

## SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

### Genesis 6-9

#### HOW DID GENESIS 5 END?

##### Genesis 5:28–32 (NRSV)

<sup>28</sup> When Lamech had lived one hundred eighty-two years, he became the father of a son; <sup>29</sup> he named him Noah, saying, *“Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands.”* <sup>30</sup> Lamech lived after the birth of Noah five hundred ninety-five years, and had other sons and daughters. <sup>31</sup> Thus all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy-seven years; and he died. <sup>32</sup> After Noah was five hundred years old, Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

#### NOAH'S FATHER

Lamech is Noah's father? Isn't he the bad-boy descendant of Cain? Nope! Wrong Lamech! If we pay careful attention to the genealogy lists in Genesis 5, we notice that Noah's father comes from the line of Seth (he's a Sethite), not Cain (he's not a Cainite). The bad-boy Lamech was Cain's great, great, great, grandson. This is a different Lamech.

Notice what Lamech says about his son, Noah: *“Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands.”* Noah's name in Hebrew may mean “to rest” but there is also a folk etymology that Noah is to bring us “relief, comfort.”

#### THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL CORRECTED

East of Eden things begin to go in a downward spiral. Humanity multiplied and violence reigned. Cain killed his brother Abel. Lamech killed a man simply for wounding him and boasted about it. Sin and evil were intensifying. What was God to do? How would God respond?

What we have in the flood story is a reversal of the creation story. The earth sinks back into the chaotic waters that God cleared away on the first day of creation. In the ark, God carries Noah's family through the flood unharmed to start afresh in a world returned to innocence. It's a new beginning and a chance to have a different ending.

How does a good God wipe out all of humanity except one family? Isn't this the story of an angry God?

No. It's the story of a heart-broken God; a God full of sorrow and grief, not vengeance. The story of the flood is one of God taking action to restrain humanity's ever-increasing evil; to stop humanity's slide into increasing evil. It's not the act of a capricious God who engages in wanton destruction. God is restoring the goodness of God's creation. The flood is about God's mercy and God's commitment to the goodness of all that God had made. God preserves one family and the patriarch becomes the new Adam told once again to be fruitful and multiply. God establishes a covenant with Noah and his family.

**Theme Alert:** In the midst of evil, a righteous one appears, passes through the chaotic waters, and comes out the other side into a new creation, bring about a new covenant of life and peace.

#### NEPHILIM

Nephilim, people of the pre-flood generation, the offspring of human women and divine beings (Genesis 6:1–4). Their generation and their conduct seem to have provoked the flood as punishment (6:5–8:22). In Numbers 13:33 the Israelite spies describe the inhabitants of Hebron as Nephilim, so large and powerful that “we seemed like grasshoppers.” Since all of the Nephilim supposedly perished in the flood, this latter reference to Nephilim in Hebron is generally taken as figurative; the term “Nephilim” had come to be used as a description for unusually powerful foes.

2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 are the NT allusions to the Nephilim. Here they are identified as angels who rebelled and have been imprisoned by God. The root *npl*, “to fall,” seems to be the basis of Nephilim, i.e., “the fallen ones.” This may refer to their fall from heaven, their “fall” into sin, or their fallen status as dead at the time when the events are recorded.

## BABYLONIAN FLOOD MYTHS

### THE EPIC OF ATRAHASIS

Atrahasis is the name of this story's Noah figure. Why did the flood happen in the story of Atrahasis? The high god and god of weather, Enlil, wanted to destroy humans for making too much noise. Atrahasis, with the help of the water god Ea, escaped the wrath of Enlil by building a large boat in which to save humanity.

Tablet II begins with more overpopulation of humans and the god Enlil sending first famine and drought at formulaic intervals of 1200 years to reduce the population. In this epic Enlil is depicted as a cruel, capricious god while Enki is depicted as a kind, helpful god, perhaps because priests of Enki were writing and copying the story. Tablet II ends with Enlil's decision to destroy humankind with a flood and Enki bound by an oath to keep the plan secret.

Tablet III of the Atrahasis Epic contains the flood story. It tells how the god Enki warns the hero Atrahasis ("Extremely Wise") of Shuruppak, speaking through a reed wall to dismantle his house and build a boat to escape the flood planned by the god Enlil to destroy humankind. The boat is to have a roof "like Apsu" (a subterranean, fresh water realm presided over by the god Enki), upper and lower decks, and to be sealed with bitumen. Atrahasis boards the boat with his family and animals and seals the door. The storm and flood begin. Even the gods are afraid. In tablet III iv, lines 7-9 the words "river" and "riverbank" are used, which probably mean the Euphrates River, because Atrahasis is listed in WB-62 as a ruler of Shuruppak which was on the Euphrates River.



After seven days the flood ends and Atrahasis offers sacrifices to the gods. Enlil is furious with Enki for violating his oath. But Enki denies violating his oath and argues: "I made sure life was preserved." Enki and Enlil agree on other means for controlling the human population.

### THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

In the epic of Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh (the king of Uruk who lived around 2,500 BC) was two-thirds god and one-third human and had regular dealings with the gods. After the death of his dear friend Enkidu, Gilgamesh takes a journey to find the secret of immortality. This quest leads him to Utnapishtim, this story's Noah figure. He had obtained immortality from the gods and Gilgamesh hoped he could tease the secret out of him. But he tells Gilgamesh that his immortality came through special circumstances: he was the sole survivor of a great flood. We aren't told in this story specifically what led to the flood, but we are told that the god Ea had second thoughts and told Utnapishtim to build a boat with specific dimensions and get as many animals on board as possible. He did and survived the flood, by the grace of Ea.

Some of the similarities between these two stories and Genesis are striking: the building of a large boat according to precise instructions and dimension; bringing animals on board as well as the family; sealing the door with pitch (tar); the boat coming to rest on a mountain; releasing birds to see if the waters had subsided.

Genesis looks so much like these other stories, especially Gilgamesh, that some sort of borrowing is not a far-fetched idea—the biblical writer may very well have taken some specific ideas from Gilgamesh and tweaked them for his story.

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLICAL FLOOD STORY

Bernhard Anderson suggested the following structure for the flood story, and many commentaries include it. The structure is a chiasmus, a common literary form in the Old Testament. A chiasmus is composed of a series of parallel (mirror-image) phrases in the following format, where A' parallels A—B' parallels B—and C' parallels C, as follows:

A

B

C

D  
C'  
B'  
A'

In a chiasmus, the movement proceeds in one direction until it reaches a center-point (D in the above example), and then it reverses. The chiasmus focuses our attention on this center phrase. That phrase is the hinge upon which the story turns—the key to understanding the story. The chiasmus for the Noah story is as follows:

- A. Violence in creation (6:11-12)
  - B. First divine speech: resolve to destroy (6:13-22)
    - C. Second divine speech: “enter ark” (7:1-10)
      - D. Beginning of flood (7:11-16)
        - E. The rising flood (7:17-24)
          - F. God remembers Noah
  - E’ The receding flood (8:1-5)
    - D’ Drying of the earth (8:6-14)
      - C’ Third divine speech: “leave ark” (9:1-17)
        - B’ God’s resolve to preserve order (8:20-22)
          - A’ Fourth divine speech: covenant (9:1-17)

In this chiasmus, the focus is on the center statement, “God remembers Noah.” That is the hinge upon which this story turns—the key to understanding Noah’s story.

#### **PARALLELS BETWEEN NOAH AND ADAM**

Scholars have noted a number of parallels between Noah and Adam—parallels that depict Noah as the new Adam, the new father of all humankind:

- In the creation story, God made a dome to separate “the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse” (1:6-7)—but in the flood story, “all the fountains of the great deep were burst open, and the sky’s windows were opened” (7:11)—effectively reversing the creation narrative.
- In the creation story, “God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (1:31)—but in the flood story, “God saw the earth, and saw that it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” (6:12).
- In the creation story, God created animals and humans (1:20-30). In the flood story, God saves animals and humans (8:1-19).
- In the creation story, God blessed the man and woman, and said, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it” (1:28). In the flood story, “God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth’” (9:1; see also 8:17).
- In the creation story, God gave the man and woman dominion “over every living thing that moves on the earth” (1:28). In the flood story, God gives Noah responsibility for insuring the survival of all the animals (6:19-21).
- In the creation story, Adam and Eve had three sons, Cain, Abel, and Seth (4:1-16; 5:3). In the flood story, Noah has three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth (6:10).
- In the creation story, one of Adam’s sons was cursed for murdering his brother (4:1-16). In the flood story, one of Noah’s sons is cursed for dishonoring his father (9:22, 25).
- In the creation story, in response to Adam’s sin, God cursed the ground, saying, “In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life,” effectively making him a tiller of the soil (3:17). In the flood story, Noah becomes the first person to plant a vineyard (9:20).
- In the creation story, the man and woman sinned by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree (3:1-7). In the flood story, Noah gets drunk on the fruit of a vine (9:21).
- In the creation story, God invited the man and woman to, “fill the earth, and subdue it” (1:28)—but in the flood story, “the earth was filled with violence” (6:11).
- In the creation story, the man and woman became “one flesh” (2:24)—but in the flood story, “all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” (6:12).
- In the creation story, God created “swarms of living creatures” (1:20)—but in the flood story, “All flesh died that moved on the earth, including birds, livestock, animals, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man” (7:21).

- In the creation story, “God’s Spirit was hovering over the surface of the waters” (1:2). In the flood story, “God made a wind to pass over the earth. The waters subsided” (8:1).
- Also, Noah is “the first man born after Adam’s death (a fact available to those with patience to add up the figures in 5:3-29)” (Towner, 85).

### PARALLELS BETWEEN NOAH AND MOSES

In like manner, scholars have noted a number of parallels between Noah and Moses, and consider Noah to be a prototype for Moses. In both accounts, there are references to:

- Clean and unclean animals (Genesis 7:2; 8:20; Leviticus 10:10; 11:32, etc.). The Genesis account preceded the Mosaic dietary laws, so clean and unclean in the earlier account had to refer only to the suitability for ritual sacrifice.
- Burnt offerings (Genesis 8:20; Exodus 10:25; 20:24; 24:5; 32:6).
- Lifeblood restrictions (Genesis 9:4-6; Exodus 23:18; 34:25; Leviticus 3:17).
- The number seven (Genesis 7:2-4, 10; 8:10, 12; Exodus 7:25; 12:15, 19; 13:6-7; 22:30; 23:15; 25:27; 29:30, 35, 37; 34:18; 37:23; 38:24-25, 28).
- The number forty (Genesis 7:4, 12, 17; 8:6; Exodus 16:35; 24:18; 26:19, 21; 34:28; 36:24, 26).
- The establishment of a covenant by God (Genesis 6:18; Exodus 6:4).
- Signs of a covenant, the rainbow (Genesis 9:12, 17) and the sabbath (Exodus 31:16-17).
- Teba, translated “ark” in the Genesis accounts (6:14-16, 18-19; 7:1, 7, 9, 13, 15, 17-18, 23; 8:1, 4, 6, 9-10, 13, 16, 19; 9:10, 18) and “basket” in the Exodus accounts (2:3, 5). These are the only places where the word teba is found in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word used for the Ark of the Covenant is aron—notteba.
- God commanding a person to build an ark (Genesis 6:14-16) and a tabernacle (Exodus 25-27) and providing elaborate specifications.
- The use of pitch to seal the ark (Genesis 6:14) and the basket (Exodus 2:3).
- The exacting obedience of Noah (Genesis 22) and Moses (Exodus 40:16).
- The flood that drowned most humans (Genesis 7) and the waters that drowned the Egyptian army (Exodus 14).
- Dry land (Genesis 7:22; Exodus 14:21).
- The covering of Noah’s ark (Genesis 8:13) and the covering for the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 26:14).
- But most especially, Noah was the agent through whom God worked to save humankind from sin, and Moses is the agent through whom God worked to save Israel from slavery.

### SAME STORY DIFFERENT SOURCES

The Priestly source is interested in an exact chronology, mentions that the Flood lasted 150 days and states that two animals of every kind entered the Ark; linguistically, this text is close to Ezekiel, which suggests a date in c.600 BCE, but this is not uncontested. The first Creation Story (Genesis 1) belongs to this source too.

The Yahwist source states that the Flood lasted 40 days and gives Noah the care for seven couples of clean animals and one couple of unclean animals. In any case, the second Creation story (*Genesis 2*) belongs to this source.

A redactor combined these two sources. The following table is a possible reconstruction; there are other theories.

### TWO SOURCES COMBINED

#### Priestly Source

#### Yahwist source

[6.1-8] When men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose. Then YHWH said, "My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown. YHWH saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only

evil continually. And YHWH was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

So YHWH said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of YHWH.

**[6.9-22]** These are the Records of Noah.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and set the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them."

Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

**[7.1-5]** Then YHWH said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate; and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive upon the face of all the earth. For in seven days I will send rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground."

And Noah did all that YHWH had commanded him.

**[7.6]** Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth.

**[7.7]** And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark, to escape the waters of the flood.

**[7.8-11]** Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.

**[7.12]** And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

**[7.13-16]** On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, they and every beast according to its kind, and all the cattle according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind, every bird of every sort. They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And they that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and YHWH shut him in.

**[7.17-18]** The flood continued forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters.

**[7.19-22]** And the waters prevailed so mightily upon the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; the waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, birds, cattle, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm upon the earth, and every man; everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.

**[7.23]** He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark.

**[7.24-8.5]** And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days. But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of a hundred and fifty days the waters had abated; and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

**[8.6-12]** At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made, and sent forth a raven; and it went



to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put forth his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days, and sent forth the dove; and she did not return to him any more.

**[8.13a]** In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth;

**[8.14-19]** In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

Then God said to Noah, "Go forth from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh - birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth - that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth." So Noah went forth, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. And every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves upon the earth, went forth by families out of the ark.

**[8.13b]** and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry.

**[8.20-22]** Then Noah built an altar to YHWH, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when YHWH smelled the pleasing odor, YHWH said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

**[9.1-17]** And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man; of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image. And you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on the earth and multiply in it."

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

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

**[9.18-27]** The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was peopled.

Noah was the first tiller of the soil. He planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and became drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers." He also said, "Blessed by YHWH my God be Shem; and let Canaan be his slave." God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his slave."

**[9.28-29]** After the flood Noah lived three hundred and fifty years. All the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died.

#### Notes:

**Genesis 6:6 – Grief** **אָנָּח** When it says of God that human sinfulness "*grieved* him to his heart," it is the same verb that was used in the second creation story where God says to the woman "I will greatly increase your *pangs* in childbearing" (Genesis 3:16). It's a Hebrew word that gets translated as "pain, labor, hardship, sorrow, and toil."

**Genesis 7:2 – How many?** The Yahwist tradition has Noah bring seven pairs of all clean animals and birds are taken on the ark and one pair of unclean animals. Clean animals are suitable for food and are needed for sacrifice. In the Yahwist conclusion of the flood story, Noah is going to sacrifice clean animals and birds immediately after leaving the ark (see Genesis 8:20).



Why was it not the Priestly writer who talked about clean and unclean animals? Aren't religious rituals of particular interest to them?

The priestly writer sees history divided into distinct periods. Eating meat was not introduced until after the flood (see Genesis 9:2-3). Plus, the sacrificial system and dietary regulations were not introduced until the covenant at Mt. Sinai (see Leviticus 1-7, 11).

So what is the difference between clean animals and unclean animals? What makes something clean and unclean?

**Clean and Unclean:** A crucial distinction is made between ritually clean (and therefore also edible) animals and unclean (inedible) animals. Animals allowed as food are all those that both chew the cud, or ruminates, and have cloven hooves (Leviticus 11:2-3; Deuteronomy 14:6). They are enumerated in Deuteronomy 14:4-5 and include cattle, sheep, goats, deer, gazelles, ibex, and antelope. Specifically mentioned as unclean in Leviticus 11:4-7 are the camel, the coney ("rock badger"), the hare, and the pig ("swine"). The first three were all thought to ruminates, but do not have cloven hooves; the swine does have cloven hooves, but does not ruminates. Of all aquatic and marine animals only those that have scales and fins are declared clean (Leviticus 11:9-10). Unclean birds are listed in Leviticus 11:13-19. Also forbidden as food were all flying insects (with the exception of locusts and the like; see Matthew 3:4), animals that walk on paws (i.e., carnivores), rodents, and lizards (Leviticus 11:29-30). Not only was it forbidden to eat unclean animals; they were not even supposed to be touched (Leviticus 11:8).

**In Israelite Religious Ritual:** As mentioned above, animals also played a fundamental role in Israelite ritual sacrifices, and detailed instructions about the procedures to be followed and the types of animals to be offered are given (Deuteronomy 16:1-4; 17:1; Leviticus 1:1-7:38). In general it is the animals "from the herd or from the flock" that are requested for sacrifice (Leviticus 1:2)—cattle, goats, and sheep. To the Israelites, whose wealth was measured in numbers of such animals, these were especially precious. All firstborn male animals were to be sacrificed (Deuteronomy 15:19) in an annual ceremonial feast, unless something was wrong with them (15:21).

**Genesis 7:4 – How long?** According to the Yahwist, the flood is caused by heavy rain and lasts 40 days and 40 nights. The flood last 40 days (Genesis 7:4, 12, 17).

According to the Priestly tradition, the flood lasted from the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of Noah's 600<sup>th</sup> year to the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of Noah's 601<sup>st</sup> year (Genesis 8:14) which is 1 year and 10 days, according to their calendar (lunar) which would be 1 year in ours. The priestly tradition describes the flood as the disintegration of the orders introduced at creation: the waters above and below the earth, separated by a dome on day 2 of creation (see Genesis 1:6-8) rush together into a watery chaos (see Genesis 1:2).

**Genesis 8:1 – Blow God blow!** Just as God's wind/breath/spirit blew over the waters at creation (Genesis 1:2), so also God's wind/breath/spirit blows over the waters as the world is re-created after the flood.

**Genesis 8:17 – Be fruitful and multiply!** Just as at creation, God now intends the animals to *be fruitful and multiply* (Genesis 1:22). The same goes for Noah's family (see Genesis 9:1).

**Genesis 8:20 – First sacrifices and burnt offerings!** According to the Yahwist tradition, Noah's first act is to build an altar and offer burnt offerings/sacrifices (which won't happen according to the Priestly tradition until the covenant at Sinai (Leviticus 1-7)).

**Genesis 8:21 – No more cursed ground!** In response to Noah's sacrifice, God removes the curse on the ground (see Genesis 3:17-19; 4:11-13; 5:29).

**Genesis 9:1-4 – Animals will be scared of you! Everything shall be food for you!** Go ahead Noah. Eat whatever you want! All plants and animals, with one exception "you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is its blood."

**Genesis 9:4-6 – Blood!** Two things forbidden regarding blood: consuming meat with blood in it and shedding human blood. Capital punishment is introduced for taking human life.

**Genesis 9:9-13 – The Covenant!** Initiated by God, ensured by God, and eternal for all humanity and all creatures to protect all life from destruction. God enters into and establishes a sacred relationship with all of creation. The symbol of the covenant is the bow in the sky (the Hebrew word for the weapon used by soldiers); laid up in the clouds, it becomes a sign of peace.

**Genesis 9:21 – Noah got drunk!** The verb translated *became drunk* means “to drink one’s fill” and is translated as “drank” and “were merry” in Genesis 43:34; which means that they at least had a nice buzz.

**Genesis 9:22 – Ham!** What did you do? No one knows for sure. Where’s the modesty? The text says he “saw the nakedness of his father.” When he told his brothers, they walked in backwards and covered up dad turning their faces away. Because of Ham, his son Canaan and his descendants are now cursed by their father and subservient to Shem and his descendants which includes the Israelites (see Genesis 11:10-12:6; which is the genealogy of Shem all the way to Abram through Terah and describes how Terah took Abram and Lot and left Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan but first they stopped in Haran where Terah died and then God told Abram to continue to the land of Canaan).

## THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

### SOURCE THEORY

Biblical scholars speak of four primary sources for the Pentateuch’s stories and traditions. The sources reflect four different schools of thought or traditions about Israel’s relationship with God that sprang from different areas and periods in time. Knowing each of these four sources contributed to the final form of the Pentateuch can help us understand that the Pentateuch books are not simply records of events as they occurred, but rather faith accounts about the Israelites’ growing relationship with God and told from different perspectives. The four sources are the Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist, and the Priestly.

### SUMMARY CHART OF THE FOUR SOURCES

Sources	Date	Place	Divine Name	Religious Features	Literary Features
<b>Yahwist</b>	United Monarchy (~950 BCE)	Jerusalem?	Uses Yahweh throughout the Pentateuch	Sacrifice is not limited to one single place nor is the priesthood limited to one family. Heads of household can make sacrifices.	Lively narrative and anthropomorphic view of God.
<b>Elohist</b>	Divided Monarchy (~850 BCE)	Northern Kingdom (Israel)	<i>Elohim</i> used exclusively until the divine name is introduced in Exodus.	Sacrifice is not limited to one single place nor is the priesthood limited to one family. Heads of household can make sacrifices.	Lively narrative and anthropomorphic view of God.
<b>Deuteronomist</b>	Reign of Josiah (~625 BCE)	Southern Kingdom (Judah)	Not applicable	Only the Levites can make sacrifices in the one place God chooses.	Sermonic, with characteristic phrases.
<b>Priestly</b>	End of the Exile (~500 BCE)	Babylon and/or Jerusalem	<i>Elohim</i> used exclusively until the divine name is introduced in Exodus.	Only the offspring of Aaron can make sacrifices. A single place of sacrifice is presumed.	Preserves traditions, such as genealogies, precise locations, ages, and so on Regal view of God.

### THE YAHWIST TRADITION (J) (circa 950–921 B.C.E.)

The Yahwist used Yahweh as God’s name. Has a vivid concrete style. This writer focused on the southern kingdom, Judah, used lots of stories, emphasized God’s closeness to humanity, and portrayed God acting as a human person who walks and talks. It is the oldest of the traditions. Responsible for the second creation story.

The Yahwist source originated in the southern kingdom (Judah), perhaps as early as the reigns of King Solomon or even King David. It is the earliest source, dating back to the tenth century BCE. Its theology is focused on God’s promises for salvation and the importance of cultic worship.

The textual tradition known as the Yahwist (J) was so named by academics because of its consistent and unequivocal use of the god of Israel’s name, Yahweh. Even though the divine name appears approximately 1,800 times in the Pentateuch alone, the other Pentateuchal sources (Elohist, Deuteronomist, and Priestly) restrain from using it prior to its revelation to Moses in Exodus: at 3:14-15 in the Elohist tradition and at 6:2-8 in the Priestly tradition. Only the Yahwist text, in other words, affirms and acknowledges—in contradiction to the claims of the later Priestly source—that the name

Yahweh was known to and frequently invoked by the patriarchs prior to its revelation. According to this tradition, it was known right from the first generation of mortals (Gen 4:26).

The Yahwist text itself is most likely a compilation of stories, traditions, and archival material that was shaped into a continuous narrative by a southern Judean scribe or scribes. It is difficult to say when these traditions and stories were shaped into the larger narrative we call the Yahwist, but it could not have been earlier than the 8th century BCE. Many of the Yahwist's stories display knowledge of the geopolitical world as it was in the 9th-8th centuries BCE. The final form of the Yahwist text was probably fixed sometime in the 7th century BCE and continued to be revised into the exilic and post-exilic periods (6th-5th centuries BCE).

#### **Characteristics:**

- God is referred to as Yahweh (translated as LORD [small caps] in English).
- The holy mountain is called Sinai.
- God is anthropomorphized—that is, he is given human characteristics and feelings. (He walks in the garden and talks with Adam.)
- The natives of Palestine are called Canaanites.
- Some examples are the story of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 2:4–25) and the account of the Ten Plagues (see Exodus 7:14–10:29).

#### **THE ELOHIST TRADITION (E)** (circa 870–840 B.C.E.)

The Elohist referred to God as Elohim or Lord. It has a more abstract and elevated view of God. The Elohist wrote about the northern kingdom, Israel, and was concerned about idolatry and morality. The writings of the Elohist present God's presence as mediated, such as through a burning bush. The Elohist begins the story of Abraham.

The Elohist source developed in the northern kingdom (Israel). It is thought to have developed a little later than the J source, in the ninth century BCE. Its theology focuses less on Temple worship (that happened in the southern kingdom) and more on morality and Israel's proper response to God: faith and fear of the Lord. Some think that the Elohist tradition reworked the Yahwist writing, altering the perspective from J's pro-monarchy perspective to a more pro-covenant perspective.

The Elohist source (E) clearly orients itself around the traditions, cultic sites, and patriarchs of the northern kingdom, and is thus accredited with the north as its place of composition. E's date of composition has variously been assigned to the 9th century BC reign of Jeroboam, as a counter narrative to the pro-Solomonic Judean narrative of J, to any time prior to the northern kingdom's fall in 722 BCE.

It is the shortest in length of the Pentateuchal sources making its first appearance midway through the book of Genesis (20:1)—presenting itself as a doublet to J—and extending itself into the book of Exodus where it has its strongest showing. Both in the book of Genesis and in the book of Exodus, E is often presented as narrating the same story as J, however, with contrasting narrative details and theological emphases to those of J. These differences might be accounted for by similar traditions being absorbed and modified in different geographical and political contexts, and the varying historical circumstances of its audiences. Or, as a growing number of recent scholars contend, E was added to J in a manner to supplement the J narrative, in an attempt to reinterpret and moralize the J narrative, especially with respect to J's characterization of Jacob as a trickster and usurper. Of course, there are passages where E does not double J at all. These include E's stories about the origins of northern cultic centers such as Bethel and Shechem, E's plague and Passover narratives, which will receive contradictory interpretive insertions by the later Priestly writer, and E's covenant ceremony and the giving of the law at mount Horeb—although here the Yahwist tradition does record a variant and contradictory covenant ceremony, but at Sinai and with a completely different set of Ten Commandments! Contrary to the Yahwist, the climatic event in the narrative of the Elohist is the Moses story. In fact, the Elohist's primary hero is Moses, and this may account for the fact that the Elohist was most likely written by Levites or at least scribes sympathetic to Levite concerns. This is brought out in episodes like the golden calf narrative.

The north had particular cultic practices that, although strongly condemned by the southern writers, particularly the Deuteronomist, were most likely more ancient than the Yahweh-centered cult at Jerusalem in the late 8th century BCE. In the north, Yahweh was strongly identified with El and his cultic symbol, the bull. Additionally, a number of E texts speak of El and/or Yahweh at Shechem, Beth-El, or with Jacob in general. In all likelihood the body of literature known as the Elohist is rather a collection of traditions from the north which had a preference for non-anthropomorphic

depictions of God, prophecy and divine revelation, and a penchant for moralizing tales. Additional features of the Elohist include its emphasis on the figures Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Joshua, on prophetic traditions of the north and prophecy in general, on divine providence and dreams as the mode of divine communication, and moral propriety often portrayed through the fear-of-god motive.

**Characteristics:**

- It emphasizes prophecy.
- God is referred to as Elohim (“Lord God” in English translation).
- The holy mountain is Horeb.
- The natives of Palestine are called Amorites.
- God speaks in dreams.
- Some examples are the sacrifice of Isaac (see Genesis 22) and the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:1–17).

**THE DEUTERONOMIST TRADITION (D) (620–520 B.C.E.)**

The Deuteronomist emerged toward the end of the monarchy (the time of the Israelite kings), when the covenant law seemed to have been forgotten. The Deuteronomist reflects the style and attitudes of Josiah’s reforms (about 621). It emphasized the law as the foundation of the kingdom of Judah and expresses the idea of one central sanctuary.

The Deuteronomist source is the clearest independent source. The author is responsible for most if not all of the Book of Deuteronomy and most likely the historical books of Joshua through Second Kings (not including Ruth). This collection of books, Deuteronomy through Second Kings, is called the Deuteronomistic history and was most likely written in the seventh and sixth centuries BC. But the person(s) responsible for creating this collection remains a mystery (although the Book of Deuteronomy is often associated with the book found by King Josiah around 622 BC [see 2 Kings, chapter 22]). The Deuteronomist theology teaches that all the bad things that happened to the Israelites were God’s punishment for the grave sins of the leaders and the people.

**Characteristics:**

- The book of Deuteronomy is a retelling of the stories of Exodus through Numbers (Deuteronomy means “second law”).
- Deuteronomy interprets Israel’s history as a cycle of God’s forgiveness and renewal of the Covenant, followed by the people’s failure to live the Covenant, followed by the bad things that happen to them as punishment.
- It emphasizes the Israelites’ covenantal obligation.
- The holy mountain is Horeb.
- It emphasizes law and morals.
- An example is the Book of Deuteronomy.

**THE PRIESTLY TRADITION (P) (550–520 B.C.E.)**

The Priestly writer emphasized religious rituals and the role of the priesthood. It lists genealogies. This writer portrayed God as more distant and used a more formal style. This source was written after the destruction of the temple and the Babylonian exile. Responsible for the first creation story.

*The priestly source is thought to have developed during and after the Exile (587–538 BCE), thus it dates around the sixth century BCE. Some think it never existed as an independent source but is the work of the final person or group revising and adding to the JED sources after they had been joined (see below). The theology of this source is that the Jewish people’s religious identity is found in proper worship and special laws that set them apart from other people. It represents the priestly class’s rejecting the idea of religious identity being found in a divinely appointed king (an approach which had failed them). Rather, this source focused on cult and ritual.*

The Priestly literature, which most likely once existed as an individual scroll, now makes up the largest portion of the Pentateuch and is by far the most represented of the four Pentateuchal sources. It is the Priestly source that provides the main voice and interpretive framework for the first four books of the Torah. Its creation account not only opens the book of Genesis, but its formulaic inserts of genealogies, dates, land settlements, and marriage records provide a chronological framework to the JE material throughout Genesis and into the book of Exodus. It is in Exodus, however, that we first encounter large blocks of Priestly material. Exodus chapters 25-31 and 35-40 are entirely from the Priestly writer. All of the book of Leviticus is likewise from the Priestly pen,<sup>1</sup> and approximately 75% of the book of Numbers as well. In fact, excluding Exodus 32-34, which is a compilation of JE material, the literature spanning Exodus 25:1 to

Numbers 10:28, including the entire book of Leviticus, is all from P. In other words, a total of 50 consecutive chapters of Priestly material now occupy the central position of the Pentateuch, and the following texts make up an additional 70% of Priestly material. Excluding the book of Deuteronomy which was amended to the PJE text at a later period, the Priestly source makes up 55% of the first four books of the Pentateuch!

#### **Characteristics:**

- emphasis on Temple cult and worship
- emphasis on the southern kingdom of Judah (because that is the location of Jerusalem and the Temple where cultic worship occurs)
- emphasis on the role of the Levites, the priestly class or tribe
- emphasis on genealogies and tribal lists, which established the different groups in Israelite society, including the priestly class
- emphasis on order and the majesty of God and creation
- examples: first Creation story (see Genesis 1:1—2:4), the Book of Leviticus

#### **HOW THE SOURCES WERE COMBINED**

Here is the most commonly accepted understanding of how these four sources were combined into the five books of the Pentateuch we have today:

1. During the relatively stable years of King David and King Solomon (1000–922 BCE), scribes in the royal court and Temple (the two were intimately connected) began to capture the Israelites' oral histories and religious stories in writing, the beginning of the J source.
2. After the brief civil war following Solomon's death (922 BCE), there were two kingdoms. Judah (the southern kingdom) kept or continued the written tradition (J), and the northern kingdom developed an alternative written tradition (E).
3. After the northern kingdom was conquered and destroyed by the Assyrians (721 BCE), Israelite refugees fled to Jerusalem, bringing their written tradition (E) with them. Seeking to capture the truths of both the J and E sources, a new tradition was created by combining the two. Appropriately, this theoretical source is called the JE source.
4. At some point, another written tradition was created—essentially the Book of Deuteronomy and perhaps also Joshua and Samuel. This source implied that the bad things happening to the Israelites were God's punishment for their failure to be faithful to the Covenant. This source was lost, but was found by King Josiah during his renovation of the Temple (622 BCE). This tradition was expanded to become the Books of Deuteronomy through Second Kings.
5. After the southern kingdom was conquered by the Babylonians (587 BCE), many of the Israelite religious leaders were taken to Babylon in captivity. While in Exile (and perhaps after their return from Exile), they began to rewrite their history to emphasize that their religious identity—their right relationship with God—should be found through proper worship and a strict code of law. They did this by revising and adding to the JE source to create the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. They added these books to the Deuteronomistic collection (Deuteronomy through Second Kings) and the writings of the prophets to form the first canon of the Hebrew Scriptures.