

**XX Seminary at XX University
Department of Biblical Studies**

Mission and Purpose Statement

This University is an evangelical Christian community of disciples and scholars who seek to advance the work of God in the world through academic excellence in liberal arts and professional programs of higher education that encourage students to develop a Christian perspective of truth and life.”

**GBBL 501 Torah and Prophets: Exodus-2 Kings
2016 FALL 4 Units**

Course Description

This course follows GBBL 511 and continues the study of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture by examining Exodus through 2 Kings with a focus on the women and men who formed and preserved Israel. The prophets and prophetic books that relate to this period will also be read and interpreted. **Pre-requisite: GBBL 511: Biblical Interpretation: Exploring Genesis²**

*Following the XXU Credit Hour policy, to meet the identified student learning outcomes of this course, the expectations are that this 4 unit course, delivered over a 15 week term will approximate: 3 hours per week of classroom or direct faculty instruction and 1 hour/week guided in or out of class study. In addition, out of class student work will approximate a minimum of **10-12 hours** (graduate) each week.*

Mission and Purpose Statement of XXU

This seminary, in keeping with its commitment to the centrality of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture, prepares men and women for effective, practical ministry in the Church throughout the world by promoting the spiritual, personal, and vocational development of students and by extending theological knowledge through academic inquiry, research, and writing.

M.Div. Program Outcomes: The M.Div. program prepares ministry graduates who:

1. Model a holy life through spiritual disciplines reflecting a Wesleyan heritage of faith and love.
- 2. Interpret Scripture with critical reverence, theological wisdom, and holy imagination for the edification of the church.**
3. Reflect theologically through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Scripture, Church tradition, reason, and experience) in a manner that is faithful to the past and responsive to the present.
4. Develop competency in the pastoral responsibilities of preaching, teaching, leadership, and pastoral care.
5. Analyze various cultural constructs and social issues in order to provide transforming leadership for the church.

² If you have not taken 511, you cannot take this class. Please see Prof Winslow.

This course focuses especially on Program Outcome 2: Competency as a preacher, teacher, and pastor. Modeling a holy life and recognition of cultural constructs and social issues and *are grounded in* reverent and wise interpretation of Scripture. This class also targets **Program Outcome 3:** Reflect theologically through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Scripture, Church tradition, reason, and experience) in a manner that is faithful to the past and responsive to the present.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

During this course, students will:

1. Identify the characters, as well as the literary, historical, and theological content, and themes of each examined book (Exod-2 Kgs). FAITH INTEGRATION SLO. *Assessed through observations, answers to study questions, reading summaries, and essay and/or exam.*
2. Explain the covenant as the foundation for the relationship of Israel with God and apply the principle of covenant to self and others. FAITH INTEGRATION SLO. *Assessed through answers to study questions, reading summaries and essay, and/or exam.*
3. Describe the tension over the monarchy in Israel and how this relates to the kingdom of God in the Old Testament. *Assessed through observations, reading summaries, essay, and/or exam.*
4. Examine the nature of insiders and outsiders in the Bible, their textual and social construction. Observe the social practices represented in the Bible that determine identity, boundaries and their permeability, and practices of assimilation and exclusion. *Assessed through answers to study questions, reading summaries, essay, and/or exam. FAITH INTEGRATION SLO.*
5. Defend an understanding of the formation of the Bible, as well as the texture and dynamism of Scripture as it relates to changing needs of God's people. *Assessed through reading summaries, book review, essay and exam. FAITH INTEGRATION SLO.*
6. Develop interpretive skills for personal spiritual development and the preparation of sermons, Bible studies, and social ministries. *Assessed through observations, class participation, and essay and/or exam. FAITH INTEGRATION SLO.*

Textbooks: Three options for your hard copy bring-to-class Bible and two options for the *New Revised Standard Versions* of the Bible:

1. *New Revised Standard Version*. Either:

The Wesley Study Bible: NRSV. Edited by Green, Willimon, Winslow, Arnold, Johnson. Nashville: Abingdon, 2009.

Or: *NRSV with Apocrypha. The New Oxford Annotated Bible*: Edited by M. Coogan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Or: *The Jewish Study Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Jewish Publication Society, 2004.

2. Birch, Bruce C., Walter Brueggemann, Terence Fretheim, David L. Peterson. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* Nashville: Abingdon Press; 2005. (Birch)

3. Davis, Ellen. *Getting Involved with God: Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 2001. (ED)

4. Flanders, Henry, Robert Crapps, and David Smith. *People of the Covenant*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. (PC)
5. Friedman, Richard. *Who Wrote the Bible?* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1987. (WWB)
6. Spina, Frank Anthony. *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. (Spina)

Recommended:

- Alter, Robert and Frank Kermode. *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Boston: Belknap Press of Harvard
- Colling, Richard G. 2004. *Random Designer*. Bourbonnais, IL: Browning Press.
- Collins, John J. *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 2007.
- Falk, Darrell R. 2004. *Coming to Peace with Science*. Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press. University Press, September 1, 1990.
- Newsom, Carol A., Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, editors. *Women's Bible Commentary* 3rd ed., Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2012.
- Blenkinsopp J. *A History of Prophecy in Israel*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996.

Course Packet: handouts available through the bookstore.

Website: Biologos.org; aaas.org

Sakai Documents include:

- Winslow, Karen Strand. "The Earth is Not a Planet: Genesis' Picture of the Land, the Sky, and Days"
- Winslow, Karen Strand. "The God of Knowledge Girds the Feeble with Strength 1 Kings 1.53"
- Spina, Frank Anthony. "Multiplying Division: A Figural Reading of the Story of the Levite's Concubine (Judges 19—21)"
- Van Till, Howard J. "The Scientific Investigation of Cosmic History." Pages 83-125 in *Portraits of Creation*. Edited by Howard J. Van Til et al. Grand Rapids. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Van Till, Howard J., Davis A. Young, and Clarence Menninga. 1988. *Science Held Hostage*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press.
- Walton, John H. 2006. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids. Baker Academic.
- Branson, Robert. "Shifting Paradigms: How the Discoveries of Science and Archaeology Have Brought about a Shift in the Paradigm for Interpreting Genesis 1-11." Paper presented at the Wesleyan Theological Society, Duke University, 2008.

Many more documents on Sakai will be required reading or available for your further study.

Assignments and SLOs

Through the assignments listed below, students will practice close reading of the Bible and engage the questions and carefully reflect before answering. These will be explained in more detail below.

1. Scripture reading, observations, and typed answers to study questions (sq) must be done without consulting *any* outside sources, including the textbooks and notes in your Bibles.

a. Observations: 65 points

b. Study Questions: 70 points + 65 = 135

Fulfills SLO #1: Identify the characters, literary, historical, and theological content, and themes of each examined book (Exod-2 Kgs).

Fulfills SLO #3: Describe the tension over the monarchy in Israel and how this relates to the kingdom of God in the Old Testament.

Fulfills SLO 6: Develop interpretive skills for personal spiritual development and the preparation of sermons, Bible studies, and social ministries

2. Summaries of non-Scripture readings minimum: three paragraphs: ½-1 page typed
32 textbook and/or article readings): 32 x 5 = **160** points. *Scale of 150 (two may be dropped)*
#1 and #2 comprise Notebook: **135 + 150 = 285** points for notebook

I will ask for hard copy submissions on a regular basis so bring printed work to class, even though you can maintain a copy on your computer.

Fulfills SLO #2: Explain the covenant as the foundation for the relationship of Israel with God and apply the principle of covenant to self and others.

Fulfills SLO #3: Describe the tension over the monarchy in Israel and how this relates to the kingdom of God in the Old Testament.

Fulfills SLO #4: Examine the nature of insiders and outsiders in the Bible, how they are textually constructed with reflection upon social practices represented in the Bible that determine identity, boundaries and their permeability, and practices of assimilation and exclusion.

Fulfills SLO #5: Defend an understanding of the formation of the Bible, as well as the texture and dynamism of Scripture as it relates to changing needs of God's people.

3. Book Review 20

Instructions provided below

SLO #5 Defend an understanding of the formation of the Bible, as well as the texture and dynamism of Scripture as it relates to changing needs of God's people.

4. Exam 75 Essay 100

Exam fulfills SLOs 1-5; Essay fulfills 1-6 esp. 6: Develop interpretive skills for personal spiritual development and the preparation of sermons, Bible studies, and social ministries.
Assessed through observations, class participation, and essay and/or exam.

5. Class Attendance and Participation 20 Fulfills SLOs 1-6

Further Explanations of 1-3 above:

1. Observations and Study Questions (135): For each assigned *scripture* reading in the Assignment Schedule, record observations and questions and then answer study questions. Date and clearly identify each entry. This must be your own engagement with the Scripture assignment, not with scholars' interpretations or any internet source. You will not receive any credit if you look up others' thoughts. **For each passage** write answers:

- 1) What do the texts say about God, Israel, the human characters, their free will, and the consequences of their choices?
- 2) What would be a sermon topic from this passage, meaning what is applicable to the present and how so?

Your work must be typed, 1.5 or 2 spaced. **Become conscious of your own interpretive approach to the Bible.** *Put in Notebook, bring to class.*

2. Reading Summaries 150 (160 possible): Record number of pages read from readings from textbooks and articles (non-Scripture) and write a minimum 1/2 page summary (1.5 space) for each selection. Capture high points that will help you remember their arguments. Wrestle and question. To help you write your reading summaries:

- 1) Describe three most important points made and justify your choices.
- 2) Identify any aspects that you don't understand; briefly discuss why these aspects confuse you.
- 3) Pose a question to the author/s, reflecting your curiosity about the topic. Date and clearly identify each entry. *Put in Notebook, bring to class.*

3. Book Review 20: Directions are given in the syllabus below.

4. Essay 100: General Instructions:

- 1) Select a passage from Exod—2 Kgs for exegetical study.
- 2) Practice the principles learned in GBBL 511 for exegetical analysis (beginning with observations).
- 3) Choose four articles and/or chapters or books from list provided, bibliography, or library data base (such as ATLA) related to your passage.
- 4) Write an annotated bibliography of these articles. This will include ½--1 page of description and analysis of each article, chapter, or book.
- 5) Write a 2 page (minimum) essay incorporating insights from your exegetical study and the resources selected, analyzing the latter (other scholars) based on the former (your study). In conclusion suggest how you would preach or teach this passage of Scripture. **Stay away from internet sites** except data bases supplying journal articles by scholars of the Bible. Further instructions will be provided in this syllabus below, in class, and on Sakai.

5. Exam 74: Multiple choice, T/F, and short answer exams (possibly split into 2 exams).

6. Class Participation: 20: Be on time, with your work, ready to contribute. If you do, you will receive all 20 points. Your cp grade will not suffer if an emergency arises. Let me know.

Important:

1. Always save your work on a flash drive. Late work will not be accepted unless you are sick or have an emergency. Please notify me as soon as possible. *Computer- or printer-related excuses for late work will not be accepted.* .

2. All submitted work must be formatted clearly: typed, 1 inch margins, proofread, i.e., no spelling or grammar errors, name in top right margin of first page, stapled (not in folder), and each page numbered. You may use lists when appropriate.

3. Clearly identify each submission by your name, Scripture reference, book/article title, due date, and class number.

4. Please schedule appointments with the professor for help with your work in advance of deadlines.

5. Again: LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. You must come to class with your work in hand. **Do not ask if you can email it later.** You need it IN CLASS. If you are sick, but can complete your work, you may email the assignment.

Grading Scale—500 points³

475-500: A

460-474: A-

445-459: B+

425-444: B

410-424: B-

395-409: C+

370-394: C

350-369: C-

Disclaimer: Depending on class needs, including scheduling issues, the instructor may change the assignments, schedule, and/or other aspects of this syllabus. Feel free to ask for clarification in class or by email.

Proper Citations and Copyright Responsibilities

Citations of modern Bible versions do not require publisher's information in either footnotes or bibliography; instead, use standard abbreviations one time—in text—for the Bible

³ Graduate credit is not given for a grade below a C-; a C- may not be eligible for transfer or considered a passing grade.

version (e.g., NRSV, RSV, NIV, NASB; see SBLHS 8.2). If citing scripture from a single version, include the abbreviation of the version following the chapter and verse on the first scripture reference only. When citing more than one version in a paper, include the version after each citation.

“Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria” (2 Kgs 10:1 NRSV).

When citing specific chapters and verses, use the standard abbreviated titles of biblical books provided in handout. If a biblical book is the first word of the sentence, do not abbreviate the title. Also, when referring to the book as a whole or a person with the same name as a biblical book, do not abbreviate.

Right: Revelation 3 begins with the letter to the church in Sardis.

We know little about the historical Habakkuk.

Wrong: Rev 3 begins with the letter to the church in Sardis.

Cite Bible verses with chapter and verse(s) using arabic numerals separated by a colon. Do not write out the numbers.

Right: John 5:8–9

Wrong: John chapter five verses eight and nine.

When citing multiple passages, list the abbreviated title of each new biblical book followed by the chapter number and colon, with all verses in that chapter separated by a comma and space. A semicolon should separate references to subsequent chapters or books. Do not include the conjunction “and” or an ampersand before the last citation. List passages in canonical and numerical order.

Right: Matt 2:3; 3:4–6; 4:3, 7; Luke 3:6, 8; 12:2, 5; Acts 15:1–5; Rom 1:8–12

Wrong: Luke 3:6, 8; Luke 12:2, Matt 2:3, 3:4–6; 4:3; Luke 3:6, 8 and 12:2, Rom 1:8–12

In study Bibles such as The HarperCollins Study Bible or The New Oxford Annotated Bible, special articles and the notes (usually at the bottom of the page) are *not* part of the biblical text. Study notes are written by authors or editors whose names are included in the front matter of the study Bible. **If these notes are cited**, all the relevant information from the specific study Bible should be included.

Footnote Citations are citations within a document that appear as a footer at the bottom of each page. The format differs from bibliographic citations. Note that you should indent the first line only. Endnotes fulfill the same function as footnotes, and follow the same format, but appear together at the end of the paper. The basic format for footnotes and endnotes is as follows:

Author's first name, initial. Last name, *Book Title* (city: publisher, year published), page #s.

¹ Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 234.

² Peter Wyden, *Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 179.

** Do not use bibliography form for footnotes. Journal articles and chapters in books have a different format, as do online articles.*

A bibliography is a list of the sources used in researching the topic. _It serves as a list of the works cited, and helpful resources so the reader may find more information on the topic. Entries in the bibliography are arranged alphabetically by author/editor's last name, and indented after the first line (hanging). **Do not use footnote form!**

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. Third Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Journal articles and chapters in books have a different format, as do online articles.

Further information on SBL/Turabian Documentation:

<http://apu.libguides.com/content.php?pid=82389&sid=611302> (APU home page, click Libraries, Citation Guides, Turabian)

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/03/http://www.libs.uga.edu/ref/turabian.html>

http://www.bucknell.edu/Library_Computing/Doing_Research/Citation_Guides/Turabian.html

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another author as your own, either intentionally or unintentionally. You are free to quote or refer to the ideas of others in research papers, provided you cite the source of the quotation or idea. The most common sort of plagiarism is copying and pasting from the internet. This is very easy to detect! Stay away from internet sites that do not lead you to journal articles by biblical scholars. **Anyone who plagiarizes** (i.e., presents as one's own work something which has been taken from someone else, including the internet) will receive an automatic zero on that piece of work and a warning. A second like offense will result in an "F" for the final course grade. While collaboration is good, the passing off somebody else's work as your own (because you copied it out of a book, paraphrased it out of a book, bought a paper from a research paper service, downloaded it from the internet, wrote down ideas that someone else was dictating to you, recycled an essay written by someone else, or had someone else rewrite your paper for you) is plagiarism.

Use a footnote to indicate the source when you:

1) Borrow a direct quote from another source. If the quote amounts to fewer than three lines in your paper, use quotation marks. If using a quotation that will amount to more than three lines in your paper, use a block quotation (indented one inch on each side, single-spaced, with no quotation marks).

2) Paraphrase, restate the ideas of another author in your own words.

There is no excuse for misspellings, lack of agreement between subject and verb, missing or too many commas. Do not use "heavy" sounding language. Be Direct! Read your paper silently and aloud. Have someone else listen. Do not rely only on spell check because it will not pick up 'where' for 'were' etc. But still USE IT in addition to proof reading.

University and Course Policies

Use of Laptop Computers/ smart phones in class:

Turn off phones and Ipads. Do not open up phones or laptops during class until and unless requested by instructor. You may not conduct searches during class unless requested by instructor and for purposes directly related to the class. If you do, you will not receive credit for the session or any activities conducted during that session.

Incompletes are given **only** for unforeseen crises that arise in the last weeks of the term. They are **never** given because of schedule overload, fear of low grades, etc.

Check if read; lose 5 points if not read

Make-up Exams: There will be no deviation from final exam schedule without the Dean of the School of Theology's written approval.

Tuition: The student is responsible to check the schedule as to the last day to drop this class and the last day to withdraw. The student must be aware of the financial responsibilities of making any changes in schedule.

Library, Computer Center, Media Center this University maintains excellent library and on-line, full-text databases available to all registered students. Become familiar with on-line databases and apply for internet access throughout your graduate program. Contact Darling Library at 626-815-5087. There are many available support services for graduate students including the Graduate Center, Regional Centers, Libraries, Computer Center, Media Center, Writing Center, Counseling Center, and International Center. See the Graduate Catalog for more details.

Disabilities: Students in this course who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should contact an advisor in the Learning Enrichment Center as soon as possible to initiate disability verification and discuss accommodations that may be necessary to ensure full participation in the successful completion of course requirements. **Graduate Catalog:**

All university and departmental policies affecting student work, appeals, and grievances, as outlined in the Graduate Catalog and/or Department Handbook will apply.⁴

Emergency Procedures “It is highly recommended that you leave the class title, room and building location, and the APU campus phone number [\(626\) 969-3434](tel:6269693434) with family and/or other contacts you wish to be notified in case of an emergency.”

Assignment Schedule

Students are responsible for knowing information provided in class whether or not they are in attendance when the information is given. Course schedule, topics, evaluation and assignments may be changed at the instructor’s discretion for the sake of this particular class. *Remember: You will answer do observations and answer study questions in this syllabus for each assigned scripture passage before class on the day they are assigned. Do not use any text off or online, except the Bible, for doing your observations or answering study questions.*

Group Work

Each class (starting with week 3) will begin with student summaries of the main ideas discussed in the previous class session. Each student will be prepared to present the three central themes from last week’s class session; and what was most surprising about a text or discussion. These will be shared in groups at the beginning of each class. Be sure to take notes during class so that you are prepared to do this.

8-30 Class One: Introductions and Review: student surveys, group work: what are the big questions you have about the Old Testament, OT theology, and/or Judaism? **Review of Genesis using PowerPoints, Sakai readings, and Course Pack, special focus on Gen 1.**

In class examination of “The Earth is not a Planet,” by Karen Winslow; show and provide summaries of *The Language of God* by Francis Collins, *Making Peace with Science*, by Darrell Falk.

Birch: *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. Page numbers change with each new edition.

ED: *Getting Involved with God*

PC *People of the Covenant*. The page numbers of PC change with each new edition.

9-6 Class Two these reading, observations, study questions and reading summaries must be done *before* class meets on 9-6:

Re-read “The Earth is not a Planet”

⁴ *Policies on Withdrawal and Grade Permanence, Academic Integrity, and Appeals and Grievance procedures refer to the Graduate Catalog and Departmental Student Handbooks as applicable.” Also see below in syllabus.*

Read: *Seven Glorious Days: A Scientist Retells the Genesis Creation Story* (Paraclete Press, 2012), which explores what the Biblical creation story would look like if it were written within the framework of modern science.

1. Survey Exodus 1-18 (two sets of observations) 5_____
2. Answer study questions (**immediately following this schedule**) 5_____
3. **Sum** Read Birch ch 4 and PC ch 5⁵ 10 _____
4. **Sum** Read chapter 5 “. . . Turn Aside” (ED) 5_____
5. **Sum** Read “Zipporah-WominJud” on Sakai (Winslow); 5_____ Total_____30

9-13 Class Three: Show and provide summaries of *The Music of Life* by Denis Noble

See Course Pack 27-28, 53-54⁶ check no sum_____ (lose 5 if not read)

1. Read Exodus 19-24 (one set of obs); re-read Exod 19, 24 (2nd set obs) 5_____
2. Answer study questions 5 _____
3. Read Birch ch 5 pp 131-135 and second half of PC ch 5 5_____
4. Read Exod 32-40, making observations; follow SQ instructions 5_____
5. Read chapter 12 Exod 33; ED 5_____ Total_____25

9-20 Class Four:

Read Course Pack 12-17, 21 *check no sum_____ (lose 5 if not read)

1. Following directions in study questions, read Leviticus 5_____
2. Read Birch ch 5 135-139 on Leviticus; 1 summary 5_____
3. Read Numbers—one set of obs (such as chapter titles) 5_____
4. Answer study questions 5_____
5. Read Birch 139-144 5_____
6. Read Sakai article Winslow: Midianite Outsiders 5_____ *continued*.
7. Read chapter 17 (Num 11) ED 5 _____ 35 total

9-27 Class Five:

Show and provide summaries of *Saving Darwin: How to be a Christian and Believe in Evolution* (HarperOne, 2008); and *The Language of Science and Faith: Straight Answers to Genuine Questions* (InterVarsity Press, 2011), coauthored with Francis Collins, which aims to show Christians why they need reject neither science nor God.

⁵ Two summaries (one of each book). This PC reading includes Leviticus and Numbers too. Read it now.

⁶ Page numbers of Course Pack handouts may be slightly different.

Read Deuteronomy 1-13 observations (1-2 per chapter); Reread Deut 1:1-8; more observations 5_____

1. Answer study questions 1-6 5_____
2. Read Birch 144-150 and PC pages on Deut in ch 6 (~225-228) 5_____
3. Read Deut 14-34; observations (1-2 per chapter); Reread, **highlight/comment** Deut 26.1—31.29; ch 34 5_____ (you can write obs as usual or mark up your Bible or a copy of these chapters.
4. Answer study questions 7-10 5_____
5. Read Birch 150-174 5_____
6. Read Course Pack 16, 25, and Rendsburg on Sakai; lose 10 if not read_____ Total 30_____

10-4 Class Six Introduce the website of Biologos

1. Read Joshua and write observations. Written observations: 1 page max. 5_____
2. Answers to Study Questions (SQs) on Joshua in this syllabus 5_____
3. Read: ch. 3 on Rahab and Achan in *Faith of the Outsider* by Frank Spina. 5_____
4. PC Ch 6 and Birch on Joshua 10_____ Total_____25
5. **Course Pack: 19, 20, 27-29 _____ (lose 5 if not read)**

10-11 Class Seven Show and Provide summaries of *The Oracles of Science: Celebrity Scientists Versus God and Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2006), co-authored with Spanish philosopher Mariano Artigas, which examines the purported "abuse of science" in the service of secularism by six scientists of this generation: Carl Sagan, Stephen Jay Gould, E.O. Wilson, Richard Dawkins, Steven Weinberg, and Stephen Hawking.

1. Read *Who Wrote the Bible* by Friedman; submit 3-4 page book review; see syllabus instructions below (20) ___
2. **Course pack 18, 22, 24 _____** check (lose 5 if not read).

10-18 Class Eight

1. Read Judges; Written observations: 1 page max 5_____
2. Answer SQs; read Gen 19 and compare to Judges 19-21 in writing 5_____
3. Comment in writing on the seeming pro and anti-monarchy narratives and statements. Which stories seem to be against a human king in Israel and which seem to be for a human king? Why? **Prepare for Group work after break: Impact of Reading and exposure to science and religion articles and books.**
4. Read Birch on Judges 5_____
5. Read: "Multiplying Division: A Figural Reading of the Story of the Levite's Concubine (Judges 19—21)" Spina, **Sakai** 5_____ Total 20_____

10-25 Class Nine

1. **1 Samuel**—observations and SQs 10_____
2. PC Ch 7 ~257-284; Birch ch 7 10_____
3. ABD V 954-957 “Sam” and 957-965 “Sam, book, Part 1” 5_____ Total 25_____

11-1 Class Ten

1. Read **2 Samuel** – obs____; SQs____ = 10_____
2. Copy, read, sum: ABD 2 “David, D. City of, and “Davidic Covenant” (69-72) 10_____
3. Read 1 Kings 1-2, SQs____; re-read Deut 17.14-20 5_____
4. Read “The God of Knowledge Girds the Feeble...” Sakai 5____ Total 30_____

11-8 Class Eleven

1. Read 1 Kgs 3-11 sqs 5_____
2. Read PC ch 7 on Solomon ~284-292 5_____
3. 1 Kings 12—22 observations and SQs 10_____
4. Birch ch 8 “. . . 1 Kgs 12—2 Kgs 13” 5_____

5. Course Pack 30-33_____

In class: Selections from my commentary on 1 Kgs on Sakai Total 25_____

11-15 Class Twelve

1. Read 2 Kings 1-17 obs +_SQs 5 _____
2. PC ch 8_____5
3. Appropriate selections from my commentary on 1 Kgs on Sakai (2 Kgs 1-17 sections)_____⁷
4. The Prophetic Word: PC Ch 9 5_____
5. ABD V 482-489, “Pre-exilic Hebrew Prophecy” 5_____ Total 20_____

11-22 Class Thirteen NO CLASS MEETING

1. Read 2 Kings 18-25 SQs 5_____
2. Selections from my commentary on 1 Kgs on Sakai (2 Kgs 18-25)_____⁸
3. PC Chapter 11 5_____
4. Read: Psalm 137, Psalm 89 obs 5_____
5. Birch ch 9 5_____ **Course Pack assigned p 34⁹** Total 20_____

11-29 Class Fourteen

⁷ Check if read; lose 5 points if not read

⁸ Check if read; lose 5 points if not read.

⁹ Finish and or review course pack—anything not read. Check if read; lose 5 points if not read.

SQs: Nehemiah 9.6-37 and Ezra chs 1, ch 6.19--7.13, chs 9-10 Discussion of Bible, Theology and Science using excerpts from book summaries and article “The Earth is not a Planet,” by Karen Strand Winslow. Show and provide summaries of *The Wonder of the Universe: Hints of God in Our Fine-Tuned World* (IVP Books, 2012), an exploration of the religious resonances of our modern understanding of cosmology.

12-6 Class Fifteen

Essay due: Exegesis and Annotations

Study Questions (see assignment schedule)

EXODUS 1-18

1. What links Exodus and Genesis? Be specific. Be observant!
2. Which women are involved in the deliverance of males in general and Moses in particular? What does Pharaoh’s daughter say “Moses” means?
3. Moses intervenes in Exod 2.11-15. What does this show about him?
4. Compare the way the Midianites receive Moses with the way the Hebrews responded to him.
5. Compare Exodus 3.4 with Exodus 6.1-3. What is said to be new revelation in these passages?
6. “The LORD” in your Bibles is the translation of the Hebrew: YHWH.
7. Did the patriarchs know God as YHWH (LORD) see Gen 4.26, 15.7? What do you think of this?
8. The purpose for the plagues is stated: “That you (or they or all the earth) may know that I am God.” Who (all) needs to know that YHWH is God?
9. Which is the first plague the Egyptian magicians cannot duplicate? Where is there a distinction between Israelites and Egyptians in the plague accounts?
10. Some verses say God hardened Pharaoh’s heart and some say Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Discuss this tension. What is the theological meaning of this?
11. What more do we learn about THE LORD here?
12. Read the article about Zipporah on Sakai by me; check on your assignment list.

EXODUS 19-24

1. Read Exod 19:3-6. What are the conditions—“if”—for the fulfillment of the promises—“then”?
2. In Exod 20 God lays down the stipulations of formal Mosaic/Sinai covenant. Do you think they are absolute and universal—do they apply to us today? Do the people agree?
3. Read the laws in Exod 20:22-23:33. What are the differences in type of wording and details between these and Exod 20? (See esp. 20:18-22). Do these apply to us today?
4. What is the significance of what happens in Exod 24? What is happening here between God and Israel? What analogies can you make over this contractual situation?
5. **Read Exod 25-31; only 2-3 observations required for this section.**

EXODUS 32--40

1. **First read Exodus 32-34** How does Israel sin? How do the LORD and Moses react?
2. Compare Exod 32.11-14 with Numbers 14, 1 Sam 15.11-19, 29, Ezek 18, Jer 18.8-10, 26.3-13, 42.10, and Jonah 3.8-10, 4.2. Describe Moses' commitment to the people and comment on his ability to change God's mind through intercession.
3. What is Aaron's role in this affair? What is the Levites' role in this affair? What is the future role of the Levites?
4. What do you think of the relationship between God and Moses as depicted in ch. 33? Discuss the tension over Moses seeing/not seeing God's face.
5. Read Exod 35-40. What happens in ch 40? What is the theological significance of this event?

LEVITICUS Read Leviticus 1:1-6:7

1. 1-4. Make a simple chart of the sacrifices and the purpose of each. **Do not use the internet or someone else's chart from anywhere. Make your own!**
2. Read chapters 7-15, no observations required.
3. Read Lev 16:1-34 **WHAT HAPPENS ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT!** How is it observed? Read HEBREWS 10.4
4. Read Lev 18.1-3; 18.24-19.25, and 23.1-44. What are the major holidays and holy days?

NUMBERS 10:11-36.13 scan ch 1-10

1. What do the Israelites murmur about? -- Make a list-- What are Moses' reactions? What are God's reactions?
2. What do we learn about the LORD's attitude toward Moses, Miriam, and Aaron in ch. 12?
3. What happens in Num 13-14? How does this affect everyone? Compare this to Exod 32.
4. Read Num 15:22-31. What happens when someone fails unintentionally? When someone sins with a "high hand"?
5. Note the LORD's concern that they remember his commandments in Numbers 15:37-41? What is the alternative? (vs. 39).
6. Read Num 22-24. Who is Balaam? Does he know THE LORD? What does the ass see that Balaam cannot? Can he curse Israel-why? What does Balaam say about the Israel's future? For a final reference to Balaam see Num 31.1-20.

DEUTERONOMY *Read the Introduction in your Bibles*

1. Read Deut 1.1 as you consider where, geographically, Moses is supposed to be standing and where the writer appears to be when he writes: "beyond the Jordan."
2. Deuteronomy consists of a series of speeches in which either Moses speaks or Moses quotes God. How many of these speeches are there? Where does each one begin and end?
3. How do the words of Moses in Deut form a link between what has happened to the Israelites and what will happen?
4. How do we know the God of Israel, is concerned with the faith of present and future generations of Israelites? (See Deut 6 etc.).

5. What is the significance of 4.25-31? Does the writer have firsthand experience with idolatry and exile? See Lev 18, 25.
6. According to Deut 7.6-11 and 9.4-7, why did God choose Israel?
7. What are the people supposed to do about the commandments, the land, the inhabitants, worship? See Deut 20.
8. What does God think of idolatry?
9. Generally list the consequences of obedience; of disobedience in Deuteronomy.
10. What more do we learn about Moses, God's servant, from Deuteronomy?

Nevi'im/Former Prophets (Joshua-2 Kings)

JOSHUA: When Israel obeys, Israel prospers

1. Compare Joshua to Moses: Josh 1.1-Deut 11.25; Josh 3.5--Exod14; Josh 5.15--Exod 3.5 Josh 7.6-9--Deut 9.22-29. Who is the Law giver? The Law keeper?
2. What Canaanite family (ch 2) and what city (ch 9) join Israel and are saved? How? Which Israelite leaves Israel because of disobedience? Take note of and write about the processes of entering and exiting Israel in Josh 1-10.
3. Compare Josh 10.40 with Josh 23.1-13 and Judges 1.1-2.5.
4. Compare Israel under Joshua to Israel under Moses.
5. Consider the parallels between Deuteronomy and Joshua--how does one relate to the other?

JUDGES: When Israel disobeys, Israel fails

1. Define the pattern described in Judges 2.10-23.
2. Read entire book. Make a list of the judges (*shoftim*) with Scripture citations and the people group they overcome.
3. Do you see a pattern in the selection of these leaders? What do the "judges" have in common? Which judge administers justice before becoming a military leader?
4. What is the significance of the phrase repeated in 17.6, 18.1, 19.1, and 21.25? See Deut 12.8 and Deut 17.14ff.
5. How does Samson exemplify the people of Israel in this period? Think about this, think about everything Samson does and what Israel does in Judges.

1 SAMUEL—Formation of the Monarchy: Will Human Leaders Obey the Law?

1. What did Hannah bring to Israel through her prayers? Notice Samuel's tribe. Is he a Levite? And yet what does Samuel regularly do?
2. Describe the house of Eli of the tribe of Levi and the consequences they suffer.
3. Why did Israel want/need a king? Remember Judges repeated statement about a king or lack of one.
4. Compare 1 Sam 8.10-18, 1 Sam 12, and Deut 17.14.17. What does Samuel think of the young man Saul? What does God think of Saul?

5. In what way is Saul an effective leader? Why does he ultimately fail according to the narrator?
6. Note the events of David's steady rise to power beginning with 1 Sam 16. Compare 16.14-23 with 17.55-58.
7. Comment on the seeming pro and anti-Saul/monarchy narratives, statements in 1 Samuel. Which stories seem to be against a human king in Israel and which seem to be for a human king? Why?

2 SAM

1. Who were Abner and Joab? How did David become king over all Israel (2 Sam 5)?
2. What does God promise David in 2 Sam 7? Compare 1 Kings 2.1-4, 1 Chronicles 17, Ps. 89, and 132. Notice the differences in the "forever" aspect of the Davidic covenant.
3. What are the consequences of David's failures to submit to the Law of Moses?
4. How does God work/speak/act in this narrative? Compare God's part here with the same in the Moses' narrative.

1 KGS 1—2 Solomon receives the crown and wisdom

1. Who is instrumental in naming Solomon king? Compare Bathsheba's role here to her role in chapter 11 of 2 Samuel.
2. Who was killed in Solomon's early reign and why? What do you think of these revenge murders? Write about David's motivations here and their implications as you imagine them.

1 KGS 3.1--9.9; chapters 10—13 Solomon dedicates Temple, breaks Covenant

3. Notice promises and conditions in God's encounters with Solomon: 3.10-14, 6.11-13, 9.1-9.
4. In what ways did Solomon fail to follow the law fully? How did he break the covenant?
5. Compare Solomon in ch 11 to Deut 17.14-17 and 1 Sam 8.
6. What are the political and the prophetic reasons for the division of the Kingdom?
7. How does Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom, break the covenant God offered to him? Watch for continued reference to his golden calves. Remember Aaron's golden calf.
8. How is prophecy tested in ch 13? (Test of True Prophet I)

1 KGS 16.29-18.19

9. What is the people's choice in 1 Kings 18? Why?
10. Contrast the way God manifests in 1 Kings 19 with the drama of ch. 18.

1 KGS 21--22

11. How is prophecy tested in ch 22? (Test of True Prophet II)
12. Contrast Jezebel's view of kingship and property rights with the Mosaic/Israelite view.

2 KGS 1—17 The Fall of Israel

1. What king purged Baal worshippers in Israel?

2. Why did the northern Kingdom--Israel--fall to the Assyrians according to ch. 17? Describe the style of worship and the people that inhabited what became Samaria.
3. Read ch 16 with Isaiah 7. What is the sign given to Judah's king Ahaz during the Assyrian crisis?
4. Why didn't Judah fall to Assyria? Give the answers from 1 Kgs, compare with PC.

2 KGS 18-25 The exile of Judah

1. Upon what discovery was Josiah's reform based (ch 22-3)?
2. Which nation overthrows Assyria and eventually conquers Judah, destroying Jerusalem and the Temple and exiling the leadership of Judah?
3. What was Isaiah's mission? Read Isa 7. What are the similarities among these passages; what do you learn about prophets and prophecy?

EZRA 1.1-11, 7.1-10.44; NEH 8.1-10.31, 13.1-21 Post-exile Return and Restoration: Second Temple Period and Formation of Judaism

1. Who allowed the Jews to re-settle Jerusalem?
2. How is the importance of the book of the law of God demonstrated (think physical, tangible handling and use)?
3. Comment on Ezra 9-10; how is the proposed expulsion received by the people? How do the many stories of good outsiders in the Torah and Prophets (Zipporah, Rahab; also see Ruth in the Writings) counter the move to expel non-Babylonian wives?
4. What are elements of the Judaism created during the post-exilic, Second Temple period according to Ezra and Neh? Think in terms of identity formation, inclusion, exclusion, texts, rituals, festivals. Read note *t* NRSV @ 10:44 and WSB annotations. *The expulsion did not happen; only the list was made.*

Book Review Instructions:

I. The first part of the review should describe the book's main argument. Make sure you state the thesis of the book that you are reviewing and major arguments and themes.

II. The second part of the review should contain a critical and personal response to the argument of the book, noting strengths and weaknesses in the argument, problematic presuppositions, readability, relevance/contribution, etc. Not only are you to summarize the author's argument, but you must also evaluate and critique.

Introduction:

State the author and the name of the book. Describe the question the book treats and indicate the primary argument of the author in the book. For this critical book review you only need to cite pages (use parenthetical citations). No other sources are necessary.

Body:

Part 1 - Summary: present a substantive outline (in prose form) of the entire book that would help someone who has not read the book understand the entire thrust and argument of the book.

Part 2 - Critical Engagement: In this portion of the paper you should critically engage the book's argument/thesis. Some guiding questions that *might* help you but need not all be answered are: What kinds of assumptions are made? Are there any unjustified presuppositions in the argument that need to be justified? Or are there assumptions made without any reference or supporting evidence? Does this author's thesis line up with what you know other authors are stating on the topic, and is there a relevant discussion that this author avoids or dismisses? Does it help you think more theologically and ethically about God, humanity, and the church? Does the book help you in your Christian journey in any way? Would you encourage a friend to read this book? Why or why not?

Conclusion: sum up the gist of the book and its importance for understanding the issues involved.

Exegesis Instructions

1. Use procedures learned in GBBL 511, Biblical Interpretation in this order:

- inductive study beginning with observations, i. e., initial close reading of the text without use of commentaries and notes;
- attention to textual context (material before and after the passage); attention to significance of genre and other literary aspects of the passage for interpretation.
- engagement with the text through word studies using tools obtained in GBBL 500 and/or Greek or Hebrew classes;
- consultation of lectionaries, Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, Anchor Bible Dictionary, Encyclopaedia Judaica, *note spelling!* (Or others in resource list) for material pertinent to understanding historical context of the passage.

Annotated Bibliography for Selected Passage

Use scholarly books and journals provided in course bibliographies or ATLA data base; avoid material that has had no place in seminary studies. These include Bible handbooks, notes in reference Bibles etc. When in doubt, ask! Use the books your professors have used and recommended. Criteria for grading:

1. Your exegesis demonstrates your research in primary (Bible)
2. Your annotated bibliography demonstrates your consultation of secondary (Bible scholars works) literature (*Craft of Research*, chaps. 5-6).
3. Clear writing and proper grammar, including use of standard transliteration and abbreviations (*SBL Handbook*).
4. Correct bibliographical information and documentation (e.g., notations, bibliography, or reference list; see Turabian; *SBL Handbook*).

Further Information on Copyright Laws

Materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection. Students and faculty are both authors and users of copyrighted materials. As a student you must know the rights of both authors and users with respect to copyrighted works to ensure compliance. It is equally important to be knowledgeable about legally permitted uses of copyrighted materials. Information about copyright compliance, fair use and websites for downloading information legally can be found at

http://apu.libguides.com/content.php?pid=241554&search_terms=copyright

Academic Integrity: The practice of academic integrity to ensure the quality of education is the responsibility of each member of the educational community here. It is the policy of the university that academic work should represent the independent thought and activity of the individual student, and work that is borrowed from another source without attribution or used in an unauthorized way in an academic exercise is considered to be academic dishonesty that defrauds the work of others and the educational system. Engaging in academic dishonesty in fulfillment of the requirements of

an academic program is a serious offense for which a student may be disciplined or dismissed from the program.

Plagiarism: All students are required to do their own work. Anyone who plagiarizes (i.e., presents as one's own work something that has been taken from someone else) will receive an automatic zero on that piece of work and a warning. A second like offense will result in an "F" for the final course grade. While collaboration is good, the passing off somebody else's work as your own (because you copied it out of a book, paraphrased it out of a book, bought a paper from a research paper service, downloaded it from the internet, wrote down ideas that someone else was dictating to you, recycled an essay written by someone else, or had someone else rewrite your paper for you) is plagiarism.

Information Literacy: Information literacy is defined as "a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (American Library Association, 1989). In this course, teaching and learning processes will employ the following information literacy standards, as endorsed by the American Association for Higher Education (1999), the Association of College and Research Libraries (2000), and the Council of Independent Colleges (2004).

The students in this course will:

- a. Determine the nature and extend of the information needed
- b. Access needed information effectively and efficiently
- c. Evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into their knowledge base and value system
- d. Individually or as a member of a group, use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- e. Understand many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and access and use information ethically and legally.

This course requires students to complete course assignments using resources available from the University Libraries. Research assistance and subject guides for this course are available at <http://apu.libguides.com/>

"There are many available support services for graduate students. Information regarding various co-curricular and academic support services for graduate students can be found in the Graduate Catalog. Please contact your faculty advisor and/or the Graduate Center should you have any additional questions.

STUDENT SURVEY

NAME _____ EMAIL _____

PROGRAM _____

1. To what extent are you familiar with the Old Testament, also called the Hebrew Bible or the Jewish Scriptures)?

2. To what extent are you familiar with scientific views of the origins of humanity and the universe?

What have you read recently?

What do you think about these perspectives?

3. List previous courses, grad and undergrad, you have taken in the Bible.

4. What questions do you have about the SCRIPTURES, esp. Gen--Deut? Share what interests you or with what you hope to wrestle in this class. In other words, what BIG questions you have about the Bible and God?

5. TELL ABOUT YOURSELF (activities, interests, roles, family etc.)

Selected Bibliography¹⁰

¹⁰ I am deleting this section for the sake of brevity for this aaas response.

The “Earth” is not a Planet: Implications for Theology and Science¹¹

Karen Strand Winslow, PhD

Current worldviews of most people in our culture, based—among other things—upon the discoveries of modern science, emerged long after the Bible was produced and received as Scripture. Thus, it cannot address issues or provide facts about which the writers knew little or nothing. An examination of the terms “earth,” “heavens,” and “day” in Gen 1 illustrates this point. Although these biblical terms can be nuanced and change meanings depending upon their contexts, we can be certain what they do not mean. The Hebrew *ha-arets*, often translated as “the earth,” is not the planet Earth, but land. “Heavens” is not the galaxies, but the sky. “Day,” is a twenty-four hour period, defined by “evening and morning.” Understanding each term within its biblical contexts is foundational for discussions about science and theology and demonstrates a practice of receiving the Bible, not as a science manual, but as theology in literary genres for Scripture-centered communities of all eras.

Introduction

When we hear the lovely translation: “In the beginning God created the heavens and earth,” we picture the origin of the atmosphere, space, solar systems, and galaxies, as well as of the place God dwells and to which we hope to report when we die. We think of the creation of the planet in our solar system named “Earth,” whose shape is an oblate spheroid or a rotationally symmetric ellipsoid. This mental picture is to be expected because the worldview of most contemporary readers of the Bible includes a twenty-first century acquaintance with astronomy. Our worldview includes awareness that the English term, “Earth,” is the name of the planet in this solar system on which humans reside. In nearly every modern dictionary, the first definition of “earth” is: the planet third in order from the sun, having an equatorial diameter of 7926 miles—the third rock. In modern dictionaries, the definition of “earth” as “land” ranges from the fourth to the eleventh, but this would have been the first definition in dictionaries of pre-modern people. In fact, “land” is the first listed in Bible dictionaries today, but Scripture centered communities have difficulty applying this understanding to present controversies over science and the Bible.¹²

¹¹ Karen Strand Winslow, “The Earth is Not a Planet: Implications for Science and Theology,” *Creation Made Free*, ed. by Thomas J Oord. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Press, Wipf and Stock. 2008.

¹² See, for example, W. Hansen, “Earth,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 245-248; and T Gaster, “Earth,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 2-3.

Given that “earth” is the English translation of the Hebrew *eretz* or *ha-aretz* in the Bible (“*ha*” is the definite article “the” in Hebrew), it is natural for present day readers to visualize the planet Earth when they read Gen 1.1. If readers understand that Gen 1 is theology and worship liturgy that glorifies God as creator of everything—what the biblical writer knew about his “universe” then and what we know about the universe now, this is fair.

¹ But when Gen 1 is taken as a detailed scientific explanation for the origin of the planet Earth, controversies emerge that are not necessary. We need only to examine the definition of the term *ha-aretz* or “the earth” within Gen 1 itself to understand why *ha-aretz* “earth” does not mean the planet Earth. This is also true for “heavens,” *ha-shamayim* in Hebrew, and “day,” *yom* in Hebrew. Gen 1 clearly defines the meaning each term. To fail to seek the contextual explanations violates the first and most important step of inductive Bible study—observe what the text itself says, not how it might confirm what we already “know.”

To make explicit and apply the implications of the fact that *ha-aretz* meant land and *ha-shamayim* meant sky to the people producing and transmitting biblical texts is my purpose here. Gen 1 announces the origin of the *land*, not the planet Earth and the *sky*, not the galaxies. It explains that this took place—in the world of the story—on what we call a day, defined by “evening and morning,” not in epochs or eras of millions of years. We cannot interpret Scripture as if its producers existed in cultural isolation, not to mention ourselves. Recognizing the worldviews of ancient authors and how they contrast to our own will confirm the contextual meanings of “earth,” “heavens,” and “day.”² Such considerations of biblical interpretation are foundational for discussions about science and theology and have implications for how we use the whole of Scripture, including its relevance, reliability, and authority over issues that have emerged since the close of the Jewish and Christian canons.

The Definition of “Heavens and Earth” in Gen 1

Genesis is clearly about origins. “Genesis,” the title in the Greek translation of the Bible, means “beginnings” or birth accounts. The Hebrew name for the book is similar: “At the first” or “In the beginning.” As I have noted, most people, religious or not, believe that Genesis 1.1—2.3—the six day

¹ One of the functions of liturgy is to collapse distinctions between past, present, and future. Gen 1 places communities of faith across time in continuity with one another in their praise of God as creator.

² R. Hooykaas in *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972, 16) defines worldview as “a set of fundamental beliefs that compose a comprehensive concept of reality—the physical, spiritual and their interrelationships” For the Seminar on Open Theology and Science of June 18-July 6, 2007, in Boston, Howard Van Till lectured on conscious and subconscious worldviews and how they are formed, calling them “Operative Depictions of Reality.” According to Van Till, reality is perceived differently by individuals and cultures around the world and across time. People see the world in ways that seem real and permanent. Some of those beliefs come from our “tribes,” or communities of origin: science, organized religion, geographical regions, etc. Some emerge from our genetic hard-wiring. People struggle to reconcile the beliefs they obtain consciously and those they have acquired subconsciously. For a bibliography that he suggests, contact me at kwinslow@apu.edu.

plus day-of-rest creation narrative—is the biblical account of the origin of the entire universe known today through modern instruments. Instead, the text reports the origin of the “heavens and earth” recognized in the author’s time. If we suspect that the author of a text written several thousand years ago might have a different worldview than ours, we ask the question: “to what does *hashamayim* and *ha-aretz* of Gen 1.1 refer?” The verses that follow clearly define what is meant by *ha-shamayim* and *ha-aretz* in Gen 1.1. We must use the Hebrew terms as we proceed, lest the English translations connote what they normally do, and we fail to see the world through the eyes of the writers and earliest receivers of the text.

Gen 1.1 In the beginning God created *ha-shamayim* and *ha-aretz*.

Is this sentence claiming God has already done this, or is it announcing what God is about to do? It comes at the head of the passage, which is one clue. The answer will be clear in what follows.

Gen 1.2a *Ha-aretz* was without form and void.

In other words, at the start—at that time, before God began speaking and acting, *ha-aretz* had no structure and no contents. It was without inhabitants, trees, plants, or herbs—no creeping things, no beasts, no humans; it was empty—thus, no *earth* (defined below) or its contents existed at this point. This is *not* describing an earth God had already created in vs one. This is pointing out that no earth existed before God set out to call it into being and fill it.³

Gen 1.2b And darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the wind of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Both parts of verse two provide the setting for what God will do next—before God speaks there is no earth, but there *is* darkness, water, and the hovering wind of God. Now God *acts!*

Gen 1.3 And God *said*, “Let there be light”; and there was light.”

This is the first thing that God does in the process of creating *ha-shamayim* and *ha-aretz*. In other words, Gen 1.1 announces, as a title, what God is about to do. God *acts* again:

³ David Toshio Tsumura, in *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989, 42) probes the significance of the Hebrew behind “formless and void” and finds that this term indicates bare and empty or unproductive and uninhabited. But this can be interpreted to inform the view that Gen 1.1 describes an already completed action—before the rest of the chapter unfolds, thus implying that somehow the earth was already there, when, as we shall see in the next verses, it was not until God called it into being as the waters below the earth were gathered into one place. Tsumura is correct to note the “initial situation of the earth [was] “not yet.”

Gen 1.4 And God *saw* that the light was good; and God *separated* the light from the darkness. 5 God *called* the light Day, and the darkness he *called* Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

God *acts* here by naming the light and the darkness. God speaks light into the darkness and names that light “day”; God calls the darkness that is already there “night.” In the next verse, God continues to *act*.

Gen 1.6 And God *said*, “Let there be the firmament [*raqia*] in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.”

God calls *raqia*—the firmament or dome—into existence. Let us see what happens to this *raqia*.

Gen 1.7 And God *made* the firmament and *separated* the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

The “*raqia*” is firm enough to separate the water from water. In Modern Hebrew, this is the word for “sky.”

Gen 1.8 And God *called* the firmament “heavens” [*shamayim*].

The *raqia* and the *shamayim* are identified with one another and thus defined: they separate water from water—one set of waters is below them, one is above them. “Heavens” are the sky.

This answers the question, what is *ha-shamayim* of verse one where we read, “In the beginning, God created *ha-shamayim* and *ha-aretz*”? The firmament that God created to separate the waters is what God calls *ha-shamayim* “sky.” Thus, *ha-shamayim* is not outer space, or the galaxies, but the observable sky, *the firmament* that God created to divide the waters. This dome (Hebrew *raqia*) rises above and around the land and is sealed at the edges, to restrain the external pre-creation waters from overwhelming it.

Because of this clear and indisputable answer to the identity of *ha-shamayim* within the text itself—the immediate context—we must rethink our picture of “heavens” in Gen 1 as referring to galaxies and the spaces between them. The writer, at least, was not thinking of what he had never seen or heard. To respect the text we must understand that, for the writers and receivers of this tradition, this was the sky that became the home for the “flyers,” as well as the sun, moon, and stars that are assigned to rule the days, years, and seasons in vss. 14-17. Without the help of instruments—from an unaided human vantage point—this is what anyone observes when she looks up: the sky is indeed the setting for the stars, moon, and sun—and birds. This is why some translations (e.g., NRSV) actually say “Sky” in Gen 1.8. The problem is that the translators were not consistent in translating *ha-shamayim* as “sky.” In Gen 1.1 they used “heavens” instead of “sky” for *ha-shamayim*. In the next verse we have the definition of *ha-aretz*.

Gen 1.9 And God said, “Let the waters under the sky [*ha-shamayim*] be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land [*ha-yabbashah*] appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry land *eretz* [English: “earth”] and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. . . . 11 And God said, “Let *ha-aretz* [the earth] put forth vegetation. . . . 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Again, we have a clear definition, this time of *ha-aretz*. It is the “dry land” (Hebrew: *ha-yabbashah*). When the waters below are gathered into one place, the dry land appears, which God calls *ha-aretz* (and English translators term “the earth”). Clearly, to the biblical writer this is not a planet or a globe spinning on its axis, orbiting the sun along with other planets, but the “dry ground” from which seed bearing plants and fruit trees will be ordered to emerge and on which the creepers will creep.⁴ Then God calls the gathered water—the water inside the vault of the sky from which the dry ground emerges—“seas,” (*ha-mayim*), the habitation for the swimmers and swarms. This is a different word from the darkness-covered deep of Gen 1.1. The great deep, the *tehom*, is restrained outside of this vaulted area of sky, fruitful land, and seas.

Gen 1 is not addressing the shape of the earth, but explaining the origins of the land on which people live, farm, and travel across—the land one knows through touch, observation, and traversing. This is the very sort of earth we experience today, when confined to the ground, although flying by airplane and traveling by ship give us a different perspective. In fact, *ha-aretz*, “earth,” is often a synonym for “ground” in the Bible. Other appearances of *ha-aretz* and translated “earth” in Gen 1 bear out its meaning as land. For example, the creation of creepers upon or across *ha-aretz* refers to insects and low “walkers,” who move close to the land or ground. Clearly the planet earth is not intended, but the dry ground (*ha-yabbashah*) that God made on day three in Gen 1.10.

Gen 1.25 God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon *ha-aretz* [here translated by the NRSV as “ground”] of every kind. And God saw that it was good.²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon *ha-aretz* [here translated by the NRSV as ‘the earth’].”²⁷ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill *ha-aretz* [here translated by the NRSV as ‘the earth’] and subdue it; and have dominion over the

⁴ Tsumari further shows his view that God created the entirety of a rudimentary and empty form “heaven and earth” in Gen 1.1 when he says that the earth is part of the created cosmos of Gen 1.1, referring to everything under the heaven, including the waters (*The Earth and the Waters*, 42). However, in Gen 1.9 it is clear that the “earth” is indeed the “dry land” that emerges at God’s bidding from the waters, and this articulates its creation—not Gen 1.1, which is the title indicating what this passage is about.

fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the [here translated by the NRSV as 'earth')." ²⁹God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all *ha-aretz* [here translated by the NRSV as the earth], and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of *ha-aretz* ['the earth'], and to every bird of *ha-shamayim* [NRSV, 'air'],⁵ and to everything that creeps on *ha-aretz* [here translated by the NRSV as "the earth"], everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Going through Genesis and the rest of the Old Testament would yield more of the same, but I can only give a couple of further examples from the nearby material. The ground is slightly distinguished from the earth in the Cain story by the use of the two different Hebrew terms *ha-adamah* and *ha-aretz*. Nevertheless, *ha-aretz* cannot be construed as planet; it is land—was Cain cursed to wander on the planet called "Nod?"

Gen 4.8 Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" And the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from *ha-adamah* [NRSV, 'the ground']! ¹¹And now you are cursed from *ha-adamah* [NRSV, 'the ground'], which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till *ha-adamah* ['the ground'], it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on *ha-aretz* ['the earth']." Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! Today you have driven me away from *ha-adamah* [NRSV, 'the soil'], and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on *ha-aretz* [NRSV, 'the earth'], and anyone who meets me may kill me." Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD, and settled in *eretz* [NRSV, "the land"] of Nod, east of Eden.

Throughout the rest of Genesis, we find *ha-aretz* used for the patriarchs purchasing *property*, being blessed with *land*, referring to the *place* of their birth, traveling to other *regions*, sending sons to the *lands* of the east, fleeing famine in their *homeland*, sowing and digging wells in the *land*, and bowing to the *ground*. In none of these places can *ha-aretz* conceivably refer to a planet. To easily confirm this, look for "land" or "earth" in any English translation of Gen 23-50—it will usually, if not always, be a translation of *eretz*.

⁵ Notice here how *ha-shamayim* means the place for birds, not outer space.

As in Genesis, so in the rest of the Bible *ha-aretz* refers to land, but sometimes the term expands to mean: region, field, ground, and the entire range of areas where humans live—the place of human habitation. It can be one’s own place, where one stands, bows, or lives, the site of individuals or people groups, the country side, or the entire expanse of land believed to exist. More specifically, in the RSV *eretz* is translated by the English term “earth” 660 times, and usually this refers to ground, or soil, or the place where one is standing or to which one bows. In these cases *eretz* is a synonym for the Hebrew *adamah*, the stuff from which *adam* is made in Gen 2.7. *Eretz* or *ha-aretz* is translated by the English “land” or “country” 1,620 times in the RSV. It means location or place, boundaried or unboundaried, as in countryside or region. In addition, *ha-aretz* can mean the realm of all creatures, the realm or habitation of the living (Job 28.13; Ps 27.13). In fact, nowhere in the Bible does *ha-aretz* refer to a planet. This can be demonstrated by reading each passage in which *ha-aretz* appears—around 2,300 instances.

To examine these references is interesting but unnecessary for understanding *ha-aretz* in Gen 1, where the context demands that *ha-aretz* be defined by *ha-yabbashah*, the dry ground. The other instances confirm, however, the meaning of *ha-aretz* as land, ground, region, and/or realm of human habitation. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, biblical writers often used *ha-yabbashah*, *ha-adamah*, and *ha-aretz* interchangeably. This interchange of terms is particularly significant in the flood account of Gen 6-9.

The Waters of the Flood Covered the Land

The flood story of Gen 6-9 assumes the same worldview represented in Gen 1 and uses the same vocabulary through out, including *ha-aretz* to mean land or dry ground. *Ha-aretz* translated properly as “land,” takes the air out of controversies over whether the Genesis flood story depicts a local or “universal” flood, an aspect of the polemic of young earth theorists and “creationists.” The term “universal flood” is normally used to mean that flood waters covered the entire planet as opposed to flooding a location around the Black or Mediterranean Seas, which would have been the “world” of the biblical writers. According to young earth theorists, the one year Genesis flood laid down millions of layers of sediment across the planet that include both land and sea animal fossils, causing the earth to appear to be millions of years old.⁶

The basis of this claim is the phrase “*kol ha-aretz*,” translated as “the whole earth” (Gen 7.3 and 8.9). For readers who have a planet in mind this translation biases them to believe the text claims Noah was saved from a global flood. But “*kol ha-aretz*” means all the land, the world known to the originators of the flood story. Although there are flood stories among some ancient cultures and evidence for

⁶ They suppose the earth to be less than 10,000 years old, based on adding the genealogies of Genesis. Once again, they are mixing genres—categories of literature—to develop a Western, ultra-rational, scientific, and even mathematical role for the Bible, which is of ancient and Eastern origin. Could the transmitters of these traditions have imagined their genealogies to be construed as a way of telling us how old creation is, when they clearly exist to link Abraham to Noah and Noah to Seth?

flooding in some areas around the world, in other areas, neither of these exist.⁷ An even more major problem is the fact that the layers of sediment and the fossils therein in North America alone demonstrate without question that a single flood could not have deposited them.⁸

Throughout the flood account in Genesis, *eretz* and *adamah* are used synonymously. This could be considered a criterion to distinguish the strata of the woven-together flood accounts—the one stratum using *eretz* as the name for “dry ground,” which goes back to Gen 1, from the one that uses *adamah*, associated with Gen 2.4-24 (where *adamah* is used for the soil from which *adam* came and the purpose for which *adam* was made).⁹ However, for my purpose, the fact that *eretz* and *adamah* are both used for land and ground demonstrates that the narrator was not depicting a flood that covered the surface of a planet of which he did was not aware, but rather a flood that covered the surface of all the land. This verse shows the parallelism of *ha-aretz* and *ha-adamah*.

Gen 7.4 For in seven days I will send rain on *ha-aretz* [“the land”] for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of *ha-adamah* [NRSV, “the ground”].

Gen 7.11, which is part of the grand version of the flood story associated with the Gen 1 creation story, says the windows of heaven opened and the fountains of the great deep burst forth. Thus, the land, having emerged in the beginning from the waters (Gen 1.7) to sustain animal and human life, receded under the crush of cosmic floods. The dry land (*hayabbashah*) was re-submerged under the waters from whence it had come, leading to a reversal of the creation story—watery chaos prevailed again across *the land*—it returned to its pre-creation non-existence: formless and void. Gen 7.12 simply says that it rained for forty days and nights. The modest flood account and the grand flood story were combined to depict God’s regret for the ruin and violence that humans brought to the land. We might say the flood was “universal” to the author, if we qualify “universal” to mean that this flood affected all

⁷ John Hartley makes the following points in *Genesis*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 106-108: Stories of a great flood do not exist among all peoples. The ancient texts and artifacts of Ugarit, Egypt, and Japan contain no flood narratives, and there are only a few from Africa. Thus, the closest neighbors of Israel do not “remember” flooding. Neither is there geological data to support a global flood around ten thousand years ago, as young-earth theorists claim. Eight times more water than is now on earth would have been required for waters to cover the planet. There would have been the need for a new creation to restore the earth after the flood, because salt water destroys vegetation. Certain geological phenomena would have been destroyed if there had been a global flood. In Auvergne, France, there are cones of scoria and ashes from long extinct volcanoes, but there are no signs of effects of water. In addition, the 35,000 year old cave drawings from the Dordogne area of France (and countless other extant artifacts) would have been destroyed by a global flood.

⁸ See Davis A. Young, “The Discovery of Terrestrial History,” in *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World’s Formation*, ed. Howard J. Van Till et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1990), 26-81, esp. 34-46, 58-81. This chapter traces the rise of modern geology, including eighteenth- and nineteenth-century attempts to harmonize Gen 1-9 with what the land of various regions reveals.

⁹ Gen 2.5, 15.

the land of which he was aware. He was not speaking of a global flood, however, because he did not know about North America and the rest of the planet. Thus, there is no point in claiming that a single-year planet-wide flood explains the fossil record and layers of sediments visible in regions of Colorado and Utah and all across the hemispheres, which actually provide evidence of millions of years of advancing and receding waters. When the biblical writers refer to “all the land” or “the whole world,” they refer to their whole world, not ours; they were not thinking of a planet like we do, because they did not know they were living on a planet.

The Earth *is* a Planet

Naturally the question emerges, when did a few, then more, and then a majority of people realize they were living on a planet? When did they decide to name it “earth?” This is a difficult question even for geologists and astronomers to answer. Ancient peoples observed planets and their movements relative to the more fixed constellations of stars. “Planet” means “wandering star.” Although they were aware of planets—or wandering stars, it is difficult to find ancient writers who indicate that they knew that the land on which they stood, farmed, and traveled was a planet. In the third century BCE, a Greek named Aristarchus of Samos, proposed a heliocentric—sun-centered system, but it is not clear where he located “the realm of human habitation.” In Ptolemy’s geocentric universe, the habitation of humans was considered *sui generis*, unique, the only example of its kind, unlike the planets, stars, moon, and sun. The followers of Copernicus and Galileo had great difficulty in convincing most other educated people of a sun centered universe, orbits, and rotations of planets until well after the sixteenth century. Even then, it is not clear that they admitted the Earth was a planet like the others.¹⁰

The connection between “earth” as land and “Earth” as planet came after people became aware of the planetary system, and then after they accepted they lived on a planet. Then they applied “earth” (or the term in another language used for place of human habitation) to their planet.¹¹ In other words, terms in other languages referring to land and ground extended to include conceptually all lands,

¹⁰ For church officials in Galileo’s time, the Scriptures that referred to an immovable earth (Ps 104.5, 1 Chr 16.30, Job 26.7, Prov 8.25, 30.3, Ecc 1.5) were obstacles in accepting that it revolved around the sun and spun on its axis. See William R Shea and Mariano Artigas, *Galileo in Rome: The Rise and Fall of a Troublesome Genius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 27-28, 53-54, 71-73. Galileo proposed an interpretive move called “accommodation.” Scripture accommodates itself to human limitations so that ordinary people can understand it, which is why the texts about the earth and the heavens are not technical or scientific (73).

¹¹ The name for this planet as “earth” developed over time as part of the English language. “Earth” is Old English and German in origin, related to the Old Saxon “ertha,” the Dutch “aerde,” and the German “Erda.” The Oxford English Dictionary says: “Men’s notions of the shape and position of the earth have so greatly changed since Old Teutonic times, while the language of the older notions has long outlived them, that it is very difficult to arrange the senses and applications of the word ‘earth’ in any historical order.” The Oxford English dictionary, 2nd ed. / prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, c1989). Cited 26 March 2008. Online: http://0-dictionary.oed.com.patris.apu.edu/cgi/findword?query_type=word&queryword=earth.

countries, and regions—the entire region of human habitation, which came to be known as a planet in a solar system.. When the Bible was translated into English, “earth” or initially the Old English term *Eorðe* was used to translate *eretz*. In Modern Hebrew, the planet earth is called “ball of the earth.”

The fact that many readers assume “planet” when they read or hear “earth,” in Genesis and “solar system” or galaxies when they read “heavens” illustrates the gap between our worldview and that of the handlers and receivers of this text—the text’s tradents. We—including modern translators—think in terms of a cosmos we know, forgetting that this was completely unconceivable to the biblical writers who were referring to the environs known and observable to them. When translators render *ha-aretz* as “land” in the Abraham story and as “earth” in the flood story, it is only natural for readers to imagine the planet Earth being covered with water. I am not implying that words do not have nuances and overt differences of meaning in different contexts, but rather suggesting that translators should select a context-appropriate English term for *eretz* or *ha-aretz* that does not connote the planet to today’s readers, such as “land.” Although “earth” denotes ground and land in English, as well as the planet, “land” signifies for English readers what the author meant. In any case, English readers must be careful to observe the context and to recognize the differences between ancient and modern worldviews. In so doing they will be hearing the voices of the ancient writers and taking the biblical text on its own terms.

If, when the Scriptures were being produced, the oral tradents and writers did not know that humans lived on a planet—or about the solar system, the galaxy, or the many other solar systems in other galaxies—then they could not explain their origins for our benefit. The Bible was not intended to be received as a primitive science manual that presented rudimentary scientific facts, albeit poetically, that would be verifiable at a later date when science caught up. The Bible is a library that was created a long time ago to build faith in a living God among the people who heard its words. It tells stories about God, Israel, and the rest of humanity, and their interrelationships. The Bible led its receivers to worship, love, and peace, offering the gift of salvation from the chaos, disorder, and other evil that emerged without the grace of God and the hope for eternal life evidenced in Christ and the Holy Spirit. By observing the known world in all its magnificence—noticing, distinguishing, and naming its grandest features, the author of Gen 1, Ps 104, Job 38 and etc. exemplify basic fundamentals of what we call science—observation and organizing, but they were not doing science in today’s terms. Gen 1 and the other creation texts in the Bible are prime examples of theology as worship. Clearly they are theology—talking about, seeking to know, love, and revere God. Clearly the creation texts are worshipping God, praising and glorifying the LORD as creator of all that is.¹²

Confession and Metaphor

I affirm that God is the source of all creation—what they knew then and what we know now. I stand in awe of the vastness and age of the universe, and am compelled to learn more about the earth and the heavens—the land and the sky, the planets and the galaxies—because I am a Christian. I confess

¹² For a full discussion of theology as response to the love of God in worship see Alan Padgett, “Theology as Worship,” in his *Science and the Study of God: A Mutuality Model* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 104-121, esp. 105-110. See also Ellen Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

that God created the entire universe (and multiverses, if they exist). I make this confession because of Gen 1 and many other God-as-creator texts throughout the Bible, even though I have a different worldview than these writers. If I am not expecting the Bible to explain scientific matters to me, or harmonize it with modern science, I can “see” the story about the universe I know now in Gen 1, Ps 104, Job 38-41 and worship with increasing awe and wonder; this without trying to accommodate the Bible into a twenty-first century scientific worldview.

Because of my worldview, I understand metaphorically what they may have meant literally. I say “may have” because the biblical writers intentionally, avidly, and often used metaphor and figurations to explain reality. An example of an obvious figure of speech is the simile of the land (earth) spread out like a garment (Job 26.7; 38.13) with hems or edges (sometimes translated “corners,” but hems or edges are better alternatives; Isa 11.12; Job 37.3; 38.13; Jer 39.36; Ps 48.10; 65.5). They know the land is not a garment, but it is spread out *like* a garment, and it has edges *like* hems.

On the other hand, because of their worldview, the concrete imagery of the biblical writers sometimes denotes what they believed to be literally true. In other words, although praise for the wonders of creation readily lends itself to metaphor, which they used, the writers also used images that they may not have considered figures of speech to them. For example, they affirmed the actual stability of the earth, because that is what they experienced.¹³ The sky/heaven was set upon the earth (2 Sam 22.8; Amos 9.6), which was grounded upon pillars and foundations (1 Sam 2.8; Isa 24.18; 40.21; Jer 31.37; Mic 6.2; Job 9.6; Ps 75.3, 104.5 etc.). When they spoke of pillars and foundations for the land (earth), they may have imagined literal pillars. For biblical writers, as with other ancient people, a three tiered universe was a reality, not a metaphor. The upper tier was the sky held up by the land’s mountains arising from the land and the seas, which comprised the middle tier, which in turn rested atop the underworld, the lowest tier. The great deep—the primordial waters—was restrained beyond the sealed vault of the sky and the land.¹⁴ Job 38-41 illustrates the tension between literal and figurative creation language. The images of pillars, windows, gates of darkness, doors and bolts for the sea may not have been as figurative to the hearers of this text as they are to us. We know that the stars are not on this side of an impermeable dome, holding back major waters, allowed on occasion to emerge as rain, snow, or hail from the windows of heaven (Isa 24.18). As much as I delight in these images, I will not claim they are verifiable on scientific terms. To try to force the Bible into the categories of modern science or science back into the Bible creates an unnecessary opposition between the theology and science.

When one understands the purposes of the Bible and the objectives and methods of science, these controversies are rendered formless and void. If a text in the Bible assumes or claims something, that is not verifiable in today’s scientific terms, this does not mean that the Bible is unreliable or that science is misguided and must be reshaped to fit the Scriptures. We must respect the biblical writers,

¹³ Although we “know” the earth is spinning and orbiting around the sun, it usually feels very stable.

¹⁴ Luis I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philological and Literary Study* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), esp. 9-10; 126-135.

their worldviews and that of their respective cultures, their reasons for transmitting these traditions, and the genres in which they wrote. Again, they were not writing science manuals! They were telling us about God and they used powerful picture language to do so. As much as God broke into Israel's world through events, leaders, and prophets to alter their faulty theological and social perceptions—and actions—to correct and encourage them, to pronounce judgment unless they repented, God did not seek to disabuse them of worldviews that are no longer scientifically tenable.

For many decades in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scientists tried to harmonize geology with Genesis by showing that the some aspects of the progression of creation generally followed the large movements associated with the days of Gen 1, but this project was ultimately abandoned by all but apologists for "concordantism."¹⁵ Such a project, however well intentioned and understandable in terms of traditional interpretations of Scripture, is not urgent or required. It does lead to my next point.

"Day" in the Bible

Just as "earth" in the Bible does not mean planet Earth, and "heavens" does not refer to the galaxies of a universe that extends 93 billion light years across and is 13.7 + or -.2 billion years old, neither does "day," *yom* in Gen 1, mean an age or era of millions of years. Whereas, *yom* or "day" can mean the sunlit part of a 24-hour day, the entire 24-hour day, a finite crisis period, such as the "Day of Judgment," or a promised period of peace,¹⁶ in Gen 1 *yom* means a 24-hour day. As defined by the text itself, a day is evening and morning, nighttime and daytime, either a twelve or 24-hour day. The days of Gen 1 are not eons or ages in the development of the cosmos. Evening and morning together mean one full day. We have evening and morning—the meaning of day—in common. As we think of a day now, so they thought then. The week described in Gen 1, in which God speaks and acts, is a stylistic device, used to structure Israel's claim that their God, Yahweh, spoke the entire universe they knew into being.¹⁷

When I take the Gen 1 day "literally," some of my students assume that I am claiming the heavens and earth were literally created on the second and third days of the week, respectively. Others, who recognize the age of the stars and fossils and rocks, get nervous, preferring that I espouse the day/age theory of creation, which to them solves some of the problems between science and religion. But there are two ways to take biblical passages literally. One use of "literal" understands the plain

¹⁵ A present day example is physicist David Snoke in *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), who argues for the day/age theory for the days of creation in Gen 1. As Davis Young points out in "The Discovery of Terrestrial History," in *Portraits of Creation*, "Scripture provided neither a major framework of events of Earth history nor even details about events in Earth history. Every effort over the previous two centuries to make Scripture, literalistically interpreted, and geological data conform to one another to the satisfaction of the geological community eventually failed" (57); and "[it takes] improbable exegesis to achieve harmony" between Scripture and science. (60). Young uses indisputable evidence from geology, physics, and astrophysics to demonstrate the extreme age of the earth and the universe. However, he finds it necessary to force this evidence into Gen 1 and other Scriptural frameworks by considering 'day' metaphorical for millions of years. On the other hand, he argues for a literal interpretation of other aspects of this text. He recognizes the biblical use of picture language (to his credit), but insists it must be depicting what is scientifically true.

¹⁶ See Gen 1.5, 15, 16, 18; 2.4; Amos 5.18; Zech 3.10 and F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, eds., *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1968, 398-401.

¹⁷ I cannot claim to know if the author conceptually separated the figurative from what he thought to be actually true in his use of the seven days as a stylistic device.

meaning based on the context, without reading in later perspectives and interpretations, fascinating, insightful, and useful as they may be. The other use has become a synonym for historically or even “scientifically.” People who say they interpret the Bible “literally” often mean they interpret Gen 1 historically and scientifically. This use of literal must be distinguished from the approach that takes the text inductively and seriously, seeking the author’s plain intention as it can be discovered from the text itself.¹⁸

To expand on this point: when I seek to discover what the text itself says and how the context defines a particular term, I am interpreting the Bible in its plain sense.¹⁹ I want to know what the author means, as expressed in what he wrote. In our day, seeking “authorial intention” can be confused with an attempt to psychoanalyze the ancient tradent, but I am seeking the author’s message built from words in their context. Where the context defines terms and answers questions, I can be fairly confident I have discovered the plain or literal sense of the text, the author’s message. For example, the context leads me to take the “day” of Gen 1.5 as the sunlit part of the day—God named the light “day” and the darkness he called “night.” When Gen 1 repeats “evening and morning” to define each day of the week, I take this to mean what we call a day, or at least part of a day. To opt for a “literal day” as opposed to an epoch must be distinguished from the claim that the sky is “literally” an impermeable dome that emerged during a single day against the science that reveals the great age and vastness of the stars and galaxies.²⁰

The Writer’s “Day”

Debates about science and the Bible are eased when we realize that the writer of Gen 1 was not addressing the issues of our generation, but those of his own. He was not concerned about our science; he was worshipping God as the source of all he knew, which *is* relevant for our generation. His theological liturgy countered other peoples’ creation myths and theogonies that explained the birth and hierarchy of their gods—who ruled whom and why. Why was a certain emerging nation, such as Babylon able to conquer the others? According to *Enuma Elish*, because Marduk was on its side and rose to power by defeating the other gods in his family. Then he created the land and its inhabitants in the process of further struggles among the gods. Genesis 1, however, affirms the existence and creative power of one God who always was and needs no story of origin. Israel’s God, at the beginning, spoke creation and all creatures into existence for clearly spelled out objectives.

Clearly the purpose of the Gen 1 creation story was not to detail matters we now call science. While Gen 1 transcends its earliest contexts and recipients to speak to people of all times about God’s role in creation, it does not engage or challenge verified and verifiable discoveries of science. The Bible

¹⁸ The history of Jewish and Christian biblical interpretation is fraught with other ways to treat the text that enrich its receivers, but these may be distinguished from the inductive method.

¹⁹ Jewish interpreters call this the *peshat* approach.

²⁰ Weston Fields does this in *Unformed and Unfilled* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976), 171-179. He clearly understands the intention of Gen 1 to portray creation as literally occurring throughout six 24-hour days, showing exegetically that ‘day’ (*yom*) cannot mean age or eon, but goes on to thereby insist thereby that the earth is young, having been completely created during these days a few thousand years ago. Unlike Snoke, he insists that science and the Bible are “mutually exclusive and hopelessly contradictory.”

explains, in language people of any age could understand, the source of creation and its order. The purpose of the many references to the wonders of creation throughout the Bible was and is to describe—in elegantly simple, poetic language everyone could understand—the *who* and the *why*, not the *how*, of creation. It affirms and rejoices that God, the LORD, YHWH, created all things—not Marduk, the God of Babylon, or any other god of whom Israel was aware.²¹

Conclusion

This chapter could have been entitled: “When the Earth was not a Planet,” but the Bible is a living document, which is to say it is Scripture for living communities of faith. Thus, the Bible has an immediacy to its affirmations. In the Bible, the earth *is* not a planet, and no amount of manipulation by harmonizers or concordantists can transform it into one.²² One might say that when the traditions that became the Bible were produced and transmitted, God knew and could have revealed all the information about the planets, stars, galaxies, and universe yet to be discovered by scientists. In other words, *ha-aretz* could mean and have meant planet Earth, because God knew about this planet when the biblical traditions were formed, even if the human tradents did not. *Ha-shamayim* could have meant heavens, as we think of heavens, and include all the galaxies and stars, some of which are billions of light years away.

Certainly, but we have no evidence God did so. The problem is not that this information is in the Bible, but that it is *not* in the Bible.²³ The Scriptures come to us from particular, related cultures, extended across time. They were intentionally promulgated by people who found them revelatory, relevant, reliable, and authoritative. Regardless of how one defines God’s part in the formation of the Scriptures, communities—with common worldviews—had to produce and preserve these texts. They would not have received or transmitted traditions that were irrelevant to them.

God did not violate the writers’ worldviews, their understandings of their environs, to disclose the details of the sort of universe that we now know by means of telescopes on satellites and instruments that measure radio waves. If God had revealed such matters to prophets or storytellers, would that not have been irrelevant and confusing for many centuries? Would this not have been discarded as absurd? And had this suited any divine purpose, which scientific model would God have used? A geocentric model that a handful of Greek thinkers produced, which carried the day among scholars for many centuries thereafter? A post-Copernican model? One that included the Big Bang

²¹ See *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian Creation story composed around the eleventh century BCE, although some put it as far back as the eighteenth century BCE. *Enuma Elish* can be found in numerous Old Testament textbooks, on line, and explained in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias. See www.cresourcei.org/enumaelish.html and www.ancienttexts.org/library/mesopotamian/enuma.html among others.

²² Historical geologist John L. Wiester (*The Genesis Connection* [Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, 1983]) is another scientist who attempts to fit his fine representations of the age of the earth into the days of Gen 1. While one can learn a lot of science from reading such books, and even wonder at some of the parallels suggested, the project is not necessary.

²³ Likewise, there is no mention of dinosaurs in the Bible. The *Leviathan* was not a dinosaur, but a great sea monster, living in the chaotic waters outside of the vault of the skies that overarched the earth and its foundations, as the contexts of each of these verses show: Isa 27.1, 51.9, Ps 74.13-20; Ps 104.26; Job 3.8; 40.25; chap. 41.

theory or the concept of multiverses? Scientists are discovering all sorts of things every day about the nature of the universe and the composition of planets. To include even a fraction of such information in Israel's story of beginnings would have been meaningless to them and all other receivers of Scripture for centuries.

Although Gen 1 grandly and poetically observes the world and names vital elements—fundamental acts of the scientific method—it is far more a treatise of worship and praise of the one God who spoke life and its fertile environs into existence. This is an elegant, stately, ordered claim that God was at the beginning and was the originator of everything else. The nature of this passage—as worship, as theology—discloses why it cannot be interpreted scientifically. It assaults sense and sensibility to place Gen 1 beside documents of modern science to force comparisons or prompt ridicule.

Most Scripture-centered communities regard the Bible as instructive regarding the nature of God, the nature of humans, their relationships, and how people should live. Nonetheless, the Bible's relevance to matters that now fall under the domain of science and its various subfields long after the Bible was written is debated. I have attempted to show that this is not the problem that has been supposed for the simple reason that the Bible was written long before modern science and its tools emerged, and thus does not—nor could it—address issues about which the writers knew little or nothing. This sort of information was obviously not necessary to God's loving agenda to create a people with whom to dwell, redeem, and transform. Recognizing and appreciating what the Bible does *not* say is as important to this debate as understanding what it does say.

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