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COLLEGE STUDY
BIBLE

NEW AMERICAN BIBLE

INCLUDING THE REVISED PSALMS AND
THE REVISED NEW TESTAMENT

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES
WITH CRITICAL USE OF ALL THE ANCIENT SOURCES

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Welcome to the greatest time in your life! Isn't that what everyone says? For most, the college years turn out to be as much about transitions as they are about having a great time, and dealing with those transitions is usually difficult. As students, we face pressure to achieve academically and pressure to fit in socially. We face temptations from our peers who challenge us in our beliefs. In the meantime, we try to find our own identity and figure out our place in the world as individuals.

"What happened to the great time?" you may wonder. Never fear, it's there for the taking! It's simply a matter of navigating through the daily challenges of your life in a way that allows you to become your best self—the self that God intended you to become. We can't think of a better guide than the Sacred Scriptures.

The Bible contains God's word revealed to us and is in a sense the basis for the foundation of three of the world's great religions—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. It is a huge book and can be very intimidating to read, especially since it doesn't use language that we're comfortable with and describes events that took place in a culture we know little about in a time that is ancient history to us. The bibles we received as children do not contain the tools we need to relate to and understand what we read.

As fellow students, we know you'll understand this word—*study*. We know how to study subjects such as chemistry and literature, but it may not have occurred to us actually to study the Bible. The tools in this Bible clearly have this focus, the student's needs. We had you in mind every step of the way!

It is essential to spend time studying various aspects of the Bible, including the historical context of the various books, the authors who wrote them and what audience they were writing for, and the genre of each book. These things offer important clues as to how to interpret, understand, and apply what God reveals through these human words. The *Saint Mary's Press® College Study Bible* includes footnotes, maps, photographs, charts, articles, background information, and additional tools to help you in your studies.

Probably the most rewarding and useful outcome from the time you spend studying the Bible will be the connections that you will be able to make between the Scriptures and your own life. Articles throughout this Bible discuss many of the contemporary social, personal, and spiritual issues that we face each day. By connecting these very real issues to the Scriptures, the articles help the Bible become more meaningful to us and can have a very direct impact on our lives and the choices we make.

We would encourage you to read the articles, the section introductions, and the book introductions in the *SAINT MARY'S PRESS College Study Bible* as you read, study, and reflect on the Scriptures. We are both very proud to have been a part of developing this special edition of the Bible and have found it to be extremely helpful as we seek to grow in our faith and shape our lives around God's will. We hope that your studies will enable you to turn to the Bible as a tool that can help you to navigate through the many challenges you face.

GOD BLESS,

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THE BIBLE: A LIGHT ON OUR PATH

Have you ever asked yourself questions like: “What is a Bible?” “How did the Bible that we now have come into existence?” “Why does the Bible have such authority in people’s lives?” “Should the Bible have authority in my life? If so, how do I correctly understand what the Bible has to say?” The answers to these questions are all important because they tell us something about how God has revealed God’s self over the centuries, and how we can recognize God’s self-revelation in our lives today. The answers to these questions help us understand how the Bible can be “a lamp for my feet, / a light for my path” (Ps 119:105); that is, how the Bible can teach us to walk in God’s ways.

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is not one book but a library of books. Think about the difference between a book and a library of books. A book is usually all one kind of writing. A library includes a variety of kinds of writing: myth, legend, history, biography, and fiction, to name but a few.

A book is usually by one author who lived at one time in history and had a particular point of view. A library is written by a number of authors who lived at various times in history and had many points of view.

“But wait,” you might object. “The Bible does have only one author and that author is God.” It is true that we Catholics, indeed all Christians, claim that God is the author of the Bible. We will discuss just how God is the author of the Bible later when we explore what we mean when we say that the Bible is a means of handing on revelation and that the authors are inspired. Nevertheless, we know that human beings were God’s instruments in writing the Bible. These human beings lived in different centuries and had a variety of points of view.

It is extremely important that we understand that the Bible is a library of books written in different literary forms, at various times in history, from a variety of points of

view because this information affects how we understand what the Bible teaches. You will find in-depth discussion of each of those topics in other articles in the *Saint Mary’s Press® College Study Bible* (“Understanding Genres and Literary Forms,” “Understanding the Bible in Its Historical and Cultural Contexts,” and “Understanding the Bible Within the Living Tradition of the Church”). Here we will address another question: “How did the Bible reach its present form?”

A FIVE-STEP PROCESS

Since we live in a time when the Bible is in finished form, that is, when the library of books that we consider canonical is complete, and we will neither add to them nor subtract from them, we may never have asked ourselves how this particular arrangement of books reached its present form. The Bible that we now treasure is the end result of what might be described as a five-step process.

EVENTS

The first step in the process was God’s self-revelation through events. These events occurred over a two-thousand-year period, starting with our ancestors in faith, Abraham and Sarah, who lived around 1850 BCE, and concluding with the end of the apostolic age, that is, around the end of the first century CE. Many of the events may be familiar to you: Abraham responding to God’s call to leave the home of his ancestors and to go to a new land; Moses leading God’s People out of slavery in Egypt; David uniting the twelve Tribes and establishing a united kingdom; the division of the kingdom; the rise of the Assyrians who conquered the northern kingdom; the rise of the Babylonians, who conquered the southern kingdom and sent the people into Exile; the rise of the Persians, who conquered the Babylonians and allowed the Israelites to return to their holy land; the rise of the Greeks and then the Romans, who ruled the holy land as part of the Roman Empire.

All of these events form the skeleton of the Old Testament, just as bones form the skeleton of our bodies.

It was during the time of the Roman occupation that Jesus, whom Christians believe is both human and divine, was born. The events that underlie our Gospels are: Jesus had a public ministry that was powerful in both word and deed; Jesus was found guilty of blasphemy in a Jewish court, and accused of sedition in a Roman court; Jesus received the death penalty; Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried; Jesus rose from the dead and is still in the midst of his people. The events that underlie the rest of what we call the New Testament involve the birth of the Church and the spreading of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the surrounding countries.

ORAL TRADITION

The second step in the process is oral tradition. People talked about the events that they experienced. Through the generations the stories of God's powerful intervention in the lives of God's people were told over and over. For example, in the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, we read the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. As that book ends, the Israelites have gone to Egypt because there was a drought in the holy land and they needed to find food. The second book in the Bible is the Book of Exodus, in which we read the story of Moses leading the people out of slavery in Egypt. Between the last page of Genesis and the first page of Exodus, five hundred years have elapsed. The Israelites who were slaves in Egypt knew about God's promises to their ancestors not because they had our Bible, but because the stories of the ancestors and God's promises to the ancestors were passed on through oral tradition.

Not just stories about the events of the Old Testament were passed on through oral tradition; stories about Jesus were also passed on through oral tradition before they were written. This means that no biblical account, whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, is contemporary with the events that it describes. All of the stories are told in hindsight. In addition, none of the stories were passed on for the purpose of teaching history. Rather, the stories are stories of faith; their purpose is to describe how God has revealed God's self through events.

The stories that developed to pass on the people's understanding of God's powerful presence in the events of their lives could be in any literary form. After all, the stories were composed not to teach history but to inspire each succeeding generation, to teach that generation that the promises made to Abraham are promises made to them, and that because they are in a covenant relationship with God, they have certain obligations and responsibilities. Such lessons could be taught in any number of forms, including legends, songs, fiction, allegories, parables, and riddles. Any literary form could be a vehicle to teach truth.

WRITTEN TRADITION

Slowly, over time, some of the stories passed on through oral tradition began to be written down. If we had lived during the time of Abraham (1850 BCE) or Moses (1250 BCE), we would not have been able to read any part of our present-day Bible. However, if we had lived during the time of King David (1000 BCE), we could have read some of our present Old Testament. At that time stories that had developed orally over hundreds of years were gradually written down and collected into an organized narrative.

This same process underlies the New Testament. Had we been contemporaries of Jesus, we could not have read our present New Testament. Had we lived during Paul's lifetime, we could not have read our present-day Gospels, although we could have read Paul's letters, the earliest New Testament material to reach written form. Gospel materials, too, were passed on orally, and then in written form, before they became the organized narratives that we have today.

EDITED TRADITION

Had we lived at the time of King David and read the organized narrative that dates to about 1000 BCE, we would still not be reading the Book of Genesis or the Book of Exodus as those books now exist. Over time, in the light of subsequent events, the stories were retold to include new insights or emphasize certain points that were learned through the subsequent events. For instance, in the earliest collected narrative that dates to the time of King David, the stories of the ancestors were told from the point of view of those who

lived in the south. When the kingdom split into north and south, the stories were retold from the point of view of those in the northern kingdom. After the northern kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians, those in the south pondered what the northern kingdom had done wrong. The stories were retold, emphasizing the lessons stressed by the reformers who were calling the people to fidelity to their covenant relationship with God. After the Babylonian Exile the stories were again retold in the light of what had been learned from that experience. Our present Old Testament stories are layered. They reflect the thinking and insights of the Israelites over the span of their history, not just the insights that are contemporary with the original storytellers.

The New Testament is also an edited text. The author of the Gospel According to Luke describes himself as an editor who is arranging the inherited oral and written traditions about events in order to meet the needs of his particular audience (Lk 1:1–4). Also, the order of the books in the New Testament is not the order in which the books were written. In our present edited arrangement, the Gospels come first, and the letters, many of which were written earlier than the Gospels, follow.

CANONICAL

Not every book that developed through the process we have described is in the Bible. We call those books that are in the Bible, canonical. The word *canon* originally referred to a reed that was used to measure things, a ruler. The fact that a book is in the canon means that the believing community claims that this book is inspired by God and therefore faithfully teaches those truths that God wishes to teach us for the sake of our salvation. The book is a rule for our faith.

The selection of canonical books also developed slowly over time. The Old Testament canon, as we now have it, is divided into three sections by Jewish scholars: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. We see evidence of these divisions in the foreword to the Book of Sirach, which dates to the end of the second century BCE: “Many important truths have been handed down to us through the law, the prophets, and the later authors.” However, the Hebrew canon of the Jews, which Christians call the Old Testament, probably

did not reach its present form until the first century CE.

The Catholic Old Testament canon includes some books not included in the Jewish Hebrew canon or in the Protestant canon. These books—Tobit, Judith, First and Second Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, and Baruch—are called deuterocanonical books by Catholics and apocryphal books (i.e., not part of the canon) by Protestants. All of the disputed books were written during the last few hundred years before Christ, many of them in Greek. They became part of the Septuagint, that is, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek in the third century BCE because many Jews lived in Egypt and spoke Greek rather than Hebrew. The deuterocanonical books appear in the Catholic canon because Catholic biblical translations rested on both the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament texts. They do not appear in Protestant canons because Protestant translations rested only on the Hebrew Old Testament texts.

Catholics and Protestants have exactly the same New Testament canon. Again, not all of the books about New Testament events are in the canon. There are apocryphal gospels that you are free to read. However, by the end of the second century CE, the four Gospels that we now have were in general use, and the others had fallen out of use. By the end of the fourth century, the whole New Testament canon as we now have it had taken shape.

Christians believe that the formation of the canon was due to the work of the Holy Spirit in the worshiping community. Those books that the community recognized as faithfully passing on the beliefs of the community and nourishing the community remained in use; those that did not fell out of use.

The Catholic canon was officially closed in the sixteenth century at the Council of Trent. During the Protestant Reformation, debate arose about whether or not all of the books that were then in use should be considered canonical. In reaction to this discussion, the Council affirmed that the New Testament books that had been in use for fifteen hundred years and that had formed the self-understanding of the Church were canonical. We would not add to them nor subtract from them.

INSPIRATION

Catholics affirm that God is the author of the Bible. However, as we just learned, we do not claim that God actually wrote the Bible. We understand that the Bible is the end result of a process that included events, oral tradition, written tradition, editing, and acceptance by the Spirit-filled community. So, this presents us with the question, “What are we claiming when we say that God is the author of the Bible?”

God is the author of the Bible in that God inspired God’s people at every step of the process. Those who originally experienced the events, and recognized them as events in which God was powerful and present, were inspired. Those who passed on the stories through oral tradition, those who originally wrote them down, those who edited them, and the community that recognized certain texts as texts that accurately passed on the faith of the community were all inspired. God’s inspiration was present in every generation. At the same time, the human authors of the Bible are real authors. They wrote in their own language, using their own literary expressions, and from their own historical perspectives to give us the revealed word of God. Thus the Bible is the word of God in the words of its human authors.

REVELATION

What do we mean when we claim that the Bible is revelation? Do we mean that inspired authors had God’s point of view so that every word that they spoke on every subject is true (i.e., literally God’s word or the words that came directly from God’s mouth)? No, we do not make such a claim, even though we affirm that the Bible is inerrant, that is, without error. When we claim that the Bible contains revelation and is inerrant, we are claiming that it teaches the truth on the subjects that it is addressing: the inspired authors teach us the truth about who God is, who we are in relation to God and the rest of creation, and what God would have us do to cooperate with the coming of God’s Kingdom.

If your goal is to learn history or science, the Bible is not your best source of information. But if your goal is to learn about the nature of God, about how God has revealed God’s self through the centuries, and about

how you might live your life in a way that is pleasing to God, then there is no better source on the face of the earth than the Bible. The Bible teaches us what we need to know regarding our salvation.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

The Second Vatican Council’s document *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)* says, “the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture” (no. 21). Because we believe that the Scriptures are God’s self-revelation and that they teach us the truth regarding our salvation, we also believe that there is no higher authority on earth than the Scriptures. The teaching Church, the Scriptures, and Tradition have a relationship in which each is essential to the other. It is the Church’s role to interpret the Scriptures, but in doing so the “teaching office [Magisterium] is not above the word of God, but serves it” (*Dei Verbum*, no. 10).

This means that the Church cannot teach something that contradicts the Scriptures. However, the Church can teach a truth that has its roots, but not its full flowering, in the Scriptures, as well as something on which the Scriptures remain silent.

A CONTEXTUALIST APPROACH TO THE SCRIPTURES

Because it is the Church’s role to interpret the Scriptures, the Church teaches us how to understand the truth that the Bible contains. In a single word, the Church teaches us to be contextualists, rather than fundamentalists, in interpreting the Bible. This means that in order to understand correctly the revelation that the Bible is teaching, we must interpret biblical passages in the context in which they appear in the Bible. There are three contexts to consider.

Because the Bible is a library of books, we must consider the kind of writing, that is, the literary form, in which a particular passage appears. If we ignore the literary form, we may misunderstand not only what an author

is teaching on a topic but the very topic that the author is addressing.

Because the authors lived at various times in history, we must consider the context of each author's historical time and the presumptions that the author and the audience shared. If an author pictures God creating a flat world, the author is not teaching about the shape of the earth, but merely presuming that the earth is flat in the course of teaching that God created all that exists.

Because the Bible took form over a two-thousand-year period, we must consider the context of the process of revelation that occurred over time. Early insights often represent one step in understanding a mystery, not the fullness of revelation. If we take a partial truth, and present it as the whole truth, we have once more put the authority of the Scriptures behind our own misunderstanding, not behind what the Bible actually teaches.

A LIVING WORD

The fact that we are biblical contextualists does not contradict the fact that we also un-

derstand the Scriptures to be a living word that can speak directly to our hearts in the context of our own lives. However, as biblical contextualists we are aware that scriptural passages taken out of context can be used to support conclusions that directly contradict the revelation that the Scriptures teach. Therefore, when we hear the Scriptures as a living word, we always ask ourselves, "Is the conclusion I am drawing from this passage compatible with what the Scriptures teach as a whole?" In this way we assure ourselves that we are using the Scriptures to hear God's voice, not to delude ourselves. When we integrate the Scriptures into our prayer life in this way, allowing the living word to help us discern God's self-revelation in our own lives, we will find that the Scriptures truly are a lamp unto our feet and a light upon our path.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

BACKGROUND

The Hebrew Bible or Old Testament took shape over many centuries. Long before the final written form of the Scriptures came to be, bits and pieces of it were told orally, sometimes as stories, sometimes in worship rituals, sometimes as legal judgments about particular disputed claims. In time, these oral traditions, long passed down by word of mouth, were codified in written form as stories, liturgies, and legal texts. Finally, after many rewrites and much editing, the Old Testament emerged as the Sacred Scriptures divided into three sections. The first, and most authoritative section of the Bible for most Jews is called the *Torah*, a Hebrew word often translated as “law” or “the Law.” The second and third sections of the Hebrew Scriptures are called the Prophets, and the Writings, respectively. Hints of this three-part canon of the Scriptures are found in the foreword of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) around 180 BCE and later in the New Testament (Mt 5:17; Lk 14:44; Jn 1:45), but the roots of this division go back much earlier. As the canon of the Scriptures evolved over time, and with the inclusion of additional books, the Old Testament canon as we know it was divided differently (for more information see the Table of Contents for the introductory article “The Bible: A Light on Our Path”).

TORAH: THE HEART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Torah is considered the heart of the Old Testament, as the Gospels are the heart of the New Testament. The term *Torah* can also be understood more broadly than simply “law” or even a set of laws. Its meaning includes general instructions or teaching, including the story or narrative into which these instructions or laws are sometimes placed. Law, instruction, teaching, and story are all found in the Torah of the Scriptures, that is, the first five books of the Bible known to non-Hebrew readers as the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. As the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, the name for this first and most sacred part of the Scriptures became known by its Greek title, “The Pentateuch,” meaning, “the five books.”

The Torah or Pentateuch opens with the story of Creation and concludes with the death and mourning of one of its central characters, Moses. It opens with stories of the world’s formation and closes with the children and grandchildren of freed Hebrew slaves standing on the banks of the Jordan River waiting to enter the Promised Land. In-between, stories are told of the faith and disobedience of the ancestors, the escape from Egyptian slavery, the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount

Sinai, forty years of wandering to and fro in the desert, and several significant law codes woven throughout.

If one reads the stories of the Torah or the Pentateuch according to the chronology laid out in the stories themselves, it becomes apparent that the storytellers wished to emphasize certain parts of the story over others. For example, the first fifty chapters of the Pentateuch, the Book of Genesis, purports to cover about 2,300 years according to the narrative's own internal chronology. We now know, of course, that in actual historical time, such a time frame is much too short, giving us a clue to the writer's ancient mythic worldview. The next part of the story, which tells of the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Law and other events at Sinai, takes eighty-one chapters (Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers chapters 1 through 14) to tell about events that cover just over one year! The last twenty-two chapters of Numbers cover the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Finally, the Book of Deuteronomy spends thirty-four chapters recounting the last day or two in Moses' life as he interprets the Law for a new generation on the banks of the Jordan River in what appears to be his last will and testament. Given such a contrived chronological storytelling structure, clearly, for the storytellers of the Pentateuch, the Exodus experience and the giving of the Law at Sinai were critically important. These two experiences provide a lens through which all other experiences before and after were to be understood. In the central themes of salvation and covenant, grace and obligation, gospel and law, freedom and commitment found throughout the Scriptures, one sees traces of the Exodus and Sinai traditions.

When Moses is called to lead the Hebrew slaves from Egypt, the Lord promises not only to "rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians" but also to "lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land" inhabited by other peoples (Ex 3:8). Over one hundred and fifty times in the Penta-

teuch, the ancestors of Israel are not only promised many descendents, a relationship with God, and that they will be a blessing to the whole world, but they are also promised a new homeland. Genesis 12:1-3 provides the most succinct expression of these promises made by the Lord to Abram. As if to underscore these promises, the earliest oral confessions of faith recorded in the Scriptures (e.g., Dt 6:20-24; 26:5-9) also recount the fulfillment of these promises in one form or another, especially, the promise of a new homeland.

If good stories have good endings, then the Torah or Pentateuch seems to end all too abruptly. Given how many times a homeland was promised throughout the rest of the Pentateuch, one might have expected that a good storyteller would have ended the Torah story with the people having arrived in their new homeland. They certainly had available to them stories of glorious conquest and entrance into the land as told in the Book of Joshua. Indeed, one might have guessed that the Book of Joshua would have been the most natural conclusion to the story as it unfolds in the Pentateuch. Why not a hexateuch (six books), then, instead of a Pentateuch (five books)? Why does the story end as it does with Moses dead and the fate of the ancestors in limbo? Why does the Pentateuch, the heart of the Old Testament, end with a landless people standing on the banks of the Jordan River looking longingly across to the Promised Land? Why, then, does the Pentateuch seem to end so badly? It's as if, in terms of the stories of Jesus in the New Testament, the Gospel writers would have told of Jesus' birth, life, teachings, and death, but left out the most important part—his Resurrection! The ending of the Pentateuch, then, comes as a near total surprise.

Something must have happened in the intervening years between the first telling of these old, old stories about the promises God made to the ancestors and the final version of their telling in the Pentateuch

that deliberately leaves out the fulfillment of those promises, especially the promise of land, as told in the Book of Joshua. Indeed, something huge did happen many years later, which provides the best explanation for why the Pentateuch ends the way it does and suggests a relative time frame for dating when the Pentateuch was finally compiled.

THE EXILE FACTOR

We now know that the Hebrew Bible, after a long process of gathering and editing oral and written sources, began to emerge in its final form during and soon after the People of God once again found themselves as refugees in the Babylonian Exile (587–538 BCE). Their great Temple, their land, their kingdom, indeed, everything that had given them a sense of identity and destiny for some six hundred years, was all gone. If you imagine these refugees standing now on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Babylon (modern-day Iraq), looking longingly eastward toward their homeland back over the Jordan River, the Torah story ending where it ends must have sounded like good news, wonderful news, of the possibility of an imminent homecoming. The Jordan River could well have been the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers of Babylon. The hills of Moab overlooking the Promised Land, where Moses and the people spend their last days together as described at the end of the Pentateuch, could well have been the fertile crescent of Babylon where the people find themselves now hearing the Pentateuch story in its final form.

The emotions of those who heard the Pentateuch read aloud for the first time, either in the Babylonian captivity or soon thereafter, are captured in the story of Ezra, the great scribe. In the Book of Nehemiah (8:1, 9–12), Ezra reads “the book of the law (or Torah) of Moses” to the returning refugees in the square of the Water Gate in Jerusalem. The people all stand up in reverence throughout the reading,

which took all morning. When the people hear the words of the Law (Torah) read, they weep (8:9). Soon after the reading and with a little encouragement from Ezra, their weeping turns to great rejoicing. If only reading the Torah or Pentateuch still evoked such awe and depth of emotion.

All readers, in some sense, must enter the story of the Pentateuch, first and foremost, from the perspective of those first hearers and readers. All readers now read it, as it were, backward from Exile. Now, as it was heard by the refugees in Babylon, all the stories and characters of the Torah or Pentateuch become larger than life, bigger than history, archetypal in force. In the Pentateuch the characters and events are more than historical. They have become mythic in revelatory power.

Now, the fact that the Pentateuch opens in the Garden of Eden located in Babylon between the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers matters. The first humans in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis are invited to make choices of life-altering consequence just as the people gathered around Moses at the end of the Book of Deuteronomy face choices for blessing or cursing, for life or death. Reading such stories from the perspective of the Babylonian Exile or any existential exile, for that matter, becomes a new invitation to appreciate how one’s destiny is shaped by one’s choices. Adam and Eve were exiled from Eden having made wrong choices.

Indeed, the stories in the second part of the Hebrew Bible, the Former Prophets (Joshua through 2 Kings) recount the choices of consequence that were made by all those who first entered the Promised Land from the banks of the Jordan River. Those choices eventually led them once again out of the Promised Land into Exile, first to Assyria, then to Babylon. Ironically, the Book of Joshua, which would seemingly have fit best as the climax of the Pentateuch, has now been placed, instead, as the introduction to a negative history of choices gone wrong that lead to Exile. The

beginning and ending of the Pentateuch are bookends of choice and its consequence.

The primeval stories that tell of Adam, Eve, the serpent, the great flood, and the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapters 1 through 11 are more than origin stories per se. When read together, as a whole, these stories might legitimately be called a theopolitical manifesto composed by a people living as subjects beneath the coercive power of Babylon. Each biblical story seems to have near parallels to Babylonian origin stories only now retold so as to be critical of the domination system of the Babylonian city-state. Later, in the Book of Exodus, the stories of the Lord defeating the empire of an unnamed pharaoh allows for mythic comparison to any empire that tries to subjugate God's People. Clearly, from the perspective of the Pentateuch, bondage in Babylon need not be any more permanent than bondage in Egypt had been. The extended story of Joseph living in exile in Egypt, not only serves as a paradigm for how a person of minority status might manage to become a "light to the nations" but also how the people might benefit from a Nehemiah-like leader who later becomes influential in Persian empire politics. The Pentateuch, throughout, has a strong bias against empire politics, while at the same time offering pragmatic illustrative stories for how a minority people living under the control of empire might survive until their promised liberation. The Pentateuch, as such, might be considered subversive literature on par with the underground literature of dissident playwrights.

The stories of Adam and Eve suffering only exile from Eden and not immediate death, the story of Cain's exile to the East of Eden being a sort of protective custody from his avengers, the story of God starting Creation all over again with Noah in spite of ongoing human sinfulness, are heard in fresh ways by people who are on the brink of starting over again in their own exile. Exile may not be an ending but a beginning. Indeed, Abraham and Sarah,

whose story begins in Babylon, immediately following the Tower of Babel mess, offer renewed hope for all would be refugees. Abraham became the mythic father of faith for the world's three dominant monotheistic religions, precisely because in his refugee status he had to learn to live by faith in a stateless, boundaryless, existence relying only on God for his identity and existence. He and Sarah were called to leave Babylon in order to live a life of exile, that of travelers toward the Promised Land of Canaan. Even after they arrive there, they leave once again almost immediately into exile in Egypt because of famine. As life was for Abraham and Sarah, so is life for those living in seemingly permanent Exile in Babylon. Their confessions proclaimed: "My father was a wandering Aramean" (Dt 26:5). Perhaps, wandering like Abraham, even in the wilderness for forty years as they would later do, was survivable with God on their side. Perhaps, they could even begin to imagine that they, like Abraham and Sarah, were once again being called out of Babylon to go to the Land of Promise (Is 51:2).

Abraham's grandson Jacob, renamed Israel on his way into Exile to Haran (Babylon), receives his new name and renewed promises of destiny even as he flees for his life from his murderous brother Esau. Jacob, now Israel, eventually returns to the Promised Land in humility, bearing gifts and bowing down before his brother in reconciliation. Recounting such a tale would remind those returning, or about to return to Judah from Babylon, of the need to consider how delicate any rapprochement with those living back in the homeland might need to be.

LIVING IN EXILE: MAINTAINING COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

The law codes and legal material found throughout the Pentateuch serve to remind people living in exile of the importance that worship and ethics play in the

formation and maintenance of communities of faith and life. Indeed, people living in exile might easily be tempted to assimilate to the dominant culture, choose the gods of the empire, and too easily forget the Covenant relationship promised to them by God. All the various versions of the Law in the Pentateuch seem to function less as stories telling of Israel's past, than as stories creating an imagined future around profound jurisprudence and constitutional formation. Ultimately, the variety of laws in the Pentateuch, and especially those that have been explicitly updated from earlier versions of the Law such as Moses models in the Book of Deuteronomy, suggest that even these sacred laws may be in need of periodic revision. The laws serve as a summons to the people to live lives of obedience and true worship, to make choices for blessing, now more than ever, as they stand on the banks of the Jordan or Tigris and Euphrates Rivers living in hope of yet fulfilled promises.

When Jesus is asked by some lawyerly peers who are trying to test his faith, "Which commandment in the law is the greatest?" (Mt 22:34–40), he responds with two verses from the Pentateuch. First, he quotes Deuteronomy 6:5: "You shall love

the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (verse 37). Jesus adds that "this is the greatest and the first commandment" (verse 38). Second, he quotes Leviticus 19:18: "The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (verse 39). Jesus concludes by saying, "The whole law [meaning Torah or Pentateuch in this instance] and the prophets depend on these two commandments" (verse 40). In a sense, in reciting these two verses from the Pentateuch, Jesus responds to two questions asked by the Lord at the beginning of the Pentateuch. To Adam and Eve hiding in shame because of their disobedience, the Lord seeks them out and asks, "Where are you?" (Gn 3:9). To Cain, after he kills his brother, the Lord asks, "Where is your brother?" (Gn 4:9). The first question invites reflection on one's relationship to God, the Creator. The second question invites reflection on one's sister or brother or neighbor. In short, Jesus' summary of the Law is a summary of the Pentateuch—love God and love others!

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THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

The Pentateuch, which consists of the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), enjoys particular prestige among the Jews as the “Law,” or “Torah,” the concrete expression of God’s will in their regard. It is more than a body of legal doctrine, even though such material occupies many chapters, for it contains the story of the formation of the People of God: Abraham and the patriarchs, Moses and the oppressed Hebrews in Egypt, the birth of Israel in the Sinai covenant, the journey to the threshold of the Promised Land, and the “discourses” of Moses.

The grandeur of this historic sweep is the result of a careful and complex joining of several historic traditions, or sources. These are primarily four: the so-called Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly and Deuteronomic strands that run through the Pentateuch. (They are conveniently abbreviated as J, E, P and D.) Each brings to the Torah its own characteristics, its own theological viewpoint—a rich variety of interpretation that the sensitive reader will take pains to appreciate. A superficial difference between two of these sources is responsible for their names: the Yahwist prefers the name *Yahweh* (represented in translation as *LORD*) by which God revealed himself to Israel; the Elohist prefers the generic name for God, *Elohim*. The Yahwist is concrete, imaginative, using many anthropomorphisms in its theological approach, as seen, e.g., in the narrative of creation in Gn 2, compared with the Priestly version in Gn 1. The Elohist is more sober, moralistic. The Priestly strand, which emphasizes genealogies, is more severely theological in tone. The Deuteronomic approach is characterized by the intense hortatory style of Dt 5—11, and by certain principles from which it works, such as the centralization of worship in the Jerusalem temple.

However, even this analysis of the Pen-

tateuch is an over-simplification, for it is not always possible to distinguish with certainty among the various sources. The fact is that each of these individual traditions incorporates much older material. The Yahwist was himself a collector and adapter. His narrative is made up of many disparate stories that have been reoriented, and given a meaning within the context in which they now stand; e.g., the story of Abraham and Isaac in Gn 22. Within the J and P traditions one has to reckon with many individual units; these had their own history and life-setting before they were brought together into the present more or less connected narrative.

This is not to deny the role of Moses in the development of the Pentateuch. It is true we do not conceive of him as the author of the books in the modern sense. But there is no reason to doubt that, in the events described in these traditions, he had a uniquely important role, especially as lawgiver. Even the later laws which have been added in P and D are presented as a Mosaic heritage. Moses is the lawgiver *par excellence*, and all later legislation is conceived in his spirit, and therefore attributed to him. Hence, the reader is not held to undeviating literalness in interpreting the words, “the LORD said to Moses.” One must keep in mind that the Pentateuch is the crystallization of Israel’s age-old relationship with God.

In presenting the story of the birth of the People of God, the Pentateuch looks back to the promises made to the patriarchs, and forward to the continuing fulfillment of these promises in later books of the Bible. The promises find their classic expression in Gn 12:1ff. The “God of the Fathers” challenges Abraham to believe: the patriarch is to receive a people, a land, and through him the nations will somehow be blessed.

The mysterious and tortuous way in

which this people is brought into being is described: Despite Sarah's sterility, Isaac is finally born—to be offered in sacrifice! The promises are renewed to him eventually, and also to the devious Jacob, as if to show that the divine design will be effected, with or without human cunning. The magnificent story of Joseph is highlighted by the theme of Providence; the promise of a people is taking shape.

Israel is not formed in a vacuum, but amid the age-old civilization of Mesopotamia and the Nile. Oppression in Egypt provokes a striking intervention of God.

Yahweh reveals himself to Moses as a savior, and the epic story of deliverance is told in Exodus. This book also tells of the Sinai covenant, which is rightfully regarded as the key to the Old Testament. Through the covenant Israel becomes Yahweh's people, and Yahweh becomes Israel's God. This act of grace marks the fulfillment of the first promise; that Abraham will be the father of a great nation, God's special possession. The laws in Exodus and Leviticus (P tradition) are both early and late. They spell out the proper relationship of the federation of the Twelve tribes with the LORD. He is a jealous God, demanding exclusive allegiance; he cannot be imaged; he takes vengeance upon the wicked, and shows mercy to the good. Slowly the LORD reveals himself to his people; with remarkable honesty, Israel records the unsteady response—the mur-

murings and rebellions and infidelities through the desert wanderings up to the plain of Moab.

This sacred history was formed within the bosom of early Israel, guided by the spirit of God. It was sung beside the desert campfires; it was commemorated in the liturgical feasts, such as Passover; it was transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation—until all was brought together in writing, about the sixth century B.C., when the literary formation of the Pentateuch came to an end.

The Book of Deuteronomy has a history quite peculiar to itself. Its old traditions and law code (12—26) are put forth in the form of "discourses" of Moses before his death. The extraordinarily intense and hortatory tone fits the mood of a discourse. The book contains possibly the preaching of the Levites in the northern kingdom of Israel before its fall in 721 B.C. If this book is situated in its proper historical perspective, its true impact is more vividly appreciated. It is the blueprint of the great "Deuteronomic" reform under King Josiah (640—609 B.C.). This was an attempt to galvanize the people into a wholehearted commitment to the covenant ideals, into an obedience motivated by the great commandment of love (Dt 6:4ff). Israel has yet another chance, if it obeys. The people are poised between life and death; and they are exhorted to choose life—today (Dt 26:16—19; 30:15—20).

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

CONTENTS

- Ⓟ The Primeval History [1:1—11:26].
- Ⓟ The Patriarch Abraham [11:27—25:18].
- Ⓟ The Patriarchs Isaac and Jacob [25:19—36:43].
- Ⓟ Joseph and His Brothers [37:1—50:26].

BACKGROUND

The Book of Genesis, as its title suggests, is an account of beginnings or origins. The Book of Genesis stretches from Creation to the beginnings of emergent Israel's four-century exile in Egypt. The Book of Genesis has its own internal structure somewhat blurred by the later imposition of chapters and verses on the original text. The book is divided into ten unequal sections marked off by the "title," or formulaic expression, "this is the record of the descendants of" (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2), usually followed by selected stories about the particular family so named in the title. For example, following the expression, "this is the record of the descendants of Terah" in Genesis 11:27, selected stories are told mainly about only one of Terah's three sons, Abraham. Using these ten titles as a guide to the overall structure of the Book of Genesis suggests Genesis chapters 2 through 50 be subdivided into two sections, chapters 2:4—11:26 and chapters 11:27—50:26, each with three narratives and two genealogies. Genesis 1:1—2:3, the first story of Creation, stands noticeably outside the book's ten-fold structure, serving as the introduction to the whole book.

INTRODUCTION TO GOD'S CREATIVE GOODNESS

As the introduction to the whole Book of Genesis, the first story of Creation (1:1—2:3) emphasizes the overall goodness and blessing inherent in God's creative acts. Nothing, absolutely nothing, that unfolds in subsequent chapters of Genesis about the devolution of order, the sinful decisions of humanity, the slipping toward chaos resulting in the flood, or human arrogance in building a tower to the sky, should serve to detract from the basic goodness

of Creation. The material world, even a later fallen world much in need of divine saving intervention, never erases the structural goodness and blessing in Creation. God is first and foremost a God of blessing and grace. Jesus would later suggest as much when he said God “makes his sun rise on the bad and the good and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust” (Mt 5:45).

When one considers the ancient Babylonian parallels to Genesis chapter 1 in which the sun, moon, and stars are squabbling deities and ordinary humans serve as cogs in the wheel of life or worse—disposable refuse—certainly an origin story describing creation as a generous blessing bestowed on ordinary human beings created in the image of the one and only God stands in sharp contrast. Not surprisingly, the slaves and abolitionists of the late nineteenth century saw the political dimension of Genesis. They appealed to Genesis chapter 1, especially those verses declaring all humans to be created in God’s image, to argue for their own emancipation from a master-slave economy. Where in the Babylonian origin stories, humans were meant to serve the gods 24-7, a literature arguing for a six-day work week because the Creator needed a day of rest, and required those created in his image to also take a Sabbath rest, would have been revolutionary literature indeed. In the context of the Babylonian empire or any empire, where the gods might repeatedly issue pogroms to kill humans en masse, whether on a whim or for overcrowding, the Genesis Creation with its mandate to be fruitful and multiply and to have dominion over the earth (1:28) would have sounded quite extraordinary. And, it was, and remains so.

GENERATIONS OF WRONG CHOICES, BLESSINGS, AND PROMISES

Originating Sins. Given that humanity, as described in the first Creation account, has been created in the image of

God, it would seem natural enough for humans to be empowered with the freedom of choice. Indeed, the second Creation story (2:4–25) reveals the real consequences attached to the privilege of freely choosing for or against God’s will. Adam and Eve, the symbolic representatives of all humans, make wrong choices by eating the forbidden fruit. Their action destroys all their relationships: with self, with God, with each other, and with the nonhuman world and the earth. In shame (3:7), they hide from God (3:8), blame each other (3:12–13), become enemies with the serpent (3:15), and eventually are forced to work the land “by the sweat” of their brow (3:19). The subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden (3:23) of Adam and Eve sets in motion what appears to be the unraveling of the created order itself, climaxing in the chaos of the flood (chapters 6–9).

Saint Augustine, reading these origin stories through the lenses of Saint Paul’s writings in the New Testament, would later develop the doctrine of original sin. It is important to remember, however, that although the doctrinal language of “original sin” and the Fall are closely associated with these initiating choices of Adam and Eve, the first time in the Bible where the language of the Scriptures most closely parallels the language of the doctrine of original sin does not appear until Genesis 6:5: “The LORD saw how great was man’s wickedness on earth, and how no desire that his heart conceived was ever anything but evil.” In the story, as told by the narrator, the individual choices of Adam and Eve affected them personally. It would take another ten generations, according to the internal chronological framework of the storyteller, before the cumulative choices of humanity begin to reveal the systemic results described in terms anywhere close to approaching the language of the doctrine of “original sin” as first used by Saint Augustine. Therefore, it may be best to speak of the choices of Adam and Eve as “originating sins” and leave the doctrinal

language to describe the systemic nature of cumulative wrong choices.

The Fall to Violence. Significantly, the most serious consequences of the Fall are not simply personal, such as labor pains for the woman, harsh labor for the man, expulsion from Eden for both, though these are serious enough. Ironically, not even death in the case of Adam and Eve, who lived very long lives, is the severest consequence of the Fall. The first death explicitly described in the Scriptures after the Fall is not a natural death at all. It is murder! Here the spiritual death introduced into the story by the disobedience of their parents has as its most tangible outcome brother killing brother. The spiritual and physical are not separate realities for the Hebrew mind.

When Cain kills his brother Abel (4:1–16), the systemic “fall to violence” that curses humanity most, then and now, is explicitly revealed. Cain now fears a sevenfold vengeance for his deed, while five generations later, Lamech fears a seventyfold increase in vengeance for killing a man who merely wounded him (4:24). Five more generations pass and by the time of Noah, the biblical language is explicit enough, the Lord determines to send the flood because the violence has become systemic, “the earth was corrupt and full of lawlessness [violence in Hebrew]” (6:11, 13). The story of the flood is the reversal of the story of Creation. It is a return to the formless, primordial, violent, chaos before Creation.

In the Babylonian origin stories, the earth was formed out of the murdered body of Tiamat, the goddess of watery chaos, who was killed in battle. By contrast, the biblical Creation story tells of God creating an ordered world of peace out of chaos. God established and preserved the world, not as an act of war, but with an utterance, a life-giving, creative word. Clearly, the biblical story of the earth descending into the chaos of violence from its origins in the shalom-filled

garden, suggests that one of the primary affects of sin, if not the primary affect, is violence and warfare. By rooting its critique of violence and warfare in the Creation stories themselves, the Book of Genesis criticized not only Babylon’s violent culture, but also Israel’s own past that had sought to establish its own national existence on similar ancient near eastern city-state politics (Dt 17:14; 1 Sm 8:5, 20) only to find themselves once again in exile.

The Creation Blessing Renewed.

Not all is bleak in the unfolding story of Genesis. After the flood, God reiterates the creation blessing to Noah and his family to “be fertile and multiply and fill the earth” (9:1). Genesis chapter 10 seems to illustrate the fulfillment of this blessing with its list of nations spread abroad over all the earth “according to their clans and languages, by their lands and nations” (10:5, 20, 31, cf. 10:32). In view of the obvious blessing suggested by the multiple languages and cultures already spread abroad on the earth in Genesis chapter 10, the claim that the whole earth had one language in the Tower of Babel story of Genesis chapter 11 must be seen as a localized description of the perceived self-understanding of the city-state of Babel, itself. The story illustrates on a large scale, the hubris first revealed in the first humans in the garden when they were tempted to “be like gods” (3:5).

Babylon, like all superpowers, tried to create a monolingual, monocultural ethos that tends to exclude “outsiders.” Many years later, the Jewish exiles and others living on the fringes of Babylon would be cases in point. The story of ancient Babel (read Babylon) is an attempt to critique Babylon or any empire and remind the Jewish minority of God’s true intentions for the world. Trying to build a ziggurat, a ritual mountain (pyramid-like structure), to the gods was an arrogant attempt to “be like gods,” the temptation of all superpowers. In response, the Lord comes down and confuses the language and spreads the people abroad over the face of the earth.

That is, God compels the people of Babel to join the rest of the world in the blessing described in Genesis chapter 10 of a multi-cultural, multilingual, multinational world as the true sign of God's intent for God's Creation. Of course, from the perspective of the empire, this would have been experienced as judgment.

Called to Live by Faith. The call of Abram (12:1–3) to leave Babylon on a promise—the call to live by faith—sets the stage not only for the rest of Genesis but also for the Pentateuch, indeed for the whole of the Scriptures. Abram is promised many descendants, land, a lasting relationship with God, and that he will be a blessing to all the families of the earth. Genesis 11:27—25:18 addresses the question of whether there will even be an heir and who that will be. Are Abraham and Sarah, his wife, in their old age even able to bear children? What happens when Abraham attempts to aid God in creating an heir with his concubine, Hagar? When an heir is born to Abraham and Sarah, will Abraham trust God enough to sacrifice the promised heir, Isaac, on an altar? The overriding question is one of survival of the promise of a family and so, the destiny of a people. By the end of this section, Abraham rightfully deserves the title “father of faith.” Abraham's faith is not only lauded repeatedly in the New Testament (Rom 4:9, 22; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23), but through his two sons, Isaac (by Sarah) and Ishmael (by Hagar), he becomes the legendary ancestor of the three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, and by extension, Christianity, and Islam. Isaac gets married assuring, for now, the promise of offspring. The only real estate Abraham will ever own in the Promised Land of Canaan is, ironically, a burial plot where he and Sarah are buried. He dies primarily as he lived, a landless immigrant living by faith in the promises of God.

Now that the drama of whether there would even be progeny born to Abraham and Sarah and whether he will survive has

been decided, new questions arise that propel the story forward. Questions emerge that lead to institutional responses having to do with ownership, legal practices, ritual, and conflict resolution. What happens, for example, if more than one son is born to Isaac and Rebekah? Which child gets legally to claim the birthright, the mantle of blessing, the promises of God, then? And, so, with the opening chapters of Genesis 25:19—36:43 begins an intense rivalry between Jacob and Esau, twin sons born to Isaac and Rebekah. In a murderous rage reminiscent of Cain's hatred of Abel, Esau runs Jacob into Exile to Haran (Babylon) for stealing the birthright due, by custom, to the oldest son, which Esau can claim to be by mere minutes (25:25–26). In a trajectory that will be repeated throughout the rest of the Scriptures, the tables of custom and expectation are turned upside down. In this case, Jacob, the youngest, receives the divine blessing, the new name Israel, and becomes the father of twelve, the future twelve tribes of Israel. Dinah, his only daughter, is brutally raped, in effect removing her from the story (chapter 34). Jacob, with his new name, Israel, finally returns from Exile in Haran (Babylon) to reconcile with his older brother Esau. In an act of brotherly solidarity, they bury their father Isaac in Hebron (Canaan).

With twelve brothers in the picture, the tensions mount, rivalries escalate, jealousies set in, and intrigue compels the story forward. Genesis 37:1—50:26, specifically, focuses on Joseph, the younger brother and favorite son of Jacob. The brothers connive to have Joseph sold into forced labor in Egypt and so the story of Joseph becomes the occasion to reflect on the most serious threat to the promises made to Abraham thus far, the exit or exile of the family of Abraham from Canaan to Egypt! Throughout the story, a shift occurs in how God is presented as well. Up to now, God appears, speaks, acts and intrudes into the lives of the ancestors in fairly dramatic ways. In the Joseph story

God's role is more subtle, behind the scenes, known more to the reader than to Joseph. There are no dramatic interventions, no direct encounters with God by Joseph. It is only at the very end of the story, looking back, that Joseph is able to see clearly the hand of God in his own fate and the fate of his family. "Even though you meant harm to me," he says to his brothers, "God meant it for good, to achieve . . . the survival of many people" (Gn 50:20; cf. 45:5–8). Hindsight is sometimes the only means by which people who live by faith ever know with certainty that God has been with them all along.

CONCLUSION: LIVING IN-BETWEEN

The story of Joseph situated as it is at the end of the Book of Genesis becomes a metaphor for how to live between great stories. What immediately follows in the Pentateuch is nearly a five-century gap in the story between the end of the Book of

Genesis and the opening lines in the Book of Exodus. The story of Joseph reminds its readers and all future generations waiting for their liberations that, though God may seem to be hidden and silent, God is still with them no matter what. In the final verse of the Book of Genesis, Joseph may be dead, embalmed and buried outside the Promised Land. However, in his last living will he makes the Israelites promise to carry his bones home to that land of promise. When the time comes, hundreds of years later, they keep their promise.

And so, the story ends. But does it? Those who live "in-between" the great acts of history, those living in political exile in any empire, those in existential despair of whatever kind for however long, may now read Joseph's story as their own. They too await the story of their own exodus experience.

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I: THE PRIMEVAL HISTORY

FIRST STORY OF CREATION

1 ^{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.

^{3*} Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 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. 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. 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 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, ¹⁵ 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. 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 darkness. God saw how good it was. ¹⁹ Evening came, and morning followed—the fourth day.

^{20*} 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.” ²³ Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.

^{24*} 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**†} 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 to them: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the

[†] **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 1:6f) from which rain descends on the earth (Gn 7:11; 2 Kgs 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.

* **1:1** 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; Rv 4:11.
1:2 Jer 4:23.
1:3 2 Cor 4:6.
1:7 Prv 8:27f; 2 Pt 3:5.
1:9 Jb 38:8; Ps 33:7; Jer 5:22.
1:11 Ps 104:14.
1:14 Jb 26:10; Ps 19:1f; Bar 3:33.
1:16 Dt 4:19; Ps 136:7ff; Wis 13:22f; Jer 31:35.
1:20 Jb 12:7-10.
1:22 Gn 8:17.
1:24 Sir 16:27f; Bar 3:32.
1:26f Gn 5:1, 3; 9:6; Ps 8:5f; 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.
1:28 Gn 8:17; 9:1; Ps 8:6-9; 115:16; Wis 9:2.

birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth.”^{29*} 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.

2^{1*} Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. ^{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. ^{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.

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—⁵ 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 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.

^{8*†} Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and he placed there the man whom he had formed. ^{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.

^{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. 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. ^{16*} The LORD God gave man this order: “You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden ^{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.”

^{18*} The LORD God said: “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.” 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. ²² The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the

† **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 *adama* (“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.

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.

* **1:29†** Gn 9:3; Ps 104:14f.
1:31 1 Tm 4:4.
2:1 Is 45:12; Jn 1:3.
2:2 Ex 20:9ff; 31:17; Heb 4:4, 10.
2:3 Ex 20:11; Dt 5:14; Neh 9:14.
2:7 Gn 3:19; 18:27; Tb 8:6; Jb 34:15; Pss 103:14; 104:29; Eccl 3:20; 12:7; Wis 7:1; Sir 33:10; 1 Cor 15:45.
2:8 Is 51:3; Ez 31:9.
2:9 Gn 3:22; Prv 3:18; Rv 2:7; 22:2, 14.
2:13 Sir 24:25.
2:15 Sir 7:15.
2:16 Ps 104:14.
2:17 Gn 3:2f; Rom 6:23.
2:18 Tb 8:6; Sir 36:24; 1 Cor 11:9; 1 Tm 2:13.
2:21 Sir 17:1; 1 Cor 11:8f; 1 Tm 2:13.