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Chapter Summaries

Introduction

When putting together a jigsaw puzzle, what is the most important piece? Something in the middle? An edge, a corner perhaps? No, it's the box!

On the lid of the box is a picture of what the puzzle will look like when the pieces are assembled. In searching to solve Bible, science, and history puzzles in most instances we don't have the box. The big picture can only be seen when we put the pieces together. All we have are small bits scattered around, some easy to find, others well hidden.

Besides the regular pieces, which when fitted together complete our picture, we are further confronted by illegitimate pieces tossed into the pile that may look authentic, but won't fit. Now we are faced with evaluating each piece perhaps without knowing whether it belongs or not.

So here we have a puzzle to put together with some pieces missing, some spurious pieces added, and no picture to examine on a box we haven't seen. It sounds difficult, but we can do this. Let's take four examples of bits of information we could come across any day that may be likened to pieces of a puzzle. In this case we are looking for a big picture of the world in which we live.

1. A story was published in *The Washington Post* from information provided by NASA scientists that they had analyzed data received from the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe (WMAP). The space probe was designed to gather precise measurements of cosmic microwave background radiation, the technical term for the light left over from the Big Bang. With new information provided, the age of the universe can be measured at 13.7 billion years with a margin of error of only 1 percent. Will this piece fit our big picture?

2. A guest speaker at a nearby church says the rate of magnetism around the earth is decaying, getting weaker. This implies it was stronger in the past. According to the statistics presented, projecting the present rate of decay back 10,000 years would mean the earth's magnetic field would have been "as strong as the magnetic field in a magnetic star." "That would limit the age of the earth to 10,000 years," the speaker states. Is this a perceptive analysis, or completely erroneous?

3. A *New York Times* article is titled: "Little Girl, 3 Million Years Old, Offers New Hints on Evolution." It begins: "If the fossil Lucy, the most famous woman from out of the deep

human past, had a child, it might have looked a lot like the bundle of skull and bones uncovered by scientists digging in the badlands of Ethiopia. The paleontologists who are announcing the discovery in the journal *Nature* today said the 3.3-million-year-old fossils were of the earliest well-preserved child ever found in the human lineage. It was estimated to be about 3 years old at death, probably female and a member of the *Australopithecus afarensis* species, the same as Lucy's" A valuable piece of our puzzle, or should we cast it aside?

4. One issue of a pamphlet titled, "Acts and Facts" published by the *Institute for Creation Research* contains an article that states: "Creationists acknowledge the same genetic switch activating the sixth sense in sharks, and face and head development in people. But a similar switch doesn't mean common ancestry. If this were true, the fossil record should document the amusing sea-creature-to-people transition." Is this a legitimate argument, or something for the scrapheap?

Whether a data bit or piece of information is perceived as "true" or "false" often can be affected or even dictated by our own individual "world view." How we perceive reality can be shaped by education, religious training, upbringing, common sense, superstition and a host of other factors that may have nothing to do with the actual truth or falsity of any piece of information.

In many ways our world view defines what we believe and what we are willing to accept or reject. But what if our world view, however it was shaped, wherever it came from, is just plain wrong? (Not yours, of course, but somebody's.) How would such a person be able to analyze his or her own world view and know if it was right?

Whether we are science educated or scientifically challenged, perhaps each of us can accept the premise that scientific methods, if properly applied, should give us reliable results at least most of the time. Scientific methods are simply tools we can use to evaluate information.

In addition to science consisting of a body of knowledge, it is also a process. Science is a method or system by which we make observations, gather data, formulate theories, arrive at conclusions, etc. A method can be labeled "scientific" if it adheres to certain commonly-accepted rules that have been established to ensure accuracy.

We might make an observation or witness a phenomenon. We may be able to make repeated observations and record precise details as to what we observed, although often times we do not have that luxury. We can make wild or educated guesses as to the cause of a particular phenomenon. Plain old guesswork may be used in the initial phase, and trial balloons sent up.

The next phase may involve gathering data or conducting experiments. Using observations or experimental results, some of the derived data points may be connected up yielding one or more working hypotheses, which can then be tested. Some initial suggested answers usually are found wanting, and are put aside. Normally one or more of the working hypotheses can be supported by the data collected, and garners support as others begin to accept it, elevating it to the status of theory. In addition, pieces of information strung together should be internally consistent.

In the four examples cited above, (1) and (3) are consistent with a global and universal habitat that is billions of years old, and if that is compatible within our world view, those items are likely to be accepted at face value. If, because of our religious convictions and what we may regard as “true,” our world view restricts this universe to an age of approximately 6,000 to 10,000 years, then items (2) and (4) are likely to be favorably received and (1) and (3) ignored.

Whatever our world views may be at the moment, whatever we have been taught to believe, whatever our level of education, let us try to set it all aside for the time being and consider that there may be some things we have not heard of before, that possibly run counter to our present world view, that have merit.

Yes, but how do we know what we are exposed to is true or not? Of course, unless we know something is a fictitious tale, we would like assurances that what we are exposed to, and especially what our children are exposed to, has a basis in fact - especially in the area of religious beliefs where a wrong decision may have eternal implications. Alas, having faith that something is true and proving it true can be two different matters. In lieu of the intercession of Divine Providence, the best we can do is to weigh the cumulative data and evidence and, whether well-educated or not, evaluate it for ourselves and decide accordingly.

At this point, some will say that all it takes is faith. Religious beliefs do require a measure of faith. On the other hand, cults, false religions, and atheistic beliefs likewise are based on faith. Many are born into families with their religion mandated from birth. Others become persuaded by emotions, or by a welcoming, loving congregation, or an appeal to common sense. So a “Thomas-like” approach (John 20:26-28) may not be a bad idea. Show me the goods, Lord, and I’ll believe.

Separating what may be true from what is likely false is not an insurmountable task. There are tests we can apply. Does the information come from a credible, knowledgeable source? Is it plausible? Is it verifiable? Does it accord with Scripture? Is it internally consistent with other pieces of information we have already confirmed? And we can seek the opinions of others. They may see logic flaws we don’t.

In the pages to follow, a voluminous amount of historical data and evidence will be displayed that point toward conclusions that have somehow managed to elude the Christian community at large for lo these many centuries. We will discover that Genesis 2-11 can be considered historically sound; these much-maligned chapters have historical integrity. Genesis is not concerned with the introduction of *Homo sapiens* to the animal kingdom as many have commonly misunderstood. What was handed down to the Israelites as the history of their generations, somehow, was taken by our early church fathers as an abbreviated history of our species. This interpretation has endured in spite of numerous archaeological, biological, anthropological, and genetic discoveries to the contrary.

We will discover in the pages following that all of Genesis 2-11 concerning Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, the Genesis Flood, the Tower of Babel incident, and the early life of Abraham fit neatly within the historical confines of the ancient Near East, present-day Iraq, within a time frame beginning about 5000 BC to roughly 2000 BC.

Abundant literature provided by the Sumerians and Akkadians who lived in the region during that time frame confirms the Genesis account. Some ancient Near Eastern inscriptions parallel biblical passages word for word and phrase for phrase, and are valuable pieces of our puzzle - in this case, a much smaller puzzle. Here we are only concerned with Genesis and its historical background. Yet this small picture still must fit within “the big picture.”

Furthermore, we will see that those who shunned the idea that the Genesis narrative can be taken literally, did so prematurely. It is not necessary to assign the early passages of Genesis to some condescending category such as allegory, mythology, poetry, or tradition in order to achieve a semblance of harmony. Writing in 1891 for the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Prof. Crawford Toy, who was aware of the Babylonian creation texts, wrote an analysis of Genesis 2 and 3. He wrote:

This history is not an allegory or a parable. The allegorical interpretation is a favorite one with those who see that our author is a philosopher, and cannot bring themselves to believe that so advanced an Israelitish writer could have held literally to such crudities. But the text offers no support to this manner of interpretation. As the penalties of chapter iii are simple historical realities for the author, so the course of events to which he ascribes them has a similar historical character in his mind. The serpent of the beguilement is the serpent of the curse, and the tree is as real as the man.

Early Genesis is abbreviated history to be sure, and some passages are still open to varying interpretative schools of thought. Taken as a continuum, however, as a complete body of information, we will see that these ten chapters, from Genesis 2-11, have historical and archaeological underpinnings hitherto largely unreported.

Genesis commentaries stacked on shelves in seminaries, libraries, and Christian colleges should have been useful, but for the most part, they follow the accumulated errors of predecessors. Even when ancient Near East material came to light, either it was given only passing remarks buried in the footnotes, or scarcely incorporated. Not phased by an abundance of archaeological evidence, new generations of Bible scholars largely followed erroneous but time-honored tradition.

For those who, because of their science or academic training, may have thought Genesis was at best naïve or at worst mistaken, here is the evidence otherwise. For others who may have considered Scripture to be disconnected from science and history due to their religious convictions, that is a misunderstanding which needs correcting. In assembling these pieces in the following pages this is not to imply that still more corroborating pieces of information can't be found. By all means, this book should encourage those who wish to explore further.

In the following chapters, we will assemble a significant number of pieces of a puzzle from which will emerge a complete picture – one that takes a high view of Scripture, fully respecting the current findings of modern science, consistent with ancient history. And the picture is not likely to be one you have seen before.

Richard James Fischer

Chapter 1. A Man Called Adam

Adam was a real-live, flesh-and-blood human being - or else he wasn't. As much as we might like an intermediate position, something in between, or a happy compromise, it's not possible. We either can believe there was an Adam wearing his fig leaf, or we can have an Adam who was only a figment. As much as the issue can be couched in theological double-speak, there is no escaping a fundamental fact of life, or non-life. A real Adam either existed, or he didn't.

The rationale for eliminating Adam from the roles of those who once breathed air is simple. The Neolithic surroundings of Adam's immediate family prohibit him from having lived far enough back in time that he could be the forerunner of those who lived in times quite ancient. Adam's sons raised grain and livestock. Stone Age men foraged for food where they could find it and chased reindeer herds. Seeing a logical impasse, it made sense to some to simply remove Adam from life's scene and establish him as a theological ruse. Gone but not forgotten.

On the other hand, a flesh-and-blood, real Adam is not exactly without difficulty either. The other side of the problem is that traditional, conservative, Christian beliefs about Adam are based not entirely upon scriptural evidence, but also upon an unworkable assumption. Traditionalists see Adam as both a flesh-and-blood human being, and as the father of all humanity everywhere.

The premise that Adam was the father of all human beings on the face of the planet is likewise fraught with contradictions. Remains of early humans and their precursors have been found dating beyond millions of years. The cultural surrounding of Genesis places Adam and his successors after the Old Stone Age and at the threshold of the Bronze Age, a time frame called the Neolithic Age (New Stone Age). References to tents, farming, livestock, musical instruments, implements of bronze, and even iron in the Genesis narrative give us a rough timeframe where Adam and his immediate generations belong.

And here is the fact of "life." Placing Adam in history also places him in the stream of humanity, not at the apex of humanity as has been commonly assumed. The answer to the theological question of Adam is to recognize the historical Adam as the father of the Adamites-Semites-Israelites-Jews. To be sure, there are pockets of humanity who can claim Noahic ancestry, and both Arabs and Jews regard Abraham as their father. But there is no conceivable person living between 6,000 and 7,000 years ago who could have been the ultimate father of all the people who presently inhabit the globe. When we consider that, some of the apparent Bible and science conflicts actually disappear.

Chapter 2. A Place in History: Adam and Associates

When the British began excavations in 1849 in what had been Assyria, diggers filled crates with some 25,000 clay tablets they shipped off to the British Museum, thinking they were just decorated pottery. Little care was exercised loading them into baskets without padding, and

they were sent off across the desert on the backs of pack animals with the inevitable result. Archaeologist Andre Parrot lamented:

... the voyage was more disastrous for those documents than had been the taking of Nineveh by the Medes.

What ended up in London in a pile of dust were the broken fragments of the most valuable history of Mesopotamia. This had been the library of King Ashurbanipal (668-626 BC) who collected meticulously and stored carefully his collected treasure trove.

It was the Assyrian king himself who decided which pieces of literature were important enough to copy for posterity. Candidate material included writings from before the flood. We might have found them fascinating, but the king was unimpressed:

I study stone inscriptions from before the flood, which are obtuse, obscure and confused.

And so, the king spared future historians the laborious task of sorting through tedious pre-flood literature. Thankfully, through the years of expeditions in Mesopotamia, better trained archeologists have used greater care, and although few clay tablets survived unscathed, the history of the region can be fairly well evaluated today on the basis of a wealth of recovered material. Bible and Assyrian scholar Archibald Sayce remarked:

The ancient East has risen as it were, from the dead, with its politics, and its wars, its laws and its trade, its arts, its industries and its science.

Genesis is too specific in detailing the culture of Adam's day to allow us to propel him back in time so that Adam can be ancestral to everyone on earth. Also, the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are a prohibitive factor showing a connected line of patriarchs from Adam to Abraham, who is dated to roughly 2000 BC. But even if we could slide Adam back over a hundred thousands years so that he could start the *Homo sapiens* species, or even one of the races, there is no place in the history of hominids where Adam could have commenced his line of descendants in isolation, absent any other type of human beings. Even at 100,000 years ago, Neanderthals occupied northern Europe. Both archaic *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals make their appearance earlier than what are considered to be truly modern *Homo sapiens*, and they continued for tens of thousands of years after that. If Adam lived in the Neolithic Period as indicated by Genesis, then Adam entered a populated world.

Chapter 3. Locating the Garden of Eden

Genesis names four rivers which delineate the location of Adam's home.

Genesis 2:11-14: *"The name of the first is Pishon: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Cush."* (Because *cush* also means "black," translators guessed at "Ethiopia." This is in

some translations.) *"And the name of the third is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates."*

Although one could get the impression that one river separates into four, *"and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads"* (Gen.2:10), it can also be interpreted that four rivers become one, a confluence of rivers, which better suits the topography of Mesopotamia and the nature of rivers.

... the term "heads" can have nothing to do with streams into which the river breaks up after it leaves Eden, but designates instead four separate branches which have merged within Eden.

The fourth river is easiest to identify as the well-known Euphrates, which today is joined by the other rivers before emptying into the Persian Gulf. At this point in history, roughly 7,000 years ago, the gulf region extended further north and all the rivers emptied directly into the Persian Gulf. The Hiddekel is the Tigris, the "great river" Daniel stood beside (Dan. 10:4). It originates in the region of Assyria, flowing southeast until it joins the Euphrates at a point east of Assyria, just as stated in the Bible.

M'Causland identifies the Gihon as the "Gyudes" of the ancients, the modern Karkheh joined by the Kashkan River in the region of Cush, or Kush, in Eastern Mesopotamia. Today it is called Khuzistan, a province in the southwest corner of Iran, formerly home to the *Kassi* of the cuneiform texts.

Driver places Havilah "most probably" in the northeast of Arabia on the west coast of the Persian Gulf: "The gold of Arabia was famed in antiquity." Hastings identified Havilah as "the 'sandy' region of northern Arabia, which extended westward towards the frontier of Egypt." In an article titled, "Has the Garden of Eden been located at last?," archaeologist Juris Zarins identified an ancient river bed in this region from LANDSAT space photos:

Genesis was written from a Hebrew point of view. It says the Garden was "eastward," i.e., east of Israel. It is quite specific about the rivers. The Tigris and the Euphrates are easy because they still flow. At the time Genesis was written, the Euphrates must have been the major one because it stands identified by name only and without an explanation about what it "compasseth." The Pison can be identified from the Biblical reference to the land of Havilah, which is easily located in the Biblical Table of Nations (Genesis 10:7, 25:18) as relating to localities and people within a Mesopotamian-Arabian framework.

Supporting the Biblical evidence of Havilah are geological evidence on the ground and LANDSAT images from space. These images clearly show a "fossil river," that once flowed through northern Arabia and through the now dry beds, which modern Saudis and Kuwaitis know as the Wadi Rimah and the Wadi Batin. Furthermore, as the Bible says, this region was rich in bdellium, an aromatic gum resin that can still be found in north Arabia, and gold, which was still mined in the general area in the 1950s.

Farouk El-Baz, a Boston University scientist, studied pebble distributions in Kuwait and was led to the same conclusion, a river once flowed into this country from the Hijaz Mountains in Saudi Arabia. He dubbed it the "Kuwait River." In an article for *Biblical Archaeological Review*, James Sauer associates the Kuwait River with the Pishon:

Bible scholars have identified Havilah with the Arabian Peninsula because it is rich with bdellium (fragrant resins) and precious stones, but they have been unable to pinpoint the location of the river in this arid region. The recent discovery of the Kuwait River adjacent to the Cradle of Gold, the only Arabian source for such "good gold," has led James Sauer to suggest that this dry riverbed may be the Pishon.

Put in perspective, the most ancient cities of southern Mesopotamia, Eridu and Ur were located near the junction of these rivers, and Eridu when it was first settled on the Persian Gulf was furnished fresh water via canal from the Euphrates.

Chapter 4. Original Sin: Just Say No!

A contention exists among some traditionalists that there was no death even in the animal world until Adam sinned. To support this idea, about one half of one verse in Romans is cited: "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ...*" (Rom. 5:12a). Did sin inflict both man and animals in the eyes of Paul?

One consideration is that the fossil record is replete with over half a billion years' worth of animal death from the Cambrian period until now, and traces of animal life can be found long before then. Further, that is not what the complete verse implies. What follows the oft-cited text is the second half of the verse, usually overlooked. Romans 5:12b: "*and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*" According to Paul it was men who suffered the consequences - not animals.

Continuing with Romans, in 1656, Isaac de la Peyrère argued eloquently in *Men Before Adam* that a literal interpretation of Romans 5:12-14 indicated the world was populated before Adam. The key was verse 13: "*For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*"

Peyrère reasoned that the law was given to Adam shortly after his creation, and if there was "sin in the world" at that time, there must have been people to do it:

... it must be held that sin was in the world before Adam and until Adam: but that sin was not imputed before Adam; Therefore other men were to be allowed before Adam who had indeed sinn'd, but without imputation; because before the law sins wer [sic] not imputed.

Although men and sin were in the world before Adam, the manner of sin was in the form of offenses against nature, violations of "natural law," and all died a natural death. It was not until God imposed moral law, with Adam the first to be subject to it, that men were capable of

"legal sin," trespasses against God's law. Beginning with Adam's Fall, human beings died both a natural death and a "legal" or spiritual death.

Ten years before Peyré wrote *Men before Adam*, the Westminster Divines penned their *Confession of Faith*. They sought to avoid any implications that all of humanity did not commence with Adam by putting the law on Moses. But if Mosaic law, and not Adamic law, was intended by Romans 5:13, it could mean that sin was not charged *before Moses*! No, the interpreters were not stepping into that trap. The Divines clearly recognized that the moral law, the "covenant of works," was given to Adam and said so:

The rule of obedience revealed to Adam in the estate of innocence, and to all mankind in him ... was the moral law.

If moral law was given to Adam, and already "sin was in the world," then wouldn't this involve people? The Westminster Divines were unwilling to entertain that possibility. They believed humanity started with Adam, and sin was passed to his posterity by "natural generation." The harmonizing device employed (although not mentioned specifically in the *Westminster Confession*) was to maintain that imputation of sin was through the law of Moses, but that it somehow applied retroactively to Adam and his descendants. This made no sense, of course, but they were torn between the illogical and the unthinkable. So, according to the Divines, the moral law was not "comprehended" until the Ten Commandments were delivered by God to Moses.

Peyré railed against the position taken by the Divines and their insistence that "the law" was the law of Moses:

The Interpreters being between two such inconveniences, were at a stand, nor did [they] know which way to turn themselves; But because it seemed less prejudicial to affirm, that sins were not imputed before Moses, and until Moses, than to affirm that there were any men before Adam! Therefore they preferred the first inconvenience before the second.

In Peyré's mind, since the law transgressed was the law given to Adam of Genesis, the sin was perpetrated by those who co-existed and pre-existed Adam. Sin was not imputed to those forerunners, however, until Adam disobeyed God's law.

Before the Law of God, or till that Law of God was violated by Adam, sin and death were in the world, yet had gained no power over it: they had got no lawful possession, they had got no absolute power. The reason is, because before that time there was no Law given by God.

Clearly, sin was imputed from Adam to Moses. What brought the flood? Was the flood not judgment for sin? Or for that matter, what about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? And if the subject of Romans 5:13 was Adamic law, the sin that "was in the world" was committed by men other than Adam.

We will never know Adam's mission on earth with certainty. Probably it was intended that he was to bring news of God's kingdom to the polytheistic heathen to introduce them to accountable behavior. Adam had life to offer, perhaps tied to the tree of life some way. But regardless of what Adam was supposed to have done, however he would have done it, being human, he failed. The "second Adam" was God incarnate, and succeeded.

Chapter 5. Pottery Tales

Knowledge of fire and stone tools goes back to *Homo erectus*. Paleontologists have uncovered evidence that ancient peoples harvested wild wheat by 9000 BC. It took a genetic crossing of goat grass and "emmer" to produce wheat bread. The earliest evidence of wheat cultivation was found in the ancient oasis of Jericho dated at 8000 BC. Beside remains of wheat and barley, ovens were found at Eridu for baking bread and firing mud bricks.

Genesis 3:19, 23: "*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread ...*," and, "*... the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.*"

We can only speculate what distance lay between the Garden of Eden where Adam was cast out and the settlement of Eridu where, it appears, he arrived. The garden may have been located in the city itself, or on the outskirts, or even within some small distance.

In 1940-41, the Iraqi government undertook the excavation of Eridu:

Pottery found at the lowest of 19 levels of occupation just above virgin soil was so unique that the excavators dubbed it "Eridu ware." It was described as an "extremely fine quality monochrome-painted ware, often with a buff or cream slip." Fuad Safer, who headed the excavation for the Iraqi government, described Eridu ware and commented that it was "extremely clear that the new pre-Ubaid painted ware corresponds to a well-defined epoch in the history of the prehistoric temple." In addition to pottery shards a rudimentary temple also was unearthed at the lowest level.

Genesis tells us the garden was planted after a provision had been made for water. And we can infer a canal from the Euphrates was the provision. It was only after the site was provided with water and a garden was planted that God placed Adam. If those responsible for Eridu ware initially dug the canal, it may also be that a special family was introduced to help them enjoy the fruits of their labors. It is at this location, Eridu, and at this time, roughly 4800 BC from archaeological dating, that we should look for the Garden of Eden and Adam.

Chapter 6. Adam and the Legend of Adapa

There is one historical personality who, although encumbered with mythological embellishments, very well may have been Adam of the Bible - the legendary Adapa. Several fragments of the "Legend of Adapa" were taken from the Library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh. One also was found in the Egyptian archives of Amenophis III and IV of the fourteenth century BC. To date, six fragments of the Adapa legend have been discovered written in various Semitic

languages. Versions and fragments of the Adapa myth have been found in Akkadian, Canaanitish-Babylonian, Assyrian and Amorite. Even a Sumerian version similar to the Akkadian legend was discovered at Tell Haddad.

According to the legend, Ea created Adapa an exemplary man, endowed with "superhuman wisdom," but not eternal life. A fishing accident angered Adapa, who broke the wing of the south wind, and was summoned to heaven to appear before father-god, Anu. Ea had warned Adapa not to eat a certain food or drink any water that would be offered to him. A cautious Adapa shuns the food and water of life, whereby he would have acquired eternal life, and he is sent back to earth to live out his days.

Adam of the Bible and Adapa were "created" human sons of God (god). According to the legend, Adapa was a sage, a profoundly wise man, in Eridu. Adapa prepared the altar table. Daily while Ea (his creator) slept in his chamber, Adapa guarded the sanctuary. Regarded as a prophet or seer, Adapa had been priest of the temple of Ea at Eridu. He was described as "blameless," "clean of hands," "anointer and observer of laws." Could that also describe Adam, the first type of Christ? Also, Adam was taken from the ground; in the Hebrew: *'adam* from *'adamah*. How close phonetically is *'adamah* to Adapa?

Could it be only coincidence that Adam was told "by the sweat of his face" he would eat "bread," and Adapa was a baker by trade; or that Adapa was deprived of eternal life by not eating or drinking the "food and water of life," while Adam was cut off from eating the fruit of the "tree of life"? In one version, Adapa was given vast understanding "that he might give names to all 'concepts' in the earth." And Adam was tasked to name the "creatures" of the earth. Adapa was offered new garments, and Adam was clothed by God. Adapa was returned to the earth and Adam was told he too would return to the earth.

Chapter 7. Cain's Lament: Don't Let Them Kill Me!

Genesis 4:14. Cain slew Abel and lamented before the Lord, "*... from Thy face I shall be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.*"

Genesis 4:15. God responded to Cain's plea, "*Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.*"

Who was the "whosoever" to whom the Lord was referring? Cain had just eliminated his only brother. Adam and Eve have had no other children at this point. Cain could not have known whether more children would come from his parents or not. From Cain's point of view, the entire human race would have reached a dead end at that point - unless, of course, there were other human beings about.

Cain's lament proves the point. Cain's words, after the Lord banished him from Eden, were out of fear that someone would kill him. God gave him a sign. Thus we have God's confirmation that Cain's worry was valid. Cain's fear must have been aroused at the unhappy

prospect of approaching a settlement of people, perhaps hostile, without the Lord's protection. They would have seen Cain was a stranger, and would have sought to kill him. The Lord's action alludes to that.

Cain should not have needed any "mark" to approach his own family. So the mark of Cain must have given him some kind of identity or safe passage. His concern that a premature demise might come from human hands makes no sense, unless he was aware of other human beings, and feared them. His lament and the Lord's response suggest co-existence with other human populations living in the same vicinity. Quoting Van Amringe:

Adam, at the time Cain slew Abel, had only these two children; consequently, Abel being slain, Adam and Cain were the only two men in the world, if Adam was the first and only creation of human beings. If such were the case the fear of Cain "that every one that findeth me shall slay me," must have been wholly groundless: and the reply of the Lord, that "whosoever slayeth Cain vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold," was at least unnecessary. Nor could there be any necessity for putting a mark upon him, "lest any finding him should kill him." For if there were no human beings then in the world but Adam, Eve, and Cain, would he not be sufficiently known to them without a mark? And would he not have been sufficiently protected from them, and their future descendants, by being driven out a "fugitive and a vagabond?"

Genesis 4:16: "*And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.*"

Throughout the Bible the "land of Canaan" or the "land of Egypt" refers to an area populated by those particular peoples. Why Bible interpreters have not considered that the "land of Nod" might well have been populated is a mystery. In Hebrew, *nod* means "wandering." This would be an apt designation for nomadic herdsman in the area at the time, *nod* being simply a form of the word "nomad." A suitable translation would have been: "... and Cain dwelt in a land of nomads." Suitable, that is, had Bible translators considered Cain's populated surroundings.

When Cain left the presence of the Lord and journeyed to the land of Nod - note carefully - two things happened: (1) Cain left the Lord's presence, and (2) Cain departed Eden. Next, Cain took a wife, but from where?

Josephus indicated Cain left Eden with a wife in tow, but left her origin a mystery. He named no wives and inferred no sister/wife relationships. He did weigh in with an opinion as to non-Adamic populations in the area

And when Cain had traveled over much ground, he, with his wife, settled in a place called Nod, where he made his abode; and also had his children born there. However, he did not take his punishment as a warning, but only became the wickedest, studying only his own bodily pleasure, though it obliged him to be injurious to his neighbors.

And what "neighbors" might Cain have had?

Chapter 8. Pre-Flood Cities Are Post-Flood Cities

It is especially noteworthy when we find a city such as Enoch that the Bible ties to the pre-flood period that the Sumerians identified as existing after the flood. For one thing, it indicates the limited scope and breadth of the flood itself. Conversely, Erech, mentioned by the Bible in the post-flood period, has been excavated to reveal a culture dating to 4200 BC, over a thousand years before the flood. Likewise, Ur, the home of Abraham's youth, had pre-flood beginnings, and was contemporary with Eridu. Furthermore, Asshur built Nineveh after the flood (Gen. 10:11) on an ancient, existing city site dating to the pre-flood era that had been called "Ninua" before the Semites arrived.

This illustrates that at least four biblical cities dating to the pre-flood era were resettled by Sumerians and Semites after the flood. Thus we have further confirmation that the entirety of Genesis 2-11 is confined to the Mesopotamian environs, both the pre-flood and the post-flood periods; and at the very earliest, none of Adam's generations were born before 7,400 years ago.

Sumerian king lists also recorded the longevity of their sovereigns. In the pre-flood period, they reigned for legendary thousands of years. After the flood, kings reigned for hundreds of years tapering off to mere mortal proportions in later periods. The trend jibes with Genesis.

Although the tablets are recorded in Sumerian, some of these kings bear Semitic (Adamic) names. Cain's son Enoch is the only explicit pre-flood example given by the Bible, though extra-biblical information by way of the Sumerian king lists infers other patriarchs also were kings. But Enoch fits the motif of long-lived, non-Sumerian rulers who reigned over Ubaidan and Sumerian subjects. Nimrod and Asshur are biblical post-flood examples.

Jubilees records Noah's wife's name as *Emzârâ*, daughter of his cousin *Râkê'êl*, suggesting some Adamic ancestry for her at least on her father's side. The wives of Shem, Ham and Japheth respectively were *Sêdêqêtêlêbâb*, *Né'êlâtamá'ûk*, and *'Adatan'êsês*, and according to Jubilees towns near to the ark's landing site were named for them. We have no clues about the ethnicity of these women except to say the names definitely are not Hebrew.

Chapter 9. Wives Tales

Genesis 6:4: *"There were giants [Nephilim in the Hebrew] in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."*

The term *Nephilim* means little more to us today than does "the land of Nod" or "gopher wood." These are words of antiquity and will always remain obscure. And yet, the text tells us of some kind of men who were different, were of ancient origin, and were well known at the time. It is true the biblical narrative is brief in the extreme on the subject of these "children" and the

Nephilim, but whoever they were, "fallen ones" or "apostates" perhaps, they do not appear to be from Adam unless we subscribe to angelic or demonic intrusion.

So why isn't this all spelled out in Genesis? Why is this left for us to ponder? Writing in 1848, Van Amringe confronted this problem of apparent omission:

If the creation of Adam and Eve was a remedial measure, by the All-wise Creator, to remedy the vices of the people then in being;--and Adam and Eve were made in the image and likeness of God, for this purpose; and the more important purpose of furnishing a proper line of beings, through whom God himself was, at a future time, to be born upon the earth, as the greatest of all remedial measures,--we can see that it was not important to disclose to Moses any more of the creation of that period than what immediately related to Adam, as the progenitor of the Savior.

Whether Adam had natural parents or was specially created, his offspring were compatible with the neighboring population (Ubaidans most likely) who were already living in the region at the time of Adam's introduction. Adam could not possibly have started all the Near East peoples, let alone the human race, due to his late entry, but rather he was placed in a locale which was already populated by that time.

Sons from Seth's line, including perhaps, male descendants from other sons and daughters of Adam, took wives from one or more of the local communities, probably Eridu and Erech, and possibly from the mixed line from Cain. Conversely perhaps, Adamite women were chosen for wives by non-Adamite men, or maybe some were chosen from column A and some from column B. This caused subsequent generations to be mixed, being both of "spirit" and of "flesh." Van Amringe summed it up:

Thus, then, the fear of Cain, "that every one that findeth me shall slay me;"--his marriage in the land of Nod, before Adam and Eve had daughters;--the men, and giants, of those days, as distinguished from the "Sons of God," and the wickedness which prevailed among them,--all appear to point to a race of human beings, prior to the creation of Adam and Eve.

Chapter 10. The Great Flood: Local or Global?

In *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Archer condenses Bernard Ramm's conclusions about the inherent weaknesses in the global flood argument and added, "Formidable scientific problems are raised by a universal flood according to Ramm's summary:"

(1) According to the best estimates, to cover the highest Himalayas would require eight times more water than our planet now possesses.

(2) The withdrawal of so great a quantity of water constitutes an almost insuperable problem, for there would be no place to which it could drain off. The mechanics of this abatement of water would certainly be difficult, for the atmosphere could not possibly hold that much water in

evaporated form, and it is doubtful if any underground cavities in the earth could receive more than a small fraction of this additional volume of water.

(3) Scarcely any plant life could have survived submersion under salt water for over a year, and the mingling of ocean water with the rain must have resulted in a lethal saline concentration, even though the mixture would have been considerably diluted. Practically all marine life would have perished, except those comparatively few organisms which can withstand tremendous pressure, for 90 percent of present marine life is found in the first fifty fathoms, and many of these species cannot survive distant migration from their native feeding grounds. Presumably the fresh water fish would have died, even though the salinity might have been high enough to support saltwater fish.

(4) Certain areas of the earth's surface show definite evidence of no submersion. For example, in Auvergne, France, there are reportedly cones of loose scoria and ashes from volcanoes thousands of years older than the flood, and yet they show no signs of having been washed or disturbed by flood waters.

Chapter 11. Geological Flood Evidence

Although there is no evidence for a global flood, the climatological and geographical conditions in Mesopotamia are excellent for local, annual inundations. Some of these floods have reached historical proportions, and one of them is renowned.

Southern Mesopotamia has an annual rainfall of less than ten inches making it one of the driest lands on Earth. Cyclonic disturbances from the Mediterranean pass through Iraq in winter and spring providing nearly the only rain this area receives in an entire year, and even this can be capricious. Virtually no rain at all falls some years while other years receive ample amounts. As we move north, Baghdad has an annual rainfall averaging about thirty inches per year; Mosul sees some eighty-five inches; Cizre, about one hundred inches per year; and Diyarbekir (near the headwaters of both the Tigris and Euphrates rivers), enjoys over 150 inches of rain per year. In the mountainous areas of Iraq, annual precipitation reaches 175 inches and there are places where 250 inches per year is not uncommon.

The alluvial plain of Mesopotamia is bounded on the east by the Zagros Mountain range, on the north and northeast by the Taurus Mountains, and the Amanus Mountains lie to the northwest. Rain and snowmelt from these mountainous areas feed the Euphrates and Tigris river basins in spring. The mountains of Armenia and Kurdistan in the northeastern Taurus range may endure severe winters up to eight months in duration, and snow can reach depths of six feet. The Zagros Mountains in the eastern part of Mesopotamia run parallel to the Tigris, and nearly every spring, it overflows its banks from melting snow. In these areas, snow falls mainly in the winter months (January - February), while rainfall comes in spring (March - April). Spring rainfall can quickly melt mountain snow, causing the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to reach their highest flood level in late spring.

The Mesopotamian alluvial plain is extremely flat. The surface of the plain 240 miles inland from the Gulf region is still less than sixty feet above sea level, and ninety-five miles

north of Basra the water level of the Euphrates is only eight feet above sea level. Near to the Gulf, the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers fade into a marshy lake region where water flows slowly to the Persian Gulf. During a typical spring rainy season this whole area can become heavily inundated.

The level surface of the plain and the shallow river beds are perfect for irrigation, but also are prone to sudden, widespread flooding. And, as difficult it is to get water to the land by irrigation canals, it is just as difficult for water to drain off the land when it floods. Before any dams were built beginning in the 1920s, roughly two-thirds of the entire area of southern Mesopotamia could be underwater in the flood season from March to August.

More destructive floods and wider inundations are associated with the Tigris, which is closer to the mountains, than normally are caused by the Euphrates. Each spring the Tigris floods from snowmelt in the Taurus and Zagros Mountains. Water first begins to rise in March, reaches its peak in May, and usually recedes in July. Hardly a season passes when the desert does not flood, and after a cloudburst, archaeologists have reported standing chest deep in water. A shallow water table depth of only a few feet and the absence of vegetation cause an immediate flood response.

There are accounts of Mesopotamian floods occurring in the twentieth, eighteenth and tenth centuries BC, and seventh and eighth centuries AD. Thirty major floods were recorded in and around Baghdad from 762 AD–1906 AD. The largest of these floods occurred in 1174, when the Tigris River flooded all of Baghdad. Standing water was high enough that boats could enter through the doorways of Bamarestan Hospital, which normally sits on high ground. In 1954, a rainy spring combined with melting snow from Armenia and Kurdistan caused the Tigris to overflow, submerging the plain for hundreds of miles threatening Baghdad with destruction.

Chapter 12. Revelations in Clay

When King Ashurbanipal built his library at Nineveh, pre-flood literature was held in low esteem so the king did not allot precious time and material making copies. What has been preserved and recovered are somewhat ragged legends pieced together with words inserted sometimes where they look like they belong. Still, the preponderance of material collected over the years is more than sufficient to document a flood episode paralleling the Genesis account.

In the legend of Ziusudra kingship was "lowered from heaven" and established at Eridu. The Sumerian king list continues:

In Eridu Alulim became king
and reigned 28,800 years.

Obviously, the length of rule is suspect. The reign of all the pre-flood kings, recorded in Sumerian measure, runs into thousands of years. Using a sexagesimal system, the years recorded for the ten kings ending with Ziusudra were in multiples of 60 or 60 squared. Probably there is something we do not understand about how they recorded years, but suffice it to say the Sumerians believed these kings ruled for long periods and must have lived many years.

In succeeding verses, the kingship was transferred, through warfare probably, from Eridu to Badtabira, to Larak, then Sippar, ending in Shuruppak with the reign of Ubartutu, the eighth king. Suruppak, or “Su-Kur-Lam,” was the son of Ubartutu, and Ziusudra was Suruppak's son. There is some disagreement in lists discovered. Some name eight kings, some list ten; some lists end with Ubartutu, while others end with Ziusudra. In Jacobsen's *Sumerian King List*, this narrative follows the list of pre-flood kings:

The Flood swept thereover,
After the Flood had swept thereover,
When the kingship was lowered from heaven
The kingship was in Kish.

A tablet recovered from Nippur contained about 300 lines with the first thirty-seven lines missing. Following is a part of the flood account originally written in Sumerian cuneiform:

The gods of heaven and earth [called upon] the names of
Anu and Enlil.
Then did Ziusudra, the king ... build a mighty ...
Obeying in humility and reverence, [he] ...
... the gods, a wall ...
Ziusudra, beside it, stood and hearkened.
'Stand on my left by the wall ...
By the wall will I speak a word to thee, [hearken to
my speech]
[Give] ear to my commandment:
By our ... a flood [shall invade] the places of worship,
To destroy the seed of mankind ...
This is the decision, the decree of the assembly [of the gods].
By the command of Anu (and) of Enlil ...
Their kingship, their dominion [shall be abolished].'
(Break of about forty lines.)
The hurricanes, in monstrous fury, attacked as one;
At the same time the deluge swept over the places of worship.
Then, for seven days (and) seven nights,
The flood was poured out over the land,
(And) the great ship was tossed by the hurricanes
upon the mighty waters.
Utu came forth, he who sheds light over heaven and earth.
Ziusudra opened a window in the great ship;
Utu, the hero, cast his beams into the interior of the giant boat.
Ziusudra, the king, fell on his face before Utu.
The king kills an ox, slaughters a sheep.

It cannot be ignored that the extra-biblical versions parallel the biblical version to varying degrees. Details differ, but a common thread can be seen that suggests a common source. God was (or, in the extra-biblical versions, the gods were) displeased with the state of humanity. A

man and his family were singled out. That man was warned of an impending flood; the man built a boat and loaded it with animals and birds. They rode out the storm and came to rest in a hilly or mountainous region. Birds were released and a sacrifice or libation was offered. In the end, God (or the gods) smelled "the sweet savor."

Attempts to write off the Mesopotamian flood stories as erroneous mythology, or merely pagan lore, are unjustified. For one thing, we have the flood layers themselves. Many of the cities named in stories about the flood have been excavated to reveal the actual clay layers between remnants of ancient populations. Furthermore, the layers at Kish, Shuruppak, Uruk, Lagash, and the higher layer at Ur, all date to roughly the same period, 2900 BC. From the evidence, we can infer that all the flood stories, both biblical and extra-biblical, were predicated on an event.

Many historians believe the Hebrew version in Genesis was derived from pagan mythology. This belief is unfounded. What should be seen quite easily is that the Genesis narrative of the flood, as well as the parallel epic myths, are all based upon one spectacular historic event.

Chapter 13. "We Have Found the Flood"

Putting a date on the biblical flood using purely biblical sources is frustrated by the fact that the Genesis texts themselves disagree. Kraft highlighted the problem of textual variations:

Here the figures vary considerably between those in the Hebrew Masoretic text (A.D. 600-900), from which a part of our English Bible is translated, and the figures in such early texts and versions as the Samaritan Pentateuch (originating before 200 B.C.) and the Greek Septuagint (originating about 250 B.C.). For example, in the Hebrew text the number of years between creation and the flood adds up to 1,656 years, whereas in the Greek text it amounts to 2,242, and in the Samaritan Pentateuch, only 1,307.

Not only do the years from Adam to the flood vary from 1,307 to 1,656 to 2,242 between the three texts, the differences in years from the flood to Abraham are even more startling. The Masoretic text puts 292 years between the flood and Abraham's birth, whereas the Samaritan Pentateuch records 942. This figure agrees with the Septuagint except the Greek text lists another patriarch, Cainan, between Arphaxad and Shelah, which adds another 130 years.

Cainan is mentioned in Jubilees. He discovered a forbidden astrological inscription and transcribed it. Cainan also is dutifully recorded in Luke 3:36, but missing in Genesis from the Received Text from which a large part of our English language Bible has been derived, thereby adding credibility to the oft-neglected Septuagint.

Credit for the 4004 BC date for creation, from which a flood date of 2348 BC is calculated, goes to Archbishop Ussher who used the Masoretic text. Bernard Ramm commented:

The date of 4004 B.C. was tagged on to the Bible well before the founding of modern geological theory. This date goes back to the work of James Ussher (1581-1656), an Irishman and Archbishop of Armagh.

Ramm went on to lament, the "dates of Ussher have been almost canonized" due to their inclusion in our English language Bibles for centuries. In pursuit of even greater precision, Lightfoot refined Ussher's work. Adam's creation, according to the famed Hebrew scholar, took place on October 23, 4004 BC at approximately 9:00 AM (forty-fifth meridian time, of course). This led Edwin Tenney Brewster to quip:

Closer than this, as a cautious scholar, the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University did not venture to commit himself.

Putting dates on events that took place thousands of years ago has inherent difficulties. Take, for example, the date of the Exodus from Egypt. Two principal views predominate: ca. 1440 BC during the reign of Amenhotep II (1450-1425 BC) or ca. 1290 BC during the reign of Raamses II (1299-1232 BC). Bible scholars in roughly equal numbers defend one or the other of those two dates. In the case of the flood, we have archaeological evidence to compare with biblical evidence. One bit of corroborating data reported in *The Cambridge Ancient History* relates to the date of the flood.

This important landmark in the dawn of history was associated with the person of a Sumerian king named Ziusudra who was reigning at Shuruppak, precisely where a clean flood stratum has been found.

Mallowan, from analysis of the flood deposits at Fara (Shuruppak), put the flood date at about 2900 BC. According to the Watelin-Langdon chronology, the flood deposit at Kish was dated at 3000 BC. The Early Dynastic Period in Mesopotamian history commenced with the first post-flood rulers at Kish, starting at 2900 BC and ending at 2371 BC with the arrival of Sargon, who began the Sargonid Period.

Between Ussher's estimated biblical date for the flood and Mallowan's archaeological date is some 550 years. That's not an alarming disparity, but we can narrow the gap using Ussher's own numbers; he calculated 615 years between Abraham and the Exodus.

If the Exodus took place at 1290 BC, coinciding with the reign of Raamses II, and the years from the flood to Abraham is taken from the long-neglected Septuagint, that would yield a date of 2978 BC, nearly the same as the estimated archaeological dates. If the Exodus was in 1440 BC, during the reign of Amenhotep II, the biblical date for the flood would be 150 years earlier, still fairly close to the archaeological dates.

Chapter 14. Fountains of the Deep

The phrase "fountains of the deep" (Gen. 7:11; 8:2) has been a major contributor to the global flood idea. Visions of great, oceanic, water-spewing volcanoes have been conjured up to

rationalize this phrase, and to account for the massive amount of water needed for a universal deluge.

Genesis 7:10-12: *"And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights."*

Utnapishtim: "A black cloud came up from out the horizon. Adad thunders within it, while Shullat and Hanish go before, coming as heralds over hill and plain; Erragal tears out the masts, Ninurta comes along (and) causes the dikes to give way; ..." (Skipping some lines.) "Six days and six nights the wind blew, the downpour, the tempest, (and) the flo[od] overwhelmed the land. When the seventh day arrived, the tempest, the flood, which had fought like an army subsided in (its) onslaught."

Analyses of the flood layers at the excavated city sites found only those elements that could be expected from the waters of the Euphrates. No remains of any salt water creatures were present, which indicates none of the flooded cities were inundated by sea water.

Earlier, we examined the Septuagint version where the word "fountain" appears rather than "mist" in Genesis 2:6. We saw this refers to an irrigation system in all likelihood. Here "fountains of the deep" again points to irrigation. The Hebrew word for "deep" can mean the sea, it can refer to subterranean waters, or it can mean the depths of a river.

In the Atrahasis epic, an extended period of draught preceded the rain. During the waiting period, the weather was hot and dry. No water flowed in the canals. The fields were parched. The phrases "fountains of the deep" or "fountain of the deep" appears four times. In all instances, fountain(s) pertains to "fields," as in this example:

Be[low] the fountain of the deep was stopped, [that the
flood rose not at the source].
The field diminished [its fertility].

The fields were directly affected by the draught, not receiving the "flood" of water that normally flowed through the canals, dikes, and levies used for irrigation. In the parallel Gilgamesh account, Ninurta was the "lord of the wells and irrigation works." It was this same network of canals so essential in southern Mesopotamia that was decimated when the flood came and the "fountains of the deep" were "broken up." So, we now should know precisely what the phrase "fountains of the deep" means. The expression is defined by usage, and was employed by Semites before the Genesis narrative was recorded.

Chapter 15. Surviving the Great Flood

In pointing to His Second Coming, Jesus referred to the days of Noah. *"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark ..." (Matt. 24:38).*

In Atrahasis, we have a glimpse of a possible connotation of "eating and drinking." Although there are pieces missing out of the account, enough has been recovered to show us the overwhelming compassion and sorrow he must have felt in the waning hours before the rain began to fall. After the birds, cattle, and wild animals were put aboard, Atrahasis turned to his people for whom there was no provision.

He invited his people []
[] to a feast.
[] he put his family on board.
They were eating, they were drinking.
But he went in and out,
Could not stay still or rest on his haunches,
His heart was breaking and he was vomiting bile.

For the Sumerians, "drinking" had a further connotation. Although some wheat was grown in Sumer, the salty, alkaline soil was friendlier to growing barley. Some forty per cent of the barley grown was used to produce ale. The inebriated ways of the Sumerians were so notorious, the Greeks chided that one of their pagan gods, Dionysus (god of wine), fled from Sumer in revulsion.

Slavery, divorce, and polygamy were practiced in ancient Sumer. The Sumerians worshipped well over 3,000 gods, and brought food offerings to them. As populations grew, appetites for more grain for food and drink put increased demands on the scarce water supply. When they dug irrigation canals upstream, it would deprive farmers living in settlements farther downstream. Cities waged war on neighboring cities over land and water rights.

Often the Sumerian king list concludes a list of kings at cities with an ominous phrase, "Uruk was smitten with weapons"; "Ur was smitten with weapons"; "Kish was smitten with weapons." Although the Sumerians committed acts of aggression, murdering and enslaving their victims, the question remains, were they accountable?

A command was given to Adam that was disobeyed, and he was punished. When "*men began to call upon the name of the Lord*" (Gen 4:26), the knowledge of both good and evil passed to Adam's offspring. When Abraham made his appeal to God to withhold His judgment against the condemned city of Sodom if only ten righteous people were found, he started with this question in Genesis 18:23, "*Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?*"

If God could confirm for Abraham that His judgment would not extend to punish the righteous few for the many wicked, then He merely read into the record what had already established at the time of the flood. Was moral corruption prevalent among those who had yet to learn of sin and disobedience, who were not answerable, who had not been given a commandment? Probably so. Immorality - yes, judgment - no.

Chapter 16. Of Patriarchs and Kings

When the Sumerian king lists began to surface, there was a rush to show these were the source of the biblical patriarchs. The Berossus list, close companion to the Sumerian versions, was analyzed by the Assyriologist Zimmern, who concluded:

It can hardly be doubted that the Biblical tradition of Gen 5 (P) concerning the antediluvian patriarchs is basically identical with the Babylonian tradition about ten antediluvian primeval kings.

Taking the opposite tack, G. F. Hasel made a comparative study and found "a complete lack of agreement and relationship" between Genesis 5 and 11 and the Sumerian kings. As is often the case, the truth may be found between extremes. The Genesis patriarchs and Sumerian kings cannot possibly be "basically identical" for reasons we shall see. On the other hand, to say there is "a complete lack of agreement" with historical evidence of sufficient commonality would be equally mistaken.

King lists were discovered in excavated cities, and although there is general agreement between them all, there are differences that could be attributed to geographical peculiarities, individual scribal tendencies, difficulties in communication between cities, and the sheer antiquity of the material.

After a detailed analysis of Babylonian priest Berossus, Delitzsch agreed with Zimmern and concluded:

The ten Babylonian kings who reigned before the Flood have been accepted in the Bible as the ten antediluvian patriarchs, and the agreement is perfect in all details.

What Delitzsch failed to recognize is that agreement could be expected only in instances where patriarchs were rulers, or conversely, when the kings were also in the covenant line from Adam. Evidently, some of the patriarchs did reign over small kingdoms. Yet, concurrent kingdoms were also established in southern Mesopotamia ruled by non-biblical monarchs. Clearly, it was the intent of Berossus and the king lists to record a sequence of kings without regard to ancestry, just as it was the Bible's intention to record a certain line of ancestry whether or not they were kings.

In Sumerian, the first two letters *En-* of a ruler's name denotes kingship similar to the way we use "lord" in English. At the Canaanite city of Ebla, the king bore the *en* designation whereas in Mesopotamia the title "lugal" was more common. Pettinato noted:

The use of *en* to indicate the king strikingly indicates a special relationship between Ebla and Uruk insofar as the kings of Uruk also carry the title *en*, unlike the other Mesopotamian sovereigns who are called *lugal*.

It is at Erech (Uruk) where the city of Enoch was built, and the first recorded monarch (in Genesis) was Cain's son, Enoch. The *en-* prefix carried through to Canaanite usage centuries later. The god "Enki" combines *en* for "lord" and *ki* for "earth" to mean literally, "Lord of the Earth." The Sumerian word *lil* can mean "air," "breath," or "spirit." Enlil was second in the Sumerian pantheon after the father god, An, though third in the Akkadian "trinity" behind Ea.

If we survey the pre-flood fathers, in both the line of Seth and the line of Cain, we see "En-" as the first two letters more often than any other combination (Enosh, once and Enoch, twice). This should alert us that both Cain's son and Seth's son were rulers. This offers another clue that the seventh patriarch, Enoch, also was a ruler, perhaps at Sippar.

One further thought. The Bible submits no data whatsoever on seven of the ten pre-flood patriarchs beyond their age when the first son was born, age at death, and that they had "other sons and daughters." Details beyond that are given for only three: Adam, Enoch, and Noah. And the supplementary biblical information provided for each of them correlates directly to Sumerian and Akkadian legends.

Likewise, in all the Sumerian king lists pertaining to the pre-flood era, additional particulars are given on only one man, "divine Dumuzi, a shepherd." And he is the only pre-flood Sumerian king, outside the line of Adam, corroborated in the Bible by his Semitic equivalent, "Tammuz."

Chapter 17. Parallel Verses

Common words and phrases used in Genesis and parallel accounts such as heart, flood, ark, cubits, seed, beast, pitch, seven days, fountain(s) of the deep, opened the window, raven, dove, sweet savor, remember, etc., make a compelling case for common sources and a common event for all the narratives.

In *Noah's Ark and the Ziusudra Epic*, author Robert Best stated:

Distinctive story elements and phrases that are common to two or more of these six stories indicate a common origin. Parallel quotations make it obvious that these six flood stories did not originate independently.

The flood texts in order of origination are from Ziusudra in Sumerian, Atrahasis in Akkadian, the eleventh tablet of Gilgamesh written in four Semitic languages, Genesis 6-9, Berossus, and a version from Moses of Khoren.

. "Side-wall ... pay attention" Ziusudra iv, 155

"Wall, listen to me." Atrahasis III, i, 20

"Wall, pay attention" Gilgamesh XI, 22

"when their *heart* led the great gods to produce the flood." Gilgamesh XI, 14

"the thoughts of his *heart* was only evil continually" Genesis 6:5

"the decision that mankind is to be *destroyed*" Ziusudra iv, 157-158

"The gods commanded total *destruction*" Atrahasis II, viii, 34

"I will *destroy* them with the earth" Genesis 6:13

"Enki...over the capitals the storm will sweep" Ziusudra iv, 156

"He [Enki] told him of the coming of the *flood*" Atrahasis III, i, 37
"And God said unto Noah ... I, even I, do bring a *flood*" Genesis 6:13, 17
"Kronos...said ...mankind would be destroyed by a *flood*" Berossus

"the huge boat" Ziusudra v, 207
"That ship shall be an *ark*" Atrahasis x, 9
"Build a ship" Gilgamesh XI, 24
"Make thee an *ark*" Genesis 6:14
"build a boat" Berossus

"*pitch* I poured into the inside" Gilgamesh XI, 66
"pitch it within and without with *pitch*" Genesis 6:14
"some people scrape *pitch* off the boat" Berossus

"Draw a design of it on the ground" Atrahasis C, 14
"The ship that thou shalt build" Gilgamesh XI, 28
"And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of" Genesis 6:15

"Ten dozen *cubits* the height of each of her walls" Gilgamesh XI, 57
"and the height of it thirty *cubits*" Genesis 6:15

"he sent his family on board" Atrahasis III, ii, 42
"into the ship all my family and relatives" Gilgamesh XI, 84
"Come thou and all thy house into the ark" Genesis 7:1
"he sent his wife and children and friends on board" Berossus

"who protected the *seed* of mankind" Ziusudra vi, 259
"Bring into the ship the *seed* of all life" Gilgamesh XI, 27
"to keep *seed* alive" Genesis 7:3

"animals which emerge from the earth" Ziusudra vi, 253
"all the wild creatures of the steppe" Atrahasis DT, 42(w), 9
"The cattle of the field, the *beast* of the plain" Gilgamesh XI, 85
"Of every clean *beast* thou shalt take to thee" Genesis 7:8
"and put both birds and animals on board" Berossus

"the storm had swept ... for *seven days* and seven nights" Ziusudra
"For *seven days* and seven nights came the storm" Atrahasis III, iv, 24
"Six days and seven nights the wind and storm" Gilgamesh XI, 127
"after *seven days* the waters of the flood came" - Genesis 7:10

"Enter the boat and close the boat's door" Atrahasis DT, 42(w), 6
"Pitch was brought for him to close his door" Atrahasis III, ii, 51
"I entered the boat and closed the door" Gilgamesh XI, 93
"and the LORD shut him in" Genesis 7:16

"consigned the peoples to destruction" Atrahasis III, iii, 54

"All mankind was turned to clay" Gilgamesh XI, 133

"And all flesh died ... and every man" Genesis 7:21

"Below the *fountain of the deep* was *stopped*" Atrahasis D, ii, 30

"The *fountains also of the deep* and the windows of heaven were *stopped*" Genesis 8:2

"On *Mount Nisir* the boat grounded" Gilgamesh XI, 140

"And the ark rested ... upon the *mountains* of Ararat" Genesis 8:4

"the boat had grounded upon a *mountain*" Berossus

"After Khsisuthros...landed ...a long *mountain*" Moses of Khoren

"Ziusudra made an *opening* in the large boat" Ziusudra vi, 207

"I *opened the window*" Gilgamesh XI, 135

"Noah *opened the window* of the ark" Genesis 8:6

"he pried *open* a portion of the boat" Berossus

"Then I *sent forth* and set free *a raven*" Gilgamesh XI, 152

"And he *sent forth a raven*" Genesis 8:7

"The *dove* went out and *returned*" Gilgamesh XI, 147

"Also he sent forth a *dove* ... and she *returned* " Genesis 8:10

"let out the birds and they again returned to the ship" Berossus

"The king slaughtered ... bulls and sheep" Ziusudra vi, 211

"He *offered* [a sacrifice]" Atrahasis III, v, 31

"And *offered* a sacrifice" Gilgamesh XI, 155

"And Noah ... *offered* burnt offerings on the *altar*" Genesis 8:20

"built an *altar* and sacrificed to the gods" Berossus

"[The gods *smelled*] the *savor*' Atrahasis III, v, 34

"The gods *smelled the sweet savor*" Gilgamesh XI, 160

"And the Lord *smelled a sweet savor*..." Genesis 8:21

"[on the criminal] impose your penalty" Atrahasis III, vi, 25

"On the criminal impose his crimes" Gilgamesh XI, 180

"Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" Genesis 9:6

"he touched our foreheads to *bless* us" Gilgamesh XI, 192

"And God *blessed* Noah" Genesis 9:1

"elevated him to eternal life, like a god" Ziusudra vi, 257

"they shall be like gods to us" Gilgamesh XI, 194

"I lived in the temple of Ea, my lord" Atrahasis RS 22.421, 7

"go down to dwell with my lord Ea" Gilgamesh XI, 42

"Noah walked with God." Genesis 6:9

"he had gone to dwell with the gods" Berossus

"That I may *remember* it [every] day" Atrahasis III, vi, 4
"I shall *remember* these days and never forget" Gilgamesh XI, 165
"I shall *remember* my covenant ...I may *remember*" Genesis 9:15-16

On the basis of substantial historical evidence, coupled with many parallel words and phrases, what reasonable conclusions could we make? Here are just three:

1. There is a likelihood that a flood event actually happened. Why would the Akkadians, Sumerians, and Hebrews invent such a story unless there was some historical basis?
2. Considering the parallel accounts are describing a historical event in the region of southern Mesopotamia about 2900 BC, then Genesis also is describing the same historical, regional flood, and not a global deluge.
3. A regional flood would have brought judgment to those in the region. Judgment would have been specific to the sinful Adamite population, those answerable to God, rather than a universal pronouncement upon all mankind everywhere.

Chapter 18. The Post-Flood Period: Out and About

Upon the death of Noah, his sons and grandsons and their families expand into neighboring lands. Traditionalists have attributed the entire present-day inhabitants of the globe to the wanderlust of Shem, Ham, and Japheth and their descendants. The languages of the Noahic nations were scrambled at the Tower of Babel, according to tradition, and off they went to become Eskimos, Aztecs, Pygmies, Laplanders, Chinese, and so forth.

Simply a casual glance at the racial, linguistic and ethnic differences inherent in our present-day global population, and the time necessary for these differences to accrue, should have ended that line of reasoning centuries ago. The dispersion of the sons of Noah pertains to the covenant generations, those in the line of Adam, with minimal genetic impact on our global population with its diversity in coloration, morphology, ethnicity, customs, and language.

Ancient Hebrew chroniclers surmised Noah's family remained concentrated near the mountainous region or hill country where the ark landed, and it was there Noah planted his vineyard. Not until Noah died did his sons venture forth with their families to live in the lands and territories allotted to them. Possibly, Noah could have seen the warlike tendencies of his people and putting some distance between them all seemed like a good thing to do for their own well being. Noah trusted Shem with his testament, and he was laid to rest in the same region where the ark had come to rest 350 years earlier.

Genesis 10:1: "*Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood.*"

The verses following Genesis 10:1 list Noah's sons and grandsons. The pattern blurs a bit as some descendant lines are named to the third or fourth generation, and some are named

beyond that. Tribal names are included; presumably they were derived from the founding patriarchs of those generations. Later, lands that were settled by these tribes bore the same names such that new immigrants and old residents would take on the name of the land, whether they were Noah's descendants or not.

Through further biblical references, aided by historical inscriptions and archaeological discoveries, we have a decent picture of the migrations of Noah's generations and their destined lands.

Chapter 19. The Tower of Babel: Less Confusing

After the dispersing, settling, and (probably) conquering by the tribal descendants of Noah's three sons, a landmark incident took place in the plain of Shinar that caused and still causes confusion - at the Tower of Babel.

Genesis 11:1: "*And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.*"

The King James translators arrived at Genesis 11 with the same preconceptions they had throughout the early chapters of Genesis. Just as translators and interpreters who have followed, they labored under the popular misconception that all mankind descended from Adam, and all but Noah and his immediate family drowned in a worldwide flood. When they reached this verse, they thought the population of the entire world was concentrated at Shinar and spoke one common language.

Had they known the corresponding history of the ancient Near East, they could have selected words more accommodating to the facts as we know them today. The true confusion of tongues is the translation of Hebrew into English. Yet again, *'erets* is translated "earth," although in the next verse the same word is rendered as the "land" of Shinar. If the Hebrew *'erets* is "land" and *saphah* is translated literally as "lip" rather than the broader word "language," we would read the text as follows: "And the whole land was of one lip and one speech."

Since we know the Sumerians and Akkadians spoke unrelated languages, and the Akkadian language is the root of Semitic languages including Hebrew, and if we assume the writer of Genesis was at least as knowledgeable as we are, then we may conclude that at least two languages were spoken in the region at the time that tower building was all the rage in Mesopotamian cities. So it is unlikely the writer of Genesis, probably Moses, sought to convey that everyone spoke a common language.

After the flood, platforms constructed in the Mesopotamian cities began to grow and take on religious connotations. Mud brick mounds that had originally been constructed to survive floods became ziggurats adorned with temples of worship, the dwelling places of the gods, and temples were constructed dedicated to whatever god was protecting each individual city.

Hebrew chroniclers point to Nimrod, king of Babylon (Gen. 10:9-10), as the instigator in building the tower honoring Marduk, with additional sanctuaries for Enlil and Ea. City counselors with their eyes on neighboring cities proposed the plan of erecting a tower, and Nimrod, the reigning monarch, agreed to it. Motivations among the tower builders themselves

may have been mixed; a desire to reach the gods, an uprising against God, devotion of the gods, a desire to wage war against the gods, or a means of surviving future floods. It's hard to know what was foremost in the minds of these men caught up in this monumental enterprise.

Whatever the initial motivations, the builders at Babylon became caught up in a ziggurat building competition with their neighbors. In a unified and prideful effort, they tried to outdo the other cities. God caused confusion in their speech, however, and the builders terminated construction and scattered, but their basic language was unaltered. We know this because inscriptions recovered written in Canaanite, Amorite, Aramaic, and Assyrian were all in Semitic dialects.

The confusion of tongues at Babel was not about scrambling one common language into various different languages. Instead, it related to the predominant topic of conversation of the day, which was about building mud-brick platforms and adorning them with temples of worship.

These were huge, demanding work projects involving the entire community. Thus everyone in the land, Shinar (or Sumer), at that time was talking about it. They were of "one lip."

Chapter 20. Searching for Babel

Early explorers ventured into the land of "Arabian Nights" seeking adventure, fame, prestige, honor, glory, knowledge, trinkets, and a certain elusive tower. From the latter part of the sixteenth century AD three testimonials emerged: that of Rauwolff, the adventurous physician of Augsburg (traveling 1573-76); one from the Venetian jeweler, Balbi (1579-80); and another by a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth I, the English merchant Eldred (1583), all of whom descended the Euphrates in a boat, landed at Falluja and proceeded across Iraq to Baghdad.

In 1616, Pietro della Valle was the first visitor to examine the real site of ancient Babylon and he sent back to Europe a few inscribed bricks. On his homeward journey in 1625, he retrieved bricks from *Muqayyar* located at Ur. He described the tower at Babylon as a "huge rectangular tower or pyramid with its corners pointing to the cardinal points." Describing the material of the structure as "the most remarkable thing I ever saw," he noted the sun-dried bricks, but he also noted that "here and there" and at places that "served as supports, the bricks of the same size were baked."

Dominican father Emmanuel de St. Albert visited *Birs Nimrud* west of the Euphrates around the year 1700. Thinking he was visiting the original "Babel," he examined two mounds, one "situated in Mesopotamia," and "the other in Arabia about an hour's distance from the Euphrates." He examined two masses of cemented bricks, one standing, the other overturned, and mused:

"People think that this latter hill is the remains of the real Babylon, but I do not know what they will make of the other, which is opposite and exactly like this one."

Father Emmanuel concluded that the remains were quite ancient and, much impressed, carried away with him a few souvenirs of the curious large square bricks with writing on them in “unknown characters.”

Carsten Niebuhr examined the mounds near Hilla in 1765. He regarded the designation of “*Ard Babel*” used by the natives and the numerous inscribed bricks lying on the ground as evidence for the correctness of the local tradition. Niebuhr took note of the large ruin heaps close by the eastern bank of the river” as the probable site of Babylon’s castle and the hanging gardens described by Strabo, while “an entire hill of fine bricks and a tower on top” he identified as “*Birs Nimrūd*.”

Residing at Baghdad from 1780 to 1790, Abbé de Beauchamp paid two visits to the ruins of Babylon, describing the area as located in the district of Hilla. By his reckoning the ruins were situated about one league to the north on the opposite (left) side of the Euphrates, “exactly under the mound the Arabs call Babel.” Besides the mound itself, the “ruins of Babylon,” consisted chiefly of bricks scattered about.

... there is in particular an elevation which is flat on the top, of an irregular form, and intersected by ravines. It would never have been taken for the work of human hands, were it not proved by the layers of bricks found in it ... They are baked with fire and cemented with *zephth* [*zift*] or bitumen; between each layer are found osiers.”

The new century brought forth a new breed of explorer, as much bent on returning souvenirs to their homeland as to ascertaining the intricacies of a distant, ancient civilization. Claudius Rich visited Babylon in 1811 and stayed for ten days. Taken in by the spotty accounts of previous travelers, Rich found not a few “isolated mounds.” He quickly discovered:

... the whole country covered with the vestiges of buildings, in some places consisting of brick walls surprisingly fresh, in others merely a vast succession of mounds of rubbish of such indeterminate figures, variety, and extent as to involve the person who should have formed any theory in inextricable confusion and contradiction.

As to Babylon itself:

These ruins consist of mounds of earth, formed by the decomposition of buildings, channeled and furrowed by the weather, and the surface of them strewn with pieces of brick, bitumen, and pottery.

The most northern mound he described as “Babil,” the natives called *Mujēliba* (overturned):

On his way to India in 1816, J. S. Buckingham examined the ruins of ‘Aqarqûf, so called “Tower of Nimrod.” Although the interior of the ruin was comprised of sun-dried bricks, Buckingham took note that the exterior surface had been coated with furnace-baked bricks. Well-acquainted with pyramids from his sojourns in Egypt, Buckingham recognized the mound as having been a step-pyramid or stage-tower.

A veritable mine of information on monuments, inscriptions, and antiquities of Babylonia surfaced in the early 1800s, when Sir Robert Ker Porter compiled two volumes of his extended travels in Western Asia. He inspected the four principal Babylonian ruins that had become the center of attention; ‘Aqarqûf, El Birs (Birs Nimrud), Babil, El-Ohêmir at Kish, and a number of other mounds in the general vicinity.

Not enough was known in the early days of Mesopotamian exploration to piece together the history of the tower, likely constructed originally between 2400 and 2050 BC. Expecting to find an ancient structure, they looked for signs of sheer antiquity. Such was not to be seen, however, Sennacherib sacked Babylon, destroying the city and the tower itself, dumping the bricks in a canal.

The existing ruins of Babylon date from the period of Nebuchadnezzar II, and so thorough was Sennacherib’s destruction of the city in 689 B.C., that after several years of work, Dr. Koldewey concluded that all traces of earlier buildings had been destroyed on that occasion.

This was a pattern seen often. The following inscription was repeated to the point of monotony in the annals of Assyrian kings when an enemy city was captured:

I despoiled it, burnt it down with fire, and converted it into a heap of ruins and deserts.

King Nebuchadnezzar continued the reconstruction begun by his father during a period of recovery after the Assyrian conquest, and the inscriptions match up with what Porter should have expected. Whether Birs Nimrud, an enormous tower regarded by many of the native Arabs as the Tower of Babel, or the mound at Babil, stands where the ignominious tower itself once stood, or whether these are simply towers of curiosity in a land replete with weathering mounds of brick, has long been a subject of dispute.

Chapter 21. Further Explorations

Excursions by successive travelers in the early 1800s provided only meager additional news. Fraser and Loftus traversed almost the entire length of the alluvial plain and reported what was received back home as startling news:

... the whole surface was literally covered with large towers, extensive mounds, and numerous smaller ruins, with frequent traces of ancient canals, fragments of bricks, statuary, and many other objects of a high antiquity.

Sir Austen Henry Layard may have been the first of the early explorers to adequately prepare himself for a fascinating life of adventure. In his first expedition (1845-47) he sent agents to probe several prospective sites between the Tigris and Zab rivers, turning his own attention to the southwest corner of Nimrud where he uncovered the first bas-reliefs. Near the west edge he found a crouching lion, the torsos of a pair of giant winged bulls, winged lions, and

in the center of the mound, a nine-foot tall human figurine. In addition to inscriptions and sculptures, “vast edifices” were found in the interior of the mound of Nimrud.

Layard returned to Babylon in 1850 and explored the region, beginning operations at Babil. He exposed massive piers and buttresses of brickwork frequently bearing the name of Nebuchadrezzar, but no clues emerged as to the original character of this enormous structure.

The French found interest in the area and in 1851 sent a team directed by Fulgence Fresnel, assisted by Assyriologist, Jules Oppert. After initial explorations in Mosul on a raft of 300 goatskins, they embarked upon the Tigris for Baghdad. There they delayed for several months until a rumor began to circulate that a golden statue of Nebuchadrezzar had been found at Babylon, which set them immediately in motion and heading south. In July, 1852 operations began at the Qasr with modest to negligible results.

The most imposing of all the mounds is Babil at the northern end of the vast complex. The French explorers dug to a limited degree at the base and on top where they found a few common bricks, pieces of stone and glass, and part of an inscription in Greek. Unhappy with their finds and believing that ancient Babylon covered a much larger area, the French pushed out to other mounds which likewise yielded insignificant results. After two years of effort, the weary French explorers left Babylonia. The antiquities recovered were placed aboard a French boat that sank in the muddy waters of the Tigris.

What we find is that building ziggurats was simply in vogue in those days. The Tower of Babel was one among a number of ziggurats constructed in cities throughout the region. Clearly building the tower and the confusion of tongues at Babel loomed large to the participants, but the tower itself was one among many. It may not have been the biggest, and it cannot be identified as the first or the last.

Chapter 22. A Father of Nations in a Land of Turmoil

In a Sumerian city plagued by polytheism and idolatry, Abram was a patriarch chosen by God and promised eventually to be a founder of nations. Babylonian priest, Berossus, recorded a mention of Abraham reported by Josephus:

In the tenth generation after the flood there was a man among the Chaldeans who was just, great and knowledgeable about heavenly phenomena.

Berossus identified the place where Abraham lived as “the city of Babylonia, called Camarina (which, by some, is called the city Urie, and which signifies a city of the Chaldeans),” and followed with this description:

... a man named Abraham, a man of noble race and superior to all others in wisdom. Of him they relate that he was the inventor of astrology and the Chaldean magic, and that on account of his eminent piety he was esteemed by God. It is further said that under the directions of God he removed and lived in Phenicia (sic), and there taught the Phenicians the motions of the sun and moon, and all other things; for

which reason he was held in great reverence by their king.

The “king” would have been Abimelech (Gen. 20-26) king of Gerar. Josephus described Abraham in greater detail:

He was a person of great sagacity, both for understanding all things, and persuading his hearers, and not mistaken in his inferences. So he began to have higher notions of virtue than others had, and determined to alter and change the opinion all men then had concerning God; for he was the first that ventured to declare that there was but one God, the Creator of the Universe; and that of other things whatever contributed anything to the happiness of men, as only according to his appointment, and not by its own power.

It could have been rampant polytheism, or idolatry which was part of the Sumerian-Semite culture at the time, or persecution for his public declaration of God, that prompted Abraham to journey to a land already settled by Canaanites – a land not properly apportioned to any sons of Ham. According to tradition, Terah himself had succumbed to idolatry, and according to the account of a Levite Pharisee writing in Jubilees, Abraham rebuked his father:

What help and profit have we from those idols which thou dost worship
And before which thou dost bow thyself?

For there is no spirit in them,
For they are dumb forms, and a misleading of the heart.
Worship them not.

Worship the God of heaven,
Who causes the rain and the dew to descend on the earth
And does everything on the earth

And has created everything by His word
And all life is from before His face

Why do ye worship things that have no spirit in them?
For they are the work of [men’s] hands,

And on your shoulders do ye bear them,
And ye have no help from them,

But they are a great cause of shame to those who make them,
And a misleading of the heart to those who worship them:
Worship them not.

Abram (later called Abraham) and his wife Sarai (Sarah), journeyed with Terah as part of an Amorite migration from the city of Ur, either before, or possibly at the time of its destruction, toward a land promised by God, and originally allocated by Noah to Shem’s generations. Travel

plans were to go by way of Haran to a land pre-empted by Canaanites, though Terah remained in Haran and died there.

The dialogues and patriarchal history incorporated in Genesis 2-11 probably were preserved and carried with Abraham to the land of Canaan when he left Mesopotamia, alternatively some or all of it may have remained in the care of Amorites. Parallel stories that circulated in Assyria, and among the Canaanites and some Amorites too, likely are versions of original events though corrupted over time.

Abraham is considered by the Jews to be the father of the people of Israel through his son Isaac, while Muslims regard him as the father of the Arabs through Ishmael. To Christians, he is a model of faith, willing to obey God by offering up Isaac (Gen. 22:2). This act of obedience can be seen foreshadowing God's offering his own son, Jesus, two thousand years later.

It was during the reign of Ur-Nammu that the ziggurat at Ur was erected for the moon-god, Nanna. This massive temple monument dominated the landscape in the ancient city. Minority Semites may have been conscripts for this undertaking, necessitating a departure for any unwilling to endure another ziggurat project, honoring yet another pagan god.

A pattern of turmoil that persisted for centuries before and persists to this day in the Mesopotamian region, present-day Iraq, points possibly to another reason for traveling north – the turmoil of war. Abraham with his father and nephew, Lot, may have been called by God to avoid the imminent destruction of Ur, for if they tarried too long they could have become refugees, or slaves, or worse.

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