

Creation and Fall

Overview and Structure of Genesis. First and Second Creation Accounts—Priestly and Yawehistic? Sample Exegetical Questions for the First Account. The Temptation. The Judgements. An LDS Allegory of the Fall.

Overview of Genesis

- **First book of the *Torah* or Pentateuch**
 - *Berē'sīt* (first Hebrew word, meaning “beginning, starting point”)
 - *Genēsis* (title in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, meaning “birth, origin”)
- **Sources**
 - **Pre-literary traditions** – oral histories concerning the creation of the world and mankind
 - Problems with other neighboring cultures' oral traditions mixing with the Israelite histories...
 - Jewish Tradition – **Moses wrote the Pentateuch**; Pearl of Great Price confirms that he wrote an early version, at least an account of creation and the primordial history
 - **Genealogies** (*tōlēdot*)– Family lists were very important in the Jewish culture, possible family lists available as a source?
 - **Later Editors/Redactors** – Wove a new, literary work but sometimes obscured the material by combining accounts without proper understanding
- **Genres**
 - **Narrative** – majority of the text is told in the 3rd person
 - **Genealogy lists** – important to tie the Jews/Israelites to the Narrative
 - **Poetry** – e.g. Jacob's blessing in Gen 29:2-47

Structure of Genesis

- **Origins of the Cosmos and Mankind (1:1–11:26)**
 - Creation of the World (1:1–2:25)
 - The First Sin and Its Punishment (3:1–24)
 - Beginnings of Civilization (4:1–5:32)
 - History of Noah (6:1–9:29)
- **Patriarchal Narratives (11:27–50:26)**
 - Descendants of Noah and the Tower of Babel (10:1–11:26)
 - History of Abraham (11:27–25:11)
 - Descendants of Ishmael (25:12–18)
 - History of Isaac and his Sons (25:19–36:43)
 - History of Joseph (37:1–50:26)
- The above outline is by topics. Some divide Genesis into a prologue and then ten sections, each marked by a genealogy or “story/account” (*tôlēdot*, or accounts of “generations”)
 - 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, 25:12, 25:19, 36:1, 9, 37:2

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Creation Accounts

- “Science tries to explain the *how* of creation, scripture the *why* . . .” (paraphrased from *The Old Testament for Latter-day Saint Families*)
- **Seeming doublet in 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–25, sometimes complementary, often contradictory**
 - **Exposition:** Moses 3:5 (an expansion of Genesis 2:4) suggests a “spiritual” (not necessarily a “spirit” but immortal state quickened by spirit rather than blood) and then temporal creation (usually understood as “flesh and blood”)
 - **Exegesis:** Taken by themselves, *Genesis 1–2 show signs of the same story used to emphasize different points* (or Moses’ original may have been misunderstood and subsequently used in two new ways)
- **First Account (1:1–2:4a):** uses the generic name *Elohim* (God); stresses priestly themes such as order, repetition, division, and the Sabbath
 - *Represents P’s reworking of the original material?*
- **Second Account (2:4b–25):** uses the name *YHWH* (but paired with *Elohim* for “LORD God”); focuses on humanity, beginnings of relationships/society, morality/sin
 - *Represents J?* (perhaps with R trying to smooth over the differences by using both divine titles)

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Themes and Style of Genesis

- **Themes**
 - **How the world began** → there is a purpose and order
 - Emergence of a **chosen line**
 - Begins with broad creation, the universe and narrows down through humanity (Adam's descendants), peoples, families, and to the specific family of Joseph
 - **Covenants**
 - Ritual acts or signs seen with these (Noah, Abraham, later Mosaic)
 - **Implicit Creation Covenant**
 - God blesses three of His creations – animals, man, and the Sabbath
 - **Nations weighed in God's balance**
 - Why was only Israel chosen?
- **Style** – how the authors and editors tried to bring interest to the narrative
 - Topical
 - Literary – lists of “generations” or “stories” – divide the narrative
 - Thematic Contrast – Immortality/mortality, Good/Evil, Light/Dark
 - Parallelisms – Chiasmus, poetic structures
 - Word play (rarely apparent in translation)

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The First Account (1:1–2:4a)

Note parallels between “realms” and “occupants”

- **Beginning of Creation (1:1–2)**
- **Realms**
 - Day 1: Light and Darkness divided (1:3–5)
 - Day 2: water and heaven divided (1:6–8)
 - Day 3a: water and dry land divided (1:9–10)
 - Day 3b: vegetation (1:11–13)
- **Occupants**
 - Day 4 (1'): lights in the heavens (1:14–19)
 - Day 5 (2'): fish and birds in water and heavens (1:20–24)
 - Day 6a (3a'): land creatures on the dry land (1:25–25)
 - Day 6b (3b'): mankind created (male and female!) (1:26–31)
- Day 7: God “ceased” (*shabbat*) his labor (2:1–4a)
 - **Seven is the number of completion and perfection**

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Ancient Near Eastern Cosmology

(Bandstra, 56)

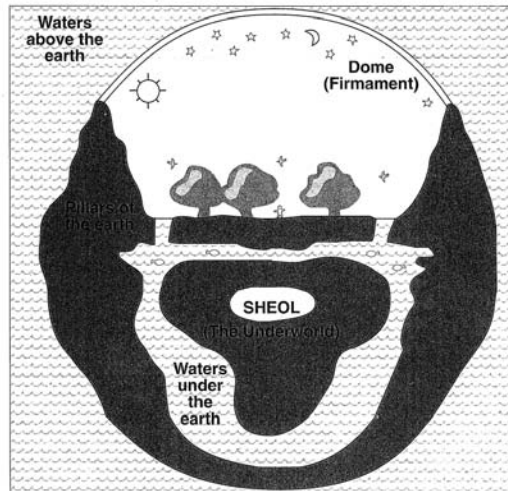


FIGURE 1.2 ANCIENT COSMOLOGY

- Day 2: Water and sky separated, leaving water above and water below
- Day 3: Dry land separated from the water below

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Exegetical Questions on the First Creation Account

- **Historical**
 - [Moses received a vision, which recounted the creation in way that he could understand, which in turn he needed to relate in a way his original audiences could understand]
 - The story of creation was remembered in various forms in preliterate traditions by various peoples
 - A later source, perhaps P, reworked or edited the material of this story for his own purpose, to illustrate themes and symbols important to his point of view
- **Literary**
 - Use of the name *Elohim* for "God"
 - Divided the cosmos into 3 (or 4) areas or realms and then used 3 (or 4) creative acts to fill these realms with inhabitants
 - Repeated literary pattern – God announces, a creative act occurs, God reviews, pronounces it good, and sometimes blesses
- **Theological/Thematic**
 - There is a purpose and order of creation (the world was made to be inhabited)
 - Creation represents the ideas of order, division, repetition, and then completion/rest (represented by Sabbath), all important priestly themes

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The Second Account (2:4b–25)

- **Man created from the dust (2:4b–7)**
 - Wordplay: “And the LORD God **formed man [adam] of the dust of the ground [adamah].**” (Genesis 2:7)
- **Garden prepared (2:8–17)**
 - A place where man can be with God, **rivers of life-giving water** flow out of it, it is the site of **the Tree of Life** (a feminine image of life and fertility in the ancient Near East)
 - **Tree of knowledge of good and evil**
 - **Exposition:** the Book of Mormon teaches that “death” is as much spiritual death or **separation from God**
- **The search for a companion (2:18–20)**
 - *Adam names the animals, showing his authority over them*
- **Woman, a fitting companion, created (2:21–25)**
 - Adam names her “Woman” (*ishah*) and renames himself Man (*ish*)
 - **Exposition** “The story of the rib, of course, is figurative.” (Spencer W. Kimball, “The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign* (March 1976, 71).

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The Temptation (3:1–7)

The First “Sin” and Its Punishment (3:1–24)

- The Yahwehist account continues with the introduction of **the serpent**
 - Wordplay on “naked” (*arom*, 2:25) and “subtil” (*arum*, 3:1)
 - Serpents/dragons were the agents chaos and opponents of creators in NE mythology
 - Nonetheless, serpents were originally “chthonic” symbols of **the cycle of birth, life, death, and especially rebirth** → Christ-figures! (think of brazen serpent, etc.)
 - **Exposition:** Satan as a “false Christ?”
- **The issue of knowledge:** innocence versus “knowing good from evil” (3:5)
 - **Exposition:** knowledge comes from the experience of opposites (see 2 Nephi 2)
 - **Morality (choosing right from wrong) was a major concern for J**
- **Nakedness now equals guilt** (3:7; before they had been unashamed)
 - Aprons: attempts to cover guilt with the work of their own hands

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The Judgments (3:8–24)

The First “Sin” and Its Punishment (3:1–24)

- **Chiasmus: man – woman – serpent – serpent punished – woman “punished” – man “punished”**
 - “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (3:15)
 - Christian exegesis (better, exposition) applies this to Christ (the seed of the woman) and Satan
 - childbearing for the woman, work for the man
- **In the midst of “Punishments,” blessings**
 - “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve [*Chawah*, Greek *Zōē*]; because she was the mother of all living.”
 - Adam and Eve receive coats of skins (3:22)
 - God clothes them, covering their nakedness (guilt)
 - “of skins?” the first sacrifice?
- **Being cast out and “separated” from the Tree of Life**
 - Exposition: now access to the Tree of Life is through Christ (see 1 Nephi 11)

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Effects of the Fall

- Without understanding the full purpose of the Fall, the final editors of Genesis were somewhat handicapped → **they only saw it as the wrong use of moral agency** (Adam and Even sinned)
 - Exposition: the fuller account in Moses and the Book of Mormon make it clear that the Fall was necessary and that the Atonement was planned from the beginning to overcome its negative effects (see esp. :Moses 5:1–12, 6:48–68; 2 Nephi 2:14–29)
 - **Death, sin, sickness, and hardship entered the world**
 - So did the opportunity to make further choices, grow, and have offspring
 - The gospel was taught and Adam and Eve were baptized and
- The subsequent narrative illustrates the continued effect of sin (not necessarily Adam’s transgressions but of individual’s wrongly using their moral agency)

An LDS Allegory of the Fall

- Accepting Adam and Eve as historical characters and the Fall as a historical event does not remove their symbolic value
- We all started in a state of innocence in the presence of God (sc. Eden)
- We all leave God's presence (sc. spiritual death/birth) and come into this world to gain experience—giving us knowledge of good and evil
- God covers our guilt through the atonement of Christ (sc. garments of skins)
- Through Christ and by making and keeping covenants we can return to God's presence
 - See 2 Nephi 2:26–30 and Moses 5:4–12, 6:59–60

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