gods] Tammuz and Gishzida. He also tells him not to eat the food [or] take the drink that would be offered him [,] for it would be the food and drink of death. Of course, Ea was wrong[;] rather [,] the food and water offered to him were the food and water of life. Therefore, by rejecting it he was deprived of eternal life.

We immediately see that this myth coincides with *Genesis 2* and *3*. Let us list the points of comparison:

1. The ‘food of life’ in *Adap[a]* belongs to the same category as the ‘tree of life’ in *Genesis*.
2. Both Adapa and Adam had gained knowledge. In both the knowledge was a power which was an attribute of divinity. This knowledge caused Adap[a] to break the wing of the south wind; it tempted Adam and Eve “to become like God, knowing good and evil” (*Genesis 3:5*).
3. Both were punished for what they did. Adapa was subjected to sickness, disease, and restlessness. Adam was subject to the monotony of toil and his wife, Eve, to the pangs of childbirth.
4. Both were clothed in a special type of clothing as a consequence of their deeds. \[Footnote:] Barton, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-12.\

This, in short, concludes our study of Babylonia....

Second, I’ll quote the essay “Two Babylonian (Akkadian) Tales of Beginnings” (I don’t know who the author is).⁴

The Tale of Adapa

Like “Adam,” its cognate in Hebrew, the Akkadian word “Adapa” means “man.” Adapa was the first of the seven sages of Eridu who lived before the flood. These sages talked with the gods, performed their rites, and helped them bring order and civilization to mankind.

The story of Adapa begins by saying that Ea disclosed “the broad design of the land” to Adapa, giving him wisdom, but not “eternal life” (Dalley 184). Like the flood hero Atrahasis [in the next chapter, Dear, I’ll show you more information about him; in the Epic of Gilgamesh, he’s called Utnapishtim; in the Bible, he’s called ‘Noah’], Adapa is described as “extra-wise” and as particularly faithful and observant to his god Ea (Enki), baking bread and making the proper offerings of food and water every day.

⁴ Available at <http://faculty.gvsu.edu/websterm/Adapa.htm>, where you can find the indicated references.

Adapa is also in charge of ritually assuring the fish supply; so one day, he sets out to fish, letting his boat drift rudderless in “the broad sea” (Dalley 184) – no doubt the Persian Gulf.

The South Wind (who is female) kicks up and overturns Adapa’s boat. Adapa is “plunged into the world of fish” (Sandars 171), so he curses South Wind, threatening to break her wing. Since Adapa’s word is law,

No sooner had he uttered these words
Than South Wind’s wing was broken;
For seven days South Wind did not blow towards the land. (Dalley 185)

[Notice, Dear, that even this semi-god Adapa was claimed to have the ability, claimed for essentially all gods (e.g., the Egyptian god Ra and the Jewish god Yahweh), to create things just by naming them or to cause things to happen just by saying them.]

The sky god Anu wonders about this, so he asks his vizier Ilabrat why the South Wind has not blown for seven days. [Notice, Dear, again the special significance given to the number seven.] Ilabrat tells Anu about Adapa breaking the wind’s wing. Anu is furious. He demands that Adapa be brought before him. Ea, who knows what’s going on in heaven, touches Adapa and advises him to go to heaven in rags and mourning. Adapa is to approach the two gatekeepers of Anu, Tammuz and Gizzida, and to tell them that he is mourning their absence from the earth. Ea predicts that the two gatekeepers will be pleased with this display of grief:

They will look at each other and laugh a lot,
Will speak a word in your favor to Anu. (Dalley 186).

In addition to this advice, Ea advises Adapa on how to behave in the presence of Anu and the assembled gods:

They will offer thee the food of death; do not eat it.
The water of death they will offer thee; do not drink it.
A garment they will offer thee; clothe thyself with it.
Oil they will offer thee; anoint thyself with it. (Heidel 150)

An envoy from Anu arrives and takes Adapa to heaven. At the gates, everything befalls as Ea predicted. Adapa’s claim to be in mourning for the two gatekeeper gods, Tammuz and Gizzida, causes them to “laugh a lot.” But Anu shouts at Adapa, “Why did you break South Wind’s wing?” (Dalley 186). Adapa explains that he was just trying to fish for his lord Ea when the wind dumped him into “the world of fish”; so, he cursed the wind. At this point Tammuz and Gizzida speak a word in Adapa’s favor to Anu. Anu’s anger is softened somewhat, but nevertheless he grumbles

Why did Ea disclose to wretched mankind
The ways of heaven and earth,

Give to them a heavy heart?
 It was he who did it!
 What can we do for him?
 Fetch him the bread of (eternal) life and let him eat! (Dalley 187)

Another translation renders the two middle lines above as, “He has made him strong (and) made him a name” (Heidel 151). Despite these translation difficulties, it is clear that Anu is not pleased that Ea has given Adapa magic powers like the ability to curse the wind.

But as a host, Anu must show Adapa some respect and offer him food and drink, in this case the bread and water of eternal life. Adapa, however, follows Ea’s instructions to the letter and refuses what he thinks are the bread and water of death. He does clothe himself with garments they offer and anoint himself with the oils they provide. Anu wonders at his guest’s lack of appetite:

“Come, Adapa, why didn’t you eat? Why didn’t you drink?
 Didn’t you want to be immortal? Alas for downtrodden people!”
 (But) Ea my lord told me: “You mustn’t eat! You mustn’t drink!” (Dalley 187)

Anu commands that Adapa be sent back to earth and laughs at the cleverness of Ea. Anu says,

“Of the gods of heaven and earth, as many as there be,
 Who ever gave such a command,
 So as to make his own command exceed the command of Anu?” (Pritchard 80).

The text comments that Adapa, who broke the South Wind’s wing, “the man child of man” (Sandars 172), has brought illness and disease “upon the bodies of men” (Heidel 153). The text ends with a prayer to Ninkarrak, the goddess of healing, to heal the sickness of men and women.

My third quotation is a “post” by Walter Mattfield entitled “The Garden of Eden Myth (Serpent, Adam, Eve & God)”:⁵

I take the “Humanist position” that the Garden of Eden is a myth and all the dialogs coming from the characters in this myth are from the mind of the narrator. I do, however, agree with Dr. Jonathan D. Safren, that behind all myths are historical kernels. In this case the “kernels” are vestiges of earlier Mesopotamian myths, reaching back to the 3rd and 2nd millenniums BCE, which the Hebrews later reinterpreted into the Garden of Eden and its motifs (cf. my earlier postings to this list arguing that the Hebrew Bible is a creation of the 5th century BCE).

⁵ Available at <http://lists.ibiblio.org/pipermail/b-hebrew/2000-August/008063.html>.

My research has suggested that several ancient Mesopotamian myths have been combined and reinterpreted and probably lie behind the Eden story and its scenarios regarding God, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent.

First, is the myth titled “Adapa and the South Wind.” Adapa journeys to Heaven and loses a chance to obtain immortality by refusing to consume the food and drink which would confer it on him, on the advice of the jealous god he serves, Enki. I suspect this [is] where the Hebrews [got] their notion that the eating of a fruit from a plant on the earth can give one immortality.

The Mesopotamian myths stress that Man was made in order [to] grow and harvest food to feed and nourish the gods. He did this by presenting “real food,” harvested from irrigation-fed gardens and slaughtering animals for meat. Water, beer and wine were poured out on the altars for the gods to consume. Evidently these products of the earth were conceived sometimes as rising up to heaven where the Gods dwelt, in the form of smoke, allowing them to “mystically consume or smell” the food as a sweet savor. Thus earthly grown food, feeds the gods.

When Adapa got to Heaven, he was presented food and drink, which would have conferred immortality (as the gods consume earthly food, the food they offered him, had to have been earthly in origin too). He refused the food and drink, having been forewarned by the god he served on earth, Enki, that he would surely die if he consumed them. Anu laughed to hear that Adapa wouldn't eat or drink, so he sent him back to the earth from which he came, and thus mankind lost its chance at immortality.

Before offering Adapa the food, Anu, the supreme god, made an interesting statement, after quizzing Adapa to learn how he was able to break the south wind's arm and prevent sea breezes reaching Lower Mesopotamia, he learned in disbelief that Enki had revealed certain knowledge to Adapa, knowledge that was restricted to the gods, and not to be possessed by mankind. It was upon this realization, that Adapa possessed secret knowledge restricted to the gods, that he thereupon decided to offer him immortality by having him consume the drink and food which could confer it. (If he's got a god's wisdom, why not make him a god?) The Hebrews have merely “reworked” and given “a new twist” to the ancient Mesopotamian myths which attempted to explain how man lost a chance to become immortal.

Now the Serpent. Genesis portrays the serpent as possessing two rather amazing characteristics: it has the ability to walk on legs and it can carry on a conversation with humans. This serpent is also portrayed as dwelling in an earthly paradise with God, Adam, and Eve. My research has concluded that the Sumerian Dragon-Serpent called “Nin-Gish-Zida” is what lies behind the Genesis Myth.

Although Anu allows Adapa to become immortal, it is his servant, Nin-Gish-Zida, who actually put in a good word on Adapa's behalf, and who is instructed to actually

present the food and drink to Adapa. Ningishzida was a guard at the heavenly gate with Tammuz (both had, in earlier myths, been dwellers of the underworld, who achieved a resurrection to heaven). Some myths call Tammuz, “Damu, the child Ningishzida,” so both gods are aspects of each other. No humans got to Anu’s presence without first having Tammuz/Ningishzida take them by the hand and present them, putting in a good word for them.

Ningishzida was not only an alternate form of Tammuz, he [was] also called “The Great Serpent-Dragon of Heaven,” being identified with the star constellation Hydra (Hydra being a creature with multiple serpent heads). He was alternately associated with the winged and horned serpent dragon called “Mushussu.” Mushussu appears standing on hind legs, holding a staff (or a gate?) in his forepaws (Langdon, p.285, fig. 88). A cylinder seal of Gudea of Lagash shows Ningishzida in human form, taking Gudea by the hand and presenting him as a petitioner before the great god, Anu. Arising from Ningishzida’s human shoulders are two horned dragon heads. Behind Gudea, on the same seal, we see Ningishzida in animal form as a horned, winged, serpent-dragon, walking on all four legs.

I conclude that Christianity’s later imagery of Satan as the Serpent in the garden of Eden is a reflex of some sort of Ningishzida, who had the power to take on human form (in human form he wears a multiple horned turban, a sign he is a god, and is bearded, with robe) as well as that as the Mighty-Serpent-Dragon of Heaven and of the Underworld. In the Underworld he was called the bearer of the Throne, and “binder” of those who do evil. Langdon understands he was originally a vegetation deity, and calls him a “Tree-god” (p.90, Langdon).

I understand that Christ is another myth, he arose from the underworld in a resurrection (and is associated with a tree, called a cross), to stand at the right hand of God. No man is allowed into the Father’s presence without Christ bringing him to the Father. In the Christian re-working of this ancient Mesopotamian myth, I understand that Christ has replaced Ningishzida/ Tammuz, who offered man immortality. So, in the Mesopotamian myths, the serpent who could walk and talk, talk not only to man but face-to-face with the supreme god, Anu, who offered man immortality with food and water of life, in heaven, is what lies behind not only the Genesis myth, but the Christian myths about Christ as well. A crude and shocking way of putting this is that the Mesopotamian Dragon-Serpent has been “pre-empted” by Christ, who has taken over all his roles (Dying and being resurrected, Petitioner of Man before God, Offerrer of Immortality, via the food and water of Life).

Other motifs, from additional Mesopotamian myths worked into the Edenic story, are the “Epic of Gilgamesh,” and “Enki and Ninhursag in Dilmun,” but space forbids me going on any further. I think you get my drift. For those interested in further research on the above topics, any good Ancient Near Eastern Mythology text can provide further details... The source used here is Stephen Herbert Langdon, M.A., *The Mythology of All the Races, Semitic, Vol. 5*, Boston, Marshall Jones Company, 1931, pp.454). By the way, this is from some “old research” I did back in 1990.

My fourth quotation, below, is from an astounding web page,⁶ which I encourage you to visit – and stay as long as you can! The article follows.⁷

CREATION MYTHS by Raymond Hewitt

GARDEN OF EDEN MYTHS

The purpose of recounting these ancient myths and legends is to illustrate their similarities to the events in Eden. It is not necessary to prove that the biblical writers drew directly from any one of them, but to show that they were influenced by the cultures around them.

There is no harm in recognizing them as epic fables. But when the Church insists with a straight face that *The Fall of Man* is an historical truth, while all the others are pagan myths, it has crossed the moral boundary into deceit and plagiarism. The Church is most importantly concerned with saving itself.

The question of origins bothered ancients as much as it bothers moderns today. The difference is that ancients had no science and written history from which to relate to their contemporaries. So, they did the next best thing. They applied their imaginations. The descriptions below give a sense of the kind of pagan beliefs from which the biblical writers drew...

SUMERIAN PARADISE MYTH

The Sumerian Eden was located in Dilmun, modern day Bahrain. Eden contained the Tigris and Euphrates rivers associated with Sumeria. The word Eden was derived from an old Babylonian name for Mesopotamia, Gan-Eden, the garden of the Middle East. Because those great two rivers watered the rich plains between them, the word Mesopotamia means between the waters.

Enki, the Sumerian water-God and God of wisdom, impregnates Ninhursag, his half-sister. Enki desires a son, but receives a daughter. He then impregnates his daughter, who in turn gives him a daughter. Ninhursag decides to put an end to this immoral procession by sowing eight poisonous plants in the garden. Enki eats of all eight plants and becomes deathly ill. One of Enki's sick organs is the rib. Nin-ti is created to heal Enki. Nin-ti means "she who makes live." It is approximately what Eve means. Nin-ti can also be translated as "the lady of the rib." "Ti" means rib...

THE LEGEND OF ADAPA

From the Babylonians comes the legend of Adapa. It carries the theme of the serpent's warning to Eve, that God had deceived her about the forbidden fruit. Adapa, son of the god of Wisdom, Ea, broke the wing of the Storm bird who attacked

⁶ At http://www.usbible.com/usbible/home_a.htm#author.

⁷ From http://www.usbible.com/Creation/creation_myths.htm.

him in the Persian Gulf. Ea summoned Adapa to question his violence and warned him that, having displeased Anu, King of Heaven, the gods would offer him the food and drink of death, which he must refuse. Anu, however, learning of this indiscreet disclosure, tried to foil Ea by offering Adapa the bread of life and the water of life instead. When Adapa refused, Anu sent him back to earth as a mortal.

GILGAMESH AND THE SERPENT

The Babylonians had a popular epic hero called Gilgamesh. In one story, Gilgamesh heard about a plant that held the secret to immortality. By much effort, he pulled it up from the bottom of the sea. On the way to taking it back to his people, he set the plant aside at a spring where he stopped to take a bath. Suddenly a serpent came up from the water and snatched the plant. As it returned to the water, it shed its skin. Thus the serpent robbed humans of the potential for rejuvenation and acquired an ability to renew itself by shedding its skin.

PUNS

The word “Adam,” as the proper name for the first man can be misleading. It comes from *ha-adam* in Hebrew, which translates to “the man” – Hebrew has no capital letters. The word *adam* is extracted from *adamah*, meaning country, earth, ground, husband, earth, or land. This suggests the context in *Genesis 3:19*, when God says “you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” The name represents the material from which he was made. He wasn’t an actual person.

Likewise, “Eve” is translated from the Hebrew *chavva’ah*, for lifegiver, as in “the mother of all living.” Its root, *Chaya*, means “serpent” in Aramaic. Eve and serpent are taken to be synonymous.

The word, *Eden*, has been traced to the Sumerian language, meaning fertile land. To the Hebrews who later settled in the region, the word *eden* came to mean “delight” or “enjoyment.” In a sense, it is a garden of delight.

In sum, the words Adam and Eve describe nobody in particular, and Eden describes no place in particular. It belongs with all the pagan mythologies of its type.

But, Dear, beyond these likely near-Eastern sources of the Bible’s second genesis myth (i.e., one can imagine the Bible’s authors combing through the collected myths generated and then recorded during the ~2500 years of writing before the Bible was written), historians have suggested still earlier sources, in Africa. For example, the following is from an essay written in 1933 by John G. Jackson and entitled “The African Origin of the Myths and Legend of the Garden of Eden: A Rationalistic Review”.⁸ In what follows, I’ve added a few notes, modified a few grammatical “niceties”, omitted some parts where you’ll find “...”, and added some italics for emphasis.

⁸ Available at <http://www.nbufront.org/html/MastersMuseums/JGJackson/AfricanOriginsOfMyths.html>.

...The Book of Genesis contains two versions of the creation of our planet: the first, or *Elohistic* account... [and] the second, or *Jehovistic* version... The reason these two creation stories are referred as *Elohistic* and *Jehovistic* is because of the different Hebrew names used in speaking of the deity in the two documents or classes of documents from which our present accounts were derived. In the first story of creation, the Hebrew word *Elohim* was originally used in referring to the Supreme Being; *Elohim*, translated literally “The Gods”, is rendered God in our present Bible. In the second story the original Hebrew word for God was *Jehovah* or *Jehovah Elohim*, literally “The God of Gods”, rendered in the King James Version of the Bible as “*the LORD GOD*”.

The differences between the *Elohistic* and *Jehovistic* accounts of the beginning of the earth, plant and animal life, and the human race are concisely tabulated in the following summary by a distinguished theologian of the Anglican Church, Bishop John William Colenso:

The following are the most noticeable points of differences between the two cosmogonies:

1. In the first, the earth emerges from the waters and is, therefore, SATURATED WITH MOISTURE. In the second, the whole face of the ground REQUIRES TO BE MOISTENED.
2. In the first, the birds and the beasts are created BEFORE MAN. In the second, man is created BEFORE THE BIRDS AND THE BEASTS.
3. In the first, all fowls that fly are made out of the WATERS. In the second, the fowls of the air are made out of the GROUND.
4. In the first, man is created in the image of God. In the second, man is made of the DUST OF THE GROUND and merely animated with the breath of life; and it is only after his eating the forbidden fruit that the Lord said, “Behold, the man has become AS ONE OF US, to know good and evil.”
5. In the first, man is made lord of the WHOLE EARTH. In the second, he is merely placed in the Garden of Eden, TO DRESS IT AND TO KEEP IT.
6. In the first, the man and the woman are CREATED TOGETHER as the closing and completing work of the whole creation; created also, as is evidently implied in the same kind of way, to be the complement of one another, and thus created, they are blessed TOGETHER. In the second, the beasts and birds are created BETWEEN the man and the woman. First, the man is made of the dust of the ground; he is placed by HIMSELF in the garden, charged with a solemn command, and threatened with a curse if he breaks it; THEN THE BEASTS AND BIRDS ARE MADE, and the man

gives names to them; lastly, after all this, THE WOMAN IS MADE OUT OF ONE OF HIS RIBS, but merely as a helpmate for the man.

The fact is that the SECOND account of the creation, together with the story of the fall, is manifestly composed by a DIFFERENT WRITER altogether from [the writer of] the FIRST. This is suggested at once by the circumstance that, throughout the FIRST narrative, the Creator is always spoken of by the name Elohim (God), whereas throughout the SECOND account, as well as the story of the fall, he is always called Jehovah Elohim (LORD GOD), except when the writer seems to abstain, for some reason, from placing the name of *Jehovah* in the mouth of the serpent. This accounts naturally for the above contradictions. It would appear that, for some reason, the productions of two pens have been here united without any reference to their inconsistencies (*The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined*, Vol. 2, pp. 171–173, London 1863).

Contrary to popular opinion, there is nothing original or unique about these Hebraic Eden myths. Similar myths and legends were told all over the world centuries before there was any ‘sacred literature’ among the Hebrews...⁹

The belief that the first man was made of clay was held all over the world in ancient times. In fact, the belief persists to this day among certain peoples. “The Ewe speaking people of Togo land in West Africa think that God still makes men of clay,” Sir J.G. Frazer informs us. “When a little of the water with which he moistens the clay remains over, he pours it on the ground and out of that he makes the bad or disobedient people. When he wishes to make a good man he makes him out of good clay; but when he wishes to make a bad man he employs only bad clay for the purpose. In the beginning God fashioned a man and set him on the earth; after that he fashioned a woman. The two looked at each other and began to laugh.” Sir James does not tell us for what reason, if any; “whereupon God sent them out into the world.” (*Folklore in the Old Testament*, p. 11, New York, 1923)...

Though this little essay was meant to be descriptive rather than analytical, it would not perhaps be advisable to omit altogether a consideration of the meaning of the several narratives of the creation of the world and the fall of man. As I see it, the myths of CREATION are attempts of early man to explain the cosmos as it appeared to his untutored mind.

⁹ Incidentally, Dear, recently while wandering around the internet, I ran into the following Greek myth about the marriage between the Greek god Zeus and his wife Hera. Its similarity to the Hebrew’s second genesis myth is obvious:

She married Zeus soon after their affair, and all of nature burst out in bloom for their wedding. Mother Earth gave Hera a little apple tree that bore golden apples of immortality. She treasured this tree and planted it in Hesperides, her secret garden in the west. She put a hundred headed dragon under the tree to guard the apples and ordered three nymphs to water and care for it.

The myths of the FALL are based on man's yearning for immortality. Due to the habit of snakes of periodically shedding their skins, primitive man got the idea serpents were immortal. The natural vanity of man told our distant ancestors that the gods had intended the precious gift of eternal life for humanity alone. So, the serpent was conceived of as having stolen this priceless possession from the human race, and snakes have been very appropriately feared and hated by men from that day to this.

The biblical version of the Fall of Man is incomplete. The role of the serpent is not explained and the tree of life is not given due prominence in the story. The original story, which we are able to piece together from fragments gathered from the mythology of many lands in all probability reads as follows.

God placed the first man and woman in a garden of delights. In this garden were two trees, the tree of life and the tree of death (called the tree of knowledge in the Bible). Man had the choice of eating the fruit of the tree of life and becoming immortal or of eating the fruit of the tree of death and becoming mortal. God sent the serpent to tell Adam and Eve to eat some of the fruit from the tree of life, so they might live forever, and to warn them against eating fruit from the tree of knowledge, or death, for if they eat this forbidden fruit, they would surely die and this curse would descend to their children from generation to generation.

The wise and wicked serpent, however, reversed the message. He told the first human pair that they would gain immortality by eating fruit of the tree of death. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve believed the diabolical snake, ate the forbidden fruit, and as a consequence, were expelled from Eden and became mortal. The sly reptile, on the other hand, helped himself to the fruit of the tree of life and obtained immortal life for himself and his kind. God also punished the serpent for his disobedience by condemning him to crawl on his belly and eat dust. Evidently the second part of the penalty must have been revoked, since it is a well-known fact that serpents do not eat dust.

Though it is generally held by historians and scholars that the Hebrews got both their theories of the creation of the world and the fall of man from the Babylonians, it is not improbable that these stories came originally from Africa. For the Babylonians received their civilization from a still earlier culture of the Mesopotamian valley, a people known as the Sumerians. According to ancient tradition, the Sumerians were originally a colony of Ethiopians. Though the Ethiopians were spread far and wide over the earth in ancient times, their original home has generally been considered to have been located in the heart of Africa. In discussing the origin of the myth of the fall as recorded in the Old Testament Sir James G. Frazer comments as follows:

In favor of an African origin of the myth it may be observed that the explanation of the supposed immortality of serpents, which probably furnished the kernel of the story in its original form, has been preserved in several African versions, while it has been wholly lost in the Hebrew version; from which it is natural to infer that the African versions are older and nearer to the original than the

corresponding but incomplete narrative in *Genesis*. (*The Worship of Nature*, Vol. I, p. 224).

Frazer infers an African origin of the Sumerians by stating that, “Even if the story should hereafter be found in a Sumerian version, this would not absolutely exclude the hypothesis of its African origin, since the original home of the Sumerians is unknown” (*The Worship of Nature*, Vol. I, page 223)...

Gerald Massey, the English poet and Egyptologist, held this original culture center was in Africa. He brought up this question in connection with the subject we are discussing in one of his lectures published in London in 1887. In said lecture, *Hebrew and Other Creations Fundamentally Explained*, he asserted, “the legend of Eden is one of those primeval traditions that must have been common property of an undivided human race carried out into all lands as they dispersed in various directions from one center, which I hold to be African.” (For an exhaustive defense of the theory of African origin of civilization and religion see [the] first volume of Massey’s work, *A Book of the Beginnings*).

My personal opinion is that these myths and legends of the Garden of Eden, besides many others of similar nature, had their origin in the heart of Africa in very ancient times and were spread by way of Egypt to the rest of the world.

Although there is much more that I want to mention about the Bible’s second genesis myth, Dear, I don’t want to do it now, in part because its moral is absolutely horrible, and as I’ve mentioned before, I want to delay until later chapters (especially those labeled with **M**, dealing with Morality) my comments about the atrocious morality advocated in the Bible (and in the Koran, and in the Book of Mormon, and in...). In addition, in the “excursion” **Yx** (dealing with Your Indoctrination in The Mountainous God Lie), I’ll go into other aspects of possible origins of the Bible’s two Genesis myths, including the message: “Just say ‘No’!” to drugs – from those trees (of “knowledge”) whose fruits are hallucinogens. Instead, for now, I want to add a few comments about the silliness of the Bible’s second genesis myth.

THE SILLINESS OF THE BIBLE’S ADAM & EVE MYTH

I trust it comes as no surprise to you, Dear, that neither of the Bible’s claims about the origins of humans (as given in its two, different genesis myths) is worth the paper (from the city of Byblos) used to write them! Meanwhile, science has been working on its own “Adam and Eve story”, which you probably know, but I think that the following description is especially well written. The author is Doug Linder.

* Go to other chapters *via*

<http://zenofzero.net/>

Science's Eve ¹⁰

Dr. Lynn Margulis thinks humans are, essentially, a colony of closely associated bacteria. When she first proposed her theory in *The Origin of Eukaryotic Cells* in 1970, the ideas proved so controversial that they “could not even be discussed at respectable scientific meetings.” Today, however, the theory that most scientists rejected out of hand has earned, in the words of biologist Richard Dawkins, “triumphant near-universal acceptance.”

The human story, as Margulis first saw it, began about 3.2 billion years ago when the only inhabitants on earth were bacteria. About that time, two primitive species of bacteria, a “mother” bacteria (*Bdellavibrio*) and a “father” bacteria (*Thermoplasma acidophilium*) started “exchanging energy” in a stable and dependable way that led to the formation of all subsequent life forms. This happened when the free-living bacteria took up residence in large “eukaryotic” cells. Confined within the large cells, the bacteria transformed into swarming elliptical membrane-filled bodies called mitochondria. With the formation of mitochondria began the flow of a river of DNA that sweeps through three billion years to include us all.

According to Margulis, each one of the hundred trillion cells in the human body is an enclosed garden of specially tamed and always multiplying bacteria. Not only is every man not an island, in the vision of Margulis, he is in essence a community of communities. The mitochondria perform essential functions, such as allowing chain reactions to occur that are critical to breathing and digestion. As Richard Dawkins notes, “Without our mitochondria, we’d die in a second.”

Mitochondria, with their own simple DNA that is not affected by sexual mixing, come from our mothers only. Your mitochondria came exclusively from your mother’s mother’s mother – and so on, back generation after generation, to the beginning of our species. The culture of mitochondria in the female egg seeds a newborn’s body, while whatever mitochondria might be in the sperm are lost with the tail at the time of egg fertilization. The female-only transmission of mitochondria, coupled with its slow rate of genetic mutation, make its DNA ideal for tracing and dating maternal ancestry.

Researchers in the 1980s used computers to analyze samples of DNA drawn from 135 diverse women from all over the globe – Chinese, African tribeswomen, Australian Aborigines, Native Americans, Europeans. The researchers discovered that the family trees of these women all led back to Africa. Remarkably, the analysis demonstrated that genetic differences among the various people within Africa all are twice as great as the differences between all other population groups. This strongly suggests that all the population groups outside Africa are descended from a small band of humans that left Africa – probably about 50,000 to 80,000 years ago. In a sense, we are all Africans.

¹⁰ Copied from <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/gen1st.htm>.

The ancestral human population that lived in Africa started to split up roughly 150,000 years ago, when the mitochondrial tree makes its first branches within the African continent. The very root of the mitochondrial tree seems to lie in the northwestern Kalahari Desert in southern Africa. The true home of Eve – Mitochondrial Eve – is not a lush Garden of Eden, but [is now!] a hot African desert.

The mitochondrial research matches nicely with recent genetic research using the Y chromosome, transmitted exclusively by males, which also points to southern Africa as the home of Adam. Unlike the Genesis version of human origins, however, the Y chromosomal Adam and Mitochondrial Eve that our genetic trees trace back to did not have the planet to themselves – there probably, in fact, were thousands of other humans living at the time. Moreover, other humans had lived and died long before they did. All we know is that these two humans, alone among the population of their time, can claim an unbroken line of sons and daughters that persists to this day.

Biologist E. O. Wilson sees the human story, as revealed by genetic research, as the possible basis for spiritual values. “We need to create a new epic based on the origins of humanity,” Wilson asserted, adding: “Homo sapiens have had one hell of a history! And I am speaking of deep history – evolutionary, genetic history – and then, added on to that and interacting with it, the cultural history recorded for the past 10,000 years or so.”

All of which, Dear, reminds me of a quotation whose authorship I haven’t been able to identify (beyond “anonymous”). It appears on the web in many different versions, all similar to:

If the Bible (or the Koran, the Book of Mormon, etc.) is mistaken about where we came from, then how can we trust it to tell us where we’re going?

In any event, Dear, parts of the “cultural history” (mentioned in the above from E.O. Wilson) that have impacted you include the Mormon silliness that “Hebrews are the original ancestors of the Native Americans of the Western Hemisphere” and the Bible’s silly flood myth about Noah. In a later chapter (Qx21), I’ll show you how mitochondrial DNA studies have exposed the silliness of that particular piece of Mormon dogma (the original Americans weren’t Hebrews; they were Asians). Meanwhile, my goal for the remainder of this chapter is to show you some of the silliness in the Bible’s flood myth. In the next chapter, I’ll show you its unequivocal, Sumerian origin.

THE SILLINESS OF THE BIBLE'S FLOOD MYTH

To begin to expose the silliness of the Bible's flood myth, I'll remind you that, all of the (many!) worldwide flood myths propose what's physically impossible. Undoubtedly concocted as extrapolations from floods people had experienced, the worldwide flood myths describe floods with sufficient water to cover the entire Earth, up to the height of the tallest mountains. But given that Mt. Everest has been around for at least 100,000 years, such a flood would have required a water height, above current sea level, of more than 35,000 feet, i.e., about 7 miles! Thus, the simple-minded people who concocted these myths failed to consider the obvious question: where did all that water come from?! The more water that would evaporate from the ocean to supply the rain, the lower the seas would fall!

Certainly, we can forgive primitive mythmakers for not understanding the hydrological cycle (water evaporates, mostly from the ocean, then condenses in clouds, causing rain and snow, which eventually returns to the ocean, mostly in rivers). But can you imagine, Dear, that some people in this day-and-age still don't understand this?! Of course it's the case that, if the land were lowered, then the land could be submerged in the oceans, but if that occurred, the Bible's flood myth should have described not enormous rains but enormous sinking of the land (with associated earthquakes) and, then, waters flooding in from the ocean – as some of the myths did describe, at least those told by the (more advanced!) Native Americans, Pacific Islander, and Aboriginal Australians!

In any event, the story in the Bible about Noah and the flood is therefore just that: a story, dreamt up in some ancient person's imagination – possibly stimulated by the inundation of the original fresh-water “Black Sea” by ocean water from the Mediterranean Sea, possibly stimulated by river-valley floods, and possibly stimulated by finding fossilized sea shells or similar on mountains (because mountains rose, not the sea). Much later, some Hebrew shepherd (who probably didn't know even how to build a boat!) no doubt borrowed the myth, adding reasons for the flood that would fit the imagined behavior of his imagined god.

Yet in spite of the silliness of the idea of any worldwide flood, Dear, I encourage you not to waste your time arguing with a “true believer” about whether or not the Noah flood-myth (or any other myth) is “true” – unless they try to pollute your children's or grandchildren's minds with such

nonsense in the schools, or unless they try to indoctrinate them with the “truth” of such nonsense. For example, don’t ask the obvious question: to cover everything with water, including all mountains, where did the water come from? For if you did so, you’d get nowhere (except into trouble with the “believers”), because “true believers” would probably answer with something similar to: if God can make heaven and earth and humans, don’t you think He could make a little extra water?

As a different example, Dear, suppose I told you that, yesterday, I discovered a “worm hole” and traveled through it to another galaxy, visited a planet there for a few days, and returned to typing at this keyboard all within a fraction of a second. If I told you such a story (of course similar to Carl Sagan’s book *Contact*, which was made into a movie of the same name, starring Jodi Foster), I’d encourage you to be polite (e.g., ask “How was the weather there?”) and then maybe tell your parents about your concern about my sanity. If someone else told you such a story, if you were certain that you were safe testing the validity of the story, and if you were at all interested in the story or the person, then you could say something similar to: “Wow – did you bring anything back with you?” And if the person claims to have done so, then by all means carefully examine what was returned – especially for a label such as “Made in China”!

My points, Dear, are these: 1) Be skeptical (try to match your grandmother’s skepticism; she’s the most skeptical person I’ve ever met; she doesn’t believe even that...), and 2) Relax – that is, Dear, it’s never the listener’s job to prove that a story isn’t true. As David Spitz said: “...it is [scarcely necessary to disprove what has never been proved](#)”; maybe Christopher Hitchens said it better: “[What can be asserted without evidence can also be dismissed without evidence.](#)” That is, Dear, for every story or myth, and especially for all the mythical stories in all “holy books”, it’s the job of the “believers” to prove their stories; it isn’t the job of the rest of us to disprove their stories; we get the fun-job of being skeptics!

For example, you can have fun playing skeptic with the Noah myth. Thus, suppose for the moment that we ignore the physical impossibility of enough water being evaporated from the oceans to submerge the land and, instead, suppose we examine God’s statement (here taken from *Genesis 7, 4-5*, of *The New English Bible*): “[In seven days’ time I will send rain over the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe off the face of the Earth every living thing that I made.](#)” To pull off that stunt (i.e., to murder every living

thing), God would need the flood to cover all mountains, and sure enough, *Genesis* 7, 19 states: “**More and more the waters increased over the Earth until they covered all the high mountains everywhere under heaven.**”

So, Dear, given that the top of Mt. Everest is about 35,000 feet above sea level, that means that the required rainfall rate would be about 35,000 feet ÷ (40 days x ~25 hours per day = 1000 hours), i.e., a rainfall rate of 35 feet per hour. Meanwhile, Dear, maybe you’ve heard reports that record rainfall rates, e.g., during hurricanes, are about 1 foot per hour; so, maybe this suggestion of a rainfall rate 35 times as great as our records wouldn’t be too tough a stunt for a god to pull off – even if he was the type of god who tired easily (needing to rest one of every seven days, doncha know).

There would, however, be major problems for Noah. To supply that much moisture (to then condense in cloud and form rain), the winds supplying the moisture (because air can only hold a limited amount of moisture as vapor) would need to correspondingly increase by a factor of about 35 over hurricane speeds, i.e., to about 3,500 miles per hour! [And if the analysis is done carefully (say with a numerical model of the world’s atmosphere), then the result would be that, near the oceans, the winds would need to be much larger – to supply sufficient water-vapor inland.] Now, I don’t want to rain on someone’s parade (or even on someone’s flood myth), but if you thought that the Titanic had problems, think of Noah and his boat full of animals!

In hurricanes, with sustained winds greater than 70 mph – especially when winds are ~150 mph – waves become so enormous that the distinction between the sea surface and the air essentially disappears: huge waves (as tall as the Titanic) get blown apart! At higher wind speeds, at a tenth of the wind speed needed to produce the rain in the Noah myth (i.e., at about 350 miles per hour), in the center of a tornado, houses get blown apart (in part because of pressure differentials). So, Dear, imagine what would have happened to Noah’s rickety old ark! Further, to survive wind speeds that are 10 times larger still (with more than 1,000 times more power, because wind power increases as the cube of the wind speed), Noah would have needed not an ark but a Space Shuttle! All of which of course goes to “prove” that NASA needs to redesign its Space Shuttle: rather than those tiles that keep flying off (e.g., during the tragic re-entry of the Columbia into the Earth’s atmosphere), all NASA engineers need to do is: “**make yourself an ark with ribs of cypress, cover it with reeds, and coat it inside and out with pitch...**”!

But again, Dear, I'd discourage you from bringing your skepticism to the attention of "true believers". It's an easy way to make enemies (some crazy enough to try to kill you), and anyway, it won't do any good. For example, a response to the above skepticism (similar to the response to skepticism that God made the Earth and all living things in six days, when the fossil evidence suggests that the time period is closer to six billion years!) might be: "In those days, days were longer – maybe as long as what we now call months – so, the rainfall rate wasn't even as much as one foot per hour." To that comment, you could respond (but shouldn't): "Well, if Noah's days were the same as our months, then that means 40 of his days would be the same as 40 months – or more than three years. I wonder, then: how much does an elephant eat in three years? And what about the dinosaurs?!"

Instead, Dear, just let the believers be. And meanwhile, as I've already mentioned, many "believers" have encountered so many problems with the silliness in the Bible (and, similarly, in the Koran and the Book of Mormon) that they've switched from being "literalists" to become "allegorists". To illustrate, consider the following quotation from an article by Mark Isaak (the same fellow from whom I quoted so many flood myths).¹¹ In his "Problems with a Global Flood", he provides an impressively thorough job of showing that the Noah flood myth is ridiculous. He then ends his analysis with the following, to which I've added the notes in brackets.

How can a literal interpretation [of the flood myth in the Bible] be appropriate if the text is self-contradictory? *Genesis* 6:20 and 7:14-15 states there were two of each kind of fowl and clean beasts, yet *Gen.* 7:2-3, 5 states they came in sevens.

How can a literal interpretation be consistent with reality? How could Noah have gathered male and female of each kind (*Gen.* 7:15-16) when some species are asexual, others are parthenogenetic and have only females ["as a normal process in some invertebrates and lower plants"] and others (such as earthworms) are hermaphrodites ["having both male and female sex organs, e.g., plants having stamens and pistils in the same flower"]? And what about social animals like ants and termites that need the whole nest to survive?

Why stop with the Flood story? If your style of Biblical interpretation makes you take the Flood literally, then shouldn't you also believe in a flat and stationary earth? (*Daniel* 4:10, *Matthew*. 4:8, *Chronicles* 16:30, *Psalms* 93:1...)... Does a global flood make the whole Bible less credible? Davis Young, an Evangelical and geologist, wrote [in *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*, Artisan Sales, Thousand Oaks, CA, p. 163]:

¹¹ Again, his excellent website is at <http://home.earthlink.net/~misaak/>.

...Although many who have no scientific training have been swayed by creationist arguments, the unbelieving scientist will reason that a Christianity [or any religion!] that believes in such nonsense must be a religion not worthy of his interest... Modern creationism in this sense is apologetically and evangelistically ineffective. It could even be a hindrance to the gospel.

Another possible danger is that in presenting the gospel to the lost [☺] and in defending God's truth [☹], we ourselves will seem to be false. It is time for Christian people [as well as Muslims and Mormons] to recognize that the defense of this modern, young-Earth, flood-geology creationism [based on the Noah myth] is simply not truthful. It is simply not in accord with the facts... Creationism must be abandoned... before harm is done...

Does the Flood story indicate an omnipotent God?

- If God is omnipotent, why not kill what He wanted killed directly? Why resort to a roundabout method that requires innumerable additional miracles?
- The whole idea was to rid the wicked people from the world. Did it work?

Finally, even if the flood model weren't riddled by all these problems, why should we accept it? What it does attempt to explain is already explained far more accurately, consistently, and thoroughly by conventional geology and biology, and the flood model leaves many other things unexplained, even unexplainable...

Meanwhile, Dear, there's a little information in the flood myth, but relatively little: 1) floods occurred, 2) the myth makers knew how to build boats, 3) they didn't realize that there's a limit to the size of boats that can be made out of wood (a limit smaller than the size of Noah's ark!),¹² and 4) they had some ideas about what was right versus wrong (which is the alleged reason for the flood). But again, Dear, I want to postpone my comments on the Bible's atrocious ideas about morality until later chapters. Instead, I'll now turn toward the "Sumerian connection" for this story about Noah.

¹² Dear, I'll leave to you the examination of the following point as a homework problem! You can find the details on the internet; for example start with Mark Isaac's home page (already referenced) in which you can find the following (and he gives additional references):

Wood is not the best material for ship building. It is not enough that a ship be built to hold together; it must also be sturdy enough that the changing stresses don't open gaps in its hull. Wood is simply not strong enough to prevent separation between the joints, especially in the heavy seas that the Ark would have encountered. The longest wooden ships in modern seas are about 300 feet, and these require reinforcing with iron straps and leak so badly they must be constantly pumped. The ark [reportedly] was 450 feet long (*Genesis 6:15*).

TOWARD THE ORIGIN OF THE NOAH FLOOD-MYTH

At the outset, I should repeat that historians have invested enormous effort trying to uncover sources of various myths contained in the Bible – and I again admit to being overwhelmed by the enormity of both their efforts and their accomplishments. Consequently, once again I plan just to quote the results reported by others and invite you to dig deeper on your own – although, again Dear, please don't waste too much of your time on such endeavors. Don't forget that, at best, the task of trying to identify sources of biblical myths is like trying to uncover origins of some crazy TV cartoons!

Nonetheless, feeling obligated to try to help my grandchildren (as well as other children), I've spent considerable time and effort digging into details of similarities between biblical myths and myths of the ancient Sumerians. But after investing substantial effort in the task, I finally decided to give up showing you anything original and just to copy what Christopher Siren has written and published on the internet.¹³ It's obvious that he knows an enormous amount more about mythology than I will ever even want to know! Further, if you want to learn more than what he has written, then you can search on the internet (e.g., using the names of any of the gods he mentions) – although, again I encourage you to restrain yourself, because my experience is that a person can easily become mired in all these myths!

In any event, what follows is Siren's response to the indicated "Frequently Asked Question" (FAQ), complete with his references [and I've added a few notes in brackets, such as these]:

VI. I've heard that there are a lot of Biblical parallels in Sumerian literature. What are they?

Traces of Sumerian religion survive today and are reflected in writings of the Bible. As late as Ezekiel, there is mention of a Sumerian deity. In *Ezekiel 8:14*, the prophet sees women of Israel weeping for [the Sumerian God] Tammuz (Dumuzi) during a drought.

The bulk of Sumerian parallels can, however be found much earlier, in the book of Genesis. As in *Genesis*, the Sumerians' world is formed out of the watery abyss, and the heavens and earth are divinely separated from one another by a solid dome. The second chapter of *Genesis* introduces the paradise Eden, a place which is similar to the Sumerian Dilmun, described in the myth of *Enki and Ninhursag*.

¹³ Available at <http://home.comcast.net/~chris.s/sumer-faq.html>.

Dilmun is a pure, bright, and holy land – now often identified with Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. It is blessed by [the god] Enki to have overflowing, sweet water. Enki fills it with lagoons and palm trees. He impregnates Ninhursag and causes eight new plants to grow from the earth. Eden, “in the East” (*Gen. 2: 8*), has a river which also ‘rises’ or overflows to form four rivers including the Tigris and Euphrates. It too is lush and has fruit bearing trees. (*Gen. 2: 9-10*)

In the second version of the creation of man [as given in the Bible’s *Genesis*] “The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.” Enki and Ninmah (Ninhursag) use a similar method in creating man. Nammu, queen of the abyss and Enki’s mother, bids Enki to “Knead the heart of the clay that is over the Abzu” and “give it form”... From there the similarities cease as the two create several malformed humans, and then the two deities get into an argument.

Returning to Enki and Ninhursag, we find a possible parallel to the creation of Eve. Enki consumed the plants that were Ninhursag’s children and so was cursed by Ninhursag, receiving one wound for each plant consumed. Enlil and a fox act on Enki’s behalf to call back Ninhursag in order to undo the damage. She joins with him again and bears eight new children, each of whom is the cure to one of his wounds. The one who cures his rib is named Ninti, whose name means the Queen of months... the lady of the rib, or she who makes live. This association carries over to Eve... In *Genesis*, Eve is fashioned from Adam’s rib and her name *hawwa* is related to the Hebrew word *hay* or living...

The prologue of *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Underworld* may contain the predecessor to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This tree not only contains a crafty serpent but also Lilith, the legendary first wife of Adam. The huluppu tree is transplanted by Inanna from the banks of the Euphrates to her garden in Uruk, where she finds that:

...a serpent who could not be charmed made its nest in the roots of the tree, The Anzu bird set his young in the branches of the tree, And the dark maid Lilith built her home in the trunk...

Another possible Sumerian carry-over related to the fall of man is the lack of “pangs of childbearing” for those in Dilmun. In particular, Ninhursag gives birth in nine days, not nine months, and the [birth is] “like good princely cream”... or “fine oil”... [By the way, Dear, a similar birth (of Jesus) is described in the Koran.]

The clearest Biblical parallel comes from the story of the Flood. In the Sumerian version, the pious Ziusudra is informed of the gods’ decision to destroy mankind by listening to a wall. He too [i.e., as with Noah] weathers the deluge aboard a huge boat. The flood lasts a long time, but Ziusudra comes to rest within seven days and not the near year of the Bible. He does not receive a covenant, but is given eternal life.

Dear: This “clearest Biblical parallel” (that is, that the myth about Noah and the flood was “borrowed” from earlier Mesopotamian myths) is contained within an astounding myth known as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. And given that it’s such an amazing story, what I want to do, soon, is start a new chapter dealing with this myth – after you’ve done another “homework assignment”!

In later chapters, I’ll be asking you to do some additional “homework” (to read Homer’s two books, the *ILYAD* and the *ODYSSEY*, and to read the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Koran), but now (or at least, after just a few more paragraphs!), I want – even more! – for you to read *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. I think it’s important for you to read Homer’s epics, because they were so influential for subsequent ideas developed by the ancient Greeks; it’s important for you to read the Bible and the Book of Mormon, because you should study, by yourself, the source of your indoctrination; and you should read the Koran, to try to get some idea about what some of the crazy Islamist extremists are “thinking” about. But, Dear, it’s easy to argue that it’s of-the-order-of a hundred times more important that you read *The Epic of Gilgamesh*!

First, you’ll probably be pleased to learn that *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is only about a tenth the size of Homer’s stories and about a hundredth the size of the Bible! More significantly, though, it was written at least 1,000 years (!) before either Homer’s books or the oldest parts of the Bible (viz., *Genesis* and *Exodus*). In fact, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is the world’s oldest known written story. A rough comparison of dates is as follows:

<i>Story</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>About “Events” Occurring</i>
<i>Gilgamesh</i>	~2000 BCE	~2800 BCE
<i>The Bible’s Genesis</i>	~1000 BCE	~1800 BCE
<i>The ILLYAD</i>	~ 700 BCE	~1200 BCE
<i>The Bible’s Exodus</i>	~ 400 BCE	~1200 BCE

Further, Dear, within *The Epic of Gilgamesh* are stories that were later incorporated into the Old Testament’s *Genesis* – and they were incorporated with many significant errors, which distort the clearer messages contained in the amazingly perceptive story of Gilgamesh.

Let me emphasize the importance of this “homework assignment” as follows. Given the indoctrination that my grandchildren have received,

* Go to other chapters *via*

quite likely the easiest way they could break free from this indoctrination and thereby to become adults is to read *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. And of course I think that not only my grandchildren should know about Gilgamesh: I would argue that no one should graduate from high school until they've read and understood *The Epic*! It would be good, also, if high school graduates had read at least Homer's ILLYAD, at least one of Shakespeare's plays, and even the Bible (so that they would better understand what has screwed-up our culture so badly), but again, Dear, I think that it's imperative that you read about Gilgamesh.

To find this story, Dear, type "Gilgamesh" in any good internet search engine, such as Google. You'll then be given at least 50,000 (!) "hits". Then, start exploring! Many of the "hits" will be discussions about the "poem", itself. Eventually, though, you'll find some translations of the original clay tablets. To cut the number of hits down to a few thousand (!), type: "Translation of the Epic of Gilgamesh". You'll find many. I suggest, Dear, that you explore a number of them, searching for one that's relatively easy to read. Some of these translations are difficult to read, because their translators have been careful to show the reader the uncertainties in the translation and where pieces of the original clay tablets are damaged or missing, whereas other "translators" seem to have tried to help the reader by "smoothing out some of the rough spots."

One version of the story that's particularly easy to read but that doesn't identify the translator (possibly because it's a composite of many translations) is at www.lavender.fortunecity.com/scarface/599/epicofgi.htm. I gave you that web address specifically, Dear, because it contains the following "Cast of Characters" and "Glossary", which I'll quote here in case that, when you're reading a particular version of "The Epic", you become confused about names – in which case you could check the following list.

Some confusion may result because so many gods are named in *The Epic*, and some of these names are different from those that appear in *The Enuma Elish*. One reason for the differences in names appears to be that the two "poems" were written at different times by different peoples. For example, in the previous chapter I quoted *The Enuma Elish*, which named many gods and contained suggestions about how humans were created (by Ea, at Marduk's suggestion). These stories and gods were Babylonian, roughly from after 1800 BCE; the version of *The Enuma Elish* quoted was probably written in about 1200 BCE.

* Go to other chapters via

In contrast, in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* you'll be reading about Sumerian gods from about 1,000 years earlier than the Babylonians; therefore, you'll be reading about still other gods. Further, not only did the names of the gods change with time (and different gods were named) but within different cities during the same time period, different gods were considered "supreme". But I don't think it's worthwhile to try to clear up this confusion in the names (and roles) of the different gods. Instead, Dear, I encourage you to just "go with the flow", accepting for the names and roles of the different gods whatever the storyteller desires!

So, with that "introduction", I'll end this chapter with the following information about *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (quoted from the reference already given).¹⁴

CAST OF CHARACTERS

GILGAMESH: The hero and king of Uruk {known in *Genesis* as the city of Erech}

ENKIDU: His new friend

NINSUN: Wise goddess and mother of Gilgamesh

SHAMBAT: Sacred girl who brought the two friends together

ANNU [ANU]: Father of the Gods and patron of the city of Uruk

HUMBABA: Monster god who must be killed

ISHTAR: The King's spurned and vengeful suitor – and a goddess

ENLIL: The god who unleashes the great flood

SIDUR: The bar maid [another goddess] with worldly advice

URHANIBAI: The boatman who gives passage to paradise

UTNAPISHTIM: Who holds the secret of eternal life

¹⁴ Dear: You may also find the following information to be useful; I've copied it from "The Epic of Gilgamesh: A Spiritual Biography", by W.T.S. Thackara (at <http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/world/mideast/mi-wtst.htm>):

Gilgamesh is a human story and it begins with his beginnings, not with the story of cosmic genesis, which nevertheless underpins the tale. Although no Sumerian theogony or creation story has yet been found, one has been provisionally reconstructed. Briefly, the gods and goddesses unfold from the nameless divine mystery as follows: in the beginning there was An (Babylonian Anu), first-born of the primeval sea, i.e., waters of Space. He is forefather of the gods and ruler of the heaven beyond the heavens. Like the Greek Ouranos [Uranus] he was united to Earth (Ki) and begot Enlil, Lord of Air, the breath and word and 'spirit of the heart of Anu'. Enlil begot the Moon, Nanna/Suen (Babylonian Sin), and Nanna in turn begot two of the most important deities in Gilgamesh: Utu (Shamash), the Sun, omniscient god of Justice; and Inanna (Ishtar-Venus), Queen of Heaven, goddess of Love and Strife. Other major characters include Enki (Ea), a 'son of Anu', Lord of Earth and the watery Abyss, also Lord of Wisdom and a co-creator and benefactor of humanity; and Aruru ('seed-loosener'), sister of Enlil and goddess of creation ('lady of the silence').

GLOSSARY

The following people, gods, goddesses, and places are mentioned... Since there is no scholarly certainty about the pronunciation of some of the terms, phonetic pronunciations assimilated from various sources are included here. These do not pretend to be the final word – merely a device to help the reader experience a fluid reading, unhampered by the otherwise inevitable stumbling over unfamiliar terms.

Anu (ah' noo) – father of the gods and sky god associated with all heavenly wonder; father of Ishtar. The city of Uruk was sacred to him.

Anunnaki (ah noo nah' kee) – spirit gods of the underworld who judged and determined the fates of the dead.

Aruru (ah roo' roo) – great mother goddess of creation who molds Enkidu from clay in the images of Anu and Ninurta. She is also called Mammetum in her role of decreeing destinies.

Dilmun (deel'moon) – paradise regained, land where the sun rises, where the deified Utnapishtim settled after surviving the great flood.

Ea (ay' ah) – god of water and wisdom, protector of human beings; his breath-born words encourage hope. He is also called Enki.

Eanna (ay ahn' ah) – the sacred temple of Anu and Ishtar in the city of Uruk.

Egalmah (ay' gahl mah) – the sacred temple of Ninsun in the city of Uruk.

Enkidu (en'kee doo) – a “natural” man created by Aruru, modeled after Anu and Ninurta, to become a rival then friend/alter ego to Gilgamesh. He is introduced to civilization by his union with Shamhat, the sacred temple girl.

Enlil (en' lil) – god of earth, wind, and air associated with the savage arts of soldiers. He sent the great flood, which drowned all but Utnapishtim and his family, and sent Humbaba to guard the cedar forest.

Ennugi (en noo' gee) – minor gods or demons.

Gilgamesh (gil'gah mesh) – hero of the epic, son of the goddess Ninsun, and possibly of the former king of Uruk, Lugalbanda. His insatiable appetites and unbridled behavior drive his subjects to seek help from the gods to divert his overabundant energies from their sons, daughters, and brides. Gilgamesh is an historic figure, as well as the legendary hero of a number of ancient tales.

Humbaba (hoom bah'bah) – nature god, assigned by Enlil to oversee the cedar forest; slain by Gilgamesh and Enkidu. He is also called Huwawa.

Igigi (ee gee' gee) – collective name for the great gods of heaven associated with blood, madness, and revenge; often associated with the Anunnaki.

Irkalla (ear kahl' lah) – a name for the underworld, also used in place of Ereshkigal, the queen of the underworld and wife of Nergal.

Ishara (ee shah' rah) – see Ishtar.

Ishtar (eesh' tar) – goddess of love and sexuality; also of war; patron of Uruk with her father Anu. She wrought deadly havoc after her rejection by Gilgamesh. She is called Ishara in her role during the sacred ritual of marriage, and is also called Inanna and Irnini.

Ishullanu (ee shoo lah' noo) – gardener of Anu, one of the many discarded lovers of Ishtar.

Lugalbanda (loo gahl bahn' dah) – shepherd and early king of Uruk, thought to be the father of Gilgamesh. He was later deified.

Mt. Mashu (mah' shoo) – twin peaks representing the place where the sun would rise and fall.

Mt. Nimush (nee' moosh) – peak on which Utnapishtim's ark came to rest; formerly called Nisir.

Namtar (nahm' tahr) – underworld demon linked with fate as a negative destiny.

Nergal (near' gahl) – chief god of the underworld responsible for plagues; chief enforcer and soldier-in-arms.

Ninsun (neen' soon) – wise goddess, mother of Gilgamesh, wife of Lugalbanda. Her name means "lady wild cow."

Ninurta (neen oor'tah) – god of war and agriculture, associated with the south wind. Enkidu is created partially in his image.

Nippur (nee poor') – city sacred to Enlil; religious capital of ancient Mesopotamia.

Nisaba (nee sah'bah) – goddess of grain; often depicted with hair of breeze-blown grain. Enkidu's hair resembled hers.

Shamash (shah' mahsh) – sun god and god of justice who despises evil. He encourages Gilgamesh to destroy Humbaba and protects him in the endeavor.

Shamhat (shahm' haht) – sacred girl most likely from the temple of Ishtar who brings civilization to Enkidu through her union with him.

Shuruppak (shoo' roo pahk) – an ancient city of Sumer located north of Uruk, former home of Utnapishtim, from where the gods issued the great flood.

Siduri (see door' ee) – barmaid who lives near the salvific shore. She advises Gilgamesh to abandon his quest for immortality and enjoy the temporal pleasures allotted to mortals while he may.

Sin (seen) – moon god.

Tammuz (tahm'mooz) – shepherd of Uruk, god of vegetation; virgin boy until his union with Ishtar; then another of her discarded lovers. He is also called Dumuzi.

Ubaratutu (oo bahr ah too' too) – god and father of Utnapishtim; former king of Shuruppak.

Ulay (oo lie') – river where Gilgamesh and Enkidu rested.

Urshanabi (oor shah nah' bee) – ferryman and sailor god whose boat crosses the waters separating the garden of the sun from the paradise where the deified Utnapishtim lives. He conveys Gilgamesh to Utnapishtim.

Uruk (oo' rook) – ancient city on the Euphrates River, a center of Sumerian culture circa 3000 BCE; kingdom of Gilgamesh and sacred to Anu and Ishtar.

Utnapishtim (cot nah peesh' teem) – legendary survivor of the great flood who was granted immortality. Gilgamesh seeks from him the secret of eternal life. He is also called Ziusudra.

Well, Dear, that ends my quoting “the list of characters” from the indicated reference. If you want more information about the Sumerian gods (and later Mesopotamian gods), see <http://www.crystalinks.com/sumergods.html>. Otherwise, after you get some exercise, please seek out *The Epic of Gilgamesh* on the internet and read it – for you – for the fun of it!