

and his brothers is a particularly constructive place to explore this kind of approach. Note how the narrator subtly leads the reader through an arc extending from Joseph's initial dreams of rule of his brothers in ch 37 to their submission to him and his provision of food for them in chs 42–50. Along the way, the speeches of Joseph and his brothers often do not correspond precisely to the reality described by the narrator, and the divergences reveal much about their characters. For example, Joseph's brothers trick their father about Joseph being killed (37.31–35), but their failure to report that their money was back in their sacks (42.25–34) is found out by Jacob, who guesses that they were planning to take Benjamin from him (42.35–38) as they actually took Joseph. Later, Joseph puts his brothers in a position where they can save themselves from slavery by betraying Benjamin, Joseph's full brother, as they once betrayed Joseph himself (44.1–17). Only when Judah, who formerly initiated the sale of Joseph into slavery (37.26–28), offers himself in place of Benjamin (44.18–34) does Joseph break down and reveal his true identity to his brothers (45.1–15). In this way the Joseph story artfully describes the first movement in Genesis from the urge toward fratricide (cf. 4.1–16; 27.41–45; see 33.12–17n.) to full reunion. Reading the Joseph story for such turns and characterizations can be an excellent introduction to the elegance of biblical narrative more generally.

Finally, one strategy in reading Genesis is to observe the differences between some of the writings embedded in it. The reader can compare parallel stories in Genesis, such as the different stories of creation in 1.1–2.3 and 2.4–3.24 or the parallel and yet different accounts about Hagar (chs 16 and 21), the covenant with Abraham (chs 15 and 17), or Abraham and Sarah (12.10–20 and 20.1–18), or Abraham, Abimelech, and Isaac (20.1–18; 21.22–34 and 26.6–33). Comparing these different accounts helps uncover the distinct perspectives of each and their contribution to the book of Genesis as a whole.

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1 In the beginning when God created^a the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God^b swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was

^a Or *when God began to create* or *In the beginning God created*

^b Or *while the spirit of God* or *while a mighty wind*

1.1–11.26: The primeval history: from creation to the birth of Abraham. This unit is composed of two principal layers, a Priestly source that also provides an editorial framework (1.1–2.3; 5.1–28,30–32; 6.9–22; 7.6,11,13–16a,18–21,24; 8.1–2a,3–5,14–19; 9.1–17; 10.10–27), and an earlier non-Priestly primeval history that uses the divine name Yahweh (represented as LORD in the translation) found in the rest of 2.4–11.9. As seen in the chart on correspondences spanning the primeval history (see p. 13), the present combined text is an intricate narrative, with echoes of creation and un-creation, struggles surrounding human god-likeness, and other themes.

1.1–2.3: Creation culminating in sabbath. This Priestly account of creation presents God as a king, creating the universe by decree in six days and resting on the seventh. **1.1:** Scholars differ on whether this verse is to be translated as an independent sentence summarizing what follows (e.g., “In the beginning God created”) or as a temporal phrase describing what things were like when God started (e.g., “When God began to create . . . the earth was a formless void”; cf. 2.4–6). In either case, the text does not describe creation out of nothing (contrast 2 Macc 7.28). Instead, the story emphasizes how God creates order from a watery chaos. **2:** As elsewhere in the Bible, *the deep* (Heb “tehom”) has no definite article attached to it in Hebrew. Some scholars understand “tehom” to be related to the Babylonian goddess Tiamat, a deity representing primeval oceanic chaos, whom the head god, Marduk, defeated in *Enuma Elish*, a major Babylonian myth that includes an account of creation. Christian interpreters have often seen the “Spirit” of the Trinity later in this verse. *Wind* fits the ancient context better (see 8.1). **3:** The first of eight acts of creation through decree. Like a divine king God pronounces his will and it is accomplished. **4–5:** These verses introduce two other themes crucial to this account: the goodness of creation and the idea that creation is accomplished through God's separating, ordering, and naming elements of the universe. The seven-day scheme of 1.1–2.3 requires the creation of light, day, and night at the outset.

evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day

and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make human-kind^a in our image, according to our likeness;

^a Heb *adam*

6–8: The *dome/Sky* made on the second day separates an upper ocean (Ps 148.4; see Gen 7:11) from a lower one. This creates a space in which subsequent creation can take place. 9–13: Two creative acts: creation of dry land and command that the land bring forth vegetation. *Earth* is a feminine noun in Heb. The text thus echoes other ancient mythologies and the life cycle in having a feminine earth bring forth the first life in the universe (cf. Job 1.21). God is involved only indirectly here, commanding the earth to *put forth*. 14–19: There is a correspondence between days one to three and days four to six (1 || 4, 2 || 5, 3 || 6), which heightens the symmetry and order of God’s creation. Here, God’s creation of heavenly *lights* on the fourth day corresponds to creation of light, day, and night on the first. In a critical response to non-Israelite cultures who worshiped these heavenly bodies, the bodies are not named and are identified as mere timekeepers. 20–23: See vv. 14–19n. The second day featured the dome separating upper and lower oceans; the corresponding fifth day features the creation of birds to fly *across the dome* and ocean creatures, including sea monsters (Ps 104.25–26)—this is probably a polemic against other ancient Israelite traditions, which suggested that the sea monsters rebelled against God (e.g., Isa 51.9). God’s blessing of the swarming creatures (1.22) anticipates a similar blessing that God will give humanity (1.28). 24–30: The third day described creation of land and plants in turn, the corresponding sixth day involves the creation of two types of plant-eating land-dwellers: animals and then humans. 24–25: Again, earth is involved in bringing forth life (see 1.9–13n.). 26: The plural *us, our* (3.22; 11.7) probably refers to the divine beings who compose God’s heavenly court (1 Kings 22.19; Job 1.6). *Image, likeness* is often interpreted to be a spiritual likeness between God and humanity. Another view is that this text builds on ancient concepts of the king physically resembling the god and thus bearing a bodily stamp of his authority to rule. Here this idea is democratized, as all of humanity appears godlike. This appearance equips humans for godlike rule over the fish, birds,

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,^a and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

²⁷ So God created humankind^b in his image,
in the image of God he created them;^c
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” ²⁹ God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.” ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ² And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the LORD^d God made the earth and the heavens,⁵ when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground;⁶ but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—⁷ then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the

^a Syr: Heb *and over all the earth*

^b Heb *adam*

^c Heb *him*

^d Heb YHWH, as in other places where “LORD” is spelled with capital letters (see also Exod 3.14-15 with notes).

and animals. **27–28:** The text stresses the creation of humanity as simultaneously male and female. This leads to the emphasis in the blessing of v. 28 and the book of Genesis as a whole on the multiplication of humanity in general (6.1; 9.1–7) and Israel in particular (17.2–6; 47.27). **29–30:** The text envisions an ancient mythological time before violence disturbs God’s perfect order (cf. 6.11). **31:** Where individual elements of creation were “good” (vv. 4,10, etc.), the whole is *very good*, perfectly corresponding to God’s intention. **2.1–3:** This day is the climax to which the whole seven-day scheme has led. God does not command the sabbath, but does rest (Heb “shabat”) on the seventh day and bless it, weaving the seven-day rhythm into creation. The establishment of institutions is found in other ancient creation stories as well.

2.4a: Although many scholars view this as the conclusion to the Priestly creation account, it is probably a separate introduction to the following material, as elsewhere in Genesis (e.g., 5.1; 6.9; 10.1).

CORRESPONDENCES SPANNING THE PRIMEVAL HISTORY

Creation (1.1–2.3)	
Crime and punishment with <u>eating of fruit</u> (2.4–3.24)	Crime and punishment with <i>brother conflict</i> (4.1–16)
Prevention of godlike immortality (3.23–24)	Origins of cultures (4.17–24 origins of peoples, ch 10)
Flood: un-creation and re-creation (6.5–9.17)	
Spreading of peoples (10.1–11.9) as part of divine	<i>Brother separation</i> : subjugation of a people (9.20–27)
prevention of people gaining godlike power (11.1–9)	as a result of the <u>first drinking of wine</u>

2.4b–25: Creation in a garden. This non-Priestly Yahwistic tradition is different from 1.1–2.3, as evidenced by the different style and order of events. Though distinct from the Priestly account of 1.1–2.3, it nevertheless reflects ancient temple imagery. **4b–6:** A description of how things were prior to creation (cf. 1.1–2) is common in ancient Near Eastern creation stories. **7:** The wordplay on Heb “adam” (human being; here translated “man” [cf. 1.26]) and “adamah” (arable land; here *ground*) introduces a motif characteristic of this tradition: the relation of humankind to the soil from which it was *formed*. Human nature is not a duality of body and soul; rather

the Spirit^a is life because of righteousness.¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ^b from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through^c his Spirit that dwells in you.

¹² So then, brothers and sisters,^d we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—¹³ for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba!^e Father!”¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness^f with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God;²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now;²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have

the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in^g hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes^h for what is seen?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedesⁱ with sighs too deep for words.²⁷ And God,^j who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit^k intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.^l

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good^m for those who love God, who are

^a Or *spirit*

^b Other ancient authorities read *the Christ* or *Christ Jesus* or *Jesus Christ*

^c Other ancient authorities read *on account of*

^d Gk *brothers*

^e Aramaic for *Father*

^f Or ¹⁵ *a spirit of adoption, by which we cry, “Abba! Father!”* ¹⁶ *The Spirit itself bears witness*

^g Or *by*

^h Other ancient authorities read *awaits*

ⁱ Other ancient authorities add *for us*

^j Gk *the one*

^k Gk *he* or *it*

^l Gk *according to God*

^m Other ancient authorities read *God makes all things work together for good, or in all things God works for good*

9–10: Paul shifts from speaking of being “in Christ” (v. 1) or *in the Spirit* to having the Spirit or Christ dwell within oneself (6.22; 7.4). 11: *He who raised Christ*, 4.17,24; 11.15. 13: *Deeds of the body*, here Paul uses “body” interchangeably with *flesh*. See 6.6–8. 15–17: *Adoption* by the Spirit: Those who live according to the Spirit (or by “faith,” i.e., faithfulness, 4.12,16) are the *heirs* of the promises given to Abraham, even if not his descendants according to the flesh (4.1,11–14; Gal 4.5–7). 15: *Abba*, an Aramaic word which Jesus may have used in his own prayer (Mk 14.36), was retained in prayer by early Christians (Gal 4.6). 17: *If . . . we suffer*, the tension between suffering and hope in the glory to come (5.3–5) is characteristic of life during “this present time” (v. 18; 12.12; 1 Cor 4.8–13).

8.18–39: *Suffering, and hope in God’s promise*. God’s purposes toward his children are much greater than the circumstances of *this present time* would indicate. This theme is crucial in chs 9–11. 19–22: Paul shares an apocalyptic viewpoint that the present age is evil (see Gal 1.4), having been *subjected* by God to malevolent spiritual forces (v. 20; 1 Cor 15.20–28; Phil 3.21). 21: Creation itself will participate in the liberation of the *children of God*. 22: *Groaning in labor pains*, a frequent apocalyptic metaphor (2 Esd 4.42; 10.5–14; Mt 24.8; Mk 13.8). 23: The inner testimony of the Spirit (vv. 16,26–27) is experienced as intense yearning and hope (5.1–5). *Adoption*, lit., “sonship,” see 9.4n. 26–27: If we “groan inwardly” (v. 23), it is because of the Spirit at work in our prayers, interceding *for the saints*. This dramatic language is resumed in 9.1–3. 28–30: The alternative translations in the footnote represent the reading in the earliest manuscript. Paul means, not that all circumstances of this life are good for us (the lament in 8.36 is genuine), but that amid *all* these *things* God’s purpose prevails. *Those . . . who are called*, preeminently Israel (9.4; 11.2); also all those who are “the children of the promise,” including Gentiles