

Handout 4

The Book of

GENESIS

The Origins of Mankind

Genesis 2:4b–5:1a

An English Translation of the Hebrew Text
with Translator's Notes

Digital file version 2.2

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The Account of the Origins of Mankind

§ 1 • *The Creation of the Prototypical Man, Woman, and Marriage*

§ 1.1 • The Creation of Prototypical Man

PART 1

1 In the time when the God¹, *Yahweh*, made the heavens and the earth—even before any plant of the field was on the land, and before any grass of the field had sprung up (for the God had not brought rain upon the land and there was no human² being to cultivate the land)—a spring came forth out of the ground and irrigated the whole surface of the ground.³ 2•Then the God, *Yahweh*, fashioned a human being⁴ out of the dust of the ground and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and that human being became a living person.⁵ 3•The God, *Yahweh*, had planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and he placed the human being whom he had fashioned in that place. 4•Now the God had caused to spring up from the ground every tree that is delightful in appearance and every tree that is good for food—including the Tree of Life in the middle of the garden,⁶ the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁷

2:4b–9

2 Now a river flowed out of Eden and provided water to the garden. 2•From there it separated and became four head waters. 3•The name of the first was *Phison*. 4•It encircled the whole land of *Havilah*, where there is gold. 5•The gold of that land is good. 6•And bdellium and the onyx stone are there. 7•The name of the second river is *Gihon*. 8•It encircled the whole land of Cush. 9•Now the name of the third river is Tigris. 10•That one flows on the east of Assyria. 11•The fourth river is Euphrates.⁸

2:10–14

3 Now the God, *Yahweh*, took the human being whom he had fashioned and settled him in the garden in Eden to cultivate and maintain it. 2•The God, *Yahweh*, instructed *Adam* (“The Human”)⁹, saying,

“3•From every tree which is in the garden you shall eat what is there to eat.
4•But, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil¹⁰, you shall not eat from it, because, in the day that you eat from it, you shall be condemned to die the Death.”¹¹

2:15–17

§ 1.2 • The Creation of the Prototypical Woman and Marriage

PART 2

4 Then the God, *Yahweh*, said,

“2•It is not good for the human being to be alone. 3•I will make a helper that corresponds to him.”¹²

4•Now out of the ground the God, *Yahweh*, had fashioned every living creature of the wild and every bird of the sky. 5•And he brought them to *Adam* to see what he would call them. 6•And in every case, whatever *Adam* called it—the living being—that was its name. 7•Now *Adam* assigned names to all the tamable animals, and to all the birds of the sky, and to all the living creatures of the wild. 8•But for *Adam*, he did not find a helper that corresponded to him.¹³ 9•Now the God, *Yahweh*, caused a deep sleep to fall upon *Adam*, and he slept. 10•And he took one of his sides and filled out the flesh where it was now missing. 11•Then the God, *Yahweh*, formed the side which he had taken from *Adam* into a woman and he brought her to *Adam*. 12•And *Adam* said,

“13•This ‘she,’ now, is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. 14•And this ‘she’ shall be called my ‘wife,’ for this ‘she’ was taken out of her ‘husband.’¹⁴

(15•For this reason, a husband will forsake his father and his mother and will unite inseparably to his wife and the two shall be as one flesh.)¹⁵ 16•Now the two were naked—*Adam* and his wife—and they were not ashamed.¹⁶

2:18–25

§ 2 • The Unmasking of Human Sinfulness

§ 2.1 • The Failed Test of the Human Creature

PART 3

5 Now *Hanachash*¹⁷ was more intelligent than any of the living creatures of the wild which the God, *Yahweh*, had made.¹⁸ 2•Now he¹⁹ said to *Adam*’s wife,

“3•What is it that the God has, in fact, said? 4•That from each and every tree in the garden, you are not to eat?”

5•*Adam*’s wife said to *Hanachash*,

“6•From the fruit of the trees of the garden we shall eat. 7•But from the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden,²⁰ the God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it—nor touch it—lest you die.’”

8•*Hanachash* said to *Adam*’s wife,

“9•You shall not be condemned to die the Death.²¹ 10•Indeed, the God knows that in the day that you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be ones who know good and evil as the God does.”²²

11•Now the wife saw that the tree was good for food²³ and that it was a delight to the eyes.²⁴ 12•And, further, the tree was desirable to make one wise.²⁵ 13•So, indeed, taking the fruit of it, she ate. 14•And she also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 15•Then the eyes of

both of them were opened²⁶ and they realized that they were naked.²⁷ 16•Then they sewed together fig leaves and made loin cloths for themselves.

3:1–7

§ 2.2 • God's Response to the Failed Test

PART 4

6 They heard the voice of the God, *Yahweh*, as he was walking in the garden in the evening of the day, and *Adam* and his wife hid in the midst of the trees of the garden from the sight of the God, *Yahweh*. 2•And the God, *Yahweh*, called out to *Adam* and said to him,

“3• *Adam*, where are you?”

4•And he said to him,

“5•I heard your voice when you were walking in the garden and I became afraid because I was naked,²⁸ so I hid.”

6•And he said to him,

“7•Who told you that you were naked? 8•You have not eaten from the tree about which I instructed you—and about that one alone—that you were not to eat from it, have you?”²⁹

9•*Adam* said,

“10•The wife whom you gave to be with me, that one gave to me from the tree, and I ate.”

11•And the God, *Yahweh*, said to the wife,

“12•Why have you done this?”

13•And the wife said,

“14•*Hanachash* deceived me and I ate.”

3:8–13

7 The God, *Yahweh*, said to *Hanachash*,

“2•Because you have done this you are cursed above and beyond all the tamable animals and all the living creatures of the wild.³⁰ 3•You will approach on your stomach and you will eat dust all the days of your life.³¹ 4•I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.³² 5•It will crush your head, yet you will crush its heel.”³³

3:14–15

8 To the wife he said,

“2•As you increase your offspring, I will increase your sorrows and grief. 3•In sorrow you will bring forth children.³⁴ 4•And your desire shall be for your husband,³⁵ but he will dominate you.”³⁶

3:16

9 Then to *Adam* he said,

“2•Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the

tree about which I instructed you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it,’ cursed will be the ground by reason of your deeds. 3•In distress you shall eat from it all the days of your life. 4•Both the thorn and the thistle will spring up for you and you will eat the plants of the wild.³⁷ 5•By the sweat of your own brow you will eat your food until you return to the earth out of which you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.³⁸

3:17–19

10 Now *Adam* named his wife “*Chawah*,”³⁹ because she was the mother of all who would have life.⁴⁰

3:20

11 Then the God, *Yahweh*, made clothing out of animal hide for *Adam* and his wife and clothed them. 2•And the God, *Yahweh*, said,

“3•Behold, the human creature is like one who knows good and evil apart from us.⁴¹ 4•And now, might he perhaps reach out his hand and take even from the Tree of Life? 5•And shall he have life into the eternal Age?”⁴²

6•And the God, *Yahweh*, banished him from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.⁴³ 7•He cast *Adam* out and established him there. 8•In the east, toward the garden of Eden,⁴⁴ he stationed the Cherubim⁴⁵ with their gleaming, slashing swords to guard the way to the Tree of Life.⁴⁶

3:21–24

§ 3 • *Early, Dramatic Manifestation of Human Sin*

§ 3.1 • The Murder of Righteous Abel by Unrighteous Cain

PART 5

12 Now Adam was intimate with⁴⁷ Eve, his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. 2•And she said, “I have created a man with the help of *Yahweh*.”⁴⁸ 3•Then, once again, she gave birth to his brother, Abel. 4•Now Abel was one who kept sheep, but Cain was one who worked the ground.

4:1–2

13 Now it came about after a period of time that Cain brought an offering⁴⁹ to *Yahweh* from the fruit of the ground. 2•And Abel, he also brought an offering, from the firstborn of his sheep—even from their fattiest parts. 3•Now *Yahweh* had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.⁵⁰ 4•So Cain became very angry and his face fell with displeasure.⁵¹ 5•Then *Yahweh* said to Cain,

“6•Why are you angry? 7•Indeed, why has your face fallen with displeasure? 8•If you do well, will there not be a lifting up of your face from joy?⁵² 9•But if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.⁵³ 10•Now its desire is for you,⁵⁴ to master you, but you must rule over it.”

11•Cain told Abel his brother, “Let us go into the field.”⁵⁵ And it happened that, when they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.⁵⁶

4:3–8

§ 3.2 • The Consequences of Cain’s Sin

PART 6

14 Then *Yahweh* said to Cain,

“2•Where is Abel your brother?”

3•And he said,

“4•I don’t know. 5•Am I my brother’s keeper?”

6•He said,

“7•What have you done? 8•The voice of your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground.⁵⁷ 9•Now you are cursed on account of the ground which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.⁵⁸ 10•When you work the ground, it will no longer reveal its vitality for you.⁵⁹ 11•You will be a vagabond and a wanderer upon the land.”

12•Cain said to *Yahweh*,

“13•My punishment is greater than I can bear! 14•Behold, you have driven me this day off of my soil.⁶⁰ 15•I will be hidden from your face,⁶¹ and I will be a vagabond and a wanderer upon the land. 16•And, as it happens, everyone who finds me will want to kill me.”⁶²

17•So *Yahweh* said to him,

“18•Therefore, for this reason, I promise that anyone who kills Cain will face revenge that is seven times greater.”⁶³

19•And *Yahweh* established a sign for Cain⁶⁴ to the end that not everyone finding him would seek to slay him.

4:9–15

15 Now Cain went out from the presence of *Yahweh*,⁶⁵ and dwelt in the land of Nod, in the east of Eden.⁶⁶ 2•Cain was intimate with his wife⁶⁷ and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. 3•Then he built a city,⁶⁸ and he named the city after the name of his son, Enoch.⁶⁹

4:16–17

§ 4 • *The Ensuing Spiritual Divide Within Mankind*

§ 4.1 • The Origin of a Sinful Line of Descent from Cain

PART 7

16 Then Irad was born to Enoch, and Irad gave birth to⁷⁰ Mehujael, and Mehujael gave birth to Methushael, and Methushael gave birth to Lamech.⁷¹ 2•Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. 3•Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and keep herds of livestock. 4•His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who skillfully handle the lyre and flute. 5•And Zillah, she too gave birth, to Tubal-cain, the forger of everything crafted from bronze or iron.⁷² 6•And the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

4:18–22

17 Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zillah:

“2•Hear me out, you wives of Lamech.⁷³ 3•Pay attention to what I tell you. 4•For I have killed a man for wounding me, even a boy for striking me. 5•If Cain is to

be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”⁷⁴

4:23–24

§ 4.2 • The Initiation of a Righteous Line of Descent from Seth

PART 8

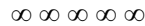
18 Adam was intimate with his wife once again,⁷⁵ and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, for, she said,

“2•God has granted⁷⁶ me another offspring in the place of Abel, because Cain killed him.”

4:25

19 To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. 2•At that time they began to call upon the name of *Yahweh*.⁷⁷

4:26



This is *The Account of the Origins of Mankind*.⁷⁸

5:1a

Translator's Notes

1. Translating the noun and article here as “the God” sounds very awkward in English. However, I translate it as such in order to keep clear the intention of the author. Contrary to the way modern Bible readers typically think of it, “God” is not a proper name, and the noun “God” is not a proper noun. It is an ordinary noun. The ordinary noun “god” denotes a reality-determining force that governs and controls the events of history. For the Hebrews who gave us the Scriptures, one and only one such force, whose will determines everything that exists and everything that occurs—namely, the personal being *Yahweh*—is of any ultimate consequence. Hence, *Yahweh* is the one and only god who really matters. The author captures this perspective by using the article in this account. *Yahweh* is *the* god. I have translated this with the English phrase “the God.”
2. The Hebrew noun translated “human being” here (אָדָם = *adam*) is roughly equivalent to the English word “man,” and it shares the English word’s ambiguity. On the one hand, it can be used to highlight or emphasize the sex of the individual—a male rather than a female, a **man** *in contradistinction to a woman*. But, at other times, it is used to highlight the distinctive humanness of the individual—a human being rather than an animal (or any other non-human being), a **man** *in contradistinction to an animal, a god, or an angel*. In this sentence, the point being made is that no human being has yet been created to cultivate the ground.
3. The author appears to be describing the condition of the earth before the cataclysm that caused and was connected with the great flood in the time of Noah. There are several clues in this account. This is the first of those clues. The author notes that “God had not yet caused rain to fall on the land.” The land was irrigated such that it could grow vegetation, not by rain, but by spring water that emerged from below the surface of the ground. As we see later in *Genesis*, this changes after the flood in the time of Noah. After the flood, rain becomes a routine meteorological phenomenon.
4. The Hebrew noun here (אָדָם = *adam*) is roughly equivalent to the English word “man,” and it shares the English word’s ambiguity. See note 2. In this paragraph, the emphasis is on the humanness of this first created man, not on his sex. As the account proceeds, it becomes clear that this first created being was a man, and not a woman. But the author’s point in this paragraph has nothing to do with his maleness and everything to do with his humanness. Hence, I have translated it “human being” even though it becomes abundantly clear as the account proceeds that, as a matter of fact, this individual is a male.
5. In paragraph 4 the author asserts that “out of the ground” God created every living creature. We see here that the human creature is like the animals in that he is made out of the ground. But, unlike the animals, God gave him personhood by breathing into him the breath of life in a way that made him a living *nephesh*, a living **person**. The human being, therefore, is a being that reflects two distinct natures. On the one hand, he resembles the animals and possesses the same sort of physicality that they possess—that is, he has an animal nature. But, on the other hand, insofar as he is a person, he resembles God and has a divine-like facet to his being—that is, he has a divine nature.
6. There is nothing whatsoever in this account to suggest that the Tree of Life was some sort of

magical tree. In fact, there is nothing to suggest that it was any different from the other trees in the garden. It was an ordinary fruit-bearing tree like all the others planted in the garden. Whenever the author wants to denote this tree in particular, he always distinguishes it by indicating its unique location—it is the tree in the middle of the garden. He never resorts to phrases like “the magical tree in the middle of the garden,” or “the tree with special powers,” or “the tree with the power to impart life,” nor anything remotely like any of these. So far as the reader knows, there are only two things that distinguish this tree from the other trees in the garden—(a) its location (it was in the middle of the garden), and (b) that the man and woman were forbidden to eat of its fruit. I will suggest later that the fact that the Tree of Life was an ordinary tree was an important element to the temptation that Eve would eventually face. Because it was an ordinary tree, Eve was familiar with it and the nature of its fruit. She knew, *from experience*, that its fruit was good to eat. So, why should it be forbidden by God?

7. In my judgment, there were *not* two notable trees in the garden of Eden to which God gave names—“The Tree of Life” and “The Tree of the Knowledge of God and Evil.” Rather, there was but one notable tree that bore a title. It was titled “The Tree of Life.” The phrase, “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” is not a *title* for the tree. Rather, it is a *description* of the tree. It is a description that is placed in apposition to the mention of the tree by its title (“The Tree of Life”). Hence, the phrase “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” is being used by the author to describe the role that this titled tree was going to play in the story recorded in the account and in God’s purposes generally. Namely, this tree was placed in the middle of the garden and was uniquely proscribed by God in order to test this brand new human creature to see what he would do. Would he honor God’s proscription? Or would he disregard God and eat from it against the very command of God? If he honored it, he would show himself to be a morally and spiritually good creature. If he did not honor it, he would show himself to be a morally and spiritually evil creature. That is why the “Tree of Life” can be described as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is the tree that will result in the knowledge of whether humankind is good or humankind is evil.

8. It is difficult to know why this paragraph is included here. None of the information that it conveys provides any significant background to this story of which it is a part. It does, however, give us another important clue that the earth (or, at least, that region) was a significantly different place before the flood as compared to what it was after the flood and today. It was not uncommon in the ancient world for place names to be reassigned to other geographical features from those that they had designated in earlier times. It would be a mistake, therefore, to judge, with any confidence, that we know which geographical features are being designated by the names in this paragraph. We simply do not know what geography is being described here and whether that geography even exists now, in modern times. This is most certainly a description of the geography of the world, and of that region, at the very origins of human history. It is information that had to have been passed down from Adam and the first generations of mankind.

9. The Hebrew noun that by most English translations is typically translated “Adam” in this passage when the translators understand it to denote the name of the individual human being who is a principal character in this account is also the Hebrew noun that is used to denote a human being (that is, a “man,” in the sense of a “human being”). So, strictly speaking, this Hebrew word means “the man” (i.e., “the human”). But it alternates between being the name of an individual

(“the Human”) and an ordinary noun denoting a human being. I have sought to determine in what sense it is being used each time it occurs in this account. When it is being used as a name to denote the particular individual whom God first created and placed in the garden, I have transliterated it as *Adam* (the italics indicate that it is a transliteration of the Hebrew word). When it is being used as a common noun that simply denotes a human being, generically, I have translated it as “a human,” or as “a man” or in some other way that denotes an individual human being.

10. See note 7 above. The phrase, “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” here is not intended by the author to serve as a title. It serves as a description of the role that this tree will play. The tree that plays this role, described as the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” is the tree that bears the title the “Tree of Life.” Hence, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is nothing other than a description of the role that the “Tree of Life” will play within this account and within God’s purposes.

11. The Greek translation of this assertion suggests to me a very different meaning from how most translators and interpreters take it. The Greek LXX translation says that “in the day you eat from it, θανάτω ἀποθανεῖσθε.” There are various ways we could construe the Greek here: “you shall die by death,” “you shall die with regard to death,” “you shall die in death,” or, “you shall die in the Death” are some of them. In any event, the Greek does *not* render it “you shall surely die” (as our English translations do). I lack sufficient expertise as a student of the Hebrew language to presume to know how much flexibility there is in the Hebrew text, לֹא-מוֹת תָּמָתוּן. There is one possibility that could explain the Greek translations of this statement. The Hebrew text, very woodenly, reads “not מוֹת you will die.” But here is the question, what is the correct rendering of מוֹת in this assertion? Should it be rendered מוֹת as the Masoretic text does (that is, as an infinitive absolute)? Or, should it be rendered מָוֶת (that is, as a noun = “death”)? The latter could very well be how the Greek translators of the LXX are reading מוֹת here. (There is precedence for the LXX translators understanding the triradical root of a Hebrew word to represent a different word from what the Masoretes understand the word to be.) It is my assumption that this is how we are to understand the text here (thereby explaining the LXX translation): “you will not die the Death” (where “the Death” translates מוֹת). If that is right, then the author’s assertion here perhaps reflects a background assumption that there is some “death penalty” that awaits those who do not please the creator. In that case, *that* implicit death penalty is the death that God is saying Adam and Eve will undergo if they disobey him and eat from the fruit of the Tree of Life. But, more likely, the author is assuming that there is a death that each and every one of God’s creatures eventually undergoes. But how will that affect human beings? Will they (Adam and Eve) have their existence nullified by the same death that nullifies the existence of every other individual creature? Here is God’s answer to that question: if they eat from the Tree of Life after he has forbidden them from doing so, then, “yes,” they will undergo *that very death*. (They will die “the Death”—the one that is built into God’s created order.) But, by implication, if they honor God’s command not to eat from the Tree of Life, then, ironically, God will grant them Life after the grave and they will *not* have their existences nullified by the same death that nullifies the existence of every other individual creature. This interpretation has an important implication. The traditional reading of this story suggests that *all* death was a consequence of the disobedient choice of Adam and Eve. On the reading I am proposing, the

traditional interpretation is incorrect. Death was built into the very nature of God's initial creation. And, yet, for mankind—from the very beginning—there was hope for Life beyond the inevitable Death that would come. And the Tree of Life was the test. Are you, Adam and Eve, creatures who should be granted Life beyond the grave? Or, are you sinful creatures who ought to be allowed to go to destruction with all the rest of creation? What these human creatures did in response to God's prohibition was intended to answer that question. I have not translated it "you shall die the Death, " but rather as "you shall be condemned to die the Death." God is not suggesting that they will experience death at the very moment (or on the very day) that they disobediently eat of the forbidden fruit. Rather, his point is that they will determine their fate at the very moment that they disobey. On the day they disobey, they will condemn themselves to die in the Death.

12. God is suggesting that Adam needs a fellow human being to be his partner and to share his life with him. Eve "corresponds to" Adam in the sense that she, no less than Adam, is a person who reflects the personhood of God himself. Hence, this "corresponds to" highlights the fact that Eve is equal in humanity to Adam. Eve is a "helper" in the sense that Adam already exists and has already been charged with responsibilities and tasks. God is creating Eve in order that she might "help" Adam to carry out those responsibilities and to perform those tasks. To be a "helper" (*ezer*) does not imply the woman's inferiority in any way. (Yahweh is quite often described as the helper, *ezer*, of Israel. He is certainly not inferior to Israel.) She is a "helper" (*ezer*) in the sense that her role—and, in a sense, the meaning of her existence (her *raison d'être*)—will be found in doing things that help her husband discharge his responsibilities before God and perform his God-given role.

13. It seems unlikely to me that Adam's naming all the animals has any more significance than to be the way that God demonstrated to Adam that the "helper" and companion he longed for did not yet exist. None of the creatures that God had already made were suitable companions for Adam. God was going to have to create that creature especially for Adam and give her to him as a gift.

14. The Hebrew here reads something like this: "And this female creature shall be called *ish•shah* because from *ish* this female creature was taken." The author's point here is not immediately clear. It may be this: since this female being was taken from and corresponds to the *ish* (masculine), she ought to be called *ish•shah* (a feminine form that is based on *ish*). In other words, since she is a female version of the *ish*, she should be called *ish•shah*. (Some scholars argue that there is no etymological relationship between *ish* and *ish•shah*. However, if this is indeed the author's point, I would trust the author's understanding of the origins of the Hebrew language over that of modern Hebrew scholars.) But it is equally possible that the author had a very different point in mind. On the assumption that the *primary* meaning of *ish•shah* is "wife" (and not "woman"), then perhaps the author's point is this: "This female creature shall be called my "wife" (*ish•shah*) because she was taken out of her husband (*ish*)." That is, the female was specifically and explicitly given to the man to be his partner and helper. In other words, she was given to the *ish* to be his *wife* (*ish•shah*). So, she shall be called his *ish•shah* for precisely this reason. (Note that this point would be true regardless of whether *ish•shah* and *ish* have any etymological connection.) Now it may very well be the case that this assertion is intended to describe Adam and Eve specifically rather than man and woman generically. In other words,

perhaps 4.13–4.14 could be accurately paraphrased as follows: “Now, at last, this particular female creature whom God has created from me is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This particular female creature shall be called my wife (אִשָּׁה), because she was taken out of me—her husband (אָדָם)—for the very purpose of giving her to me as my helper and companion.” (This is the interpretation that is reflected in my translation of this.) If this is the case, then, on the one hand, it applies specifically and narrowly to Adam and Eve. However, since Adam and Eve are the prototypical husband and wife, it describes, by extension, the relationship of every wife to every husband. Every wife is a God-given gift created specifically and especially for her husband. She may not have been literally created out of his very body (as Eve was from Adam’s), but it is as if she were. She was created especially for the purpose of being the *ezer* to that man. That is why she is rightly called his “wife” (אִשָּׁה). Each and every man’s wife is not just some female human being, she is the female human being created specifically for him and given to him as a gift from God. Hence, she is called his “wife” (אִשָּׁה). Of the two readings discussed in this note, which one is the right reading hinges mostly on whether the primary meaning of אִשָּׁה is “wife” or “woman.” (And, correspondingly, whether the primary meaning of אָדָם is “man” or “husband.”) Clearly, אָדָם can mean “man” and אִשָּׁה can mean “woman.” But do they mean these things by extension from the primary meaning of “husband” and “wife”? Or do אָדָם and אִשָּׁה primarily mean “man” and “woman” and only mean “husband” and “wife” by extension? How we answer this question will largely determine which way we take 4.14.

15. The parenthetical comment here is a commentary on the significance of the story just told. The story is not merely a chronicling of what God did, of how man and woman came into existence. Rather, this story introduces the reader to a marriage relationship between the prototypical man and the prototypical woman. Their marriage serves as a “type” for every marriage relationship that will follow throughout human history. It explains and clarifies the nature of the ideal marriage relationship between every husband and wife. This parenthetical comment here is, in effect, a definition of the marriage relationship.

16. Why were Adam and Eve not ashamed? Because, as of yet, they had nothing of which to be ashamed. While they were intrinsically evil creatures—as the Tree would eventually demonstrate—they did not yet know that about themselves. They had never explicitly acted in a manner that was clearly and explicitly antagonistic to the creator. They did not know the disobedience and rebellion of which they were capable. They would eventually come to know it. And when they did, they felt shame. The notion of nakedness here is interesting. The author is not representing shame at nakedness in sexual terms. It is not a matter of them not being ashamed of their sexuality, only to later become ashamed of their sexuality. Rather, it is their very being, their very existence (not their sexuality), of which they are *not yet* ashamed. This only makes sense if we assume, in the background, that nakedness is a kind of **self-exposure**. That is, when I am naked, I am not merely exposing and making visible my genitals and my sexuality; rather, when I am naked, I am exposing and making visible *my very self*. Or, at least, so it “feels” to me. Therefore, the one who does not want his very self to be seen will naturally not want to be seen naked. (This seems to be a ubiquitous human psychological fact. It is an impulse that can be overcome, certainly. But a human being, left alone, seems to want to hide by covering WHO HE IS [his nakedness] with clothing.) So, before Adam and Eve had any sort of

self-knowledge that would induce them to want to hide who they are, nakedness was not psychologically problematic to them at all. (“They were not ashamed.”)

17. I have left the Hebrew word *nachash* untranslated in order not to prejudice the reading of this story. Clearly, the author is introducing a creature that we have not seen before. He is referred to as *hanachash* (=the *nachash*). The Hebrew word *nachash* means a snake or serpent. Previously, I considered whether *nachash* had, at some point, undergone a change of meaning in the history of the Hebrew language. With the exception of 2 Corinthians 11:3, the Bible everywhere attributes the deception of Eve to Satan, not to a snake. How are we to understand that? (Nothing in the text of *Genesis* explicitly identifies this tempter with Satan.) Could it be that *nachash* was an ancient Hebrew word that, under a different meaning from “snake,” was somehow used to denote the person of Satan? In that event, this account makes no mention of a snake at all. However, coming across 2 Corinthians 11:3 persuaded me that reading *nachash* as meaning “snake” seems to have been perfectly acceptable to the writers of the New Testament. So, my current view is that *Hanachash* (meaning “The Snake”) was a very ancient title for that being who later came to be known, more typically, as *satan* (Satan), or—in Greek—as *diabolos* (Devil). (In this regard, see Revelation 12:9.) Apart from various *a priori* preconceptions and traditional beliefs on the part of the modern reader, there is nothing in the text that requires us to take the tempter to be a literal snake. (Indeed, there is nothing in the text that requires us to assume that the tempter came in the form of a snake.) In whatever form he appeared and whatever form he took, it would seem that “*Hanachash*” is nothing other than Satan himself being described under the very appropriate title, “The Snake.” In my translation, I simply transliterate the Hebrew word that denotes Satan as *Hanachash*. But note that it could legitimately be translated “The Snake,” and it is being used to indicate the created being whom we more typically name “Satan” or “the Devil.”

18. As should be obvious from note 17, the author is not suggesting that “The Snake” (*Hanachash*) is an animal who is being compared to other animals. Rather, he is a created being being introduced into the narrative for the first time and he is being compared to beings who have already been mentioned. Up until now, in the narrative, no creature created by God (other than Adam) is of such a kind that it could carry on a conversation with Eve. To provide an explanation for the conversation that is about to take place in the narrative, the author introduces us to Eve’s conversation partner, making sure that we understand that this being—“The Snake” (*Hanachash*)—is not one of the animals or living creatures that was spoken of earlier. He is an altogether different sort of creature. He is one that has the mental wherewithal to carry on a conversation. Hence, he is described as being “more intelligent” (עָרִיב) than all the creatures of the wild whom we have already encountered in the account.

19. The “he” here refers to *Hanachash*. In other words, the text could read, “Now *Hanachash* said to *Adam*’s wife,”

20. Eve is telling *Hanachash* here that she is not to eat from the tree “that is in the middle of the garden.” Earlier, in paragraph 1, it was the Tree of Life that was described as the tree that was in the middle of the garden. So a rather straightforward reading suggests that it is the Tree of Life from which she is forbidden to eat. But, as we saw above (see notes 7 and 10), the Tree of Life is, at one and the same time, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

21. This is an explicit and direct contradiction of what God himself had told Adam and Eve. God

told them that, if they ate of the tree, they would die the Death. Here, *Hanachash* is telling Eve that she will *not* die the Death. (For an understanding of “die the Death”, see note 11.)

22. The typical reading given to this deception by *Hanachash* is mistaken. In the first place, *Hanachash* is not suggesting to Eve that eating from the Tree will *cause* her eyes to be opened. He is not claiming that there is some magic or power in the fruit of the Tree of Life that will cause a metaphysical change in Eve such that she will have a god-like ability to see and know things. No such thing is being claimed. Rather, *Hanachash*'s claim is that there is a significant relationship between Eve's deciding to eat from the fruit of the forbidden tree and her being experienced, mature, perceptive, and knowledgeable enough to decide to do so. So long as she is a child who lacks knowledge, experience, and insight, then, of course, she must naturally do whatever the God tells her to do. But the day will come, *Hanachash* is suggesting, when things will change. She will no longer be a dependent child who cannot be expected to make such a decision for herself, on the basis of her own knowledge and experience. When that day comes, she will know that she is now wise enough to decide for herself. And on that day, she will eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, for, on the basis of her own personal knowledge and experience, she will know that it is alright to eat of it. This statement by *Hanachash* is the key to the whole story. The appeal that *Hanachash* makes to Eve is to her pride. She doesn't want to remain a dependent child does she? Doesn't she want to be a mature, independent, wise, and fully capable woman—one who no longer needs God, or anyone else, to tell her what is and is not good for her? This is all we can determine from the text itself. But one can easily imagine how *Hanachash* might have spun his point to Eve in order to make it more seductive. *Hanachash* could quite easily have painted a picture for Eve where her making the decision, on her own, to go ahead and eat the fruit of the forbidden tree—in direct disobedience to what God had commanded—would actually be a *good* and *wonderful* thing. It would be something that pleased God, something that he welcomed: “Sure, God has told you not to eat from that tree. But he is just testing you, don't you see? He wants to see when, and if, you will be wise and experienced enough to come to realize that such a prohibition is arbitrary and unnecessary. In the day when you decide that it is arbitrary and unnecessary, you will show God that you have arrived, that you have grown up, that you are now the wise and wonderful creature that he has always wanted you to become. In that day, he will be very happy with you. Certainly, he will not punish you with death for being the magnificent creature that he has always wanted you to become!”

23. Presumably, she “saw” that it was good for food because she “saw” that it was the very same kind of fruit that she had been eating off of the other trees in the garden. In other words, she knew from personal experience that it was “good for food.”

24. The author is suggesting here that Eve had never noticed, one way or the other, whether the fruit from the Tree of Life was good for food and tasty. In her innocence, it never occurred to her to take notice of whether it would be good to eat, for God had forbidden her from eating it. But, now, *Hanachash* had piqued her interest. Perhaps the fruit of the forbidden tree would be good to eat. In fact, perhaps God is wanting her to eat its fruit. Maybe she is supposed to decide for herself whether it is a good thing to eat its fruit. So, now she takes notice. She looks. And now that she has taken the time to look, she can see with her own eyes that it is, in fact, good for food and desirable to eat.

25. Paraphrasing this assertion, it would read like this: “Furthermore, eating from the tree was desirable to make Adam’s wife wise, like God. That is, eating from it would indicate that she had come to have the knowledge and experience to decide for herself whether she should eat from it, or not.” To “become wise” here is a way of describing the same thing as “to know good and evil as the God does” (see 5.10).

26. Having done precisely what God had commanded them NOT to do, they now came to see and understand who they actually were. They were evil, rebellious creatures, not good, obedient creatures. This is what the author means by “their eyes were opened.” Their act of disobedience had brought it about that they could now “see” the sinful, hostile creatures that they were. They had always been such creatures—from the moment that they were created (nothing in this account describes any *change* in their moral and spiritual condition)—but now circumstances had opened their eyes so that they could see their moral and spiritual condition. Until now, they had been ignorant of the truth about who they were.

27. The author’s point is not that, while being formerly unaware of their nakedness, they now had become aware of it. Surely they had known that they were naked all along. But until now, their nakedness posed no problems for them. Because they had themselves been totally unaware of their own shameful sinfulness, they had had no sense that they ought to hide themselves from others. Previously—believing they had nothing to hide—they did not mind being known, and, hence, they did not mind being naked. (See note 16.) But now—with a fresh realization that they had a shame to hide—they do mind being known, and, hence, they mind being naked. Because they are creatures of shame, it is uncomfortable and unpleasant to have their shamefulness exposed to others. Hence, it is uncomfortable and unpleasant for them to be naked before others.

28. See note 27 above. Adam was afraid to see *Yahweh* because of his guilt. It would not be comfortable to expose his guilt to the scrutiny of God.

29. God’s response to Adam here confirms the interpretation I have given to the preceding account. The only explanation for Adam’s newfound concern over his nakedness is that he now has something of which to be ashamed. So, God asks him if he has not committed the shameful act of directly contravening his prohibition.

30. This statement does not have to be understood in a way that implies that *Hanachash* is one of the animals. To be cursed above and beyond the animals does not have to mean that, of all the animals, he is the most cursed among them. Another plausible reading would be that *Hanachash* is “more cursed” even than any animal is cursed. To say that X is slyer than a fox does not require that X is an animal like a fox. A being who is “above” the animals can still be compared to the animals. That is what is happening here. The “cursedness” of *Hanachash* seems to be his defeat, humiliation, and abject subjugation. *Hanachash* was seeking some sort of victory over God’s human creation—and, therefore, over God. But, instead, his fate is to be humiliating defeat. God had created the animals to be lower than and subject to the human being. It will be the fate of *Hanachash* to experience an even more abject subjugation to human beings than any animal ever does. In other words, Satan’s destiny is to experience defeat and humiliation at the hands of human beings.

31. This is an image of abject humiliation and defeat. In the ancient world, enemies of a king

(especially the Pharaoh in Egypt) would be forced to lie flat on their stomachs before the king who had been victorious over them, their faces in the ground, as the king rested his feet on them as his footstool. (Compare: “sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool under your feet.”) This seems to be the image that God is employing here. To “go on your stomach” and “eat dust all the days of your life” seems to be a way that he is describing a continuing, ongoing humiliation and defeat throughout his entire existence.

32. God informs *Hanachash* that, because of what has happened, the woman will be his enemy throughout the rest of history. This enmity between them will manifest itself in an ongoing animosity between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of *Hanachash*. The “offspring of the woman” are those human beings throughout time who, like their mother Eve, are inclined to believe God and truth and to base their lives on that truth. (They are those who will want to know God and love him.) The “offspring of *Hanachash*” (that is, the “children of the devil”) are those human beings throughout time who believe and base their lives on the lies of *Hanachash* instead of the truth from God. God is predicting a perpetual hatred of the children of the devil for the children of the God—a hatred of the unrighteous (like Cain) for the righteous (like Abel). This statement is more of a prediction than it is a punishment *per se* that he is imposing on *Hanachash*. God is not pronouncing sentence. He is stating the natural and necessary consequence of what *Hanachash* has done. Given God’s purposes for history, *Hanachash* has bought defeat and humiliation for himself, not victory. (Note the positive light in which Eve is placed by this statement. Eve is clearly assumed to be a righteous woman—a woman who seeks to honor and obey God. That is the most reasonable explanation for why subsequent humans who are righteous and who seek to honor and obey God are described as *her* “offspring.”)

33. God predicts the ultimate outcome of the enmity between *Hanachash* and the woman. The “offspring of the woman” will ultimately “crush the head of *Hanachash*.” This is most likely a picture of their victory over *Hanachash*. *Hanachash* will not succeed in deceiving them. They will overcome and defeat him. They will “crush his head.” (Cf. Romans 16:20) However, this victory of the woman (through her children) will not be without cost. While the woman will defeat *Hanachash* in and through her offspring, *Hanachash* will inflict damage on her by inflicting significant damage on her offspring: “he (*Hanachash*) will crush its (her seed’s) heel.” (In all likelihood, the damage to the seed of the woman that is primarily in view here is the torture and death of God’s own righteous Messiah, when Jesus was crucified.)

34. This is not, as many take it to be, the pronouncement of a sentence on the woman. God is not announcing a specific punishment where he declares that he will make childbirth a particularly painful experience. To understand it in this way is a misreading of this statement. It is more a prediction than it is a judicial sentence. God is going to increase the woman’s offspring. He had always intended to do so. But to increase the woman’s offspring is—as recent events should have made clear—to increase the number of evil creatures in the world. And because they will be sinful, rebellious creatures, the woman’s children will bring grief, sorrow, and great unhappiness into the woman’s life. Her evil children will break her heart. Hence, this is simply a prediction of what Eve can expect in light of the freshly minted knowledge that human beings are evil and rebellious.

35. The phrase translated “your desire shall be for your husband” means something like “you

will desire to possess and control your husband.” (Cf. Genesis 4:7, the account of Cain’s jealousy toward Abel. The same Hebrew clause occurs there: “sin is crouching at the door; *and its desire is for you*, but you must master it.” It seems apparent that, in that statement there, “its desire is for you” means “its desire—the desire of sin—is a desire to possess and control you.”) This would seem to be a direct consequence of the woman’s sinfulness. Human sin makes the woman selfish and, in her selfishness, she will desire to possess and control her husband and have her husband serve her desires. Hence, again, this statement is little more than a prediction of what Eve can expect, given that she has now been exposed as a sinful rebel against her creator.

36. Again, this is a prediction rather than a sentence that God is imposing. God is simply declaring the natural and necessary consequence of Adam and Eve being evil creatures. As an evil woman, Eve will desire to possess and control her husband (see note 35), but the actual outcome will be contrary to that—her stronger, evil husband will force her into subjugation to himself. The woman will not succeed in getting the man to serve her every desire. Rather, the roles will be reversed. The man will get the woman to serve his every desire.

37. This, in contrast to what Yahweh has said to *Hanachash* and to his wife, certainly sounds like a straightforward pronouncement of a penalty to which God is sentencing Adam. In a sense, of course, it is. But, at the same time, it is also the natural consequence of Adam’s action. As a penalty for his disobedience, God is banishing Adam from the garden. But to be banished from the garden, at that particular time in history, is to be banished into land where agriculture will be extremely difficult. Adam will find it very difficult to grow food on the land to which he is being banished. Consequently, he will be forced to forage what he can off the land. The garden he is being forced to leave is fertile, abundant, irrigated, and verdant. The land to which he is being banished is dry, infertile, and harsh. God is not saying, however, that the land to which you are being banished used to be fertile and productive but I am going to curse it and cause it to be fertile and productive no longer. It never has been fertile and productive. That is why God placed Adam in the garden. He put him in a place where food was easy to come by. But God is going to kick him out of the garden, into the wild, harsh desert—a land that has always been cursed *vis à vis* the garden.

38. God’s statement here raises an important question at this point. What does this statement say about Adam’s fate? When it speaks of Adam’s returning to the earth out of which he was taken—“for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”—is God announcing the fact that “dust” is Adam’s ultimate end? Is God suggesting that Adam—unlike his wife Eve (see note 32)—will *not* be raised up to Life after he dies? Will Adam not receive mercy so that he will indeed die the Death? Eve, apparently, is going to be shown mercy? Does this statement imply that Adam will not be shown the same mercy? See note 40 for more on this.

39. The Greek translation of this statement translates the woman’s name as “Life.” Apparently, those translators viewed the Greek text in such a way that there was a verbal link between the name of Eve (*Chawah*) and the word for “Life.”

40. There are two possibilities for what this means: (a) On the one hand, Adam could be registering the fact that every subsequent human being who will ever come into existence will come into existence because of Eve. (In a sense, every human being who has ever lived has had Eve for a mother.) Or, (b) Adam could be responding to what God has just announced to

Hanachash. Perhaps Adam has understood—from God’s predictions to *Hanachash*—that every human being who would subsequently be granted mercy by God is one of Eve’s “offspring.” That is, every human being who would subsequently be granted Life after death—because of his right orientation to God—is a “child of Eve.” That would make Eve, in a sense, the “mother” of every human being who was destined to receive eternal Life, life beyond the grave. This may very well be what Adam has in mind when he names her Eve. She is “the mother of all living” because, as per God’s prediction, she is the forerunner of all who will attain Life. I am inclined to understand the account in keeping with this latter option. It could very well be that Adam is rightly contrasting Eve’s fate with that of himself. He is not the “father of all who will have Life,” for it is not Life, but *dust* that is his destiny. But Eve is the “mother of all who will have Life,” for Life is indeed her destiny. (However, nothing in the account requires the conclusion that Adam will remain dust after he dies. So this may not be included in the background to what Adam is saying here about Eve. In other words, he may be commenting on Eve’s stature without contrasting it with his own. And, indeed, in light of the likely meaning of Genesis 5:3, it would appear that Adam—unlike Cain and the line of descent coming from him—was a righteous individual who stood at the beginning of a line of righteous men leading up to Noah.)

41. The phrase מִמֶּנּוּ דַרְבָּרָא / εἰς ἐξ ἡμῶν is typically misunderstood and mistranslated as “one of us.” God is not saying “the human has become like *one of us* in knowing good and evil.” Rather, God is saying, “the human is one who knows good and evil *apart from us*.” The preposition, מִן (ἐξ), is not being used in the partitive sense. It is being used to express the notion of being outside of or apart from. In this case, it is being used to express independence. The human has shown himself to be one who is ready and willing to decide what is good and what is evil *independently of us*. (I have no clear understanding of why the first person plural is used for God here.) Clearly, then, the idea here is not that the fruit that the man and woman ate had a power that caused them, magically, to see as God sees, to think as God thinks, and to judge as God judges. (Why would that be a bad thing?) The tree had no magical power whatsoever. Rather, this ordinary tree—because it had been proscribed—tested them. It discovered and revealed something about the human being that had been true of him all along—namely, that he was a creature who was inherently willing to disregard the instruction and command of God and to decide for himself—independently of God’s explicit instruction—what he thinks is right and good and what he thinks is evil.

42. The text here has typically been misunderstood and mistranslated. God is not to be understood as stating the reason for his banishing Adam—namely, “lest he eat of the Tree of Life and obtain eternal Life thereby.” (Such a reading would, in fact, lead one to conclude that the Tree of Life had some sort of magic or power to impart eternal Life. But, this is not the right reading.) Rather, we should understand God here to be deliberating his next course of action—“Do I want to allow Adam to eat of the Tree of Life again? Do I want to grant eternal Life to Adam?” In the next sentence, when it states that God banished Adam from the garden, we are given to understand the outcome of God’s deliberation. “No, he did not want to allow him to eat of the Tree of Life again? And no, he did not want to grant eternal Life to him.” (Note: does this fact help answer the question of Adam’s ultimate destiny? See notes 38 and 40 above. We must remember, however, that Eve was not allowed to eat of the Tree of Life after this either; yet she was destined for mercy and Life. So it would appear that this does not answer the question of Adam’s eternal destiny any more than it does Eve’s.) Rightly understood, we have here an

important clue with regard to what the Tree of Life is. The Tree of Life was not some kind of supernatural, magical tree. It was an ordinary tree like all the others. However, it had been arbitrarily chosen to symbolize something to Adam and Eve. The symbolism apparently consisted of this: a person was allowed to eat from the Tree of Life if and only if it was God's intention to grant him Life after the grave. Initially, Adam and Eve were proscribed from eating from it. Why? Because their moral condition—and, hence, their fate—had not yet been made known. Before anyone could eat of the Tree of Life (see Revelation 22:2,14,19, where God's mercy has made eating of the Tree of Life possible once again), God wanted to employ it as a test. He forbade them from eating from it in order to create this test. The test would reveal whether they were good or evil. (Presumably, if Adam and Eve had passed the test and proven themselves good rather than evil, God would have ultimately lifted his ban against eating from the Tree of Life.) Adam and Eve would come to self-knowledge through this test. They would come to see that they were not deserving of Life after the grave. Once the fact of their unworthiness was made manifest to them, it would be inappropriate to allow them to eat of the Tree of Life. To eat of that tree would mean that they were worthy to inherit Life when, in truth, they were not. (Hence, without mercy, no Life would ever be possible.) To keep his message clear, God must banish Adam from the garden and force him away from the Tree of Life. For evil creatures are not deserving of the Life after death that eating from the tree symbolizes.

43. Note that Genesis 2:7–8 seems to imply that the ground out of which Adam was fashioned was in a different location from the garden into which God had placed him after he was created. The garden appears to have been to the east of where Adam was first created. Here, then, “to work that ground from which he had been taken” seems to mean to work the unproductive and infertile ground in the desert from which he had first been fashioned. (See note 37.)

44. The following is what seems to be described here: Adam, who was created to the west of the garden of Eden, had been taken to the garden of Eden and given a home there. But because of his disobedience, Adam was banished from the garden. As punishment, he was returned to the region west of the garden of Eden, to the barren land from which he had originally come. Having banished him into the western wilderness, God posted Cherubim on the western boundary of the garden in Eden—opposite to where Adam now lived—to keep Adam from returning to the garden from the western wilderness where he now lived. The text describes the location of the Cherubim as “in the east, toward the garden of Eden,” because, from the perspective of Adam, that is where the Cherubim were posted. They were posted to the east of him, on the way to the garden of Eden.

45. The Cherubim are, presumably, some sort of suprahuman, angelic-type beings. God is using them as guards. They are stationed on the way to the Tree of Life to prevent Adam and Eve from returning to the garden and eating from the Tree of Life. We have insufficient biblical data from which to construct any definitive understanding about the nature of Cherubim. The point of the passage has little to do with Cherubim. Their purpose is to dramatize and emphasize God's resolve. God thinks it utterly unfitting for Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Life, because of what eating would symbolize. It would symbolize their being worthy and deserving of being granted eternal Life. Since that is decidedly not so, it would be highly inappropriate for them to be allowed to eat of the Tree of Life. The Cherubim posted as guards highlights and emphasizes

this fact.

46. It is difficult to know exactly what the original text was here and it is equally challenging to know how best to analyze the syntax and to translate it. However, the basic idea seems clear enough. My translation tries to capture the basic idea even if it does not get all of the original syntax exactly right.

47. The Hebrew verb translated here by “was intimate with” means “to know.” So, literally, it reads, “Now the man *knew* Eve, his wife....” The verb “to know” in Hebrew is sometimes used in the sense of “to choose to bring into some sort of close or intimate connection with oneself.” Because sexual intercourse involves choosing to enter into an intimate connection with one’s sexual partner, the Hebrew idiom for describing person A as having had sexual intercourse with person B is to say that “A knew B.” In this context, it is clear that sexual intercourse is being described here by the assertion that “Adam knew Eve.” Therefore, I have translated it in terms of Adam “being intimate with” Eve.

48. In this context, the Qal of the Hebrew verb *קָנָה* means “to make”, “to form”, or “to create.” It often can mean “to get,” “to obtain,” or “to buy.” Less frequently, it can mean “to create.” In this context, however, the latter makes the most sense. Nothing in the text suggests that this is meant to be a statement of pride on Eve’s part: “Look, I’m as good as God. I can create a human being too.” Rather, everything suggests that it is a more or less innocent statement of amazement at the wondrous miracle of procreation. Furthermore, it seems to suggest a recognition on Eve’s part that this miracle of procreation results from the work of *Yahweh*. *Yahweh* is the creator of Cain no less than he is the creator of Adam and Eve. The means of creation may have been different; but the fact that *Yahweh* is the creator is the same.

49. We have here the first act of religious ritual in the Bible. It occurred “after a period of time.” That is, it is something that occurred in the course of time. Every indication is that offering up an offering to *Yahweh* was Cain’s idea. Hence, it was Cain—the murderer—who invented religious ritual as a means of relating to the creator God. As we can see, Abel appropriates Cain’s idea (Cain’s invention) and employs it as a way to express his love of and respect for God. But it was Cain who invented it, not Abel. There is no indication that *Yahweh* commanded or instructed Cain with regard to ritual offerings. It was Cain’s imagination, not *Yahweh*’s will and desire, that gave birth to religion and religious ritual.

50. Why did *Yahweh* have regard for Abel’s offering, but not for Cain’s? On the one hand, we see a clear clue in the text. Cain offered up *some fruit* “from the fruit of the ground.” He offered up *some* of what he had grown. Abel, on the other hand, offered up *the fattiest (choicest) portions* from some of *the firstborn* of his flock. In other words, Abel took great care to offer up his best to *Yahweh*. Cain just offered something up. Clearly, however, it is not the content of the offering to which *Yahweh* is responding. *Yahweh* is responding to what the content of their offerings represents. He is responding to what each offering reveals about the heart of the one who is offering it. Abel has a heart that genuinely and authentically honors and respects *Yahweh*. That is why he cares to give *Yahweh* his very best. Cain has a heart that does not genuinely and authentically honor and respect *Yahweh*. That is why he does *not* take care to give *Yahweh* his very best. *Yahweh* “has regard for” the offering of Abel because he has regard for the heart of Abel. *Yahweh* does not have regard for the offering of Cain because he does not have regard for

the heart of Cain. *Yahweh* accepts Abel's religious expression of worship, because he finds Abel's heart acceptable. *Yahweh* does not accept Cain's religious expression of worship, because he does not find Cain's heart acceptable.

51. Cain responds with self-pitying anger and jealousy. On the one hand, he feels sorry for himself that God did not accept him (insofar as he did not accept his religious expression of worship). And, on the other hand, he is jealous of Cain, for God did accept him. It is the state that every rebel against God inevitably finds himself in. On the one hand, he has no interest in giving his heart and being to God in order to honor and serve him. But, on the other hand, he is deeply displeased that he is thereby cut off from God's acceptance. The ungodly man would like to have his cake and eat it too (that is, he would like to reject God and go his own way while, at the same time, not suffering any consequences for doing so). And he is very unhappy and angry that he cannot do so. Cain, in many respects, is the prototypical rebel against God. It is all the more noteworthy, therefore, that it is Cain who is the inventor of religion. See note 49.

52. That is, "if you do well, will you not experience the joy and reward of my acceptance?" In other words, won't you find acceptance from me if you do what is good? The "doing good" that God has in mind has to do with Cain's committing his life and existence to the knowledge, love, honor, and service of God. That is, "doing good" would mean turning his heart toward God. God is *not* saying, "if you would just offer up a better offering, won't you find acceptance from me." As we saw earlier, the content of the offering is only meaningful to the extent that it reflects the state of the worshipper's heart.

53. In all likelihood, this language is intended to picture sin like a lion crouching to devour its prey. It dramatizes the fact that human sin is no friend of humanity. Sin's desire, if you will, is to destroy the human individual, not to benefit him in any way.

54. See note 15. God is telling Cain that sin (his anger, jealousy, and self-pity) desires to possess and control him. He must not let that happen. He must master it. He must not allow it to master him.

55. This follows the Greek translation of the *Torah*. The content of what Cain told Abel is omitted in the Masoretic text. I believe the Masoretic text fails to reflect the original Hebrew text, while the Greek translation (the LXX) preserves it.

56. It is a truly remarkable fact that in the earliest generation of this new creature, man, he resorts to the heinous and treacherous act of murder. I believe this account is included in the account of the origins of Mankind in order to make dramatically clear that mankind is inherently sinful. Man's inherent, original sinfulness is the primary theme of this account and of all the initial accounts included in *Genesis*. The story of Cain's murder of Abel develops this theme with powerful force and clarity.

57. The ground, being portrayed as a witness to what has transpired, is crying out that justice be done for the treacherous act that Cain has committed.

58. This is figurative rather than literal. It is not *literally* because of the ground that Cain is cursed. Cain is cursed on account of what the ground has been witness to—namely, the shedding

of Abel's blood by Cain.

59. Up to now, Cain has worked the ground and grown crops. If the ground is no longer going to "show its vitality" (literally, give its strength), then it is no longer going to produce crops at the same level of abundance as it had formerly. It will not produce crops in sufficient abundance for Cain to be able to sustain himself by working the ground. As a result, he will be forced to turn to hunting and gathering to survive. He will be turned into a nomad.

60. Literally, "you have driven me this day from the face of the ground." Cain's point is that Yahweh's punishment is of such a nature that he will be forced to give up living off the soil—the life that he had previously pursued—and will be reduced to having to scavenge off the wild.

61. To have God's "face turned toward a person" is an idiomatic expression for being in God's favor. Cain's complaint that he will be hidden from God's face, therefore, is his fear that he will no longer be receiving God's blessings. Heretofore, Cain had been enjoying the blessings of God in the form of abundant produce from the soil that he worked. That will now be denied to him. That is the concern that is in view when he complains that he will "be hidden from God's face."

62. Cain is anticipating that his brothers will want revenge for the murder of Abel. As the perpetrator of such a heinous crime, he anticipates that his brothers will want vengeance against him because of it. Cain understands, therefore, that he must look forward to is a life where, as he lives off the land (hunting and gathering), he must live in constant fear for his life since everyone he might chance to meet will be wanting to take revenge for Abel's death.

63. In order to offer Cain escape from a life of constant fear, *Yahweh* promises him that anyone who does act to exact revenge against Cain will be subject to having seven times the vengeance exacted against him. This threat of such extreme revenge should serve as a deterrent to anyone who might otherwise be tempted to exact revenge against Cain. Therefore, if Cain trusts the promise of God—which, from the subsequent text, it would appear he does not (see note 68)—he should be able to live out the rest of his life without a fear of being killed by everyone he meets.

64. *Yahweh* places a "sign" on Cain. Presumably, it was an objective, observable mark of some kind. Of whatever it consisted, it conveyed the fact that God had made a promise to Cain that he would exact extreme revenge against anyone who harmed him. (And the purpose of that promise, in turn, was to serve as a deterrent to anyone who might want to harm him.) Either the sign was such that its meaning was clear and obvious from the nature of the sign itself, or God somehow made its meaning known to others. From Cain's standpoint, the "sign" that God placed on him was no more reassuring than God's promise was. If Cain did not trust God's promise, then there was no reason to take comfort in the sign. It would appear from the subsequent account that Cain did *not* put his trust in *Yahweh*'s promise. Therefore, neither did he take comfort in the sign. See note 68.

65. Presumably, the land area where Adam was first created and the land area where the garden was found were places where human beings had direct, face-to-face contact with *Yahweh*. Therefore, it could reasonably be said that the earliest human beings who lived in these places were living in the "presence of *Yahweh*." But Cain is no longer comfortable living in a place where *Yahweh* might appear to him and confront him. So, he leaves the "presence" of *Yahweh*,

looking for a place where he can believe that he has put distance between himself and *Yahweh*. This move by Cain is evidence of his lack of repentance. A lack of any real, authentic interest in relating to his creator seems to persist throughout Cain's life. The same lack of regard for God that ultimately led to his murdering his brother continues to characterize Cain throughout the remainder of his life.

66. Eden was not the name of the "garden" in which God placed Adam and Eve. It was the name of the region within which that "garden" was found. Apparently, Cain does not leave the region of Eden. He simply moves to the eastern boundary of that region (Eden) and makes his home there.

67. This is the same construction as in 12.1 (Genesis 4:1). See note 47.

68. So far as the biblical record is concerned, Cain is the first human to build a city. The original cities were walled cities, built to give protection from various kinds of danger. By definition, if a settlement was not walled, it was not a city. It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that Cain's city-building means that he has decided he needs protection. All the other human beings on the earth at that time faced the same dangers that Cain did. So what led Cain to build a city for protection when the others had not felt the need to do so? Did Cain have greater foresight than all the others. Was he more imaginative and inventive than the others? Or, did Cain have more to fear than the others? Up to this point, the story has emphasized Cain's fear—his fear that someone will seek revenge for Abel's murder. Presumably that is why Cain feels the need to live in a walled, fortified city. He feels the need to protect himself from those who might be seeking revenge for Abel. This is significant. *Yahweh* made a promise to Cain that was intended to relieve Cain of this fear. God created a significant deterrent against anyone deciding to harm Cain. But God's promise could only relieve his fear and anxiety to the degree that Cain trusted *Yahweh* and his promise. Therefore, building a city within which to live is likely an indication that Cain does not trust *Yahweh* and that he does not find any solace in God's promise. This is how Jacques Ellul interprets this simple fact in his book, *The Meaning of the City*. I agree with his interpretation. (However, I believe the claim about Cain building a city occurs as part of a straightforward, factually accurate, historical account, not as part of an etiological myth—as Ellul suggests.) If this interpretation is right, then the very origin of life in the city was rooted in human unbelief and distrust of the creator. This is the very interesting and central thesis of Ellul's book.

69. Some argue that the original text read in such a way that Enoch, not Cain, was the first city builder and that he named the city Irad after his (Enoch's) first son. I do not find their arguments convincing. Their arguments begin with the assumption that there is an incoherency in the text. Earlier in the story, Cain is said to have been turned into a vagabond and a wanderer in the land. Now he is said to be the first city builder. Is this not an inconsistency? Is he a wanderer and a vagabond, or an urban dweller? I do not believe this is an inconsistency. It seems clear to me that these two disparate facts are sequential. Initially, because the ground was cursed, Cain was forced to hunt and gather and he became a vagabond and a wanderer. Later in his life (perhaps even much later), he migrates to Nod to live on the eastern boundaries of Eden. It is there that he finally decides to build a city. This is not in conflict with, nor is it contradicted by, the fact that Cain's original occupation in one part of Eden (farming) was permanently disrupted such that he

was forced to wander and migrate elsewhere. The text need not be construed to suggest that Cain was permanently and enduringly transformed into a nomad. Rather, its point is that Cain was *prevented from continuing life as usual in Eden, as a grower of produce*, and was forced to relocate and reinvent his life. Such was the consequence of his evil act.

70. It is not necessarily clear how we are to understand the concept of “giving birth to” in the various genealogies within *Genesis*. In 14.2, when it says “Cain was intimate with his wife and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch,” the author clearly means to say that Cain was the biological parent of Enoch. However, what does it mean when it says, “Irada was born to Enoch,” or again “Irada gave birth to Mehujael”? Was Enoch the biological parent of Irada, or was Enoch rather an ancestor of Irada? And was Irada the biological parent of Mehujael, or was he rather an ancestor of Mehujael? It may very well be the case that to say that “A gave birth to Z” means simply that Z was an eventual descendent of A who—for one reason or another—is a particularly noteworthy individual. Therefore, it may very well be the case that when the text states that “A gave birth to Z,” it means to describe a reality where A was the biological parent of B, who was the biological parent of C, who was the biological parent of D . . . who was the biological parent of Y, who was the biological parent of Z.” If that is so, then a person becomes an individual who is named in a genealogy because of something noteworthy about him. So, for example, being the patriarch of a distinctive and clearly identifiable people-group would likely make an individual noteworthy. Exactly this seems to be the case with the named descendants of Lamech. They are specifically named because they are the patriarchs of distinctive people-groups: Jabal was the patriarch of a people-group who were distinctive for living in tents and keeping herds of livestock, Jubal was the patriarch of a people-group who were distinctive for their skill in making music, and Tubal-cain was the patriarch of a people-group who were distinctive for their skill at forging artifacts made of bronze or iron. In this particular case, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain are quite likely being described as the direct biological offspring of Lamech. But this need not be the case in every genealogy. And it is not absolutely necessary that it be the case here either.

71. In view of the point made in note 70 above, there are two possibilities for how to understand this statement. I will portray the two distinct possibilities through two different paraphrases of 15.1: (i) “Then Irada became the direct biological offspring of Enoch, and Mehujael became the direct biological offspring of Irada, and Methushael became the direct biological offspring of Mehujael, and Lamech became the direct biological offspring of Methushael.” (ii) “Then Irada became an eventual descendent of Enoch, and Mehujael became an eventual descendent of Irada, and Methushael became an eventual descendent of Mehujael, and Lamech became an eventual descendent of Methushael.”

72. If we accept this account as straightforwardly factual—as I think we are meant to do—then human culture developed before the flood. Hence, human culture existed prior to the development of human culture and civilization as that is described by modern archaeology. Since all human beings—except Noah’s family—died in the flood, the initial developments of human society, culture, and civilization died with them. However, Noah would presumably have kept alive a memory of the pre-flood cultures. This memory would likely have served as a motivation to develop human culture and civilization once again. But it is unlikely that Noah himself had the knowledge and skills necessary to recreate or reproduce all aspects of the pre-flood cultures. Therefore, technology had to be reinvented and culture and civilization had to be recreated.

Presumably, what modern scholarship studies is the *rediscovering* and the *reinvention* of technology and civilization (which they mistakenly take to be the first and original advances of civilization and technology). Hence, there is no necessary conflict between the account of early civilization and culture recorded here in the *Genesis* account and the conclusions of modern archaeology, for they are not describing the same stage of history.

73. Lamech is wanting to reassure his wives. Lamech might very well be inclined to fear that others will seek revenge for the death of his young victim. His wives would likely fear the very same thing. Lamech wants to allay their fear. He does so by offering them the following rationale: if God would offer Cain protection, even more certainly would he offer Lamech protection. Hence, they have nothing to fear.

74. The purpose of this brief anecdote is to highlight Lamech's arrogance. What he is telling his wives, in effect, is this: if Cain deserved divine protection from revenge, I deserve it even more—specifically, eleven times more than he did. This is an attitude of incredible arrogance. In the first place, God did not offer security to Cain because Cain deserved it. It was God's mercy that led him to promise Cain the protection that he did, not something that made Cain deserving of it. Lamech clearly does not understand this. He presumes that it was Cain's worthiness. And, in his arrogance, he presumes that he is even more worthy of God's protection than Cain is. This anecdote is consistent with the purpose of the whole of the early portions of *Genesis*: to point out and highlight the sinfulness and evil of mankind. Lamech is a paradigm of the arrogance, hubris, and autonomy from God that characterizes all of mankind.

75. See note 47.

76. The Hebrew verb translated “granted” here (שָׁתַּת) has the same root as does the name Seth. Eve names her son שֵׁת (Seth) because God has seen fit to שָׁתַּת (grant) her a child in place of her deceased son Abel. This is loosely equivalent to Eve naming her son *Grant* because God has seen fit to *grant* her a son to replace her lost boy Abel.

77. It is not clear whether the fact that “they began to call upon the name of *Yahweh*” is to be linked to Enosh, to Seth, or perhaps to both. In any event, the point being made is that with Seth and his son Enosh, there begins a line of descent of people whose heart is turned toward God. No longer is mankind *universally* proud, arrogant, godless, and unrepentant. With Seth and Enosh we see the emergence of a line of human beings whose heart is directed toward knowing, loving, and serving their creator. This is the significance of their being described as “calling upon the name of *Yahweh*.”

78. The phrase here is סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם. In this context, it means “the Book of the Origins of Mankind.” In all likelihood, it indicates the written account that has just been reproduced by the author/editor of this portion of *Genesis* (the account that immediately precedes this phrase), or perhaps it indicates the written account (סֵפֶר) that has served as the source for the material covered in this portion of *Genesis*. It is a mistake, I believe, to take this as the introductory title to the material that follows it. It is, rather, the title and identification of the material that has just preceded it. The author's point, then, is to inform the reader that he has just read an account of the “origins of mankind”—that is, he has just read an account of the earliest origins of human

history. The Hebrew word תולדות would seem to mean “births,” in a sense that denotes the “origins of human beings.” By extension, it can also be used to denote the “origins” of something other than a human being. (So note that in *Genesis* 2:4, the same word תולדות is used with respect to the heavens and the earth.) *Genesis* 2:4 should not read, “This is the *births* of the heavens and the earth.” (Although, it could certainly be read that way in a metaphorical sense.) Rather, it should read, “This is the *origins* of the heavens and the earth.” The formula, “This is the origins (תולדות) of ...” seems to be a formula used—in the earliest chapters of *Genesis*—to mark off the distinct portions of the work. It is possible that each distinct portion of the early part of *Genesis* is a replication of, or has been constructed on the basis of, separate and distinct sources. If that is so, then the formula “This is the origins (תולדות) of ...” is the editor’s way of identifying the specific source material that he is replicating or relying upon in his account.