

I: THE PRIMEVAL HISTORY

CHAPTER 1

First Story of Creation. * 1 In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, * while a mighty wind swept over the waters. b

3 Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. c 4 God saw how good the light was. God then separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." Thus evening came, and morning followed—the first day. *

6 Then God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other." And so it happened: 7 God made the dome, and it separated the water above the dome from the water below it. d 8 God called the dome "the sky." Evening came, and morning followed—the second day.

9 Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear." And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared. e 10 God called the dry land "the earth," and the basin of the water he called "the sea." God saw how good it was. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it." And so it happened: 12 the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw how good it was. 13 Evening came, and morning followed—the third day.

14 Then God said: "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. Let them mark the fixed times, the days and the years, and serve as luminaries in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth." And so it happened: 16 God made the two great lights, the greater one to govern the day, and the lesser one to govern the night; and he made the stars. b 17 God set them in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the dark-

ness. God saw how good it was. 19 Evening came, and morning followed—the fourth day.

20 h Then God said, "Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky." And so it happened: 21 God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of swimming creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw how good it was, 22 and God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth." i 23 Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.

24 j Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth all kinds of living creatures: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals of all kinds." And so it happened: 25 God made all kinds of wild animals, all kinds of cattle, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. God saw how good it was. 26 k Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground." *

27 God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.

a Gn 2, 1, 4; Ps 8, 4; 38-39; 90, 2; Wis 11, 17; Sir 16, 24; Jer 10, 12; 2 Mc 7, 28; Acts 14, 15; Col 1, 16f; Heb 1, 2f; 3, 4; 11, 3; Ry 4, 11; b Jer 4, 23; c 2 Cor 4, 6; d 1 Prv 8, 27f; 2 Pt 3, 5; e Jb 38, 8; Ps 33, 7; Jer 5, 22; f Ps 104, 14; g Jb 26, 10; Ps 19, 1f; Bar 3, 33; h Dt 4, 19; Ps 136, 7ff; Wis 13, 2ff; Jer 31, 35; h Jb 12, 7-10; i Gn 8, 17; j Sir 16, 27f; Bar 3, 32; k 2 Pt 1, 5; 1, 3; 9, 6; Ps 8, 3f; Wis 2, 23; 10, 2; Sir 17, 1, 3f; Jas 3, 7; 1 Cor 11, 7; Eph 4, 24; Col 3, 10; Mt 19, 4; Mk 10, 6.

1, 1-2, 4a: This section introduces the whole Pentateuch. It shows how God brought an orderly universe out of primordial chaos.

1, 2: The abyss: the primordial ocean according to the ancient Semitic cosmogony. After God's creative activity, part of this vast body forms the salt-water seas (vv 9f); part of it is the fresh water under the earth (Ps 33, 7; Ez 31, 4), which wells forth on the earth as springs and fountains (Gn 7, 11; 8, 2; Prv 3, 20). Part of it, "the upper water" (Ps 148, 4; Dn 3, 60), is held up by the dome of the sky (Gn 1, 6) from which rain descends on the earth (Gn 7, 11; 2 Kos 7, 2, 19; Ps 104, 13). A mighty wind: Literally, "a wind of God," or "a spirit of God"; cf Gn 8, 1.

1, 5: In ancient Israel a day was considered to begin at sunset. According to the highly artificial literary structure of Gn 1, 1-2, 4a, God's creative activity is divided into six days to teach the sacredness of the sabbath rest on the seventh day in the Israelite religion (Gn 2, 2f).

1, 26: Man is here presented as the climax of God's creative activity; he resembles God primarily because of the dominion God gives him over the rest of creation.

Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth." 29 m God also said: "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; 30 and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants for food." And so it happened. 31 God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day. *

CHAPTER 2

1 Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. o 2 Since on the seventh day God was finished with the work he had been doing, he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken. p 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation. q

4 Such is the story of the heavens and the earth at their creation.

Second Story of Creation. * At the time when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens— while as yet there was no field shrub on earth and no grass of the field had sprouted, for the LORD God had sent no rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil, 6 but a stream was welling up out of the earth

1 Gn 8, 17; 9, 1; Ps 8, 6, 9; 115, 16; Wis 9, 2; m 2 Pt 1, 3; Ps 104, 14f; n 1 Tm 4, 4; o 11 45, 12; Jn 1, 3; p Ex 20, 9ff; 31, 17; Heb 4, 4, 10; q Ex 20, 11; Dt 3, 14; Nah 9, 14; r Gn 3, 19; 18, 27; Tb 8, 8; Jb 34, 15; Ps 103, 14; 104, 29; Eccl 3, 20; 12, 7; Wis 7, 1; Sir 33, 10; 1 Cor 15, 45; r 1a 51, 3; Ez 31, 9; Gn 3, 22; Prv 3, 18; Ry 2, 7; 22, 2, 14; s Sir 24, 25; t 8f 7, 15; u Ps 104, 14; v Gn 3, 2f; Rom 6, 23; w Tb 8, 6; Sir 36, 24; 1 Cor 11, 9; 1 Tm 2, 13; x Sir 17, 1; 1 Cor 11, 8f; 1 Tm 2, 13.

2, 4b-25: This section is chiefly concerned with the creation of man. It is much older than the narrative of Gn 1, 1-2, 4a. Here God is depicted as creating man before the rest of his creatures, which are made for man's sake.

2, 7: God is portrayed as a potter molding man's body out of clay. There is a play on words in Hebrew between adam ("man") and adamah ("ground"). Being: literally, "soul."

2, 8: Eden: used here as the name of a region in southern Mesopotamia; the term is derived from the Sumerian word eden, "fertile plain." A similar-sounding Hebrew word means "delight"; the garden in Eden could therefore be understood as the "garden of delight," so that, through the Greek version, it is now known also as "paradise," literally, a "pleasure park."

2, 10-14: Rises: in flood to overflow its banks. Beyond there: as one travels upstream. Branches: literally, "heads," i.e., upper courses. Eden is near the head of the Persian Gulf, where the Tigris and the Euphrates join with two other streams to form a single river. The land of Cush here and in Gn 10, 8, is not Ethiopia (Nubia) as elsewhere, but the region of the Kassites east of Mesopotamia.

and was watering all the surface of the ground—7 the LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground* and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being. r

8 Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden,* in the east, and he placed there the man whom he had formed. s 9 Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. t

10 A river rises * in Eden to water the garden; beyond there it divides and becomes four branches. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it is the one that winds through the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 The gold of that land is excellent; bdellium and lapis lazuli are also there. 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it is the one that winds all through the land of Cush. u 14 The name of the third river is the Tigris; it is the one that flows east of Asshur. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it. v 16 The LORD God gave man this order: "You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden w 17 except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die." x

18 The LORD God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." y 19 So the LORD God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each of them would be its name. 20 The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man.

21 So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. z 22 The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, 23 the man said:

"This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;

This one shall be called 'woman,' for out of 'her man' this one has been taken.*"

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.*

²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.

CHAPTER 3

The Fall of Man. ¹ Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made. The serpent asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?" ² The woman answered the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³ but it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman: "You certainly will not die! ⁵ No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know* what is good and what is bad." ⁶ The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

⁸ When they heard the sound of the LORD God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day,* the man and his wife hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ The LORD God then called to the man and asked him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself." ¹¹ Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!" ¹² The man replied, "The woman whom you put here with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it." ¹³ The LORD God then asked the woman, "Why did you do such a thing?" The

woman answered, "The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it." ¹

¹⁴ Then the LORD God said to the serpent:

"Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures; On your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life. ⁸

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers;

He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel." * ^b

¹⁶ To the woman he said:

"I will intensify the pangs of your childbearing; in pain shall you bring forth children.

Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master." ⁱ

¹⁷ To the man he said: "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat,

"Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life. ⁱ

¹⁸ Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as you eat of the plants of the field.

* Mt 19, 5; Mk 10, 7; 1 Cor 7, 10; Eph 5, 31.—b Gn 2, 17; Rom 6, 23.—i: Wis 2, 24; Br 26, 14; Is 14, 14; Jn 8, 44; 2 Cor 11, 3.—l Gn 3, 22; 1 Tm 2, 14.—m Jer 23, 24.—f 2 Cor 11, 3.—g Is 65, 25; Mt 7, 17; Rv 12, 9.—h Is 7, 14; 9, 5; Rom 16, 20; 1 Jn 3, 8; Rv 12, 17.—l 1 Cor 11, 3; Eph 5, 22; Tm 2, 12.—j Gn 5, 29; Rom 5, 12; 8, 20; Heb 6, 8.

2, 23: There is a play on the similar-sounding Hebrew words *ishsha* ("woman") and *ishah* ("her man, her husband").

2, 24: One body: literally "one flesh"; classical Hebrew has no specific word for "body." The sacred writer stresses the fact that conjugal union is willed by God.

3, 5: Like gods who know: or "like God who knows."

3, 8: The breezy time of the day: literally "the wind of the day." On most days in Palestine a cooling breeze blows from the sea shortly before sunset.

3, 15: He will strike . . . at his heel: since the antecedent for he and his is the collective noun offspring, i.e., all the descendants of the woman, a more exact rendering of the sacred writer's words would be, "They will strike . . . at their heels." However, later theology saw in this passage more than unending hostility between snakes and men. The serpent was regarded as the devil (Wis 2, 24; Jn 8, 44; Rv 12, 9; 20, 2), whose eventual defeat seems implied in the contrast between head and heel. Because "the Son of God" appeared that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3, 8), the passage can be understood as the first promise of a Redeemer for fallen mankind. The woman's offspring then is primarily Jesus Christ.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, Until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return." * ⁸

²⁰ The man called his wife Eve, because she became the mother of all the living.*

²¹ For the man and his wife the LORD God made leather garments, with which he clothed them. ²² Then the LORD God said: "See! The man has become like one of us, knowing what is good and what is bad! Therefore, he must not be allowed to put out his hand to take fruit from the tree of life also, and thus eat of it and live forever." ²³ The LORD God therefore banished him from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ When he expelled the man, he settled him east of the garden of Eden; and he stationed the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.*

CHAPTER 4

Cain and Abel. ¹ The man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced a man with the help of the LORD." * ² Next she bore his brother Abel. Abel became a keeper of flocks, and Cain a tiller of the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought an offering to the LORD from the fruit of the soil, ⁴ while Abel, for his part,

brought one of the best firstlings of his flock.* The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not. Cain greatly resented this and was crestfallen. ⁶ So the LORD said to Cain: "Why are you so resentful and crestfallen? ⁷ If you do well, you can hold up your head; but if not, sin is a demon lurking* at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master." "

⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out in the field." When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He answered, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰ The LORD then said: "What have you done! Listen: Your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil! ¹¹ Therefore you shall be banned from the soil that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² If you till the soil, it shall no longer give you its produce. You shall become a restless wanderer on the earth." ¹³ Cain said to the LORD: "My punishment is too great to bear. ¹⁴ Since you have now banished me from the soil, and I must avoid your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, anyone may kill me at sight." ¹⁵ "Not so!" the LORD said to him. "If anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold." So the LORD put a mark* on Cain, lest anyone should kill him at sight. ¹⁶ Cain then left the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod,* east of Eden.

Descendants of Cain and Seth. ¹⁷ * Cain had relations with his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. Cain also became the founder of a city, which he named after his son Enoch. ¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father after his son Enoch. ¹⁹ Irad became the father of Mehujael; Mehujael became the father of Methusael, and Methusael became the father of Lamech. ²⁰ Lamech took two wives; the name of the first was Adah, and the name of the second Zillah. ²¹ Adah gave birth to Jabal, the ancestor of all who dwell in tents and keep cattle. ²² His brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all who play the lyre and the pipe. ²³ Zillah, on her part, gave birth to Tubalcain, the ancestor of all who forge instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubalcain was Naamah.

1, 20: This verse seems to be out of place; it would fit better after v 24. The Hebrew name *hawwa* ("Eve") is related to the Hebrew word *hay* ("living").

3, 24: The above rendering is based on the ancient Greek version; that of the current Hebrew is, When he expelled the man, he settled east of the garden of Eden, the cherubim.

4, 1: The Hebrew name *qayin* ("Cain") and the term *qaniti* ("I have produced") present another play on words.

4, 7: Demon lurking: in Hebrew, robes, literally "croucher," is used here, like the similar Akkadian term *rabisu*, to designate a certain kind of evil spirit.

4, 15: A mark: probably a tattoo. The use of tattooing for tribal marks has always been common among the nomads of the Near Eastern deserts.

4, 16: The land of Nod: not a definite geographic region. The term merely means "the land of nomads."

4, 17-22: In vv 12-16 Cain was presented as the archetype of nomadic peoples. The sacred author in this section follows another ancient tradition that makes Cain the prototype of sedentary peoples with higher material culture.