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# OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY: PENTATEUCH

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SPSM Dec 2013

Melbourne, Australia

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# WHY STUDY THE TORAH?



*Torah*  
תּוֹרָה

Genesis ..... בְּרֵאשִׁית  
Exodus ..... שְׁמוֹת  
Leviticus ..... וַיִּקְרָא  
Numbers ..... בְּמִדְבָּר  
Deuteronomy ..... דְּבָרִים



- Luke 24:44-47 -it is what Jesus fulfilled and opened His first disciple's minds to grasp so that they could preach to all nations.
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17-when used properly and fully it enables us to become thoroughly equipped.
- Romans 4:1-3 -what Paul was teaching had to fit in with “scripture” (OT).We often do the opposite.
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 -the parallel temptations and trials that can help us repent rather than repeat.
- Hebrews 10:1 -the shadow (OT) compliments and enhances the reality (NT)

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# WHAT THE TORAH IS:

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1. A unified work
  2. The basis for all that follows
  3. A story about faith & obedience
  4. The story about how our spiritual ancestors got to the edge of the Promised Land
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# WHAT THE TORAH IS NOT:

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1. It is not complete on its own
  2. It is not Law
  3. It is not a story about a God of Wrath
  4. It is not a story about an ideal world or an ideal people
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# OVERVIEW

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- Genesis 1-11: How God Created the World and Related to it.
  - Genesis 12-50: Promises to our Ancestors
  - Exodus 1-18: How God Delivered His People from Egypt
  - Exodus 19-Leviticus-Numbers 10: How God Met with Israel at Sinai
  - Numbers 10: How God Led Israel to the Edge of the Land
  - Deuteronomy: How God Spoke Through Moses for the Last Time
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# AUTHORSHIP

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- Traditional View: Moses
  - Critical View: Assembled post-exile
  - Post-Modern View: We don't know who made it.
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# TWO CLUES FROM JESUS

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- Matthew 19:3-8 There are allowances for hardness of hearts
  - Matthew 22:40 The root of Loving God & Loving Neighbours
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# GENESIS

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# THE CHALLENGES IN GENESIS

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1. The apparent clash between two sources of information that should both be reliable.
  2. The consequent danger of being anti-science (as if it were anti-God) or of mis-focusing our attention on Genesis (concentrating on its scientific implications more than its message).
  3. The actual problem: a clash between the interpretation of two sets of evidence. Both sets of information come from God. The problem is a clash between our scientific understanding of the data from the world and our Christian understanding of the data from the Bible (and what we infer from both).
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# 4 APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM

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1. Science is right about the facts and Genesis is wrong about them, but it doesn't matter, because Genesis can still be right on the theological significance of creation
  2. Genesis is right on the facts as well as the theology, and science is wrong.
  3. Genesis and (standard) science can be reconciled.
  4. Genesis and science don't need to be reconciled
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# GENESIS 1-11 & HISTORY

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- It speaks of God's real historical intention and God's real act of creation but its story takes parabolic form.
- It speaks of real people and events (God, creating, orderliness, showing His goodness, His expectations of creation not met, His design failing to be followed), but it does so in pictures.
- For most of Genesis 1 there were no human eyewitnesses.

**Straight Facts**

**Symbolism/Communication/Interpretation**



*Genesis 1-11*

*Kings*

*Gospels*

*Revelation*

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# GEN 1-3 TWO CREATION ACCOUNTS

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1:1-2:3	2:4-3:24
panoramic overview	zoomed in close-up
transcendent God	immanent God
Elohim	YHWH

- complementary rather than contradictory
  - two perspectives (or 4 in the gospels), enriches our understanding of what is going on.
  - both united by the idea that the earth has been created to become God's dwelling place.
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# GENESIS 1-2

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- God brings order to the chaos
  - poetic narrative (look for repeat phrases)
  - where is the climax?
  - Imagine being Ruth, Ezra, or David reading this...what would strike you?
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# IMAGE OF GOD

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- Many understandings:
  - Different views often reflect different occasions. People read into the phrase what is important to them at the time.
  - Visible & physical image
  - Invitation to discover who God is and therefore who we are
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# EMERGENCE OF EVE

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- Powerful phrase within it's context: "...not good..."
  - Upgrade? 2.0 is always better than 1.0
  - Helper
  - Self-Giving Love
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# THE EARTH AS GOD'S TEMPLE-CITY

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- 7th Day Rest: God has set up the cosmos (generally) and the garden (specifically) to serve as His temple in which he will find rest in the order and peace He has established.
  - Interesting parallels exist between Eden and the later sanctuaries:
    - The Lord God walks in Eden and the tabernacle (Gen. 3:8; cf. Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:15; 2 Sam. 7:6–7).
    - Eden and the later sanctuaries are entered from the east and guarded by cherubim (Gen. 3:24; Exod. 25:18–22; 26:31; 1 Kings 6:23–29).
    - The tabernacle menorah (or lamp stand) possibly symbolises the tree of life (Gen. 2:9; 3:22; cf. Exod. 25:31–35).
    - The river flowing from Eden (Gen. 2:10) resembles Ezekiel 47:1–12, which envisages a river flowing from a future Jerusalem temple and bringing life to the Dead Sea.
    - Gold and onyx, mentioned in Genesis 2:11–12, are used extensively to decorate the later sanctuaries and priestly garments (e.g., Exod. 25:7, 11, 17, 31). Gold in particular is associated with the divine presence.
    - Adam's task in the garden is to Work & Care, which is the same for the Levites at the Tent of Meeting (Genesis 2:15 & Numbers 3:7-8).
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# THE ROYAL LINEAGE IN GENESIS

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- In contrast to other ancient creation accounts (EX: Babylonian: Enuma Elish) humans are not there to provide food for the gods but given divine authority to rule.
    - “...that they may rule...rule over...” Gen 1:26-28
    - In ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, the phrase “image of God” is frequently linked to kings.
  - The Chosen “Seed” (Gen 3:14-15)
  - The Lineage of Adam
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# THE GREAT BETRAYAL

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- Serpent uses Elohim not YHWH: removes the intimate relationship, and gets Eve to do the same.
  - As caretakers of the garden Adam & Eve should have expelled the serpent, the role of guardian is then entrusted to the cherubim (Gen 3:24).
  - Instead of ruling over creation, Adam & Eve follow a creature.
  - Unlike the serpent they were made in the image of God, but ironically in their quest to become more “like God, knowing good and evil” (3:5) they image God less and the serpent more.
  - The greatest loss was not paradise; it was God’s presence.
  - So begins a great unraveling of creation in Genesis 4-11 (Cain & Able, The Flood, Tower of Babel)
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# JUDGMENT & GRACE

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- The Fall
    - Not the best term
    - Universal Effects, but not Guilt
    - Creation was good, but not without pressures, problems, temptations, earthquakes, volcanoes, death, etc.
      - Necessary in order to take people towards maturity.
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# TESTING, TRUSTING, TRAINING

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- The Forbidden Fruit
    - Knowledge of good and evil
  - God's Prohibition is a test (like Gen 22)
  - Submission to God is the 1st principle of wisdom
  - God does not abandon them (clothed-3:21, received offerings-4:3, disciplined-4:7-8, rebuked-4:9, showed mercy-4:15)
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# THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

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- Genesis 3 Rebellion of Adam & Eve
  - Genesis 4 Cain murders Abel
  - Genesis 6: Sons of god took “wives” (women) for themselves
    - “sons of god” in the OT: supernatural figures
    - Nephilim: things being distorted and out of line with God’s intent.
  - Things are so bad it grieves the heart of God. (Gen 6:6)
  - 120 years: God giving notice, time until the flood.
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# THE FLOOD

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- Local or Global? See article by Carol Hill online
  - A return to the chaos that God had brought into order.
  - Hope: Noah 8:1
  - 8:22 God again sets up a covenant (man and animals)
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# AGES IN GENESIS

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- In the Mesopotamian world view, numbers could have both real (numerical) and sacred (numerological or symbolic) meaning. For example 60 & 7 are known Mesopotamian sacred numbers and all of the patriarchal ages in Genesis revolve around them. Preferred numbers in the Bible are well known: 3, 7, 12, and 40 are all used in the OT and NT.
  - Every age-number (30 in all) from Adam to Noah are a combination of the sacred numbers 60 (years and months) and 7. No numbers end in 1, 3, 4, 6, or 8—a chance probability of one in a billion. Thirteen numbers end in 0 (some multiple or combination of 60), 8 numbers end in 5 (5 years = 60 months), 3 numbers end in 7, 5 numbers end in 2 (5yrs + 7 yrs = 12), and 1 number ends in 9 (5yrs + 7yrs + 7yrs = 19).
  - All of this cannot be coincidental. The Mesopotamians were using sacred numbers, not real numbers. Therefore, these numbers were not meant to be (and should not be) interpreted as real numbers. (Making Sense of the Numbers of Genesis by Carol Hill also online at: <http://www.spachurches.com/session-4-dec-2013.html>)
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# GENESIS 11 | BABEL-BABYLON

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- The Babel-Babylon episode highlights two contrasting aspects of human existence:
    - the capacity of people to achieve great things & the pride of humans who have rejected God's sovereignty
  - Brief account (9 verses), but casts a long shadow.
    - Babel-Babylon is the archetypal God-less city
    - Abraham in tents, looking forward to a "better land", a "heavenly one" a city with foundations, designed and built by God (Heb 11) while Lot & his family are in yet another wicked city (Genesis 19).
    - God rescues the Israelites from building cities for a despotic Egyptian king in order that they may begin the process of constructing God's dwelling place on the earth (1:11; 25:8).
    - This is, however, merely part of a long process that will later include, among other things, the establishment of Jerusalem/Zion as God's temple-city and its destruction by the Babylonians.
    - Revelation 21-22 Pictures this New Jerusalem (Heb 12:22, 13:14) that will be revealed in the age to come. It is of course contrasted with another city in Revelation, Babylon, a mirror of Babel (Rev 14-18).
    - The story of Babel-Babylon reveals that many people aspire for total security and lasting fame apart from God. However, ultimate reward will come only to those who in faith seek the city that has God as its architect and builder.
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# GENESIS 12

## ABRAHAM NARRATIVE

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- The Abraham narrative marks an important turning point in the book of Genesis.
  - Instead of working throughout mankind, God's focus now shifts to a specific family.
  - The people of Babel tried to establish a "name" for themselves without God's help (11:4) and they get 9 verses of coverage, but the Lord will make Abraham famous and his story flows through generation after generation.
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# THE STRUCTURE

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- Divine Call: Gen 12:1-3
  - Unconditional Promissory Covenant: Genesis 15
  - The Covenant of Circumcision: Genesis 17
  - The Divine Oath in Genesis 22:16-18
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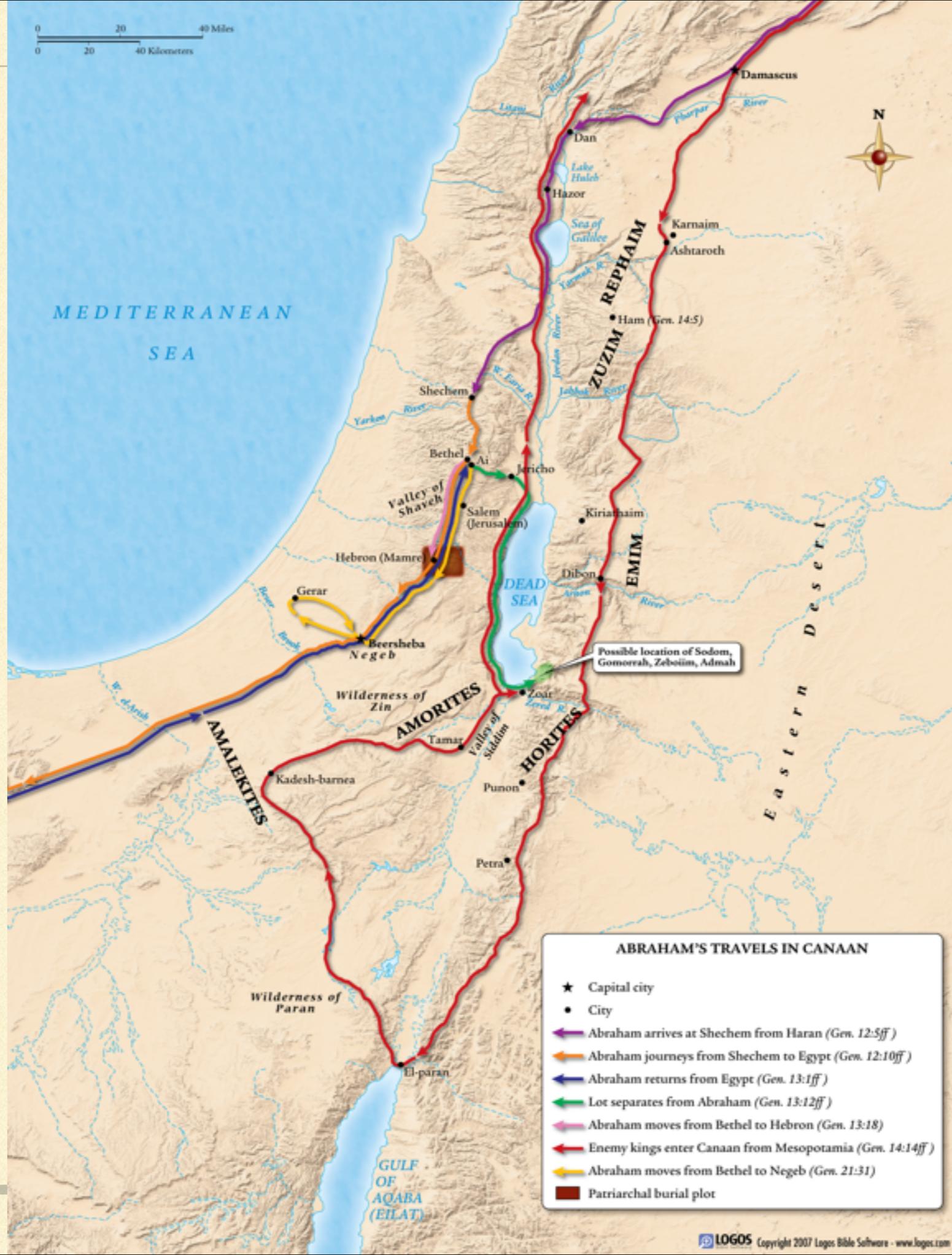
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# GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

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- It is conditional on Abraham's obedience to God. At the very outset Abraham must obey the Lord's call to leave his own land and go to a new land (12:1)
  - God informs Abraham that his descendants will occupy the land of Canaan only after a period of over four hundred years (15:13–14).
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0 20 40 Miles  
0 20 40 Kilometers



**ABRAHAM'S TRAVELS IN CANAAN**

- ★ Capital city
- City
- Abraham arrives at Shechem from Haran (Gen. 12:5ff)
- Abraham journeys from Shechem to Egypt (Gen. 12:10ff)
- Abraham returns from Egypt (Gen. 13:1ff)
- Lot separates from Abraham (Gen. 13:12ff)
- Abraham moves from Bethel to Hebron (Gen. 13:18)
- Enemy kings enter Canaan from Mesopotamia (Gen. 14:14ff)
- Abraham moves from Bethel to Negeb (Gen. 21:31)
- Patriarchal burial plot

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# PROMISES & PROBLEMS

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- The book of Genesis has been carefully composed to focus on a unique family line, starting with Adam and continuing down to the twelve sons of Jacob. This line of “seed” includes various individuals who all enjoyed a special relationship with God: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Genesis anticipates that a royal and priestly dynasty will arise from the descendants of Abraham.
  - Yet, woman after woman is barren
  - Each generation has struggles and challenges
    - Abram/Sara (Gen 12-25)
    - Isaac/Rebekah (Gen 24-35)
    - Jacob/Rachel (Gen 29-50)
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# LIFE OF JOSEPH



Joseph born in Haran, 11th son of Jacob



Receives many-colored coat from his father, arousing jealousy in his brothers



Recounts his dreams to his brothers, who fake his death and sell him into slavery



Sold to Potiphar, captain of the royal Egyptian guard

Finds favor, becomes overseer of Potiphar's household

Imprisoned on false accusation by Potiphar's wife

Placed in charge of other prisoners

Correctly interprets the dreams of other prisoners: chief cupbearer restored to position, chief baker hanged

Pharaoh has dreams that his wise men cannot interpret; cupbearer recalls Joseph to Pharaoh. Joseph interprets dreams. Pharaoh entrusts him with famine preparations and elevates Joseph to high authority in Egypt.

Jacob dies. He is buried in Canaan.

Joseph's remains carried from Egypt during the Exodus



Joseph dies



7 years of plenty 7 years of famine

Assured of Joseph's forgiveness, his brothers live out their lives with him in Egypt.



Jacob sends sons to Egypt for grain; they come before Joseph but do not recognize him. Joseph holds a brother hostage while sending the others home to get Benjamin. When Benjamin arrives in Egypt, Joseph reveals himself and forgives his brothers.

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# EXODUS: DEPARTURE FROM EGYPT

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- Exodus is essentially a book about knowing God.
    - Moses (3:1-4:17), then Pharaoh (5:2), the Egyptians (14:4, 18), and the Israelites (15:11).
  - Other Major Themes:
    - Deliverance 1-18
    - Covenant 19-24
    - Presence 34-35
  - Shifts in God's Workings
    - Gen 1-11 Mankind
    - Gen 12-Exodus | The Patriarchs
    - Exodus-Jesus Hebrews to Israelites
    - Jesus into all nations
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# EXODUS 1-15

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- Chapters 1 & 2: Needy World
  - Chapter 3: God again calls out a man to work through
    - **The burning bush:** divine presence is frequently symbolised by fire, smoke, and cloud (13:21–22; 14:24; 19:18; 24:17; 40:38; cf. Lev. 9:24; 10:2; Num. 9:15–16; 11:1–3; 14:14; Deut. 1:33; 4:11–12, 15, 24, 33, 36; 5:4–5, 22–26; 9:3, 10, 15; 10:4; 18:16).
    - **Divine holiness:** God must be approached with caution.
    - **Out of Egypt:** the “seed” has multiplied now the promise of “land” is back in view. Moses will lead them there.
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# THE NAME

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- The Israelites believed that an individual's nature was reflected in one's name (3:6, 13-15).
  - In Genesis different aspects of God's nature are highlighted by the names used to designate him: El Elyon ("God Most High," Gen. 14:18–20), El Roi ("God who sees me," Gen. 16:13), El Shaddai ("God Almighty," Gen. 17:1), El Olam ("God Everlasting," Gen. 21:33)
  - Here God introduces himself by using the personal name "Yahweh," translated in most English versions as "the Lord" (Exod. 3:15). YHWH does not restrict God's nature to any particular characteristic, He is who He is and He does not change (God of A, I, and J...from generation to generation 3:15)
  - Jesus & "I AM" (John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19)
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# VIOLENCE IN THE TO THE WARRIOR GOD

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- God the protector of creation
  - God the liberator
  - God the judge
  - We must struggle with the deep complexity of the character of God
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# SIGNS, WONDERS, & PLAGUES

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- Message of the Plagues?
    - Natural order for the 1st 6 (T. Keller). Creation turning on itself. Days of creation being undone.
    - When we rebel against God we are rebelling against the fabric of creation and many of the consequences are simply the natural ones that stem from operating against manufacturer directives.
    - Salvation (know, obey, be saved)
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# HARDENING/STRENGTHENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART

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- The numerous references to the strengthening of Pharaoh's heart underline the importance of this motif, which is described in two ways:
    1. In the initial stages it is reported that Pharaoh hardens his own heart (7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:34, 35)
    2. In the latter stages the narrative states that the Lord strengthened Pharaoh's heart (9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17)
  - It is important to observe that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart always comes after a hardship is removed and Pharaoh is no longer being pressured into releasing the Israelites. The motif of Pharaoh's heart being hardened reveals that God wants the Egyptian king to release the Israelites willingly and not while under compulsion.
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## SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

## PSEUDO-SOVEREIGNTY OF PHARAOH

God strikes the Egyptian economic & spiritual centrepieces: hitting Egypt where it hurts...God introducing chaos into the lives of the Egyptians.

Dismantling the Egyptian Identity, destroying their gods

Pharaoh gives in, but then again turns hard to God...His life is crumbling but still refuses to give up and submit to the sovereignty of God.

God hardens Pharaoh's heart showing even His sovereignty over our inner most beings 7:5 "the Egyptians will know that YHWH"

12:32 Pharaoh acknowledges that the Israelites have the power to bless

Leads to Freedom

Leads to Slavery

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# EXODUS 12-THE PASSOVER

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- Deliverance
  - NT: Communion: Synoptics
  - Gospel of John
  - John 10:17-18
  - John 19:14, 31-36 & Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12
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# EX 15:22-18:27 INTO THE DESERT

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- T. Keller: God can conquer an enemy and free a people from slavery, but to take slavery out of the hearts of those people is another thing entirely.
  - Learn to faithfully follow even in the face of dire need (15:22-27)
  - Try to gather more manna-faithlessness-needed to learn daily dependence
  - God showing them the opposite of what Pharaoh was engraining in them. Pharaoh was self-serving storing up for himself...God showing His people that He will provide just what they need.
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# SINAI: EXODUS 19:1 THROUGH TO NUMBERS 10:10

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- 19:4-6 The Covenant Agreement: If Israel, in the light of its divine deliverance from Egypt, will obey the Lord, then it will be his “treasured possession, . . . a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Four factors are worth noting about this covenant.
    1. From beginning to end God takes the initiative. He listened, He revealed, He redeemed, He led, and now He instructs.
    2. God highlights Israel’s special status: “treasured possession” & “a kingdom (or royal) of priests and a holy nation”
    3. Conditional Covenant: Israel has thrown off the yoke of Egyptian slavery but now they must put on the yoke of God. They have already been rescued, but now they must follow. 20:6 “...those who love me and keep my commandments...”
    4. Two sets of obligations are placed before the Israelites.
      1. The first set, the Ten Commandments (20:3–17), are announced directly to all the people by God. These are the main covenant obligations that the people must accept.
      2. Later through Moses, God gives further obligations that are recorded in a document known as the Book of the Covenant (20:22–23:33)
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# MEETING GOD AT SINAI

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- God is further revealed to the Israelites
    - God is Holy. Seen earlier in Moses' encounter and now with the community. They must consecrate themselves, wash their clothes, and abstain from sexual relations for 3 days (19:14-15)
      - boundary around the mountain: As the ground around the bush was holy so Mount Sinai will become holy because of God's presence (19:23)
    - God's presence—accompanied by thunder and lightning, fire and smoke, and the violent trembling of the mountain (19:16–19)—is seen, heard, and felt by all the people.
    - God speaks directly to all those gathered at the foot of the mountain and declares the principal obligations to which they must adhere in order for the covenant relationship to be established (20:1–17).
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# 10 COMMANDMENTS (1-4)

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1- “You shall have no other gods before me. SOLE ALLEGIANCE TO GOD LIES AT THE VERY HEART OF THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP.

2- “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. IN BOTH EGYPT AND CANAAN HUMAN AND ANIMAL FORMS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT FUNCTION IN DEPICTING ATTRIBUTES OF A DEITY BECAUSE THE IMAGE WAS UNDERSTOOD TO BE THE PLACE WHERE THE DEITY WOULD MANIFEST ITSELF. IMAGES OF GOD, IN VIEW OF THE SIGNS, WONDERS, ETC AND THE TABERNACLE ARE THEREFORE UNNECESSARY AND INAPPROPRIATE.

3- “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. AS THE SECOND PREVENTED VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF GOD, THE 3RD FOCUSES ON VERBAL.

4- “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. A COVENANT SIGN MUCH LIKE CIRCUMCISION.

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# 10 COMMANDMENTS (5-10)

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5- “Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHORITY AND FAMILY STRUCTURES WITHIN GOD’S COMMUNITY. IF AUTHORITY IS GRASPED WITHIN THE FAMILY IT WILL SPREAD BEYOND INTO THE COMMUNITY AND ULTIMATELY TO GOD.

6- “You shall not murder. HIGH PRIORITY PLACED ON LIFE AS EACH PERSON IS AN IMAGE BEARER OF GOD. DIFFERENCES ARE ALLOWED FOR IN REGARDS TO ACCIDENTS AND GOD SANCTIONED WAR.

7- “You shall not commit adultery. THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE IS FOLLOWED BY THAT OF MARRIAGE.

8- “You shall not steal. HUMAN LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS ARE VALUED ABOUT PROPERTY BUT STILL THERE IS RESPECT FOR POSSESSIONS.

9- “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour. SHIFT FROM ACTIONS TO WORDS.

10- “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.” FROM ACTIONS TO WORDS AND NOW WORDS TO THOUGHTS. UNLIKE ALL THAT PRECEDE, THIS ONE ADDRESSES THE INNER FEELINGS THAT ONLY GOD AND THE INDIVIDUAL WOULD KNOW.

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# THE LEGAL MATERIAL OF THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT (EX 21:1-22:20)

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- Moral Symmetry
  - The Sanctity of Life
  - Moral Imperatives (Ex 22:21-23:9)
  - Instructions for the Sabbath & Religious Festivals (Exodus 23:10-19)
  - The Reciprocal Nature of the Covenant (Exodus 23:20-33)
    - If the Israelites obey the Lord their God, then they will take possession of the land of Canaan (23:22–23). Furthermore, God’s blessing will ensure their future comfort (23:25–26) and security (23:27)
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# EXODUS 32: GOLDEN CALF

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- While Moses is receiving God's instructions for constructing the tabernacle, the people who remain at the foot of Sinai desire to have a symbol of the Lord's presence.
    - This ironically results in the making of a golden calf. The tabernacle, with its golden furnishings, will portray the Lord as a royal personage, but the golden calf, in marked contrast, represents him as a mere beast.
  - Worship, to be true, must be based on a right perception of God. The book of Exodus emphasises the importance of knowing God as he truly is, and not as we imagine him to be.
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# EXODUS 33 MOSES & THE GLORY OF THE LORD

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- To assure Moses of his identity, God proclaims his personal name, the Lord (Yahweh).
    - Interestingly, when God previously revealed his name to Moses, “Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God” (3:6). Now he displays a greater confidence.
  - He stresses not only his **mercy** and compassion, “forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (34:7; cf. 33:19), but also his **justice**: “He does not leave the guilty unpunished” (34:7; cf. 32:34). The revelation of these divine characteristics to Moses is so significant that this passage is echoed on many occasions in the Old Testament (e.g., Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Pss. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2).
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# THE TABERNACLE

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- Three aspects:
    - A Royal Tent
    - A Holy Tent
    - A Tent of Meeting
  - The first two of these are clearly linked to God's nature; he is a sovereign and holy God. The third aspect focuses on the special relationship that God has established with the people of Israel through the covenant at Sinai.
  - Exodus 40:34 "Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."
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## INSIDE THE TEMPLE

(Cutaway view)

1. Holy of Holies
2. Ark
3. Veil
4. Altar of Incense
5. Lampstand (Menorah)
6. Holy Place
7. Table of Shewbread
8. Outer Veil

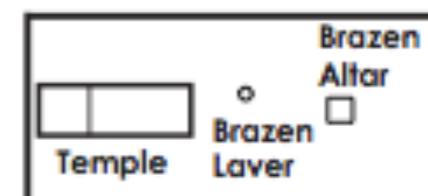
Pillar of  
Smoke

The  
Temple

Pillar

American  
Football Field

Size comparison  
(approximate):



Court of the  
Tabernacle

## TEMPLE COVERINGS AND CURTAINS

9. Outer covering of badger skins
10. Covering of Ram's skin dyed red
11. Curtain of goat's hair
12. Curtain of fine linen

Curtain  
enclosure

Court of the  
Tabernacle

Brazen  
Laver

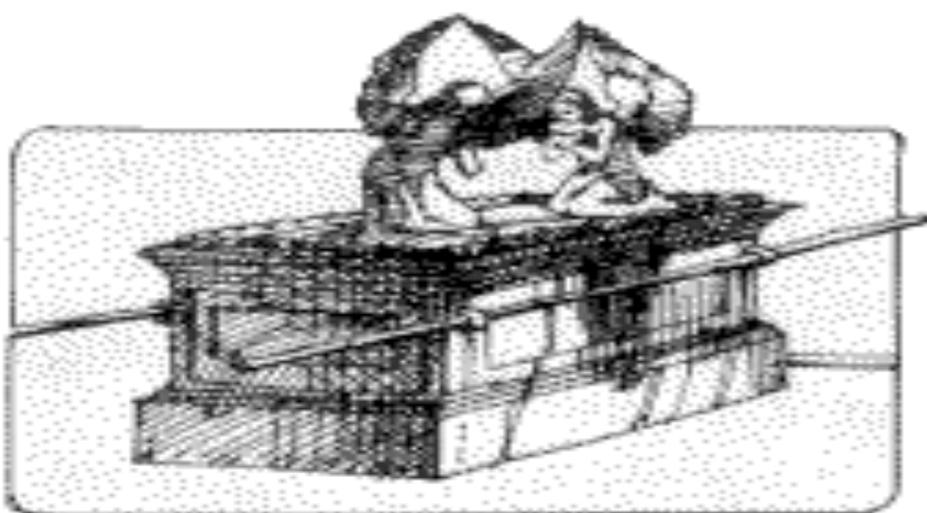
Brazen  
Altar

Slaughter  
Tables

Entrance  
Curtain

# The Tabernacle

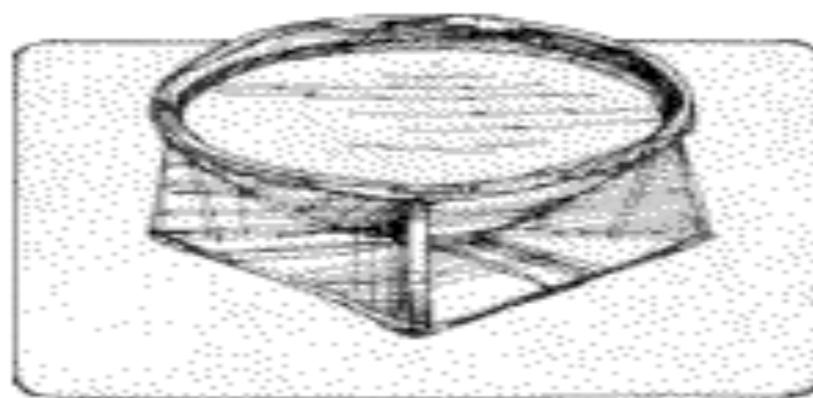
This portable temple was built in the wilderness by the Israelites circa 1450 BC after they were freed from Egyptian slavery. The Tabernacle was the first temple dedicated to God and the first resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. It served as a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israelites' 40 years in the desert while conquering the land of Canaan.



### **Ark of the Covenant**

(Ex. 25:10–22)

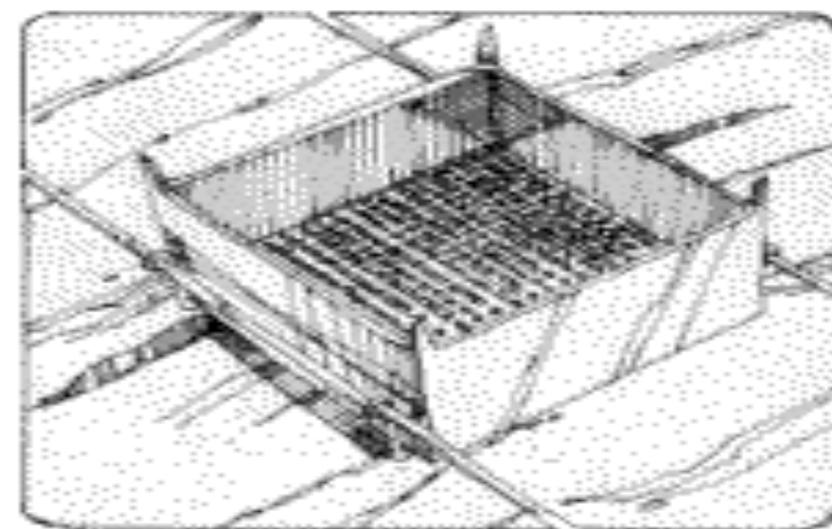
The ark was most sacred of all the furniture in the tabernacle. Here the Hebrews kept a copy of the Ten Commandments, which summarized the whole covenant.



### **Bronze Laver**

(Ex. 30:17–21)

It was to the laver of bronze that the priests would come for cleansing. They must be pure to enter the presence of God.



### **Altar of Burnt Offering**

(Ex. 27:1–8)

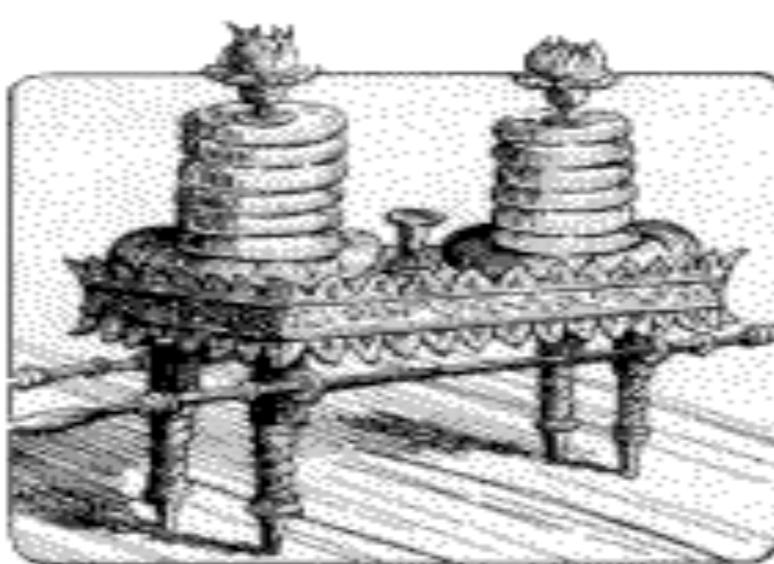
Animal sacrifices were offered on this altar, located in the court in front of the tabernacle. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the four horns of the altar.



### **Golden Lampstand**

(Ex. 25:31–40)

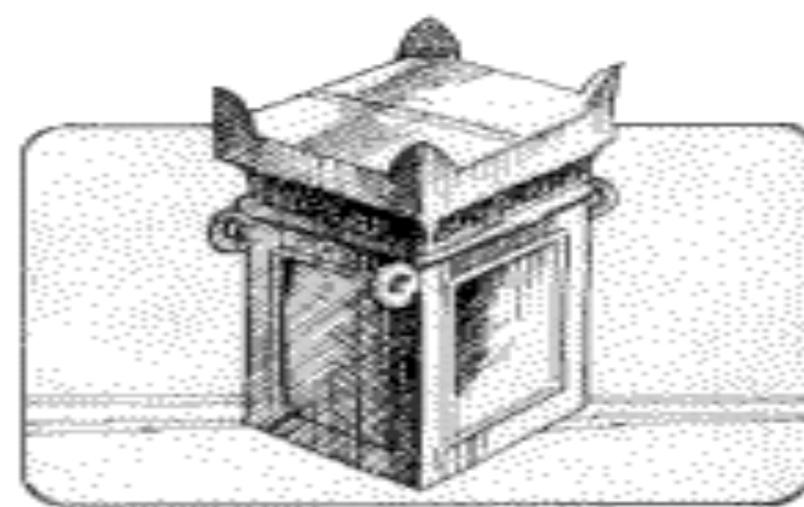
The gold lampstand stood in the holy place, opposite the table of showbread. It held seven lamps, flat bowls in which a wick lay with one end in the oil of the bowl and the lighted end hanging out.



### **Table of Showbread**

(Ex. 25:23–30)

The table of showbread was a stand on which the offerings were placed. Always in God's presence on the table were the 12 loaves of bread representing the 12 tribes.



### **Altar of Incense**

(Ex. 30:1–10)

The altar of incense inside the tabernacle was much smaller than the altar of burnt offering outside. The incense burned on the altar was a perfume of sweet-smelling aroma.

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# LEVITICUS: PRIESTLY CODE

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- Chapters 1-16 Holiness in Ritualistic (cultic) matters
  - Chapters 17-29 Holiness in the Promised Land
  - God permeating every aspect of their lives!
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# LEVITES: HELP THE PEOPLE APPROACH GOD

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- Israelite tribe taking its name from the third son of Leah and Jacob (Gn 29:34)
  - Levi appears with Simeon at the treacherous slaughter of the inhabitants of Canaanite Shechem (Gn 34:25–29).
    - This brings Jacob’s rebuke at the time (Gn 34:30) and his deathbed curse (Gn 49:5–7), foretelling that the descendants of Levi and Simeon will be scattered throughout Israel.
      - This does not seem a likely background for God’s priestly tribe, but so it proved to be; for it was as a priestly tribe that Levi was scattered through Israel
  - “Secular” tribe until the Golden Calf (Ex 32). They responded to the call of Moses: “Whoever is for the Lord, come to me.” (32:26) and so became set apart to the LORD (32:29).
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# HOLINESS: 2 ASPECTS

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- Separateness: God is set apart
    - He is so distinct, so different than us, that we can not approach Him without a keen knowledge of knowing what we are doing and Who exactly we are coming before.
  - Action Oriented: not merely avoidance
    - Obedience
    - Righteousness/Justice
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- Chapters 1-7 :The sacrificial System
    - “Gift of God” Entire sacrificial system was not viewed as a set of procedures to earn God’s grace...For the Hebrews it was a gift to even have the opportunity to approach God. God had provided the very conditions that would allow a relationship to take place.
  
  - Chapters 8-10:Aaron
    - Nobody can abuse God’s presence, even the priests
  
  - Chapters 11-15: Purity outside of the rituals
    - Actual day to day relationships.
    - Training the hearts and minds to value and desire to be whole and complete
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- 
- Chapters 16: The Day of Atonement: yom kippur
    - The day when Israel's sins are forgiven and they are reconciled to God as a nation
    - Highly tangible experience
    - Parallels with Hebrews 6:19-10:39
  - Chapters 18-20
    - Immorality doesn't just affect those involved, it pollutes the land
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# CHAPTER 19

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- Right in the middle of the book
  - Love your neighbour/ taking care of the poor is a way of showing holiness
  - Needs to be at the centre of our relationships
  - **Law of Gleaning:** God's vision for sharing the fruits of labor with those in need
    - Reap once-Tithe off that.
    - Leave the edges for those in need
  - They were a delivered people, and they understood that they were meant to give!
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- 
- Chapter 23-25: Various Feasts & festivals
  - Chapter 25: Year of Jubilee
    - Holiness is expressed in forgiveness
    - Every 49 years the land is given rest and the covenantal inheritance is given back to its rightful owner. Land was very important in ancient Israel. No one could ever permanently lose their inheritance. Prevents an economically impoverished class from ever being established.
  - Chapter 26: Rewards (Bless) & Punishments (Curse)
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# NUMBERS

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- Sinai: Mountain of Commandments (1:1-10:11)
  - Sojourn: Journey towards the Promise Land (10:11-36:13)
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# CENSUS LISTS

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## FAITHLESS GENERATION

Numbers 1

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EX of disobedience  
(1 Cor 10)

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die in the desert

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## FAITHFUL GENERATION

Numbers 26

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Model of Faithful  
Obedeince

---

live in the land

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Caleb is the link between the two

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14:24 Caleb has a different spirit

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# NUMBERS 6:24-26:3

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- Face=Shalom
  - Over and over YHWH frames God's presence as His face
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# NUMBERS 11-14

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- Crisis of Wandering: Has God changed, is He more angry than before?
    - What has changed is that God has brought Israel out of Egypt and reaffirmed the covenant relationship with them, and laid down his expectations for the way they will respond and live their life as his people.
    - an exposition of what can go wrong in Israel's experience of life and how Israel can respond and what consequences follow.
    - A further linked answer is that this is a sequence of stories told for settled Israel to hear, in order that it can learn from them. Paul makes the same point in 1 Cor 10 about the importance of these stories for the church.
    - So Israel and the church need to be aware of these dynamics and be wary of them in their own life.
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# NUMBERS 13-14 SPY NARRATIVE

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- Faithfulness: One group sees the abundance and fruitfulness
  - Fear: Other group sees all the hardships and troubles and reasons to fear
  - Numbers 14:22-24 Moses boldly pressing God
    - God will sort out the faithful and faithless
  - Numbers 14:26-45 Destructive consequences of faithlessness
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# NUMBERS 22-24 BALAAM AND HIS DONKEY

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- 23:8-9 curse
  - 23:20 bless
  - God's purpose is to bless and nothing can counter that
  - God doesn't punish just to punish
  - Balaam: wages of wickedness & immorality: Numbers 31:16 Implies a link back with 25:1-3—in other words, it implies that Balaam was involved there; then on that basis 2 Peter 2:15; Revelation 2:14
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# DEUTERONOMY

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- 2nd telling of the law
  - 3 Sections all of which are speeches of Moses as the Israelites are just beyond the Jordan in the land of Moab staring into the Promised Land.
  - Moses uses warnings and urges
  - 1:5 Moses began to preach the law...As they looked into the Promised Land Moses lays out all the things that are important to know!
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# 1:6-4:49 INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENTERING INTO THE LAND

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- Moses begins with God's goodness and kindness
    - Look at all these amazing things God has done for You!
  - Joining God's commands with God's love
  - If God is good and loving why would He command this?
  - 4:15 shunning of idols
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# 5:1-26:28 PART I

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- 5:6-21 (10 commandments)
  - 6-11 God's generosity and goodness
    - We worship a good God, all He can do is good
  - 6:4-5 Shema God calling to His people
    - v. 20 When your sons ask about God's commandments and statues...begin by telling them how you are a redeemed people!
    - We are called by God, we are not self supporting individuals
    - I Corinthians 11 same idea
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# 5:1-26:28 PART II

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- 12-25 Legal Corpus...Legal Issues
    - How do we take the commands received at Sinai and apply them to day to day life in the land?
    - Translates the law into social, political and economic matters
  - 15:1-18 Year of release (debt forgiveness) relationships are more important than the workings of the economy
    - Should we work & sacrifice to help one another not be in debt? Are we too wrapped up in the economic principles of capitalism? Have we lost sight of God's plan of forgiveness and sharing? We too are a delivered people; God has rescued us from slavery, should we not do the same?
    - 15:15 Remember Egypt in view of this command
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# 5:1-26:28 PART III

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- 16:18-22 Commands for the King
    - 17:14-20 Role of the king is laid out
    - Can't have a king in the land without a prophet!
  - 24:17-21 Dealing with orphans, widows, aliens
    - Dealing with the weakest groups
    - Community of love, providing for each other
  - 26:16-19 Now with everything laid out, are we still into following God?
  - 28 Recital of blessings and curses
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# 29:1-31:29 TRANSITION

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- Handover from Moses to Joshua
    - Moses the man of Sinai
    - Joshua leading the settling of the land
  - Must learn to obey in different settings
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# RESOURCES

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- [Introducing the Old Testament by John Drane](#)
  - [From Paradise to the Promised Land by Desmond Alexander](#)
  - [The Pentateuch as Narrative by John Sailhamer](#)
  - [Fuller Seminary OT 501 by John Goldingay \(itunes U\)](#)
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# THE WRITINGS:

- Last section of the OT in its Jewish order
- Assortment of different sort of books from different background
- All connected with the 2nd Temple period (Persian & Greek empires)
- GK & English Bible spreads them among the other books

## Wisdom

Psalms

Proverbs

Job

## Megillot (the scrolls)

Song of Songs

Ruth

Lamentations

Ecclesiastes

Esther

## Histories

Daniel

Ezra

Nehemiah

Chronicles

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# OUTLINE

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- Story:

- Ezra-Nehemiah (div in 3rd Cent)
- Chronicles
- Ruth
- Esther

- Worship:

- Psalms
- Lamentations

- Wisdom:

- Proverbs
  - Song of Songs
  - Job
  - Ecclesiastes
  - Daniel
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# HOW THE WRITINGS ARE DESIGNED TO TRANSFORM

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1. They set our lives not in the context of a set of beliefs but in the context of a story, and of some smaller stories, too. They also encourage us to tell our stories.
  2. They see us in a relationship with God – a relationship of praise, protest, trust, repentance, and testimony. They encourage us to say what we feel.
  3. They set our thinking in the context of an argument. They encourage us to face questions. They thus rescue us from the limitations of what we believe already.
  4. They are there to help the people of God live concretely, worshipfully, wisely, and hopefully.
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# EZRA-NEHEMIAH

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- Relate a series of episodes from the story of Judah from 539-445
  - The books combine:
    - Stories about events that took place
    - First-person memoirs of Ezra & Nehemiah
    - Official Documents
    - Lists of People
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# EZRA 1-6

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- Begins with Cyrus's takeover of Babylon in 539 B.C.
  - He encouraged Judahites who had been taken off there (or rather, their children and grandchildren) to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.
    - They did clean up its site and start the rebuilding work but they were put off by the opposition of other local peoples.
  - In Darius's reign they resumed the work and completed it between 520 and 516 B.C. with prods from Haggai and Zechariah.
    - The accounts of opposition in 4:6-23 relate to the later time of Xerxes and Artaxerxes—the book has collected together stories about opposition.
  - Lamentations tells of how people in Jerusalem had been praying through the period up to Cyrus's day, and the stories in Daniel tell of the situation of Judahites in Babylon.
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# EZRA 7-10

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- During the reign of Artaxerxes
  - In 458 B.C. he commissioned a learned Judahite called Ezra to take a scroll of the Torah and see that its rules were implemented in Jerusalem and Judah.
  - Note that Ezra had nothing to do with the original return from the exile—his family had stayed in Babylon so he had nothing to do with the rebuilding of the temple. His concern was the purifying of the community.
  - Esther tells another story about the Judahite community in Susa, one of the key Persian cities, in the slightly earlier time of Xerxes.
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# NEHEMIAH 1-7

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- Like Ezra 7-10, Neh 1-7 jumps on to the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, 445 B.C., when he agreed to commission one of his palace staff in Susa to go and organize the rebuilding of the Jerusalem city walls, which were apparently still in ruins as a result of the Babylonian destruction in 587 B.C.
    - Evidently Nehemiah's family, too, had not taken the chance to return to Judah.
  - Some of the wrongs Malachi protests about in Jerusalem parallel the kind of thing Ezra and Nehemiah take action about, and Malachi likely dates in this general period.
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# NUMBERS 8-13

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- Ezra and Nehemiah are now together in Jerusalem, evidently at some later date in Artaxerxes' reign.
  - They are working together at the rebuilding of the community on the basis of the Torah and the building up of the population of the city itself.
  - Two strong leaders with different skills working together towards a common goal
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# LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM EZRA-NEHEMIAH

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- Insights on the way God can work through and with a political superpower
  - The Importance of Prayer (Ezra 9 & Nehemiah 1, 9)
  - The Wonder and Worries of Rebuilding and Reforming
  - Communication/Organisation/Delegation/Adaptation
  - Dealing with Opposition
  - *Good Leadership Book: Hand Me Another Brick* by Swindoll
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# MARRIAGE IN EZRA-NEHEMIAH

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- Strong Teaching against marrying “foreigners” (Ezra 9-10, Nehemiah 10:30, 13:25-26)
    - The “set apart” Jewish community would have ceased to exist
    - There would have been no Israel
    - No Messiah...No Jesus
  - Note that the story does not concern foreign women like Ruth who became worshipers of Yahweh. It concerns women who kept their ethnic and religious identity.
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# 1-2 CHRONICLES

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- Chronicles is Prequel to Ezra-Nehemiah or Ezra-Nehemiah was the Sequel to Chronicles
    - First verses of Ezra are the same as the last verses of Chronicles
  - Chronicles is a retelling of Judah's story designed to encourage them.
    - Much of it is word-for-word the same as Samuel-Kings; the author started from Samuel-Kings and produced a revised version of its story, sometimes omitting things, sometimes adding things, sometimes rewriting things.
    - It is a new version of the story because the people are in that new situation and need a new message from God, and the Holy Spirit inspires the writing of a new version of the story.
    - The presence of two versions in Scripture compares with the presence of four versions of the Jesus story in the NT. A rich story can be told in several ways in different contexts.
  - We don't know who wrote it, but it is a more coherent composition than Ezra-Nehemiah. It does not just bring together a collection of separate pieces.
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# THEMES IN CHRONICLES

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- The theme of worship is part of a stress on God being with people. He is not involved in Judah's national life as he had been before the downfall of the state but He is with them in the present not absent, nor do they simply have to look to the future.
    - The Levites are key figures, and they are music leaders. Chronicles emphasises prayer, joy and praise—in life as well as in the temple.
  - It stresses God's might, God's justice, God's word, and God's grace—with the expected response of purity, trust, and obedience.
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# KEYS TO CHRONICLES

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- **It is Contextual.** Why should God want to inspire another version of the story in Samuel-Kings?
    - The differences from Samuel-Kings reflect Chronicles' distinctive context in the Second Temple period when the faith is under pressure and God seems inactive. Samuel-Kings tells the story of the time of the kings in a way that shows people how they had gone wrong, which fits the context of the exile. They needed to face these facts. Chronicles tells the story in a way that encourages people, which fits the context after the exile, when they need such encouragement.
    - In telling the story, it does not always try to be literally accurate, but dresses the figures of history in the costumes of its own day, to make the links clear to the people's own day.
  - **It is a Narrative:** It does not (overtly) tell its own story but retells the old, old story and abbreviates it (e.g., omitting the story of Ephraim and the human interest stories) or expands it (e.g., in the information on David's plans for the temple building). It portrays David rather more positively than 2 Samuel, like Hebrews 11 talking about OT characters.
    - The way the first Christians kept rewriting the Gospel story (Mark, then Matthew and Luke, then John, according to the traditional view) takes up the assumption that an important story needs repeated retelling and gains from repeated retelling.
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# ESTHER

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- Esther tells of how a Judahite girl gets drafted into the Persian king's harem in Susa and is thus in a position to get the king to halt a plan by one of his senior ministers to eliminate the her people.
  - Most likely written in the Persian period in Persia (or perhaps the Greek period), but it is anonymous.
  - Retold at the Festival of Purim each March
    - “based-on-fact” version of an event
      - added spice: 23 meter high gallows; 6 month beauty treatment
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# ESTHER & ANTI-SEMITISM

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- It's the biblical discussion of anti-Semitism.
    - often fuelled by Christian talk about the Jews being Jesus' murderers.
  - Esther is an account of a failed attempt at genocide that is typological of the Jewish people's experience. (Exiles, 70AD, WWII, Present day)
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# ESTHER & GOD

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- It is an expression of the way God often works in history. It makes no reference to God, Israel, or prayer, yet its silence speaks loudly.
  - It compares and contrasts with the story of Israel in the days of Joseph and Moses. In Moses' day God visibly intervened, but God's acts are not usually visible. Even in the Joseph story, eventually God's involvement is explicitly mentioned, but not in Esther.
  - It illustrates the themes of wisdom expressed in Proverbs, and the characters embody wisdom and folly.
  - Esther encourages Jewish people to take responsibility for their destiny in the conviction that God is at work behind coincidences and chance.
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# ESTHER & POWER

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- It's not about what should happen but about what does happen.
  - It's not what you know that counts, but who you know.
  - The males have power—or do they? The king turns out to have no power over Vashti, and the men assume that her action will encourage rebellion among the other wives in Persia. Esther turns out to have power in another sense, by using the system rather than defying the system.
  - The fact that women have usually had to survive and exercise power out of a position of structural weakness makes a woman an appropriate image for the position of the Judahite people in the Dispersion.
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# ESTHER AS A COMEDY

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- It shows how if you want to survive you'd better learn to laugh.
  - Encourages the Jews to cope with adversity by laughing at their foes and at themselves.
  - Humor runs through the story:
    - Vashti and Esther as sex objects, the six-month banquet, the 23 meter high gallows, the year preparation for entering the harem, Haman's ending up honoring Mordecai, the king's assumption that Haman is raping Esther when he is actually begging her for mercy, the fact that the only people in danger are those who attack the Jews and 75,000 do. And in that connection, the ultimate irony is that the Jews let themselves be drawn into the massacre they had managed to escape.
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# RUTH

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- The Book of Ruth is anonymous and we don't know when it was written.
  - Its location among the Writings points to its having been written in the Second Temple period, when the question of relations with people such as the Moabites was a lively one (see Ezra-Nehemiah).
  - Its closing with a genealogy leading up to David suggests it is a basically historical story; it would be foolish to give David a Moabite great grandmother if this idea was fiction.
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# WHAT KIND OF STORY IS IT?

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- **Jewish:** It's about how David acquired his great grandmother; and like Esther, it's one of the Five Scrolls used at different occasions each year in the Jewish calendar (Pentecost). Some aspects would be obscure to other cultures (the details of the redeemer obligation, the shoe ritual).
  - **Female:** It's about how to survive as women in a man's world. One facet of this aspect is the way Ruth propositions Boaz—or rather proposes to Boaz, as she is surely not just offering him a one-night stand. But it's risky plan. She is taking the initiative in the relationship in a way that contrasts with cultural norms.
  - **Intertextual:** It resonates with other stories such as Tamar (Gen 38) and the Moabite women in Numbers 25, as well as Ezra-Nehemiah. We come to understand each text by comparing and contrasting them. Proverbs 31 has painted a portrait of a powerful or resourceful woman (Prov 31:11); only Ruth in Scripture is actually described in terms of that phrase in Proverbs. Her action in leaving her family and committing herself to Naomi and to Yahweh is like Abraham's. The portrait of life in Bethlehem (the care taken of some vulnerable women and a relative's willingness to marry a widow) bears comparison with the expectations of the Torah.
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# WHAT KIND OF STORY IS IT?

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- **Encouraging:** It's about God's involvement in some ordinary people's ordinary lives: a woman whose life falls apart, a woman who finds a new family, a man who finds a wife. It reminds us that everyone has their story to tell and their genealogy to find
  - **Hopeful:** It begins with a reference to the period of the judges, and the Book of Judges is characterised by unsavoury accounts of how life works out in that time, especially for women.
  - **Edifying:** A rabbinic comment asks how it is designed to be useful when it doesn't concern itself with classic Jewish themes such as cleanness and taboo, and answers that its significance lies in its exposition of the nature of hesed.
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# RUTH & *HESED*

- The word *hesed* plays a key role in the book, illustrating *hesed* at work without always saying it.
  - Common translations: steadfast love, devotion, faithfulness, favor, kindness, love, loyalty, or mercy.
  - The word denotes an extraordinary act of self-giving, the nearest word to Greek *agapē*.
  - It can refer to an extraordinary act of generosity, graciousness or mercy that one person shows to another when they are under no obligation to do so - there is no prior relationship between the parties. (3:10)
  - It can also refer to an extraordinary act of self-giving, loyalty or mercy that one person shows to another when they are already in relationship with them. (1:8 & 2:20)
  - *Hesed* is also translated “covenant love,” and it does sometimes link with covenants. But it can exist outside of any covenant relationship. **It is a love based loyalty that goes beyond anything that a covenant would demand.**
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# PSALMS

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150 Example of How to Talk to God

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“I read five psalms every day — that teaches me how to get along with God. Then I read a chapter of Proverbs every day and that teaches me how to get along with my fellow man.”

*—Billy Graham*

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# 5 BOOKS WITHIN THE BOOK

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- Before Psalms 1, 42, 73, 90, and 107 are the headings “Book One,” etc., and at the end of Psalms 41, 72, 89, 106 are some blessings, amens, and hallelujahs.
  - In 5 books, the Torah told Israel about what God had done and about the way of life that should be lived based on that fact. In five more, the Psalter told people how God was involved with them now, how to respond in worship to what God had done and does, how to urge him to do it again.
  - The Psalms teach not by telling but by showing. They speak from God by showing us how to speak to God.
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# SUBSECTIONS WITHIN THE BOOKS WITHIN THE BOOK

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- David Psalms 3-41, 51-72 (except 10, 33)
  - Korah Psalms 42-49
  - Asaph Psalms 50, 73-83 (though it's odd that 50 is separate)
  - Korah Psalms 84-85, 87-88 (though it's odd that 86 is an isolated David psalm)
  - Kingship Psalms 93, 95-99
  - Hallelujah Psalms 105-107
  - The Egyptian Hallel, used at Passover 113-118 (113-4 before meal, 115-8 after – see Mk 14:26)
  - Psalms of Ascents, used on pilgrimage or in procession 120-134
  - The Great Hallel, also used at Passover 135-36
  - David Psalms 138-145
  - Hallel Psalms 146-150
  - Note also the Elohim Psalms 42-83
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# OTHER GROUPING

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- **Orientation**—human life consists in satisfied seasons of well-being that evoke overtures of gratitude for the constancy of blessing. These are the psalms which seem to overflow with expressions about joy, celebration, goodness, coherence, and the reliability of God, his creation, and God’s governing law.
  - **Disorientation**—life is also filled with seasons of anguish because of hurt, alienation, self-pity, and hatred. These psalms are found most typically in “complaint songs,” the form of which matches the ragged, painful disarray (Their shape permits extravagance, hyperbole, and abrasiveness).
  - **New Orientation**—Human life consists in turns of surprise when we are overwhelmed with the new gifts of God, when joy breaks through the despair. Where there has only been darkness, now there is light. These psalms never state that the new situation was “natural,” easy, or obvious.
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# PSALMS AS POETRY

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- A poem uses its poetic form to probe deeper into human experience than ordinary speech or writing is usually able to do, to pull back a veil and allow the hearer or reader to sense other dimensions.
  - Parallelism: They say something from one angle and then repeat it from a slightly different one:
    - The most important things we want to say remain just a little beyond even our best words. The reader is invited to follow both perspectives and to see the larger, unspoken truth looming up behind
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# PSALMS AS A PRAYER BOOK

## EX: PSALMS 22 & 28

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- **Invocation of God** (“My God, my God”).
  - **Protest:** “I/we”: how things are for me/us (“I am a worm, not a human being”)
    - “They”: what they are doing to us (“All who see me mock me”)
    - “You”: how you are neglecting us (“Why have you abandoned me?”)
  - **Recollection of God’s deeds in the past:** painful but hopeful (“Our ancestors trusted in you, and you rescued them”)
  - **Confession of trust** (“Yahweh is my strength and my shield”)
  - **The actual prayer:** “Listen to me” (“Don’t be deaf towards me”)
    - “Deliver me” (“Save my life from the sword”)
    - “Put down my oppressors” (“Render their wages to them”))
      - The balance of protest and prayer in psalms is thus the opposite to that typical of Christian prayers. The psalms spend a lot of time telling God what the situation is; they assume God can work out what to do.
  - **Promise to come back with praise when God has acted** (“In the midst of the congregation I will praise you”)
  - **Transition to actual praise** (“You who are in awe of Yahweh, praise him”)
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# MISCTHOUGHTS PSALMS

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- Psalm 119 is a glorious extended meditation on the same theme, with the alphabetical backbone of the poem (each set of eight verses begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a remarkable poetic feat in itself) making its own point about the word of God. The very script in which it is written can bring God's order to human life.
  - C. S. Lewis hailed Psalm 119 as the finest poem ever written
  - Good Books on the Psalms:
    - Long Obedience in the Same Direction by Eugene Peterson
    - Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
    - Why the Psalms Matter by NT Wright
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# WHY THE PSALMS MATTER

## BY NT WRIGHT

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- **Time:** linear in biblical thought yet dynamic and complex. The past is brought into the present pointing us toward a future. (Passover/Exodus/Communion) Psalm 89 is a good example of this.
  - **Space:** there is an overlap between sacred space and human space – the overlap/interlocking of heaven and earth. (Creation, Tabernacle, Temple, Jesus, in the Spirit through the Church) Psalm 139 is a good example.
  - **Matter:** the goodness of Creation and the theme of “glory.” Glory has to do with human’s imaging God to the world of matter. God’s glory, then, is first of all God’s own presence and power that is then shared with God’s people as they reflect God to Creation. Psalm 72, 96, and 98 are good examples.
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# LAMENTATIONS

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- Lamentations' five poems each have 22 verses (66 in chapter 3); there are 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and in chapters 1—4 each verse begins with a different letter. They thus express sorrow from A to Z
  - Its background is the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of people from Judah—presumably the destruction of 587 B.C.
  - It is the surviving community's prayers in the years after that event. We know that the community had fast days in that connection (see e.g., Zech 8:19) and we can imagine it using these prayers on those occasions. The Jewish community still uses them on the Ninth of Av (August) in this way.
  - *Good Book: The Hidden Face of God: Finding the Missing Door to the Father Through Lament* by Michael Card
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# SOME NOTES ON LAMENTATIONS

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- Lam 1: The leadership has been deported; here ordinary people are mourning the city's fate. They accept responsibility for what has happened (contrast e.g., Ps 89). The prayer keeps noting that Ms. Zion has no comforter—in due course Isaiah 40:1-2 will respond to this fact.
  - Lam 2: The motif of Yahweh's anger is prominent, reflecting the experience of being on the receiving end. It indicates that Yahweh has all the passion of a person; Yahweh is not a cold judge. Note the situation's horror (vv. 11-12); also the disproving of a faith-conviction (v. 15; cf. Ps 48:2).
  - Lam 3: Now a man speaks; cf. Psalms and Jeremiah (with first, second, and third person verbs). Hope has gone (vv. 16-18); remembering is painful (vv. 19-21a). Then there is an astonishing reversal (v. 21b); Yahweh's other passions make hope possible (vv. 22-30). Yahweh is angry only unwillingly (v. 33 - the central line). Literally, it doesn't come from his heart. These facts make an appeal for repentance possible (vv. 40-42); there is the possibility of forgiveness.
  - Lam 4: If Lamentations 3 was the highpoint, the poems now revert to pained, concrete description. Yahweh has not kept his commitment to David and to Zion (v. 20; contrast Ps 132).
  - Lam 5: The least concrete of the poems, and the one most like a psalm. Lamentations turns out to be linear—it takes us to the end of its journey. But it is an unsatisfactory end (v. 22). The story is still incomplete.
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“But where can wisdom be found?  
Where does understanding dwell?

*-Job 28:12*

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# PROVERBS, JOB, ECCLESIASTES, AND SONG OF SONGS

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How to learn from life.

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“Solomon wrote the Song of Songs in the springtime of youth, Proverbs with the wisdom of maturity, Ecclesiastes with the disillusion of old age”

*-Rabbi Jonathan*

*Song of Songs Rabbah, the Rabbinic Commentary on the Song of Songs*

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# PROVERBS

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- It rubs our noses in truths that we wish we did not have to face.
  - It is instruction or discipline: which implies that it is not obtained without effort or pain.
  - It is insight: the capacity to be discerning and to look behind things.
  - It involves shrewdness: the characteristic of the snake (Gen 3), but a positive quality, too, in helping us live wisely.
  - It refers to knowledge: which means acknowledgment: not mere head-awareness of the truth but commitment to living by it.
  - It speaks of skill: a word that suggests “knowing the ropes,” being able to steer one’s way through life.
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# JOB: HOW WE LIVE WITH SUFFERING

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- The book of Job is a piece of theological reflection in the form of a drama about a man who becomes the subject of debate in the heavenly court, and whose life then falls apart (chapters 1 – 2).
  - It centres on a dialog between him and three friends discussing appropriate reactions to an experience like his, and appropriate ways of understanding it (chapters 3 -27).
  - After a poem reflecting on the issues, and a final statement by Job (chapters 28 – 31), a latecomer storms in to make his contribution (chapters 32 – 37).
  - Then God appears and speaks (chapters 38-41).
  - Finally Job's life is restored (chapter 42).
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# INSIGHTS FROM JOB

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- Suffering is a test
  - Suffering comes as a consequence of our personal human sinfulness
  - Suffering challenges us to insist on facing God with the facts
  - Suffering is designed to encourage us to grow spiritually
  - There is no answer to the question about suffering even when there is one
  - Happily Ever After
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# SONG OF SONGS

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- **The Song gives expression to intrinsic human needs.** The need for loving recognition and acceptance: The woman describes herself as darkened by the sun, but pretty (1.5-6) – she is OK about herself because she is loved. She is only a common wild flower – but to him she is a lovely flower against the background of weeds (2.1-2). He is not an impressive tree compared with the giant redwoods – but as far as she is concerned, he provides shade and produces lovely fruit (2.3). They are just an ordinary couple, but their love turns them into a prince and a princess (3.6-11).
  - It opens with **shocking directness**: May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth (1.2)
  - It is not saying human beings should be like this, but just that we are, and readers had better own the fact.
  - The poems do not prioritise the physical over the relational, nor the relational over the physical. They assume that the two belong together, like body and spirit.
  - The presence of the Song in scripture implies that the kind of relationship it celebrates might be significant for people in general, not just for young people on their way to marriage.
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# ECCLESIASTES

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- Places side by side two ideas for consideration:
    - Biblical Teaching: wisdom teaching and of faith in God
    - Down-to-earth gloominess concerning how things are “under the sun”—“in real life”
  - It urges us not to hide from the emptiness of life “under the sun,” but to accept the challenge to believe nevertheless.
  - It forms a warning not to think we have the truth all buttoned-up, It issues a protest like that in Job against the over-simplified truths of Job’s comforters.
  - It constitutes Scripture’s permission to doubt. Biblical truth may sometimes seem full of holes, but we may still recognise that there are no better answers than the biblical ones.
  - Ecclesiastes is then like Job himself. The problem is not that Ecclesiastes is depressed—or if he is depressed, it is because he is facing facts. The book is about how to live with doubt.
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# DANIEL

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- Narrative Book. More than half of Daniel comprises a series of stories. They occupy most of chapters 2—7
  - Worship Book. Worship is a recurrent theme, especially in the stories.
  - Wisdom book. At the beginning of the book, the young men are introduced as men of insight, and through the stories they manifest that insight in a variety of ways.
  - Prophecy. In the Greek/English Bible the Book of Daniel appears among the Prophets, and Jesus refers to Daniel as a prophet (Mt 24:15)
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