

EVE, CAIN, AND OUR 12,000-YEAR WAR AGAINST THE ROBOTS

BY CHRIS TOLWORTHY

The Bible: It's All True.

By Chris Tolworthy, July 2025

ISBN 978-1-326-87863-4

Imprint: Lulu.com

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Quick summary

- * Life used to be very good.
Then we invented land-ownership.
- * Land-ownership created city-states. City-states are great beasts with iron teeth. They crush the world.¹



(Image from the Cloisters Apocalypse, c.1330, out of copyright.)

- * Moses told us how to defeat city-states: share the land.
(In economic terms this means taxing unearned wealth,
and sharing that money equally.)

¹ *“Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws — the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left.”*

- Daniel 7:19. See also Cain and the first cities, the Beast of Revelation, etc.

Other books (The Fall Trilogy)

This trilogy is about the Fall of Man, and the coming return to paradise.

Remember the magic number 150.

12,000 years ago, nearly all societies had fewer than 150 people ("Dunbar's number"). So we could keep track of everything that happened. So liars were easily spotted. The Fall was when we exceeded 150 people. We could no longer keep track of everything that happened. We could no longer be sure of everything. This began the golden age for liars. Today, clever liars make money by causing death and misery.

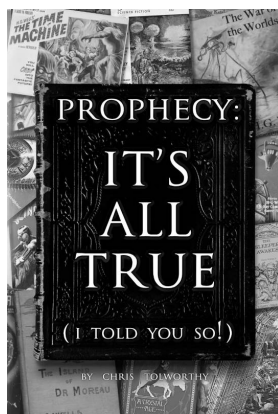
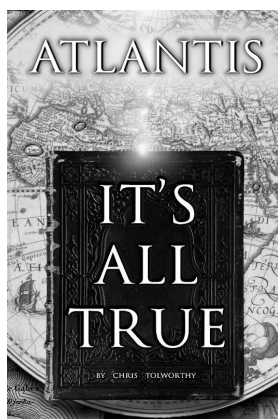
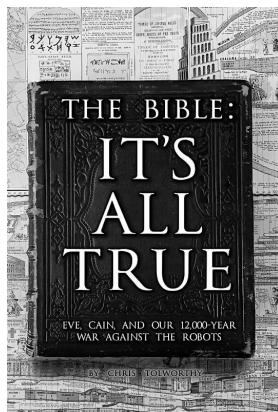
"The Bible: It's All True" is about the Fall. It shows how Cain's followers created cities to trap us. It shows how cities are a kind of robot: they evolve and grow just like humans, but they use us as fuel. The Bible shows how Abraham fought back. Then Moses showed how to save the world: share the land.

"Atlantis: It's All True" is about life before the Fall. We have records from before the Fall, going back 110,000 years. We used to be immortal. This book has the details.

"Prophecy: It's All True" is the proof. How can you know that these claims are true? Because these claims lead to predictions. Those predictions can be tested. These predictions have a better success rate than anything the scientific community can offer.

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Thanks for reading.



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About the author

My name is Chris. I am an autistic ex-Mormon. I live in a forest in Scotland, alongside red squirrels, crows, badgers, and the neighbour's cat.



At the age of 9, I learned that people are starving to death. This really bothered me. Because we live in a world where you can eat an apple, and drop the seeds, and a new apple tree will grow. So why does anyone starve?



The simple answer is “greed”. But how do we fix the problem?

I decided to devote my life to finding the answer.

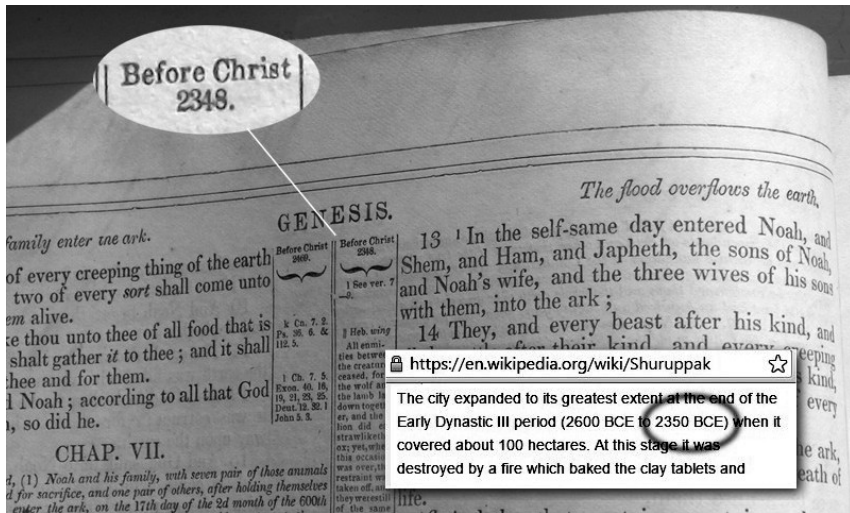
To cut a very long story short, we used to be better than this.

But 12,000 years ago we went a bit mad.

Introduction:

The rise of the robots

This book began when I looked into the date of Noah's Flood. According to the Bible, the flood occurred in 2348 BC. The Epic of Gilgamesh places the flood in the city of Shuruppak and describes it as being accompanied by fire. So, I examined the archaeology. The Bible was correct: Shuruppak was destroyed by fire and flood around 2350 BC.



I then checked the other dates in Genesis. They are all confirmed by archaeological evidence.

Why is nobody talking about this?

It is easy to see why Christians and Jews don't talk about it. Because if Noah's flood was a real event then flooding "all the world" just meant "all the world" as seen from the city of Shuruppak. Worse, "God", "the Elohim", "the gods", meant the gods of the Sumerians. Worse still, "The Lord" meant greedy landlords, who were angry that the slaves rebelled, so they killed them. This is not the story that Christians or Jews want.

But modern scholars might be happy with that story, right?

No. Modern scholars don't talk about the dates either. Because the story makes modern scholars look even worse.

The end of civilisation as we know it

Scholars cannot accept Bible dates. Because if they did, they would have to admit the scholarly community's role in great evil. And they would then have to support the end of civilisation as we know it.

Civilisation, as we know it, is based on scholarly books like *Leviathan* (by Thomas Hobbes) and *The Social Contract* (by Jean-Jacques Rousseau). These books argue that the state is good for us. *Leviathan* admits that the state relies on violence, like Leviathan is the Bible, but argues that life before the state was even worse. *The Social Contract* argues that individuals make a contract with the state, and it benefits the individual.

If the Bible dates are true, then Hobbes and Rousseau were wrong.

Bible dates imply that the state ruins everything. The dates imply that before we lived in states, we lived in the Garden of Eden, and life was good. But when we left the Garden of Eden, Cain appeared. Cain farmed the land, so he was the first landowner. Cain then invented the first city-state. This led to the endless violence we see today.

If the Bible is real history, then states are bad. If scholars accept that, then the only moral choice is to end all states. This would be the end of civilisation as we know it. Very few scholars are willing to go that far. So instead, they say the Bible is not history.



Cain (right) and Abel (left). from the Foster Bible (1860), out of copyright.

Overview of the Bible

The Bible is the story of the rise and fall of the state.
(And city-states, hierarchical religions, etc.)

- The **Garden of Eden** tells how life was better before states,² and shows what went wrong (we were forced together by climate change).
- The **Cain** story is about how land-ownership created the first cities. This led to brother killing brother, and thousands of years of warfare.
- The **Patriarchs** story is how we finally gave in and joined the strongest cities for protection, in 4000 BC. We replaced war with slavery.
- The **Noah** story is about the first city-based civilisation (Sumer). Cities led to a rejection of history, then genocide, then complete collapse.
- The **Abraham** story is about Abraham, a great city king, began to conquer Canaan. But then he saw the genocide he was causing, and swapped sides. Abraham became the great enemy of cities.
- The **Jacob-Joseph** story is about how Abraham's descendants opposed him and conquered Egypt, and how that ended in misery and disaster. They went on to conquer Greece, and that created western civilisation.
- The **Moses** story shows us how to beat the cities: give everyone an equal share of land (or just tax unearned wealth from land). By doing this, Moses created a new Golden Age. This lasted for 400 years.
- The **David** story is about how greedy men corrupted the law of Moses. They changed it into the worship of the city god, Sydyk.
- The **Kingdom of Israel** is the story of national decline under rulers like Solomon and Josiah (due to corrupting the law of Moses).
- **Daniel** tells us that city-states are great beasts, with iron teeth and claws. These beasts crush the world.
- The **Jesus** story is of a heroic attempt to defeat the new super-city, Rome. Jesus almost succeeded in bringing back the Golden Age of Moses.
- The **Paul** story is about how city traders corrupted the religion of Jesus and turned it into a worship of money and power.
- The **Book of Revelation** is about the final battle between cities (symbolised by Babylon and Rome) and the people of logic. Finally, Babylon will fall, and we will return to paradise.

² See the chapters on the Golden Age in this book and in "*Atlantis: It's All True*"

Is the Bible right?

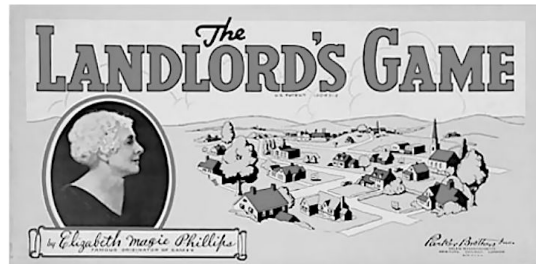
The Bible tells of states that caused great suffering and then collapsed.³ States will always do that. Here is the proof:

A state is based on inequality. That is, one person has natural resources and another does not. This allows the lucky person to grab even more resources until they have everything.

This inevitably leads to conflict (for resources), slavery (because power is highly unequal) and eventual collapse (because society is divided against itself).

To show why, Lizzie Magie created “*The Landlord’s Game*”. You have probably played a version of it: the game of Monopoly. It shows how owning land concentrates wealth into fewer and fewer hands. Near the end of the game, if poor people land on an expensive property, they can only survive if the landowner chooses to let them: he has all power over them. He becomes their de facto ruler. When he becomes tired of them and lets them fail, the whole system collapses (the game ends).

This is the world we live in.

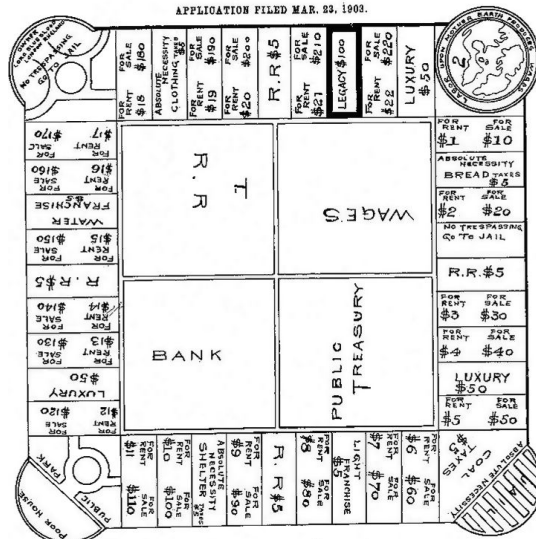


No. 748,626.

L. J. MAGIE.
GAME BOARD.

APPLICATION FILED MAR. 23, 1903.

PATENTED JAN. 5, 1904.



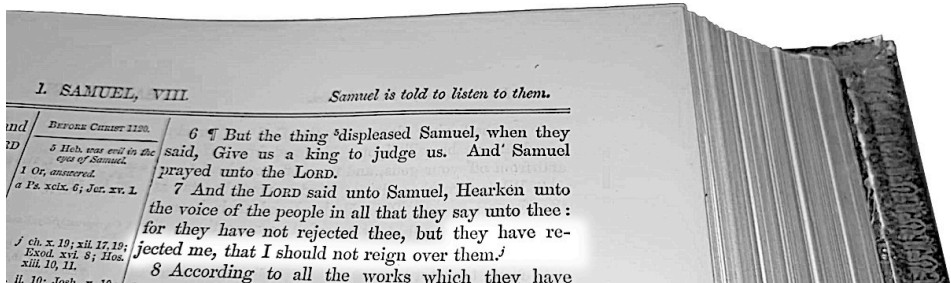
Lizzie J. Magie Inventor
by *John A. Stahl* Attorney

Patent: public domain. Box: out of copyright.

³ The first urban state, Sumer; the first empire state, Akkad; Egypt when conquered by the Hyksos; Israel when it rejected Moses; etc.

“Are you sure the Bible says that?”

Many people think that the Bible supports states, because some Bible books praise the kings of Israel. But the kings rejected God and destroyed their people. They then commissioned books to make themselves look good. If we cannot see this then we are not paying attention.



For example, King David was a warlord, murderer, liar and adulterer. Sometimes he was all four at once, as with the case of Bathsheba.

His followers tried to fix his reputation. They took psalms by other people and said they were by David.⁴ They credited David with works by other people (e.g. killing Goliath). When they could, the kings destroyed evidence of the better life before kings.⁵ When they could not, they invented new texts to rewrite history.⁶

Kings rely on supernatural claims: things we cannot see. Because everything we *can* see tells us that kings are bad.⁷ The old religion - as seen in Genesis through to Judges - did not require the supernatural.

Millions (billions?) of people accept the kings' supernatural religion, but this is dangerous. If somebody tells you “*obey me, give me money, do what I say, because of miracles that I cannot show you*”, then what is more likely? That they can do miracles? Or that they are lying?

So this book rejects the supernatural. When we reject the supernatural, we find that the Bible agrees with archaeology. The Bible is solid history: it is the story of our 12,000-year war against city-states and against the elites who run them.

⁴ E.g. Psalm 20, see the chapter on “*After the Judges*”, on the priests of Zadok.

⁵ E.g., Josiah destroying the shrines.

⁶ See the chapter on Deuteronomy.

⁷ See the chapters on Jacob and Joseph for example, and how they caused disaster for their own people and needed Egypt to rescue them.

States guide our decisions

The Landlord's Game (or Monopoly) shows how the problem of states is because of the state itself, not because of bad rulers. It does not matter if every player is kind and generous: as long as people follow the rules of the game in any form, the game will concentrate all wealth and then the system will collapse. This is because of land-ownership. It must be true as long as land-ownership exists (unless we apply Moses's solution).

So the game (the economic system) forces us into a situation we did not choose. Worse, the vast majority (the poor) are trapped into a limited range of choices. So the system guides our decisions, against our wishes.

Can we at least blame the super-rich for not being more moral? Yes we can, but it does not help much. Because the system will always create the super-rich, and it trains everybody to behave ruthlessly. The game of Monopoly trains people to maximise their money and not care about anything else.

So the system decides what we think and what we do. The Bible calls the system Leviathan, the enemy of mankind.



Liber Floridus (Ghent University) 1120 CE (out of copyright)

States actively destroy evidence of Eden

The greatest threat to the state is knowledge of Eden.

For example, when the French state invaded Iroquois lands, French traders met the Iroquois and saw what it was like to live before states took over. The Iroquois were stronger, happier, healthier, more free, and had no poverty.⁸ When faced with a choice, Europeans wanted to join these pre-state societies.⁹ These non-state people introduced ideas about freedom that led to the French Revolution.¹⁰ If the ideas continued to spread, the states could not survive.

So leading scientists once offered a prize for anyone who could prove that European civilisation was better than the Iroquois and other so-called “savages.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau won the prize: he argued that Europeans were more advanced because they were better at killing people.¹¹ However, this reasoning troubled him, so he devised a more palatable argument: yes, the Eden lifestyle was better in every way, but *it could only work in small family groups*—or so Rousseau claimed.¹² Rousseau lied. Travellers’ reports showed that hunter-gatherer federations like the Iroquois were larger than most European nations, but did not rely on inequality.



By pretending that the “noble savage” is unable to maintain large-scale societies, Europeans could argue that their civilisation was inferior, and forced the “savages” off their land. Any survivors had to live on poor-quality land that the colonisers did not want. Today, we use these devastated communities as evidence that native people live hard lives. And we destroy their records¹³ so nobody will ever know their happy past.

⁸ See, for example, the 1703 book “*New Voyages to North America*”. It is discussed and quoted extensively in “*Atlantis: It’s All True*”.

⁹ For example, British sailors saw that “primitive” life in Tahiti was far better than life in Europe. This sparked the famous mutiny on board the HMS *Bounty*, in 1789. In general, the rise of romanticism in the late 1700s shows this longing for Eden.

¹⁰ See “*The Dawn of Everything*” by Graeber and Wengrow

¹¹ I.e. better at war. See Rousseau: *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (1750) stmarys-ca.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/files/arts.pdf

¹² “as long as they undertook such works only as a single person could finish ... they lived free, healthy, honest and happy, ... but from the moment one man began to stand in need of another’s assistance; ... all equality vanished” - from Rousseau’s “*Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*”

¹³ For examples, see “*Atlantis: It’s All True*”

The state is a robot

States (and cities, religions, corporations, etc.) control us and decide what we can think and do. They pass every test for being alive:¹⁴

1. A city or state is highly ordered and structured.
2. A city or state reproduces itself (with colonies, institutions, etc.)
3. A city or state grows and develops to reach maturity (growing from a few houses to become a vast metropolis).
4. A city or state takes in and utilises energy (cities and states do this on an unprecedented scale).
5. A city or state exhibits homeostasis. (E.g., central banks change interest rates to ensure target levels of growth.)
6. A city or state responds to its environment. (E.g. a city can be placed on a war footing, or enact laws to handle a pandemic or economic crisis.)
7. A city or state evolves due to external pressures, and pass on beneficial changes to its offspring. (E.g. Rome evolved from a kingdom to a republic to an empire to Christendom, and then planted Christian institutions around the world.)

So the state is alive, and has its own desires which it enforces on humans against their will. But it is largely made of concrete and metal, so it is best thought of as a kind of robot that enslaves humans.

In this example, we see Babel, a notable city-state. The picture shows how Babel controlled humans, turning them into servants. In the end, Babel was not able to control human communication, so disagreements arose and the state failed. Later states learned from Babel's mistakes and did better.



Tower of Babel mosaic at Monreale Cathedral
Photo by 'Sibeaster', released to the Public Domain

¹⁴ There is general agreement on what is life, so I use the NASA definition, as it is likely to consider the possibility of non-biological life. <https://astrobiology.nasa.gov/education/alp/characteristics-of-life/> (choose the highest option, grades 9-12)

Our 12,000-year war with the robots

In summary, Eden was real. Life was good. Then 12,000 years ago, we began to settle and own land. This created systems of control.

These systems evolve for their own benefit, not ours. The Bible calls these systems great beasts. Today we could call them robots.

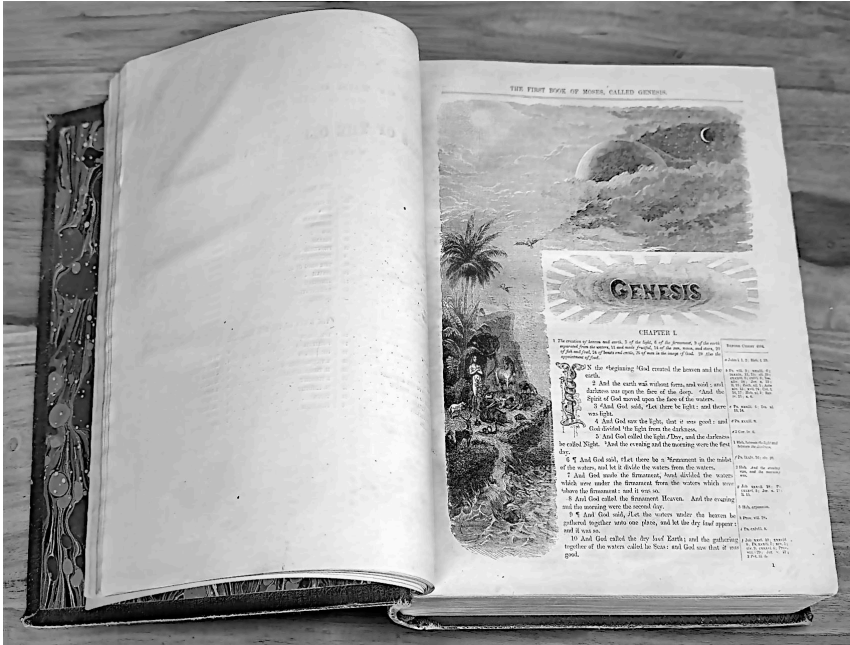
Sometimes our ancestors met people who still lived in Eden, before the robots took over. These people showed us that life was better without the robots. So the robots had to destroy their Edenic history, then crush the Edenic people as a warning to others.

The Bible is the story of these robots, and our battles for freedom.



We worship the Beast and the Dragon (Revelation 13). The dragon is portrayed as the serpent of the Garden of Eden. From El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo (c.950 AD), out of copyright

Genesis 1:1: the gods



IN the ^abeginning ^bGod created the heaven and the earth.

The Hebrew word for “God” is “Elohim”. Originally, it meant “the gods.”¹⁵

The early stories in Genesis are derived from older Mesopotamian tales about the gods—plural. The concept of monotheism, or belief in just one God, only emerged thousands of years later.¹⁶

15 “El” was the generic name for a god, and “-him” meant plural.

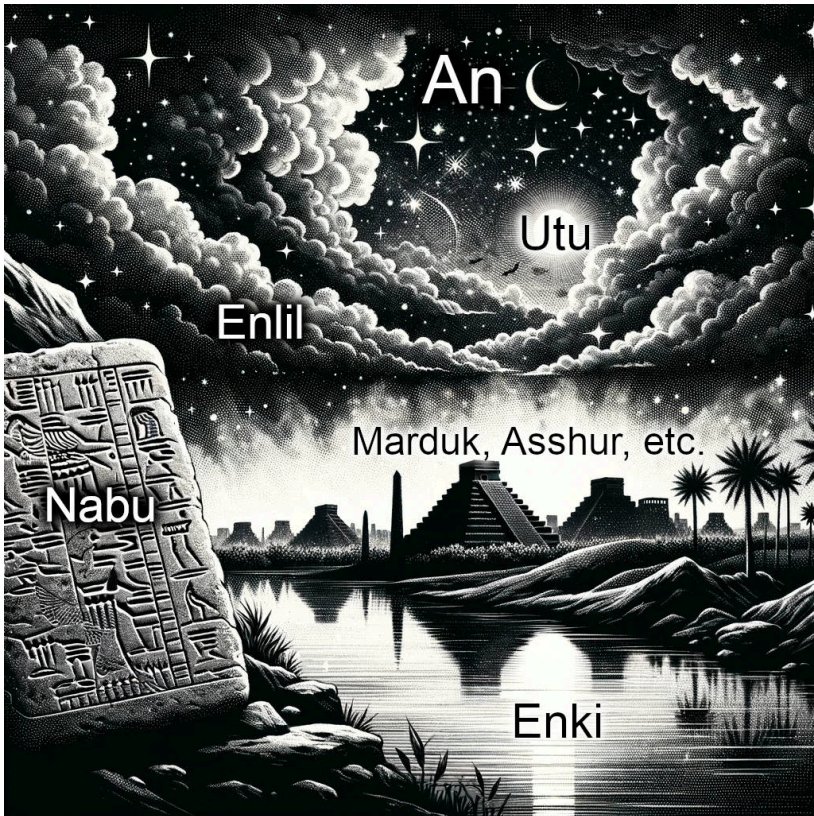
16 We can see this in place names. “For a people devoted to Yehouah [Yahweh] only one of 502 local place names in Israel and Judah had Yehouah in it. Yet Canaanite gods and goddesses, such as Baal, Shamash, Anath and Mot, anathema to the Jews of the bible, are common.”- see “Jerusalem and Judaism before the Return...” academia.edu/22615235/Jerusalem_and_Judaism_before_the_Return_Canaanite_in_Culture

Who are the gods?

A god is any force that is stronger than man. Ancient myths gave these forces names and personalities to make them easier to understand and remember. But there's no distinction between a force of nature and the god that represents it—they are the same thing.

Thanks to surviving Mesopotamian texts, we now know the names of the gods who make up the Elohim: “An” is the sky. “Utu” is the sun. “Enki” is fresh water. “Ashur” is a region of the Tigris River, later a city. “Marduk” is the spirit of Babylon.¹⁷

Humans are also part of nature, so human forces are also gods: “Ninhursag” is the god of motherhood, “Nergal” is the god of war, “Nabu” is information (scribes and tablets), and so on.



From “d-amar-utu-(a)k”, “bull-calf of Utu”, suggesting domesticating the bull. His symbol is the spade, suggesting irrigation. He rose to rule the other gods.

The gods are real

In modern times, we think of gods as supernatural beings who live in the sky. But in ancient times, gods were understood as forces of nature. These forces were personified to make them easier to comprehend. It's simpler to say "the sky is angry" than "a wave of high pressure will cause thunder." The result, however, is the same.



The gods are real—they are the forces of nature. These forces can be seen, measured, and observed. They created the sky and the land. So Genesis 1:1 is correct.

Genesis 1: The seven-day training course

Genesis 1 is partly based on the Babylonian creation story, the Enuma Elish. The Enuma Elish was recited and performed during a seven-day New Year festival.¹⁸ This festival was a major event, where people gathered to feast before the harvest and watch the story of creation acted out.



The idea of a seven-day creation is often misunderstood. Scholars sometimes claim that the creation itself took seven days, but there is no evidence of this teaching in the ancient Middle East. The festival also varied depending on the needs of each city. For instance, in later Babylon, the New Year festival expanded to twelve days, and in the city of Asshur, the hero-god was Asshur, not Marduk. In *Genesis*, the hero-god became Yahweh.

¹⁸ “The New Year agricultural festival lasted up to seven days, depending on the locale and historical period in which it took place.” - Ichiro Nakata, “*Problems of the Babylonian Akitu Festival*” janes.scholasticahq.com/article/2224.pdf

“On the third day, the gods said...”

During the New Year festival, people carried giant puppets of the gods—representing the forces of nature—and retold the creation story over seven days.¹⁹ There is no evidence that the actual creation took seven days.²⁰

As the story unfolded, the people saw the gods speaking each day: on the first day, the gods said X, and it was so; on the second day, the gods said Y, and it was so. We see this same structure echoed in Genesis.

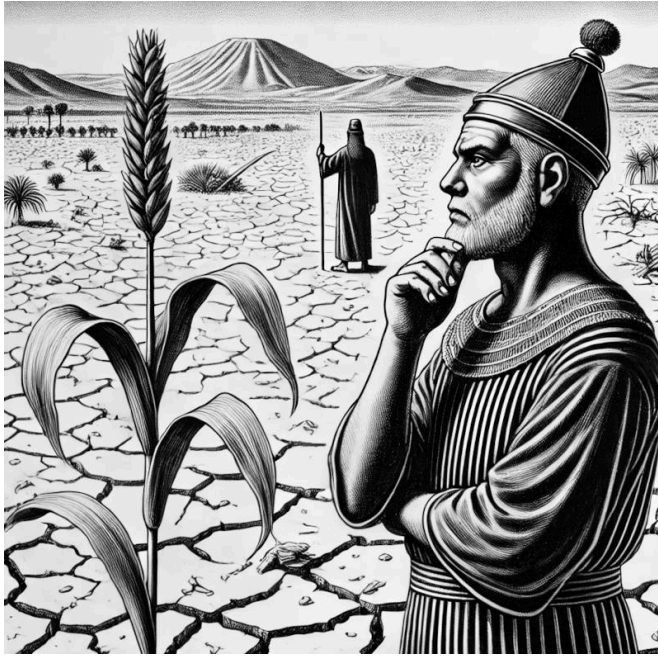


19 In Babylon, days 1-3 were about the chaos before the gods brought order. Days 4-7 were the *Enuma Elis*, how your local god (in Babylon it was Marduk) brought order. In later years, extra celebrations were added, bringing the total to 11 or 12 days. Genesis was finalised after 600 BC, when Israel was monotheistic. So Genesis 1 skips the arguments between the gods.

20 It is true that Exodus 20:11, written much later, is often translated as “in six days the Lord made heaven and Earth”, but two verses earlier the same word (“asa”) is translated “show” (Exodus 20:9, “showing mercy”). So it could mean in six days the Lord showed people heaven and Earth. Lords (e.g. landlords) work by speaking and showing, not by working with their hands. The difference is trivial, as the seven day festival acted out what happened, so was also doing the thing it described.

These people were smart

Ancient writers used stories, logic, and observation to infer the origins of life. By studying nature and patterns in the world around them, they worked out how life must have begun. For example, the *Enuma Elish* describes the origin of life in a way that modern science now confirms.²¹

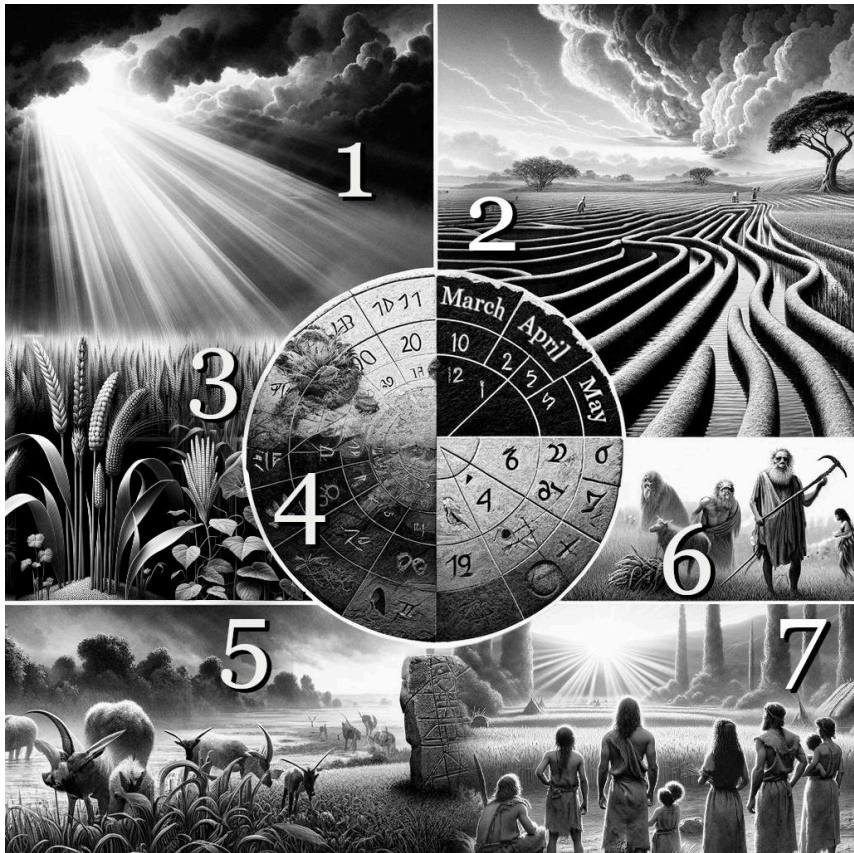


²¹ For example, the *Enuma Elish* tells how the original waters created helpful spirits: Lahmu, male, and Lahamu, female. “Spirit” just means life force. The Babylonians did not know about precise chemical reactions, but they knew that chemicals react to create new chemicals, just as males and females react to make new life. These interactions created two fields of activity: the planet below (“Kishar”) and everything above it (“Anshar”). Anshar (above) creates Anu (the sky and everything above it). Anu (the sky) creates Ea (freshwater). This led to irrigation, which upset the natural order. Apsu (natural groundwater) wanted to end irrigation, so he gave knowledge (“Mummu”) to the sea, suggesting some great cataclysm (a flood or ice age?). This failed, so Apsu (groundwater) decided to do the job himself. The Younger Dryas caused drought and famine. Then the new gods put Apsu to sleep, and the climate stabilised after 8000 BC. Irrigation won. So Ea (water) and Ninhursag (mother goddess of the mountains of Eden, where irrigation began) took control away from Apsu (groundwater). Ea now wears Apsu’s crown. Ea chained Mummu (knowledge): irrigation gives humans knowledge of farming. This led to the creation of Marduk (god of Babylon: In the Assyrian version it’s Ashur, god of Assyria). This is reliable history. We just need to get used to their names for things.

The seven steps

The seven-day training course gives seven steps for creating life. Interestingly, these steps align with what we would need to follow if we were to colonise Mars or another planet:

1. first, we need energy (sunlight),
2. then irrigation (day 2),
3. then plants (day 3),
4. then a calendar so we know when to plant and harvest (day 4),²²
5. then we can introduce animals (day 5),
6. then the colony is ready for people (day 6).
7. then we can rest and enjoy life (day 7).



²² Some people get confused by day 4, where it talks about using stars for measuring days and months. The ancient world used stars for the calendar. This had nothing to do with giant balls of flaming gas.

Day 2: The Firmament

Day 2 describes a "firmament" that holds water. The word "firmament" is "Rāqīa", meaning "to spread thinly," referring to how water is dispersed through the air into the heavens. So it is not a solid dome, but a force: a spreading force that causes water to stay in the sky. Today, we call this force evaporation or buoyancy—the upward movement of air caused by heating from the sun, which is sufficient to carry individual water molecules upward. This process is essential for the proper cycling of groundwater ("Apsu") and seawater ("Tiamat"), ensuring a regular cycling of life-giving fresh water ("Enki").



Day 4: The Calendar

Day 4 focuses on using the lights in the sky—the sun, moon, and stars—as a calendar. It is not about the creation of these lights, which occurs on Day 1, but about how the lights are used to measure time.

- We measure the time of day by the height of the sun in the sky. This also tells us the time of year, as midsummer's day occurs when the sun is at its highest.
- We measure the time at night by observing the position of constellations as they rotate around the Pole Star.
- We measure the time of the month by the phases of the moon.



Image: Orion 8, CCA-SA 3.0

- We measure the time of the year by noting which stars rise with the sun.

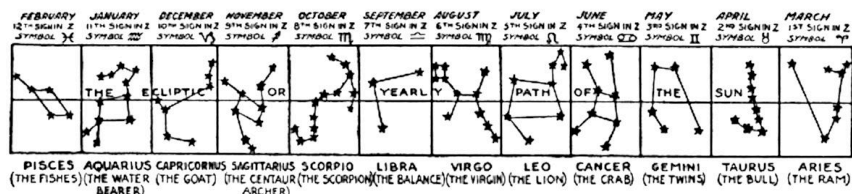


Image: A. Frederick Collins 1920 (out of copyright)

For our ancient nomadic ancestors, the moon was the most critical timekeeper. The moon conveniently divides the year into twelve parts, helping people know when plants grow, when animals migrate, and when they give birth. Therefore our nomadic ancestors followed the moon. Sometimes they only followed the sun and moon, and no other gods.²³

The Akkadians called the moon god “Sin”. Egyptians (like Moses) called the moon god “Iah” or “Yah”. We will later see how “Yah” evolved into “Yahweh”, the main god of the Bible.

²³ Herodotus says the nomads in the far west (Libyans) only worship the sun and moon (Herodotus, Histories, 1.216) and the nomads in the far east (the Massagetai, just past the Caspian Sea) only worship the sun (Herodotus, Histories, 4.188)

Genesis 1:20-23: before the first humans

The seven steps for creating life outlined in "Genesis" are universal principles. These steps are followed by anyone setting up a new settlement in unfamiliar territory. They were also followed by nature as life evolved over millions of years:

Billions of years ago, there was light (Day 1). This energy drove molecular reactions, and the most critical molecule for life was water (Day 2). Water allowed for the development of plant life (Day 3). More complex life forms emerged, guided by the rhythms of tides and seasons (Day 4). This paved the way for animals (Day 5) and, eventually, humans (Day 6).

Some people say that life in nature is “nasty, brutish, and short.” But this is nonsense. I know this because I live in a forest. I watch birds, squirrels, and badgers go about their lives. They do as they please and are seldom hungry. When I put out food they don't eat it all, except for a few days each year when the ground is frozen solid. At all other times, they leave food behind. They spend most of their time foraging in a slow and leisurely way, or playing, or sleeping, or making their nests. Animals in a healthy ecosystem have a good life. Humans in their natural state would have been the same.



Genesis 1:26:

The Golden Age

Humans “in the image of the gods”

Genesis described the creation of humans in stages. Different kinds of humans appeared at different times: the god-like humans of Genesis 1, the slaves of Genesis 2, the serpent and cherubim of Genesis 3, and the people of Nod in Genesis 4.

The god-like humans of Genesis 1 emerged around 50,000 BC, during the Upper Palaeolithic era. This was when humans became “behaviourally modern”. With their problem-solving brains, teamwork, and advanced tools and weapons, they became unstoppable—a force of nature, like gods. And there were no landowners. Every human was free: every human was a king or queen of the world.



Less hunger

Hunter-gatherers experience less famine than settled farmers.²⁴ This is not immediately obvious because landowners today occupy the most fertile land, leaving modern hunter-gatherers in deserts and marginal areas. But when we account for land quality, hunter-gatherers consistently experienced less famine.

This is because in times of famine, landowners are tied to their land, but nomadic hunter-gatherers can move to better locations.

As one bushman put it,

"Why should we plant, when there are so many mongomongo nuts in the world?"²⁵



Hunter-gatherers could always get more food if they wanted. For example, the Aka people traditionally hunted with spears, even though nets would capture more animals. They had the knowledge to use nets for at least 5,000 years,²⁶ but they preferred spears because nets don't give animals a fair chance.²⁷

I live in a forest, and I notice that my bird table is almost never emptied: the birds always leave food behind. The only exception is when the ground is frozen solid for a couple of days in January. But on the day when the ground thaws, they eat almost nothing from the table. This suggests to me that they have a strong need to hunt and forage: they do it because they love it, **not because they are hungry**. In the same way, modern humans play computer games about fighting or finding hidden objects (hunting and foraging): we do it because we enjoy it. Getting food is secondary.

²⁴ "Hunter-gatherers have less famine than agriculturalists" ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3917328/

²⁵ thefreelibrary.com/Hunter-gatherers%3A+insights+from+a+golden+affluent+age.-a0205567724 citing Richard Lee (1968) "What Hunters Do for a Living" in "Man the Hunter"

²⁶ kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/08/aka-pygmy-people-egalitarian-society.html

²⁷ I read this explanation in an interview with an Aka hunter, years ago. Sadly, I cannot now find the reference online. Even though I cannot find the reference, this is just another way of saying the culture prefers spears. Nets are lazy and cheating. But once the landowners took all the good land, the Aka had no choice but to start using nets.

Better health

Our ancestors were extremely fit endurance runners. They could outrun almost any animal on Earth.²⁸ And they had stronger bones than farmers.²⁹



Then why did they die young? Most lived to their fifties or sixties instead of the seventy-plus that is common in modern cities, but many hunter-gatherers died in childhood. This was due to being more free: free children are more likely to get injuries and a wide variety of infections. However, **those who died were reborn.** We will look at that next.

²⁸ Faster animals become too hot when running, so they have to stop and cool down. But humans can run for hours until the faster animal collapses from exhaustion.

²⁹ <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/hunter-gatherer-past-shows-our-fragile-bones-result-from-physical-inactivity-since-invention-of>

Immortality

In the early parts of the Bible, nobody cared about life after death. They only cared about the survival of the tribe. They understood that the individual was merely a node in the tribe.

An individual is not a body. An individual is information. Think of your mind: your mind is information. **You** are information. Information is not tied to just one physical medium. Your mind contains information from your ancestors: they are still alive in you. This is a very hard concept for modern people to grasp, even though it is literally the only thing that any of us know: **We. Are. Information.**

Our ancestors understood that we are just information (they call it “spirit”) and **information is shared between bodies**. So they were immortal.



But what about the information that is contained only in your body? After death, that becomes part of the sky (if your body is cremated) or the soil and plants (if your body is buried). This is a huge topic: for details and proofs, see the last part of “*Atlantis: It’s All True*”.

No horrific evils

There is no limit to the evil caused by modern life. Somewhere in your city, someone is being abused and cannot escape. This is only possible because of strong, permanent walls: if we all lived in tents or temporary shelters like our nomadic ancestors, any abused person could just run away. They could even live off the land for a while if necessary.

When you start looking for the evils in the world, you find some horrifying facts that keep you awake at night. Many people are trapped in terrible situations. There is so much misery, so much despair.

It's not just people who suffer in the modern world: animals show all the signs of being sentient, yet we keep them in tiny cages in factory farms. All of this unimaginable suffering relies on city technology: such as metal and concrete.

Without city technology, every fight is fair. Everyone has a fighting chance to win or escape.



Less war (maybe no war at all)

Farming creates land ownership. Land ownership creates wars over land. It also creates large armies and leaders who profit from sending others to their death. So warfare always follows land ownership.

The first war we know of was in Jebel Sahaba, around 12,000 BC. This was when the Qadan Culture first experimented with farming. **There is no evidence of war before this date.** As farming spread, wars became common. A review of the literature on early warfare concluded:

*"[T]he origins of warfare lie not in the European Palaeolithic [44,000-10,000 BC] but in the Levantine Neolithic [after 10,000 BC], as it was here that the demographic basis for sustained conflict first appeared."*³⁰



Arguments for war in the golden age

Various attempts have been made to argue for war in the Golden Age, but they all fail on closer examination. For example, the alleged “Nataruk massacre” of about 8000 BC may be a misinterpretation of an ordinary burial ground.³¹ Another common argument is that humans are like chimps, and chimps have wars. But perhaps we are more like bonobos, who do not have wars (as far as we know). And chimps only go to war when pushed: it is unusual even for them.³²

³⁰ Lee Clare and Hans Gebel, “Introduction: Conflict and Warfare in the Near Eastern Neolithic” in *Neo-Lithics* 1(10):3-5 researchgate.net/profile/Lee-Clare/publication/278156932 Some scholars still believe Thomas Hobbes’ view that prehistoric humans loved war. But more evidence supports Rousseau’s view that we preferred peace: “it is the latter of these paradigms [Hobbes v Rousseau] which proved prevalent”

³¹ See “Contesting the massacre at Nataruk” by Christopher M. Stojanowski et al. *Nature* volume 539, pages E8–E10 (2016) “We believe the data suggest that the burials are not contemporaneous and that most of the observed cranial damage is inconsistent with blunt force trauma.”

³² The canonical example is the Gombe Chimpanzee war of 1974. The chimp tribe had a well defined territory. This ensured peace with neighbouring tribes. But one group of six adult males decided to claim part of their tribe's territory for their own. This created uncertainty over borders, which of course led to conflict. Over the next four years, the secessionists showed no indication of reuniting the territory. So eventually the other chimps killed all six of them, order was restored, and peace returned. War was so unusual that Jane Goodall (who saw everything) was shocked that it happened.

(Why we have wars)

Whenever hunter-gatherers have wars among themselves, it is always because of landowners.³³ For example, landowners pushed the Yanomami out of their original lands, and then gave them steel weapons and alcohol. As a result, Yanomami kill each other in large numbers. There is no reason or evidence for such violence before settlers arrived.³⁴

Another example: American settlers began to kill the Shoshone in the 1500s. Some of the Shoshone refused to die quietly and founded the ferocious Comanche tribe known for its zero tolerance to invaders. By adopting violence, the Comanche protected their lands from settlers for hundreds of years. The settlers left them with no other choice.

Even a tiny influence from landowners can be deadly. For example, Genghis Khan's horsemen did not own land, and yet they started wars that killed millions. Their secret? The metal stirrup gave them an edge in battle. The metal stirrup could only be made by settled landowners, who traded with the Khan's people. The Khan's uniquely deadly warfare was due to settler technology.

Cities created massive warfare. This is recalled in Genesis chapter 4.



³³ "Although it is only occasionally argued that primitive societies do not practise warfare (Schnieder 1950), it is generally accepted that hunter-gatherers only practise feuding." (Divale, p.225) Feuding refers to revenge: A only fights B if B previously fought A. When tribes are nomads, with plenty of land, tribes tend to separate so feuding must die out. Thus, feuding can only exist where land is limited, either by land ownership or in (e.g.) small isolated islands.

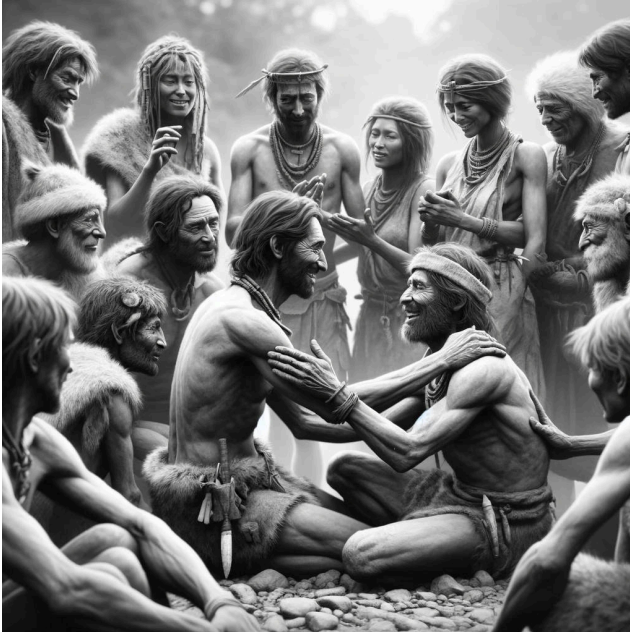
The feuding quote is from *Systemic population control in the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic* by Divale, *World Archaeology* 4:2, Oct 1972, p.225. Sadly, Divale does not address the elephant in the room: the role of settled agriculture in restricting land (and providing tools/weapons), therefore increasing warfare.

³⁴ livinganthropologically.com/yanomami-science-violence-empirical-data-facts/

More friendship, more honesty

We evolved to work closely with 100-150 people. So in hunter-gatherer tribes (which tend to be that size) we naturally have more real friends.

What if you don't feel like you fit in? Among hunter-gatherers, Everyone is more or less equal. So you can easily join another tribe, as long as you prove trustworthy. I asked an anthropologist who studies hunter-gatherers. "Do people ever change their tribe?" He said, "Yes, definitely": he knew one man who had changed tribes twelve times!



Close friendships naturally create more honesty: it is hard to lie when everybody knows what you do, and when a single lie would ruin your reputation forever. Lying only becomes a problem when we interact with large anonymous groups, such as city people. For example, one researcher asked some Hadza hunter-gatherers what they looked for when choosing a friend. Honesty was very low down their list of priorities: it was never an issue to worry about. The same researcher came ten years later, after the Hadza had begun to interact with settled people. He asked the same question. This time, lying was a serious problem.³⁵

³⁵ hbes.com/how-culture-shapes-who-hunter-gatherers-prefer-to-live-with/

Less crime, no prisons

More honesty means less crime. For example, when a party goes off hunting, they often leave everything unguarded.

If somebody does something bad, a meeting of the tribal elders will decide a suitable response. If a person continues to do bad (or does something unforgivable), the greatest punishment is ostracism. The bad person is not directly harmed. The tribe simply withdraws any help. The bad person has to survive all alone in the wilderness. This often becomes a death sentence.



So people soon learn to keep the rules. There is no need for any prison or police force. And if people don't like the rules, they can start a tribal debate. Everyone is equal, so all rules are based on agreement and understanding.

No work

We evolved to hunt and gather. The things hunter-gatherers do for “work” are what city people call fun: hunting, fishing, walking in the countryside, finding interesting things in a forest, or cooking while chatting with friends. Hunter-gatherers have no boss, no need for money, and can stop and sleep any time they want to.



Some studies say hunter-gatherers only “work” 3-5 hours per day.³⁶ Even if we pretend they don’t enjoy hunting and fishing, and if we add the time to walk to the hunting site with friends, they still work fewer hours. When hunter-gatherers settle and become farmers, they work ten hours longer per week. The difference is even worse for women.³⁷

Trust your eyes. Watch animals in the wild. They do not spend all their time hunting. They spend a lot of time playing or sleeping. It’s a good life.

³⁶ Marshall Sahlins, “The Original Affluent Society”

³⁷ From a study in the Philippines. cam.ac.uk/research/news/farmers-have-less-leisure-time-than-hunter-gatherers-study-suggests

More knowledge

A hunter-gatherer knows almost everything from direct experience. They use all their senses. They see all the context.

City people are different. Most of what they “know” comes from others. And where did those others get their information? From other people. Everything is filtered. And most people have an agenda: they need to sell something, or they need to look good. So cities are based on ignorance and poor quality information.

Most city people don’t know how to build a house, or grow food, or fight, or run a healthy society. They do jobs they don’t like, and feel mental stress: they know their brain is not healthy in cities, it does not work properly. But they cannot work out why.

City life is a kind of information virus. It squashes people together in a big lump of bad information. Hunter-gatherers try to keep that virus at bay.



In short, we were gods

Every civilisation has a distant memory of this golden age. Everything we long for now, like beautiful land, freedom, friends, etc., is the life we used to have. That is what we evolved for.

When we go on holiday we get a taste of how we used to live all the time. Then we come back to our day job. Compare and contrast. Which life do you prefer? Which life did you evolve for?



We used to live like the gods on Mt Olympus. Now we live like slaves.

Genesis 2: Yah

Meet the god of generations

Genesis 1 tells how the gods (i.e., nature) created mankind. Now we see what happened next:

These are the generations [i.e., the descendants] of the heaven and the earth, when they were created [“bara’], in the day that Yahweh-God propagated [“asa”]³⁸ the heaven and the earth.³⁹

Genesis says, “These are the generations” after things were created. That is why we begin to follow Yahweh, the god of new generations.

Yahweh is Moses's name for God. It means “Yah is revealed”.⁴⁰ Moses's full name was “Yah-Moses”, meaning “Yah is born”.⁴¹ Yah was the Egyptian name for the moon god. The moon tells us the calendar: it tells us when to hunt, when to travel, when to plant, and when to harvest. It is particularly linked to birth, as women menstruate once per month. (The word “month” comes from the word “moon”, as we have 12 complete new moons per year.) Hence, the moon is the god of cycles of life: the god of generations.

Once creation is explained, Genesis follows the generations or natural cycles of life and therefore focuses on the moon god, Yah.



Image: Osiris-Yah, from the Met, CC0

³⁸ “Asa” (“do”) in this verse is usually translated as “made” but that causes confusion with “bara” (“created”). They are different words, with different meanings. Bara means to create a new thing, but “asa” means to do something with an existing person or thing. “āsā” is usually translated as “do” in Hebrew, but in Genesis 1 and 2 it is used in the context of propagating *from something else*. E.g. the fruit tree “asa” fruit (Genesis 1:11 and 12), the gods “asa” the beasts of the Earth after his kind, they “asa” man in their image, Adam and Eve “asa” aprons, etc.

³⁹ Genesis 2:4, with “asa” translated as “propagated”

⁴⁰ Yahweh is how we pronounce YHWH, (in Hebrew יהוה) the name of God. HWH (חה) has three possible meanings: to reveal, or gather, or prostrate in submission. Exodus says YHWH means “I am”, i.e. he reveals himself. When God revealed himself to Moses, the people gathered and prostrated themselves.

⁴¹ See “Ahmosis” in the chapter on the book of Exodus

The patriarchs worshipped Yah

Apart from the name Yahweh (“Yah is revealed”), this is how we know that the patriarchs worshipped Yah, the moon god:

1. Moses received God’s laws from Sinai (the mountain of Sin) in the wilderness of Sin. Sin was the Mesopotamian name for Yah, the moon god.
2. Moses means “Yah-Moses”, or “Yah is born”.
3. Moses adopted the religion of Abraham. Abraham was from Ur, the cult centre of the moon god Sin.
4. Abraham’s father was Terah, also a name of the moon god Sin.⁴²
5. Abraham’s wife was Sarah, also the name of the wife of the moon god Sin.⁴³
6. Abraham left Ur, and settled in Harran, a city dedicated to the moon god Sin.
7. Later patriarchs had to return to Harran for any important decisions, such as finding a wife descended from Milcah, daughter of Sin.⁴⁴
8. Abraham became a nomadic herder, and nomads routinely follow the moon.⁴⁵
9. Moses followed the religion of Midian. Their most prized possessions, their camels, had golden crescent moons hung around their necks.⁴⁶ Later, Israelite women wore the same crescent moons on necklaces, just as modern Christian women often wear the cross on a necklace.⁴⁷
10. A relic of the belief may still persist to this day. *“The moon, on account of its monthly reappearance, is considered as the emblem of Israel”* and an ancient tradition calls on all Jews to praise the new moon.⁴⁸

⁴² See *“The Religion of the Patriarchs”* by Gordon J. Wenham, quoting E. L. Abel, *“The Nature of the Patriarchal God El Sadday”*, *Numen* 20, 1973, pp.48-59.

⁴³ Sarah = Akkadian “Sarrata” = “princess” or “queen”, equivalent to Ningal, “great queen”, wife of Sin. (Akkadian was the lingua franca of the Fertile Crescent.)

⁴⁴ Milcah = Akkadian Malkatu = “queen”, a title of Ishtar, queen of heaven, a.k.a. Inanna, a.k.a. Eve, the original matriarchal goddess of the nomads.

⁴⁵ See the discussion of the calendar in day four of creation.

⁴⁶ The “šahārōnīm” in Judges 8:21,26

⁴⁷ Isaiah 3:18 mentions these “šahārōnīm” while condemning all jewellery

⁴⁸ 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia, “moon” and “new moon, blessing of the”

Yah and the Enuma Elish

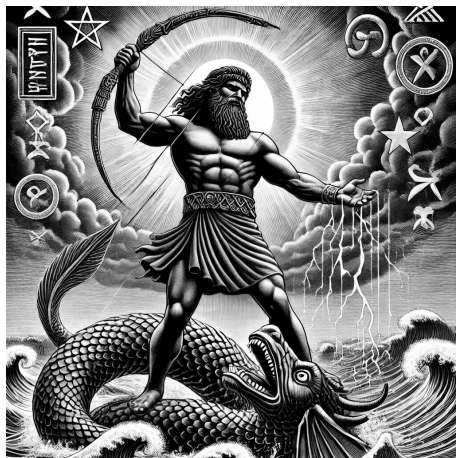
This shift from all the gods (Elohim) to the local god (Marduk, or Assur, or Yah, etc.) is seen in the Enuma Elish. The Enuma Elish tells how the local god showed himself to be greater than the other gods, by conquering the sea (Tiamat). In Babylon the local god was Marduk. In the Assur version of the story it was the god Assur. And in Genesis it was Yahweh.⁴⁹

How did the local god defeat the sea? It might refer to Sumer, the first city-based civilisation, that features in Genesis 5-12. Sumer built its cities where the rivers (freshwater, Apsu) meet the sea (Tiamat).⁵⁰ If Tiamat threatened to destroy the cities, this might refer to coastal flooding, or storms from the sea, or enemies attacking from the sea. Or it could be the mysterious Uanna (Oannes), the wise fish-men who first taught the Enuma Elish: perhaps a reference to seafarers from the Indus civilisation.⁵¹

Long before that, the people of Eden⁵² conquered the Caspian Sea. Climate change made storms more erratic, so the Caspian was very dangerous. Rock art from 10,000 BC at Gobustan shows large canoes. So the local tribes could defeat the sea, and defeat rival seafarers, gaining access to other lands and good fishing.

Much later, Babylon and Israel achieved their greatest power by defeating invaders from the sea.⁵³

So there is a long tradition of major civilisations rising to power by defeating the sea.



⁴⁹ In Genesis 1:2, God subdues “tehom” (“the deep”), linguistically similar to Tiamat. Psalm 74:12-17 says that Yahweh divided the seas and defeated the great sea monster.

⁵⁰ Silt from the rivers caused the estuaries to fill with mud. So the cities are now miles from the coast. But originally they were in the coastal marshes, where the mud was used for growing food and making bricks.

⁵¹ See “*Sumer, Coastal Arabia and the Indus Valley in Protoliterate and Early Dynastic Eras: Supporting Evidence for a Cultural Linkage*” by Elisabeth Caspers (1979)

⁵² See the later discussion of the location and date of Eden

⁵³ Sumer took control of the marshes at the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates. This was highly desirable fertile land, so they probably had to fight others for it. See the discussion of the Baal Cycle in the chapter on Joshua, especially the footnotes.

Genesis 2:5-6: the great drought

Genesis 2:5 describes a great drought. This was before men knew how to irrigate the desert.

“Neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For Yahweh God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.”⁵⁴

But they knew that rivers had water at their source:

“And a spring did rise up from the Earth and did give drink to all the face of the Earth.”⁵⁵

So they began to follow the rivers to their source.

This great drought will lead to the origins of agriculture and the first kings. This dates the story to the Younger Dryas climate crisis, around 9,600 BC.



⁵⁴ Genesis 2:5, combining New Living and English Standard versions

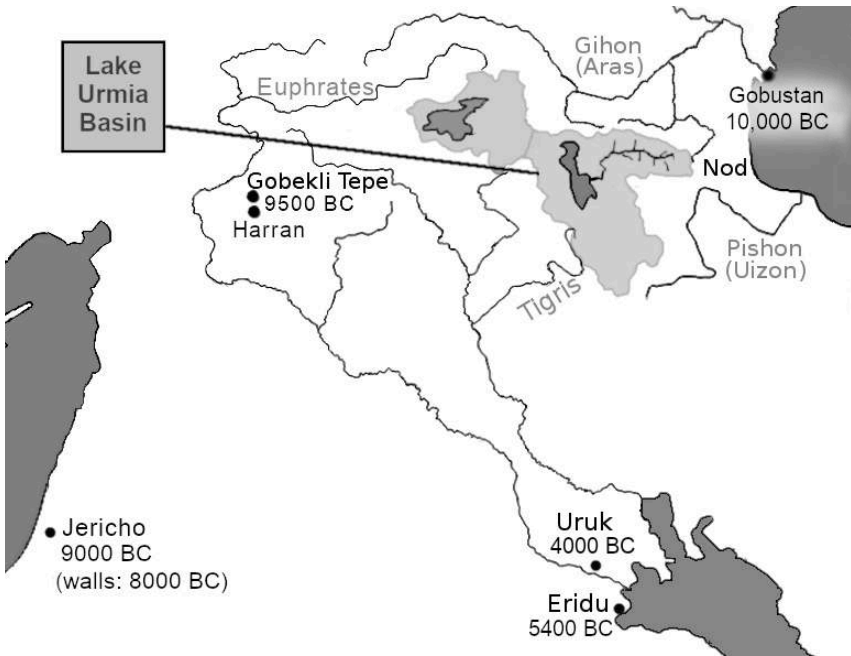
⁵⁵ Genesis 2:6, Peshitta translation. This translation uses “spring” instead of “mist” for the Hebrew word “ed”. “Ed” only appears twice in the Bible: here and in Job 36. Job 36:27-30 shows that “ed” refers to the water that begins the cycle of water that ends at the sea. That is, “ed” refers to where rivers begin.

Genesis 2:10-14: the source of the rivers

The people followed the rivers Tigris and Euphrates to where they came from. This is what we know as the Lake Urmia Basin.

Genesis 2:10-14 describes the rivers, the natural resources, and the surrounding lands. So we can identify this as the Miandoab plain, east of Lake Urmia.⁵⁶

We can learn about these people from the archaeological sites of Gobustan (c.10,000 BC) and Gamigaya (c.4000-1000 BC). Gamigaya rock art shows large canoes, good hunting, and suggests that they worshipped the moon:⁵⁷ this will be important later. Later we will see how the god Yahweh began as Yah (also known as Sin), the moon god.



⁵⁶ The River Aji Chay runs westward out of the garden to the Lake Urmia / Lake Van river basins. At the edge of these basins, the single river system breaks and becomes the four separate river systems. For full details, see David Rohl's book "Legend"

⁵⁷ "There are some discrete rock carvings at Gamigaya connected with worship of the moon. Fascinating rock images of a crescent, circle and man can still be seen here and there are pictographic texts representing a man bowing to the moon with arms raised." - Veli Aliyev, "Pictographic Inscriptions - the Annals of Gamigaya" in "Visions of Azerbaijan" Nov-Dec 2011

Genesis 2:7-15: the moon god saved us

Now they had water. The people (the “adam”) were no longer in the dust. The moon god saved them: they felt alive again.



But this came at a price: they were “pressured” to work for the moon god.

*Then Yahweh God **pressured**⁵⁸ a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now Yahweh God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had **pressured**. ... The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.⁵⁹*

⁵⁸ The word for “pressure” is “yāšar”, “to bind, be distressed, be in distress, be cramped, be narrow, be scant, be in straits, make narrow, cause distress, besiege” It is often perversely translated as ‘form’ in Genesis 2:7, which Strong’s concordance says is “probably identical with” the word yāšar that means to squeeze and cause distress etc.

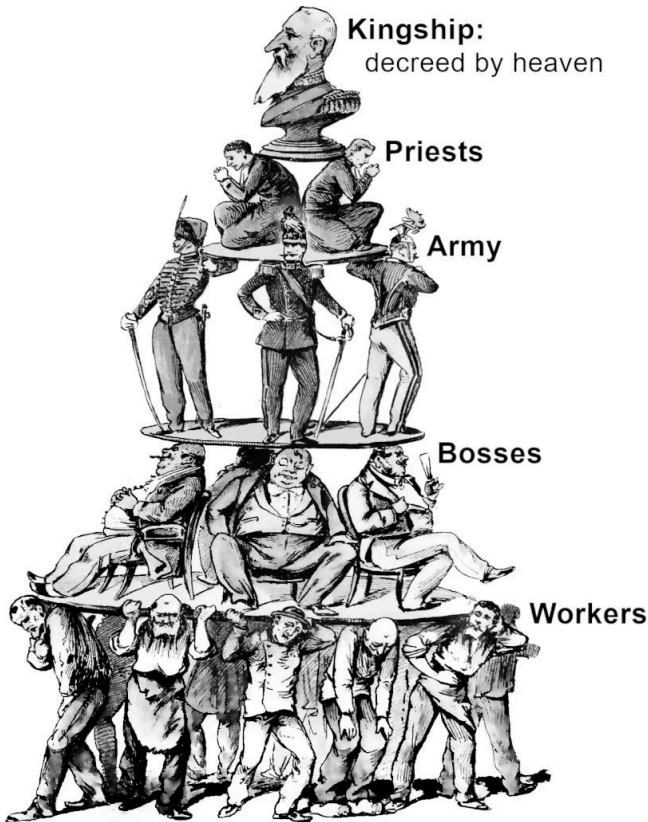
⁵⁹ Genesis 2:7-8,15

Genesis 2:8,15: The agricultural revolution

Being pressured to work, to get scarce resources, marks the birth of modern man. The word “pressure” (“yāṣar”) is often translated as “create”. This pressure created modern humans: pressured humans, stressed humans, who must obey the whims of predatory landowners, or be denied vital resources.

The next step was to claim ownership not just of water but of land. “Garden” just means “enclosure”, from the same root as “guard”. (“The Edin” was the Sumerian term for land far away from cities.) They put the people to work on the land: this was the agricultural revolution.

The agricultural revolution meant the landowning revolution. A small minority now controls the natural resources. This means they effectively control everything. They pay priests (or scientific think tanks) to tell us that this is the only system we can have. They tell us that this is good and fair: that this is the system that the nature gods require.



Pyramide à renverser, public domain via Wikimedia

“Yahweh said” meant “the priest of Yahweh said”

If the nature gods want a small elite to control the land, it follows that this small elite is chosen by the gods. They are close to the gods. They are god-men. They act like gods, controlling the land and ordering people around, So we now have three kinds of beings:

- the nature gods
- the god-men (elite rulers who claim to speak for the gods)
- workers

When we read “*Yahweh said this*” it is not a voice coming from Yah, the moon. It was a human priest of Yah, speaking on behalf of Yah. Whenever people say “*God says...*” **it is always a human** claiming to speak for the gods. For example, in Genesis 3, Yahweh walks in the garden and does not know where Adam is hiding. “Yahweh” here is the human priest of Yahweh, and he does not know everything.



“Yahweh said” *always* meant a human priest

This is important. To understand the Bible, and to understand human history, we need to understand the three groups of being:

- nature gods
- god-men, who claim to represent the nature gods
- workers

Whenever god talks, it is always a man talking. For example, many centuries after Eden, a man called Jacob wanted permission to settle in Canaan. So he travelled to Harran, the city of the moon god. There he had a dream of seeing Yahweh on top of a ladder with angels ascending and descending.⁶⁰ The word for “ladder” is an Akkadian word for steps, such as the steps up a temple ziggurat (like the White Temple of Anu at Uruk).⁶¹ “Angel” just means “messenger”. The messengers climb the ziggurat to speak to the king or priest, who claims to represent the god (in this case the moon god). This is how Jacob understood his lord: as the king or priest of the city, the landlord who makes the rules.

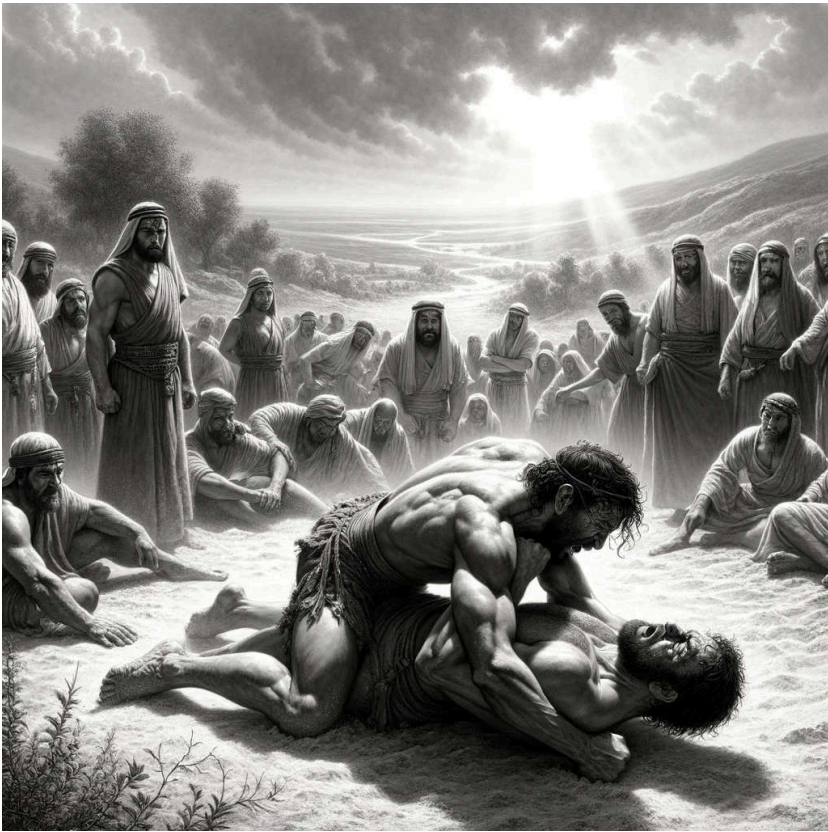


⁶⁰ Genesis 28:10-15

⁶¹ As discussed in the “Podcast of Biblical proportions” #25

“God said” always meant a human

On the way back from Haran, Jacob met his brother Esau. Esau who was the firstborn, and so had the right to any inheritance, such as owning the land. After that, Jacob fought with an unnamed messenger. They fought all night. Eventually, the messenger admitted defeat and gave Jacob the new title of “Isra-el”, meaning “fights against God”.⁶² Jacob (now called Isra-el) called the place where he fought “Peni-el” meaning “I have seen God”. So “seeing God” meant seeing a human who has the authority to decide land disputes.



This is what we mean when we talk about God in Genesis. God is always a landowner who claims to speak for Yahweh. He is always human. And he wants to control everything.

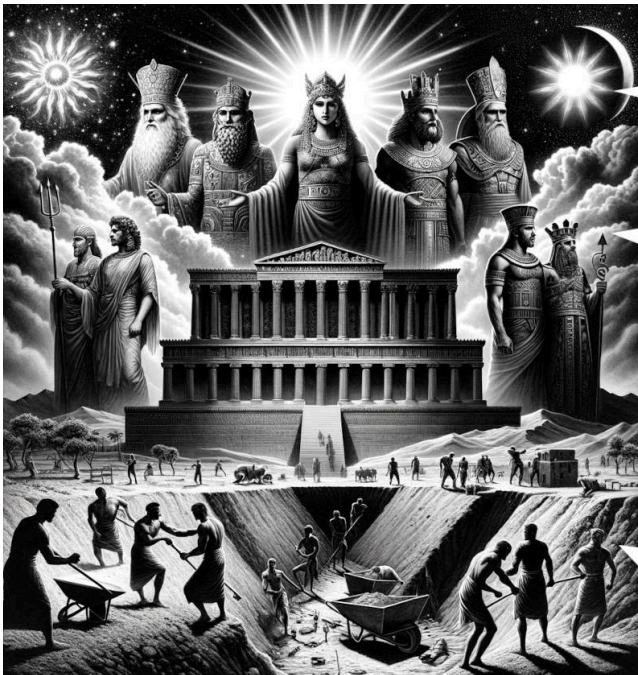
⁶² Genesis 32:22-23

God-men in the Enuma Elish

If we look at the source material for Genesis, such as the Enuma Elish, or the Atrahasis epic, we see the same story:

- nature gods (e.g. the sun and the sky)
- god-men (e.g. Marduk, god of Babylon)
- workers (slaves)

The god-men are sometimes called junior gods or divines. (“dingirs”). They are described as gods, but they talk and act like human rulers. They have to do work, digging ditches to provide water for their cities. They complain about the hard work. They arrange for slaves to do their work. So these junior gods are clearly just humans, like you and me. They are the humans “in the image of the gods” that we see in Genesis 1. And they create the class of servants that we see in Genesis 2.



Nature gods
(sky, storm, etc.)

Divine people

("divine" is "dingir".
E.g. "nin-dingir",
"lady-divine", who
receives taxes in
Eridu. In Atrahasis,
dingirs complain
about having to dig
ditches, so they
create slaves to do
the work.)

Slaves
(conquered people)

So Genesis and the Enuma Elish and Atrahasis all tell the same story. It is the story of the agricultural revolution: how men were once like gods, and they created a class of slaves to work for them.

How common people preserve history

When big events happen, the common people always turn them into stories. This helps them to make sense of the event, so they make better decisions in future. For example, World War II inspired endless books and movies (and now games).

This has always been true. For example, the Gunditjmara people of Australia tell about the time that the volcano Budj Bim last erupted, 37,000 years ago. The bigger the event, the longer we tell stories about it.

Sometimes these stories are extremely detailed. For example, Homer's Iliad tells the story of the Trojan wars in a series of long and complex poems, recited from memory.

Many of these stories feature god-men (kings and heroes who claim to be chosen by the gods). The stories are often critical of these men. For example, the story of Robin Hood describes King John as a wicked man, and it praises common people who rob the rich. Even the stories that show the god-man as a great hero also show his flaws. For example, Jacob became the ruler of his tribe by lying to his father and threatening to kill his innocent brother. So these stories did not start as propaganda. Many of the stories, perhaps all of them, began as ordinary people telling stories about things they saw.



"The Storyteller" by Georg Bergmann, out of copyright.

How kings weaponise history

The era of the people's history lasted until the Library of Alexandria, around 200 BC. Before that point, all libraries were archives: places to store old records. But Alexandria turned libraries into places of scholarship: where scholars use old records to create new, "better" histories.⁶³

These new histories were seen as more useful than the old ones, or why bother writing them? So the older ones fell out of use.

This was a powerful weapon for a king. He could change history. For example, when Genesis appeared, people were less likely to copy the *Enuma Elish* and *Atrahasis*. Eventually, those texts were forgotten. In effect, the king destroyed history and replaced it with a new version. And the new version supports the king. Let's see how that works.



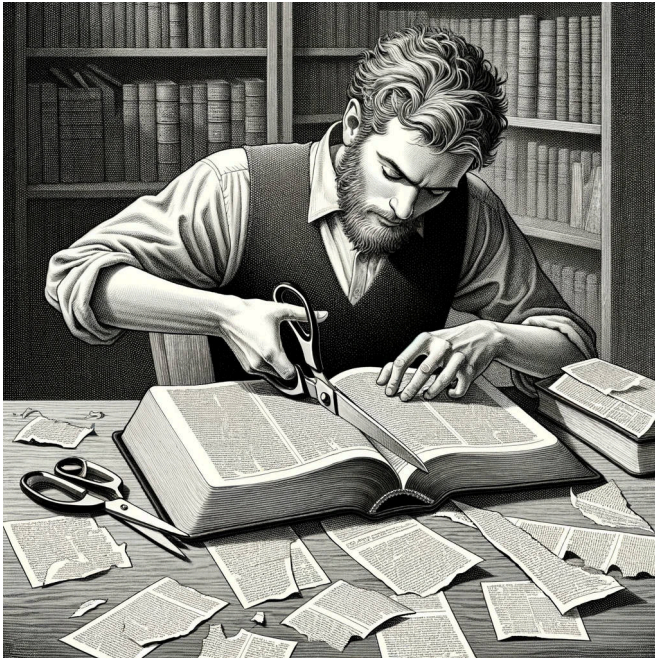
Inside the library of Alexandria, by O. Von Corven (1800s), public domain

⁶³ See Dr Gad Barnea's discussion in the History Valley podcast 31 Oct 2024.

How kings and scholars destroy history

Kings want power. So kings don't like polytheism, because polytheism gives freedom. With polytheism, we can set gods against each other: e.g. the god of war might say to attack your neighbour, but the god of peace says to become friends instead. So the ordinary people can debate. But with monotheism, there is no debate. The one god says "fight" then you have to fight, even if it's a bad idea. So kings always try to get monotheism. First they tell us that one god is more powerful than the rest ("the god", or "deus": "zeus"). Then gradually the other gods are demoted to become just bystanders. Eventually the kings say there are no gods, only people: and guess who is the most powerful person? The king! Or the president or the chief executive officer. So the first step to supreme power is to get rid of polytheism. Then eventually discredit all gods. For this, kings pay scholars.

For example, in Genesis, the gods created god-men and the god-men created slaves. But late kings declared that there was only one God. Therefore god-men are just the mouthpiece of that god: when they speak it is the same as God speaking. This turns Genesis into nonsense: Genesis now says that God created man, then God created man again! So scholars invented the "~ Hypothesis". They imagined that there were originally two contradictory creation accounts. So they began to destroy the Bible by cutting it up into these imaginary source documents.

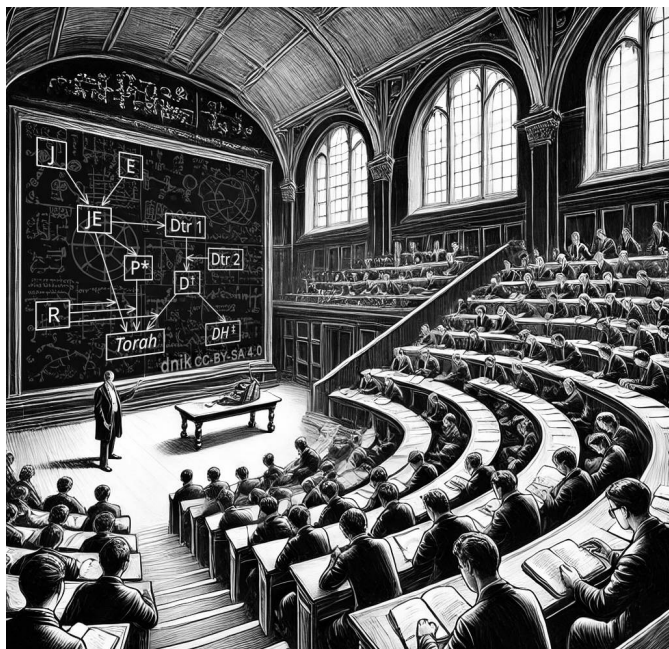


Why scholars cannot admit their mistakes

For hundreds of years, scholars embraced the Documentary Hypothesis. They imagined contradictions everywhere. They invented multiple imaginary source texts for Genesis, called ‘J’, ‘E’, ‘P’, etc.

Eventually, the real source material for Genesis was rediscovered: the Enuma Elish, Atrahasis, Gilgamesh, and so on. These texts showed that nature gods created god-men, and the god-men created slaves, just as in Genesis. This was very embarrassing because the scholars should have known this, even without the source texts. Because *every* city-based civilisation worked this way: with gods, rulers who represented the gods, and lower classes. Modern civilisations *still* work this way. So the ‘J’ and ‘E’ theories were ignorant nonsense. The source material just proves it. But scholars cannot draw attention to their ignorance. So, despite having the real source materials for Genesis, scholars continue to teach their imaginary J and E documents instead.

This process happens everywhere. Scholars do not specialise in economics or sociology, so they make bonehead mistakes.⁶⁴ But they are supposed to be the gatekeepers of knowledge. This leads to nonsense.



⁶⁴ For example, see the chapter on Paul. To understand Paul we need experience of being a missionary for a new religion. Scholars tend to lack that experience.

Genesis 2:17 - do not question experts

After becoming slaves, the Adam people were told not to question the lords. That is, they could not eat of the Tree of Knowledge.

In the past, it was simple to ban the tree of knowledge. Kings could ban certain groups from getting an education. Today it is harder to stop people from being educated, and so kings instead use mockery. For example, if you educate yourself by watching YouTube videos, you may be mocked. The mockery might be justified: there is plenty of nonsense on YouTube. There is also plenty of nonsense in mainstream Bible scholarship. But mainstream scholars tend to treat each other with respect, in the hope of getting work from respected institutions. Whereas non-mainstream YouTubers have no status and no hope of paid work. So they are fair game to be mocked and almost nobody will defend them.

Genesis 2:18-20 - domesticating animals

The Adam slaves were treated like animals, forced to work for their master. So the master experimented with other animals to help them. This period (around 10,000 BC) is when the farmers domesticated various animals.

Some animals could be domesticated, meaning they could be trained to come when called. Genesis says the Adam people tried to “quara” the animals (call to them). Those that could be called were then named after their use. For example, the Sumerian word for a goat used for milking was “üz-ga-naĝ” (“goat-milk-drink”). The base word for goat (“uz”) no doubt referred to some characteristic of the goat, like its horns, or sure-footedness, or independence.⁶⁵

Talking of goats, they became the most important symbol of nomadic religion. Which brings us naturally to the next verse in Genesis, about the invention of religious rituals.

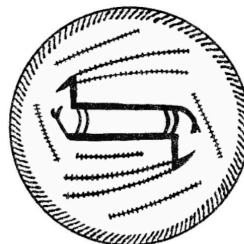


Image: *The Ibex as an Iconographic Symbol ...*
by Richard Dibon-Smith, Fair Use

⁶⁵ “uz” is related to “ús” meaning to support, stand upon, or edge. Perhaps it refers to the goat’s ability to stand in precarious ledges, something people would notice when first chasing them to domesticate them.

Genesis 2:21-24: the sacred marriage ritual

Genesis 2:21-24 is usually assumed to be the creation of women. But this is unlikely.⁶⁶ This is more likely to be the “hieros gamos” (“sacred marriage”) ritual. This is where the king sleeps with a representative of Inanna, the queen of heaven. It takes place at the autumn festival, after the new moon (the new Yah). So it fits at this point in Genesis.



⁶⁶ Because (1) the source material contains no such story; (2) women were already created in Genesis 1; (3) the rest of Genesis is based on real history: suddenly inventing women is not part of real history; (4) the reason for the event is to help the slaves to work: introducing women into an all-male society would have the opposite effect; (5) the conclusion is that “therefore” we should leaving father and mother. This does not follow from the existence of women. In traditional societies, families tend to live near their parents. Women tend to be more sociable than men, and to need help with child-rearing, so introducing women for the first time would mean becoming closer to parents, not leaving them.

The marriage ritual and redefining “woman”

When a mortal king made love with the queen of heaven, he showed that he was accepted by heaven. Later, as kings became more powerful, they identified with powerful male gods, who dominated female gods. Female gods were sometimes created from the bodies of male gods.⁶⁷

This is how Eve was “bānâ” (“built up”), not created:

- Adam slept, then was joined by Eve at his side.⁶⁸ “Rib” (šēlā‘) is usually translated as “side”.
- Eve was “the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20) - i.e., she was Inanna.
- The ritual followed the sequence where Adam learned animal husbandry and then became husband to Eve. To “husband” something means to control it. The king in the ritual represented Dumuzi, the god of shepherds, who controlled animals.
- The reference to opening/closing flesh may be a euphemism for sex.⁶⁹
- The Genesis account ends with a description of marriage. Marriage was now a formal institution controlled by the state. It required people to “*leave their father and mother*” as the source of authority: the (patriarchal) state was now the authority.



Inanna, Akkadian cylinder seal, by Sailko, Wikimedia, CCA3.0,

So the ritual redefined females as built up (“bānâ”) by males, when previously they were equal.

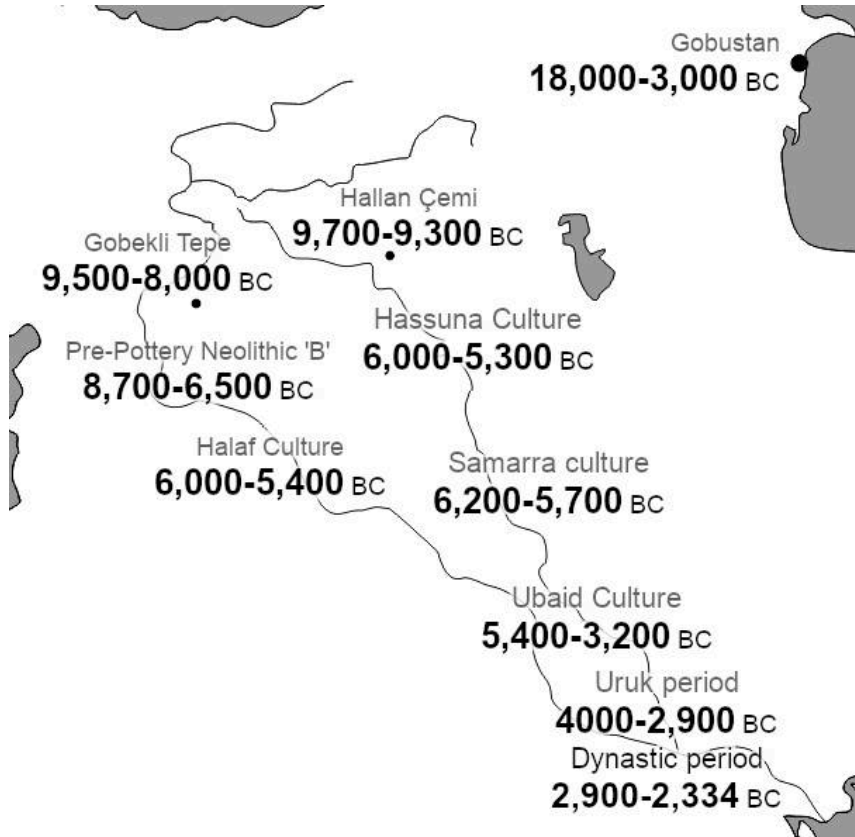
⁶⁷ In Sumer, the king and priestess represented Dumuz and Inanna. Inanna was senior. In some later tellings, the god and goddess were Zeus and Hera. (See the introduction to “The Syrian Goddess, by Lucian” translated by Strong and Garstang, 1913, at sacred-texts.com) Zeus was famously sexist, and in the Greek myths he rescues Hera and the other gods when Cronus swallows them. And when Cronus is castrated, his blood creates the female Furies and Aphrodite. So when Genesis was compiled, in that extremely sexist era, the male in the ritual caused the female to come forth.

⁶⁸ In the earliest version we know of, Inanna is in control (hinted at in a letter from the ruler of Aratta to Enmerkar, a king of Erech). But as kings became more powerful and saw themselves as gods, we would expect the king to take the lead, and the subservient priestess of Inanna would then come to him.

⁶⁹ Genesis 2:23 is in the form of a hymn. The sacred marriage involves hymns that are graphic about body parts. Genesis may be more discrete.

Genesis 3: Inanna

Genesis 3 is an overview of how Eden lost its influence over 6,000 years. At first, the Adam people were servants in Eden. Then they moved south and built their own civilisation. We can see their southward movement in archaeology:



The centre of power was the temple of Inanna, queen of heaven. When power moved south, the temple moved south. Eden finally admitted defeat, and lost the main temple of Inanna, in the reign of Enmerkar, c.3,300 BC.

Genesis 3 combines at least three older texts that tell of the southward shift in power: *"Inanna and Utu"*, *"Inanna and the Huluppu tree"*, and *"Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta"*.

Genesis 3:1-7: Inanna and the tree of power

Inanna (or Ishtar), queen of heaven, was the divine queen of the mountains of Ararat, the location of the Garden of Eden. She was very similar to the later Hurrian goddess Hebat. The Amarna letters refer to a king of Jerusalem called Abdi-Heba (servant of Hebat). In Hebrew Hebat became Hawwa, or in English “Eve”. Later she was worshipped by the Israelites as Asherah, wife of Yahweh, with her sacred trees that symbolised her power.

Inanna was the goddess of both new life and war. She was associated with the “Huluppu” tree. “Huluppu” means “power” and “water” so most people think it was originally a willow, a tree that grows by water, and provides wood for the bow and arrow. As people made more use of the Huluppu tree (i.e. they made more use of bows and arrows) they gradually rejected the old ways of obedience to the lords of Aratta (Ararat). They began to establish their kingdoms further down the rivers.

Inanna planned to create a throne out of Huluppu and reign in Sumer. Later, Inanna sent Gilgamesh to cut down the Huluppu tree in Ararat. Genesis remembers this event as Eve defying Yahweh over the tree, and demanding to be on the same level as him.

Here is the king of Ur in Inanna’s temple, with the sacred tree (by that time the tree was portrayed as a palm). The king sits on a raised area, suggesting the top of the ziggurat, where he receives messengers.



Image: Ur-Nammu in the temple of Inanna, fair use.

Genesis 3:1-5: the snake

A snake lived in the roots of the Huluppu tree, a symbol of Inanna's power. Snakes can hide then kill without warning, so they are the symbol of intelligence and power. Enmerkar, the builder of Uruk, the chief city of Sumer, is described as "*the saĝkal [foremost] snake living in Sumer, who pulverizes heads*". When Inanna defied Aratta and moved her power to Sumer, she "*stamped on the scorpion and cut off its tail*", suggesting stamping on the snake in Genesis 3:15. It is not clear if the scorpion was exactly equivalent to the snake, or just represented his armies (as in the Book of Revelation) because these ancient texts often have missing lines.

After she defied Aratta (Ararat) and moved to Sumer, the head of the gods (Anu) lamented that Inanna had grown even more powerful than him.

Archaeology supports these legends. The earliest landowners were in Ararat. These developed the arts of war and of large populations: warfare and childbirth, meaning Inanna. Warfare must have included civil war, leading groups to split off. As they expanded they naturally moved down the rivers until they arrived at Sumer. The canals, fertile soil and sea trade made them so powerful that they dominated the old rural lands further north. This rivalry is most clear in "*Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*" which seems to reflect actual letters sent between Sumer and Ararat, with each king demanding that the other one gives in.

Snake people, or "Ophidian" figures, were common in the archaeology of Ubaid. Here is a typical example: a woman with a snake-like head, nursing a child. The vast majority are male figures, with imagery suggesting great power.⁷⁰ Earlier on, the snake was the most common image found at Gobekli Tepe.⁷¹



Image: Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg), via Wikimedia, CCA4.0

70 "A Snake in the Grass. Reassessing the ever-intriguing ophidian figurines" by Aurelie Daems

71 "Animals in the symbolic world of Pre-Pottery Neolithic Göbekli Tepe" by Peters and Schmidt,

Genesis 3:16: the Fall of the Goddess

Inanna used to be the most powerful goddess: whoever had the temple of Inanna ruled the world. But in Genesis, she became subordinate to Adam. How did that happen in history?

Lands were traditionally seen as female, for their ability to create life. Females bear children, and are extremely concerned about grandchildren, so they think about the long term. As long as society was based on female principles, it had long-term stability.

For example, women ensured a stable population. Nomads had to carry their babies. So they could not average more than one young child per woman. This kept everyone fit and slim. Women evolved so that low body fat plus lactation meant no ovulation. Once a child was fully weaned and could run alongside the adults, then a mother stopped producing milk and could have another child. And if for some reason the population went down but food stayed the same (e.g. in a pandemic), eating the more plentiful food (due to the lower population) caused increased body fat and thereby increased ovulation.

So women ensured a stable population, one that did not use up all the local resources, so there was plenty for everyone.

So women were the symbol of order, health and happiness for the tribe. The oldest art shows idealised female forms. The oldest gods are female (Athena, Inanna, etc.)

Settled agriculture changed that. Babies did not have to be carried everywhere, so women could have more babies. Women became baby-making machines. Each baby had less time with its mother and less direct contact (less carrying). This probably made them less happy and less well-brought up. Men, being physically stronger, took control of the villages and any wealth, so women became second-class citizens. Land ownership encouraged wars over land, so stability was abandoned in favour of growth. Large populations lived closer together (with animals) and this encouraged the spread of disease. Women, being baby-making slaves, suffered the most. Childbirth was now associated with every kind of pain, as we will see on the next page:

*To the woman he [the landlord] said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."*⁷²

⁷² Genesis 3:16

Inanna became Lamashtu, goddess of evil

Sumerian texts describe the fall of Inanna in “*Inanna's descent to the nether world*”. It describes how a woman was “*the ruler of the great world*” (Erec-ki-gala, or Ereshkigal) but she now lives among the dead. Why? Because of childbirth.

*The mother who gave birth, Erec-ki-gala, on account of her children, is lying there [in the land of the dead].*⁷³

Her sister, Inanna, was the queen of the heavens but had to join Ereshkigal. She lost all of her powers (the seven “me” powers, such as the crown of authority, the jewels that attracted men to follow her, etc.). She was hung on a hook like meat to be eaten. The new ruler of Sumer was Enkidu, the god of water and canals, because of his ability to create fertile land out of the desert. He rescued Inanna, but Inanna was always subordinate to him. She blamed her husband the shepherd for causing this misery: this all started when mankind began to domesticate animals (and plants), as in Genesis 2.

Because women now suffered more (as baby-making machines in a world of disease), yet had no power to make decisions (as men now ruled) they turned to figurines (“*lamashtu*”⁷⁴) and begged Inanna for help. Inanna became identified with the *lamashtu* of suffering:

*[To] Lamash, daughter of Anu. Whose name has been uttered by the gods, Innin(Inanna), queen of queens.*⁷⁵

Eventually, Lamashtu became a goddess of evil in her own right. Everything that goes wrong for women was blamed on Lamashtu, as the real villain (settled agriculture) was too powerful to challenge.



Lamashtu plaques, showing all the ways that women suffer. Rama, CCA-SA2.0, France

⁷³ Inanna's descent to the underworld, lines 226-235

⁷⁴ The etymology is uncertain, but most likely refers to figurines representing various diseases and calamities. See “*Lamastu, Daughter of Anu*” by Frans Wiggermann

⁷⁵ Incantation in “*Amulets and Magic*” by Wallis Budge, quoted in “*The Transformations of a Goddess: Lillake, Lamashtu, and Lilith*.” by Wendilyn Emrys

Lilith and the rise of misogyny

The Jews remember the powerful aspect of Inanna as Lilith (meaning “spirit of the ancient trees”⁷⁶). She was Adam's first wife, but she refused to be dominated like a slave.

[God] said, 'It is not good for man to be alone' (Genesis 2:18). He also created a woman, from the earth, as He had created Adam himself, and called her Lilith. Adam and Lilith immediately began to fight. She said, 'I will not lie below,' and he said, 'I will not lie beneath you, but only on top. For you are fit only to be in the bottom position, while I am to be the superior one.' Lilith responded, 'We are equal to each other inasmuch as we were both created from the earth.' But they would not listen to one another. When Lilith saw this, she pronounced the Ineffable Name and flew away into the air.⁷⁷

The Jews then imagined Eve as a more obedient replacement for Lilith. Lilith was then blamed for everything that went wrong for women. In later centuries Lilith became a symbol of sexual temptation, but that was not in the original story.

This was similar to the Greek version of the story: the Sirens. Like Inanna and Lilith and the Cherubim, Sirens were often drawn or described as having wings, symbolising their freedom. Sirens were drawn as birds with human chests and heads. They were not portrayed as beautiful or as temptresses until thousands of years later.⁷⁸



Image: Carl Poellath, out of copyright

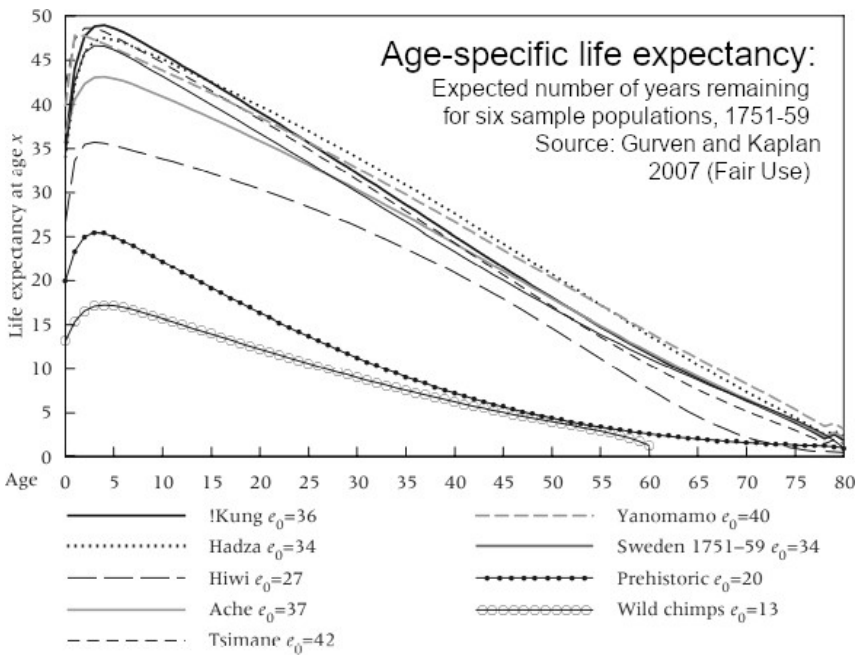
⁷⁶ Based on ki-sikil-lil-la-ke from extra tablet (XII) of the epic of Gilgamesh

⁷⁷ From the medieval “second Alphabet of Ben Sirach” https://ia802904.us.archive.org/21/items/alphabetofsirach/Alphabet_of_Sirach.pdf

⁷⁸ See “Woman's Lore: 4,000 Years of Sirens, Serpents and Succubi” by Sarah Clegg, and her interview on “The Ancients” podcast (“The Sirens”, 25 August 2024)

If you eat the fruit you will die” (Gen 2:17)

Genesis said that leaving Eden would lead to death. And it did, from disease and increased warfare. Critics say the opposite: they say that moving to cities brings longer life.⁷⁹ But archaeology supports Genesis: the first settled farmers’ skeletons show they were weaker and more sickly than hunter-gatherers. Eventually, they began to adapt and live longer, but they still did not live longer than hunter-gatherers. For example, this graph compares various hunter-gatherer groups to life expectancy in Sweden in the 1750s. They are about the same.⁸⁰



Cities finally gave people a longer life around the year 1900 (i.e. for children born around 1870). But this was at the cost of destroying the environment and creating new zombies (robots) to replace humans.

⁷⁹ E.g. in 1651, Thomas Hobbes wrote “Leviathan” to declare that life without landowners was horrible in all kinds of ways, e.g. “nasty, brutish and short”

⁸⁰ The much lower number for prehistoric people is probably due to the limited data. Because it is very unlikely that every hunter-gatherer group in the 1700s was wildly different from prehistoric times. More likely, the few bones we have are not representative of all people who died.

Genesis 3:16-19: The Fall of Man

When the Younger Dryas ended, the Adam people left Eden. Farming meant they now had to work *“by the sweat of their brow”* and it also meant more children, more disease, more pain. So why didn’t they go back to the good old days of being hunter-gatherers? They partly did: some became nomadic shepherds. But settled farming created a zombie apocalypse.

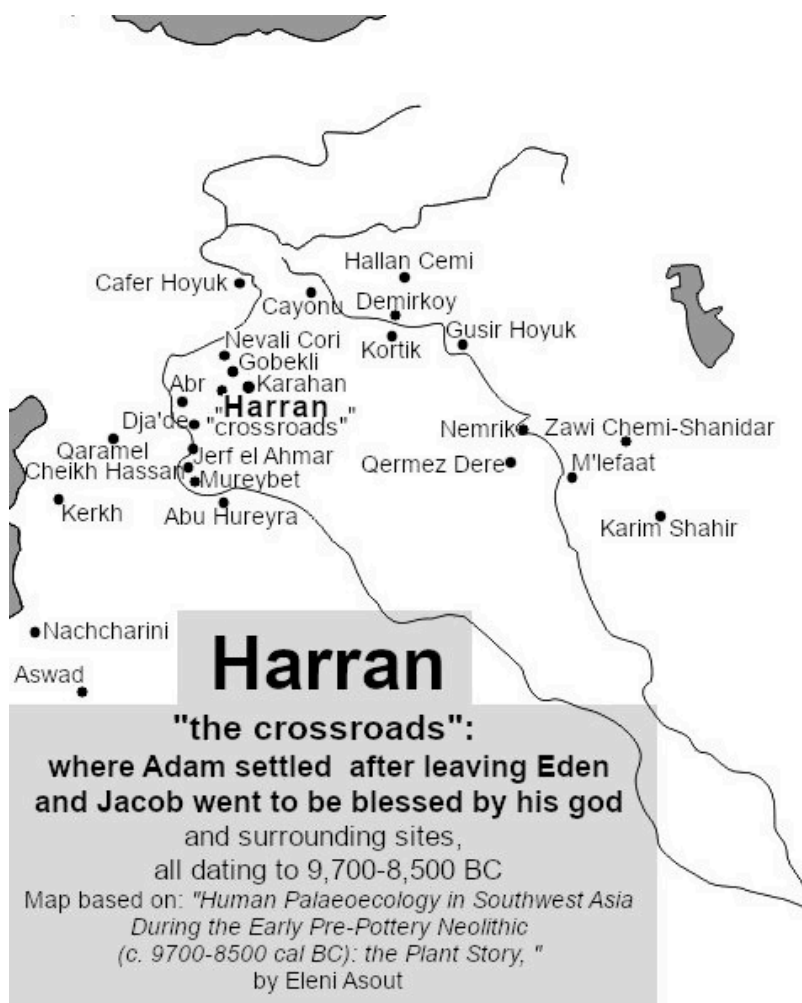
Settled people were weaker and sicker at first, and brought new communicable diseases. But there were endless hordes of them and they had to mindlessly obey their leaders, and endlessly die in wars. Their sickly life was cheap. So they could overwhelm free people, take all the best land, and bring the plague. Like zombies.

Eventually, the healthier hunter-gatherers had nowhere left to run. Then the zombies won.



“The crossroads of history

When the Adam people left Eden, they first settled around the “Crossroads” (the “Harran”) of the ancient world, near Gobekli Tepe. This is where the ancient nomadic routes from Africa, Europe and Asia all cross. There, in Harran, the people settled and invented farming with the ox⁸¹ around 8,500 BC. Harran is where Abraham and Jacob later visited whenever they needed to make world-changing decisions.



⁸¹ For the legend see "Traveller's Guidebook of Sanliurfa Province" p.135, a part of the official 'Revitalization of History in Sanliurfa Project'.

Genesis 3:24 - the Cherubim

When Adam and Eve left Eden, it became an enemy land. It was protected by “cherubim” (the plural of Cherub) with a flaming sword. “Cherub” in Hebrew is Ker-oob, and probably comes from the Akkadian “Kar-ibu”, meaning “to bless”. Kur (Kar) was the blessed land: the fertile land of mountains and trees, unlike the deserts of Sumer. It was known for its gold and jewels. Kur was the old name for Eden, and later became known as the land of the dead (more about that later). The people of Kur (such as Inanna) were often shown with wings, showing their ability to travel freely.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu challenged the gods of these mountain forests by cutting down some of their sacred trees. As punishment, Enkidu had to die. So the people of Kur had the power to bless with knowledge and riches, and also the power to kill any who broke their laws. So they had the trees of knowledge and also the trees of life and death.

So the word Cherub/Karibu probably meant something like “the people who can bless you, or kill you”.

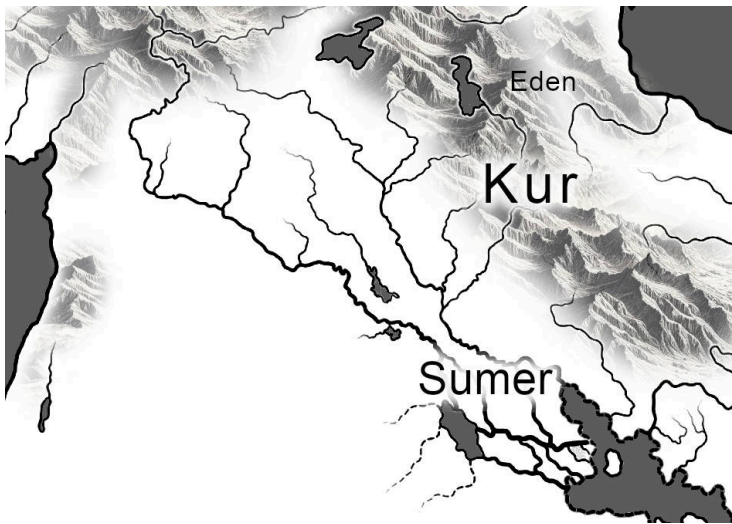


How Eden was remembered

The garden of “Eden” just means the garden “far from the city”. Genesis places it at the source of the Tigris and Euphrates. The Sumerians called this region Kur.

Kur was the land of the spirits of the ancestors (the land of the dead) and became equivalent to “mountains”, or “foreign land”. Kur was seen as the home of the gods”. E-Kur (“House-Kur”) was the name for the house of the gods. The E-Kur was the Ziggurat (the artificial mountain) at the centre of every city: a reminder of the mountains where the old gods lived.

Kur was the common name for the Zagros mountains. Kur was a place that anyone could visit for advice from the ancestors, and then return. But it was extremely dangerous enemy territory: the slightest wrong move meant death.⁸² The Kur of the gods was reached by ship. The Sumerians were scared of large hailstones on the voyage,⁸³ so the ship must have gone north, and to high land: up the river. Kur was originally near the source of the Tigris and Euphrates. That is, the original Kur of the gods was the location that Genesis defines as the Garden of Eden.



⁸² See “*Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld*.” Gilgamesh was a great hero, but he could not visit Kur as he was too well known. So he sent Enkidu in disguise. On his return, Enkidu described the dead in the way a necromancer would describe them: with the experiences and values they had on death. Or see *Inana’s visit to Kur*: it is described as a very dangerous temple. The text “*the Death of Ur-Nammu*” is about how Ur-Nammu died in battle so went to Kur. The text reads like a complaint to the necromancers that this death was unfair because Ur-Nammu did everything right so should have won the battle and not died.

⁸³ See the story of Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld

How Sumer lost respect for the ancestors

The land of Kur had the temple of Inanna (Eve), queen of heaven. She was the final authority in all things. Even Gilgamesh gave respect to the gods of the forests ... until he chose to defy them by cutting down their sacred trees. But then he had to accept their punishment.



However, the world's climate was changing. Kur (by then called Ararat⁸⁴) was drying out. (This is the same climate change that caused the rivers of the Sahara to dry out: in 5000 BC the Sahara was full of lakes and forests, but by 3000 BC it was desert. This caused migration to the Nile, causing the wars that ended in one king, Pharaoh, ruling all of Egypt.)

The northern cities experienced famine. Meanwhile, Sumer was thriving due to the great rivers and new technologies (canals and then writing). So Kur declined while Sumer grew more powerful. Sumer no longer respected the land of Kur. At least five epic Sumerian poems tell the story of how Sumer demanded that the temple of Inanna move to Sumer, and how they finally won.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ possibly related to the Hebrew “har” (mountain) and “yarad” (go down)

⁸⁵ *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, *Enmerkar and Ensuhkeshdانا*, *Enmerkar and Lugulbanda*, *Lugulbanda and the Mountain Cave (or Mount Hurum)*, and *Lugalbanda and the Anzud Bird*.

How Sumer destroyed Eden

Ararat (a.k.a. Kur, Eden, Aratta) lost the temple of Inanna. Sumer was now in charge. Sumer wanted Ararat to admit defeat. Ararat refused. So Sumer declared war on Ararat,⁸⁶ in the name of Inanna:

Since they showed me no respect, since they did not put their noses to the ground for me, since they did not rub their lips in the dust for me, I shall personally fill the soaring mountain range with my terror. Against its magnificent sides I shall place magnificent battering-rams ... In the mountain range I shall start battles and prepare conflicts. ... I shall set fire to its thick forests. ... I shall spread this terror through the inaccessible mountain range Aratta [Ararat].⁸⁷

Sumer's threat "poured fearsome terror on the abodes of the gods. It has spread fear among the holy dwellings of the Anuna deities." They begged Sumer (Inanna) to stop, but she went ahead anyway.

The decline in Ararat matches a drying climate. The gods sent famine to Ararat just as they sent wealth to Sumer.⁸⁸ Ararat became associated with death. We can see the decline in how the names changed their meaning between the oldest texts and the later texts:

name	original meaning	new meaning
Nergal	Lord of the big city	Lord of the dead
Ereshkigal	Ruler of the great world	Queen of the dead
Kur	Mountains	Underground
Sheol	Knowledge	Death in darkness
Hubur (river)	Fertility (Habur)	Death

⁸⁶ Specifically against Ebih, in the middle of the Lulubi mountains. The precise location is unknown, but Lulubi was the southern edge of the mountains of Ararat, and Ebih II was king of Mari, in the borderlands between Sumer and Ararat.

⁸⁷ *Inanna and Ebih*, lines 33-48 <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr132.htm>

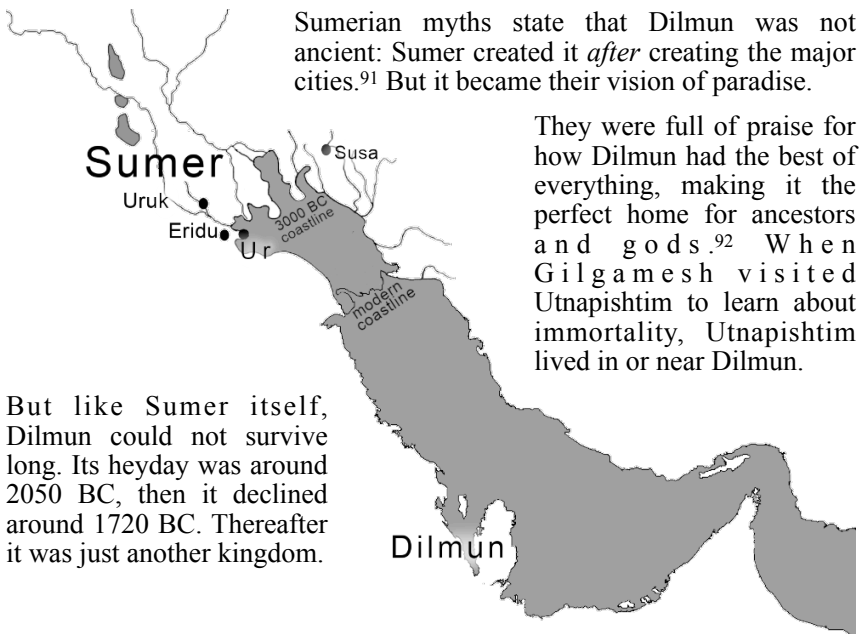
⁸⁸ "Impact of climate changes on vegetation and human societies during the Holocene in the South Caucasus (Vanevan, Armenia)" by Mary Robles et al. "An aridification trend marks the last 5000 years causing a drop in water level ... [particular] Arid events are recorded at 6.2 ka, 5.2 ka, 4.2 ka and 2.8 ka a cal BP" That is, the land became drier after 3000 BC, just as Sumer reached its greatest power. And there were additional dry spikes at: 4,200 BC (just before the Adam people gave in and agreed to serve Uruk); 3,200 BC (when unusual wealth pouring into Uruk's temples led to the invention of writing as a way to catalogue the new riches), and 2,200 BC (our first Sumerian texts, boasting of defeating Ararat, with references to famine in Ararat).

How Sumer replaced Eden with Dilmun

When the people of Adam left Eden, around 9,700 BC,⁸⁹ they abandoned the home of the ancestors: the home of the gods. They became wanderers on trails that led south. The Sumerian gods noticed the problem:

“Nintur [mother goddess] was paying attention: ‘Let me bethink myself of my humankind, all forgotten as they are; and mindful of mine, Nintur’s, creatures let me bring them back, let me lead the people back from their trails. Let them come and build cities and cult places...’”⁹⁰

So they built new cities (Eridu etc.). They still respected their mountain origins (the Kur) as the home of the gods, until (after 3000 BC) the mountain climate dried up and Kur (Ararat) became weak. So Sumer needed a new home of the gods: a new land of the ancestors. They looked around for the most beautiful land, the one that represented their ideals of purity and wealth. They chose Dilmun (probably Bahrain).



⁸⁹ When they founded Hallan Cemi and then Gobekli Tepe

⁹⁰ Eridu Genesis, lines 1-5

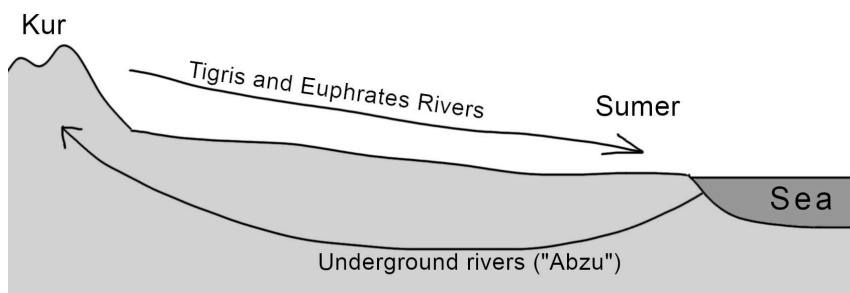
⁹¹ Sumerian myths refer to ancient times as “*before Dilmun existed*”. E.g. in “*Enmerkar and the lord of Aratta*”, the conflict with Aratta took place before Dilmun existed. And so did *Nanna-Suen's journey to Nibru*

⁹² E.g. the myth “*Enki and Ninhursanga*” praises Dilmun at length.

How Eden became Sheol, and Sheol became Hell

Even though Kur meant “mountains”, these mountains extended deep underground. This is because Kur was also the land of underground rivers.

Kur (Eden) was at the source of the Tigris and Euphrates, the source of life for Sumer. The Sumerians knew about underground water, because of oases in the desert. So they rationally concluded that water from the sea returned to the mountains via underground rivers.



Those underground rivers emerged as springs out of the Earth. Hence Genesis 2 introduces the Garden of Eden by saying that “*streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.*”

When the above-ground Kur dried up, it was natural to think of the spirits of Kur moving to the underground waters. Or perhaps the spirits moved to the Sumerian temples, following Inanna. Kur was no longer blessed.

The Hebrew word for Kur is Sheol, meaning “knowledge”.⁹³ But the Greek Bible translates it as Hades. Hades followed a similar process of starting as a real place of the ancestors. “Hades” (A-ides) meant “lost knowledge”. Like Kur / Sheol, it was known for its fertility and rivers, but the same drying around 3000 BC turned it into a desert. Around 1300 BC the capital of Hades, Tartarus, was buried in an earthquake.⁹⁴ This was seen by the Greeks as a punishment for sin. Later, Greek ideas influenced the Bible through the first Bible canon, the Septuagint. So the Bible adopted Hades as the name for the underground land of the dead and a place of punishment. Hence Eden became Sheol which became Hades.

⁹³ Sheol is שְׁאוֹל (Strong’s number H7585) and Strong derives it as the past participle of שָׁאַל (H7592) “to ask”. Sheol is identical to the name Saul, שָׁאוּל, meaning “asked” in the sense of asking for knowledge from the dead. Saul asked a necromancer for advice. The different marks around the letters suggest different vowels, but these were added by the Masoretes for convenience thousands of years later. The original text only showed consonants, so Sheol = Saul = ask the dead for knowledge.

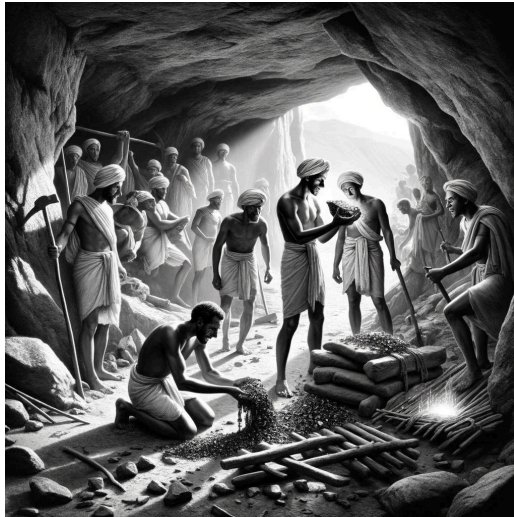
⁹⁴ See the companion to this book, “*Atlantis: It’s All True*”

Genesis 4: Cain

Settled agriculture leads to specialisms, such as mining. So people found copper in larger quantities.

Copper can produce bronze, which makes better tools. So the “Bronze Age” began. Genesis explains it this way: Eve had a son “from the lord”, i.e. from the landlords. That is, this son became a settled farmer and ruler of land, like them. He also became a “qayin”, the Hebrew word for metal smith.⁹⁵ “Quayin” is related to the word “qanah”, to acquire, since precious metal was used in trade. In English, we say “Cain”. Cain’s people liked to acquire things with their copper: Cain (the metalworkers) built the first city, and their descendants owned livestock, created tools and musical instruments, etc.⁹⁶

The gods (the ruling landowners) did not want their servants to own land. So when Cain paid his tribute gifts, they rejected him and condemned him. But they accepted the tribute from the nomadic herders. This sowed the seeds of a division that lasts until this day: city people versus country people, or Cain (the miner, acquirer and city builder) versus Abel (the nomadic herder).



⁹⁵ From the Semitic stem *q-y-n* "to form, to fashion." (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/Cain>) hence the play on words where Eve said she called him Cain because she got a man - she formed or acquired a man. All experts agree that it refers to the Kenan tribe, whose name meant metalsmiths.

⁹⁶ Genesis 4:17-22

Cain vs Abel, and the warning against Cain

Landowners have the best land and the biggest armies. And Smiths (the quayin / Cain) have the deadliest weapons. So the nomadic tribesmen never stood a chance. Their lives were “vain”, like breath that disappears: in Hebrew, “hebel”. Or in English, “Abel”.

Smiths created the first metal weapons (at least in large enough quantities so that archaeologists find remains) around 5000 BC. This began an era of endless war. This era only ended around 3000 BC, when the invention of writing allowed larger kingdoms. From that point on, the most powerful kings could quickly crush any small rebellion. DNA shows that, between 5000 BC and 3000 BC, 16 out of every 17 men died before they were old enough to have children, almost certainly due to these wars:

“Modern men's genes suggest that something peculiar happened 5,000 to 7,000 years ago [i.e. 5000 BC to 3000 BC]: Most of the male population across Asia, Europe and Africa seems to have died off, leaving behind just one man for every 17 women.”⁹⁷

The lords punished the Cain-ite landowners by exiling them and said their crops could be legally stolen.⁹⁸ However, they made a sign or warning (often mistranslated as “mark”) not to kill these exiles, as that would start another round of wars.



⁹⁷ *“Why Do Genes Suggest Most Men Died Off 7,000 Years Ago?”* livescience.com/62754-warring-clans-caused-population-bottleneck.html

⁹⁸ Genesis says that if Cain plants crops, he won’t be able to eat them.

Cain created our technological world

Genesis 4 records how the smiths (the Cain) created “hanak” - meaning “*make this god’s house*”.⁹⁹ They built a new concept in cities: not just a walled village, but a temple to invite the gods. The modern equivalent is a university: a tower where we learn the secrets of nature (the nature gods). Previous temples were simple, ancient shrines to the past. These new temples were majestic, new, and devoted to growth and expansion.



Cain’s descendants were initially fugitives (“Iradd”), then men who were destroyed by the gods (“mehujael”), then god-men (“methushael”), then conquerors (“lamech”), then passionate musicians (“jubil”), and then finally the world-smith (“tubal-cain”) who created the Iron Age. So the smiths (Cain) created the future. They created “progress” as we know it.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Literally “dedicated (to God)”, always referring to a house or temple. Other references are Deuteronomy 20:5, 1 Kings 8:63, 2 Chronicles 7:5, Proverbs 22:6. Related words mean to train or to catch, to make obedient to the gods.

¹⁰⁰ Hence the gnostic Cainites worshiped him as following the high god of knowledge, whereas Abel (they said) followed the inferior creator the demiurge.

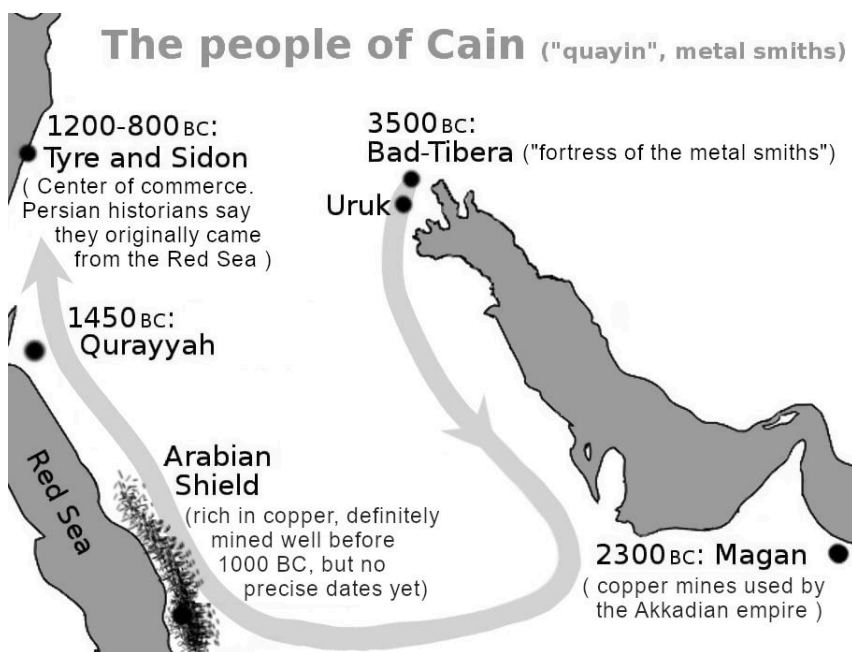
How nomads survived the Cain apocalypse

Metalworkers (Cain) created an apocalypse where 16 out of every 17 males died before adulthood. The free nomads had no choice: they had to join the cities for protection. They had to beg the landlords for help, and become virtual slaves. So Genesis ends the Cain chapter in this way:

“At that time [Adam’s] people began to call on the name of the Lord.”

This event, around 4000 BC, marks the end of the egalitarian Ubaid period and the beginning of the Uruk period, which saw a major increase in inequality. Technology also increased. Around 3500 BC, the smiths created a new fortress city dedicated to metalwork: “Bad-Tibera”.

But the nomads did not give up. They needed metal so they could defend themselves against cities. So they established semi-nomadic communities that used copper mined far away from cities. These nomads finally reached Canaan before the time of Moses. They taught Moses his religion.¹⁰¹ This was the religion of how to survive in a world dominated by large cities. We will cover that when we discuss Exodus and Leviticus.



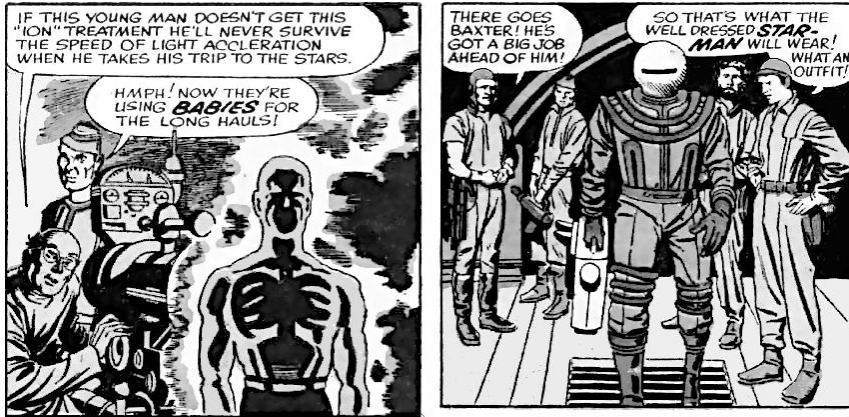
¹⁰¹ See “Yahweh: *Origin of a Desert God*” (2021) by Robert Miller. Miller shows that the old Midianite / Kenite (Cain-ite) hypothesis is supported by new archaeology.

How we will survive the AI apocalypse

The age of metal caused a crisis. The Bible records several similar crises. It shows how we survived each one:

- **Metal technology:** this naturally favours inequality, as it allows everything to scale up. The nomads fought back. They found metal sources far from cities, and found how to create high quality items without the need for settled life. They also dominated trade.
- **Settled farming:** this concentrates power in the hands of land owners. For how Moses solved the problem, see the chapter on Leviticus.
- **Writing:**¹⁰² this allows rulers to run large empires, with skilled priests and lawyers producing propaganda. The Hebrews fought back by creating the Bible. These books let us test new ideas against the past.
- **Money:**¹⁰³ this replaces relationships with psychopathy. Prophets fought back by showing why this will destroy civilisation. Prophets provide dates, so we can test their predictions.¹⁰⁴

Our current challenge is **AI** (Artificial Intelligence). AI provides rich people with global surveillance and an army of machines. Prophets conclude that the only way to survive AI is to change our bodies. We have done this in the past, by adapting to a new disease or a new climate. But this time we need to do it more, and faster.¹⁰⁵



"The Long Long Years" in *Race for the Moon #3* (1958) by Jack Kirby, out of copyright

¹⁰² For writing see Enoch. For how people fought back see the Tower of Babel.

¹⁰³ For the results of coinage see the chapter on Daniel.

¹⁰⁴ See the chapter on Revelation, and the book "*Prophecy: It's All True*"

¹⁰⁵ See Frank Herbert's *Dune*, or various stories by Jack Kirby: *Starman Zero*, *Challengers #3*, Kleeter (in *Homecoming 3000*), Ben Boxer in *Kamandi*, etc.

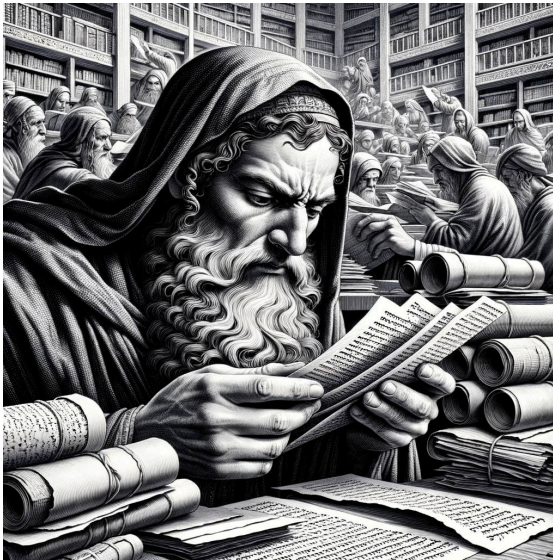
Genesis 5:

The History of Sumer

This chapter discusses the dates in Genesis 5. Those dates refer to Adam and his descendants down to Noah. They describe the start of civilisation as we know it today: the first city-states, the first writing as we know it today, the first large buildings, the first legal codes, and so on.

We calculate those dates by starting with a date that everyone agrees on: the destruction of the first Jerusalem temple in 586 BC. Then we look for parts that say “This person was 75 years old when...” or “This was 400 years after...” and work backwards.

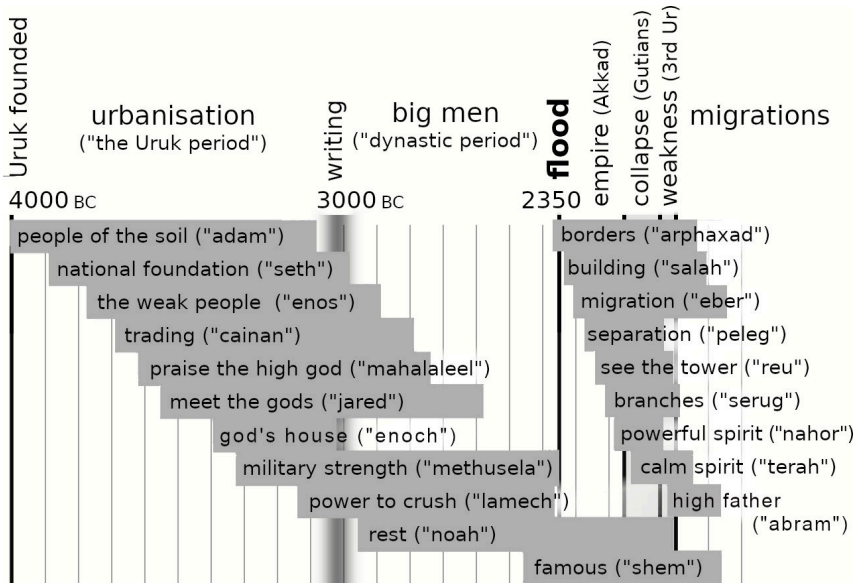
Some versions of the Bible have different dates, due to mistakes when copying, or changes to the meaning of words (no language stays the same forever). So Jewish scribes called Masoretes spent over 500 years carefully comparing the old copies of the Bible, to ensure we have the most accurate version today.



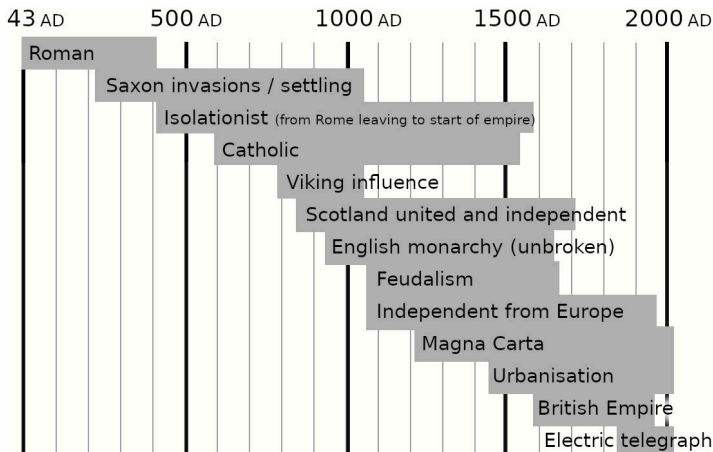
We can test the results using archaeology. And we find that every date matches up. Genesis 5 is an accurate record of history. Genesis 5 tells the story of Sumer, the civilisation that gave us kings, cities, and writing (at least in the form we know them today).

BOOKMARK THIS PAGE!

Here is a summary of Genesis chapter 5 (and also chapter 11).



Each name refers to a person who began a major period of history.
To see how it works, here is a similar timeline for the history of Britain.



How they recorded history

Genesis was compiled around 600 BC, from much older texts. Genesis 5 as we have it today is written in this format:

“When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. 4 After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. 5 Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died.”¹⁰⁶

However, if this is genuine, the earliest version must have used proto-writing on clay tablets: just shapes and numbers.



Image: beer rations c.3000 BC, Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg), CCA4.0



Image: list of places, c.000 BC, 'Zunkir' via CCA4.0

Proto-writing was highly compressed and had no letters. So the text about Adam, quoted above, was originally something like “Land, 130, 800”, since “Adamah” meant “land”. But was “Adamah” originally a person, a tribe, a description, or something else? Those additional details were remembered in stories, using the tablet as a memory aid.

¹⁰⁶ Genesis 5:3-5

Tribes were remembered as individuals

Genesis 5 begins by reminding us that “Adam” refers to people, plural: *“male and female created he them”*. In the Bible, the word “Adam” can refer to an individual, his descendants, or people in general. And remember that a tribe can have many sons and daughters, just as a person can.

In the same way, “Isra-el” can refer to the man, or the tribe, or the land. It is all the same word.



We still do this today. If we say, “America did this”, we might mean the president of America did this, or the American people did this, or perhaps the land of America did this (if we are talking about geology and climate). We use the same word because, in theory, they should all be in harmony.

Testing the numbers for internal accuracy

Some people doubt the accuracy of the dates in Genesis, because the two most important translations, the Masoretic and Septuagint, give different numbers:¹⁰⁷

Age at the “birth” of each “son” + remaining years of life:		
	Masoretic:	Septuagint:
Adam	130 + 800	230 + 700
Seth	105 + 807	205 + 707
Enosh	90 + 815	190 + 715
Kenan	70 + 840	170 + 740
Mahalalel	65 + 830	165 + 730
...		
Enoch	65 + 300	165 + 200
...		
Arphaxad	35 + 403	135 + 330
Selah	30 + 403	130 + 330
Eber	34 + 370	134 + 370
Peleg	30 + 209	130 + 209
Reu	32 + 207	132 + 207
Serug	30 + 200	130 + 200

It seems likely that when translating the Septuagint from Hebrew into Greek, somebody said (or wrote) “*The Adam era was 130 years*”. But “era” in Greek was “aeon”, which also means “100”. So the scribe wrote the sign for 100, and 100 was added to the number. This was an easy mistake to make and was corrected by the Masoretes.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ The other big differences (not shown here) are due to changing the numbers near the Flood and also near Abraham. This was so they could arrive at numbers that were known to be reliable. E.g. to make sure that the era of Methuselah did not continue after the flood.

¹⁰⁸ The Septuagint generally adds 100 to the first number and subtracts 100 from the second. But why? We saw that the original was in the form “Adam, 130, 930” and a skilled scribe was expected to subtract 930 - 130 to get the number 800. So if we accidentally change the 130, then the 800 automatically changes as well. Occam’s razor suggests that this is the most likely explanation, as it only requires one mistake per name, not two. How do we know the problem is with the Septuagint? Partly because the error is in Greek, partly because the Masoretic is confirmed by archaeology, and partly because the Septuagint had inconsistent scribes, suggesting that less care was taken overall. E.g. some Septuagint books have excellent Greek at the expense of the Hebrew, whereas other books closely follow the Hebrew, giving odd Greek phrasing. The job of the Masoretes was to compare all previous sources, including the Septuagint, to spot errors like the numbers in Genesis 5, and correct them.

4004-3074 BC: the era of ditch diggers

We will now examine each of the eras. Starting with Adam.

“Adam” means the people (“male and female”), literally “from the soil” (Hebrew “adamah”). They dug canals and tended the gardens of the lord of the land. This is confirmed by archaeology.



4000 BC to about 3100 BC is what archaeologists call the “Uruk” period. 4000 BC is when mankind first became urbanised: when people moved from the countryside to the city.

The old ditch-digging culture (the life of the Adam) had to end forever around 3100 BC. This is due to the invention of syllabic writing. This gave more power to the employer: he could keep track of every detail and use it against the illiterate workers. He would also use writing to hire people from further away, forcing wages down.

The Adam system was based on having at least some power to negotiate with the boss: the Adam people could “call on the name of their lord” and the Lord had to listen. They could discuss grievances, and withdraw labour if needed to come to some respectful compromise. But the invention of writing took away that power. From 3100 BC, the boss had all the power, and the only way for workers to get any power was to become a trader (Cainan) or a temple worker (Mahalalel).

The same thing is happening today with the invention of computers. The working class is losing power. They have to either become traders or integrate closer with the elite class if they want to make money.

3874-2962 BC: city separates from countryside

Genesis says that after 130 years the “adam” people had a son and called his name “Seth” (originally STH: Hebrew did not use vowels). But the word “a son” is not in Hebrew, and the Hebrew word translated as “his name” literally means “position”. So the verse literally says this:

“And the ditch digger lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat in his own likeness, and after his image; and positioned ‘STH’”

What did STH mean? Let’s try the possible vowels:

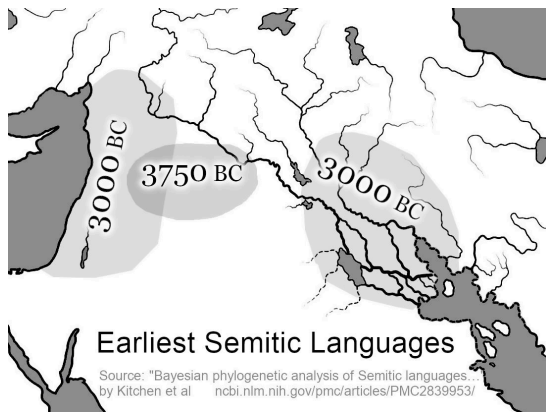
“The verb שׂית (shyt) means to give, set or place firm. Noun שֵׁית (shyt) refers to occupational garb, the dress upon which the profession stands. Noun שַׁת (shat) describes a national foundation; whatever a nation is set on.”¹⁰⁹

So “STH” appears to mean setting a national foundation. So in 4000 BC some free people became slaves, and in 3870 BC the slaves were recognised as a separate nation. This is supported by linguistic studies. The Semitic language first broke away from its parent language at this time. Linguistics cannot give a precise date, but it was very roughly 3750 BC:

“We estimate an Early Bronze Age origin for Semitic approximately 5750 years ago in the Levant”¹¹⁰

The classes must have divided for a new language to evolve. So this was an era of separation.

The separation period ended with the invention of writing, which created more complex institutions and networks. Genesis records how the lineage of Cain (the metalworkers and city builders) then merged back into the lineage of Seth (the farmers in the fields) in the era of Lamech (military power). Put crudely, after 3000 BC, country people began to mix with city people, and new relationships were needed. So the era of Seth (the era of separation) ended.



¹⁰⁹ E.g. abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Seth.html

¹¹⁰ "Bayesian phylogenetic analysis of Semitic languages..." by Kitchen et al. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2839953/

3769-2864 BC: birth of a slave nation

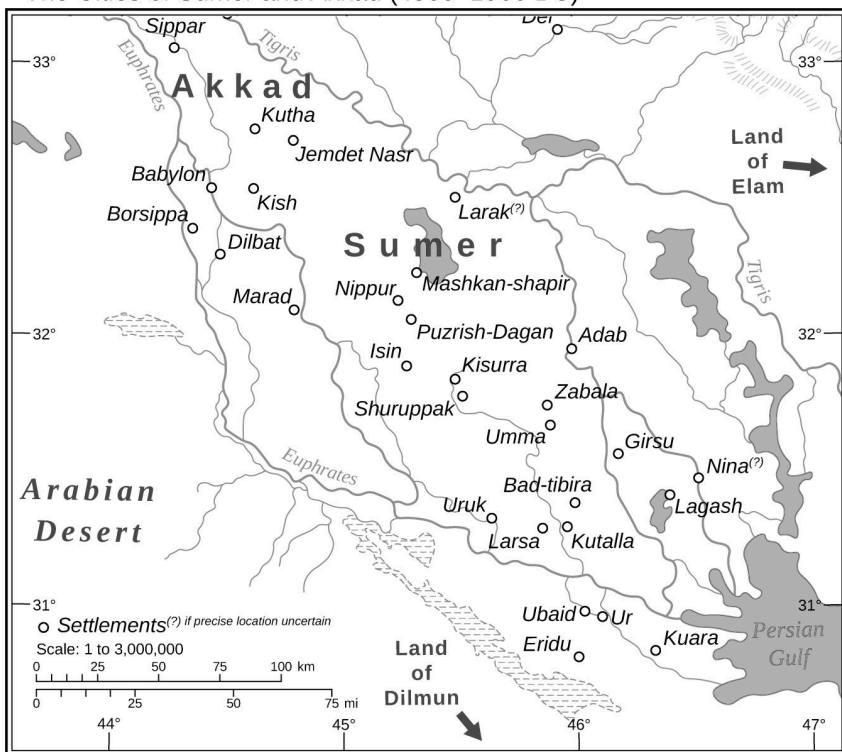
The next group in Genesis is called “Enos”, or in Hebrew “anash”. Genesis 4 says “Enos” is when the people began to call on the name of the Lord. That is, they gave in and submitted to the rulers.

“Enos/anash” means both “the people” and “weakness”. So they are a separate people, but subordinate. The rulers crushed them. In this period, archaeologists find mass graves at Tell Brak, between the Tigris and Euphrates (further north than on this map).

This period ended a thousand years later, when “big men” like Gilgamesh used writing to issue more efficient military commands and more efficient propaganda. At that point the era of “the people” ended and the era of “the big men” began. Around 2900 BC the poor people no longer mattered. That began the inevitable slide toward the end of civilisation: the Great Flood.

This discussion of separation makes this a good place for a map.

The Cities of Sumer and Akkad (4500–1900 BC)



By Wikimedia user Cattette
September 2021

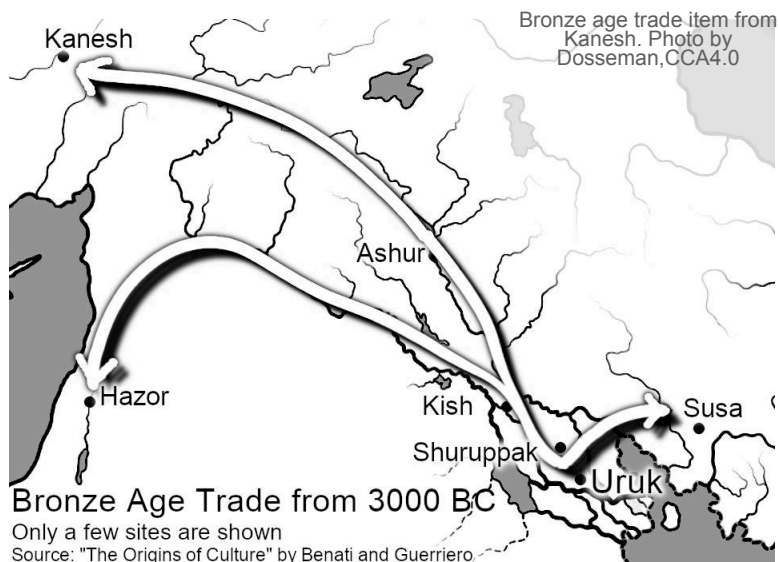
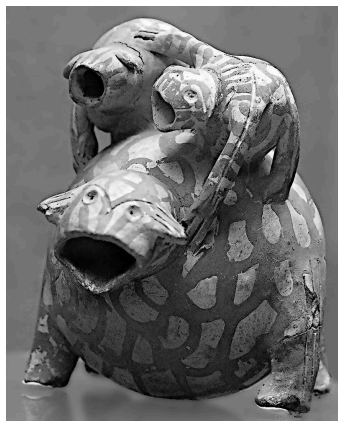
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3679-2769 BC: the era of trade

The next era, Cainan, means “trading”.¹¹¹ Archaeologists call this the “Middle Uruk” period. It was defined by evidence of expanding trade. This was a natural result of Enos, the era of splitting into two. When people are all in the same tribe, they can organise goods based on centralised control or family duties. However, separate tribes need a formal system of trade.

The end of this trading era is a natural result of the end of the Enos era, and the rise of “Big Men” who ruled everything. At some point - the year 2769 BC - normal healthy trade broke down because the Big Men began to dominate. They did not need to trade, at least not in any meaningful way, because they could set the terms, or take what they wanted by force.

We see the same thing today. In theory, we have a system of global trade where everyone is free to make the best deals. But in practice, the powerful control the market and maintain power with military force.

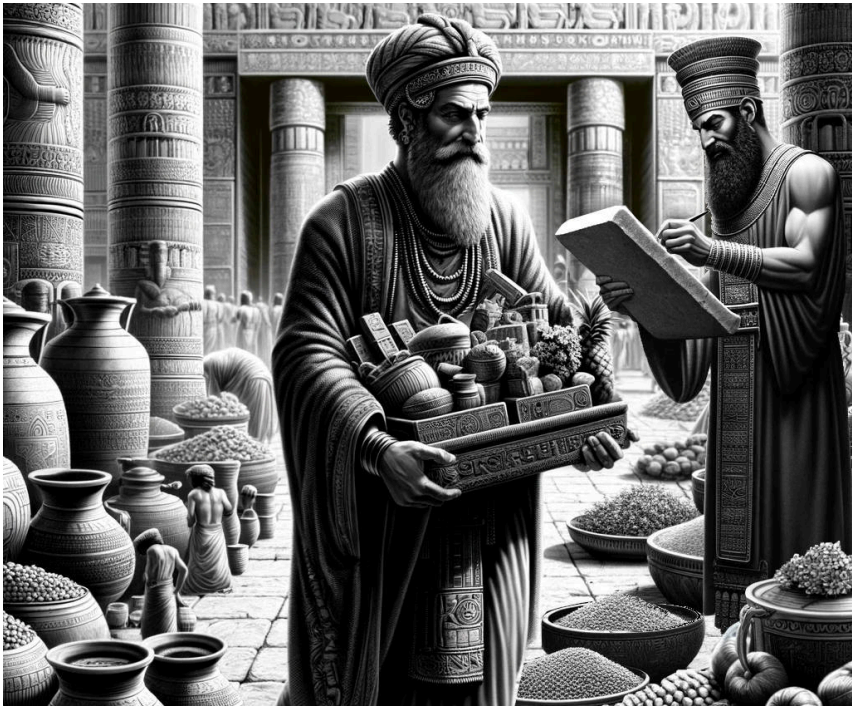


¹¹¹ The Hebrew “qanan” is not used elsewhere in the Bible, but “qana” means to obtain through commerce, and “qinyan” means something bought or made. Outside the Bible, “qyn” is a common word for making things (e.g. metal things), and “quayin” means spear, which has connotations of being a free man, one who can obtain private wealth.

3609-2714 BC: the invention of writing

The next era, Mahalalel, means “*praise the high god*”.¹¹² Trade (Cainan) caused a big increase in riches entering the temples. The priests could not catalogue it fast enough. So they invented new systems of writing.

"The earliest known written texts were found in Uruk and date to ca. 3600-3500 BC. They amount to little more than temple inventories detailing the assets, the labor force, and the stored resources at the disposal of a priestly establishment. Temple priests attempted to catalogue these resources using pictographic representations of items such as sheep or measures of grain."¹¹³



This marked the start of the good times: the time to “praise the high god” because the temples were overflowing with wealth.

The era of praise ended when the Big Men began to rule the temples through violence. Something happened in 2714 to make people realise that the gods were no longer to be praised: they were to be feared.

¹¹² “Mahalal” means praise, and “el” is the generic name for a high god.

¹¹³ Purdue course materials, “The Bronze Age Near East”

3544-2582 BC: the White Temple

The next era is Jared, meaning “*descend from the holy mountain*”.¹¹⁴ Around 3500 BC sees the building of the White Temple in Uruk.

This is the beginning of the spectacular stepped temples or ziggurats. The great ziggurat was a holy mountain that connected heaven and Earth.

The king would ascend this mountain to sacrifice to the gods and receive their words or blessings.

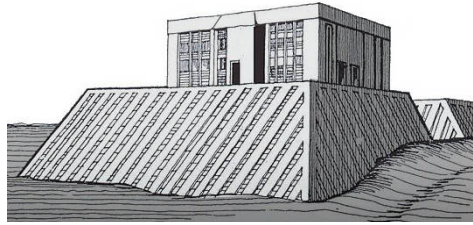


Image: Fletcher Banister, 1898, out of copyright

This era of communion with the gods ended in 2582 BC. What happened? We don't have detailed records from Sumer at this time, but their trading partner Egypt gives us clues. This is when wealth and power reached such a peak that Pharaoh Khufu built the world's largest vanity project (the Great Pyramid) and defaced the Sphinx, re-carving the face to be like his own.¹¹⁵ Manetho says he “*conceived a contempt for the gods*”. No doubt, the same evolution of technology led the god-kings in Sumer to the same arrogance. This arrogance would lead to the Great Flood.



¹¹⁴ Hebrew “yarad” is to descend and is often used in the sense of coming down from a holy mountain.

¹¹⁵ The tiny human head, where we would expect a larger animal head, suggests re-carving. Some argue, based on weathering, that the Sphinx is from c.9000 BC.

3382-3017 BC: the gods' house

Enoch means “*make this the gods' house*”.¹¹⁶ Archaeologists call this the “Late Uruk” period: when we see distinctive advances in pottery, writing, and other artefacts. Uruk was the most advanced city in the world. The kings of Uruk must have felt like kings of the world.



Genesis says this ended in 3017 BC. Archaeology says that around 3000 BC, all the other cities had copied Uruk's methods, so they no longer needed Uruk. The Uruk elite found they were no longer wanted. Their taste of godhood ended.

“At the end of this gradual process of cultural homogenisation, around 3000 BC, both the economic centralisation and the Uruk-type material culture, which constituted the essence of the so-called late Uruk culture in the north, rapidly disappeared throughout the whole region.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ See the discussion of “hanak” in Genesis 4

¹¹⁷ [researchgate.net/profile/M-Frangipane/publication/282733483_Rise_and_collapse_of_the_Late_Uruk_Centres_in_Upper_Mesopotamia_and_Eastern_Anatolia/](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/M-Frangipane/publication/282733483_Rise_and_collapse_of_the_Late_Uruk_Centres_in_Upper_Mesopotamia_and_Eastern_Anatolia/)

Enoch sees the future

Enoch left a long and important legacy. Enoch, seventh era from Adam, appears to be the same person as Enmeduranki, the seventh name in the Sumerian King List. Legends say that Shamash (god of the sun, who looks down on people so is the god of kings) and Adad (Hadad, god of storms) took Enmeduranki “to their assembly” (the assembly of the gods), where they sat him “on a large throne of gold”. They then taught him the secrets of the universe, including how to predict the future. They gave him the tablets of destiny, and showed him how to write.¹¹⁸



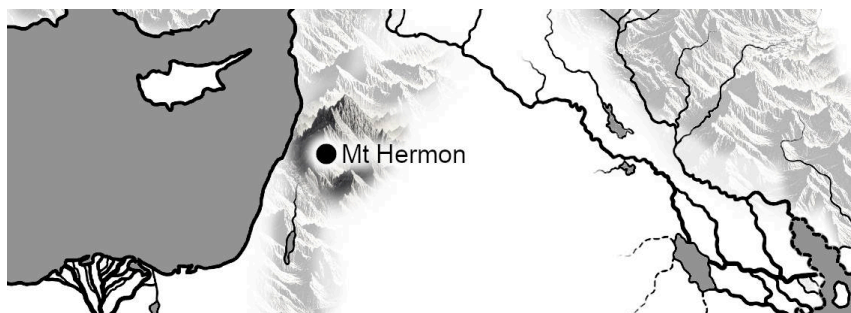
¹¹⁸ Most of this material is from a tablet from Nineveh published by Wilfred Lambert, “Enmeduranki and Related Matters,” in the *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 21 (1967) 126–38, esp. 132. See also H. S. Kvanvig, “Roots of Apocalyptic: the Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man” in WMANT 61. For details and discussion, see jewishrootsofchristianmysticism.com/roles-and-titles-of-the-seventh-antediluvian-hero-in-mesopotamian-traditions-the-case-of-king-enmeduranki/ Also tablet III of the omen series Bīt Mēseri (“House of Confinement”); the apkallū (wise man) called Utu-abzu “ascended to heaven” and is taught all things about heaven and Earth. He is elsewhere associated with Enmeduranki. See Rykle Borger, “Die Beschwörungsserie Bīt mēseri und die Himmelfahrt Henochs”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33:2 jstor.org/stable/544732 therealsamizdat.com/tag/enmeduranki/

More evidence that Enmeduranki was Enoch

Like Enoch, Enmeduranki's dynasty ruled for (probably) 360 years.¹¹⁹ His name means lord (“en”) of the power (“me”) that links (“dur”) Heaven (“an”) and Earth (“ki”). He was *“the beloved of Anu, Enlil and Ea.”* (the chief gods: heavens, air and water). Genesis compresses the lengthy name *“lord of the power that links Heaven and Earth”* into the much shorter *“tastes godhood”* (Enoch). He is still the seventh mythological figure before the Flood, but his 360-year reign became 365 years, probably because he ruled the city of the sun (Sippar) and the solar year has 365 days. Enoch’s 365 years are divided into a typical human lifespan (65 years) and then another 5 old Sumerian sars¹²⁰ (300 years). Later kings like Nebuchadnezzar I claimed their authority from Enmeduranki:

*“...offspring of Enmeduranki, king of Sippar, [who saw the future], who sat in the presence of Shamash and Adad, the divine adjudicators, foremost son, [...], king of justice, reliable shepherd, who keeps the land’s foundations secure.”*¹²¹

Enmeduranki *“brought the men of Nippur, Sippar and Babylon into his presence”* and taught them his secrets. That is, the assembly of the gods was somewhere that ordinary people could visit if they had permission. This is further evidence that the assembly of the gods was somewhere on Earth. The Book of Enoch says it was Mt Hermon, the Mountain of Oath, the mountain of the gods, the border between Israel and the ancient lands (Harran etc.), where angels descend from heaven.



¹¹⁹ 5 sar and 5 ner. Sumerians numbering used units of 1, 12, 60, 360, 600, 3600, etc. A sar (“totality”) was later defined as 60x60 (=3600). This gives (5x3600)+(5x600) =21000, which contradicts archaeology. But in a base 60 system, “totality” (“sar”) makes more sense as meaning 60, at least until the increase of writing post 3000 BC led to larger numbers becoming more common. Sar also meant a garden area of 60 “gin” (surface shekels: see sumer.grazhdani.eu). If sar was 60 (so a ner is the next unit down), (5x60)+(5x12)=360. This broadly agrees with archaeology. 360 also fits with Sippar being dedicated to Shamash (who moves around a 360-day Sumerian year).

¹²⁰ See the earlier footnote discussing the Sumerian number 360.

¹²¹ Lambert, “Enmeduranki and Related Matters,” JCS 21, p.130

The I.T. revolution

The gods taught Enmeduranki how to write with the tablet and stylus. That is, they taught him cuneiform: the first syllabic writing as we know it today. This dates the story to 3100-2900 BC. The Book of Enoch says that this led to the end of Mesopotamian civilisation in the Great Flood. The Book of Enoch says that the final end of the world will be just like that, but on a larger scale: the end of *global* civilisation.

The Great Flood happened like this. The information revolution (the invention of cuneiform writing) caused great economic growth, which led to great inequality. Inequality caused violence, the powerful against the workers, until finally, the rulers used weapons of mass destruction and killed everyone. Enoch learned that the only way to stop this is for the common man (the “son of man”) to rise up.¹²²

Cuneiform tablets were a revolution in Information Technology (I.T.). They allowed a city like Uruk or Babylon to extend its power much further than before. They changed how humans relate to each other. At first the tablets still included some pictures, but 500 years later (around 2500 BC), they evolved into a more streamlined alphabet of pure sounds. This enabled any ideas to be transmitted very quickly. This created new kings: cuneiform tech giants who could extend their ideas, and hence their power, anywhere in the known world.



c.3000 BC



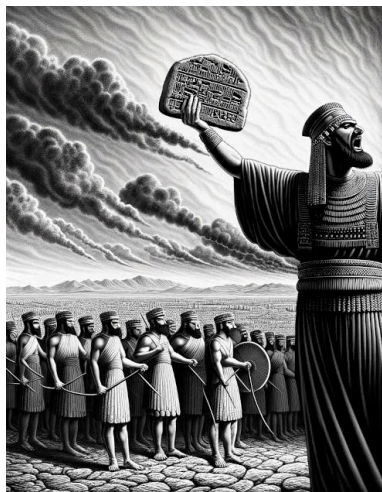
c.2500 BC

Public Domain, via Wikimedia

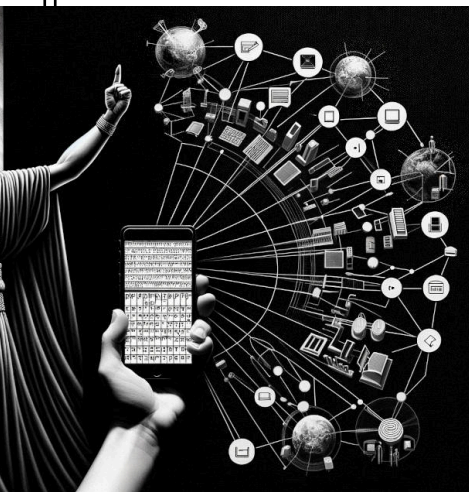
Today it's happening again. The invention of printing had the same effect as the invention of cuneiform. And 500 years later the invention of computers allows mechanised text to travel more quickly and efficiently. This again creates a generation of tech giants who think they can do anything, anywhere in the world.

¹²² Enoch thought “the son of man” would be a magical messiah from above. He was told that no, the son of man meant the common man, people like him. See the chapters on Daniel and Jesus for more details.

Enoch's IT revolution:



Modern IT revolution:



3000 BC: cuneiform:

- faster communication
- larger cities
- colonialism
- new wealthy “big men”

2500 BC: reject the past¹²³

2350 BC: civilisation collapses

1450 AD: the printing press:

- faster communication
- larger cities
- colonialism
- new wealthy “big men”

1950 AD: reject the past¹²⁴

2100 AD: ??

Notice the 500-year cycle, which will become important in prophecy, and will be discussed later. Every 500 years sees huge changes in how we think and how we interact with each other.

¹²³ Ur-Nanshe (a non-priest) becomes ruler of Lagash: this marks a complete rejection of the old religion. Ancient tradition no longer mattered.

¹²⁴ The 1950s is when elites rejected ancient religion *in principle*, in favour of modern science. They did not simply reject a particular church like in the 300s or 1400s. The results took generations to filter through to the common people. religionnews.com/2014/01/27/great-decline-religion-united-states-one-graph/

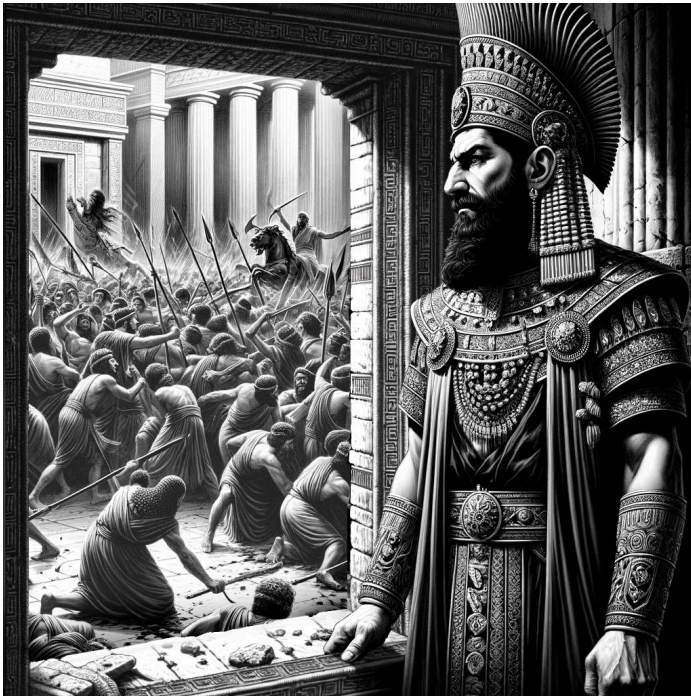
The workers rebel

Writing changed everything. Six hundred years after cuneiform (i.e. around 2400 BC) this led to a lot of noise, and that worried the rulers. The Atrahasis epic records:

*“600 years, less than 600, passed, And the country became too wide,
the people too numerous. The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.
The god grew restless at their racket...”*¹²⁵

What does that mean? This was the second time that the text describes noise worrying the gods. The first time was earlier in Atrahasis, the creation of the ditch diggers. The Enki people had complained about having to dig ditches. The rulers killed one of the gods who complained. Then the others went quiet. The god’s blood was mixed with the dirt, and that created the people of the red soil: the people we know as Adam.

So the “noise” that scared the gods before the Flood was probably another worker rebellion. Writing allowed kings to control remote workers without talking to them. It insulated kings from complaints. It encouraged abuse. So the people made a noise!



¹²⁵ Unless stated, quotes are from Stephanie Dalley’s translation of *Atrahasis*

Workers strike, bosses kill them

The gods (in the Atrahasis epic) had a simple solution to the rebellion:

“Cut off food supplies to the people!”

Starvation led to sickness. Atrahasis was the leader of the ditch diggers. He complained to his supervisor, the man who represented Ea:

“Atrahasis made his voice heard and spoke, Said to Ea his master, 'Oh Lord, people are grumbling! Your [sickness] is consuming the country!'”

Ea (who later became Yahweh) sympathised with Atrahasis, and told him what to do: tell the workers to withhold their labour!

“Call the [elders, the senior men], Start an uprising in your house, Let heralds proclaim ... Let them make a loud noise in the land: Do not revere your god(s)!”

So the gods (bosses) faced a rebellion, just as they had back when they invented slavery. In the Enuma Elish the gods killed one of the leaders of the rebellion and used his blood to create a race of slaves: in other words, he was killed as a threat to the others. The strategy worked in the Enuma Elish, but would it work again?



3317-2348 BC: Military strength

Methuselah means “military strength”.¹²⁶ Writing led to bigger and more powerful armies. So this became an era of military strength.

“(ca 3300-3100 BC) the so-called Uruk Expansion involved the direct colonization of Northern Mesopotamia and Syria and the imposition of purely Sumerian urban enclaves into the existing rural culture.”¹²⁷



Image: Eric Gaba
(User:Sting)
via Wikimedia,

For example, this is “the stele of the vultures” from this era: it shows vultures carrying away body parts of defeated enemies.

The same thing is happening today: new technology leads to bigger, more deadly war machines, and great pride in having the most advanced military.

This era of war ended in the year of the Great Flood.

First, the flood broke the social contract with the elites. Why fight for your king if he might kill you? And second, this breakdown of trust allowed a populist ruler to arise and take control of every city. Sargon of Akkad would become the world’s first emperor. This would change the nature of warfare. Remember that Genesis is the history of ordinary people, not the history of kings. The last years of Sumer were a golden age for the ordinary soldier: a single battalion could defeat the greatest king. However, the age of empires changed that. Now if your battalion rebelled, the emperor could call on several nearby cities to crush you. So the Great Flood ended the golden age of warfare, at least from the point of view of the ordinary soldier. It ended the age of the hero soldier, the “Methuselah”.

¹²⁶ Hebrew “mat” means man, and “shalah” means send, or “shelah”, missile. This is usually translated as “man of the javelin” but that misses the implication of power and status: javelin throwers were high-status fighters.

¹²⁷ University of New Mexico, “the Uruk Expansion” unm.edu/~gbawden/328-exp/328-exp.htm

3130-2353 BC: colonialism: crushing other cities

Lamech means “power to crush others”.¹²⁸ This was the high point of Uruk’s power. This was the period of submission when other cities accepted that the Uruk elite were gods.

*"The second 'wave' of expansion in the Jemdet Nasr Period (c.3100-2900 or 2800 BC) derived from the initial 'enculturation' of the societies of the Susiana Plain (Elam) just to the east of Sumer in extreme southwestern Iran. These societies adopted most aspects of Sumerian culture to their own local uses during the earlier Uruk period then in the Jemdet Nasr extended their own version of southern Mesopotamian culture far across the Iranian Plateau in the Proto-Elamite expansion."*¹²⁹

The most famous “Lamech” was Gilgamesh. He was the most famous god-man in history. He called himself “one-third man and two-thirds god”. In this statue, he claims to have defeated a lion with his bare hands. Propaganda was very important to the Lamechs.

How did this era end? The system inevitably broke down when the Big Men, drunk with arrogance, began to crush their own people. Around 2,500 BC the famous death pits began: when a Big Man died, their officials arranged mass human sacrifice.¹³⁰ Also around 2500 BC, Ur-Nanshe became ruler of Lagash. His parents were commoners, not kings. The sons of God mixed with the daughters of men! They still had military strength (“methuselah”) but their underlying authority, their “lamech”, disappeared.



Image: 'Darafsh', CCA3.0

¹²⁸ Hebrew "le" means “push toward”, and "muk", means “bring low” in a socio-economic sense. The name of the letter "le" is "lamed", meaning a cattle prod.

¹²⁹ University of New Mexico, “the Uruk Expansion” unm.edu/~gbawden/328-exp/328-exp.htm

¹³⁰ E.g., at the Royal Cemetery of Ur

2948-1998 BC: the era of stable royal dynasties

“Noah” means “to rest”, Hebrew “nuah”. Archaeologists call this the “Early Dynastic Period”: when stable dynasties began. Before this era (the era of writing), kings were never secure. They were expected to deliver good times for the city, or the people would rebel. But writing allowed complex institutions and propaganda, so a king’s extended family could rule no matter how badly they performed. Kings could finally rest! 2900 to 2334 was the Early Dynastic Period. 2334-1998 was the rise and fall of Akkad, the first empire (that is, the first kingdom where a single king ruled multiple city-states). By the time they lost their moral authority, around 2500 BC, their institutions were so powerful that they did not care.

The same thing is happening today. The elites have so much power that they don’t care that their moral authority has gone. This is a golden age for elites when they and their extended families have an easy life. But without moral authority, without the social contract, this cannot last.



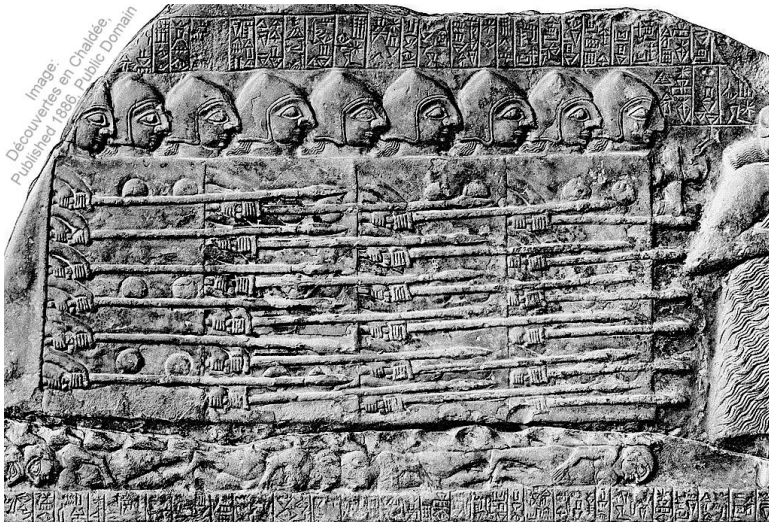
2468 BC: the new super weapon

The gods gave rebellious workers 120 years' warning of being wiped out.¹³¹

120 years before 2348 BC takes us to 2468, the appearance of the greatest weapon of ancient times (from the perspective of kings): the phalanx. The phalanx is the tight arrangement of soldiers where shields meet up, and the enemy just sees spears. The phalanx then moves forward and kills anything it meets. The only way to beat a phalanx is to have professional soldiers who are trained in the latest strategies. Ordinary workers with spears don't stand a chance.

The earliest known record of a phalanx is from the "Stele of the Vultures" This monument is a big deal: it is the defining discovery from Lagash, part of the findings which define the "*Early Dynastic IIIb*" era. This is the final stage of the dynastic era, before the fall of Shuruppak and the collapse of Sumer. This period dates to 2470-2350 BC. The start date is 2470 BC because the monument is about King Eannatum, and all his dated records come from that year.¹³² Archaeology says this was around 2470 BC, but cannot be precise. Genesis says 2468 BC.

This is happening again. 500 years after the printing press, the elites developed nuclear weapons and electronic surveillance. Common people simply cannot compete.

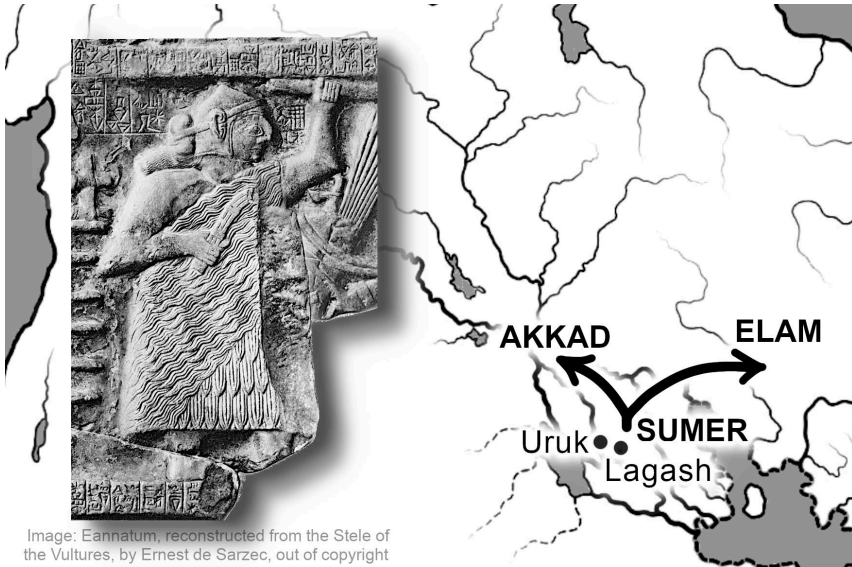


¹³¹ Genesis 6:3. This is probably because they relied on the irregular annual flooding being at its maximum, and they thought in terms of base 60.

¹³² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eannatum

2450-1846 BC: the era of Big Men

Shem means “fame or renown”.¹³³ Big men like Gilgamesh (who dominated the region around Uruk) led to even bigger men like Lugal-Anne-Mundu (*“big man of heaven who sacrifices the dead”* - recall the death pits). Shem may be a direct reference to Eannatum, ruler of Lagash circa 2500–2400 BC, who conquered not just the cities of Sumer (including Akkad) but also Elam (Persia/Iran).



The name “Eannatum” probably means bison or auroch - that is, he identified as a herder, like the country people who wrote Genesis.

Eannatum was also called Lumma, the name of a god. So he may have been the first of the Adam-Seth line to rise to supreme power. He left the workers and became a boss. He made a name (a Shem) for himself.

His descendants (notably Abram) conquered Amorite lands as far as the borders of Egypt. The end date, 1846 BC, is when Egypt (under Senusret III) drove them out. So the era of Shem, 2450-1846 BC, is confirmed as the era of the Big Men who thought they could defeat the whole world.

¹³³ Hebrew “shem” is “name” in the sense of making a name for yourself: gaining reputation and fame.

“Big Men” as “giants”

In ancient Sumer, rulers were often called “lugal” (“Big Man”). For example, Lugal-Anne-Mundu (“*big man of sky god [an] and temple wealth [mundu]*”). He briefly conquered all of Mesopotamia. Big Men caused the chaos that destroyed Sumer. Looking back, Genesis calls them “fallen ones” (“nephilim”), sometimes translated as “giants”. Their descendants survived in Canaan until the conquest by the people of Moses. Genesis, like Manetho, calls these remnants “*the spirits of the dead*” (“rephaim” in Hebrew). They presided over an era of death: violent conquest, death pits, and forever-wars between the elites and anyone who dared to resist.

Stone reliefs showed kings as larger and stronger than anybody else. They also built bigger homes (palaces and towers). Their ceilings were higher, their doors were larger. The Jerusalem temple had thirty-foot-high ceilings. The gate to Babylon (the Ishtar gate) was fifty feet high. Even their beds were larger. The temple of Marduk in Babylon had a jewel-encrusted bed that was thirteen feet long. Og, king of Bashan had a bed of the same size, overlaid with precious metal (iron, which was very precious at the time). The Book of Enoch describes these Big Men as 3000 cubits (4,500 feet). That is the height of the mountains where the gods lived. However, other stone reliefs show Big Men to be only slightly taller than other people. So the scale of these “giants” indicates their status, not their literal body size.



Victory Stele of Naram Sin, by 'Rama', CCSA2.0 (France)

Genesis 6:

The Great Flood

The Great Flood, also called “The Deluge”, is where the gods killed the people of Adam in a big flood. This was easy because the Sumerian cities were mostly low mud-brick houses on a level floodplain. Many years later, King Sennacherib of Assyria used the same method to destroy Babylon: he diverted water from the river Euphrates, and said that what he did was worse than the Great Flood:

“I dug canals into the centre of that city and (thus) levelled their site with water. I destroyed the outline of its foundations and (thereby) made its destruction surpass that of the Deluge.”¹³⁴



¹³⁴ Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period (RINAP) 3.2, 223: ii 47–54. See *“The Sound of Silence: the Destruction of Babylon...”* by Yuval Levavi

The flood: no faith required

Genesis says that “elohim”, that is “the gods” destroyed the world in a flood. We have seen that “the gods” means the ruling class. And “the world” was of course the world as they knew it. This was the Bronze Age when most people never left their home village.

There is nothing supernatural in this. This kind of thing still happens today. For example, here is a photo of flooding during the war in Ukraine. Part of the Kakhovka Dam in Ukraine was blown up on 6th June 2023. This is widely blamed on the Russian authorities because they controlled the dam and wanted to punish the Ukrainian rebels.

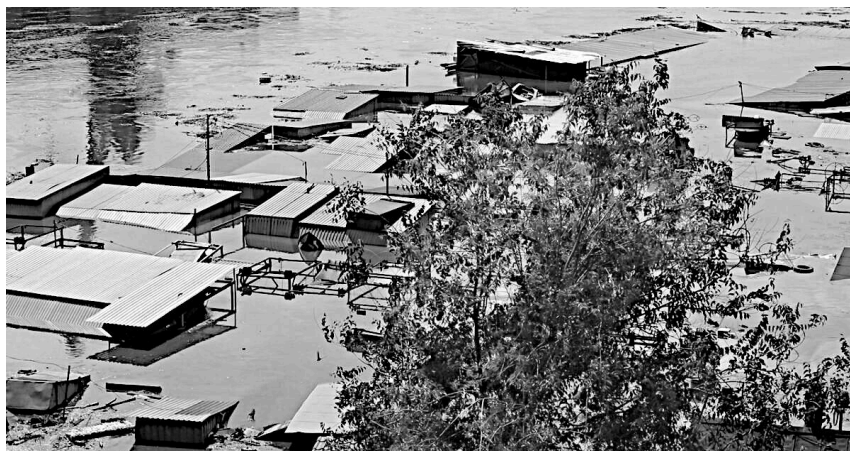


Image: Ministry of Defence, Ukraine, via Wikimedia, CCA4.0

The Ukrainian action is just like the story in ancient Sumer. The elites in Shuruppak (the chief city of Sumer) claimed authority over the people who worked on the canals. They felt that the workers were rebellious and becoming a real threat. They needed to be taught a lesson. After all, the city owners also owned the canals and made the laws, so it was their legal right to destroy their dams and show who was boss.

This event triggered the collapse of the Shuruppak economy and the breakdown of trust between the cities of Sumer. This led to the fall of Sumer. This was the fall of the world's first civilisation (in the sense that we understand the word today). Arguably, it was the end of the dominance of independent city-states after eight thousand years. It was the start of the Age of Empires. It was the start of the Age of Change and Chaos. This was a planet-changing event, yet the flood itself was relatively small.

Making the dikes overflow

The Gilgamesh version of the flood gives us more details. It reminds us that the “gods” were the priests and rulers of the Sumerian city of Shuruppak: the god-king, his chamberlain, and his minister of canals.

“The hearts of the Great Gods moved them to inflict the Flood. Their Father Anu uttered the oath (of secrecy), Valiant Enlil was their Adviser, Ninurta was their Chamberlain, Ennugi was their Minister of Canals.”¹³⁵

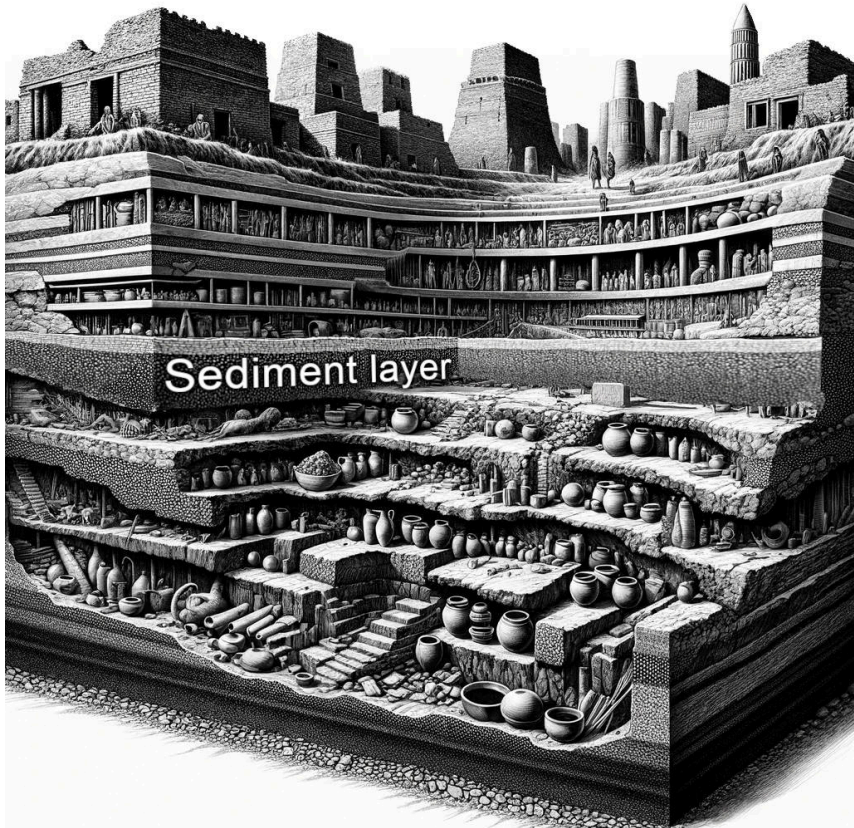
They waited until the annual flooding season. When they saw the rain clouds coming, they sabotaged the irrigation dikes: “Erragal pulled out the mooring poles, forth went Ninurta and made the dikes overflow.”



¹³⁵ *Gilgamesh*, tablet 11

Which flood?

In 1929, archaeologist Leonard Woolley dug down in the ancient city of Ur, and discovered a ten-foot thick layer of sediment. This implies an enormous flood that must have covered all the buildings. Woolley allegedly sent a telegram home, saying “*We Have Found The Flood!*”



The Ur flood dates to 3500 BC. Soon after, archaeologists found evidence of another great flood in Shuruppak, dating to 2900 BC. Then three separate floods in Kish, dating to between 3000 and 2600 BC. There are probably even more that we haven't discovered yet. It sounds like they had a major flood every 100 years or so. That might explain why the rulers warned of the flood 120 years in advance (they counted in base 60).

So the “Great Flood” was probably one of these 100-year floods. The death toll was enormous because the rulers sabotaged all the defences and also set fire to the city. The people died in the flood because of the actions of the gods: that is, because of the actions of the priests of the gods.

Dating the flood in archaeology

Because there were many floods, evidence of flooding is not enough to pinpoint the Shuruppak flood in archaeology. But luckily, Gilgamesh has a crucial detail that lets us find direct evidence of this flood and not the others. Gilgamesh says that as part of the sabotage, the gods also burnt the houses.

“The Anunnaki lifted up the torches, setting the land ablaze with their flare. Stunned shock over Adad’s deeds overtook the heavens, and turned to blackness all that had been light.”



Partially burned tablets and bricks confirm that the city of Shuruppak was destroyed by fire:

“Shuruppak emerged in the Early Dynastic period I (ED I 3000-2750), growing fairly rapidly until the end of Early Dynastic III (ED III 2600-2350), when it covers some 100 hectares. This was the phase terminated by the great fire and one that was most productive from an archaeological point of view.”¹³⁶

This dates the destruction to 2350 BC, give or take 20 years or so. Genesis says 2348 BC, give or take a few months.

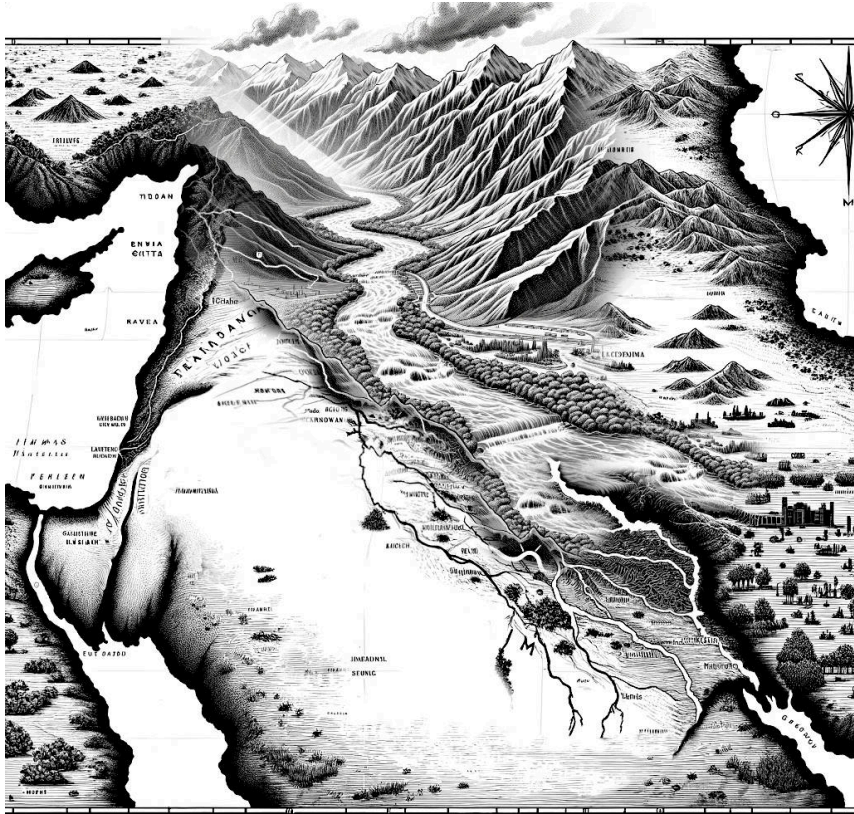
Once again, a date in Genesis is confirmed by archaeology, but Genesis gives us far more precision than archaeology can. Genesis also gives us more details about how it happened and how it felt and shows why the event was so important to world history.

¹³⁶ Gwendolyn Leick, *“Mesopotamia and the Invention of the City”* (2002)

How they knew the flood was coming

Gilgamesh says that Enki warned Utnapishtim (Noah) about the flood. In other words, the priests of Enki warned him. Enki was the god of fresh water, so the priests of Enki were the experts on the flow of the river. Their status depended on knowing when the river would be high. This explains how they knew the flood would reach peak levels on a certain day in the annual cycle.

The annual floods were caused by snow melting in the mountains. So reports of heavier than usual snow would give them warning months in advance. Knowledge of weather patterns would also help: Gilgamesh says they chose a day when dark storm clouds rolled in across the plain.



So the gods knew that major floods happened every hundred years or so, they had months of warning for one of these major floods, and they knew just the right day to destroy the dams and burn the houses.

Flooding “all the world” including “Ararat”

The flood covered “all the world” and the ark landed on Ararat. Today, “All the world” includes Australia, and the land we call Ararat is far away from Shuruppak. But what did it mean when Genesis was compiled, around 600 BC?¹³⁷ Luckily we have a map from the time.

The “whole world” on the map was about ten cities, plus vague arrows to elsewhere. Ararat (a.k.a. Urartu, number “3” on the map) was a region that began not far from Babylon (“13” on the map); the border began around 70 miles north of Shuruppak.

The Gilgamesh account says the ark was pushed by a storm from the south for seven days. So it was pushed north along the flooded river valley for seven days and covered seventy miles. This is very reasonable.



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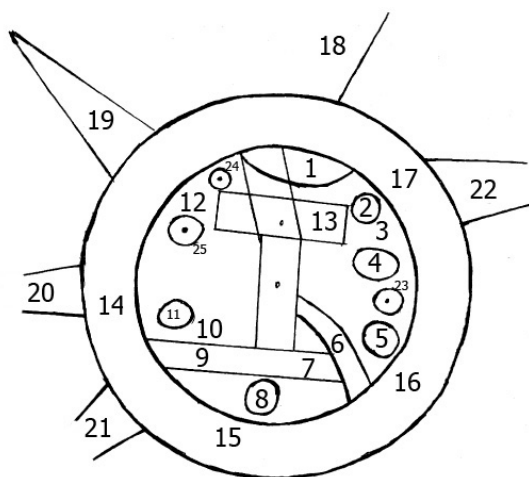


Image: Evgeny Genkin, Public Domain, via Wikimedia

¹³⁷ The Babylonian myths were probably gathered by the Jews while they lived in Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

Flooding all the “high mountains”

“All the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits [23 feet]” (Genesis 7:19-20)

This is a translation (English) of a translation (Hebrew) of a translation (Babylonian) of a translation (Akkadian) of the original Sumerian. So we cannot rely on subtle nuance. Therefore the passage can mean either the water was 23 feet deep *plus* the depth of the mountains, or the water was 23 feet deep *which was enough to cover* the mountains. The first interpretation is nonsense. The second interpretation is exactly what we would expect for an extreme river flood at Shuruppak. The river floods in China in 1931 reached over 20 feet deep.

The word for “mountain” is “har” which can also mean hill. Shuruppak was on a floodplain, so the “highest hills” would be maybe 20 feet high. The highest point (by design) was the temple at the heart of each city. That would be among the oldest sites, so would be near the river, the lowest point. The great temple at Uruk probably rose to around 40 feet above the plain (notice the scale in the diagram).

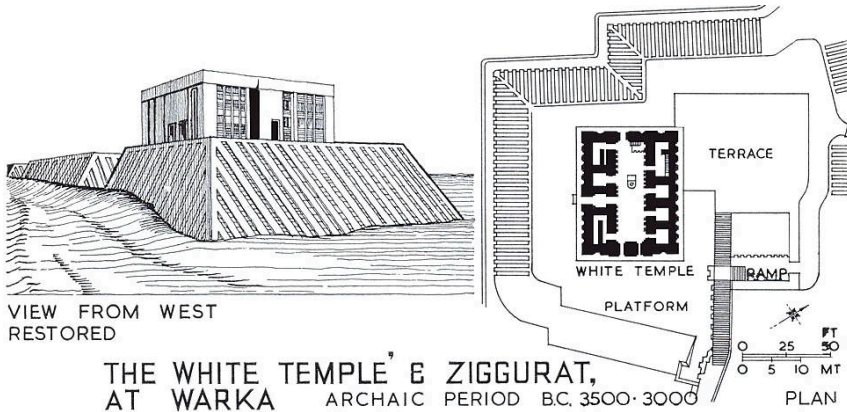


Image: out of copyright (from 1898), via Wikimedia

Pre-flood temples only had to be high enough to look down on the reed houses of the workers. The era of gigantic tall ziggurats did not come until centuries after the flood. The White Temple of Uruk was considered special, so the less important temple at Shuruppak may have been smaller than the white temple’s 40 feet. The upper part would be made of mud-brick, so it would probably collapse if the lower part was flooded. A flood of 10-20 feet would be enough to leave a 23-foot temple no longer visible above the water.

The ark

The ark dimensions show that all the numbers were recorded accurately. A recently discovered fragment from the Gilgamesh epic gives more details, showing that whoever wrote the story was serious about the design. The fragment describes the amount of materials needed, and the amounts all add up correctly.

Seeing this, Irving Finkel, the Assyriologist who translated the fragment, became very excited. He realised that the story was intended to describe a real boat and not an imaginary idea. Finkel later worked with a film crew to build a working model of the ark.¹³⁸

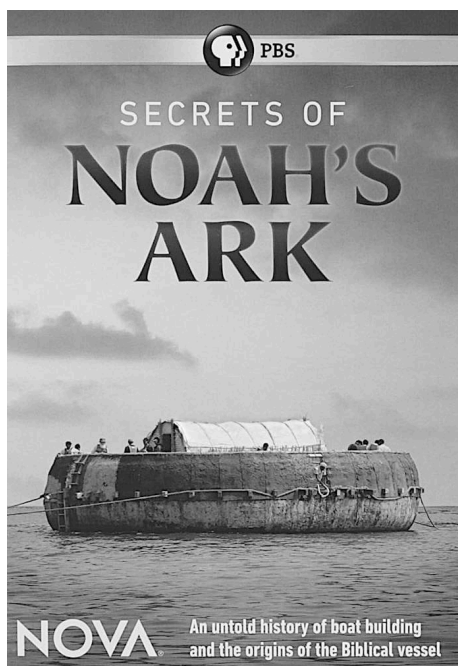


Image: PBS Nova, Open Source

The original text indicates that the ark was circular. This was a scaled-up version of a “kuphar”, a coracle that routinely transported goods and people across the Euphrates. The dimensions in Genesis (300 by 50 by 60 cubits) seem to refer to circumference and radius,¹³⁹ plus the height of the central three-storey hut.



Image: Netherlands National Archives, via Flickr commons, Pubic Domain

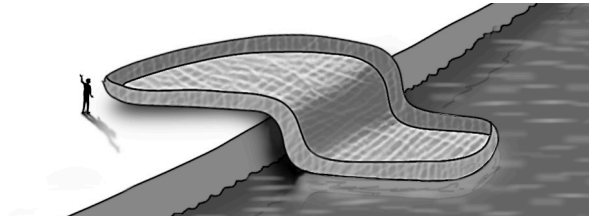
¹³⁸ The standard method of moving animals across the river was in a large coracle. The Babylonians described the ark as a gigantic coracle. The Hebrews had no experience with coracles, so they assumed that 300 was the length. See “The Ark Before Noah” by Finkel, and tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/the-mystery-of-noahs-ark

¹³⁹ Circumference = $2 \times \text{PI} \times \text{radius}$. Ancient designers typically rounded PI to 3, as they only needed the number as a rough check when ordering supplies.

The ark was a floating reed mat

Finkel's team did not build the ark full size because they assumed that it should be rigid, and anything that large would bend. However, the Gilgamesh account indicates that it was not rigid. In Gilgamesh, they had to slide the completed ark into the river, and they had to alter the wooden parts so that the reed parts could bend, to change its shape bit by bit, until each section sloppily flopped into the water. Gilgamesh says:

"The launching was very difficult, So that they had to shift the floor planks above and below, Until two-thirds of the structure had gone into the water."¹⁴⁰



So the ark was essentially a large reed mat with reed walls and a reed house in the middle. It had wooden staves to add strength where needed but was not rigid. It is best thought of as a mat designed to float if needed.

Ancient Sumerians used reeds to make almost all houses and boats, sealed with tar. This is why the city could burn so easily, even in the rain. They knew more about reed construction than we do, and Iraqi bitumen is extremely high quality. Making a very large reed raft was well within their abilities.

A large reed raft with house-like walls is highly achievable. The people of Lake Titicaca in Peru make floating reed islands that are sometimes more than 300 feet long and a similar width. The ark was less than half that length, or one-sixth of that area (as it was a circle and not a rectangle).



Floating island on Lake Titicaca, by Diego Delso, delso.photo, License CC-BY-SA

¹⁴⁰ pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/gilgamesh.html

The numbers are accurate

After the flood, Genesis says it took 10 months (300 days) before Noah was convinced that it was safe to dismantle the ark. This is what we would expect if the story was real. Sumerians built their houses from reeds. Gilgamesh says that Utnapishtim dismantled his house to build the ark. So it was natural to repurpose the ark into a house again.

Also, Sumerians stored food between annual harvests. So it was natural to have 10 months of food stored. So 10 months was the natural period to stay before dismantling the ark house and committing to a new life, far from Sumer.



This was plenty of time to think about civilisation. The first walled city was built in Jericho in 8000 BC. Five thousand years later, the rulers of the greatest city in the world showed that they would kill their own people. Maybe cities were not such a good idea.

Genesis 9:

the birth of nations

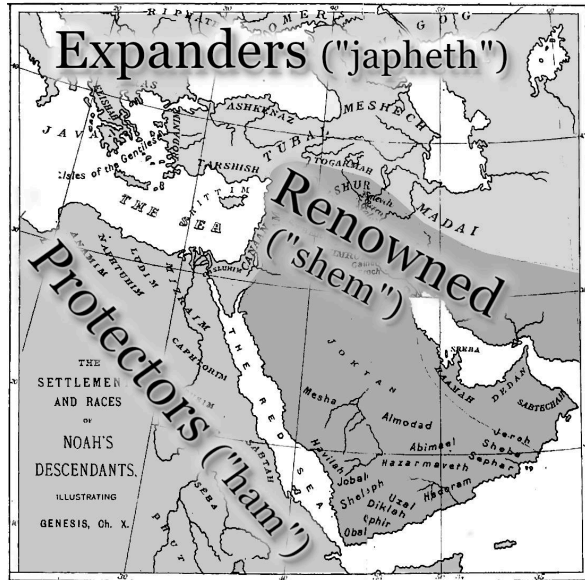
The fall of Sumer was a new start for the world. Would the peoples of the world risk destruction again?

Genesis divides the peoples of the time into three groups, according to their attitude to risk: they are either expanders ("Japheth"), protectors ("Ham"), or renowned ("Shem"):

1. **Expanders** are tribes that value individual heroes more than settled

states. These are the ancestors of the Greeks (Javan), the horse riders of Asia Cimmerians and Scythians (Gomer and Magog and Tubal), and invaders from Anatolia (Meshech) and the Tyrrhenian sea (Tiras). Genesis groups these under the title "expanders" ("Japheth") because they are always trying to expand.

2. **Protectors** are ancient cities with a track record of surviving attacks. These are Egypt, Canaan (with the walled city of Jericho dating back to 8000 BC), Cush (ancient states have the greatest status: see below), and Phut (the Libyans: see Appendix 4, Atlantis). Genesis groups these under the title "enclosures" ("Ham") because their cities protect people.
3. **The renowned** want to make a name for themselves. Not by direct conquest like the Expanders, but by being clever: building new kinds of cities and trying new ideas. They include the Akkadians (called Arphaxad in Genesis), the Elamites (Elam), Assyria (Asshur), the Syrians (Aram) and the Anatolians (Lud). Genesis groups them under the title "renown" ("Shem").



Genesis 9:18-27: Noah gets drunk and is embarrassed by Ham

Genesis now explains the next major movements in history:

1. the rise of Sargon of Akkad (2234 BC),
2. and why Abraham was justified in settling Canaan (1998 BC).

The ancient Akkadian “Weidner Chronicle”¹⁴¹ explains both:

Queen Kubaba was a tavern keeper (i.e. she served wine). She ruled the city of Kish, but Marduk, the god of Babylon, gave her authority over the whole world. Presumably, this means that all kings respected Kubaba. Kings had important ceremonies involving wine libations in the temples: it is easy to imagine Queen Kubaba was the perfect feminine host, the solution to the masculine aggression that caused the flood. She relaxed the kings with wine, so they could all get along.

As long as the kings drank wine and got along as friends, like in the dynastic period of Sumer, then the lands had rest: they were “Noah”. But after the fall of Shuruppak, it all went wrong.



¹⁴¹ Also known as the “Esagila Chronicle” or “ABC 19”. It was written around 1800 BC by king Damiq-ilīšu of Isin, and describes the deeds of previous kings. livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-19-weidner-chronicle/

Kingship became chaotic after the fall of Sumer

The Weidner Chronicle explains how Ur-Zababa was king of Kish, in Sumer. He tried to get his cup-bearer (the one who tasted his wine for poison) to change the sacred wine ceremony to benefit Kish: Kish probably wanted to benefit from the fall of Shuruppak. The cupbearer, whose name was Sargon, refused. Having lost respect for his master, he rebelled and took over the kingdom. Marduk (i.e. the priests of Marduk) judged that Ur-Zababa had been wrong to want changes, but they let Sargon stay as the new king. This was a big mistake. Having established a bad precedent, Marduk had to repeatedly allow ambitious new kings to take over lands.

The chronicle ends at the time of Abraham,¹⁴² and explains how the gods now justify sending kings to other countries to establish better rule.¹⁴³

Genesis simplifies the wine story as follows. The kings are at rest (i.e. they are “Noah”) but they messed up regarding wine. The Ham people should not have allowed this: as the most ancient and stable lands it was their job to judge disputes over who rules the less stable lands.

This whole situation was very embarrassing. It made all kings (who were previously at rest, “Noah”) look greedy and incompetent. It undermined their authority. The other kings wanted to cover up the embarrassment and look the other way.

Canaan may have been singled out because the land from Harran to Hermon was the land where the gods stood in judgment over kingdoms.¹⁴⁴ They failed in their duty. So they forfeited some of their own land: the land of Canaan.



¹⁴² The chronicle was written to king Apil-Sin of Babylon (reigned from 1830 BC) and ends with a reference to his grandfather (i.e. sometime before 1900 BC), the time when Abraham left the region.

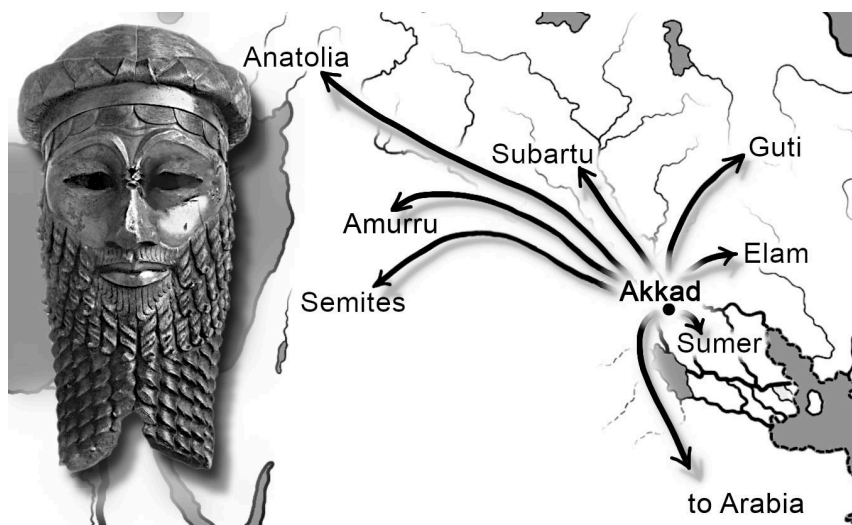
¹⁴³ The king was justified in conquering Mesopotamian cities because of Nabu, the god of writing. “Nabu” means “authorised” and reflects how a king could use writing to project power far away.

¹⁴⁴ See the Baal Cycle, and Mt Hermon in the Book of Enoch, and Harran in Genesis

Genesis 11: Akkad

2346-1908 BC: Sargon, the first emperor

“Arphaxad” means “borders”, in the sense of expanding: it was understood to mean the Akkadians, who spread their borders to include all the cities of Sumer¹⁴⁵ and beyond. Sargon did not conquer Sumer until 2334 BC, twelve years later than Genesis places Arphaxad, but he began his plans years earlier when he dreamed that he would take advantage of the chaos. The chaos was probably caused by the flooding of Shuruppak in 2348 BC, so 2346 is a very likely date for his dream.



The end date, 1908, apparently refers to the loss of Nippur, home of the god Enlil, lord of the universe, and home of the great tower of Babel (see below). The great Amorite leader Gungunum (meaning “protector”) died in 1906 BC after losing Nippur. This was the decisive failure of the Isin-Larsa period. Isin-Larsa were the successors to Akkad, and when they failed, Babylon took over.

So the era of expanding borders (Arphaxad) lasted from Sargon’s dream (2346) until the loss of Nippur (1908) which marked the rise of Babylon.

¹⁴⁵ “Arphaxad named the Arphaxadites, who are now called Chaldeans” - Josephus, Antiquities 1.6.4. “Akkad” has the same meaning as Arphaxad, “marks or boundaries”, literally “how we roam”. Arphaxad may be the Assyrian word “arba-kishshati” “the four quarters of the world”: jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1817-arphaxad

2311-1878 BC: building Babylon and other cities

“Salah” means “builder”,¹⁴⁶ in the sense of building Ziggurat temples.¹⁴⁷ When Sargon conquered Sumer in 2334, he embarked on building programs. The second half of his reign was spent putting down rebellions. So the height of his building program was probably halfway from 2334 to his death in 2279, i.e. sometime around 2311. As archaeology reveals more, we can tighten this date up.

Toward the end of Sargon’s reign, in 2286 BC,¹⁴⁸ King Belus founded the city of Bab-el, “gate of the gods”, with its famous temple at its centre. Around the same time, Sargon introduced a new language to help him administer his empire: Akkadian.



¹⁴⁶ “salal” is to cast or heap up, especially for building highways (mesilla, maslul). See also “sala”, a rising sound of triumph,

¹⁴⁷ “sullam” is Jacob’s ladder, described in Hebrew as if it is a Ziggurat where messengers climb up to speak to the gods. (See the Podcast of Biblical Proportions)

¹⁴⁸ How Queen Semiramis, wife of Ninus, built or expanded the city for Belus: “*In the earliest age, then, the kings of Asia were native-born, and in connection with them no memory is preserved of either a notable deed or a personal name. The first to be handed down by tradition to history and memory for us as one who achieved great deeds is Ninus, king of the Assyrians.*” (Diodorus Siculus, Library of History, 2.1.4) “*According to Castor of Rhodes (apud Syncellus p. 167), his reign lasted 52 years, its commencement, according to Ctesias, corresponding to 2189 BC. He was reputed to have conquered the whole of western Asia in 17 years with the help of Ariaeus, king of Arabia, and to have founded the first empire.*” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninus>) He built the great city of Nineveh (Diodorus, 2.3.1) “*Since after the founding of this city Ninus made a campaign against Bactriana, where he married Semiramis, the most renowned of all women of whom we have any record...*” (Diodorus 2.4.1) “*Semiramis, whose nature made her eager for great exploits and ambitious to surpass the fame of her predecessor on the throne, set her mind upon founding a city in Babylonia, and after securing the architects of all the world and skilled artisans and making all the other necessary preparations, she gathered together from her entire kingdom two million men to complete the work.*” (Diodorus 2.7.2) The walls of the city were 360 stadia (56 km). The walls were 50 cubits (22m) high, “*and wide enough for more than two chariots abreast to drive upon*”. This probably refers to the final size, in the Iron Age, not its initial size: Genesis only mentions the central tower. “*After this she built in the centre of the city a temple of Zeus whom, as we have said, the Babylonians call Belus. Now since with regard to this temple the historians are at variance, and since time has caused the structure to fall into ruins, it is impossible to give the exact facts concerning it. But all agree that it was exceedingly high, and that in it the Chaldeans made their observations of the stars, whose risings and settings could be accurately observed by reason of the height of the structure.*” (Diodorus 2.9.4)

Naram-Sin and the fall of the Tower of Babel

Sargon's grandson, Naram-Sin, was the first emperor to not merely call himself one with the gods, but he called himself an actual god. At that point (2230 BC) the empire was conquered by the Guti, barbarians with no interest in cities or writing. The Akkadians explained the defeat of Naram-Sin as due to his pride.¹⁴⁹ So their god "*took away its [the temple's] wisdom*".¹⁵⁰

Genesis plays on the similarity between the words "babel" ("gate of the gods") and "balal" (Hebrew for "confused"). It says that Yahweh punished the people for the pride of trying to unite the people with a single language to build a temple that the gods did not request. As a result, the Guti invaded, the language failed, and the people dispersed.

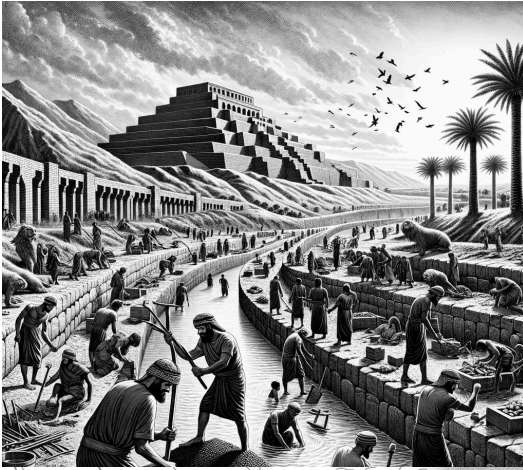


¹⁴⁹ see *The Curse of Agade*

¹⁵⁰ see *The Wiedner Chronicle*

Civilised behaviour crumbles

Eventually, the Akkadians defeated the Gutis, but a few years later they were defeated by the city of Ur. Ur, like Akkad, was still Sumerian, so there was some continuity. Ur was then defeated by Elam (Persia), and the cities of Isin and Larsa tried to maintain the old Sumerian ways.



The end date (1878 BC) corresponds to when Isin and Larsa began to fight each other, thus rejecting the laws of the gods. This is the date when Larsa tried to re-route Isin's canals so Larsa would get all the water.

Around that time (c.1881 BC), the ruler of Babylon began to conquer nearby cities, founding the first Babylonian empire.¹⁵¹



¹⁵¹ His name, Sumu-la-El, indicates that the gods were on his side. Technically his predecessor Sumu-abum was the first independent ruler of Babylon, but his conquests were small and insignificant.

2281-1817 BC: the era of nomads

“Eber” means “crossing over” or “beyond”: this is the era of migrations away from the falling empire when people went back to herding cattle.

2281 BC probably refers to the death of Sargon in 2279 BC (either date could be a year or two off, due to rounding errors). This is when the Gutian nomads were gaining power. For over 300 years, nomads were a serious threat to the cities: the age of great cities and empires might easily have ended.

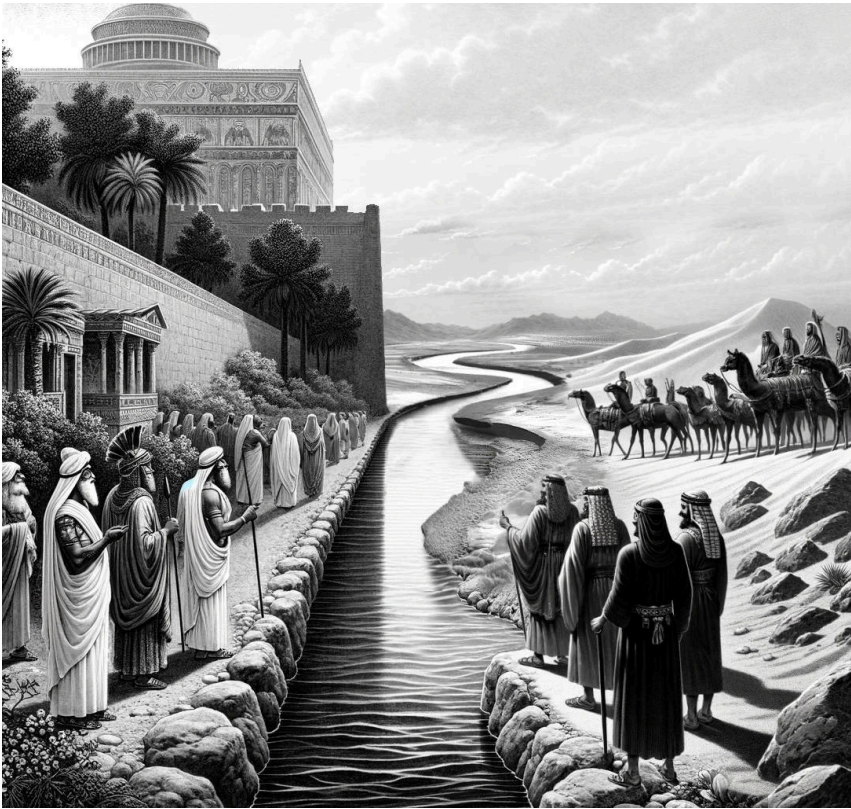
The power of the nomads ended in 1817 BC, when Babylon began to flex its muscles. Babylon was not a great powerhouse until Sin-Muballit became the first ruler of Babylon to declare himself king, in 1813 BC. He and his famous son Hammurabi turned the modest Babylonian empire into a major world power. At that point, the nomads knew it was all over. The cities were here to stay, and nomads would never again be the greatest power in the world.



2247-2008 BC: the world divided (city vs. country)

“Peleg” means “divided”. Genesis states, “*in his days the world was divided*”. The great Naram Sin became ruler of Akkad in 2254 BC. He then (presumably in 2247 BC) declared himself to be a god. He was the first ruler to do so. This implies that he claimed absolute ownership of the land, even far away from cities. And he had the power to enforce that rule. The land was now divided between enemies: god-men versus nomads.

This period of division reached its peak when the Gutis defeated Akkad. But the city kings did not give up, they rallied and fought back.



Cities were finally humbled by the great famine at the end of the Ur III period, which finally ended in 2004 BC. The famous “Lament For Ur” tells how the gods abandoned the cities, and all their sources of food were laid waste. No doubt the kings had to beg the country folk for food, so the great divide was over.

2217-1978 BC: “behold the tower”

“Reu” means “see” or “behold”, meaning “see the tower of Babel”:

“And he called his name Reu; for he said: 'Behold the children of men have become evil through the wicked purpose of building for themselves a city and a tower in the land of Shinar [Babel].’”¹⁵²

Babel (sounding like “balal”, “confused”) was a good way to remember Sargon’s attempt to enforce the Akkadian language and the later failure of his empire. But the biggest and most important temple was at Nippur, home of Enlil, lord of the universe. This was begun by Shar-Kali-Sharri in the year 2217 BC, the exact date given in Genesis.



Image by Peter Breugel the Elder, out of copyright

This great tower dominated the king’s life: most of his years are named after some aspect of building it. Later kings continued to build it. The temple was finally defeated (meaning its god was defeated) by the Elamites. This was sometime after Elam defeated Ur in 2004 BC. The Elamite king Rim Sin I (1822 BC) called himself “the shepherd of the temple of Nippur” so it must have still existed then. Genesis places the loss of the temple in 1978 BC.

¹⁵² Jubilees 10:18-19

Nimrod (Enmerkar)

Around this time we have Nimrod, the “mighty hunter before the Lord”. “The beginnings of his kingdom” were Uruk and other cities of southern Mesopotamia. Nimrod appears to be the king Enmerkar. En-mer-kar means “lord of the young, hunter”. En-mer was written NMR (vowels were not written down). Genesis changed it to N-MRD meaning “(the name of-) the rebel”. hence “Nimrod the hunter”.

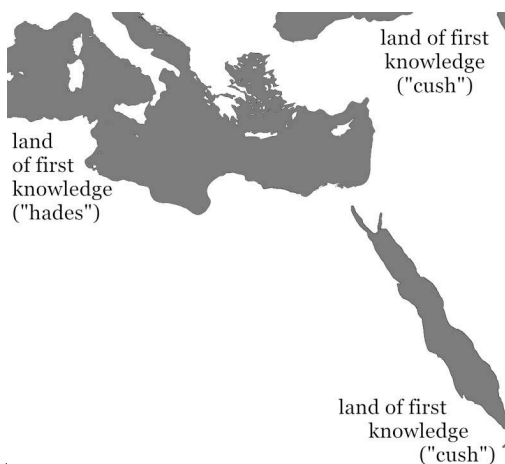
Enmerkar’s influence lasted a thousand years, much like the tribes of Genesis. The man himself lived sometime between 3400 and 3100 BC (the late Uruk period) but his work created the Dynastic period and the collapse of Sumer. He built up Uruk and professionalised agriculture. Instead of humbly learning from his ancestors, he declared that his modern ideas were greater than their old ideas because he grew more food. He demanded that the centre of power, the great temple of Inanna (Eve) should move from Ararat to Uruk. He created the age of the god-kings.



Cush

Enmerkar's father was Mesh-ki-an-gasher, meaning "*lineage of earth and heaven, 'Gash'.*" Gash's father was the sun god Shamash (Utu). His name is understood to mean that his ancestors or descendants travelled across heaven and earth (i.e., they migrated far, and saw things just as the sun sees everything), and had the name "Gash". "Gash" can also be translated as "Kash" or perhaps "Kush" (the writing did not show vowels). "Kush" is another name for the mountains (Kur) in Anatolia where Genesis began.¹⁵³ The Egyptians also called the east coast of Africa "Kash" or "Kush".

Nobody is sure what "Kush" means, but Anatolia is where agriculture began, and East Africa is where humans first began. So "Kush" may have something to do with origins. The children of Kush (i.e. where these tribes migrated) are as follows: they are the oldest and wealthiest cities of Africa south of Egypt,¹⁵⁴ the land of gold by the garden of Eden,¹⁵⁵ ancient Sudan, (which was wealthy in the Bronze Age due to its natural resources and position on strategic trade routes¹⁵⁶), and the legendary powerful Tichitt people (who thrived in the Sahara before it became a desert).¹⁵⁷ The most detailed etymology I can find links Kush to the root קִשׁ (y sh h) meaning "uncertain" "*which yields the noun תִּשְׁיָה (tushiya), meaning wisdom, sound knowledge*".¹⁵⁸ So Kush appears to mean a place of ancient knowledge, almost lost to history. The Greek word Hades has the same meaning and originally referred to the land where the gods were born.¹⁵⁹



¹⁵³ The Kusheh Dagh or "mountain of Rohl discusses this in his book "Legend"

¹⁵⁴ Seba (Sheba), the horn of Africa, and its close associate Raamah, nearby southern Arabia (a short journey across the strait) - see Ezekiel 27:22. The Egyptians knew the region as Punt, the source of many riches. Later Sabeans came from Yemen but they are far too late for the Genesis story. nationalgeographic.co.uk/history-and-civilisation/2021/06/where-did-the-queen-of-sheba-rule-arabia-or-africa

¹⁵⁵ Havilah, near Lake Urmia: see Genesis 2:10-12, and earlier discussion.

¹⁵⁶ Sabtah, which Josephus calls the Astaborans, i.e. Sudanese.

¹⁵⁷ Sabteka. See the chapter on Atlantis.

¹⁵⁸ abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Cush.html

¹⁵⁹ See the companion book "Atlantis: It's All True"

2185-1955 BC: the people split into branches

“Serug” means “branches”. The Hebrews (descendants of Eber, i.e. nomads) used branches of a vine as a metaphor for families spreading out.¹⁶⁰ The start date is just after the start of the reign of Dudu of Akkad (2189 BC). The high point of Akkadian power was under Naram-Sin, and his son Shar-Kali-Sharri maintained the power as best he could, but the empire descended into anarchy under his son Dudu. Dudu could only control his one city, while other cities fought each other:

“And the sons of Noah began to war on each other, to take captive and to slay each other, and to shed the blood of men on the earth, and to eat blood, and to build strong cities, and walls, and towers, and individuals (began) to exalt themselves above the nation, and to found the beginnings of kingdoms”¹⁶¹

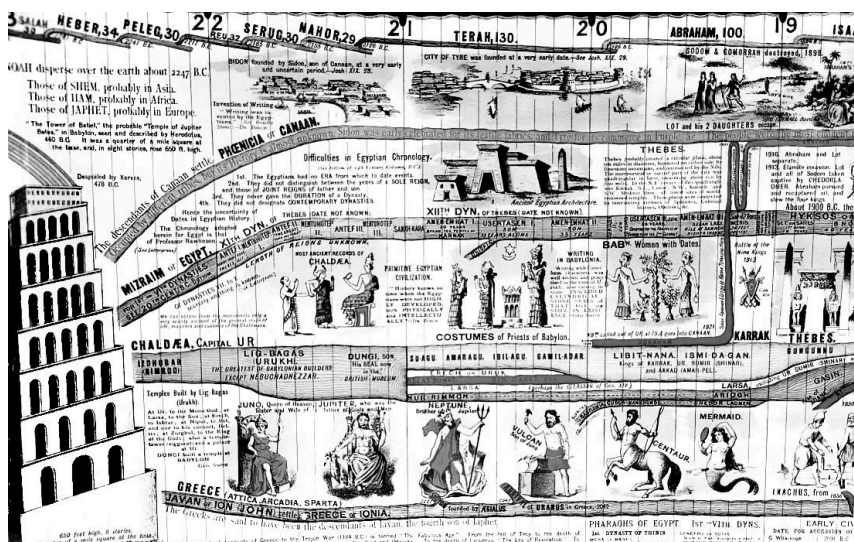


Image: Victorian time chart of history, out of copyright

The period of anarchy and weakness continued on and off until 1953 BC (Genesis says 1955 BC) when the statues of the gods were formally returned to their temples. This restoration was a huge event, known as “restoring the Ekur” (the Sumerian word for “mountain house” or temple tower). It was the sign that the gods had come home, and the scattered people could come home as well.

¹⁶⁰ Isaiah 5, John 5

¹⁶¹ Jubilees, chapter 11

2155-2007: the new religion (Nahor)

2154 BC is the end of the reign of Shu-turul, the last king of the Akkadian Empire. This was a period of chaos, where people had no direction. The Sumerian King List records decades of shameful weakness, starting with Dudu (see above) and ending when the Gutians invaded. About this period the king list laments, *"Who was king? Who was not king?"*

"Nahor" means "strong breath" (literally snort), in the sense of the breath of the gods, the wind that guides people. The same kind of blast of breath later parted the Red Sea and led Isra-el out of bondage.¹⁶² The same kind of blast drives the nomads: the nomads of the fertile crescent (the Amorites) were known as *"The powerful south wind"*.



In 2111 BC, the Amorites gave up their independence and joined Ur. So this year was named *"Year of the Amorites, the powerful south wind who, from the remote past, have not known cities, submitted to Ib-bi-Sin the king of Ur."*¹⁶³ Genesis says the wind era ended in 2007 BC.

¹⁶² Exodus 1:8

¹⁶³ The official name of Ib-bi-Sin's 17th year, 2111 BC. He reigned 2028-2004 BC

2126-1921 BC: the new god

After the snort, the urgent, forceful spirit of the gods, comes the calm breath. “Terah” means to patiently breathe. It comes from the word for breath or “spirit”.¹⁶⁴ “Terah” is also the word for “ibex”, the symbol of the major religious revolution in Elam (Persia) in the period from the first major canals (5500 BC) to the invention of writing (3000 BC).

“[T]he life, death, and transfiguration of the ibex presents clear evidence of a cultural and even a religious revolution of fourth millennial Mesopotamia, a revolution that produced fundamental changes in man’s cosmological ideas, some of which are still with us today.”¹⁶⁵

There were two great religious symbols at the time: the ox (“bucranium”) and the ibex. The ibex was the central figure, and the most common.¹⁶⁶

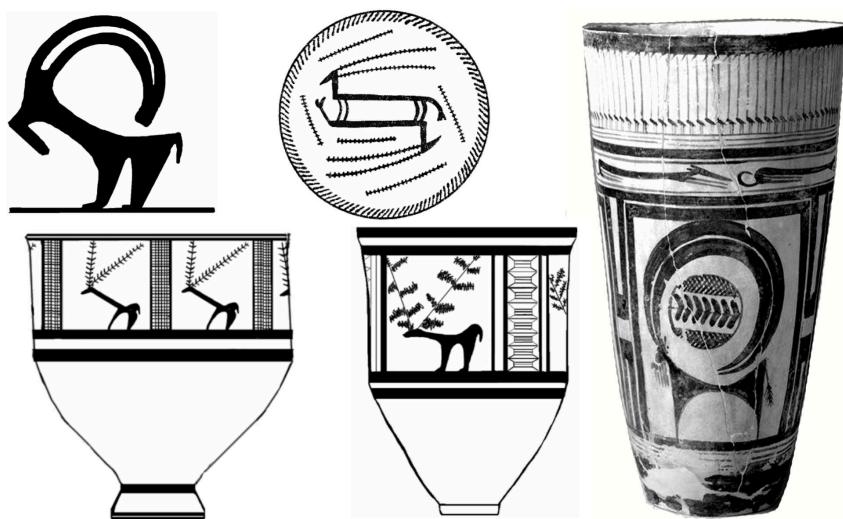


Image: *The Ibex as an Iconographic Symbol ...* by Richard Dibon-Smith, Fair Use

A thousand years later, when the Elamites conquer Ur, Abraham’s father was known as Ibex (Terah). This was when Abraham decided to start a new religion, he rejected cities, and became a nomadic herder like the ancients.

¹⁶⁴ “*tarah*”, to patiently breathe, from “*ruah*”, wind, breath or spirit. - abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Terah.html

¹⁶⁵ “*The Ibex: History of a Near Eastern Time Symbol*”, By Richard Dibon-Smith

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, and “*The Ibex as an Iconographic Symbol in the ancient Near East*” by Richard Dibon-Smith

Ibex versus ox: freedom versus cities



The ibex was the symbol of the religion of Elam. It represented freedom. The ibex was the life of the nomad. The ibex may have been the symbol of religion in the golden age, back to 20,000 BC or before:

“The study of Palaeolithic bone carvings and cave drawings has confirmed the general importance of the ibex as far back as 20,000 B.C; this animal holds a central position in Leroi-Gourhan’s reconstruction of a Palaeolithic sanctuary. Not only the central figure, the ibex is the most numerous of all the peripheral animals”¹⁶⁷

The ibex religion is now almost gone, but its memory still survives in one place: Yemen.¹⁶⁸ Yemen still loved the ibex and is known in the Bible for its Midianite traders:¹⁶⁹ Moses got his religion from Midianites.¹⁷⁰

In contrast, the ox was the symbol of the religion of northern Mesopotamia: the Pre-Pottery Neolithic, who enslaved animals and gave us settled agriculture. The ox represents the city: power over nature.

As for dates in Genesis, 2126 BC is about when the last king of Ur (Ibi-Sin) fled the capital city of Ur, to the city of Isin. The city gods of Sumer had failed. Hence, Abraham returned to the old nomadic religion. 1923 BC is when the usurper Ur-Ninurta seized the throne of Isin, and so the failure of cities was complete. The Sumerian gods could not protect even a single city. For the nomads, there could be no looking back to Sumer now.

¹⁶⁷ *“The Ibex as an Iconographic Symbol in the ancient Near East”* by Richard Dibon-Smith

¹⁶⁸ globalvoices.org/2022/01/24/ibex-in-the-yemeni-civilization-a-historical-symbolism-being-revived/

¹⁶⁹ Isaiah 9:6

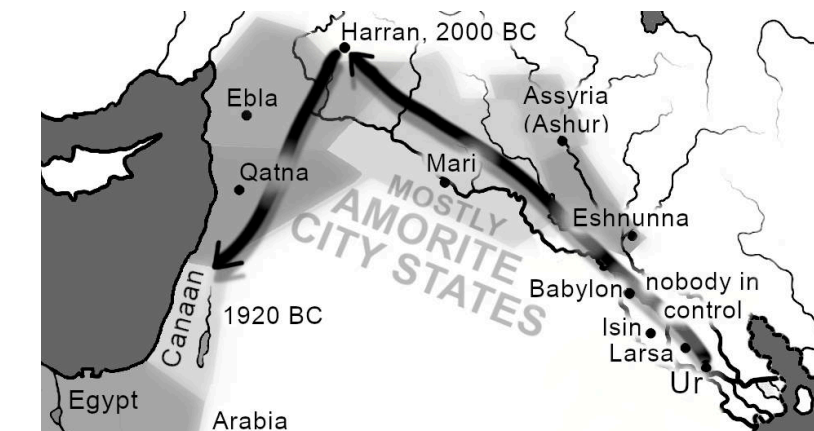
¹⁷⁰ Moses married the daughter of the priest of Midian, and lived with them.

1996-1821 BC:¹⁷¹ the new era: Amorites versus Egypt

In 2004 BC, Ur fell to Ishbi-Erra, an official in Sumer who was not of Sumerian lineage. This showed the weakness of the Sumerian gods. In 1996 BC, the 8th year of his reign, he won decisive victories against the Amorites. This showed that non-Sumerians (like Ishbi-Erra) were stronger than pure-blooded Sumerians. The lineage of Sumer had failed, so it was time to start a new lineage.

Genesis calls the founder of this new lineage “Abram”, meaning “high father”, and later “Abraham”, father of ham (the ancient nations). He went to Harran, the ancient centre place. He stayed until Terah died: that is, until 1921 BC, just after Ur-Ninurta seized Isin, showing that there was no hope for Sumer. Abraham then moved to Canaan. He made his base in the southern deserts on the trade routes from Arabia.¹⁷² This explains why Abraham had camels, a detail that bothers scholars who don’t pay attention.¹⁷³

His family stayed in Harran until Abraham died in 1821 BC. In 1820 BC, the Amorites defeated Harran. Archaeology confirms these dates, 1921-1821 BC, as much as archaeology can. The period from 1950 to 1750 BC is called “Middle Bronze IIA”, characterised by *“introduction into the Levant of a culture with contacts with the north [Amorite states].”*¹⁷⁴



¹⁷¹ I follow Archbishop Ussher’s numbers. He argues that Abraham stayed 60 years in Harran until Terah died. Others could argue that Abraham left immediately, so the dates would be 2056-1881 BC. But Ussher’s calculations are confirmed by archaeology.

¹⁷² Genesis 20:1 - he lived between Kadesh and Shur.

¹⁷³ Scholars often point out that Canaan did not have camels in the time of Abraham. But Arab traders did. When Abraham went to Harran to get a wife for his son, he took camels - the proof of his exotic wealth (Genesis 24)

¹⁷⁴ israelipalestinian.procon.org/background-resources/map-egyptian-dominance-3200-1850-BC/

Genesis 12: Abraham

Abraham made his covenant with the gods of Ur (i.e., the priests of Ur) in 1897 BC. He was to conquer Canaan on their behalf. Isaac was born in 1896, and in 1895 Abraham (supposedly) rejected his firstborn son Ishmael and chose Isaac instead. Around that time (c.1890 BC) this picture was painted on a tomb in Egypt. It is the first reference to Hyksos (“rulers of foreign lands”) and shows some Asiatic people, possibly Canaanites, visiting Egypt. The foreign ruler is called Abisha, and he brings an Ibex, a symbol of Abraham’s old religion Terah.

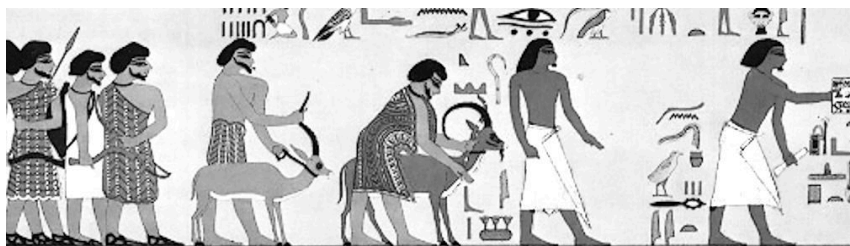


Image: NebMaatRa, CCA-SA 3.0

Abisha could be short for Abishem, “father of Shem” meaning the father of Semitic peoples. That describes Abraham, whose name means “father of many nations”. Abishem appears on the Abishem Obelisk, the oldest obelisk outside of Egypt. It dates to around 1800 BC, just after Abraham died. It reads:

“Beloved of Arsaphes, Abishemu, prince of Byblos, renewed in life, his [words missing] Kukun, son of ‘the Lycian’ justified”¹⁷⁵

“Arshaphes” is the ram god of Egypt: recall how Abraham did not sacrifice Isaac, but chose a ram instead. Sanchuniathon, the Phoenician historian,¹⁷⁶ implied that Abraham was a king of Byblos.¹⁷⁷ “Renewed in life” suggests Abraham’s new life in the Levant. “Son of the Lycian” means the Sea Peoples, such as traded with Byblos. “Justified” in this context means he died but was a great man, so was justified by the gods. Abraham died shortly before this in 1821 BC. So Abisha and Abishem could be Abraham.

¹⁷⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abishemu_obelisk

¹⁷⁶ Known from quotes in Eusebius. Sakkun-yathon means “gift of the god Sakkun” [σοκέω, sioko to preserve or remember: see Albert Baumgartner]

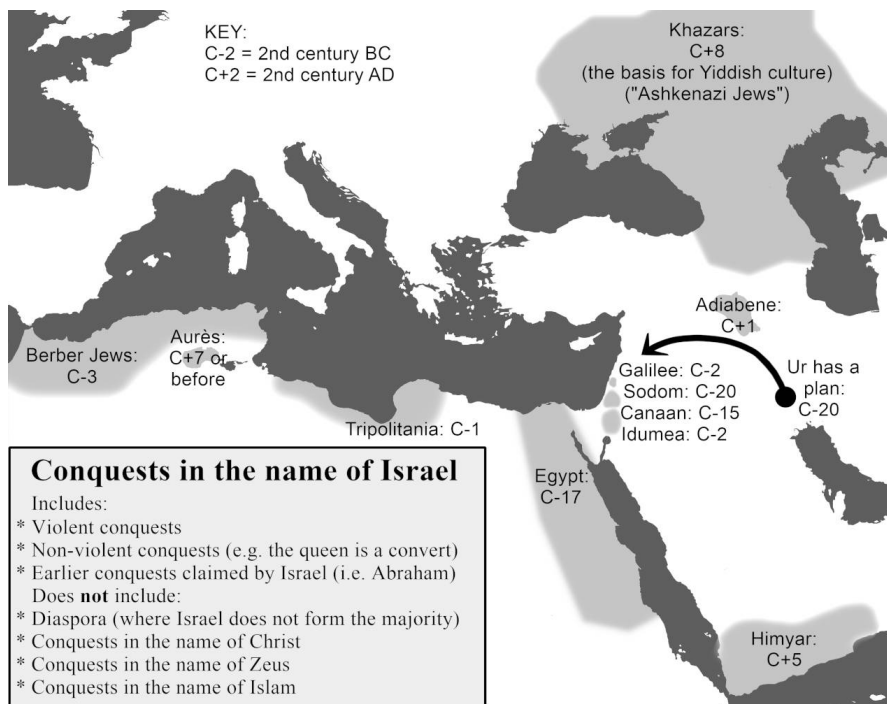
¹⁷⁷ See the chapter on Zeus for why Cronus, king of Byblos, was Abraham

The promise to Abraham

As we have seen, “the gods” were the rulers of Ur, followers of Yah. Ur was in decline (Genesis 11). So the rulers of Ur looked for new lands to conquer. They told Abraham to settle in Canaan (Genesis 12). Here is a summary of what happened next. The rest of this book has the details.

Abraham’s friend Lot settled the fertile lands around Sodom (Genesis 13). Many others also tried to settle this land, leading to wars (Genesis 14). Abraham did well in the wars, so the rulers of Ur got excited. They told Abraham that his descendants would fill the land (Genesis 15). Abraham preferred to make alliances with the desert nomads in the south: they would be his people. This annoyed the rulers of Ur (Genesis 16). So the rulers again urged Abraham to conquer Canaan (Genesis 17). Abraham resisted: he sympathised with the local people and did not want to kill them. So Ur provided a replacement ruler: Isaac.

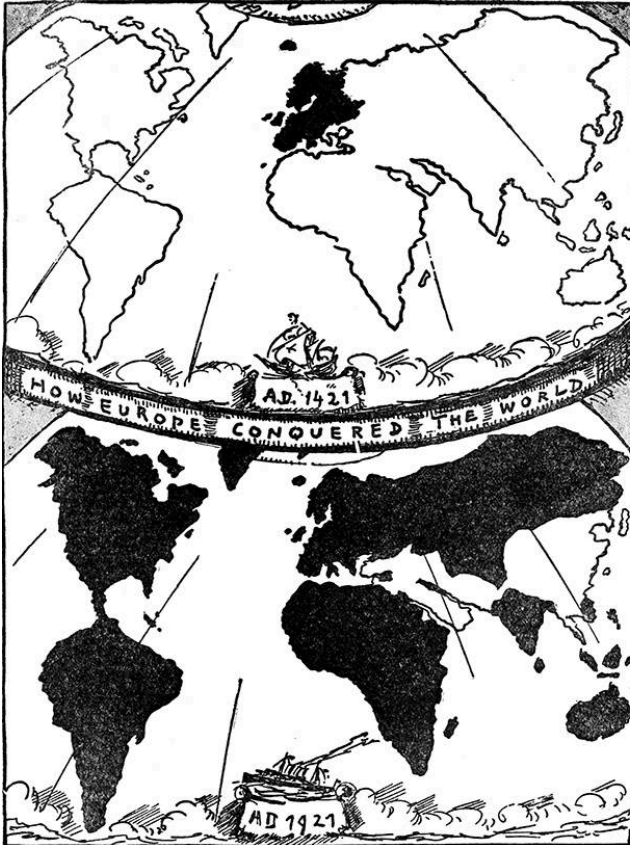
Isaac’s son, Jacob (who became Isra-el), wanted to conquer Canaan. Jacob’s son, Joseph, wanted the sun and moon and stars to bow down to him. He conquered Egypt and his descendants conquered Greece. The Israelites conquered many lands.



How Isra-el conquered the world

The previous map only shows direct conquests by Isra-el. But Isra-el had powerful children: Zeus and Christianity.

Isra-el conquered Egypt by stealth.¹⁷⁸ Isra-el conquered Greece in the same way it conquered Sodom: with advanced weaponry.¹⁷⁹ Christians conquered Rome through friendship.¹⁸⁰ Finally, they conquered the whole world using Greek ideas and advanced weaponry.



Only two regions could resist the Christians: these regions were (1) the children of Abraham... and (2) China.

This was just a brief summary of world history. It shows that the last 4000 years of world history is a direct result of the colonial project of the priests of Ur in 2000 BC.

Now let's get back to Genesis.

From The Story of Mankind (Hendrik van Loon), out of copyright

¹⁷⁸ Isra-el adopted the Egyptian practice of circumcision (Herodotus II:104). Then they showed Pharaoh how to make a lot of money through a 20% tax in good times then crushing people during hard times (Genesis 47:13-26)

¹⁷⁹ The Penteconter ship: see the chapter on Abraham as Cronus

¹⁸⁰ Marcion's business club in the chapter on "Paul"

Abraham's influence on Egypt

Abraham arrived in Egypt around 1880 BC. Two years later (1878 BC), Sesostris III (a.k.a. Senusret III) came to power. He had new ideas, which were just like the ideas Abraham had seen in Ur. He centralised all power, like the god-kings of Ur. He then set out to conquer, using new methods. He defeated the Arabs to the south, and the Libyans to the west. He then defeated Canaan and fought his way north into Europe as far as the Thrace. This was unprecedented and made him a living legend. He *“was among the few Egyptian kings who were deified and honoured with a cult during their own lifetime.”*¹⁸¹ He then returned to Egypt and built a series of canals: classic Mesopotamian technology. Other nations had to adapt or die. So the whole world changed. And it all began when Abraham arrived in Egypt.



¹⁸¹ Wikipedia, quoting *"The Oxford Guide: Essential Guide to Egyptian Mythology"*

Genesis 17:1: El Shaddai

Abraham knew God as Yah, and also as El Shaddai. “El” means “god”. “Shad” means “breast”. Some say it should be “shadad” for “destroyer”, but five of the six references to El Shaddai are about having many children, so it has to be “breast”, not “destroyer”.

Israelite religion originally had a female goddess above Yah. We know this because when Josiah destroyed the shrines of the old religion of Isra-el, he missed one.¹⁸² The surviving shrine shows both male and female gods as equals. Canaanites routinely had dual male and female gods. Their female god, Asherah, was the most popular. The shrine has images of “*Yahweh and his Asherah*”, “*Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah*”, and “*Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah*”.¹⁸³ In one image, Asherah is in the form of a cow (like Hathor in Egypt). Yahweh is drawn smaller, suckling from her, just as Pharaohs suckle from Hathor. So Asherah gave Yah his power

El Shaddai was a goddess of breast-feeding, so was probably the same as Nintur (a.k.a. Ninhursag), mother goddess of the mountains of Eden. She gave life and strength to the gods,¹⁸⁴ because mountains gave water, strength, and life.¹⁸⁵ Nintur had no city shrines because she was the ancient matriarchal goddess of the nomads, people like Abraham.



¹⁸² In Kuntillet Ajrud, northern Sinai. [haaretz.com/israel-news/premium.MAGAZINE-a-strange-drawing-could-undermine-our-entire-idea-of-judaism-1.5973328](http://haaretz.com/israel-news/premium/MAGAZINE-a-strange-drawing-could-undermine-our-entire-idea-of-judaism-1.5973328)

¹⁸³ See “Did God Have a Wife?” by William Dever

¹⁸⁴ E.g. “For you [for Ninurta, god of strength], Nintur [mother goddess of the mountains] has opened wide her creative hands; she has breast-fed you from her sweet breasts; she has fed you with the milk of vigour. As if you were a spectacular wild bull, she has made your figure strong” - An adab to Ninurta for Lipit-Eštar (Lipit-Eštar D) <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.5.5.4#>

¹⁸⁵ “Shaddai” probably comes from the sound “shdh” meaning “mountain” in Sumerian. (See “YHWH, the Origin of the Tetragrammaton” by E. C. B. MacLaurin) The mountains at the source of the Tigris and Euphrates always had water even in droughts. See the drought described in Genesis 2, which created the first robots.

Genesis 19: Abraham opposed the god-kings

Although Abraham came from Ur, the land of big cities and god-kings, he went native and sided with the local cities of Canaan. Abraham paid tribute to the king of Salem. Abraham tried to talk the gods (i.e. the priests of Ur) out of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. He failed - the gods (priests) destroyed the cities by throwing burning tar over their walls. They called it “fire from heaven”.¹⁸⁶



¹⁸⁶ The War of the Kings (Genesis 14) was an alliance between the Amorites and Mesopotamians. Sodom and Gomorrah were built near tar pits (Genesis 14:10). So the gods “raining fire and brimstone” almost certainly refers to the god-kings of Mesopotamia ordering their armies to throw missiles of burning tar over the city walls (or village fence) to burn all the buildings.

Genesis 19: Abraham switched sides

This chapter is crucial to understanding the modern world. The modern world is based on cities. Cain created cities. Sodom shows why every city is doomed:

1. Cities create envy. Ur wanted Sodom, because it controlled the fertile plains. Ur sent Abraham to conquer Sodom.
2. Cities create an arms race. Ur had superior tactics. In this case it also had new technology: raining fire from heaven.
3. Cities turn people against strangers: they hate immigrants. The people of Sodom wanted to abuse Lot's guests.
4. Cities crush the weak. They force us to make choices we hate. Lot could only protect his guests by (in effect) sacrificing his daughters. This was the final straw: Lot lost his morality.

The conclusion? We should get out of Sodom and **never look back**. This is the story of the pillar of salt: salt is valuable, and that is the kind of thing that makes us settle in cities: we can get valuable stuff. But in the end, we lose our morality and all we have is a pile of stuff.

- So in Genesis 20, Abraham no longer allied with Ur. He tried the rival civilisation, Crete (see the chapter on Zeus), but he could not go through with it.
- So in Genesis 21 his firstborn son (Ishmael) had to leave and become a nomad.
- The city gods could see that Abraham was doubting. In Genesis 22 they required him to sacrifice his son to prove his loyalty. That was the final straw. Abraham decided that true gods would not require that.
- So in Genesis 23 the princess of Ur died, indicating that the marriage (alliance) with Ur ended. We learn that while the princess lived in the cities of Canaan, Abraham lived far away, as a nomad in the southern desert and borderlands. Abraham chose the life of a nomad, not the life of the city.
- After the alliance with Ur ended, in Genesis 24 Abraham went back to the ancient crossroads: Harran. This is where the gods decide where people belong.
- In Genesis 25, Abraham died. Because his nomadic dream died: Abraham's people began to settle in Egypt, with a desire to take it over, as we will see.

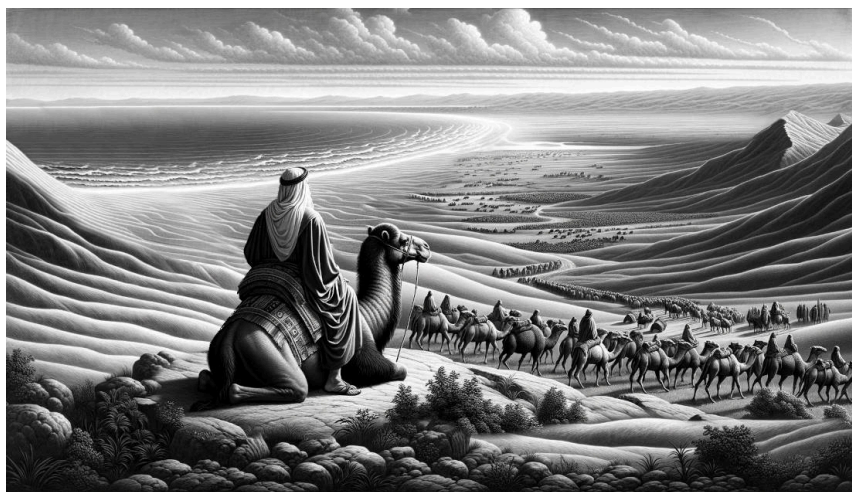


The pillar of salt:
JoTB, CC3.0

Abraham became an Arab

Abraham lived on the southern borders with Arabia, and lived as a nomadic herder. He seems to have adopted an identity as an Arab. He married an Arab (Hagar): it appears that his official wife was a political marriage to avoid war,¹⁸⁷ because her family was a powerful enemy, and Abraham fled from them.¹⁸⁸ His firstborn son and heir, Ishmael, was an Arab.¹⁸⁹ He had many other sons, also Arabs.¹⁹⁰ Isaac was almost certainly not his biological son.¹⁹¹ And again seems to be for political reasons.¹⁹²

So Abraham fought on the side of the ancient nomads. He fought against the modern god-kings. And he changed his name from Abram (“exalted father”) to Abraham (“father of many”). He no longer cared about being exalted, he now cared about people.



¹⁸⁷ “Sarai” means “princess” - i.e., he married a princess of Ur. She obviously did not like him much, as they lived far apart: he lived in the Negev desert, she lived in Hebron, where Abraham was a foreigner and stranger without influence there (Genesis 23:1-4).

¹⁸⁸ After leaving Ur, Abraham visits Egypt, enemy of Ur, and takes circumcision, an Egyptian practice. *“the Syrians of Palestine acknowledge of themselves that they learnt the custom from the Egyptians”* - Herodotus II:104.

¹⁸⁹ The Arabs are clear that Ishmael was the real heir.

¹⁹⁰ Genesis 25:1-4

¹⁹¹ We have seen that Genesis reflects real history. So when Abraham laughs at the idea of having a son when Sarai was elderly, he is serious: this was impossible. But the men of Ur deliver a son for him, called “Isaac” meaning “he laughs” - it was an open secret that nobody believed this was Abraham’s biological son. Genesis shows no interest in Isaac as a fully rounded person. He served a political purpose, that is all.

¹⁹² After siding with Egypt (Genesis 17), the god-kings make him a deal: 3 visitors from the gods (i.e. from Ur) says a son of Ur must inherit his land. (Genesis 18) To drive home their power, they then destroy the city of Abraham’s friend, Lot (Genesis 19).

Genesis 25: Jacob

In 1839 BC (as far as archaeology can tell), the great Pharaoh Sesostriis (Sensuoret III) died. He left Egypt in a superb state: large, strong, wealthy, the envy of the world.

His successor, Amenemhat III, had little interest in war. He spent much of his long reign in Sinai, overseeing the mining of jewels and precious metals. This was next door to the nomadic peoples of Abraham. They watched with great interest.



Sesostriis had been too strong. But Amenemhat was just interested in wealth. The people of Abraham considered their options. Some of them hatched a plan.

Genesis records how, in 1836 BC, Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau means “asa”, “to do”: “asa” is the word that described Yah’s actions when he first appeared in Genesis 2:4. It implies that Esau, like Yah, made things work as intended. He was a nomadic herder like Abraham. Esau had the birthright. But “Jacob” means “heel grabber”, an idiom meaning “deceiver”. Jacob was like his ancestors the kings of Ur. He wanted wealth and power, and he was prepared to lie and steal. With Sesostriis gone, Jacob turned his eye to Egypt.

1821 BC: Eber ended, Isra-el settled in Egypt, Abraham died

In 1822 BC¹⁹³ Amenemhat IV became Pharaoh. Around the same time, over in Mesopotamia, the chaos that began with the fall of Akkad was coming to an end. Babylon was becoming strong.

In Babylon the “Eber” or “migrant” era ended around 1817 BC. When Akkad fell, the smart people had become nomads. But now that kings were strong again, they were returning to the cities. In Egypt, this change happened around 1822 BC. Many of the nomads of southern Canaan chose to settle in north-east Egypt, to work on Amenemhat’s many building projects.

The influx of Asiatic immigrants in the Nile Delta that had started during the reigns of Amenemhat IV's predecessor accelerated under his own reign, becoming completely unchecked.¹⁹⁴

The Bible remembers this as the death of Abraham in 1821 BC. This was the death of the dream of being nomads following Yah, like their ancestors

Over the next hundred years, Abraham's descendants would settle in Egypt at Avaris in the Nile Delta, in the land of Goshen.



¹⁹³ according to the Oxford History of Ancient Egypt. Scholars disagree over the precise dates. But all are agreed that this is when the Asiatic Hyksos began to enter Egypt, and they entered peacefully.

¹⁹⁴ Wikipedia, Amenemhat IV

The birthright (1760 BC): the first lawyers

The 1770s-1760s BC were a period of chaos in Egypt. Multiple Pharaohs reigned for very short periods, typically from a few months to a couple of years. Often their details were deliberately erased from monuments, suggesting a time of great instability. This climaxed with Pharaoh Khendjer, whose name suggests a Semitic origin: Khendjer means wild pig.¹⁹⁵ Moses later hated pigs so much that he banned them.

This coincides with the use of written law codes in Babylon. The most famous law code was the Code of Hammurabi, thousands of lines of detailed rules, best known from a copy dating to 1755 BC. Before law codes, decisions were based on the spirit of tradition: when a decision was needed, a ruler or the tribe's elders would get together and decide the best action. After law codes, decisions were based on the written word. This made it easier to control a large empire, but it also allowed clever lawyers to get a result that was the opposite of what everybody wanted. This could explain the chaos in Egypt.

Genesis records this as follows: in 1773 BC, Abraham's intended successor died,¹⁹⁶ ending any hope of Abraham's nomadic ways returning. Now Jacob "the heel grabber" could rise in power.

In 1760 BC, Jacob stole the birthright from Esau, by tricking blind Isaac. He then had a son called Joseph ("yasaph", meaning "to increase", e.g. in wealth). Joseph rose to power in Egypt by cunning use of debt laws. He manoeuvred the Egyptian people into debt, so they lost all their land to Pharaoh, becoming de facto slaves: this gave Joseph great influence. This is how it happened:



Image: Haider Adnan, CC-A-SA-2.0, and Mbzt, CCA-3.0

¹⁹⁵ The name is assumed to be equivalent to "hnzr" meaning "wild boar"

¹⁹⁶ The story of Sarah being barren is irrelevant. Ishmael was the firstborn. And he was a nomadic herder on the Arabian border, like his father. The Israelites argued that Ishmael did not count, because they wanted the birthright. The story of Jacob usurping Esau (the old-style herder) follows the same pattern as Isaac usurping Ishmael.

1728 BC: Joseph began his rise to power

In 1750, Hammurabi died. He had conquered many neighbouring lands, including Mari, which included Harran. On his death, these other lands fought for and regained their freedom.

Then around 1725 BC, the thirteenth dynasty of Egypt began to fall apart, with the death of its last powerful Pharaoh. The Canaanite incomers now ruled as Pharaohs at Avaris, and the native Pharaohs had to retreat to the south.

“The final powerful pharaoh of the Egyptian Thirteenth Dynasty was Sobekhotep IV, who died around 1725 BC, after which Egypt appears to have splintered into various kingdoms, including one based at Avaris ruled by the Fourteenth Dynasty. Based on their names, this dynasty was already primarily of West Asian [e.g. Canaanite] origin.”¹⁹⁷

Genesis records this as follows: In 1739 BC, Jacob (Canaan) opposed Laban (Harran). They separated. In 1728 BC, Joseph announced his intention to rule the world. He announced a dream in which the sun (i.e. Ra, god of Egypt), the moon (i.e. Yah, god of Abraham) and eleven stars (i.e. the other tribes of Canaan) all bowed down to him. Jacob supported his plan, and gave him a coat symbolising his power. Realising that this would lead to great chaos, his brothers wanted to kill him. They ended up merely disowning him. Joseph became a servant in Egypt. He tried to get influence in Pharaoh’s court by befriending the wife of an official,¹⁹⁸ then when that backfired, he befriended powerful people who were in jail (i.e., they were crooks). He may also have had a deal with the Egyptian priests.¹⁹⁹ This got Pharaoh’s attention. Joseph had a plan to increase Pharaoh’s power, by having a 20% tax and using it to buy grain.²⁰⁰ Then in times of famine, he made the people sell all their land to Pharaoh in exchange for grain to eat. Pharaoh was so impressed that Joseph became the effective ruler of Egypt.



Sobekhotep IV, by ‘Med’,
CC-A-SA-2.0

¹⁹⁷ Wikipedia. *Hyksos*, retrieved 22 Sep 2024

¹⁹⁸ Joseph claimed that she tried to seduce him, but how likely is that? It is usually the men who push themselves onto women, not the other way around. Joseph had every reason to seduce her: she was his route into Pharaoh’s court. It is normal when a man seduces a woman and then it goes wrong for him to say “she tried to seduce me”.

¹⁹⁹ In Genesis 47:26 they are the only ones he does not tax.

²⁰⁰ Genesis 47:23-26

1689 BC: the Canaanites had all power

The 14th dynasty of Egypt was chaotic. Pharaoh after pharaoh had very short reigns. The best-attested dates suggest that 1689 was the key date: after that, dates are very hard to determine.

Pharaoh Nehesy Aasehre left office in 1705 BC

Pharaoh Khakherewre left office in 1705 BC

Pharaoh Nebefawre left office in 1704 BC

Pharaoh Sehebre left office in (unknown date) after 3 years

Pharaoh Merdjefare left office in 1699 BC

Pharaoh Sewadjkare III left office in (unknown date) after 1 year

Pharaoh Nebdjefare left office in 1694 BC

Pharaoh Webenre left office in 1693 BC

Pharaoh (unknown name, records damaged) left office in (unknown date)

Pharaoh [...]djefare left office in (unknown date)

Pharaoh [...]webenre left office in 1690 BC

After that we have 27 pharaohs up to the time of Apophis (circa 1620 BC), so around three years each. But no dates survive: they are nobodies.

Archaeology shows that new rulers from Canaan took power. But they did not achieve power by force. They must have gradually gained more influence until it was impossible for pharaohs to function properly. By 1690 BC they were the de facto power in Egypt.



Genesis records this as the end of the Jacob era in 1689 BC. The Canaanites were no longer nomadic herders. In 1689 they visited their old lands, bringing all the power of Egypt with them. They left the bones of Jacob in Canaan because they were now Pharaohs in all but name.

1635 BC: Canaanite thugs ruled Egypt

Archaeology shows that from 1690 Egypt was chaotic, with Egyptians and Canaanites struggling for power. Then in 1650 the Canaanites became the Pharaohs and founded the 15th Dynasty: the dynasty of the “Hyksos” (“foreign kings”). The Egyptians called them “Aamu”, meaning people from the Levant and Syria. They established “*loose control over northern Egypt by intimidation or force*”.²⁰¹ That is, they were thugs:

The dynasty is recorded as having destroyed Egyptian monuments and removed Egyptian statuary for booty, as well as plundering royal tombs, Ahmose complaining that “pyramids have been torn down”.²⁰²

Genesis-Exodus is suspiciously vague about this period. Why? Surely this is a period of triumph? But we skip over two centuries with very few details, except names.²⁰³ The names tell us that:

In 1689 BC, when Jacob died, Isra-el was fruitful²⁰⁴ but also forgot its humble past.²⁰⁵

In 1635 BC, when Joseph died, Isra-el was controlled by warlike salesmen.²⁰⁶

The reluctance to tell us more details²⁰⁷ suggests that this is a period that later Israelites were ashamed of.



Hyksos dagger handle, showing Hyksos with a bow and sword. Udemu, CC-A 3.0

²⁰¹ Wikipedia. Hyksos

²⁰² Wikipedia, *Fifteenth Dynasty* (the Hyksos), quoting Ryholt, “*The Political Situation in Egypt During the Second Intermediate Period, C. 1800-1550 B.C.*”

²⁰³ Genesis 50:22-23: Ephraim, Manasseh and Makir

²⁰⁴ Ephraim set the tone for three generations (50:23). “Ephraim” means “fruitful”

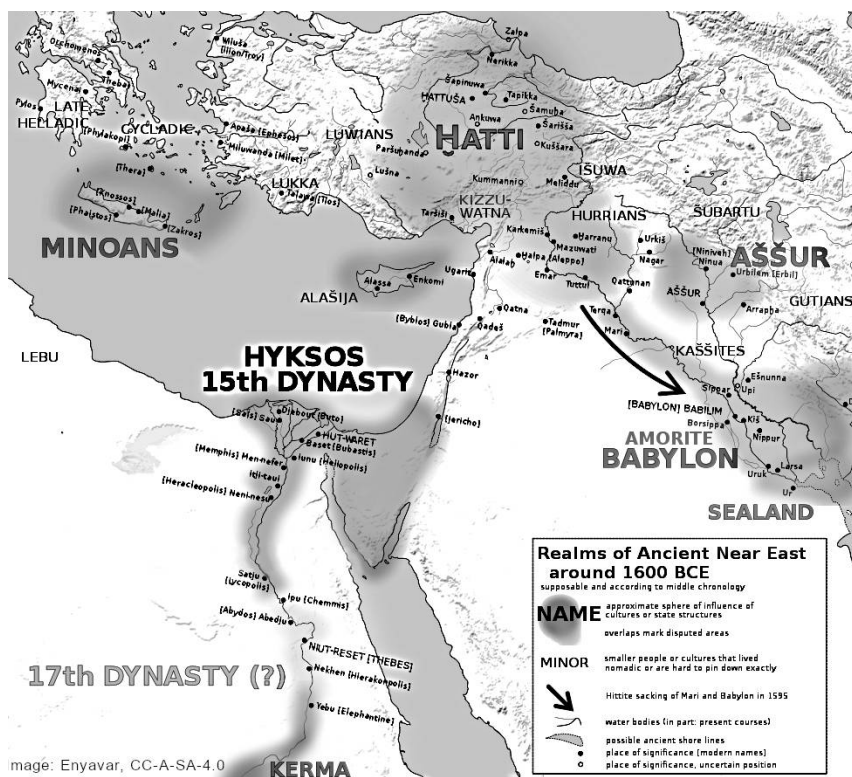
²⁰⁵ Manasseh” means “to forget”. Joseph’s final message (Genesis 50:23-24) was to remind the people to remember that they belong in Canaan, not Egypt. This implies that they were forgetting their old lives in Canaan.

²⁰⁶ Makir means “sold” or “salesman”. He was probably the son of a concubine from Aramea: i.e. from the old cities of Mesopotamia (1 Chronicles 7:14). This reminds us of how Jacob manipulated Esau (the obedient nomad) into selling his birthright so that Jacob could follow the old city ways. And how Joseph manipulated the common Egyptian people into selling their birthrights (their land). So Machir was like Joseph. The tribe of Machir was also known for killing Og of Bashan, the last of the “big men” from before the flood. Makir then controlled Bashan, which includes Mt Hermon, where the angels descended on the Book of Enoch. Hermon was the site of Baal-Gad, “Baal of fortune”: Gad was a Semitic god of fortune.

²⁰⁷ The Bible tells us nothing of their actions for 200 years (1689 BC, the death of Jacob, to 1491, when the Egyptian prince Moses leads Isra-el), beyond these names. Compare the detail that covers previous centuries and later centuries.

1619 BC: unity broke down

Archaeology gives us no clear dates for the Hyksos around 1600 BC, due to general chaos. The chaos ended in 1567 BC, when Yah-Moses finally brought order, ending the rival 15th, 16th and 17th dynasties, and beginning the triumphant 18th dynasty. All we know from Genesis is that “Levi” (“unity”) died around 1619 BC after uniting the people for 137 years.²⁰⁸ From this, we can infer that the Israelites (the Hyksos) split into rival factions. And that is where we leave the Genesis of Isra-el, around 1600 BC.



²⁰⁸ Levi means “to join or connect”. This era began when Jacob married the daughters of Laban: i.e., he allied with the ancestral people at Harran. He said he wanted to ally with the nomadic herders (“Rachel”: “ewe”) but said he accidentally allied with the city people instead (“Leah” “cow”). In Semitic iconography, sheep and goats represent nomadic herders, while cows and bulls represent settled agriculture and the violent power of cities. Leah had three children (Reuben, Simeon, Levi) to prove she could produce a dynasty and therefore unite with Jacob (Genesis 29:31-35). But Jacob rejected them all and preferred Rachel’s children. In Genesis 49:1-7 he finds excuses to hate Leah’s children. However, Moses makes Levi the glue that holds together all the tribes. That glue did not exist between 1619 and the exodus (1491 BC).

Abraham was Cronus

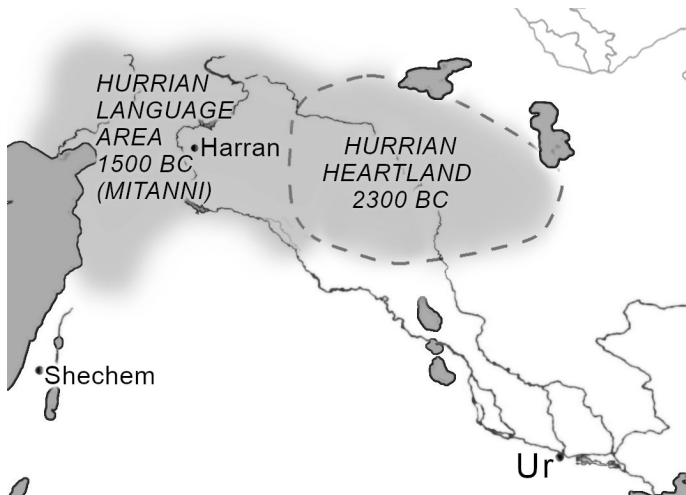
Let's look closer at the evidence for Abraham, the father of world history for the past 4,000 years. Abraham appears in multiple nations' records, and the war between Abraham and Jacob is the defining war of history. It is the war between nomadic life (good) and land ownership (bad, because it causes wars and slavery).

Scholars never bother to check

Mainstream Bible scholars say that there is no evidence for Abraham. They say there is no evidence for him before about 900 BC, and that even this evidence is sparse and ambiguous.²⁰⁹

This is nonsense. The scholars never bothered to look.

Abraham's story began in earnest in the city of Harran in 1921 BC. So if we want evidence for Abraham then we need to look at Hurrian texts from around that date.



Most of the Hurrian texts are about Abraham. They date to the right time and place and tell the same story as the Bible. These stories are also recorded in Greek mythology.

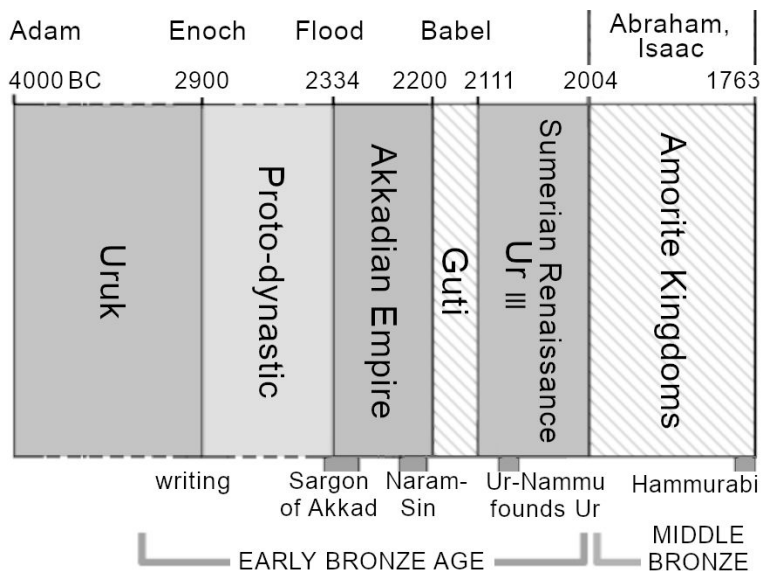
²⁰⁹ The most famous scholarly text on Abraham is probably *"The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives"* by Thomas L. Thomson. The Wikipedia entry on Abraham has a good summary of the mainstream view.

Abraham is the story of the Amorites

The life of Abraham covers one of the major eras of world history: the era of Amorite kingdoms. This is when the cities of Mesopotamia spread out and began to colonise the world. Abraham realised that this was wrong.



Amorite kingdoms c.1764 BC, by 'Attar-Aram syria' CC-BY-SA-4.0



Dates from archaeology, design based on work by 'Venal,' Wikipedia, CCA-SA-3.0 As archaeology improves, dates get closer to Genesis.

The role of Crete in the story of Abraham

To recognise Abraham in other historical records we need to focus on Crete, and on Abraham's influence on Libya. The people of Crete settled in Gaza and were later called Philistines. When we follow the story of Abraham it climaxes with the people of Crete.²¹⁰ Abraham wanted the old religion of the ibex: freedom, balance and tradition. But Crete wanted the new religion of the bull: they wanted raw power. Crete won.



²¹⁰ **Genesis 12:** Abraham leaves Ur for the ancestral land of Harran. He then tries to ally with Egypt: Abraham changes his mind and refuses to let Egypt marry into his family (the family of Ur).

Genesis 13: Lot (from Haran) moves to the agricultural paradise of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham (from Ur) forges an alliance with Salem.

Genesis 14: All of Ur's allies try to conquer Sodom and Gomorrah

Genesis 15: Abraham's gods (i.e. the priests of Ur) encourage Abraham by saying he can conquer the whole fertile crescent.

Genesis 16: Abraham cannot find a good ally to guarantee the future of Ur. As a compromise, he allies with the humble nomads of Egypt/Sinai.

Genesis 17: Abraham circumcises all his people (a sign of alliance with Egypt, as only Egypt practised circumcision)

Genesis 18: Angels (i.e. messengers from the priests of Ur) tell Abraham that his future is with "Isaac". (This will be fulfilled by an alliance with Gerar.) Abraham hopes to find allies in Sodom and Gomorrah but fails.

Genesis 19: Abraham is willing to break every moral rule to befriend Sodom, but it fails. The gods (i.e. the priests of Ur, and their armies) destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 20: Abraham becomes an ally of Gerar (verses 15-16)

Genesis 21: For the first half of the Abraham story (Genesis 13-19), he was unable to find an ally. So Ur had no future. In symbolic terms, the princess of Ur (Sarai) was barren. But the new alliance with Gerar means his future is assured... or so he thinks. Abraham's new heir was "Isaac".

Genesis 22: Abraham is required to sacrifice Isaac (more on this later),

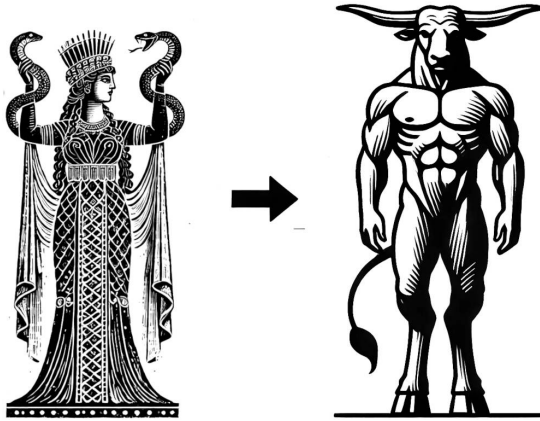
Genesis 23: Ur now has an heir, so the Sarai story ends.

Genesis 24: Isaac married into Harran: i.e., he cements the link between Gerar and Ur.

Genesis 25: The age of Abraham (the fight with Jacob) is now over.

The religion of Crete and the Philistines

Early Crete was remembered as a golden age of the mother goddess, with wisdom (symbolised by the snake) and equality, much like Eden. But later Crete was remembered as a brutal patriarchal age where the Minotaur (half man, half bull) required human sacrifice. What changed?



Our best source for early Crete is the historian Diodorus when he wrote about Cronus and the Titans. He focused on Crete as the ideal Golden Age society. This reflects Early Minoan Crete (3100-2100 BC), which began around the time of Enoch, the inventor of writing. Early Crete was known for its sexual and economic equality: women ruled and there were no palaces. Crete had beautiful art, and a rich, vibrant culture. It was the centre of metalwork and technology. It was an exciting time to be alive.

Middle Minoan I (2100-1875) was the era of Abraham. This was the time of trouble in Mesopotamia: the fall of Akkad then the decline of Ur. The disease of inequality, which had long tormented Mesopotamia, began to spread. We see the first palaces in Crete. They started small, but inequality plus Cretan technology was a deadly combination. Crete began to send out colonies, such as the city of Gerar, to conquer the world.

Middle Minoan II and III (1875-1700) was the time of Isaac. Palaces grew larger. Crete developed its own more advanced writing system. Violence increased. Around 1700 the civilisation collapsed.

Late Minoan I (1700-1470 BC) continued the inequality. So when Thera erupted (1562 BC) the culture broke. The last days of Minoan Crete saw the violent age of King Minos: the legend of the minotaur, a society based on death and horror, finally defeated by Theseus and the rise of Greece. How are the mighty fallen!

Isaac: the new religion from Crete

The name “Isaac” (“yitshaq”) means “he will laugh”. Genesis says Isaac had that name because the Sarai (the princess of Ur) could not believe that she finally had an heir. For Abraham this would be a cynical laugh, because to obtain this heir, Abraham had to abandon his original and preferred heir, Ishmael. Abraham wanted to be a nomadic Arab, not a colony of Ur.

Abraham’s attempts to form alliances for Ur required a higher and higher price. At first, he tried to befriend Egypt, so he had to accept circumcision. This was a uniquely Egyptian practice, so it represents accepting Egyptian rules. Then the price grew higher. Next, Abraham’s friend Lot tried to appease Sodom and Gomorrah. As a price, he had to give his daughters as prostitutes. (Possibly these were temple prostitutes.²¹¹) Then, when Ur wanted to teach the cities a lesson, Abraham had to agree to genocide. Finally, after allying with Gerar, he had to agree to sacrifice his son.²¹² The resulting alliance created the people we call “Jacob”, meaning the one who grabbed the true heir and took his place,²¹³ defeating Abraham’s religion.

Child sacrifice was not part of mainstream Mesopotamian religion as far as we know.²¹⁴ But it was part of the religions of Crete, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and later of Phoenicia and Carthage. That is, it was part of the religions of the promised land. Child sacrifice then became part of the Israelite religion (see below).

Calling Isaac “he will laugh” may be a pun with a double meaning. Not only was the idea of Isaac absurd, as it went against nature (Abraham already had an heir and it should have been too late to change), but ancient sources say that when a sacrifice burned on a Moloch statue, the heated air escaped the mouth and sounded as if the body was laughing.²¹⁵

²¹¹ Genesis presents the story as being of individuals, but the context and timescale indicate that this is a simplified version of larger political choices.

²¹² This is implied by the order of events: six chapters of failure to find an heir, then Gerar, then an heir appears, then he must be sacrificed. The king of Gerar was called Abimelech - “Melech is my father”. Vowels were not written, so “Melech” could be Moloch”, the practice of infant sacrifice.

²¹³ עקב: ‘qb or ‘akeb (“heel”), meaning “one from behind, a supplanter,”

²¹⁴ See the summary at Wikipedia (retrieved October 2024)

²¹⁵ E.g. Cleitarchus (aka Clitarchus or Kleitarchos, c. 300 BC), a biographer of Alexander: “There stands in their midst a bronze statue of Kronos, its hands extended over a bronze brazier, the flames of which engulf the child. When the flames fall upon the body, the limbs contract and the open mouth seems almost to be laughing until the contracted body slips quietly into the brazier. Thus it is that the ‘grin’ is known as ‘sardonic laughter;’ since they die laughing.” - From the Scholia to Plato’s Republic, I, 337A (ed. Bekker, vol. 9, p.68): See also Diodorus book 13, chapter 86: “he [Hannibal from Carthage] supplicated the gods after the custom of his people by sacrificing a young boy to Cronus” See also book 20, chapter 14, Quintus Curtius book 4, chapter 3, etc. <https://www.roger-pearse.com/weblog/2012/05/31/sacrifices-of-children-at-carthage-the-sources/>

Child sacrifice became part of the Israelite religion

When Abraham sacrificed Isaac, Genesis said he stopped at the last moment and sacrificed a sheep instead. Later, when Jephthah sacrificed his daughter to Yahweh, it was presented as a mistake.²¹⁶ But later prophets admitted that yes, child sacrifice was commanded by Yahweh.

“I gave them other statutes that were not good and laws through which they could not live; I defiled them through their gifts—the sacrifice of every firstborn—that I might fill them with horror so they would know that I am the Lord.”²¹⁷



Image: Abraham-Johann Gottfried Seutter, CC0

They questioned whether Yahweh still required it:

“Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”²¹⁸

Child sacrifice was in the earliest part of law of Moses:

“You must give me the firstborn of your sons. Do the same with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but give them to me on the eighth day.”²¹⁹

However, Moses tried to replace killing children with killing sheep.²²⁰ Hence at Passover, when the Egyptians’ firstborn were killed, he told the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb instead. But a memory of the old ways is preserved to this day, in Christianity. The central event of Christianity is where God sacrifices his firstborn son, Jesus, as a payment for sin.

²¹⁶ e.g. Judges 11:29-31 (sacrificing a child to Yahweh)

²¹⁷ Ezekiel 20:25-26

²¹⁸ Micah 6:6-7

²¹⁹ Exodus 22:29-30. See also Exodus 13:1-2

²²⁰ Yah-Moses ended human sacrifice: Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 4:XVI

How many children were sacrificed?

Genesis says that Abraham did not kill Isaac. But he showed that he was ready to do it. Acceptance of child sacrifice probably entered the Hebrew religion with Abraham. Greek historians say the statue that burned child sacrifices was called Cronus: another name for Abraham (as we will see).

Estimates of the scale of child sacrifice in Canaan vary from large numbers to zero.²²¹ Given that parents have evolved to do anything to prevent their children from dying, the true numbers were probably low.

And before we judge them too harshly, modern “advanced” nations still kill children in wars, but we are less discriminating and more violent.²²²



Image: Gaza girl killed by Israeli forces in the Israeli assault on Gaza Strip January 8-9, 2009. Day 14 of the assault. Al Jazeera, CCA-3.0 <http://cc.aljazeera.net/node/28>

²²¹ We mostly know about it from enemies who needed “dead babies” as an excuse to start a war. For example, the Romans needed a reason to destroy their great rival Carthage, so they spoke of how Carthaginians killed babies. The Israelites needed a reason to kill their rival Canaanites, so they spoke of how Canaanites sacrificed children to Moloch. In modern times, America justified the 1991 invasion of Iraq by saying that Iraqis threw babies out of incubators. This claim, the famous “Nayirah testimony”, was false. In 2024 the Gaza war was justified by claiming that Palestinians beheaded 40 babies. Again the claim was false. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2024/04/03/40-beheaded-babies-the-itinerary-of-a-rumor-at-the-heart-of-the-information-battle-between-israel-and-amas_6667274_8.html ; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/21/october-7-forensic-analysis-shows-hamas-abuses-many-false-israeli-claims> Archaeology shows that the Phoenicians did cremate babies in special cemeteries, but the remains include stillborn children, so those (at least) were not killed: they died of natural causes.

²²² Their throats were cut, so each child was dead before the body was presented to the Moloch statue for burning. (Plutarch, *De superstitione*, chapter 13). In contrast, modern wars burn children alive, starve children to death, and kill children slowly with painful but easily preventable diseases. This is not accidental, as snipers also shoot children in the head. At the time of writing (October 2024) the West is supplying money and weapons for killing children in Gaza. Our actions support bombing, burning refugees in their tents, preventing food deliveries, and destroying hospitals.

Abraham was Cronus

To understand the Hurrian records of Abraham we first need to understand the story of Cronus.

The Sibylline Oracles are ancient books that claim to preserve the records of the ancient Sibyls. The Sibyls were female prophets who guided Rome in all its big decisions. The longest and most important Sibylline Oracle is the third one. It includes a description of life after the Tower of Babel. It then describes the great patriarch who arose ten generations after the Flood. “Ten generations after the Flood” is familiar shorthand for the time of Abraham.²²³ So the great patriarch who lived “ten generations after the flood” is Abraham.



But when the oracle comes to the tenth generation after the Flood, it refers to Cronus. Then, instead of dividing the world between Shem, Ham and Japheth, the oracle divides the world between Cronus, Titan and Iapetus. But Titan means the old lands before the new generation of gods: also known as Ham.²²⁴ And Iapetus is the Greek form of “Japheth”.

These details may be from the Babylonian historian Berossus. The full text is lost, but we know that sometime after the Tower of Babel a conflict arose between Cronus and “Titan”²²⁵ (the old lands, in this case Ur²²⁶). We also know that Berossus described someone who sounded like Abraham “ten generations after the flood” *but did not name him Abraham*.²²⁷

²²³ See for example Ginsberg’s Legends of the Jews: “Ten generations there were from Noah to Abraham”. This is notable because there were also ten generations from Adam to Noah.

²²⁴ See the commentary on Genesis 9 and the division of the lands

²²⁵ [After describing the Tower of Babel as in Genesis] “... *who till that time had all spoken the same language: and a war arose between Cronus and Titan. The place in which they built the tower is now called Babylon...*” - Eusebius, Preparation for the Gospel book 9, see also George Syncellus “Chronography,” part 44, Eusebius’ Chronicon part. 13.

²²⁶ See the commentary on Genesis 9:18-27: Ham, Canaan and the rise of Sargon

²²⁷ “*Berossus mentions our father Abraham without naming him, when he says thus: “In the tenth generation after the Flood, there was among the Chaldeans a man righteous and great, and skilful in the celestial science.”*” = Josephus, Antiquities, 1.158

The name Cronus

Cronus means “eternal”, meaning the patterns and cycles that never change. For example, the sun always rises, spring always follows winter. It is closely related to the word “chronus” meaning time that changes.²²⁸

A clock measures chronus (chronology), because the time is always changing. Father Time is represented as Cronus with his sickle, eternally cycling from old to young again.



Image: Frances Brundage, 1910, out of copyright.

Cronus (Kronos) may be from the word Kur.²²⁹ E-Kur is the home of the gods, so has the connotation of eternity. Yah and El-Shaddai (the names of the God of Abraham) and the name Abraham,²³⁰ all suggest “eternity” or “father of the gods”, like Cronus.

²²⁸ The difference can be seen in Pindar’s Olympian 10. See “Khronos, Cronos, and the Cronion Hill” by Maria Pavlou. <https://research-bulletin.chs.harvard.edu/2014/08/22/khronos-cronos-and-the-cronion-hill/> Pavlou does not say her work is proof, but consider how Abram, Abraham and all the names of his god all refer to cycles of rebirth.

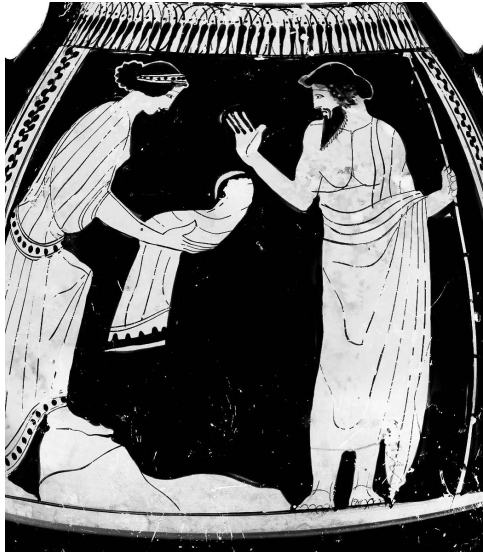
²²⁹ Because “Kur” is the common feature of both Kronos and Kumarbi (the older name for Kronos). Kumarbi means “he of Kumar”. Kumar could be kum-ar (to pile up stones) or it could be “Kur-Mar”: “Mar” was Hurrian for “to kill”. Cronus (Kronos) killed the old religion of Kur by castrating Uranus. As for Cronus, the “-us” is just a grammatical ending, which leaves “Kron”. The “-on” ending was a natural part of the morphology of certain masculine names, hence Jason, Orion, Typhon, etc. Then Kron could be “Kur-on”, “man of Kur”. This is all speculation, but the important point is that the heart of both Kumarbi and Kronos is the syllable Kur, the eternal land.

²³⁰ “Ya” (the moon with its eternal cycles), “I Am That I Am”, “El Shaddai” (the goddess of suckling infants). Abram means “exalted father”, Abraham is “father of nations”.

Cronus for beginners

Here is the story of Cronus from Hesiod and later Greek writers:

1. Cronus is the son of Earth (Gaia) and Heaven (Uranus). That is, he is one of the original inhabitants of the land. Cronus leads the “Titans” (“white Earth”), ancient people of the soil.
2. He learns that he is destined to be overthrown by one of his children.
3. To prevent this, Cronus overthrows Heaven, with the help of Earth: he castrates Heaven using a sickle. So Cronus becomes ruler of all.
4. Cronus then swallows five of his children (gods of agriculture, wealth, home, motherhood and seafaring²³¹) so they cannot overthrow him.
5. Cronus’ wife Rhea hides the last child in Crete, to protect him.
6. Rhea gives Cronus a Zeus-shaped stone. So he does not suspect.
7. Now grown up, Zeus forces Cronus to regurgitate his siblings. They defeat Cronus and the Titans.



Rhea gives Cronus a stone that looks like baby Zeus. Image an ancient Greek vase at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Public domain image (according to Wikimedia)

²³¹ Demeter, Pluto/Hades, Hestia, Hera, and Poseidon. For more about Demeter and Pluto/Hades, see the companion to this book, on Atlantis.

Cronus and Abraham: the same story

Abraham appeared at the same time and place as Cronus,²³² with the same story:

1. Like Cronus, Abraham was the son of Earth (“Adam”, meaning the people of the soil) and Heaven (Terah, meaning the spirit or breath of God²³³).
2. Like Cronus, Abraham foresaw that his children would destroy him. Abraham meant “high father”. He was patriarch of the children of Adam, so was high father” of all the tribes. He was based at Ur, up to 1996 BC. This was when Ur fell, attacked by the other tribes. So his “children” destroyed his civilisation and his future.
3. Like Cronus, Abraham had a plan to castrate heaven using a sickle. Heaven was the ancient home of the gods: the lands controlled by Harran. The sickle was the symbol of agriculture: Abraham’s job was to spread settled agriculture.²³⁴ Heaven was a threat because it produced strong semi-nomadic warriors like the Gutians. If Abraham could persuade Harran to adopt settled agriculture, they would become allies of Ur, with similar values and dependent on Ur. Abraham would remove Harran’s ability to produce Gutian children.



²³² The lands around Harran, between 2000 and 1700 BC. (The Hurrian version dates to 1700 BC or earlier.) Abraham “died” in 1821 BC, but he is a composite character and the story is about the rise of Jacob (Zeus) who was active around 1700 BC.

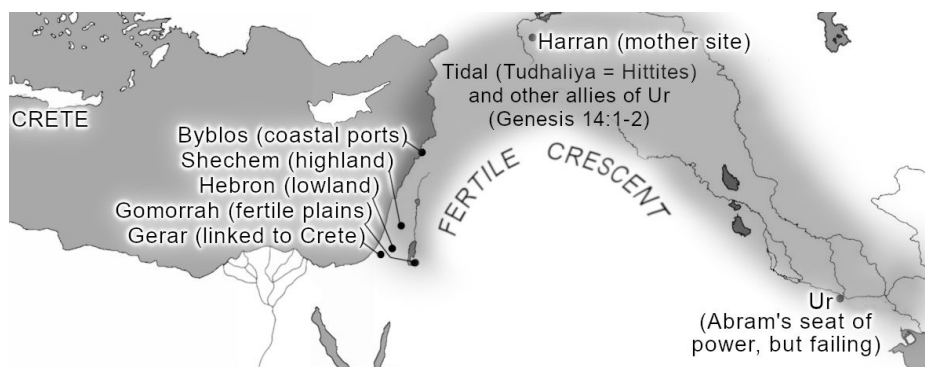
²³³ See the discussion of Terah and the religion of the ibex.

²³⁴ Abraham was repeatedly told that he could settle the land. To show his ownership he named the southern oasis “Beersheba” meaning “well of the oath” - an agreement about owning the land. He planted an “esel” there. The word only appears in two other places: Saul, the first king of the land, later held court under an “esel”, and his bones were buried under one (1 Samuel 22:6, 31:13). Most translations say it is a grove of tamarisk trees, or an orchard. The Septuagint says it meant a field under tillage: settled agriculture. The oasis of Beersheba marked the southern edge of agricultural land before the desert. The tamarisk tree resists salt and is often used to prevent desertification: that is, they turn deserts into soil for farming. Abraham was based on the desert beyond Beersheba, so his ability to turn the desert into farming land may have been how he impressed the local people.

4. Like Cronus, Abraham absorbed five children back into his system. That is, he absorbed five regions back into control of the mother city, Ur. Those five regions were:

- (1) The ancient lands around Harran, where Abraham stayed for decades.
- (2) The northern Levant (then controlled by Qatna: either Damascus or Byblos²³⁵).
- (3) Highland Canaan: its capital Shechem plus Bethel, Ai and Salem.
- (4) Lowland Canaan: Abraham stayed at Hebron (Mamre) for some time.
- (5) The plains around the Dead Sea: Sodom and Gomorrah.

The first half of Abraham's story (Genesis 13-19) is about his attempts to make alliances with these five groups. They roughly correspond to the five gods swallowed by Cronus.²³⁶



²³⁵ Abraham came from the north (Harran) and his job was to settle Canaan, so he would not immediately give up and become a nomad in the deserts far to the south. Abraham said that Eliezer of Damascus would inherit his wealth (Genesis 15:2), suggesting that Damascus was his base for a while. Josephus records how Nicolaus of Damascus, in the fourth book of his *History of the World*, wrote "*Abraham reigned at Damascus*" before later moving south to Canaan. Sanchuniathon said Cronus became king of Byblos (see the later review of the 1200 BC version of the story). Byblos is on the coast, and Damascus is 80km away inland (as the crow flies). They were both in the region controlled by Qatna c.2000 BC

²³⁶ * Harran: motherhood (Hera), as Abraham's family went to Harran to get mothers for their people, and Harran links back to Eden with its matriarchy.

* Byblos: seafaring (Poseidon).

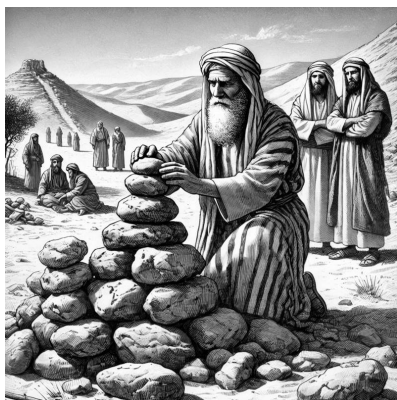
* Shechem and Salem: power or wealth (Pluto).

* Hebron/Mamre: the "oaks of Mamre" or "oak of Ogygia" was named for being a very ancient site. So this may have been the oldest site in Canaan: the home (Hestia).

* Sodom and Gomorrah: agriculture (Demeter). These are well-watered plains, ideal for agriculture. "Gomorrah" or "Amara" means "to bind up" (e.g. gathering corn) and is related to "omer" (a sheaf of grain or unit of measure) and "amir" (a row of fallen grain). ("Sodom" is from "sadam", to burn, and may refer to burning to clear a field, or may be because of the tar pits that surrounded the city). This may explain why Ur was keen to destroy those cities unless they submitted entirely: they were in direct competition with Ur's agricultural system.

5. Like Cronus, Abraham had a sixth child, who hid in Crete. The second half of Abraham's story is about his attempts to ally with Gerar, a city of immigrants from Crete,²³⁷ with many links to Crete.²³⁸
6. Like Cronus, Abraham was given a stone by his wife in the shape of Zeus. "Zeus" means "deus" or "the god": the supreme god. Abraham's god, Yah, lived in places marked by piles of stones (e.g., Bethel and Hebron.) These stones show the presence of God: they are god-shaped.

When Abraham made his alliance with Gerar then his wife gave him an heir, Isaac. Abraham built an altar of stones to sacrifice Isaac to gain the approval of the gods. Abraham thought he was following the gods. He did not know that anything was wrong.



7. The sacrifice by Cronus sounds just like Abraham and Isaac:
"Kronos then, whom the Phoenicians call Elus, who was king of the country ... had by a nymph of the country named Anobret an only begotten son, whom they on this account called ledud, the only begotten being still so called among the Phoenicians; and when very great dangers from war had beset the country, he arrayed his son in royal apparel, and prepared an altar, and sacrificed him."
8. Like Cronus, Abraham found that his last child turned against him. Isaac produced Jacob. Instead of being loyal to the god of Abraham, Jacob fought against Abraham's gods. Jacob worshipped the bull, the god of Crete. The other children of Ur (Salem, Hebron, etc.) broke away from the gods of Abraham and sided with Jacob. They fought a war against Abraham's heir Isaac, and defeated him. The bull god of Crete triumphed. He claimed ownership of the moon god, Yah, and made him like the bull god. Abraham was defeated.

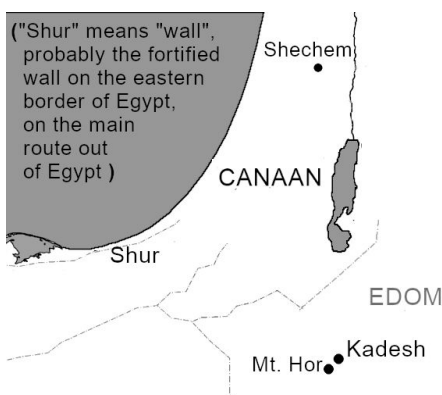
²³⁷ Genesis 26:1, Gerar was "Philistine": Hebrew "pelisti" or "immigrant". They came from Crete (Amos 9:7). The term "Philistine" was the name used after 1200 BC, but archaeology shows the same Cretan influence before that, in Abraham's era.

²³⁸ Archaeology, DNA and linguistics links Gerar (probably Tell Haror) to Crete. For example, a sherd from 1600 BC contains writing from Minoan Crete.

The war between Abraham and Jacob

The Bible uses the phrase “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”, to suggest that they are as one. But the facts speak for themselves: they were deadly enemies.

Abraham followed the gods of the ancient nomads: the moon god Yah, and the ibex (Terah). Abraham left city life in Mesopotamia to become a nomadic herder living in the semi-arid land between Shur and Kadesh. That is, Abraham rejected the urging of the priests of Yah from Ur. They wanted him to conquer the whole fertile crescent. But Abraham wanted to be a nomadic herder. His first heir was Ishmael, another nomad. The intended heir of Isaac was Esau, another nomad.



Abraham wanted to be on good terms with his neighbours. He tried to stop the gods (i.e. the priests of Ur) from destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. He allied himself with all the other lands. When he had a disagreement with Gerar over water, he made peace and they came to a friendly agreement.²³⁹

Contrast this peaceful nomadic life with the lives of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Isaac became a settled farmer. When this caused another conflict with Gerar over water, Isaac did not make peace. He focused on becoming more powerful than Gerar instead.²⁴⁰ Isaac's son was Jacob (meaning “heel grabber”, i.e. “usurper”), and he took the title “Isra-el”, meaning “fights against gods”. He was ready to kill Esau to get the birthright. His son Joseph had a dream that he would rule all the other tribes, and used his cunning to become the de facto ruler of Egypt, enslaving all the people of Egypt using debt.

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph wanted everything that Abraham hated. They became deadly enemies of Abraham's true heirs, the desert Ishmaelites and Edomites. Isaac, Jacob and Joseph claimed to follow Abraham, but their actions showed that they were his enemy. Bible editors, acting for kings, interpreted Abraham as an aggressive conqueror like them.

²³⁹ Genesis 21:22-32

²⁴⁰ Genesis 26:12-22

Jacob (Isra-el) worshipped the bull, god of Crete

While Abraham worshipped the Ibex, Isra-el (“fight against gods”) worshipped the bull, a symbol of raw power. So did Minoan Crete²⁴¹ and many other peoples. The bull, a symbol of violent change, was the opposite of the moon, a symbol of peaceful eternity. Abraham worshipped Yah, the moon god. Isra-el pretended to worship Yah, but just gave Yah’s name to their real god, the storm god Baal Hadad, whose symbol was the bull.²⁴²

Israelite temple priests cleansed themselves in a great brass bath resting on twelve bulls.²⁴³ Aaron, the Israelite high priest, created a golden calf as a symbol of Isra-el’s gods. Moses forbade this, but even Moses had to defend the calf makers.²⁴⁴ A close reading of Judges 6 suggests that a golden calf was set on the hillside by the Israelites, and the high priest’s metal breastplate probably had the image of a calf.²⁴⁵ Jeroboam filled Isra-el with golden calves.²⁴⁶ Jerusalem condemned this, but only because he wanted to concentrate all worship in Jerusalem.



Image: 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia, out of copyright

²⁴¹ The Minoans were famous for bull jumping, and the minotaur (Minoan-taurus)

²⁴² See the chapter on Moses, the pages on the Baal Cycle.

²⁴³ 1 Kings 7:23–26; 2 Chronicles 4:2–5

²⁴⁴ Exodus 32:11–14

²⁴⁵ “*Bull-Worship in Israel*”, by Leroy Waterman examines this in great detail. [jstor.org/stable/528741](https://www.jstor.org/stable/528741)

²⁴⁶ 1 Kings 12

Isra-el conquered Egypt

Abraham wanted peaceful coexistence, living as nomadic herders. But Joseph (his name means “to increase”) had big dreams. In 1728 BC, he had a dream where the sun (chief god of Egypt), the moon (chief god of Abraham) and the stars (the tribes of Canaan) all bowed down to worship him.



He achieved his goal by 1689 BC, doing the opposite of what Abraham wanted: he used settled agriculture to enslave people.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ Joseph had another dream about using settled agriculture and taxation as a way to take essential resources away, then when a famine hit he would make everyone sell their land or die of starvation. Much like how his father Jacob got his birthright from Esau. Joseph sold the idea to the Pharaoh, who loved it. This gave Joseph power in Pharaoh's court, and bit by bit, Jacob pushed Pharaoh out of his own land. For details, see the chapters on the end of Genesis and the start of Exodus.

Abraham and Jacob as gods

In ancient times, great rulers were remembered as gods.²⁴⁸ This was only natural in a polytheistic society. However, the editors of the Bible, around 500 BC, were very keen to present their ancestors as monotheists. This was so that people would only worship Yahweh, the god of the city of Jerusalem, and therefore give all power to that city.²⁴⁹ But archaeology, and clues in the Bible, reveal that Israelites used to be polytheists.²⁵⁰

Readers may still struggle to think of Abraham as a god but think of him like Jesus. Jesus lived as an ordinary man, but what he did was so extraordinary that later generations thought of him as the creator of the world. Abraham was the same. Abraham was so important that some Jewish legends say that the world was created for Abraham:

*“all the generations [of humans] provoked [God’s] wrath, until Abraham our father came and received the reward of all of them. ... Yea, more, **the world itself had been created for the sake of his merits.**”*²⁵¹

*“[Terah] was permitted to see his son Abraham rule as king over the whole world.”*²⁵²

As for Jacob as a god, here is a Hyksos scarab showing a Hyksos pharaoh as the weather god Baal. The first and greatest Hyksos leader was Jacob, so he would be the greatest Baal of all.



Image: by 'Khruner' based on a scarab found at Tell el-Dab'a, now at the University of Fribourg. CC-BY-SA 4.0

²⁴⁸ Sanchuniathon said so. Also, see Pharaoh, Caesar, Jesus, etc. All lived as mortal men, but were later seen as gods

²⁴⁹ See the chapter on the later Bible for details.

²⁵⁰ See the chapters on Genesis and Moses for details.

²⁵¹ Ginzberg's *"Legends of the Jews"*, under *"Abraham-the Wicked Generations"*

²⁵² Ginzberg's *"Legends of the Jews"*, under *"Abraham Emigrates to Haran"*

The 1200 BC version of the story

Most versions of the Cronus story come from Hesiod, around 700 BC. But we have two much older versions, from Sanchuniathon and Harran. These are even closer to the Genesis account of Abraham.

Sanchuniathon, a Phoenician historian from Byblos, wrote his version sometime before 1200 BC. Here are the highlights. For how this describes Abraham, see the footnotes.

'Uranus, having succeeded to his father's rule,²⁵³ takes to himself in marriage his sister Ge [Earth],²⁵⁴ and gets by her four sons, Elus who is also Cronus,²⁵⁵ and Baetylus,²⁵⁶ and Dagon who is Siton²⁵⁷, and Atlas.²⁵⁸ ... Also by other wives Uranus begat a numerous progeny; on which account Ge was angry,²⁵⁹ and from jealousy began to reproach Uranus, so that they even separated from each other.

'But Uranus, after he had left her, used to come upon her with violence, whenever he chose, and consort with her; and go away again²⁶⁰ ...

And when Cronus [son of Uranus] had advanced to manhood, he, with the counsel and help of Hermes Trismegistus²⁶¹ (who was his secretary), repels his father Uranus, and avenges his mother. ... Cronus made a sickle and a spear of iron.²⁶² Then Hermes talked magical words to the allies of Cronus,²⁶³ and inspired them with a desire of fighting against Uranus on behalf of Ge.²⁶⁴ And thus Cronus engaged in

²⁵³ Abraham's father Terah ("ibex", the symbol of nomads) and grandfather Nahor (breath of god) both refer to spirits (gods) associated with high places (heaven). Both are the ruling patriarchal figures of the time.

²⁵⁴ Adam meant Earth, and they originally worshipped the female goddess Inanna (Eve).

²⁵⁵ Elus: El, "the god", i.e. the high father (Ab-ram), i.e. the eternal one (Cronus).

²⁵⁶ Baetylus is "Bethel", house of gods. Bethel is where Abraham first made his home in Canaan. Bethel is also where Jacob had his dream of conquest.

²⁵⁷ Sidon, i.e. Phoenicia (Canaan).

²⁵⁸ i.e. the Atlas Mountains: the Libyans (Libya meant all of Africa west of Egypt). For details, see the companion to this book, about the legends of Atlantis.

²⁵⁹ The Earth goddess wants just one religion: the religion of Mother Earth. But cities each have different gods, which take people away from the ancient ways.

²⁶⁰ Settled agriculture is violent to the Earth: city people take what they want from nature, ploughing up the land and enslaving animals, and have no respect for its ways.

²⁶¹ Hermes = The Egyptian god Thoth, god of wisdom and magical ideas, linked to the moon (Abraham's god, Yah). Egypt first pioneered settled agriculture (the Qadan people c.16,000 BC).

²⁶² Settled agriculture and warfare.

²⁶³ Full writing, from c.3100 BC.

²⁶⁴ Agriculture claims to better understand the ways of the land (Ge).

war, and drove Uranus from his government, and succeeded to the kingdom.²⁶⁵ ...

After this Cronus builds a wall round his own dwelling, and founds the first city, Byblos in Phoenicia.²⁶⁶ ...

Soon after this he became suspicious of his own brother Atlas, and, with the advice of Hermes,²⁶⁷ threw him into a deep pit and buried him.²⁶⁸ At about this time the descendants of the Dioscuri [sailors] put together rafts and ships, and made voyages; and, being cast ashore near Mount Cassius [Phoenicia], consecrated a temple there.²⁶⁹ ...

And Cronus, having a son Sadidus,²⁷⁰ dispatched him with his own sword, because he regarded him with suspicion, and deprived him of life, thus becoming the murderer of his son. ...

And when Uranus knew it, he sent Eimarmene and Hora²⁷¹ with other allies on an expedition against Cronus. and these Cronus won over to his side and kept with him.²⁷² Further, he says, the god Uranus devised the Baetylia, having contrived to put life into stones.²⁷³ ...

²⁶⁵ Ur (which relied on agriculture) defeated the Gutian nomads (who followed the stars), creating the short-lived Third Dynasty of Ur (c.2100-2000 BC).

²⁶⁶ Details like this show that Sanchuniathon was probably reliable. For a long time it was thought that Byblos was a relatively young city, until archaeology showed that it was one of the very oldest. It is also possible that “founding the city” was equivalent to having a charter due to its new improved walls, and the settlement existed long before Cronus (Abraham).

²⁶⁷ Cronus then got ideas from Egypt (Hermes is also known as Thoth, god of knowledge, linked to the moon). So he rejected the sky gods of the city, just as Abraham changed his mind about letting the king marry Sarai.

²⁶⁸ Probably a reference to the great earthquake that buried Tartarus in 1325 BC. See the book on Atlantis for details.

²⁶⁹ “this time” meaning 1325 BC. The great temple of the Phoenicians was at Tyre. Tyre became a Phoenician city around 1200 BC, the time of the Trojan Wars (and of Sanchuniathon). The founding of Tyre, the Trojan Wars and the other events of the Late Bronze Age Collapse can all be traced to secondary results of the fall of Tartarus in 1325 BC (see the book on Atlantis).

²⁷⁰ “Sadid pronounced Shadid reminds us, to digress, of Shaddai. The name Shaddai is a name of God chiefly in Job. Exodus 6:2-3 says it is how God was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” - *Canaanite religion* by Dr M D Magee <http://askwhy.co.uk/judaism/0245CanaaniteReligion.php> We saw elsewhere that Shaddai is the god of suckling children, in the sense that families live forever through having children. When Abraham killed Isaac (or showed he was ready to kill Isaac), he showed that he was ready to abandon El Shaddai. He no longer put his children first: he is now willing to kill his own children if needed, to get power.

²⁷¹ Eimarmene (Heimarmene) was fate or destiny. Hora was natural order.

²⁷² Abraham formed alliances with all the local regions.

²⁷³ I.e. Abraham does not need the grand temples of Ur, A simple pile of stones (the “Bethel”, the house of God) could be a home for the gods. Compare Exodus 20:22-26.

*And Dagon, after he discovered corn and the plough, was called Zeus Arotrios.*²⁷⁴

*[Sanchuniathon then describes how Cronus fights Zeus and his other sons, but cannot defeat them.]*²⁷⁵

*'And in the thirty-second year*²⁷⁶ *of his power and kingdom Elus, that is Cronus, having waylaid his father Uranus in an inland spot, and got him into his hands, emasculates him near some fountains and rivers.*²⁷⁷ *There Uranus was deified...*

*'Cronus also, in going round the world, gives the kingdom of Attica to his own daughter Athena.*²⁷⁸ *But on the occurrence of a pestilence and mortality Cronus offers his only begotten son [Sadidus] as a whole burnt-offering to his father Uranus, and circumcises himself, compelling his allies also to do the same.*²⁷⁹ ..

That was from Eusebius, quoting Philo of Byblos, who quoted Sanchuniathon. Philo adds this footnote:

*'It was a custom of the ancients in great crises of danger for the rulers of a city or nation, in order to avert the common ruin, to give up the most beloved of their children for sacrifice as a ransom to the avenging daemons; ... Cronus then, whom the Phoenicians call Elus, who was king of the country and subsequently, after his decease, was deified as the star Saturn, had by a nymph of the country named Anobret*²⁸⁰ *an only begotten son, whom they on this account called ledud*²⁸¹*, the only*

²⁷⁴ Zeus ("deus", god) of ploughing ("arotron" from "aroo", to cultivate).

²⁷⁵ The key idea is that Abraham wants a middle way. He rejects the big city ways of Ur. He wants an alliance of Canaanite states, some of which practice agriculture while preserving the best of the old nomadic ways. But Zeus (Baal, god of Isra-el) is more willing to embrace agriculture so is more powerful and ruthless.

²⁷⁶ The death of Uranus (Terah) dates to 1921 BC. So Elus gained power around 1950 BC. This is about when Abraham arrived in Canaan. The Ussher chronology marks this as the start of the third age of the world (after the creation and The Flood). This is when Ur-Ninurta seized the throne in Isin, chief city of Mesopotamia. This is also when Gungunum, an Amorite (i.e. from the northern lands near Harran) was making the nearby city Larsa the more powerful city. Ninurta called himself "son of Iskur", the storm god: equivalent to "son of Demarus/Baal". This emasculated the ancient Sumerian religion: it no longer had power.

²⁷⁷ i.e. priests of Ur, who wanted the ways of Nahor and Terah, were defeated, and were unable to continue their ways in Canaan.

²⁷⁸ See the discussion of the rise of Greece in the 1500s BC.

²⁷⁹ Now we are back to Abraham, the sacrifice of Isaac, and circumcision.

²⁸⁰ anu-BRT, or daughter of the sky god Anu: i.e. the princess of Ur (Sarai).

²⁸¹ This is more evidence that Isaac, Jacob, etc. worshipped Baal Hadad (see the chapter on Exodus, about the Baal Cycle). *"Plainly Yedud [Iedud, the child sacrificed at the end of the story] is Sadid and both are Haddad [Baal Hadad, lord of thunder], the sound of the aspirate or soft guttural "h" being an "s" or an "i" to the Greek ear of whoever really wrote all this*, - *Canaanite religion* by Dr M D Magee <http://askwhy.co.uk/judaism/0245CanaaniteReligion.php>

begotten being still so called among the Phoenicians; and when very great dangers from war had beset the country, he arrayed his son in royal apparel, and prepared an altar, and sacrificed him.'

The 1700 BC version of the story

The Hurrian version of the story dates from close to the time that Jacob (Zeus) defeated Abraham (Cronus).²⁸² The Hurrians call Cronus "Kumarbi", meaning "he of Kumar". In Hurrian, "Kum" means "to pile up", so may refer to piling up stones for an altar. That was the defining feature of Cronus, according to Sanchuniathon: Cronus rejected the religion of large cities and temples, which he felt had corrupted the ancient religion of the hunter-gatherers, and insulted Mother Earth. So Cronus invented a religion for nomads, where a simple pile of stones could become home for the gods. (Alternatively, kumar could mean kur-mar, killer [mar] from the land of Kur, the home of the old gods, i.e. the Titans).



The Hittite version of Kumarbi. He holds his sickle and his father's masculinity in his hands. Image: Zde, CC-B Y-SA-4.0

²⁸² The copies we have are from Hittite times, 1200-1400 BC, but the language and content show that they are just copies of earlier Hurrian stories.

The songs

In ancient times, history was told through epic poetry. The story of Kumarbi was told through several songs, focusing on Kumarbi's battle with his son, the storm god Teshub (the equivalent of Baal Hadad or Zeus).

The “Song of Emergence”²⁸³

This tells of the conflict between Kumarbi and his father, Anu (the sky god: Uranus). Kumarbi hates what Anu is doing, so bites off Anu's genitals, so Anu can create no more gods. In Hesiod's version, Cronus uses a sickle for the same task. Sanchuniathon says he “emasculates” him.

Kumarbi then gives birth to Teshub (the thunder god), who becomes his great rival. These “gods” are probably human representatives of the gods, because the song refers to mentions dates and places. E.g. *“Alalu was king in heaven [i.e., the great temple at Eridu?] and in the ninth year Anu went in battle against Alalu.”* and *“Kumarbi, upset, went to Nippur.”*

After the first part, most of the song is lost or in fragments. But we do have intriguing references to Ea (Enki, Yahweh) and a special coat. This may be important when we look at the Bible's version of the story:

“ Ea [he]ard the words. To him [...] by [mo]uth the messenger [...] who went, [...] the king gave gifts. To him a garment [for his] body [...]. To him a pull-over garment for his chest [...], and an ipantu-garment of silver for the messenger. Around his middle he wind[s X garment].”

The Song of Silver

In this song, Kumarbi allies with “Silver”, his son with a mortal woman. Silver presumably represents wealth. But again Teshub defeats them: neither wealth nor children can defeat Teshub.

The Song of Hedammu

In this song, Kumarbi creates a sea monster to fight Teshub. This sounds like the sea monster in the Baal Cycle of stories (see the chapters about Moses): that monster appears to represent the Phoenician Sea Peoples, enemies of the incoming thunder god Baal Hadad. But again Teshub (Baal Hadad) defeats Cronus.

²⁸³ Sometimes called “The Song of Kumarbi” or “The Song of Birth”. Kumarbi quotes are from *“Gods, Heroes and Monsters: a sourcebook of Greek, Roman and Near Eastern Myths”*, 2nd Edition, edited by Carolina Lopez-Ruiz

The Song of LAMMA

In this song, Kumarbi allies with LAMMA (possibly a god from Carcheish, a region near the Hurrian heartland). But Teshub still defeats him.

The Song of Ullikummi

In this song, Kumarbi allies himself with the sea to create a stone creature called Ulli-kummi (“stone destroyer”) to fight Teshub in the Hurrian heartland. By this time Teshub is the chief god of the Hurrians.

Ullikummi grows on the shoulders of the “Upelluri” (“mountains of Upe”). These mountains are so ancient that they pre-date the creation of heaven and Earth. Ullikummi grows to such an enormous size that his head reaches the sky. He then attacks Teshub’s city but eventually loses.

The story parallels the history of Atlantis, examined in the companion volume to this book. The people of Atlas were more ancient than all other people and were associated with the mountains that reach to the heavens. The Hittite version of the song dates to the end of the Hittite empire (around 1200 BC). In this period the Hittites, along with the Egyptians and other ancient sites, were all being attacked by the Sea Peoples, an alliance that was either led by or included the Libyans (the people of Atlas). When the Song of Ullikummi was written, the stone destroyer from Atlas was still being defeated. This was seen as yet another failure for Kumarbi and another success for Teshub.

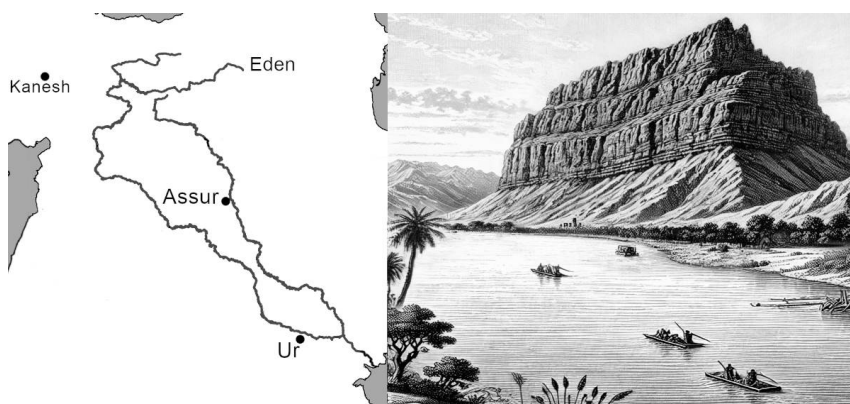


A possible representation of scenes from the Song of Ullikummi on the golden bowl of Hasanlu. Image: [Emtadbir](#), CC-BY-SA-4.0

Abraham, father of Assyria (and Libya)

Josephus tells us that Abraham became a father to Assyria (and Libya).²⁸⁴

Nomadic herders understood the divine power of rocks.²⁸⁵ Rocky outcrops are ideal sites for navigation, gathering and protection. One such site is “Assur”, “the rock”,²⁸⁶ an escarpment on the banks of the River Tigris.



In the period before Abraham left Ur, Assur was the site of a minor city controlled by Ur. But then Ur fell. Assur then began to follow Abraham's principles: relying on long-distance trade and cooperation instead of the

²⁸⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, CHAPTER 15.

*“How The Nation Of The Troglodytes Were Derived From Abraham By Keturah. “The sons of Madian [son of Abraham and Keturah] were Ephas, and Ophren [and others]. Now, for all these sons and grandsons, Abraham contrived to settle them in colonies; and they took possession of Troglodytis, and the country of Arabia the Happy, as far as it reaches to the Red Sea. It is related of this Ophren, that he made war against Libya, and took it, and that his grandchildren, when they inhabited it, called it [from his name] Africa. ... Cleodemus the prophet, who was also called Malchus, who wrote a history of the Jews, ... names three of [the sons of Abraham and Keturah], Apher, [Ephas: in Genesis 25:4: Ephah: darkness] and Surim [in Genesis 25:3: Sur is Ashur], and Japhran [Ophren: in Genesis 25:4 probably Epher]. That from Surim was the land of Assyria denominated; and that from the other two [Apher and Japhran] the country of Africa took its name, because these men were auxiliaries to Hercules, when he fought against Libya and Antaeus; and that Hercules married Aphra's daughter, and of her he begat a son, Diodorus [gift of dio (God)]; and that Sophon [Sophos: wisdom] was his son, from whom that barbarous people called Sophacians were denominated.”*NOTES: The Troglodytes are from Africa, described by Herodotus. “Sur” means “rock”. Hence the city of Tyre (or Sur), built on a large rock. The city of Assur was built on a rocky escarpment in the Tigris that was easy to defend. The Sophacians are the Sufax, the people of North Africa after Antaeus

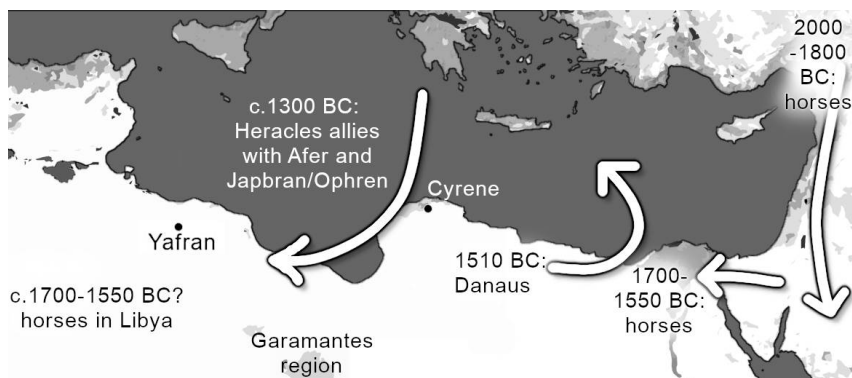
²⁸⁵ See for example the rock of Horeb, Mt Sinai, or Abraham's rock altars.

²⁸⁶ Linguists will point out that the “s” in “sur” is pronounced “ts”, but the “s” in “Aššur” is pronounced “sh”. However, we cannot be precise about the many varying dialects from 2000 BC. We can only be approximate, so we must rely on context instead. The shared context here is the rocky outcrop that made Assur a holy site.

hierarchical centralised power and violence used by Ur.²⁸⁷ Josephus says that Assur became known for an Abrahamic tribe called “surim” (“the rocks”). Assur became the hub of a great trading network stretching from Kanesh to Ur and beyond. Thanks to Abraham’s policies, Assur became Assyria, the next great power in Mesopotamia. When the Abraham era ended in 1821 BC, trade declined and Assur slipped into dictatorship again.²⁸⁸

Abraham, father of Libya

Josephus said that the Abrahamic tribes Afer and Ophren gave their name to Yafran (Yefran) and hence to “Africa”. Yefran appears to be the northern limit of bushmen from further south, from the days when the Sahara was less dry.²⁸⁹ This map, and the timeline that follows, will summarise the history of Abrahamic tribes in Africa.



²⁸⁷ “Unlike in later Assyrian periods, the Assyrian kings of the Old Assyrian period are not thought to have been autocrats (i.e. rulers with sole power), but rather they acted as the stewards of the city’s god, Ashur, and presided over the meetings of the *Ālum* (city assembly), Assur’s main administrative body in this time. The kings in the Old Assyrian period appears to have mainly functioned as the assembly’s executive officers and chairmen ... they were seen as ‘constitutional experts’.” - Wikipedia

²⁸⁸ In the Shamshi-Adad dynasty (1808–1736 BC).

²⁸⁹ Herodotus calls the local people “troglodytes”, nomads of the Sahara who stay in caves where possible, for protection from the heat. Other ancient writers place them in East Africa and throughout the Sahara. Herodotus says they are the fastest runners and have an unusual language made of squeaks, which suggests the click languages of bushmen. Herodotus wrote in the 400s BC, based on older stories, so this may recall the last time that the Sahara could support bushmen. (The rivers stopped flowing around 3000 BC but it was still not as dry as today.)

The Abraham-Libya timeline

Josephus says that Abraham's people helped Libya become a powerful nation, but later fought on the side of the Greeks against the Libyans. Crucially, Libya meant the whole of North Africa west of Egypt. so it included the lands of Atlas. Here is the timeline. For the detailed evidence, see the companion to this book: *"Atlantis: It's All True"*.

* 1996-1821 BC:

In Abraham's time, traders brought horses from Hittite lands to Arabia.

* c.1700-1550 BC:

In the Hyksos era, horses appear in Egypt. Around this time the Garamantes begin using horses and chariots. Josephus says that Abrahamic tribes from Arabia settled the land of the Troglodytes, which Herodotus places in Africa, just south of the mountains of Atlas. Presumably, they brought Arabian horses and chariots to the Garamantes. So Abraham's people supplied war horses and war chariots to Libya (Atlas).

* 1500s BC:

The Libyans ruler Danaus was an uneasy ally of Egypt, and then he became a ruler in Greece. This may help to explain why some Libyans (i.e., Atlanteans) later supported Greece. This leads to a ten-year war wherein elite city people take over Greece (the Titanomachy, see below).

* c.1500s -1300s BC:

A matriarchal Amazigh (Berber) tribe used horses to conquer much of northwest Africa. The Greeks came into contact with this tribe, and must have lost badly. Because they remember the tribe as unbeatable Gorgons, the most terrifying enemy the Greeks had ever faced.²⁹⁰

* The 1300s BC:

By now, north Africa was known as the home of thousands of mounted warriors. Libyans in Cyrene (near Egypt) were so confident that they challenged travellers to wrestle, and routinely defeated and killed them.²⁹¹ One source refers to "troops of nomad horsemen" who supported the king.²⁹²

* 1325 BC:

A natural disaster crippled the civilisation of the Atlas Mountains. This gave the Greeks the confidence to attack.

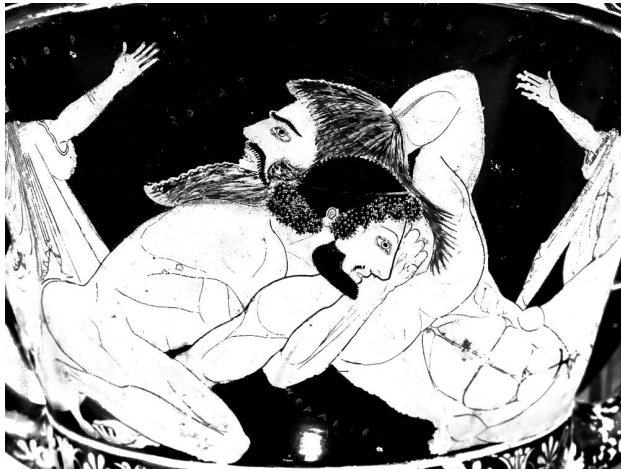
²⁹⁰ See the companion to this book, *"Atlantis: It's All True"*

²⁹¹ The story of Antaeus, king of Irasa, near Cyrene

²⁹² Pindar, Pythian Ode 9: after Alexidamos won the king's daughter by being the fastest runner, he "led her through the troops of Nomad horsemen."

*** c.1300 BC:**

The Greeks attacked Libya. This is remembered as the story of Heracles defeating the giant Antaeus, king of Libya.²⁹³ Hercules can be dated to around 1300 BC.²⁹⁴ Josephus says the Greeks had help from Abraham's descendants Afer and Ophren.



Hercules wrestles Antaeus, on a red-figured calyx krater, 515–510 BC. Image: Jastrow, CC-BY-3.0

*** After 1300 BC:**

The Greeks and later the Romans gradually settled more of northeast Africa, though Carthage prevented them from settling the Atlas Mountains. Carthage and the Atlas Mountains became the archetypal enemies of Greece.

So Josephus records how Abraham's people gave the latest war technology to the people of Atlas, and this led the people of Atlas to defeat the people of Zeus (the Greeks) for many years. But finally, some of these same tribes switched sides and helped Zeus, who was then able to defeat Atlas. This all matches the story of Cronus and the Titanomachy.

²⁹³ The story of Hercules defeating the powerful wrestler Antaeus (meaning “set against”), who was king of Irsaa in Cyrene. See Pindar, Pythian Ode 9 (5th century BC). The story of lifting Antaeus above the ground appears to be invented by Ovid, almost 500 years later. By then the Greek world had pushed much further west, so Pliny relocates the story to the new western border, the river Lixos in Morocco.

²⁹⁴ See the Parian Chronicle and my book about Atlantis. Tartarus flooded in 1325 BC, and that gave Greece (Thebes, city of Hercules) an excuse to invade.

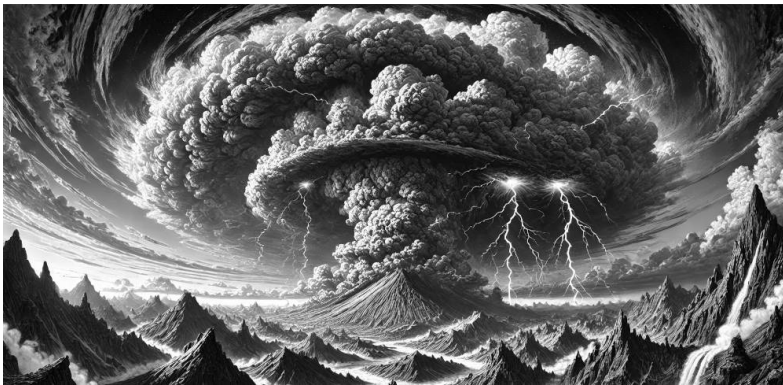
1562 BC: Typhon

Hesiod (the most famous source for Cronus) writes of Typhon as the final stage of the Cronus story. It seems to refer to the Thera eruption of 1562 BC.²⁹⁵ It caused a tidal wave that devastated Greece and destroyed the old records.²⁹⁶ Most people did not see the volcano directly, but they saw the smoke and destructive winds. They called the wind “Typhon” (from “*typhein*”, “to smoke”), a name that became our word “typhoon”:

“...from under the brows of his eyes in his marvellous heads flashed fire, ... and the earth around resounded terribly and the wide heaven above, and the sea and Ocean's streams and the nether parts of the earth. ... heat took hold on the dark-blue sea, through the thunder and lightning, ... and the scorching winds ... The whole earth seethed, and sky and sea: and the long waves raged along the beaches round and about, at the rush of the deathless gods: and there arose an endless shaking. ... A great part of huge earth was scorched by the terrible vapour and melted ... And from Typhoeus come boisterous winds ... Some rush upon the misty sea and work great havoc among men with their evil, raging blasts... filling [fields] with dust and cruel uproar.”²⁹⁷

Egypt also recorded the wind, the noise, and great damage to buildings:

The gods (made?) the sky come with a tempest of (rain?); it caused darkness in the Western region; the sky was unleashed, without ... more than the roar of the crowd; ... was powerful... on the mountains more than the turbulence of the cataract which is at Elephantine. ... all that existed had been annihilated...”²⁹⁸



²⁹⁵ For the date, see the discussion of the plagues of Egypt. The Parian Chronicle refers to it in relation to the temple of Zeus in 1528, but that may be the *recovery* from Typhon

²⁹⁶ Plato's Timaeus talks about these periodic cataclysms destroying records.

²⁹⁷ Hesiod's Theogony, 820-880. Hesiod places this *after* the Titanomachy, but that is an easy mistake when writing 800 years later when the Typhon flooding destroyed records

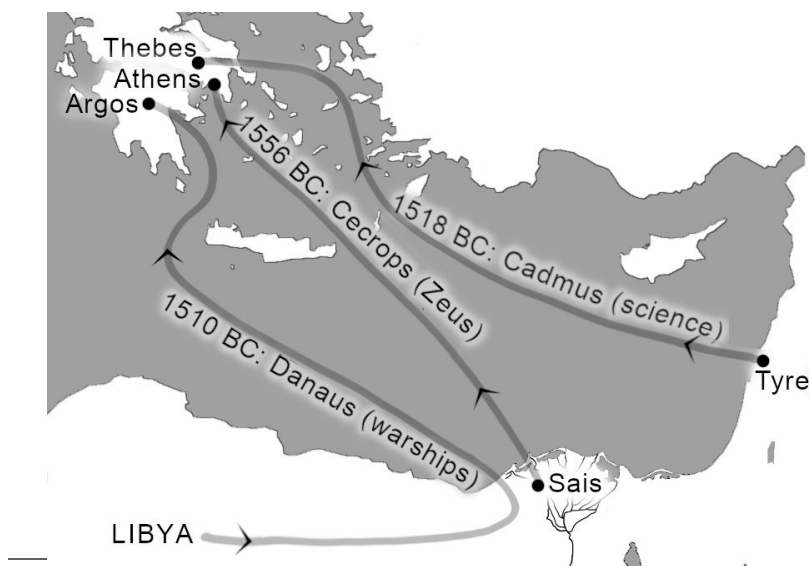
²⁹⁸ Translation from therafoundation.org via Wikipedia

1556 BC: Yahweh (as Baal) became Zeus

In the 1560s BC, after the destruction of Thera, the Egyptians began to drive the Hyksos (Israelites²⁹⁹) out of Egypt. In 1556 BC,³⁰⁰ a Hyksos(?)³⁰¹ ruler called Cecrops left Egypt for Athens. He became the first king of Athens and marked the start of Greek history as we know it.³⁰² Cecrops was the first to build a temple to Olympian Zeus.³⁰³ So Zeus probably became a major god thanks to a Hyksos ruler: an Israelite.

“Zeus” just means “deus”, “the god”. This particular Zeus was the thunder god. Cecrops came from Hyksos-controlled Sais, where the thunder god was Baal Hadad, the chief god of the Hyksos. So Zeus was originally Baal Hadad, the chief god of the Israelites.

Canaan then sent Cadmus in 1518, and Libya sent Danaus in 1510. Between them, they created classical Greek culture, based on the conflict between Abraham (Cronus) and Jacob (for Zeus).



²⁹⁹ See the chapter on the Exodus

³⁰⁰ According to Ussher, citing Diodorus Siculus

³⁰¹ He came from Sais on the Nile Delta, in the Hyksos heartland.

³⁰² Modern scholars calculate the Parian Cecrops to 1581 BC. This depends on various assumptions about how King X relates to King Y. Eusebius had access to more texts, so his date of 1556 is likely to be more accurate. Modern views on later Parian dates are likely to be better, as they are cross-referenced with more ancient texts.

³⁰³ In 1528 BC, according to the Parian Chronicle. Hyginus' *Fabulae* 225 says "Pelagus son of Triopas built the first temple to Olympian Jupiter in Arcadia." Pelagus was a brother of Agenor, a close relative of Danaus, so the date fits.

1518-1508 BC: The Titanomachy

In 1518 BC Cadmus the Canaanite entered Greece.³⁰⁴ He brought the Phoenician alphabet, the secrets of metalwork, agriculture, and science in general.³⁰⁵ Cadmus became the first Greek hero and the first king of Thebes. Thebes produced many of the greatest Greek heroes, including Heracles, Oedipus, and Dionysus. Thebes and Troy were the two greatest cities of the heroic age.

In 1510 BC³⁰⁶ Danaus sailed the Penteconter (a ship with fifty oars) from Egypt to Greece in 1510 BC. That is, he brought important military technology. Cadmus and Danaus were probably the two most important figures in the birth of classical Greece.

This is starting to look very much like the Titanomachy (“Titan War”) described by Hesiod:

- The eruption of Thera caused coastal flooding that destroyed the city culture and left the land to shepherds.³⁰⁷ Shepherds are the original people of the land, meaning that they are the Titans.
- After the Thera flood, city-based civilisation began again under king Deucalion. This created a natural tension between the nomadic shepherds (the Titans) and those who wanted to be kings (followers of Zeus)
- Deucalion was king of Phthia, by Mt Othrys. Shepherds are natural rulers of the mountains. Mt Othrys became the Titan stronghold. Meanwhile, the kings claimed the gods of the highest mountains in the land.
- In this period the people of Zeus felt threatened by the power of the nomadic people of Libya (especially the Atlas Mountains).
- Over ten years (from Cadmus in 1518 to just after Danaus in 1510) the Zeus people took control. The key to success was Danaus. Danaus was a Libyan, an insider. And had ships with 50 rowers. The Theogony calls them monsters with 50 heads and 100 arms. It says Cronus was ashamed of them (Abraham did not approve of city-scale weaponry) but Zeus made use of them, despite their enemy origins.

In short, Abraham and Cronus are the same story, and this is real history.

³⁰⁴ These dates are from the Parian Chronicle, backed up by Ussher, who used various ancient sources.

³⁰⁵ hellenicaworld.com/Greece/Mythology/en/Cadmus.html

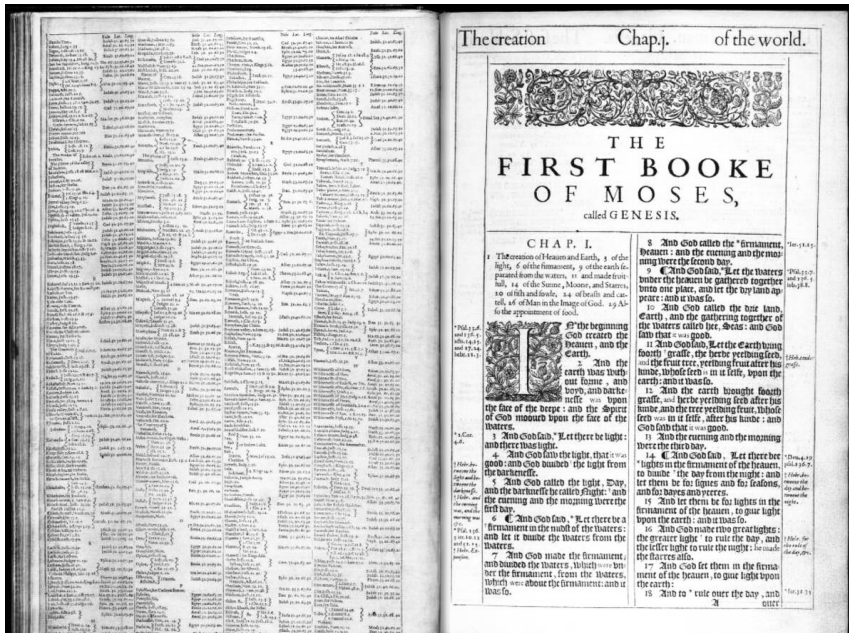
³⁰⁶ according to the Parian Chronicle, our most reliable source

³⁰⁷ “[When] the gods purge the earth with a deluge of water, the survivors in your country are herdsmen and shepherds who dwell on the mountains” - Plato, Timaeus

Exodus 1: Moses

Moses is the main figure of the Bible. Arguably he was the most important figure in all history, as he showed us how to fix the world.

The first five books of the Bible are the books of Moses. Later books appeal to Moses as their authority. In older Bibles, the name Moses was often printed larger than the name of the book. The Bible is about Moses.



These are the four major dates in the story of Moses:

1. 1571 BC: his birth, then he grew up as a prince of Egypt
2. 1531 BC: Moses left Egypt, and allied with the nomads of Midian
3. 1491 BC: the Exodus, then Moses gave the law
4. 1451 BC: Moses sent the people into the Promised Land

Each date is confirmed by archaeology.

(As usual, "Moses" refers both to the leader and his descendants.)

The Pharaoh mystery

Exodus raises major questions. Why do the dates in the life of Moses match the dates of similar events in the life of the Pharaohs Yah-Moses (Ahmose) and Thoth-Moses (Thutmose)? And why did the Israelites need to change their sacred religion? Why would they adopt new laws, new ceremonies and new institutions?

Let's start with a minor question that unlocks all the other mysteries: why is the Pharaoh who opposed Moses not named in the book of Exodus?

In every other case, when a Pharaoh's personality matters, then they were named:³⁰⁸ e.g. Shishak (who plundered the temple),³⁰⁹ Neco (who killed Josiah, deposed Jehoahaz and installed Jehoakim),³¹⁰ Hophra (who tried to help Jerusalem but failed),³¹¹ Teharqa (who helped Hezekiah against Sennacherib),³¹² So (to whom Hoshea paid tribute),³¹³ and Zerah (who fought Asa).³¹⁴ They were all named. So why is the most important Pharaoh of all not named?



Perhaps the compiler of the Books of Moses forgot? Perhaps it was too long ago? But they remember the names of other enemies: Nimrod, Balaam, Abimelech, Og, Sihon, Balak, Korach, Chedorlaomer, Zimri, Cozbi, Dathan, Abiram, Hamor, etc. So why don't they name the Pharaoh of the Exodus?

This is part of a pattern. Nobody wants to talk about Isra-el in Egypt. We have plenty of detail about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, but then the editors of the Bible gloss over Israel's triumphal centuries in Egypt. Why? Why don't they talk about their greatest success?

³⁰⁸ One exception might be Genesis 12:14-20, where Pharaoh desired Sarah. But this was the first time they interacted with a Pharaoh, so there was no need to distinguish which one. Another possible exception is 1 Kings 11:17-20, but here the wife of Pharaoh is more important, and she is named (Queen Tahpenes).

³⁰⁹ 1 Kings 14:25-26; 2 Chronicles 12:2-9

³¹⁰ 2 Kings 23:29-35; 2 Chronicles 35:20-24; Jeremiah 46:2

³¹¹ Jeremiah 44:30; Ezekiel 29:1-6

³¹² 2 Kings 19:9; Isaiah 37:9

³¹³ 2 Kings 17:4

³¹⁴ 2 Chronicles 14:9-15. he is called a Cushite, but Cush (Ethiopia) would not march through Egypt to attack Judah, so this is probably a Pharaoh or an Egyptian general associated with Cush. They retreated toward Egypt.

Exodus 1:8: the Pharaoh who did not know Joseph

“There arose a new king over Egypt, that knew not Joseph: And he said to his people: Behold the people of the children of Israel are numerous and stronger than we. Come let us wisely oppress them, lest they multiply: and if any war shall rise against us, join with our enemies, and having overcome us, depart out of the land.”³¹⁵

Let's identify this pharaoh. Here are the famous Pharaohs of this era:

date (BC)	pharaoh	notes
c.1650-1590	(various)	16th Dynasty pharaohs were far away, so they could not enslave the Hyksos.
1580s?	Rahotep	Founded 17th Dynasty. Retreated to Thebes. Nothing could stop the Hyksos.
1580s?	Nubkheperre Intef VI.	He stopped running. Began to rebuild, to defeat the Hyksos.
1570s?	Sequenre Tao	Died in battle with the Hyksos
1570s?	Kamose (Ka-Moses)	Brother of Tao. He kept fighting.
1569	Ahmosis (Yah-Moses)	Became Pharaoh. Founded 18th Dynasty + New Kingdom
1550-1543		Removed Hyksos leaders from Egypt
1543-1522	Amenhotep I	Probably re-conquered Canaan. Most records are lost, but his successor was able to travel to the Euphrates without needing to fight, implying that Amenhotep had been there first.
1497-1446	Thutmose III (Thoth-Moses)	“Thutmose The Great”. Conquered most of the Near East.
1491-1476	Hatshepsut	Regent for young Thutmose III

The dates are from *"Towards an absolute scientific date for the Egyptian New Kingdom"* by Petra and Lars-Åke Larsson. They are anchored by the feast of the new moon in 1497 BC, so they should be reliable.

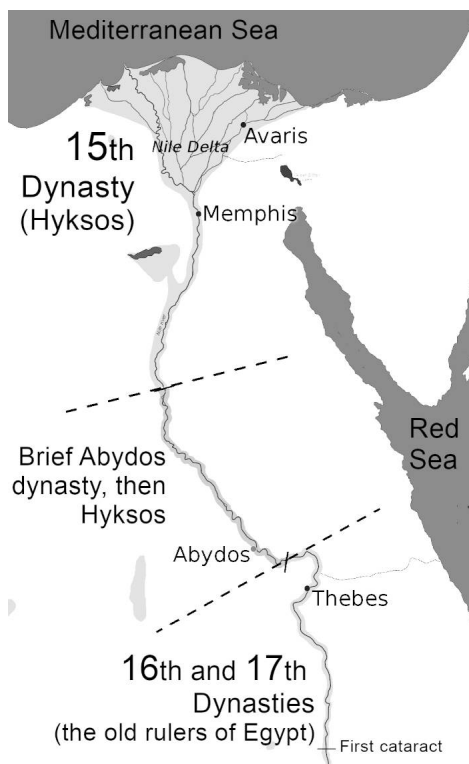
³¹⁵ Exodus 1:8-10

The Hyksos pharaoh at the time

There is an obvious problem with identifying one of the 17th dynasty pharaohs with the pharaoh of the Exodus. They did not control the Hyksos! By that point, **the Hyksos had pharaohs of their own.**

The “*pharaoh who knew not Joseph*” was probably Apepi (see below). Because:

- * He was the first Hyksos to call himself Pharaoh and he then worshipped the pharaohs’ god Ra (the sun, god of rulers) instead of Yah. So he broke with tradition.
- * He was pharaoh when the Joseph era ended (1635 BC).
- * He was remembered as an evil tyrant.
- * He reigned for a long time, making a big impact.
- * He fought against other Hyksos. So when Pharaoh said “*the people of the children of Israel are numerous and stronger than we*”, “the people” were probably the other Hyksos (the traditionalists), and the “we” were probably Apepi and his new regime.



Kings always feared the common people, but the clever ones (like Joseph) were skilled at propaganda. Recall that Joseph saw himself as above his fellow Israelites: they tried to kill him,³¹⁶ but Joseph embraced them and said how much he loved them. Jacob had a similar policy with Esau.³¹⁷ Joseph had enough sense to act like he loved the people and served their gods. This is the first rule of how to survive as a dictator. But Apepi forgot. His bad reputation (as the serpent god of chaos, who fought other Hyksos) suggests that he treated the people harshly, without sympathy, like the pharaoh in Exodus.

³¹⁶ Joseph’s dream, and his brothers’ murderous reaction is in Genesis 37

³¹⁷ Genesis 32:7-11

The major Hyksos pharaohs³¹⁸

length of reign	pharaoh	notes
19 years	Salitis	Conquered Egypt without a fight. Salitis is a Greek form of šallīt, Joseph's title (translated "governor" in Genesis 42:6)
44 years	Bnon/Beon = Semquen?	BN (ben) was son, perhaps the name meant son of Salitis (e.g. Manasseh or Makir?) "Sem" = semitic, "qinyan" = "acquired". Compare Makir (son of Manasseh, and Joseph's chosen successor), "sold". Or perhaps Semquen is Simeon?
37 years	Pachnan =Aper-anat?	Pa-Chnan = "the Canaanite"? Aper-Anat could mean "Hebrew warlord". 'Apiru is equivalent to "Habiru", probably the origin of "Hebrew". Anat was the Canaanite goddess of war.
61 years	Apepi = Aphophis / Staan	Aphophis was the serpent god of chaos. Staam could be a corruption of Satan: we only know these names from centuries later. Apepi gave himself the title Aaqenen-re, <i>"The strength of Re is great!"</i>
50 years	Inanas =Yanassi	Yah-Nassi could mean, <i>"Prince of the god Yah"</i> . (Prince is usually spelled Nasi, but chabad.org says "nassi" means "king").
49 years	Assis/ Archles	Possibly Greek "Archeleus" ("ruler of people"), a Greek equivalent of some Semitic name.
Total of all kings: 194 years. (Dynasty 14: 86 years, dynasty 15: 108 years.) See Gary Greenberg's "Manetho Rehabilitated" for calculations. Simple addition gives 19+44+37+61+50+49=260 years. This implies 64 years of co-regency overlap.		

³¹⁸ Based on "Manetho Rehabilitated: A New Analysis of His Second Intermediate Period" by Gary Greenberg. <https://ggreenberg.tripod.com/ancientne/manetho2.html>
Additional notes from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifteenth_Dynasty_of_Egypt
The archaeology seems to support Josephus's order. The different names are because Pharaohs had several names and titles, and our copies of Manetho often have Greek attempts to transliterate a language they did not know.

Improved timeline

We can now calculate a probable timeline for the Hyksos kings. This is based on the most likely estimate for the overlapping co-regencies.³¹⁹

1728 BC: Joseph announced his dream of being king.

1722 BC: Joseph became “Salitis”: governor for Pharaoh.³²⁰

1703 BC: Joseph’s son, Manasseh, inherited his position.³²¹

1689 BC: The Hyksos were now more powerful than the Pharaoh.³²²

1659 BC: Manasseh’s son, the “Pachnan” (warlord) Makir, took power.

1635 BC: Apepi conquered Memphis, and declared himself Pharaoh, starting the 15th dynasty. This ended the “Joseph” era, the era of growth (yasap). It began the era of conflict and decline.

1622 BC (1619?³²³): Manasseh was replaced by Yah-Nassi, son of Khyan.

1619 BC: the end of unity.³²⁴ Rival Hyksos Pharaohs: Yah-Nassi and Apepi.

1569 BC: Yah-Moses came to power and defeated the Hyksos rulers.

c.1543-1522 BC: Amenhotep pacified the Levant.

1491 BC: Hatshepsut argued with Thoth-Moses III
(the exodus from Egypt: details later).

1455 BC: Thoth-Moses III completed his conquest of the Levant
(Israelites entered the promised land: details later).

³¹⁹ When was the 64 years of co-regency overlap? Probably most of it was in the reign of Yah-Nassi. The archaeological evidence calls him a “prince” and suggests some confusion over dates. His name (worshipping Yah instead of Re) suggests a conflict with Apepi. That conflict would explain why Apepi needed to kill the firstborn of the Yah followers: they had a legitimate claim to be king. This leaves 14 years of overlap unaccounted for. This is exactly the difference between the pre-Apepi kings (100 years) and the first dynasty (86 years). The dynasties changed when the Hyksos conquered Memphis (see Greenberg). If Apepi conquered Memphis 14 years before Pachnan died, that would be the natural time to declare himself Pharaoh, and begin a conflict with the more traditional Yah-followers.

³²⁰ 194 years before Moses is ejected from Egypt.

³²¹ 19 years after Joseph became Salitis.

³²² The end of the Jacob era: Genesis 49:33-50:9

³²³ Odd months can easily be lost, and 1619 is the key date in Genesis (death of Levi)

³²⁴ The death of the era of Levi, where the tribes work together.

Pharaoh Apepi versus Moses

Apepi was a Hyksos (Hebrew, or Israelite), based in the north at Avaris, but he worshipped Re, the chief god of Egypt. He conquered Memphis and declared himself to be Pharaoh, so he identified as Egyptian.



Scarab showing Apepi's name (in the middle). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, photo by Keith Schengili-
Roberts, CC-BY-SA-2.5

Apepi's was short for Aphophis, the serpent god of evil and chaos. He could have changed that name if he did not like it (or he may have chosen it himself later), so this is how he wanted to be known. He wanted to be known as a powerful force for change, as somebody who upset and changed the old order.

Yah-Moses was the pharaoh in Thebes, far to the south, but not in Avaris (though he planned to change that). In Avaris, Moses was a rebel, an ally of the enemies of Apepi.

The Book of Exodus is written from the Israelites' point of view. It tries to show the Israelites as the heroes. So it makes Moses look like a Levite and a Hebrew. This is technically true, but only because "Levite" and "Hebrew" originally had different meanings to how we see them today.

One more thing: this is mythology, meaning it is compressed history, so we treat a person and their family or followers as the same. Apepi died just before Yah-Moses came to power, and was replaced by Assis. We know little about Assis, other than his name, which means "ruler". So we must assume that Assis carried on Apepi's policies. Apepi was the one who called himself a pharaoh and made the break with the past. So in this chapter, we will focus on Yah-Moses versus Apepi, even though the conflict spilled over into the time of their children and grandchildren.

Yah-Moses, the saviour of the Hyksos (Israel)

Apepi and his successors were cruel. There was a civil war with other Hyksos (Israelites). So when Yah-Moses removed the Hyksos leaders he made life better for the common Hyksos people. Archaeology shows that removing the Hyksos made very little difference to the cultural evidence. This probably means the war was limited, and only the leaders were removed. The common people carried on as before.

Yah-Moses and his successors then pacified Canaan, allowing ordinary Hyksos to return to Canaan in peace. Yah-Moses helped to create the system of international peace and prosperity described in the Amarna letters (the Amarna letters will be discussed more in the chapter on the Book of Judges). So Yah-Moses was a hero to the Hyksos.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that Apepi was destroying the Hyksos. By removing the Hyksos pharaohs, Yah-Moses saved the Hyksos.



Moses adopted the god of the Hebrews

The Hyksos (Hebrews) made Yah important to Egypt:

The high point in Yah's popularity can be found following the Middle Kingdom when many people immigrated from the Levant and the Hyksos ruled Egypt. Hence, it is likely that contact with the regions of Palestine, Syria and Babylon were important in the development of this god in Egypt. George Hart, in his "A Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses" believes that these foreigners in Egypt may have associated Yah with the Akkadian moon-god, Sin, who had an important temple at Harron in north Syria. Like Thoth, Sin was a god of Wisdom, but his other epithets included "Brother of the Earth", Father of the Sun, Father of Gods, as well as others.

...

Later during the New Kingdom within the Theban royal family, and not so strangely, even though it was they who expunged these foreign rulers from Egypt, the name of the god Yah was incorporated into their names.³²⁵

Yah-Moses, Thoth-Moses (Thutmose), and Ra-Moses (Rameses) revolutionised Egypt and the known world. But after that the old ways returned, and the name Yah was almost forgotten in Egypt:

In the tomb of Tuthmosis III of the 18th Dynasty, who is often called the Napoleon of Egypt, and who was perhaps responsible for Egypt's greatest expansion into the Levant, there is a scene where the king is accompanied by his mother and three queens, including Sit-Yah, the "daughter of the moon-god". However, after this period, the traces of Yah's moon cult in Egypt appear to be sporadic.³²⁶

It must be remembered that up to the Late Bronze Age Collapse (c.1200-1000 BC), Canaan was part of the Egyptian empire. The only difference between Canaan and the Nile was that the people of Canaan were semi-nomadic independent tribes, so their favourite god was Yah. In contrast, the people of the Nile were settled, united, and directly ruled by a powerful king, so their favourite god was Ra. Apepi rejected the religion of Abraham (the life of the nomad), and replaced Yah with Ra. He caused misery and destruction. Yah-Moses went the other way: he replaced Ra with Yah, and helped the people return to their Hebrew ways. Yah-Moses became an honorary Hebrew. He became more Hebrew than Apepi.

³²⁵ From "Yah, the Other Egyptian Moon God" by Jimmy Dunn <https://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/yah.htm>

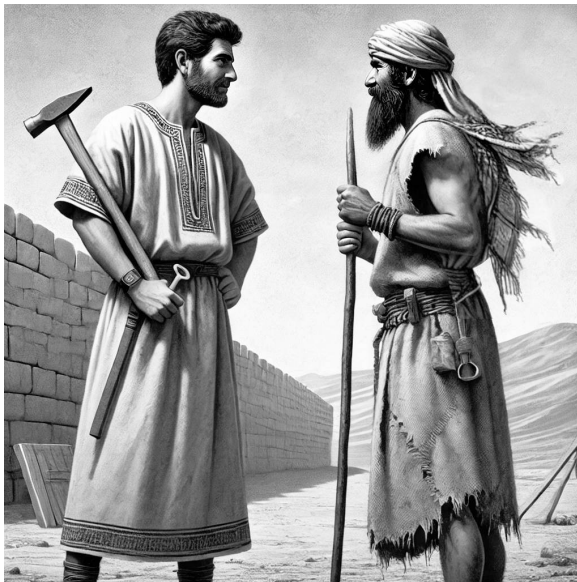
³²⁶ *ibid*

The eternal shame

Joseph thought he was so clever. His policy was growth (“yasap”, hence “Joseph”). It made his descendants the rulers of Egypt. But look at the cost: he rejected Yah in all but name. His policy put Satan (“Staan”) in power, killed Israelites, divided brother against brother, and almost destroyed everything, Canaan and Thebes included. Isra-el only survived because Yah-Moses had compassion and rescued them. The period of Joseph was one of great shame, so the Israelites never talked about it.

The laws of Moses led to a new golden age, as we will see. But it was based on equality. Eventually, men like Joseph rose again. They wanted power. They were the kings of Israel: Saul, David, Solomon and the rest. They created war and slavery and chaos, and again destroyed the nation. Why did people accept kings again when it was such a disaster in Egypt? For the same reason that they accepted Joseph after the twin disasters of the Flood and Babel. Propaganda. After 500 years, everyone who understood the previous disaster is dead, and so are their children, grandchildren, etc. So a new generation of clever liars can make inequality sound good again.

This is the eternal cycle: the war between “Big Men” (city builders like Cain, Nimrod, Jacob, Apepi, David, etc.) and nomads (Abel, Abraham, the Midianites, the people of Atlas, etc.). The Big Men make big promises based on big theories. The nomads watch as these promises fail and the cities destroy themselves. This is the eternal shame of cities.



Exodus 1:11: treating fellow Israelites as slaves

Apepi was an Israelite but worshipped Re. That is, he chose to be Egyptian and wanted all power. But his fellow Israelites worshipped Yah and followed the official ruler Yah-Nassi. So they were enemies. Apepi was also the enemy of the 17th dynasty in southern Egypt. So he made the people build military stores at Pithom and Tanis, the roads to Canaan.³²⁷



Kings often treat their people like slaves. Hence, centuries later, when Israelites asked for a king, the prophet reminded them:

*"You yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day."*³²⁸

This happened. For example, the Israelite king Rehoboam. Just like in Exodus, when people complained he made their burdens heavier:

*"My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions."*³²⁹

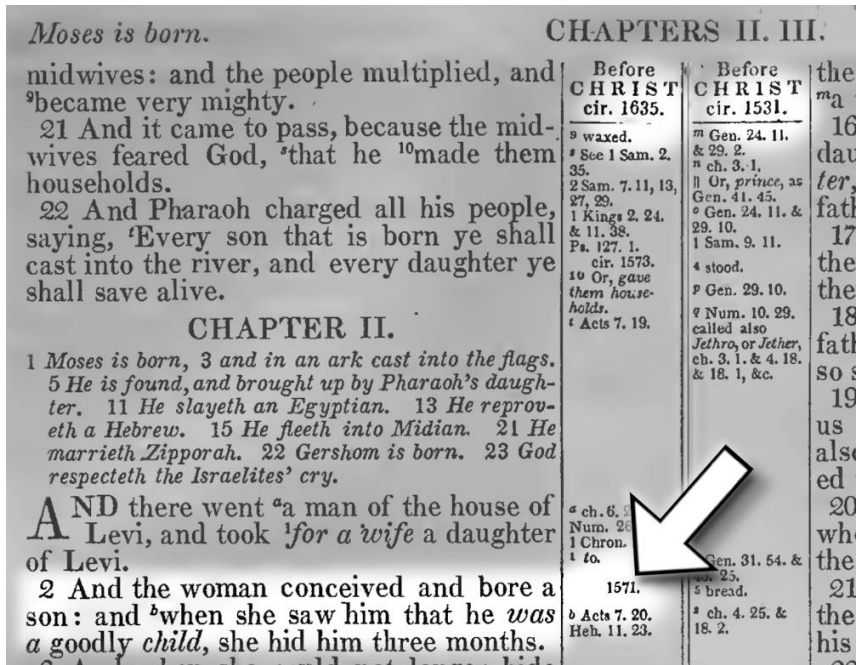
³²⁷ Archaeology confirms that they were built (or rebuilt) at this time (the "second intermediate period"). A later editor gave Tanis its then-current name of Rameses.

³²⁸ 1 Samuel 8:17-18

³²⁹ 1 Kings 12:11, spoken by king Rehoboam, son of Solomon

Exodus 2:2,10: the date when Moses was born

The best Bibles include dates. This makes it easy to check the archaeology.



Exodus says that Moses was born in 1571 BC. Yah-Moses came to power in 1569 BC. Exodus rounds this to 1571 to make it easy to remember in a 40-year cycle.³³⁰

When a pharaoh came to power it was seen as a rebirth of the king and the nation. It was modelled on the rebirth of Osiris as Horus. Hence the new pharaoh in 1569 took the name Yah-Moses: “Ya is born”.

So Yah-Moses was born in 1569, rounded to 1571, just as Exodus says. Exodus tells the story as if Moses was a literal baby, but this just makes the story easier to remember.

³³⁰ The anchor date for Exodus is 1491 (the exodus from Egypt). The other major events (birth, Midian, and entry to the promised land) are at roughly 40 year intervals.

Exodus 2:1: Moses the Levite

DNA studies show that Levites were not a single biological group.³³¹ Being a Levite was therefore a role, not a lineage.³³² Levite simply means “joiner”³³³, someone who united different tribes. So in theory, anyone who united the tribes could be called a Levite, regardless of their genetic background.

This brings us to Moses's father: Seqenenre Tao. He wanted to unite the north and south of Egypt. The Hyksos had divided Egypt in two, by taking control of the north. Seqenenre Tao tried to drive them out, so Egypt could be united again. But they killed him.

His mummified body shows the marks of distinctive Hyksos axes. His young son Yah-Moses was around ten years old when he died. His older son, Ka-Moses, then tried to defeat the Hyksos to avenge his father. And the Hyksos killed Ka-Moses as well.



Image: public domain

Young Yah-Moses realised that he could not defeat the Hyksos by simple force. He would need another way. Luckily the Hyksos were divided. Apepi wanted to rule as an Egyptian Pharaoh, but Yah-Nassi wanted to rule for Yah, with more respect for the old ways. If Yah-Moses could unite himself with Yah-Nassi, he could drive out Apepi and come to some agreeable solution. This would make Yah-Moses a kind of Levite, uniting the divided Hebrew people.³³⁴

³³¹ “[Unlike studies into descendants of Aaron], similar studies into Levite origins found the Levite genome to be significantly less homogeneous. ... they do not share a common male ancestor within the time frame of the Biblical narrative ... [this is] suggestive of multiple origins for the majority of non-Aaronid Levite families.” -https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Y-chromosomal_Aaron#Y-chromosomal_Levi - citing multiple scientific papers, especially Behar et al. (2017). “The genetic variation in the R1a clade among the Ashkenazi Levites’ Y chromosome”.

³³² The 12 sons of Jacob appear to refer to 2 groups, not literal children. E.g., wives Leah and Rachel are “the cow” and “the sheep” from Harran, symbolising cities and nomads. Every son’s name is a symbol of some group. E.g. Reu-ben is “behold the son”, implying legal birthright; Simeon is “the listener”, then Levi is “the joiner”, etc.

³³³ From the Hebrew word *lawā*, to connect or join

³³⁴ This is simply an inference: it is the logic of the situation. Archaeology and Egyptian records (e.g. from Manetho) do not leave us with enough details to know exactly what Yah-Moses was thinking.

Moses the Hebrew

Yah-Moses's mother was Ahhotep I, whose name means “Yah-Hotep”, “Yah is at peace / satisfied”. She was legendary for her ability to unite people in peace: she was honoured for her peace-making ability for centuries after her death. A famous inscription from Karnak declares:

*“Give jubilation to the Mistress of the Land, the ruler of the riverbanks of Hau-nebu, with a renowned name in every land, and who does the will of the masses. The King's Wife, the Sovereign's Sister; life-prosperity-health, the King's Daughter and the august King's Mother, who knows matters, and upholds Egypt; she has united its officer class; and she has protected it; she has returned its deserters and she gathers its dissidents; she has pacified Upper Egypt and she quells its rebels, the King's Wife, Ahhotep, living.”*³³⁵



Image: public domain

Yah-Moses was only ten years old when he became Pharaoh, so she probably made the big decisions for the first few years. Notice how she “does the will of the masses” and “united” the officers, “returned” the deserters and “gathered” the dissidents: this suggests a great ability to unite people.

Yah-Hotep's title was “Mistress of the Land [Egypt], the ruler of the riverbanks of Hau-nebu, with a renowned name in every land”. Hau-nebu refers to lands bordering the Mediterranean, from the Aegean islands to Syria. “The riverbanks” suggests the rivers of Canaan. Egypt ruled not just the Nile, but also Canaan. For most of its history, the River Jordan was the heartland of the culture we now call Egypt. Moses's distant ancestors came from Canaan.³³⁶

“Hebrew” just meant migrant.³³⁷ When Yah-Moses was embattled in the south, and fighting to return to his ancestral lands in the north, he could rightly call himself a migrant. He was firmly on the side of the migrants who opposed pharaoh Apepi, and saw their true home as Canaan. That is how Exodus wanted to remember Moses: as a migrant, as a Hebrew.

³³⁵ Translation by Sidpura, Taneash (2022) in “*Flies, Lions and Oyster Shells*”.

³³⁶ See the companion book, “*Atlantis: It's All True*”. Egypt was founded in 39,000 BC. Egypt was culturally the same group as the Pre-Pottery Neolithic in the Levant. Around 8,000 BC it built the great city of Jericho. Egypt was called Mizra-im (Genesis 10:6), meaning the Masors, or fortified places, i.e. the walled fortresses. The centre of power did not move to the Nile until around 6,000 BC.

³³⁷ From the Hebrew “Abar”, to “pass beyond a border”.

Exodus 2:2-10: Moses in the Bulrushes

The bulrushes story simplifies the story of the rise of Yah-Moses.

Recall the situation when Yah-Moses was a child. Moses's father and brother were both killed by the Hyksos. If Yah-Moses attacked the Hyksos then he too would be killed. The Nubians, seeing their opportunity, began to attack from the south. Egypt was doomed. The child's mother, Yah-Hotep, had to save Egypt. What could she do?

The ancient world had a long tradition of what to do when a kingdom was doomed and a child king was about to die. The child should be sent away for safety. He would grow up in a foreign land, learning humility and a new perspective, then come back as an adult and free his nation. There are dozens of stories about that.³³⁸ One involves Joseph, who grew up in hiding.³³⁹ Another is the story of Sargon of Akkad, as it includes the basket in the river. But a closer match is the story of Osiris. Every Pharaoh saw himself as Osiris.

Osiris, the chief god of Egypt, was killed by Set (another foreign god of chaos, like Apepi/Aphophis). Osiris' body was laid in a coffin that floated down the Nile. It was found by a local queen. Osiris's wife, Isis, watched, and the queen (now knowing who Isis was) asked Isis to take care of the body. Isis revived Osiris for long enough to have a child, Horus. Horus saw Egypt reborn. Moses played this role.



The young Moses was as good as dead. He may as well have lain in his coffin. He metaphorically floated downstream, from Thebes to Avaris (the stronghold of Apepi and his successors). In an act of genius, Moses was reborn as a follower of the Hebrew god Yah (hence “Yah-Moses”, “Yah is born”). This let him guide the Hyksos out of Egypt without a large war. Moses saved Egypt, and Egypt was reborn as the New Kingdom.

³³⁸ See “The Literary Motif of the Exposed Child” by Donald Redford (1967).

³³⁹ Genesis 27: Jacob tricks Esau, thus gaining the Abrahamic birthright. He first runs away to Harran, and then to Padan Aram where he can raise his heirs in safety. The oldest version of the Jacob hiding story is in the Hurrian song of Ullikummi, which became the story of Zeus hiding from Cronus.

Yah-Moses in the literal bulrushes

The best mythology is not just a metaphor: it is also a memory aid, based on real history and real events. The bulrushes story reminds us of major events in Yah-Moses's life:

- Moses first came to fame by fighting the Nubians. He hid in the bulrushes, using a basket. He then married the Nubian princess.³⁴⁰
- Yah-Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter: his mother, Yah-Hotep. She was the great peacemaker (the great Levite). She gave up her old religion to start a new life as a worshipper of Yah.
- Moses swapped roles. He began as the pharaoh who should have killed the Hebrew. But that did not work. So he became a Hebrew who saved the other Hebrews, in order to make them leave the Nile.
- His mother nursed him while acting in a new role as a follower of Yah. In this she acted as Isis: Queen Isis nursed the dying Osiris so that he could be reborn as Horus and save Egypt.



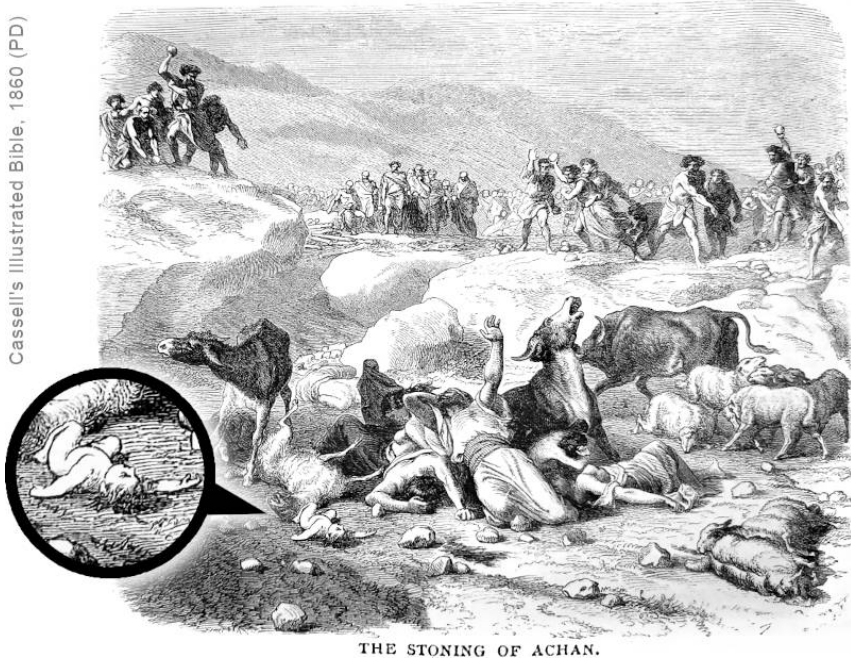
Exodus changes minor details to make the bigger picture memorable: Moses changed roles. He embraced Yah. He became Hebrew. That is how he defeated the evil pharaoh and persuaded the Hebrews to leave. (And that is why the Hebrews kept wanting to return: life in Egypt was good for the Hebrews. But Moses was adamant: they had to leave.)

³⁴⁰ Antiquities of the Jews, Book 2, chapters 9-10. Before fighting the Hyksos, Moses fought in Nubia. His army entered Nubia without being spotted, by wading down the edge of the Nile, hidden by bulrushes. Normally this was impossible due to the many deadly snakes that hide there. Moses had them create baskets out of sedge (a kind of reed) and carry ibises, birds that eat snakes and other small creatures. The snakes would see their predator and stay down. Josephus calls each basket an "ark", like Moses's baby basket in Exodus. The plan worked: Moses's army surprised the Nubians. Moses saved Egypt. As part of the peace treaty, Moses married the Nubian princess. Numbers 12:1 mentions Moses marrying a Cushite (Nubian).

Exodus 1:15-22: would Hebrew kings kill Hebrews?

Would Apepi (or his successors) kill Israelites, including children, as described in Exodus? We have seen that human sacrifice was part of the Israelite religion. The Bible also has examples of Israelites killing fellow Israelites, including children, as punishment for sins. For example:

* Killing Achan and his children for stealing from Jericho (Joshua 7)



- * Killing the entire town of Nob (including women and children) because they helped David against Saul (1 Samuel 22)
- * Killing male descendants of Saul to pay for Saul's sin (2 Samuel 21);
- * Killing king Jeroboam's entire family (1 Kings 15)
- * Killing all of Baasha's relatives (1 Kings 16)
- * Killing all of Ahab's family (2 Kings 11)

This does not mean Israelites were unusually violent. As noted earlier, modern nations kill far more children. It just means that Apepi would easily kill children from other Israelite tribes (or Egyptian Levites) that he considered his enemies.

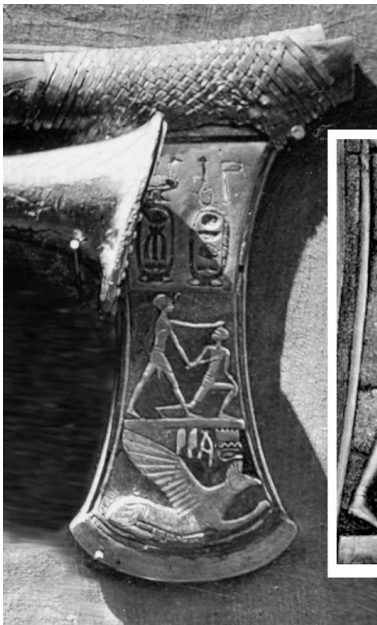
Exodus 2:11-12: Moses kills an Egyptian

Exodus says that Moses began his adult career by killing an Egyptian.

One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"³⁴¹

Notice how the Hebrews are fighting their fellow Hebrews. Apepi's people (Assis' people) fought Yah-Nassi's people. Apepi identified as an Egyptian, and Moses opposed him, killing Apepi's people. But Moses did it cautiously: he could not win a direct confrontation or he would be killed like his father and brother. He had to use hit-and-run, and hide any evidence that would let Apepi's forces find him. Exodus makes it look like Moses acted alone, but as a prince, he would always have soldiers with him.

This axe-handle shows Yah-Moses killing one of Apepi's men.



Yah-Moses killing a Hyksos
(axe handle of Yah-Moses)



Image: public domain,
from 19th century books

³⁴¹ Exodus 2:11-13

Exodus 2:15: Why did Moses run away?

Seqenenre Tao attacked the Hyksos with all the might of Egypt, and died. Ka-Moses tried again, and died. He succeeded at first: on a stele of Ka-Moses, he boasts of how he defeated many Hyksos, but he implies that he turned back before reaching their capital Avaris. Why did he turn back?

Why was a bunch of shepherds so powerful that the mightiest empire on Earth had to run away? Probably because the Hyksos had super-weapons: chariots. The Hyksos introduced horses, and hence chariot warfare, into Egypt.³⁴² Everyone wanted horses! Chariots can appear out of nowhere at any time, then fire arrows on the unprepared army, and then retreat out of range. Ka-Moses and Yah-Moses did not stand a chance.



Archaeology suggests that Ka-Moses did manage to get his hands on *some* chariots. But not enough: even a hundred years later, carvings show that horses and chariots were rare and valuable, a sign of royal wealth. Without enough horses, Yah-Moses had to run away. But he could not just run back to Thebes and wait to be conquered. Where could he go? How could he defeat the super-weapon? Answer: he had to go to Midian.

³⁴² At the same time (c.1500 BC), horse warfare began to devastate the North African coast, defeating the most ancient and most feared civilisation (the Gorgons). See the companion book about Atlantis, in the chapters on the Amazons of Tartarus

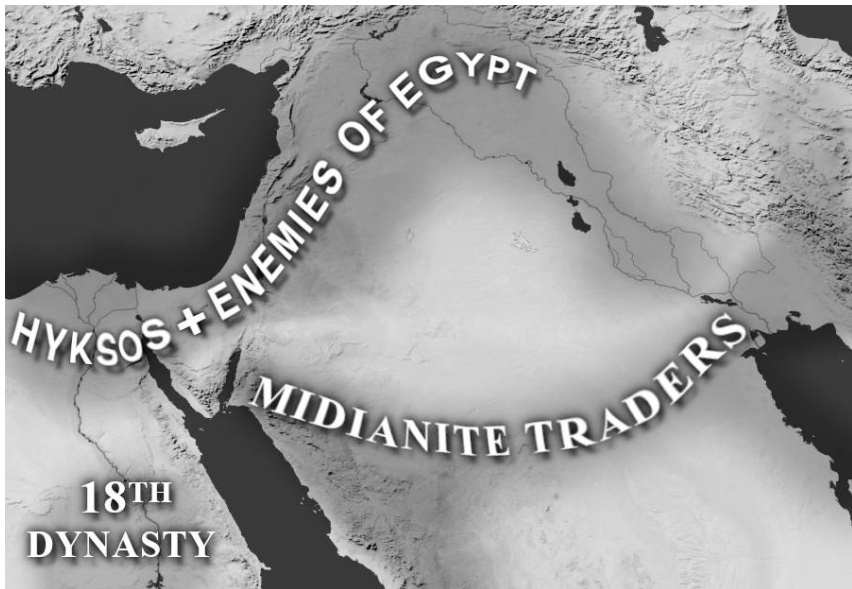
Exodus 2:15-22: why Midian?

Yah-Moses had a problem. For thousands of years, Egypt used its power against all of its neighbours. But this meant that, in its moment of crisis, Egypt had no friends.

As an added problem, the Hyksos controlled the mines and access to the fertile crescent. They were also aligned with Canaanite coastal cities: the Phoenician ports. So southern Egypt could not buy vital raw materials.

Why did Yah-Moses succeed when his father and brother failed? Inscriptions and archaeology can only give glimpses. We know that Yah-Moses stationed soldiers at a fort on the road between Egypt and Canaan, to cut the Hyksos off from their allies. We know that a few years later (?) he made multiple attacks on Avaris (the Hyksos capital), and the last attack was successful. But archaeology shows that very little changed. So the attacks must have been small: he must have killed or removed the leaders and left the common people alone.

So we know that Yah-Moses needed more horses and more resources, and he needed to cut the Hyksos off from any other source of help. The only way that Yah-Moses could get much-needed supplies was via desert traders: Midianites.



Exodus says that Moses helped the Midianites against their enemies, and married into their people. In other words, he made a political alliance. This is exactly what Yah-Moses must have done to defeat the Hyksos.

Exodus 2:23: The first Moses dies

Yah-Moses drove out or killed the Hyksos rulers. This didn't make much difference to the ordinary Hyksos people: they still had to obey a different pharaoh. So this is not relevant to the story of Exodus. The book of Exodus skips to the important part: how the ordinary Hyksos left Egypt.

Yah-Moses died a few years later, in 1543 BC, and the common Hyksos let Egypt in the time of Thoth-Moses. To keep the story simple, Exodus treats the two men called Moses as just "Moses", just as we might refer to two kings as "the king". But Exodus includes this line:

"During that long period [when Moses was allied with Midian], the king of Egypt died."³⁴³

Most people assume that this king was the Pharaoh we read about earlier. But if that was the intended meaning, why not use the same word as before? Instead of "Pharaoh" (Hebrew "paro") we read of "the king" (Hebrew "melek"). Why use a different word?

And why even mention this death? If Pharaoh died then he was instantly replaced with a new Pharaoh. He was unnamed before, he was unnamed now. He enslaved them before, he enslaved them now. What changed?

The only reason to add this detail (that "the king" died) is to help later historians. When we compare the dates with secular history, we see that the king in question was Yah-Moses.

When we next see Moses he will act and speak very differently from the old Moses.



³⁴³ Exodus 2:23

Exodus 3: Moses versus Pharaoh

Exodus now skips ahead about forty years to 1491 BC. This was the start of the dramatic career of Thoth-Moses The Great (Thutmose III).

Thoth-Moses was two years old when he became Pharaoh. So the country was ruled by his stepmother and aunt, Hatshepsut. She did not have to be called Pharaoh. Everyone understood that she was the most senior figure, and would make the decisions until Thoth-Moses became a man.

But when Thoth-Moses was eight years old, something very odd happened. Hatshepsut saw the need to take the title of pharaoh to herself. Thoth-Moses was still pharaoh as well, but he was a child and she was the experienced ruler.

This was highly unusual. Why did she not continue to rule from behind the scenes? Why would the wider family and political class allow her to become a joint pharaoh?

This suggests that the child was about to do something that shocked and angered the establishment. So Hatshepsut took over official power to overrule him.

This date is very important. Because this is the date that the Bible gives to the Exodus from Egypt.

So the pharaoh of the Exodus was a woman. But in Egyptian art, as in Exodus, all pharaohs, including women, were referred to as men.

Year CE	Sothic date	Pharaoh
-1470	XI Epiphi 28	Thutmose III 28
-1471		Thutmose III 27
-1472		Thutmose III 26
-1473		Thutmose III 25
-1474	XI Epiphi 27	Thutmose III 24
-1475		Thutmose III 23
-1476		Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1477		Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1478	XI Epiphi 26	Thutmose III 20/ Hatshepsut 20
-1479		Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1480		Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1481		Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1482	XI Epiphi 25	Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1483		Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1484		Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1485		Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1486	XI Epiphi 24	Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1487		Thutmose III/ Hatshepsut
-1488		Thutmose III 10/ Hatshepsut 4
-1489		Thutmose III 9/ Hatshepsut 3
-1490	XI Epiphi 23	Thutmose III 8/ Hatshepsut 2
-1491		Thutmose III 7/ Hatshepsut 1
-1492		Thutmose III 6
-1493		Thutmose III 5
-1494	XI Epiphi 22	Thutmose III 4
-1495		Thutmose III 3
-1496		Thutmose III 2
-1497		Thutmose II/ Thutmose III 1
-1498	XI Epiphi 21	Thutmose II
-1499		Thutmose II
-1500		Thutmose II
-1501		Thutmose II

From "Towards an absolute scientific date for the Egyptian New Kingdom" by Petra and Lars-Ake Larsson

The eight-year-old versus Hatshepsut

Thoth-Moses was very young to challenge the great queen Hatshepsut. But he had advisors. This is like when Tutankhamun was nine years old and reversed his father's religious reforms: Tutankhamun was helped by his advisor Ay. He was also like Josiah, who was eight when he reformed Judaism, helped by the high priest Hilkiah.



Hatshepsut, by Postdlf,
CCA-SA-3.0



Moses's young age solves many mysteries:

- * Why does Thoth-Moses need permission from Pharaoh?
- * Why does he need Aaron to speak for him?
- * Why did Pharaoh give him so many chances?
- * Why was he so impressed by a burning bush?³⁴⁴
- * Why did he need to learn conjuring tricks?³⁴⁵
- * Why did Moses irritate his own priests?³⁴⁶
- * The strange events of Exodus 4:24-26...³⁴⁷
- * And more.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁴ In the real world, whatever caused the effect was probably modest: perhaps a mirage, perhaps a tiny part that burned, etc. But to young Moses it was amazing.

³⁴⁵ Exodus 4 he has to learn some tricks to impress Pharaoh, tricks that any competent magician could do. But he needs to prove his intelligence and self-control.

³⁴⁶ In Exodus 4:14 the Lord is sick of Moses's whining, and in 4:24 wants to kill him.

³⁴⁷ In Exodus 4:24-26, Zipporah makes Moses her bridegroom. But didn't they marry 40 years earlier? No, that Moses had died. She was now betrothed to the new young Moses. (Child marriages were common in royal alliances.)

³⁴⁸ E.g. why Moses was still fit and healthy in 1451 BC.

Exodus 4:10-16: Aaron the advisor

Thoth-Moses was a child, and relied on his “brother”, Aaron, to talk to his stepmother, Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut’s favourite official, and probably her lover, was called Senenmut. Senenmut means “brother of mother”. He was the perfect man to persuade Hatshepsut. Given that Moses was a child, and trusted Senenmut, the Exodus might have been Senenmut’s idea.

Senenmut was Hatshepsut’s chief architect, so he probably built her magnificent tomb. It contains a “holy of holies”, like the ark of the Covenant. Exodus shows that Aaron was very interested in such things.

Senenmut was also known for his love of the stars. The earliest known star map in Egypt is found in his tomb.

Aaron became Moses's spokesman, so whenever we read of Moses saying something it was probably Aaron. Moses did not even need to be present: he could be back in Egypt or away on a military expedition most of the time, only coming back to check on things. The only time we read of a disagreement between Moses and Aaron was when Moses was away in Sinai, and Aaron made the golden calf and suggested going back to Egypt: life was much better in Egypt. Then Moses came back and had to punish everyone involved - except Aaron, who was indispensable.



Senenmut, by Schengili-Roberts, CC-BY-SA-2.5

Aaron’s power depended on the “Aron” or “ark of the Covenant”. Gil Kidron, a native Hebrew speaker and Bible scholar, believes that “Aaron” and “the Aron” (the ark of the covenant) are essentially the same. “The Aaron” was the person with the authority to open the ark, and use the “Urim and Thummim” (a device used to divine the will of God).³⁴⁹

³⁴⁹ See “A Podcast of Biblical Proportions” episodes 52-55. E.g. in Exodus 33:11-23, Moses speaks to God as a man, but is not allowed to see his face, only his back. Throughout Exodus, Aaron speaks for God, on behalf of Moses. Aaron is a confident speaker but lacks Moses’s position of authority over the people. So applying Occam’s razor, Exodus 33 would refer to Aaron receiving the word of God in a manner that Moses was not allowed to see. Moses was only allowed to see Aaron from behind when Aaron looked in the box.

Aaron was a title: the two Aarons

Aaron was a title, so could be held by anyone. Senenmut is the most likely Aaron before leaving Egypt, but Hatshepsut would not want to lose her best friend. After leaving Egypt the most likely candidate is Nebwawy.

Nebwawy³⁵⁰ was the High Priest of Osiris in the time of Thoth-Moses The Great. He also served as a military leader.³⁵¹ In Exodus, Aaron spoke for Moses, so he was a de-facto leader in their battles. Manetho (the great Egyptian historian) combines Moses, Aaron and Joseph, when he says that Moses was previously a priest of Osiris, called Osarsiph³⁵² (Osiris-Joseph).³⁵³

Egypt's version of the story is that the Hyksos were diseased. They had "*leprosy, and other distempers*" (see "*The Egyptian version of the story*"). So Egypt made the Hyksos work the eastern quarries, before Osarsiph led them away. The quarry detail is confirmed by archaeology. In the mid-1500s, Ahmose reopened the Serabit el-Khadim turquoise mines in Mafkat, and filled them with Semitic prisoners. This graffiti shows that they spoke the Canaanite language.



Image: public domain, via Wikipedia

³⁵⁰ "Neb-wawy" means "neb wadis" or "lord of the two wadis". A wadi was a seasonal river. "The two wadis" could be a metaphor for upper and lower Egypt, or for the lands of the dead and the living, or it could be the River of Egypt (a wadi that divides Egypt from the Levant) and Wadi Arnon (the boundary between the Israelites and Moabites). Those two wadis are the limits of Moses's promised land.

³⁵¹ E.g. "*This reading entails assigning to Nebwawy [a high priest of Osiris in the time of Hatshepsut] a military or expeditionary role in which he overthrew the queen's enemies.*" - Elizabeth Froid, examining stela EA 1199, in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 2003, p.69

³⁵² Quoted by Josephus, "Against Apion", 1:26-27 Josephus dislikes Manetho's history and prefers to link Moses to the Hyksos at an earlier date.

³⁵³ All these names are symbolic and often combine more than one person, to make it easier to remember complex history.

Exodus 3:1-2: the Burning Bush

Thoth-Moses was called “Thoth-Moses the Great” because he conquered so many lands. In ancient times, when a ruler set off to conquer, he always visited a temple of the relevant god. There he would learn from some great conquering predecessor. So Darius the Great visited the temple of Hephaestus in Ethiopia, to see if he measured up to Sesostris.³⁵⁴ Alexander the Great visited the oracle of Ammon at Siwa, to see if he was a son of Zeus.³⁵⁵ And Julius Caesar visited a statue of Alexander in Gades (Cadiz).³⁵⁶

Thoth-Moses worshipped Thoth, an aspect of the moon (Yah) that emphasised wisdom. He planned to rely directly on Yah, the god of time and change. The great temples of Yah were at Ur and Harran. But those were far away in enemy lands. However, the nomads worshipped the moon at natural landmarks, such as mountains. So Moses went to “*the mountain of the gods [the elohim]*” or the mountain of Horeb (“the desert”). This was the desert and mountain of Sin, the Semitic name for Yah. Hence “Sinai”.³⁵⁷

Young Thoth-Moses was inspired by seeing a bush that burned yet did not die. Meaning, unlike other desert plants, this one had a good water source. So the twigs might burn but the core remained green and healthy. The Hebrews would be the same.



³⁵⁴ Herodotus, Histories 2.110

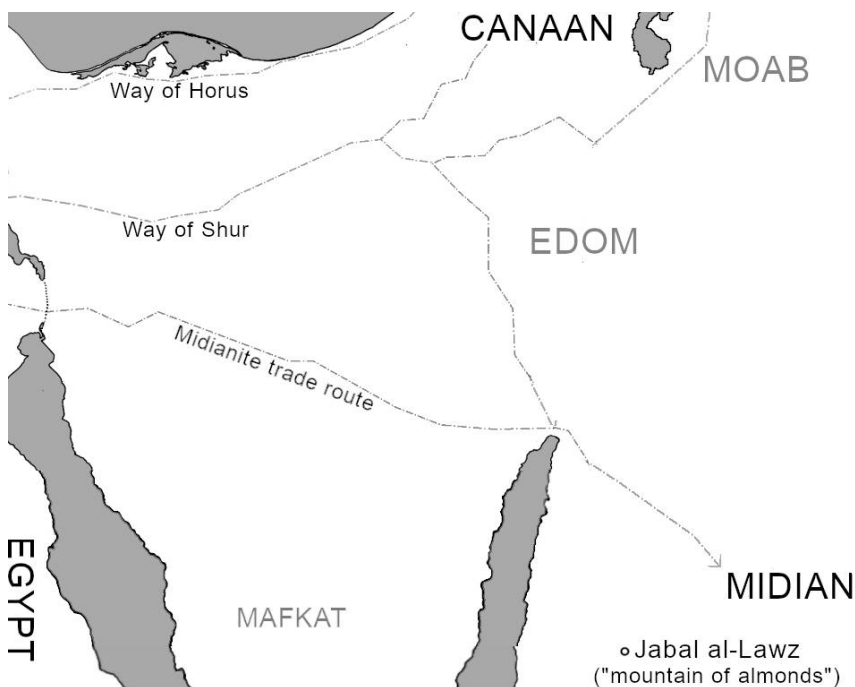
³⁵⁵ Plutarch, Parallel Lives, Alexander, 27.5

³⁵⁶ Plutarch, Life of Caesar, chapter 11

³⁵⁷ Could Sin derive from “seneh”, the bush? No: the connection with the moon god is much stronger. Abraham and Yah-Moses both worshipped the moon god. So why is Sinai like seneh? Because Exodus uses wordplay to make the story easy to remember. E.g. Gen 3:20 Eve and “living” (šēm, 'ēm), Gen 4:1 Cain and “acquired” (quayin, qānā), Gen 11:9 Babel and Balal, Ex 2:10 Moses (mōšē) and māšā (“drawn out”) etc.

Exodus 3:1: where was Sinai?

Exodus says that Mt Sinai was in Midian,³⁵⁸ 45 days' walk from Egypt.³⁵⁹ Moses found water there.³⁶⁰ The mountain must have been very high to be called the mountain of the gods. So it is probably Jabal al-Lawz, "the mountain of almonds".



Almonds need a lot of water, so this once had water, making it a valuable meeting place for desert nomads. To remember the mountain of almonds, Moses made a sacred candlestick decorated with almond flowers (Exodus 25:31-40). To show that Aaron (and his successors?) could speak for God, Moses used an almond branch (Numbers 17) and stored it in the ark of the covenant. Later, when God called Jeremiah, it was in a vision of an almond tree (Jeremiah 1:4-12).

³⁵⁸ Exodus 2:16,21, 3:1. 1800 years later, Helena, the mother of the first Christian emperor, wanted to make pilgrimages to Sinai and other Biblical sites. Unfortunately, Midian was not controlled by Rome. So she decided that Sinai was in Mafkat, which was controlled by Rome. Over the centuries, many thousands of pilgrims travelled to the new Sinai in Mafkat. So Mafkat became known as the Sinai Peninsula.

³⁵⁹ Exodus 16:1. Around 450 km at 10 km/day.

³⁶⁰ Exodus 17:6

Yahweh means “the place where Yah is revealed”

The earliest reference to Yahweh outside the Bible comes from Egypt, around 1400 BC. That is, soon after Moses. And crucially it predates the priests and kings. So we get our best view of Yahweh as worshipped by Moses, before kings edited or reinterpreted the text.

The text refers to “the Shasu of Yhw³”: nomadic herders of Yahweh. Yahweh was a place near Sinai, not a god’s name.³⁶¹ Since Yah was the Egyptian name for Sin, the moon god, Yahweh probably meant the same as Sinai: “*the place where the moon god was revealed.*” So “Yahweh says” refers to decisions made when the tribes meet. Old friends would share stories and discuss news. Priests and elders would settle disputes and agree any decisions. The law of Yahweh (Sinai) was final.



³⁶¹ See “Yahweh: Origin of a Desert God” (2021) by Robert Miller

Exodus 3:14: The title of God: “I am” / “I will be”

We saw in Genesis that when “God” speaks it is always a human priest or messenger. So when Darius, Alexander, Caesar, etc, wanted to talk to God at a temple, they spoke to the oracle of God who lived there. So when Moses spoke to God at the burning bush, he probably spoke to the priest of Midian, Jethro. This explains why Moses could say that God was wrong and argue with him in Exodus 4:10 and 13.

Moses asked the name of God:

Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”³⁶²

The moon god had many names.³⁶³ The name depended on what aspect of the moon: e.g. in Egypt, “Yah” was the physical moon and its cycles, “Khonsu” was travel and new starts using the moon, and “Thoth” was knowledge using the moon. The moon was the basis of time and cycles and certainty and night, and travel and cattle herding and so many things that the underlying abstract concept can be hard to explain:

The etymology of this name [the oldest name, Sin] remains uncertain. One of the inscriptions of Gudea from the third millennium BCE refers to Sin as a god ‘whose name nobody can explain’, which might be an indication that his name was already unclear and a subject of scribal speculation during his reign.³⁶⁴

So Moses needed clarity. Exodus 3:14 gave the perfect name for the moon god. It sums up the central concept of trusting in the cycles of nature:

אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה

(’ehye ’ăšer ’ehye)

I will be what I will be

This can also be translated “I am that I am”. It beautifully captures the concept of eternity: time and cycles and reassurance of foundational reality. Much like Abraham’s El Shaddai and Cronus.

³⁶² Exodus 3:13

³⁶³ Nanna in Sumerian, Sin or Nanna-Sin in Akkadian, Yah in Egypt, Yarick in Canaan, Aglibol in Palmyra (Syria), etc.

³⁶⁴ Wikipedia, citing *"Mondgott A. I. In Mesopotamien"* by Manfred Krebern timer, and *"Metaphors for the Unrecognizability of God..."* by Sebastian Fink.

Exodus 7:1-13: opposite philosophies

Young Thoth-Moses (with a lot of help from Senenmut) wanted to release the Hyksos workers to return to Canaan. He would use them to help him gain power in Canaan. He would use cooperation where possible.

Hatshepsut thought the plan was childish. Only a child could be so naive. If you let your workers free then you have fewer workers. You also get a reputation for being soft, so your remaining workers become lazy. And the freed workers might turn against you. So power must be based on force.

These represent opposite philosophies: cooperation versus force.



Young Thoth-Moses became Thoth-Moses “The Great” by putting his naive plan into action. He changed the world. He created an international federation of wealth and strength based on cooperation: “the brotherhood of kings” described in the Amarna letters. He raised Egypt to her greatest ever strength, the glory of the New Kingdom. But that was all in the future. How could the child persuade Hatshepsut?

This was the seventh year of young Thoth-Moses's reign (that began when he was two years old.) Senenmut knew what happened in the seventh year of Yah-Moses's reign: a series of plagues almost destroyed Egypt. This could happen again.

The Asiatic Hyksos had various diseases (see below). The only way to survive a plague is for everyone to cooperate. So cooperation is the most powerful tool in the world. Without it we would all be dead.

But was that enough to persuade Hatshepsut?

The Egyptian version of the story

To understand the next part of Exodus (the ten plagues), we need to read the later Egyptian version of the events. It was preserved by the historian Manetho, though we only have quotations preserved by Josephus. Here is a summary:³⁶⁵

"[Manetho reports that] our people [the Israelites] had come into Egypt, many ten thousands in number; and subdued its inhabitants; ... we went out of that country afterward, and settled in that country which is now called Judea, and there built Jerusalem and its temple."

Here are the key details, starting with the plagues:

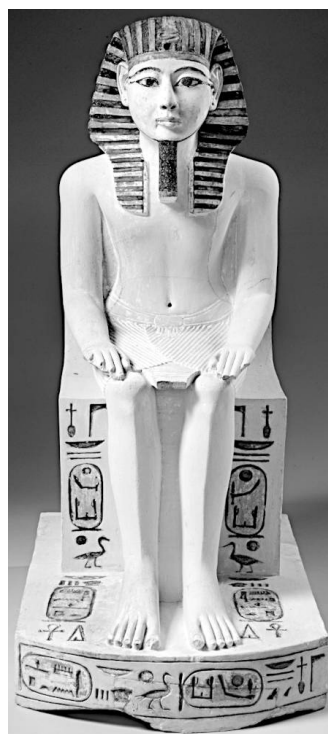
"The Egyptian multitude, that had the leprosy and other distempers, [were] mixed with us, as he says they were, and that they were condemned to fly out of Egypt together."

Josephus hated Manetho, so he took every opportunity to claim that Manetho was lying. But Manetho told the truth. For example, Josephus says *"He [Manetho] mentions Amenophis, a fictitious king's name"* But the name "Amenophis" is not fictitious. It is another name for Amenhotep, the pharaoh who succeeded Yah-Moses. Amenhotep dealt with the ordinary Hyksos after Yah-Moses drove out the Hyksos leaders. We do not have many monuments that survive from Amenhotep's time, but there are hints that he fought the Hyksos in Canaan. It appears that the bulk of the war with the Hyksos rulers may have been by Amenhotep, as Manetho says.

Manetho says that *"Tethmosis was king when they went away."* "Tethmosis" is Toth-Moses III, who arranged the final exodus in 1491 BC.

At first there seems to be a confusion over dates due to this passage in Josephus:

"Now, from his days [Tethmosis], the reigns of the intermediate kings, according to Manetho, amounted to three hundred and ninety-three years, as he says himself, till the two brothers Sethos [Egyptus] and Hermeus [Danaus]"



Amenhotep, CC0

³⁶⁵ For the full account, see "Against Apion", 26

Egyptus and Danaus fled Egypt in 1510 BC to create Greece as we know it today. This was before the Exodus, not 393 years after. Josephus' confusion is probably because Manetho used checksums: an accounting method to ensure that a copyist copied previous numbers correctly.³⁶⁶

The Egyptian account of the Exodus continues:

"[Manetho refers to] Amenophis, who was the son of Papis. ... how this namesake of his told him that he might see the gods, if he would clear the whole country of the lepers and of the other impure people;"

"Papis" was probably Pharaoh Pepi II (c.2200 BC). He saw the Old Kingdom of Egypt break apart. Manetho says that Pepi's son, Amenophis, wrote a prophecy saying, in effect, *"don't do what my Dad did, or your kingdom will fall apart as well."* The later Amenhotep (Amenophis) saw the Hyksos destroy the Middle Kingdom,³⁶⁷ so he took this prophecy very seriously.



Pepi II as a child, with his mother, Ankhesenmeryre II, Keith Schengili-Roberts, CC-BY-SA-2.5

"Their number [the Hyksos defeated by Amenhotep] was eighty thousand; whom he sent to those quarries which are on the east side of the Nile."

"Thousand" is sometimes a mistranslation of "families/tribes/military units": see the later section "1491 BC: How big was the Exodus?"

"After those that were sent to work in the quarries had continued in that miserable state for a long while, the king was desired that he would set apart the city Avaris, which was then left desolate of the shepherds."

"A long while" and "the king" indicate a new Pharaoh, after Amenhotep but before Thoth-Moses III. So probably Thoth-Moses II. He began to feel sorry for the Hyksos slaves and wanted to let them settle in Avaris again.

³⁶⁶ The checksum adds up previous columns or rows. A copyist is expected to add up his copied numbers and make sure he comes to the same total. See *"Towards an absolute scientific date for the Egyptian New Kingdom"* by Petra and Lars-Åke Larsson.

³⁶⁷ The history of the Pharaohs from 3000 BC is divided into Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom. The Old Kingdom broke apart under Pepi II, the Middle Kingdom broke apart under the Hyksos, and the New Kingdom was eventually conquered by Rome.

“But when these men were gotten into it, and found the place fit for a revolt, they appointed themselves a ruler out of the priests of Heliopolis, whose name was Osarsiph... his name Osarsiph, from Osiris, who was the god of Heliopolis; but that when he was gone over to these people, his name was changed, and he was called Moses.”

Osarsiph was just a title. We saw earlier that the likely leader of the Exodus was Nebwawy, the High Priest of Osiris. Nebwawy was based in Abydos, further south than Heliopolis, but may have moved north to keep an eye on the Hyksos when they returned to Avaris. He would then have led the Hyksos out of Egypt as the representative of Moses.



“Amenophis returned back from Ethiopia with a great army, as did his son Ahampses with another army also.”

“Ahampses” could be Ahmoses, the daughter of Amenhotep, named after her grandfather Ahmoses (Yah-Moses). She had an unusually large collection of titles, indicating that she was powerful and highly respected. The most powerful women in Egypt, when they acted like Pharaohs, were routinely described and depicted as if they were men.

“Both of them joined battle with the shepherds and the polluted people, and beat them, and slew a great many of them, and pursued them to the bounds of Syria.”

Ahmoses (daughter of Amenhotep) was the mother of Hatshepsut, who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. So their lives overlapped.

The Egyptian account confirms the Exodus account. But plagues were a problem from the start. They did not just begin in 1491 at the final exodus.

Exodus 7:14-11:10: The Ten Plagues

The ten plagues were huge: e.g., *all the water in Egypt* looked like blood. So it must have referred to a very large scale event: like the eruption of the Thera volcano. Records say this took place in 1563 BC.³⁶⁸ Tree rings and ice cores suggest it was 1562:³⁶⁹ year seven of Yah-Moses, just before he began his campaign against the Hyksos.

The eruption would have caused:

1. **Water like blood:**

Volcanic ash carried cinnabar (mercury sulphide). The ash would give a faint redness to all exposed water. This is the same as if someone had dropped blood into the water.

2. **Frogs:** The ash is very acidic, so frogs would leave the water.

3. **Lice:** as frogs die everywhere, lice feed on their bodies.

4. **Beasts:** the lice cause diseases that kill many animals.

5. **Pestilence:** diseases then spread to humans.

6. **Boils:** one of the diseases, made worse by acid rain from the ash.

7. **Hail:** the volcano upset the climate, causing freak weather.

8. **Locusts:** feeding on the dead animals.

9. **Darkness:** ash clouds in the sky.

10. **Killing the firstborn:** more about this in a couple of pages.



³⁶⁸ 810 years before 753 BC: Orosius, *Historiae Adversus Paganos* 1:9

³⁶⁹ “The exact Thera eruption date remains unconfirmed, but the team has narrowed it down to just a handful of possibilities: 1611 BC, 1562-1555 BC and 1538 BC” <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/05/220502142621.htm>

A record of the plagues

We have a contemporary record of darkness and destruction in the reign of Yah-Moses (i.e. between 1569 BC and 1543 BC). The Tempest Stela describes hurricane-force storms near the eruption of Thera (1562 BC):

The gods (made?) the sky come with a tempest of (rain?); it caused darkness in the Western region; the sky was unleashed, without ... more than the roar of the crowd; ... was powerful... on the mountains more than the turbulence of the cataract which is at Elephantine. Each house, ... no one able to light the torch anywhere. Then His Majesty said 'How these (events) surpass the power of the great god and the wills of the divinities!' ... His Majesty was informed that the funerary concessions had been invaded (by the water), that the sepulchral chambers had been damaged, that the structures of funerary enclosures had been undermined, that the pyramids had collapsed(?), all that existed had been annihilated...³⁷⁰

Exodus blames the Israelites (the Hyksos). The Egyptians called the Hyksos capital (Avaris) “the city of Typho”,³⁷¹ a god of chaos, and Typho/Typhon later gave his name to our word “typhoon”. (Typhon features prominently in the story of Cronus and Zeus in the Titanomachy.)



³⁷⁰ Translation from therafoundation.org via Wikipedia

³⁷¹ Josephus, *Against Apion*, 26

Exodus 7:17-21: why enslaving Israelites began the plagues, and why the Exodus ended the plagues

Could the Hyksos be diseased? Yes, and so can anyone. In the Bronze Age, people travelled less, so each group might develop immunity to different diseases. Then mixing those groups could cause a pandemic in one group, while the other group suffers less.

For example, a hundred years after the Exodus, the Hittites (north of Canaan) fought many wars of expansion. They brought back slaves from Syria and elsewhere. Those slaves brought diseases the Hittites had not experienced before, so they had no immunity. The Hittite Plague of the 1300s BC almost destroyed the empire.

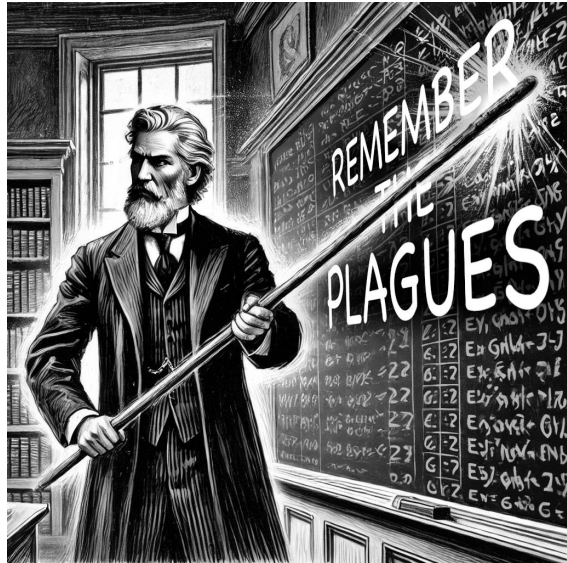
So enslaving the Hyksos could easily cause diseases among the Egyptians.

What about the other plagues, like poisoned water or animals dying? Whatever the crisis, we are more likely to survive if we work together. For example, if animals start to die (Moses plague #4), those with healthy animals can share them, and those with diseased animals are more likely to be honest and share the information. But if each side hates the other, then more people die.

So Moses was right. When people enslave and fight each other, they turn minor inconveniences into deadly plagues. So the answer is to stop enslaving people, and cooperate instead: let the Hebrews go!

So when Exodus says that Moses struck the water with his staff and it became blood, perhaps in the original story Moses struck the water just to make a point. Like a teacher might strike a blackboard, saying “Remember this!”

Perhaps Moses was saying “look at the river! Remember that plague of blood? We didn’t share our clean water. We didn’t trust each other. Thousands of people died!”



Exodus 11:1-8: Killing the firstborn

The Hyksos had different germs to the germs in Thebes. Senenmut was travelling back and forth trying to persuade Hatshepsut to let the Hyksos go, and warning of plague. You can guess what happened next.

There is one other crucial detail: Hatshepsut had only one child: Princess Neferure. (Note: royal women were often written as male in official documents.) Hatshepsut gave Neferure an unusually large number of important titles. Hatshepsut may have planned to make her the next Pharaoh.³⁷² And there are multiple statues of Senenmut lovingly holding the child. He may have been her father.

Neferure died before her mother.³⁷³ We don't know when, but Exodus says that this is what broke her. The Hebrews had to leave. NOW!

That decision must have taken hours at least. Exodus says that before any official news arrived, Moses suddenly received a message that the death was about to happen, and be prepared to leave very quickly: in hours, not days. It also said to paint Hebrew doors as if they had the plague. That was the only way to be left alone.



Young Neferure sitting on Senenmut's lap. Image by 'Captmondo' at the British Museum. CC-BY-SA-3.0

Because once the news got out, Egypt would go crazy. Senenmut was very wise, and had warned of plague, so people were already on edge. But to kill Neferure! The most protected child in the world! And now the queen was mad with grief, and the Hebrews had to all leave the country now, this same day! How bad must this plague be? Nobody was safe! The plague was real, and firstborn children tended to travel more, so were more likely to catch germs. People would suddenly remember every recent death. Rumours suddenly spread that plague was everywhere. Years later, stories would say that every firstborn died that night. There was more screaming that night than any night in history.³⁷⁴

³⁷² Wikipedia, citing "*When women ruled the world*" by Kara Cooney

³⁷³ She is mentioned along with other people on a tomb from year 7 of Thoth-Moses III's reign: 1491 BC, the year of the Exodus. So she was alive then. She was also mentioned in year 11, but is absent from a tomb in year 16, when she should have appeared. So she seems to have died between years 11 and 16. Thoth-Moses would be 18 by then, and some scholars think they married and had a child: Pharaohs married young.

³⁷⁴ Exodus 11:6

1491 BC: How big was the Exodus?

The size of the Exodus hinges on one word: “aleph”.

“And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred ‘aleph’ on foot that were men, beside children.”³⁷⁵

“Aleph” is usually translated as “thousand”. This creates absurd stories where the smallest disease kills ten thousand people, or a single man kills twenty thousand people. It also implies millions of people in the Exodus. That makes no sense.

Kings of Israel liked big numbers because it made them look very important: so they liked to see “aleph” as “thousand”. If scholars want to be paid by kings (or official universities) they had better interpret history in a way that makes the king look important. But these big numbers do not show up in the archaeological record. They also contradict other parts of Exodus. For example, Exodus 1:15 says that the children of Israel only needed two midwives. Presumably one was on call while the other one slept. So this was not a large population. Then what did “aleph” mean?

Aleph (written as “ ‘lp ” - Hebrew was written without vowels) meant “family”. Families did the fighting, so aleph came to also mean a military unit. As nations grew in size, aleph came to mean a thousand soldiers.

H502	אֶלֶף 'ālah, aw-lof; a primitive root, to associate with; hence, to learn (and causatively to teach)
H504	אֶלֶף 'eleph, eh'-lef; from H502; a family; also (from the sense of yoking or taming) an ox or cow
H505	אֶלֶף 'eleph, eh'-lef; prop. the same as H504; hence (the ox's head being the first letter of the alphabet, and this eventually used as a numeral) a thousand

So the “600 aleph” in the Exodus probably meant 600 families.³⁷⁶

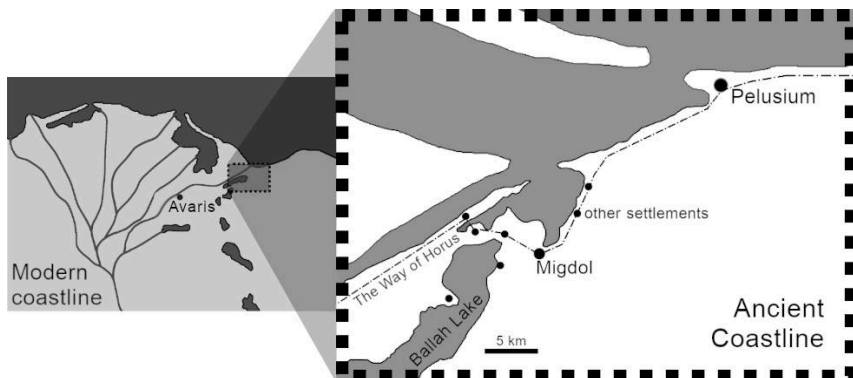
All the large numbers are like that. Bronze Age history typically involves family groups, not impossibly large armies. So the great Exodus probably included maybe 5,000 people. This is less than the typical Egyptian army of 10,000-20,000 people who would routinely cross the Sinai Peninsula.

³⁷⁵ Exodus 12:37

³⁷⁶ “*The Number of People in the Exodus from Egypt*” by Colin J. Humphreys. [jstor.org/stable/1585502](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1585502)

Exodus 14:1-3: Crossing the Reed Sea

Moses escaped from Egypt via the “Yam Suph”, the “sea of Reeds”. Josephus³⁷⁷ identifies the location (Pi Hahiroth) as the city of Pelusium, opposite Baal Zephon.³⁷⁸ Josephus might be wrong, but it was probably nearby. This marked the eastern border of Egypt, the start of the road to Canaan, so it was the natural place to stop. There are other places nearby that could also be bottlenecks.



“Pelusium” means “clay or mud” indicating swampy ground: this was the edge of the Nile Delta, a particularly swampy area, hence the “Sea of Reeds”. The map was constantly changing between water and soft wet ground.

“Pi Hahiroth” may mean “Mouth of the Canals” or “Opening of the Canals,” referring to all the waterways.

Exodus records how, when they arrived, the ground was too wet to cross. But then a hot wind dried out land so that the six hundred families could walk across. But then a strong wind caused the waters to surge, making it impossible for Pharaoh’s heavy chariot wheels. So they sank into the mud and reeds amid the storm. The surging water seemed like “a wall on the right and the left”. A miracle!

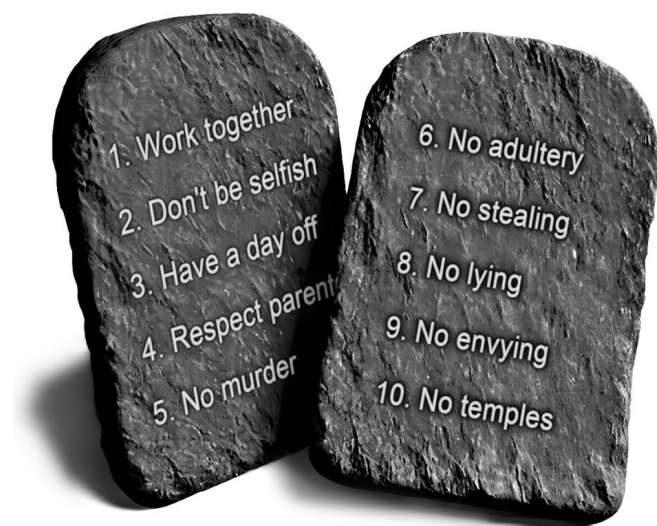
³⁷⁷ Antiquities 2.15.1.

³⁷⁸ “Baal Zephon” means Lord Zephon. Zephon sounds very similar to Typhon, worshipped at Avaris (Against Apion: “the city Avaris ... now this city, according to the ancient theology, was Typho’s city.”). Zephon is sāpōn, “north” or “north wind” (Psalm 25:23, Song 4:16) Typhon in Greek is whirlwind: the Hyksos came like a whirlwind from the north. How is Avaris “opposite” Pa Hahiroth? In Exodus 13:20, the Israelites went to the edge of the desert, then in 14:1-3 they turned back (i.e. toward Avaris) to confuse Pharaoh. The word translated as “opposite” is “pānim”, usually translated “before” but sometimes “toward”. Moses uses a disparaging term to remind them that they worship Yah now, and will not return to the violent chaos of Typhon. Alternatively, Typhon could refer to the coming storm that defeated Pharaoh.

Exodus 20:

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments say nothing about belief.³⁷⁹



Religious belief is a recent idea, invented around the year 1700.³⁸⁰ Originally, religion meant the rules and culture of the tribe.³⁸¹ You can believe whatever you like, as long as you keep the rules.

³⁷⁹ Commandment 1 (which Protestants split into 1 and 2, changing the numbering of the rest) was changed by the invention of religion. It says to not have other gods before Yahweh, and not make pesels (more about that later). The new definition of religion makes this about belief. But originally, gods referred to nature. Each tribe chose some aspect of nature as a mascot, such as the moon god or storm god. In the same way, a modern football team might call itself the Miami Dolphins or the Miami Hurricanes. So this is about working as a team. Commandment 2 (don't be selfish) is a modern version of not misusing a god's name. All ideas were attributed to the gods, so misusing a god's name meant saying the god wants your own selfish desire.

³⁸⁰ See *"Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept"* by Brent Nongbri

³⁸¹ Strictly speaking, religion means "re-legos" or "repeat logic": repeat a tradition until you understand the logic behind it. See Cicero, "On The Nature of Gods". Later, St Augustine tried to change the definition to mean "re-ligare", to repeatedly bind yourself (e.g. with ligaments) to a particular view. But Augustine was biased, trying to bind you to his particular religion. Cicero was more objective and gave the older definition.

Exodus 20:3-5: the first commandment

The first commandment is to have no “pesels”:

*“You shall have no other gods before me [nature]. **You shall not make for yourself a ‘pesel’** in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God [nature], am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me...”*

A “pesel” (literally “carved”) is an image that does not represent ancestors. Ancestor images are a special category called teraphim (plural of TRP, “old worn out things”, memories of the past). The world is full of lying images, and the only images we can trust are the memories of our ancestors. For example, Moses created cherubim (images of the Kerub: the people of Eden), and the brass serpent (serpents represent wise people, i.e. ancestors). So hang onto your teraphim. Because everything else is trying to sell you something for *their* benefit, not yours. If we believe pesels, then within 100 years (“the third and fourth generation”) things will get very bad.



Exodus 20:6: a thousand generations of happiness

The first commandment continues:

“...I, the Lord your God [nature], am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

If we follow nature (God), then we reject pesels. Instead, we listen to the teraphim, the reminders of our ancestors. This reminds us how our ancestors once lived in harmony (more or less) with all the other people around them. And they lived in harmony (more or less) with all of nature. And sometimes they made terrible mistakes. But unlike corporations and advertisers, they were just like us. So we can learn from them. If we focus on our ancestors and distrust other images then we will seldom go wrong.



If we reject lying pesels, and instead embrace teraphim, we can be happy for “a thousand generations”. A thousand generations is roughly one precession cycle (26,000 years). We will return to precession when we discuss the Millennium.

Exodus 20:3: Moses was a polytheist

“No other gods before me” meant *“Yah is the top god”*. This was not monotheism (“no other gods exist”) but henotheism: polytheism but with one god who was more important than the others.

Ancient Israel was polytheist. The easiest way to prove this is to look at ancient place names in Israel: *“only one of 502 local place names in Israel and Judah had Yehouah in it. Yet Canaanite gods and goddesses, such as Baal, Shamash, Anath and Mot, anathema to the Jews of the bible, are common.”*³⁸² King David’s family (before he became king) had teraphim that they treated as gods (elohim).³⁸³ His son Solomon worshipped hundreds of gods. Most of Israel’s Kings were polytheists. Monotheists were the exception, but they were the ones who eventually edited the Bible.

Moses had cherubim on the ark of the covenant and a bronze serpent that he told people to follow. The ark also contained an almond branch which probably acted as an “Asherah pole”: tree branches were symbols of Asherah, goddess of motherhood and fertility: i.e. the long-term survival of the family. Notice the pattern: your ancestors, tribe and family are good. Any other kind of carving or image is bad.



Moses never acted against polytheism unless there was some other crime attached, such as stirring up division. A live-and-let-live approach was fine. For example:

*“Now an Israelite woman's son, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the people of Israel. And the Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel fought in the camp, and the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name, and cursed. ... And they put him in custody, till the will of the Lord should be clear...”*³⁸⁴

If the father was an Egyptian and the boy blasphemed against Yahweh, this probably means that he preferred Egyptian gods. Notice that **there was no established policy for what to do**. So being a polytheist cannot have been a crime. But the boy was stirring up trouble, so Moses had to think of an appropriate response. The fact that there was no established rule, even when attacking Yahweh in favour of Egyptian gods, indicates that other gods were not a problem unless they caused division.

³⁸² *“Jerusalem and Judaism before the Return...”* academia.edu/22615235/Jerusalem_and_Judaism_before_the_Return_Canaanite_in_Culture

³⁸³ 1 Samuel 19:12-13

³⁸⁴ Leviticus 24:10-12

Exodus 20:25-26: the tenth commandment

When Moses revealed the Ten Commandments, the final commandment was not to have temples. After the commands about coveting, there was thunder and smoke. Moses told the people not to be afraid. He then returned to the mountain and told the people this:³⁸⁵

If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. And do not go up to my altar on steps, or your private parts may be exposed.'



Notice God's sense of humour. The exposed backside is a great metaphor: Perverts expose themselves in public as a crude way to have power over others. Yahweh sees temples in the same way. Yahweh, the god of nomads, wants us to be modest. Altars should be simple piles of rough stones.

When Solomon built his temple in Jerusalem he broke this commandment. After that, kings pretended that it was not part of the Ten Commandments. So they made the previous nine commandments into ten. Jews and Protestants split the first commandment (no pesels) in half. Catholics keep it as it was, but split the ninth commandment (no coveting) in half.

³⁸⁵ Exodus 21:1 begins "the laws", so Exodus 20:25-26 is still part of the "ten laws", often translated "ten commandments" (e.g. in Exodus 34:28).

Exodus 21:1-11: slavery

The Ten Commandments are designed to end slavery. They begin:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

The first commandment is to avoid pesels because they enable systems that are more powerful than humans. The last command is to avoid temples, symbols of power. The other commandments prevent people from taking advantage of others. So it is all designed to end slavery.

After the Ten Commandments, the next chapter begins the detailed laws. And yet, the very first law allows slavery!

"These are the laws you are to set before them: 'If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. ...'"

Hebrew servants cannot be slaves but foreign slaves are allowed:

Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God. Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves.³⁸⁶

America and the West used this law to justify slavery. But why did Moses say that? Why did Moses say "no slavery" and then not ban slavery?



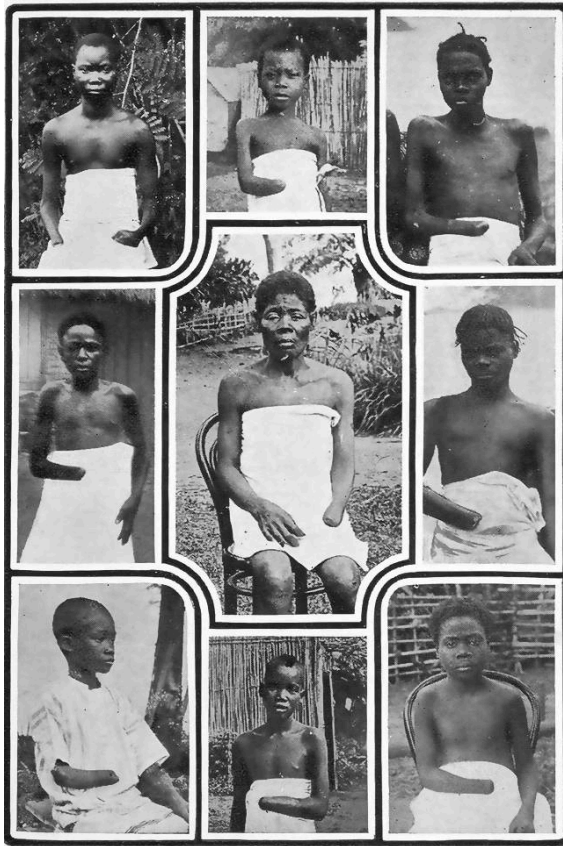
Image: from The Gospel of Slavery, by Iron Gray (out of copyright)

³⁸⁶ Leviticus 25:42-44

How the West “banned” slavery

Moses is widely criticised for not banning slavery. The enlightened West showed its moral superiority by banning slavery. This is what it did.

Between 1770 and 1910, industrialised Western countries banned slavery at the same time as they colonised the world. They turned entire nations into slaves. They found that pretending to be anti-slavery was a better way to trick people into becoming slaves. For example, Belgium banned the slave trade in 1814.³⁸⁷ They then treated colonial workers *like* slaves, but they were not *officially* slaves. If workers did not meet targets, they could have their hands cut off. But they were not slaves. Because we ended slavery!



³⁸⁷ As part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, which included “Belgium Austriacum” (a.k.a. the Austrian Netherlands). Belgium then became independent in 1830. The 1814 law only banned the *trade* in slaves. Slavery was banned within Dutch colonies in 1863.

How America “banned” slavery

America banned slavery in 1865. They replaced it with “Jim Crow” laws that had almost the same effect. (And they still allow slavery in prisons, and have the largest prison population in the world.) Banning slavery enabled them to unite the country so they could then go after other countries: attacking Korea in 1871, Samoa in the 1880s, Cuba in 1898, and so on. This created a global system where the global rich (mainly in America) can force the global poor to work for starvation wages.

For example, this picture shows people carrying body parts from their relatives. Their relatives worked for American companies but refused to live like slaves. So they mysteriously disappeared. Their remains were discovered decades later in a mass grave.³⁸⁸ There are countless examples like this.³⁸⁹



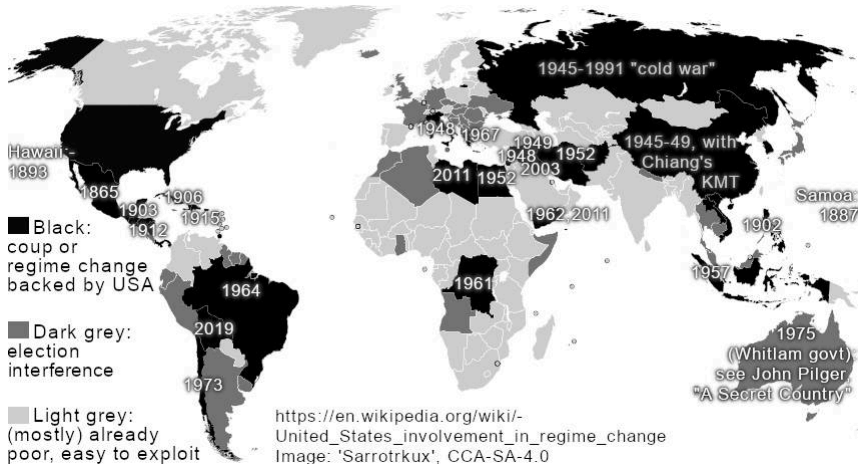
Image: Ixil people carrying their loved ones' remains after an exhumation in the Ixil Triangle in February 2012. From the Centre for Forensic Anthropology and Applied Sciences (CAFCA) archives, via 'Trocaire' (Flickr) and Wikimedia. CC-BY-2.0

³⁸⁸ This is how it happened: In 1952, many Guatemalan people lived like slaves, working for the American United Fruit Company. So the Guatemalan government passed “Decree 900”, saying that the United Fruit Company should give unused land to the peasants. The company would be paid for the unused land, in government bonds. The company did not like that. So it persuaded America to overthrow the Guatemalan government (“Operation PBFortune”). In 1954 America installed a dictator to crush the peasants. This led to a civil war (1960-1996). America helped organise “Operation Limpieza” (“operation cleanup”) to identify, torture and kill peasants who rebelled. 140,000-200,000 people disappeared, most of them peasants. Guatemala is typical: the West has punished dozens of slave rebellions using the same methods.

³⁸⁹ See “*The Racket*” by Matt Kennard

Banning slavery to increase slavery

This map shows interventions by the USA. All of these interventions took place after America banned slavery, which made it more united and stronger. This is not an attack on America in particular: we could create a similar map for the British Empire, or ancient Rome, Persia, Babylon, etc..



Empires use violent interventions to create a system that serves the empire. They sometimes do it without war, but it always causes poverty, which causes death.³⁹⁰

Ancient authors defined this relationship as slavery.

For example, when Herodotus described the Persian empire, he said they wanted to turn all the world into slaves (douloi).³⁹¹ Persia was probably the kindest and gentlest of the ancient empires, but when an empire uses violence to enforce its will on the world, that is slavery, according to the ancient definition.

³⁹⁰ For example, America helped create the "Investment State Dispute Settlement" system (ISDS) to force weak countries to obey American corporations. As an example of how it works, in 2012 Occidental Oil broke a contract with Ecuador, so Ecuador cancelled the contract. Occidental then used the ISDS to sue Ecuador, a very poor country. Ecuador had to pay \$2.4 billion, even though Occidental broke the contract. "The tribunal agreed the violation took place but judged that the annulment was not fair and equitable treatment to the company" - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Investor%E2%80%93state_dispute_settlement#Cases_lost_by_governments Ecuador had planned to spend that figure on public works each year: money needed for healthcare, social welfare, safety, and other life-saving work. But it no longer had that money. See "Ecuador plans to spend \$200 million per month for public investment" <https://www.americaeconomia.com/en/node/288236>

³⁹¹ E.g. in Herodotus, Histories 7.8C.3

Unequal land guarantees slavery

Slavery is caused by unequal access to land. If you control the most valuable land (like America), then you will pull resources from weaker competitors like a gigantic global vacuum cleaner.³⁹²

To see how this works, play the game of Monopoly. It was originally called The Landlord's Game. It was designed to show that a monopoly on the value of land will destroy the economy. Toward the end of the game, if you land on the property of a rich player, you have to resort to begging for mercy or accept that your game has ended. So you are like a slave.

The book of Leviticus tells us how to fix this terrible system: how to end slavery along with poverty and war and all other ills.



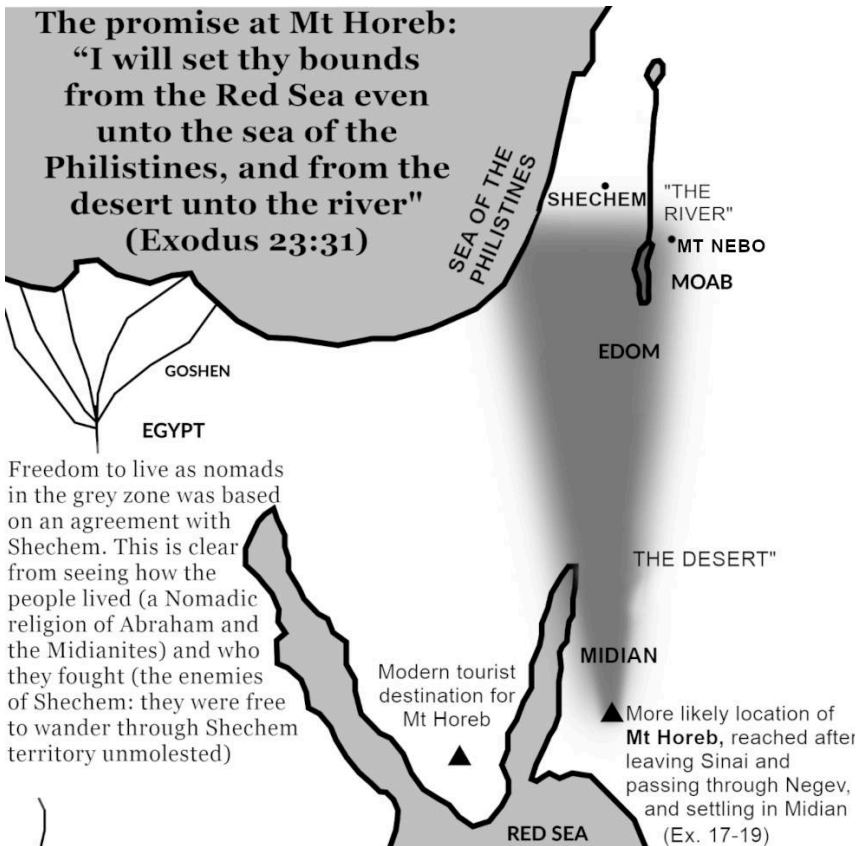
Image: 1906, LandlordsGame.Info, CC0

³⁹² Imagine a country called “Richland”. It has a lot of good land or other resources. (All natural resources are called “land” by economists.) Thanks to resources, working in Richland creates a lot of wealth. Let’s say, \$10 per hour. But across the sea, a country called “Poorland” has very poor resources. Working in Poorland earns \$1 per hour. Richland and Poorland both need things that the other country produces. So they each work 10 hours to buy stuff. 10 hours of work from Poorland earn 10 dollars. So they can buy just 1 hour of work from Richland. But they need stuff, so they end up selling their resources instead. But 10 hours of work from Richland earn 100 dollars. So Richland can easily buy 100 hours of work from Poorland. So Richland sucks everything of value out of Poorland at the ratio of 100 to 1.

Exodus 23:31: how big was the promised land?

Moses wanted to free the Israelites from slavery. Aaron urged him to try to conquer the whole Levant, saying this was the will of God.³⁹³ But Moses was realistic: he only needed space for 600 families. And as Pharaoh Yah-Moses he had no interest in causing a war in his lands. He wanted to establish a safe place where the 600 families would be safe and do no harm, then he would leave.

So, standing in the desert south of Canaan, he made a realistic claim: he wanted a certain triangle of land that defined the southern desert and southern part of Canaan:



³⁹³ Exodus 6:8 (1-8). See the earlier discussion of how Aaron replaced the Levites.

“The river”

“The River” is not named, and therefore it must be the nearest major river, the Jordan. Later generations claimed that he meant the Euphrates, but that is impossible. Because “from the desert to the river” would then include the West Bank of Jordan, including Mt Nebo. But Moses stood on Mt Nebo when he was *outside* the Promised Land looking in.

Moses wanted the desert

Moses got his religion from the Midianites. These are Midianite lands. Moses came from a desert land (Egypt). He led the people for forty years in the desert, and he was an expert at finding water in the desert.³⁹⁴ Moses was a man of the desert, not of highland Canaan.

Jacob did own a tiny piece of land in Shechem.³⁹⁵ This was the only land they owned. It enabled them to be friends with the settled highlanders. But they were nomadic herders of the southern lowlands. They visited Canaan for trade, but they did not live there.³⁹⁶

Abraham rejected the empty promise of Canaan

Some people point out that Abraham was promised the whole of Canaan in Genesis 17. But that was always an empty promise made by people in far away Ur. As we saw, Abraham rejected that promise and chose to be a nomad instead.

Did Moses steal land?

Moses obtained land through an agreement with Shechem, the chief city of inland Canaan. Therefore he did not steal it.

Moses told the people to enter the promised land and then make a covenant at Shechem.³⁹⁷ Archaeology confirms that Shechem made a treaty to let the invaders settle: the king of Jerusalem complained that Shechem had given land to “Habiru” fugitives (usually taken to mean either Hebrews or somebody similar)³⁹⁸

³⁹⁴ E.g. in Exodus 17

³⁹⁵ Genesis 33:19,35:4

³⁹⁶ E.g. they must not marry a Canaanite (Genesis 28:1), “the people of the land” are Canaanites, not Israelites (Genesis 34:30), etc.

³⁹⁷ Josh 8:33; Deut 11:29, 30; 27:4-13

³⁹⁸ From the Amarna letters, EA 289. These are Egyptian correspondence from 1360-1332 BC, 40 years after Joshua entered the land.

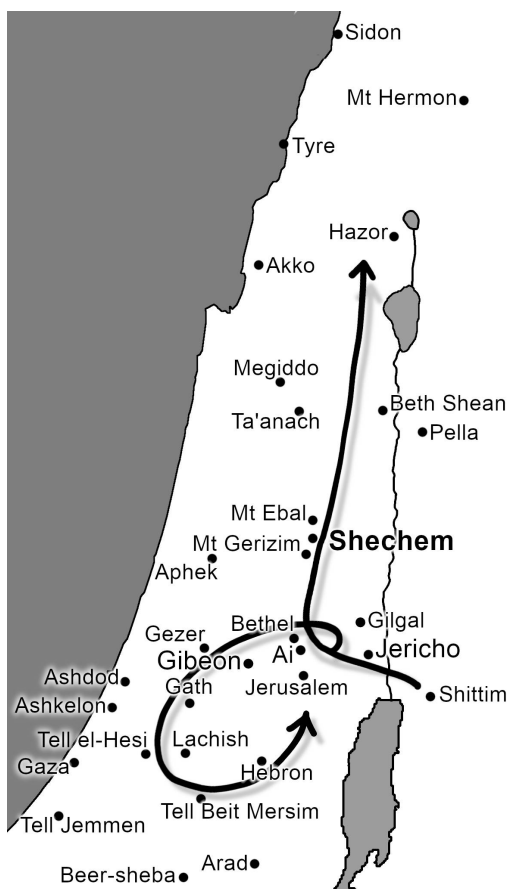
Manetho records an agreement with Jerusalem.³⁹⁹ That may have been separate from any agreement with Shechem, but it shows Moses's policy.

What was the agreement? When Israel entered the promised land they first attacked Jericho. This was largely deserted and was purely symbolic, because Jericho was the first great walled city. (See the chapter on the book of Joshua)

Joshua then attacked the city of Ai, which was noted for being small and weak,⁴⁰⁰ yet Ai was still able to defeat the Israelites, which suggests that Jericho was even weaker).

They then walked 34km north, ignoring any local tribes or villages, to make the covenant at Shechem.⁴⁰¹ Most of the Israelites were women and children,⁴⁰² so they could not march so far in safety unless they were among friends.

After the covenant at Shechem, they were tricked into an alliance with Gibeon further south, which caused some conflict.⁴⁰³ After that, they walked to the far north of Canaan. Again this indicates that they must be at peace with the regions on the way. They then fought tribes in the north “for a long time”.⁴⁰⁴



³⁹⁹ As reported by Josephus, in “Against Apion”, 26

⁴⁰⁰ Joshua 7:3, note that “thousand” probably just meant “family head”

⁴⁰¹ Joshua 8:30-35

⁴⁰² Joshua 8:35

⁴⁰³ Joshua 10

⁴⁰⁴ Joshua 11:18

So it appears that the people had an agreement with Shechem in central Canaan. They may or may not have agreed to fight Shechem's enemies in the far north and south. They made some treaties with the tribes near Shechem, when Moses said not to make treaties in the promised land. Everything says that central Canaan was not the promised land, it was the land of friends. The promised land was the triangle of land further south.

Did Moses commit genocide?

Joshua committed genocide. But Moses did not, except in a single case where he acted in foolish anger against the Amalekites. He paid for his crime with his life. For details of this and the other alleged genocides, see the chapter on the Book of Numbers.

The simple fact is that Moses was Egyptian, whereas Joshua was the most determined of the Hyksos. Moses wanted to solve the problem of the Hyksos. The last thing he wanted was more war in his empire. But Joshua came from a heritage of conquest. He needed to prove himself! He wanted to prove that the Hyksos (the Israelites) were not a problem to be pacified, they were a mighty conquering people!

All authority traced to Moses, so Joshua had to claim that he was doing what Moses said. But the evidence says the opposite.

Joshua was extremely violent: he was cruel to the enemy horses (cutting their hamstrings⁴⁰⁵), chased everybody off, and then went back to the chief city (meaning a walled village) and killed every living person in their walled villages.⁴⁰⁶ He then allied with the tribe of Gibeon.⁴⁰⁷ This is more evidence that Joshua did not follow Moses: Moses said to make no alliances.⁴⁰⁸

After this, Israel settled down and divided the land,⁴⁰⁹ planning how they would one day conquer the Philistines in Gaza when they got around to it.⁴¹⁰ The conquest story then ends with renewing the covenant at Shechem.⁴¹¹ Shechem needed the Israelite's help in fighting because it was weak. So Shechem was now in no position to oppose Joshua's fait accompli.

⁴⁰⁵ Joshua 11:6,9

⁴⁰⁶ Joshua 11:11

⁴⁰⁷ Joshua 9

⁴⁰⁸ Exodus 23:31-33

⁴⁰⁹ Joshua 12-23

⁴¹⁰ Joshua 13

⁴¹¹ Joshua 24

Driving city people out of the southern desert

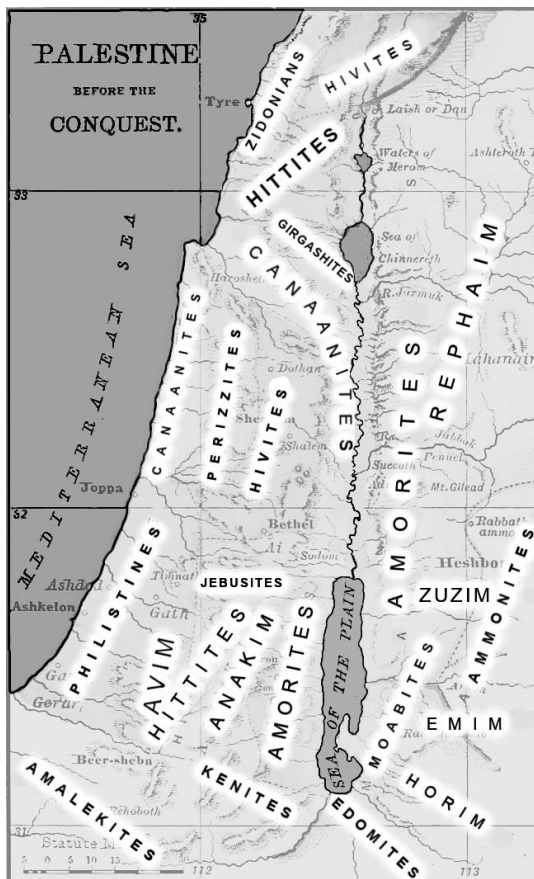
Exodus 34:11 gives six names to drive out of the promised land:

I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Why does this list not include the Philistines, Amalekites, Edomites, Ammonites, etc.? Why does it not include the people Joshua fought?

If we study these names, we see that boundaries on most maps of Canaan are nonsense. Some of these names are not even tribes.

Out of the six names, only the Amorites and Canaanites are indigenous. Two names refer to migrants moving south due to the decline of the Hittites.⁴¹² The remaining two names are just words meaning “rural people” and “villagers”. Let us look at the six names.



Based on Jesse Hurlbut's Bible Atlas, 1910

⁴¹² “MENDENHALL (1974 : 142- 145) convincingly suggested that only two of these names (Canaanites and Amorites) refer to autochthonous elements of the population of Canaan . The other five reached the country only at the beginning of Iron Age I due to the outcome of large scale migration that followed the destruction of the Hittite empire (see MAZAR 1981: 76- 80).” - Nadav Na’aman, “Canaanites and Perizzites” (1988), quoting G.E. Mendenhall, “The Tenth Generation” and B. Mazar, “The Early Israelite Settlement in the Hill Country”. Na’aman refers to Iron Age I, 1200 BC, but the same southward pressure existed in the weak “Middle Kingdom” (c.1500-1400 BC) between the fall of the Old Kingdom (c.1650-1500) and rise of the New Kingdom (1400-1200)

No city people allowed in the promised land

The six names show that Moses only wanted to drive city people back to their cities. The city people are the Amorites, Shechem-ites (Canaanites), any Hittite migrants (even if they lived in small villages), and anyone from Jerusalem. Moses did *not* say to drive out the Amalekites (descendants of Esau), or the Kenites, Edomites or Moabites, even though he wanted their lands. Because those were nomadic people: they knew how to share.

Here are the six names:

The Amorites were the major power in the Middle East. They founded Babylon, Ebla, Mari, and the fourteenth dynasty of Egypt. So they were everywhere, including the southern desert that Moses wanted. Local tribes had to show them respect. They were the city people who Abraham and Moses rejected. So Moses was happy to push them out of the desert and back to their cities.

The Canaanites were the original people of the southern Levant. Their capital was Shechem. The agreement with Shechem allowed Moses to settle in the South. So the Canaanites had to get out because that was the agreement.

The Hittites were the people of Anatolia, far in the north. They were major rivals of the Amorites and were gradually spreading into Amorite territory. In 1595 BC they conquered Babylon. But by 1500 BC they were weaker, under pressure from the Hurrians (the people around Harran from Abraham's history). Many Hittites began to migrate south, away from the Hurrians.

The Jebusites are the people of the land that would become Jerusalem. This was probably the greatest stronghold in Canaan.⁴¹³ They were confident and arrogant, so were likely to be found in neighbouring lands, and Moses did not want their kind.

The Perizzites are never mentioned outside the Bible, and the Bible is vague about their location. The word means "rural people". "**Hivite**" is much like "Perizzite": it just means "villagers".

So Moses wanted no city people, even if they now live in small villages. They had to go back to their cities. He then said that people do not marry into these (city) tribes or follow their (city) gods. This was the first of the new Ten Commandments in Exodus 34. This suggests that the Israelites would normally intermarry and share gods with local people. That was Moses's general policy, as we will see in the Book of Judges. But Moses wanted no city people in his promised land.

⁴¹³ Joshua could not dislodge them (Joshua 15:63, Judges 1:21) and the Jebusites said even the blind and lame could defend their citadel (2 Samuel 5:6-8).

Leviticus:

How to make a perfect world

Leviticus means the book of “Levi”, the book of “joining together”. It starts with several chapters of feasts designed to bring the community together. Then it has a simple rule for creating infinite wealth:

Share land equally

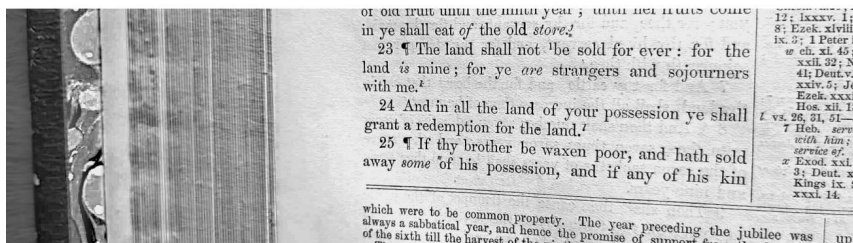
First, Moses divided the promised land between all the families, so everyone had roughly equal amounts of land.



Do not sell land

Next, Leviticus 25 gave the one rule: you cannot sell your land. You can rent it out if you like. Or you can lease it. People who need land can always get more if they are willing to pay rent. **But you cannot sell land.** This ensures that nobody can amass more land than someone else.

The land shall not ¹be sold for ever



This one idea will change the world

It's not just one verse: it is implied in every verse of the Bible. If God owns the land, then you do not. It was also a much bigger deal before the rise of priests and kings: this is confirmed by the historian Hecataeus, as we will see. This is the most explosive idea in the world. It means:

1. **No kings (or financial elites)**

The land was initially shared out equally. No king was allowed. (Both facts are confirmed by Hecataeus.) No person could ever gain more land than somebody else unless they paid rent for it.

2. **No poverty**

Each person owned land, so there could be no poverty.

3. **No injustice**

Imagine going to court, when everybody is equal. It's like a millionaire going to court: you get the best possible result.

4. **Great wealth for all**

Equal land removes injustice and only rewards work. This creates enormous amounts of wealth as we will see.

5. **History turns upside down**

This implies that all the kings and elites in history were the bad guys. So everything you were taught was a lie.

This teaching explodes from the Bible and turns the world upside down!



This was the defining feature of Yahweh's religion, (before priests and kings changed it)

Sharing land is the heart of any nomadic religion. Equal land was the heart of Moses's religion. It was therefore the heart of the Bible.⁴¹⁴

For proof, consider Hecataeus of Abdera, our earliest witness to Judaism. Hecataeus lived just after 300 BC. This was a hundred years before the Maccabees edited the Bible to support their claim to kingship.⁴¹⁵ This is how Hecataeus summed up Judaism before the Maccabees:⁴¹⁶

- The nation of the Jews began when they were foreigners living in Egypt. Egypt blamed them for a great plague, and expelled them. Danaus and Cadmus went to Greece, and the rest went to Canaan. (This confirms two of the controversial parts of this book: the reality of the plague that caused The Exodus, and the role of Israel in creating Greece.)
- Moses was “*a very wise and valiant man*” who led the Jews. As was common in ancient texts, Hecataeus simplified history. He attributed every action to Moses, even if it was done by his later successors. E.g. he said that Moses conquered Canaan and built the temple in Jerusalem.
- Moses divided the people into twelve tribes, chose priests and laid down laws. Then “*he introduced a most inhuman and unsociable manner of life*”. Hecataeus does not explain what that was. Perhaps he is repeating what the priests told him: they liked power and wealth, so the original law of equality was “inhuman and unsociable” to them
- **“*They say that the Jews have never had any king; but that the leadership of the people has always been entrusted to a priest*”.** So the “king” David was probably more like the archaeologists’ suggestion: “local warlord David”, reliant on the priest for his authority. But the Maccabee kings took the role of priest to themselves. So their edited Bible makes it sound like kings were more important than priests.
- **“*[Moses or later rulers] gained much territory by force of arms, which he gave as allotments to his countrymen, in such a way that***

⁴¹⁴ Jesus followed Moses. Paul's letters can be ignored. See the chapters on Jesus, Paul and Christianity.

⁴¹⁵ Many scholars (such as Gil Kidron from the Podcast of Biblical Proportions) think the Maccabees' fingerprints are all over the Bible. Of interest to this book is that they became kings, so must have opposed the teaching of equal land. Hence, the teaching is hidden in chapter 25 of Leviticus. And yet for it to exist, and to arise naturally from the core teaching (that God owns everything) it must have been huge.

⁴¹⁶ For the full text, see Diodorus, *Histories*, book 40

everyone shared alike,

except the priests, who had a larger portion than the rest". Here we have the equal land rule, but instead of the Levites having *no* land, as Moses said, the priests have *more* land. Evidence suggests that the priests took power (and land) at the time of David, around 1000 BC.⁴¹⁷

- ***“Neither was it lawful for any man to sell his allotment, lest, by the greed of those that bought the allotments, the others might be made poor and oppressed, and so the nation might suffer a shortage of manpower.”***
- Moses *“ordered the inhabitants to be careful in rearing their children, who are brought up with very little expense; and by that means the Jewish nation has always been very populous.”* This fits with the theme of equality. Amassing wealth is bad. Real power comes from having lots of healthy and trained people who live without waste.
- Hecataeus ends by telling us that, *“during the rule of the Persians, and in the time of the Macedonians, who overthrew the Persians, through intermingling with foreign nations, many of the traditional customs among the Jews were altered”*.

In summary, equal land was not just some minor verse hidden in Leviticus. It was a major idea in the religion. And it was an even bigger idea before the priests took over and demanded extra land for themselves.

Hecataeus mentioned other ideas as well, such as the Jewish temple and the priests and the wars. But those are commonplace and unremarkable. Most religions have temples, priests and wars. But the equal land rule was unique. No other nation ever had that. The equal land law made Judaism different. It changed the whole world, as we will see. **It was the defining feature of Moses's religion.**

⁴¹⁷ These priests were based at the temple in Jerusalem. But Moses did not want temples or cities. The priests at Jerusalem would not have added condemnation of temples. So the ban on temples must be original to Moses. So the priests must have arisen later and centralised the religion at Jerusalem. The books of kings and Chronicles show them becoming prominent when David conquered Jerusalem. Before that, in the book of Judges, they had a secondary role. So the earlier claim that *“leadership of the people has always been entrusted to a priest”* is probably what the priests told Hecataeus.

The problem with land sales

The problem with selling land is that some people get more and more. Once people own a lot of land, then we have to obey them, because we all need what land offers. So the big land owner can do what they want, even if it hurts other people.



For example, workers can be charged high rent and paid low wages. Factories can pollute the air. Politicians can be bribed. Wars can be fought to get other countries' natural resources. We can have Hell on Earth.

Why does equal land ownership solve the problem? Because it gives people bargaining power. So we don't have to accept bad stuff. The history of the world (The Flood, the Hyksos, etc.) is the history of people doing terrible things because they had land, so they could get away with it.

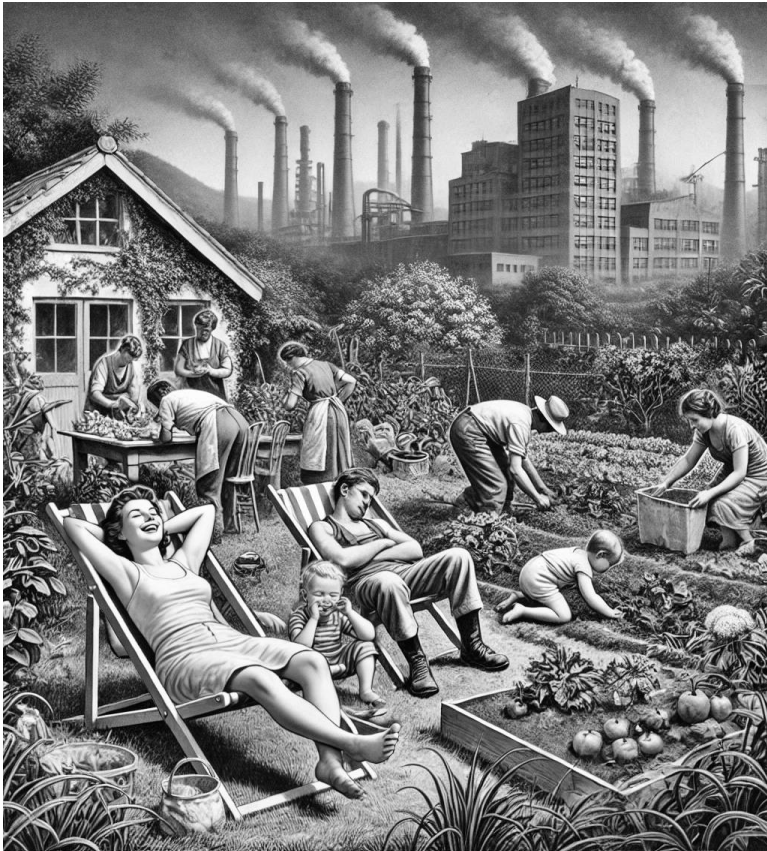
Land gives you bargaining power

Now imagine a world where everybody has an acre of land. You have no rent to pay. If the factory does not treat you well, you don't need to work there: you can live off your land instead. Land gives you bargaining power.

What if the factory needs more land? They have to offer you a good rent. And keep on paying that rent every month.

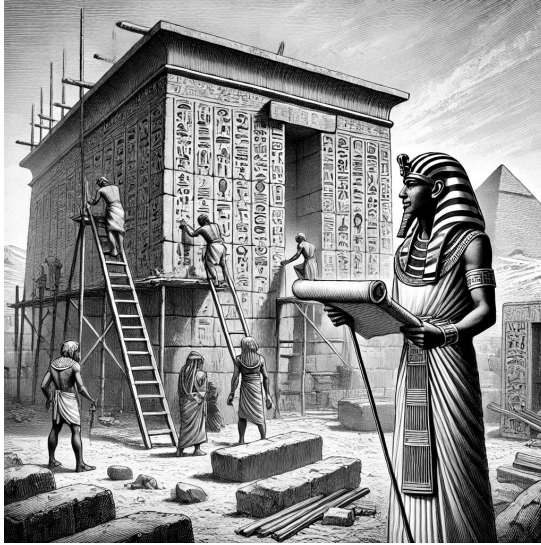
What if the factory cannot afford the rent? If you think your land is worth £1000/month, that means living on it is worth £1000 to you. If the factory can only use that land to make £500, then the factory is destroying wealth and should not exist.

The same applies to politicians. Land gives you the power to opt out, or just to stop and think, or to organise. When you have land you are never desperate, you are always free.



Senenmut was a better economist than us

Moses was represented by his Aaron, someone like Senenmut the architect and polymath. Senenmut learned from thousands of years of Egyptian history. He was a better economist than modern economists. He understood, from observing history, that merely owning land adds no economic or social value. Only the work you do adds anything.



In contrast, Modern economists know very little about history. They mostly rely on data from a couple of hundred years. They don't see the thousand-year cycles of history. So modern economists think that rent-seeking (buying resources like land merely to collect rent on them) is an acceptable problem. They do not see how it destroys civilisation.

Senenmut knew better. In 1500 BC he could see how rent-seeking "big men" destroyed Sumer and Akkad. Rent-seeking "big men" had just destroyed the first Babylonian empire.⁴¹⁸ Rent-seeking "big men" were busy destroying the first Assyrian empire.⁴¹⁹ Senenmut knew all about "big men": and rent-seeking. They always destroy civilisation.

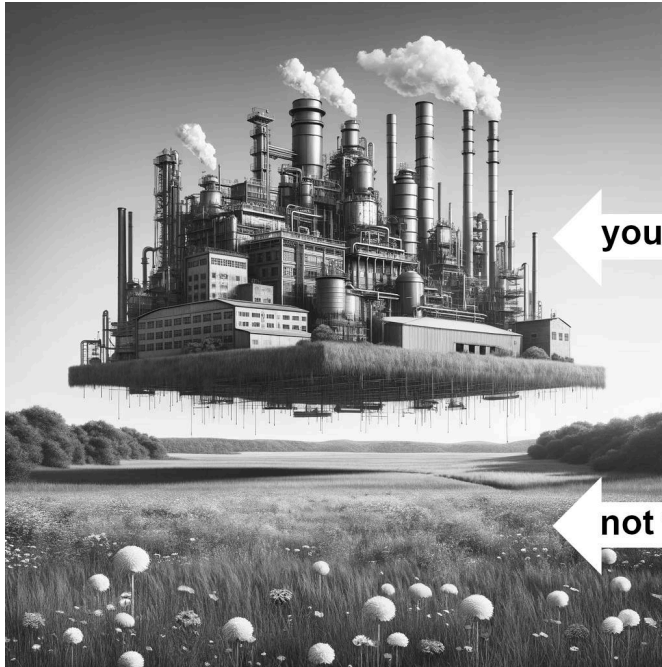
⁴¹⁸ Under the last ruler, Samsu-Ditana, 1625–1595 BC, "*the Babylonian state was in decay, with offices becoming hereditary, usurping royal prerogative, and payments accepted in lieu of military service to fund the bloated bureaucracy.*" -Wikipedia, citing "*The History of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Overview*" by Dominique Charpin,

⁴¹⁹ Assyria, founded on trade and equality, was becoming a land-based empire. It would be conquered in 1430 BC. See "*The Imperialisation of Assyria*" by Bleda Düring.

Moses's land law creates more wealth

Giving everyone land has the result that renting extra land can never *on its own* make money. Because the market will demand the maximum price to rent the extra land.

So all businesses must find ways to add value to land. Only the added value makes them any money. You did not make the land so cannot profit from it, except by living on your own share of land and enjoying it.



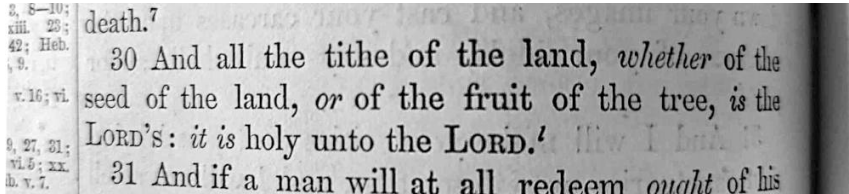
If this sounds like a problem, it proves that many current businesses do not add any net value to land. That is, many current businesses destroy real net value while only adding value on paper. Moses's land law solves this problem and therefore creates more wealth.

In other words, by giving everyone land, we can easily show who creates wealth and who does not. The wealth-destroying businesses cannot afford the rent and so they go out of business.

Therefore Moses's law creates more wealth. Compound growth means the amount of wealth soon doubles, and doubles again. Archaeology confirms this (see the chapters on Judges). But does this mean we should redistribute land by force?

Ground rent: no need to redistribute land

To apply Moses's land law, do we need to redistribute land? No. If land is already owned, and we forcibly redistribute it, then that divides society, which is the opposite of Levi ("joining"). Forced redistribution causes violence, corruption, and loss of productivity: the people who know how to farm the land lose it, and people who don't know how to farm get the land. It encourages greed, hatred, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and all bad things. So Moses has a better solution: ground rent, also known as tithing. The very last verses of Leviticus outline the principle:



This is how it works: if you farm the land, you increase its output. But some plants and animals would appear even if you did nothing. Moses arbitrarily measured that amount as one-tenth of your total output. That natural output is caused by nature (God), not by you. So it belongs to nature, it does not belong to you. Moses said that value should go to the cost of running society (i.e. to the full-time Levites, who had no land, and spent their time organising public events to keep people united).

In other words, **Moses did not tax work**. Everything that you created belonged to you. But everything that you did not create (the natural output of land) belonged to the community. The figure of one-tenth was just a very rough approximation. We can accurately measure the output of the land by seeing how much money people will pay for bare, unused land. That base land value is called ground rent.

If we share the ground rent equally between everyone, then each person gets the same value as if we divided the land equally and gave each person physical land. So applying ground rent has the same economic effect as Moses's land law. If people want to, they can use their share of ground rent to rent land. So the result is the same as if the state had redistributed land.

In short, Moses's land law is as follows:

- If it is convenient, redistribute the land so everyone has equal shares.
- If that is not convenient, charge ground rent and share that out instead.
- Do not tax work.

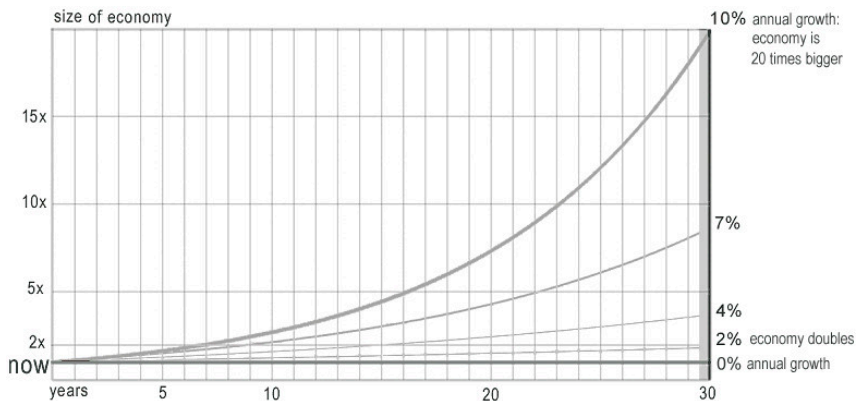
Ground rent creates unlimited wealth

Ground rent is the rental value of bare land in any particular location. A government cannot arbitrarily increase ground rent, as it can with taxation, because the value of land is decided by the market, not the government. So ground rent forces government to be good: good government becomes the only way for a government to increase its income.

Good government causes ground rent to increase because people want to live there, thus raising the rent. Therefore Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, concluded that ground rent was the best way to pay for a government:

*"Ground-rents ... Nothing can be more reasonable than that a fund, which owes its existence to the good government of the state should be taxed peculiarly, or should contribute something more than the greater part of other funds, towards the support of that government."*⁴²⁰

For example, let us try a thought experiment. Imagine that your government stopped taxing work and moved to ground rent instead. This would force the government to adopt good policies. How much growth would be caused by good policies? Let's choose a modest number: 2% per year. This means the economy would then double in size every 30 years, compared to an economy that taxed work. It would then double again and again. Pretty soon, the ground rent economy would be ten times bigger than the taxation economy. Then a hundred times bigger, then a thousand times.



⁴²⁰ From book 5, of *"The Wealth of Nations"*, by Adam Smith

How to save the world

Moses reached the promised land in 1441 BC. Imagine that his people were desperately poor, earning just \$1 per day (all numbers are adjusted for inflation). 2% growth means that one year later the poorest person would earn \$1.02 per day. How much would the poorest person earn by the year 2026 AD, after 3467 years of compound growth? Get a calculator and do the math yourself, or you won't believe it. \$1 per day, multiplied by 1.02, repeated 3467 times, gives:

\$665,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 per day.

That is what the poorest person would earn today, after inflation, if we had followed Moses's land laws. So Moses's land law creates staggering amounts of wealth. And we don't have to wait for that wealth. If we know that wealth will be produced in 30 years, then today, right now, we can sell 30-year bonds. Then in 30 years, those bonds can be cashed for the real wealth that then exists. So right now, today, the government can switch to ground rent. If landowners complain, they can be bribed with big piles of money, paid for by issuing 30-year bonds. In other words, the nature gods (Yah, Inanna, etc.) will pay you big piles of cash if you admit that they own the land and you do not.



This is not some crazy fringe theory.

The idea of replacing all taxation with ground rent is called “Georgism” (after the economist Henry George), or “the single tax”, or “Land Value Taxation” (LVT) or “Geoism”. Supporters of ground rent included not just Adam Smith, but Leo Tolstoy, Mark Twain, Henry Ford, Winston Churchill, and numerous Nobel Prize-winning economists.⁴²¹



You don't need to be an economist to understand the value of ground rent. Just play the game of Monopoly.

Monopoly (originally “The Landlord’s Game”) was invented by Georgist thinker Elizabeth Magie with two sets of rules. One set of rules was the game we play today and reflects the economy that we have today: where people can buy land and own it without paying rent. The result? All the money ends up in the hands of the rich, and everyone else loses. Then the game ends: the economy fails. The second set of rules includes ground rent: when you own property you must pay a modest rent. Under those rules, everyone always has money and the game (the economy) never ends.

⁴²¹ For more about ground rent, its history and the economists who support it, search for “Land Value Taxation”.

Sacrifices and festivals in Leviticus

Leviticus spends most of its pages on sacrifices and festivals. These are various excuses to make people meet their neighbours and eat together. This needs a lot of pages, because Moses had to think of a lot of excuses to force people to get together and share food.

Meeting our neighbours also teaches economics. Sharing ideas lets us do more and more of whatever we do. That means compound growth. And they understood sound money:

“Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.”⁴²²



⁴²² Proverbs 13:11

Draconian laws in Leviticus?

Finally, Leviticus is famous for draconian laws: a person can be killed for a small offence. *But only in theory.* The commentary on the law says:

“A sanhedrin that executes once in seven years is called murderous. Rabbi Eliezer ben. Azariah Says: once in seventy years. Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Akiva say: ‘Had we been members of a sanhedrin, no person would ever be put to death.’”⁴²³

This is because the standard of proof was almost impossibly high:

“As we have seen throughout tractate Sanhedrin and tractate Makkoth, convicting a person of a capital crime is no easy matter. The person must be warned beforehand and then the crime has to be explicitly witnessed by two valid witnesses.”⁴²⁴

Therefore when we read of Jesus preventing the stoning of a woman (“*let he who has no sin cast the first stone*”) he represents a correct understanding of the law of Moses.

This is a natural result of equality and friendship. If everyone has land, and they often meet for sacrifices and festivals, then they are friends with equal status. Friends do not kill friends. And people do not kill people of equal status, because next time it could be you!

So extreme sanctions only exist as a warning. If equality and friendship break down, then people can use these draconian punishments as a warning to the next generation: do not let land ownership, festivals and friendships break down! Maintain equal land and keep meeting for those sacrifices. Then you will be equal and you will be friends. That is the law of Moses.



⁴²³ Mishnah Makkot 1:10

⁴²⁴ Commentary on Makkot 1:10, at sefaria.org/English_Explanation_of_Mishnah_Makkot.1.10.4

Numbers

Numbers 4: why history matters

Numbers 4 shows how the people of Kohath (“gathering”) protected the ark of the covenant. The ark contained:⁴²⁵

- * The Ten Commandments (Exodus 25:16)
- * A jar of manna from the desert (Exodus 16:30-33). This reminds us that nomads can find food even in a desert. So we do not need city life.
- * An almond branch from the mountain of Yah. This shows that the Aaron could speak for Yah.

The ark was protected by golden Cherubim (Ker-ub), reminding us of the golden age before cities, in the land of Kur (the garden of Eden). It was covered by a blue and scarlet covering, reminding us of the natural purple dye that made the Canaanite lands rich (for more about the purple, see the pages on Phoenicia in the Book of Judges).



Together, these things gave us ten thousand years of history. They taught us how to have a happy life through sharing God's land.

The people of Ethiopia, the land where humans began, still protect the ark. They still preserve it with their lives. Because history matters. For example, recently:

*At least 800 people were reportedly killed in Ethiopia as worshippers and soldiers risked their lives to protect what Christians there say is the sacred Ark of the Covenant from local militia.*⁴²⁶

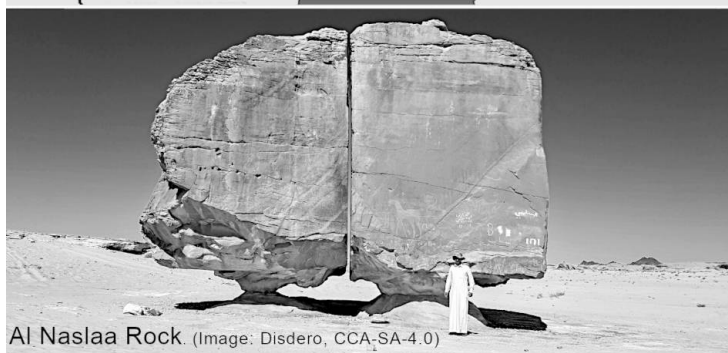
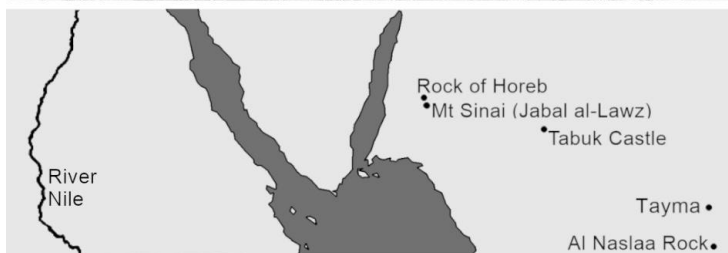
⁴²⁵ Exodus 25:16, 16:33-34, Numbers 17:10

⁴²⁶ <https://nypost.com/2021/02/20/at-least-800-ethiopians-killed-after-defending-ark-of-the-covenant/>

Numbers 20: water from the rock

Moses wanted the religion of Abraham: the religion of desert nomads. This religion relied heavily on gigantic natural monuments that guide people to water sources. Dramatic examples are the split rock near Sinai and the similar rock near the oasis of Tayma. These monuments are natural temples of Yah. Tayma was occupied since at least 3000 BC. Between Sinai and Tayma is the castle of Tabuk, first built around 3500 BC. So this region was a major highway.

Tayma seems to be the capital of Yah's religion: it features in the story of Tiamat versus Marduk, the foundational story of Babylon. The last king of Babylon (Nabonidus) tried to move his capital there when he realised that Babylon was doomed and Yah would always win in the end.



Numbers 21: Moses's alleged genocides

Moses's plan was based on an agreement with Shechem. It required no genocide or ethnic cleansing. He avoided fighting wherever possible:

“Let us pass through your country. We will not turn aside into any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the King’s Highway until we have passed through your territory.”⁴²⁷

Those cities (walled villages) chose to fight him, and so he fought back and took their land, as the agreement no doubt allowed. That was one of only three times that Moses ordered any killing. Here are those three times:

1. **The first time** (the Amalekites) was a mistake, and Moses (or whoever spoke for him) paid for it with his life.⁴²⁸ This image shows Moses looking out at the Promised Land. He is about to be killed as punishment for his genocide.



⁴²⁷ Numbers 21:22

⁴²⁸ Numbers 20, the water from the rock. Moses's people were thirsty in the desert, so he found the local well. The local tribe, the Amalekites, came to complain: Moses's six hundred families would drain their precious water. Moses was tired and angry and foolishly fought them instead of apologising. But he recognised it was a huge mistake: because of this mistake he could not enter the promised land (Numbers 20:12). Instead he was able to look at the promised land and then he died “as the Lord said” (Deuteronomy 34:1-5), indicating that his death was part of the same agreement that said he could not enter the land.

2. **The second time** was here in Numbers 21: the people were attacked as they tried to pass through the land. So Moses fought back in accordance with the agreement with Shechem.
3. **The third and final time** when Moses ordered killing was to prevent a deadly plague from spreading. We will look at that next.

Numbers 25 and 31: The plague at Peor

The last stop before entering Canaan was Baal Peor, famous for its shrine that involved prostitution. Some of Moses's soldiers had sex with the enemy's prostitutes. After having sex, a plague spread in the camp:

*"These caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord."*⁴²⁹

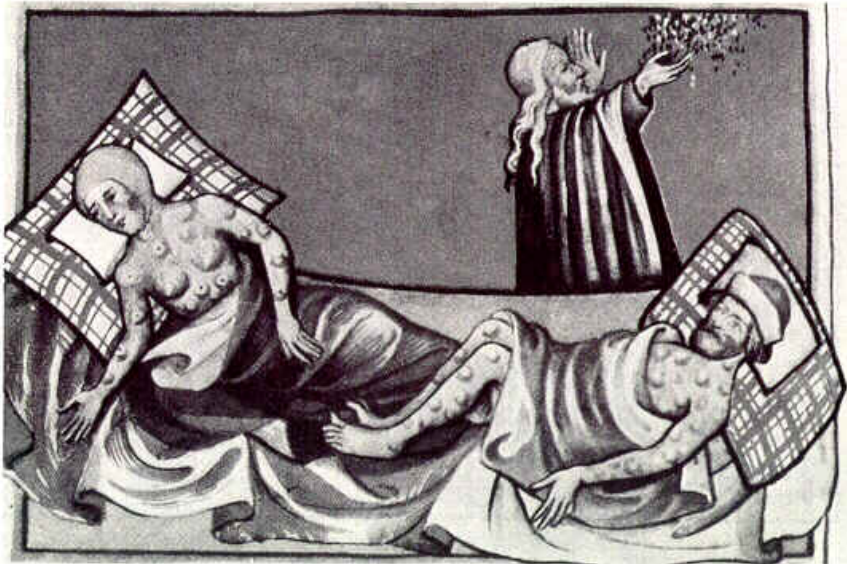


Image: from the Toggenburg Bible, out of copyright

The Midianites deliberately sent diseased women to infect the Israelites, to kill them all.⁴³⁰ This is interesting in itself, as Midianites were desert traders, so this might be a rival to Jethro's tribe. Or maybe killing the Amalekites turned the Midianites against their adopted son.

⁴²⁹ Numbers 31:15-16

⁴³⁰ Numbers 25:14-16

Desert travellers had to live close together for survival, so there was no escape from plague. **Everyone was going to die.** So Moses told the judges to kill everyone who might potentially be infected: *“Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.”*⁴³¹ Then anything that touched infected people had to be quarantined and thoroughly cleaned:

*“Anyone who has killed someone or touched someone who was killed must stay outside the camp seven days. ... Gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, lead and anything else that can withstand fire must be put through the fire, and then it will be clean. But it must also be purified with the water of cleansing. And whatever cannot withstand fire must be put through that water. On the seventh day wash your clothes and you will be clean. Then you may come into the camp.”*⁴³²

“Sex slaves”?

The only ones who could prove they were not infected with the prostitutes’ disease were female virgins. Because only they could prove they had not had sex. The males could not prove it.

*“Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man”*⁴³³

What does “for yourselves” mean? Similar phrasing is in Genesis 34:

*“Hamor said to them, ‘My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our **daughters for yourselves**. You can settle among us; the land is open to you. Live in it, trade in it, and acquire property in it.’”*⁴³⁴

So he says they should marry. The women were Midianites, and that was Moses's adopted tribe: they were his people.

Some Bible scholars assume, without evidence, that Moses just wanted sex slaves. For example, in a post entitled *“Is This a God You Want to Worship? Some Horrors of Scripture”*, Bart Ehrman can only imagine that the women are sex slaves.⁴³⁵ This says more about Bart Ehrman than it says about Moses.

⁴³¹ Numbers 25:1,5

⁴³² Numbers 31:19,22-24

⁴³³ Numbers 31:16

⁴³⁴ Genesis 34:8

⁴³⁵ ehrmanblog.org/is-this-a-god-you-want-to-worship-some-horrors-of-scripture/

Numbers 27: Moses was a feminist

Moses thought women should have as much power as men. That is, Moses was a feminist. As proof, under Moses's system of judges, Deborah defeated Israel's enemies and ruled for forty years, just like Moses. The "Song of Deborah" is arguably the oldest part of the Bible: it has the oldest grammar. So it is our best clue to the world of Moses.

Later the religion changed. Around 1000 BC, David adopted the religion of Jerusalem. As we will see, they worshipped Sydyk, equivalent to Zeus, the misogynist god of power. Sydyk adopted the name Yahweh but did not change his nature. So prophets like Isaiah then felt it was a sin for women to rule.⁴³⁶ That was not the religion of Moses. Moses followed the god of Abraham: his name was not just Yah, but also El Shaddai: "god of the breast", the ancient mother.



⁴³⁶ Isaiah 3:12

There are hints in the text that Moses was a feminist in his personal life. He joined Zipporah's tribe and accepted her tribe's rules. He let women change his mind.⁴³⁷ He said that women (as well as men) are in the image of the gods.⁴³⁸ He changed the creation story to give women a bigger role: in the Gilgamesh version, the male heroes cut down the sacred trees to defy the gods. That was a powerful act. But in Moses's version, Eve takes the initiative and Adam passively follows.

Moses's feminism was better than anything we have today. Why? Because it created economic justice. Today, millions of women are trapped in horrible situations because of low wages. That was not possible under Moses's law of equal land.

Aside from female judges, Moses also allowed female Levites to run the nation. Two of the famous Levites were Moses's mother and sister. While Moses's father is barely mentioned, his mother and sister drive the action. This reflects the importance of Hatshepsut in Egyptian history.

Moses is sometimes attacked for Exodus 21:7-11, which deals with selling women into slavery. The practice pre-dated Moses. Critics usually ignore verses 10-11, where Moses implies that under his law, female slaves must either be treated as wives or returned to their parents. More importantly, slavery would soon disappear if we followed Moses's economic rules. Unlike in the modern world where we officially ban slavery yet one in every 200 people is a slave.⁴³⁹



Moses and Zipporah (1898) out of copyright

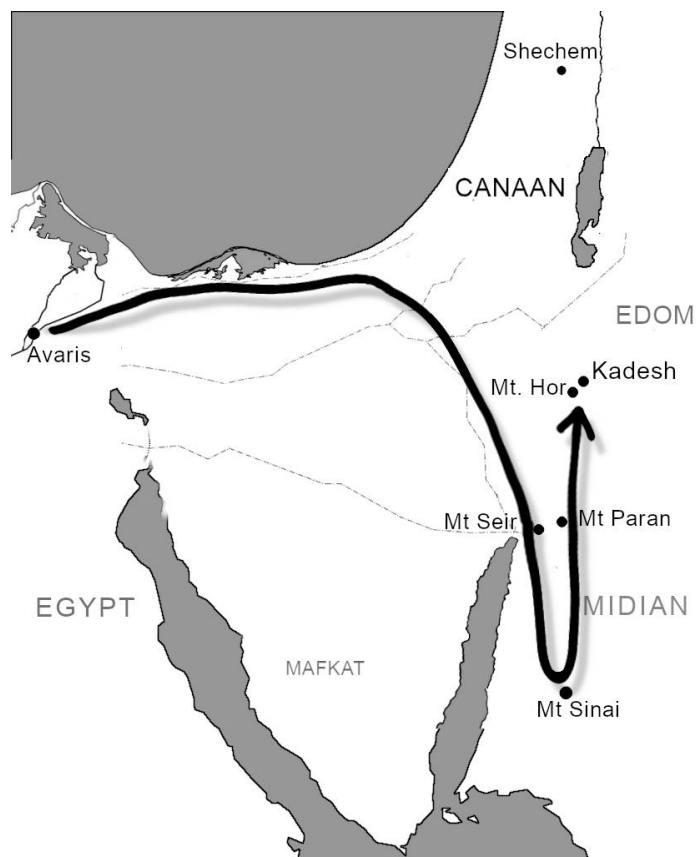
⁴³⁷ The daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 27

⁴³⁸ Genesis 1:26

⁴³⁹ [theguardian.com/news/2019/feb/25/modern-slavery-trafficking-persons-one-in-200](https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/feb/25/modern-slavery-trafficking-persons-one-in-200)

Numbers 33: 40 years in the wilderness

Numbers 33 gives a detailed itinerary for the 40 years in the wilderness (1491-1451 BC). The Israelites went to Sinai for the law of the Midianites, then waited for 38 years at Kadesh on the southern border of Canaan.⁴⁴⁰



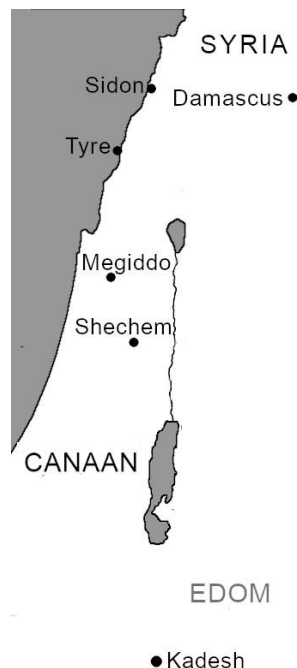
Numbers 14 says that they waited for the first generation to die off. The official reason is that the people were grumbling and did not deserve to enter the Promised Land. But archaeology and Egyptian records suggest that they were waiting for the Egyptian armies to pacify Canaan for them.

⁴⁴⁰ Most of the other locations appear to be small oases, and map-makers can only guess where they were. For the 38 years at Kadesh, see <https://bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-route-kadesh-barnea-jordan.htm> and <https://bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-route-sinai-kadesh-barnea.htm#thirtyeight>

What Moses did in the missing 38 years

1491-1451 BC is in the reign of Thoth-Moses (Thutmose III), 1497-1446 BC⁴⁴¹ *"The Napoleon of Egypt"*.⁴⁴² This is what Thoth-Moses did while the Israelites waited at Kadesh (1489-1451 BC):

- 1491-1476 BC: Moses could do very little because of Hatshepsut. She died in 1476 BC, and Moses got to work:
- 1476 BC (21st year of Thutmose III): the battle of Megiddo, the largest battle of his career. He thoroughly defeated the Canaanites.
- 1475-1472 BC (up to his 25th year): various tours around the defeated Canaan, collecting tribute and making records.
- 1468-1466 BC (29-31st year): conquest of Syria
- 1465-1455 BC (32nd-42nd year): fought in Syria and the land further north and east: the ancient lands of the Patriarchs.
- 1447 BC (50th year): his final campaign, against Nubia, south of Egypt. This implies that Canaan and Syria were pacified, ready for the Israelites.



So Moses spent those 38 years in conquering Canaan and Syria. Archaeology confirms that Shechem was either abandoned or at least attacked and weakened in this period.⁴⁴³ The small amount of spoils indicate that the later battles probably ended in some kind of treaty. That is, something like the treaty with Shechem that allowed the Israelites to settle in 1451 BC.

⁴⁴¹ The Larssons date Thutmose's coronation to the New Moon festival of 1497, so he reigned from 1497 to 1446. Hatshepsut reigned alongside him from 1491 to 1476.

⁴⁴² Wikipedia, quoting historian Richard Gabriel

⁴⁴³ Shechem's large temple was destroyed circa 1500 BC. This date is very approximate, based mostly on types of pottery associated with the middle versus late Bronze Age. "Temple 1 had been replaced after a gap in occupation from about 1550 to 1450 B.C.E. by a much smaller and completely different temple—Temple 2—built on the ruins of Temple 1." - <https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/article/the-shechem-temple/> citing Edward F. Campbell, "Shechem III" (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2002), pp. 8–9

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is a fake book of Moses, added 800 years later, to destroy the law of Moses.

The clue is in the name: “deutero-nomy”, “repetition of the law”. Why do we need a repetition of the law? What was wrong with the original law in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers? This law created peace, justice, freedom, and great wealth for four hundred years.⁴⁴⁴ But this is because the law forbade unequal land. So people who wanted unequal land hated it.

Deuteronomy tried to look exactly like the law of Moses, while slipping in subtle changes that allow unequal land.

Change 1: reject God, bring back kings

Having a human king meant rejecting God as king, and going back to the ways of Pharaoh instead.

When they said, “Give us a king to lead us,” this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.”⁴⁴⁵

Deuteronomy rejected God by saying that God now approves of kings:

Be sure to appoint over you a king the Lord your God chooses.⁴⁴⁶

Deuteronomy arguing that this still keeps the law as long as they do not physically travel back to Egypt:

The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.”⁴⁴⁷

Change 2: reject altars, bring back temples

The Ten Commandments ends with a command to not build temples, but to build small altars as needed But Deuteronomy tells people to only sacrifice

⁴⁴⁴ See the chapter on Joshua for an overview of life after Moses.

⁴⁴⁵ 1 Samuel 8:6-8

⁴⁴⁶ Deuteronomy 17:15

⁴⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 17:16

in one central place. This implies the need for a large temple:

*you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety. Then to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the Lord. ... Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. Offer them only at the place the Lord will choose in one of your tribes.*⁴⁴⁸

To make sure no temple was built, the law said “do not build it [your altar] with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it.” The kings invented a loophole: they used dressed stones and tools, but not on the temple site itself.

*In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.*⁴⁴⁹

Regarding steps, the law said, “do not go up to my altar on steps”. The kings created a loophole by building a large temple with steps, but placing the altar inside on the ground floor.

*The entrance to the middle floor was on the south side of the temple; a stairway led up to the middle level and from there to the third.*⁴⁵⁰

Change 3: reject equality, bring back inequality

As an example of how Deuteronomy ruins everything consider its teaching on not mixing fabrics. This is often mocked: why would God care about mixing fabrics?

Leviticus 19 teaches people to love each other and not cheat other people. Verse 19 gives an example of not tricking anybody: if you make a cotton shirt, don't mix it with cheaper linen. And if your field has one thing, do not mix another: this matters if you let someone else harvest your plants and they get inferior plants they did not expect.

But Deuteronomy changes the meaning. It adds a line that if you do it wrong, the temple gets to keep everything.⁴⁵¹ By linking it to the temple, and giving the temple power over the person, it makes readers link the command with the fact that the high priest wears mixed fabrics. So it

⁴⁴⁸ Deuteronomy 12:10-11,13-14

⁴⁴⁹ 1 Kings 6:7

⁴⁵⁰ 1 Kings 6:8. “middle” in Hebrew was translated “lowest” in the Septuagint

⁴⁵¹ Deuteronomy 22:9, compare Numbers 18:19 for what it means

changes the law, from not cheating others, to promoting unequal wealth and unequal rules. So a good law becomes evil.

Change 4: more aggressive nationalism

Deuteronomy urges people to nationalistic savagery in a way that is not present in the law of Moses. For example, Moses told the people to only take the southern edge of Canaan, as part of the agreement with Shechem.⁴⁵² And he told the people to love any foreigners they meet:

*When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.*⁴⁵³

But Deuteronomy urges Israelites to take as much land as they can, and to kill and terrorise their neighbours:

*Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea. No one will be able to stand against you. The Lord your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go.*⁴⁵⁴

Change 5: removing the command not to sell land

We saw how not selling land was the heart of the law of Moses. The new book of Deuteronomy does not mention it at all.

When was Deuteronomy written?

Archaeology shows that the strict monotheism described in Deuteronomy was not common until 600 BC at the earliest. It was not close to universal among Israelites until around 160 BC, when it became the core of the successful independence movement against the hated Greeks.⁴⁵⁵

Our earliest original Jewish texts come from Elephantine in the 300s BC. Some of them are letters requesting help from Jerusalem to build a temple in Elephantine. They do not seem to be aware of the rule in Deuteronomy that a temple can only be in Jerusalem. So either Deuteronomy did not exist in 300 BC, or it was widely ignored.

⁴⁵² See the chapter on Exodus

⁴⁵³ Leviticus 19:33-34

⁴⁵⁴ Deuteronomy 11:22-25

⁴⁵⁵ The “*Podcast of Biblical Proportions*” argues for the Bible being heavily edited in the 160s BC, the time of the Maccabees.

Joshua

Moses left Eleazar in charge

With Canaan pacified, and the Hyksos on their way to Shechem to receive their agreed lands in the south, Pharaoh Moses's job was done.

Moses had to leave, and Aaron was dead. That was the price for killing Amalekites for their water. Then who would lead the Israelites to Shechem and then on to their southern homeland? Moses chose Joshua, the most capable soldier in all of Israel. But Joshua was just a figurehead. The decisions were to be made by Eleazar, son of Aaron.

He [Joshua] is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord.⁴⁵⁶

Joshua ignored Eleazar

Moses wanted the people to settle in southern deserts of Canaan. But charismatic Joshua had bigger plans. In Joshua chapter 1, Joshua announced that he was now in charge, with no mention of Eleazar. Joshua proceeded to conquer as much of Canaan as he could. Eleazar is not mentioned until chapter 14, after the main conquests, when he was called in alongside the tribal heads to divide the spoils. Eleazar was very old,⁴⁵⁷ and Joshua simply sidelined him.

Moses's history of the Exodus (the book of Numbers), mentions Joshua 12 times, and Eleazar 35 times. But the fake rewritten history, the book of Deuteronomy, only mentions Eleazar once, in passing.

Joshua 3: crossing the Jordan on dry ground

Joshua's first act was to arrange a miracle, so he looked like Moses:

And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.⁴⁵⁸

Joshua seemed to be waiting for something:

⁴⁵⁶ Numbers 27:21

⁴⁵⁷ Bamidbar Rabbah (a midrash of the book of Numbers) 3:7 says Eleazar was aged 30 or more when the spies returned from Canaan. So he would be over 70 when Moses left. Joshua might have been even older (Joshua 14:7), but some people are still alert and cunning in their 70s, while others are not.

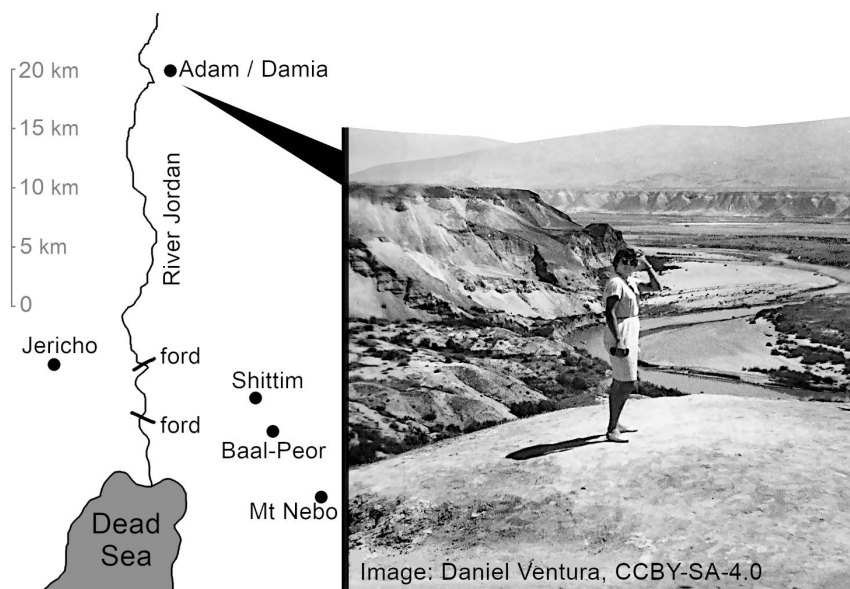
⁴⁵⁸ Joshua 3:1

And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host.⁴⁵⁹

They waited three days. It would take one day for his men to travel north to find a suitable spot to dam the river, somewhere like the steep hills near the city (village) of Adam (modern Damia). Then one day for a messenger to get back with news. And perhaps another day to see the sign (like something floating down the water to say the plan was ready).

And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you.⁴⁶⁰

'Hereby ye shall know': Joshua had this all planned. This would prove that he was just as clever as Moses.



The waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam... and the people passed over right against Jericho. (Joshua 3:16)

Why mention the far away city of Adam (modern Damia or Tell ed-Damiyeh)? Because it had a narrow gorge that was easily blocked by landslides:

⁴⁵⁹ Joshua 3:2

⁴⁶⁰ Joshua 3:10

At least seven historical earthquakes precipitated landslides that dammed the Jordan River near Damiya: 1927 AD (July 11 stopped flow for 22 hours) 1906 AD (stopped flow for 24 hours) 1834 AD, 1546 AD (Jan 14 stopped flow for two days) 1534 AD, 1267 AD (December 8 stopped flow for 10 hours) 1160 AD...⁴⁶¹

A hundred soldiers could dislodge Earth and cause a small landslide at Adam, making the river Jordan dry up for an hour. There is your miracle!

Joshua 6-7: the walls of Jericho

The miracle of Jericho was the same: a carefully staged publicity stunt. Archaeology shows that Jericho was barely inhabited at the time. Any walls were already ruins.

Just a few shepherds would live in the ruined city, but Jericho had enormous symbolic significance. It was the first city ever built (in 8000 BC), a strategic location, and a symbol of ancient strength. Marching around it, blowing horns, pushing down some remaining walls, and terrifying the few inhabitants, felt good! The Israelites needed an easy win, and needed to scare other cities.



⁴⁶¹ preachitteachit.org/ask_roger/did-the-israelites-really-walk-across-the-water/

The Canaanite record of the conquest

Joshua tells the story of the conquest of Canaan. The most powerful Canaanite cities were on the coast. We call them Phoenicians, but they were just Canaanites with sea trade.

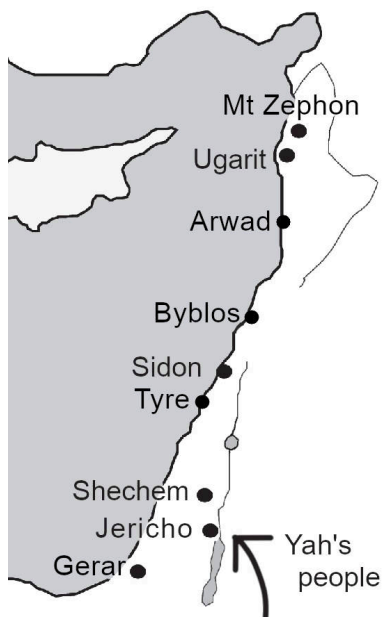
"E Stern⁴⁶² recognizes what he calls the Phoenician 'koine' that 'dominated all of Phoenicia and Palestine'. 'Koine' is Greek for common, so he means that the common culture of the whole region was Phoenician. The Phoenicians called themselves Canaanites." ⁴⁶³

The Canaanite version of the story is called the Baal Cycle. It tells how invaders came from the south and conquered Canaan. All the details fit the Bible story.

The date

The Baal Cycle refers to ideas from after 1700 BC.⁴⁶⁴ It was probably written down around 1100 BC, possibly before.⁴⁶⁵ So the date, location and events fit with the conquest of Canaan.

Could the parallels be a coincidence? Could it be a much older story that was only noticed by Babylon after 1700 BC? Or could it be a Babylonian story later adapted by the Canaanites? The answer to both questions lies in the identity of Tiamat, the antagonist in the Enuma Elish, who appears in the Baal Cycle as Yam.



⁴⁶² Ephraim Stern, prominent archaeologist and professor at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem

⁴⁶³ "Jerusalem and Judaism before the Return..." academia.edu/22615235/Jerusalem_and_Judaism_before_the_Return_Canaanite_in_Culture

⁴⁶⁴ All of Marduk's greatest achievements are listed in Hammurabi's law, written around 1700 BC. But the list does not include defeating Tiamat, so that must have occurred after 1700 BC.

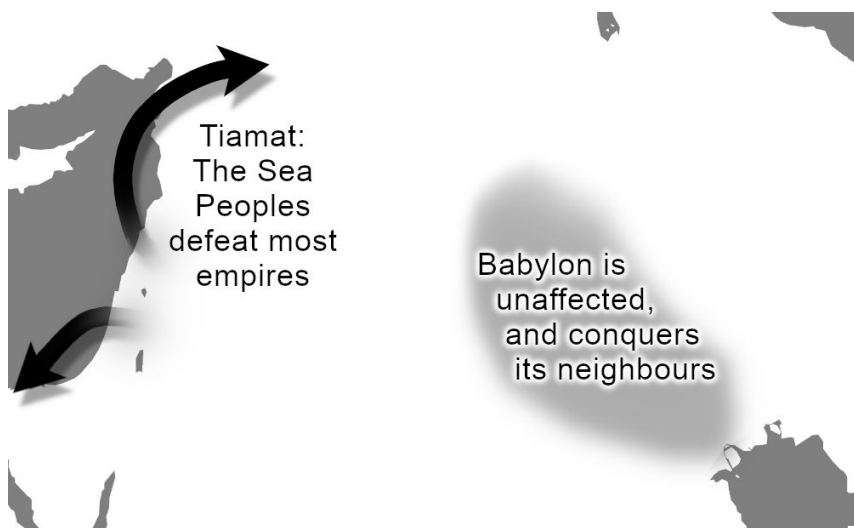
⁴⁶⁵ This is when Babylon defeated Elam and wrote a number of similar poems and inscriptions. It was an era of great national pride. The oldest Enuma Elish fragments date to soon after this.

Who was Tiamat?

Tiamat is the god of the primordial sea. The name is a variant on the word for “sea”. When the sea combined with fresh water, this produced the gods of Babylon. This mix of salt water and fresh water probably refers to the marshes at the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates. This is where the kings of Sumer built the first large cities, because of all the mud for growing crops and baking bricks, plus the sea was convenient for trade.

Tiamat became an enemy around 1100 BC, and Marduk (Babylon) defeated him. This is how:

This is the era of the Late Bronze Age collapse. The Sea Peoples (i.e., the Tiamat people) from the Mediterranean caused all the major empires to either collapse or suffer severe problems. But Babylon, being far from the Mediterranean, survived. Even better, around 1100 BC Babylon defeated its old enemy Elam (Persia). It was an era of great pride for Babylon: every other empire was suffering, but Babylon was stronger than ever. Babylon beat the curse of the Sea Peoples! Babylon beat Tiamat!



So Tiamat, the Sea, refers to the Sea Peoples. In the next chapter, on Judges, we will see that the Sea Peoples were Phoenicians: that is, Tiamat, and hence Yam, in this context, means the Canaanites.

So the Baal Cycle tells how the people of Baal entered Canaan and defeated the seafaring Canaanites. All of the details match the story of Israel conquering Canaan under Joshua.

Baal was Yahweh

“Baal” just means “lord”. The Baal of the Baal Cycle is Baal Hadad, lord of storms. The Hyksos changed Yah (god of free nomads) into a version of Baal Hadad (god of power). In the Bible books after Moses, Yahweh is described in terms that describe Baal Hadad:

“He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy, with great bolts of lightning he routed them.”⁴⁶⁶

“He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth.”⁴⁶⁷

“lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,”⁴⁶⁸

“When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.”⁴⁶⁹

“It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters [Yam or Tiamat]. It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan”⁴⁷⁰



Image: Hadad, drawn 1900, CC0

The Baal Cycle contains the intriguing line (in Phoenician), “sm . bny. yw. ilt”, meaning:

“my son by the name of Yaw, O goddess Elat [Asherah]”.⁴⁷¹

“Yaw” can be pronounced “Yah”. The surrounding text is too broken to be clear, but either Yam (the sea) or Hadad is called Ya. That only makes sense for Hadad: Yam is being prepared for the fact that Hadad will win.

⁴⁶⁶ 2 Samuel 22:15

⁴⁶⁷ Job 37:3

⁴⁶⁸ Psalm 148:8

⁴⁶⁹ Jeremiah 10:13

⁴⁷⁰ Psalm 74:13-14

⁴⁷¹ According to a lengthy debate in the “talk” section of the Wikipedia page on “Ugarit” (the original source link is now dead).

Summary of the Baal Cycle (the Lord Cycle)

The Baal Cycle is the Lord Cycle: the cycle of stories about how Baal-Hadad (i.e. Yahweh) became the lord of Canaan. It is the story of Yahweh's people invading farther and farther north so that the ancient centres of power (Harran etc.) become concerned.

Most summaries of the Baal Cycle use the Phoenician names for their gods, which makes the story seem obscure. But if we translate the names into English then the story becomes much clearer:

Who is who

Mount Zephon:

Modern-day Jebel Aqra. Whoever controlled this mountain controlled Ugarit (the northern coast of the Levant) and the Phoenician heartland.

Baal:

Lord Hadad, or Yahweh. Yahweh wants control of Mount Zephon. Yahweh needs real soldiers to control a real mountain, so where the text says Baal we can read it as "Yahweh's people".

Yam:

The equivalent of Tiamat: the sea-going Canaanites (Phoenicians).

El:

The highest god, or his priests. We are dealing with real people in real history, so this must be the highest authority: the elders of the tribes in the cradle of civilisation. They decide who controls the region.

The gods:

All the gods: public opinion among people who matter.

Asherah:

The wife of El and mother of the gods: the queen of heaven, the most popular gods in Canaan/Phoenicia. So Asherah is just "the queen".

Athtar:

*"Supreme god of Ancient South Arabia. God of the thunderstorm and provider of rain."*⁴⁷² That is, this god is the Arabian version of Hadad or Yahweh. So we can read 'Athtar' as "Midianites".

Anath:

The war goddess, wife of Baal. She urges Hadad to go to war. So we can read "Anath" as "Yahweh's War Hawks".

⁴⁷² The name is on a number of inscriptions from Yemen. britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG61833

Mot:

Death.

Kothar-wa-Khasis:

Craftsmen.

Shapash:

The sun. Her role in the story is to give advice that is held in high regard, so we can call her the adviser.

Qodesh-wa-Amrur:

A fisherman who delivers messages.

Sheger and Ithm:

They represent cattle and sheep. That is, they are shepherds.

Craftsmen:

These are the key to Yahweh's success.

The story

Here is a summary of the Baal Cycle,⁴⁷³ using the more familiar names:

The elders of the tribes summon craftsmen to build a palace for the Phoenicians. Meaning, the Phoenicians are growing in power, and want a place among the elders. The elders want the palace built quickly, as the Phoenicians can be aggressive. When the Midianites hear of this, they take a torch to fight, but the adviser tells them to do nothing; the elders have decided that the Phoenicians rule here. The Midianites complain that they don't like this (the Phoenicians can be dangerous). But the Midianites don't have a voice on the council. The adviser says that is because they are new to the area (literally, they "have no wife": they are young and have no connections).

[The story is missing some parts.] Everyone is concerned that the Phoenician palace problem must be resolved, or there could be a war. But to gain the palace, they will have to drive Yahweh's people away.

The craftsmen warn the Phoenicians that Yahweh's people won't just stand by if the Phoenicians take control of the region, and the craftsmen have weapons.

The Phoenicians send a message to the elders of the tribe, demanding that Yahweh's people surrender. Yahweh's people attack the messengers, but Yahweh's War Hawks and Midianites hold them back.

⁴⁷³ Based on Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal_Cycle

[The next part is missing, then we re-enter the story:] Yahweh's people are fighting the Phoenicians, and the Phoenicians are winning. This is the famous battle between Yahweh and the sea monsters. The craftsmen provide Yahweh's people with special weapons and assure Yahweh's people that they will be victorious and will win "a kingdom without end" — a Biblical phrase. Using the weapons they defeat the Phoenicians. The Midianites tell Yahweh's people to thoroughly defeat the Phoenicians, which they do. Yahweh's people will now rule the region!

Triumphant, Yahweh's people feast on Mount Zephon. Yahweh's War Hawks give Yahweh's people the secret of lightning. (Weapons? Military tactics?). Together they will find the secret of the royal mountain.

Yahweh's people still do not have permission to permanently settle in the region. They threaten war with the elders of the tribe unless they are allowed to permanently settle. The queen sends a messenger to the craftsmen of Egypt, in the hope that they will support Yahweh's people.

[After more missing text], the queen sees the war tribe approaching. She fears they will kill her sons (the other tribes). But then she sees the many gifts from the craftsmen of Egypt and realises she is safe. After more persuasion, she agrees that Yahweh's people can settle.

Now settled, Yahweh's people march out and defeat many other cities. Yahweh seems to love killing: he invites Death to the feast! But Death tells Yahweh's people that he (Death) is like a lion in the desert, always hungry for human flesh and blood. Yahweh's people realise that if they carry on this way, everyone could die.

The adviser has a plan. He advises the elders of the tribes to find a fake version of Yahweh's people. This decoy tribe will be killed so that Death seems to be triumphant. The plan works. The decoy tribe is killed, and everybody mourns the death of Yahweh's people. The decoy tribe is buried on Mount Zephon. The Midianites try to take over and take the place of Yahweh's people, but they are not tall enough for the throne: that is, they are not strong enough to rule.

Meanwhile, Yahweh's War Hawks search for Yahweh's people. Death says he has eaten Yahweh's people. Angry, the War Hawks smash Death to pieces.

Finally, the elders of the tribes have a dream that Yahweh's people still live, and then they return. Death returns and they fight on Mount Zephon. The adviser arrives and warns Death: fighting Yahweh's people is futile because the elders of the tribes are now on Yahweh's side. Death gives in. Yahweh is now king.

The Baal Cycle as the origin of Phoenicia

This is how the Baal Cycle connects to other historical sources

1800s BC (Before the Baal Cycle): Minoan Crete trades with Egypt. They establish permanent settlements up the coast from Egypt, in Gerar. Abraham considers an alliance with them but changes his mind.⁴⁷⁴ At this stage, Abraham and Jacob are still in agreement, but they are drifting apart.

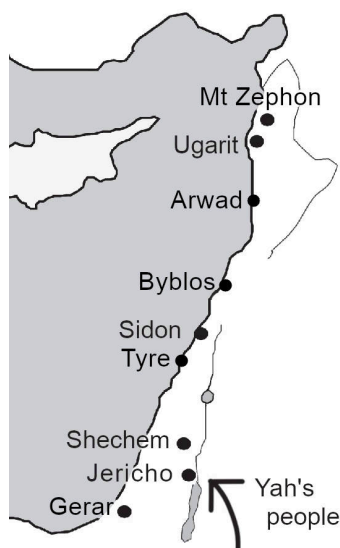
1562 BC (the Phoenician crisis): Thera erupts, devastating the Minoan economy. The traders of Gerar expanded to the fishing villages of Byblos, Tyre and Sidon. They become the Phoenicians. The established powers at Ugarit see that as a threat.

1560s BC (the Hyksos crisis): at the same time, Yah-Moses expels the Hyksos rulers from Egypt. The Hyksos now focus more on Canaan. They are allied with the Midianite traders. They resent the Phoenician traders moving in on their turf.

1560s-1440s BC (the Baal Cycle battles): the Phoenicians (people of Yam) and Hyksos (people of Baal) struggle for dominance in Canaan. The rulers of Ugarit side with the Phoenicians. But the Hyksos (the Israelites) are determined and clever. They also have help from Egypt (e.g. Thutmose III). And they are allied with the Midianites.

Egypt crushes the Hyksos (the triumph of Mot), so it seems like the Phoenicians have won. (The Exodus from Egypt). The Midianites are also happy because it seems like the surviving Hyksos will adopt the Midianite religion. (The 38 years at Kadesh.) They will live in the southern desert and not be any threat to Midianites, Phoenicians or Ugarit.

But in the end, the Hyksos come back from the dead. As soon as Thutmose III is dead, Joshua, the Hyksos ruler, abandons the treaties and embarks on a series of genocidal wars. Baal has won. Even the Phoenicians adopt the aggressive ways of Baal. Ugarit has to accept the new reality.



⁴⁷⁴ Genesis 20: the sister-wife story. A sister can be married to another royal family to create a political alliance. Abraham came to Canaan to expand the power of Ur, but he gradually rejected cities and conquest and became a simple nomad instead.

The same story in multiple nations

The Baal Cycle centres on the battle between Baal (lord of storms) and Yam (the sea). Baal (Yah) was worshipped by the Hyksos. Yam was worshipped by and represents the Phoenicians.

Yam (the Phoenicians) appears in Sanchuniathon⁴⁷⁵ and also the Hurrian songs.⁴⁷⁶ He is on the side of Abraham (Cronus/Kumarbi) and gradually opposes Jacob (Zeus/Baal/Teshub), but eventually becomes like him.⁴⁷⁷

Herodotus, “the father of history”, begins his massive history by saying that Greek wars all began with the Phoenicians. In other words, this is the great battle between Yam (Leviathan) and Zeus/Baal: another version of the Baal Cycle.

The Enuma Elish starts with a later version of the Baal Cycle: the battle between Marduk (the Babylonian Baal) and Tiamat (the Babylonian Yam).

So all the greatest histories have their versions of this story. The war between the Israelites and Canaanites was a major turning point in world history.



⁴⁷⁵ Sanchuniathon's history of the Phoenicians, written before 1200 BC, calls Yam "Pontus". He says that Pontus (Yam) appeared with his brother Typhon (Manetho says Typhon is Avaris, i.e. the Hyksos) at the same time as Cronus (i.e. Abraham). Pontus (Yam) was the son of Nereus (god of fishing), who was the son of Zeus Belus (i.e. Zeus as the god of war, a descendant of Belus the warlike founder of Babylon). Cronus and Pontus both fought against Zeus. So here we have the ancient conflict of city versus country:

⁴⁷⁶ In the Hurrian texts, Yam is called Kiaše (or Kiyaze), a friend of Kumarbi and an enemy of Teshub. Yam (Kiaše) features in the Hurrian "song of the sea". See *"The Song of the Sea: Thoughts on KUB 45.63"* by Ian Rutherford. This text is probably about the importance of Mt Zephon (Called Mt. Hazzi, a.k.a. modern Jebel Aqra) in deciding who is king over which land, and how Teshub (Baal) defeats Kiaše (Yam). So this is the earliest version of the Baal Cycle. The earliest version of the Hurrian version dates to the 1600s BC at Mari, and the sea is not yet an enemy of Teshub. So the dates match Genesis: in the 1600s, Jacob was just gaining power over Egypt, and could still pretend to be a friend of the old order. But by the 1500s BC, he had great power and was their enemy.

⁴⁷⁷ The Egyptian version ("Astarte and the Insatiable Sea") dates to the New Kingdom, when Yamm (the Phoenicians) want more power.

Judges:

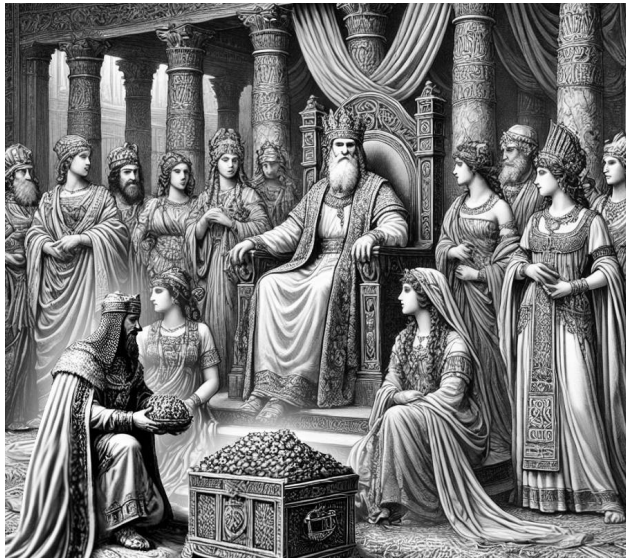
the new golden age

Whoever edited the Book of Judges hated polytheism. And he hated intermarriage with non-Israelite tribes. Throughout the Book of Judges he complained about how the Israelites kept marrying into other tribes and worshipping other gods.

The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.⁴⁷⁸

He does not mention that this system created peace, freedom, happiness, and great wealth.

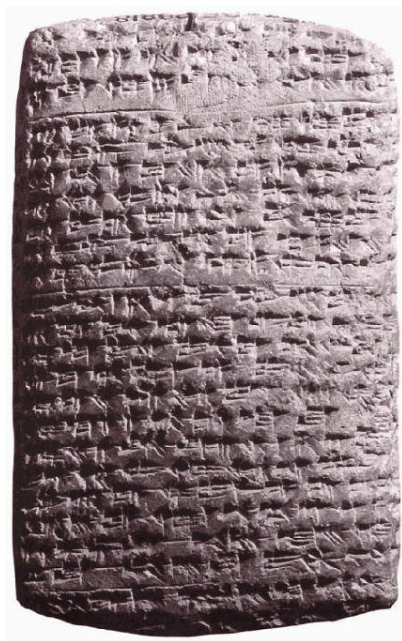
Every king intermarried his family into the families of other kings. So everybody respected everybody else and could trade freely. This system reached its apex just before the rise of the kings. The kings began the downward slide, but at the start, they enjoyed the fruits of this golden age. For example, King Solomon married 1000 wives and concubines from different kingdoms and built shrines to their gods. This avoided any wars, enabled a great deal of trade, and made him very rich, and very wise.



⁴⁷⁸ Judges 3:5-6

Archaeological evidence for the new golden age

Our clearest outside view of the reign of the judges comes from the Amarna letters. These were letters between the various kings around Canaan (from Egypt to Mesopotamia). They date to around 1350 BC: 150 years after the Exodus (1491 BC). The letters portray a new Golden Age, geographically centred on Canaan.⁴⁷⁹



Public Domain via Wikimedia

In the letters, the kings all refer to each other as “brother” and speak of their warmth and kindness to each other. None of the letters are about war. They are all about sending gifts back and forth between the kingdoms to ensure continued prosperity. Occasionally kings will say, “why haven’t you given the gold I asked for?” But the worst the other king would do in response is to delay giving the gift, then give it anyway. And the first king’s messengers were kept in luxury while they waited. It was a very civilised system.

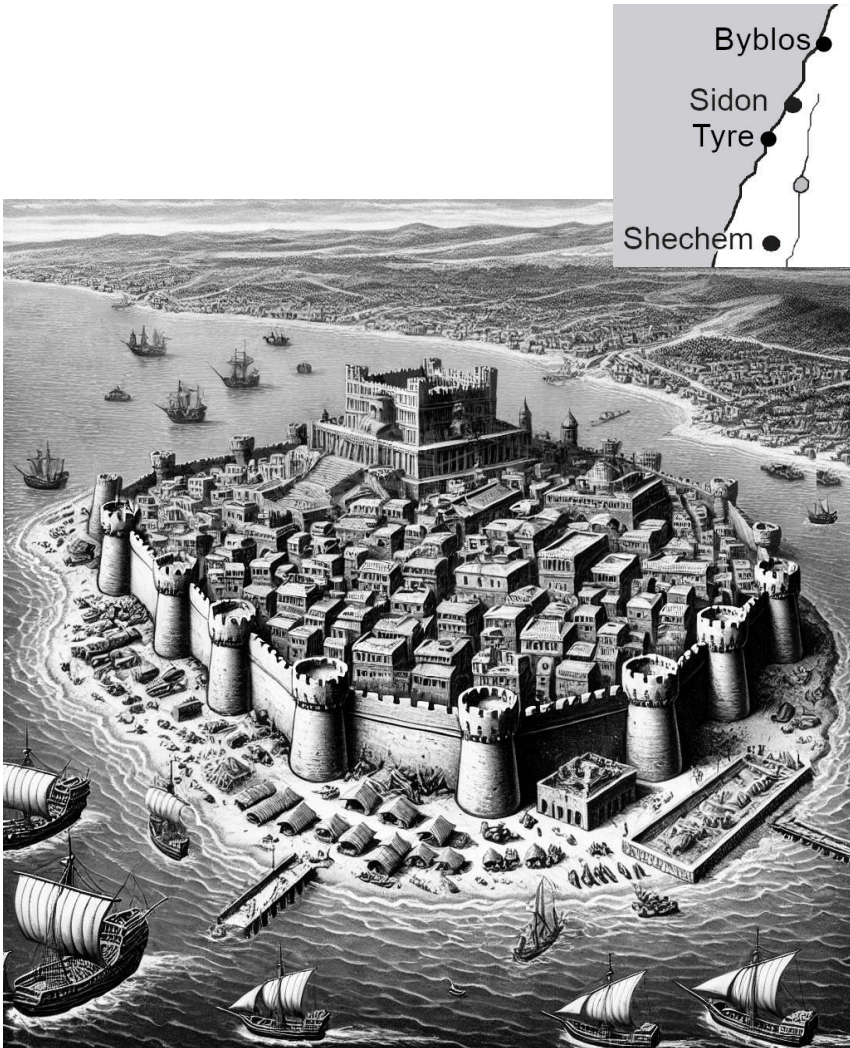
This was a level of international peace and cooperation that has never been equalled since.

⁴⁷⁹ See *"Brotherhood of Kings: How International Relations Shaped the Ancient Near East"* by Amanda H. Podany.

Evidence for dramatic economic growth

Moses's land law led to enormous economic growth due to competition and trade. The Israelites did not follow the law perfectly: right from the start, Joshua used violence more than trade. But even following the law a little bit increased their wealth.

Archaeology shows a great increase in prosperity after the Israelites arrived. Especially in the trading ports like Tyre and Sidon.



Israel included Phoenicia, and became wealthy

Phoenicians did not call themselves Phoenicians: they probably called themselves Canaanites.⁴⁸⁰ The Bible and archaeology both show that Israelites, Canaanites and Phoenicians were all the same culture. Most of the conflict between them that we see in the Bible was due to a minority of zealots trying (and failing) to promote monotheism.

Tyre, the chief city of Phoenicia, was part of Biblical Israel. It was listed as one of the cities of Asher.

“The boundary then turned back toward Ramah and went to the fortified city of Tyre, turned toward Hosah and came out at the Mediterranean Sea ... These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the tribe of Asher”⁴⁸¹

"Ashur" means "happy one" - the successful one, who occupied Tyre and western Galilee, the breadbasket of Israel:

“Most blessed of sons is Asher; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him bathe his feet in oil. The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze, and your strength will equal your days.”⁴⁸²

Even after the Jerusalem kings rejected the law of Moses, their religion was still very similar to the religion of Tyre. The king of Tyre built the Jerusalem temple in the Phoenician style, with Phoenician free-standing pillars at the front. It was a Phoenician temple. It was the same religion.



Image: unknown artist, generally believed to be Public Domain

⁴⁸⁰ According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed Jan 2022

⁴⁸¹ Joshua 19:24-31

⁴⁸² Deuteronomy 33:24-25

Moses created Phoenicia as we know it

"Phoenicia" probably means "crimson" (Mycenaen *po-ni-ki-jo*) and refers to "Tyrian Purple", the expensive dye that made Tyre famous. Chemists trace its earliest use to centuries before Moses,⁴⁸³ but it did not become a major source of wealth until after Moses. It grew in use until it became noticeable in archaeology around 1200 BC. Moses did everything he could to promote the dye. The book of Exodus says the Tabernacle used a lot of gold and purple. Levite priests, and later the Roman emperors, used the purple dye in their clothing. The rabbinic halakha calls it the "tekhelet" dye, made from a sea creature known as the *hillazon*,⁴⁸⁴ found between Tyre and Haifa. In other words, this is Tyrian Purple, from the murex snail.⁴⁸⁵ Moses was the first to make it popular.

CHRIST 1491.	make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. ^c
1. 3.	5 And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen. ^d
ferences to	6 ¶ And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work.
1. ch. xxix. 9; xxx. 30; xxxv. 19; xl. 13-15; xvi. 32; 4; xviii. 7; Luke i. 8; vii. 11, 28.	7 It shall have the two shoulderpieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof; and so it shall be joined together.
xxx. 10; 30; xvi. 4; xx. 26-28; 4.	8 And the curious girdle of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; <i>even of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.</i> ^e
ix. 1-5; i. 7; 1 Sam. 28; xiv. 3; xxiii. 6, 9; 1 Chron. Hos. iii. 4.	9 And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel:

⁴⁸³ E.g. McGovern, P. E. and Michel, R. H. "Royal Purple dye: tracing the chemical origins of the industry". *Analytical Chemistry* 1985, 57, 1514A-1522A

⁴⁸⁴ mayimachronim.com/what-is-tekhelet/

⁴⁸⁵ Some critics argue that Moses would not use a non-kosher animal, and therefore his purple must have been a less impressive colour from a plant source. But he did not eat it, he wore it. When chemists in the 1990s analysed blue fabrics from Masada, they confirmed that this was from the Murex snail: this was indeed Tyrian purple.

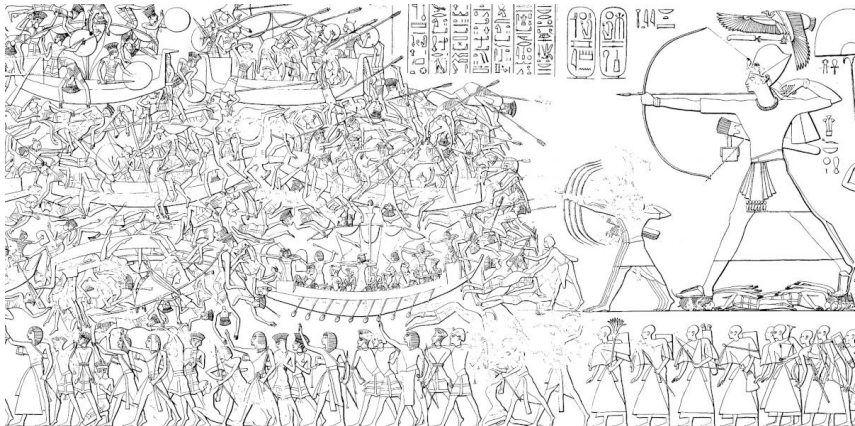
Moses's law conquered the world

Around 1200 BC a confederation of “Sea Peoples” attacked all the major empires (Egypt, the Hittites, etc.). But who were these king-hating seafarers? In one of the battles, Egypt captured several chiefs. They were grouped as :

“land peoples” (Hatti, Amor and Shasu) in alliance with “sea peoples” (Tjeker, “Sherden of the sea”, “Teresh of the sea” and Peleset).⁴⁸⁶

- “Hatti” means Anatolia, north of Canaan.
- “Amor” means the Amorites, northwest of Canaan.
- “Shashu” means the herdsmen of southern Canaan.
- “Tjeker” have unknown origin, but in 1150 their capital was Dor, on the northern coast of Canaan.
- “Sherden of the sea” have unknown origin, but they wear the corslet (upper armour) of the Canaanites.
- “Teresh of the sea” is a generic term for seafarers from far away, also known as Tarshish, the Canaanites trading partner.
- “Peleset” is Philistines, neighbours of Canaan.

The common element is Canaan. This is not surprising, as Canaanites (Phoenicians) dominated sea travel. Only the decentralised Canaanites/Phoenicians had the skill to organise people without a central authority.



Sea Peoples versus Ramesses III, Battle of the Delta c. 1175 BC, Public Domain

⁴⁸⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_Peoples#Primary_documentary_records

Moses freed the world's slaves

The “Late Bronze Age Collapse” refers to the collapse of slave states. This was only a collapse from the point of view of kings. The kings wrote the history. A history written from their point of view of the slaves would be very different.⁴⁸⁷ To the vast numbers of slaves who now had a chance to escape, this was a Late Bronze Age Liberation; a Late Bronze Age Triumph; a Late Bronze Age Joy.

Only the Canaanites had the ships, and the contacts, and the culture to organise all the free peoples of the world in a fight against the most powerful empires on Earth. The Canaanites, the people of Moses, took on the world and they won.

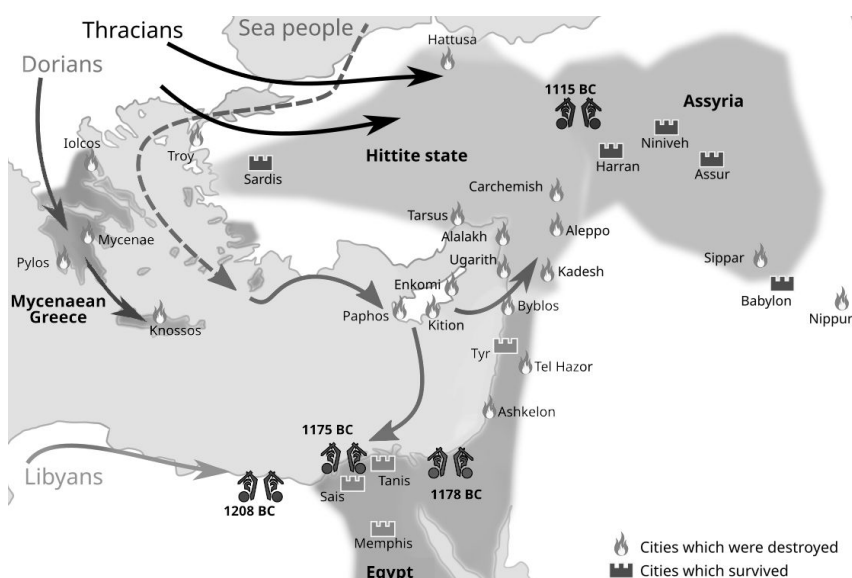


Image: Lommès, CC-BY-SA 4.0

But the fight against slavery is never over. The kings regrouped. They came back. They enslaved the old empires again and even infiltrated the people of Israel. They eventually destroyed the golden age of the Judges. The Book of Judges shows us how they did it.

⁴⁸⁷ See for example Fredy Perlman's "Against His-story, Against Leviathan" theanarchistlibrary.org/library/fredy-perlman-against-his-story-against-leviathan

Judges 1-6: ignoring Moses, choosing war

The golden age of the Judges was based on respect for others. Some people hated that. They wanted slaves. They wanted wars. Because wars make people insecure. Insecure people will follow a king for safety. Wars also get land for a king. So encouraging war is a good way to become a king.

It all began with Joshua. Moses had a contract with Shechem to settle the southern desert, but Joshua was a Hyksos: in the past, they conquered mighty Egypt. He did not want just a slice of desert, he wanted the whole of Canaan. So he began genocidal wars.

To be fair, Thoth-Moses also used violence to pacify Canaan. But Canaan was already in Egypt's empire. Thoth-Moses's great success indicates that he must have also used diplomacy where possible. But Joshua did not use diplomacy.

A careful reading shows that there are very few wars in Judges, and they all seem to be started by a few fanatics among the Israelites, especially Joshua. When Joshua ignored Moses's restraint and attacked other tribes on Judges 2, some of those tribes fight back. Other than that, most of the so-called "wars" are not wars at all. In most cases, the Israelites freely chose the superior Philistine way of life. Then some religious fanatic would kill a Philistine chief, start a war and ruin everything.



Image: Thesaurus Sacrarum historiarum Veteris et Novi Testamenti, 1585

Judges 2, etc.: “Delivered into the hands of...”

The book of Judges records six times when Israel fully embraced other gods alongside Yahweh.⁴⁸⁸ The book is edited to present cooperation as a kind of slavery.

But there is no suggestion that the Philistines (etc.) used force to conquer Israel. The text says that Yahweh (i.e. the priests of Yahweh) “sold” Israel to outsiders. Selling implies that Yahweh (i.e. the priests) got something good in return. What did they get? And why does the text say that Philistines “plundered” the people?

Here is the first and longest description of how Israelites were “sold” to the Philistines:

“Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. They forsook the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshipped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the Lord’s anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashoreths.

*In his anger against Israel the Lord gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them. **He sold them into the hands of their enemies** all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress.*

Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshipped them. They quickly turned from the ways of their ancestors, who had been obedient to the Lord’s commands. Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord relented because of their groaning under those who oppressed and afflicted them.

But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors, following other gods and serving and worshipping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.⁴⁸⁹

So the Israelites first chose the gods of the Philistines (etc.) Meaning they chose the Philistine culture. Sometimes a fanatical judge would persuade them to stop cooperating with other gods. But they always went back to the other gods, because they preferred that life.

⁴⁸⁸ Judges 2:7, 3:12-14, 4:1-3, 6:1, 10:7-8, 13:1

⁴⁸⁹ Judges 2:11-17

Judges 13-16: life under the Philistines

The only detailed example we have of an Israelite living under the Philistines is the story of Samson. Let us see how Samson was “sold”.

Samson was free to walk around, causing mischief for the Philistines. He had a good life with Philistine women. So he was not a slave.

Was Samson free only because he was strong? No, a single well-aimed spear could have killed him. But the Philistines never killed Samson. Instead, they looked for ways to humiliate him. This was a battle of ideas. The Philistines had to show that they were smarter and stronger than this Israelite fanatic. They did this by enticing him with beautiful women, and then learning that his self-confidence came from his hair. So they cut it off.



So how was Samson “sold” to the Philistines? How was he “plundered” by them? They tempted him with beautiful and clever women! Philistines were coastal traders, not inland farmers like the Israelites. So they had the most cultured women with the best makeup and clothes and the best seduction skills.

Samson wanted to marry a Philistine woman. And later he lost his heart to Delilah. They bought him, heart and soul! They offered him a better life! But then they humiliated him for killing so many of their men (and Samson famously got his revenge in the end.)

There is no record in the book of Judges of the Philistines killing Israelites unless the Israelites started it. Instead, we see the Philistines enticing the Israelites by their desirable gods and their enjoyable lifestyle. This reduced the power of the priests of Yahweh. Yahweh’s people got better offers from the Philistines, being “plundered” by sophisticated rivals from the coast. The country priests could not compete, and they hated it.

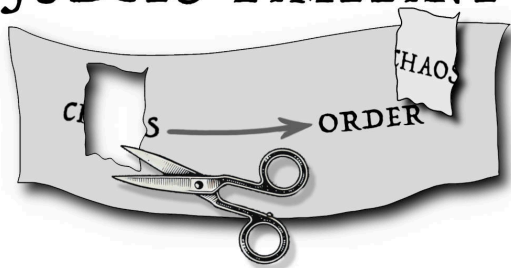
Judges 18: how kings used propaganda

The book of Judges shows how life got better and better for over 300 years. Life was bad at the start (1450 BC), thanks to Joshua's genocide. Genocide encourages chaos, deception, theft and murder. But life was good at the end (c.1150 BC), thanks to generations of trade and peace.

How did kings persuade people to give that up? A warlord took advantage of public dislike of a bad judge: Samuel and his useless sons. David then conquered (or made a deal with) Jerusalem, and gradually conquered more towns. The kings presented this as saving the people from bad judges, and they rewrote history to make all the judges look bad. For example, they reversed the timeline of the Judges.

They found the most shocking event from the **start** (c.1450 BC): the murder and dismembering of a woman. Then they moved that event to the **end** of the book.⁴⁹⁰ They moved it to around 1116 BC, a hundred years before David, so people in the time of David could not remember all the details.

JUDGES TIMELINE



So they took a story about life getting **better**, and made it look like a story about life getting **worse**. They then told people again and again that all of Israel's problems were due to the Judges.

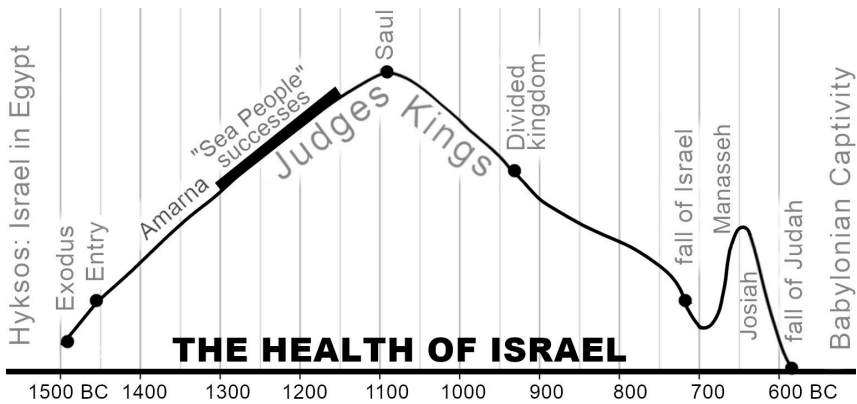
*"In those days there was no king in Israel: but every one did that which seemed right to himself."*⁴⁹¹

Every politician does this: *"the problems you see are due to the previous guys: give me even more power and I will fix it!"* King David focused on propaganda: he produced Psalms and stories to make himself look humble and pious. He gave power to the priests of Jerusalem in return for their support of him. We will look at that next.

⁴⁹⁰ The crime is in Judges 18, near the end of the book. But Judges 18:1-2 says the tribe of Dan still had no inheritance and sent people to spy out the land. Yet Joshua 19:40-48 says that Dan already had cities. Judges 18:7-11 then describe them discovering the country for the first time. 18:30 refers to the grandson of Moses. So the chapter only fits soon after arriving in Canaan, around 1400 BC. Judges 19:1 continues without pause, to the story of the murdered woman (from 1400 BC) looks like it takes place at the very end (c.1116 BC).

⁴⁹¹ Those are last words of the book. (Judges 21:24, see also 17:6, 18:1, 18:31, 19:1)

After the Judges



The law of Moses made everything better and better. The Amarna letters describe a regional golden age. Canaanites following Moses's methods defeated the most powerful empires around them. But then kings appeared, and rejected the law of Moses:

- Saul (the first king) began to order people around.
- David (the next king) began a series of wars.
- Solomon (the next king) broke the kingdom in two.⁴⁹²
- 210 years after Solomon,⁴⁹³ Israel was gone.
- 135 years later,⁴⁹⁴ Judah was gone.

Here are the main people involved:

Saul (1095-1055 BC): the first king

The first king was Saul. Like Deborah, he was elected to save Israel in a time of war. But unlike Deborah, Saul said that he could save the people better if they made him king. That was a lie. Israel made him king, and then he failed to protect them.

⁴⁹² He taxed the people so heavily that most of Israel refused to follow his successor. So Israel split from Judah.

⁴⁹³ Solomon reigned from 971 to 931 BC, and Assyria conquered in 721 BC.

⁴⁹⁴ From 721 BC to the conquest by Babylon in 586 BC.

Egyptian records from this period

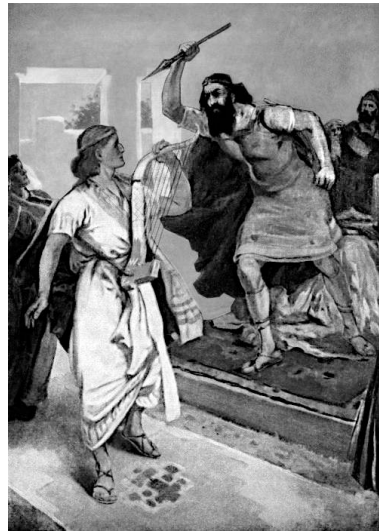
“The Report of Wenamun” from 1072 BC⁴⁹⁵ tells how the Pharaoh was in Byblos (a Canaanite coastal city) to obtain wood. He sent his servant Wenamun to do business further north (in Lebanon). But Wenamun was robbed in the city of Dor, ruled by Sea Peoples (just south of Galilee). Wenamun had to ask the Pharaoh for extra money.

This episode shows that Egypt was weak: a stronger Pharaoh would have punished the robbers. But Assyria was moving into northern Canaan and Egypt did not have the power to act. Wenamun also says that his home town is controlled by the high priest of Amon suggesting that Pharaoh has limited power.

The Bible says that at this time Samuel’s sons were corrupt rulers.⁴⁹⁶ They robbed the people. They were not the people who robbed Wenamun, but it shows the general lawlessness. The Bible says that this caused the people to want a king. Why would they want that if Egypt was in a position to punish corrupt local officials?

The Bible says that a local ruler called Kish had a son, called Saul. Saul grew up to be handsome, strong and popular, but also prone to a violent bad temper. He could see that Egypt was weak and Canaan was badly run. So he decided to make a name for himself. He called himself Israel’s first king.

All the other Egyptian records confirm that Egypt was weak in the period of Saul, David and Solomon. Pharaoh Amenemnisu had to pardon some rebels, Pharaoh Psusennes I moved the Egyptian capital to Tanis, closer to Canaan, as if Canaan was a worry. Then Pharaoh Osorkon the Elder (992-986 BC) was not even Egyptian: the Lybians started to take over Egypt. Pharaoh Siamun (986-967 BC) may have fought the Philistines at Gezer. All of this indicates that this is the time when we would expect rebellious Canaanites to declare themselves to be independent kings rather than respectful friends of Egypt.



Saul, from 'David the Shepherd Boy',
out of copyright

⁴⁹⁵ Or 1102 BC. It just says “year 5”: that could refer to Ramesses XI or Smendes.

⁴⁹⁶ 1 Samuel 8:1-3

David (1055-1015 BC): the definitive king

By choosing a king, Israel rejected Yahweh: The next king was David. David claimed to follow God. But his actions say otherwise:

- He was a king, meaning he rejected God.⁴⁹⁷ He generally lacked respect for God.⁴⁹⁸
- He moved the capital from Ebal (where Moses commanded the centre place to be⁴⁹⁹) to Jerusalem. There he planned to build a large temple, in opposition to God's law.
- He coveted his neighbour's wife, bore false witness, murdered and committed adultery.⁵⁰⁰
- He allowed his family to rape and commit incest without punishment.⁵⁰¹
- He began wars in which many innocent people died, in opposition to Moses's example of respect and restraint.
- If Deuteronomy has any basis in history, then David was legally forbidden from ruling.⁵⁰² But he did it anyway.
- David made the priests of Moses (the Levites and the Aaron) subservient to the priests of Sydyk (see below).
- His greatest skill was in lying. He created amazing propaganda, for example, claiming that he had great remorse for breaking God's laws. Yet he never paid any personal price and kept on breaking the laws. Even his name was a lie. "David" meant "*darling, beloved friend*", specifically a friend to King Saul. But David betrayed his friend: he fought on the side of the Philistines.⁵⁰³ The Philistines then conveniently attacked Saul. Circumstantial evidence suggests that David arranged the death of Saul.⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁷ 1 Samuel 8:6-7, KJV

⁴⁹⁸ E.g. by conducting the census of 2 Samuel 24:1-10

⁴⁹⁹ Joshua 8:30-33. Ebal is near Shechem, the natural centre of Israel.

⁵⁰⁰ the incident with Bathsheba

⁵⁰¹ When David's son Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar, David did nothing, breaking Leviticus 18:18-29

⁵⁰² Deuteronomy 23:3, "*No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even in the tenth generation.*" David's grandmother was a Moabite (Ruth 4:13-17)

⁵⁰³ 1 Samuel 27

⁵⁰⁴ 2 Samuel 1 says that an ally of David killed Saul, and then brought the crown to David. David had the man killed, as if he (David) did not want that outcome. But see who benefits.

The priests of Zadok, and Psalms, and Goliath

The central battle of good versus evil (in the Bible) is country versus city. Adam, Abraham and Moses wanted country life: decentralised power based on trade and respect. Cain, Jacob and David wanted city life: centralised power based on violence and xenophobia. David's preferred city was Jerusalem, the city of Melchizedek ("king of Tsedek") and Adonizedek ("my lord is Tsedek"). Tsedek is also known as Sydyk or Zadok.

David considered himself "*a high priest after the order of Melchizedek*".⁵⁰⁵ Solomon made the priests of Tsedek (Zadok) the high priests of the temple. These priests, such as Hilkiah (below) centralised all power at Jerusalem. This is the opposite of the religion of Abel and Abraham and Moses: they wanted a decentralised religion where everyone was equal.

The oldest versions of the "Psalms of David" were psalms to many different gods.⁵⁰⁶ So David would have no problem worshipping Tzedek, the local god of his local city. Later kings edited those psalms to only mention Yahweh.⁵⁰⁷

It looks like the story of Goliath is another story that was co-opted, to whitewash David's illegal and treacherous origin.⁵⁰⁸



⁵⁰⁵ Psalm 110:4

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⁵⁰⁶ E.g. the Elephantine version of Psalm 20 (Papyrus Amherst 63 XI.11-19)

"May Adonay [Horus as lord] answer us in our troubles. May Adonay answer us in our troubles. O Bow in Heaven, crescent moon [i.e. Horus right eye, the moon god Yah/Yaho], send your emissary from the temple of Rash; And from Zaphon may Adonay sustain us. May Adonay grant us our heart's desire. May the Lord grant us our heart's desire. May Adonay fulfill our every plan. May Adonay fulfill—may Adonay not withhold in part—every request of our hearts. Some with the bow, Some with the spear; But as for us, Mar is our god. Adonay, Yaho, our bull is with us. (Or: We are sighing to Mar. Our god Yaho will grant our people.) May Lord Bethel answer us tomorrow. May Baal of Heaven, the Lord, pronounce blessings upon your faithful."
<https://isthatinthebible.wordpress.com/2018/07/10/bethel-the-forgotten-god-of-israel/>

⁵⁰⁷ The edited Yahweh-only version of Psalm 20:

"[1a] May Yahweh answer you in time of trouble. [1b] May the name of the God of Jacob protect you. [2a] May he send you help from the Sanctuary. [2b] And from Zion may he sustain you. [4a] May he grant you your heart's desire. [4b] And may he fulfill your every plan. [5b] May Yahweh fulfill all your requests. [7a] Some in chariots, and some in horses; [7b] But we put our trust in the name of Yahweh our god. [9] O Yahweh, give victory to the king. Answer us when we call."
<https://isthatinthebible.wordpress.com/2018/07/10/bethel-the-forgotten-god-of-israel/>

⁵⁰⁸ 2 Samuel 21:19 says Elhanan killed Goliath. What is more likely? That the most famous king had the most famous origin, then a historian forgot and said some minor soldier did it instead? Or that an underling did it but the king took credit? What happens more often in the real world? (Later, 1 Chr 20:5 tries to fix the error by saying Elhanan killed *the brother* of Goliath, but this was written much later. And it dates the event to the same time as 2 Sam 21, suggesting that 2 Sam 21 was the original version.) Without the David and Goliath story in 1 Sam 17, David is just a treacherous scheming courtier in 1 Sam 18, a very common situation in the real world. Plus his Moabite origins made him illegal. David needed to claim the Goliath story, to whitewash his origin.

Solomon (1015-975 BC): the cleverest king

Many scholars think that Solomon cannot be real because he claimed a gigantic and wealthy empire:

And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon's subjects all his life. Solomon's daily provisions were thirty cors [a "cor" was five tons] of the finest flour and sixty cors of meal, ... Solomon had four thousand stalls for chariot horses, and twelve thousand horses. ... The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents [23 tons], not including the revenues from merchants and traders and from all the Arabian kings and the governors of the territories.⁵⁰⁹

Yet the Bible also says Solomon's cities were small and of low quality:

At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built these two buildings—the temple of the Lord and the royal palace—King Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre, because Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar and juniper and gold he wanted. But when Hiram went from Tyre to see the towns that Solomon had given him, he was not pleased with them. "What kind of towns are these you have given me, my brother?" he asked. And he called them the Land of Kabul ["good for nothing"]⁵¹⁰

And the Bible also says that Solomon rode a mule, not a horse, to his coronation. And it took place in a tent, not a palace.⁵¹¹ When we examine the Hebrew words closely, Solomon's "city" just meant a place with a floor (i.e. not a tent). His "throne" could have been just a stool. The description of gold used on the cedar walls of the temple could refer to thin artistic flourishes (gold can be beaten very thinly). So how do we explain Solomon's claim of enormous wealth? The answer is in these lines:

Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar and juniper and gold he wanted. [But Hiram asked] "What kind of towns are these you have given me, my brother?"

This kind of exchange is familiar from the Amarna letters: kings called each other "brother", they requested gold and other goods from each other, and they often complained if what they got was not of sufficient quality. So this was the era when kings felt that they had a right to each other's goods. Solomon's extravagant claims now make sense. Solomon claimed to rule from the Euphrates to Egypt because he could *in theory* claim any of that wealth. He married a thousand different local princesses and showed respect to their gods, so he was part of a gigantic family of brother-kings,

⁵⁰⁹ 1 Kings 4:21-22,26; 10:14-15

⁵¹⁰ 1 Kings 9:10-12

⁵¹¹ 1 Kings 1:32,38; 2:28

When we add up all the wealth that Solomon could draw upon (in theory) then we get the large numbers. For example, consider his “*four thousand stalls for chariot horses, and twelve thousand horses.*” When we add up the number of miles of road between the Euphrates and Egypt, and consider the need for inns and armies, 3000 stalls, servicing 12000 horses sounds about right for the entire region.⁵¹²

Why did Solomon say that all this wealth belonged to him? Because Solomon was a magician. A magician is someone who uses careful words (and misleading objects) to change how we see reality. Solomon made himself look fabulously wealthy and the wisest king in the history of the world. So legends remember Solomon as a great magician who could fly, control demons, and do almost anything.



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Solomon did real magic

Solomon is probably the most famous magician of all time. Books like the Testament of Solomon and the Lesser Key of Solomon describe his magical artefacts, his ability to control demons, and his knowledge of all secrets. The Bible does not explicitly call Solomon a magician, but it does show him doing great magic:

Consider the position when Solomon came to power. The first king, Saul, is widely regarded as a failure. The second king, David, father of Solomon, was a morally bad man, he set the nation on a path to destruction and ended his days in a famine caused by his own failures.⁵¹³

The third king, Solomon, could not even afford a horse, he only built a temple by begging from his neighbours, and his mismanagement of finances broke his nation in two. And yet the Bible remembers him as a fabulously wealthy genius! How? Though clever words. By defining the wealth he *could* call upon (in theory, in small amounts) as if it were his wealth. Around the same time, David the violent failure was rebranded as a pious and sensitive musician (as if he wrote all those psalms himself), a loving friend, and a great conqueror. And some people believed it. This was a magical illusion.

These words created a fanatical belief in being God's magically chosen people. This had real-world effects. When the temple was destroyed in 586 BC and the rulers deported to Babylon, instead of embracing their original culture (the Hebrews came from Mesopotamia) they fanatically clung to the new beliefs. They looked forward to a "son of David" to rescue them, even though the original David was a failure who made their lives worse.

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This magical view of their founding kings caused Israel to survive and change the world for thousands of years. It led to Christianity, which led to new concepts of the self and "progress". It led to the modern state of Israel and its huge effect on modern politics. **This is real magic!** A few carefully chosen words twisted all of time and space.



Image: the Great Symbol of Solomon, from a History of Magic by Eliphas Levi, 1922 (out of copyright)

⁵¹³ 1 Samuel 24

How the kings destroyed Israel and Judah

The priests of Zadok refused to cooperate with their superpower neighbours as before. This was a suicidal policy. The superpowers, Egypt and Assyria (or others) would inevitably conquer tiny Israel.

This policy of isolationism could only work when the superpowers were weak. Luckily for the kings, the weakness of Egypt caused by the followers of Moses (the Sea Peoples) lasted from 1069-664 BC.⁵¹⁴ This is why Israel and Judah could claim independence for so long. But it was a temporary blip. Sooner or later the major powers would become strong again. Israel, having rejected the law of Moses, was now too weak to stop them.

Solomon was wise enough to realise that isolationism was a stupid policy, so he married into neighbouring royal families and respected their gods. But most of the later kings lacked Solomon's wisdom.

Unluckily for the kings, Assyria was farther away from the Sea Peoples, and recovered quickly. Assyria expanded and began to consume its neighbours.

Luckily for Israel, in the eleventh century BC, while Israel was rejecting alliances with its neighbours, Assyria turned its attention eastward, to conquer Babylon.

Then in the tenth century BC, Israel broke itself in half by the greed of its kings demanding more and more taxes. The southern tribes broke away and became Judah. Fortunately Assyria was busy fighting the Arameans in Syria.

In the ninth century BC, Assyrian rulers were happy to maintain the new empire and not expand it. Ashurnasirpal II conquered as far as Canaan, but merely took an annual tribute from Tyre.

Eventually, Israel's luck ran out. In the eighth century BC, Assyria returned (under Tiglath-Pileser III and later Shalmaneser V, followed by Sargon II) and in 722 BC destroyed the northern kingdom, Israel.

The southern kingdom, Judah, survived by agreeing to pay a large tribute to Assyria. Then Babylon conquered Assyria. By this time Egypt was back to full strength. Too late, Judah tried to make friends again with Egypt, but that just annoyed Babylon. So Babylon conquered Judah in 586 BC.

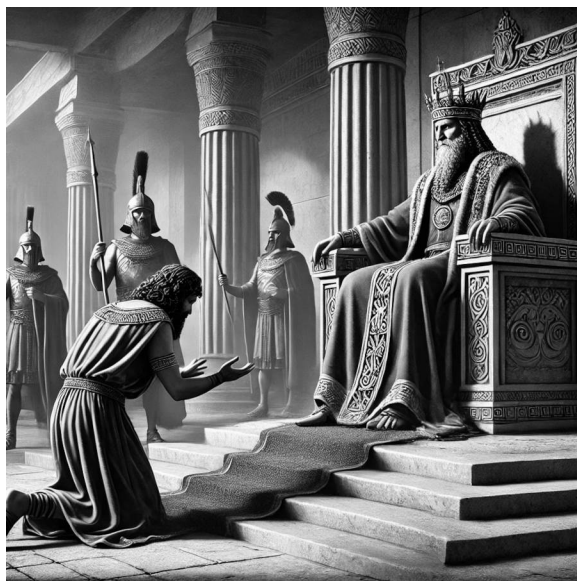
So the policy of defiance instead of cooperation had its inevitable result. Israel and Judah were destroyed.

⁵¹⁴ "the Third Intermediate Period".

The prophets

The rest of the Old Testament is mostly attempts to avoid the truth. Israel rejected Moses, but could not admit it. Because anyone criticising the king could be killed.⁵¹⁵

None of the prophets could say what needed to be said, even if they wanted to. For example, Isaiah (760-698 BC) was an advisor to kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. So he could not tell his boss “*You should abdicate, you are the problem*”.



As another example: Jeremiah (629-586 BC) could not tell King Zedekiah to abdicate and return to Moses's system of elected judges. Jeremiah could only timidly suggest the smallest action to prevent destruction: he urged cooperation with Babylon. And for that, Zedekiah's men threw Jeremiah into a pit to die.⁵¹⁶ Another prophet, Uriah, made the same modest suggestion and then ran away. They chased him and killed him.⁵¹⁷

So the main value of Bible prophets is not in providing answers, but in showing that we only hear the prophets that the kings want us to hear.

⁵¹⁵ 1 Kings 18:4

⁵¹⁶ Jeremiah 38:1-6

⁵¹⁷ Jeremiah 26:20-23

False prophecies from Isaiah

Isaiah is remembered for one prophecy that partly came true: when it was obvious that Assyria would destroy Israel, Isaiah said that when a young woman had a child, the baby would not be old enough to speak before Assyria conquered Israel.⁵¹⁸ That happened, as predicted. Or did it?

The true part was that Tiglath-Pileser III would carry off Israel's wealth within two years. Anybody with eyes could see that: he had just conquered his eastern neighbours, and had begun to conquer the west: when Isaiah wrote, Tiglath was busy defeating Urartu before moving to Syria and Canaan.

The false prophecy was that this defeat was caused by Israel worshipping Baal. Historically, the opposite was true. Whenever Israel made alliances with all their neighbours (such as in the time of the judges), these alliances created peace and prosperity. Those alliances required intermarriage and respect for each other's gods. But when Israel tried to go alone, hating and defying its neighbours, Israel did not have the strength to win.

Isaiah also prophesied that Babylon would never be inhabited (Isaiah 13), Damascus would become a fallen ruin (Isaiah 17) and Tyre would be utterly destroyed and forgotten (Isaiah 23). None of these prophecies came true, unless we wait for hundreds or thousands of years sooner or later every city is destroyed, so the prophecy becomes too vague to be meaningful.

How does this fit with this book's claim that the Bible is "All True"? Because Isaiah was wise enough to be vague and not give firm dates. Every prophecy can come true if it is vague and has no date.

More importantly, Isaiah teaches us how the world really works. Isaiah is greatly admired because of the beautiful poetry, and the book's popularity among religions. So Isaiah teaches us that beautiful and popular and inspiring ideas can still be either wrong or meaningless. This is still true today. Many of our ideas about the future (e.g. social progress) and about how the world works (e.g. our political beliefs) turn out to be popular and inspiring, but useless.

The Bible also shows us that among the bad prophecies there are some world-changing dated prophecies that came true. For more about those, see the chapters on Daniel and Revelation.

⁵¹⁸ Isaiah 8:1-4. Ussher dates this to 740 BC. In 738 Tiglath-Pileser III made Israel pay a heavy tribute, turning Israel into a vassal state. (2 Kings 15:19-20) Israel later allied with Aram-Damascus, so in 722 BC Assyria destroyed Israel.

Manasseh (697-643 BC) saved Judah

After the fall of Israel, King Manasseh of Judah realised that things had to change. The Zadokite policy of isolation would soon destroy Judah just as it destroyed Israel. So Manasseh made big changes:

Archaeologists such as Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman credit Manasseh with reviving Judah's rural economy, arguing that a possible Assyrian grant of most favoured nation status stimulated the creation of an export market. They argue that changes to the economic structure of the countryside would have required the cooperation of the "countryside aristocracy", with restoration of worship at the high places a quid pro quo for this.⁵¹⁹

So Manasseh returned Israel to something like the reign of the judges:

- A focus on international trade.
- A deep respect for neighbours' values (e.g. respecting their gods).
- Equality between regions: with no special treatment for Jerusalem.

This created a system of mutual help, where each kingdom benefitted from the other kingdoms remaining free. Archaeology show that Israel in this era was not just a valuable trading partner but a vital ally, so they had no incentive to change the arrangement.⁵²⁰

In general, Manasseh “*Manasseh reversed the centralizing reforms of his father Hezekiah, and re-established local shrines*”.⁵²¹ And when he died he was buried in his own home, not in Jerusalem among the kings.

So Manasseh returned Israel to something like Moses intended. And the Zadokites hated it. Manasseh's reforms were a direct attack on their power. Manasseh had to be stopped! But he was too strong.

So the Zadokites waited until Manasseh died, and then killed his successor, Amon.⁵²² The people were outraged: Amon was popular.⁵²³ But next in line to the throne was an eight-year-old child. Josiah, and the Zadokites found him easy to control.

⁵¹⁹ Wikipedia, citing “*The Bible Unearthed*” by Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman (2001)

⁵²⁰ This is known by archaeologists as the “Pax Assyriaca”: an increase in trade goods with Assyria in the era of Manasseh.

⁵²¹ Eikipdia, summarising 2 Kings.

⁵²² 2 Chronicles 33:24 says his “servants” killed him, but what was their motive? Only one group benefited: the Zadokites, who then took power.

⁵²³ 2 Chronicles 33:25

Hilkiah destroyed Judah

King Josiah was only eight years old when he came to power in 640 BC.⁵²⁴ So the High Priest Hilkiah was the de facto unopposed ruler. Hilkiah, like all High Priests, was a Zadokite and controlled the temple.

Hilkiah's first act was to take all the money in the temple, which was supposed to provide for the needs of the kingdom, and spend it on the temple itself. At least, that is what he claimed. He made sure that no records were kept, so nobody can say where the money went.⁵²⁵

Hilkiah's next act was to produce a new book of scripture that nobody had ever seen before. This was probably the Book of Deuteronomy, which pretends to retell the law of Moses, but it reverses what Moses taught: it gives all power to the High Priest (Hilkiah and his successors).⁵²⁶

Hilkiah single-handedly destroyed Judah. He persuaded Josiah to enthusiastically embrace a Jerusalem-first policy. So instead of cooperating with its neighbours, Judah defied them.

So when "*Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went up to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria*", instead of joining the alliance, Josiah fought against Necho. And he was killed at a battle of Armageddon.⁵²⁷ Assyria, lacking the help it needed, was defeated by Babylon. Babylon, seeing that Judah was now an enemy, invaded Judah. Thus began the sequence of events that destroyed Judah, destroyed the temple, and carried off all the rulers to be captives in Babylon.



The High Priest of the temple at Jerusalem. The clothes are based on Exodus 28, with additional details from Josephus. Image from Macalister's book "Ecclesiastical Vestments", 1896 (out of copyright).

⁵²⁴ 2 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 34

⁵²⁵ 2 Kings 22:4-7

⁵²⁶ See the chapter about Deuteronomy.

⁵²⁷ 2 Kings 23:29. Armageddon = Har Megiddo, the valley of Megiddo

Hilkiah destroyed records

“Hilkiah” means “to steal or plunder Yahweh”.⁵²⁸ That is exactly what he did. He claimed to speak for Yahweh, and wanted to control the temple, the city, the kingdom, and the world, through force.⁵²⁹

After Hilkiah re-wrote the law of Moses, he then destroyed the original records (as far as possible). He destroyed every shrine that he did not control, i.e. every shrine outside Jerusalem, along with their “Asherah poles”:

“[He] began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles and idols. ... he tore down the altars and the Asherah poles and crushed the idols to powder and cut to pieces all the incense altars throughout Israel.”⁵³⁰

Asherah was the wife of Yahweh, and the queen of heaven, the equivalent of Inanna or Eve. “Asherah poles” were memory aids for ancient stories, and often contained religious carvings. That is, they were the ancient history of the people.

For example, this Asherah image includes the ibex (symbol of Abraham’s religion), the tree of life (from Inanna/Eve), twins representing evening and morning (the eternal cycle of the moon, Yah), the importance of the mother goddess (Abraham’s El Shaddai) and much more. It serves as a memory aid to recall the stories in Genesis. But these symbols also remind us that Yah is the god of nomads and opposed hierarchies. Hilkiah wanted the opposite. He wanted hierarchies, with himself at the top as the High Priest of the only temple. So these historical records had to be destroyed.



Image: פטעמי-עליון, CCA-SA-4.0

⁵²⁸ From the Hebrew “*hālaq*”. The first uses of the term in the Bible show that it refers to violently stealing or plundering. Genesis 14:15 “*he hālaq himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them*”; Genesis 49:7: “*Cursed be their anger; for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will hālaq them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*”; Genesis 49:27: “*Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall hālaq the spoil.*” Etc.

⁵²⁹ I.e. rejecting the system of brotherhood between kings, and treating all other nations as deadly enemies.

⁵³⁰ 2 Chronicles 34:3-7, NIV

Hilkiah (or his followers) edited the Bible

Hilkiah missed some of the shrines, so we still have artefacts like this jar. It shows Yahweh with his wife, Asherah. All the archaeology shows that this was the normal belief of ancient Israel: Israelite religion was polytheistic. Hilkiah was not preserving the old religion, he was destroying the old religion. He was creating a new religion with himself at the top.

We can still see the original polytheism in the Bible if we look carefully.⁵³¹ This shows that Hilkiah was not able to destroy it all. He had to twist what was left and make it say the opposite of what happened.

So when we read that Hilkiah was good and Manasseh was evil, we have to ask, “Says who?”

Somebody is telling us that Hilkiah was good, yet he destroyed Judah and caused war and poverty. The same person is telling us that Manasseh was evil, yet Manasseh saved Judah and gave them peace and prosperity.

Somebody has edited the Bible, to tell us that evil is good and good is evil. We cannot say for certain who edited the Bible, but Hilkiah has to be top of the list of suspects.

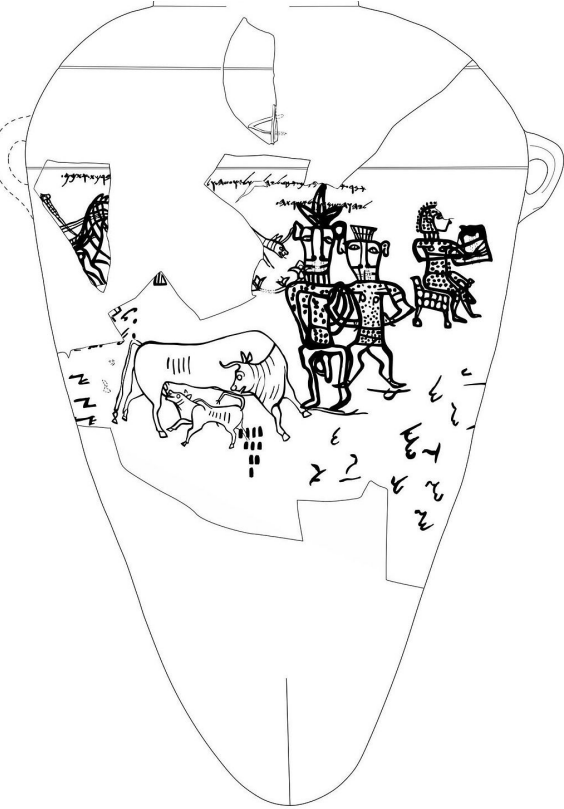


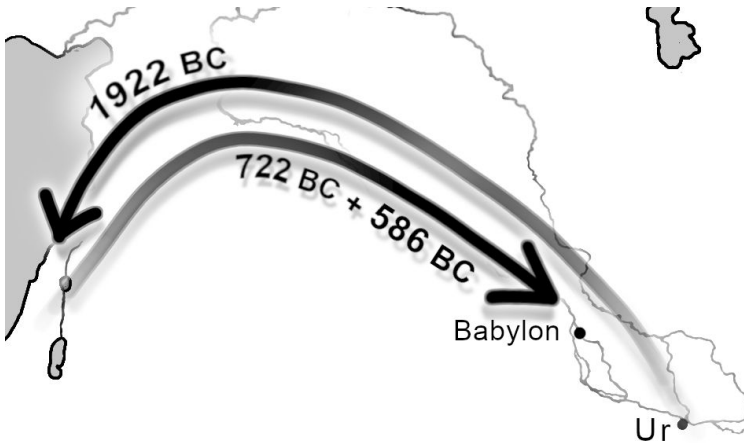
Image: decorated jar, 8th century BC.
Unknown artist, from Kuntilat Ajrud.
Via Wikimedia, out of copyright.

⁵³¹ E.g. Elohim is a plural word, Moses created a bronze serpent and cherubim, etc.

Ezra, Nehemiah

The Hebrews return home

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Judah. He took the king and elites back to live in Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia was Abraham's homeland. It was the land of Heber (the land of the Hebrews) where the plan to conquer Canaan and Egypt began. Heber (Eber) means "migrant": migrants from Mesopotamia. The Hebrews finally stopped being migrants and returned home. The 1200-year colonial adventure was over.



Most of the Hebrews⁵³² had happy, prosperous lives in their ancestral lands around Babylon. And those who still lived in Canaan mixed with the local people and became friends. Ezra and Nehemiah did everything they could to restart the colonial project and divide the Jews against their neighbours. Ezra broke up families,⁵³³ Nehemiah caused social unrest,⁵³⁴ lied,⁵³⁵ had people beaten up⁵³⁶ and used hypocrisy.⁵³⁷ This worked with some people, but most people ignored them where possible.

⁵³² It is difficult to be precise with numbers in this period, but all the reference books suggest that Judah was poor and struggled, whereas Jewish communities in Babylon Egypt, etc. were large and vibrant.

⁵³³ Ezra pressured men to abandon their foreign wives

⁵³⁴ The local people of Canaan were disturbed by Nehemiah's colonists

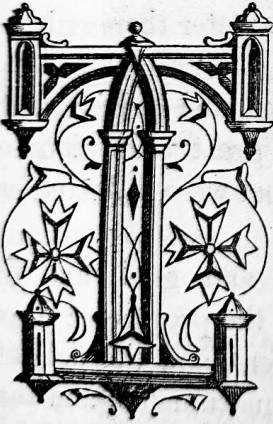
⁵³⁵ Nehemiah promised that the colonists would not try to become kings. Eventually they began a war and made themselves kings under the Maccabees (the Hasmoneans).

⁵³⁶ Nehemiah 13:23-25

⁵³⁷ Nehemiah told people to live in Canaan, then he returned to live in Babylon

Ecclesiastes:

about intelligence (and AI)



THE words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.^a

2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.^b

3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?^c

4 One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh:

Ecclesiastes is a book about intelligence. It argues that:

1. All our great works are pointless.⁵³⁸
2. Life is basically random: intelligence counts for little.⁵³⁹
3. Everything runs in cycles: there is nothing new.⁵⁴⁰

If these claims are true, then ten thousand years of “progress” made things worse (due to the cost of that “progress” inequality, environmental damage, etc.) And if these principles are universal, then artificial intelligence can be beaten, because intelligence is not as clever as we think.

So are these claims true? And are they universal principles?

⁵³⁸ “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity” - Ecclesiastes 1:2. “Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.” - Ecclesiastes 4:4

⁵³⁹ “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.” - Ecclesiastes 9:11

⁵⁴⁰ Ecclesiastes 1:4-10

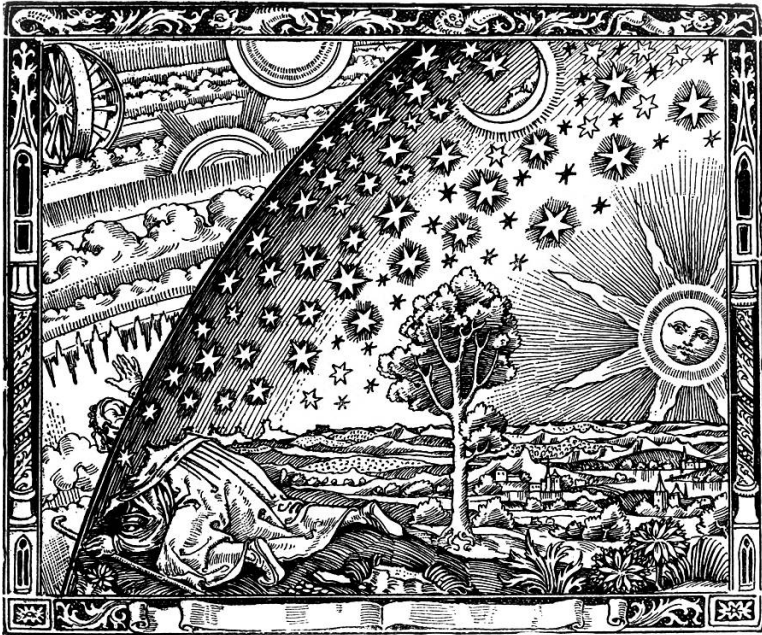
Claim 1: All our works are pointless

Why are our works pointless? The logic is simple: we know nothing. So we don't know what we are doing or why.

Why do we know nothing? Because the universe is infinite. So no matter what we know, it is nothing compared to the universe. If we think we understand something, then we just need to see the bigger picture, to find out we were completely wrong. For example, ten thousand years of "progress" made everything worse. The chapter on Genesis 1 has many examples. We used to be gods, we used to be immortal. But ten thousand years of progress turned us into slaves, terrified of death.

The smartest human we know of was probably Einstein. His greatest discovery (that mass is energy) led him to recommend building a nuclear bomb. The nuclear bomb is the arguably worst invention ever. It is the stupidest thing we have ever made. So the smartest man turned out to be the stupidest man. Similar observations can be made about Einstein's discovery of time dilation. This enabled accurate satellite communication. This reduces in-person communication, and makes individuals powerless compared to governments and corporations.

In short, when we think we understand something new, we should step back and see the bigger picture. Things are not what they seem.



Flammarion's famous engraving from 1888 (out of copyright)

Claim 2: Intelligence counts for little

What is intelligence? What is an intelligent decision?

Nassim Taleb explores intelligence in his books. Taleb was a successful options trader. This means he was very good at predicting the future, at least for a few years. He understood the system. This is what he learned:

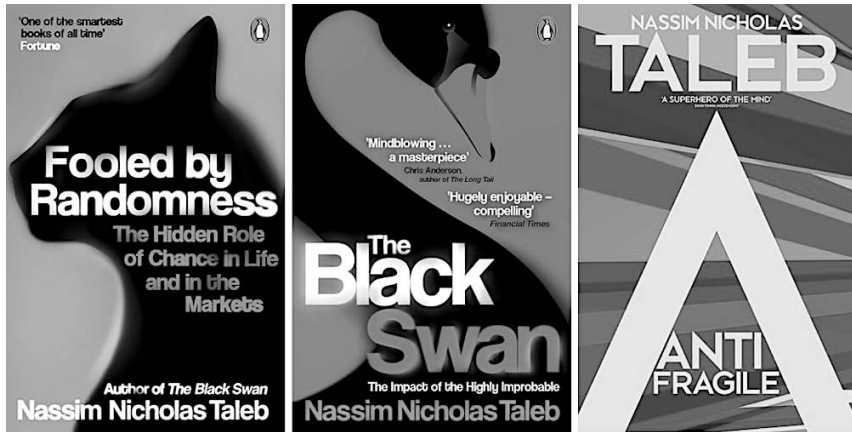


Image: Penguin Books covers, Fair Use

“Fooled by Randomness” shows how most of our decisions are random. But if we randomly win we think we are smart. Winning attracts more resources, which makes us more likely to win again (randomly). People look at our big wins, and the riches they bring, and decide that we must have superior intelligence. But it is all random. We are fooled by randomness.

“The Black Swan” shows that the world is not as predictable as we think. We think we understand the world: e.g. we know that all swans are white. Then we see a black swan: our confident knowledge was wrong. Nothing in our experience prepared us for that. Taleb shows how these unexpected events have “long tail” effects: they undermine our calculations for decades. So all our theories are fundamentally unreliable.

“Anti-fragile” shows how to survive: how to intelligently predict the future. The best strategy is to forget the theory. Just see what has worked for decades (or centuries, or millennia). The longer that a thing has worked, the more black swans it has survived. So it is more likely to survive the next black swan event.

Let’s look closer randomness, black swans, and anti-fragility.

Intelligence and randomness

Taleb argues that many so-called geniuses were just lucky once or twice. But what about geniuses like Einstein? He was the same. He just got lucky.

Einstein's reputation is entirely due to two random accidents.⁵⁴¹

1. The first random accident was learning about Brownian Motion.⁵⁴²
2. The second random accident was learning about the work of Hendrik Lorentz, then the world's most famous theoretical physicist.⁵⁴³

Put those two accidents together, with a large enough group of random physics students, and one of them will randomly use Lorentz' ideas on Brownian motion. That led to the four papers that made Einstein famous.⁵⁴⁴

Einstein also needed training and hard work. That did not make him unusual. What made him unusual was his two random pieces of luck. We know they were random luck because Einstein spent the next fifty years trying to do something equally brilliant. And he failed. All he could do was tweak the old theories. He had the greatest brain and the best resources in the world, and no matter what he did, he could not repeat his initial luck.



Image: Schlurcker, CCA-SA 4.0

⁵⁴¹ For how Einstein made his discoveries, see "*How Einstein Did Not Discover*" by John D. Norton, sites.pitt.edu/~jdnorton/papers/Einstein_Discover_final.pdf and "*Can We Trust Einstein's Accounts of the Genesis of Special Relativity*" by Olivier Darrigol hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-03467475/file/Einstein%20s%20recollections%20and%20reconstructions%20pdf.pdf

⁵⁴² Einstein studied physics at university. He was taught that something in "the ether" must explain light's constant speed: particles of ether must cause light to speed up or slow down. So Einstein had to think about how light particles would change when they hit particles of ether. Luckily, Einstein had heard of Brownian motion, where tiny grains of dust jiggle about in the air, because they are hit by air particles. He worked out how fast the much smaller air particles must be moving. But this could not explain the problem of light. So he concluded that the theory of "the ether" did not make sense.

⁵⁴³ Lorentz published on time dilation and "reference frames". So Einstein tried Lorentz's ideas to explain the speed of light. Einstein could not follow the logic of one part of the paper: a claim that magnetism was asymmetric. So Einstein changed it. And then everything worked!

⁵⁴⁴ Einstein's four papers published in 1905: (1) about photons hitting normal matter, (2) about the speed of Brownian motion, (3) about time being relative to speed, and (4) an unexpected result of the equations: about mass being energy.

Black swan events

A black swan event is an unexpected event that can cause your plans to fail. Ecclesiastes gives the example of death: you might be very successful, but then you die.

Businesses and nations can die, just like people. It just takes one detail you did not account for. And there is *always* some detail you did not account for.

Sometimes failure is triggered by something very small. This is an example of “the butterfly effect”. In theory, a butterfly can flap its tiny wings and disrupt a tiny air current. This air current can disrupt another tiny air current. This can disrupt a larger air current, and so on. This changes how heat is exchanged in the atmosphere. This can lead to a tornado on the other side of the planet. This can lead to climate instability, causing wars, causing civilisation to end in a nuclear inferno.



A real-world example of this is the decision of a car driver to take a wrong turning in 1917. The car was carrying Archduke Franz Ferdinand of the Austro-Hungarian empire. The car accidentally slowed down near to a Bosnian student called Gavrilo Princip. Princip hated Ferdinand: he thought that Ferdinand was a threat to Bosnia. When Princip saw Ferdinand he could not believe his luck, so he quickly pulled out his gun and shot the Archduke. This assassination angered Austria-Hungary, who blamed Bosnia. This destabilised various alliances. This led to World War I. This destroyed the Austro-Hungarian empire, led to World War II, and more.

So the tiniest decision, like a car driver taking a wrong turning, can destroy an empire and turn the whole world upside down. So everything is fragile. All our strength is an illusion. It is all vanity.

Anti-fragility: the Bible calls it wisdom.

What helps us survive? Big brains? Inventions? Nature carried out those billions of experiments to answer this question.

For a billion years, nature created millions of species across countless environments. Nature filled every environment with every kind of intellectual stimulation: different pleasures, rewards, threats, surprises, competitors, and so on. Everything stimulates the brain and rewards intelligence. Nature then gave every individual a random different intelligence, and let them pass that intelligence down to their children.



A Morganucodon family in Pangea, 205 million years ago
(Map by Fama Clamosa, CCA-SA 4.0)

The result? After a billion years, and millions of experiments, we see no tendency toward larger brains. And we see no tendency toward more inventions. There is no evidence that big brains or inventions help survival over the long term. But there is plenty of evidence for extremely complex behaviour encoded into very small brains. Such as honey bees, who have language and complex societies using brains the size of a pin head. Or squirrel-like animals, whose general body plan (and resulting social groups) survived gigantic asteroids, super-volcanoes, and every other black swan catastrophe for over 200 million years.

I live in a forest where I watch red squirrels. Their lives are just as interesting as human lives. But unlike us, they spend their time in eating, drinking, and playing in the trees. And planting new trees. It's a good life.

Douglas Adams put it best:

“Man had always assumed that he was more intelligent than dolphins because he had achieved so much—the wheel, New York, wars and so on—whilst all the dolphins had ever done was muck about in the water having a good time. But conversely, the dolphins had always believed that they were far more intelligent than man—for precisely the same reasons.”⁵⁴⁵



The author of Ecclesiastes agrees. After considering all the works of men, he decided that all our works are vain. The best thing to do, he said, is to keep the commandments of God (i.e. Leviticus, with its law of equal land) and then eat, drink and be merry.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁵ Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

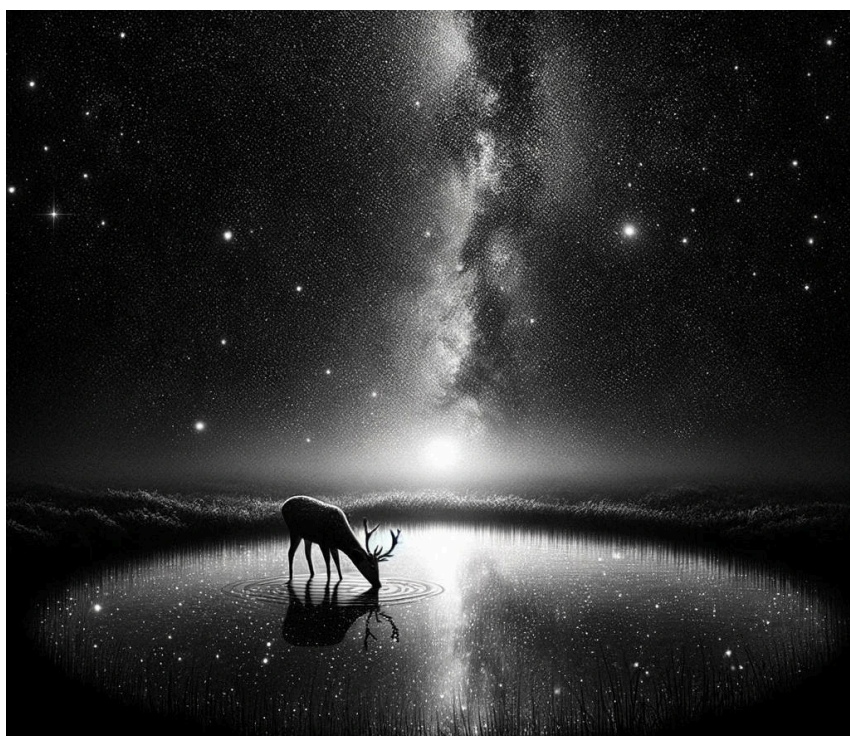
⁵⁴⁶ Ecclesiastes 8:15; 12:13

Consciousness is vanity

We like to think that we are better than other animals, because:

1. We are self-aware. E.g. we recognise ourselves in a mirror.
2. We create abstract models of reality in our brains.

Both of these abilities cut us off from the outside world. Because self-awareness implies that we sometimes turn inward. And an abstract model is often wrong. In contrast, an animal like a deer is always conscious of possible predators in the grass, and the taste of the water, and the scent of the wind, and the lights from distant stars. The deer is more connected to the world than we are.



We can measure human consciousness. It is a stream of ten bits of data per second.⁵⁴⁷ So we are less conscious than an atom. Our belief in special human consciousness is vanity.

⁵⁴⁷ For details, see the later chapters of the companion book “*Atlantis: It’s All True*”.

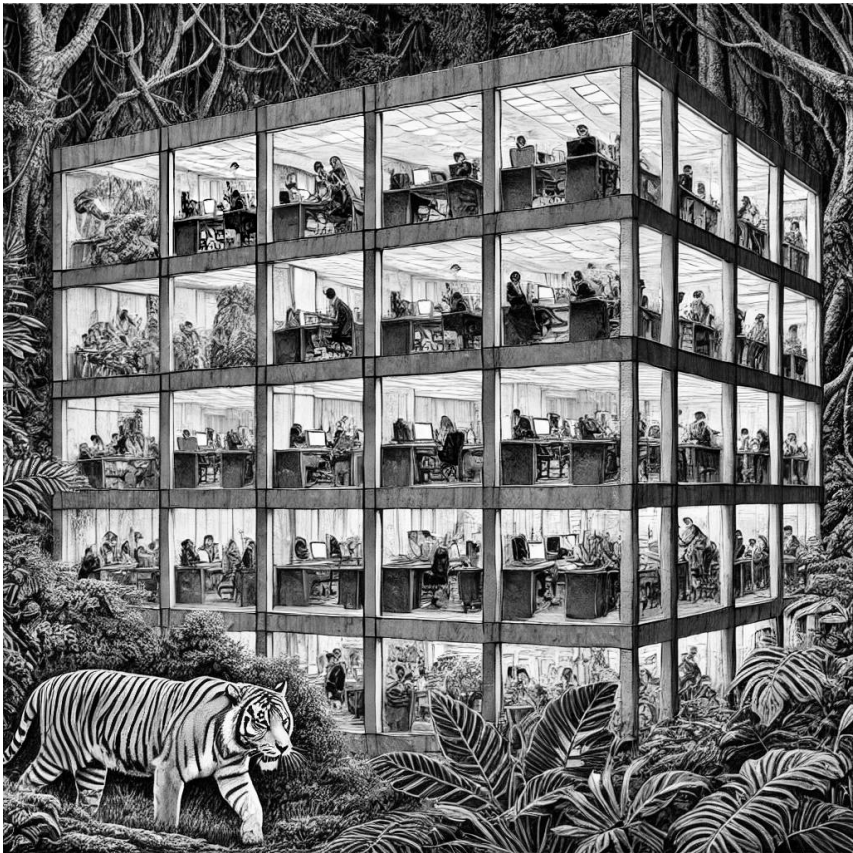
Power is vanity

We believe that we are more intelligent than animals because we have more power. Or do we?

We can defeat animals and kill them, but that power largely depends on the city. The city creates complex tools. Without the city, we are limited to the simplest wood and stone weapons. The city has most of the power.

In the next chapter (about the prophecies of Daniel) we will see that cities evolve like living things. Cities act for *their* interests, *against our interests*. Cities breed humans. Cities trap humans. Cities kill humans.

By creating cities we not only defeated animals, we defeated ourselves.



Ecclesiastes was right again. Our mighty works are vanity.

Claim 3: Everything runs in cycles: nothing is new

Ecclesiastes says there is nothing new under the sun. Let's test that claim.

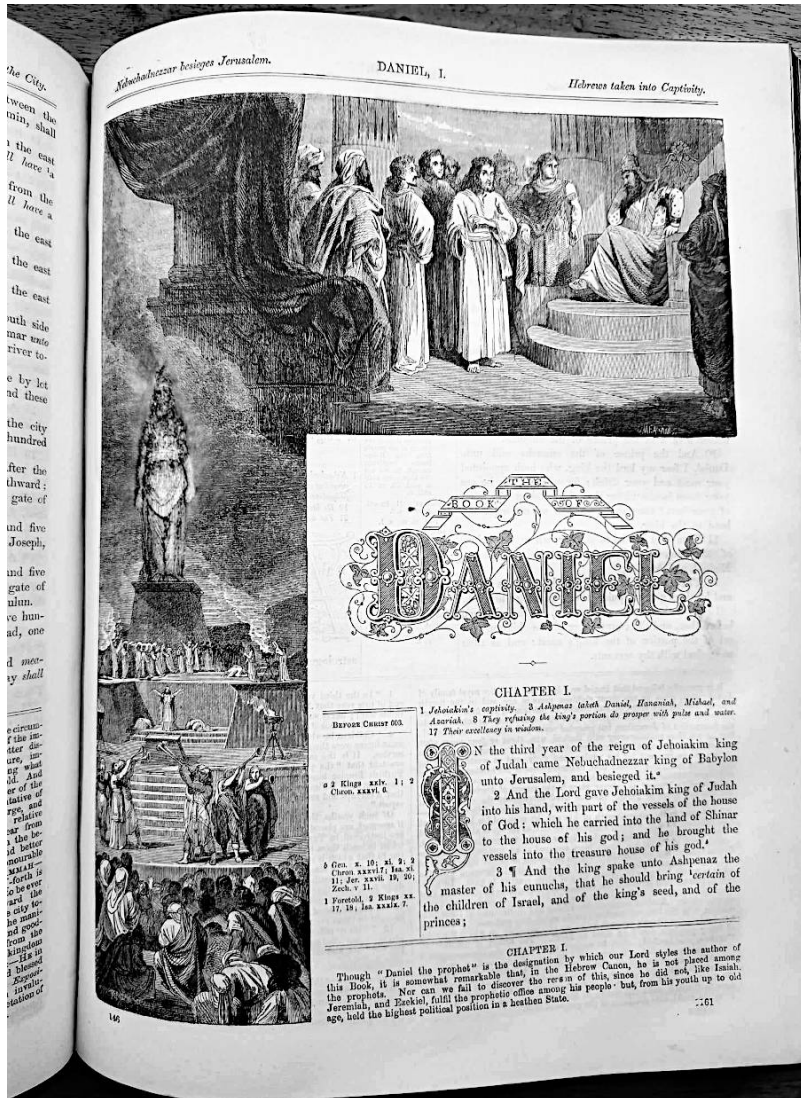
Are computers new? Given that ten thousand years of progress has made things worse, a modern computer is functionally the same as a new axe blade: it is a tool that sometimes helps us, and sometimes kills us. At best it is neutral. It is just another tool in a long line of tools.

Is artificial intelligence new? It has the same limitation as any intelligent thing: the faster it learns, the less time it has to test its theories in the real world. So artificial intelligence will always make mistakes, sometimes very bad ones. So it is just another animal, like us.



This does not mean that artificial intelligence is safe. Some animals can kill us. And this animal has evolved to be better adapted to cities. So this animal will gradually replace humans in cities. But will cities always exist?

The name “Daniel” means “Dan-el” or “judge-god”. The early chapters are about Daniel judging the gods of Babylon. He confronts each god and proves to the king that the god is merely a statue.



Daniel 1: Daniel in Babylonian records

The Babylonians called Daniel Belteshazzar, meaning “Beltiya protect the king”.⁵⁴⁸ Beltiya was “our lady”, meaning the queen of heaven, Inanna (Eve in Genesis). So the name Beltiya-šar-usur (Belteshazzar) means the same as Inanna-šar-usur. In the time of Daniel, the name Beltiya was being replaced by Inanna when scribes copied the texts. So this means we have an early version of the name.⁵⁴⁹ So Daniel appears no later than the start of the Babylonian conquest, just as the Bible says he does. This is long before the kings of Jerusalem banned any reference to the goddess.

We have Babylonian records of a man called Innin-šar-usur (i.e. Beltiya-šar-usur) in the period from Nebuchadnezzar to Nabonidus, the time covered by Daniel. The details match dates and places, and possibly a connection with his friend Shadrach.⁵⁵⁰ He uses the Sumerian name for the queen of heaven, Innin (Inanna), which suggests that he was connected to the priests: one of the wise men.

We also have a record of the name Ea-Dayyan, “God-judge”, equivalent to Daniel (God-judge).⁵⁵¹ Daniel (Ea-Dayyan) was how his friends knew him, and Belteshazzar was a new title.

The worship of Inanna (Eve) suggests that Daniel disliked cities, and also had a deep understanding of history. This explains both the early parts of the book of Daniel (where Daniel opposes the kingdoms of this world) and the later parts (dated prophecies). It also explains why Nebuchadnezzar chose him: a wise king can always use an expert on the deep patterns of history.

548 Belteshazzar is Beltiya-šar-usur, literally “Beltiya - king - protect” See “*Finding Belteshazzar; the Daniel of the Bible*” by Rochelle A. Houser (2019). Most scholars disagree and interpret Belteshazzar as Balāt-šu-ušur, “*protect his life*” (life [Balat] - his [su] - protect [ušur]). Because this is a better fit for the “shazzar” sound. However, even today people pronounce words differently in different cities and at different times, so we cannot be dogmatic about how every city pronounced every syllable in every century long ago. More importantly, in Daniel 4:8, Nebuchadnezzar (or possibly Nabonidus) says “He is called Belteshazzar, [after] the name of my god”. So the name Belteshazzar must include a god’s name. So it must be Beltiya-šar-usur, with the god Beltiya, not Balāt-šu-ušur.

549 Before Babylon defeated Assyria, the queen of heaven was known as both Beltiya and Ishtar. Before Nebuchadnezzar (II) the name Ishtar is generally used. After the fall of Jerusalem, “Ishtar of Uruk” is most common, because Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt her temple at Uruk. Her temple was called e-Anna, meaning the temple of Inanna, because the old Sumerian name (Inanna) was still used by temple priests. See section 3.2, page 128

550 See “*Finding Belteshazzar; the Daniel of the Bible*” by Shelley Helzerman Houser

551 See “*Finding Daniel: Ea-Dayyan and the Daniel of the Bible*” by Houser

Daniel 2: statues and city-based kingdoms

Daniel 1 introduced Daniel, and showed his dislike of city life: he preferred simple, plain food to rich city food, and this made him healthier. This is a theme of the whole Bible: cities are bad, nature is good.

Daniel 2 then shows how King Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon, worries about the future. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream about his kingdom Babylon. He saw it as a gigantic statue. The dream shows that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom will fall, and so will the kingdoms that come after it.

There are the details: Babylon became the most powerful city in the world in 626 BC. King Nebuchadnezzar ruled from 604 BC. But the Persians were growing in strength. They would conquer Babylon in 539 BC. Babylon would have less than ninety years at the top. Next, Persia would rule for a while, then it too would be conquered.

The exact names of the empires do not matter. The general principle is that city-based kingdoms are unstable and never last for long, compared with the multi-thousand-year cultures of our ancestors. The final state of city kingdoms is to be like “feet of clay”, weak, and divided into many toes.

Eventually nature will take over again. A stone “cut without hands” will roll down from the mountains and cause the divided kingdoms to fall over. Just like the Hurrians destroyed Akkad or the Sea Peoples destroyed the Bronze Age kingdoms, or the Goths destroyed Rome.

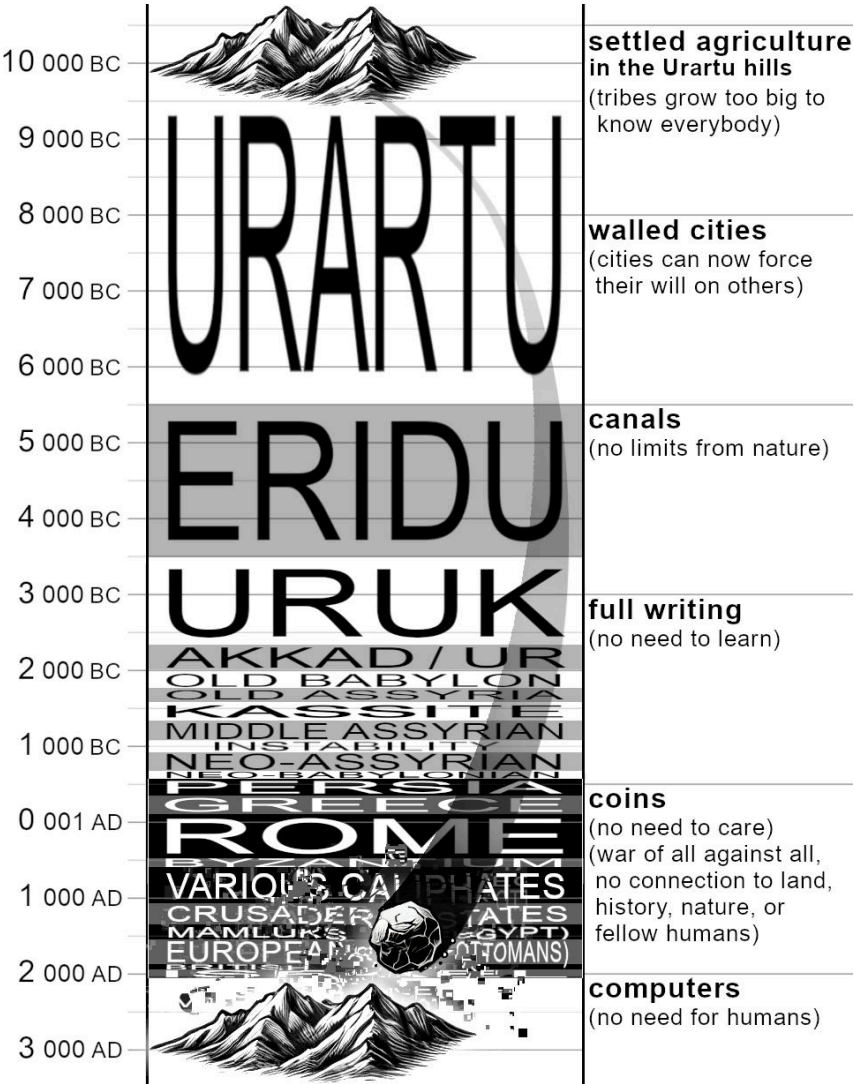
“Cut without hands” reminds us of the tenth commandment, forbidding temples made of cut stone. The mountain base reminds us of Kur, land of the ancestors. Our nomadic ancestors will eventually return when cities fail.



Millerite image from 1843

How inventions make cities less and less stable

Here is a timeline of major kingdoms since the invention of settled agriculture. Agriculture caused more fights over land, plus new inventions. Inventions caused more and more instability. If inventions ever make life impossible (e.g. if robots replace humans) our only choice will be to return to nature, to once again worship at shrines “cut without hands”.



Daniel 3: the “fiery furnace”

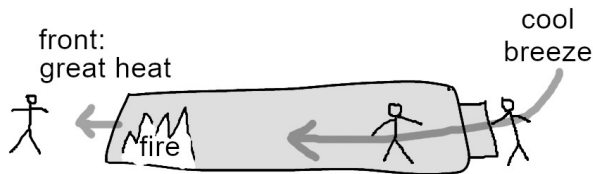
In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar realised that city-based kingdoms will always fail. Daniel 3 shows why: it is because cities divide people. Cities create kings and servants, and rival factions competing for status.

In Daniel 3, Babylon was divided into pro-Daniel and anti-Daniel factions. The anti-Daniel faction arranged for a loyalty test: a test that they knew Daniel’s faction would fail.

Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language ... you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”⁵⁵²

So Daniel’s friends were thrown into the furnace. Yet they survived. Another man (Daniel?) was seen inside the furnace, helping them. Nebuchadnezzar realised that Daniel was smarter than his enemies.

It is easy to see what happened. The furnace had to be specially made, and made quickly, to accommodate many people, in case thousands of people refused the loyalty test. Existing bread ovens or brick kilns were far too small. Who would build the giant furnace? The local officials, *people such as Daniel*. The special furnace needed more than one exit, in case of continuous use. The text says that the furnace was built near a great plain. So there would be a steady breeze. Daniel merely had to design it so that the wind entered through the back. So the back was cooler, and the heat blew out of the front.



Daniel’s friends covered themselves with “*robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes,*” so they could quickly walk through the hot part without harm. But the servants standing at the front, with exposed skin, died from serious burns. Daniel could then enter from the back and help his friends. People at the front could see the four men through the fire. The men were not harmed, because Daniel was smart. Daniel was a clever follower of the gods: a “son of a god”. Daniel proved that loyalty works. But a city that turns people against each other? That city will eventually fall.

⁵⁵² Daniel 3:4-6

Daniel 4: all nations are doomed

Daniel 4 is more about Nebuchadnezzar realising that city life is doomed. Historically, the king in question was Nabonidus, who reigned from 556 BC (Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC), but they came to the same conclusion, so the story is easier to remember with just one name.

Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon and the last native ruler of Mesopotamia. He realised that Persia could not be stopped, and the whole city-based culture was a dead end. He had some kind of mental breakdown (the story of going mad and eating grass like an animal).



Image: Nebuchadnezzar by William Blake, out of copyright

When he recovered, he saw that the only hope for Babylon was to return to the ancient way of the nomads. They must follow the moon god Yah (Sin) again, and relocate to Yah's heartland of Tayma in Arabia.

He was unable to persuade anyone else. So the rest of Babylon carried on its path to destruction.



Daniel 5: Babylon and Persia

When Nabonidus moved to Tayma, he left his son Belshazzar in charge of Babylon. Belshazzar lacked his father's insight. He thought Babylon could last forever. He did not see that Persia could not be stopped. And he did not see that even Persia would only last a few generations, because the rise of money meant that cities were less stable than ever. (More about money later!) The kings could not see it, as they loved money. But the common people could see the problem.

In 539 BC, Belshazzar was in the middle of a feast when someone wrote graffiti on the wall: "*numbered, weighed, divided.*" That is, an unknown graffiti artist used the new language of money to suggest that Babylon was doomed. Babylon would be weighed like money and found not to be valuable enough.

The danger must have been very close for anyone to have the courage to scrawl such words on the wall, and not worry about the king's ability to punish him. (This is the origin of the phrase "the writing on the wall".) Persia was about to attack, and Belshazzar did not take the threat seriously. The next day, Persia attacked and Babylon was defeated.



Image: Rembrandt, public domain

Daniel 7: the rise of the robots

Daniel 6 is about a new Persian king, Darius. He learned what Nebuchadnezzar learned: that tribal people like Daniel survive, because they are not afraid to die. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions, but an “angel”, literally meaning “a messenger”, helped him. Some lowly messenger defied the king to help Daniel, even though there was a high chance he would be killed as punishment.

Having shown why the tribal way is better, Daniel 7 moves to the topic of cities. Cities are beasts with iron teeth.⁵⁵³ The Bible does not use the word “robot”, because “robot” is a modern word. But calling a city “a great beast with iron teeth” means the same thing: a city is a kind of robot.

7 And after this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

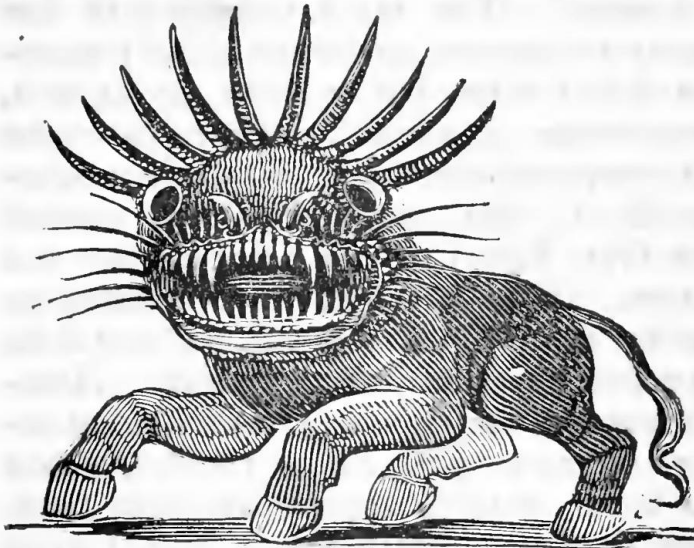


Image: from “Illustrations of Prophecy” by David Campbell (1840), PD

⁵⁵³ Not just in Daniel and Revelation. See Psalm 74:13-14 (a city state is described as a sea monster), Isaiah 27:1 (Leviathan), Jeremiah 12:9 (birds), Jeremiah 50:17 (sheep and lions), Ezekiel 17 (eagles), Ezekiel 29:3 (dragon or crocodile), Ezekiel 32 (lion and sea monster), Hosea 13:7-8 (lion, leopard and bear), etc.

Cities are alive

In the first chapters, Daniel is concerned with statues as symbols of the city or nation. Because Daniel follows the first of Moses's Ten Commandments: we should not have pesels. Pesels are images of worship that do not represent ancestors.

Cities are also pesels. We bow down to them: we obey their laws. But they are not the laws of ancestors, They are not laws that have been tested for millennia. They are relatively untested laws that always fail in the end.

Daniel describes cities (and their attached empires) as great beasts with iron teeth that crush the world. An Analysis of a typical city shows that Daniel is right. Cities are alive. For example, here is a simplified diagram of a typical city. It shows the typical flows of energy and goods. Most of us have lived in cities at some time, so we understand that this is highly simplified. So imagine a diagram with ten times the complexity, as a start.

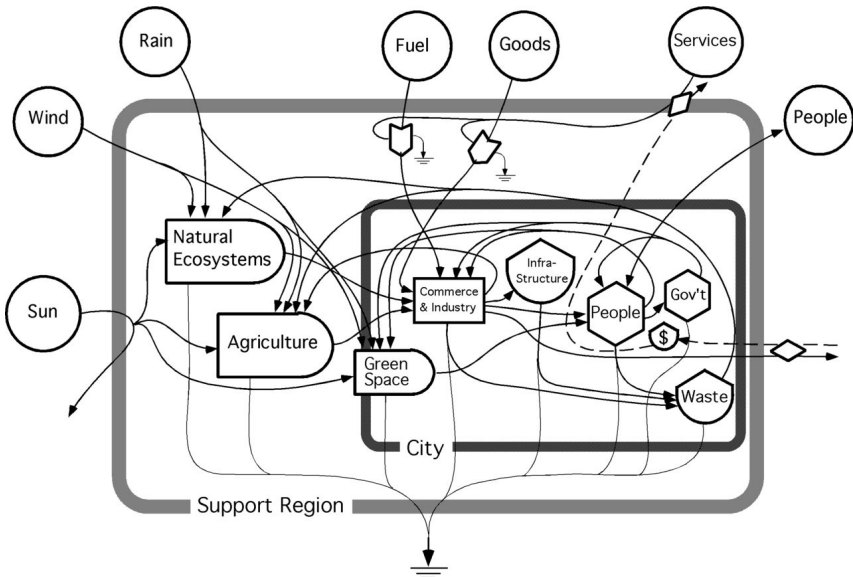


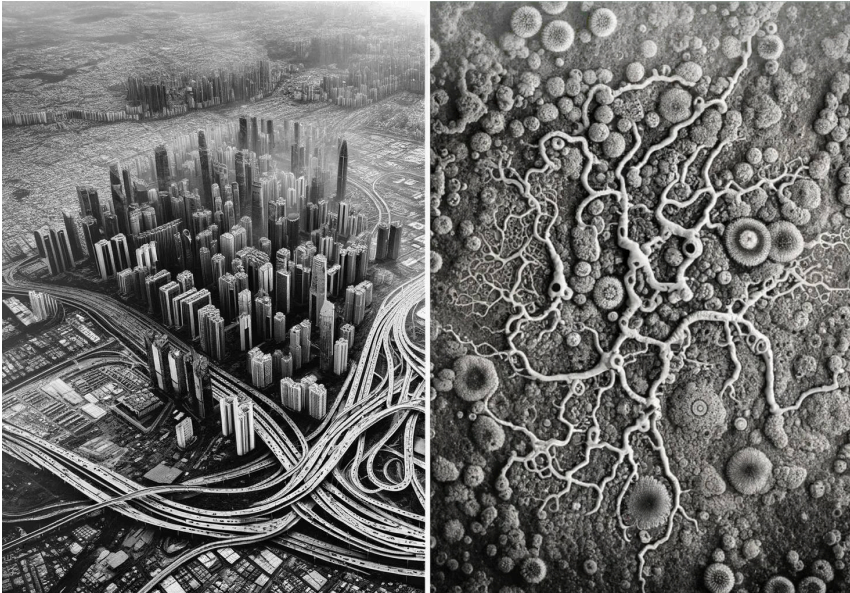
Image: Mtbrown8, CC-BY-SA-3.0

Now compare this with the workings of a typical human cell. The next page has a public domain cell diagram by “Mxschons”. The diagram is too detailed to show every process, but you can see the similarity with a city: the cell has different parts performing different roles, with complex flows of energy and resources, control systems, and so on.

Cities grow, evolve, react, etc.

We can watch cities grow and interact over many generations. We can see them be born, grow up, have children (suburbs or colonies) and sometimes die.

Cities look and act like gigantic bacteria. We may not notice the similarity on a human scale, but stand back and watch a city over decades and centuries. The city grows and spreads. It competes with other cities for natural resources. Cities colonise any region that has those resources.



Find a time-lapse video of a city or empire over many centuries. Then find a time-lapse video of bacteria as it grows and spreads. They look the same.

No definition of life is perfect,⁵⁵⁴ but cities fulfil every common checklist: they regulate their internal and external environment to maintain their systems, they respond to stimuli (fighting off threats or moving toward resources), they have their equivalent of DNA for growth and repair, (cultural records and laws), they use oxygen and produce waste, they communicate, they evolve, and so on.

⁵⁵⁴ Because everything is alive, and admitting it makes us horrible people because we abuse nature. See the companion book on Atlantis for chapters on consciousness.

A city has a hidden brain

A city (or state or corporation) relies on a neural network. That is, it has its own hidden brain. This is how it works:

A simple neural network

input layer hidden layer output layer

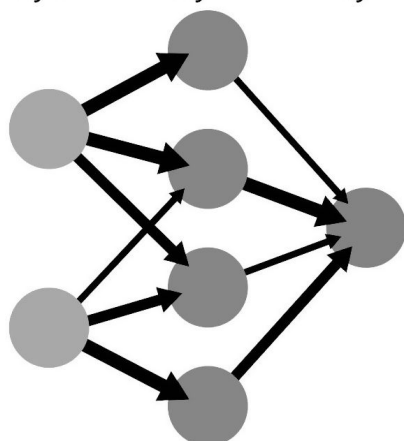


Image: public domain, via Wikimedia

A neural network is any system of inputs and outputs, with a hidden layer of decision-making.

In a human brain, the input is your eyes and ears. The output is your decisions. The hidden layer is billions of neurons.

In artificial intelligence (AI), the input is the keyboard or microphone. The output is the AI's decisions. The hidden layer is billions (or trillions) of connections.

In a city or an empire, the input is the commands of the king. The output is whatever the king wants to happen. The hidden layer is all the thousands or millions of people in the city, each making their own decisions.

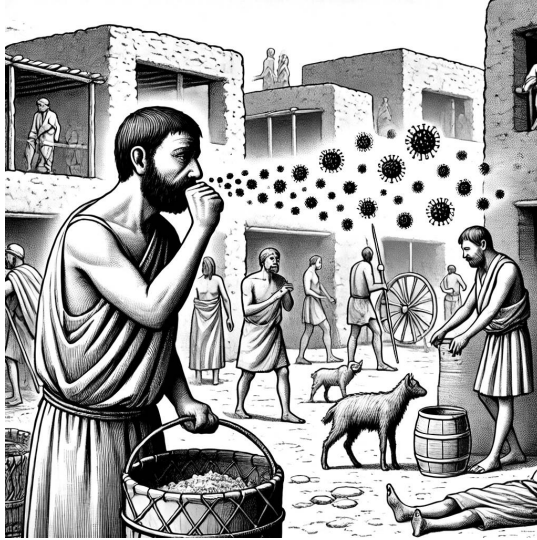
The decision layer is hidden because of its complexity. It is far too complicated to follow.⁵⁵⁵ All we can do is change inputs, watch the outputs, and guess what happens in between.

For example, a king learns that if passes laws and has an army then the people do work. Whenever he watches the people they say and do the right things. So he thinks that everything runs smoothly. But he does not know what the people really think and what they might be doing behind his back.

⁵⁵⁵ For example, the human brain has billions of neurons with trillions of connections, each firing maybe forty times per second (the “gamma wave”), and constantly re-wiring themselves! To see exactly how a decision is made, like “get out of bed”, you would need to freeze the state of the brain, and somehow trace every one of those trillions of signals. That would either be physically impossible, or it would take years. So to get anything done, you must give up any attempt to directly control the hidden layer.

Cities make unexpected choices

Humans think that they control cities. But they make a lot of choices that we don't want. For example, when we first built cities we gathered a lot of people and animals in the same place. This caused a lot more disease. No human wanted that. Perhaps no human expected it. But the city produced that result anyway.



Or what about famine? Cities let us plant more food. But they also increase birthrates. And when a famine happens, you can't move your city to a better place. So cities cause more famine, not less.⁵⁵⁶ The city did that against our wishes.

Or what about war? Walls around cities made us feel safe. So we felt less likely to die in a war. But walls also make kings feel safer. Before cities, when people were more equal, every war meant the king had a fifty-fifty chance of dying. But now the king of the strongest city will probably survive each war. That encourages him to have more wars, not less.

Cities give us a lot of things we do not ask for or expect. So cities act like neural networks. We do not understand how the network works. We cannot always predict its actions. Sometimes we train a city to help us, and it kills us instead.

⁵⁵⁶ "Hunter-gatherers have less famine than agriculturalists" ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3917328/

Is it possible to control cities?

If we routinely get the results that we want from cities, then we think we control them. But then something happens and we realise that we are not in control. We were just part of a system that works until it doesn't.

For example, Julius Caesar thought that he was in control of ancient Rome. He told his servants to do things, and they always obeyed. But he did not know that they secretly hated him. Then one day they killed him. Caesar could not believe this would happen!



Does that mean the rebels were in control of the city? No, because the city then gathered forces to kill the rebels.

Why did the rebels kill Caesar? Because he wanted too much power for himself. He did not put the city first, so he had to die.

Why did the city kill the rebels? Because they were causing chaos. The city liked order.

Who benefited each time? The city. So who was in control? The city. Who lived the longest? The city. Who did everybody serve? The city.

Who is really in control?

We humans try to believe that we control cities (and corporations). But think about your typical day. Most of us work for some company: a part of the city or empire. In the morning we enter the mouth of the company. We spend eight hours of each day obeying its commands or servicing its brain. Then at home we recover, eat and sleep, to prepare for the next day.

So who is in control?



Maybe you enjoy working for a company. Many people do. But that does not change the fact that the company (or the city or the nation) makes the choices. The company likes it if you are happy. It means you will not rebel. You will keep on obeying forever, or until it no longer needs you.

Cities sometimes kill us

Cities always kill the people at the bottom of the social scale, through unsafe work or unaffordable healthcare.

Sometimes cities kill *everyone*. Noah's Flood was the city of Shuruppak killing all the local workers as a warning to others not to complain. Several nations have been accused of killing millions of people in famines, where they divert food to disobedient cities and give it to more obedient cities.⁵⁵⁷ A more common example is wars: more "advanced" cities use their technology to kill people or push them off the land. For example, Europeans argued that their cities and farms used the land more efficiently, therefore they could kill anyone who stood in their way.⁵⁵⁸

I live in the Scottish highlands. The hills are dotted with the ruins of abandoned cottages. These are the remains of the Highland Clearances, the time when poor people became less profitable than sheep, so they were driven off the land.

In short, if cities or states want your land, and you resist, they will drive you out or kill you. They will find some legal way to justify it. But that is how the system works.



Image: ruins from highland clearances. Sarah Egan via Wikimedia, CC-BY-SA-2.0

⁵⁵⁷ E.g. Winston Churchill and the Indian famine, Stalin and the Ukraine famine, the British and the Irish Potato Famine, etc.

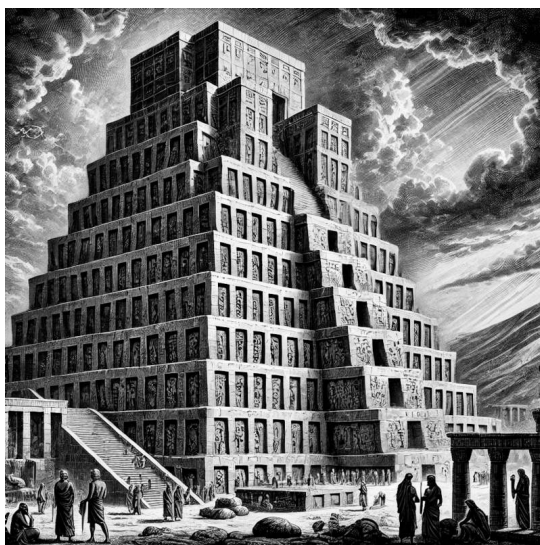
⁵⁵⁸ This was John Locke's justification in his *Second Treatise of Government* (1689)

The Bible is about robots (cities) versus humans

We are at the end of a 10,000-year war over land. Robots (cities) are gradually controlling all the resources, especially land. Humans must serve them or die. Humans are gradually being replaced. It began when border guards were replaced by walls. Today, most human roles are slowly being replaced by artificial intelligence.

The Bible is the history of this war against robots. The Bible starts with the robots inventing walls.⁵⁵⁹ It moves to robots inventing metalwork and cities.⁵⁶⁰ Then the invention of urban civilisation.⁵⁶¹ Then the invention of writing as we know it.⁵⁶² Then the military phalanx.⁵⁶³ Then ziggurat towers.⁵⁶⁴ Then legal codes to run the robot brain more efficiently.⁵⁶⁵ Then Iron Age battles over land (perhaps the majority of the Bible).⁵⁶⁶ Then coins to remove human relationships from the economy.⁵⁶⁷

Every major event in the Bible is driven by a new technology that makes robots (cities) more powerful. And every minor detail is a secondary effect of those changes.



⁵⁵⁹ “garden” of Eden: the word “garden” comes from the word for enclosure (hence “guard”). Likewise, “paradise” means “para-“ or enclosed. Genesis 2 dates this to the first land enclosure. This created the first landlords and the first farm workers.

⁵⁶⁰ Cain, in Genesis 4. Cain is “Quayin”, “metalworker”.

⁵⁶¹ 4000 BC, the start of the Uruk period, the first urban city (i.e. a central hub of elites surrounded by lower-class people living outside the walls.)

⁵⁶² The story of Enoch

⁵⁶³ See the discussion of the 120 year warning of the flood

⁵⁶⁴ The Tower of Babel

⁵⁶⁵ See the discussion of Jacob and the Hyksos conquest of Egypt.

⁵⁶⁶ All the prophets and histories around the rise of kings, then the Babylonian captivity.

⁵⁶⁷ See the discussion of “Cyrus and the robots”, below.

547 BC: when robots got their lifeblood



Image: Arya.Go, based on Winged genius relief, PD

Every 2500 years sees a world-changing invention that dominates the next 2500 years:

- agriculture (c.10,500 BC),
- walls (c.8000 BC),
- canals (c.5500 BC),
- writing (c.3000 BC),
- coins (c.500 BC),
- and now computers (c.2000 AD).

The last 2500 years were dominated by coins, popularised by Cyrus the Great (559-529 BC).

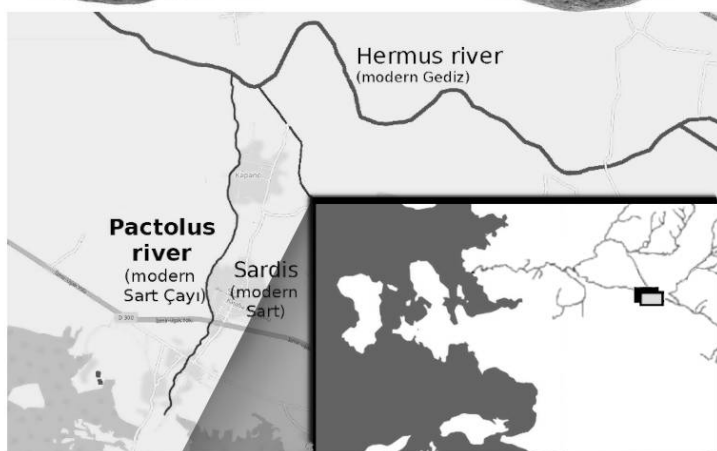
Coins caused the biggest change in cities (i.e. robots) for ten thousand years. Because coins removed the need for humans. Coins replace complex human relationships with one-dimensional tokens. Coins began the process of automated communication and automated decision-making. We no longer need to consider a person's reputation, family, needs or personality. We just add up numbers. Everything a person does can then be replaced. This creates a far more efficient global network, built on metal and silicon, not flesh. Modern electronic communication merely extends the logic of coins.

This all began in 547 BC.



Image: Martin Grandjean (airports are proxy for global communication) CCA-SA4.0

In 547 BC, Cyrus conquered Lydia, where King Croesus (the real King Midas) invented coins, using gold from the Pactolus river.



Coins created the world as we know it

Cyrus used Lydia's gold and coins to pay his armies. This was much quicker and more efficient than transporting gold bullion and then having the problem of how soldiers could exchange grains of gold for food in local markets. Coins made everything easy. After 522 BC (the reign of Darius The Great), Persia became the first empire to mint its own coins.

Coins changed the world, probably more than the invention of writing, and perhaps more than the invention of settled agriculture or land ownership. Coins enable the extinction of the human race. This is why:

Coins caused a number of revolutions in thought and action:

1. **Belief in the unconscious mind.**

Before coins, the rich were expected to help the poor, without putting a number on how much they helped. But after coins, the rich could say "*I have already paid you X, you get no more from me!*" This allowed bad people to become very rich, while good people often starved. This created a philosophical problem: how do we justify bad people growing rich. So we have to invent "*the soul*". Or in modern words, we invented "*the unconscious mind*" or "*individual genius*". We told ourselves that rich people are smarter, or more blessed by the gods in some hidden way. There is no scientific evidence for the unconscious mind (see "*The Mind is Flat*" by Nick Chater). And there is no evidence that rich people are better or smarter than poor people, other than rich people have more money. Anthropologists have shown how the arrival of coins into a society causes the belief in the soul.⁵⁶⁸

2. **Individualism:**

The invention of the soul, or the unconscious mind, leads to individualism: some people are better than others. Despite all the evidence that smart people often do terrible things, and that the best predictor of wealth is being born rich.

3. **Linear history:**

The idea of the soul leads to linear history. All evidence shows that linear history is nonsense: everything in nature runs in cycles, and history is no different. People die, empires fall, and everything starts again eventually. But the soul is not based on evidence: it is based on greed for money. It pretends that geniuses make the world better and better, even though they have made it worse for ten thousand years.

⁵⁶⁸ E.g. in Polynesia in the 1950s. "*If you look at the anthropological evidence you can see that the arrival of western economic models, in particular individual property, promotes the belief in the bounded individual self. [I.e. separate from other people] ... the arrival of the trade store introduces a new model of 'the person.'*" - Richard Seaford, on "*The Secret History of Western Philosophy*" podcast #4

4. **Modern science:**

Defying nature and belief in linear history leads to modern science. Modern science focuses on narrow fields (e.g. physics and chemistry) as if it can ignore the rest of the world (e.g. political science). That is, modern science is based on ignoring most of the evidence.

5. **Modern religion:**

Belief in individual genius leads to a belief in a supernatural anointed leader or “Christ” (anointed one), and individual rewards after death. This began with Zoroastrianism and then spread to Judaism and hence Christianity. But it all began with the invention of coins. (Before this, the Egyptian “weighing of the heart” led to either annihilation or “the field of reeds”. The field of reeds, the best outcome, was simply more slavery to Pharaoh, a continuation of the injustice of this life.)

6. **The Bible:**

Before 547 BC, religion involved visiting holy sites regularly, to renew human connections. But coins made it easy to have religion at a distance. E.g. Jews living in Babylon did not need to visit the temple in Jerusalem, they could show their loyalty by sending coins instead. But this meant they did not hear their stories at the temple. So they needed a written version of the stories. So they assembled all the more important stories into The Bible.⁵⁶⁹

7. **The modern world**

All human activity is now mediated by money (or under extreme pressure from money). Countless species are being driven to extinction by money. The way we think about the self, and justice, and the future, and logic, is transactional: based on money. This makes the impact of money greater than the impact of writing, and equalled only by the impact of settled farming.

⁵⁶⁹ The whole Bible was written as the Septuagint by 132 BC, so that is the latest date. The earliest date is probably the theory that Baruch compiled the Bible around 620 BC, for use in Babylon or Egypt. (See the footnotes to the book of Baruch.) The spread of the diaspora due to coinage made copies of the Bible the most important part of the religion, the only way to learn the stories. Some argue for a late date (closer to 132 BC) because our earliest copies of Jewish texts (from Elephantine in the 300s BC) do not mention Moses. They also ask for help from Jerusalem for building their local temple. Deuteronomy forbids any temple outside Jerusalem, so did they even know of Deuteronomy? But that assumes that all Jews would care about all the Bible and obey it all. History shows the opposite. Elites only use the parts of the Bible that suit them at any particular time. E.g. Samuel says that all of Israel rejected God by having kings. If they can reject God they can easily ignore a verse or two.

547 BC puts Daniel at the heart of prophecy

We can now see why Daniel is at the heart of all prophecy. Anyone who follows long-term history can see that history runs in roughly 12,000-year Yuga cycles. Each Yuga cycle is subdivided into roughly 2,500-year cycles. Each cycle is driven by a world-changing invention. We will discuss these cycles in the chapters on Revelation and in the book on Atlantis.



In our 12,000-year cycle, the invention of coins is a very big deal. This invention drives the final 2,500 years of history in this cycle. At the end of this cycle, global civilisation collapses and we start again.

The previous 2,500-year cycle was triggered by the invention of syllabic writing. That allowed cities to explode in size and power all around the world. Each 2,500-year cycle has its own 500-year cycles, again driven by major inventions. The last such cycle (beginning c.1000 BC) was the growth of the Iron Age. Iron makes everything bigger, faster, and therefore more chaotic. The next big invention (coinage) was due to have an even bigger impact than iron.

The best-informed wise men and kings would know about these cycles. So they expected a change bigger than iron around the 500s BC. So it is no accident that both King Nebuchadnezzar and King Nabonidus saw that the age of stability was over. And it's also no accident that Daniel, the wisest of their advisers, made predictions based on these cycles. The rest of the Book of Daniel is about these predictions.

Daniel 9: cleansing the temple (a dated prophecy)

(Daniel 8 will be discussed in the chapter on Revelation 11)

Daniel 9:24-27 says:

*“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place. Know and understand this: **From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’** It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ **In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.**”*

Daniel introduces this as an extension to Jeremiah’s “seventy year” prophecy.⁵⁷⁰ Jeremiah had given seventy years for Babylon to be destroyed. Daniel feels that it will take seventy *times seven* before "everlasting righteousness" comes in. A “seven” in the prophecy refers to seven years, the normal cycle of sabbath years. So $70 \times 7 = 490$.

There is nothing supernatural about this prophecy

When Daniel wrote, Persia had already agreed to fund the rebuilding of the temple. Daniel was very close to the Persian king. So he knew that they would soon approve the rebuilding of the city. Daniel did not know when the command would go forth, but he knew it would happen.

Daniel knew that the temple originally stood for about 420 years (completed 1005 BC, destroyed 586 BC), and he knew that Jewish history always ran in cycles of about 500 years (i.e. about 10 jubilees):

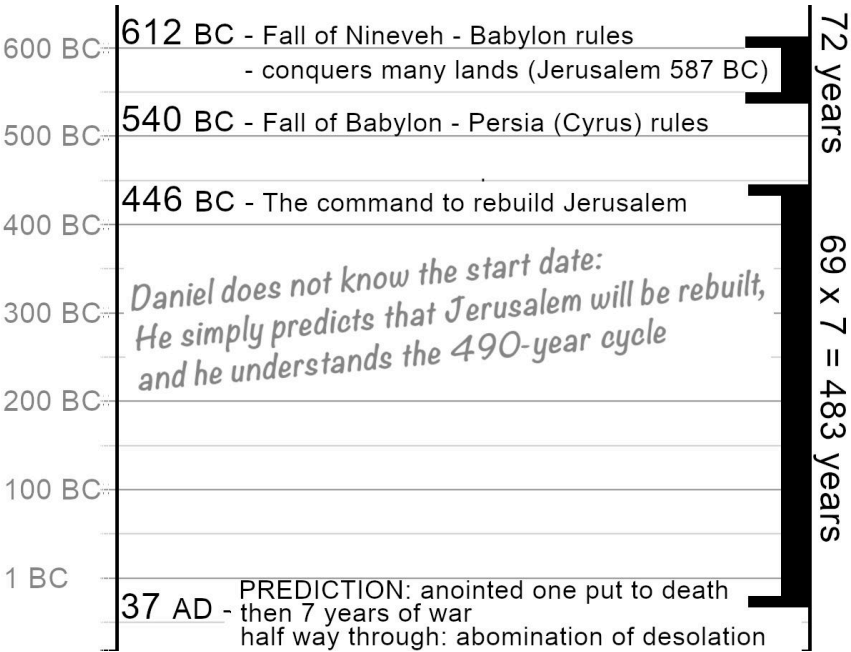
Adam (c. 4000 BC)
to Jared (c. 3500 BC)
to Enoch (c. 3000 BC)
to the Flood (c. 2300 BC)
to Abraham (c. 1900 BC)
to Moses (c. 1500 BC)
to the temple (c. 1000 BC)
to the return to Babylon (c. 500 BC).

⁵⁷⁰ Daniel 7:2, referring to Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10

So it was safe to predict that it would be 500 years before the earliest likely end-times date. And he was right. The events happened nearly as predicted.

Daniel also knew that future generations would be inspired by prophecy. So when the next 500-year cycle came around, people would look for the signs to be fulfilled and would do their best to fulfil them. And that is exactly what happened. So there is nothing supernatural about this prophecy.

The start date



“The word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem” is sometimes assumed to mean the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC,⁵⁷¹ but that decree was to rebuild the temple, not the city itself. All the references are clear about that.⁵⁷² Daniel’s decree concerns the city, not the temple. He refers to “streets and a trench” or some translations say, “streets and a wall”, because every ancient city was surrounded by a defensive wall or moat.

The book of Nehemiah records how the city is rebuilt. Nehemiah was

⁵⁷¹ or possibly 538 BC
⁵⁷² 2 Chronicles 36:22–23, Ezra 1:1–4, 6:1–12

cupbearer to Artaxerxes, who replaced his brother Darius as king of the Medes and Persians, in 465 BC, the year of Daniel's vision. The book of Nehemiah begins with Nehemiah's sadness because, although the temple is rebuilt, the city is still in ruins:

*"The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire. When I heard these things, I sat down and wept."*⁵⁷³

Artaxerxes saw Nehemiah's sadness:

*"In the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, so the king asked me, 'Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.' I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, 'May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?' The king said to me, 'What is it you want?'"*⁵⁷⁴

Artaxerxes then gave Nehemiah various letters: these were "the word" that gave Nehemiah the authority to rebuild the city walls and gates. The "twentieth year of Artaxerxes" implies 446 BC.⁵⁷⁵

The end date

Daniel said that from the word to rebuild the city there would be sixty-nine sevens (483 years) until the messiah came. And then:

*"After the sixty-two sevens, [which come after the initial seven: so 7 + 62 sevens] the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."*⁵⁷⁶

69 sevens is 483. 446 BC + 483 years takes us to 37 AD.⁵⁷⁷ Jerusalem by then would be fully rebuilt, ready for the anointed one ("messiah").

⁵⁷³ Nehemiah 1:3-4

⁵⁷⁴ Nehemiah 2:1-4

⁵⁷⁵ 465 BC + 19 years. The 1st year starts on the 1st day: so "In 1st year" means "add 0 years", "In 2nd year" means "add 1 year", etc.

⁵⁷⁶ Daniel 9:26-27 (NIV)

⁵⁷⁷ For convenience we will assume there was a year zero. In reality, 1 BC jumps forward to 1 AD, so calculated 37 AD becomes calendar year 38. Greater precision is impossible due to debates over months: coronation and year start dates may be different, nations use different calendars, etc

Rationally, Daniel would expect some pushback from whatever Gentiles controlled the city. So the anointed one *"will be put to death."* Rationally, Daniel would also expect the Jews to keep fighting. So Daniel predicted that in the final seven (i.e., 37 AD - 44 AD) Jerusalem would be destroyed. Rationally, Daniel would expect the enemy to defile the temple as a show of strength. So he said that in the middle of that seven (40 AD), an evil ruler would end temple sacrifice and instead erect *"an abomination that causes desolation"* until a decreed end. **Everything about this prediction was rational and not supernatural.**

The prediction was rational, but did it come true?

As the centuries passed, Judea finally gained independence under the Maccabees. But then Rome conquered the entire region and appointed Herod the Great as ruler. To appease the people, Herod enlarged the temple to a magnificent size, more than doubling its previous area. Then in 37 AD, Herod's son Herod Antipas killed the popular prophet John the Baptist. Soon after, Herod was defeated in battle. One of John's supporters, Jesus of Nazareth, no doubt remembered Daniel's prophecy of 37 AD and decided that the time had come to restore the kingdom of Judea.

In 40 AD, the mad emperor Caligula wanted to erect an abomination in the temple. This is just as Daniel expected. But Daniel could not possibly predict the next part: Caligula gave the job to a man who kept delaying and never carried out the order. Caligula ordered Petronius, governor of Syria, to erect the statue. But Petronius knew this would lead to war. So he kept finding excuses to delay the act. Then, in January 41 AD, Caligula was killed. So the abomination was never erected, the war did not happen, and Jesus did not free Jerusalem as planned.

Jesus's followers could not accept that the prophecy failed. Then in 70 AD, the Romans destroyed the temple, and in 136 AD they expelled the Jews. This was such a catastrophe that Jesus's followers reinterpreted the old prophecies to fit the destruction by the Romans. And the rest is history. But none of that changes the fact that Daniel predicted a messiah to arise in 37 AD, and that happened.

For the precise date of Jesus's ministry, and more about the timeline and prophecies, see the chapters about Jesus.

Daniel 10: Daniel's mystery warrior

In Daniel 10, Daniel was still thinking about what would happen to the Israelites. He could not get any answers. After three weeks, Daniel was visited by a man who told him about a coming “great war.”⁵⁷⁸ The man began by apologising for making Daniel wait for three weeks. He said that for three weeks king Cyrus was resisting his plans.⁵⁷⁹ This suggests that the man had enormous influence over the most powerful king in the world. Who could this man be? He then told Daniel (a senior advisor from a conquered nation) of a plan to fight against Cyrus, and that the recently defeated Greeks will then rebel.⁵⁸⁰ What man had that kind of influence over Cyrus and might also organise a rebellion of multiple nations?

Daniel's friends ran away when they saw the man, and Daniel fainted.⁵⁸¹ Why? Daniel had no response from the king for three weeks, and now this incredibly dangerous man spoke of rebellion. Daniel would expect the worst: Perhaps Israelites were now official enemies, perhaps they had all been killed. But the man reassured Daniel that he was still highly regarded in the royal court. Again, who was this man?

Many readers think the man was a god, seen only in a dream, because Daniel describes *“his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.”* But that does not make him a god. This is the same way that Homer described the mortal hero Achilles, when he was about to charge into battle in his shining bronze armour:

*“forth from the man made blaze a gleaming fire. ... even so from the head of Achilles went up the gleam toward heaven. ... There stood he and shouted, and from afar Pallas Athene uttered her voice; but amid the Trojans he roused confusion unspeakable. Clear as the trumpet's voice when it soundeth aloud beneath the press of murderous foemen that beleaguer a city, so clear was then the voice of the son of Aeacus.”*⁵⁸²



⁵⁷⁸ Daniel 10:1

⁵⁷⁹ Daniel 10:2,13-14

⁵⁸⁰ Daniel 10:20

⁵⁸¹ Daniel 10:7

⁵⁸² Iliad 18:203+

The mystery warrior revealed

Apart from Occam's razor (why add the supernatural?), there are three reasons for suspecting that Daniel's mystery warrior was a regular human.

1. Daniel spent a whole chapter on the shock of meeting him. Compare the previous chapter, where Gabriel appeared in a dream. Gabriel's entire introduction took just four verses (20-23). In the previous chapter, a similar dream took just five verses. But the man in chapter 10 required an entire chapter of 21 verses. There was something very special about this man. And yet...
2. ... he was not named! Supernatural beings do not need to keep their identity secret. If Daniel saw Gabriel or Michael or The Ancient of Days he would say so. But when real people are planning a war, they need secrecy.
3. History suggests somebody who fits the description.

Daniel says that the mystery man's body was gold-like⁵⁸³ and he wore "a belt of fine gold from Uphaz" Nobody is sure what "from Uphaz" means but it could mean from Ephesus.⁵⁸⁴ When Daniel wrote, the main source of fine gold was Ephesus, the main trading port for Lydia. Cyrus just conquered Lydia and was now using Croesus' Lydian gold. And not just his gold! Herodotus said that instead of killing or imprisoning Croesus, Cyrus kept him as an advisor. By all accounts, Croesus was a highly talented conqueror and a remarkable man. Herodotus mentioned him 184 times, about as often as Cyrus (187 times). Croesus, the model for Midas, was obsessed with gold, so wearing gold clothing was just like him. We don't know his secret plans (though we can guess),⁵⁸⁵ but 35 years later, Croesus' old lands rebelled against Persia, with the help of Greek soldiers.⁵⁸⁶

So the man described by Daniel, wearing gold, very dangerous, dazzling in every way, a senior advisor to Cyrus, secretly wanting to start a war with Cyrus, with the help of the Greeks? That sounds exactly like Croesus.

⁵⁸³ Daniel 10:6, "*his body was like tarshish*", sometimes translated "topaz" or "beryl" because nobody was sure what it meant. Strong's concordance says "*perhaps yellow jasper; or other gold-coloured stone*". So, gold-like.

⁵⁸⁴ A non-Greek speaker might assume that the "-os" ending was optional, meaning "male" or similar. In fact nobody is sure of its etymology, because Ephesus does not work as a Greek word, but a non-Greek speaker would not know that.

⁵⁸⁵ Herodotus says that Croesus persuaded Cyrus to attack the ancient land of Eden (the Massagetai, past the river Araxes), not far from Lydia. Eden was led by the Amazons, and they killed Cyrus. Croesus' words to Daniel may have been misdirection.

⁵⁸⁶ The Ionian Revolt, 499 - 493 BC. (Ionia was the region around Ephesus.)

Daniel 11: Greece and Rome

If Daniel 10 was a disguised version of Croesus, then the original version of Daniel 11 was probably Croesus' plans. That would be something about a war between Persia and Greece, with a promise of support to Judah if they supported Lydia. And that is roughly how Daniel 11 begins. But there is a problem: the revolt failed.

When a Bible plan fails, it is always reinterpreted. So in 167 BC, when the temple was defiled, an unknown writer remembered the prophecy in Daniel 9 about cleansing the temple. So they re-wrote Daniel 11 to describe how the temple was defiled, and tried to predict how it would be cleansed.

We know that Daniel 11 was originally different because Daniel 10 ends by saying the man will describe a war between Persia and Greece, but Daniel 11 quickly dispenses with Persia.

We know Daniel 11 was re-written in 167 because the text was very precise when describing events before that date, and then became approximate. The approximate part - the new prediction - was still accurate, although not details. This shows the power of prophecy: if we study the past we can make good guesses about the future.

From Daniel to 167 BC:

Verses 1-4 take us from Daniel's day (538 BC) to the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC). Alexander the Great's empire was split between his generals after a lot of fighting. The north (from Canaan's point of view: Syria and Asia) went to Seleucus. The south (Egypt) went to Ptolemy.

Verses 5-35 take us to 167 BC. Verses 5-6 describe the king of the South (the Ptolemies) opposing the king of the North (the Seleucids). In verses 7-9 they fight over Canaan, and the Seleucids keep the land. Verses 10-29 have various kings and battles, leading to the rise of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV. In verse 30, Antiochus, after a humiliating defeat, wants to lash out. He hears that the Jews are rebellious, so decides to punish them severely. So in verses 31-32 he defiles the Jewish temple in 167 BC. In verses 33-35 the Maccabees fight Antiochus.

Predictions for after 167 BC:

Verse 36 says *"He [Antiochus, the Seleucid king of the north] will be successful until the time of wrath is completed."* In other words, he will succeed until he does not. A safe prediction!

Verse 38 says *"he will honour a god of strength [mā'ôz]; a god unknown to his ancestors"*. In other words, some new strong power will appear, and the Seleucids will choose to follow them. This was a rational guess: the writer

correctly judged that the king of the south (Egypt) was in decline, so a new and unknown power would have to stop the Seleucids. He also implied that the Seleucids would not be defeated in a major battle, but would accept terms. And sure enough, the Seleucids became gradually weaker until Rome absorbed Syria (the Seleucid stronghold) in 64 BC.

Verse 39 says *"He [the king of the north, i.e. Syria] will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price."* In other words, after being absorbed by the new power, the new conquering power would have great success. Another reasonable guess that came true: Rome had great success.

Verse 43 says *"He [Syria and its new ruler] will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Cushites"*. In other words, if this new power can absorb Syria it can probably absorb other Mediterranean lands. Note that this does not mention Persia: the writer knows that would be more difficult. And the guess was right; Rome conquered the whole Mediterranean, but not Persia.

The last verses (44-45) say: *"reports from the east [i.e. Persia] and the north [of Syria] will alarm him [Syria and its new ruler], and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain [i.e. Jerusalem]. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him."* This is a very good long-term guess. For geographic reasons, Persia (later replaced by Parthia) and the lands far to the north of Syria (eastern Europe) would always be a problem to a Mediterranean empire. Sooner or later the new power (Rome) would fight them anyway (in a rage) and eventually even the new power would lose (because no power lasts for ever). For geographical reasons (the land joins Europe, Asia and Africa) and cultural reasons (it has a history of defiance), Jerusalem was likely to be a border in any major battle. That was always true. That is still true today - as I write (October 2024) America is fighting a proxy war with the Middle East using Jerusalem.

In summary, Daniel 11 is an example of studying the past (up to 167 BC) then making educated guesses about the future (after 167 BC). The guesses turned out to be pretty good.

Daniel chapters 8 and 12

Daniel chapters 8 and 12 will be discussed in the chapter on Revelation and Second Coming prophecies.

Jesus

Jesus was real. We know this because several Roman historians refer to him or his followers, and the earliest gospel (Mark) makes no unusual or supernatural claims (we will discuss this in detail in a few pages). So there is no reason to doubt what Mark says.

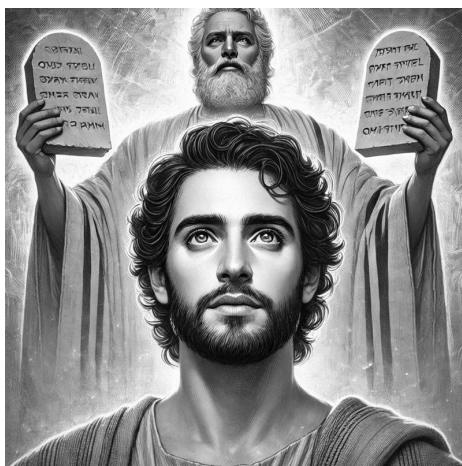
Jesus wanted to bring people back to the law of Moses:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.⁵⁸⁷

“Fulfil” is “plēroō”, meaning “to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally”⁵⁸⁸ - so it means Jesus wanted more of Moses: as much Moses as possible, Moses everywhere! Jesus continues:

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.⁵⁸⁹

So Every detail of Moses's law must stay until Moses is everywhere. Meaning, Jesus wanted the law of Leviticus. So he wanted everyone to own roughly equal land with no kings: he wanted decisions to be made by humble judges. Just as Moses taught.



⁵⁸⁷ Matthew 5:17

⁵⁸⁸ Strong's concordance

⁵⁸⁹ Matthew 5:18

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

The story of Jesus is in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. So let's start at Matthew chapter 1, the virgin birth.

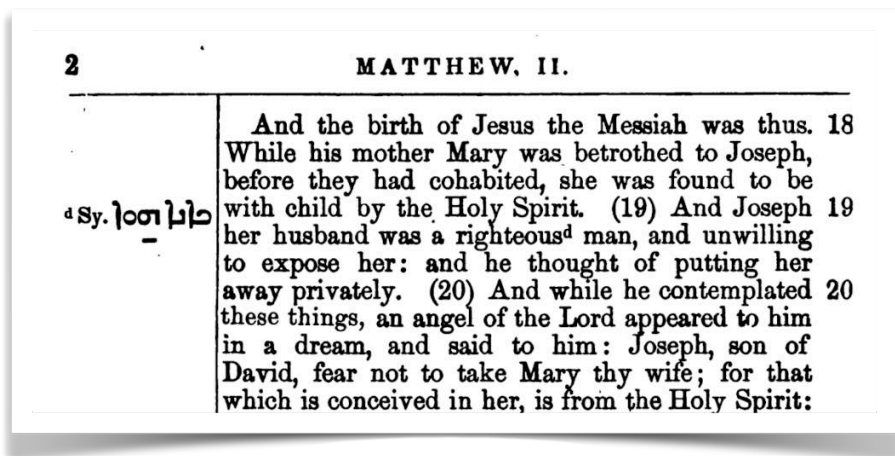


Image: Syriac Peshitta, Murdoch translation 1915, out of copyright

We immediately hit a problem: Virgin births are extremely unlikely, so this is probably not true. Or maybe it's a euphemism? Later evidence suggests that a Roman soldier called Panthera raped Mary. So when Matthew says "*she was found with child of the Holy Ghost*" that could be just a polite way of saying "*don't blame the girl or the baby, let's focus on how every birth is a miracle, and let's not discuss the details*".

Every part of Matthew, Luke, and John is like that. Those three gospels are full of miracles. We have to struggle to explain each miracle. But why should we explain them? The miracles are not presented as euphemisms, or clever conjuring tricks. They are presented as evidence that Jesus was God. But the claim is so extraordinary that it is much more likely that Matthew, Luke and John were talking nonsense. People who talk nonsense are very common. People who rise from the dead are not.

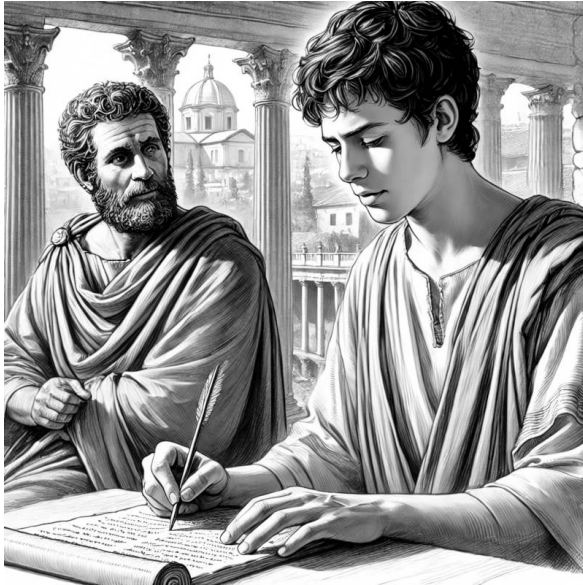
Mark is different. Mark has no virgin birth story. Mark has no resurrection. Mark has no walking on water: Mark has Jesus walking "by" the water, not walking "on" the water.⁵⁹⁰ Everything in Mark is like that. There is no reason to doubt Mark, and every reason to believe him.

⁵⁹⁰ We will examine the alleged miracles in Mark later.

Only Mark

Mark was the first gospel. We can prove this in many different ways,⁵⁹¹ but the simplest proof is this: the other gospels quote from Mark.⁵⁹² Mark never quotes from the other gospels.⁵⁹³

As we will see, the other gospels were written a hundred years after Mark. Mark's account was Peter's account of Jesus, written five years after the events, based on notes written at the time.



Mark writing his report, based on what Peter told him.

So if we want to know about Jesus, we have to read Mark and ignore the other gospels. Once we have a solid history from Mark, then we can use it to untangle the other gospels.

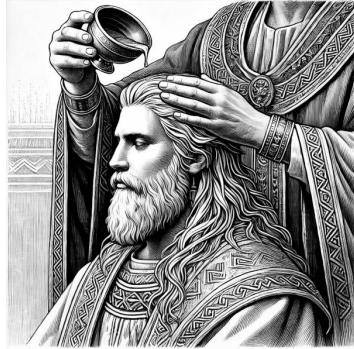
⁵⁹¹ E.g. Mark is the simplest, it is the least polished, it has the most eyewitness details, it has nothing supernatural, it has none of the later theology, etc., etc.

⁵⁹² John does not quote directly, but everything about the Book of John indicates that it is later than the others, and so relies on them. Early writers agree that John was late.

⁵⁹³ Matthew, Mark and Luke have many passages that are similar, but look closer. When all three gospels share the same stories, they generally follow the same order of events. But if an event is not in Mark, then Matthew and Luke do not agree with each other. It looks like Matthew and Luke do not know what happened, unless Mark is there to guide them. There are many other arguments like this. See Mark Goodacre's work for why Mark has to be first (and also why there is no need for "Q")

“Jesus Christ the son of God”: a supernatural claim?

“Christ” is the Greek word for the Hebrew word “messiah”, meaning “anointed one”. Every king and priest was anointed with oil, and anyone who felt chosen for a particular purpose also felt anointed. There is nothing supernatural about anointing.



The archetypal messiah was Judas the Maccabee (“the hammerer”). He was a common man who freed Judea from the Greeks after Antiochus defiled the temple in 167 BC. While Judas saw himself as inspired by God, he did not rely on supernatural miracles. He organised an army and won through military force. He then negotiated with the defeated Greeks.

The next most famous messiah was Cyrus the Great, king of Persia. Isaiah 45:1 names him as a messiah (God’s anointed). Why? Because Cyrus allowed the Jews to emigrate to Canaan and he paid to restore their temple. Again he did not rely on miracles. He relied on armies and political organisation.

Josephus mentions four other would-be messiahs from the first century: Athronges, Judas of Galilee, Theudas, and Simon of Perea. Only one of these accounts suggests a possible supernatural claim: Athronges said he would let his people cross the river Jordan just as Joshua did.⁵⁹⁴ But we saw that Joshua did not use supernatural means.

So a messiah, when Jesus lived, was not a supernatural being.

So if Mark originally said that Jesus was Christos (messiah) and not just Chrestos (servant), that is not a supernatural claim, nor does it imply hierarchical authority.

Are sons of God supernatural?

Jesus was a son of God. But Jesus said that God is everyone’s father.⁵⁹⁵ So “son of God” applies to everyone. We might take it as also meaning the son is like the father, but that could just mean in judgement and obedience. It is a compliment, not a supernatural claim.

⁵⁹⁴ Josephus, *“Antiquities of the Jews”*, 20:97-98

⁵⁹⁵ Mark 11:25-26 twice refers to God as “your father”.

“Faith” originally meant logical persuasion

Mark often refers to “faith” or “belief”, a translation of the Greek word “pisteuo” or “pistis”. “Pistis” means “I am persuaded” and is the passive form of “I persuade”. Persuasion implies evidence and logic. Later Christians said that pistis meant belief without evidence. But originally it meant to be persuaded by evidence or logic. Aristotle explained pistis:

The opening [of Aristotle's Rhetoric] defines rhetoric as the “counterpart of dialectic [argument of opposing opinions],” which seeks not to persuade but to find the appropriate means of persuasion in any given situation. These means are to be found in various kinds of proof or conviction (pistis). . . . Proofs are of two kinds:

- 1. inartificial (not involving rhetorical art--e.g., in forensic [judicial] rhetoric: laws, witnesses, contracts, torture, and oaths)*
- 2. artificial [artistic] (involving the art of rhetoric).⁵⁹⁶*

“You have to be persuaded to have pistis, and persuasion requires logos [logic].”⁵⁹⁷



Plato and Aristotle (centre) in “The School of Athens” by Raphael (out of copyright)

⁵⁹⁶ P. Rollinson, A Guide to Classical Rhetoric.

⁵⁹⁷ Anthony Preus, “Notes on Greek Philosophy from Thales to Aristotle” p. 157

Was Jesus a supernatural healer?

Jesus did many amazing things in Mark, but none of them needed supernatural power. For example, he healed a blind man in Mark 8. Modern faith healers do this kind of thing all the time. This relies on three facts:

1. Blindness is a spectrum. Most registered blind people can see something, but not much: this man could see “men as trees”.
2. The excitement of a revival meeting creates emotional pressure.
3. Politeness. If miraculous healing fails, a blind person may be too polite to say so. A blind person relies heavily on goodwill from strangers, and cannot afford to embarrass powerful people. It took Jesus two attempts. After the second attempt the blind man was not going to ask for a third failed try: he said what was expected of him.

What we see in Mark 8 is exactly what we see in countless faith healings: the first attempt does not work. On the second attempt, the blind man does not want to embarrass his host. The host presents this as a miracle but tells the blind man not to make a big deal out of it (because he knows that any improvement is psychological and temporary).

This is typical of all Jesus’s healings in Mark. A similar example is in Mark 1:30-31: Peter’s mother got off her sick bed to help out: that is what women had to do. And when there is an intense crush of people, many people with adrenaline feel better in the moment, but there is no long-term follow-up.



Image: Václav Mánes (1832), out of copyright

Psychological and ritual healing

Most of Jesus's healings are "*unclean spirits*", literally "*unclean breath*".⁵⁹⁸ The archetypal unclean spirit was when King Saul was angry or depressed: David played music to remove the bad spirit.⁵⁹⁹ Similarly, the Dead Sea Scrolls contained a jar with songs for cheering people up: for removing evil spirits.⁶⁰⁰ Zechariah called unwarranted pessimism as an evil spirit.⁶⁰¹ Jesus spent much of his time doing what David did: casting out these sad or angry emotional states.

In Mark, the first man with an unclean spirit asked "*What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?*" This was a reasonable question because Jesus was a messiah, a leader against the Romans. A generation earlier, a messianic revolt in 4 BC led to two thousand Jewish rebels being crucified.⁶⁰² So the heckler made a valid point: by acting like "*the Holy One of God*" Jesus put everybody in danger. So Jesus told everyone not to say he was the messiah, so the Romans would not kill them all.

The remaining "healings" were mostly ritual in nature: somebody needed a priest to declare them clean. Take for example the man with the withered hand "restored whole" in Mark 3. "Whole" was the Greek word "hugies" or "hygies", the root of our word "hygiene". Hygies was the goddess of being clean, not the goddess of healing. Jesus used his status to declare the hand to be ritually clean. The watching Jewish authorities understood: they did not doubt that Jesus could declare the man clean, so this was no miracle: the only question was whether he would do it on the Sabbath.



James Tissot, out of copyright

⁵⁹⁸ "Spirit" is the Greek "pneuma", air, as in "pneumatic tyres"

⁵⁹⁹ 1 Samuel 16:23

⁶⁰⁰ 11QApocryphal Psalms

⁶⁰¹ Zechariah 13:3-5

⁶⁰² Josephus, Antiquities, XVIII, chapter 10

Walking by the water

Another famous “miracle” is when Jesus walked “on” the water.⁶⁰³ The Greek word for “on” was “epi”, meaning “additional to”, and can be translated as “in”, “on”, “near”, etc. The story was about Jesus’s great love for his friends, following them around the lake all through the night instead of sleeping. In the context of the story, “epi” makes more sense as walking “near” the water, or perhaps “in” it, but not “on” it.



Another “miracle” is when Jesus appeared to calm the storm. This is easily explained by the fact that he liked to walk by the lake. He understood local storms. He knew that the weather would soon grow calm. The story was about his wisdom and confidence.

Another “miracle” was when the temple veil tore around the time of Jesus’s death. The veil was so enormously heavy and impractical that it had to be replaced twice a year.⁶⁰⁴ So it must have torn frequently, especially at Passover, the busiest time of the year.

⁶⁰³ Mark 6:49

⁶⁰⁴ Harris, *Hebraic Literature: Translations from the Talmud, Midrashim and Kabbala*: M. Walter Dunne, 1901, pp. 195-96

Faith to drop a mountain into the sea

What about when Jesus said a man of “faith” can throw a mountain into the sea?⁶⁰⁵ This was a reaction to a followers killing a fig tree. If one follower can kill a fig tree, then if you have enough followers they can throw a mountain into the sea.

This really happened. In ancient times, Alexander the Great faced an impossible task: how to conquer the city of Tyre? Tyre was an island with superb defences: any enemy ship approaching it was sunk. But Alexander had unlimited conviction in his abilities. If nobody could defeat the island or Tyre, then he would make it **not** an island!

Alexander ordered his men to throw a mountain’s worth of rock and soil into the water. Then his army marched across and destroyed the city. This is a photograph of the city of Tyre, as it is today. Today it is a peninsula connected the coast. You can see how it used to be an island. Alexander’s belief created the peninsula.



Image: 1934 French government photo, via Wikimedia, out of copyright

⁶⁰⁵ Mark 11:21-23

Raising the dead?

What about raising the allegedly dead daughter of Jairus? Jesus *said she was not dead*. She was just asleep. The people in Jairus's household did not want Jesus to come.⁶⁰⁶ Was there something embarrassing about this situation? It sounds like the daughter was a follower of Jesus, and if so, the ending explains what happened. Jesus healed her simply by telling her to get up and eat. Why would a follower of Jesus not eat? Because Jesus was famous for his forty-day fast. This follower was twelve, the age when a girl becomes an adult. It sounds like she was stressed about her family and was trying to be holy like Jesus by starving herself.

What about the voice from heaven? "*Voice from heaven*" is another name for "*bat kol*", meaning "*the daughter of a voice*", the first spontaneous voice from a silent crowd. And who is most likely to spontaneously say, "*This is my son whom I love*"? Jesus's mother was in the crowd, and she was immensely proud of her son.

All the so-called miracles in Mark are like this. There is no need to invoke the supernatural in Mark.



Raising Jairus's daughter: Vasiliy Polenov, 1870, out of copyright

⁶⁰⁶ What happened might depend on the word translated as "Laughing to scorn". That is a very rare Greek word, so might not mean what we think.

Mark 1: what Jesus wanted

This is how Mark begins:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.⁶⁰⁷

The first quotation is from Malachi and refers to cleansing the temple:

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites [the priests intended by Moses] and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem [i.e. the temple] will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years.⁶⁰⁸

The second quotation is from Isaiah⁶⁰⁹ and refers to the return of the exiles from captivity. Isaiah wrote in the days of Hezekiah, who was the king when the ten tribes of Israel were taken back to Babylon in 721 BC.⁶¹⁰ So Isaiah refers to the ten tribes of Israel coming back again from Babylon and bringing “offerings in righteousness” to Jerusalem.

Mark then summarises Jesus’s message:

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.⁶¹¹

So Jesus’s story is about cleansing the temple, with the help of the ten tribes, in order to establish the kingdom of God.

⁶⁰⁷ Mark 1:1-3, KJV

⁶⁰⁸ Malachi 3:1-4, NIV

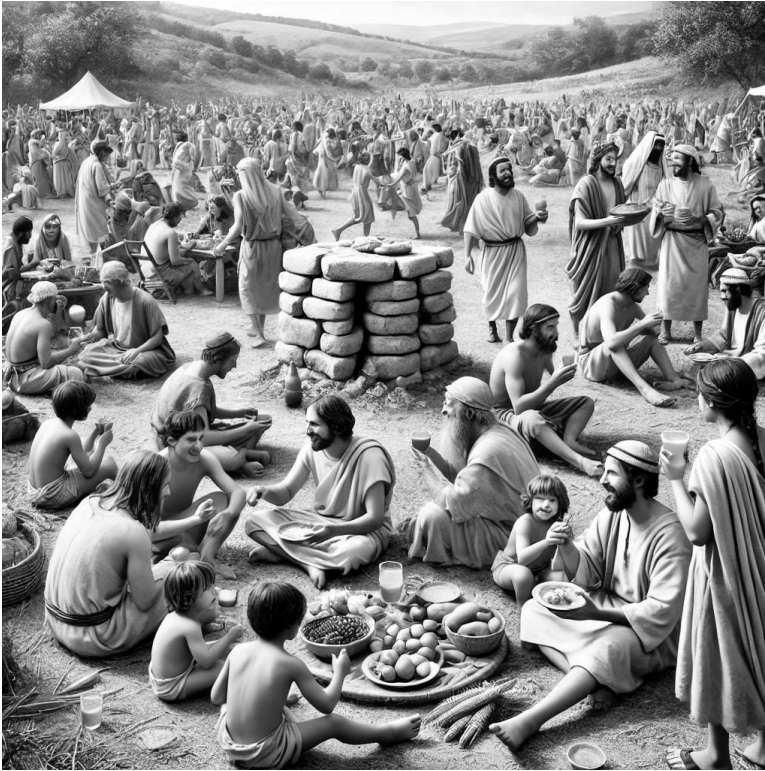
⁶⁰⁹ Isaiah 40:3-5, NIV

⁶¹⁰ See the previous chapter, Isaiah 39. Jesus would not have known of the modern theory that Isaiah was three or four different people.

⁶¹¹ Mark 1:14-15, KJV

Why cleanse the temple?

Moses's religion was built on festivals around a simple altar. These festivals forced people to get together and know each other. The altar was to sacrifice their best animals to the nature gods. These festivals forced people to never rely on their wealth (in ancient times wealth was in the form of animals). Real wealth comes from nature and from friendship. Hence, Moses told us to sacrifice our property to the nature gods, to show that we value nature more than property. And he told us to meet often for festivals, so we would get to know our neighbours.



All the evil in the world comes from corrupting this perfect system. The altar, designed to free people from greed, is often replaced by a temple of greed and inequality. This temple in modern times could be a mansion or skyscraper or anything that celebrates wealth inequality.

So to make a perfect world we need to cleanse the temple. We need to get it back to being a simple altar at a festival of friendship.

Mark 1:15: “The time is fulfilled”

Jesus said that “*the time is fulfilled*”. That is why he began his campaign to cleanse the temple. What time was fulfilled?

Most people say that Jesus’s ministry lasted two to three years, beginning around the year 30 AD. But that is based on the virgin birth story in Luke, which is highly unreliable. If we stick to the Gospel of Mark, then his ministry lasted two to four months.⁶¹²

Jesus died at Passover of 37 AD (see below). So Jesus said “*the time is fulfilled*” some time around Hanukkah in 36 AD.⁶¹³ Hanukkah is the feast that celebrates the cleansing of the temple by the Maccabees in 164 BC. The Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the temple in 167 BC by erecting an altar to Zeus and then sacrificing a pig there. This was known as “*the abomination that causes desolation*”. It led a family of ordinary Jews (the Maccabees) to start a revolution. They drove the Greeks out of Jerusalem and cleansed the temple.



Image: the Maccabean Revolt, Historia Sagrada (1920), out of copyright

⁶¹² Starting at Mark 1:14 (when John is put in prison), Mark moves very quickly. He often uses words like “immediately”, so there are very few gaps in his narrative. All of Jesus’s travels were as little as three hundred miles. If he averaged ten miles per day (more on the final journey to Jerusalem, less in Galilee) his mission would take around a month. We can double that to allow for minor detours and longer stops. Maybe double that again to four months as the absolute longest timeframe. This short timespan is confirmed because at one point Jesus picks ears of grain to eat. Grain was planted in Autumn, and most grain was harvested by the time of Shavuot (Pentecost, 50 days after Passover). The grains were large enough to pick a few weeks before Passover, but not before that.

⁶¹³ Eight days starting on Kislev 25 (usually in December, sometimes late November)

Jesus had to cleanse the temple in 37 AD

Hanukkah in 36 AD is the start of the 200th anniversary of the cleansing of the temple. This anniversary ends at Hanukkah in 37 AD.⁶¹⁴ 37 AD is when Daniel predicted that the temple would be cleansed and the messianic age would begin. As we will see, Jesus had inside information that the emperor-in-waiting, Caligula, was likely to cause another “*abomination that causes desolation*” in the temple. Jesus also knew that, due to a conflict in Samaria, Pilate (the Roman governor in Jerusalem) was forced to be cooperative. That would allow Jesus to make a deal. This was also the perfect moment to return Jewish exiles: in 36 AD, a Jewish convert became king of Adiabene (part of ancient Eden, and on the road to Babylon). In 37 he gave refuge to the king of Parthia at a crucial time, and in return received many favours.⁶¹⁵

Finally, when Mark recalls Jesus saying “*the time is fulfilled*” he may be combining what Jesus said a month or two later, after King Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist. The killing was followed by a major defeat in battle, which the Jews took as a sign that God was going to support a revolution.

So this period, Hanukkah 36 AD to Passover 37 AD, seemed like the perfect time to cleanse the temple and return the exiles. It felt like God had arranged everything for this date.

Daniel’s prophecy	>	37 AD
Maccabee anniversary	>	37 AD
Herod will be defeated	>	37 AD
Abomination will rise	>	37 AD
Adiabene can save the exiles	>	37 AD
Pilate forced to cooperate	>	37 AD

⁶¹⁴ There is no year zero: 1 BC goes to 1 AD, hence 200 years after 164 BC is the year that begins in 36 AD but ends in 37 AD. Did they care about a 200 year anniversary? Yes, because 200 years is 4 jubilee cycles. The Book of jubilees was popular around that time, showing that they still cared about these cycles.

⁶¹⁵ Dates are from the Encyclopaedia Iranica. Wikipedia gives slightly earlier dates, but the Iranica is probably a better curated source for Iran.

Mark 11: copying the Maccabees

In Mark chapters 1 to 10, Jesus gathers his followers. He teaches them to treat each other as equals. This makes it impossible to have a human king: only God can be king. Then they march to Jerusalem.

In Mark 11:1-11, Jesus enters Jerusalem, riding a young donkey, and with people waving tree branches. The young donkey symbolises how leaders must not be rich.⁶¹⁶ The tree branches symbolise the Maccabees, who waved tree branches after cleansing the temple when it was defiled in 167 BC:

Now Maccabeus and his followers, the Lord leading them on, recovered the temple and the city; they tore down the altars that had been built in the public square by the foreigners and also destroyed the sacred precincts. They purified the sanctuary and made another altar of sacrifice ... Therefore, carrying ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also palm fronds, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place.⁶¹⁷

As we will see later, the donkey and tree branches come from the era of Judges, before Israel rejected God and chose kings. They trace even further back to nomadic herders and Asherah poles. So they represent nature's kingdom, ruled by the gods, not a kingdom ruled by a man.



THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

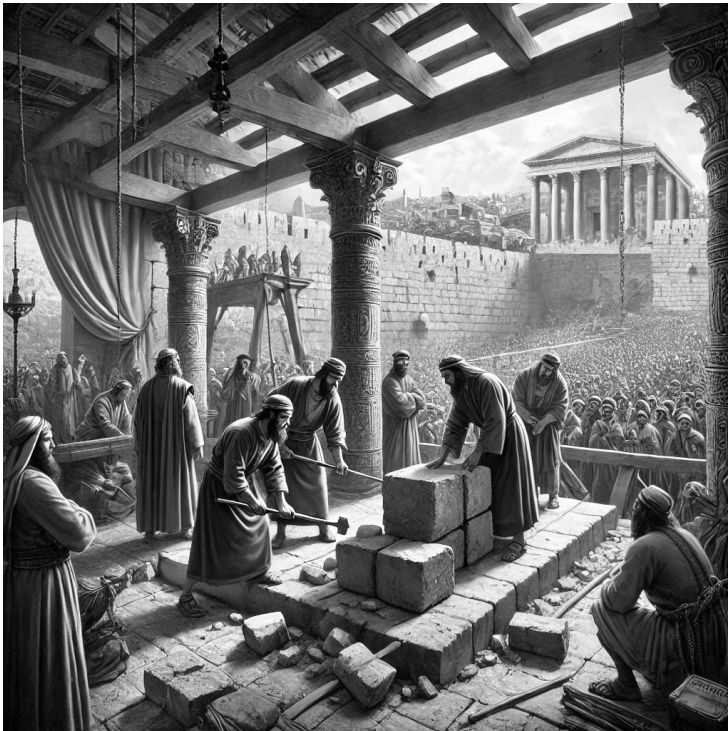
Image: from "The King of the Jews" (1900), out of copyright
⁶¹⁶ Zechariah 9:9

⁶¹⁷ 2 Maccabees 10:1-3,7

1 Maccabees 4: how to cleanse a temple

Cleansing the temple requires the **dismantling** of the temple. Moses said it should not be cut stone or have steps. Herod's gigantic temple was a travesty of what Moses said. It defiled the altar. So the defiled parts needed to be dismantled and removed. The altar and any surrounding structure could then be rebuilt from uncut stones as Moses instructed. This is how the Maccabees did it:

They cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place. They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned. And they thought it best to tear it down, so that it would not be a lasting shame to them that the nations had defiled it. So they tore down the altar and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them. Then they took unhewn stones, as the law directs, and built a new altar like the former one. They also rebuilt the sanctuary and the interior of the temple and consecrated the courts.⁶¹⁸



⁶¹⁸ 1 Maccabees 4:43-48

Mark 11:15: driving the moneychangers out

This is how Jesus began his program to cleanse the temple:

On day 1, Jesus went to the temple to just observe.

On day 2, he made a whip and drove the moneychangers out of the temple. He overthrew their tables and did not allow anyone carrying goods to enter the temple. That is all he did, all day.



Image: Alexander Bida (1885), out of copyright

And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. And when even was come, he went out of the city.

That is all he did on his first full day in Jerusalem. He must have had help from his many followers. This event is why the scribes and chief priests plotted to kill Jesus.

“And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him.”

Why the elites wanted to kill Jesus

How important was the moneychangers incident? Consider the enormous size of the Jerusalem temple: it covered 35 acres! Here is a scale model: see the size of the houses on the left.

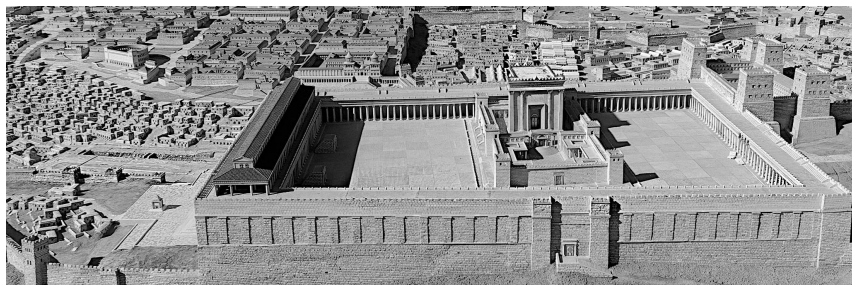


Image: photo by Berthold Werner, released into the public domain

The temple and the surrounding city were full of pilgrims from around the world, gathered for Passover. Then Jesus and his followers arrived from Galilee, home of Zealot terrorists. They forced all the traders out of this huge area. This was big news.

Having got the attention of the whole of Jerusalem, Jesus then gave his message: that the temple should be a house of prayer, but money turns it into a den of thieves.

Prayer in the Old Testament has two purposes: to ask for things and to give thanks. In other words, prayer is about getting free stuff from God.

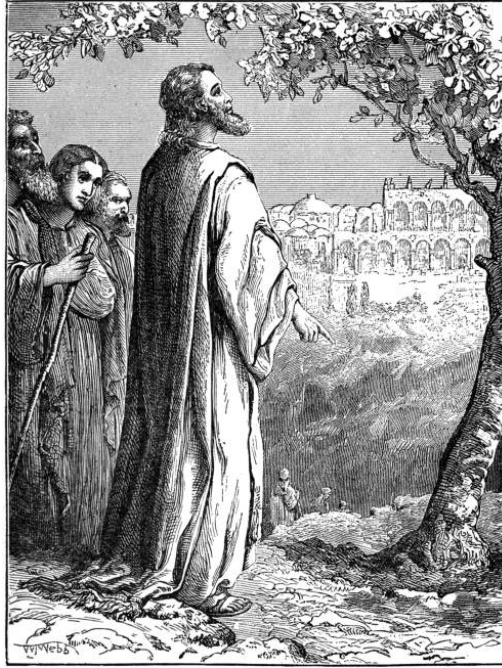
God designed the world so that everything is free. For example, if you eat an apple and drop the core, the seeds will grow a whole tree full of apples. What an amazing world! But elites hate it. They want more. So they forced our ancestors to walk away from this Golden Age.

Jesus understood that everything should be free. He showed us how to make it happen: cleanse the temple, bring it back to what Moses intended.



Mark 11: the fig tree as a symbol of the temple

On the evening before driving out the moneychangers, Jesus saw a fig tree with no figs. He chose to make it a lesson about results. The tree did not have the results that God intended from nature, so Jesus said it should not live.



From "Mother Stories From the New Testament"
(1906), out of copyright

The next day when they came back after driving out the moneychangers, the fig tree roots were exposed. This indicates that somebody had pulled the tree up. With the roots exposed to the hot Judaeen air, the tree died. Who pulled it up? Obviously one of Jesus's followers. They heard Jesus say that the tree should not live, and recognised it as a command.

Notice the parallel with the temple: the temple did not provide the fruits that God intended nature to provide. So the temple had to be cleansed, which meant destroying the existing temple.

Also notice how Jesus acted like a judge in the time of Moses, giving judgment under a tree. (See the discussion of Deborah in the page about how the church changed Jesus into a king.)

Mark 12: Bible scholars get it wrong again

Continuing the theme of replacing failures, Jesus said bad rulers of the land should be replaced (just like bad trees and bad temples).

Jesus told the parable of the wicked husbandmen. The scribes (experts on the law of Moses) and temple priests (those who run the festivals and sacrifices) were husbandmen for God's vineyard (the land). But they were not doing their job: they were not producing the fruit. God sent messengers to tell them to improve, but they killed the messengers. Last of all, Jesus came to tell them "stop or else". They saw Jesus coming, and planned to kill him as well.

So what would God do? He would kill those scribes and temple priests, and give the land and temple to people who follow his rules.

This parable was based on Isaiah 5: The land would be rescued from bad rulers and given to good people who followed the laws of Moses. The bad rulers were foreign rulers. For Isaiah, these were Assyrians and Babylonians (and their local Jewish servants), and for Jesus they were the Roman authorities (and their local Jewish servants).

Bible scholars like Bart Ehrman interpret this parable as a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD.⁶¹⁹ The Romans took the land away from the Jews. But Jesus said the opposite: Jesus said the land would be taken away from the Romans (and the corrupt priests under their governorship) and given to faithful Jews.



From "Mother Stories From the New Testament" (1906), out of copyright

⁶¹⁹ "the earliest Gospels seem to presuppose the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and of the Jewish temple, as happened in 70 CE. And so, for example, in Mark's Gospel Jesus indicates that the nation of Israel will be destroyed (12:9) and that the temple will not be left standing (13:1-2)." - Bart Ehrman, "The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings", sixth edition, quoted here: ehrmanblog.org/new-boxes-oral-traditions-and-the-dates-of-the-gospels/

Mark 12: the temple was corrupt...

Moses's religion ensured that everyone had food and land. But Herod's temple took every last penny from widows, leaving them destitute:

*[They] devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation. And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a **certain poor widow**, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. ... **she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.**⁶²⁰*

The temple took “all her living”: it ate every penny that she had. It devoured her house! So the temple was damned.



Image; Gustave Dore, out of copyright

⁶²⁰ Mark 8:40-42,44

...therefore it had to be thrown down

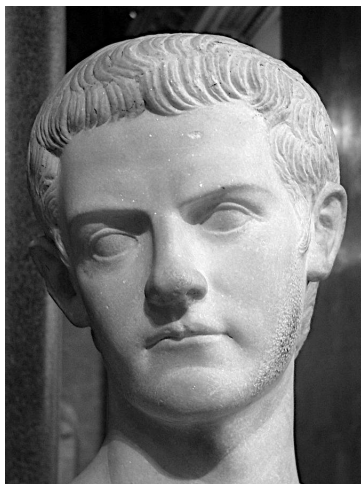
After seeing that the temple was corrupt, Jesus said that it had to be torn down:

...this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living. And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another; that shall not be thrown down.⁶²¹

In other words, Jesus continued to follow the Maccabees' example:

*"And they saw the sanctuary desolate, and the altar profaned. ... And they cleansed the holy places, and **took away the stones** that had been defiled ... And a good counsel came into their minds, **to pull it down**: lest it should be a reproach to them, because the Gentiles had defiled it; so **they threw it down**."⁶²²*

Jesus knew that the people would support him, *and even the Roman Governor would support him*. Why? Because Jesus had inside information about something the emperor Caligula was going to do. The details are in Mark chapter 13.



Caligula

via Wikimedia, Public Domain

⁶²¹ Mark 12:43-13:2

⁶²² 1 Maccabees 4:36-59, emphasis added

Caligula

In Mark 13, Jesus explains how the temple must be dismantled. He starts by indicating that he, Jesus, will soon be very famous. Many people will claim to represent him.

Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ

Why does he think that? In Mark 1-10 we saw how Jesus was charismatic and popular, but the ability to dismantle a gigantic temple suggests something more. So let's look at what Jesus knew and what he planned.

Jesus was a carpenter, or in Greek, a “tekton”, which could also mean a stone mason. He grew up in Nazareth and his friends lived in Capernaum. This means he would be one of the thousands of carpenters and stone masons employed by Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas had many building projects, but the biggest was his new capital city called Tiberias, in honour of his benefactor Tiberius Caesar.



When Herod was in his capital the tektons would hear all the palace gossip. The juiciest gossip would be about Herod's nephew Herod Agrippa. Herod Agrippa was always gambling and losing money. Luckily, he had found an amazing friend: Caligula. Caligula was next in line to be Roman Emperor. So he was rich, and soon going to be *very* rich.

And palace insiders knew that Caligula was a monster.⁶²³

⁶²³ Suetonius and Cassius Dio are the best sources for Caligula's crimes. Some modern historians try to argue that they were biased, but experience tells us that power corrupts. So a significant percentage of emperors would be monsters. If not Caligula, who?

What palace insiders knew about Caligula

One day, someone overheard the idiot kid Agrippa saying that he wanted the emperor Tiberius to die so that his friend Caligula could take over. So Agrippa was thrown in jail. Everybody in his palaces would know about this. They would also know that Tiberius was old and had a respiratory problem, so Caligula would soon be in power and would free his friend Agrippa.⁶²⁴

In public, Caligula was charming and competent. He was careful not to do anything that might stop him from becoming emperor. But palace insiders knew the truth. The historian Suetonius wrote that Caligula was both a hydra and a Phaeton, destined to ruin all mankind and burn the world:

*“He could not even then conceal his natural disposition to cruelty and lewdness. ... [Tiberius realised that] Caius [Caligula] was destined to be the ruin of himself and all mankind; and that he [Tiberius] was rearing a hydra for the people of Rome, and a Phaeton for all the world.”*⁶²⁵

The Hydra was a many-headed monstrous snake.

Phaeton was the legendary spoiled child who insisted on gaining power that he could not control: he tried to guide the sun (like Caligula would guide Rome), but crashed and burned the whole world.

That is what palace insiders knew about Caligula in early 37 AD. So they expected wars, famines, and every kind of disaster.



⁶²⁴ Tacitus, Annals, book 6, 50: Tiberius moved between several villas while his health declined, so the palace gossip would know about this before Jesus's two month mission began.

⁶²⁵ Suetonius, "The Twelve Caesars"

Mark 13:7-11: wars and rumours of wars

Caligula became emperor on March 16th, 37 AD. So the news did not arrive in Jerusalem⁶²⁶ in time for Passover, five days later.⁶²⁷ But insiders knew what was coming because Tiberius was very sick. So they expected this Phaeton to appear at any moment and burn the whole world.

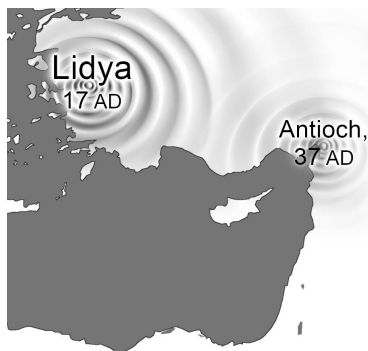
Caligula drained the treasury and mismanaged everything. He even caused a famine for fun: he diverted all the grain ships from their regular tasks, filled them with soil, and made them line up side by side in the river, so he could walk across the river as if walking across a field.

Caligula loved to torture people, or just humiliate them in public. He slept with anyone he wanted, including all three of his sisters. He would randomly order people to be murdered, saying, “*Remember that I have the right to do anything to anybody*”. Allegedly, at the gladiatorial games, he once pointed to a section of the audience and had them fed to the wild beasts. Caligula was a monster. So Jesus warned:

*Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars ... for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.*⁶²⁸

How could Caligula affect earthquakes?

When Jesus spoke, the governor of Syria was visiting from Antioch.⁶²⁹ In 37 AD,⁶³⁰ Antioch suffered a serious earthquake. Antioch last had a serious earthquake in 148 BC, and people would remember the more recent massive earthquake in Lydia. Ten Lydian cities were saved because Tiberius took generous action. Would Caligula do that? Under Caligula, the death toll would surely be much worse.



⁶²⁶ A fast trading ship would take 25 days between Jerusalem and Rome, according to the Orbis ancient Rome website. Five days is impossible.

⁶²⁷ hebc.al.com gives passover in 37 AD as the 19th to 26th of March, using Gregorian dates. This is 21st to 28th on the Julian calendar, as used in Rome. <https://planetcalc.com/7083/>

⁶²⁸ Mark 13:7-8

⁶²⁹ See the later analysis of Pontius Pilate's timeline.

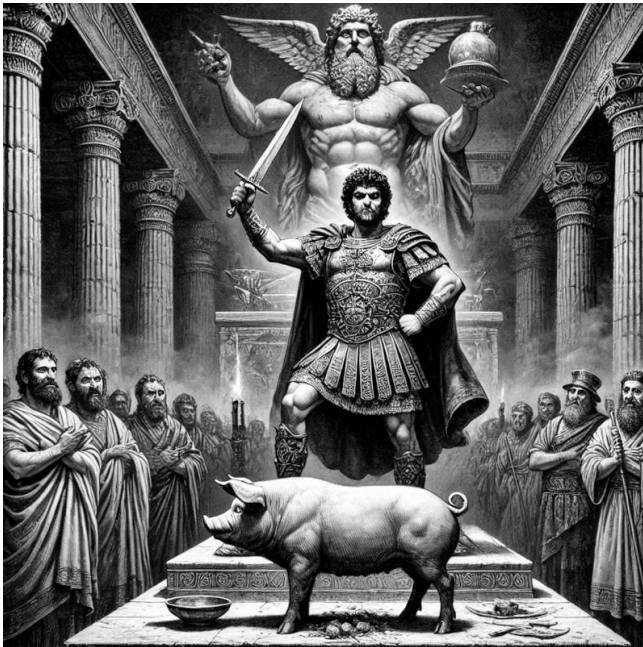
⁶³⁰ This is assumed to be late 37 AD, but we cannot be sure. Even if it was after Passover, the governor was an exceptionally capable man so would know of any signs that shows earthquakes were increasing.

Mark 13:12-14: the Abomination of Desolation

Roman emperors were declared to be gods upon their death. But Caligula did not want to wait. Like Antiochus Epiphanes, Caligula believed himself to be a living god. He was such a narcissist that he must have been thinking about it when he prepared to be emperor in 37 AD.

In 39 AD, Caligula ordered an idol of himself to be placed in the Jerusalem temple. Did he think of this in 37 AD, when talking with his friend Agrippa? Maybe, maybe not. But there are so many parallels between Caligula and Antiochus⁶³¹ that Jesus must have expected something like this.

The Abomination of Desolation “*spoken of by Daniel the Prophet*” refers to the moment when the Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanes defiled the temple by erecting a statue of Zeus Olympios in the Jerusalem temple and sacrificing a pig (an “unclean beast”) on the temple altar. Jesus expected Caligula to do something similar.



⁶³¹ Both were blasphemous narcissistic rulers of empires that crushed Israel. Both had a special interest in humiliating the Jews (Antiochus wanted to make up for a recent military loss, and Caligula was just a monster with a Jewish best friend). Jesus modelled himself on the Maccabees, so of course he expected a new Antiochus and new Abomination of Desolation.

What Jesus expected

Philo, the great Jewish writer, heard the news of Caligula's statue. This is his reaction:

*"Our temple is destroyed! Gaius [Caligula] has ordered a colossal statue of himself to be erected in the holy of holies, having his own name inscribed upon it with the title of Jupiter!" And while we were all struck dumb with astonishment and terror at what he had told us ... the Jews would willingly, if it were possible, endure ten thousand deaths instead of one, rather than submit to see any forbidden thing perpetrated with respect to their [laws]"*⁶³²

Petronius, the new governor of Syria, was given the job of erecting this abomination. But Petronius was not mad: he knew that it would provoke a revolt, with Jews coming from all over the empire to cleanse their temple:

*"[The Jewish population] had spread over the whole face of the earth; for it is diffused throughout every continent, and over every island, so that everywhere it appears but little inferior in number to the original native population of the country. Was it not, then, a most perilous undertaking to draw upon himself such innumerable multitudes of enemies? And was there not danger of allies and friends from all quarters arriving to their assistance? ... for he was aware that Babylon and many others of the satrapies of the east were occupied by the Jews ... [they] might on a sudden direct their march that way and surround him ... if I comply with them [these commands] the result will very probably be war"*⁶³³

That is exactly what Jesus predicted.

That explains Mark chapter 13. Jesus expected Caligula to erect a pagan statue in the temple, just like Antiochus. That would cause a revolt. Jesus would lead foreign Jews to Jerusalem to get the Romans out of the temple, and then cleanse the temple by removing its stones and rebuilding the temple as Moses intended. Just like the Maccabees did.

It was a rational plan.

But the plan went wrong. Petronius knew that the statue would cause a war, so he found many excuses to delay it. And then Caligula was assassinated. The next emperor, Claudius, was sensible, and everything calmed down. The abomination never happened. The prediction did not come true. But in AD 37 Jesus expected it. The Abomination was not a supernatural prophecy, it was a rational extrapolation from current events in 37 AD.

⁶³² Philo, on the Embassy to Gaius, earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book40.html
The English translation says "religion" but as Brent Nongri shows in "Before Religion", that translation is anachronistic.

⁶³³ Philo, on the Embassy to Gaius

Later histories changed the story

Jesus's plan failed. Caligula was assassinated, so there was no Abomination of Desolation and no war. So Later gospels (our current versions of Matthew, Luke and John) changed the story. They took the central plan, to cleanse the temple in 37 AD, and changed a few words.



Here is Mark's prediction of how the temple would be defiled:

*"But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: ... [then the fighting]... And then shall he [God] send his angels [messengers], and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."*⁶³⁴

And here is Luke's changed version:

*"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains ...[then the fighting]... they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."*⁶³⁵

"The abomination that makes desolate" never happened, so it was changed to Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem. And all of Mark's urgency was removed from Luke: now we must wait for an indeterminate "*time of the Gentiles*". This became a completely different prophecy.

However, when Jesus spoke, all the evidence pointed to a coming war. How could Jesus organise such a war? How could he win it?

⁶³⁴ Mark 13:14,27

⁶³⁵ Luke 21:16,24

Mark 13:15-23: Jesus's secret weapon: the gospel

Jesus believed that war and chaos and abomination and despair were coming. People would be desperate for a leader. False leaders would arise, but not be able to help. Then Jesus would appear out of the smoke and chaos, fully prepared, and save everything.

While others were panicking, Jesus's followers would gather an army from "all nations": all "ethnos" (ethnicities). Jesus sent his people to preach in Galilee ("the nations"), Syria, and especially Samaria. He brought the "gospel" or "good news". (Later we will see that Samaria was the heart of the Jesus's movement.)

The Greek word for "gospel" is "evangelion", a word typically used for news about winning a battle, or the birth of a great leader, or the start of a new era.⁶³⁶ This was the gospel of Jesus: that he could appear in the smoke of war, save the day, then cleanse the temple, then remove the human king and bring back the kingdom of God as established by Moses.



⁶³⁶ E.g. in 9 BC cities such as Priene changed their calendar to match the Roman calendar, acknowledging the power of the new empire. They dedicated the calendar to the first emperor, Augustus, referring to the "evangelion" of his birth.

Mark 13:24-25: the sun darkened, stars will fall

All the phrases like “the sun shall be darkened” paraphrase Isaiah, describing the destruction of Babylon:

The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. ... Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the pride and glory of the Babylonians, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah.⁶³⁷

Notice that this is the *rising* sun, and refers to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Isaiah draws from this passage in Genesis:

With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Hurry!” ...By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. ... Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the Lord. He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.⁶³⁸

So the rising sun and the moon were covered by dense smoke because of the utter destruction of the city by fire. Burning embers in the darkness looked like stars falling. This was not supernatural.⁶³⁹ The experience was so terrifying and catastrophic and final that it was remembered forever, and became the defining imagery of war.



⁶³⁷ Isaiah 13:10,19

⁶³⁸ Genesis 19:15,23-27

⁶³⁹ See the Genesis chapters in this book for the destruction of Sodom

Mark 13:34: The Son of Man

Jesus called himself “the son of man”. Scholar Bart Ehrman thinks that “the son of man” is a cosmic being.⁶⁴⁰ However, when Mark was written, “the Son of Man” always, without exception, meant “the common man”. For example, Ezekiel was often called “son of man” to show that he was ordinary.

Jesus used the language of Daniel 7, a dream where a son of man comes in clouds to rule Judea. Daniel 7 then immediately explained the dream: three times Daniel explains that “*The son of man*” referred to “*the holy people*”, the ordinary followers of God. When Enoch saw a cosmic son of man, the passage was labelled as a parable, and Enoch was told that the great conqueror in the parable is the common man: himself!

“Enoch Is Identified as the Son of Man

*... And he came to me and greeted me with his voice and said to me,
“You (are) that Son of Man”*⁶⁴¹

So Jesus identified as the common man. He was planning a revolution led by the common man!



Liberty Leads the People, by Delacroix (out of copyright)

⁶⁴⁰ ehrmanblog.org/jesus-and-the-son-of-man/

⁶⁴¹ 1 Enoch 70:16-23, from “1 Enoch : a commentary on the book of 1 Enoch by George W. E. Nickelsburg, 2001. The popular Charles translation misses these vital verses, but modern translations include them, and so does the Laurence translation. A commentary notes: “Laurence’s original translation renders this phrase ‘offspring of man.’ Knibb (p. 166) and Charles (p. 185) indicate that it should be ‘Son of man,’ consistent with the other occurrences of that term in the Book of Enoch.” See <http://qbible.com/enoch/70.html>

Mark 13:26; 14:62: clouds from heaven

In Exodus, God's presence on earth was shown by a pillar of cloud.⁶⁴²



Raphael (1500s) and Providence Lithograph (1913 or before), out of copyright

Jewish scholars later called this the “shekinah”, the presence of God on Earth as a cloud or fire. Ezekiel and Revelation described God's presence in his temple as heavenly cloud filling the temple:

Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the Lord rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the Lord.⁶⁴³



⁶⁴² Exodus 13:1

⁶⁴³ Ezekiel 10:3-4. In Revelation 15:8 it is smoke.

Clouds from heaven show that God is on Earth.

Mark draws on Ezekiel, because both accounts are about God's presence leaving the temple, then war(s), then building a new, better temple. Ezekiel 32:7 confirms that the sun and moon are darkened because of the clouds of smoke. Moses's pillar of cloud was almost certainly smoke from a sacrifice, so the smoke of a righteous battle could be the clouds of heaven that Jesus mentions. Ezekiel 38 also describes invading armies as like clouds.

When Jesus describes the clouds of heaven he uses the language of Daniel 7, which in turn draws on the book of Enoch.⁶⁴⁴

*"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power."*⁶⁴⁵

Even though it says "clouds of heaven" this all takes place on the Earth. The clouds of heaven, around God's throne, simply show that this is God. Daniel's vision tells how the common man defeats the kingdoms of the world (Daniel's great beasts), helped by the hidden presence of God (symbolised by clouds). The common man then approaches God on his throne, which is now on Earth.⁶⁴⁶ God then rewards the common man with power and glory.



⁶⁴⁴ Enoch 45:3 and the following chapters

⁶⁴⁵ Daniel 7:2-13

⁶⁴⁶ The throne has a river coming from it. Compare Eden, and the new Jerusalem (with its river and tree of life) in Ezekiel 47 and Revelation 22

Mark 13:27-37: why Jesus was so confident

Jesus did not know when the war would start (verse 32). So he was not in control. But he was confident that it must happen, based on his rational reading of the evidence (verses 28-29). He believed that he could unite the common people. Jesus knew that, when the wars came, Rome would be desperate for a Jewish leader like him: someone they could work with. Jesus may have been an advisor to the child Marcus Agrippa, heir to the throne: in a war, the nation would rally around Marcus, and Jesus could gently guide him. See the chapter on the early church for details.

Jesus was not stupid. He grew up in Galilee, the headquarters of the Zealots, so Jesus had seen messiahs rise and fall. He saw how Rome reacted. Jesus would not make their mistakes, so he modelled himself on the Maccabees. The Maccabees won by making a treaty with Rome.⁶⁴⁷

The spring of 37 AD was a unique opportunity for working with Rome: for a brief moment, circumstances forced the Romans to cooperate with the Jews. So Jesus was careful never to antagonise Rome. When asked if we would rebel against taxes, Jesus said we should pay them (*“render to Caesar what is Caesar’s”*). When his enemies gave reasons to condemn him, the governor could not find anything that Jesus had done wrong under Roman law. Jesus looked like the reasonable one while his enemies looked like fanatics. When the war came, the governor would remember.



⁶⁴⁷ 1 Maccabees 8

Pilate and Vitellius when Tiberius died

Josephus tells us more about Pilate,⁶⁴⁸ governor of Judea. This helps us to date the events in Mark⁶⁴⁹ and explains odd choices by “Pilate”.

In late 36 AD or early 37, Pilate had a conflict with some Samaritans. They complained to Vitellius, governor of Syria. Vitellius’ main job was to protect Rome’s border with its main enemy, Parthia. He could not afford to waste soldiers on a minor rebellion in Judea. So he accepted the Samaritans’ complaint and sent Pilate to explain himself to Caesar. Since Pilate was on his way to (or from) Rome, Vitellius stayed in Jerusalem at Passover.⁶⁵⁰



So it was probably Vitellius, not Pilate, who dealt with Jesus. He stood in for Pilate for a few days, but this was still Pilate’s role. Officials do not do all their work in person! So Pilate’s name was on later records. Mark got his information from Peter, who was not at the trial with Jesus, and was probably not in the crowd outside (unless he was far at the back).⁶⁵¹ Peter was from Galilee, so would not know what Pilate looked like. And now we wrongly fixate on Pilate’s name due to misunderstanding ancient literary conventions.⁶⁵²

This explains why “Pilate” rushed the trial, sounded sympathetic to Jesus and was willing to release a prisoner: Vitellius just wanted to keep the Jews happy so he could get back to Syria.

⁶⁴⁸ Antiquities book 18, chapter 4

⁶⁴⁹ Pilate was on his way to Rome when he heard that Tiberius died on 16th of March, 37 AD (all dates are on the Julian calendar). Passover in 37 AD was probably around 1st April, give or take. According to the Orbis ancient Rome website, it took 25 days to get from Rome to Jerusalem (using a fast trading ship). So Pilate could not have returned in time. (There is a small chance that Passover was a month later, due to a leap month. If so, Pilate was there but had to please Vitellius.)

⁶⁵⁰ Most of this is from Josephus. A senior Roman needed to be at Passover because so many visitors were there, and so many rebels, that Passover was always a powder keg. Before Pilate arrived in Rome, Tiberius died.

⁶⁵¹ Peter was trying to avoid being seen: Mark 14:66-72

⁶⁵² When reconstructing events, ancient writers routinely imagined conversations. This results in imagined dialogue where the name Pilate appears ten times, even though the name of the Roman official was not important.

Early Christianity

This chapter looks at the church from 37-42 AD. For the church in the book of Acts (37-62 AD), see the chapter on Paul. The Gospel of Mark is our only detailed source for the early church.

The Kingdom of God in Mark

Jesus had one goal: to cleanse the temple. He had one message: the good news (gospel) of the kingdom of God. When we first see Jesus, this is how he is introduced:

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.⁶⁵³

Jesus did not need to define the kingdom of God, because Moses already defined it: a kingdom rules by God. In other words, a kingdom with no human king. That is, a kingdom where each person has equal land, and any national problems are settled by judges chosen by the people.

When God owns the land, he also owns any rent from that land. So people cannot make money simply by owning land. Almost all rich people rely on owning land as a guarantee of stored wealth. The kingdom of God makes it almost impossible to live that way:

How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! ... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.⁶⁵⁴

To create this kingdom by:

1. Loving God (i.e. loving nature, sacred history, and Moses's laws)
2. Loving our neighbour as much as we love ourselves.

Then we are “*not far from the kingdom of God.*”⁶⁵⁵ Jesus said that the best way to do this is to keep the Ten Commandments. Then give away any riches we might have to the poor. Then join in Jesus’s revolution.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ Mark 1:14-15

⁶⁵⁴ Mark 10:23-25

⁶⁵⁵ Mark 12:29-34

⁶⁵⁶ Mark 10:18-21

Mark 14:24: did Jesus save us from sin?

A hundred years after Mark was written, other gospels were written or edited. They tried to change the message of Mark. They said that Jesus did not come to cleanse the literal physical temple. They said that Jesus came to save us from sin. They twisted two verses in Mark to fit the new teaching. The first verse is about shedding blood for us:

*And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. he said unto them, **This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.** Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.⁶⁵⁷*

“Testament” is “diatheke”: a legal term for a last will and testament. So Jesus was making a legal promise: he promised to not drink wine until he had created the kingdom of God. In other words, this was a Nazirite vow. “Nazirite” means “consecrated (“nazar”). Anyone could consecrate their life for a certain purpose for a certain time, and during that time they would not drink alcohol (or cut their hair or do other things).⁶⁵⁸ Jesus’s blood was shed for many because, like any revolutionary, he expected to die for the cause of creating the kingdom.

The second twisted verse says that Jesus gave his life as a “ransom”:

*But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and **to give his life a ransom for many.**⁶⁵⁹*

“Servant” is “doulos”, meaning “slave”, somebody owned as property. “Ransom” is “lytron”, the money paid to free a slave. In this passage, Jesus said that nobody should be a lord over somebody else, not even the Son of Man. Jesus said he would die as a price to free people from ever being subject to a lord.

Jesus’s words do not fit later Christian teachings. Later Christians said that Jesus became a lord, with authority to command people. But Jesus said that he would die to stop that from happening.

⁶⁵⁷ Mark 14:23-25

⁶⁵⁸ Numbers 6:1-21

⁶⁵⁹ Mark 10:44-45

Mark 15:2,26: 'King of the Jews'?

“King of the Jews” was an insult from Jesus’s enemies, a sign placed on the cross to mock him. Jesus opposed human kingship. To Jesus, the only king was God. And Jesus said he (Jesus) was not God.

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.⁶⁶⁰

After saying that, Jesus said that rich people cannot get into heaven - so kings won’t get in. He then explained that nobody should rule by authority.



*“Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But **so shall it not be among you**”⁶⁶¹*

Jesus called himself the common man. We are used to calling him “christ”, but in the original text, references to “Christ” (Greek “Christos”) were usually “Chrestos” (see below), meaning “servant”. So Jesus identified as a servant, the opposite of a king.

Pilate’s first question was, “*Are you the king of the Jews?*” and Jesus left the question open: he simply said “Σὺ λέγεις” or “you said that”. The word for “king” was “basileus”, from the word “base” meaning the place where you stand, from “baino”, to walk.⁶⁶² Jesus was walking ahead of the people to show the way, so he could not strictly disagree. Another reason to not disagree is that when the war came, Herod would fail and Pilate might ask Jesus to step in. But that would be in the future, and a temporary measure. Jesus’s goal was to create the economic system that made such hierarchies impossible.

Jesus’s enemies “*accused him of many things*” in front of Pilate. Pilate asked “*Why? What crime has he committed?*”⁶⁶³ So Jesus did nothing that was of any danger to Rome. So Jesus had no interest in power. He just wanted to lead by example, to show the power of Moses system: a system with heroes, but no hierarchical power at all.

⁶⁶⁰ Mark 10:18

⁶⁶¹ Mark 10:42-43

⁶⁶² Strong’s concordance suggests that etymology.

⁶⁶³ Mark 15:14

Christian or Chrestian?

Most early Christian texts are copies of copies of copies. The older the text is, the more likely it is to write “Chrestian” instead of “Christian”.⁶⁶⁴

The oldest texts of all, the Oxyrhynchus Papyri,⁶⁶⁵ all use the word “Chrestos” and not Christos.⁶⁶⁶ Hence the Didache, an early manual for Jesus’s followers, refers to Jesus not just as lord, but also as servant. E.g.:

Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks this way. First, concerning the cup: ‘We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which You madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever.’ And concerning the broken bread: ‘We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which You madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant’⁶⁶⁷

Jesus was only “lord” insofar as people chose to follow him: he attracted willing followers by serving them (see Mark 10:42-45). We will return to this reference to Jesus as the vine of David when we discuss Shiloh [Jesus] replacing Judah [David].

Later, when texts were copied, “Chrestian” was changed to “Christian”, but sometimes they forgot to change it. In this example a scribe copied “Chrestian” and then realised and changed it to “Christian”, but that left a gap in the word.

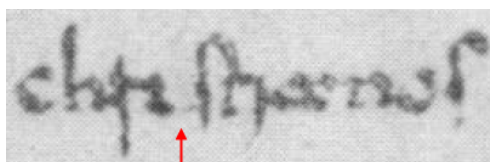


Image: public domain, via Wikimedia

⁶⁶⁴ E.g. “The term Christians appears only three times in the New Testament, the first usage (Acts 11:26) giving the origin of the term. In all three cases the uncorrected Codex Sinaiticus [which contains our oldest complete copy of the New Testament] in Greek reads Chrestianoī.” Wikipedia, Tacitus on Jesus, retrieved 26 July 2024, citing Geoffrey Bromiley, (1995). International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. p. 657, and Robert Van Voorst (2000). Jesus Outside the New Testament p.33-35

⁶⁶⁵ Old worn out texts were thrown away in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt. Finding this rubbish dump was one of the greatest discoveries in archaeology.

⁶⁶⁶ Though divergent spellings are attested in the material from Oxyrhynchus, in every instance the eta [“ē” sound] replaces the iota [“i” sound], and in the letters specifically the epithet is employed on three separate occasions: SB XII 10772; P.Laur. II 42 (IV/V); P.Oxy.XLIII 3149” - <http://mountainman.com.au/essenes/chrestians%20christians.htm>

⁶⁶⁷ Didache, Roberts-Donaldson translation, chapter 9 (the chapters are very short).

How the church changed Jesus into a king

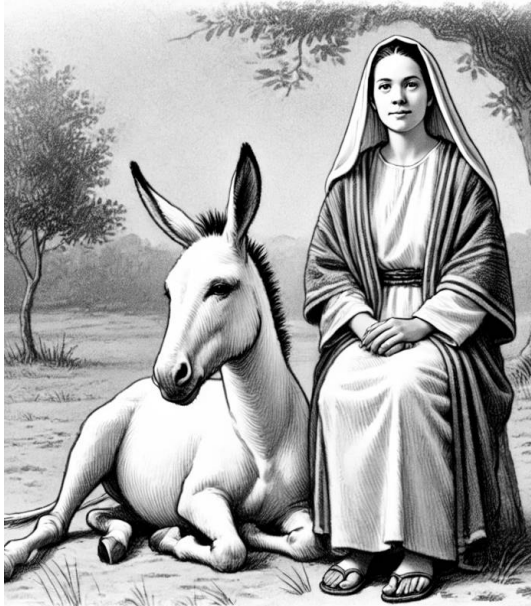
In Mark, Jesus opposed kings. But the Christian church later taught the opposite. They said that Jesus was king, and that church leaders represented him. This gave the church great power and wealth.

How did they make it look like Jesus supported kings? By making a very subtle change to one verse.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem he rode on a young horse that had never been ridden before. This had great symbolism. It has to be never ridden to symbolise purity and new life.⁶⁶⁸ But why a colt? In Genesis 49 (the prophecies about the future of Israel), Judah was promised to be king until Shiloh (“the peacemaker”) came. Genesis 49 says that Shiloh would then tie a colt to the best vines.

In Judges 5, the “Song of Deborah”, we learn that the judges are known as the people who ride on white donkeys. (“Donkey” and “colt” are often used interchangeably.)

My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD. Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way.⁶⁶⁹



⁶⁶⁸ E.g. Numbers 19:2

⁶⁶⁹ Judges 5:9-10

Deborah carried out her judging while sitting under a palm tree:

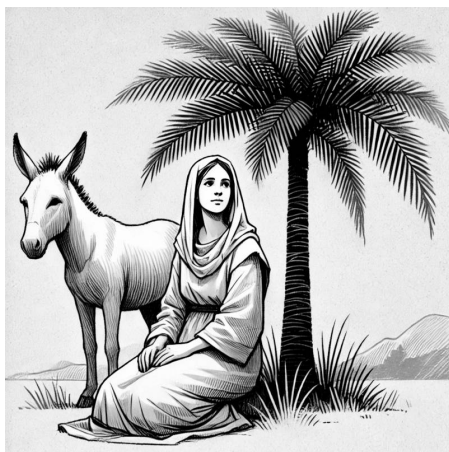
*She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided.*⁶⁷⁰

So the donkey and the palm leaves identify Jesus not as a king, but as a humble judge, a commoner chosen by the people.

These symbols must have been important because King David instructed Solomon to ride a mule to his coronation,⁶⁷¹ and Zechariah 9:9 says a king will ride a colt or donkey to show humility. Then the Maccabees had people spread palm branches as they entered Jerusalem. Kings pretended to be good by appropriating the humble symbols of Moses's judges.

The Christian church reversed this teaching in a very simple way. When the gospel of Matthew told the story of Jesus riding a colt, it said Jesus was a king like David. That claim was added: it was not in Mark. If we just read Mark and the Old Testament, the colt (and the palm) had the opposite meaning: it meant that Jesus wanted to be Shiloh (the peacemaker), to end the reign of kings (who were warlike and hierarchical).

(A critic might object and say that Jesus was the son of David. But Mark shows that although most people liked David,⁶⁷² Jesus did not. Jesus told blind Bartimaeus not to call him “son of David”.⁶⁷³ Jesus only used David as an example when it made the common man look more important.⁶⁷⁴ Jesus wanted to end the reign of the priests who gave David his power.⁶⁷⁵)



⁶⁷⁰ Judges 4:5

⁶⁷¹ 1 Kings 1:32-34

⁶⁷² In Mark 11:10 they said “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David”

⁶⁷³ Mark 10:47-48

⁶⁷⁴ Mark 2:24-28: David was hungry and acted as a commoner would, stealing food from the priests. (Hecataeus of Abdera shows that, despite what later kings claimed, in the centuries between David and the Maccabees, Jerusalem priests had more power than the kings.) Jesus used this story to say that rules should benefit commoners, not priests.

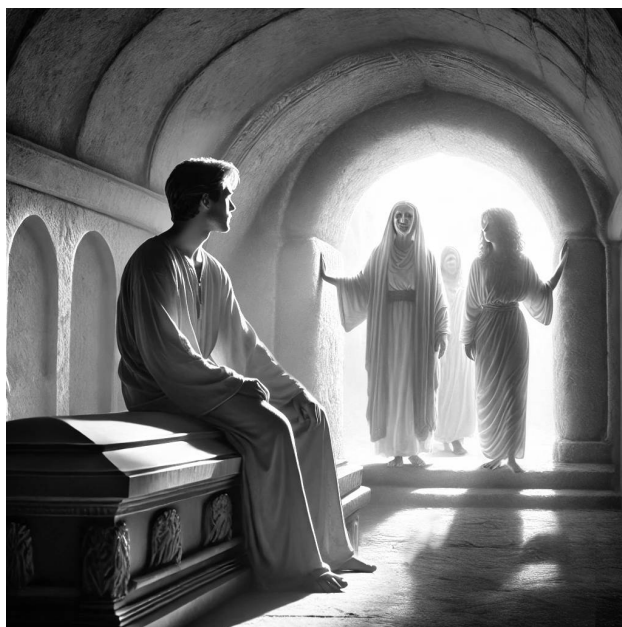
⁶⁷⁵ Mark 12:28-37. The scribes want David to have authority (that gives power to the temple elites), but Jesus showed that a messiah (anyone chosen by God) is greater than David. That undermines temple elites, but Mark says the common people loved it.

Mark 16: The empty tomb

Jesus planned to survive his crucifixion somehow:

For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.⁶⁷⁶

The centurion in charge of the crucifixion was an admirer of Jesus.⁶⁷⁷ After six hours he allowed Jesus to be given some kind of liquid, then Jesus immediately appeared to die.⁶⁷⁸ Pilate was surprised that Jesus “died” so quickly: normally it took a lot longer. A wealthy follower then arranged for Jesus to be taken, and his body was treated with special ointments in a large private tomb. On the third day, three women went to see the body, and a young man told them that Jesus had risen, just as he had planned. The young man told them to gather in Galilee, where Jesus would meet them. Nothing about this suggests anything supernatural.



Jesus had a back-up plan in case he did not survive: a person's spirit could live on through someone else.⁶⁷⁹

So in later years, people could claim to see the resurrected Jesus, even though the man they saw had a different face.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁶ Mark 9:31

⁶⁷⁷ Mark 15:39,44-45

⁶⁷⁸ Mark 15:36-37

⁶⁷⁹ Mark 8:27-28

⁶⁸⁰ Luke 24:13-32, his close friends talked with him for a long time without recognising him. They finally decided it was Jesus because their hearts burned within them.

The supernatural resurrection was added later

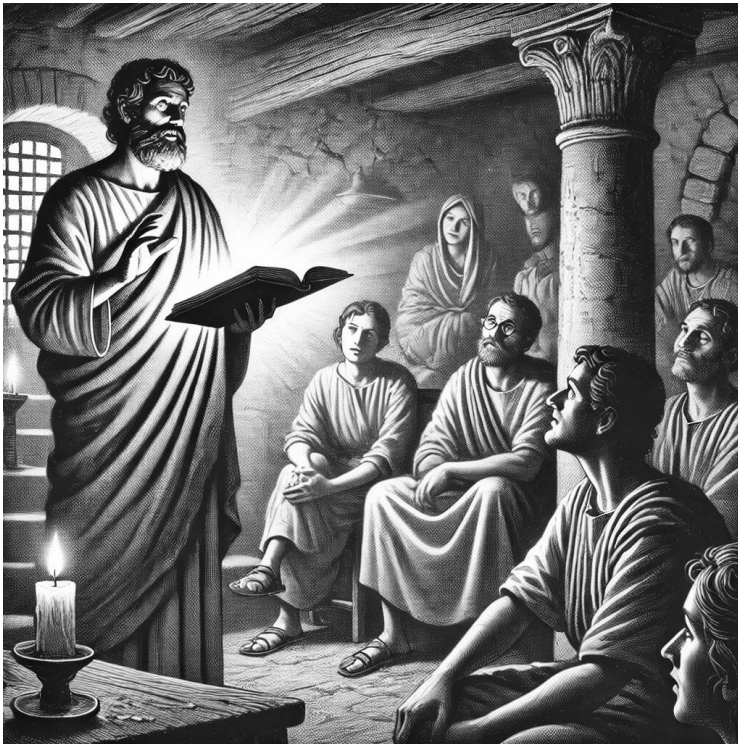
The oldest copies of Mark end with chapter 16 verse 8:

And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

This ending works better than the later endings, because the book was an army recruitment tool. The Gospel of Mark was written to persuade Jews in Rome to come to Galilee and fight in Jesus's army in the upcoming war. Books were expensive, and most people could not read, so the recruiter would read it in person. The Gospel of Mark has an urgent style, with lots of eye-witness details and frequent use of words like "*then immediately this happened...*" The recruiter would no doubt add personal experience and answer questions as he read each part. The book ends on a call to action, and the threat of imminent war. The recruiter would naturally finish by asking,

"What will YOU do? Will you tremble and be afraid like them?"

Or will you come with us to Galilee, ready to fight?"



Was there a “Messianic Secret” in the church?

Jesus often told people not to say he was “the messiah”. Because that is not how he saw himself: he saw himself as the common man.⁶⁸¹

But many modern scholars believe in “*The Messianic Secret*”: the idea that Jesus saw himself as a supernatural messiah, but did not allow people to say so. That is, until Peter said “you are the Christ” in Mark 8:22-26, the middle of the book. This came after Jesus needed two attempts to heal a blind man, and many scholars say this is the key to understanding Mark. This is what Bart Ehrman says about it:

*“[I]t is the only miracle in the Gospel that Jesus does not perform immediately and effortlessly. ... A perceptive reader will recognize the symbolism of the account in light of its immediate context: in the very next story, the disciples themselves — those who until now have been blind to Jesus’s identity (cf. 8:21!) — gradually begin to see who he is, in stages. ... This is a climactic moment in the narrative... now, half way through the account, someone finally realizes who he is — at least in part.”*⁶⁸²

Let’s test those claims. Is it “*the only miracle in the Gospel that Jesus does not perform immediately and effortlessly*”?

Turn back three chapters, to when Jesus attempted to heal a man with an unclean spirit but failed. Jesus said, “*Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.*”⁶⁸³ But the spirit did not come out. Instead, the man rebuked Jesus. So Jesus failed.

Let’s move to the next claim:

“A perceptive reader will recognize the symbolism of the account in light of its immediate context”

An unperceptive reader might think that. But a perceptive reader will see that there are multiple possible contexts. A more immediate context is that Peter was always wrong. He was wrong before (e.g. wanting power), and he was wrong after (e.g. denying Jesus three times), so he was probably wrong when he said, “*You are the Christ*”, so Jesus told him not to say it.

And so the *Messianic Secret*, the foundation of how Bible scholars see Mark, is simply wrong.

⁶⁸¹ Mark 10:42-45: he was a chrestian (a servant), not a Christian (anointed to rule).

⁶⁸² See for example, Bart Ehrman’s “*The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*”, quoted here: ehrmanblog.org/jesus-in-mark-who-knew/

⁶⁸³ Mark 5:6-8

Dating Mark

Scholars usually assign Mark to a date of around 70 AD, because they wrongly assume that Mark 13 refers to the destruction of the temple *by the Romans*. But Mark refers to *cleansing* the temple, *by the righteous Jews*.

The Roman theory comes from Matthew. But we cannot use Matthew as a guide to Mark, because Matthew did not exist when Mark was written. We cannot even assume that Matthew and Mark share a common culture. Because *Matthew was written in order to change Mark*. For example, Matthew makes Jesus into a supernatural being, and Matthew raises the status of the apostles. This suggests that **the story in Mark was causing problems by the time that Matthew was written**.

So Matthew is not useful as a guide to Mark. But we do have other books that predict the cleansing of the temple: these are the Damascus Document and the Habakkuk commentary in the Dead Sea Scrolls. They date to the first century BC,⁶⁸⁴ but the ideas were still popular in the first century AD. This gives us the rough time period when Mark belongs.

Bible scholars don't know what they are talking about

Most Bible scholars think the gospels existed as oral traditions before anything was written down:

*It is widely agreed amongst Biblical scholars that accounts of Jesus's teachings and life were initially conserved by oral transmission, which was the source of the written gospels.*⁶⁸⁵

This is because most Bible scholars have never been in a new religion. And they don't study the sociology of religion in any scientific way. So they literally do not know what they are talking about: they do not know about starting a new religion, or the sociology of new religions in general.

I was a missionary in a new(ish) religion. I can tell you from experience that a new religion will not survive without a written text. Why? Because new religions are a threat to existing religions. They compete for members. Existing religions have a full-time clergy, established infrastructure, and training in how to retain members. If you start poaching members from an existing religion, they will fight back. They will send letters to their churches. They will organise meetings against you. When you arrive in a

⁶⁸⁴ https://cojs.org/damascus_document-1st_century_bce/ based on handwriting analysis. But it describes events from 390 years after the first fall of Jerusalem, and 20 years later: i.e. it describes the era of the Maccabees, c. 177-150 BC.

⁶⁸⁵ Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_gospel_traditions retrieved 6 Nov 2024, citing "The Oral Gospel Tradition" by James D.G. Dunn. See also ehrmanblog.org/how-do-we-know-when-the-gospels-were-written/

new city you will find anti-cult ministries have got there first. And even if you convert someone, when you leave the existing churches are still there, working to get back their lost sheep. So you have to do everything the existing churches do. At the bare minimum you need your message in writing, or your new religion won't survive.

Don't take my word for it. Sociologist Rodney Stark studied successful new religions from ancient to modern times. He showed that they always target middle-class educated people first, and target wealthy people if they can. They have to, in order to survive.⁶⁸⁶

Jesus was no exception. Jesus was bankrolled by wealthy women.⁶⁸⁷ One of these women anointed Jesus with oil that cost more than a year's wages for an ordinary worker.⁶⁸⁸ These women had money and leisure, so they would typically learn to read and write. When Jesus began, after recruiting his friends (Simon Peter and his family) the first person he targeted was Levi the tax collector, better known as Matthew. Jesus spent time at Matthew's house, and became his friend. We then learn that tax collectors (plural) followed Jesus. So tax collectors were his priority.⁶⁸⁹ Why tax collectors? Tax collectors had to be literate: they had to be able to write down names, addresses, property, etc. Matthew collected the words of Jesus for the very first followers:

*"And they [the Ebionites, Jewish Christians] receive the Gospel according to Matthew. For this, they too, like the followers of Cerinthus and Merinthus, use to the exclusion of others."*⁶⁹⁰

These words were the "logia", the words of Jesus in Hebrew (i.e., Aramaic). These sayings were later studied and interpreted.

*"Matthew collected the oracles ["logia" or words of Jesus] in the Hebrew language and each one [i.e. each reader] interpreted them as best he could."*⁶⁹¹

At some point these sayings were combined with the Gospel of Mark to produce a complete gospel story: the first version of the gospel of Matthew. Cerinthus, who lived at the time of the apostles, used this early version of Matthew. It said that Jesus was an ordinary man:

⁶⁸⁶ "Early Christianity: Opiate of the Privileged? in "Faith & Economics" 54 (Fall 2009)

⁶⁸⁷ Luke 8:2-3

⁶⁸⁸ Mark 14:3-5

⁶⁸⁹ Mark 2:14-15

⁶⁹⁰ Epiphanius, Panarion: 30.13.1-8, earlychristianwritings.com/text/gospelEbionites.html See also earlychristianwritings.com/text/gospelHebrews-mrjames.html and hebrewgospel.com.

⁶⁹¹ Quotes by Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History, III, XXXIX, 16

“Cerinthus ... [taught] that Jesus was not generated from a virgin, but that he was born son of Joseph and Mary, just in a manner similar with the rest of men”⁶⁹²

Later writers had a copy of this gospel, but it was different from the Greek version we have:

“Matthew also called Levi, apostle and aforesometimes publican, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed, but this was afterwards translated into Greek though by what author is uncertain.”⁶⁹³

They call the Greek version a translation, but there are no signs of Aramaic grammar in our Greek text of Matthew. So Greek Matthew was a complete rewrite of Aramaic Matthew, which already relied heavily on Mark

So we see that Jesus chose Matthew before almost anyone else (i.e. in 37 AD) to record his words. Mark wrote his version later. The version of Matthew that we now use was a rewrite from much later, after Mark became a problem.

Eyewitness details suggest soon after 37 AD

Mark constantly refers to details that only somebody who was there at the time would know, such as Jesus taking the children in his arms in Mark 10:16, or sleeping on a cushion in Mark 4:38. Mark assumes that the listeners know local people: e.g. he mentions Alexander and Rufus in Mark 15:21, without having to explain who they are. So Mark only makes sense if written near the time in question.

Reliance on Caligula suggests 42 AD or before

The end of the Gospel of Mark tells followers to wait in Galilee for instructions. This ending only makes sense until the year 41 AD. Or 42 AD at the latest. Because Jesus's message relied on Caligula erecting an abomination in the Jerusalem temple. But Caligula was assassinated on 24th January, 41 AD. There followed a period of uncertainty while the new emperor (Claudius) established a more stable rule. At first, some Romans considered abolishing the role of emperor and bringing back the republic. In January of 42 AD the senator Lucius Scribonianus tried to start a revolution. But after that things calmed down. So early 42 AD is the last possible date for the writing of Mark.

⁶⁹² Hippolytus, Refutation of Heresies, 7, ch. 21. earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus7.html

⁶⁹³ Jerome, Lives of Illustrious Men, Ch. 3. Jerome himself translated Aramaic Matthew into Greek (Jerome On Matthew 12.13), so that cannot be the Greek version he means: that author is not unknown. So he is probably referring to the much earlier translation into our present Greek text.

The writing style suggests the early 40s or before

Maurice Casey used the Aramaic of the Dead Sea Scrolls to reverse engineer Mark into its likely original phrasing. He also analysed the phrase "son of man" in great depth. His graduate student James Crossley examined the use of the law of Moses in Mark, comparing it to the understanding in Paul and other early texts. Both men concluded that Mark only makes sense if dated to the early 40s or before.⁶⁹⁴

“John who called upon Mark” suggests 37-41 AD

Stephan Huller⁶⁹⁵ points out that there is a rather obvious clue that dates Mark: the title of the gospel. This is "Εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Μάρκον,"⁶⁹⁶ the good news from⁶⁹⁷ Mark. Mark is the key that unlocks the gospel.

Who was Mark? The early church said the text was written by “John ‘epikaleō’ Mark”.⁶⁹⁸ The word “epi-kaleō” means to call on, in the sense that God calls you. This was John who “called upon” Mark. Most translators don’t know what to make of that, so they usually change it to “surnamed Mark”, but this was literally “John who called upon Mark”. So again, who was Mark?

In 37 AD there was a very famous Mark, who could easily be “called upon” to lead the Jews of the diaspora. This was young Marcus (Mark) Julius Agrippa, who would later grow up to be Herod Agrippa II, the last king of Judea.

Marcus was the son of Herod Agrippa I (11 BC - 44 AD), who liked to gamble and had to be bailed out by his family. In contrast, Marcus appears to have been very competent.⁶⁹⁹ The Christians liked him better than his father.⁷⁰⁰ Marcus was born in 27 or 28, so was only 8 or 9 when Jesus

⁶⁹⁴ *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel* bmc.brynmawr.edu/1999/1999.12.03/

⁶⁹⁵ Author of “*The Real Messiah: The Throne of St Mark and the True Origins of Christianity*.” Huller goes much further than this. We do not have to accept all of Huller’s arguments, but he deserves credit for highlighting young Marcus.

⁶⁹⁶ Many scholars say the original text had no title, but this is our earliest guide to how it was understood.

⁶⁹⁷ Modern translations usually read “κατὰ” (kata) as “according to”. But the word literally means “down from, at, with, under”.

⁶⁹⁸ E.g. Acts 12:12. Irenaeus (3.1. 1.) said this was the “John Mark” who wrote the gospel.

⁶⁹⁹ He lived through ten different emperors, all of whom seemed to like him: even after the destruction of Jerusalem he was given extra lands. Josephus reports actions suggesting he was wise and diplomatic (Antiquities XIX, 8-9)

⁷⁰⁰ Acts 12:20-23 shows Agrippa I dying as a result of blasphemy. Acts 26 shows his son Agrippa II in a very positive light.

began his ministry (early 37 AD). This is old enough to show his competence, but young enough to be guided by the right people.

Marcus' father was given the lands north of Judea, while Rome ruled Jerusalem through Pilate. The Marcus hypothesis is that to resolve a crisis (e.g. caused by Caligula), Rome might use popular young Marcus as a calming presence in Jerusalem. He would need a Jewish advisor who was familiar with palace life, and respect for Rome, but also had connections among the Jewish rebels, and had the respect, charisma and intelligence to solve any problems. That is, Marcus would need somebody like Jesus.

How would Jesus know Marcus? Marcus' father built a large palace in Galilee, so Jesus, as a local "tekton" (stone mason or carpenter), would have worked on it. Jesus had wealthy followers, so he had connections.

Soon after the crucifixion, Agrippa I was in Alexandria,⁷⁰¹ presumably with Marcus. Alexandria was the city of "John from Mark".⁷⁰² At the same time, there was a major conflict between the Jews and Greeks, leading to Philo's famous embassy to Caesar in Rome. Philo's account claims that it was all the Greeks' fault, and it was merely a coincidence that Agrippa was present. But soon after that event "John from Mark" took his message to Rome. And soon after that the Jews were expelled from Rome for causing trouble about "Chrestus" (the Roman and Alexandrian⁷⁰³ name for Christ). This is all circumstantial evidence, but it is consistent with young Marcus being some kind of political catalyst.

This would explain why the gospel begins with the words "the beginning of the good news", where "good news" ("gospel") is "Evangelion", a word typically used for news about winning a successful battle. This was only the beginning of the revolution, with young Marcus as the figurehead. And it explains why the text sounds so urgent and ends with a call to gather at Galilee, the borders of the lands of Agrippa and Marcus. The gospel cannot explicitly call for an uprising where Marcus becomes king. That would get people killed. But it is consistent with that message.

This does not prove that Jesus wanted to use Marcus as a figurehead. But this is the only scenario that explains how Jesus could lead the diaspora back to Judea. The diaspora largely lived in Alexandria (the city of John from Mark), Syria (lands promised to Agrippa) and Rome (where Agrippa

⁷⁰¹ Philo, "Embassy to Gaius" XXVIII. 179

⁷⁰² Church history says John Mark was made bishop of Alexandria. Alexandria was an extremely important city, the port where Rome got its grain from Egypt. It also had a very large Jewish population. So this indicates that John Mark was an important person, probably with connections there.

⁷⁰³ *"Open virtually any Alexandrian prayer book and see how often Jesus is called 'pi-khrestos'. The regular use of this title is quite staggering."* - Huller, "The Real Messiah", end of chapter 5

and Marcus spent most of their time).

The Marcus hypothesis relies on Caligula, who was happy to give his friend Agrippa I what he wanted. (i.e. let his son be a figurehead in Jerusalem). After Caligula died, Claudius (the next emperor) was less likely to be so helpful. So the Gospel of Mark, which needs Marcus as a figurehead for the diaspora, only makes sense in the reign of Claudius: from 37 to 41 AD or very soon after.

Church history says 42 AD

Eusebius, the father of Church history, dates the Gospel of Mark to the reign of Claudius (41-54 AD):

*"...during the reign of Claudius, the all-good and gracious Providence, which watches over all things, led Peter, that strongest and greatest of the apostles, and the one who on account of his virtue was the speaker for all the others, to Rome against this great corrupter of life [Simon Magus]. ... And so greatly did the splendor of piety illumine the minds of Peter's hearers that they were not satisfied with hearing once only, and were not content with the unwritten teaching of the divine Gospel, but with all sorts of entreaties they besought Mark, a follower of Peter, and the one whose Gospel is extant, that he would leave them a written monument of the doctrine which had been orally communicated to them. Nor did they cease until they had prevailed with the man, and had thus become the occasion of the written Gospel which bears the name of Mark."*⁷⁰⁴

Can we be more precise than 41-54 AD?

"Eusebius of Caesarea left us two lists of the Roman bishops, one in his 'Ecclesiastical History,' the other in his 'Chronicle.' ... In the 'Chronicle' St. Peter's episcopate at Rome is stated to have lasted twenty-five years. In the 'Ecclesiastical History' we read 'under the reign of Claudius by the benign and gracious providence of God, Peter that great and powerful apostle, who by his courage took the lead of all the rest, was conducted to Rome.' In other passages his martyrdom with that of Paul is represented as taking place after Nero's persecution. The interval between these two dates would roughly be about twenty-five years. Now it is evident that these figures, derived as they are from men like Irenaeus and Hippolytus, who had access to the archives and traditions in Rome itself, cannot be dismissed as pure fiction. They must have a basis of fact behind them. Eusebius tells us 'that after the martyrdom of Paul and Peter Linus was the first that received the episcopate at Rome.' Now the date of this martyrdom was according to

⁷⁰⁴ Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2, 14:6-15:1

the received tradition the fourteenth year of Nero or 67 AD; if then we deduct twenty-five years, we arrive at 42 AD."⁷⁰⁵

Jerome indicates that Peter entered Rome in 42 AD:

*"Simon Peter the son of John, from the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee, brother of Andrew the apostle, and himself chief of the apostles, after having been bishop of the church of Antioch and having preached to the Dispersion - the believers in circumcision, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia — pushed on to Rome in the second year of Claudius [i.e. AD 42] to overthrow Simon Magus, and held the sacerdotal chair there for twenty-five years until the last, that is the fourteenth, year of Nero."*⁷⁰⁶

The definitive work on Peter's time in Rome is the book "Peter In Rome" by Daniel Wm O'Connor. He concludes:

*"In 1953 appeared the fourth edition of the 'Manual of Christian Archeology' of Orazio Marucchi, the eminent Roman Catholic archaeologist, author of over fifty-five books and articles related to the subject of Peter and Paul in Rome. In it, he claims that all the evidence combined permits the opinion not only that Peter did live in Rome, but also that he most likely arrived during the reign of Claudius, between A.D. 41 and 44, left after the edict of Claudius A.D. 49 and did not return again until the year of his death."*⁷⁰⁷

So Church history says Peter arrived in Rome in 42 AD, and then Mark wrote his gospel. But church history also says that Mark wrote his gospel after the death of Peter:

*"Mark ... was the interpreter of Peter. After the death of Peter himself, the same man wrote this gospel in the parts of Italy."*⁷⁰⁸

*"Peter and Paul, however, were in Rome preaching the gospel and founding the church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also delivered to us in writing the things that were then being preached by Peter."*⁷⁰⁹

So when did Peter die?

The stories about Peter being in Rome all date to the second century or later. However, the most respected account, the Book of Acts, appears to show that Peter never visited Rome, but was killed in Jerusalem in 42 AD.

⁷⁰⁵ "The Church in Rome in the First Century" by George Edmundson ccel.org/ccel/edmundson/church.v.html

⁷⁰⁶ Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, chapter 1.

⁷⁰⁷ Peter In Rome, Columbia University Press 1969, p.5

⁷⁰⁸ From the "Anti-Marcionite Prologue" (the introduction to Gospel of Mark in numerous early New Testament manuscripts).

⁷⁰⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1–2

Acts cannot say so directly, because that would show that the church failed. But it has to explain the absence of Peter from the early church. So it talks about Peter being taken up by an angel and appearing as a spirit, then going on a long journey far away. This language strongly implies that Peter was dead. Much of what follows is based on *"Where and When Did Peter Die?"* by Donald Fay Robinson,⁷¹⁰ and *"Did Peter Die in Jerusalem?"* by Warren M. Smaltz.⁷¹¹ Here are the main points:

The book of Acts gives the early history of Jesus's movement. Peter dominates the book until Acts 12, and then he disappears. In Acts 12, Herod (Agrippa) kills the apostle James. This is usually dated to 41 or 42 AD, as Herod died in 44 AD. After killing James, Herod captures Peter, planning to kill him as well. Then Peter disappears. Peter's experience in prison parallels Jesus's experience in the tomb:

- He is condemned to death at Passover (Easter)
- He is placed in a tomb guarded by soldiers
- An angel appears and raises him, surrounded by light.
- The angel leads him out of the tomb, and he then disappears.

When Peter was in prison, *"the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up."*⁷¹² Smaltz points out that the same Greek words are used elsewhere (by the same author) to indicate death. After being raised by the angel, Peter appears to his friends, just as Jesus did. As with Jesus, the risen Peter is first seen by one of the women. As with Jesus, the apostles find it hard to believe:

"And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel."

Saying *"It is his angel"* suggests that they think Peter is dead, because an angel is a spirit: Peter's angel is his spirit. Acts cannot say, "Peter is dead" because Acts is a story of triumph, not defeat. But the gospel of John (written later) indicates that this is how Peter died:

*"when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.*⁷¹³

Notice the order of events: (1) stretch out his hand, (2) someone else will

⁷¹⁰ Journal of Biblical Literature Vol. 64, No. 2, pp. 255-267

⁷¹¹ Journal of Biblical Literature Vol. 71, No. 4, pp. 211-216

⁷¹² Acts 12:7-8, emphasis added.

⁷¹³ John 21:18-19

dress him, and (3) lead him where he does not want to go (to death?). This paraphrases Acts 12:

*“Arise up quickly. And **his chains fell off from his hands**. And the angel said unto him, **Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals**. And so he did. And he saith unto him, **Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me**. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true”.*

Some people think that “stretch forth thy hand”, could mean crucifixion, but Acts 12 is a closer match.

At first glance, it looks like there is an appearance of a “Peter” after Acts 12: in Acts 15:7. But that makes no sense, because that “Peter” says,

“a good while ago God made choice among us, that the gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel”.

“A good while ago” is “*archaios hēmera*” or since the beginning of days. But that sounds like the letters of Paul, not Peter. Paul said: “*the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;*”⁷¹⁴ Even though Peter eventually agreed with Paul in Acts 10, that was not “*archaios hēmera*”, from the beginning. Peter was never the apostle to the Gentiles: Peter mostly stayed in Jerusalem. And here is another strange thing: when James thanks Peter for his words, James calls him Simeon, with an “e”, and not Simon (verse 14). Why?

After Peter disappears in Acts 12, we learn of the death of Agrippa, and the chapter ends by saying that Saul and Barnabas return from Jerusalem. The next verse (Acts 13:1) sees them back in Antioch with a prophet or teacher called Simeon. Simeon and others lay their hands on Barnabas and Saul to separate him to preach to the Gentiles. So Simeon has great authority. After that, Saul is called Paul, and for two chapters (Acts 13 and 14), Barnabas and Paul preach in various Gentile cities, then return to Simeon and the others in Antioch. In Acts 15, Christians from Judea say the new Gentile converts should be circumcised. So Barnabas and Paul take some people from Antioch (e.g. Simeon or others) to help argue their case in Jerusalem. And after that, we have “Peter” arguing their case, and then Peter is called Simeon. It appears that a copyist saw the words “Jerusalem” and “Simeon” and assumed that Simeon must mean Simon (Peter). That became the most valuable mistake in history because it allowed the Gentile church to later argue that Peter was still alive, out there somewhere but nobody knows where, so maybe he visited Rome. That allowed Rome to claim to be the new headquarters of Christianity. All the power of the Roman church depended on that single word, writing Simeon as Peter in Acts 15:7. So nobody ever dared to correct it.

⁷¹⁴ Galatians 2:7

Galatians

Galatians 2:11 is sometimes used as evidence that Peter survived:

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.”

This comes after verse 1 says “after fourteen years”. But it also comes after verse 9, which recalls how Paul was welcomed into the church, so it could be part of a flashback. Also, there is overwhelming evidence that Marcion wrote the letters of Paul, one hundred years after the events in question.⁷¹⁵ Marcion might be influenced by the rumours that Peter survived. So this passage does not imply that Peter was alive after the fourteen years, and might be pure fan fiction.

1 Peter

1 Peter claims to be a letter written by Peter from “Babylon”, with Mark. But the language of 1 Peter is too polished to be written by either Peter or Mark. “Babylon” could mean literal Babylon, or it could mean “Old Babylon” in Mark’s city, Alexandria. It could even mean Rome, or it could mean “the evil world”. It is conveniently vague. It gives readers the comfort that maybe Peter is still alive out there somewhere, and nobody can prove he isn’t.

Romans

Paul’s epistle to the Romans (supposedly dated to 57 AD, but probably by Marcion in 142 AD) does not mention Peter. It mentions around fifty different people in Rome, but not Peter.

Acts 28

Acts 28 describes Paul arriving in Rome, but does not mention Peter. So Peter was almost certainly not in Rome.

Ignatius

Ignatius’ letter to the Romans mentions Peter, but Ignatius is very late.⁷¹⁶ He also mentions Peter in his letter to the Trallians (the Tralles in Asia Minor) and his letter to Philadelphians. Ignatius also mentions Isaiah and others: So Paul is like Isaiah, a figure that Ignatius read about.

Clement

Clement describes the deaths of Peter and Paul, but only in the briefest, vaguest terms. He says Peter and Paul “*belong to our generation*” but this is only in contrast with Moses and David, who lived over a thousand years

⁷¹⁵ See the chapter on Paul for details.

⁷¹⁶ See the appendix to the chapter on Paul for the date of Ignatius’ letter.

earlier, so just means the generation of the early church.⁷¹⁷ Clement then says that Peter “*went to his appointed place of glory*” and Paul “*went unto the holy place*”.⁷¹⁸ This is all very vague. Clement was an early bishop of Rome, so if Peter and Paul had lived and died in Rome Clement would surely have given some details.

So the early evidence has little to say about Peter after 42 AD and does not give any reason to think he visited Rome.

Why are there traditions that Peter visited Rome?

Marcion

Marcion created Christianity as a business club, based on Roman trade routes.⁷¹⁹ The city of Rome was the hub of all Roman trade, so it naturally became the centre of the new church. But there were relatively few followers of Jesus in Rome, compared to the centres of the church in Alexandria (the city of Mark, with a very large Jewish population) and Antioch (where Christians first became Christians). So Rome needed to strengthen its claim to authority over the other cities. But how?

The Apocalypse of Peter

Sometime between 100 and 175 AD (i.e. the era of Marcion) somebody wrote the Apocalypse of Peter. An “apocalypse” means it is intended as a dream or vision. In the dream, Peter was told, “*you must go into the capital of corruption*” to die. This could mean either Jerusalem or Rome, but all the evidence points to Jerusalem. However, it was easy to reinterpret this as Rome.

Justin Martyr

Around 125 AD or so, Justin Martyr visited Rome and saw a statue on the River Tiber. It said, “to Semon the Holy God”.⁷²⁰ That is the Sabine god “Semon Sancus”. But Justin thought it meant “Simon”, meaning Simon Magus. Justin wondered if Simon Magus had come to Rome. Simon Magus fought against Peter, so the idea arose that maybe they fought in Rome?

The shrine to Peter

Around 160 AD, a shrine was built in Rome, which became a memorial to St Peter. Memorial shrines were common in Rome: many houses had a “lararium” where people could leave offerings to a god, or memories of a loved one. Sometimes a lararium was on a loved one’s grave, so people

⁷¹⁷ 1 Clement 4:12-5:1

⁷¹⁸ 1 Clement 5:3-6

⁷¹⁹ See the chapter on Paul

⁷²⁰ Justin Martyr, First Apology, 26

came to believe that this shrine might cover the grave of Peter. Archaeologists have explored the shrine and found no grave from the period. Instead, there is a wall built where any grave would have to be, plus a few human and animal bones, and two coins from a later date. So if human bones were buried there, they were probably after the shrine was built in 160. The shrine was revealed by archaeologists in 1953. In the same year, a first-century Christian tomb was discovered in Jerusalem, with a name that appears to be “Simon Bar Jonas”. So *if* one of these is Peter’s tomb, it is probably the tomb in Jerusalem.

The Acts of Peter

Around 180 AD, two relevant texts appeared: “The Acts of Paul and Thecla” and “The Acts of Peter.” The first text said women could baptise, so the church tracked down its author and made him apologise. The second text said that Peter came to Rome. The church loved that idea and accepted that text as genuine.

Eusebius

In later centuries, serious historians like Eusebius saw the evidence that Mark came to Rome in 42 AD, and that Mark got his information from Peter, and they used this as evidence that Peter also came to Rome. And so the idea began to appear in history books. And thus it became history.

Roman records suggest the early 40s AD

The Roman historian Suetonius (69-122 AD) refers to events that support Mark being in Rome in the early part of the reign of Claudius (41-54 AD):

“Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.”⁷²¹

“**Chrestian**” (with an “e”) was the original name for the followers of Jesus.⁷²² Tacitus (writing in 116 AD) explains:

*Nero fastened the guilt [for the Great Fire of Rome, 66 AD] and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called **Chrestians**⁷²³ by the populace. Christus [Chrestus?], from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus⁷²⁴*

⁷²¹ Suetonius, the Lives of the Great Caesars, part 25, Claudius

⁷²² See the chapter on Paul

⁷²³ Most translations change this to “Christians”, but the Latin is “*quos per flagitia invisos vulgus **Chrestianos** appellabat, auctor nominis eius **Christus** Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum...*” - Tacitus, Annals, 15.44, via Wikipedia

⁷²⁴ Tacitus, Annals, 15.44, via Wikipedia

When did Chrestians arrive in Rome?

When did the rebellious Chrestian message arrive at Rome? Claudius felt that the Jews “*constantly made disturbances*”, which suggests that it was happening throughout his reign. So it was more likely to have begun in the earlier part of his reign. Mark’s message was tied to the chaos of Caligula, Claudius’ predecessor, so the “disturbances” probably began then. However, Claudius may not have reacted until years later when he grew weary of it.

What did the Chrestians do to disturb Claudius? Suetonius classes their “disturbance” among several ongoing minor issues that could easily be ignored. Suetonius said that Claudius only acted because his wives and freedmen (senior servants) brought them to his attention.⁷²⁵

The purpose of the Gospel of Mark, as stated in the first three verses, was to encourage the Jewish diaspora to return to Judea for a war. This message would not appeal to comfortable Jews, but it might appeal to Jewish servants who have nothing to lose. So the Gospel of Mark explains why Claudius expelled the Jews: he may have heard seditious rumours from the Jewish slaves.

Acts refers to an expulsion from Rome.

*“After this [after returning to Jerusalem and then travelling to Greek cities], Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them.”*⁷²⁶

As we will see, Acts was written after the letters of Paul, which were probably written by Marcion. So the book of Acts is very late. Priscilla was important to Marcion. Acts tried to reconcile the conflicting stories of Peter and Paul, long after the event. But Acts could not afford to tell obvious lies, as people would notice (and the writer would feel bad). So Acts had to connect the stories to genuine events where possible.

Acts was quiet about the reason for the expulsion from Rome, implying that the reason was embarrassing. It looks like the “disturbances” caused by Chrestians in Rome caused the Jews in Rome to be expelled. So the Jews in Rome hated the Chrestians for causing trouble. That would explain why Nero was able to blame the Chrestians for the Great Fire of Rome: he knew that even the other Jews hated them.

⁷²⁵ “*But these and other acts, and in fact almost the whole conduct of his reign, were dictated not so much by his own judgment as that of his wives and freedmen, since he nearly always acted in accordance with their interests and desires.*”

⁷²⁶ Acts 18:1-2

The case against 42 AD

Let us examine other arguments for dating Mark later than 42 AD. Perhaps the most popular argument is to find parallels with some other text. Then announce that Mark is obviously based on...

- Homer (see Dennis MacDonald's *"The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark"*)
- Aesop (Whitney Shiner's *"Creating Plot in Episodic Narratives: The Life of Aesop and the Gospel of Mark"*)
- Virgil's Aeneid (Floyd E. Schneider's doctoral dissertation)
- Moses (R.C. Symes *"Jesus's Miracles and Religious Myth"*)
- The Old Testament in general (Nathanael Vette)
- The Sanskrit Tathagata (the *"Bible Geek"* podcast).
- Apocalyptic literature / mystery religions (Howard Clark Kee).
- Ancient novels (Mary Anne Tolbert)
- Historical monographs (Adela Collins)
- Ancient biographies (Richard Burridge)
- The gospel of Thomas (Stevan Davies)
- Allegorical works (rationalrevolution.net)
- The Dead Sea Scrolls plus PseudoClementine literature (Robert Eisenman)
- Jesus Ben Ananias in Josephus (Theodore J. Weeden)
- The Psalms ("Forged Fiction" on YouTube)
- Elijah and Elisha (Thomas L. Brodie)
- Fantastic literature (George W. Young, focusing on Mark 6:45-56)
- Roman propaganda (Adam Winn)
- Roman imperial ideologies (Joel Marcus)
- Greco-Roman drama (David Rhoads)
- SpongeBob Squarepants (my upcoming monograph⁷²⁷)
- Etc.

We can find parallels with anything. So this approach only proves one thing: that the reader has read Mark plus another book. Now let's look at other arguments for a late date for Mark:

⁷²⁷ At his crucifixion (the defining moment of his life) Jesus was given a sponge, while the soldiers took his pants (Mark 15:24,36). Bob means "Robert", from "Hrod-ebert", "godlike-shining". Jesus was godlike and shone at his transfiguration. Jesus spent his time with fishermen around the Sea of Galilee, and often taught from a boat. His message was to become childlike (Mark 10:15), and build community, but he was often misunderstood and rejected. **Mark** (O'Hare) wrote SpongeBob episodes, etc.

The Gerasene swine and Legion X Fretensis?

*"Many scholars see another historical allusion in Mk 5:8-13 to a 'Legion' which had a pig as its emblem and which Josephus tells us remained in Jerusalem in the war's aftermath (Wars of the Jews 7.1.3). ... two thousand pigs [was] the size of the occupying Legion"*⁷²⁸

"Legion" was just a Latin loan word for "large number" in Aramaic, so does not mean a Roman legion.⁷²⁹ Even if it did, the number is wrong. A Roman legion means ten cohorts of six centuries: a maximum of 6,000 men, not 2,000. And the place is wrong: they should be near Galilee, not in Jerusalem. This event takes place in a Gentile region, so removing pigs from a gentile region is unlikely to be a metaphor for removing Romans from Judea. Besides, Mark is always positive about the Romans.⁷³⁰ And while the Tenth Legion sometimes used the image of a boar, it more often used a Roman Galley, Neptune, or a dolphin, because its name: "Fretensis" refers to a sea strait (and not an inland lake). Josephus simply says that Titus *"permitted the tenth legion to stay, as a guard at Jerusalem"*, he says nothing about pigs. Nothing about the Roman pig theory works.

A closer parallel is between the 2,000 pigs and the 2,000 rebels who were crucified after they rebelled when Herod died in 4 BC.⁷³¹ The rebels were many (i.e. legion), many would be from that region,⁷³² they had an evil (angry) spirit, and 2,000 were killed. The parallel is not close enough to be significant, but it is closer than the Tenth Legion theory.

Taxation and 70 AD?

Some scholars say that the question about taxes (Mark 12:14-18) must refer to the revolt of 66-73 AD because it was over taxation. But it is a closer parallel to the tax controversy of 37 AD. Mark says this particular question came from the Pharisees **and Herodians**, the supporters of Herod:

*"And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words."*⁷³³

Taxes paid to the Herod dynasty (Roman appointees) would be a very hot

⁷²⁸ earlychristianwritings.com/mark.html

⁷²⁹ *"My Name Is Legion: Palestinian Judaic Traditions in Mark 5:1-20 and Other Gospel Texts"*, Studies in Judaism (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2003), 15-17

⁷³⁰ "render to Caesar", Pilate not wishing to kill Jesus, the Roman centurion saying Jesus was the son of God, and so on.

⁷³¹ Josephus, Antiquities, book 17, section 295

⁷³² Josephus does not identify where each rebel came from, but the most famous rebels were the zealots, and their movement was founded by Judas of Galilee.

⁷³³ Mark 12:13

topic in early 37 AD. This is because Herod Agrippa wasted all his money on gambling, and had to get bailed out by Herod Antipas. Then a couple of years later Antipas killed John, went to war (funded by those taxes), and was defeated: a punishment from God. How could Jesus possibly agree to pay money for gambling, killing the prophet, and angering God? There was no better time for this question than 37 AD.

Mark's local knowledge

In their efforts to date Mark around 70 AD or later, some scholars argue that Mark did not know the world of 37 AD. But in each case, it is the scholars who are not paying attention.

In Mark 1:21, Jesus enters the synagogue. Some scholars argue there were no synagogues at the time.⁷³⁴ But "synagogue" is simply the Greek word for "place of assembly" ("syn" + "agein"). Was there ever a town without a place of assembly? A fine example of a synagogue building from Galilee in the time of Jesus was recently discovered at Tel Rekhesh, near Mount Tabor in the Lower Galilee. It was built around 20-40 AD.⁷³⁵

In Mark 2:26, we read that David *"entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest"*. But in 1 Samuel 21, the event is when Abiathar's father Ahimelech was High Priest. Scholars have used this as evidence that Mark could not have been a Jew. However, it shows the opposite. Because the Bible itself confuses Abiathar with Ahimelech.⁷³⁶ A good Jew who knew the story from memory would therefore often get them mixed up. But any forger would read the primary text, 1 Samuel 21, and not make that mistake.

In Mark 5:2, we read, *"And they came to the other side of the sea to the region of the Gerasenes"*. The story is about pigs falling off a cliff into the sea, but the well-known Gerasene region is thirty miles away from the sea. A forger, unfamiliar with the region, would use a map and not make that "mistake". But Mark shows local knowledge: Gerasa (or Gergesa) is a Greek spelling of Khersa (now known as Kursi), a village that perfectly fits the description given by Mark.

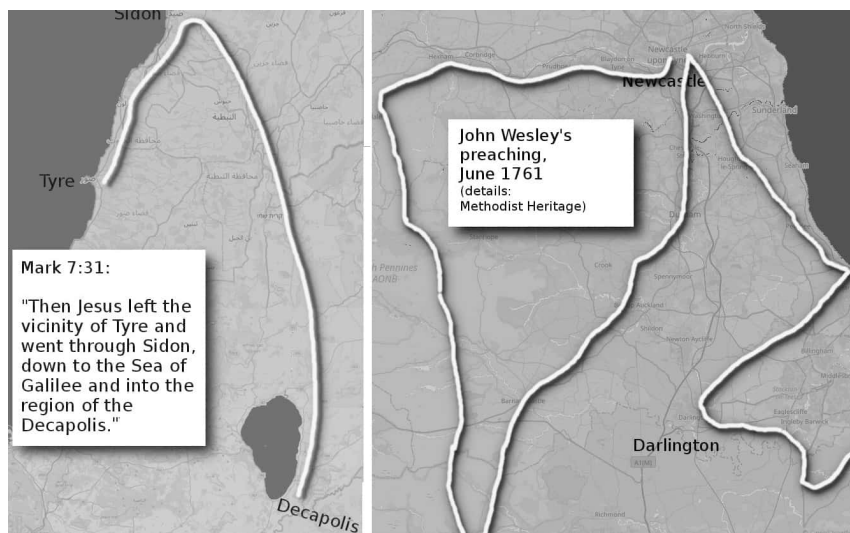
In Mark 7:31, Jesus journeyed from Tyre, through Sidon, then to Decapolis. *"In the words of scholar Hugh Anderson in The Gospel of Mark (p. 192), this would be like 'travelling from Cornwall to London by way of*

⁷³⁴ "Mark also refers to synagogues being common ... which was only true decades after Jesus." - the Bible Geek podcast for 9/17/13 @19:00

⁷³⁵ Times of Israel, 19 Aug 2016

⁷³⁶ 1 Samuel 22:20 and 23:6 say Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech. But 2 Samuel 8:17 and 1 Chronicles 18:16 say that Ahimelech was the son of Abiathar. (Chronicles probably relies on Samuel, so this could be due to a single ambiguity in one verse.)

Manchester.”⁷³⁷ Yes, this is exactly what itinerant preachers do. They try to reach as many locations as possible. Anyone with experience in preaching would know this: just look at the journeys of John Wesley, founder of Methodism, or any other great preacher.



In Mark 7:2-3, we read that the Jews liked to wash their hands before eating. E. P. Sanders claims there is no direct evidence of this until after 70 AD 70. Yet we know that ritual hand washing was both mainstream and widespread before that: the translators of the Septuagint washed ritually before translating,⁷³⁸ the Qumran community *and others* had special pools for washing,⁷³⁹ the Samaritans did it,⁷⁴⁰ and so on. James Crossley goes into more detail in his book, showing why hand washing fits an early date.⁷⁴¹

In Mark 9:5, Peter calls Jesus “Rabbi”. Some scholars say this is anachronistic, as “rabbi” was not a formal title until after AD 70.⁷⁴² Yet

⁷³⁷ *"Why Scholars Doubt the Traditional Authors of the Gospels"* by Matthew Wade Ferguson

⁷³⁸ Source: the 2nd century AD letter of Aristeas

⁷³⁹ *"Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism"* edited by David Hellholm, Tor Vegge, p.233

⁷⁴⁰ Reinhard Pummer, *"The Samaritans"*, p.15

⁷⁴¹ *"The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity"* Bloomsbury, 2004, p. 183-205

⁷⁴² *"Mark also refers to ... the title 'Rabbi' ... which was only true decades after Jesus"*- The Bible Geek podcast for 9/17/13 @19:00

“rab” just meant “leader”.⁷⁴³ The suffix “i” just meant “my”, so “rabbi” just means “my leader”. Mark always uses “rabbi” as a term of flattery, not as a formal title.⁷⁴⁴

In Mark 10:46-11:2, Jesus came from Jericho “to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany”. To a scholar not familiar with the territory, this seems to be a mistake: “Anyone approaching Jerusalem from Jericho would come first to Bethany and then Bethphage, not the reverse.”⁷⁴⁵ But a close look at the map in Jesus’s day shows that both locations are tiny: just a few houses along the same road. So a local would naturally refer to “Bethphage and Bethany” as a single unit. This is like John Wesley travelled north to Newcastle and reaching “Tyne and Wear”. He reached the River Wear first, but “Tyne and Wear” is the local name for the region.

In Mark 10:12 Mark refers to a woman divorcing a man. Some scholars see this as a serious error.⁷⁴⁶ But in 37 AD, Herodias had just initiated a divorce against Antipas.⁷⁴⁷ So Jesus responded to the big news of the time. This only makes sense when 37 AD was a recent memory.

In Mark 15:7-15 Mark refers to Barabbas being freed. Bart Ehrman argues that it is unlikely that Pilate would release a prisoner (Ehrman apparently forgot the pressure from Vitellius in 37 AD), and points out that “Barabbas” means “son of the father”, and therefore (he writes) Barabbas probably did not exist.⁷⁴⁸ By the same logic, Bart Ehrman himself does not exist. “Bartholomew Ehrman” means “honest son of the Ptolemies”, an obvious reference to the period he studies. And how likely is it that a New Testament scholar would be popular among atheists? Ehrman’s logic implies that Ehrman cannot exist.

In Mark 15:43 we meet “Joseph of Arimathea”. Modern readers cannot find “Arimathea” on any map, and some say it was “Mark’s own invention”.⁷⁴⁹ But most Koine Greek texts indicate that the word should start with a breathing mark or “h” sound, so probably refers to ha-Ramath, the town of Ramathaim where the prophet Samuel was born. A local man would know this.

⁷⁴³ E.g. Rab-shakeh, “chief of the princes” in 2 Kings 18-19, Rab-mag the “chief soothsayer” in Jeremiah 39:13, etc.

⁷⁴⁴ Peter is surprised by Jesus’s power in 9:5 and 11:21, the blind man flatters Jesus in 10:51, and Judas identifies Jesus in 14:45.

⁷⁴⁵ Randel Helms, “Who Wrote the Gospels?” p.6

⁷⁴⁶ “Verse 12 implies that Mark believed women had a right of divorce in Jewish law. They did not.” - biblicalcatholic.com/apologetics/ShreddingTheGospels.htm

⁷⁴⁷ Josephus, Antiquities, book XVIII

⁷⁴⁸ ehrmanblog.org/did-the-gospel-writers-invent-barabbas-readers-mailbag/

⁷⁴⁹ biblicalcatholic.com/apologetics/ShreddingTheGospels.htm

In Mark 15:46 we read of Jesus wrapped in linen and the tomb closed with a circular rock. Some have argued that only rich people used circular rocks on their tombs in this period (most used square rocks), and only poor people had simple linen (rich people used thick, heavy shrouds until Gamaliel made thin shrouds popular). But that is the whole point: Jesus entered Jerusalem as “the son of man” (the common man) so had to be buried like a pauper. But he also needed a grave that could be opened easily, because he planned to be revived after his partial crucifixion.

*“Mark 14:57-58 and 15:29 slanderously attribute to Jesus the claim that he will destroy the temple and raise it again in three days. What is striking is that the controversy is over Jesus’s role in bringing about the destruction -NOT whether or not the temple will actually fall.”*⁷⁵⁰

“What is striking” is how scholars ignore the central point of the quote: that Jesus intended to dismantle the temple *himself* and *rebuild* it with uncut stones,⁷⁵¹ so the Jews could regain control of the land. So this cannot refer to the Roman destruction. It only makes sense around 37-41 AD.

In general, Mark uses Latin terms. Later scholars sometimes argue this means it was written after Jerusalem was destroyed. As if Jews suddenly forgot their culture and all began speaking Latin in the year 70. The claim is not just absurd, but irrelevant: Eusebius (quoting Papias) said that Mark wrote the text for the people of Rome. Therefore it had to be in Latin, and Mark had to be familiar with the language and idioms.

We could explore additional claims forever. For example:

- whether there were Pharisees in Galilee (there were),
- what Jesus meant by “some will taste of death” (he referred to dying in the war, not dying of old age),
- whether Nazareth existed (it did),
- whether they used the word “Caesar” (they did),
- when the term “corban” was first used (Eliezer ben Hyrcanus merely promoted it, but the idea was much older),
- whether trials happened at night (the nighttime was a mob, not a trial: the trial was before the Romans the next day),
- whether trials can be rushed or bend the rules (only armchair scholars think that all laws are always followed with perfection),

And so on. In each case, Mark turns out to be reliable, and the critics turn out to be wrong.

⁷⁵⁰ User “zeichman” on reddit AcademicBiblical

⁷⁵¹ The listeners were shocked that Jesus would build it “without hands” like Moses intended, i.e. a simple altar of uncut stones. Exodus 20:25-26

Paul

All of Paul's letters are fake

A theme of this book is that most scholars don't check their biggest claims. A good example of this is the letters of Paul.

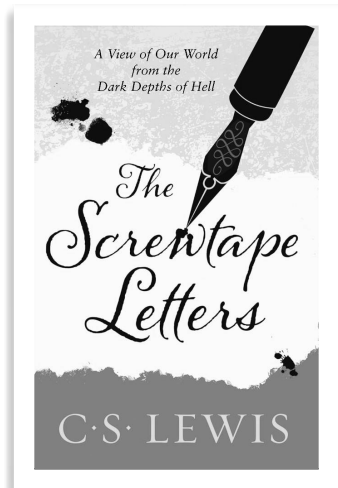
Most scholars assume that there is a core of genuine letters, plus some others that don't fit in, so are assumed to be fake. Dr David Trobisch is one of the few scholars who checked this assumption. Recall that Paul's letters first appeared as a collection.⁷⁵² Trobisch studied ancient letter collections. He found that the letter collection was a genre of fiction.

"You can do genre studies and you can look at letter collections as a genre and say, how good are letter collections when it comes to historical fact? And the result ...will be that roughly 9 out of 10 letter collections published in Antiquity are fictional. They're not written by the author they claim wrote them. This is simply a statistical observation. I'm probably the person to [ask]. I don't think there's been another person who really looked at every letter collection in Antiquity. These are the statistics."

Why produce fake letters? Because ancient people knew that letters had to be hand-copied and delivered through many hands across long distances. So forgery was absurdly easy. The only way to guarantee genuineness was an official seal, backed by legal force. Without a seal, **nobody expected letters to be genuine.**

A letter collection was just a way to tell a story, like in the novel "Dracula" or the book "The Screwtape Letters". So the fact that the letters of Paul first appeared as a collection tells us that it is 90 per cent certain to be fake.

Now let's examine the letters and see where they fit into history.



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⁷⁵² Our earliest reference to the letters is when Marcion had them.

⁷⁵³ Dr. David Trobisch, "The New Testament Was Fabricated, Marcion was First!", History Valley podcast, 17 Nov 2024, 34:20

Paul only makes sense after 135 AD

Most scholars of Paul have never been missionaries for a new religion. So they cannot see how absurd the letters of Paul are.

It appears that most scholars learn about missionary life from Monty Python's *Life of Brian*. They seem to believe that people will follow a religious leader if he says something like...

- "Believe and be saved!"
- "We accept gentiles!"
- "I saw a vision!"
- "Jesus is coming back!"

That was Paul's message. The letters of Paul suggest that those claims were enough to convert people. If you think that Paul's teachings could convert people, then I invite you to try it yourself. Become a missionary for a new church (not a well-established church). Offer what Paul offered. See if it works. I tried it. I was a full-time missionary for the Mormon

church for two years. I quickly learned that people only join if you offer **concrete benefits**. Normally you have to offer a strong social group. Failing that, you need to offer economic benefits. Mormonism initially offered people cheap land.⁷⁵⁴ Jesus in 37 AD offered Jews a return to the glory days of the Maccabees. Without concrete benefits, you only attract desperate or confused people, and that kind of church cannot last.

What concrete benefit did Paul offer? Did the Greeks or Romans want to follow Jesus? Did the Jews want to dilute their Judaism? Did the followers of Jesus want an outsider (Paul) to take over from Peter and James?

When we study church history, we see only one time that Paul's message would have offered a concrete benefit to anyone: after the Bar Kochba catastrophe of 135 AD. Some existing followers of Jesus might have been ready to accept Gentiles and a watered-down faith to save their religion from extinction. Let's look more closely at that period of history.



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⁷⁵⁴ The Mormon church began in 1830, the year of the Indian Removal Act, and the Book of Mormon argued that the land was given to white people. Joseph Smith promised to create Zion on the borders of Indian lands. Later, in 1837, missionaries had great success in Britain by targeting workers displaced by the Industrial Revolution and promising them a new life in America.

An overview of Christian history

Archaeology and reliable history⁷⁵⁵ shows that the early church only had four periods of major growth. So if Paul has any basis in real history, then he must fit into one of these periods:

1. **c.37-42 AD:** the mission of Jesus.
2. **Before 150 AD:** major growth in Samaria, **not** in Judea, Rome etc.
3. **c.112 AD:** Pliny said Christians were throughout his province.
4. **After 180 AD:** Archaeology shows more and more physical evidence of Christians (inscriptions, buildings, etc.)

These are also the four times when the church offered major social or financial advantages:

1. **c.37-42 AD.** Jesus promised freedom from Romans.
2. **Before 150 AD:** Jesus's movement was tailored to Samaritan goals (as we will see).
3. **c.112 AD:** The church had honest businessmen in an otherwise corrupt part of the empire (as we will see).
4. **After 180 AD:** The Christians offered gentiles a healthy community in the middle of a corrupt empire.

This lets us build a history of Christianity based on facts we can test: archaeology, reliable history, and how people act in the real world:

1. **c.37-42 AD:** Jesus had an exciting message, but it failed.
2. **Before 150 AD:** the church grew in Samaria. To a lesser extent it also grew in regions that shared Samaritan culture: a more Greek approach to Israel.⁷⁵⁶ So it spread to Hellenised Jews in Asia Minor.
3. **c.112 AD:** the Jewish wars failed (in 70 and 135 AD). The dream was dead. All the church had left was its idealism. This turned out to be a big selling point in corrupt areas of the empire.
4. **After 180 AD:** the Roman church adopted Marcion's ideas and created a serious alternative to the Roman state.

This history is the background to this chapter.

⁷⁵⁵ i.e. history that does not rely on supernatural claims

⁷⁵⁶ Josephus indicates that Samaritans were more likely to accommodate Greek ideas.

Nobody heard of Paul before Marcion

Paul had nothing to offer until the second century. And nobody heard of Paul before Marcion produced the letters around the year 140 AD. So Tertullian⁷⁵⁷ suspected that Marcion wrote them.

I require to know of Marcion the origin of his apostle . . . since a man is affirmed to me to be an apostle whom I do not find mentioned in the Gospel in the catalogue of the apostles. Indeed, when I hear that this man was chosen by the Lord after He had attained His rest in heaven, I feel that a kind of improvidence is imputable to Christ, for not knowing before that this man was necessary to Him; and because He thought that he must be added to the apostolic body in the way of a fortuitous encounter rather than a deliberate selection; by necessity (so to speak), and not voluntary choice, although the members of the apostolate had been duly ordained, and were now dismissed to their several missions. Wherefore, O shipmaster of Pontus [Marcion], if you have never taken on board your small craft any contraband goods or smuggler's cargo, if you have never thrown overboard or tampered with a freight, you are still more careful and conscientious, I doubt not, in divine things; and so I should be glad if you would inform us under what bill of lading you admitted the Apostle Paul on board, who ticketed him, what owner forwarded him, who handed him to you, that so you may land him without any misgiving, lest he should turn out to belong to him, who can substantiate his claim to him by producing all his apostolic writings. [i.e. Paul belongs to Marcion, as Marcion is the only one providing evidence.]

Despite that, Tertullian still had to accept Paul's letters because everybody else did. So he grabbed onto the only argument he could think of: that the Book of Genesis mentions Benjamin, and the letters say that Paul is of the tribe of Benjamin. That weak argument was the best he could do. Because there was no evidence for Paul before 140 AD - except for the evidence that Paul was Simon Magus. But the church in Rome worked hard to pretend that Paul and Simon were different people (more about that later).

The earliest books we have that mention Paul are 1 Clement and Ignatius. But a close look shows that they are both later than Marcion.

The Book of Acts claims to place Paul in the first century. We will discuss that claim later. (Short version: Paul in Acts is a highly edited version of Simon Magus. Nobody recognised the edited version.)

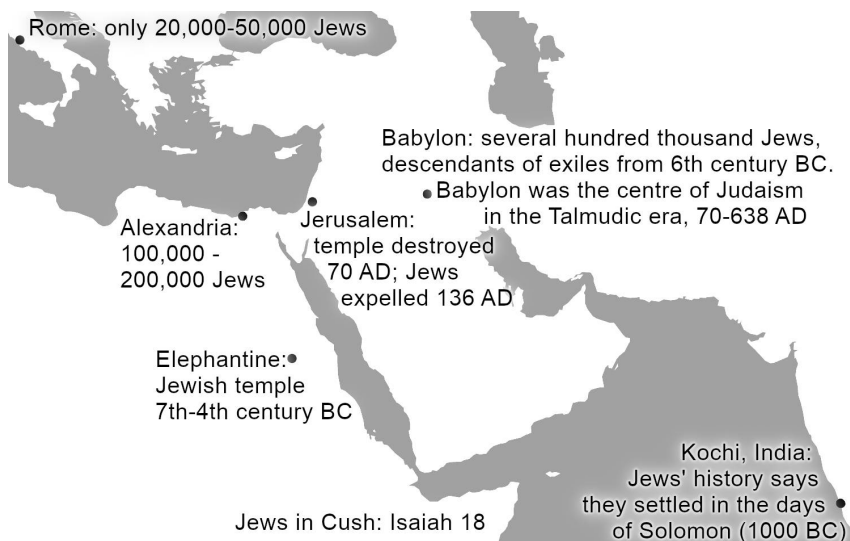
Tertullian lived between 150 and 220 AD, when Paul's letters were generally accepted as genuine. So he quotes them to support his arguments. But he is suspicious.

Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, book 5, chapter 1

See the chapter appendix for details.

Would apostles preach in those cities?

There is no archaeological evidence for Christians in the cities where Paul supposedly taught, until the time of Marcion. There was no reason to preach there in the first century. Jesus's goal was to bring back the diaspora to cleanse Jerusalem, so early missionaries would go to areas with high Jewish populations, such as Alexandria and Babylon.



Early Christian leaders were more likely to come from the East than the West. This was still true as late as the 300s AD:

There were more representatives from India and Persia at the council of Nicaea [325 AD] than there were from Western Europe.

The council of Nicaea had over three hundred delegates. The total number from Rome, western Europe and North Africa was probably fewer than ten people.⁷⁶¹ So when *“The Acts of the Apostles”* focuses on Rome, we know it is not a history of apostles, it has some other purpose.

760 *“The Romans and India”*, interview with William Dalrymple on “The Ancients” podcast, 5 September 2024. He notes that up to one third of Roman tax income came from trade with India, so trade in that direction was common.

761 There is no definitive list, but this summary is based on works by Eusebius (who was there), Athanasius of Alexandria, Socrates of Constantinople, etc. The summary was produced by the ChatGPT o1 model, which is generally reliable for such queries, and it agrees with Dalrymple’s quote.

More evidence that the letters are fake

- Some of the “letters of Paul” are such obvious forgeries that few scholars will defend them as being by Paul. These are the “pastoral” letters that were not in the earliest collection (by Marcion). They contradict the tone, content and timeline of the Marcion letters. So we know that the church had no problem with accepting forged Paul letters.
- Galatians 2:6 is written as if the apostles are all in the past, but they were supposed to still be alive and active.
- Paul is like Mary Sue fan fiction: it stars a super apostle who is better than the real apostles in every way:

“I am more [than the apostles]; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea...”
*“I face death every day”.*⁷⁶²

- The letters begin by telling the reader why they should believe the letter.⁷⁶³ Yet the letters are supposed to be to people who knew Paul.
- Real Roman letters tend to start simply, like “*Cicero greets Atticus*”. They then get straight to business. But Paul often starts by explaining who his audience is, as if he is writing to someone else.⁷⁶⁴
- The letters show signs of editing, as if the forger had worked on them for years, and only kept the best parts.⁷⁶⁵ (Although this could be due to the church’s later edits).

762 2 Cor 11:23-26, 1 Cor 15:31

763 E.g. “Paul, slave of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...” ... “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God...” ... “Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through a man, but through Jesus Christ and God...” ... “Paul, a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus...” - Romans 1:1, 2 Thess 1:1, 1 Cor. 1:1, Gal 1:1, Phil 1:1

764 e.g. “Paul, to the church of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.” 1 Corinthians 1:1. Many of these examples are from Hermann Detering, “The Falsified Paul: Early Christianity in the Twilight” egodeath.com/TheFabricatedPaul.htm

765 E.g. Richard Carrier says 1 Cor 8 does not join up well with 1 Cor 9, suggesting that either it is fake or it is changed. He thinks forgers do not work like that, but it is exactly how Joseph Smith changed his revelations, leading to contradictions. See Jerald and Sandra Tanner in “*Mormonism: Shadow or Reality*”.

- Paul's letters also reveal that their author is not Jewish. He certainly did not learn the Torah from Gamaliel, as Acts says: some of Paul's arguments rely on the Greek translation of scripture, whereas a student of the Torah would know it in Hebrew. For example: *"The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ."*⁷⁶⁶ Here, the author of Paul's letters relies on the Greek translation of Genesis 12:7 (Abraham's promise), where the word for "seed" is singular. But in Hebrew, it is "zera" which can be either singular or plural (and the context suggests plural). He betrays his Greek thinking again in Romans 1:16 where he divides the world into "Greek and non-Greek", and not into "Jew and Gentile".
- The description of the Jews being rejected in Romans 11, especially the parable of the branches being broken off, suggests that this was written after the destruction of the temple.
- The earliest writer to use Paul's letters (that we know of, after Marcion) was Justin Martyr. The letters' ideas are in Justin's work, but Justin does not quote Paul directly or refer to him by name.⁷⁶⁷ This is consistent with Paul being a controversial new invention by Marcion. It is not consistent with Paul being a respected early Christian.

So what do we know about the letters?

The letters rely on ideas from the Gnostics, like Simon Magus. The central theology is that Jesus had to die to pay a ransom for our sins. But pay whom? Pay God? Does God think innocent people should suffer so that guilty people do not? How is that fair or just or good? But the Gnostics teach that the highest god is pure truth and justice, and below him is a secondary god, the Demiurge ("skilled worker") who deal with the physical world. The Demiurge is the kind of god who wants blood and doesn't care how he gets it. The Demiurge thought up the idea of a scapegoat and killing innocent people in The Flood. So the Demiurge would be fine with an innocent person dying to pay for sins. So we need the Demiurge to make sense of Paul's theology.

So Paul's letters reflect Gnostic thinking. As another example of Gnostic thinking, the hymn to Christ in Philippians 2 appears to use Gnostic ideas from Valentinus, the companion of Marcion.

So it looks like Marcion wrote the letters, based on ideas from Simon Magus or later gnostics like Valentinus.

⁷⁶⁶ Galatians 3:16

⁷⁶⁷ Justin was well informed and dates after Marcion, so he must have heard of Paul. This essay argues for extensive Pauline influences: pursuingveritas.com/2021/12/15/the-letters-of-paul-in-justin-martyr-part-1/

Paul was Atomos

Paul (“small”) is the Latin equivalent of the Greek *Atomos* (“indivisible”, i.e. “smallest”). The word *Paul/Atomos* can refer to both his claimed humility and to the Gnostic beliefs of the Samaritans (belief in the monad).

Atomos appears in Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews*:

At the time when Felix was procurator of Judea [i.e. 52-60 AD], he beheld her [Drusilla, daughter of king Agrippa, wife of Azizus]; and, inasmuch as she surpassed all other women in beauty, he conceived a passion for the lady. He sent to her one of his friends, a Cyprian Jew named Atomos, who pretended to be a magician, in an effort to persuade her to leave her husband and to marry Felix.⁷⁶⁸

Atomos (later called “Simon Magus”) was the father of Gnosticism. His foundational text, “*The Great Declaration*” derives all reality from the starting point of the initial root, the one, the indivisible.

“Atomos” (often written with the Latin ending, *Atomus*) is Greek for “indivisible”, hence our word “atom”. The idea is that if we split something into smaller and smaller pieces, eventually we must stop because we have the smallest possible unit, the building block from which we can create all reality.⁷⁶⁹

Indivisibility is the foundation of Gnosticism: that everything starts with one indivisible reality (the one, the monad, God) and by logical inference this implies the existence of more complex abstractions (two is duality, three is complexity, etc.).

“Paulus” (“small”) comes from the Greek word *παύω* (*paúō*) meaning “to stop”. It may derive from Proto-Indo-European “*peh₂w-” (“few, small”), hence the Old Armenian “haw” (“beginning”). It is the same concept as “Atomos”: if we examine something in more and more detail, eventually we must stop, because we simplify a topic to its simplest possible point. This simplest truth (indivisible reality, the monad, the God) is the beginning and end of knowledge, the alpha and omega.⁷⁷⁰

We will now see that Atomos was Simon Magus, and the life and teachings of Simon Magus are the life and teachings of Paul, and these were edited by Marcion to suit his needs.

768 *Antiquities*, XX.7.2, from Harvard’s Loeb Classical Library”.

769 This was argued by the philosopher Democritus. Sadly, we only have his work via Aristotle (e.g. in his *Metaphysics*) who thought Democritus was wrong about atoms. But Democritus was right.

770 Revelation 1:8

Atomos was Simon Magus

Josephus wrote about Atomos in Greek. But later Latin translations change “Atomos” to “Simon”. i.e. Simon the magician: Simon Magus.

Some people argue that Atomos cannot be Simon Magus, because Josephus calls Atomos “*a Cyprian Jew*” whereas Justin Martyr (our best source on Simon) called him “*a Samaritan, Simon, a native of the village called Gitto*”. This would be a strong argument if Atomos was not a magician. But Atomos was a magician, and needed to become friends with Drusilla, the Jewish daughter of King Agrippa. So he had to present himself as a Jew. Atomos had to persuade Felix that he could make Drusilla fall in love, so it helped to say that he was from the island of Aphrodite, and not the local backwater of Gitto. Paul explains:

*To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.*⁷⁷¹



Paul before Drusilla and Felix (Acts 24). Compare Simon Magus and the same Drusilla. Picture by Hogarth (1752), out of copyright

771 1 Cor 9:20-22

The life of Simon Magus = Paul

- The Ebionites (the Jewish followers of Jesus) taught that Paul and Simon Magus were the same.
- Simon Magus often argued with Peter. Paul's letters show Paul arguing with Peter.
- Simon Magus began as the first of John the Baptist's thirty disciples. His lover Helena, and Dositheus were also in the thirty. When John died, Dositheus led the movement, but Simon soon succeeded him. In Acts, Paul is presented as being a faithful Jew who attacked the Christians before converting. This makes sense if Paul was Simon, the leader of John the Baptist's group. They were rival organisations. Josephus indicates that John's group was larger and more popular. Peter's group was causing trouble, as we will see, so it had to be stopped.
- Josephus thought Atamos was a Cypriot Jew.⁷⁷³ The letters of Paul give him a spokesman and travelling companion, Barnabas. Acts says that Barnabas' real name was Joseph, and he was a Cypriot Jew. Like Paul and Simon, Barnabas' gained status in the Jerusalem church by giving it money.⁷⁷⁴ It seems clear that Jerusalem was the poor relation to the northern churches. The northern churches (e.g. Antioch and Asia Minor) had the people and the money. Jerusalem had to beg for help from them.
- Paul came from Tarsus. The closest major city was Antioch. The name "Christian" was first used at Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas preached for a year.⁷⁷⁵ Sometimes Simon and Peter argued in Antioch. Antioch provided money, via Saul and Barnabas, for Judea during the famine in the time of Claudius. Simon's successor, Menander, was based at Antioch. Saturninus, the famous early Gnostic, was also based at Antioch. Antioch was "Antioch of Daphne" because of the temple of Daphne, famous for its temple prostitutes. Helena was accused of being a prostitute.
- Finally, in later stories Simon ended up in Rome with Peter, where he died. Similarly, Paul ended up in Rome, where he died.

772 E.g. in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, Simon Magus fights Peter, and everything Simon says sounds like Paul.

773 Perhaps he was born in Samaria and spent his formative years in Cyprus, then settled in Tarsus? Acts 22:3 distances Paul from Samaria by saying he was born in Tarsus.

774 Acts 4:36-37

775 Acts 11:25-26

The teachings of Simon Magus = Paul

- Simon Magus was the great enemy of Peter.⁷⁷⁶ So was Paul.⁷⁷⁷
- Simon Magus was accused of leading people to reject the laws of God. Paul's message was that we don't need the law of Moses.
- Revelation condemns teachings that sound like both Paul and Simon.⁷⁷⁸
- Simon Magus taught that the god of this world was evil, but he proclaimed a higher god. So did Paul.⁷⁷⁹
- Simon's doctrine was that *"The little will be great, being as a point, and the great illimitable."*⁷⁸⁰ Hence "Atomos". Paul's doctrine was *"Jesus made himself nothing ... Therefore God exalted him to the highest"*.⁷⁸¹
- Simon Magus *"appeared among the Jews as the Son, but descended in Samaria as the Father while he came to other nations in the character of the Holy Spirit."*⁷⁸² So did Paul: *"God's Spirit dwells in you"*⁷⁸³ and the people *"received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus."*⁷⁸⁴
- Simon Magus said his friend Helena was Eve from the Garden of Eden.⁷⁸⁵ Paul said that Jesus was the second Adam.⁷⁸⁶
- Simon Magus said that his followers would never die.⁷⁸⁷ So did Paul.⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁷⁶ E.g. in The Acts of Peter, or The Acts of Peter and Paul.

⁷⁷⁷ E.g. in Galatians 2:11-14 "I opposed him to his face".

⁷⁷⁸ The believers in Ephesus had apostles who they decided were fake. They disagreed with the Nicolaitans. (Isidore of Seville in AD 636 accused the Nicolaitans of wife-swapping. This may be related to the claim that Simon and his partner Helena encouraged debauchery.) Pergamos practised fornication and ate food sacrificed to idols. So did believers in Thyatira, who followed a prophetess called Jezebel, and explored "the depths of Satan", a possible reference to deep Gnostic doctrines. People "who say they are Jews but they are not" could be a reference to Hypsistarians.

⁷⁷⁹ 2 Cor 4:4 *"The god of this age ['aion', sometimes translated 'world'] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."*

⁷⁸⁰ Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies, book IV, chapter 51

⁷⁸¹ Phil 2:5-9

⁷⁸² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 1 chapter 23

⁷⁸³ 1 Cor 3:16-17, 1 Cor 6:19, Rom 8:9-11:

⁷⁸⁴ Galatians 4:14

⁷⁸⁵ Justin Martyr, First Apology, 50 (in some translations the section on Simon Magus is chapter 26, but scholars use the Greek numbering of 50).

⁷⁸⁶ 1 Cor 15:45-49

⁷⁸⁷ Justin Martyr

⁷⁸⁸ 1 Cor 15:51-52 *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump"*

Acts was heavily edited but based on real events

Acts contains details that suggest it is based on contemporary documents.⁷⁸⁹

Several passages are written in the first person, (“then *we* did this”),⁷⁹⁰ as if Acts is edited together from different texts.

Acts also contains some obviously fake material, such as people rising from the dead and floating into the sky. It has multiple statements that either contradict reliable history⁷⁹¹ or sound implausible.⁷⁹²

So Acts seems to be based on genuine documents but is edited by somebody who did not know the events. So it could have been edited long after the time in question.

Acts contradicts most of what is in Paul’s letters. Paul changes from an enemy of Peter to his friend. He changes from opposing circumcision to embracing it and circumcising his friend.⁷⁹³ Paul’s message changes from grace to resurrection. And his self-appointed title of apostle is never mentioned in Acts: that might offend Peter’s followers. In Acts, Paul is described as like Peter in every way.⁷⁹⁴

So it looks like Acts is based on genuine stories from the first century, but it was heavily edited after the appearance of Paul’s letters, to make Paul and Peter look like close friends.

789 E.g. Acts 12:1–2 (Herod Agrippa I), 18:12–17 (Gallio, Proconsul of Achaia); 23–24 (Felix, Governor of Judea); 25:13–27 (Festus, Successor to Felix); 14:8–13 (the worship of Zeus and Hermes in Lystra); Acts 19 (Ephesus and the Artemis Cult).

790 Acts 16:10–17 (the Journey to Macedonia and events in Philippi); Acts 20:5–15 (Travel from Troas to Miletus); Acts 21:1–18 (Journey from Miletus to Jerusalem); Acts 27:1–28:16 (Paul’s voyage to Rome). These passages often contain details that suggest they are eyewitness accounts.

791 E.g. Acts 9:1–2 says that Paul had authority from Jerusalem to arrest Christians in Damascus and bring them back. But Damascus was a city of King Aretas of Arabia, so Jerusalem had no authority there. Acts 10 has Peter meeting a centurion from the Italian regiment of troops in Caesarea. This was around 40 AD, but no such regiment was stationed there until 69 AD. There are many such problems. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_reliability_of_the_Acts_of_the_Apostles

792 E.g. Acts 22:3 says that Paul was taught by the famous Jewish teacher Gamaliel. There is plenty written about Gamaliel in Jewish sources. Why didn’t the Jews notice that his famous student created an opposing religion?

793 Timothy, in Acts 16:3. This is a very Greek name to emphasise that even Greeks should be circumcised.

794 In Acts, both men have their lives changed by a vision. Both men heal the sick. Both raise the dead. Both give major speeches outlining the same principles of the gospel. Both practice circumcision. Both are the one key figure in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. Both have lengthy missionary journeys. Both are imprisoned and released. And in the later tradition both Peter and Paul end up martyred in Rome.

Who was Saul?

In Acts chapter 5, followers who did not give all their money to the church ended up dead.⁷⁹⁵ This caused great fear, and not just among followers.

*And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.*⁷⁹⁶

Only the Roman state had the authority to kill people. So the Romans jailed the apostles. But a messenger (“angel”) set them free.⁷⁹⁷ This was a serious threat to Roman authority. A prominent believer named Stephen argued that a revolution was about to start.⁷⁹⁸ As the Romans could not stop them, they turned a blind eye when the Jews took Stephen outside the city and killed him.

The man who organised the killing was “called” Saul (“kaleō” Saul). he was not “named” Saul (he was not “onoma” Saul). “Kaleō” and “onoma” have different meanings. “Onoma” means your name, such as the name given at birth. But “kaleō” means this is what people call you: it could also be a nickname or a title. This “Saul” could hardly use his real name for an illegal act.⁷⁹⁹ Saul was a good code name, as it meant “desired” and was the name of Israel’s first king, as charismatic self-appointed leader. This “Saul” then began to track down and imprison believers.

It is unlikely that the believers knew Saul’s identity: he was “a young man” so he had no reputation (at least with them). He was acting illegally so would do his best to be anonymous. Believers could not afford to stand close by as the mob dragged Stephen out to kill him. And no believer could see Saul without being imprisoned: instead, they would avoid any hint of his presence. So “Saul” was a distant figure. We have no words from Saul until the later “conversion”. Having no words is unusual. But this fits with nobody being close enough to hear him.

Our biggest clue to Saul’s identity is how the church reacted. Acts 8:1-5 tells us that Saul was destroying the church in Jerusalem, and “therefore” everyone except the apostles left Jerusalem to preach elsewhere. Did they just give up on Jerusalem? No, Philip, their best preacher,⁸⁰⁰ headed for Samaria. But why Samaria? And why did he then meet somebody who was remarkably like Saul?

⁷⁹⁵ Acts 5:1-10

⁷⁹⁶ Acts 5:11

⁷⁹⁷ Acts 5:18-19

⁷⁹⁸ Acts 7: he compared the church to the revolutions under Abraham and Moses, and finished by declaring the messianic revolution (the son of man appearing next to God)

⁷⁹⁹ Acts 7:58

⁸⁰⁰ Based on his success with the Samaritans and then the Ethiopian official

Acts chapter 8: Saul was Simon Magus

In Acts chapter 8, the church was in crisis. So the best preacher immediately left for Samaria. Every person he spoke to became excited to follow Jesus.⁸⁰¹ We cannot explain that success simply by Jesus's message being tailored for Samaritans. If everyone accepted the message, this suggests something more.

As we will see, Simon Magus took over from John the Baptist, and eventually converted practically all of Samaria to the message. But Mark said that John intended Jesus to be his successor, but Jesus died. So when Philip brought a triumphalist message of Jesus, this explains the excitement. It also explains why Simon was ready to invest great resources into Philip's group: by combining both groups they could achieve their shared goal of a Jewish revolution.

Peter ruined everything. Philip needed Peter's approval. But when Peter came from Jerusalem he verbally attacked Simon and threatened him with death.⁸⁰² Simon, no doubt aware that people who opposed Peter tended to die, asked Peter to pray to the Lord that he (Simon) did not die.

After that, the mysterious "Saul" renewed his attacks on the Jerusalem church.

So Simon and Saul shared the same goals: the law of Moses. Saul was a strict follower of the law, and Simon led John's movement of repentance (i.e. stricter following of the law).

Simon and Saul also shared the same view of the Jerusalem sect led by Peter: they saw it as divisive and murderous. Saul was shocked by Stephen's claim that only his group had The Truth, and Simon was repelled by Peter's death threat after trying to unite the groups.

Simon and Saul also shared the same strategy: the relentless attack on the Jerusalem church. Later followers of Peter (and his successors) recalled Simon Magus as the original and greatest enemy of their church.

In summary, the identity of Saul was a mystery, but the church knew that Saul probably came from Samaria, and they knew that Saul was indistinguishable from Simon. Applying Occam's Razor, the book of Acts leads us to conclude that Saul was Simon, leader of John the Baptist's movement. Just as the later Ebionites (the original Jewish church) said.

⁸⁰¹ Act 8:5-8. Recall that "evil spirits" means depression or mental stress. So Philip's message was unusually exciting and uplifting to all.

⁸⁰² Acts 8:20 "thy money perish with thee" leading to Simon's concern in 8:24

Saul's conversion and the rest of the Book of Acts

Now that the Jerusalem church knew the identity of the Saul character, they could target him. Saul had to be persuaded again.

The blinding light could be metaphorical, or it could be achieved through using a mirror on a bright sunny day, just as Archimedes allegedly used mirrors to burn enemy ships in Syracuse.

In Acts 13:9, we learn that Saul is “also” Paul. Saul was never *renamed* Paul. We are merely told in passing that Saul was also known as Paul. Paul (“the small guy”) was a nickname. “Saul” (“the guy they asked for”) was probably also a nickname, for when he did not want to be known by his usual nickname (Paul). “Magus”

(magician) was not a nickname, it was just his occupation. “Simon” was probably his real name, because it was an extremely common name. That is why every Simon needed a nickname, to distinguish him from all the other Simons. For example, Jesus’s friend Simon was nearly always called Peter (“the rock”).

The rest of the Book of Acts could be more or less correct except that it is edited to make Paul seem like a friend of Peter.

Paul was probably beheaded by Nero in the mid 60s.⁸⁰³ In 68 AD Paul was already very unpopular.⁸⁰⁴ So presumably Paul helped to make the Christians unpopular with Nero. Nobody wanted to talk about him until Marcion revived his memory in 140 AD. By then, as he was largely forgotten, it was easy to think of the stories of the bad magus as being about a different person. The book of Acts avoids the problem of Paul’s controversial death by simply not talking about it.



Archimedes with his mirror, by De Vivo Tommaso (1800s), out of copyright

803 See “The Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Paul” in the Act of Paul. The story tries to argue that Paul converted a lot of people before he died, and then haunted Nero as a spirit. This sounds like a way to make a real event seem less unpleasant.

804 See the chapter on Revelation: the letters attack Paul’s teaching.

Christianity was mostly Samaritan and Gnostic

Justin Martyr said that most of Samaria followed Simon Magus (Atomos) and they called themselves Christians:

And almost all the Samaritans, and a few even of other nations, worship him [Simon], and acknowledge him as the first god; ... and [they] deny that God is the maker of this universe, and to assert that some other being, greater than He, has done greater works. All who take their opinions from these men, are, as we before said, called Christians”⁸⁰⁵

In contrast, only a tiny part of Judea followed Jesus. So the vast majority of Christians were in Samaria, following Simon. This is also true for most Christian break-off sects. Irenaeus said most “heresies” can be traced to Atomos and/or Gnosticism. So nearly all Christians and nearly all branches of Christianity were in Samaria.

Rome argued that Samaritans were heretics because they were like Gnostics. John the Baptist, whose group produced both Jesus and Simon, was also Gnostic (if his followers the Mandaeans are any guide). Rome’s main complaint against Gnosticism was that it had a god higher than the creator. But so did Jesus, according to the gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.⁸⁰⁶

So the Word was the creator-god and was Jesus. And he was with another God. John then says they are the same, but that could just mean they act as one. (The church took three hundred years to decide the exact relationship between Jesus and God, and it is still ambiguous.) In Mark, Jesus was below God. So the original teaching, and the teaching of the vast majority of Christians, was that the creator god (Jesus) worked for a higher god (God the father). That is just what the Samaritans taught.

The real reason why Rome hated the Samaritans was that the Samaritans did not obey an apostolic hierarchy. But Jesus taught them not to. Jesus said that if we want people to follow us, then we should earn their respect by helping them, so they want to follow of their own free choice. We should never appeal to authority as the Gentiles do.⁸⁰⁷ But the Roman church system was modelled precisely on the Gentile system, and this is why it was so successful in the 180s AD, as we will see.

805 Justin Martyr, First Apology, 50 (in some translations chapter 26), emphasis added

806 John 1:1-4

807 Mark 10:42-45

The real church: Judea or Samaria?

Judea claimed to have the real church because it claimed to have the apostles. But so what? The apostles were only with Jesus for two to four months, and they were wrong about most things. Jesus had to constantly rebuke and correct them.

The apostles were there just to help Jesus in the coming war with Caligula. And they were to lead by example, not by command. Jesus did not want a top-down hierarchy “like the Gentiles”. He wanted a kingdom of equals, as Moses intended.

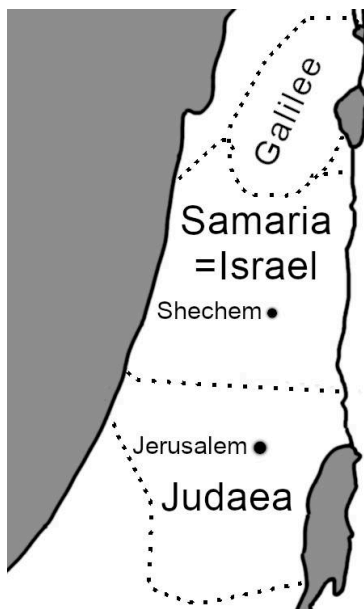
If the apostles settled in Jerusalem then they disobeyed Jesus. Jesus and all the other apostles came from Galilee, and Jesus told followers to gather in Galilee, not Jerusalem. Only Jesus’s brother James was to be based in Jerusalem, where he could watch over the temple and give advice.

Now recall Jesus’s two goals:

1. Cleanse the temple
2. Bring back the ten lost tribes.⁸⁰⁸

These were the Samaritans’ goals. The Samaritans felt the Jerusalem temple was corrupt. And the Samaritans were the ten lost tribes. They were never really lost. The elites were taken captive in 721 BC, but the common people remained. This is backed up by DNA studies.⁸⁰⁹ So Jesus’s goals were Samaritan goals.

Jesus was for all of Israel: all of the twelve tribes. Ten of those twelve tribes were in Samaria. If the apostles did expand beyond Galilee, then Samaria (the land of Israel) would be their natural home.



⁸⁰⁸ Mark 1:3: “*The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*”, quoting Isaiah 40:3-5 about the ten tribes returning.

⁸⁰⁹ “Detailed pedigrees of the last 13 generations show that the Samaritans comprise four lineages:

1. The priestly Cohen lineage from the tribe of Levi.
 2. The Tsedakah lineage, claiming descent from the tribe of Manasseh
 3. The Joshua-Marhiv lineage, claiming descent from the tribe of Ephraim
 4. The Danafi lineage, claiming descent from the tribe of Ephraim”
- Wikipedia, retrieved 23 July 2024, Citing Oefner et al (2013). “Genetics and the history of the Samaritans”. Human Biology Open Access Pre-Prints
It is hard for DNA studies to detect traces of any smaller tribes because very few Samaritans now survive.

Jesus loved Samaria

Later gospels tried to turn Jesus into the enemy of Samaria.⁸¹⁰ But who was closer to Jesus's original teachings? Judea or Samaria?

Jesus used "the good Samaritan" as the example to follow. In contrast, Jesus said we should not follow the people of Judah, the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Pharisees and Sadducees argued from tradition, but the Samaritans (or at least Atomos, in "*The Great Declaration*"), argued from logic. Jesus was the same. He used the Socratic method: ask a good question, then let the person work out the logic in their mind:

*Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?*⁸¹¹

*Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?*⁸¹²

*Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?*⁸¹³

*How can Satan cast out Satan?*⁸¹⁴

*Who are my mother and my brothers?*⁸¹⁵

*Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?*⁸¹⁶

*Whom do men say that I am?*⁸¹⁷

*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*⁸¹⁸

*Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it?*⁸¹⁹

So Jesus had the religion of Samaria, not Judea.

810 "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel." (Matthew 10:5-6), or see John chapter 4.

811 Mark 2:8-11

812 Mark 2:19-20

813 Mark 3:4

814 Mark 3:23

815 Mark 3:33

816 Mark 4:21

817 Mark 8:27

818 Mark 8:36-37

819 Mark 9:50

The earliest believers were like the Samaritans

The Didache is one of our earliest guides to how people followed Jesus. It dates to the late first century or mid-second century. It said that each group of believers should select their own bishops and deacons. And it showed how to tell a good teacher from a bad one, or a good apostle from a bad one. This implies that **there was no organised church structure** to tell them who to follow.

This also implies that there was nobody to say that even the Didache was official: each person had to listen to the voice of God inside them.

The Didache explains how Jesus was lord:

My child, remember night and day him who speaks the word of God to you, and honor him as you do the Lord. For wherever the lordly rule is uttered, there is the Lord.

So not only was there no church hierarchy, but everyone who served God and spoke what God would speak became the lord. This was the basis of Atomos' teaching: insofar as you follow God and do what he would do, you become (to all intents and purposes) God. So the Didache, our best guide to the early church, teaches Atomos' doctrine.

The people around Jesus also shared Atomos' belief in reincarnation:

And Jesus [...] asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.⁸²⁰

John the Baptist said that we can receive not just the spirit of some dead person, but the spirit of God himself!

[John the Baptist said] I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost [the spirit of God].⁸²¹

In summary, the religion of Atomos was the religion of Jesus. Or closer to the religion of Jesus than it than the hierarchical structure that came later.

How did the early religion change? And how did the letters of Paul preserve some of the older teachings? It's time to look at how Christianity became Christianity.

820 Mark 8:27-28

821 Mark 1:8

Atomos' teachings created Christianity (How Chrestianity became Chrĭstianity)

Step 1: moving north to the Hypsistarians

The Book of Revelation is our only guide to the church in the 60s AD.⁸²² It begins by condemning the teachings of Nicholas, which had spread to seven cities in Asia. These teachings are very similar to the teachings of Paul. But how did this Samaritan religion spread north?



Archaeology has found evidence of Hypsistarians ("people of the most high") in Bithynia, Pontus, Cappadocia, and further up the coast. They probably date from the 2nd century BC or before. Hypsistarians had beliefs similar to the letters of Paul: they considered themselves brothers of the Jews from Jerusalem, and kept the sabbath and dietary laws, but they did not follow the law of Moses.

*The existence of these Hypsistarians must have been partially responsible for the astounding swiftness of the spread of Christianity in Asia Minor.*⁸²³

So that explains how Jesus's followers felt at home moving north.

822 See the chapter on Revelation: the book dates itself to 68 AD

823 New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia newadvent.org/cathen/07611a.htm

Step 2: Chrestians are in demand in Pontus

The Asian province of Bithynia and Pontus was a crucial trading route between the Black Sea and Rome. But the local rulers were corrupt. Official records were faked. Expensive building projects were abandoned with the suspicion that officials had taken the money. So in 112 AD the emperor Trajan sent his friend Pliny the Younger to bring law and order.

*"You were sent to your province for the express reason that there seemed to be many abuses rampant there which required correction."⁸²⁴
... "The examination of their public accounts must be one of your first duties, for it is fairly evident that they have been tampered with."⁸²⁵*

Pliny found that nobody cared about their neighbours. When there was a major fire, nobody made any effort to put it out, they just stood and watched. There was not a single water pump or bucket in the whole town! The people were so corrupt that the government could not even organise a fire brigade without it becoming a secret criminal gang. Trajan noted:

"Your province of Bithynia, and especially city states like Nicomedia, are the prey of factions. Whatever name we may give to those who form an association, and whatever the reason of the association may be, they will soon degenerate into secret societies."⁸²⁶

So one of the first things that Pliny did was to ban secret societies of any kind. Then he found a very strange thing: One of the secret societies was different from all the others. Instead of plotting to get money, they plotted to be honest! They met in secret, before sunrise, and took this sacred oath:

"To abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and from breach of faith, and not to deny trust money placed in their keeping when called upon to deliver it."

So the group was a business club: a club of people who promised not to defraud anybody. These were the only people in Bithynia and Pontus that anyone could trust. So the group was in demand: it spread to every part of the province. This is the first reliable evidence of Chrestian growth.

Pliny had to shut the group down, because the rule was "no secret societies". Also, the rest of society was so corrupt that the Chrestians did not join in with civic activities. So they had to be opposed. But this business club would eventually replace the corrupt Roman authorities.

824 Trajan to Pliny, Letter 32. <http://www.attalus.org/old/pliny10a.html>

825 Trajan to Pliny, Letter 17b

826 Trajan to Pliny, Letter 34

Step 3: the Jerusalem church collapses

The hardline Zadokites (Sadducees) were such bad neighbours to the Romans that the Romans finally got sick of them. After one more rebellion, by would-be messiah Bar Kochba, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and expelled most Jews from Judea. So that included the Chrestians. This was an unparalleled disaster, far worse than the smaller-scale exiles of leaders under Assyria and Babylon. The temple, the centre of Jewish worship, would never be rebuilt.

The people of Bithynia and Pontus were well aware of the disaster for the Jews, because the emperor chose a local man from Sinope, Marcion's city, to rebuild Jerusalem as a Roman city. Local traders from Sinope, like Marcion, would no doubt deliver supplies.

*"Hadrian then renamed Jerusalem Aelia Capitolina in honor of himself ... According to Epiphanius, Hadrian appointed **Aquila from Sinope in Pontus** as 'overseer of the construction of erecting the city' because he was connected to him by marriage. Aquila was responsible for removing or covering the signs of Judaism that filled the walled city and refacing it in the Roman style that is now evident in the excavations all across today's Old City."*⁸²⁷

Some of the exiled Jews settled nearby on the Black Sea coasts. Again, local ship owners would no doubt carry them.

*"Some argue that those Jews who survived the Hadrianic persecutions after the Bar Kochba revolt were exiled to the Crimea."*⁸²⁸

*"Jerome (d. 420; on Zech. 10:11, Obad. 20) heard from Jews that the Jewish settlers by the Bosphorus were descended from families exiled by the Assyrians and Babylonians and from deported warriors of Bar Kokhba; the Bosphorus was called by the Jews 'Sepharad.' [i.e. Spain: recall how the Paul character planned to go to Spain]"*⁸²⁹

So Marcion was well aware of the scale of the disaster. Judaism failed. Yet business for Chrestians was booming. So how could the Jesus movement survive? Marcion had money and skills to help Aquila rebuild Jerusalem, but why rebuild a city that God had obviously abandoned?

Notice the name of the man from Sinope who rebuilt Jerusalem: **Aquila**. In the letters of Paul, Aquila and his wife Priscilla are the driving force behind the new church. For example, they taught Apollos. We will study the work of Priscilla next.

⁸²⁷ thejudean.com/index.php/history/63-hadrian-the-bar-kochba-revolt-the-jewish-diaspora-begins-117-138

⁸²⁸ njop.org/jews-and-crimea/

⁸²⁹ jewishvirtuallibrary.org/crimea-ukraine-virtual-jewish-history-tour

Step 4: the New Jerusalem

Jesus's goal was to cleanse the temple. But the plan failed. To make things worse, the temple was destroyed and the Jews were forced to leave the city. Perhaps the only healthy group of followers was in Philadelphia. They had a plan: to become a pillar of a *new* temple of God in a *new* Jerusalem:

*"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ... The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God."*⁸³⁰

After the Bar Kochba disaster, Priscilla (or another prophetess) had a vision of Christ, in the form of a woman. Priscilla was important: she may have written the letter to the Hebrews.⁸³¹ Christ told her to build New Jerusalem at Tymion and Pepouza. This was not treated as a supernatural thing until later, so it could have just been a gathering place.⁸³²



Modern Bible scholars treat Tymion as a minor footnote in Christian history. This is because they tend to not study new religions. So they do not know their subject. New religions routinely begin with a new holy city.⁸³³

Over the following decades, the city of Rome won the battle to become that new holy city, but at the moment when Christianity was born, for believers in prophecy (Montanists), Tymion and Pepouza were the New Jerusalem.

⁸³⁰ Revelation 3:7

⁸³¹ See *"Priscilla's Letter: Finding the Author..."* by Ruth Hoppin.

⁸³² For an overview of sources, see *"Revelation 21 and the Montanist 'New Jerusalem'."* By William Tabbernee, Australian Biblical Review 37 (1989).

⁸³³ E.g. Judaism and Jerusalem; Yazidis and Lalish; Sikhism and Amritsar; Islam and Mecca; Mormonism and Independence then Salt Lake City; etc.

Step 5: Marcion came to Rome

The Chrestians of Bithynia and Pontus were determined to be honest with everyone. They may have been the only honest traders in the region. The region did a lot of trade, so word got around. So Chrestian traders made a lot of money.

The city of Sinope chose a local man to head their group.⁸³⁴ His son, Marcion, was a ship owner. Marcion made a lot of money. He had a big new idea, summed up in a simple question: what did Jesus mean when he said “*don’t put new wine into old bottles*”?

*And he began—at the very beginning, as it were, and as though at the starting-point of the questions at issue—to put this question to the elders of that time: “Tell me, what is the meaning of, ‘Men do not put new wine into old bottles...’?”*⁸³⁵

Marcion observed that the Jewish religion had failed. But over in Pontus, they stopped trying to be Jewish long ago. Instead, they kept it simple: just be good, united under the name of Jesus. Marcion’s Chrestians were growing like crazy! He gained followers in “*Rome and Italy, Egypt and Palestine, Arabia and Syria, Cyprus and the Thebaid [southernmost parts of Egypt]—in Persia too moreover, and in other places.*”⁸³⁶

God blessed them with a lot of business: a lot of money. Yet the Roman Chrestians were struggling. So around 140 AD, Marcion visited Rome with his new ideas and gave them 200,000 sesterces (equivalent to about 170 years’ pay for a soldier).⁸³⁷

Marcion showed that the new streamlined Jesus movement could beat the world. After a hundred years of failure, this was exciting news to the Chrestians of Rome. Marcion deeply impressed a candidate for bishop (Pope?)⁸³⁸ called Valentinus. Valentinus added his own ideas and created “Gnosticism” as we know it. At first, the church in Rome was excited by Marcion and Valentinian. Tertullian (155-220 AD) describes “*their ever restless curiosity, with which they even infected the brethren*”.⁸³⁹

834 According to the Didache, each group chose its own overseer or “bishop”.

835 Epiphanius’ Panarion, Against Marcion

836 Epiphanius, Panarion (written 374-377), “Against Marcionites” (late 200s).

837 A Roman legionary was paid at 3.3 sesterces per day. Half of that was deducted for board and lodging. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sestertius>

838 Tertullian, “Adversus Valentinianos” (“Against Valentinians”) 4: “Valentinus expected to become bishop because he had great abilities of mind and tongue”. Tertullian thinks Valentinus created Gnosticism as revenge for not getting the job. tertullian.org/articles/riley_adv_val/riley_03_translation.htm They were in Rome, so “bishop” would mean bishop of Rome, i.e. (later) Pope.

839 Tertullian, “Against Marcion” chapter XXX

Marcion could “discover” new letters as needed

Marcion could produce a letter “by Paul” whenever he needed one. For example, any missionary for a new religion knows that the first objection is “I already have a religion”. So Marcion then “stumbled upon” an old letter of Paul to the Galatians where Paul vilified the original apostles for not accepting some new truth:

[regarding] Tertullian (Against Marcion 4.3):115

In this passage, Tertullian [argues that they have the apostles do they do not need Marcion and Luke] Nevertheless, Tertullian continues, Marcion stumbled upon the letter of Paul to the Galatians, in which he vilifies even the apostles for not walking in accordance the truth of the gospel, etc.: Sedenim Marcion nactus epistolam Pauli ad Galatas... (“But now, since Marcion discovered the letter of Paul to the Galatians...”). Nancisci means “to attain by accident” (e.g., a suitable harbor: idoneum portum). Tertullian clearly seems to allude here to the claim by the Marcionites, or Marcion himself, that Marcion had accidentally and fortunately “discovered” the letter of Paul to the Galatians.’⁸⁴⁰

This behaviour is common (or is commonly alleged) in new religions. When a leader’s position is weak, he will “discover” a convenient ancient text or divine revelation.⁸⁴¹ For example, critics of Mormonism make lists of “*The Mormon Revelations of Convenience*”⁸⁴² such as when Joseph Smith lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon: he then discovered an ancient prophecy that said there was a backup plan in case something like that happened. Similarly, critics of Islam refer to the prophet’s “just in time” revelations,⁸⁴³ such as when Mohammed made rules about marriage, then (allegedly) created new rules whenever he needed an exception to the old rule. The most famous example of conveniently discovering a text is the book of Deuteronomy. When King Josiah wanted to break the law of Moses (by centralising power at his temple) he conveniently discovered a forgotten book by Moses saying that this was okay.

So it was perfectly normal for Marcion to “find” a new letter whenever he needed to solve a problem.

840 Hermann Detering, “*The Falsified Paul: Early Christianity in the Twilight*”
egodeath.com/TheFabricatedPaul.htm

841 By Floyd C. McElveen. For example, when Joseph Smith lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, he then discovered an ancient prophecy that said there was a backup plan in case something like that happened. Critics of Islam also refer to his “just in time” revelations. wikiislam.github.io/wiki/Muhammad%27s_Just_In_Time_Revelations.html

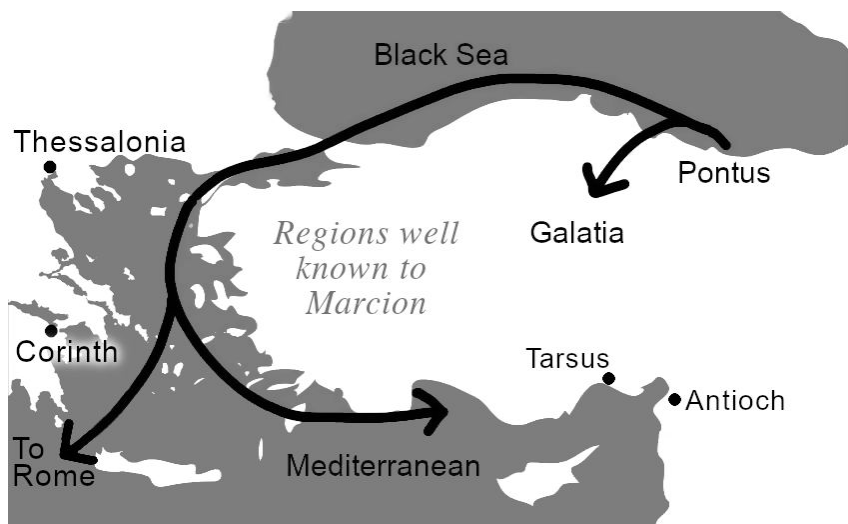
842 the book by Floyd C. McElveen

843 wikiislam.github.io/wiki/Muhammad%27s_Just_In_Time_Revelations.html

The letters reflect Marcion's career

Only seven letters are considered to be “definitely” by Paul. They tell the story of Marcion's career.

The locations give us an overview of Marcion's expanding organisation. He lived in Pontus, then first expanded to neighbouring Galatia. He then continued to Thessalonica, then to Corinth, then finally to Rome. The locations reflect how Marcion's movement grew.



Here are the seven original “authentic” letters of Paul, in order:

Letter 1 (to Galatia): Marcion justified his new organisation

Marcion's great message was “new wine in new bottles”. Meaning, there is no need to continue the law of Moses. This offended his Jewish listeners. So Marcion produced a letter that he said was from Atomos (or in Latin, “Paul”), the teacher who inspired the majority of the early believers.⁸⁴⁵ In the letter, Atomos says we do not need to follow the law of Moses.

Marcion added details that were well known: e.g. that the Jerusalem church

844 The list of “authentic” letters, and their order, is from Wikipedia, retrieved December 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pauline_epistles#Order See the individual letters for their alleged dates. The dates may be fake, but the order matters.

845 See the discussion of Samaria, earlier in this chapter

had a crisis 14 years after Jesus, and this was due to offending other Jews.⁸⁴⁶ This probably referred to the Jerusalem Council of 50 AD, where they debated whether circumcision was needed for converts. This is yet more evidence that Jesus's ministry took place in early 37 AD.⁸⁴⁷

Letter 2 (to Thessalonica):

Marcion defended a hole in his argument

Marcion's goal was to expand his business club, so his second letter was to the major trading hub: Thessalonica, the gateway to the Aegean.

Marcion's business club used Jesus as a mascot: a symbol of honest dealing. Jesus effectively became the god of honesty. But this created a problem: Jesus promised to come back to lead a revolution. But the revolution never happened and Jesus never came back. How could a god of honesty break his promise? So Marcion produced a letter saying that Jesus would miraculously come back as a god. A god could have any timescale he wanted, so any delay is not a problem.

Letters 3 and 4 (to Corinth):

The business club had internal divisions

As the club expanded past Thessalonica and into Corinth, it had problems associated with growth. One problem is that new people ask new questions. Many Greeks in Corinth were trained in philosophy, so they had questions about the new teaching of a supernatural resurrection. So Marcion addressed this in his letter to the city.⁸⁴⁸

A more serious problem was that a growing business club naturally had divisions. Other people wanted to be in charge. They claimed that they had the right talents for leadership: or as Marcion puts it, "spiritual gifts". So Marcion addressed this topic. Worse, some people were suing other club members for money. Marcion had to address that as well.

The business divisions grew worse, so Marcion needed a follow-up letter. The club was obviously not making its members rich, even though it made Marcion very rich. This is common in new high-demand religions: the leader is rich, while promising riches to his followers, yet the followers are

846 Galatians 2:1. Jesus's ministry was in the spring of 37 AD, and many scholars think that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome around 50 AD, leading to the Jerusalem council described in Acts. For details, see the chapter on the early church and dating the Gospel of Mark.

847 In the ancient world, "14 years" would include parts of years, so we would call this 13 years and some months. That is, 14 years takes us from early 37 AD to 50 AD.

See the chapter on Revelation for resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15

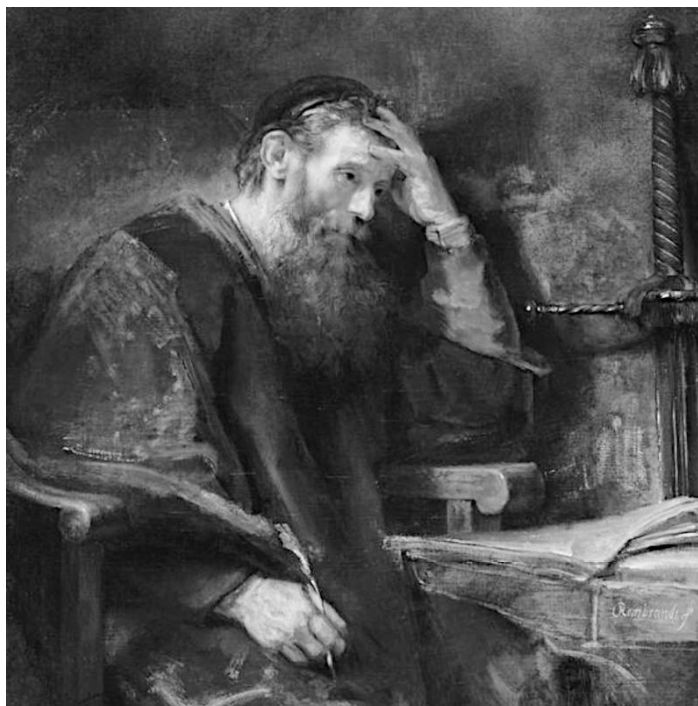
poor. So in the second Corinthian letter, Marcion (as Paul) reassured people that suffering is normal, and club members should still be generous in their gifts. They should still follow him.

Letter 5 (to Rome): Rome turned against Marcion

Later historians recall how Rome was initially dazzled by Marcion, then turned against him. So the letter to Rome was his magnum opus: his longest and strongest argument against the law of Moses. But it did not work. Or at least, not as he intended.

Letter 6 (to Philippi): Marcion felt trapped in Rome

Rome now opposed Marcion. Marcion (as Paul) began to talk about being imprisoned. He felt depressed, talking about wanting to die and be with Christ. He encouraged his friends to endure the bad times. He urged a long-term view: yes they were losing, but they would win in the end. Marcion's plan was falling apart. He acted confident but he knew that he had failed.



Paul, by Rembrandt, public domain

Letter 7 (to Philemon): Marcion felt betrayed. He had failed.

And so we come to the final “authentic” letter. This is a short letter of frustration, despair and anger. It is addressed to Philemon, Archipus and Apphia. Marcion/Paul again felt chained. The letter is about a servant “Onesimus” (“useful”) who has betrayed Marcion’s friend Philemon. Marcion wants Onesimus to come back to Philemon, and promises to forgive.

This letter has parallels to the eventual fall of Alexander the Great’s kingdom. Like Alexander, Marcion has great success in many nations.⁸⁴⁹ Like Macedonia, Marcion then wanted to add Rome to the list. But his followers would not do it (they were persuaded by Jewish members to return to the law of Moses).⁸⁵⁰

Onesimus was the advisor who betrayed the kingdom of Macedonia to the Romans. This brought the downfall of Macedonia, once the proud kingdom of Alexander. Maybe Onesimus did the right thing: Macedonia was certain to lose a war with Rome, just as Marcion could not win a battle against tradition. But Onesimus is remembered as the servant who switched sides and destroyed the kingdom.⁸⁵¹

Marcion (Paul) says that Onesimus left Marcion’s “Philemon” (meaning “embrace”). So Marcion’s club cannot have “Apphia” (growth).⁸⁵² Also notice that Philemon (“lover”) and Archipus (“ruler of horses”) together make Philip (“lover of horses”), the king who Onesimus once followed.

Marcion wanted his Onesimus to return to his embrace (his Philemon), but it was too late. Marcion felt chained. Like Macedonia, he could not defeat Rome. He had failed. Rome had won.

849 “The sect is still to be found even now, in Rome and Italy, Egypt and Palestine, Arabia and Syria, Cyprus and the Thebaid—in Persia too moreover, and in other places.” - Epiphanius, the Panarion, “Against Marcion”

850 Galatians 3:1, “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?”

851 “Onesimus the son of Pytho, a Macedonian of high rank, who had always urged peaceful counsels on the king and advised him to keep up the custom, which his father Philip had observed to the last days of his life, of reading over twice daily the text of his treaty with Rome, or if he could not always do so, to do it frequently. When he saw that he could not deter him from war, he gradually withdrew himself on various pretexts from attendance on the king so that he might not be involved in proceedings which he did not approve of. At last, when he found that he had aroused suspicion and that now and again charges of treason were brought against him, he went over to the Romans and became extremely useful to the consul” - Livy, history of Rome, 44.16, concerning the third Macedonian war. Onesimus gave Rome valuable information, which led to the fall of Macedonia in 168 BC.

852 Apphia probably means to “add or increase”: Hebrew “yasap”. Yasap (Joseph) conquered Egypt through economic growth, so he is a natural parallel for Marcion’s dream of conquering Rome through business.

The Roman church edited Marcion's originals

The small church in Rome did not want to reject the law of Moses. But it admired Marcion's enormous success. How could they combine the law of Moses with Marcion and gain some of his strength?

Justin Martyr had the answer. Justin came from Samaria, so he understood Atomos (Paul). But he also loved the Jewish church and he loved philosophy. Justin was perfectly placed to combine Marcionism with the Old Testament that Marcion rejected.

Ever since the time of the Book of Revelation, Simon Magus had been out of fashion. So most people did not know his history. So they could easily assume that Simon and Paul were different people. This allowed Justin to imagine his own version of Paul: a compromise between Simon and Peter.

The Roman church then added new verses to the letters of Paul. The result is a text that zig-zags between being anti-Jewish and pro-Jewish.⁸⁵³

*"To explain Paul's zigzagging we don't have to resort to strained psychological or tactical explanations. Anyone who has read mainstream Pauline commentaries knows what I am talking about. They contain seemingly endless psychological reasons why Paul shifts back and forth on the contentious issues that separated the proto-orthodox from the early gnostics."*⁸⁵⁴

The Roman church then said that the zig-zagging text was the original. But if so, why do many variant readings of Paul's letters agree with Marcion? if the zig-zag version was first, then this means that multiple copyists independently changed the text to be closer to the heretic Marcion. Why would they do that? It is far more likely that the more heretical version was earlier and that it was changed to suit the followers of Peter.

*"Marcion's predates just about any of our biblical manuscripts of Luke and Paul, [and also] a number of variant readings we've known of, from across different manuscripts, agree with Marcion's wording exactly ... the only people who record that he cut away from the text lived well after him and had what can only be called a strong bias against him..."*⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵³ We can partly reconstruct Marcion's simpler version, based on Tertullian's attack in "Against Marcion". Example: gnosis.org/library/marcion/Galatian.htm

⁸⁵⁴ Roger Parvus, "Was Marcion Right about Paul's letters?" vridar.org/2012/01/23/was-marcion-right-about-pauls-letters/

⁸⁵⁵ From a summary of "*The First New Testament*" by Jason BeDuhn. reddit.com/r/AcademicBiblical/comments/z7ikie/marcions_alterations_to_pauline_epistles/

144-180 AD: the church wrote *many* books

Marcion gave the Christians confidence. Instead of trying to persuade all the other Jews they would embrace their difference. Instead of trying to satisfy the scriptures, they would write new scriptures, like Marcion did. Instead of trying to keep the law perfectly, they would argue for new laws like Marcion did. But they did not have to go as far as Marcion.

Perhaps most important, instead of being meek and persecuted, they would rule! Seeing Marcion must have been difficult for the followers of Peter. A hundred years of sacrifice counted for nothing, while the upstart Marcion got all the money and converts. But now that they had vanquished Marcion they could adopt some of his ideas and get the growth and money that they felt they deserved.

This was an exciting era: the birth of a new religion. Christians began to write like crazy: new gospels; new histories of the apostles; new apologetics, arguing why every other kind of Christianity was wrong. They used the genius of Justin Martyr, and new writers like Tertullian and Irenaeus, to challenge every Marcionite, and win. It is likely that the New Testament canon as we know it was settled by around 170 AD.⁸⁵⁶

Above all, they embraced Marcion's idea of Jesus as their symbol. Jesus became their object of worship: not just an angelic messenger from God, as in Revelation, but practically God himself. The new gospels turned Jesus into a supernatural being.

It would take another two hundred years to persuade monotheists to define Jesus as fully equal to God, but they finally managed it. Christianity, the religion of the servant, was dead. Christianity, the religion of the anointed ruler, was taking over the world.

They had to pretend that Marcionism was just another heresy and they were the originals. But they could not hide the fact: Marcion started this revolution. All the great debates that followed began with Marcion. All the early historians agree on this point.⁸⁵⁷

856 David Trobisch, (2000). "The First Edition of the New Testament."

857 Epiphanius: "For all of these sprouted from the ground at the same time ... in an instant like the ugliness of toadstools. This has been said of them already, by the most holy Irenaeus." - Panarion 31, "Against Valentinians". See also Tertullian, "Against Marcion" chapter XXX, "Comparative Lateness of Heresies". The only major "heresy" that was earlier than Marcion was that of the Ebionites (the Jewish believers). But their heresy was simply to believe the earliest gospels: that Jesus was a man, not a god, and he was Jewish. This is why it became so important to claim that Paul was early and genuine, to counter the Ebionites who say the Roman church changed the doctrine.

How the books were written

How were these books written? Were they deliberate forgeries? We know the answer, thanks to *“The Acts of Paul and Thecla.”* This is one of the many books that sanitised Paul. It may reflect the story of Simon and Helena, but it changes the name Helena (meaning “the bright one”) to Thecla (“theo-kleia”, “God’s glory”). It shows Paul as teaching abstinence, just like Marcion. It shows Thecla as the woman he adores, just as Simon adored Helena. But it shows her as forever suffering and forever pure. And it makes the mistake of showing a woman as having authority over men. So the Roman church denounced it. This is lucky for us, as we get to see how a book like this was written:

“But if certain Acts of Paul, which are falsely so named, claim the example of Thecla for allowing women to teach and to baptize, let men know that in Asia the presbyter who compiled that document, thinking to add of his own to Paul’s reputation, was found out, and though he professed he had done it for love of Paul, was deposed from his position.”⁸⁵⁸

So we see that random people wrote their own versions of famous stories. Their motivation was to “add to the reputation” of the famous authors. Sometimes the message was popular with the Roman church, like the Acts of Peter, which claims that Peter came to Rome. Those books were encouraged. But if the book was not popular with Rome, like this book, then it was denounced and rejected.



Paul and Theoclia, mother of Thecla (6th century fresco), Public Domain via Wikimedia

⁸⁵⁸ Tertullian, “On Baptism”, 17:5

Every orthodox book was written after Marcion

Justin Martyr used an Aramaic version of Matthew that was soon abandoned by the church, and Matthew relied heavily on Mark. So Aramaic Matthew and Mark both pre-date Marcion. But what about our current versions of Matthew, and the rest of the New Testament?

Markus Vinzent spent years carefully teasing out the differences between Marcion's texts and our orthodox texts. He concludes that Marcion's texts have no references to anything in the Book of Acts, or any other orthodox texts. Most scholars still think that some orthodox New Testament texts must predate Marcion, but Vinzent says that view is now untenable.⁸⁵⁹

Before Marcion, we only had Mark and Aramaic Matthew (and maybe somebody had Marcion's Luke). Everything else was written as a response to Marcion.

Vinzent points out that Eusebius, in his history of the church, records everything in order, according to who was the Roman Emperor at the time. Eusebius discusses the writing of the Gospel of Mark in Book II, in the time of Claudius (41-54 AD). He does not discuss the writing of other gospels until Book III, in the time of Trajan (96-117 AD). But even there he indicates that he is doing so out of order, and only places the discussion there because he just discussed John and Irenaeus' claim that John was exiled in the time of Trajan. Eusebius returns to the topic of the writing of the gospels when he discusses the time of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD). He refers to Irenaeus, who was active at this time.

Irenaeus is the most likely candidate for the final editor of the gospels. It was common at that time to edit different gospel material into a harmonious single gospel. So Irenaeus would not see his edits as worth mentioning.

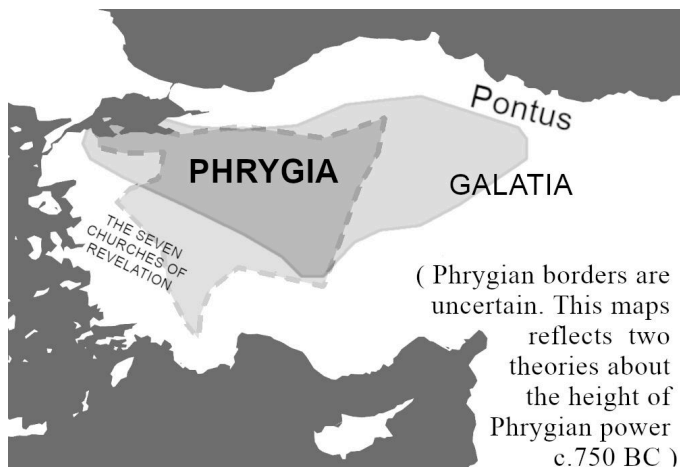
	Augustus
	Tiberius
37	Caligula
42	Claudius: Mark
54	Nero
	4 emperors
	Vespasian
	Titus
	Domitian
96	Nerva
	Trajan: Growth in Pontus; new gospels
117	Hadrian
132-6	Jewish catastrophe
140-44	Marcion in Rome
	Antoninus Pius
161	Marcus Aurelius: Final edits
180	Commodus

859 From an interview with Markus Vinzent on the New Books Network podcast, about Vinzent's book "Resetting the Origins of Christianity: A New Theory of Sources and Beginnings" (Cambridge UP, 2022). He also talks of a book on Marcion that he is currently writing.

Why the Roman church won

The Roman church was a small group of hated Jews, while Marcion's movement was popular, and growing rapidly. Yet, between 140 AD and 200 AD, the Roman faction defeated the Marcionites. How?

Montanus, a friend of Priscilla, preached for the need for new prophecy: perhaps Marcion's business club left people spiritually hungry? This need for prophets was later known as Montanism or "The Phrygian heresy". There were so many new prophets in Phrygia that it became known as "Scorched Phrygia",⁸⁶⁰ like the much later "burned over district" in New York State. Phrygia was burned over by endless fiery preaching.



Marcion proved that there was a lot of money in religion. This led to crooked "prophets" who only wanted money. These new prophets were very charismatic, but the church could tell there was something wrong:

"Tell me, does a prophet dye his hair? Does a prophet stain his eyelids? Does a prophet delight in adornment? Does a prophet play with tables and dice? Does a prophet lend on usury?"⁸⁶¹

Now we see why Rome won the argument. The Roman presbyters (the hierarchy of bishops) could spot fraudsters and kick them out.⁸⁶² They could settle arguments. They could guarantee standards. They invented orthodoxy. People felt safe with the Roman church.

⁸⁶⁰ Epiphanius' Panarion, on the Encratites, 64.1.1

⁸⁶¹ E.g., Alexander, a very popular preacher, who was convicted of multiple robberies, and was rejected by his own congregation. - Eusebius, History 5.18.6-11

⁸⁶² Presbyters moved in to attack the wild preachers. E.g. Eusebius 5.16.5

180-312 AD: finally, a BIG reason to be Christian

In 180 AD Marcus Aurelius, the last good emperor, died. This was the end of the 200-year “Roman Peace” (“Pax Romana”). Good Marcus Aurelius was replaced by evil Commodus, arguably the worst emperor Rome ever had. The movie “Gladiator” is set at this time, but most historians say Commodus was even worse than in the movie. This began the slow decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

Nobody could be trusted. Officials were all corrupt. Crime and misery were everywhere. Ordinary people longed for a way out. A famous Roman described the situation to his friend:

"This seems a cheerful world, Donatus, when I view it from this fair garden under the shadow of these vines. But if I climbed some great mountain and looked out over the wide lands, you know very well what I would see; brigands on the high road, pirates on the seas, in the amphitheaters men murdered to please the applauding crowds, under all roofs misery and selfishness. It really is a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. Yet, in the midst of it, I have found a quiet and holy people. They have discovered a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of this sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are the Christians... and I am one of them." ⁸⁶³

Here was the same corruption that we saw in Bithynia and Pontus, but across the whole empire. And the Christians had the solution.

The church copied the political structure of the Roman Empire. They provided a trusted alternative at every level. The bishop of Rome became the “Roman pontiff”, copying the Pontifex Maximus, the chief priest of the College of Pontiffs, the highest religious authority in Rome. The Pontiff (Pope) created the office of cardinals to advise him, copying the structure of the Roman senate. Cardinals would discuss doctrine at ecumenical councils, modelled on senatorial assemblies. They created canon law, modelled on the Roman legal system. The Pope ruled each region of the empire via a system of archbishops, copied from provincial governors. Each bishop (or archbishop or cardinal) needed a bureaucracy to handle day-to-day needs, so the Pope created the “curia”, comprised of congregations, tribunals and councils, modelled on Roman imperial bureaucracy. Each local congregation had deacons (church servants) to manage church property and charitable work, modelled on Aediles who managed buildings and festivals. Priests performed liturgical services and pastoral care, modelled on local magistrates and officials who ran the

⁸⁶³ St Cyprian’s letter to his friend Donatus, explaining why he joined the Christians, around 246 AD. This letter is widely shared among Christians, but it is hard to find the source. It may be a later summary of the more verbose “first epistle of Cyprian”, which expresses the same sentiments. www.newadvent.org/fathers/050601.htm

public services (who were themselves modelled on the priests of older communities). The church wrote and spoke in Latin, the language of the Roman Empire, instead of the local languages. All of this made Christianity a direct alternative to the state, but one you could trust.

The state felt threatened. So they demanded that Christians worship Roman gods. But unlike in Bithynia, where meek Christians agreed to cooperate, the new militant Christians openly defied the state. They were punished with death but quickly developed a passion for martyrdom. Everyone knew the Roman Empire was hypocritical and weak. Every martyr proved that they were better than Rome: they ignored their own needs and only cared for high principles. Each martyr became an advertisement for Christianity. They brought new converts and hastened the victory of Christianity. The Christians could smell blood! It was an exciting time to be a Christian!

All the evidence shows that Christian growth took off after 180. All of the oldest Christian artefacts, inscriptions, and buildings date to this period.

The war against choice

Things moved fast once Marcion died (c.160 AD). The Roman church learned from Marcion's success, by adapting his simplified religion, proselyting to other followers of Jesus, and offering Gentiles an alternative to the corrupt Roman establishment. But they also learned from Marcion's failure: they tried not to offend Jewish followers, but they ensured that no troublesome prophets could ever arise. They did this by promoting a system of bishops and priests to control the church. To promote this system, they attacked the twin foundations of prophecy:

1. Choice (*hairetikós*, "able to choose")
2. Knowledge (*gnosis*)

The church taught that heresy (choice) and gnosis (knowledge) were evil, unless they came from bishops appointed by Rome. Irenaeus wrote "*Against Heresies*" (literally "against choice"), arguing that every form of gnosticism ("knowing things") was wrong. At the same time, Hegesippus wrote "*Hypomnemata*" ("memoirs"), arguing that we should only follow the Roman bishops. Theophilus of Antioch wrote "*Ad Autolycum*" ("to the lone wolf"), attacking non-Christian ideas. Tertullian wrote "*De Praescriptione Haereticorum*" ("Prescription Against Heretics") - the title speaks for itself. Hippolytus wrote "*Refutation of All Heresies*", and so on.

The policy worked. The Roman bishops became the authoritative voice of the church. Alternate voices were hunted down and extinguished. The church became unified. The church became strong.

312 AD: why robots win, and why they will lose

By enforcing obedience to bishops, the Roman church became a kind of robot: a corporation concerned with regulating its own body, at the expense of humans, for its own survival. So the tiny church grew strong.

Meanwhile, the Empire was going in the other direction. Roman leaders gained more by harming the empire than by helping it. So the system became weak. The empire was also a kind of robot, but it was too big to change easily. It had the problem of scale.

By 312 AD, the Roman emperor (Constantine) was tired of the corruption that meant nothing worked. He saw that Christianity was more efficient. One day he saw the shape of a cross in the clouds. He imagined the words “in this sign you will conquer”. He then won a great battle.



So he began to favour Christians. But how could he keep them united? He forced all the Christians to decide on exactly the same belief. They came up with the Nicaean Creed: a supernatural belief that cannot be disproven because it is not open to being tested in the real world. That kept the church together, but it also meant nobody could prove that Christian leaders were wrong. So they became just as corrupt as Rome ever was.

So the Christian robot won by being more efficient and organised at scale. But later it lost, just like Rome did, because neither group could maintain that efficiency for long. The problem was scale.

Chapter Appendix: Clement and Ignatius

Dating 1 Clement

The Roman church adopted Paul as their own. So they needed to argue that he was not merely Marcion's Simon Magus fan fiction. So they produced 1 Clement. 1 Clement mentions Paul. Irenaeus decided that Clement, lived around 95 AD.⁸⁶⁴ Irenaeus was only guessing.⁸⁶⁵ Why did he guess such an early date? We have some clues:

1. The Shepherd of Hermas mentions a Clement who matches what we know of 1 Clement.⁸⁶⁶ But the shepherd dates to 140-154 AD.⁸⁶⁷
2. Origen (185-253 AD) assumed that Hermas was the one mentioned by Paul, and assumed that Paul's letters were genuine, therefore Clement was early, therefore Paul was early. It was a circular argument.⁸⁶⁸
3. Irenaeus thought that Hermas was much older than it is.⁸⁶⁹
4. Irenaeus was highly motivated to think that Clement was older than Marcion.⁸⁷⁰

864 *Against Heresies*, book 3 chapter 3

865 Everything else he says about Clement comes from the book itself, which does not name its author. Nobody else knew anything about Clement of Rome, except that the name Clement appears in lists of early bishops. Even the great Tertullian (born 160 AD) only knew him as a name in a book.

866 Clement's job was to take letters from church leaders and deliver them to churches in other countries: "Therefore you will write two little books, and you will send one to Clement and one to Grapte. Then Clement will send it to the cities abroad, because that is his job." - Hermas 8:3

867 The Muratorian fragment (from c.170 AD) says Hermas was written while Pius was Pope (140-154 AD)

868 Paul mentions a Hermas in Romans 16:14. So "The reference to an unknown Clement is presumed by some to be Clement of Rome" - Wikipedia, citing Philip Schaff, "Fathers of the Second Century"

869 Irenaeus wrote "*Against Heresies*" around 180 AD. He quotes the Shepherd of Hermas as scripture (in book 4, chapter 20, verse 2: "*Truly, then, the Scripture declared...*", then quotes Hermas 26:1, "*First of All, Believe that God is One*" etc.). The purpose of *Against Heresies* was to prove that Roman Christianity was the oldest form. So Irenaeus was unlikely to quote a book he knew to be a modern invention. Later writers decided that it was indeed a forgery, so did not allow it into the New Testament canon.

870 Irenaeus' fame, and his faith, rested on his defence of Rome as the original church. This depends on Paul being early, since Rome adopted Paul's letters and theology. If Paul was post-Marcion, then Rome abandoned the original Jewish faith to embrace a modern lie. 1 Clement is the best hope of proving Paul was pre-Marcion. Other evidence (Acts and Ignatius) is even weaker.

Clement became the centre of the battleground for faith: Clement was the strongest link between the apostles and the Roman church. He was supposed to be a friend of Paul. So texts arguing for and against Paul⁸⁷¹ were all attributed to Clement.⁸⁷²

So when was 1 Clement written? The book says that a long time had passed since the days of Jesus.⁸⁷³ The apostles had all died, the people they chose had all died, and the people *they* chose had all died as well.⁸⁷⁴ Missionaries sent out as young people had also died of old age.⁸⁷⁵ The church at Corinth was “ancient”.⁸⁷⁶ So the letter of Clement was unlikely to be from the first century. We can infer the date from the reason for the book, given in the first verse:

*“By reason of the sudden and repeated calamities and reverses which are befalling us, brethren, we consider that we have been somewhat tardy in giving heed to the matters of dispute that have arisen among you, dearly beloved, and to the detestable and unholy sedition, so alien and strange to the elect of God, which a few headstrong and self-willed persons have kindled to such a pitch of madness that your name, once revered and renowned and lovely in the sight of all men, hath been greatly reviled.”*⁸⁷⁷

Many scholars have tried to argue that the “calamities and reverses” refer to persecution by the emperor Domitian, around 95 AD. However, the Domitian persecution never happened.⁸⁷⁸ And the Greek text does not refer to outside persecution. The words translated “calamities and reverses” are “συμφορὰς καὶ περιπτώσεις”, literally “bringing together of a falling”. “περιπτώσεις”, or “períptōsis”, meaning “peri”, about, “ptōsis”, “to fall, throw oneself down”.⁸⁷⁹ So this refers to events where the church almost threw itself down. An extremely literal translation of the first sentence is:

871 Some of the Clementine literature strongly implies that Paul was just a cover for Simon Magus

872 The Clementine literature is hard to date. Most scholars assume it is from the 200s or later, but Gerhard Uhlhorn (1854) dated the earliest to East Syria after 150 AD. Joh. Lehmann, in *Die Clementinischen Schriften* (1869) dated the earliest before 160. Joseph Langden (1890) argued that the earliest documents were a direct power grab by Rome, a result of the Jerusalem church losing power after the Bar Kochba revolt (135 AD).

873 “Let this scripture be far from us where He saith Wretched are the double-minded, Which doubt in their soul and say, These things we did hear in the days of our fathers also, and behold we have grown old, and none of these things hath befallen us.” - 1 Clement 23:3

874 1 Clement 44:2-3

875 1 Clement 63:3

876 1 Clement 47:6

877 1 Clement 1:1

878 See Brian W. Jones’s biography of Domitian. biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/post-biblical-period/domitian-persecution-of-christians/

879 Translations from wiktionary.org

“Through to-the-ones to-un-manifested-belonged and to-upon-other-to-other to-having-had-became unto-us to-bearednesses-together and to-fallings-beside, to-delayed we-parcelee [parcae, destinies]-to to-a-returning-upon to-have-had-come-to-do-unto about of-the-ones of-being-sought-upon-unto beside unto-ye of-practicings-to, ...”⁸⁸⁰

This is not about external persecution. This is about apostasy. Hence needing a lecture and then rigid leadership from Rome.

So this is most likely a reference to the Bar Kochba revolt (132-136 AD) then Marcionism (142 AD) and the resulting Gnostic divisions. These were existential threats. First, Judea fell, undermining the whole Jewish foundation. Then Marcion undermined the intellectual foundation of the Jewish church. The church was about to “fall or throw itself down” because of people “un-manifested” who threatened the “bearednesses-together” of the church.

If 1 Clement was written against the influence of Marcion, that explains everything:

- Why Rome needed to double down on its leadership.
- Why the focus on Peter and Paul, ignoring other apostles: the book was trying to unite followers of Paul (Marcionites) with followers of Peter (the Roman church).
- Why the book had so many examples showing the value of Old Testament stories: Marcion rejected the Old Testament, and Rome wanted to show that the Old Testament still had value.
- Why the focus was on the risen Christ, not the Jewish Christ. The Marcionites only cared about the risen Christ, and Clement needed to appeal to them (because of their numbers) as well as appealing to the church at Rome.
- Why the church at Corinth was suddenly unhappy with the money sent from Rome:⁸⁸¹ Marcion was rich and gave much more money than Rome ever could. So Clement represents a fight between the Roman church and the Marcionites.

⁸⁸⁰ sites.google.com/site/literaltranslationofthebible/1-clement

⁸⁸¹ 1 Clement 2:1 refers to Corinth now being unhappy with God’s provisions. The author reproves them: “it is better to give than receive.” Why? “It had been the custom of the Roman church from the beginning 'to send contributions (ephodia) to many churches in every city'” (Eusebius, Church History 4.23.10).

The case against a late date for Clement

Despite this, the scholar Richard Carrier argues for a date before 70 AD.⁸⁸² He uses two lines of reasoning: a reference to the temple, and the absence of details of Jesus's life. Yet both suggest a date after 142 AD.

1 Clement 41:2 refers to temple sacrifices in Jerusalem. Hence, Carrier dates it before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. So why do the majority of scholars still date 1 Clement after 70 AD? The Greek text cannot mean the temple exists, or everyone would side with Carrier. Given that ambiguity, turn to 1 Clement 41:1-4. This passage is a warning to be precisely obedient in every detail. Otherwise, you could be destroyed. The implication is that this already fate already fell on the temple. The author does not need to explain why, suggesting that this was a well-established argument. This argues for a date well after 70 AD. The author implies that the Corinthian saints might be about to make the same mistake. This argues for the Corinthians making a fatal mistake - a description of Marcionism (from Rome's point of view).

Regarding the absence of details from Jesus's life, 1 Clement gives various historical arguments of envy and rebellion, mostly from the Old Testament, but also from the lives of Peter and Paul. But it does not give many examples from the life of Jesus. Carrier sees this as evidence that the author did not know the gospels. And hence, he says the book must be older than the gospels. Yet he accepts that the gospels existed as oral history. Therefore the author did know about the mortal Jesus: he appears to quote the gospels.⁸⁸³ So this cannot be an argument for the book being early.

Then why does the book ignore most of Jesus's life? That is, *why does it have the same policy as the letters of Paul?* The letters of Paul also have very few examples from the life and words of Jesus, and instead focus on Jesus as the resurrected lord. This is what mattered to the Marcionites. Rome had to persuade Corinth in arguments they would accept.

Carrier also uses 1 Clement 47 as evidence, but that is a weak claim. Clement says "you" had divisions even in the days of Paul. Carrier argues that "you" must mean individuals. But the Greek word "ὁμᾶς" is just "you" plural: the Corinthians as a group. It is like saying "You British have always been X" - it could mean a thousand years ago. Nobody doubts that people after Marcion thought that Marcion's Paul was real. The only question is if there is any evidence that Marcion's version of Paul existed before Marcion. And so far the answer is no.

⁸⁸² richardcarrier.info/archives/22313

⁸⁸³ 1 Clement 13:2 paraphrases Matthew 7:1 / Luke 6:38 and surrounding verses, about whatever you do shall be done back to you.

Dating Ignatius

“Ignatius” appears to be a fictional character. *“The epistles ascribed to Ignatius have given rise to more controversy than any other documents connected with the primitive Church.”*⁸⁸⁴ There is no physical evidence that Ignatius existed: he is just a name attached to some unlikely letters. He is portrayed as an idealised fiery Christian, hence the name. A real name “Egnatius” is changed to sound like “bright fire” (ignis). He ignites and illuminates people with his faith! His name appears on a collection of letters. As noted earlier, the letter collection was a genre of fiction, and ninety per cent of such collections were fictional.

All but seven of the letters of Ignatius are obvious forgeries that no serious scholar would defend. The other seven are not much better. They appear in three different forms (short, medium and long), so we know that people were happy to cut them up and add parts as needed, as with any fan fiction.

The writing style is armchair fan-fiction. The letters are stylistically well constructed, as if written by somebody with plenty of time, not by a prisoner being moved between strange jails. The author forgets details and so contradicts himself.⁸⁸⁵ The one letter to an individual friend is strangely flowery but impersonal, as if the writer wants to put on a good show, but has not met the friend in real life. Real letters between friends, even in Roman times, were simpler and more personal.⁸⁸⁶ The variety of topics, leading up to a spectacular death, looks contrived. The letters deal with topics of interest after the days of Marcion and the other heretics. These topics include:

- Docetism (from “dokein” meaning “seems”): this is the idea that the Jesus only *seemed* to die, but did not really. So the letters stress that Jesus was real, in the flesh.⁸⁸⁷
- The pre-existence of Christ. The earliest gospels have no nativity story: Jesus was a regular person who was adopted by God at his baptism. But Marcion’s Paul has a (superficially) more exciting message: that Jesus became one with God, and he was special

⁸⁸⁴ From the Roberts-Donaldson Introduction to Ignatius's letter to the Ephesians, earlychristianwritings.com/info/ignatius.html

⁸⁸⁵ *“In IgnEph 5.3, for example, he seems to have entirely forgotten that he writes as a bishop, and exhorts the church like someone who has never been invested with the office of bishop: ‘Let us then be careful not to oppose the bishop’ (cf. IgnEph 11.1; 15.2; 17.2; IgnMagn 10.1).”* - Hermann Detering, *“The Falsified Paul: Early Christianity in the Twilight”* egodeath.com/TheFabricatedPaul.htm

⁸⁸⁶ Herman Detering, *ibid*, about Ignatius’ letter to Polycarp

⁸⁸⁷ E.g. Smyrnaeans, 7:1, *“they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of His goodness, raised up again.”*

even before he was born.⁸⁸⁸ The Ignatius letters agree.⁸⁸⁹

- Salvation by grace, not the Jewish law. This was Marcion Paul's big innovation.⁸⁹⁰ Ignatius agrees.⁸⁹¹
- Above all, the need for the church to obey Rome. This, more than anything, has led many scholars to think these letters are late forgeries. Ignatius often returns to this theme, indicating that it is the central concern, as it was after Marcion.

Ignatius wants more than anything else to be martyred: to be torn apart by wild beasts to prove his faith. In the story he is taken to Rome to be killed - something unlikely in real life (prisoners tended to be killed locally unless there were unusual circumstances). His helpful guards then took him on many lengthy detours on his way to Rome, so he could preach and write letters about how wonderful it is to be martyred, and to discuss various Christian topics. Do real guards act like this? Do real prisoners long to be torn apart and then go on a tour to promote the event?

The story is so absurd that the Roman poet Lucian apparently parodied it in his story, *"The Passing of Peregrinus"*. This dates to 160 AD, which shows when Ignatius letters were popular then. Or perhaps Ignatius copies Lucian. If so, that gives us an even clearer idea of the date.

Scholars still argue over the letters today, but the closest thing to a consensus is that they date to between 125 and 150 AD, probably closer to 150: that is, they come from the period of Marcion.

*"[D]ifficulties with both the late and traditional dates have opened a middle way for dating Ignatius's letters. For this via media, the letters are understood as authentically Ignatian compositions but should be dated in the middle of the second century, roughly in the second quarter of the century."*⁸⁹²

So Ignatius dates to the time of Marcion or later, and cannot be used as evidence that Marcion's version of Paul existed before Marcion.

⁸⁸⁸ Colossians 1.16: *"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him."*

⁸⁸⁹ Ignatius to the Ephesians, ch. 7, shorter version, *"God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God"*

⁸⁹⁰ Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸⁹¹ Ignatius to the Magnesians 8:1, *"if even unto this day we live after the manner of Judaism, we avow that we have not received grace."*

⁸⁹² *"The Date and Authenticity of the Ignatian Letters: An Outline of Recent Discussions: by Jonathon Lookadoo, 2020. journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1476993X20914798#:~:"*

Revelation

There is nothing supernatural in Revelation

We are told that the Book of Revelation is a dream. We have all had dreams. Dreams are not supernatural.

The Book of Revelation is part of a long tradition of dreams or visions in the Bible. The strange images are symbols of things in the real world. Symbols are useful. There is nothing supernatural about using symbols. For example, writing is a system of symbols. We use symbols to capture big ideas in small spaces.

We are told that the dragons and strange beasts in Revelation are symbols of specific cities and empires, such as Rome in different stages of history. Everything in Revelation can be tested against real history. So there is nothing supernatural here.



The structure of the Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation is about the fall of Babylon. Babylon is the traditional symbol for all great empires (Babylon, Greece, Rome, etc.).

	INTRODUCTION
chapters 1-3	Letters to seven churches: wake up!
	THE WAR
4-5	God's throne and the book of prophecy
6-9	Six global disasters
10-11	John's day (68 AD)
	WORLD HISTORY
12	The rise of Babylon
13	How Babylon won
14-16	How the Son of Man defeats Babylon
	KEY POINTS
17-18	About Babylon
19-20	Celebrating the fall of Babylon
21-22	Return to the golden age

Why does Revelation announce the fall of Babylon three different times?⁸⁹³ And why does it repeat the stages of the war twice (in chapters 8 and 16)?⁸⁹⁴ Because repetition helps us to remember. So we are told the main events of the war, then we look at the bigger picture, then we again return to the main events of the war. So we remember.

⁸⁹³ In 11:15 (implied), 14:8 and 18:2

⁸⁹⁴ The seven angels in chapters 8-9 -> compare the same angels in chapter 16
Angel 1: a great war (hail, fire and blood burns the world) -> a great wound. At first glance these are different. But the other angels show that these are the same events. John chooses to summarise the entire war with the first angel.

Angel 2: war in the sea -> death in the sea

Angel 3: war in the rivers -> death in the rivers

Angel 4: war in the skies -> burning from the skies

Angel 5: war on the bottomless pit (home of the beast) -> pain for the beast

Angel 6: war on the Euphrates -> war on the Euphrates

Angel 7: announce victory -> announce victory

Revelation 1:1-2: a book of logic and evidence

Revelation is about logic and evidence. It says so right at the start:

*The logic of God and the evidence of Jesus the servant.*⁸⁹⁵

But this is usually mistranslated as “*the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ*”.⁸⁹⁶ This is a mistranslation because it is anachronistic. It uses words in a Christian sense, but that sense did not exist until after 140 AD. The key words in Greek all have well-established non-supernatural meanings. The key words in the first verses are “logic”⁸⁹⁷, “evidence”⁸⁹⁸, and “servant”⁸⁹⁹.

Judaism at the time of Jesus was based on logic and evidence. We know this partly because the first century saw the beginnings of the rabbinical system, which is based on reasoned debate, and partly because the most popular Jewish leaders of the time relied on logic, not faith. Philo of Alexandria and Simon Magus both wrote books interpreting Judaism through logic. Philo taught that logic (logos) was the way to God.⁹⁰⁰ Simon will be discussed next. Jesus also taught using logic. Typically a Pharisee would give Jesus a difficult question (e.g. “*should we pay taxes to our deadly enemies, the Romans?*”) and Jesus would then reason with them. e.g. “*Who’s face is on the Roman coins we use? Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and give to God what is God’s*”.

John, the author of Revelation, was probably from Ephesus, a Greek city, birthplace of the important early philosopher Heraclitus. So of course he would use logic and evidence. It is anachronistic to think that John used a Greek philosophical term like logos but then somehow applied a later Christian supernatural meaning that had not been invented.

⁸⁹⁵ The content of the Book of Revelation, according to the end of Revelation 1:2. This translation uses the meaning of “logos”, “martyria” and “christos” as they were when John wrote.

⁸⁹⁶ Revelation 1:2, NIV

⁸⁹⁷ The Greek word for logic was “logos”. We persuade people using 'logos' (logic), 'pathos' (emotion) and 'ethos' (our reputation). See Aristotle, 'On Rhetoric'. Christians later changed it so that logos was closer to pathos: The Christian God speaks through emotion more than logic.

⁸⁹⁸ The word commonly translated as “testimony” is “martyria”. This means testimony in a legal sense: the words spoken under oath in a court of law. A court wants to hear naturalistic things: of real things that you saw. It does not what you hear your supernatural beliefs. But in Christianity, testimony (martyria) came to mean supernatural belief.

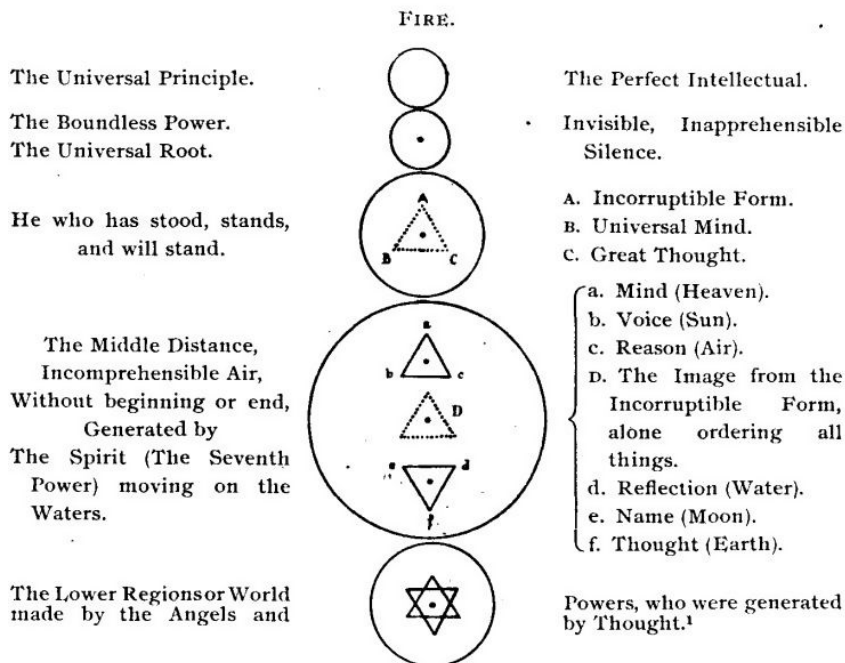
⁸⁹⁹ The Greek text of Revelation is a copy of a copy of a copy, and says Jesus **Christos** (anointed one). But as we have seen, in general, the very oldest Christian texts said Jesus **Chrestos** (servant).

⁹⁰⁰ Imperfect people become perfect by following logos. ("The Sacrifice of Abel", 38)

A religion of logic

In the dream/vision, Jesus was called “the logic of God”.⁹⁰¹ The earliest followers of Jesus took this literally. Most of the followers were in Samaria, and followed Simon (Atomos). Simon explained Jesus’s teachings as a theory of logic. As far as we can tell (because later Christians opposed his teaching and avoided copying it), Simon taught that God, the initial cause of all things, is a philosophical concept. He taught God is the “the one”, literally the number 1: the simplest concept possible. From that concept all other concepts emanate. Gnostics call these emanations “aeons”. For example, if you have “one” then that implies some logic needed to define “one”. So you really have two concepts. So one *creates* two. This implies a third concept: *creation*. And so on. Through logic like this, Simon showed that God created all concepts, relationships and powers, and hence the universe. This was a religion of logic, not the supernatural. The supernatural came later.

DIAGRAM OF THE SIMONIAN ÆONOLOGY.



Simonian Aeonology (study of Aeons, or fundamental concepts),
diagram by G.R.S. Mead (1892), out of copyright

⁹⁰¹ Revelation 19:13: "his name is called the logos of God"

Revelation 1:1: this “must shortly come to pass”

Everything in Revelation is logical and based on evidence. And yet John, in 68 AD, said that the end of the world “must shortly come to pass”, perhaps in just a couple of years. Where is the logic in that?

That claim was based on five pillars of evidence. Here is a summary. The rest of this book has the details.

1. Logic tells us that a divided society must fall.
2. History tells us that all societies collapse sooner or later, and the whole global system collapses every 12,000 years or so. (More about that later.)
3. According to his data, he was living in the year 11659. This was well within the margin of error for the end of the 12,000 years.
4. The smartest person he knew (Jesus) was confident that the final collapse would happen within the lifetime of his listeners. He said that 31 years ago.
5. John saw all the signs of global collapse: the world finally had a single dominant superpower (Rome) and that empire looked like it was about to collapse.

So, rationally, John concluded that the Roman civil war of 68 AD was likely to be the final war.

But there was one error in his data: the start of the 12,000 years. That date is calculated using the date of the Fall of Adam. But John’s Bible gave the wrong date.⁹⁰² John’s Bible said 5592BC,⁹⁰³ when the real date was 4004 BC.⁹⁰⁴ So John’s starting date was 1588 years too early (5592 - 4004). That date was only approximate: more observations were needed to reach a precise final date, but John’s Fall of Adam date was so wrong that he misinterpreted everything.

When we use the correct date for the Fall, and then apply John’s methods, we see that John’s dates and predictions match up with history. The prophecy came true after all. Then logic was sound. We will look at the details in the chapter on the Second Coming.

⁹⁰² John, like all the early followers of Jesus, used the Septuagint translation. This translation has stylistic inconsistencies that suggest it was translated by non-experts. The Septuagint accidentally adds 100 years to the length of most of the eras between Adam and Abraham. This plus some other minor errors pushes the date for Adam back by over 1500 years. See the chapter on Genesis 5 for details.

⁹⁰³ According to Clement of Alexandria’s later calculation. Others have various dates around 5500 BC.

⁹⁰⁴ See the chapter on Genesis 5: the Masoretes took centuries to carefully compare all previous texts. The resulting numbers are confirmed by archaeology.

Revelation 2:18-24: the logic of money

Revelation begins with counsel to seven churches, warning them of the logical results of their actions. For example, the church at Thyatira was following “Jezebel”, who was “fornicating” and eating food given to idols. As a result she would be thrown on her bed and her children would be killed.⁹⁰⁵ The logic of this prediction becomes clear when we consider the symbols used:

- Jezebel is the love of money.⁹⁰⁶
- Fornication (in Revelation) always refers to following false gods:⁹⁰⁷ in this case, the false god is money.
- Eating meat sacrificed to idols refers to abandoning the law of Moses and worshipping money instead.⁹⁰⁸

The logic of money (Jezebel) is that people compete against each other. We might try to create fair rules, but people can win by bending or bypassing those rules. So people fight each others’ interests. A city or nation divided against itself must eventually fall. That is the logic of Jezebel.

So logic predicts that a money-based system will eventually collapse in a horrific way, like a prostitute being abused. Jesus warned us in the Book of Revelation. Jesus personifies logic, so he tried to warn us of the logic of money.

John thought that the entire global financial system would collapse in 68 AD, with the horrific results described in Revelation. But in hindsight that did not happen. So what was wrong with John’s logic?

⁹⁰⁵ Revelation 2:20-23

⁹⁰⁶ It is very unlikely that a religious leader would choose the name of the most hated woman in the Bible, so this is symbolic, like everything else in Revelation. The symbols are well established in the scriptures. Jezebel was the princess of Tyre who turned Israel to Gentile gods. Her greatest crime was having Naboth killed so that a rival could take his land. This broke the core of the law of Moses: equal ownership of land. Love of money is also indicated by the metaphor of prostitution, and the criticism of other cities (Pergamos and Balaam, or Laodicians and wealth).

⁹⁰⁷ The first counsel (to Ephesus) refers to God as the city’s “first love”. This metaphor, of God as bridegroom and Israel as bride, is used throughout Revelation, and in prophetic literature in general. Following some other god is routinely compared to adultery or fornication.

⁹⁰⁸ See the discussion of Revelation 2-3. The churches in Asia are early versions of Paul and Marcion’s teaching. The name Nicolas (“victory of the people”) could be symbolic of a populist religion. All the names in Acts 6:5 are suspiciously perfect for charismatic church leaders: Procorus (“leader of the chorus”), Nicanor (“conqueror”), Timon (“worthy of esteem”), Philip (a popular name among kings), Parmenas (“steadfast faith”) and Nicolas.

Revelation 2-3: where Marcion got his ideas

In the chapters on Paul, we saw how Marcion invented Christianity around the year 140, as a business club in Asia Minor. Marcion produced letters that he said were from Paul (i.e. Atomos, i.e. Simon Magus). How much of this reflected the real writings of Atomos, and how much was invented by Marcion? Revelation 2-3 gives us some clues.

First, John praises Ephesus for rejecting “*false apostles*” and rejecting the followers of Nicolas (“*Nicolaitans*”). The only Nicolas in the Bible is Nicolas of Antioch, a church leader who was a Gentile convert.⁹⁰⁹ Antioch is where Christianity first appeared.⁹¹⁰ John implies that following Nicolas was a recent change (hence the “*thy first love*” quote: Israel was often compared to a woman, married to God through the law of Moses).

Next, John comforts Smyrna in its fight against “*them which say they are Jews, and are not*”.

John criticised Pergamos for following “*the doctrine of Balaam*” who preached comfortable tidings for money. Pergamos encouraged eating meat sacrificed to idols (a practice that Paul allowed but other Jews did not⁹¹¹) and fornication. Given the metaphor of Israel as the bride of God, fornication is probably a metaphor for accepting Gentile ways.

John has similar criticisms (idol meat, “fornication”, etc.) against the churches in Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia. And Thyatira reveres a woman: this is a signature feature of Simon Magus’ teaching.

John criticises the Laodiceans for being lukewarm about following God, and seeing their great wealth as evidence of God’s approval.

These are all criticisms later made of Marcion’s Paul: a watered-down belief that is more Gentile than Jewish, and focuses on money.⁹¹² So it looks like Marcion’s teaching (before he adopted and expanded it) began in Antioch and then spread to the churches in Asia. The first chapters of the Book of Revelation are a reaction to the spread of that teaching.

⁹⁰⁹ Acts 6:5

⁹¹⁰ Acts 11:26

⁹¹¹ 1 Corinthians 8 and 1 Corinthians 10:14–33.

⁹¹² Marcion created a business club using Jesus’s name and became very rich. Paul was allowed into the church at Antioch, and the purpose of his missionary journey was to raise money to help a famine. (Acts 11, whole chapter, especially the last verse.) In Acts, Simon Magus’s sin was to give money to become an apostle.

Revelation 4: knowledge of history since Eden

In Revelation chapter 4, John saw God's throne, surrounded by church elders and four strange beasts. This was like the vision in Ezekiel chapter 1. Ezekiel later learned that the beasts were cherubim.⁹¹³ We saw earlier that "cherubim" probably represented the people of Kur, the mountains of Eden. The Book of Revelation began and ended with the Tree of Life, so we know that John was thinking about the Garden of Eden.

Ezekiel saw that God's throne had wheels so he could travel: this probably represents the chariot, one of the greatest inventions of ancient times. So Ezekiel saw God travelling from Eden. In Daniel's similar vision, God was called The Ancient of Days. This great age gave God great experience, so he could warn Ezekiel of the destruction of Judah. He warned Daniel of the future, and he warned John of a coming war.

So the prophets knew their history right back to Eden. This enabled them to see repeated patterns in history. They used logic to extrapolate those patterns and make reliable guesses about the future



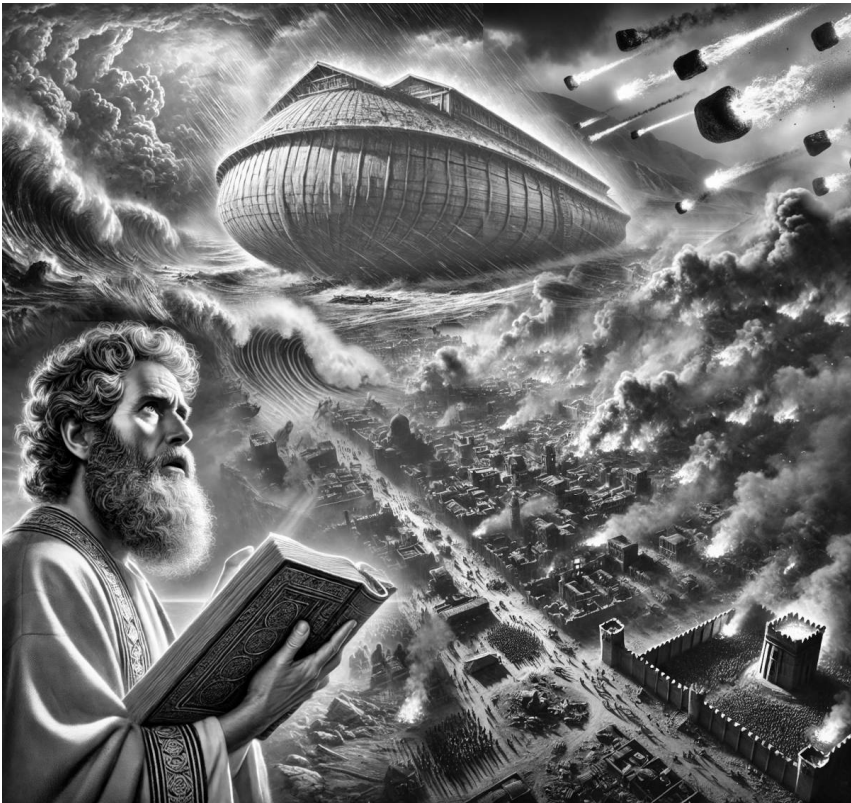
Ezekiel's vision, by Matthaeus Merian (1593-1650), out of copyright

⁹¹³ In Ezekiel chapter 10.

Revelation 5: prophecies inferred from history

Notice how the picture of Ezekiel's vision shows Ezekiel being given a book. This was a common theme in apocalyptic visions or dreams.⁹¹⁴ The gods (i.e. priests representing gods) preserve the history of their people in books (or scrolls or carvings). These books were stored in temples. These books allowed prophets to see patterns in history. Prophets look for those same patterns in the present, and see where those patterns will lead.

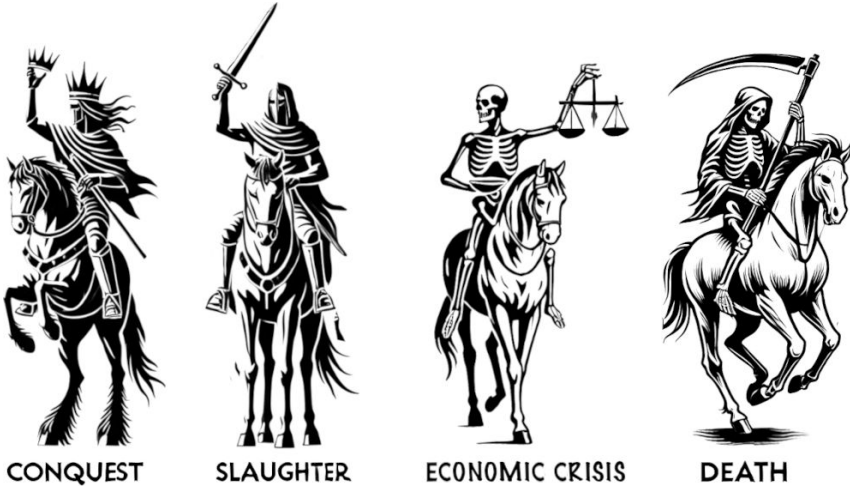
John relied heavily on the book of Enoch, which described the world before the Great Flood. John also relied on the Book of Daniel, which described the wars with Persia and Greece. John's language of fire from heaven can be traced to Sodom and Gomorrah. And John was watching the Roman civil war and the Jewish rebellion. John recognised long-term patterns. So John could rationally infer what would happen next.



⁹¹⁴ E.g. Ezekiel 2:3-3:3; Daniel 7:10; Zechariah 5:1-4

Revelation 6: the logic of Armageddon

Let us examine John's main prediction, the war of Armageddon. John described four logical states to the war. These four stages are known as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. ("Apocalypse" is Greek for "Revelation": that which is revealed.)



The first horseman is the root cause of all major wars: the love of conquest. Some humans think it is a good idea to rule other humans.

This inevitably leads to more war. Trust becomes impossible. Conquest is too profitable. And so the second horseman is mass slaughter.

This inevitably leads to economic crisis, represented by the scales and inflated prices: people cannot obtain the essentials of life.

This inevitably leads to death.

We have lived with this cycle of war for ten thousand years, ever since our ancestors got greedy and claimed ownership of land. So far, the wars have always been limited. But as technology increases, there must come a point when war is so fast and so deadly that it destroys everything.

So the final Apocalypse is an inevitable result of logic. The only question is when? When does technology grow so big and so fast that the next war must logically cause everything to collapse?

Jesus personifies logic, so John sees Jesus causing the war. This is not because Jesus is bloodthirsty, it is because Jesus is logic. Because of logic (because of Jesus) the future cannot be any other way.

Revelation 7: the war is against the environment

Revelation chapter 6 (the four horsemen) shows us why the war is inevitable. Chapter 7 gives us the nature of the war: this is a war against the natural environment. The war is summed up as hurting the earth, the sea, and the trees.

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

Why do we need to seal the tribes of Israel? Because the only defence against environmental destruction is the law of Moses: equal land for all. That is the only way to have land ownership without abusing the land. See the chapter on Leviticus for details.



Revelation 8-9: the stages of the war

Chapter 8 gives the stages of the war. These stages are repeated in chapter 16, in case we did not pay attention.

1. The first angel:

Fire and blood destroy the grass and trees.

This is a natural result of settled agriculture. People cut down the trees for wood, burn the grass to make way for farms and cities, and have wars to conquer more land. Agriculture then creates more and more people, who create more technology and the process accelerates until the land can no longer support life. Then we have the final war.

2. The second angel:

A mountain burning with fire is cast into the sea.

The mountain is not the point: it isn't in the chapter 16 version at all. The point is that, having stripped their own land of resources, the nations of the world take to the seas to find more resources. They export their blood and horror around the world. A mountain burning with fire, thrown into the sea, is a good metaphor for seafaring colonialism. It captures the terror of being conquered.

This painting shows the feeling: here Archimedes uses catapults to defend Syracuse against the invading Romans. When the Roman ships arrive, fire will rain down and blood will flow. The Romans merely killed, plundered and enslaved the people of Syracuse. But they utterly destroyed nearby Carthage. They burned everything, killed the people, flattened all the tall buildings, and left the city as a flat ploughed field, as a warning to anyone who might dare to defy Rome.



Image: by Thomas Ralph Spence (1895), out of copyright

3. The third angel:

Blood and horror stretches up every river.

Rivers are the highways inside nations. When a powerful nation colonises another nation, soon every part of every nation is conquered. Any resistance is met with blood and fire.

4. The fourth angel:

Fire and smoke are everywhere.

Remember that this is a dream or vision: dreams simplify complex topics. Here, John simplifies the results of war into a single image: smoke that blots out the sun. The imagery comes from the destruction of Sodom, and is often quoted in prophecy.

5. The fifth angel:

Roman soldiers.

John describes the opening of a great pit. This is the home of the Beast: i.e. Rome. A pit is a good metaphor for empires like Rome. They do not make their people happier, but they create a class system: a pit of misery for those at the bottom. John describes the soldiers of Rome as like scorpions, a reference to the Aqrabuamelu (scorpion people) in Gilgamesh and other Akkadian texts: these are the people who guard private land. The original version of Genesis 3:15 (where Eve crushes the serpent's head) is in "*Inanna and Utu*", where Inanna crushes the scorpion's head by moving her people to a different land. This is the prerogative of all nomads: to defy land claims and be free. Roman soldiers enforce land claims using extreme violence: i.e. they are scorpion men. John describes them as armoured horses (best known from Parthian and Sasanian cataphracts) whose hair is like women's hair: a reference to either their decadence or their crested helmets.



Crest: Kretschmer, 1882, out of copyright; Cataphract: John Tremelling, GNU Free 1.2

6. The sixth angel:

The final battle.

The final battle features enormous armies, gathered around the Euphrates. Armies from the East then cross the Euphrates to gather at the final battle in the valley of Megiddo, the ancient pass that controls access to the Levant. Hence the battle of Armageddon (Har-Magiddo, the hill of Megiddo), the last great war over Palestine.

7. The seventh angel:

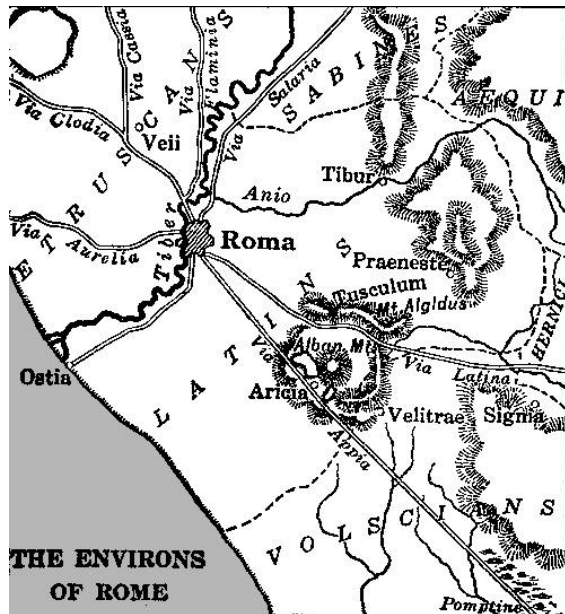
All nations fall.

The final battle causes the destruction of all nations. In the vision this is the greatest earthquake in history. Remember that this is a vision: like a dream, it uses images that capture the experience, without being literally true. So while this could be a literal earthquake, it is more likely to be the kind of total destruction that is best described as like an earthquake.

In summary, the seven stages of war are based on logic and evidence. First, an empire uses up resources. Next, it sails the seas looking for resources. It continues up the rivers. It brings war.

For example, this map shows early Rome. The largest city (Rome) is on a river. As the largest, in the best position, it was probably the first. Smaller cities are on high ground or in the gaps between hills. These are easy to defend. This implies that warfare is the primary concern. So the map shows how cities expand: first comes navigation by water, then comes war. That is the lesson of both logic and evidence.

The only difference in John's account is the scale.



From A History of Rome, by Arthur E.R. Boak (1921)
(out of copyright)

Revelation 10: when did John write Revelation?

In chapter 10, an angel gives John a little book to eat and it is sweet like honey. This is a reference to Ezekiel 3: the book contains the message the prophet is to tell his people, an urgent message that explains the past and the future, and why that moment was the pivotal time. Why did John feel that he had to give such an apocalyptic message? Because of the date.

John said that five Roman emperors had passed, one was present, with another expected to take over for a short time, but he thought the eighth emperor would come soon and be very bad.⁹¹⁵ This dates the writing to around December of 68 AD.⁹¹⁶ This was a crucial pause in the First Jewish–Roman War.⁹¹⁷ This explains the Book of Revelation: at that moment, the empire was in chaos, and John could realistically believe that Jerusalem might win. It also explains why John was so frustrated with the churches in Asia, who were less committed to the Jewish cause.

A later writer suggested that Revelation was not written until emperor Domitian (c.95 AD), but that claim is not credible.⁹¹⁸

⁹¹⁵ Revelation 17:9-11. The city on seven hills is Rome.

⁹¹⁶ The first five emperors were Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero. Nero died on 9th June, 68 AD. Galba (6th emperor) took over, but made himself unpopular and was killed on 15th January 69. Otho became 7th emperor, but almost immediately Vitellius declared his intention to be emperor. Otho was weak, but Vitellius was strong. Everyone expected Vitellius to defeat Otho, and he did, becoming the 8th emperor of Rome on 19th April. Meanwhile, apparently unknown to John, Vespasian planned to become emperor. He was a superb general, and carefully built strong alliances in the east. Then on 20th December he defeated Vitellius and became emperor the next day. He brought order and good government to the empire, and reigned for ten years until an illness killed him.

⁹¹⁷ The Jews revolted against Rome in 66 AD. In 67 AD, The Roman General Vespasian defeated the rebels in Galilee (the homeland of the Jesus movement). In one town, ten miles from Nazareth, 40,000 Jews were killed. Josephus says 100,000 Jews were either killed or sold into slavery. (Wars, book 3, end of chapter 7). In the Spring of 68, Vespasian began re-conquering all of Judea except for Jerusalem. Then in June of 68, Nero died and plunged the empire into civil war. Vespasian then halted his campaign in Judea to wait and see what the new emperors would do. The rebels took advantage of this pause to entrench themselves in Jerusalem. Then at the start of January the emperor was killed, and in February Vespasian began to plan to become the next emperor. In March he began the siege of Jerusalem and conquered the city in August of 69, destroying the temple and killing or enslaving all rebels. Throughout 69 AD the rebels fought among themselves so their defeat was inevitable. But in 68 it was possible to believe they might succeed.

⁹¹⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 30, part 4. The later date does not explain either the war or the hope that Jerusalem could defeat Rome. Then why suggest it? Because Irenaeus wrote his book to make supernatural claims: that is, false claims. In particular he wanted to imply that the prophecies in Revelation were infallible. John's date of 68 AD cannot be reconciled with that faith, because it shows that John was wrong: Jerusalem did not defeat Rome.

Revelation 11: the two prophets in Jerusalem

In Revelation 11, John gives what he sees as the likely outcome of the present war in Judea.

John describes two witnesses in Jerusalem. He refers to them as olive trees or candlesticks: a reference to Zechariah 4, so they are probably Phannias ben Samuel and Eleazar ben Simon.⁹¹⁹ John expects them to defy Rome for 1260 days before being killed by their enemies.⁹²⁰



This takes us from the start of the rebellion (September 66 AD) to early 70 AD. John hopes for some kind of positive result by then. John describes this as the two men returning to life: this is not supernatural, it is a way of describing an uprising. See the later discussion of resurrection.

This war takes place against the background of civil war in Rome, so John thought that these two leaders would trigger the great war that Jesus predicted. He saw this as the men calling down the fire and bloodshed from heaven (remember that this is a dream).

John's prediction was wrong,⁹²¹ because his Bible had the wrong dates. But if current events are any guide (I write this in 2025), Jerusalem might still play a critical part in the End of the World. So John was right to focus on it.

⁹¹⁹ Zechariah probably refers to the high priest (Joshua) and the governor (Zerubbabel). The equivalent people, on the Jewish side in 70 AD, were the High Priest Phannias and the rebel in charge of the inner temple, Eleazar.

⁹²⁰ 1260 days the normal length for Jewish crises, for some reason. This is true from ancient times down to modern times. We will discuss these prophetic time periods later.

⁹²¹ The rebels fought among themselves, and the Roman general Vespasian was very competent, so Rome won decisively.

Revelation 13:8: Why is Babylon so bad?

*And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations ... as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. ... And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark...*⁹²²

Babylon is any great city and empire: either literal Babylon, or Rome, or any other. The city is made up of people, with the rich and powerful at its head. You have to be part of the city. You don't have a choice. The city is powered by money (like Jezebel), and you cannot buy or sell unless you are part of the economic system. You have to be a cog in the machine.

And here is the problem: the machine does not care about you. It will use you up until you die, then use somebody else. The more you serve it, the more powerful it becomes, and the less it will tolerate disobedience.



⁹²² Revelation 13:8,15,17

Leviathan versus the saints

Babylon is in the image of the first beast, Leviathan. They are all the same really: great mechanical systems made of people.

Below is the famous image from Thomas Hobbes' book Leviathan. Hobbes argues that the only way to run a nation is to give all power to a brutal king. See how the king is made up of countless small people. Those small people are you and me. We only exist to serve our rulers. Now look in front of the great king: see the rolling hills and valleys and trees. All of that used to be free, and full of wildlife to eat. John hates how you have to buy and sell everything. He calls that system the great prostitute (like Jezebel). Some things should not be for money!

John says that the enemy of the Beast (the enemy of Leviathan) is the saints.⁹²³ The word for "saint" is "hagios", one who venerates the gods. The gods are the gods of nature. If we respect them then we can live for free and have all the food we need. John says we should pray to the gods (or to Yahweh the moon god of nomads). In the Old Testament, prayer is to ask for things from nature. And the gods give it, free, if we respect their ways. That makes the saints the enemy of Leviathan. The saints want a world of freedom and plenty. Leviathan wants a world where only those with money are free, and he has all the money.



From the frontispiece to Hobbes' Leviathan, out of copyright

⁹²³ Revelation 13:7

Revelation 13:14-15: The image of the Beast

The image is a form of pesel: an image that is not your ancestors. Images are important to Leviathan (the great kingdoms and empires). Why? Because the reality is horrible. The reality is that you and I must slave for things that used to be free. The reality is that Leviathan will chew us up until we die in misery and fear. So Leviathan creates images to deceive us:

And [the second Beast] deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast...⁹²⁴

Leviathan creates “miracles”: shiny tricks to make people believe in him. Leviathan demands that we pledge allegiance to images: statues, flags, brands, etc. Leviathan shows us “fire from heaven” - amazing military technology.

Leviathan especially loves the image of more ancient Leviathan, because it suggests stability. Hence, modern America bases its architecture and political system on ancient Rome. Ancient Rome in turn copied Greece and claimed descent from Troy (in the Aeneid). Greece’s greatest hero was Heracles: also known as Melqart from Phoenicia, the original Leviathan. They need the illusion of stability because in reality, all cities are temporary and fragile, built on a tissue of lies.



⁹²⁴ Revelation 13:14

Revelation 13:16-18: the mark of the Beast

The new beast was another multi-headed beast, just like the first. This was Rome, an empire made of many kingdoms. In John's day, Rome was embodied in the emperor Nero (hence his number 666⁹²⁵). Nero had just died, but like Leviathan he seemed to come back (in late 68 AD a look-alike claimed that he was Nero).⁹²⁶

The mark on the right hand and on the forehead refers to Passover: it means remembering that you came out of Egypt:

*This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that this law of the Lord is to be on your lips. For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand.*⁹²⁷

Ezekiel used this imagery to show we reject the worship of Tammuz and Shamash in the temple.⁹²⁸ The marks show that we hate those things.

*Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.*⁹²⁹

Tammuz was god of both shepherds (good) and agriculture (bad). Shamash was god of the sun, which is a fundamental force of nature (good), and child of the moon (good), but is known for watching everything that people do (bad) so was favoured by kings (bad). So Tammuz and Shamash are how we compromise with the evil of cities: we still say we care about the freedom of nomadic shepherds and their moon god, but we compromise with the restrictions of settled city life and kingship.

Ezekiel said this Tammuz and Shamash were in the temple. And this was bad. It would not be so bad if they were outside the temple. Moses was relaxed about other gods, because we have to get along with our neighbours. But our own shrine should only be to the moon god Yahweh: the god of freedom and nomadic shepherds.

John's vision shows people doing the opposite of what God wants: they have the mark of the city and trading, instead of the mark of nomads and their festivals of free food.

⁹²⁵ Many different names can make 666, but Nero can make it in many different ways, and he is the fifth king of Rome who just died, as identified in chapter 17.

⁹²⁶ Tacitus, Histories, 2:6-8

⁹²⁷ Exodus 13:9

⁹²⁸ Ezekiel 8:14,16

⁹²⁹ Ezekiel 9:4

Revelation 14:9-11: the logic of Hell

Revelation 14 describes the result of the global war:

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.⁹³⁰

Fire and brimstone refer to the destruction of Sodom, the archetypal city. It is natural and logical that when cities destroy each other that it will involve fire, and probably some technology just as foul as sulphur. But how does this last forever? John was paraphrasing Isaiah:

Edom's streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! It will not be quenched night or day; its smoke will rise forever. From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again.⁹³¹

So this refers to land that is so thoroughly destroyed that nobody will ever live there again. The word for “torment” is “basanismos”, meaning “a testing by the touchstone, which is a black siliceous stone used to test the purity of gold or silver by the colour of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with either metal”⁹³² So this refers to testing the gold (the money) of the city people. “Basanismos” is a clever choice of words, as it became the word for torture. Because most torture is designed to test if a person is telling the truth. The destruction of the world’s cities shows that cities are based on lies and cannot survive. Their smoking remains will show generation after generation that trust in money was a lie and could never work.

Why does this only affect people who worship the Beast? John explained: it is because of the patience of the saints, the blessed dead. In the midst of the war the saints are comforted by the knowledge that it will soon be over, and that they will soon be blessed in heaven forever. The wicked have no such comfort. We will look at the blessed dead next.

⁹³⁰ Revelation 14:9-11

⁹³¹ Isaiah 34:9-10

⁹³² Strong’s Concordance, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g929/kjv/tr/0-1/>

Revelation 19:14: the armies in heaven

Revelation 14:14 talks about the coming of the common man:

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the son of man [the common man]...

Chapters 15-18 then repeat the introduction and seven stages of the war, so we don't forget. Then in chapter 19 we are back with the common man. Verse 14 says he is accompanied by the armies of heaven:

And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

The “armies of heaven” are the “hosts of heaven” who surround God's throne. David A. Burnett explores this theme in detail,⁹³³ but here is a brief summary: the hosts of heaven are the stars. For example:

*It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.*⁹³⁴

In ancient times, heroes became stars at death. The shapes of constellations then remind us of their stories, and guide our lives. For example, the hunter Orion chases the Pleiades. When the Pleiades appear each year, they tell us when to plant crops and when the storm season has ended so it is safe to travel by sea.



⁹³³ E.g. in his paper “*A Neglected Deuteronomistic Scriptural Matrix...*” or his interview in the Data over Dogma Podcast, August 13, 2023, “*I’ll make you a star*”

⁹³⁴ Isaiah 45:12. See also Daniel 12:3

The new gods, the new white horses

The Israelites felt that the old gods and heroes had failed, and therefore Yahweh should replace them:

*The ‘gods’ know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. “I said, ‘You are gods; you are all sons of the Most High. But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.” Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.*⁹³⁵

So the stars (the armies of heaven) are the stories that guide us. In ancient times these stories were about gods or godlike men (e.g. Orion, Hercules, etc.) but today those stories are about common people. Because our modern religion is progress: belief in the divinity of the common man. This is a religion created by the Big Men to justify their power (“follow us and everyone can be a Big Man”). It creates visions of armies conquering not just other lands but all knowledge: heaven itself!

The modern armies ride white horses made of metal: great white spaceships with names like *The Enterprise* (symbol of human enterprise) or *The Discovery* (from *2001: A Space Odyssey*), or *The Endurance* (from *Interstellar*) or *The Machine* (from *Contact*). These space horses are always white, like in the prophecy. We follow the billionaires (the Big Men) because they promise us these white horses, and they promise us a future with armies in heaven. Our faith in these stories gives the Big Men their power.



⁹³⁵ Psalm 82:5-8

Revelation 20:4: the logic of resurrection

The Bible mentions resurrection many times, and it always refers to living on through your family or followers:

Job 19:27-29 refers to living on through “*my flesh*” meaning “*my flesh and blood*” or “*my family*”: if Job dies, a family member will make right any debts (literally “redeem” him).⁹³⁶

Ezekiel 37, the valley of dry bones refers to Israel as a nation returning to its land. This is the ancient idea that only the tribe matters, not the individual. Hence in Revelation 20:13-15, the graves can bring back the dead: meaning they bring back the memory of the dead. This is how our ancestors were immortal because they understood that ancestors live on as spirits. The physical world is less important than the spiritual world, the world inside our heads, the world of ideas. In a loving tribe nobody cares about themselves, we only care for others, so our ideas live forever through the tribe. Thus, the whole concept of an individual death is cast into the fire: this is the second death, the death of death.

Daniel 12:2 uses the same poetic language as Ezekiel: the nation (tribe) will be dead, but the nation will rise again. Daniel adds that only the good will be rewarded. People who did not try hard in the bad times, when Israel was struggling, will be treated as pariahs and forgotten.

Jesus “rose from the dead” in the same way: his ideas rose. The resurrected Jesus had a different face. We know this because his closest friends spoke with him for a long time, and did not recognise him. Only later, when the visitor acted like Jesus, did they decide that this was Jesus.⁹³⁷ The Jews understood that spirits (ideas) move between people: because they assumed that Jesus was either Elijah or John the Baptist. Jesus only became special when God’s spirit entered him at his baptism. The majority of Jesus’s followers, the Samaritans, accepted that spirits move between bodies. E.g. Helena (partner of Atomos) had many past lives, and Simon’s “*Great Declaration*” was all about how ideas spread and create new life.

But the elites (such as the Sadducees⁹³⁸) hate resurrection, because they need people to fear death. Fearful people are easier to control.

⁹³⁶ Leviticus 25:25 if a man loses his land, a family member can buy it back: he becomes the redeemer. Deut. 25:5-10 applies the principle to marriage. In Job 2:29, the words often translated “*I will see him*” are literally “*I see on my side*”: the whole verse is present tense. See the Literal Standard Version or Young’s Literal translation.

⁹³⁷ Luke 24:13-32, the Road to Emmaus incident.

⁹³⁸ Hence Mark 12:18-27. Jesus refers to Exodus 3:6, the archetype of national rebirth (i.e. resurrection). After the revolution nobody will care who the woman was married to, because her spirit (her ideas) will mix with the rest of the ancestors. Then ancestors live among the stars, guiding the tribe as messengers (angels) of the gods.

1 Corinthians 15: Atomos (Paul) on resurrection

Let us explore the most famous text on resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15. David A. Burnett once again explores this topic in detail,⁹³⁹ and this page is just a summary.

1 Corinthians 15 explains the kind of body we have in the resurrection: not an earthly body like people and animals, but a heavenly body like the stars. This explanation is based on Deuteronomy 4:15-20, which classifies all objects into early or heavenly, using the same list of animals and heavenly bodies. Deuteronomy⁹⁴⁰ says that God allotted the stars to be the heavenly hosts that guide the nations of the world, and allotted the people of Israel to be his chosen people. Hence Paul (in Romans 4) could expand the mention of stars in Genesis 15 to explain many different things. Genesis 15 does not say God's people are "*numerous* like the stars", it says they are "*like* the stars". Philo, the greatest Jewish writer of Jesus's day, emphasised this.

The righteous exist as shared ideas, only concerned with eternal relationships, not caring about their individual bodies. This teaching led to Gnosticism (where the physical body is a prison) and Christian asceticism (achieving immortality through renouncing the body). These ideas terrify the modern mind, because the modern mind is centred on the self. But the ancient mind was centred on the good of the tribe. Heroes and loving people feel the same way: they never think about themselves.

Psalms 82 and similar texts describe how the other nations' ideas (their stars) have failed, so their stars no longer deserve to rule. So the sons of God, the Israelites, will now rule the world instead. Hence, Israelites rise to become like stars. That is what is meant by the resurrection.

Resurrection is not a return to be like our corrupted state: it is a return to the ideal state in the garden of Eden, where humans ruled the world, like stars, directed by God. This is made possible by the destruction of human kingdoms, leaving only the kingdom of God: the kingdom of nature, the kingdom of infinitely connected ideas, the kingdom of the circle of life, where everything is eternally recycling and re-connecting.

Paul (Marcion) adds some pointless supernatural elements, like saying Jesus will be a ruler (not the common man), and that we will change "in the twinkling of an eye", and that we rise into the air to meet him as he descends to Earth. But those details are new and wrong and unimportant. The ancient idea of resurrection is that we live through others, because we care for others and not for ourselves, as it was in Eden.

⁹³⁹ E.g. in his paper "*A Neglected Deuteronomistic Scriptural Matrix...*" or his interview in the Data over Dogma Podcast, August 13, 2023, "*I'll make you a star*"

⁹⁴⁰ Burnett uses the Septuagint translation, as John would have done

Revelation 19: The Second Coming

The Second Coming is not what we think. Revelation 19 tells us what The Second Coming really means.

1. The Lamb unites with the people of God

In Isaiah 2:6, the final triumph of the people of God is compared to a marriage feast: where God (as the bridegroom) unites with his people (as the bride). There is great celebration, as the people now have the power and blessings of God, and all will be good. This is the moment of triumph. Any date for the Second Coming must refer to this event.

The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.⁹⁴¹

The wife is the saints (the people of God), who wear righteousness like fine linen. The lamb is Jesus.⁹⁴²

2. The war with Babylon

The Word of God then starts a war with Babylon. This is the great battle described in chapters 8, 16, etc. This battle destroys The Beast (Rome) and Babylon (all Earthly kingdoms) forever.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True... and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses... And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.⁹⁴³

But this is all a symbolic dream. In the real world, how can Jesus (one man) marry millions of people? And what form does this war take? What do the symbols mean? What should we look for?

⁹⁴¹ Revelation 19:7-8

⁹⁴² Revelation 21:14: the lamb has twelve apostles and he generally acts like Jesus

⁹⁴³ Revelation 19:11,13-14,19-20

The Second Coming: what to look for:

The Last Days, the Second Coming, the Marriage of the Lamb, the End of the World, the Millennium, etc., all refer to the same thing: the coming of the age of logic.

Here is the most famous Last Days prophecy of all. We can see all the elements here: the marriage feast, the army like locusts, like a thief in the night, the sun darkened and the moon turned to blood, the saviour on Mt Zion, and so on. But above all, the spirit of prophecy is spread across the whole world:

*Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. ... a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come. Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. ... They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, ... They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. Before them the earth shakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. ... I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy you fully; ... "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten ... the locust swarm ... You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, ... And afterward, **I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.** And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance..."⁹⁴⁴*

A similar but shorter prophecy is in Isaiah 25:6-9.

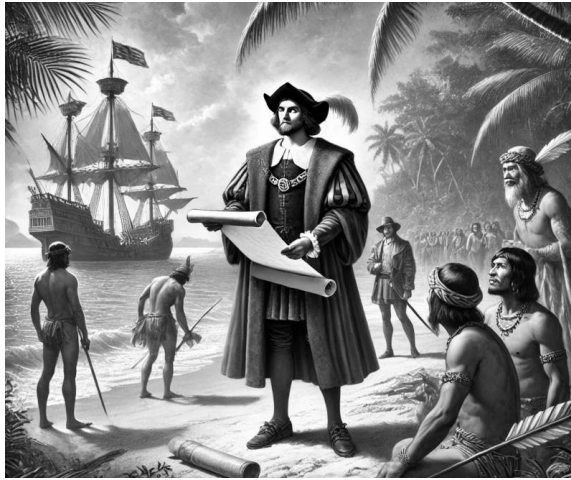
This is what the Second Coming means: an age when everything changes, in the most dramatic and amazing ways, an age of plenty, an age of astonishing wars, when everything happens so quickly, when the spirit of prophecy - the spirit of logic - is poured out on people all over the world. And it is all triggered by the spirit of Jesus: by logic.

This is what we should look for when we look for The Second Coming: the return of power to the common man, due to dramatic revolutions triggered by the start of an age of logic.

⁹⁴⁴ Joel 2:24, 28-32

Revelation 20: who is Satan?

The Second Coming starts a great war that ends the rule of Satan. John calls Satan "*the dragon, that old serpent*". This identifies him as Leviathan. Leviathan was originally the Phoenicians, the great sea traders.⁹⁴⁵ John says he is the archetype for the great Beast, Rome, whose power comes from money, and sits on many waters. But Revelation is around a return to the Garden of Eden, and describes Satan's armies as scorpions, so that suggests the serpent in Eden, based on the scorpion men of Inanna, who control access to land. The common theme (uniting Phoenicians, Rome, and Scorpion men) is of claiming ownership of colonies of land.



Revelation 12 says that Satan was cast out of heaven with all the fallen angels, just before The Flood.⁹⁴⁶ This identifies him with the Big Men who arose after the time of Enoch, a result of the invention of syllabic writing (writing as we know it) around 3000 BC.⁹⁴⁷ Unlike proto-writing, syllabic writing requires no knowledge from the reader. So it allows a massive expansion of ignorance: vast kingdoms powered by bureaucracy, endless wars, and unlimited opportunity for lying.

So Satan refers to colonialism, especially when backed by writing. So the only way to bind Satan for a thousand years is to make colonialism impossible, probably through some kind of new information revolution.

⁹⁴⁵ See the discussion of the Baal Cycle in the chapters on Moses

⁹⁴⁶ See the later discussion of the 1260 year cycle

⁹⁴⁷ See the chapters on Enoch

The Millennium

The Second Coming took place in 1844, just as predicted. That date began the 1000-year Millennium. That was an easy prediction for John, because human civilisation reboots every 12,000 years or so. So this kind of thing has happened before. The prophets recognise the patterns. This chapter has the details.



Let's start with the 1260-day prophecy in Revelation 11, then move on to the 1260-day prophecy in Revelation 12, and then the Millennium in Revelation 20.

Revelation 11: the 1260-day crisis period

Revelation and Daniel often refer to 1260 days as a period of crisis or rebirth.⁹⁴⁸ That is, three and a half years. All the greatest crises in Jewish history lasted about 1260 days.

15 Chislev (Nov/Dec), 167 BC:

Antiochus defiles the temple

25 Chislev, 164 BC:

Daily sacrifice re-starts

The Maccabean Revolt: 3 years

Source: 1 Maccabees 1:54; 4:52-53

16 March, 37 AD:

Caligula becomes emperor

24 January, 41 AD:

Caligula is assassinated, Claudius reigns

The Reign of Caligula: 3 years 10 months

September 66 AD:

The revolt begins

October 68 AD:

John writes his prediction

April 70 AD (Passover):

Hoped for victory

The first Jewish Revolt: 3½ years?

(The real end: 1st May -25 Sep, 70: siege, 1 million Passover visitors die)

Source: <https://josephus.org/home.htm>

April 132 AD:

The revolt begins

November 135 AD:

Revolt ends (Romans capture Jerusalem)

The Bar Kokhba Revolt: 3½ years

Source: <https://imperiumromanum.pl/en/wars/bar-kokhba-revolt/>

This is even true today: the first gassing of Jews began at Auschwitz was 3 September 1941. Most concentration camps were liberated in April of 1945, just over 1260 days later.

It is common to trace the 1260 days to the period of the Maccabean revolt.⁹⁴⁹ But the 1260-day prophecy has a much older and more precise inspiration: the 1260-year cycle.

It is time to look at the cycles of history.

⁹⁴⁸ Sometimes the 1260 days is written as 42 months (of 30 days each), or three and a half “times”). See Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5

⁹⁴⁹ E.g. The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* on Daniel 8:1, or “*the Four Empires of Daniel*” by Michael J. Gruenthaner (Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 8:1, 1946)

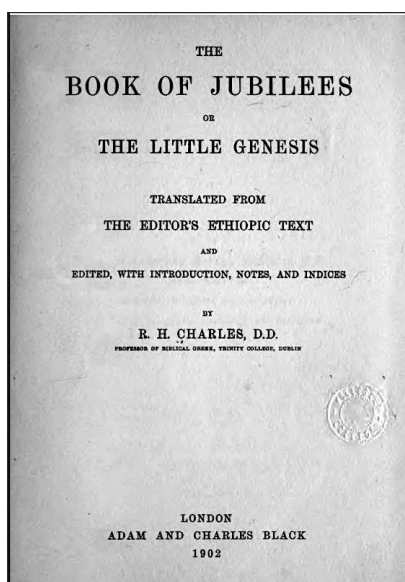
How history works: the Jubilee Cycle

History runs in cycles. For example, night follows day in a 24-hour cycle. The moon has a roughly a 30-day cycle, and summer and winter follow a cycle of roughly 12 moons. Humans also follow a cycle of birth, childhood, adulthood then death.

Even though individual human cycles vary, we can make precise predictions about large groups. For example, an individual human might live for a day, or for a hundred years. But in large groups, a human life averages to around 70 years. The larger the group, the more important this number becomes, because it lets us compare different groups. For example, if one group lives to be 70, and another group lives to be 75, that suggests greater health and efficiency, so the longer-lived group will tend to defeat the shorter-lived group in any war. So we can speak very precisely about the human life-cycle, and small differences matter. They enable us to make predictions.

For human behaviour, the most important number is the adult career. Humans typically become adults at around 15 and retire at around 65. So they have 50 years of influence. So in large groups, we find that rulers cycle every 50 years. If a big new idea takes over, it cannot be removed for 50 years. For example, in 1945, after World War II, everybody saw the destruction of war, and decided to work together: we created the welfare state. But 50 years later, in 1995, all the wartime rulers had been replaced. The new rulers had no experience of war, and thought the welfare state was a waste of money. So in 1995 they began to dismantle it. So every 50 years we forget vital experience from 50 years earlier. To solve this problem, Moses commanded a “jubilee” year every 50 years. In that year we refresh our memory of vital truths. In particular, in a jubilee year, all land is returned to its original owners.

The 50-year cycle is a very useful way to understand history. So the ancient Jews divided time into 50-year jubilee units. For example, the *Book of Jubilees*, a very popular book among the Dead Sea Scrolls, tells the history of the world (from the creation up to Moses) in 50-year jubilee chunks.



Out of copyright

Other cycles in history

The human career is one of two big drivers of historical cycles. The other driver is Dunbar's Number: this is the number of people we can form stable relationships with. This number is around 100-150 people. If a society grows larger than 150 people it becomes unstable. For example, it becomes hard to spot liars, or to understand what other people mean when they talk, because we do not know them well enough.

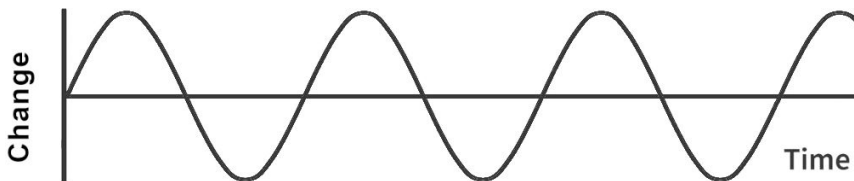
500 years, 2500 years, and 12,000 years

We try to overcome the limit of Dunbar's number using specialists. For example, a specialist historian might not know their living neighbours, but they might be very familiar with 150 people stretching into the past. But as history grows longer we reach a limit where even the specialists forget things and cannot make reliable judgments. History shows that this happens every ten jubilee cycles: every 500 years (see next page). So every 500 years, institutions break down and new ideas take over.

To overcome this 500-year limit we create religions: institutions designed to emphasise very old ideas, and treat all new ideas with the greatest suspicion. But history suggests that after five 500-year cycles even religions fail. Every 2500 years we have a chaotic period that breaks old religions and produces world-changing new ideas. E.g. Kingship in 10,500 BC, walled cities in 8000 BC, canals in 5,500 BC, writing in 3000 BC, coins in 500 BC, and computers in 2000 AD.

After five 2500-year revolutions, we cannot remember anything useful from the start. So global civilisation completely breaks down and reboots every 12,500 years. (More about that later.)

New ideas take a long time to settle in. So each 2500-year cycle tends to divide into 1250 years of change and 1250 years of stability. We usually refer to these as 1260-year periods, because 1250 is easier to divide and fit into other time periods based on 0-day months and 360-day years. Similarly, 12,500 years become 12,000. Big changes propagate slowly, like waves, so the precise date we choose is up to us.



The 500-year cycle

The 500-year cycle. 500 years is just an approximation: sometimes it is a little more or less. 500 years is equivalent to Daniel's "seventy sevens" (490 years).

David Solomon explains this cycle in his popular lecture "*The Whole Jewish History in One Hour*":

Now this is a very very important thing I'm going to say now. If you remember nothing from this talk except what I'm going to say now it's this : from King David onwards it's possible to understand Jewish history - I didn't make this up, this is Jewish history itself - in discreet 500-year blocks. Every 500 years the Jewish people go through a major phasic transition to another period. ... If we understand the major spiritual project of each 500 year Epoch then the details simply fit in and it's possible to get one's head around Jewish history. It's the whole point of what I want to show you.⁹⁵⁰

Here are the 500-year epochs in Jewish history. (David Solomon starts at 1000 BC, but this list starts earlier.) These epochs show that Jewish history, like all history, is the story of nomads versus cities.

4000 BC: the Adams reluctantly enter Uruk and stop being nomads

3500 BC: the age of Mahalalel: they fully embraced city life

3000 BC: the age of Enoch (writing),

2350 BC: The Flood: a return to nomadic life, distrust of temples

1900 BC: Abraham

1400 BC: Moses (the law)

1000 BC: Kings (the temple)

500 BC: Diaspora (destruction of the temple, first exile)

70 AD: Rabbis (destruction of the second temple)

500 AD: Talmudic academies

1000 AD: Crusades (and more exiles: "The Wandering Jew")

1500 AD: Zohar (mysticism, embraced after the Warsaw Ghetto)

1948 AD: Zionism

⁹⁵⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUIM2a2tsOM> time stamp 2:27

The 1260-year cycle

Our current 12,000-year cycle is defined by land ownership. This turns neighbours into enemies, because the people with the best land can kill or enslave their neighbours and take *their* land.

First, we became enemies to the ancient gods, so we could become “a big name” (a “Shem”) in defiance of ancient tradition. Next, we became enemies to nature, by inventing supernatural gods. Next, we became enemies to the land, by creating a religion without a geographical base. Finally, we declared each individual to be a god, making every human a deadly rival to every other human.

Each step took 1260 years, then another 1260 years for the step to become so normalised that we no longer thought about it. Two 1260-year cycles make the 2500-year cycle of major new inventions.⁹⁵¹ Each major invention appeared 500 years after the change in thinking.

3609 BC: Era of "Mahalal-el" ("praise the gods"): Praise the power and wealth of temples	2348 BC: The Great Flood: The elites attempt genocide
The Birth of the Semitic Peoples: 1261 years	

2348 BC: The Great Flood: The elites attempt genocide	1095 BC: Saul becomes Israel's first king (and 1085 BC: David is born)
The Birth of the Kingdom of Israel: 1253 years (or 1263)	
Source: Ussher chronology	

1095 BC: Saul becomes Israel's first king (and 1085 BC: David is born)	c.166 AD: Pope Soter, many fundamental changes
The Birth of Christianity: 1260 years	
c.160: Marcion dies; c.166: Justin dies; c.162 or 168: Pope Soter: creates Easter source: https://popehistory.com/popes/pope-st-soter/	

c.166 AD: Pope Soter, and the birth of Christianity	1434 AD: Cosmo Medici becomes lord of Florence, the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance
The Birth of Individuality: 1268 years	

⁹⁵¹ Agriculture (10,500 BC), walls (8000 BC), canals (5500 BC), writing (3000 BC), coins (500 BC), computers (2000 AD)

Mahalelel, Saul, Soter, and Cosmo

Readers who are unfamiliar with multi-thousand-year history may not see the importance of the names Mahalalel, Saul, Soter and Cosmo.

Mahalalel (“praise the gods”) was the people who began to love wealthy temples. This was a new approach to religion. The need to catalogue that wealth led to writing as we know it. The book of Enoch records that Mahalelel was the fount of wisdom, the most important ancestor.

Saul was the first king of Israel. “Saul” means “asked for”. We saw the success of Moses’s golden age and wanted power for himself: for his name, his Shem. He asked the people for power and he got it. He rejected the existing gods of the land (while pretending to follow them)⁹⁵². He began the process of the birth of Christianity: the world-changing idea of following a special anointed person who came from nowhere and rejected old gods. All previous kings, including arrogant kings like Gilgamesh, relied on a physical base: Gilgamesh was nothing without the mighty walls of Uruk. But Christianity broke with the land, and it all began with Saul.

Soter was the Pope at the death of Marcion, the creator of Christianity. With no Marcion to oppose him, Soter was free to control Marcion’s ideas. Marcion’s idea (a business club) was fundamentally unstable because it was based on competition: the club would inevitably compete against itself and consume itself. But Soter saved the idea by combining it with the stability of Judaism (long tradition) and Rome (top-down power). He merged Jew and Gentile to create a Christianity that would thrive for 1260 years. “Soter” means “saviour”: he saved Christianity. He is best known for creating the feast of Easter, the central Christian festival. That is, he replaced Passover: he changed the religion from a branch of Judaism into a new idea based on supernatural resurrection. Soter’s reign (the 160s AD) saw an explosion of new books. Most early Christian texts probably date from this decade or soon after. The earliest Christian artefact, the shrine of St Peter, dates from Soter’s time, 160 AD.⁹⁵³

Cosmo (from the Greek word for Cosmos, the universe) was the greatest leader of the early Medici family. He funded Renaissance art and put banking at the heart of the economy. He made Florence the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance, an educational project to look forward rather than backward: to learn from the past to forget the past. Scholars will insist that Cosmo did not create these ideas, but that is the point: Cosmo was the focal point of larger cosmic ideas. Cosmo was the point at which those existing ideas became the dominant force shaping world history.

⁹⁵² 1 Samuel 8:7

⁹⁵³ it is dated by graffiti on the “red wall” (in the Basilica) that was built at that time.

Revelation 12: the 1260-year birth

Some people identify the woman in Revelation 12:1 as Mary, or the church, or Israel. But that does not explain the text:

- Why is the woman in heaven?
- Why does she have the sun, moon and stars at her feet?
- Why does she wait for 1260 days?
- Where is the evidence for a war in heaven at Jesus's birth?
- Where is the evidence for Satan and all his angels being cast out of heaven at Jesus's birth?
- And where is the great flood that ends the story (verse 15)?

The identity of the woman is obvious if we start at the end: the great flood, then the fallen angels, then the war in heaven. Like most of Revelation, this is from the Book of Enoch. The fallen angels are the sons of God who caused Noah's Flood. Noah's flood caused the birth of the Semitic peoples. They are the man-child. They ruled the world with a rod of iron.⁹⁵⁴

Look back at the chapter on Genesis. The turning point was the era of Mahalalel ("praise the gods") that began in 3609 BC. This led to the invention of writing, which changed the world. This led to bigger temples, military strength, colonialism, and so on. Finally the elites saw the common people as a threat and caused the Flood. This backfired, causing the fall of Sumer, and the rise of "Shem", the Semitic people, the people of the name.

Mahalalel is a key figure in the Book of Enoch. When Enoch has his vision of the end of the world he does not understand. So he goes to Mahalalel to learn what it means.⁹⁵⁵

Mahalalel (praising gods for wealth) is a key concept in the Book of Revelation. The people praise the dragon for his power.⁹⁵⁶ This leads to the final war.

Mahalalel in 3609 BC began the process that caused the Flood, the fall of the empire and the birth of the Semites, 1260 years later. And Enoch implies that the end of the world will follow the same pattern. So of course Revelation spends a chapter on this: this is the heart of all prophecy.

⁹⁵⁴ See the discussion of Zeus and Jacob as they ruled Egypt and Greece, and their role in creating the Iron Age. We could also discuss modern Christianity and Zionism.

⁹⁵⁵ 1 Enoch 83:3-10

⁹⁵⁶ Revelation 13:4,8, following the 1260 prophecy in Revelation 12

Revelation 12:1-2: the woman

The woman who creates the Semitic people is “*a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars*”⁹⁵⁷ A woman who matches this description appears in many ancient texts and carvings. She is “*probably Ishtar*”,⁹⁵⁸ also known as Inanna, or Eve, the primordial goddess of Eden (Kur) who created (gave birth) to the Semitic peoples (Shem). Elements of the mother goddess were later incorporated into the cult of the Virgin Mary, so people who say the woman was Mary are not *entirely* wrong.



Image: Walters Art Museum, listed as public domain

This cylinder seal shows Ishtar (left), a Semitic follower (middle), and a scorpion man (the dragon figure, right). Note the sun, moon and stars. On the table are symbols of divine authority: the tree of life and a sceptre of power (called a “rod of iron” in Revelation).

⁹⁵⁷ Revelation 12:1

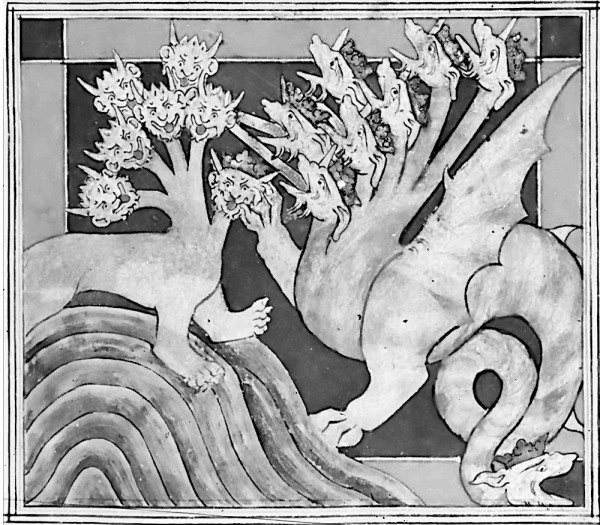
⁹⁵⁸ “*This seal’s imagery includes a deity surrounded by a nimbus of stars, probably Ishtar; a worshipper, and human-headed scorpion figure. A rhomb, crescent, and a standard also decorate the scene.*” <https://art.thewalters.org/detail/1817/cylinder-seal-with-standing-figures-with-a-human-headed-animal/>

Revelation 13:1-11 from the Flood to Saul

Revelation 13 describes the 1260 days (years) of the first beast: from the Flood in Revelation 12:15 to the rise of the second beast (implying that the first had gone).

The beast comes from the sea and is wounded as if to death. These two facts, and the timeframe (after the flood) identifies the beast as Leviathan, the beast fatally wounded by Baal/Yahweh.⁹⁵⁹

Leviathan was the kingdom from the sea: the Phoenicians (Canaanites) from before 1500 BC, and all their allies, who were defeated and became allies of the Israelites.⁹⁶⁰



The many-headed beasts in Revelation come from the sea.
Image: Queen Mary Apocalypse, early 1300s.

After the Israelite

Canaanites defeated the world's empires (the Late Bronze Age Collapse), Saul ended the reign of judges and brought in kings. The judges could no longer lead the people. Big empires (Leviathan with its many heads) came back: the wound was healed.

John then described a new beast who was just like the old one, but had horns like a lamb. In prophecy, a lamb was always a sacrificial lamb, especially for Passover. Saul and other kings sacrificed thousands of lambs to pretend they followed the law of Moses.⁹⁶¹ That is, Saul pretended to be humble, like lambs. But really, Saul and the other kings only cared about power: so they spoke with the voice of the dragon.

⁹⁵⁹ See Isaiah 27:1; Psalm 74:14

⁹⁶⁰ see the chapters on the Book of Joshua and Judges

⁹⁶¹ e.g. 1 Chronicles 29:21

Revelation 20: The thousand-year prophecy

The start of the thousand years in Revelation 20 is the date that anchors all the other dates. Once we know this date, then we can look at signs that fit the other predictions.

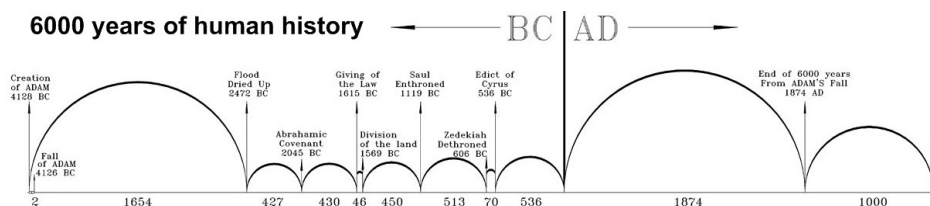
The thousand years (the Millennium) is mentioned six times in chapter 20. This is the climax of the prophecies. After this, we only have chapter 21, the end of the book, where it describes the blessed and happy state after the Millennium. Here are the six references:

*And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him **a thousand years**, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till **the thousand years** should be fulfilled... [and the righteous] lived and reigned with Christ **a thousand years**. But the rest of the dead lived not again until **the thousand years** were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him **a thousand years**. And when **the thousand years** are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison [for the final battle, that he will lose].⁹⁶²*

After the Millennium there is one final war, and then Satan is banished forever. We then see a new heaven and a beautiful new earth. If this is true, then the Christians were right, and this makes everything worthwhile. So let us spend several pages examining the Millennium.

The seventh thousand years from Adam

Most predictions place the Millennium - and hence the Second Coming - at six thousand years after Adam's start date in Genesis (around 4000 BC). The Millennium is the seventh thousand years. For example, this is a Jehovahs' Witness calculation from 1896. But where does this seven thousand year teaching come from?



Studies in the Scriptures 2, chapter 2 (1896, out of copyright); revised 1980 (Fair Use)

⁹⁶² Revelation 20:2-7

The origin of the Millennium

The Millennium is part of an old Jewish teaching, that the world will last for six thousand years from Adam, and then there will be a thousand years of desolation while the Lord rules:

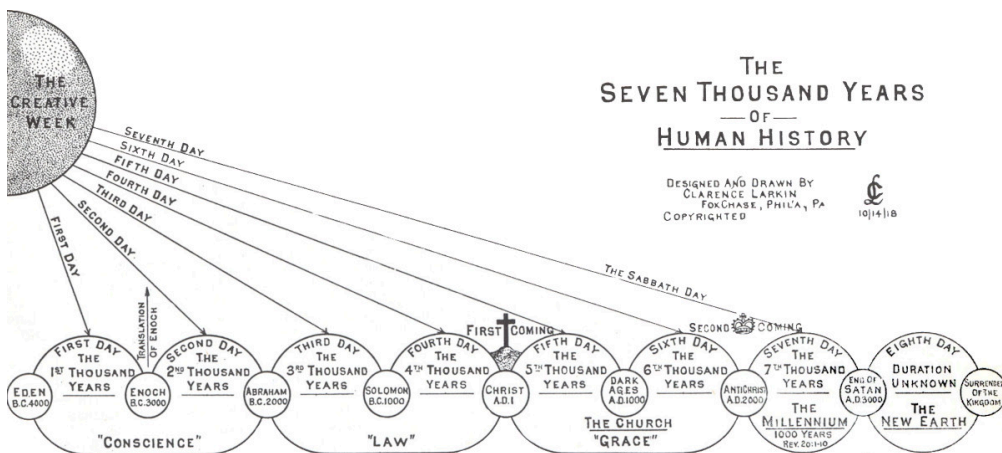
*"R. Katina said, 'Six thousand years the world will exist and one [thousand, the seventh], it shall be desolate (haruv), as it is written, 'And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day' (Isa. 2:11).'"*⁹⁶³

*"The Talmud tells us that this world, as we know it, will last for six thousand years, with the seventh millennium ushering in the cosmic Shabbat, the Messianic Era. ... However, it is certainly possible for Moshiach [messiah] to come earlier. ... This is also analogous to the weekly Shabbat, which we have the prerogative of ushering in early on Friday afternoon."*⁹⁶⁴

Recently, some Jewish scholars have suggested that the due date might have passed. But the ancient teaching remains.

*"Six thousand years is the duration of the world. Two thousand of the six thousand years are characterized by chaos; two thousand years are characterized by Torah, from the era of the Patriarchs until the end of the mishnaic period; and two thousand years are the period of the coming of the Messiah."*⁹⁶⁵

The Christians inherited the teaching:



Adapted from Clarence Larkin, 1918, out of copyright

⁹⁶³ Sanhedrin.97a. For more details, search sefaria.org

⁹⁶⁴ chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/607585/jewish/Significance-of-the-year-6000.htm

⁹⁶⁵ Sanhedrin 97b

The 7,000-year prophecy in Enoch

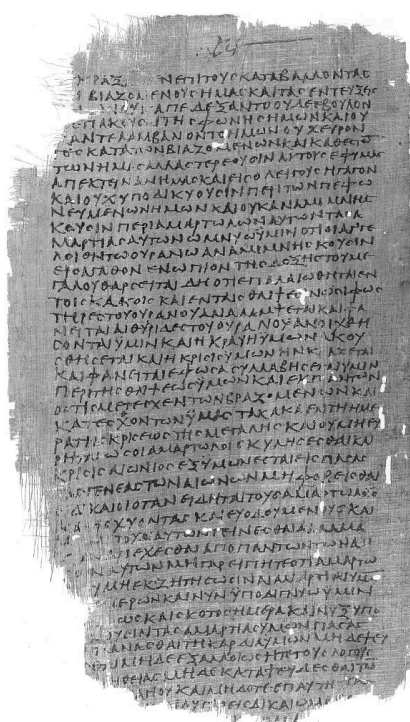
The 7,000-year history of the world is in the Slavonic Book of Enoch, which is usually dated to the first century AD:

God shows Enoch the age of this world, its existence of seven thousand years, and the eighth thousand is the end, neither years, nor months, nor weeks, nor days.

AND I appointed the eighth day also, that the eighth day should be the first-created after my work, and that the first seven revolve in the form of the seventh thousand, and that at the beginning of the eighth thousand there should be a time of not-counting, endless, with neither years nor months nor weeks nor days nor hours.⁹⁶⁶

The same teaching is found in the more famous (and probably older) Ethiopian Enoch. In that text, Enoch refers to each thousand-year period as a week, making seven weeks in total, or 7,000 years for Earth's history.⁹⁶⁷

But where did Enoch get the idea that world history would last for 7,000 years?



A page from Enoch, 4th Century AD, Chester Beatty, Public Domain

⁹⁶⁶ 2 Enoch (Slavonic Enoch) 33:1, including chapter summary. From *The Forgotten Books of Eden*, by Rutherford H. Platt, Jr., 1926, at sacred-texts.com

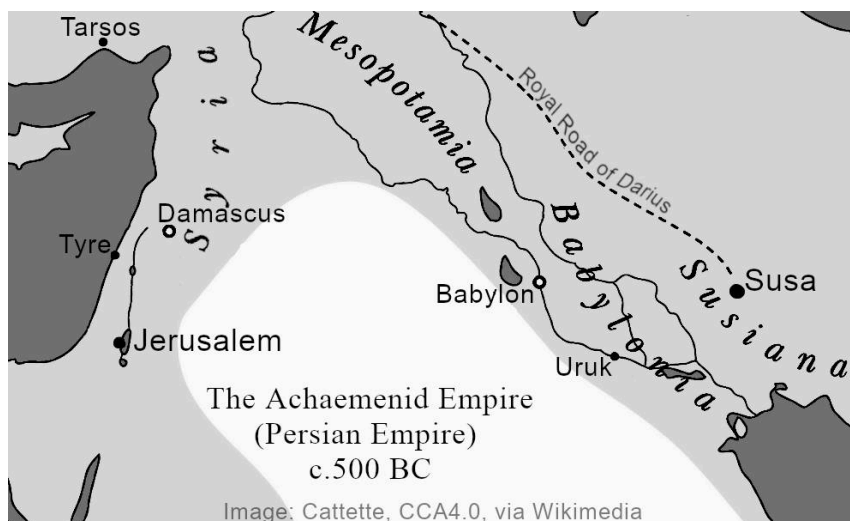
⁹⁶⁷ 1 Enoch 92:1-10, Charles Translation. Enoch says “*I was born the seventh [generation from Adam] in the first week*”. Adam’s dates start at 4000 BC and Enoch was 3000 BC. David was born in week 3 “*at its close*”, i.e. the end of the 2000 BC-1000 BC period. David was born around 1000 BC. “*In the fourth week, at its close [i.e. circa 1 BC], Visions of the holy and righteous shall be seen, And a law for all generations and an enclosure shall be made for them.*” This seems to refer to the messianic hopes of the era from the Maccabees to Jesus. And finally “*And at its close [of the 7th week, so around 3000 AD] shall be elected The elect righteous of the eternal plant of righteousness, To receive sevenfold instruction concerning all His creation.*” - the final state of bliss, the “*new heaven and new Earth*” of Revelation 21, the start of 2 Enoch’s “*endless*” eighth thousand years.

Tracing the teaching to Persia

The Millennium teaching can be traced to Parseeism: the religion of Persia.

Chiliasm or the idea of the millennium is, nevertheless, older than the Christian Church; for the belief in a period of one thousand years at the end of time as a preliminary to the resurrection of the dead was held in Parseeism.⁹⁶⁸

“Parsee” means Persian. Parseeism is the Persian religion in India (this will be important later: the Persians once ruled much of India).



Persia deeply influenced the Bible. The Jews considered Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire, to be chosen by God to free the Jews. The Jews wrote the Bible while living in the Persian empire. They spoke Aramaic, the Persian language, and adopted Persian religious ideas such as personal resurrection and Satan. The term “Pharisee” probably meant Parsee/Persian.⁹⁶⁹ So the Biblical Millennium probably came from the Persians. But where did the Parsees get the idea of a Millennium?

⁹⁶⁸ Jewish Encyclopedia, “Millennium”. <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10840-millennium> Note that there are two entries called “Millennium”, the other is 4333-chiliasm, but unfortunately renamed, causing confusion.

⁹⁶⁹ Only one person was known to have called himself a Pharisee (Josephus), but the author of the Paul letters had Paul also use the term. In both cases, it was to assure a foreigner that they were not a threat. It was like a Christian today saying “I am a good American”. The term was mostly used by outsiders, just like the term “right-wing evangelical” today.

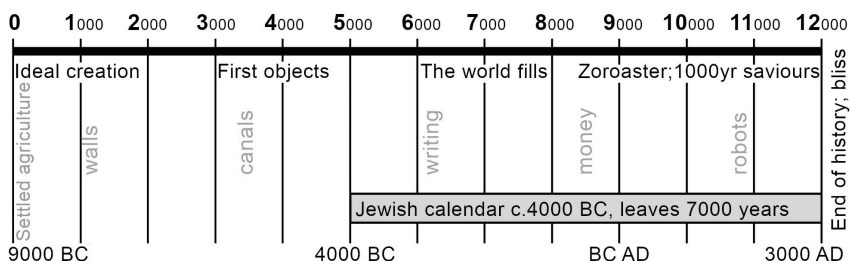
The last 7,000 years of the 12,000-year history

Persian religion was Zoroastrian. It taught that world history will be 12,000 years, starting around 9000 BC, and ending around 3000 AD. The Jewish calendar starts at 4000 BC, which means that the remaining Jewish history would be 7,000 years.

Jewish prophecy was obsessed with the number 7, so a 7000-year history must have seemed inspired.

The Zoroastrian history of the world goes like this:⁹⁷⁰

- Year **0-3000**: Ahura Mazda (“lord of wisdom”) creates the world in an ideal form. The Evil Spirit attacks but is defeated.
- Year **3000-6000**: Ahura Mazda gives material form to the creation, adding one original pure plant, one animal and one man.
- Year **6000-8969**: The Evil Spirit breaks in and destroys the plant, the animal and the man. This act spreads seeds and fills the world.
- Year **8970**: The birth of Zoroastra (also called Zarathushtra). He preaches true religion. This is a time of goodness, but evil slowly returns.
- Year **9970, 10970, 11970**: Every thousand years a new preacher (World Saviour) arises to bring goodness back.
- Year **12000**: Ahura Mazda returns. This brings the final judgment and resurrection of the dead, the end of history, and a new era of bliss.



When exactly does the 12,000 years begin? We can calculate this if we know the date for Zoroaster. We can then work out other dates, and also see where the Persians got the idea of a 12,000-year history.

⁹⁷⁰ Adapted from ‘*Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*’ edited by Mary Boyce, 1990, p.21. Zoroastrian texts can be interpreted in different ways, but Boyce is considered a world authority.

Dating Zoroaster (also called Zarathustra)

There is wide disagreement over when Zoroaster lived, but our best source is probably Pliny the Elder:

There is no doubt that this art [magic] originated in Persia, under Zoroaster; this being a point upon which authors are generally agreed; but whether there was only one Zoroaster, or whether in later times there was a second person of that name, is a matter which still remains undecided.

*Eudoxus, ... informs us that this Zoroaster existed six thousand years before the death of Plato [i.e. c.6300 BC], an assertion in which he is supported by Aristotle. Hermippus, again, an author who has written with the greatest exactness on all particulars connected with this art, and has commented upon the two millions of verses left by Zoroaster; besides completing indexes to his several works, has left a statement, that **Agonaces** was the name of the master from whom Zoroaster derived his doctrines, and that he lived five thousand years before the time of the Trojan War. [i.e. 6200 BC] ...*

Authors who have made diligent enquiries into this subject, make mention of a second Zoroaster, a native of Proconnesus, as living a little before the time of Osthanes. . . . The first person, so far as I can ascertain, who wrote upon magic, and whose works are still in existence, was Osthanes, who accompanied Xerxes, the Persian king, in his expedition against Greece. [Xerxes died in 465 BC]⁹⁷¹

A footnote to the text states:

In the Zendavesta he [Zoroaster] is represented as living in the reign of Gushtasp, generally identified with Darius Hystaspes.⁹⁷²

Darius Hystaspes was the father of Darius I, and lived around 550 BC. This is when Cyrus conquered Media. This is when the Jews were in Persia, compiling the Bible.

So it looks like Zoroaster lived around 550 BC. But Pliny suggests that Zoroaster saw himself as continuing the work of Agonaces who lived around 6000 BC. Hence the confusion over dates: it is easy to confuse Zoroaster of 550 BC with Agonaces of 6000 BC.

⁹⁷¹ Pliny, Natural History, Book 30.

⁹⁷² From the John Bostock edition at Perseus: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D30%3Achapter%3D2>

Pushing history further and further back

The name “Agonaces”, the earliest Zoroastrian sage, means “agon-arch” or “contest or struggle with the archon”. Archon (in this context) means a heavenly ruler, so this is similar to the title chosen by Jacob: “Isra-el”, “fights with the gods”. Clearly, Agonaces was a major figure in history.

The date and place, around 6000 BC in Mesopotamia. We saw earlier that major changes in thinking come every 2500 years, and after 500 years they lead to some world-changing invention. In this case, it looks like Agonaces (6000 BC) had the idea to defy the land: he took his farmers away from the fertile lands of Eden and made them farm the desert. Nobody had farmed the desert before: that was madness. But Agonaces made it work. 500 years after Agonaces, we see the first signs of large-scale irrigation.



This irrigation created Eridu, the first Mesopotamian city. Around this time, Egyptian farmers began to settle around the Nile, suggesting that irrigation technology was spreading. This invention was changing the whole world.

Cities could now spread everywhere. This was a major milestone in the 12,000-year war between cities and the ways of nature. Cities could now defy the gods of nature: there was no limit to their growth.

Where Zoroaster learned his 12,000-year history

Mary Boyce is the most respected Western expert on Zoroastrianism. She records how the idea of multi-thousand year cycles of history was common. And the Zoroastrians probably got the idea from the Zurvanites.

THE ZOROASTRIAN 'WORLD YEAR'

During the Achaemenian period (sixth to fourth centuries B.C.) Persian scholar priests encountered the theory of Babylonian astronomers, that there existed a 'great year', during which all heavenly bodies completed a full cycle of their movements; and that in each 'great year' every occurrence of the preceding ones was exactly repeated, to infinity. This theory was widely adopted in antiquity, with hugely varying numbers of natural years being assigned to each 'great year'. Among the Iranians it was probably Zurvanites who first tried to reconcile these alien ideas with Zoroastrianism.⁹⁷³

Zurvanites are an early branch of Zoroastrianism:

The earliest mentions of Zurvān appear in tablets dated to about the 13th and 12th centuries BC, found at the site of the ancient Mesopotamian city of Nuzi.⁹⁷⁴

Zoroastrians generally teach of a good God (Ahura Mazda) and an evil god (the Evil Spirit). But Zurvanites teach that there was just one god. Zurvan, and he was morally neutral. The Ahura Mazda teaching is dominant, so its followers naturally teach that the Zurvanites were a break-off sect. But it was probably the other way around. Because the idea that gods are morally good is a recent invention. All the oldest religions describe the gods simply as forces of nature. They are only good in the sense that they create life and they bring order. But they are just as likely to destroy and bring chaos. We find happiness by learning of their cycles and fitting in, not by fighting. All ancient societies know this because they live in small nomadic communities that do not have the power to seriously challenge nature.

The idea of challenging nature did not become dominant until the invention of coins led to the fantasy of unending linear growth. This killed the idea of cycles of history. It killed the idea of balance. It created the idea of good (us) versus evil (them) and endless progress. It created the religion of Zoroaster in 550 BC. This quickly spread to the Jews, and later created Christianity.

⁹⁷³ 'Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism' edited by Mary Boyce, 1990, p.20

⁹⁷⁴ Britannica, Zurvan

This was originally a 12,000-year cycle

Hindus had a 12,000-year cycle long before the Persians had their 12,000 year linear history. Trade goods show that Persia routinely traded with the Indus Valley, and some linguists speculate that they share the same Elamo-Dravidian language family. So the Zurvanites probably got their 12,000-year teaching from the Hindus for whom it was originally a repeating cycle. There are hints of a cyclical history in Zoroastrian texts:

*This, from the Exegesis of the Good Religion, concerns that which, revolving, returns to its beginning, Time; and that which continues from beginning to end, Wisdom.*⁹⁷⁵

That is, time for the Zurvanites “is thought to move in a circle and return to its own point of departure.”⁹⁷⁶

*Known also as the god of growth, maturity, and decay, Zurvān appeared under two aspects: Limitless Time and Time of Long Dominion. **The latter emerges from Infinite Time, lasts for 12,000 years, and returns to it.** . . . Zurvān was the chief Persian deity before the advent of Zoroastrianism and was associated with the axis mundi, or the centre of the world. The most common image of Zurvān depicts a winged, lion-headed deity encircled by a serpent, representing the motion of the Sun.*⁹⁷⁷

So Zurvan is like Cronus: a memory of the old religion of the Earth. This was the religion of endless cycles of nature: e.g. how the sun circles the Earth. Why was he lion-headed? The lion was the constellation where the sun rose between 10,700 BC and 8,600 BC: the era of the first kings.



Image: Антонис CCA-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia

⁹⁷⁵ Denkard (9th Century Zoroastrian collection) III.267

⁹⁷⁶ “Zurvan: limitless time or timeless time?” by Kianoosh Rezanian, Journal of the K. R. Cama oriental Institute, 2008, p.52

⁹⁷⁷ Britannica, Zurvan

The timeline of history

The date for Zoroaster anchors the 12,000-year timeline in archaeological history. Dates after 550 BC were guesses, but they came true.

- Year 0-3000: **c.9500-6500 BC**
Ahura Mazda creates the world in an ideal form. The Evil Spirit attacks but is defeated. This coincides with the height of the golden age, then the Younger Dryas disaster. But kingdoms are still small and weak, so for most people the golden age continues.
- Year 3000-6000: **c.6500-3500 BC**
Ahura Mazda creates one original pure plant, one animal and one man (Agonaces, the original Zoroaster). This is when cities expand down the Tigris and Euphrates. Instead of nomads following countless varieties of plants and animals, everyone works on the same farms on the same limited crops and the same domesticated animals. Hence one man, one plant, one animal.
- Year 6000-8969: **c.3500-550 BC**
The Evil Spirit breaks in and destroys the plant, the animal and the man. This spreads seeds and fills the world. This coincided with the invention of money, and the breakdown of the reputation-based economy. This is “the axial age” on which the modern world pivots. We begin to replace human interactions with tokens. It is the start of the end for the human race and the triumph of the robots.
- Year 8970: **c.550 BC**
The birth of Zoroaster. He preaches true religion. The Persian empire defeats the Babylonians (who rely on brutal force) and tries to create an empire based on negotiation and cooperation. That is, it tries to restore balance. But all empires are fundamentally unequal, so it inevitably ends in bloodshed.
- Year 9970, 10970, 11970: **c.500, 1500, 2500 AD**
Every thousand years a new preacher (World Saviour) arises to bring goodness back. Arguably c.500 AD was Mohammed, and c.1500 AD was the Renaissance. Both change the world, and try to fix global evils, but neither can fix the underlying problem: the existence of the state guarantees inequality, and hence war and corruption, etc.
- Year 12000: **c.2500 AD**
Ahura Mazda returns for the final judgment and resurrection of the dead. The end of history. A new era of bliss. We will finish this book by examining this era.

Previous 12,000-year cycles

You can check the 12,000-year cycle for yourself. We have records going back to 110,000 BC. They show that major civilisations always collapse after 12,000 years (or sooner if there is some natural disaster like the Toba supervolcano or the Younger Dryas climate event).

Most people do not read our 110,000-year history. This is a common theme in this book: people do not bother to check.

Most people believe that writing was invented just before 3000 BC.⁹⁷⁸ But that was just syllabic writing. Proto-writing existed long before that.

In this book, we saw that Genesis has dated records back to 4004 BC. The companion book, *“Atlantis: It’s All True”*, shows that we have reliable dated records back to 9600 BC, in the form of the Atlantis story. The Atlantis book then shows that multiple civilisations have records taking us back to 39,000 BC. And we have at least two sets of dated records that take us back to 110,000 BC.⁹⁷⁹

These records show that civilisation (as a whole) reboots every 12,000 years, or sooner if there is a global catastrophe.

According to the Egyptian historian Manetho, recent reboots (from the Egyptian point of view) are:

- 9,000 BC: “The destruction of mankind” (the Younger Dryas climate disaster). Without this disaster, that cycle would have continued until 4000 BC, the starting date for Genesis.
- 16,000 BC: “the age of demigods.” I.e. the first landowners. This began the destruction of the Golden Age.
- 28,000 BC: “the age of the gods”. Egypt was destroyed by Set: the age of Osiris ended, and the age of Horus began.
- 39,000 BC: Egypt and other great civilisations were founded after the war with the Neanderthals.

The Atlantis book shows how our civilisation actively destroys these ancient records. And scholars help in the destruction. So all we have left are fragments. But we can use those fragments to tell us where to dig, so we can always reconstruct the history of our ancestors.

⁹⁷⁸ *“The invention of the first writing systems is roughly contemporary with the emergence of civilisations and the beginning of the Bronze Age during the late 4th millennium BC.”* - Wikipedia, retrieved 18 Jan 2025

⁹⁷⁹ The Yazidi records and the story of the Pleiades.

How our ancestors recorded 12,000-year cycles

Here is a brief summary of how we recorded 12,000-year cycles. For details, see *"Atlantis: It's All True!"*

We can measure 12,000-year cycles using just a stick.

When a stick casts the shortest shadow, that is midday on midsummer. The length of the shadow at midday tells us the day of the year.

When we place the stick on a fixed location at sunrise, and look at a distant landmark, the stars behind that landmark also tell us the day of the year. Many civilisations have stones or landmarks that point to the rising sun on important days like midsummer or the spring equinox. Their positions must be accurate enough to pinpoint a precise day.

So there are two different ways to measure important days with a stick. After 35 years the two methods disagree by half a day. So anybody who visits the calendar stones for 35 years will notice. We will also notice that the stars rotate each year. And the sun and moon circle us every day. Everything rotates. So we can use the stick to draw a circle in the dust. Then draw a line to see how far the stars have rotated in 35 years. Count the same distance again and again until they complete a full circle. That will tell us that the stars slowly rotate in a full circle approximately every 25,000 years: roughly 12,500 years out, and 12,500 years back again.

We already use constellations to tell the months: we can use the same constellations (and a stick) to record where the sun is on the spring equinox. So drawing the sun, and a bull, and a plant, is enough to say *"the sun is in Taurus on spring equinox"*. This identifies the date to within 2,000 years. To do this, we only need one curious person every few thousand years. As long as they use the same images for constellations (e.g. Taurus is still recognised as a bull) then each curious person can recognise dates left by the previous curious person.

So all it takes is a stick, and one curious person every two thousand years. That is how we record time in cycles of around 12,000 or 25,000 years.

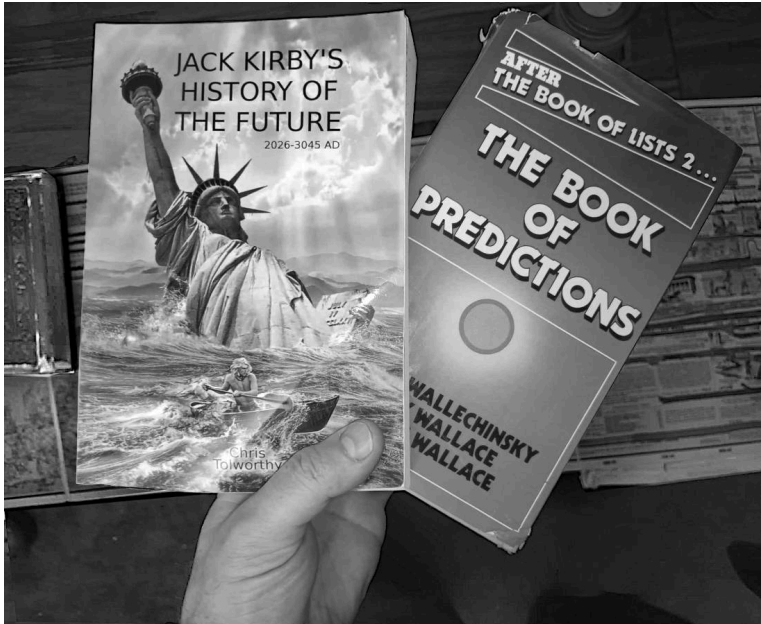


How the 12,000-year cycle predicts dates

If we know the 12,000-year cycle, then we know when civilisation will probably reboot... but only within a thousand years or so. To be more precise, we can look for evidence of the 2,500-year cycle: which inventions dominate the current thousand years? Then we can look for evidence of the 500-year cycle: when did religion last have a soft reboot? But above all, we can look for parallels with previous cycles, such as how the invention of printing parallels the invention of syllabic writing. The more we know of our deep history, the more we will recognise those patterns today.

This is not a precise science: the real world is full of multiple cycles, just as the sea is full of waves and tides and currents in multiple directions. Ten different readers can take the same evidence (such as Daniel's 70 weeks) and apply its ideas to ten different periods of history. The test of Bible prophecy is not that these numbers add up. The test is that the numbers should show a deep understanding of history. And **the proof** is whether the predictions happen on the date predicted.

The bottom line is that deep history (mythology) is our best guide to the future. A top mythologist (like Jack Kirby) can predict future events, with dates, with 100% accuracy when predicting the future. Whereas a top scientist or historian might score 20% or less. For details, see the companion book, *"Prophecy: it's All True!"*



Predicted dates for the Millennium

Many people have predicted the Second Coming or Millennium for various dates.⁹⁸⁰ But look closer: **there was only ever one serious attempt**, at least until 1844. And his prediction came true.

date	name	comments
500	Hippolytus	Rough guess.[1] Equivalent to c.2000 AD [2].
1260	Joachim	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1368	Roquetaillade	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1492	Russians	Rough guess.[1] Equivalent to c.2000 AD [2].
1504	Botticelli	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1524	Stöffler	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1525	Müntzer	Not a prediction.[4]
1533	Stifel	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1673	Aspinwall	Not a prediction.[4]
1694	Zimmermann	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1694	Alsted	Idiosyncratic.[5]
1700	Archer	Idiosyncratic.[5]
1757	Swedenborg	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1770	Ann Lee	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1793	Brothers	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1814	Southcott	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1829	Rapp	Not based on Bible prophecy.[3]
1836	Wesley	Lots of guesswork.[6]
1844	Miller	Extremely thorough. Thousands of people read his evidence and agreed.

⁹⁸⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predictions_and_claims_for_the_Second_Coming
retrieved 20 November 2024

Notes:

[1] They only used the rough “six thousand years after Adam:” guideline. More careful scholars cross-check with other cycles and parallels.

[2] These use poor translations of Genesis. The “equivalent” number is corrected based on a more accurate translation.⁹⁸¹

[3] They claim a personal dream, or a gut feeling based on current events, or rely heavily on astrology, or some extra-Biblical tradition, or use some detail in the Bible that was not intended as a prophecy (e.g. the size of Noah’s Ark or the number of letters in a word).

[4] They merely said that the events of their day show the hand of God, therefore they expect the end soon, but they do not give a calculation.⁹⁸²

[5] The numbers add up, but their choices raise eyebrows.⁹⁸³

[6] Wesley suggested parallels between events in Revelation and historical events. Some of these are hard to follow, e.g. taking 42 months as meaning 667 years, and suggesting numbers of years that have no connection to the text. See “*Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*” (1754)

The scholars are wrong again

We see from this sample, courtesy of Wikipedia, that there was only one thorough analysis of the prophecies before the year 1844. It came to a firm date, and was very persuasive. As we will see, the prediction came true exactly as the Bible said.

Yet scholars tell us that there have been multiple predictions and they have all been wrong.⁹⁸⁴ It appears that the scholars never bothered to check, or did not consider the logic of each argument.

This is why we should always check what scholars claim. Scholars are busy, so they seldom check their sources. Their sources are often the opposite of what they say. To be fair, non-scholars have the same problem, but we expect much better from scholars.

⁹⁸¹ E.g. The Septuagint places Adam around 1500 years earlier than the standard Masoretic text. Therefore the Millennial calculations are 1500 years earlier. Russian Orthodox Bibles place Adam at around 4500 BC, yielding results 500 years earlier. Most current Bibles use the Masoretic text. The Masoretes compared all previous translations for errors. Masoretic texts dates are confirmed by archaeology.

⁹⁸² E.g. Aspinwall, “*as for the precise year, I dare not determine.*”

⁹⁸³ E.g. Johann Heinrich Alsted added 1290 + 1335 from Daniel 12:11-12 to make 2694. And started it from the destruction of Jerusalem, then took the result to be the end of the Millennium. See “*The Beloved City*” at quod.lib.umich.edu, p.57. Henry Archer used Daniel’s 1335 date and added it to the reign of Julian the Apostate.

⁹⁸⁴ See for example, “*Armageddon: What the Bible Really Says About the End*” by Bart D. Ehrman, chapter 3, “*A History of False Predictions*”. Or see any scholarly list of predictions on the Internet.

Isaac Newton and William Ward

Wikipedia's list of predictions is just a sample. Many other people made similar predictions, with similar results. But special mention should go to Isaac Newton and William Miller.

Newton was arguably the greatest scientist of all time. He spent a huge amount of time on the prophecies and concluded that the most likely date for the Second Coming was between 2035 and 2054, or possibly 2060. However, he was not happy with his work because he did not have access to reliable histories, so could not check his assumptions. So he did not publish his conclusions, and he discouraged others from doing so.⁹⁸⁵

William Ward wrote an exhaustive six-volume analysis of the prophecies, publishing volume six in 1820.⁹⁸⁶ He concluded that the Great Supper and Armageddon must date to the year 1830.

The seven years of preservation will be fulfilled by a full execution of enemies, at the battle of Armageddon, 1830 $\frac{1}{4}$, and ending the last quarter of 1830, being seven years from 1823 $\frac{1}{4}$. The eighth

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year of spiritual revival and triumph, including the fulness of the gentiles, will be 1830 $\frac{1}{4}$ to 1831.

Thus the last quarters of three years are very important, 1816 $\frac{1}{4}$, 1823 $\frac{1}{4}$, and 1830 $\frac{1}{4}$; of which the first has been fulfilled, of which the second will be greater than the first, and the third, which is the time of the great supper, will exceed the former two in the superlative degree, being the greatest year in the calendar of the world.

Ward's date differs from William Miller's by just 14 years, which is insignificant considering that the 12,000 years is only an approximation. As we will see, both dates fulfil the requirements of the Second Coming.

⁹⁸⁵ See Matthew Goff, "The Millennial Scientist: Isaac Newton Reading Daniel 7" from "Knowing the Time, Knowing of a Time. 3rd Annual Conference of the Center for Millennial Studies. Boston, December 6-8, 1998 Conference Proceedings." University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 1998 in Journal of Millennial Studies, 1998. Page 10, especially the footnotes.

⁹⁸⁶ "The Fulfilment of Revelation; Or Prophetic History of the Declensions and Restoration of the Christian Church: Volume 6"

Another famous prediction: the Rapture in 1988

Special mention should also go to Edgar C. Whisenant, author of “*88 Reasons Why The Rapture Will Be in 1988*”. Whisenant based his predictions on the impending fall of the USSR,⁹⁸⁷ increasing globalisation,⁹⁸⁸ and ancient cycles. “The Rapture” is not part of the main sequence of Second Coming prophecies, but was added by Marcion/Paul. It says that Jesus will appear in the sky and his followers will rise to meet him.⁹⁸⁹ This refers to the ancient practice of welcoming a new king as he approaches a city: in this case, Christ becomes king of the world, and people embrace his ways: we go out to meet him. We all then re-enter the city in a triumphant procession. So the rapture is not the coming of Jesus, despite what “Paul” says. The rapture is when the war seems to be won, and Christians join their king as rulers of his kingdom. This global triumph must happen sometime **after** the movement began in 1844.

Another problem is that Whisenant expected the personal Jesus of the Nicene Creed. But originally Jesus was a spirit, not restricted to a particular body.⁹⁹⁰ This spirit (i.e. this zeitgeist) returned in 1844. Democracy then grew until, in 1988, the Christian United States won the Cold War, became unstoppable, and the ordinary Christian voters joined their Christ as rulers of the world. This triumphant, **rapturous** moment seemed to herald the end of history and the beginning of “a new world order.” But power corrupts. So this did not become the democratic utopia some expected.



⁹⁸⁷ Reasons #12-13 and #61. (See also #62,64,77, 3,78-81 etc.). This numbering is based on the two-book edition (which includes “*On Borrowed Time*”) at archive.org

⁹⁸⁸ Reason #12 and “*On Borrowed Time*”, on Antichrist promising global peace

⁹⁸⁹ 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

⁹⁹⁰ See the discussion of Revelation 20:4 and resurrection

Americans like to say that the key moment was when Mikhail Gorbachev saw the enormous cost of Ronald Reagan's space weapons systems. Then he realised that the USSR had lost the Cold War, so he embraced American corporations.



RIA Novosti archive, image #850809, CCA-SA-3.0

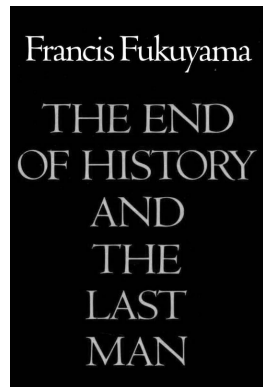


This period also saw the birth of the World Wide Web⁹⁹¹ and cheap satellite communications for business.⁹⁹² Both were based in Western Christendom. So Christ (Christians) now ruled from space (the heavens).

This was the triumph of global markets, also known as Neoliberalism and 'The End of History'. From that moment, private corporations (i.e. robots) ran the world. Human leaders after 1988 were just their puppets.⁹⁹³

The robots pretend to serve democracy (i.e. they pretend to serve the common man, "the son of man"). This is a lie: they serve their own interests. In the longer term, robots will destroy our whole system. This will end our 12,000-year cycle - so the common man can return.

So here we have the Rapture, the supernatural Christ, the armies of heaven, and the war of the son of man, arriving in 1988, just as predicted.



Public domain, per Wikimedia

⁹⁹¹ proposed in March 1989

⁹⁹² e.g. the launch of PanAmSat PAS-1 in June 1988. Satellites became affordable.

⁹⁹³ Pre-1988 leaders had coherent ideologies and would oppose their allies on principle. E.g. Margaret Thatcher opposing Menachem Begin in 1980 and 1982. Post-1988 leaders appear to have no principles other than to make the world profitable for corporations.

Mainstream Second Coming prophecies

Let us review the main prophecies, as shared by the Old Testament and Revelation (i.e. not including Marcion's rapture prophecy).

- The Second Coming of "the Son of Man" refers to the triumph of the common man, not to Jesus's bodily return. (That part was added by Marcion, so was treated separately.)
- The triumph of the son of man will make life vastly better for all people (see the wedding feast of the lamb in Revelation 19).
- It will begin with somebody following Jesus.
- He will bring the logos (logic) to the world.
- It will probably cause some kind of information revolution.
- This will happen in 1844. Or maybe 1830.
- It will cause a global war that removes all kingdoms.
- It will make Satan (colonialism) powerless for a thousand years.

This all happened, right on schedule. Sadly, Miller did not recognise the signs, because he tried to make them fit the letters of Paul. Those letters said that Jesus would float out of the sky. But that is nonsense. People do not float out of the sky! All the other prophecies were fulfilled, just as predicted. And it was all thanks to this man: Michael Faraday.



Michael Faraday

Faraday's surname means "man of the forest"⁹⁹⁴ - the perfect name for the man who would destroy all cities. His parents named him Michael, the name of the leader of God's people in the last days.⁹⁹⁵

Faraday was raised in the "Church of Christ" run by Robert Sandeman. It was notable for shared meals (think "marriage supper of the Lamb") and its focus on logic: God's teachings must be logically provable, with no appeal to emotion. At the age of 30, in 1821, Faraday devoted his life to following Christ in this way, and he never wavered.⁹⁹⁶ He decided that the best use of his life would be to understand the world that God created.

Faraday became one of the greatest scientists of all time: Einstein had Faraday's painting behind his desk (along with Newton, and Einstein's hero James Clarke Maxwell). He brought electricity into common use.

In the year that he devoted his life to Christ (1821), Faraday created the first electric motor, after the greatest scientists of his time had failed.⁹⁹⁷ He continued to make breakthroughs in electricity and chemistry, and in promoting science to the public.

In 1830, Faraday was appointed professor of Chemistry at Woolwich, and renewed his experiments on electric motors. In the same year, Joseph Henry visited Faraday to compare notes.⁹⁹⁸ In 1831 Faraday discovered electromagnetic induction, the foundation of numerous electrical devices such as the electric generator and transformer. In the same year, Joseph Henry (back home in America) created the first experimental electric telegraph: the basis of electronics, the embodiment of logic.⁹⁹⁹

The age of electrical machines began with Faraday. But how would that topple every nation and fulfil every Last Days prophecy?

⁹⁹⁴ From the Irish Ó Fearadaigh, "descendant of feara-dach (forest man)". An Irish name, and a family with little money, suggests that his ancestors knew all about being victims of colonialism.

⁹⁹⁵ Daniel 12:1, named after the Michael of Daniel 10, probably Crassus, the man who invented coins, the invention that defined the last 2500 years. This new Michael invented the next great wonder, which makes coins obsolete.

⁹⁹⁶ https://acshist.scs.illinois.edu/bulletin_open_access/num11/num11%20p40-47.pdf

⁹⁹⁷ Humphrey Davy and [William Hyde Wollaston](#) tried but failed. Faraday then produced two different designs.

⁹⁹⁸ Funded by Princeton. Henry was making similar discoveries at the same time as Faraday. <https://edisontechcenter.org/JosephHenry.html> Henry made many discoveries independently of Faraday, but Faraday was usually first.

⁹⁹⁹ siarchives.si.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/jhpp/JHP_Inventor_of_the_Telegraph.pdf

1844: “What Hath God wrought?”

In 1844, Samuel Morse used the new electrical discoveries to create the first practical electric telegraph. The first message he sent was “*What Hath God Wrought?*” Those were the words spoken by the prophet Balaam when he was sent to stop Moses, and he saw that Moses could not be stopped.¹⁰⁰⁰

Moses went on to create the Kingdom of God on Earth, in the midst of human kingdoms. It lasted for 400 years. It briefly defeated every nation in the region, until power-hungry people corrupted it from within. Moses's kingdom was a practice run for the end of our 12,000-year cycle. This time the kingdom will be permanent (at least for a few thousand years), because it is based on a new technology that makes kingdoms impossible: electronic communication.

Electronic communication allows common people to talk across great distances. So they can see the truth about kingdoms. The printing press began the process, but it was too slow and bulky. The telegraph was instantaneous, and would eventually connect every individual in the world. At first, this merely encouraged democracy. But that was just the start.



Image: “American Progress” by John Gant, Public Domain. *Note the telegraph.*

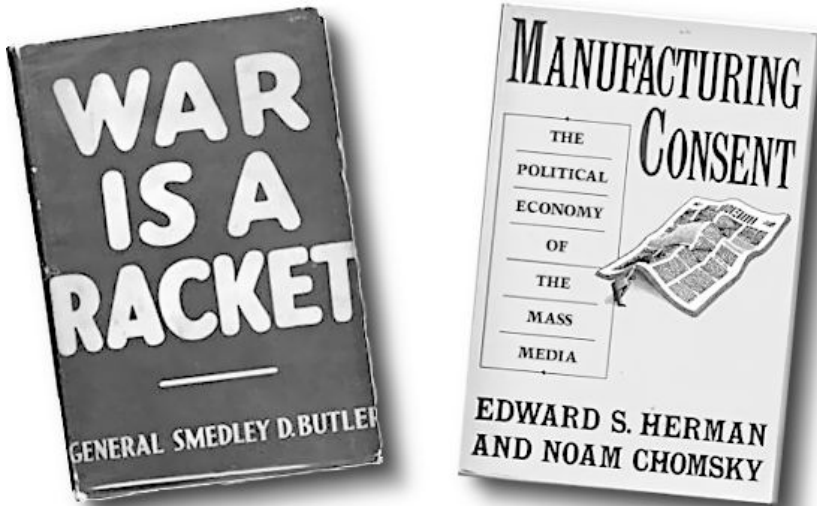
¹⁰⁰⁰ Numbers 23:23

The fall of all nations

This is how the telegraph causes the fall of all nations (and all corporations):

Step 1 of 3: revealing the horror

The electric telegraph brought instant news. Before the telegraph, all news took days or weeks to spread. This allowed the state (or the corporation) to step in and influence the message. But the telegraph allowed raw, unfiltered information. People began to see that states and corporations constantly lie. States and corporations are not your friends.



Images: Fair Use

The first dramatic example was the Crimean War. People had been told that this war was noble and good. But daily news showed that the war was horrific and rulers did not value soldiers' lives. This kind of unfiltered news led to many astonishing revelations. We now have countless books (like "*War is a Racket*" and "*Manufacturing Consent*") that show in detail how the modern world is built on murder and lies.

We now know that the global economy is built on war, corruption, starvation, torture, slavery, unspeakable evils performed behind locked doors, nuclear war waiting on a hair trigger, animal cruelty on an unimaginable scale, mass extinction, and the destruction of the planet's ability to support life. When people think about these things too much they often descend into a mental hell. Suicide is common. The modern world is too horrible to even think about. So how do we cope?

Step 2 of 3: we make a deal with the Devil

Why do people put up with the horror and injustice? Like Dr Faustus, we make a deal with the Devil. We sell our soul for money, power, sex, and magical toys.

Thanks to the electric telegraph, we know that the system does great evil. But we also know that we can make a deal with this evil, and become rich, or at least comfortable. We fool ourselves that we can make a deal with the Devil and force the Devil to be good.

How do we make that deal?

The birth of the telegraph in the 1840s was also the birth of large-scale global trade. This created a race for European nations to colonise the world. From the 1840s, nations and corporations (the robots) could suddenly grow

very quickly. But any robot that did not grow at maximum speed could be crushed by a bigger robot. So every robot had to grow quickly to survive. Every state and every corporation needed more and more skilled workers. They also needed large numbers of manual workers. This need gave the workers bargaining power. The most skilled workers got huge payouts for promising to serve corporation "A" instead of corporation "B". And manual workers were able to unionise, threatening to strike if they did not get better pay and conditions. The robots had to agree, or they would be crushed by other rival robots.

And so the common people got paid to help the robots grow. They got pay rises, better conditions, and nicer houses. They forced the robots to be kinder (to them at least). People congratulated themselves on their cleverness. The skilled workers were proud of their ability to create, and the common workers were proud of their ability to unionise. It was a golden age for workers and ethics. What could possibly go wrong?



Step 3 of 3: the all-powerful global robots

And so workers made the robots more and more powerful. A handful of corporations now control practically all electronics. And everything you do now requires those electronics. The robots (corporations) track everything you do, via your mobile phone or other devices. They feed that data into software models that duplicate the human brain. The global robots are gradually replacing humans with machines.

Unions now find it harder to organise: people are divided and isolated. Unions find it harder to strike: workers can be replaced by desperate people on the other side of the world. Highly skilled workers are still needed, but machines are gradually learning how to replace them, skill by skill. Humans are being phased out.

At some point, even the wealthiest human will see the clock ticking. They will have to stop the Beast at any cost. After 10,000 years of complacency, Faraday's discovery has forced mankind to wake up.



The next thousand years

Here is a quick summary of the next thousand years. For details, see the companion book: *"Prophecy: It's All True"*.

1976: The tech billionaires begin to watch the Earth.

2026: They decide to replace us with AI.

2040: AI develops more slowly than the hype promises. (Intelligence turns out to be far more stupid than we thought.) The real danger is that AI gives billionaires vast power over ordinary people. 2040 sees Earth become a dystopia. And it sees the first regular flights to Mars, another dystopia.

2070: War between China and America. Not the end, but it feels like it.

2090: The first robot to equal or exceed humans in every possible way. All humans despair. They reassess the history of the world. They look at the costs of each technological "advance" (inequality, environmental damage, stress, etc.) They ask, was technology ever a net benefit?

2121: Nuclear war. Technology loses all credibility. Survivors look at the wreckage and conclude that cities were always a death cult.

2160: The post-apocalyptic struggle ends. But the threat of technology will not go away. For nearly a thousand years, humans will struggle to create stable technology that does not rely on cities or large-scale networks.

3000: Human bodies now incorporate technology. A new 12,000-year cycle begins: The "new heavens and a new Earth" from Revelation.

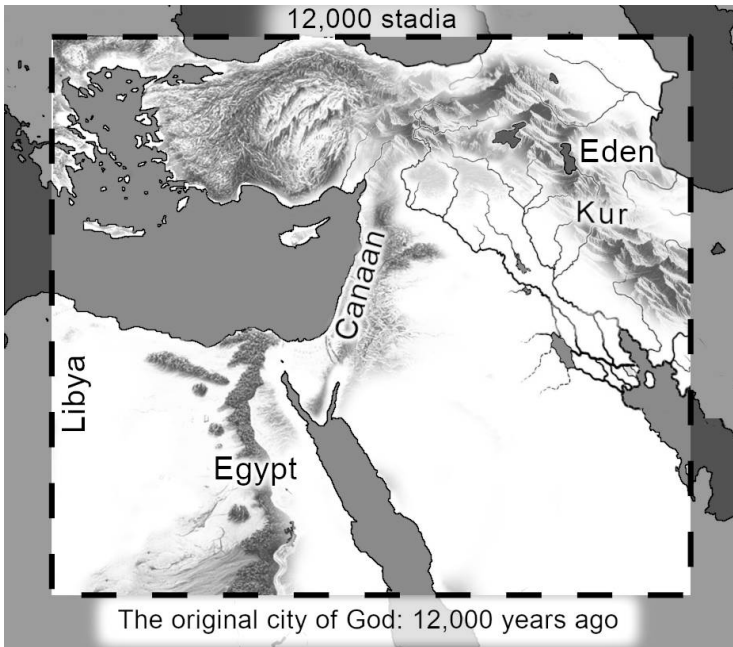


Revelation 21-22: the end is a new beginning

The Book of Revelation begins and ends with the Tree of Life from the Garden of Eden:¹⁰⁰¹ paradise lost is now paradise regained.

If mankind survives the fall of earthly cities, this will lead to the return of the city of God. This is an area defined as 12,000 stadia (1400 miles) on each side,¹⁰⁰² centred on what is now Jerusalem. This includes all the original lands of Genesis. Outsiders will be welcomed if they keep God's law of equality. Every person will again be a king, as in the previous Golden Age.¹⁰⁰³

And so a new 12,000-year cycle begins. The last one was defined by land ownership. This cycle will probably be defined by the new world-changing invention, some kind of high-tech cyber-DNA.¹⁰⁰⁴ And so the adventure continues.



¹⁰⁰¹ Revelation 2:7; 22:2,14

¹⁰⁰² It is sometimes translated as 1200 stadia high as well, but this is the Greek word "hypsos", from "hyper", meaning "more" or "beyond": it can also refer to its high rank or high station: the garden of Eden is historically the first among lands.

¹⁰⁰³ Genesis 1:26, Rev 5:10. See also 11:15. So the kings in 21:24 meet their equals.

¹⁰⁰⁴ See "*How we will survive the AI apocalypse*" in the chapter on Cain