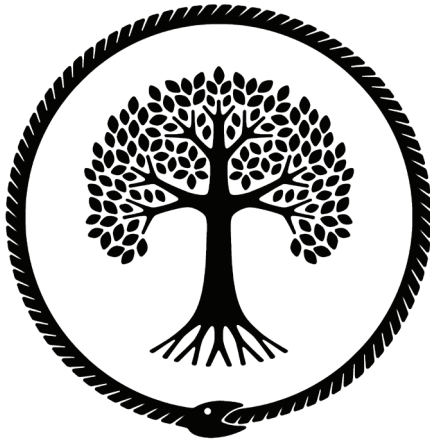


THE LANGUAGE OF CREATION

COSMIC SYMBOLISM
IN GENESIS

A COMMENTARY



MATTHIEU PAGEAU

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Esau: *I have enough my brother, let that which is yours be yours.*

Jacob: *Please take my gift because God has shown me grace, and I also have enough.*

Esau: *Let us take our journey together then, and I will go before you.*

Jacob: *I will journey according to the pace of the flock and children until I come unto you, my lord, unto Seir.*

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INTRODUCTION

As our technological knowledge distances us from nature, we find it increasingly difficult to reconcile the current scientific worldview with the biblical worldview. I have written this commentary to provide the reader with the necessary tools to interpret the Bible from its own cosmological perspective instead of the materialistic paradigms of modern science.

In the first section, I discuss the differences between scientific and traditional cosmologies, as well as the importance of rediscovering the ancient biblical worldview. This is followed by a brief commentary on the first day of creation with a focus on the cosmic duality called “heaven and earth.” The practical implications of this duality are then examined in the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah.

In the second half of this commentary, I examine the first three days of creation and the concepts of space and time as understood in ancient cosmology. I review the early stories of Genesis and discuss the implications of these concepts at the level of human experience. Finally, I revisit the difference between materialistic and traditional worldviews in light of the information presented in this commentary.

PART I

SALVAGING CREATION
FROM THE SCIENTIFIC WORLDVIEW

CHAPTER 1

SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL PERSPECTIVES

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.

Unlike modern science, traditional cosmology did not attempt to describe reality in terms of atoms, energy, and mechanical causality. Instead, most ancient cultures perceived the world in terms of spiritual principles such as angels, demons, and mysterious sea monsters at the edge the world. So before attempting to interpret a book like Genesis, it is important to understand why our current worldview is so different from that of the past.

Spiritual Perspective



What does it mean?
What truth does it embody?

Material Perspective



How does it work?
What material is it made of?

As illustrated above, scientific and traditional cosmologies see reality from two completely different perspectives: 1) in terms of its practical and material implications, and 2) in terms of its higher meaning. The first is the specialty of modern science, which conceptualizes all things in terms of meaningless matter and mindless causality. The second is the specialty of religion, which interprets every phenomenon as the manifestation of spiritual truth.

When interpreting reality, each of these worldviews raises its own types of questions. For example, when looking at a plant from a material perspective, one might ask the following questions: “What is this plant made of?” and, “How does it work?” However, when looking at the same plant from a spiritual perspective, one might ask the following questions: “What is the meaning of this plant?” and, “What higher truth does it embody?” Not surprisingly, these questions have little or nothing in common, which demonstrates the distinct nature of these worldviews.

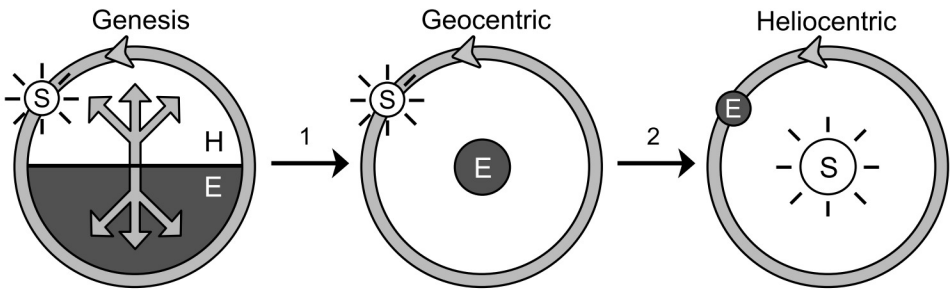
That said, the goal of this commentary is not to bridge the gaps between the material and spiritual perspectives, but to rediscover the lost spiritual worldview and to interpret the Bible accordingly. For that purpose, we must learn how to look at the world from a very different point of view, to see reality not as a heap of meaningless atoms and energy, but as the physical expression of metaphysical truth.

CHAPTER 2

COMING FULL CIRCLE: THE COPERNICAN REVOLUTION

God exiled him [the human] from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.

The spiritual and material perspectives have always been in competition because they are fundamentally different. Nevertheless, since neither of these worldviews has successfully subsumed the other, they have learned to coexist and even cooperated in the past. However, a series of important scientific discoveries have dealt a fatal blow to the spiritual worldview, one from which it has never recovered.



The scientific discoveries illustrated above were not merely technical in nature; they transformed our concepts of space, time, and causality. Ultimately, these discoveries completely undermined the foundations of traditional metaphysics. Therefore, when these changes were taking place during the Copernican revolution, the stakes were much higher than merely defending geocentrism against heliocentrism. They were also about preserving the spiritual perspective from a com-

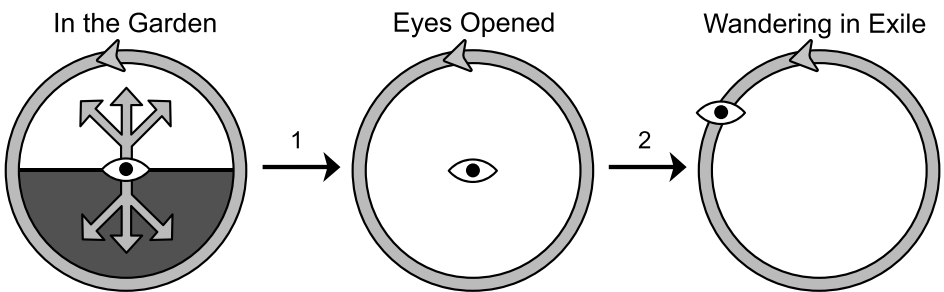
pletely materialistic worldview. From a scientific standpoint, it would be difficult to justify any attempts to “cover up” discoveries in order to preserve a debunked model of the universe. However, from a biblical perspective, this seems like a proper response to the tragedy of the fall in Genesis.

Losing the Spiritual Perspective (paraphrased from Genesis 2-3)

God said to Adam, “From the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat, for you will die on the day that you eat from it.”

They ate its fruit, and their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves girdles . . . God exiled the human from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.

The reason to preserve biblical cosmology against scientific hegemony is that it describes reality at the meta-cognitive level. Hence, the story of the fall is really about the process of knowledge itself and the dangers of acquiring greater material knowledge at the expense of spiritual insight. So, by comparing the diagram below to the previous one, it is easy to understand why the Copernican revolution may be interpreted as a reiteration of the narrative of the fall.



The story of the Garden of Eden describes a state of innocence, where humans occupied a central place in a relatively natural environment. This naive perspective conveniently provided humans with a full understanding of their role in the universe and the spiritual purpose

of existence. However, the garden was also a sheltered place; it was a tiny portion of a much greater world. Therefore, as soon as humans looked beyond the limits of the garden, their “eyes were opened” to a strange universe devoid of spiritual meaning. They “knew that they were naked” and saw their previous worldview as somewhat illusory. Once the bubble had been shattered, all attempts at “covering it up” were in vain, and humans had no choice but to wander in a meaningless universe until they return to the ground.

At the meta-cognitive level, the narrative of the fall perfectly matches the plight of humanity since the scientific revolution. So, even though these technical discoveries have locally debunked traditional cosmology, they have ironically proven its significance at a higher level. In general, the narratives of the Bible are about humanity’s conflicted attempts to reconcile spiritual truth with physical reality in the hopes of acquiring divine knowledge. For that reason, the ancient stories of the Bible will survive and eventually transcend any scientific discovery, as long as we recognize that level of interpretation.

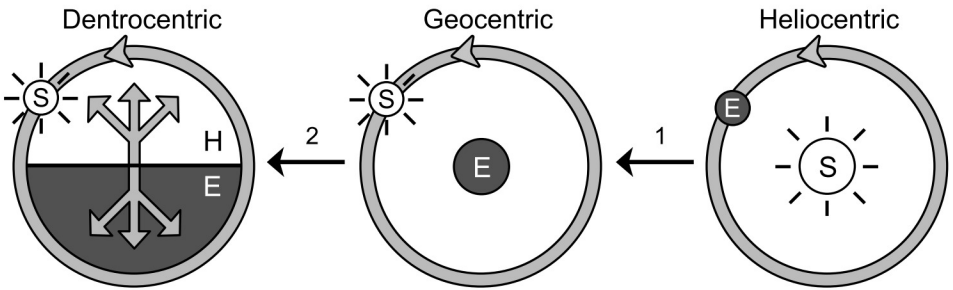
CHAPTER 3

RETURNING TO THE GARDEN OF EDEN

God planted a garden eastward, in Eden, and there he put the human he had formed.

From a strictly materialistic perspective, science has debunked most of traditional cosmology. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the highest level of biblical interpretation has been left intact by scientific discovery. Moreover, this level is the only one that truly matters from a spiritual perspective because it fully encapsulates the meaning of humanity within creation.

Unfortunately, the higher levels of interpretation have been marginalized in recent times because of the scientific ability to explain phenomena exclusively in terms of matter and mechanical causality. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to interpret the Bible using a scientific model of the universe instead of its own cosmological perspective, no matter how archaic it may appear to modern sensibilities.



Admittedly, interpreting the Bible with its own cosmology is a difficult task because our current worldview has little in common with that ancient perspective. This huge discrepancy was inevitable because

we arrived at it by artificially warping our natural perceptions with telescopes and microscopes. At this point, humanity has “opened its eyes” to such an extent that our conception of space and time corresponds to the point of view of an alien robot gazing at our solar system from a far away region.

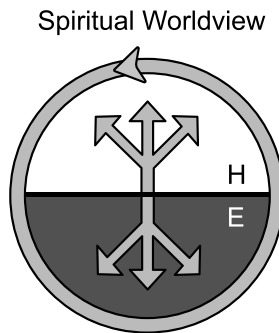
To rediscover the biblical point of view, we must pretend that our eyes are not geared with thousands of telescopes and microscopes and that we care little for quasars and quarks. Moreover, we will need to reposition ourselves within space and time by looking past the heliocentric and geocentric viewpoints towards an ancient cosmology. This archaic worldview may be described as tree-centric or “dentrocentric” for lack of a better word. We will temporarily adopt this perspective to rediscover ancient biblical cosmology and reclaim its metaphysical foundations.

CHAPTER 4

RECONSTRUCTING THE LANGUAGE OF CREATION

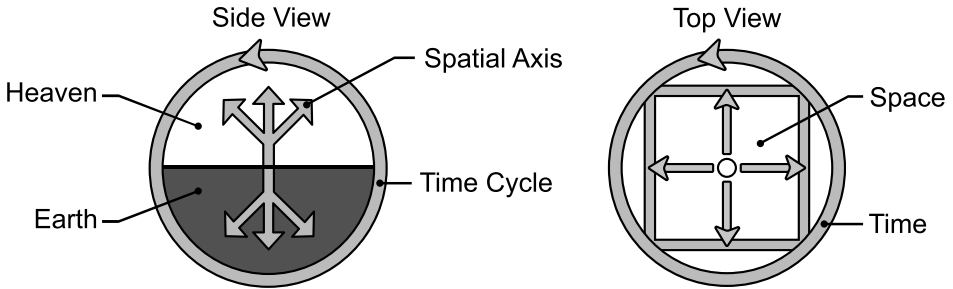
In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.

Rediscovering the biblical perspective will be the equivalent of learning an entirely new language because all concepts will need to be redefined according to the spiritual worldview.



Most importantly, the words “heaven” and “earth,” as quoted in the verse above, can no longer refer to what we now call “heaven” and “earth” from our scientific viewpoint: the third planet from the sun and its atmosphere. Instead, the archaic concept of “earth” refers to the lower material half of the entire universe, and the archaic concept of “heaven” refers to the upper spiritual half. In general, a complete redefinition of cosmic categories like heaven, earth, time, and space will be needed. The implications of these concepts will then trickle down to every level of human experience to redefine all things in the context of the Bible.

To simulate an immersion into the archaic perspective of Genesis, visual aids will always accompany the text of this commentary. These diagrams will emulate the pre-conscious conditioning that time and space imposes on the human mind.



In parallel, another didactic tool, single quotation marks, will be used to highlight the distinction between current concepts and their ancient counterparts in the Bible. For example, in the following quotation: *God prepared a great 'fish' to swallow Jonah, and he was in the belly of the 'fish' for three days and three nights*, the word 'fish' has been highlighted with single quotes to distinguish the archaic concept of fish from a modern taxonomical definition: *a gill-bearing aquatic craniate animal that lacks limbs with digits*. Instead, a more ancient concept should be assumed, one that certainly included such animals as dolphins, whales, and other aquatic creatures. Of course, neither of these definitions is correct or incorrect. They are simply based on different cosmologies. Modern taxonomical definitions are grounded in evolutionary science while ancient bestiaries were answering the question: "What spiritual truth does this animal embody?"

The breath of God hovered over the face of the 'waters.'

In the verse above, the concept of water perfectly illustrates the need to recover the meaning of ancient cosmological concepts. Indeed, from a scientific perspective, the definition of water can easily be given as H₂O, which is simply its chemical composition. However, this type

of definition only answers the questions, “What is it made of?” and “How does it work?” These are the only concerns of the materialistic perspective. On the other hand, the biblical concept of water certainly had nothing to do with its chemical composition. Therefore, it would be naive to assume that the concept of water in the Bible necessarily refers to the same substance as its modern counterpart. Instead, it is perfectly conceivable that ‘water’ was synonymous with our current notions of liquid or fluid, which have much broader definitions. If this were the case, then there would have been many different varieties of ‘water’ (meaning liquids) in the ancient conception, including blood, wine, urine, milk, mercury, and many other fluids.

God said, “Let there be light,” and there was ‘light.’

Similarly, from a scientific perspective, a working definition of light would be as follows: *electromagnetic radiation with a wavelength in the range of 4,000 to 7,700 angstroms*. As expected, since physics studies matter and its interactions, this concept has been framed by materialistic parameters. On the other hand, the concept of light was framed by meaning rather than mechanism in ancient cosmology. Hence, there were probably many varieties of ‘light’ in that context, and not all of them were made of photons.

The main point of these examples is to demonstrate the naiveté of assuming that ancient words had the same meaning as their modern counterparts. In reality, there are tremendous gaps between ancient and modern definitions such that every word must be reconstructed within the framework of an archaic cosmology.

The distinctions between ancient and current concepts will not always be as clear as the examples provided in this chapter. Therefore, the reader may legitimately doubt the validity of this reconstructed language. However, as will be discovered in the following sections, these words will be entirely derived from the cosmological categories of the Bible: heaven, earth, time, and space, as described in the narrative of creation.

In addition, the Bible itself will serve as testing grounds for this reconstructed language as it is used to interpret its stories, rituals, and laws. For the reader, this will be the ultimate test as to whether this “language of creation” faithfully recaptures the biblical worldview. If all goes well, formerly cryptic texts should begin to make perfect sense, even to the point of becoming self-evident.

PART II

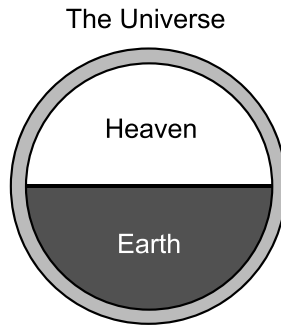
HEAVEN AND EARTH IN BIBLICAL COSMOLOGY

CHAPTER 5

HEAVEN AND EARTH: A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

In the beginning, God created the ‘heaven’ and the ‘earth.’

Due to the glaring discrepancies between modern and ancient worldviews, it is necessary to rely exclusively on traditional cosmology to interpret the meaning heaven and earth in the Bible.



When considered from an ancient human perspective, the words ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ refer to the two halves of the cosmos. This polarity completely encompasses reality, which makes it the secondary cause of all manifestation. In other words, everything in this universe was made from a combination of ‘heavenly’ and ‘earthly’ components.

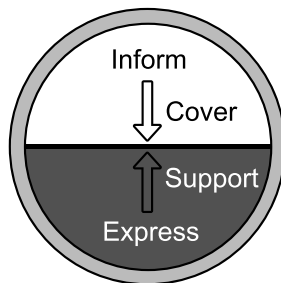
In this respect, biblical cosmology is similar to our materialistic worldview, which tends to describe all phenomena as a combination of matter and energy. However, it would be a mistake to imagine that ‘earth’ is exactly the equivalent of matter as understood by contemporary physics, and it would be an even greater mistake to think that ‘heaven’ is the equivalent of energy.

In the Bible, raw ‘earth’ refers to matter without meaning, and pure ‘heaven’ refers to spiritual meaning without corporeal existence. As strange as this duality may seem to modern sensibilities, this way of framing reality is self-evident from the spiritual perspective because it directly addresses the following questions: “What does it mean?” and, “What spiritual truth does it embody?” So, it is not surprising that the basic polarity of this cosmology is meaning and matter. Conversely, the materialistic perspective has developed its model of the universe in response to the following questions: “What is it made of?” and, “How does it work?” So, it is not surprising that materialism’s fundamental duality is matter and energy.

With wisdom, the Lord founded the earth; with understanding, he established the heavens; with his knowledge, the depths were split and the skies dropped the dew (Proverbs 3:19).

According to the spiritual worldview, the whole universe can be described in terms of the intercourse between ‘heaven’ and ‘earth.’ This joining of spiritual and corporeal realities—called knowledge—is the most fundamental notion in biblical cosmology. In fact, every single phenomenon can be interpreted according to this pattern.

- Knowledge -
Joining Heaven and Earth



As illustrated in the diagram above, the union of heaven and earth involves a dual interaction, in which the heavens “cover the earth” and the earth “supports the heavens.” On one end, spiritual reality informs corporeal reality with meaning and purpose. On the

other end, matter expresses spirit by making it visible and tangible in the universe. These fundamental interactions will be discussed at length throughout this commentary, and the notion of knowledge will be illustrated with many examples from the Bible.

CHAPTER 6

THE UNIVERSE AS A LANGUAGE

In the beginning, God created the heaven [spiritual reality] and the earth [corporeal reality].

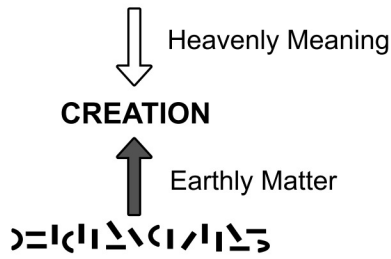
From a material perspective, the universe resembles a gigantic machine composed of meaningless matter and mindless energy. This worldview has little to do with the spiritual perspective, which likens the universe to a written language.

Divine Breath Becomes Word and Light (Genesis 1:2)

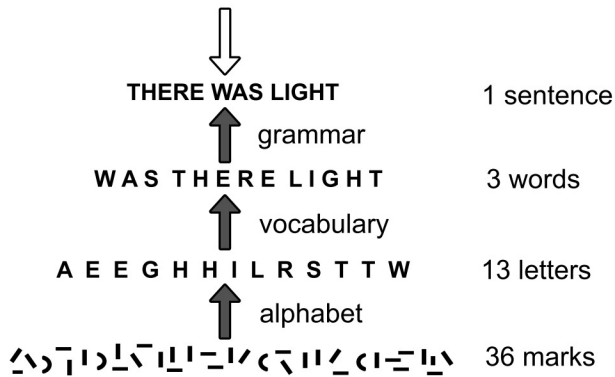
The earth was confused and meaningless; darkness was on the face of the deep, and the breath of God hovered over the face of the waters.

God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

From the spiritual perspective, creation is viewed as the manifestation of divine language. Therefore, to understand the book of Genesis and its ancient cosmology, we must posit a universe founded on meaning and language instead of mindless mechanical causality. Thankfully, there is an easy way to emulate this perspective using an analogy with our written language. To fully appreciate this analogy, it is important to realize that written words are the union of physical marks (shown at the bottom of the following image) and abstract meaning. Because of this union, the marks of the written word support the breath of the spoken word. These linguistic components perfectly represent the corporeal and spiritual interactions discussed in the previous chapter.



As illustrated below, it takes levels upon levels of organization to form a meaningful sentence from a jumble of marks. The result is a physical construction, the written word, capable of encoding the events of our world within the confines of this page. Miraculously, by ordering these marks with the technical laws of our language (alphabet, vocabulary, and grammar), they point to a relatively higher reality. Thus, a real but invisible connection is established between those physical marks and a universe that reaches far beyond the limits of this page.



In biblical cosmology, the entire universe operates according to this paradigm, except at a higher level. In that case, instead of ordering marks on a page to encode a fact, a divine language organizes facts and events in the world to embody metaphysical truth. Thus, concrete reality is arranged by the cosmic laws of that language and then infused with spiritual meaning.

Of course, in order to accept the possibility of such a “cosmic language,” we must forego the materialistic assumption that facts are completely devoid of spiritual meaning. Otherwise, the words on this page can be nothing more than ink marks, and reality itself can be nothing more than insignificant atoms and molecules.

The gap that separates ancient cosmology from materialistic science is enormous. On one hand, we may interpret reality exclusively with mechanical causality, where everything is devoid of meaning and higher purpose. On the other hand, we may interpret reality exclusively through a cosmic language, where facts and events are the hosts of spiritual meaning. Neither of these worldviews is complete without the other. A purely material perspective knows how the universe works but perceives no higher reason for its existence, while a purely spiritual perspective knows the meaning of the universe without understanding how it technically works. Ideally, we should be able to adopt both perspectives without having to sacrifice one or the other.

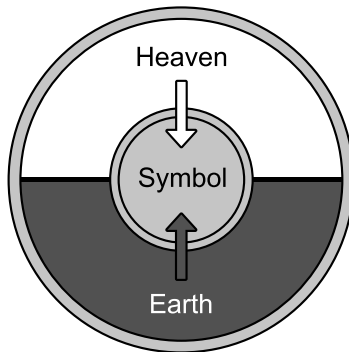
CHAPTER 7

SYMBOLISM AND THE SPIRITUAL WORLDVIEW

In the beginning, God created the heaven [spiritual meaning] and the earth [physical expression].

In biblical cosmology, the world was created by the union of 'heaven' and 'earth,' where the first is the source of spiritual meaning, and the second is the source of physical expression. Thus, everything in this universe is analogous to a written word in a divine language.

- Symbol -
Physical Embodiment of Spiritual Meaning

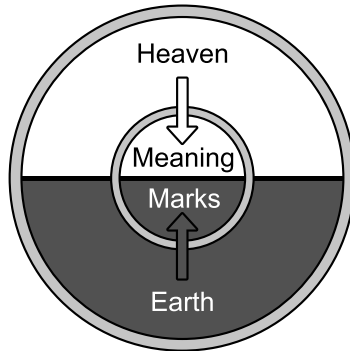


These “cosmic words” will be referred to as symbols in the language of creation, where a “symbol” is simply a fact that embodies higher truth. This metaphysical framework implies a universe where all events may be interpreted as both factual and meaningful at the same time, possessing concrete reality as well as spiritual significance.¹

1 This does not disallow for fictional stories in the Bible, but an *a priori* refusal to admit the coexistence of fact and meaning creates equally mistaken tendencies: 1) focusing on the “metaphorical” to systematically shed doubt on the factuality of biblical events, and 2) abolishing higher meaning to protect the integrity of the fact.

Another important characteristic of the spiritual perspective is its tendency to describe the universe in terms of microcosms. This means creation is perceived as a series of embedded re-presentations of its cosmic principles. It also means that each part of the universe can reflect a miniature version of the whole.

- Microcosm -
Miniature Re-Presentation of the Cosmos



The diagram above illustrates our first example of a microcosm. In this case, the fundamental structure of the written word is analogous to the fundamental structure of the universe. In the macrocosm, the universe is composed of intangible ‘heaven’ supported by tangible ‘earth.’ Similarly, in the microcosm, the written word is composed of intangible meaning supported by tangible marks.

In biblical cosmology, this type of analogy is not interpreted as a metaphor. Rather, it is seen as a translation of cosmic influences on smaller scales. For instance, the Mosaic Law itself was regarded as the translation of cosmic language into a more specific human language. Similarly, the various miracles or “signs” described in the Bible are meant to be interpreted as microcosmic symbols (representations of cosmic patterns at the human scale).

As an important example of this concept, the separation of the Red Sea by Moses may be interpreted as a miniature version of the separation of the primordial waters by God: *Moses stretched his hand on the sea, and God made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided* (compare Genesis 1:6-13 and Exodus 14:16-22).

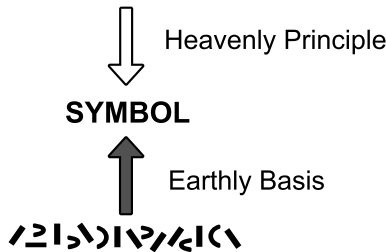
In general, all the miraculous powers of Moses are miniature versions of God's powers in creation. Even beyond such miracles, every single event in the Bible should be interpreted as a re-presentation of cosmic principles on the human scale. Of course, this type of interpretation is completely foreign to materialism because the only acceptable form of explanation is mechanical causality. Conversely, from a spiritual perspective, explaining a miracle with mechanical causality would be the equivalent of detailing the steps required to construct a written word with marks, which is hardly relevant at all.

CHAPTER 8

THE LINGUISTIC RULES OF SYMBOLISM

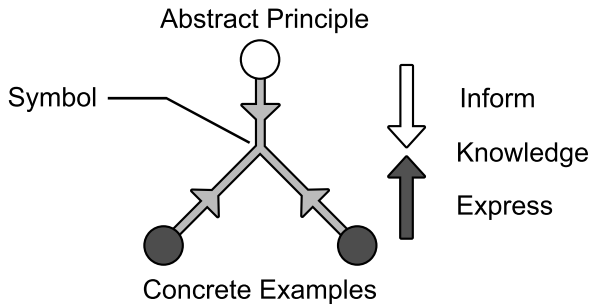
In the beginning, God created the heaven [abstract principles] and the earth [concrete examples].

As mentioned in previous chapters, the best way to understand the roles of ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ in this cosmology is through analogy with our written language. In this microcosm, the concept of matter is represented by physical marks that are organized to express higher meaning (by the rules of alphabet, vocabulary, and grammar).



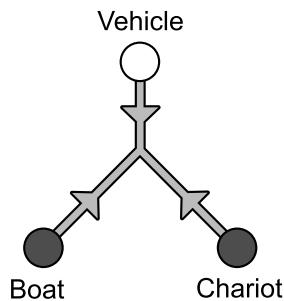
At the cosmic level, a similar process will also occur, but instead of ordering groups of letters into words, this higher language organizes groups of facts into meaningful symbols (according to its own linguistic rules). Unlike the English language, the language of symbolism does not attribute meaning arbitrarily. Instead, it follows the basic patterns of knowledge itself. This is very different from our phonetic language, which provides no logical connection between words and the concepts they express.¹

1 For example, in trying to understand what a “TABLE” is, it would be absurd to ask why the word contains a “B” and why this letter has 2 loops etc. because the physical structure of this word has nothing to do with the notion of a table.



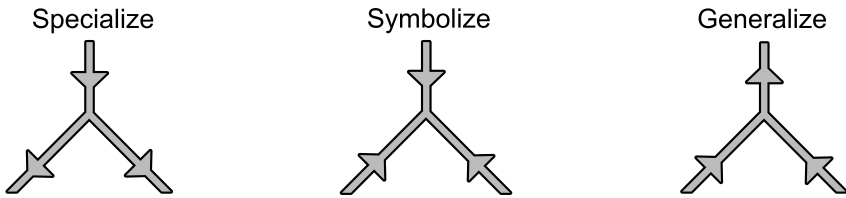
The image above illustrates the most basic pattern of symbolic representation. It shows the process of knowledge as the union of an abstract principle with a set of concrete examples. This simple cognitive structure is the key to understanding all ancient symbols. Therefore, it will be used throughout this commentary as a valuable template of interpretation.

The following diagram will serve as an introductory example of using this pattern. In this case, a highly abstract principle—vehicle—is supported by a pair of tangible objects—a boat and a chariot—which are two instances of the same idea.



This example approximates how symbols are usually formed in the language of creation. It demonstrates how concrete instances delineate abstract notions, and how abstract principles define concrete objects. Due to this union of tangible and intangible realities, this pair of objects (boat and chariot) is the expression of a highly abstract idea.

In general, a symbol is a collection of facts expressing a spiritual identity. This is analogous to a collection of letters forming a word in a written language.



Symbolism is probably humanity’s most ancient and universal language because its linguistic rules are based on a combination of cognitive processes: generalization and specialization. Abstract principles are grasped from tangible experience, and multiple experiences are seen as instances of a single principle. In this manner, spiritual reality is united with corporeal reality to form symbols.

As will be demonstrated in the following sections, these basic linguistic patterns are the key to deciphering the Bible. Unfortunately, since materialism currently dictates our understanding of the world, most symbols will probably seem cryptic or arbitrary at first glance. However, by replacing our scientific goggles with the paradigms of ancient cosmology, the meaning of these symbols should become increasingly self-evident.²

² The reader may also discover that the language of creation can be used as a key to decipher ancient stories, myths, and laws from all over the world, and not just from the biblical tradition.

CHAPTER 9

EXAMPLE: THE CHERUBIM OF EZEKIEL I

Each Cherub had four faces: a human, a lion on the right, a bull on the left, and an eagle.

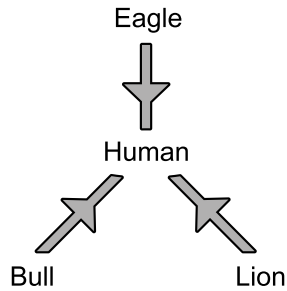
The basic pattern described in the previous chapter is the key to interpreting the entire Bible. This fact will be demonstrated in the following sections, once the cosmological concepts of heaven, earth, time, and space have been introduced. In the meantime, it will be useful to examine one of the most obvious cases of this symbolic structure in the Bible.

The Tetramorphic Cherubs (from Ezekiel 1)

As I was among the captives by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. A stormy wind came from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing up . . . From its center came the image of four living beings that looked like the image of a human.

Each [cherubim] had four faces: a human, a lion on the right, a bull on the left, and an eagle . . . Over the heads of the living beings was the image of an expanse, and on it was the image of a throne, and on the image of the throne was an image that looked like a human.

Ezekiel's vision is the perfect example of a narrative that seems cryptic from the wrong perspective. Conversely, in proper context, cosmic categories like thrones, cherubs, and wheels are just as fundamental as space, energy, and time are to materialism.



The tetramorphic cherub described in this vision is an obvious example of the symbolic template discussed in the previous chapter. At the top of the structure, the eagle represents a spiritual or ‘heavenly’ principle, which is too abstract to be grasped without tangible expressions. At the lower end, the lion-bull duality represents the corporeal or ‘earthly’ basis that provides concrete support for that principle. At the center, the human is the knower that unites spiritual and corporeal realities.

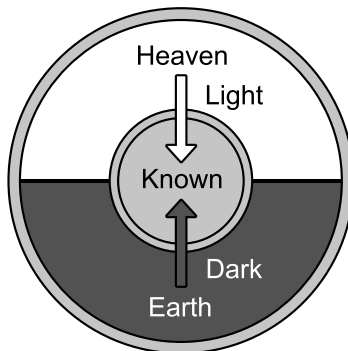
Even though these “living beings” might seem random at first glance, they perfectly describe the inner structures of this cosmology. As a prophet, Ezekiel was using this symbolic language to describe the very process of obtaining divine knowledge. In general, the key to deciphering such symbolic structures is to solve the puzzle of a dichotomy, which means understanding the lion-bull opposition in this example. Unfortunately, the concepts required to decipher this symbol will only be discussed in the following sections (chapters 28 and 40). In the meantime, this example should at least provide an intuitive insight into this type of symbolism.

CHAPTER 10

LIGHT AND DARKNESS: A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

‘Darkness’ was on the face of the deep . . . God said, “Let there be light,” and there was ‘light.’

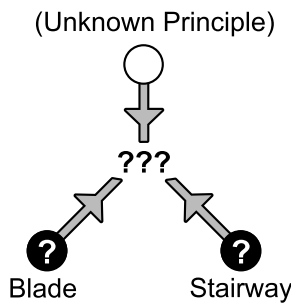
It is important to differentiate the scientific concept of light from its archaic symbolic counterpart. The first is composed of material particles called photons while the second is the purest expression of higher meaning. Accordingly, the biblical version of light is directly linked to meaning and language, which is why it was created through God’s first spoken word. On the other side of the equation, the primordial earth is described as dark, meaningless, and confounding.



The earth was confused and meaningless; ‘darkness’ was on the face of the deep, and the breath of God hovered over the face of the waters. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was ‘light.’

The ancient notions of light and darkness were defined by their roles in the process of knowledge. However, it is important to understand that darkness cannot simply be defined as the absence of light in this context. Instead, there is a causal link between ‘darkness’ and corporeal reality or ‘earth,’ just as there is a link between ‘light’ and spiritual reality or ‘heaven.’

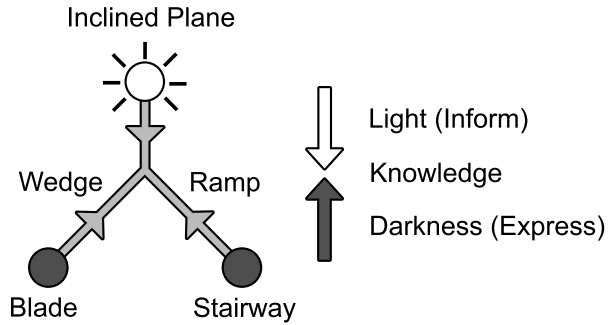
The example below should suffice to illustrate the roles of light and darkness from a spiritual perspective. It shows a dichotomy of two concrete objects—blade and stairway—between which there is no discernible relationship. Thus, pairing these objects together produces a dark enigma that could potentially support an invisible principle (which currently remains unknown).



In traditional cosmology, material reality is considered obscure or ‘dark’ when disconnected from a heavenly principle. Conversely, the principle itself is seen as the invisible source of ‘light’ that implicitly contains the answer to the enigma. When these components are finally brought together, the ‘light’ becomes explicit to reveal a unifying truth (see the answer on the following page).

In this manner, corporeal reality acts as a question with the power to host spiritual meaning when properly answered. Therefore, even though matter is inherently ‘dark’ (as in meaningless), it is also considered a cause of revelation and manifestation. Indeed, without the contribution of material reality, certain spiritual principles would be too abstract and simple to understand.

This concept of knowledge may still be counterintuitive to the reader because we usually say that something is too complicated when we fail to understand it, often implying that 'light' would be needed to clarify the matter. However, we rarely think about the flipside of the cognitive process, that an idea can also be too abstract to grasp and may require detailed examples to appreciate its ramifications.



In general, the archaic concepts of light and darkness have little to do with their current scientific definitions. They are synonymous with the revelation of a spiritual principle as it descends into the obscurity of corporeal reality to illuminate its mysteries.

CHAPTER 11

THE SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL DIMENSIONS

In the beginning, God created the heaven [immaterial meaning] and the earth [meaningless matter].

In biblical cosmology, the universe was created as a union of heavenly and earthly components. Therefore, everything in it has both a spiritual and material dimension. These dimensions are often symbolized by a series of layers in vertical space, with a relationship between each layer's position and its degree of corporeality. Top layers are light and supple, and bottom layers are heavy and solid.

The Layers of Vertical Space (from Genesis 1:2)

Earth: The earth was meaningless and confounding.

Water: Darkness was on the face of the deep.

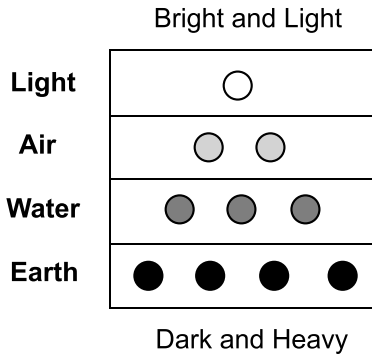
Air: The wind of God hovered over the face of the waters.

Light: God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.¹

This topography of vertical space is illustrated in the following diagram. However, there is no need to associate the dots of that illustration with atomic theories of matter. Instead, they simply illustrate the varying densities of tangible stuff for each of these levels. The top levels are more implicit than the bottom levels and therefore have a less corporeal presence.

¹ Until recently, the only known source of light was fire. So, the narrative of creation suggests the following layers in its cosmology: earth, water, air, and fire.

In addition to their degree of corporeality, these layers are also defined by their degree of brightness. Together, these two dimensions provide a complete picture of vertical space in ancient cosmology. The material dimension goes from heavy to light while the spiritual dimension goes from bright to dark (or clear to obscure). There is also an inverse relationship between these characteristics. Highly corporeal things will naturally be low in brightness and vice versa.



To fully understand this inverse relationship, it is important to realize that matter was inherently connected to darkness in ancient cosmologies. In practice, this is due to the fact that matter causes obscurity depending on its degree of opacity. In other words, earthly substances block the light completely while more fluid substances, like water and air, have greater degrees of transparency. Hence, there is an inverse relationship between the degree of corporeality of a substance and its degree of clearness. Substances that are high in corporeality are obscure due to their complexity while substances that are low in corporeality are clear due to their simplicity.

This pyramidal structure is a fundamental pattern of interpretation in the Bible. It attaches a spiritual quality to objects and events based on their position in vertical space. In this context, something may be depicted as “too high” when it is too simple to understand and “too low” when it is too complex. True knowledge is usually depicted as “central” in the sense that it is complex enough to be tangible and simple enough to be meaningful.

CHAPTER 12

EXAMPLE: NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM I

This image, which was large and whose brightness was surpassing, stood before you.

The following passage from the book of Daniel will serve as another example of the vertical structure introduced in the previous chapter. It will also provide another example of the use of microcosms in the Bible.

Nebuchadnezzar's Statue (from Daniel 2:31-33)

This image, which was large and whose brightness was surpassing, stood before you.

Its head was fine gold.

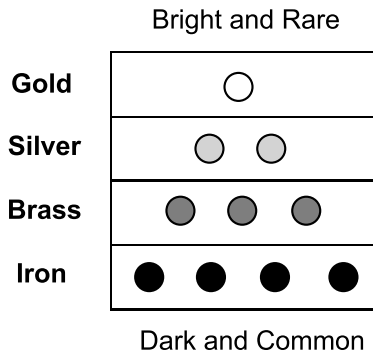
Its chest and arms were silver.

Its belly and thighs were brass.

Its legs were iron, and its feet were iron and clay.

The “image” described in the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream clearly depicts the different layers between ‘heaven’ and ‘earth.’ The upper portions are rare, supple, and bright, while the lower portions are increasingly common, hard, and obscure.¹

1 Daniel 2:31-33 suggests “an image with a big base and surpassing brightness,” with a pyramidal form (perhaps a man wearing a robe) that increases in size as it decreases in brightness towards the base.



The top of the statue is a head of gold, which is the brightest and rarest of metals. Conversely, the bottom layer is made of iron, which is the hardest and most common of metals. Each of these layers can be described in terms of its corporeal and spiritual dimensions, and there is a natural trade-off between quality and quantity. The layers with a high degree of corporeality are hard, obscure, and common, and the layers with a low degree are supple, bright, and rare. In addition, this statue is a microcosm (a miniature representation) of the elemental hierarchy of light, air, water, and earth that stretches from heaven to earth in biblical cosmology.

CHAPTER 13

EXAMPLE: WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

With wisdom, the Lord founded the earth; with understanding, he established the heavens.

In the Bible, the union of heaven and earth is often defined in terms of wisdom and understanding. These are the divine principles by which God “founded the earth” and “established the heavens.”

The beginning of wisdom is: get wisdom, and with all you have gotten, get understanding (Proverbs 4:7).

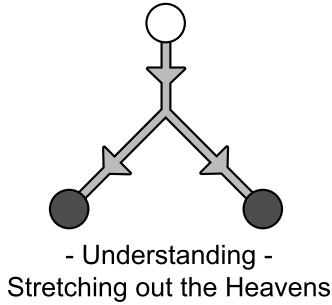
- Wisdom -
First Point of Creation



According to this cosmology, wisdom is the first principle of creation. Therefore, it is often envisioned as a concentrated point, a cosmic seed, that contains the whole universe as pure information. The seed was a very important symbol in ancient cosmology. It was the closest tangible example of a purely spiritual or ‘heavenly’ principle. Of course, the ancients did not consider the seed to contain a coded language, like DNA, with detailed instructions to build a living organism. Rather, it was seen as a foundational principle that only expressed minimal information. Like an axiom in mathematics, the ‘seed’ is a self-evident principle that implicitly contains everything in a point-like form.

God made the earth by power; he founded the world by wisdom, and he stretched out the heavens by understanding (Jeremiah 51:15).

Given its seed-like properties, it is usually difficult to appreciate wisdom because it is far too simple and contains too much information. Therefore, the role of understanding is to “stretch out the heavens,” which means developing, explaining, and detailing the ramifications of this ‘seed.’



In this context, the role of understanding is perfectly analogous to that of the earth’s soil. It is the power that expands and expresses a seed into something knowable.¹

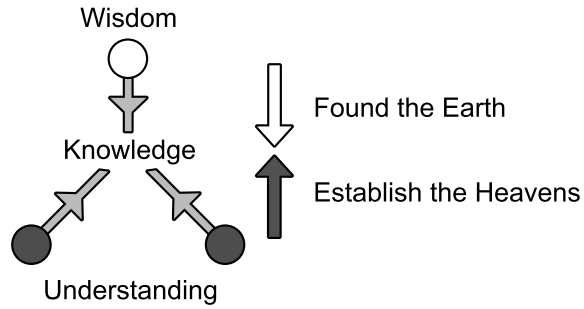
With wisdom, the Lord founded the earth; with understanding, he established the heavens; with his knowledge, the depths were split, and the skies dropped the dew (Proverbs 3:19).

As shown in the following diagram, understanding is the power that supports a principle with specific facts, and wisdom is the principle that covers these facts with a spiritual identity. Knowledge is the process and final result of these interactions.

With wisdom, a house is built; with understanding, it is established; with knowledge, its rooms are filled . . . (Proverbs 24:3)²

1 This basic structure is referred to as the “cosmic tree.” It is considered the principle of ‘space’ in ancient cosmology. The symbolism of the spatial axis will be fully described in section 4 of this commentary.

2 In Hebrew, the word “understanding” is connected to both the concepts of “building” and “in-between.”



Another important way to describe these fundamental interactions is with the imagery of building a house. In this case, wisdom is analogous to the plan of the house, and understanding is the process that puts the plan into practice. From one end, a spiritual principle must be lowered into concrete reality. From the other end, building materials must be raised into a meaningful and coherent structure.

Another important aspect to this imagery is the notion that buildings are microcosms of creation. In this case, the roof and base of the house are analogous to the heavens and the earth respectively. Also, the symbolism of pillars is especially important in this context. They represent the supports of a spiritual principle and are usually called “the pillars of the earth” at the cosmic scale.³

³ These pillars are usually depicted as opposites (like the pillars of Yakin and Boaz) in order to express the maximum range of implication. By definition, opposites are the most different expressions possible, which means they always provide the best support for knowledge. This is one of the reasons why opposites are so commonplace in ancient symbolism.

PART III

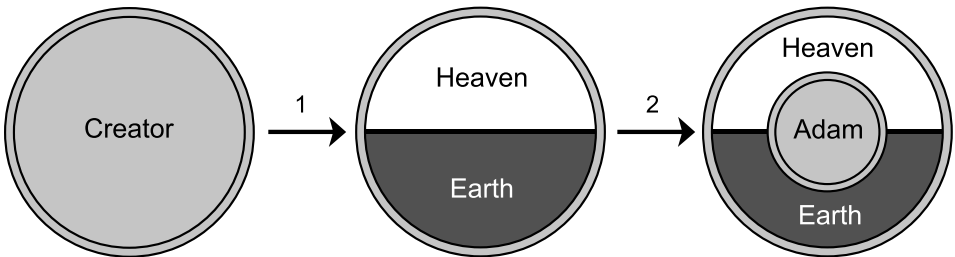
HEAVEN AND EARTH
ON THE HUMAN SCALE

CHAPTER 14

HUMANITY AND THE IMAGE OF GOD

God created the human in his image; in the image of God, he created him.

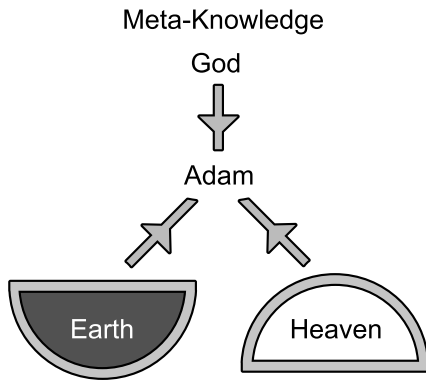
As will be discovered in this section, the narrative of creation also provides significant insights about the role of humanity in the universe. Most importantly, according to biblical cosmology, the function of human beings is to act as a mediator between heaven and earth for the knowledge of God within creation.



In this context, the notion that Adam is “in the image of God” means that humanity is a symbol of the Creator within creation. Thus, Adam is the embodiment of divine knowledge in the world. Unlike regular knowledge, which involves the union of spirit and matter for created things, this type of knowledge transcends itself into a form of metacognition.

The following diagram represents the ultimate pattern of interpretation in the Bible. Although it is similar to the patterns discussed in the previous section, this structure involves an infinitely higher level:

the knowledge of God in creation. This overarching symbolism, and Adam's general role as mediator between heaven and earth, will be discussed in detail throughout this section.



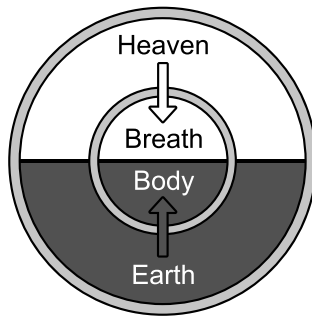
CHAPTER 15

ADAM AS MICROCOSM: THE BREATH AND THE BODY

God formed the human from the dust of the ground [earth] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [heaven].

In the story of the Garden of Eden, humanity is described as a microcosm of creation. Thus, Adam is created by joining a body from the earth and a breath from heaven.

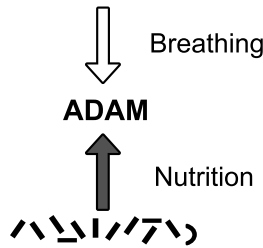
The Human Microcosm



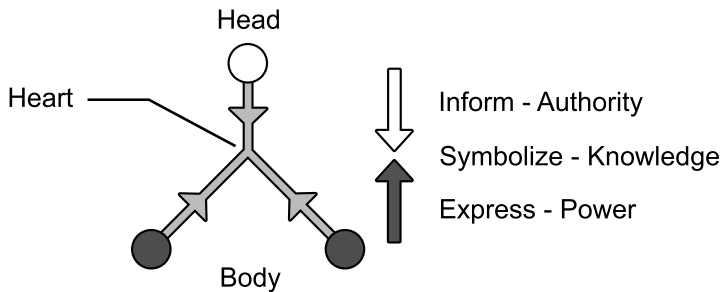
As illustrated above, the soul and body of Adam may simply be interpreted as instances of heaven and earth at the level of human experience. Accordingly, the word “spirit” simultaneously refers to the wind of heaven and the breath of living creatures. These are one and the same in biblical cosmology.

The primary role of Adam in this context is to act as a mediator between heaven and earth for the union of spirit and matter in creation. Moreover, this union defines Adam completely, not just at the

moment of creation, but throughout his entire life. In other words, not only was Adam made by joining dust and breath but this is also the impetus of everything he does.



At a basic level, human life consists of breathing and nutrition. The first is when heaven’s air is translated into Adam’s breath, and the second is when the earth’s soil is translated into Adam’s flesh. In this manner, the cosmic union of heaven and earth is reflected at human levels. Thus, by simply staying alive, Adam is contributing to the greater goal of creation. Conversely, if Adam dies, a part of corporeal reality loses its higher spiritual purpose, and a part of spiritual reality loses its lower corporeal expression.



For humans, it is also important to remember that breathing involves the ability to speak, which makes it a vehicle of language and information. Thus, in the human microcosm, Adam’s head represents the first principle (wisdom)¹ as the source of meaning for the body.

¹ In Hebrew, the word “head” implies “first principle,” a meaning that is also implied in the English words “head,” “captain,” “chief,” etc.

The role of the head is to provide a unifying principle to answer the 'dark' (subconscious) enigmas of the flesh. In exchange, the body expresses and supports the head with the actions of the arms and legs.

On the whole, Adam's existence is centered on knowledge, which refers to the union of heaven/spirit and earth/body. Therefore, humanity's impetus in the universe can adequately be summed up as: "informing matter with meaning and expressing meaning with matter." This extremely simple formula surprisingly encompasses all human activity, including reproduction, technology, government, and science. These are all instances of joining matter with meaning.

CHAPTER 16

EXAMPLE: MANNA AND FLESH

God will give you flesh in the evening to eat and bread in the morning to the full . . .

The example provided in this chapter is a particularly clear case of the interactions between heaven and earth. It unmistakably depicts the dual influences of heaven and earth in the form of manna and quails during Israel's exodus. It also provides some important examples of interactions between the macrocosm and the microcosm, where the influences of heaven and earth are translated into human experiences.

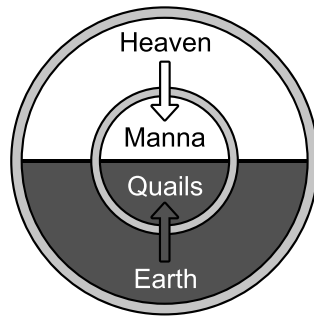
Lowering Seed and Raising Flesh (from Exodus 16 and Numbers 11)

Children of Israel: "Wouldn't it have been better for us to die in Egypt as we sat by the flesh-pots and ate bread to the full? Have you brought us to this wilderness to kill us with hunger?"

God: "I will rain bread from heaven, and the people will gather it every day to test whether or not they will follow my law. They will eat flesh in the evening and be filled with bread in the morning, and they shall know that I am the Lord their God."

At evening, the quails ascended and covered the camp. When the dew descended on the camp during the night, the manna descended upon it. In the morning, there was a fine bareness like frost on the surface of the earth. When the children of Israel saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" and they called it "manna." It was like coriander seed—white—and tasted like wafers in honey, and its appearance was like crystal. The people gathered it, and they ground it and made cakes with it.

In the previous passage, manna and quails are depicted as descending and ascending respectively, and they are also referred to as “seeds” and “flesh.” These two types of food represent the influences of heaven and earth in this narrative.



On one end, manna is not a typical food but a spiritual nutrition. Its primary purpose is not to sustain the body but to inform the soul. Manna is compared to seeds in this narrative because ‘seeds’ represent spiritual principles in biblical cosmology. These points of wisdom were considered to be full of implicit ‘light’ (concentrated information), which is why manna is described as bright, clear, and light, and why it is associated with the first light of morning. These ‘heavenly’ principles are high in meaning and low in corporeality. They are point-like materialization of divine language, as clearly stated below:¹

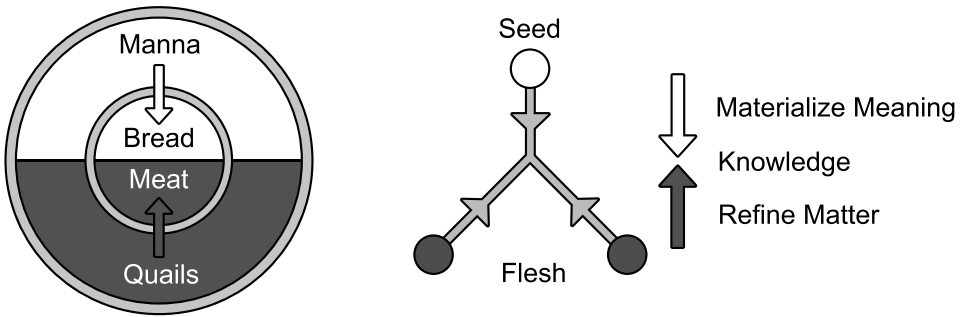
God fed you with manna . . . to teach you that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3).

On the other end, the quails are called flesh or meat, which refers to regular food in the sense of matter to sustain the body. They are depicted as “ascending in the evening” because they are akin to material obscurity. In general, flesh represents the counterpart of seed in the process of knowledge. Its role, like the earth’s soil, is to detail or “flesh out” the implicit meaning of the seed. It is a cause of manifestation because it makes the implicit explicit (see chapter 10).

1 “Manna” (מַן) means “what,” which is similar to the “quiddity” of western philosophy. Like a seed, manna embodies the simple essence of phenomena.

You shall eat flesh in the evening and be filled with bread in the morning, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God . . .

On the whole, the structure of this narrative is straightforward. It describes the nation of Israel as existing between 'heaven' and 'earth' to receive the knowledge of God from their union. In general, the process of knowledge should always be interpreted in terms of two opposite transactions. It always involves materialization of meaning from above in exchange for refinement of matter from below. These exchanges of spirit and flesh are the two sides of a single coin because invisible truth cannot be made manifest without material sustenance.



As illustrated above, the descent of manna towards the earth is a process of materialization. This is clear in the Bible because manna is compared to hoarfrost, which is a solidification of dew, which is itself a condensation of air. Moreover, the process of making bread from manna represents that materialization at the human level. Indeed, making dough from flour (a fine white substance) symbolizes condensation, and making bread from dough symbolizes solidification. On the other hand, the ascent of quails into the camp and the preparation of their flesh is a process of refinement, where meat must be cleaned, tenderized, and cooked until suitable for human consumption.

As will be demonstrated in later chapters, making bread and preparing meat are extremely significant in the Bible. They are important symbols of "lowering meaning" and "raising matter" for the union of heaven and earth at the human level.

CHAPTER 17

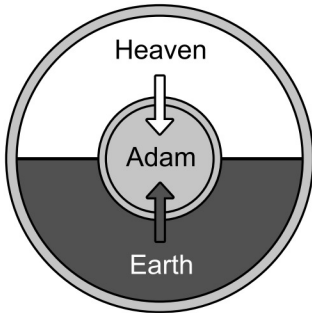
ADAM AS MEDIATOR: NAMING ANIMALS AND HOSTING ANGELS

These are the descendants of the heaven and the earth when they were created . . .

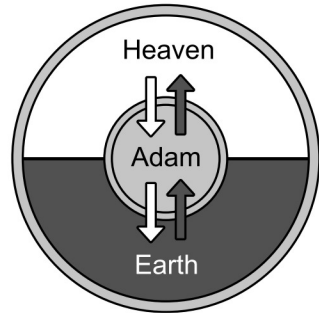
In the verse above, Adam is described as the descendant or offspring of heaven and earth. In the verses below, Adam is also described as the mediator or bridge that provides the necessary communication between heaven and earth.

. . . No herb of the field had sprung up for God had not made it rain upon the earth, and there was no human to work the ground . . .

Offspring of Heaven and Earth



Mediator of Heaven and Earth



Adam’s mediation between heaven and earth involves “lowering meaning” and “raising matter.” This cosmic process is symbolized in a variety of ways in the context of the Bible. For instance, Adam’s first job in the Garden of Eden is to name the animals, which is a clear case of “lowering heaven into the earth.” In this scenario, heaven’s wind becomes Adam’s breath and serves as a vehicle to communicate between

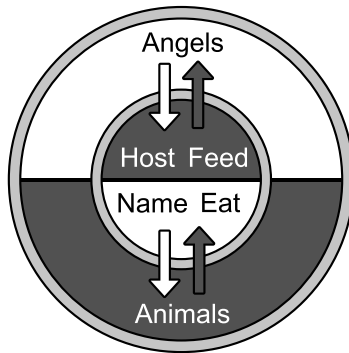
spiritual and corporeal realities. With it, Adam is able to assign a spiritual identity to the animals of the world.

Adam Names the Animals (from Genesis 2:19)

God formed, from the ground, every beast of the field and bird of the air. He brought them to the human to see what he would call them. Whatever Adam called each living creature was its name.

Language is what separates humans from animals in this cosmology. Adam is the only earthly creature capable of uniting spiritual principles and corporeal facts with language (through his spirit or breath).

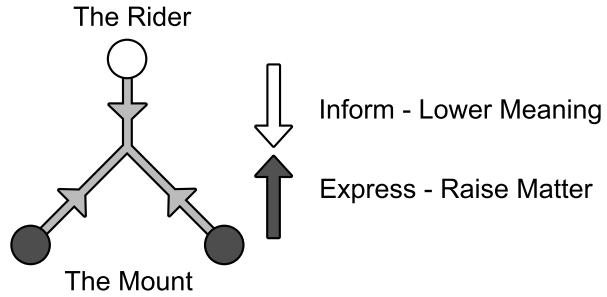
Who makes the winds his messengers [angels] and the flaming fire his ministers? (Psalms 104:4).



As illustrated above, humanity's full role as cosmic mediator can be summed up as "naming animals and hosting angels." In biblical cosmology, angels are messengers that transmit higher meaning and guidance to humanity. On the other hand, beasts can potentially receive guidance and instructions from humans. Naming the animals is the ultimate proof of Adam's God-given authority because it makes him the very source of their identity.

As will be detailed in the following chapter, the role of Adam towards angels is to host them and feed them, and his role towards animals is to name them and eat from them. That being said, it is now

important to understand that eating and naming are closely related in biblical cosmology. They are both examples of putting matter under the influence of your spiritual authority. Thus, naming, eating, and taming the animals are connected in meaning, and so are hosting, feeding, and following the angels.



Another important way to symbolize these relationships is through the interactions of a rider and a mount. The rider informs the mount with direction and purpose, and the mount expresses that purpose with power and support. The mount extends the rider's body by increasing the power of his legs, and the rider extends the mount's spirit by increasing its wisdom.

The relationship between the rider and the mount is perfectly analogous to the relationship between Adam's own mind and body. In this case, the body is his "animal component," and the mind is his "spiritual component." Thus, Adam's impetus in the universe may also be described as: "raising the animal and lowering the spiritual," both in himself and the world around him.

CHAPTER 18

EXAMPLE: ABRAHAM AS MEDIATOR I

The Lord appeared to him [Abraham] by the Oaks of Mamre . . . and three men stood before him.

The example provided in this chapter is a rather clear account of humanity's role as mediator between heaven and earth. It describes Abraham and Sarah as they host and feed messengers, or "angels," from God. The reader may refer to Genesis 18:1-10 for the full text of the narrative paraphrased below.

Hosting Angels and Raising Animals (from Genesis 18)

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, and Abraham lifted his eyes and looked. Three men stood before him, and he ran to meet them and bowed down to the earth . . .

Abraham: "Please do not move on, I will fetch a morsel of bread and sustain your heart . . ."

Abraham said to Sarah in the tent, "Take three measures of fine meal and knead it, and then make some cakes." Abraham went to the herd and chose a calf, and then he gave it to the youth who hurried to prepare it. He took cream and milk and the calf he prepared, and he offered it to them under the tree.¹

They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" Abraham said, "Behold in the tent." The Lord said, "I will return to you at this time next year and Sarah your wife shall have a son."

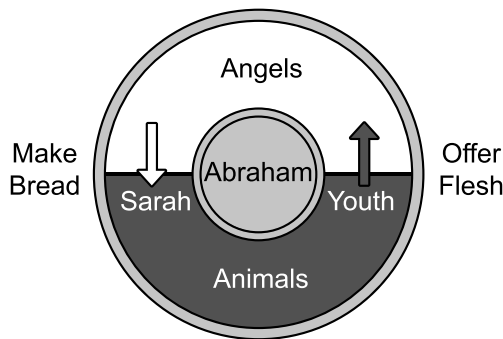
¹ This "tree" represents the "spatial axis" which was briefly mentioned in the first section of this commentary and will be fully discussed in sections 4 and 5.

This story is one of many examples in the Bible of a transaction between heaven and earth. In this case, Abraham receives heavenly information from angels in exchange for earthly food from animals. In other words, this transaction is an exchange of seed for flesh (like the descending manna and ascending quails from chapter 16).

“I will return to you at this time next year and Sarah your wife shall have a son.”

The information transmitted to Abraham by the messengers came in the form of a simple promise. This promise is a clear example of a seed because it contains great implications with very little basis in material reality. Also, the promise informs Abraham of a future son, which makes it a perfect example of a seed. What is a seed but the promise of a future offspring?

As illustrated in the following diagram, Abraham finds himself at the center of a cosmic transaction between heaven and earth. This is a typical example of trading flesh for seed to acquire knowledge.² On one side, Abraham asks a youth to prepare flesh. On the other, he asks Sarah to make bread. As discussed in chapter 16, making bread from flour is a process of materialization, whereas preparing meat from an animal is a process of refinement.



Abraham went to the herd and chose a calf, and then he gave it to the youth who hurried to prepare it.

² A clear example of trading flesh for seed can also be found in the story of Jack and the Beanstalk, when Jack trades his cow for “magic beans.”

The image of raising livestock in this story is significant because it points to the role of humanity as “raising the animal to lower the spiritual.” In particular, the act of choosing a calf (emphasis on choosing) indicates a process of refinement and of separating the “cream” from the common. Moreover, the flesh of the animal must then be cooked to become the body of these ‘heavenly’ messengers. This is also a process of refinement.

Abraham said to Sarah in the tent, “Take three measures of fine meal and knead it, and then make some cakes.”

The image of making bread in this story indicates a process of vulgarization. It means that something too fine (flour) has been materialized into something more tangible (bread). Importantly, the bread prepared by Sarah in this story is not even eaten by the angels. This odd omission may seem like a mistake, but it is actually a typical pattern in biblical cosmology. The ascending side of the transaction (the flesh) must be consumed by the angels, while the descending side (the bread) remains intact. These are simply the two sides of a single coin. One side feeds and the other side hosts.

As strange as these cosmic transactions may appear to modern interpreters, they are no different than what any individual performs on a daily basis. Humans refine matter into food to be integrated by the head into the body. This body is then able to host and support the human spirit, which is thereby able to manifest itself concretely in the world. Thus, matter is refined so that spirit can be materialized and vice versa. The only difference here is that the transaction is performed at the cosmic level with Abraham playing the role of mediator between spirit and matter.

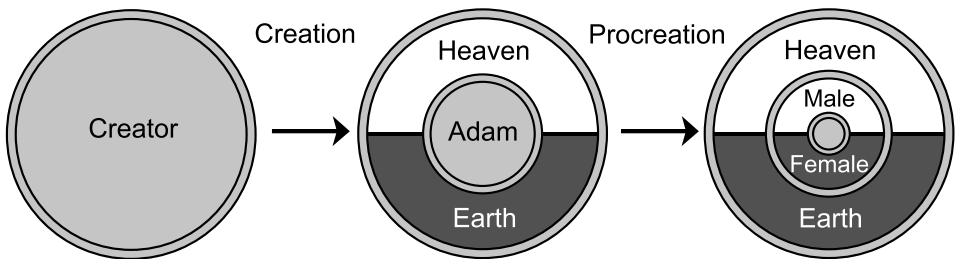
CHAPTER 19

SEXUALITY AS MICROCOSM: ADAM'S REPRODUCTION

God created the human in his image, in the image of God he created it, male [heaven] and female [earth] he created them.

The sexual revolution has been just as devastating to the spiritual worldview as the Copernican revolution. Therefore, if we wish to understand certain notions in the Bible, we must adopt a traditional perspective and forget about things like “test tube babies” and “gender reassignments.” Instead, we must simply recognize the duality of male and female as the basis of procreation. Only from this natural position does sexuality become a microcosmic union of heaven and earth.¹

In biblical cosmology, heaven and earth is the secondary cause of all manifestation. It is also the basic pattern from which all of reality was modeled, including the male and female duality in the context of procreation.



¹ Only the symbolism of male and female as principles of reproduction are discussed here. A more complete picture will be given in chapters 71 and 72.

Separating Adam into Male and Female (from Genesis 2:21)

God made the human fall asleep and took one of its sides and then closed the flesh in its place. God built the side he had taken from the human into a woman and brought her to the human.

Human: "This time, it is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. This shall be called woman because this was taken away from man."

Thus a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his woman, and they shall become one flesh.

As illustrated on the previous page, Adam is the higher principle at the source of gender division.² Therefore, like the Creator of the universe, Adam can reproduce a miniature image of himself, a child, through the reunion of that polarity. Thus, in order to create Adam in his image, God made Adam a creator or "reproducer" of his own image. Only then was the microcosm truly complete, when the image contained its own image within itself.

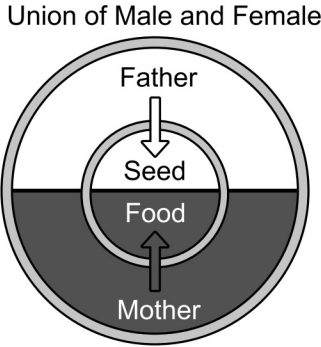
God said, "It is not good that the human is alone. I will make him a help as his opposite" (Genesis 2:18).

To truly grasp the significance of gender in the Bible, it is important to understand that Adam is the union of heaven and earth at the cosmic level, and that this union translates into a sexual union at the human level. Therefore, the male and female sides each re-present one half of the equation. The male is responsible for materializing meaning into seed, and the female is responsible for refining matter into food.³

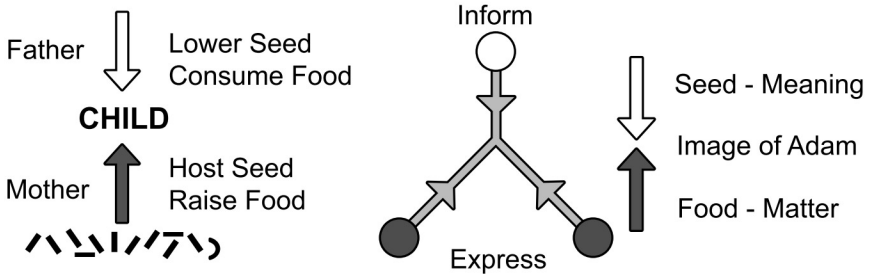
² The name "Adam" actually means "human" and refers to both male and female halves: *God created Adam in the image of God. He created them male and female, blessed them, and called their name Adam (Genesis 5:1-2).*

³ There is traditionally a strong connection between digestion and gestation because the womb is associated with the belly. Therefore, the seed apparently develops where the mother's own food is being stored.

On one side of the equation, the father produces the seed that implicitly contains the essence of humanity. Therefore, the role of the male is directly connected to heaven and language. On the other side of the equation, like the earth itself, the mother provides sustenance in the form of food. In particular, she raises food from her own body, first in the womb and then in the breast.



At the moment of their union, the seed’s meaning begins to inform the food, and the food’s matter begins to flesh out the seed. The seed consumes the food which turns into the body that hosts its meaning. In general, eating food is a human version of informing matter, while hosting seed is a human version of supporting and expressing meaning. These are the two sides of a single coin, which means the male and female roles are equally important in this cosmology.⁴



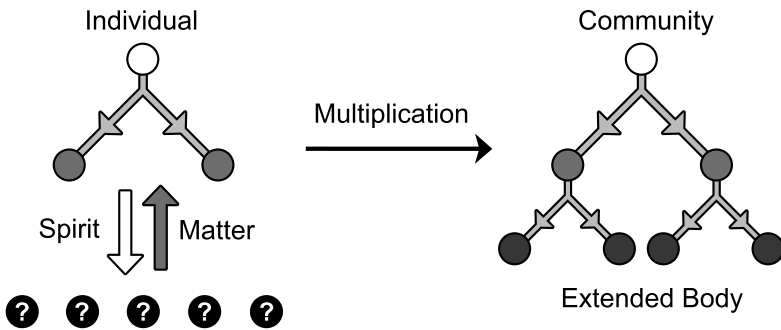
4 This cannot easily be reconciled with the scientific explanation of “how things work” at the molecular level. In this case, males and females contribute the same amount of information (DNA) while only females express it with matter. Hence, the male role is greatly diminished in a materialistic worldview.

CHAPTER 20

SEXUALITY AS MICROCOSM: ADAM'S MULTIPLICATION

God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth."

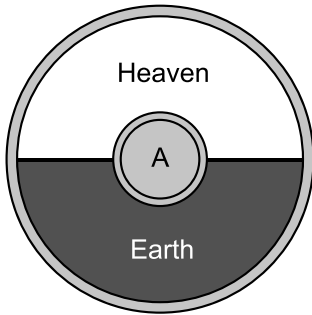
In the context of creation and the Garden of Eden, the word "Adam" simultaneously refers to an individual and humanity at large. Such interpretations are possible because Adam is the principle of the entire human race which is multiplied by a male-female dichotomy. As a result, humanity or "Adam" can increase the size of his "body" to populate the entire world.



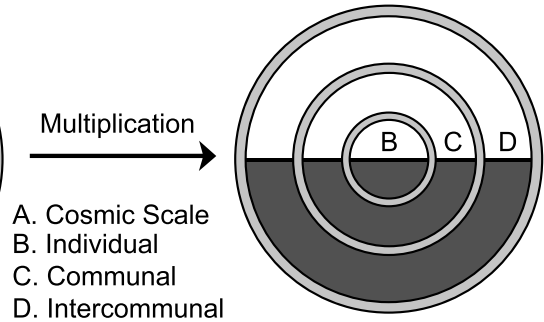
As illustrated above, the same fundamental patterns that determine an individual also determine a community of individuals. Society is also composed of a head (the leader) and a body (the population), where the head provides meaning and purpose in exchange for power and support from the body. Thus, Adam's ability to multiply himself produces a kind of macro-Adam with the same basic patterns as its members (a self-similar structure).

In biblical cosmology, the universe is a series of embedded representations of its cosmic principles. Therefore, every single word in the language of creation has a meaning that crosses multiple levels of reality, from the universal to the particular. In other words, the symbols of this language are neither metaphors nor similes, but words that point at once to different scales of organization.

Adam as Mediator in the Macrocosm



Adam as a Nested Microcosm



- A. Cosmic Scale
- B. Individual
- C. Communal
- D. Intercommunal

Because of these analogies, every story in the Bible can be read at multiple levels of interpretation. Most notably, every concept simultaneously refers to four scales of humanity: A) cosmic, B) individual, C) communal, and D) intercommunal.

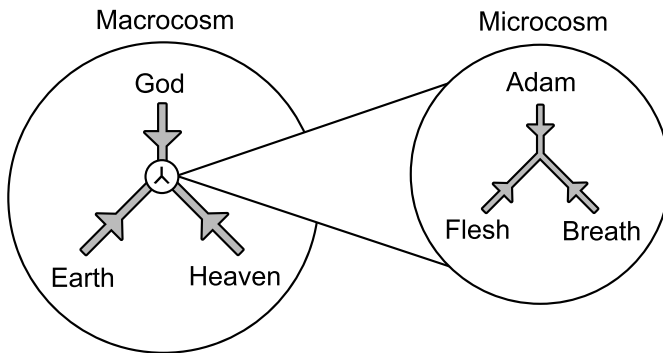
A) The cosmic level defines Adam as a mediator between heaven and earth with the responsibility of “hosting angels” and “naming animals.”

B) The individual level defines Adam as the sum of his body parts: head, heart, arms, legs, etc. It involves joining heaven and earth at the individual scale by correctly expressing the intentions of the head with the actions of the arms and legs.

C) The communal level is that of an entire society and the interactions between its members. It involves joining heaven and earth at the communal scale by formulating a common identity as leader and expressing its laws as member.

D) The intercommunal level is that of subgroups within a whole. For example, it may involve the interactions of social classes in a greater society or different nations in an empire.

The vocabulary of the language of creation can be interpreted at the cosmic scale and a variety of human scales. Thus, cosmic concepts like 'heaven' and 'earth' are translated into spirit and body, where they equally apply to individuals, nations, and empires, with implications that cross many levels of interpretation.



For each of these scales, notions like body and soul follow the same basic patterns. For example, at the communal level, there must be an invisible principle or “spirit” above a mass of individuals for its members to act in tandem. In this case, breath also plays a crucial role in connecting the head of the community to its body because every society needs a common discourse to link its population to its abstract identity.

Learning to perceive the universe in terms of microcosms is a necessary step towards rediscovering the spiritual worldview. These various levels of interpretation will become increasingly important in the following sections of this commentary as the key to deciphering biblical narratives.

CHAPTER 21

EXAMPLE: NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAMS II

This image, which was large and whose brightness was surpassing, stood before you . . .

Nebuchadnezzar's story (see chapter 12) is an example of seeing reality in terms of microcosms at different scales of interpretation.

Nebuchadnezzar's Statue (from Daniel 2:31)

This image, which was large and whose brightness was surpassing, stood before you . . .

Its head was fine gold.

Its chest and arms were silver.

Its belly and thighs were brass.

Its legs were iron, and its feet were iron and clay.

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the statue itself corresponds to the individual scale of interpretation because it is a human figure with its body parts: head, chest, arms, legs, etc. The head is the source of breath and language for the body, so it is made from the brightest and rarest of metals. The lower levels are sources of power (arms) and support (legs), so they are made from harder and more common metals.

Because of analogies between different levels of human organization, Daniel interprets the individual imagery of Nebuchadnezzar's dream at a completely different scale (the intercommunal scale).

Daniel's Interpretation (from Daniel 2:38-42)

You, O king, are the head of gold to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom.

After you shall rise an inferior kingdom and a third kingdom of brass to rule over all the earth. The fourth kingdom will be strong as iron and will break them all into pieces. The feet and toes, partly clay and iron, will be a divided kingdom, strong and partly broken.

In Daniel's interpretation, the layers of the body are translated into a series of empires that gradually become less coherent as they grow in power and size. The first empire starts with a high degree of meaning and a low degree of corporeality, but the empires that succeed it can only increase in corporeality at the price of their spiritual coherence.

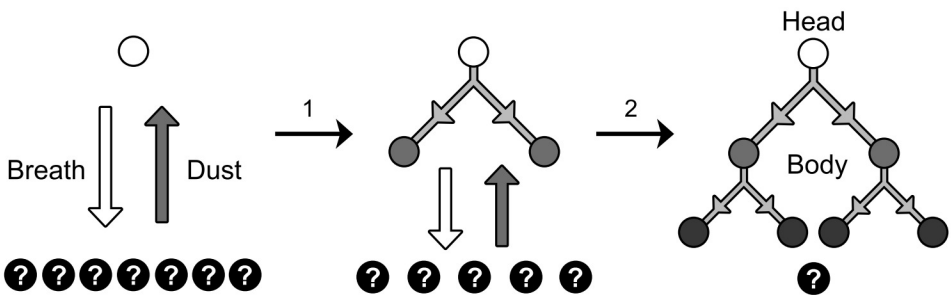
Importantly, Nebuchadnezzar's dream could have also been interpreted at the communal scale, in terms of social classes. In that case, there would be a clear analogy with the degree of authority and power of the following social classes: priests, nobles, merchants, and laborers. As will be discovered in this commentary, such interconnected analogies between different scales are commonplace in ancient cosmology.

CHAPTER 22

EXAMPLE: RAISING A NATION FROM THE EARTH

God formed the human from the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life.

Due to analogies between the cosmos and human organization, every single story in the Bible can be interpreted at multiple scales of reality. For example, the verse quoted above can equally be interpreted at the individual and communal scales. In both cases, a corporeal mass is raised from the “dust of the ground” to form a body capable of hosting a spiritual identity.



The following example from the book of Exodus is meant to be interpreted according to this pattern. In this scenario, Moses climbs the holy mountain to receive a heavenly name from God. He then descends the mountain to transmit this identity to the nation of Israel and raise them from slavery in Egypt.¹

¹ This narrative has been greatly simplified to focus on the role of Moses as a mediator between heaven and earth.

Lowering a Name and Raising a Nation (from Exodus 3)

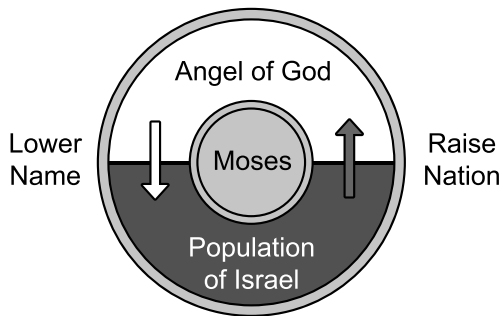
Moses came to the mountain of God, and the Angel of the Lord appeared in a flame at the center of a bush that burned without being consumed.

God: "I have come down to deliver my people from Egypt and raise them up from that earth . . ."

Moses: "When I say to the children of Israel that the God of their fathers has sent me, they shall ask, 'What is his name?' and what shall I say?"

God: "I am what I am . . . you shall say to the children of Israel that BEING has sent you."

The story of the Exodus is a detailed reiteration of the following verse: *God formed the human from the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life.* In this context, the "raised dust" is the population of Israel, stranded in the land of Egypt, and the "lowered breath" is the Angel of the Lord, speaking in the name of God on the mountain.²



I have descended to deliver my people from Egypt and raise them up from that earth.

As discussed in previous chapters, the descending and ascending influences are irrevocably linked. God can lower his identity through the vehicles of meaning and language, but this invisible breath must be met from below with a body that physically expresses its meaning.

² Like the tree, the mountain is a symbol of the spatial axis (see chapter 32).

When they ask, “What is his name?” What shall I say? I am what I am . . . you shall say that BEING has sent you.

In this narrative, God’s identity is expressed as a singular name, which is the clearest example of a ‘seed’ in the Bible. This name is a spiritual principle (a point of wisdom) with great ramifications. As an identity, “being” suggests nothing specific but implicitly contains all of creation in its scope. Thus, as detailed in the following example, the revelation of God’s identity was only the first step towards the materialization of this heavenly seed.

Lowering Laws and Raising Deeds (from Exodus 19:1-8)

After the children of Israel left the land of Egypt, they came into the wilderness of Sinai . . . and encamped before the mountain. Moses ascended to God, who called him from the mountain.

God: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I lifted you on eagles’ wings³ and brought you to me. If you hear my voice and keep my covenant . . . you shall be a kingdom of priests and a sacred nation.”

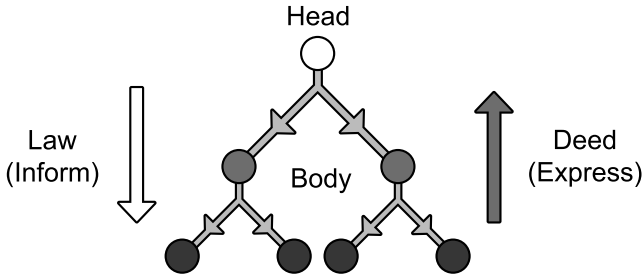
Moses came down the mountain and called the elders. He then transmitted all the words commanded to him by God. All the people answered together, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do!” Moses reported the words of the people back to the Lord.

In this story, the materialization of God’s identity required the following agreement between spiritual and corporeal realities: *All that the Lord has spoken [in breath] we will do [in body].*

At the communal level, an agreement or “covenant” between heaven and earth implies proper exchanges of laws and deeds. God provides a spiritual identity or “soul” from heaven, and the population provides physical expression or “body” from the earth. This exchange is no different than how a head and a body cooperate at the individual

³ The ascending eagles of this narrative should be compared to the ascending quails (see chapter 16) opposite the descending manna.

level. In this case, an agreement must be reached between the spirit and the flesh by which the body correctly expresses the ideas of the mind in exchange for the leadership and direction of the head. Similarly, at the communal level, the population of Israel becomes a great physical body for God's spirit when it agrees to follow divine law.



CHAPTER 23

EXAMPLE: MATERIALIZING LAWS FROM HEAVEN

God formed the human from the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life.

In the previous chapter, a covenant between God and Israel was made by which an entire population agreed to perform with deeds every word that God had spoken. To fully grasp the implications of this idea, it is important to realize that Mosaic Law is more than just a means of preserving social order. It is also a way to express a spiritual identity. In other words, every law is a specific ramification of God's identity at the level of human interactions.

What shall I say if they ask "What is his name?" I am what I am . . .

The people answered, "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do."

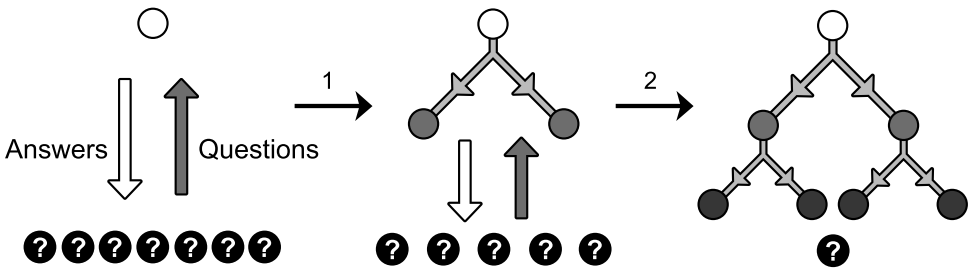
Even though God's name is extremely simple, it fully encapsulates the agreement between Israel and God to "perform with deeds everything spoken with words" or "I am [in deed] what I am [in word]" or "I am [on earth] what I am [in heaven]." So even though it appears to say very little, this name perfectly symbolizes the seed that contains the entire agreement in principle. This "cosmic seed" resembles an axiom in mathematics, a self-evident principle that cannot be proven due to its simplicity but from which everything must derive.

As such, the name of God is the principle of all Mosaic Laws. For example, a law like "thou shall not lie" is an obvious expression of this identity at the human level. The only difference, in this case, is that

it was expressed in negative terms. When articulated positively, this law becomes: “thou shall be true” or “words must agree with facts” or “heaven must agree with earth.” All of these formulations express the same identity (I am what I am) at different scales of reality.

In theory, every single Mosaic Law can be derived as a practical implication of God’s identity. However, it would be counterproductive to examine the corpus of the law with this intention. Instead, we will focus entirely on a single example—thou shall not kill—to demonstrate how a trivial law expresses its ramifications or “materializes itself” at the level of human interactions.

Thou shall not kill . . . But are all murders equal? What if I kill my enemy? My parents? My child? My servant? My dog? What if I kill someone in an accident or in self-defense? What if I injure someone in a fight and they lose their livelihood and eventually die? What if I fight with a woman and she loses her unborn child as a result? What if my child, servant, or dog kills someone? Who is responsible? What if my dog kills my neighbor’s dog? What if it happens again and again? What if I kill someone who requested it? What if I kill myself? (see Exodus 21 for answers to some of these questions).



These are the kinds of questions that arise when a law is applied to the complexity of human interactions and develops into a series of branches. This concretization is essentially what it means for God to “blow into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life.” It refers to a process of materialization in which a purely spiritual identity is “fleshed out” into its practical ramifications.

In the context of biblical cosmology, it is always important to remember that 'earth' is not just a storehouse of matter but of enigmatic 'darkness,' to be answered by the 'light' of a higher identity. In this manner, specific laws are formed by the descent of a metaphysical principle into the details of corporeal reality. This material obscurity is necessary to reveal the identity of God to humanity. Otherwise, the highest principles would be too abstract and simple to know.¹

On the whole, there must be an exchange between heaven and earth for the knowledge of God within creation. God's identity must lower itself into practical reality by elaborating laws, and the masses of Israelites must raise themselves into significance by embodying them as deeds. Laws bring light and meaning to human events, and human questions or "problems" provide tangible expressions for God's spirit. Ultimately, the purpose of these interactions is for Adam to fully embody the image of God at the communal scale.

1 As discussed in the following section, the Law is analogous to a tree and the deeds to its fruits. These fruits are concrete facts that point to a higher identity, or "fruits with their seed in them." God's identity, which has so far been translated as "I am what I am," could also be translated as "I shall be what I shall be." This further confirms the symbolism of the seed as a principle that "is not yet what it shall be" because it must be planted in the earth to fully be (in fact) what it is (in theory).

CHAPTER 24

EXAMPLE: AUTHORITY AND POWER

God formed the human from the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life.

The reader may refer to Exodus 18 for the full text of the narrative below, which has been greatly simplified in this example.

Lowering Authority and Raising Power (from Exodus 18)

Jethro [Moses's father-in-law] entered the wilderness where Moses camped at God's mountain. He saw Moses judging the people and how they all stood over him from morning until evening.

Jethro: "Why do you sit alone with all the people standing over you from morning until evening?"

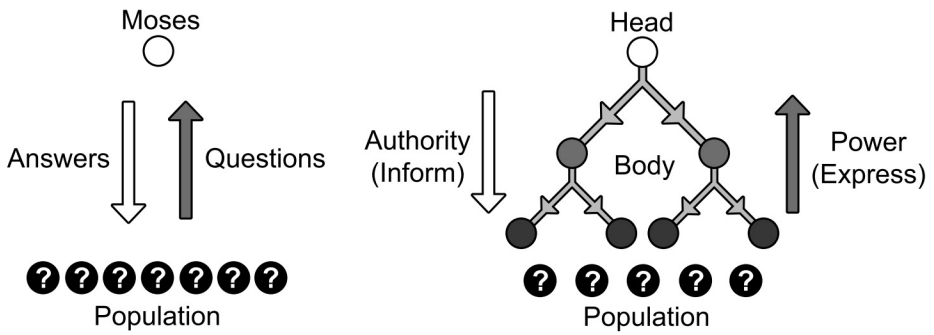
Moses: "I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the laws of God."

Jethro: "You will surely wear yourself out, along with this people, because it is too heavy for you alone."

Moses chose capable men and made them heads over the people. They were rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. The important causes they brought to Moses but every small matter they judged themselves.

This narrative is another typical example of "lowering breath" and "raising dust" to form a human being at the communal scale. In this situation, each judicial case is an obscure enigma to be answered by the

principles of heavenly law. As illustrated below, this story provides an important example of exchanging authority for power at the communal level. On the left, Moses begins as the sole teacher of an entire population. However, this job was “too heavy for him alone.”¹ Therefore, as shown below on the right, he distributed his authority into a communal body to deliver a more powerful expression of the Law.



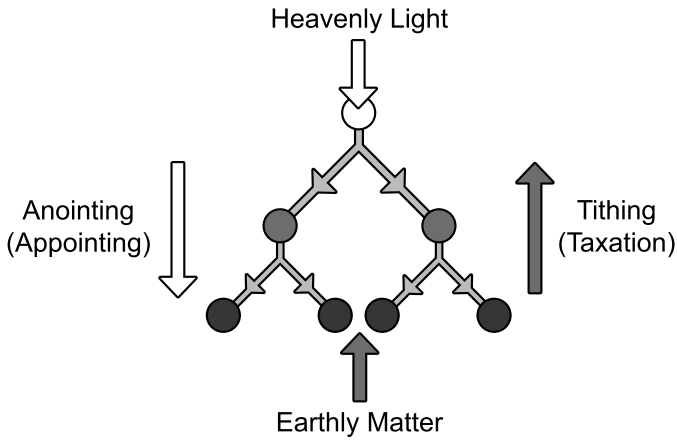
Importantly, this structure is analogous to the human body, with the top as the head and the lower levels as the limbs that support it. On the whole, this narrative is analogous to a person eating food to increase his body, or to a sexual union between male and female. In the latter case, Moses is the heavenly seed that contains the answers in principle, and the population is the earthly flesh that questions, supports, and then expresses the answers.

Moses chose capable men as heads over the people . . . and every small matter they judged themselves.

As described in the passage above, this union also implies refining matter and materializing seed. On the one hand, “choosing capable men” is a clear example of raising matter, whereas “every small matter they judged themselves” implies a popularization or vulgarization of the law. This means that each level received less and less insight into the highest principles of the law.

¹ The reader should compare this to: *It is not good that the human is alone; I will make him a help as his opposite* (Genesis 2:18).

In the Bible, transmissions of power and authority at the communal level are usually symbolized by tithing and anointing. Tithing is a transmission of matter and power from below, in which portions of material resources are “offered up” to support the head, and anointing is a transmission of meaning and authority (or ‘light’) from above².



Of course, there is nothing mysterious about any of these ideas because they are still in effect in modern societies. However, in today’s world, these interactions are seen only as the practical necessities of a state, while they were probably seen as representations of cosmic patterns in the ancient world. In that context, anointing and tithing were translations of heavenly and earthly influences at the communal scale.

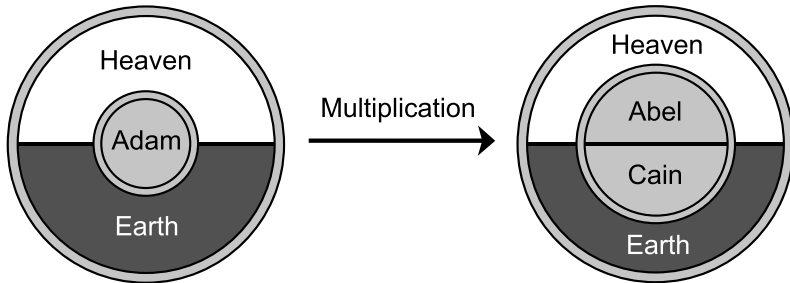
2 Oil resembles golden light, and everything it covers becomes glossy and reflects light. Anointing is making material facts capable of reflecting light/meaning from above. In addition, oil (שמן) was also the fuel of ancient lamps. So, like breath (נשמה), it served as a vehicle of light/meaning.

CHAPTER 25

ADAM'S DESCENDANTS AS MICROCOSM

Abel was a herder of flocks and Cain was a worker of the ground . . .

Like all stories in the Bible, the story of Cain and Abel is a simple narrative with tremendous implications. For that reason, its meaning cannot be fully examined at this point. Instead, the purpose of this chapter is to recognize the cosmic patterns of heaven and earth and their implications in this narrative.



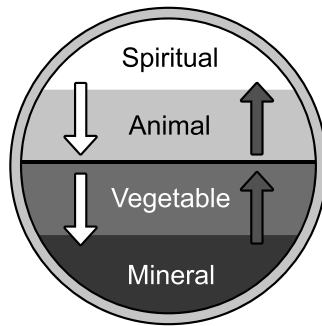
As illustrated above, Cain and Abel are expressions of Adam in the contexts of heaven and earth. More precisely, Cain embodies humanity in the context of earth, and Abel embodies humanity in the context of heaven. These are specializations of Adam's cosmic role as mediator between heaven and earth.

The Farmer and the Pastor (from Genesis 4)

The human knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have acquired a man with the help of the Lord." She then gave birth to his brother Abel.

*Abel was a herder of flocks and Cain was a worker of the ground. Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the fruits of the ground, and Abel brought an offering from the fat of the firstborns of his flock. The Lord regarded Abel and his offering but disregarded Cain and his offering.*¹

These two specializations are extremely important in the Bible as symbols of the distinction between spiritual and material mediation. In this context, Abel is the prototype of heavenly authority and priesthood at the communal level. He is a contemplative individual concerned with spiritual matters and the higher meaning of reality. On the other hand, Cain is the prototype of earthly power and kingship at the communal level. He is more concerned with possessing the land and dealing with its practical realities.



As illustrated above, God accepts the offering of Abel rather than Cain because one is higher than the other in the vertical space of this cosmology. In this hierarchy of meaning and matter, the mineral level is closest to “meaningless matter” while the spiritual level is closest to “intangible meaning.” These are essentially levels of nutrition by which minerals sustain vegetable life, vegetable matter sustains animal life, and animal flesh sustains spiritual life.

In this context, Abel was responsible for lowering the spiritual into the animal and raising the animal into the spiritual. Therefore, Abel is also the prototype of the priest who specializes in offering refined

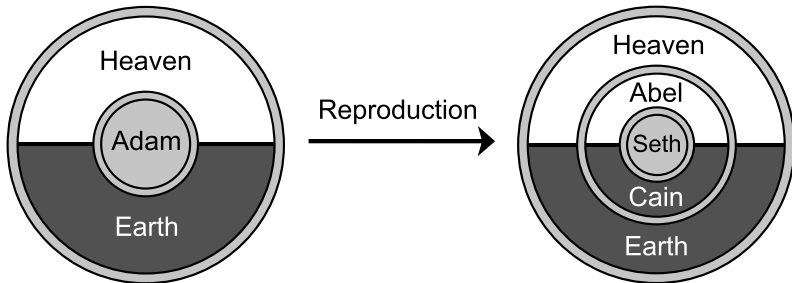
¹ Cain and Abel are “opposite twins” because they were born from the same knowledge. This pattern—a single identity expressed as opposites—is important in symbolism. A similar structure can also be found in the story of Esau and Jacob.

flesh to God. On the other hand, Cain was responsible for lowering the vegetable into the mineral and raising the mineral into the vegetable. Thus, Cain and his offspring are the prototypes of builders and smiths who specialize in making tools and vessels from refined minerals (bricks and metals).

The basic pattern of this story can be interpreted at many scales of reality, as follows: 1) the body and the spirit at the individual level, 2) the kingly and the priestly at the communal level, and 3) materially and spiritually inclined nations at the intercommunal level.

Adam knew his wife again. She bore a son and called his name Seth, “For God has set for me another seed under Abel because Cain killed him” (Genesis 4:25).

In a perfect world, Cain and Abel would have reached an agreement by which spiritual and material realities would have been joined correctly. In that case, Abel would cover Cain with spiritual meaning from heaven, and Cain would support Abel with physical power from the earth. Unfortunately, this crucial agreement between authority and power could not be reached at this juncture.²

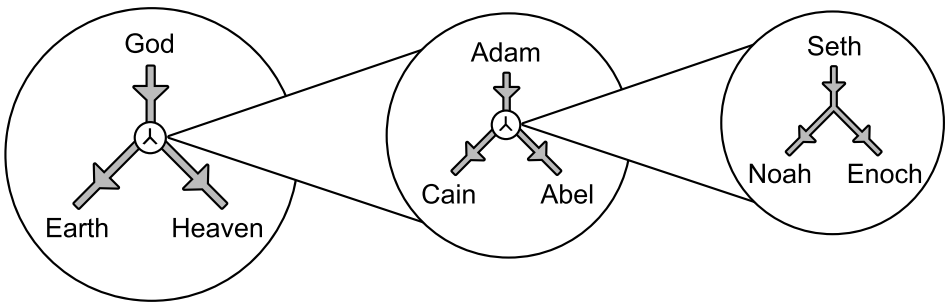


Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and bore a son in his image, and he called his name Seth (Genesis 5:3).

² “Abel” means “breath” with the connotation of vanity because he was “just breath” or “bodiless meaning.” This means that Abel was full of lofty ideas without concrete facts to support them. He was a great spirit without physical power. On the other hand, the word “Cain” is connected to “nest” because Cain’s most important function was to build a stable physical reality (a temple or “nest”) to host a higher spiritual identity.

As illustrated in the previous diagram, Adam’s third son, Seth, symbolizes a return to the image of Adam, which is also the image of God. The following verse also indicates a recovery of the image of Adam (humanity) on a smaller scale and a renewed communication with a heavenly identity (the name of God). In general, Seth’s lineage represents a new and more successful attempt at finding an agreement between heaven and earth.

To Seth was born a son. He called his name Enosh [humanity], and they started calling on the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:26).



In general, the genealogy of Adam is built around a series of embedded microcosms, where the same patterns are reiterated at various scales. Thus, even in the generations of Seth, there is another reiteration of the basic cosmic pattern. In this case, Enoch dealt with higher spiritual levels, whereas Noah dealt with animal and material levels.³

³ There are widely held traditions about Enoch’s communion with angels and his final ascent into heaven. As for Noah, his association with Cain is clear as the builder of the ark and as a “man of the ground” (Gen 9: 20).

CHAPTER 26

EXAMPLE: BUILDING THE TEMPLE I

Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them . . .

When Moses encountered God on the mountain, legislation came in two forms: 1) laws for the people and 2) plans for the temple. Both correspond to building a body to host the presence of God's breath below. In general, the purpose of these laws was to arrange the visible facts of society to embody the invisible spirit of God.

Lowering a Plan and Raising Materials (from Exodus 25)

Speak to the children of Israel, to take an offering [a raising] of gold, silver, and brass . . . and make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

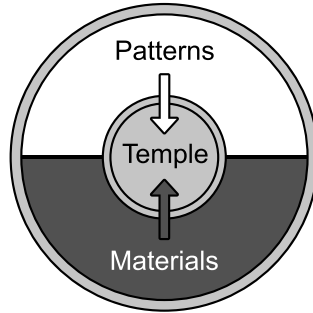
Make the sanctuary according to the patterns I have shown you . . . Make an ark overlaid with gold . . . and put the testimony in the ark. You shall make two cherubim of gold facing each other at the two ends of the ark-cover . . .

There I will meet you and speak from between the cherubim.

The plans or "patterns" of the temple have the same function as the social laws, with rules that descend even farther into material reality. Accordingly, various metals and materials were raised from the dust with the population of Israel.¹

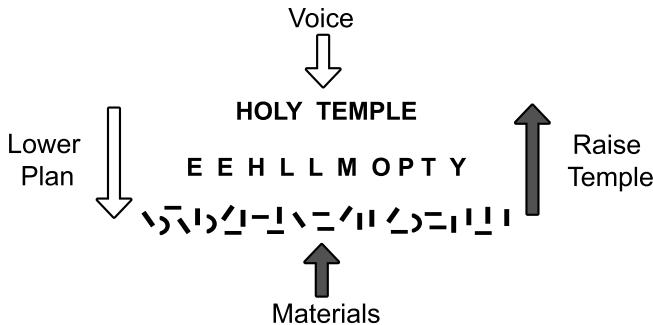
¹ Precious metals are a perfect example of "raised matter" because they are refined from the soil and polished to reflect the light. Importantly, the task of "raising matter" is explicitly given to women in Exodus 3:21-22.

Every woman shall ask her neighbor for vessels of silver and gold, and for clothing. You shall put these upon your sons and daughters, and you shall spoil the Egyptians (Exodus 3:21-22).



Make the sanctuary . . . and put the testimony in the ark . . . There I will speak from between the two cherubim.

Given our current materialism, the best way to understand the role of the temple is through analogies with our written language. Like a written word, the temple is made from a collection of physical parts arranged by the rules of an arcane language. The purpose of this “body” is to host an invisible “breath.” This pattern is then reiterated within the temple itself (in the Ark of the Covenant) where the written tablets (the testimony) physically host the spoken laws of God.



With the help of the image above, it is easier to understand why “lowering a plan” and “raising a temple” are the two sides of a single process. In this example, the meaning at the top of the structure could not have been expressed on the page without the rules of language (alphabet, vocabulary, and grammar) to organize these marks in a very specific manner. Moreover, if any of these marks had been

misplaced, the resulting expression might have been meaningless; or worse, it might have hosted a completely different meaning or “spirit” (for instance, EMPTY HELLO).

You shall make loops of blue on the edge of the curtains on both sets . . . and fifty clasps of gold coupling the curtains one to another, that the tabernacle be made a single whole (from Exodus 26).

With the analogy of written language, it is easier to understand why the plans of the temple are so detailed and complicated. These patterns are examples of “lowering meaning” into the lowest depths of material reality. At these levels, they are like the rules of an alphabet because they organize “marks” in a very detailed manner. Similarly, if we were to describe how to embody the meaning of “holy temple” on this page, the plans for its construction might look something like this:

You shall make nine vertical marks, ten horizontal marks, and six slanted marks. Three of the slanted marks shall be left-leaning, and three shall be right-leaning, etc. You shall make two of the following patterns: three horizontal marks joined to the right of one vertical mark in equal distance, etc. (refer to the previous image).

Of course, these technical rules will only make sense to those who already understand the written English language. Even then, the individual patterns of the letters remain somewhat meaningless until they are brought together with a higher set of rules (vocabulary and grammar). Similarly, in the context of building the actual temple from wood, metal, and textiles, we might ask why there must be fifty loops in the curtains, or why they should be blue, or why the clasps must be golden and placed opposite each other, etc. As before, these detailed rules will only make sense to those who are familiar with the arcane language of this temple, which was strictly reserved to the priesthood.²

² Building the temple is a job (raising minerals) that belongs to kingly or warrior-like tribes such as Judah and Dan. Ultimately, the responsibility of building the temple will belong to King Solomon, hailing from the tribe of Judah.

CHAPTER 27

EXAMPLE: BUILDING THE TEMPLE II

Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them . . .

Without a doubt, the clearest example of cosmic mediation in the Bible can be found in the context of the temple. Unfortunately, much like the legislation of Moses, this subject is far too elaborate to examine in this commentary. Instead, it will be more useful to simply recognize the overarching patterns of the temple and its rituals.

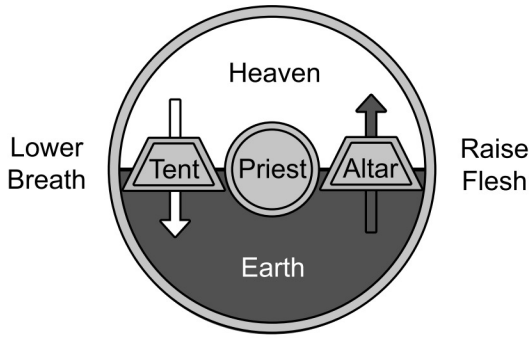
Between the Altar and the Tent (from Exodus 29:44-45)

I will sanctify the tent of meeting and the Altar, and Aaron and his sons I will sanctify as my priest.

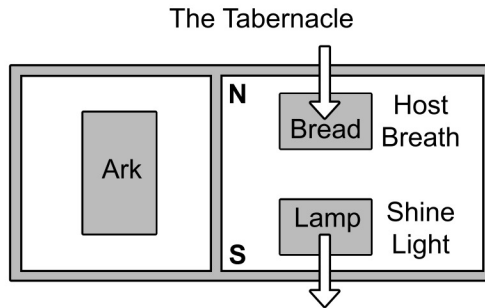
I will dwell among the children of Israel and be their God, and they will know that I am the Lord their God . . .

As summed up in the passage above, the general structure of the temple was quite simple. It essentially consisted of the following two parts: 1) an altar on the east side, and 2) a tent on the west side.

This basic structure simply corresponds to the two transactions between heaven and earth with a priest mediating between them. On one side, the purpose of the altar was to refine matter or “raise flesh into heaven.” On the other side, the purpose of the tent was to materialize meaning or “lower breath into the earth.” Together, the altar and the tent were technologies that transformed matter into meaning and vice versa.



The main purpose of the altar was to consume flesh below and raise it into heaven as smoke. This transaction should be understood as a form of cosmic taxation by which parts of the flesh were allotted to the priestly hierarchy while others were carried further up into heaven. In general, the altar was the place where taxes, in the form of flesh, food, and even money, were “offered up” in exchange for leadership from heaven in the form of revealed information or ‘light.’



On the opposite end of the temple, the purpose of the tent was to “materialize breath” to inform matter below. So, the tent was both a host for spiritual principles and a transmitter of meaningful information. The ritual objects in the tent were specifically designed for these functions. On the north side was a table of “showbread” which hosted the invisible breath of God, and on the south side was the menorah which transmitted visible light beyond the temple.¹

1 The reader should compare the showbread in the temple to the bread made from manna and the bread made by Sarah in the tent to host the angels. These are discussed in chapters 16 and 18 as examples of “materializations.”

Finally, the most sacred part of the temple, the Ark of the Covenant, was located on the westernmost side, in the holy of holies. This golden box was meant to reflect, reproduce, and even re-present God within creation. To understand the role of the Ark, it is important to recognize the difference between receiving a specific commandment from God and hosting the very presence of God. This is comparable to the difference between Adam giving names to the animals versus seed to his wife. In the first case, Adam merely provides a specific identity for the animal. In the second case, there is a transmission of Adam's full identity from the male half to be reproduced within a female half.

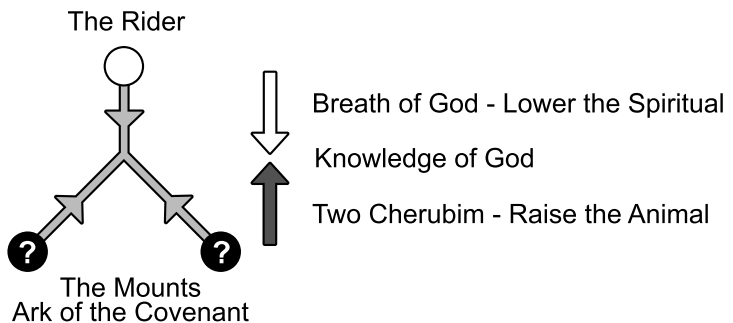
To appreciate the general meaning of these structures, it is only necessary to understand the basic interactions between heaven and earth. Simply stated, one must "feed the spiritual" to make it visible, explicit, detailed, and tangible. This pattern is self-evident in biblical cosmology, and it is only because of materialism that these rituals seem cryptic to modern interpreters.

CHAPTER 28

EXAMPLE: THE CHERUBIM OF EZEKIEL II

Each cherub had four faces: a human, a lion on the right, a bull on the left, and an eagle.

The creatures referred to as “Cherubim” in the Bible are simply the carriers or mounts of God. This relationship is described clearly in Psalms 18:10 and in the visions of Ezekiel, where the cherubim are depicted as carrying the chariot of God. This supporting role was also the purpose of the cherubim located on the Ark within the tabernacle.



The Cherubim above the Ark (from Exodus 25:18-22)

You shall make two cherubim of gold at the two ends of the ark-cover. Make one cherub at the one end and one cherub at the other, of one piece with the ark-cover. Their wings shall be spread upwards, shielding the ark-cover, with their faces towards each other. There I will meet you and speak from between the two cherubim.

As material supports, these mysterious beasts symbolized the obscure questions to be answered by a higher principle. They are just another example of the corporeal ‘darkness’ needed in the process of knowledge to express and support the implicit ‘light’ of God’s word. In this sense, the cherubim were identical to the Egyptian and Greek sphinx, posing their enigmas and swallowing whoever failed to answer them. As such, they were also guardians of higher knowledge against those who failed to recognize the spiritual truth that answered the enigma. Thus, in the Bible, the cherubim are the keepers of the Garden after the fall.

God exiled the human, and he placed before the Garden of Eden the cherubim . . . to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24).

The Tetramorphic Cherubs (from Ezekiel 1)

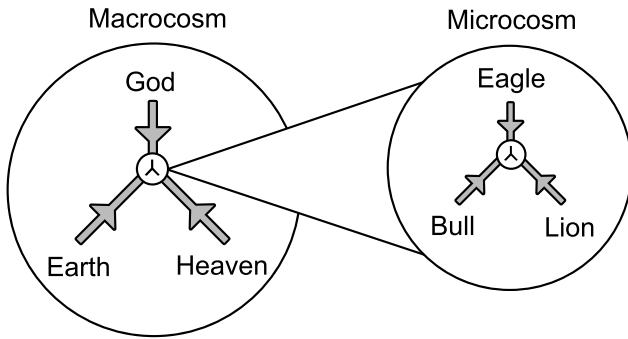
As I was among the captives by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. A stormy wind came from the north, and a great cloud with fire flashing up . . . From its center came the image of four living beings that looked like the image of Adam.

Each one had four faces: a human, a lion on the right, a bull on the left, and an eagle . . . Over the heads of the living beings was the image of an expanse, and on it was the image of a throne, and on the image of the throne was an image that looked like Adam.¹

Importantly, the cherubim are not merely the supports of mundane knowledge, but of divine knowledge or meta-knowledge. This type of knowledge is infinitely greater than the knowledge of created things because it transcends its own symbolic structures (see chapter 14).

¹ The word “Chebar” (כבר) in this passage is a permutation of “cherub” (כרוב) and “rachab” (רכב) which means “ride.” This alludes to the beasts as mounts that support and express the spirit that rides them. This “expression” is also alluded to in the statement “the heavens were opened,” which means the same as “stretching out the heavens by understanding” (Jeremiah 51:15).

O Lord . . . that sits upon the cherubim, you are the God of all the kingdoms of the earth . . . you have made both heaven and earth (2 Kings 19:15).



As illustrated above, the dichotomy of the lion and the bull symbolizes the interactions between meaning and matter. More specifically, the lion eats the flesh of the bull which in turn becomes the body that hosts the lion's spirit. Therefore, this pattern is a miniature re-presentation of the basic interactions between heaven/spirit and earth/body as described throughout this section.

In addition, the lion and the bull are closely connected to the altar and the tent. On the east side, the altar of fire consumes the flesh of the offering; the lion eats the bull's flesh, and on the west side, the Tabernacle hosts a heavenly breath; the bull becomes the lion's body.² These interactions are like the two sides of a coin, which is why the lion and the bull are perceived as facets or "faces" of a single entity.

Although the pattern of the tetramorph may seem cryptic from a materialistic perspective, it symbolizes the basic cognitive structure which underlies all known phenomenon. Therefore, from a spiritual perspective, this fundamental pattern is reiterated in all things and at all scales of reality.

² In Ezekiel 43:15-16, the word for altar or hearth is actually "ariel" (lion-of-God). Moreover, the altar and the tent are often associated with the 'sun' and the 'moon' in Judaic tradition, as are the lion and the ox in many traditions.

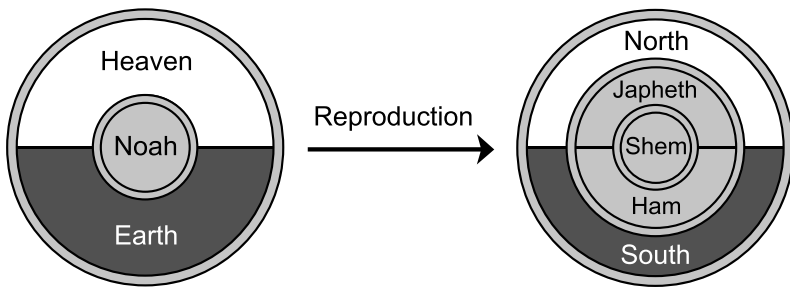
CHAPTER 29

NOAH'S DESCENDANTS AS MICROCOSM

God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth."

The main purpose of this chapter is to briefly examine a form of spatial syntax found in the Bible. It is based on a horizontal representation of heaven and earth that is centered on the Middle East and expands south toward Africa and north toward Eurasia. In parallel, this symbolism is based on the distribution of Noah's descendants in the ancient world.

Noah bore three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth . . .



Geographically, these associations simply correspond to the altitudes of those lands relative to the region of Canaan (which acted as a bridge between Africa and Eurasia). This topography was clearly visible in ancient times from the current of the Jordan River, which started in the mountains of Lebanon in the north and flowed toward the Dead Sea at the edges of Edom in the south.

For this reason, Israel's Egyptian exile is always described as a "descent" into Egypt, because it was known to be lower than Canaan. Of course, from a historical and scientific perspective, this topographical information is mildly relevant. However, in a cosmology based on meaning and knowledge, this journey was associated with traveling into the depths of the 'earth.'

Northern Heights and Southern Depths (from Isaiah 14:13)

You said in your heart, "I will ascend into heaven, above the stars of God will I exalt my throne, and I will sit upon the mount of meeting, in the uttermost parts of the north . . ."

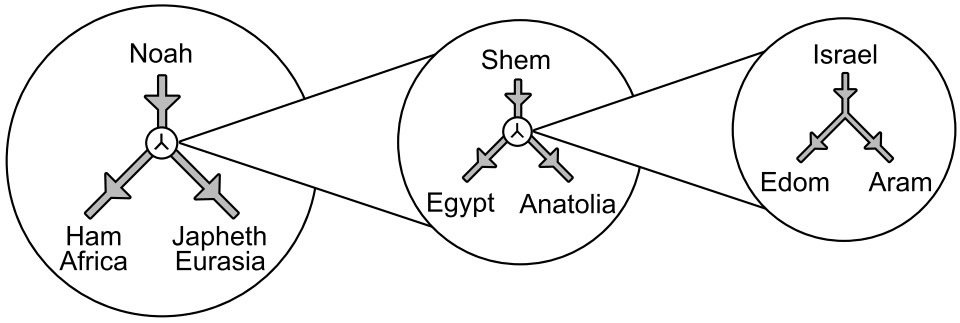
"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, and I will be like the Most High . . . Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the uttermost parts of the pit."

As implied above, the northern regions represented the heights of heaven, and the southern regions represented the depths of the earth. This symbolic geography is especially important in the stories of the patriarchs who constantly traveled between the north and the south.

From the land of Canaan, traveling south towards the land of Egypt corresponded to a long subterranean descent. The purpose of these journeys was always to "acquire material sustenance" from strangers in the form of food, population, and materials. Conversely, ascending north into Aram was always about returning to visit their kin, the source of their identity.¹

As illustrated in the following diagram, Shem's territory (the Middle Eastern region) is a microcosm of the world. In this picture, Egypt acted as a bridge to Africa, and Anatolia acted as a bridge to Eurasia. Thus, Shem was a mediator between sedentary Hamitic influences from Egypt and Ethiopia in the south-west and volatile Japhetic influences from the Eurasian steppes in the north-east.

1 This is particularly clear in the story of Jacob, where he travels to his uncle Laban to get "souls" or "seeds" from the north (heaven). He later travels to Egypt in order to "multiply greatly" in the south (earth).



The Descendants of Noah (from Genesis 10:1)

These are the generations of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth . . . The sons of Ham were Cush [Ethiopia], and Mizraim [Egypt], and Put [Libya], and Canaan.

Cush begot Nimrod who became powerful in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord . . . and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh.

Like Cain, the descendants of Ham are kingly prototypes credited with building the first cities and ruling over powerful empires. Nimrod is called a “hunter” which points to his ability to kill wild animals as opposed to pasturing domesticated animals. This is the expression of power in contrast with authority, an important pattern that is repeated in the relationship between Jacob and Esau.²

These patterns are representations of the conflicted relationship between Cain and Abel, which is itself a representation of the relationship between earth and heaven. These reiterated patterns of earthly power versus heavenly authority are reflected in the geography of biblical narratives. Once these structures have been recognized, many stories in the Bible no longer appear as random events. Instead, they are transformed into coherent narratives, leading to the union of heaven and earth at the center of creation.

² Esau (also called Edom) is identified in the Bible as a nation of kings while Israel is called a nation of priests (compare Genesis 36:31 with Exodus 19:6).

CHAPTER 30

EXAMPLE: JACOB'S LADDER

A ladder stood on the earth with its top in heaven, and God's messengers were ascending and descending . . .

The story of Jacob's ladder was chosen as a final example for this section because it demonstrates many of the notions presented so far, including the spatial associations discussed in the previous chapter. It describes Jacob's journey as he fled from his brother Esau, in the south, to his uncle Laban, in the north.

Jacob's Ladder (from Genesis 27:42 and 28:10-22)

Rebecca said to Jacob, "Your brother Esau wishes to kill you, so arise and flee to my brother Laban, to Haran, and dwell with him until your brother's wrath has subsided . . ."

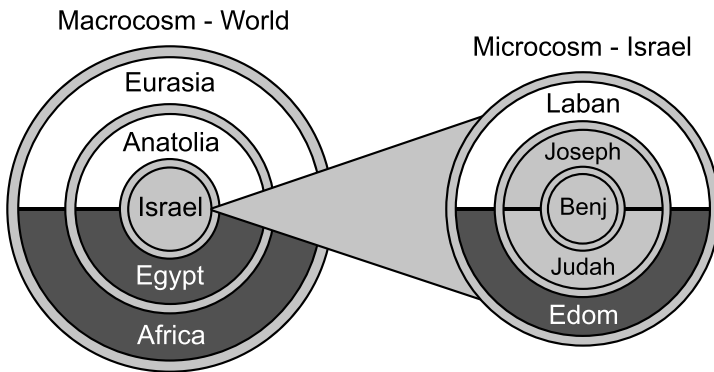
Jacob came to a place and tarried there all night because the sun came down. He took one of the stones from that place and set it under his head to lie down and sleep.

Jacob's dream: a ladder stood on the earth with its head in heaven, and God's messengers were ascending and descending it . . . The Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The earth on which you are lying, I will give to you and your seed."

"Your seed shall be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west, east, north, and south. In you and your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed . . ."

Jacob arose and took the stone from under his head. He set it as a pillar and poured oil on top . . . “The stone I have set up as a pillar shall be God’s house . . . Everything you give to me I will tithе unto you.”

In the context of this story, Esau represents earthly power, and Jacob represents heavenly authority.¹ Like Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob are twin re-presentations of Adam’s cosmic mediation. Therefore, their relationship is similar to the conflict between Cain and Abel after the fall.



As illustrated above, interpreting Jacob and Esau in this manner is incomplete because Jacob was able to inherit some of the “earthly attributes” of Esau through his mother’s trickery. This provided him with earthly power in addition to heavenly authority (see Genesis 27). Thus, as a result of his mother’s meddling, Jacob came to symbolize a return to the image of Adam, like Seth and Shem before him. This transfer of ‘earth’ between Esau and Jacob is a miniature version of what occurred between Ham and Shem when Shem inherited the central portion of the earth (the Land of Canaan) that previously belonged to Ham (see Genesis 9:25).

Rebecca to Jacob: “Your brother Esau wishes to kill you, so arise and flee to my brother Laban . . .”

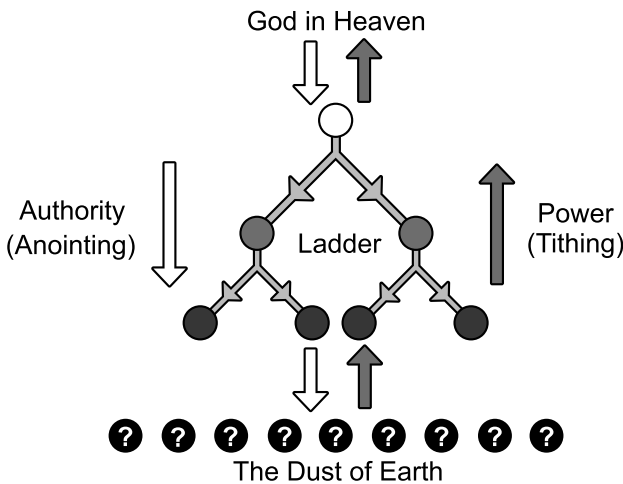
1 Esau (עשו) means “fact” or “doing” which refers to ‘earth’ and its powers.

When Jacob flees from Edom (which means red) in the south, he ascends toward his uncle Laban (which means white) in the north.² For Jacob, this is a return to his origins and source of identity: the “seed.” On the other hand, his eventual descent into Egypt will be to acquire a more powerful “body.”

A ladder stood on the earth with its top [head] in heaven, and God’s messengers were ascending and descending . . .

In this narrative, Jacob’s ladder symbolizes the vertical bridge between heaven and earth through which meaning and authority are exchanged for matter and power. Although strange to modern sensibilities, this ladder is fundamental to cosmologies based on knowledge and meaning.

Your ‘seed’ shall be as the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west, east, north, and south.³



2 There is an obvious color association here: north = white and south = red. Lebanon means white, which naturally alludes to its snowy peaks, and Edom means red, or ruddy, in connection to the soil (אדמה).

3 This ladder/pillar is the axis of ‘space’ which is why it branches out into west, east, north, and south in the passage above. The fact that Jacob encounters a ladder at this juncture also confirms the idea that his journey toward Laban represents an ascent into heaven.

Jacob rose up, took the stone under his head, and he set it up as a pillar, and then he poured oil on its top . . . “The stone I have set up as a pillar shall be God’s house . . . Everything you give to me I will tithe unto you.”

The dual movements of raising matter and lowering meaning are rather clear in the passage above. Jacob anoints (lowers heaven) the pillar that will host the presence of God, and then he promises to offer up tithes (raise earth) in exchange for this higher identity.

PART IV

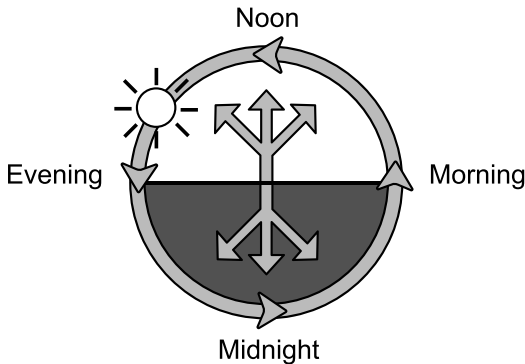
TIME AND SPACE IN BIBLICAL COSMOLOGY

CHAPTER 31

TIME AND SPACE: A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

God called the light 'day' and the darkness 'night.'

The archaic concepts of time and space are very different from their modern counterparts, which are completely detached from the natural human point of view. Therefore, we must look at the universe from a long forgotten perspective to rediscover these patterns.



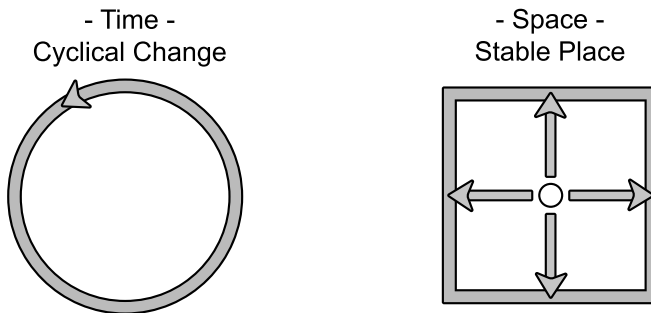
The Creation of Time (from Genesis 1:3)

God said, "Let there be a light," and there was a light. God saw the light, that it was good, and separated between light and darkness. God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." There was an evening, and there was a morning, one day.

The diagram above illustrates the implications of time from an ancient perspective. From this viewpoint, 'time' is an influence that plunges the 'light' into the 'darkness' of material reality, and then mysteriously separates it from the darkness and raises it back into heaven.

To rediscover this perspective, it will be useful to discuss three fundamental differences between ancient and modern notions of time. To begin with, it is important to recognize that the archaic concept of time was associated with the cosmic cause of change. In other words, 'time' was seen as the influence that carried reality from one point to another, like the flowing current of a river. This is completely different than modern physics, for which time is no longer considered the *cause* of change but merely the abstract possibility for change.

The second distinction is that 'time' does not refer to any change whatsoever, but to cyclical transformation. This paradoxical force is what transforms summer into winter, top into bottom, first into last, life into death, and vice-versa. Thus, 'time' is a powerful influence that eventually overturns everything. This contrasts with modern conceptions of time, for which the cyclical nature of change is seen as illusory and not necessarily inherent to time itself.¹

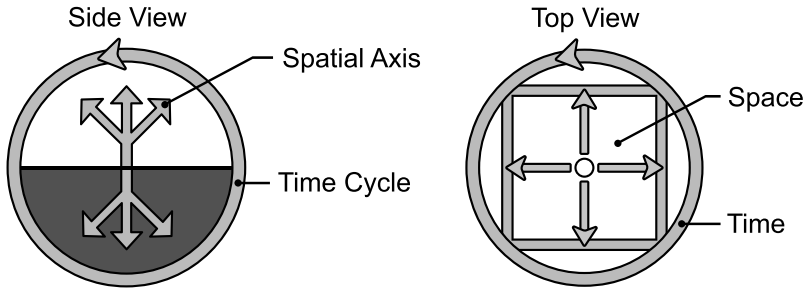


The third and most important difference between archaic and modern notions of time is that 'time' may be considered the opposite of 'space' in ancient cosmology. Of course, in this context, space is defined as a stabilizing power against the transformative forces of time.

The universe resembles the following picture from a spiritual perspective. It contains a relatively stable place (space) surrounded by a relatively unstable periphery (time) where ironic and unexpected

1 Ancient cosmologies were more concerned with the spiritual meaning of the time cycle than its mechanical causes. From a materialistic perspective, the time cycle can be explained strictly in terms of gravity and planetary revolutions. However, from a spiritual perspective, this technical explanation is the equivalent of explaining how a word was written instead of what it means.

events tend to occur. Two forces are constantly pushing against each other in this universe: the transformative forces of time and the stabilizing forces of space. Even though this imagery may appear naive from a materialistic perspective, its symbolism is insightful and universal. It points to an ancient form of metaphysics, from an age when spiritual knowledge was the primary concern of humanity.

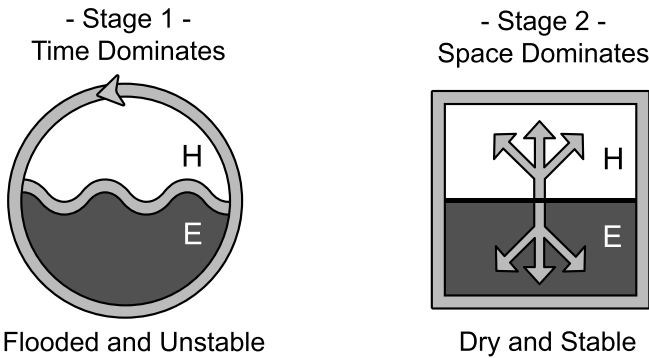


CHAPTER 32

FLOODED LAND VERSUS DRY LAND

He restrains the waters, and they dry out [space]; he unleashes them, and they overturn the earth [time].

As mentioned in the previous chapter, time and space should be interpreted as opposites in biblical cosmology. They should also be associated with two fundamental stages of creation: 1) a primitive flooded world on the first day of creation, and 2) the construction of a dry world on the second and third days.



According to this cosmology, the dominion of ‘time’ corresponds to a more primitive stage of creation where everything was fluid and continuously transforming into its opposite: up into down, down into up, like the oscillating waves of an ocean. This comes in contrast with the dominion of ‘space,’ which is an artificial stage that stabilizes reality by holding these opposites apart.

The First Stage of Creation: Time (from Genesis 1:1-5)

The earth was formless and confused, darkness was on the face of the deep, and the breath of God hovered over the waters . . .

God said, “Let there be a light,” and there was a light. God saw that the light was good and divided between the light and the darkness.

God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.” There was an evening, and there was a morning, one day.

The first stage of creation is a spaceless or placeless universe entirely dominated by the influences of time. Accordingly, it is filled with a flowing and subtle medium (water) that perfectly reflects the vicissitudes of the time cycle. For these reasons, ‘water’ was the primary symbol of change in ancient cosmology, just as ‘light’ was the primary symbol of higher meaning. In general, the flowing of water and the image of the wave were symbols of cyclical transformation.¹

The Second Stage of Creation: Space (from Genesis 1:6-13)

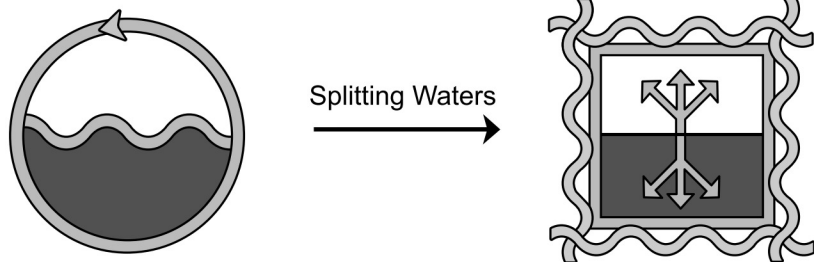
God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters, and let it separate water from water.”

God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered to one place, and let the dry land appear.”

God said, “Let the earth grow seeding herb and a tree bearing fruit of its kind with its seed in it.”

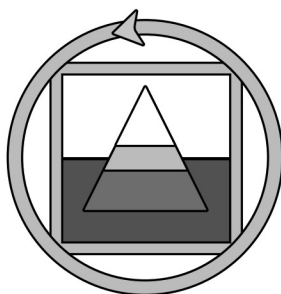
As shown in the following image, the creation of ‘space’ involves pushing the subtle medium of change (water) to the margins of reality and holding it at bay. The result of this operation is a stable place (dry land) surrounded by a flowing periphery (unstable sea) still dominated by cyclical change.

¹ The wave and the cycle are two expressions of the same basic pattern, which is a continuous oscillation between opposites. Thus, in Hebrew, “galgal” (גלגל) means cycle and “gal” (גל) means wave.



As mentioned at the beginning of this commentary, ancient cosmologies were generally dencrocentric. Hence, the tree is a symbol of the spatial axis, a central pillar that upholds the integrity of space by separating above from below, north from south, and east from west.

The Cosmic Mountain



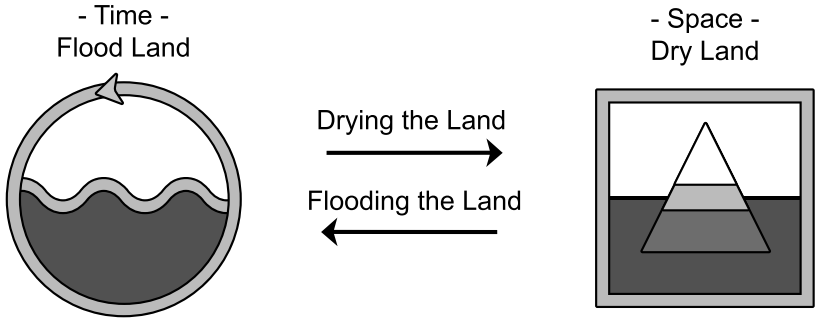
Another important symbol of the spatial axis is the Cosmic Mountain, which embodies stability in the natural world. It stands at the center of the universe in resistance to the forces of pointless change that constantly threaten to flood the land.

Time versus Space (from Psalms 104:5-9)

Who established the earth on its foundations that it be not moved forever and ever? You covered it with the deep like a cloak, and the waters stood over the mountains . . .

But they fled at your rebuke and hasted away from your thunderous voice. The mountains rose, and the valleys sank to the place you established for them. You set a boundary they should not pass, no longer returning to cover the earth.

As implied in the diagram below, the second stage of creation is not invincible, and there is always the possibility of returning to the first stage. In fact, this is precisely what happens in the story of the flood, when spatial stability is entirely lost to the primordial waves. The battle then continues, and space is re-established from the top of Mount Ararat.



In ancient cosmology, space and time are engaged in a constant battle over manifestation.² The cycle or wave swallows space and overturns the earth, while the spatial axis splits the waters and founds the earth. In general, there is a constant tug-of-war between the dominion of cyclical time and the dominion of spatial stability.

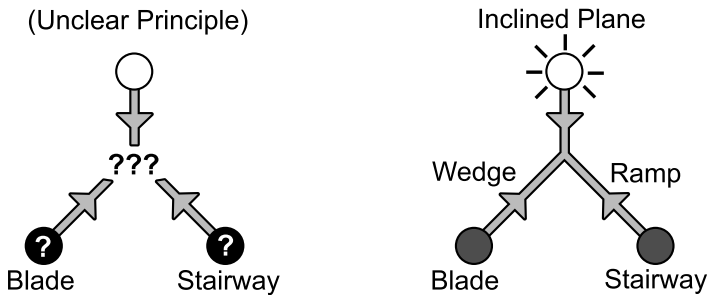
² This imagery has been discovered in all corners of the world, which speaks to the universality of its metaphysics. It symbolizes a truly fundamental duality that is self-evident from the spiritual perspective.

CHAPTER 33

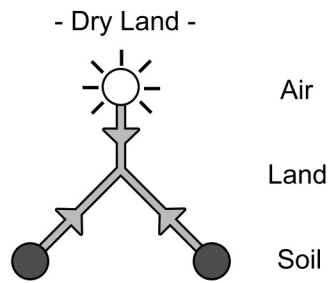
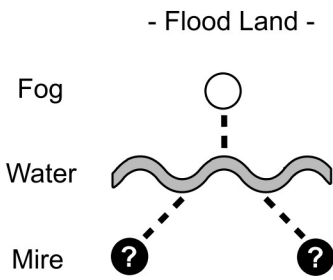
TIME AND SPACE AS MEDIATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

He restrains the waters, and they dry out [certainty]; he unleashes them, and they overturn the earth [uncertainty].

The purpose of the universe in biblical cosmology is knowledge from the union of heaven and earth. Therefore, every single phenomenon should be interpreted according to this paradigm, including the realities of time and space.

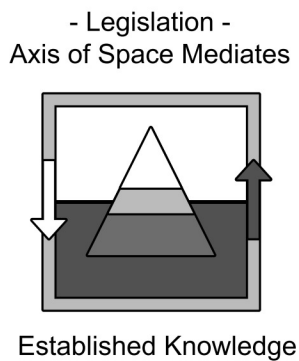
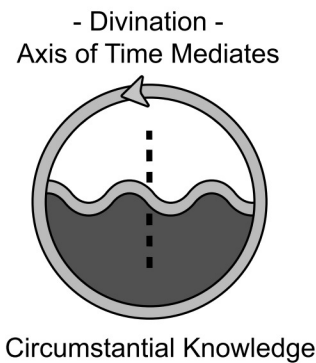


As illustrated in the diagrams above, the process of knowledge implies at least two stages of development: 1) a primitive form of knowledge characterized by uncertainty, and 2) a more advanced form of knowledge characterized by certainty. The first stage lacks a clear agreement between heaven and earth while the second is defined by that agreement. In the second stage of creation, physical reality correctly expresses and supports spiritual meaning, and spiritual meaning clearly answers the enigmas of corporeal existence. Simply put, “dry land” is when heaven meets earth or when language (theory) and fact (practice) perfectly match.



On the other hand, a more primitive form of knowledge called “confusion” naturally emerges when no clear connection can be established between meaning and fact. Thus, when there is no reasonable agreement between heaven and earth, a more subtle medium (water) naturally fills the gap. This translucent medium is neither clear like heaven nor solid like the earth but lies ambiguously between meaning and fact. This type of mediation produces a vague and unstable reality that is highly susceptible to the vicissitudes of time.

In the Bible, obtaining knowledge from this primitive medium is called “divination,” a practice that is deeply connected to the cyclical flow of ‘time’ and its mysteries. This form of knowledge held an important place in the ancient world. It acted as a substitute for reason and certainty when this level of knowledge was unavailable.



As shown above, time and space may be interpreted as distinct mediators between heaven and earth. In this sense, they correspond to different ways of joining meaning with matter.

Dry land appears when heaven and earth are mediated by a manifest connection called “the axis of space.” Flooded land appears when heaven and earth are mediated by a non-manifest connection called “the axis of time.”¹ These important cosmic mediators and their characteristics will be discussed throughout this section, with many examples from the Bible.

1 This form of knowledge (divination) lies outside of the investigations of modern science because scientific methodology willfully removes these subtle influences by creating controlled environments. In this manner, science shields itself from this primitive level of knowledge by creating a ‘space’ where everything is well defined, and there is no confusion between measurer and measured.

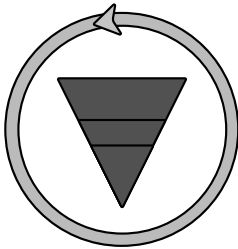
CHAPTER 34

SYMBOLS OF SPACE AND TIME: THE PILLAR AND THE AXLE

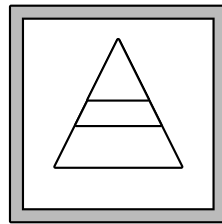
He restrains the waters, and they dry out [pillar]; he unleashes them, and they overturn the earth [axle].

In biblical cosmology, the realities of 'time' and 'space' are the result of two types of mediation. These are often depicted as opposite axes that symbolize the presence or absence of a clear connection between 'heaven' and 'earth.' The dominion of space is symbolized by a house being held up by a visible pillar, and the dominion of time is symbolized by a wheel being secretly turned by a mysterious axle.

- Time -
The Axle and the Wheel



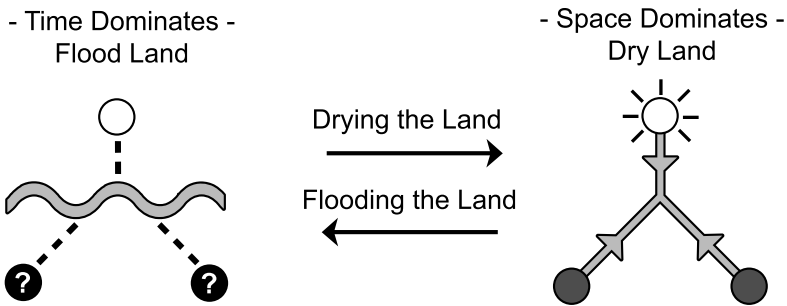
- Space -
The Pillar and the House



As illustrated above, the duality of the pillar and the axle are often symbolized by a positive and a negative axis. For instance, they may be described as a bright pillar versus a dark pillar, or as an upright hierarchy versus an inverted one. Another way to symbolize the same idea is by the duality of fullness versus emptiness, such as a mountain versus a cavern.

Like all concepts in ancient cosmology, space and time exist at different scales of reality. Therefore, the dominion of space may be symbolized by a box, a house, or simply as dry land on the cosmic scale. Similarly, the dominion of time may be symbolized by flooded versions of the above, such as a cup filled with wine, a flooded house, or a flood-world on the cosmic scale.

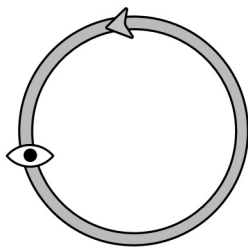
In this context, water symbolizes the confusion that mediates between heaven and earth, and the transformative influences of change. Importantly, this does not refer to any change whatsoever, but to losing the agreement between meaning and fact. In practice, this means falling away from familiarity into a world of uncertainty where everything appears foreign and strange.



When reality is dominated by the spatial pillar, there is a clear connection between facts and their spiritual meaning, and life in the universe has purpose and direction. Conversely, whenever the bridge between heaven and earth is lost, spiritual principles fail to answer the enigmas of corporeal reality, and practical reality no longer expresses spiritual law (the facts no longer support the theory).

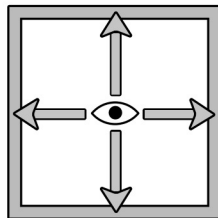
In the Bible, transitioning from the dominion of space to that of time is called “losing the land” and is experienced as “going into exile” and then “wandering in strange lands.” This comes in contrast with “seizing the land,” which is experienced as “returning from exile” and then “inhabiting the homeland.”

- On the Wheel -
The Axle Dominates



Wandering in Strange Lands

- In the House -
The Pillar Dominates

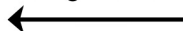


Staying in the Homeland

Seizing the Land



Losing the Land



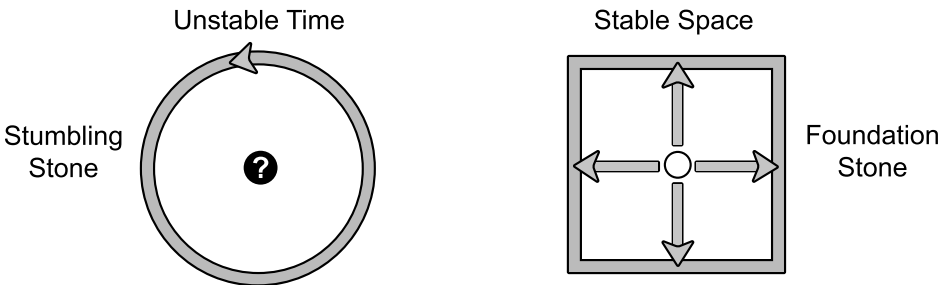
Overall, the archaic concepts of time and space have little to do with their scientific counterparts. Nonetheless, these concepts are fundamental to biblical cosmology and have far-reaching implications in that context.

CHAPTER 35

SYMBOLS OF SPACE AND TIME: FOUNDATION STONE AND SCANDAL STONE

With wisdom, the Lord founded the earth; with understanding, he established the heavens.

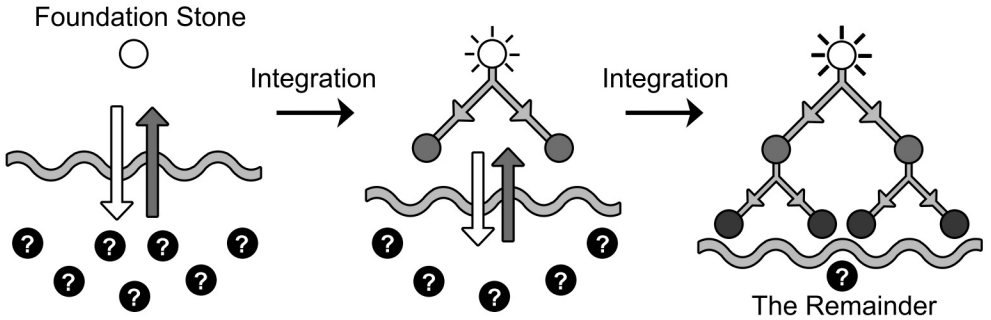
The symbolism of the foundation stone and the stumbling stone is closely related to the symbolism of the pillar and the axle as described in the previous chapter.



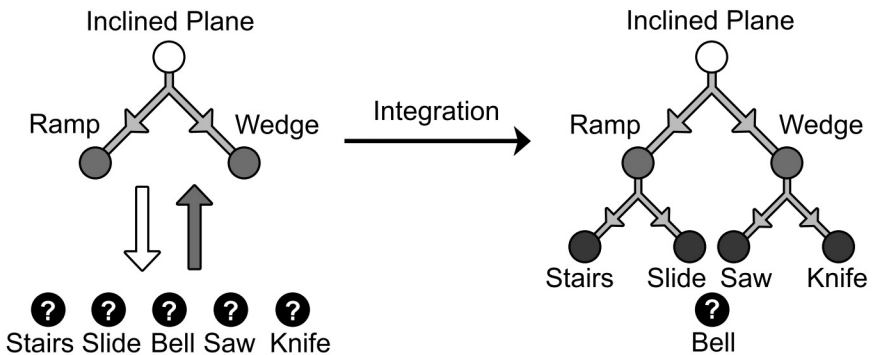
On the one hand, the foundation stone symbolizes the principle of space according to which material reality is ordered and arrayed. On the other hand, the scandal stone symbolizes the principle of change which makes the entire edifice tumble and fall. One is a familiar cause of certainty and stability, and the other is a strange cause of doubt and transformation.

With wisdom, a house is built; with understanding, it is established; with knowledge, its rooms are filled . . . (Proverbs 24:3)

As illustrated below, the process of building space begins with a positive principle (the foundation stone) according to which every other “stone” must be arrayed. When this integration is successful, material reality lends its power and support to that principle. However, when it fails, it reveals anomalous facts or “remainders” that question the supremacy of the first principle.

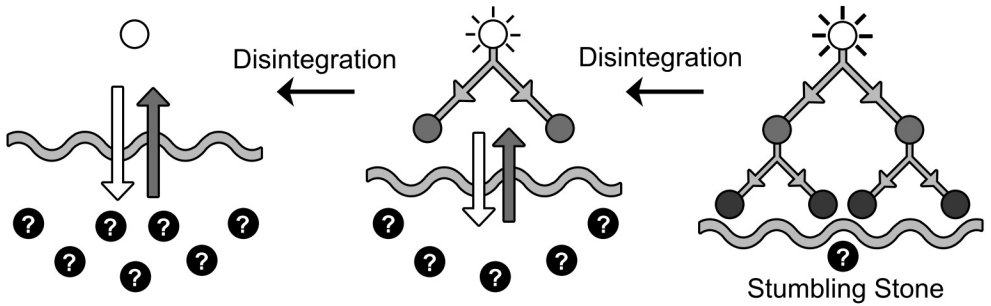


In the following example, the first principle can “cover” most of the objects below, but the bell is simply not an instance of that idea. Therefore, it cannot reasonably be integrated into that ‘space’ and must remain as a left-over piece of the puzzle.



This left-over does not matter in such a limited example, but at the cosmic scale, when God is supposed to be the single source of all manifestation, the mere presence of a remainder is an influence of subversion. In that context, left-overs shed doubt on the supremacy of God’s revealed identity. They raise the possibility that “strange gods” might be needed to answer the missing pieces of the puzzle.

I will put stumbling stones before this people, and the fathers and the sons shall stumble together (Jeremiah 6:21).



As shown above, the failed integration of a “stumbling stone” can flood the entire edifice of ‘space’ with uncertainty. This eventually leads to a period of confusion that forces a return to the drawing board. In that sense, the stumbling stone is an influence of subversion, doubt, and destruction but also a potential cause of renewal.¹

The foundation stone is a principle that “builds the house” by successfully integrating matter into reasonable space, and the stumbling stone is a principle that “floods the house” by disintegrating that space with mysterious riddles. Thus, in biblical cosmology, change is caused by the failed integration of alien facts which creates untenable inconsistencies.

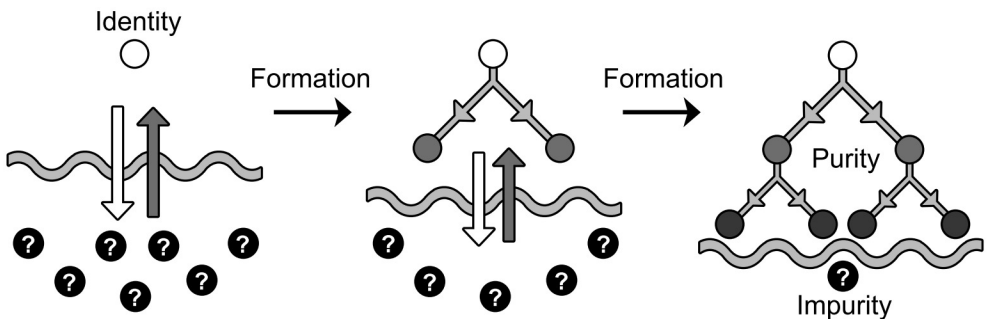
¹ These patterns can easily be found in the history of science. For example, a principle like “phlogiston” made sense of visible phenomenon until a closer look revealed pieces of the puzzle that did not support the theory. Such “remainders” are usually ignored at first but are eventually used to bring down the entire edifice.

CHAPTER 36

TIME AS MIXTURE AND SPACE AS PURITY

He restrains the waters, and they dry out [purity]; he unleashes them, and they overturn the earth [mixture].

There are deep connections between the concepts of ‘space’ and purity as well as ‘time’ and impurity. However, to fully appreciate these connections, it is necessary to distinguish between ancient and scientific concepts of change. These distinctions are needed because materialism has created a notion of change that includes any type of modification. Conversely, in non-materialistic cosmologies, there is a fundamental difference between transformation and formation. The first is synonymous with the ancient notion of change while the second could easily be considered the opposite of change.



As illustrated above, formation is a process by which an identity produces “more of itself and less of the other” by integrating matter. Like the growth of a tree, this process begins with a singular identity (seed) that expands into a coherent structure. This is not change in the ancient sense of transformation, a process that creates “less of

itself and more of the other.” Simply stated, change means turning something into something else, whereas formation means producing a greater version of something.¹ Once these distinctions are understood, the connections between purity and spatial stability become obvious. In this context, remaining pure simply implies “staying oneself” by only integrating elements that correctly support the identity. Conversely, impurity implies incorporating elements that remain foreign to the communal identity. Naturally, the reiteration of this process leads to less of oneself and more of the other, which is the very definition of change in the sense of transformation.

According to these definitions, the practice of purity is synonymous with influences of stability or ‘space,’ and the practice of impurity is synonymous with influences of change or ‘time.’ Thus, in the Bible, purity laws maintain the stability and familiarity of “the homeland.” Conversely, transgressing these laws unleashes a series of transformations called “flooding the land” and “going into exile.” Thus, exile is not an arbitrary punishment from God in biblical cosmology. It is simply the logical consequence of transgressing the “laws of space” in favor of the “laws of time.” This usually translates into transgressing purity laws in favor of admixture at the human scale.

1 This is entirely a matter of perspective. One person’s formation might be another person’s transformation, depending on their respective identities.

CHAPTER 37

TIME AS CONTINUOUS AND SPACE AS DISCRETE

He restrains the waters, and they dry out [discrete]; he unleashes them, and they overturn the earth [continuous].

In ancient cosmology, there were also important relationships between the concepts of change and continuity as well as stability and discontinuity.¹ Although somewhat counterintuitive to modern sensibilities, these connections can still be appreciated with the following basic considerations:

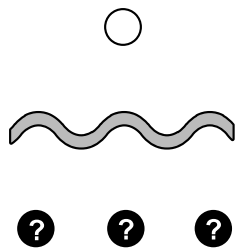
- 1) In order to transform one thing into another, it must pass through a series of intermediate states.
- 2) The more two things are different, the harder it will be to transform one thing into the other.

Given these considerations, it is easier to understand that maximum instability is achieved by inserting infinitely many intermediate states between opposites, and maximum stability is achieved by removing all intermediate states.

. . . Let there be an expanse between the waters, and let it separate water from water . . . Let the waters under the heavens be gathered to one place, and let the dry land appear . . . Let the earth grow seeding herb and a tree bearing fruit of its kind with its seed in it.

¹ This is clear in Zeno's paradox, which considers change unreal because continuity is irrational. In general, the rivalry between Parmenides and Heraclitus is a philosophical equivalent of the space-time duality in ancient cosmology.

Continuous and Fluid



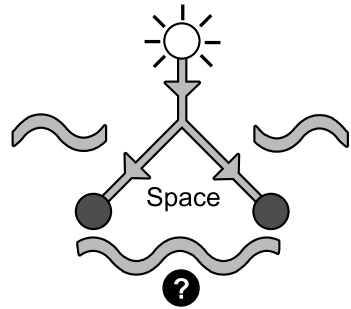
Splitting Waters



Flooding Land



Discrete and Stable



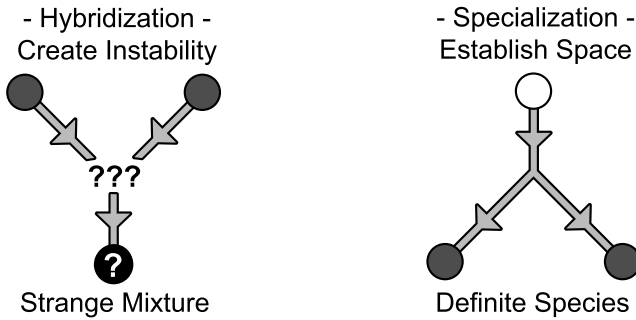
With wisdom, the Lord founded the earth; with understanding, he established the heavens; with his knowledge, the depths were split, and the skies dropped the dew (Proverbs 3:19).

“Splitting waters” is the process by which certainty replaces primitive confusion and instability. In this context, water symbolizes the continuous medium of change, and dry land symbolizes stability and discrete space. At the cosmic level, creating ‘space’ involves separating the following opposites: above from below, east from west, and north from south. Moreover, these patterns are applied to all scales of reality so that separating any two opposites may be considered an act of “establishing space.” This includes separating things such as milk from meat and linen from wool. On the other hand, confusing opposites and changing one opposite into another are acts of “summoning time.” Such actions are strictly forbidden in Mosaic Law because they are interpreted as catalysts of instability and transformation that could eventually lead to exile and the flood.

Do not crossbreed your cattle with diverse species. Do not sow your field with a mixture of seed. Do not wear clothing with a mixture of diverse fabrics (Leviticus 19:19).

The reason why certain forms of hybridization were forbidden in the Mosaic Law is that they symbolized the return of ambiguity and confusion. For instance, crossbreeding is a process that creates more and more intermediate states between species. This transforms ‘space’ into an increasingly continuous and unstable medium. Hence, mixing

different species was seen as a process of regression that returned creation to its primitive state of fluidity. In other words, hybridization was interpreted as a cause of the deluge within the spiritual worldview.



In the ancient world, the appearance of “hybrid monsters” was interpreted as a warning sign that the stability of ‘space’ was being threatened by the influences of ‘time.’ Thus, in the book of Genesis, the deluge was preceded by the appearance of hybrid giants called “Nephilim.” These were born from the illicit unions of “sons of gods” and “daughters of men.” Moreover, according to many traditions, these giants were engaged in crossbreeding, which ultimately contributed to the flood at the cosmic scale.²

According to this cosmology, stability is obtained at the expense of completeness, through the removal of ambiguous cases. This inevitably creates “remainders” which come to symbolize the fluid medium of ‘time.’ These ambiguous cases are exiled from familiar space in order to increase its consistency and stability, and they are returned to manifestation when summoning the flood.³

2 The symbolism of fallen angels and giants will be discussed in chapter 77.

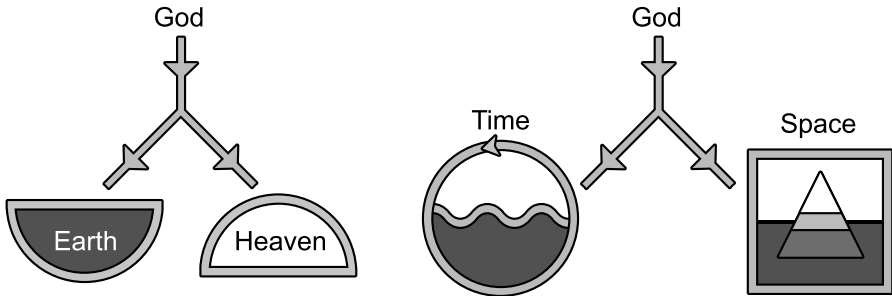
3 Ambiguous cases were either refined into spiritual principles or exiled to the margins of space (refer to the diagram on the previous page). This is the meaning of the scapegoat ritual (Leviticus 16) in which the first goat was sent up on the altar for God, and the second goat was exiled to the wilderness for “Azazel” (the name of a fallen angel from the flood).

CHAPTER 38

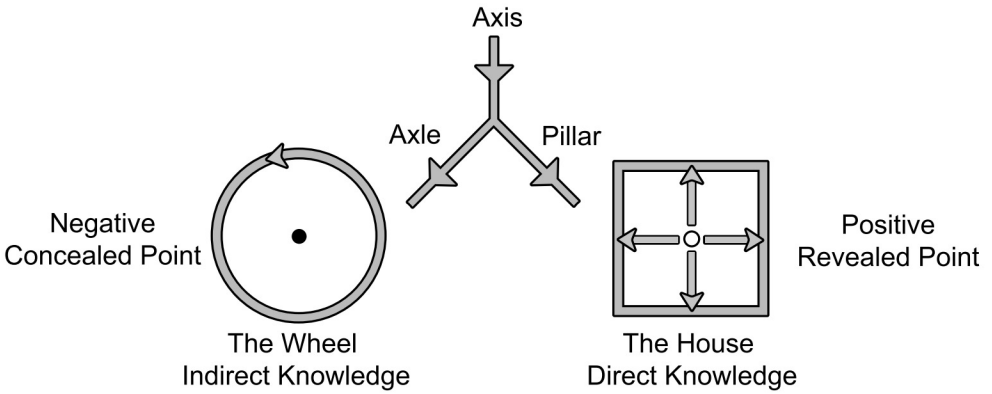
THE CREATOR OF SPACE AND TIME: REVEALED AND CONCEALED

He restrains the waters, and they dry out [revealed]; he unleashes them, and they overturn the earth [concealed].

The two diagrams below essentially sum up the metaphysics of biblical cosmology. The first describes God as the creator of heaven and earth, and the second describes God as the creator of time and space.



According to the second pattern, God is the source of two very different influences. One is a positive expression of God's identity, and the other is a negative retraction or concealment of God's identity. God's influence as creator of space is analogous to the pillar of a house, and God's influence as creator of time is analogous to the axle of a wheel. The first is firmly attached to a positive foundation, and the second is loosely attached to the empty hub of a wheel. One is the power that builds a consistent and stable reality, and the other is the mystery that subverts and overturns existing reality with inconsistency and confusion.

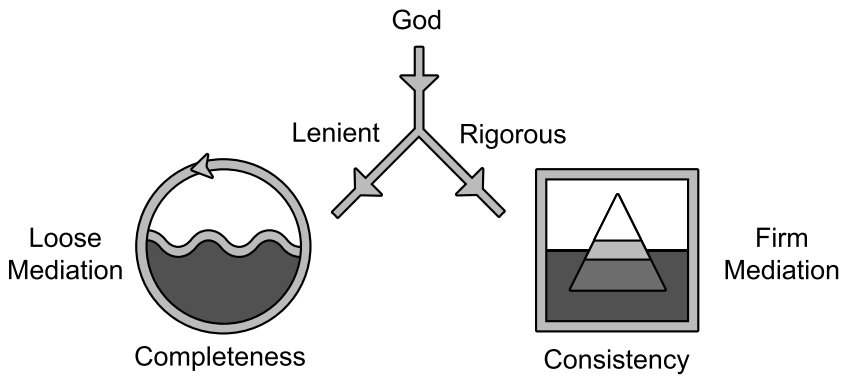


The influences of ‘time’ and ‘space’ also correspond to levels of divine revelation. The stage called “dry land” is founded on a direct revelation of God’s identity. In this case, the intentions and expectations of God have been revealed from above and agreed upon below. This is the level of revelation that occurred on Mount Horeb, where a clear and stable covenant was established between heaven and earth.

Conversely, the primitive stage called “flooded land” involves total concealment of God’s identity. In this case, the intentions of the creator remain hidden, and there is only an indirect form of knowledge. This is the level of revelation in the story of Esther, in which reality was loosely connected to a concealed God who secretly turned the wheel of fortune and ironically caused every flip and return.

He restrains the waters, and they dry out [rigor]; he unleashes them, and they overturn the earth [leniency].

Another way to understand God as the creator of space and time is through the divine attributes of rigor and leniency. God creates ‘space’ (dry land) with strictness and rigor. These are necessary to build a world where language (or law) and fact (or practice) must always be in perfect agreement. On the other hand, flooded land is the ultimate result of God’s kindness. It allows all things to subsist in the universe, including inconsistency, irrationality, and ambiguity.



As illustrated above, creating 'space' implies consistency and stability at the cost of completeness, and creating 'time' implies completeness and change at the cost of consistency. These creative powers are often symbolized by fire and water in ancient cosmology. 'Fire' cuts through confusion with light and dries up the earth with heat. 'Water' confuses heaven and earth into fog and mire. Although this imagery may appear strange to the mechanistic sensibilities of modern science, it was self-evident when spiritual meaning was the primary concern.

CHAPTER 39

EXAMPLE: NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAMS III

A stone was cut without hands and smote the image at its feet, and it broke it to pieces.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which was discussed in chapters 12 and 21, contains a clear example of the foundation stone and the stumbling stone, as introduced in this section.

Disintegrating and Reconstructing Space (from Daniel 2)

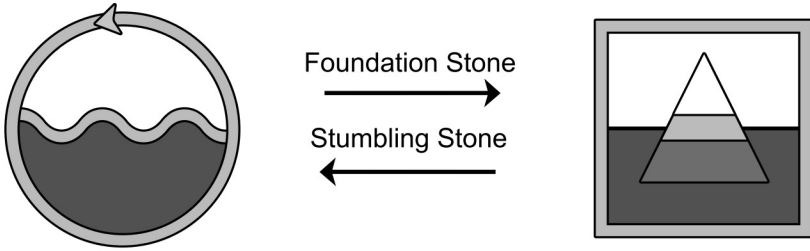
To the sages of Babylon: "I have dreamed, and my spirit is troubled to know it . . . If you cannot reveal the dream and its meaning, you shall be cut into pieces, and your houses turned into dung-heaps."

Sages: "No man on earth can declare the king's matter except the angels who dwell not with flesh."

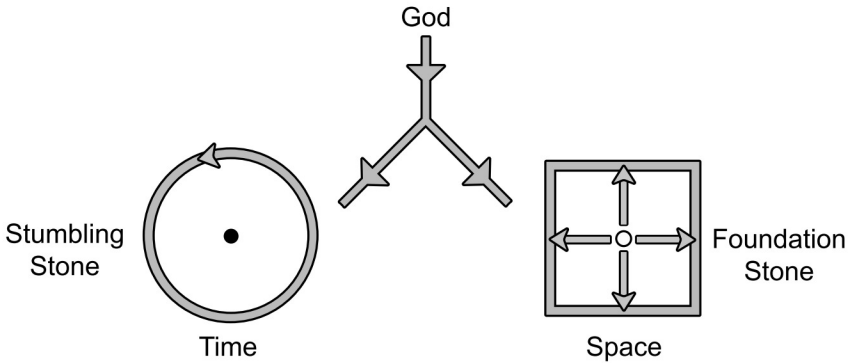
The secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. "The God of heaven reveals the deep and secret things. He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him."

"An image stood before you . . . Its head was fine gold; its chest and arms were silver; its belly and thighs were brass; its legs were iron, and its feet were iron and clay . . ."

"A stone was cut without hands and smote the image at its feet, and it broke it to pieces. The wind carried them away, and the stone became a great mountain which filled the whole earth."



In this scenario, the statue is destroyed and disintegrated by the power of a “stone cut without hands.” This refers to the stumbling stone which is an irregular “uncut stone.” It is a symbol of the influence of time as it overturns spatial reality. Moreover, after the statue has disintegrated, the same stone becomes a foundation stone from which a mountain grows and fills the earth.



The fact that these opposite stones are seen as one and the same points to a metaphysical truth: God is the creator of both time and space. This paradoxical notion has tremendous implications in the cosmology of the Bible, as will be discovered in this commentary.

CHAPTER 40

EXAMPLE: THE CHERUBIM OF EZEKIEL III

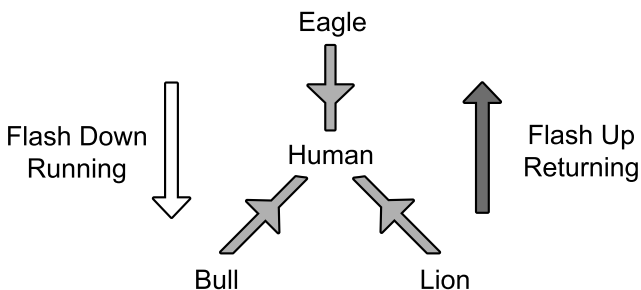
As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each one . . .

As mentioned in chapters 9 and 28, the visions of Ezekiel are not merely a description of things to come, but a rare glimpse into the processes of divine knowledge. In other words, the cherubim represent the patterns of meta-cognition through which the Creator is revealed to the prophet.

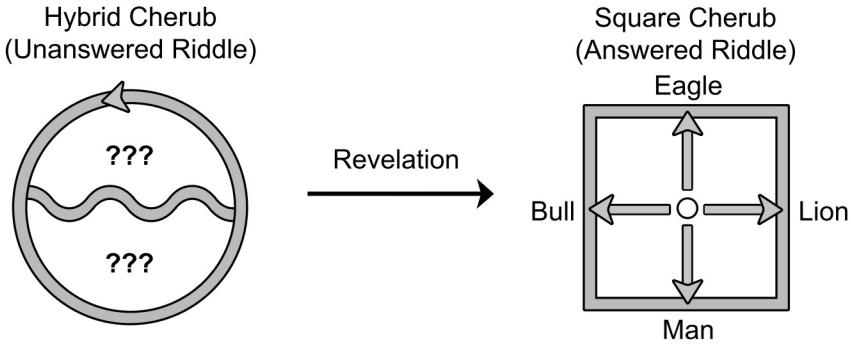
The Tetramorphic Cherubs (from Ezekiel 1)

From its center came the image of four living beings that looked like the image of Adam. Each one had four faces, and each had four wings [corners] . . . They each had the faces of a human, a lion on the right, a bull on the left, and an eagle.

Their appearance was like coals of fire burning like torches and flashing up and down among the creatures. There was a brightness to the fire, and out of the fire went forth lightning. The creatures were running and returning as the appearance of a flash of lightning.



Importantly, the creatures in this vision are not just any kind of cherub, but what could only be described as “square cherubim.” They have four corners (wings) and four faces, each facing a specific cardinal direction. Their “squareness” symbolizes the fact that these cherubs have been made into a proper space for divine revelation.



As discussed in chapter 28, the cherubim are both the hosts of spiritual principles and the guardians of spiritual secrets. These roles simply correspond to the two stages of creation described in this section (dry land and flooded land) which are also levels of revelation. In this context, the confused or hybrid version of the cherub symbolizes the unanswered enigma (like the Egyptian sphinx) while the square version represents the answered enigma (like Ezekiel’s tetramorphs). The latter is a stable and definite space that hosts the divine answers to the mysteries of nature.¹

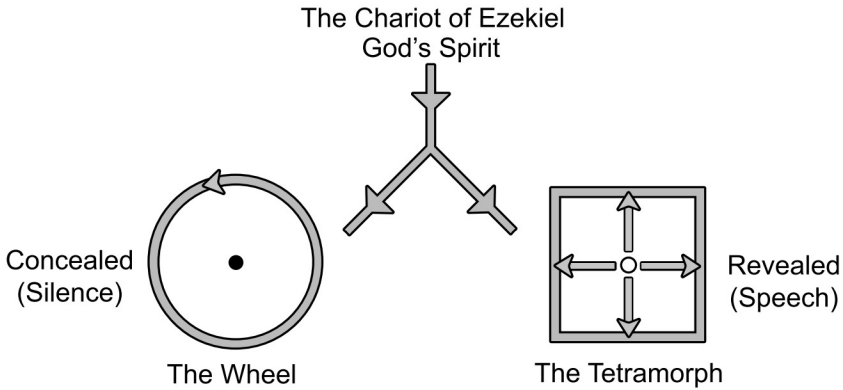
The Wheels of the Chariot (from Ezekiel 1)

As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside them . . . it was a wheel within a wheel. Their rims were big and dreadful, and they were full of eyes all around. When the creatures went, the wheels went, and when they stood, they stood. When they were lifted up, the wheels were lifted up beside them, for the spirit of the living creatures was also in the wheels . . .

¹ The enigma posed by the hybrid or sphinx-like cherub is synonymous with the mystery of cyclical time. Answering this enigma involves building a definite space for the human who is the knower.

Unlike the square cherubim, the wheels in this vision represent an unanswered riddle. They are the outer expressions of God’s hidden intentions; they represent the knowledge that is not explicitly revealed to Ezekiel in this vision. The wheels symbolize the indirect or circumstantial revelations that seem uncertain and irrational to the prophet.

I saw a wheel on the ground beside the living creature . . . the spirit of the living creature was also in the wheels . . .



To fully appreciate these symbols, it is useful to understand that round or “pointless” shapes are connected to continuity and change, whereas square or “pointy” shapes are connected to discontinuity and stability (see chapter 37). The edges and corners of the square represent the clear outer expressions of a revealed inner point. This comes in contrast with the pointless cycle, which vaguely hints at the indirect influence of a hidden point. Given this imagery, it is easy to understand why the altar, the ark, and the stone tablets are square shaped in the Bible. Squareness indicates both stability and certainty, which are synonymous in biblical cosmology. It indicates that material reality (earth) is directly and explicitly hosting spiritual reality (heaven).

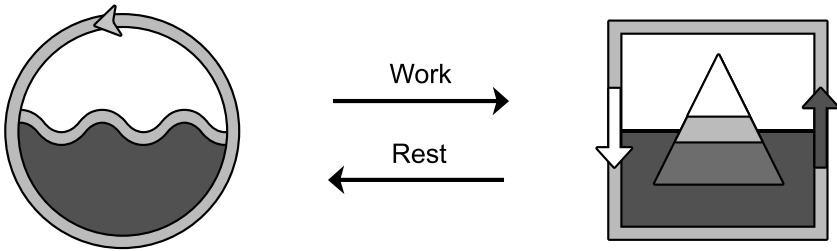
The vision of Ezekiel is really a meta-prophecy in the sense that it reveals the inner workings of divine revelation. Furthermore, given the nature of this cosmology, the chariot of Ezekiel is also a vision of the cosmos, where God is perceived as the creator of cyclical time and square space.

CHAPTER 41

WORK AND REST IN ANCIENT COSMOLOGY

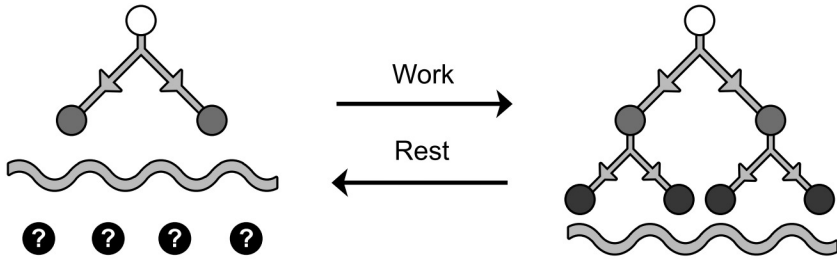
He restrains the waters, and they dry out [work]; he unleashes them, and they overturn the earth [rest].

In biblical cosmology, the notions of work and rest are deeply connected to the dominions of space and time called “dry land” and “flooded land.” On the one hand, dry land is an artificial construction that required work on the part of God. On the other hand, flooded land is a natural or primitive condition that was already present at the earliest stages of creation. So even at the cosmic scale, constructing and maintaining ‘space’ requires work.



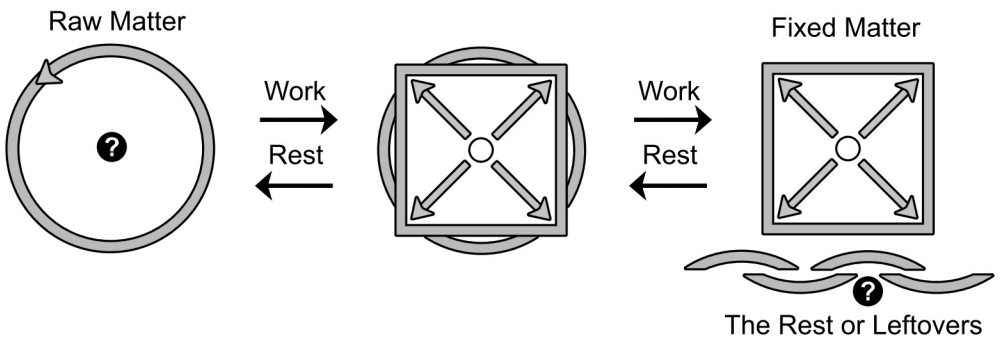
The notion of work in the Bible specifically refers to the construction of ‘space’ at different scales. This means expressing a plan (heaven) into material reality (earth) and integrating its raw matter (flooded land) into familiar space (dry land). On the flipside, idleness and rest indirectly cause a return to more primitive stages of creation. This means gradually returning to flooded conditions on the cosmic scale and to wilderness conditions on the human scale. In the latter case, the waves in the following image may be interpreted as wild vines, overflowing from nature onto dilapidated buildings.

Work: *By wisdom, a house is built; by understanding, it is established* (Proverbs 24:3).



Rest: *By laziness, the rafters sink; by idleness, the house leaks . . .* (Ecclesiastes 10:18)

As illustrated below, artificially building a space necessitates the removal of unusable matter, which inevitably creates by-products called “remainders” or “leftovers.” Conversely, rest or idleness implies the gradual return of these wild elements into space, which brings back fluidity, instability, and pointless change.



The subtle influence of ‘time’ is what returns the cosmos to a more primitive or natural stage. Therefore, it is definitely a destructive power. However, it should also be interpreted as a force of re-creation, capable of restoring the land when in need of renewal. At the cosmic scale, this return to primitive confusion is symbolized by a flooded world, which should be interpreted as a land in slumber. On the human scale, cyclical returns are symbolized by distraction, rest, recreation, sleep, and even death.

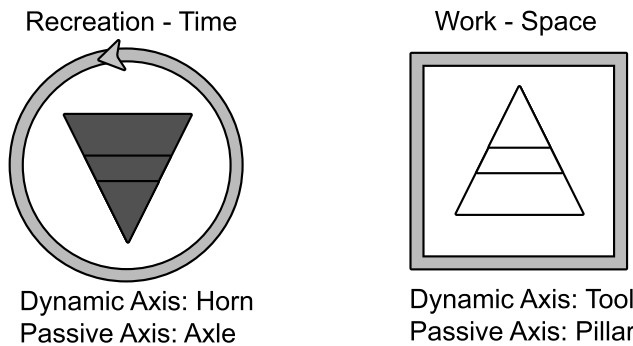
The construction of space through work is often symbolized by the expansion of artificial containers (houses or boxes) that explicitly host a central identity or plan. Conversely, the flood is a natural process of disintegration that overturns spatial reality by toppling the erect, curving the straight, and loosening the tightly bound.

CHAPTER 42

SYMBOLS OF SPACE AND TIME: TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS

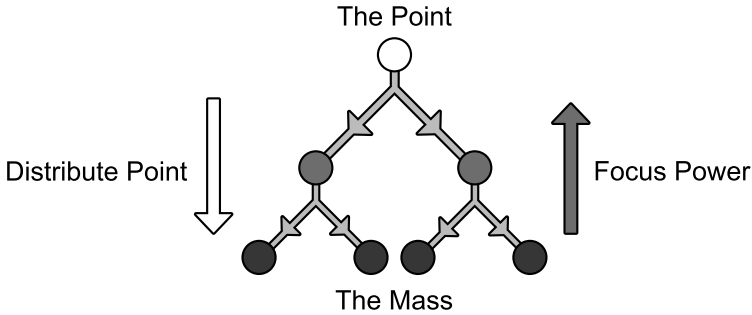
He restrains the waters, and they dry out [work tools]; he unleashes them, and they overturn the earth [musical instruments].

As mentioned in chapter 34, the axes of space and time are symbolized by a pillar and an axle. However, these symbols only represent the passive aspects of the axes, which also have a dynamic role in creation. These active principles are often symbolized by work tools and musical instruments.



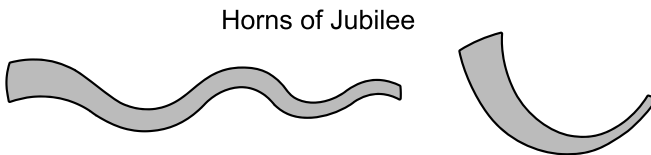
Tools are ancient symbols of the spatial axis as the principle of work. In this context, work refers to the process of building ‘space’ by correctly joining matter with meaning and purpose. The prototypical tool is a pointy or sharp implement. Its general function is to rectify material reality according to a specific purpose. Importantly, the shape of this tool is itself a microcosm of work in the broad sense of “focusing power to distribute a point.” That formula includes the process of building anything, even other tools for the construction of space.

This pattern also implies a “hierarchy of tools” that can be interpreted as a macro-tool which encompasses all of technology.



In the symbolism of technology, all tools represent the axis as the dynamic principle of ‘space.’ That said, different tools have slightly different functions, leading to a wide range of symbolic meaning. For example, the two most fundamental tools are the pointy stake and the blunt mass (i.e., the nail and hammer) which are two aspects of a single interaction between “point” and “mass.”

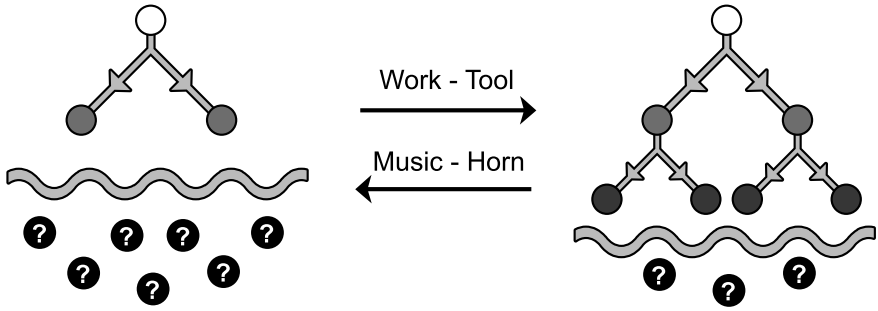
On the flipside, the horn or trumpet seems to be one of the oldest symbols of the cosmic axle. The main reason for this symbolism is that the horns of a beast are wild outgrowths that twist and turn as they grow. Also, a horn is made into a musical instrument by hollowing it out and removing its point, making it empty, pointless, and curved, which are the defining characteristics of cyclical time.¹



In general, all musical instruments symbolize the cosmic axle that makes the universe pointlessly turn and dance. They are implements of diversion and distraction which lead to relaxation, rest, sleep, and even death. Moreover, like cyclical time itself, they are implements of re-creation, renewal, reawakening, and even resurrection.

¹ The horn can be made into a drinking horn, a trumpet, or an inkhorn, all of which represent the axle of time.

In the symbolism of music, different instruments will have slightly different meanings. For example, the harp is better suited for relaxation, rest, and sleep, whereas the trumpet is better suited for a reawakening and resurrection.



The dynamic powers of space and time can be symbolized by various implements: construction tools, weapons, measuring instruments, and musical instruments. Each represents a specific cosmic power. However, it is important to understand that these symbols should not merely be considered metaphors within the spiritual worldview, but actual manifestations of the axes of 'space' and 'time' on the human scale.

CHAPTER 43

TIME AS ABSURDITY AND SPACE AS REASON

Vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity. What profit has man in all his work under the sun?

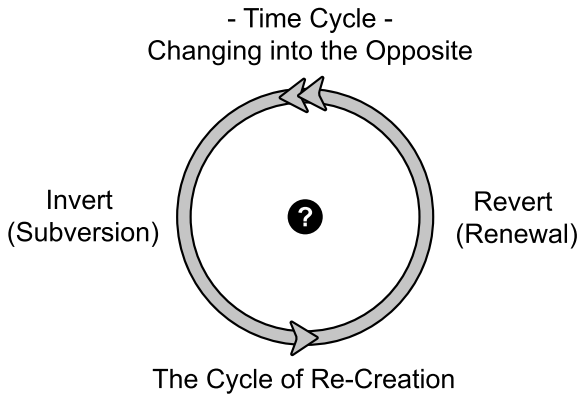
The implications of change as cyclical are counterintuitive to modern sensibilities. Therefore, it is not always easy to understand why time is associated with vanity and absurdity in biblical cosmology, and why space is associated with reason and rationality.

As discussed in chapter 36, the archaic notion of change refers to transformation, which means to change one thing into something different. However, to fully appreciate the implications of this concept, this definition must be brought to its absolute limit. In this case, transformation does not just mean “changing something into something else,” but more completely, “changing something into its opposite.” The latter includes all the implications of change in ancient cosmology. It also shows why time is inherently cyclical in that context.

Vanity of vanities . . . the whole is vanity . . . One generation passes and another generation comes . . . whatever has been shall be and whatever was done shall be redone . . . (from Ecclesiastes 1)

As illustrated on the next page, cyclical time is a negative force of transformation, which means it inverts or negates everything and transforms it into its opposite. Negation is precisely what creates the cyclical pattern when reiterated upon itself, because the inversion of an inversion implies a return to initial conditions ($- -1 = +1$).

As illustrated below, the negative nature of change is the metaphysical reason why 'time' is both an influence of death and rebirth.



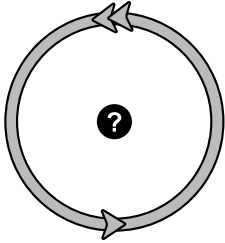
Let there be an expanse between the waters, and let it separate water from water . . . Let the earth grow seeding herb and a tree producing fruit with its seed in it according to its kind . . .

On the other hand, the spatial axis or “cosmic tree” is based on a completely different pattern of manifestation. It is founded on a single principle that expresses itself with reason and purpose by “producing fruit with its seed in it according to its kind.” Among other things, this means that all the implications (the fruits) of the tree are consistent expressions of its first principle (the seed). In other words, space is a pattern that never contradicts or returns on itself. It is a “positive” process in the mathematical sense of addition or accumulation because it always produces “more of itself.”

Space is based on reason and purpose, which implies consistency and therefore productivity. Time is based on absurdity because it expresses a self-contradiction which ultimately produces nothing. The destructive and re-creative pattern of time implies futility, irony, and vanity because it annuls itself or “swallows itself” at every turn. It is a self-negating pattern of manifestation, which naturally expresses “pointlessness” or “nothingness.” It does so by periodically contradicting what it has created, destroying what it has built, and freeing what it has bound. Ultimately, there is no reason for any of these processes.

There is a season and a time for every matter under heaven . . . A time to be born and a time to die . . . A time to kill and a time to heal . . . A time to destroy and a time to rebuild . . . (from Ecclesiastes 3)

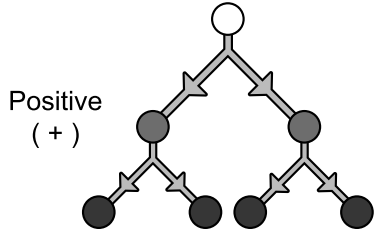
- The Law of Time -
Absurd Pattern of Contradiction



Negative
(-)

Expressing Pointlessness
with Irony and Vanity

- The Law of Space -
Rational Pattern of Consistency



Positive
(+)

Expressing a Point
with Reason and Purpose

The pattern of time expresses itself like a circular argument: summer derives from spring, which derives from winter, which derives from fall, which derives from summer!?! In other words, cyclical time is pointless change, or futile change, because it never really “amounts” to anything. Therefore, life under the dominion of time is summed up as vanity and naught (+1 - 1 = 0).¹

In biblical cosmology, the patterns of space and time are mediators of knowledge that are synonymous with reason and absurdity. The consistent pattern of space always produces “according to its kind,” and the absurd pattern of time always ends up “turning against itself” in a counterproductive manner. One is the principle of work and productivity, and the other is the principle of rest and recreation. In practice, following the artificial law of space leads to accumulation and stability, whereas following the natural law of time leads to waste and instability, but also re-creation and renewal.²

1 The number 0 is a complete symbol of time. It expresses the concept of “naught” and restarts the digital cycle. In general, the digits 0 and 1 perfectly express the principles of time and space as pictured here. Similarly, the mathematical signs +/- perfectly symbolize space and time when fully understood.

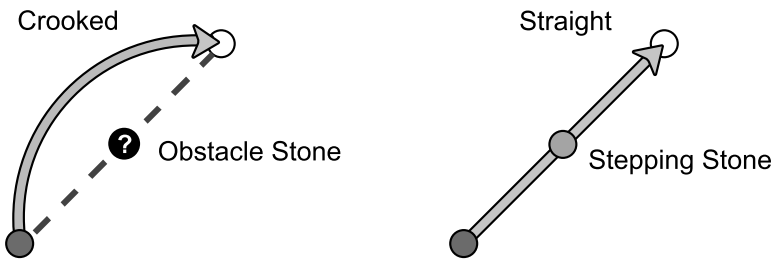
2 Even in modern mathematics, cycles and trees are often defined as opposite data structures: a tree has no loops and a cycle has no branches. So, the association of ‘space’ with a tree is not a metaphor. Like modern mathematicians, the ancients were more than capable of seeing abstract patterns in reality.

CHAPTER 44

TIME AS IRRATIONALITY AND SPACE AS RATIONALITY

That which is crooked cannot be rectified, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered (Ecclesiastes 1:15).

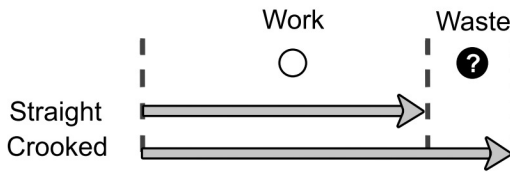
The purpose of this chapter is to show the connections between rationality, straightness, efficiency, and ‘space’ as well as irrationality, crookedness, wastefulness, and ‘time.’ To illustrate these connections, the notion of traveling will serve as a basic example of work. It is a process that expresses a point (the destination point) with a series of practical steps.



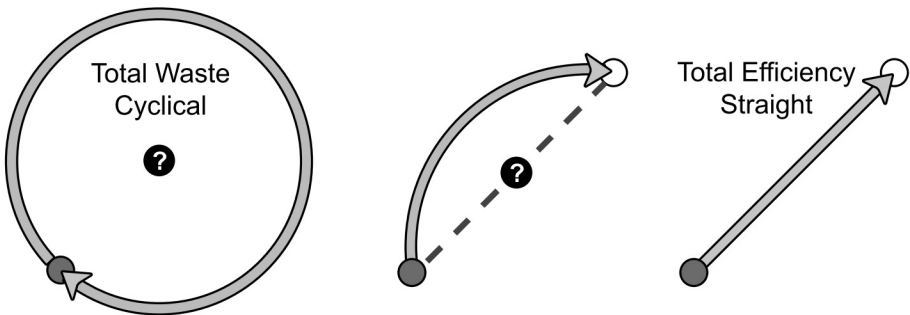
In the diagram above, two paths lead from the same starting point to the same destination point. However, the path on the right is straight and direct, while the path on the left is crooked and indirect. On the one hand, the entire trajectory of the straight path was solely determined by the destination and the positive support of “stepping stones” along the way. On the other hand, the crooked path was negatively influenced by “obstacle stones” that lengthened the journey.

Comparing the lengths of these trajectories demonstrates how the crooked path is necessarily longer than the straight one. The extra length proves that part of the crooked path was “wasted away” and

“distracted away” from the first intention of the journey. In other words, the crooked path is not entirely the expression of reason and work, at least not with regard to the intent of the journey. So the crooked path really contains two very different components: 1) a part that expresses a positive principle and is characterized by reason and efficiency, and 2) a part that expresses a negative principle and is characterized by wastefulness and pointlessness.

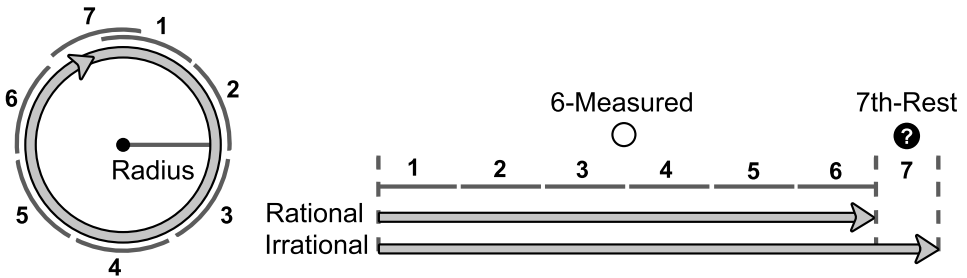


The diagram below illustrates why “cyclical” rather than “crooked” should be considered the opposite of “straight.” Straightness (or directness) implies total efficiency, meaning the entire trajectory was determined solely by the destination. In this case, every part of the path is reasonable, and every effort counts as work toward the goal. On the opposite end, a fully cyclical trajectory ends up exactly where it started. It turns completely around a negative obstacle, which results in absolute waste, vanity, and pointlessness overall.¹



¹ In the Bible, being solely determined by an alien cause in this manner is also referred to as “serving strange gods in exile,” or “turning after other gods.”

In parallel with the process of traveling, the acts of counting and measuring are also basic examples of work. They are both processes that impose meaning, reason, and definition upon the natural world, by integrating raw quantity into discrete and rational patterns.



In the narrative of creation, the meaning of the numbers six and seven comes from the parallels between working and counting. The number seven symbolizes the inability to correctly measure the cycle with its radius, which yields a measurement of six and a little bit more. This “rest” demonstrates that cyclical continuity can never be subsumed by the square patterns of reason and ‘space’ because there is always a remainder. In other words, the complete cycle is an unanswerable riddle.²

The number seven represents the natural law of the cycle, and the seventh part of that cycle symbolizes the irrational period when the end transforms into a new beginning. It is the strange moment when the cycle finally “swallows itself” in the confusion of first and last. This type of inversion is forbidden by the hierarchical “law of space” during periods of work and productivity. However, during the critical seventh period, space loses its grip on reality as it returns to more primitive cyclical conditions. In the Bible, this “returning to irrationality” is often symbolized as flooding on the cosmic scale and as carnivals, Sabbaths, and Jubilees on the human scale.

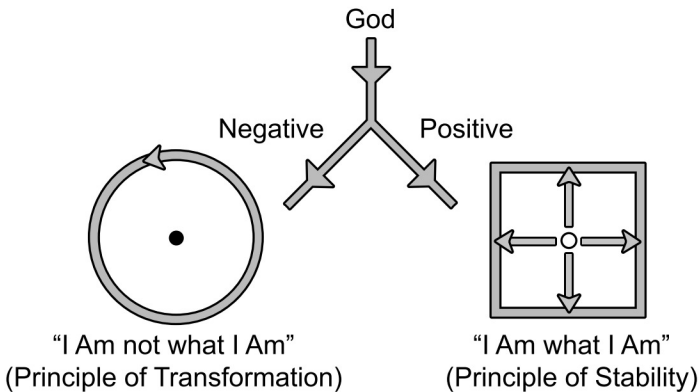
² The circumference of a circle is incommensurable to its radius and can only be expressed with an irrational number (π). This means continuity ultimately escapes discrete countability. Whether this was formally proven in the ancient world does not really matter. It was probably known but kept secret.

CHAPTER 45

THE CREATOR OF SPACE AND TIME: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

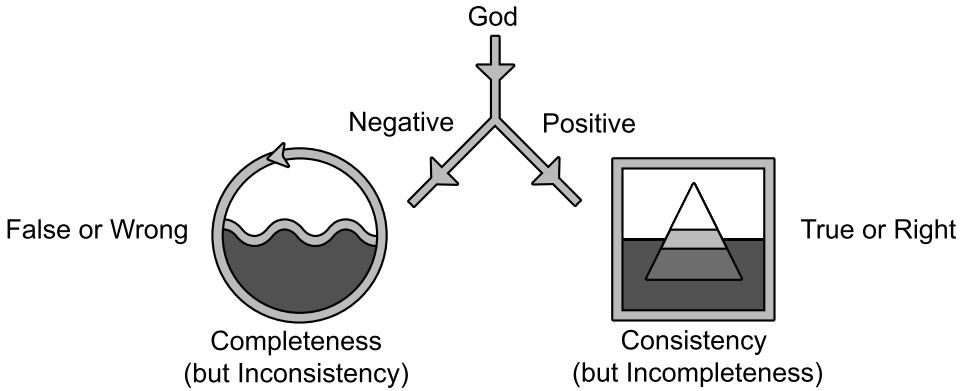
Who forms light and creates darkness? Who makes peace and creates evil? I am the Lord who makes them all.

As discussed in chapters 22 and 23, the name of God (I Am what I Am) revealed on Mount Horeb is the seed-like principle of all Mosaic laws. More importantly, that tautology is the metaphysical principle of ‘space’ on the cosmic level.



Applying this formula to the cosmic scale implies “I am in heaven what I am on earth,” which means outward fact (earth) perfectly expresses inward meaning (heaven). This is precisely the definition of ‘space’ in biblical cosmology. It is also the quality of all things straight, true, and correct. Conversely, the negation of God’s identity produces the following contradiction: “I am not what I am,” which is also the principle of ‘time’ and flooded land on the cosmic scale. This negative name means that outward fact (earth) and inward meaning (heaven)

are not immediately or clearly in agreement. It characterizes all things crooked, false, and wrong. Thus, cycles and waves are uncertain and deceptive because every expression hides the opposite intention.¹



In the context of biblical cosmology, the notions of right and wrong have more than moral implications because the entire universe is based on the union of meaning and fact. Hence, saying that the tides of time are “founded on lies and contradictions” is not just a clever metaphor, but a defining characteristic of cyclical change. On the time cycle, the seed of summer is always hidden in the dead of winter and vice versa, so that everything secretly implies its opposite. Conversely, spatial reality, or “dry-land,” is the very embodiment of righteousness and truth in this cosmology. It refers to the strict agreement of meaning with fact and the stability that derives from that certainty.

God regretted making the human on the earth, and it grieved his heart. “I will blot out the human that I have created from the face of the earth . . . behold, I bring the flood of waters to destroy all flesh” (Genesis 6:6).

On the cosmic scale, divine contradiction is nowhere more evident than in the narrative of the flood. Flooding is a negative expression of God’s identity, where “negative” means a retraction or subtraction of what God had already created: *God regretted making the human*

1 In English, words like “wrong” and “ring” seem etymologically connected, implying contradiction, incorrectness, and instability. Conversely, the word “true” seems connected to “tree,” implying consistency, correctness, and stability.

on the earth. This type of reversal or negation is why cyclical change is an absurd pattern of manifestation. This strange power overturns and contradicts what has already been established. Why did God create the world if only to destroy it? Shockingly, flooding expresses contradiction on the part of God, especially when God is understood as omniscient.²

In the context of biblical cosmology, there is always the option of blaming these contradictions on humanity's free will and the errors it creates when mediating between heaven and earth. Although this provides a way around the contradiction locally, there is no easy way to solve this paradox on the cosmic level. Ultimately, God created all things, including Adam's mediation and the implications of free will.

Who forms light and creates darkness? Who makes peace and creates evil? I am the Lord who makes them all (Isaiah 45:7).

As quoted above, God is credited with creating both "good" and "bad." Of course, it could be argued that the first was created directly, while the second was only created indirectly, as a by-product or remainder. Nevertheless, negative or false events are often considered helpful and even necessary in the Bible, and it is often the case that two wrongs make a right. These cyclical patterns or "double negatives" are especially important when the second "wrong" is an ironic cause of renewal and resurrection.³

2 At this point, anyone doubting the possibility that God can be deceitful and contradictory can refer to Abraham's test in Genesis 22, or to I Kings 22:22, where God sends forth his "deceitful spirit" to fool the false prophets.

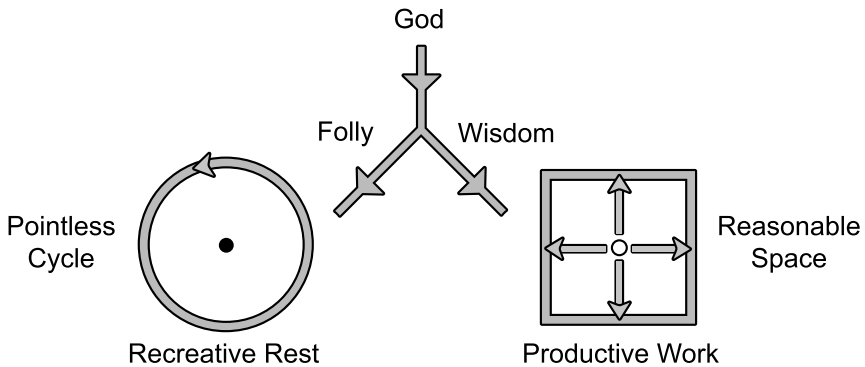
3 This is clear in the story of Tamar (see Genesis 38) and even clearer in the book of Esther. In the latter account, the rules of the game are finally summed up as: *it was turned into its opposite* (Esther 9:1). This perfectly describes the contradictions of the time cycle as benevolent when a temporary evil is ironically reverted into a greater good.

CHAPTER 46

EXAMPLE: WISDOM VERSUS FOLLY

The heart of the wise is on his right, and the heart of the fool is on his left (Ecclesiastes 10:2).

The concepts of wisdom and folly are important symbols of space and time in the cosmology of the Bible. These notions are mostly described in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, where the mysteries of cyclical time are often embodied by the archetype of the fool.



I realized that wisdom is better than folly, as light is better than darkness (Ecclesiastes 2:13).

In the Bible, wisdom is the name given to the revealed principle of creation (the first “point” of creation). Through its partnership with understanding, it is responsible for things like “founding the earth” and “building the house.” So, wisdom is essentially the principle of work in the cosmos, which refers to building stable and reasonable space. On the other hand, folly is founded on “nothing” and is also the source of absurdity and vanity.

The fool says in his heart: "God is Naught" (Psalms 14:1).

The fool folds his arms together and eats his own flesh (Eccl. 4:5).

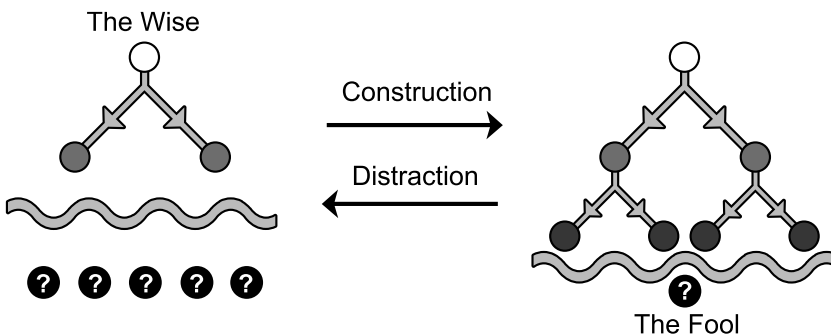
The shocking image of self-cannibalism described in the verse above depicts the fool as an indolent non-productive individual who would rather "eat his own flesh" than do actual work. Of course, this is merely a translation of the cyclical patterns of time when applied to human activity. As mentioned in chapter 43, the cycle is a self-negating pattern of manifestation that "swallows itself" with absurdity and vanity. This concept is perfectly encapsulated by the fool who "folds his arms together," symbolizing the unproductiveness of the cycle, and then absurdly "eats his own flesh."

He turns wise men backwards and makes their knowledge foolish (Isaiah 44:25).

In the Bible, wisdom is the polar opposite of foolishness. One is characterized by work, purposefulness, integration, and correction, and the other is characterized by idleness, pointlessness, distraction, and irreverence. Similarly, wisdom implies efficiency, preservation, and accumulation, whereas foolishness implies clumsiness, wastefulness, and indebtedness.

By wisdom, a house is built; by understanding, it is established . . .

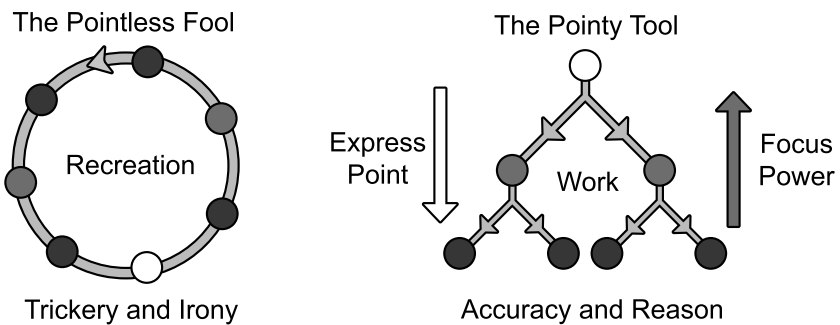
By laziness, the rafters sink; by idleness, the house leaks . . .



It is important to understand that foolishness is also the cause of renewal and recreation in the universe. Therefore, the same negative influence that causes the flood at the cosmic scale is also the source of foolishness and silliness at the human scale. This usually comes in the form of pointless games and entertainment. In this capacity, the fool is the jester or clown who distracts from work, questions authority, and loosens what is tightly bound.

The words of the wise are gracious, but the lips of the fool swallow themselves (Ecclesiastes 10:12).

As a manifestation of cyclical change, the impetus of the fool is trickery and deceit. However, it is important to realize that notions of truth and falsity have a wide range of implications for humanity. Some lies are taken more seriously, like perjury or false testimony, and others are considered benign and even humorous, like jokes, sarcasm, and satire. In general, humor involves misunderstandings, double-entendres, inversions, and empty exaggerations. These are the characteristics of cyclical change and the secret of the clown, whose role in the universe is to bring rest and recreation. On the other hand, work is supposed to be serious because it is founded on reason and accuracy.



As depicted above, the “circus fool” is an archetype of time, and the “pointy tool” is an archetype of spatial power. On the one hand, clowns and jesters are microcosms of the axle of cyclical change by

their absurd powers of inversion and restoration. On the other hand, measuring instruments and tools are microcosms of the spatial axis by their powers of integration and construction.

Naturally, the most overt symbols of the time cycle and the flood have been preserved in the circus and the carnival. These include the acts of juggling, swallowing flaming swords, taming wild animals for distraction, and exhibiting gigantism. Clowns also represent 'time.' They oscillate between sadness and happiness, showing that one aspect secretly hides its opposite. These fools spend most of their time fooling others but always end up fooling themselves in the grand finale. In general, they are joyful manifestations of a "wandering perspective." Accordingly, their red noses and disheveled appearances are meant to symbolize drunken homeless wanderers.¹ They are completely under the influence of time because they have lost or abandoned the stability of space (the house built by wisdom) and the advantages of work and accumulation.

In general, all forms of entertainment are cyclical influences to various degrees: distraction, rest, and recreation. This includes theatre and acting, which are entirely founded on lies and deceit. Moreover, it also includes music as a flowing influence that makes the universe pointlessly turn and dance.² Finally, all types of games, and especially games of chance and gambling, are symbols of the cycle and its powers of irrational transformation.

1 Intoxication is an important representation of the influences of time and flooding at the human scale. This symbolism will be fully examined in chapter 80.

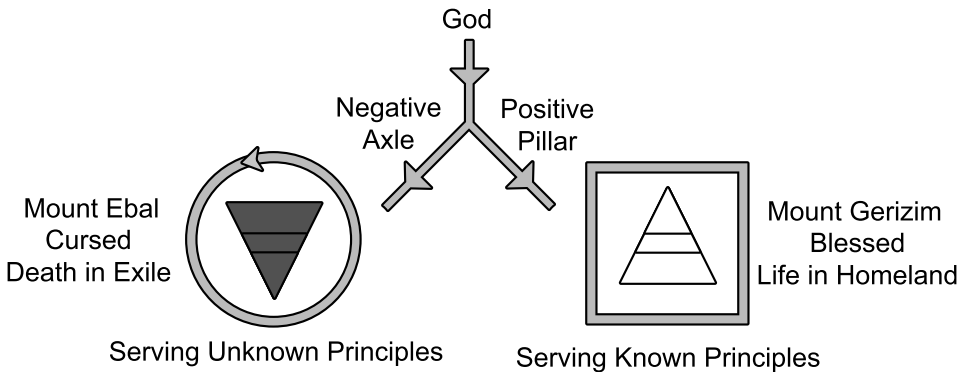
2 The subversive and re-creative influence of music is nowhere more evident than in modern "rock and roll," a strange undercurrent of change which is often expressed through a dark imagery of self-destruction and death.

CHAPTER 47

EXAMPLE: MOUNT GERIZIM AND MOUNT EBAL

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today. I put before you life and death, blessing and curse . . .

Mount Ebal and Gerizim, located at the center of the land of Canaan, are particularly clear examples of the axes of time and space as discussed in this section. These mountains are made into opposite pillars of space in the following narrative. One is positive and blessed, and the other is negative and cursed.



The Two Pillars of Space (from Deuteronomy 27)

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God . . . and the curse if you heed them not and turn after other gods, which you do not know. When the Lord your God brings you to possess the land, you will put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.

On one side, Mount Gerizim is the spatial pillar that upholds the laws of stability and reason in the land of Israel. On the other side, Mount Ebal is the axle of time, which is the principle of instability and exile from the homeland.

At this point, the reader should consult the narrative of the blessing and the curse in Deuteronomy chapters 27 to 30. While doing so, pay close attention to the consequences of transgressing these laws and their relationship to the patterns of time and space.

You shall set up these stones on mount Ebal . . . and write upon them all the words of this law very clearly (Deuteronomy 27:4).

It is important to understand that the purpose of this ritual was to negate the natural symbolism of Mount Ebal (the axle of pointless change) while affirming the natural symbolism of Mount Gerizim (the pillar of productivity and stability). In this manner, both mountains were made into pillars of stability by expressing the “law of space” in positive and negative terms. ‘Time’ and ‘space’ are defined as opposites in this cosmology, so negating the law of time produces the law of space and vice versa. For example, “Thou shall be true” would be a natural law of space, and “Thou shall be false” would be a natural law of time. Inverting the second statement into “Thou shall *not* be false” produces a negative expression of the law of space. Similarly, cursing Mount Ebal turned it into a negative pillar of space.

Cursed is the man who removes his neighbor’s landmark . . . and all the people say “amen” (Deuteronomy 27:17).

The commandments listed at Deuteronomy 27:14 are negative expressions of the law of space. However, apart from the law quoted in the verse above, it is not necessarily obvious that taboos against incest, idolatry, bestiality, and perverted justice are negations of cyclical time. Hopefully, this will become clearer in later chapters. Until then, we will focus on the consequences of transgressing these laws.

The Curse:

Turning from the law
The dominion of time
Sickness and death
Not benefiting from work
Falling under the stranger
Wandering in foreign lands
Serving unknown gods

The Blessing:

Following the law
The dominion of space
Health and life
Benefiting from work
Rising over the stranger
Inhabiting the homeland
Serving the known God

The columns above summarize the consequences of the curse and the blessing. One leads to the dominion of spatial stability and the other leads to the dominion of cyclical time. In terms of human experience, the blessing implies possessing and inhabiting one's homeland, and the curse implies losing the homeland to strangers and going into exile.

In practice, the blessing leads to productivity and accumulation, which acts as a safeguard against the vicissitudes of time, whereas the curse causes the inability to join meaning with matter successfully and benefit from work. This may be experienced as sickness or disability at different scales of reality, leading to inefficiency and eventually to the complete loss of all natural resources.

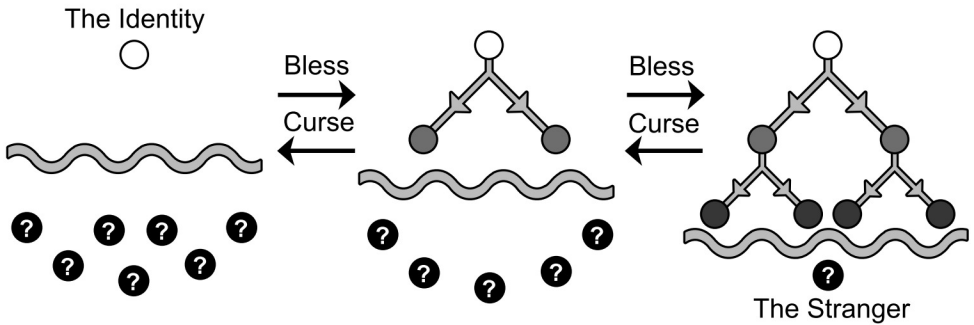
The Effects of the Curse (from Deuteronomy 28)

The fruit of your land and all your labors shall be eaten by a nation which you do not know . . . The Lord will bring you to a nation that you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, and there you will serve other gods, of wood and stone.

God will bring a nation against you from the ends of the earth . . . whose tongue you shall not understand . . . who will besiege you in your gates until your high and fortified walls fall down.

Important to this symbolism is the concept of the "stranger" or "other" as the flipside of a revealed identity. The name of God is the identity of the nation of Israel, and anything that does not express that principle is the "stranger" or the "other."

Simply stated, God is the spiritual identity of this nation which raised them from exile and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life (the law) as a direct expression of itself. So naturally, following the law implies working for your own benefit (the benefit of your identity), while going against it implies working for the benefit of another. So, the choice is simple: practicing the law by “building familiar space” or turning away from it and “serving time in exile.”



The Lord will bring you back into Egypt in ships, by the same way about which I said, “You shall never see it again.” There you will sell yourselves to your enemies as slaves, but no one will buy you (Deuteronomy 29:68).

The passage above clearly illustrates the pattern of cyclical time as one of contradiction, absurdity, vanity, and irony. First, the threat of “returning to Egypt” represents a return to more primitive conditions for this nation. It is therefore analogous to the flood at the cosmic scale. Moreover, God is basically saying, “Do not make me contradict myself because I will.” Indeed, when there is a clear covenant between heaven and earth, God will remain true and consistent, but if that agreement becomes muddled in the flow of time, then God will have no qualms about contradicting himself.

You will eat the fruit of your own body and the flesh of your own sons and daughters . . . A woman’s eye shall grow evil against the children born from between her feet . . . for she will eat them in secret . . . (Deuteronomy 28:53-57).

As discussed in the previous chapter, cannibalism is a sign of returning to the dominion of time, which is a self-negating and self-swallowing pattern of manifestation. It is a shocking image of vanity, narcissism, absurdity, counter-productiveness, and pointlessness.

You will have no repose among these nations, and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot . . . You will say in the morning, "I wish it were evening" . . . and in the evening, "I wish it were morning" (from Deuteronomy 28:65-67).

In biblical cosmology, cyclical time is associated with rest, relaxation, and recreation. However, this only holds as long as spatial reality holds. In other words, cyclical influences are only "restful" when they occur in the safety of familiar space, and when they do not completely destroy it. Otherwise, if space is completely flooded, then there is "no rest for the sole of your feet" because the earth no longer supports you. When this happens, humanity must suffer the vicissitudes of the time cycle as it oscillates from one painful extreme to the other.¹

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may perform all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 29:28).

As described in chapter 38, time is centered on the empty hub of a wheel. This "secret" symbolizes the hidden aspect of God as the creator of all phenomena (completeness). Indeed, some mysteries can only be loosely connected to God's revealed identity, rendering them potentially subversive to familiar space when revealed, even to the point of overturning it. Nevertheless, the following verse makes certain that Israel does not attribute its misfortune to anything but God.

The Lord rejoiced to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice to destroy you . . . (Deuteronomy 28:63).

¹ In that case, it is the land itself that is at rest and not its human inhabitants. This notion is clearly spelled out in Leviticus 26: 27-35 which contains curses similar to Mount Ebal, including references to cannibalism in verse 29.

CHAPTER 48

EXAMPLE: JUBILEE AND THE WALLS OF JERICHO I

For six days you shall do all your work, but the seventh day is Sabbath . . . in which you shall not work (Deuteronomy 5:12).

The Sabbath and Jubilee are examples of cyclical influences on different scales of reality. The Jubilee is a large-scale version of the sabbatical year, which is itself a large-scale version of the weekly Sabbath. These reiterated patterns are just another example of microcosms (wheels within wheels) in biblical cosmology.

Returning to Primitive Conditions (from Deut. 15 and Lev. 25)

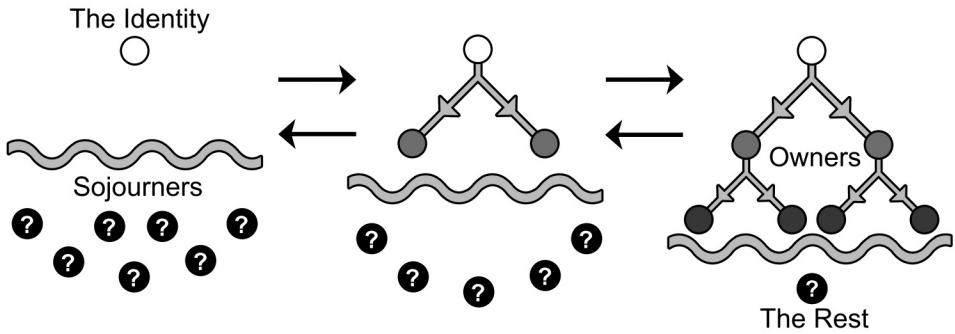
For six years you shall sow your field, prune your vineyard, and gather its produce. But the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land . . . At the end of seven years, you shall make a release. Creditors shall release their debtors and servants shall be let loose . . .

You shall count seven sabbatical years [7x7 = 49 years], then you shall make a proclamation by blowing the horn throughout all your land for the fiftieth year, and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land.

It shall be a Jubilee unto you, and you shall return every man to his tribal possession. The land shall not permanently be sold because it is mine. You are but strangers and sojourners with me.

As discussed in chapter 41, idleness and rest indirectly bring about a return to primitive nature. This implies returning the land to its flooded condition on a cosmic scale and to its wilderness condition at a more

human scale. At all scales of reality, it implies loosening and freeing what is tightly bound.¹ At the communal level, Jubilees imply freeing slaves, canceling debts, and returning the land to ancestral ownership, and ultimately to God. In this sense, the Jubilee is closely connected to the exile because the entire nation is momentarily reduced to the status of “strangers and sojourners on a land not theirs.”



These periods of rest and re-creation are potentially dangerous since they inevitably entail a certain level of destruction, disintegration, and subversion. In fact, these same influences are used specifically for their destructive powers elsewhere in the Bible.

Overturing Space with Time (from Joshua 6)

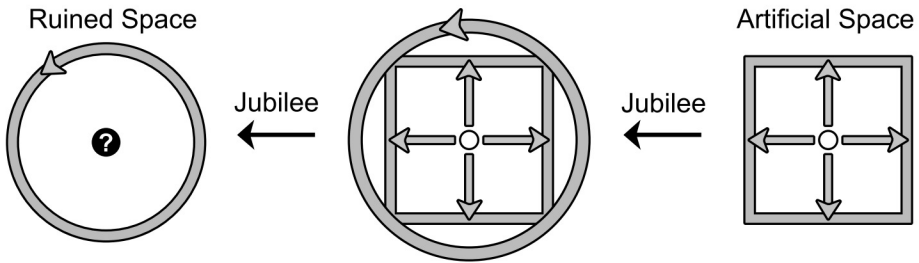
God said to Joshua, “I have given Jericho into your hand. Surround the city with the men of war, and go around the city once every day for six days.”

Seven priests shall bear seven horns of jubilee before the ark. On the seventh day, you shall go around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

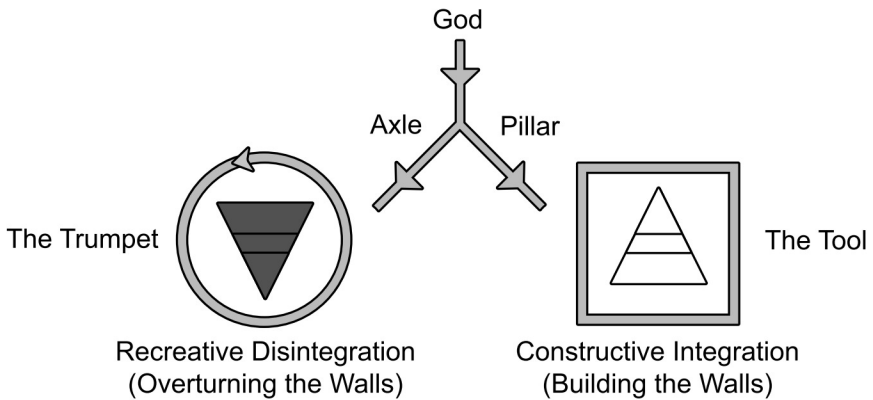
When they make a long blast with the jubilee horn, all the people shall shout loudly, and the walls of the city will fall.

¹ The word “jubilee” (יובל) may be connected to “flooding” (מבול) or “foolishness” (נבל), two concepts that are closely related in biblical cosmology, along with confuse (בלל), waste (בלה), naught (בל), and vanity (הבל).

In this story, the walled city of Jericho is an example of artificial space, while the revolutions around the wall represent the primitive influences of time. So clearly, in this case, the destructive nature of the cycle was used strictly as a weapon against the stable spaces of Jericho.



The destructive influence in this narrative is the same as the restorative influence of the Jubilee because cyclical time is both a destroyer and renewer of space. However, it is often invoked for purely destructive purposes in the context of the Bible.²



Sabbatical years and Jubilees unleash the power of time for the destruction and re-creation of space. This takes on many shapes and sizes in the Bible because it manifests on different scales of reality. In general, it involves returning to more primitive or natural conditions via flooding, freeing, flowing, and turning.

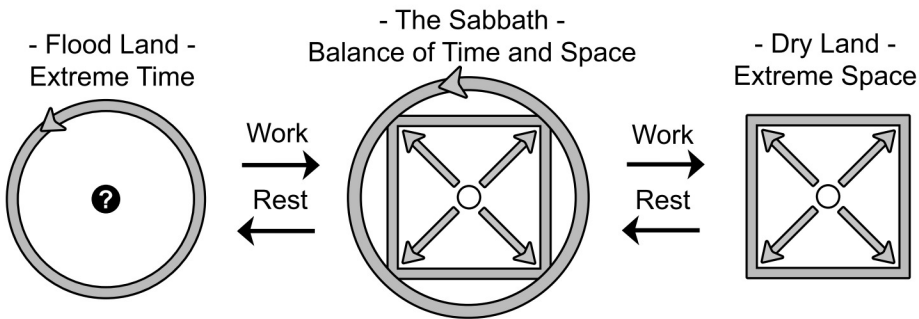
² The use of cyclical powers in warfare is the main theme of the book of Judges. The stories of Samson and David are elaborate descriptions of cyclical powers and their mysterious role in creation. Samson represents the cyclical powers of the 'sun' while David represents the cyclical powers of the 'moon.'

CHAPTER 49

THE SABBATH AS BALANCE OF TIME AND SPACE

In six days God made heaven and earth, and the sea with everything in it, and he rested on the seventh day . . .

In biblical cosmology, the Sabbath is not just a period of rest and renewal, but a cosmic covenant between ‘space’ and ‘time.’ This covenant may also be interpreted as a deal between the ‘land’ and the ‘sea’ to not overextend onto the other’s domain. This sacred peace is what allows space and time to coexist instead of destroying each other in a constant tug of war. Without it, countless worlds would have to be flooded and then rebuilt in endless succession.

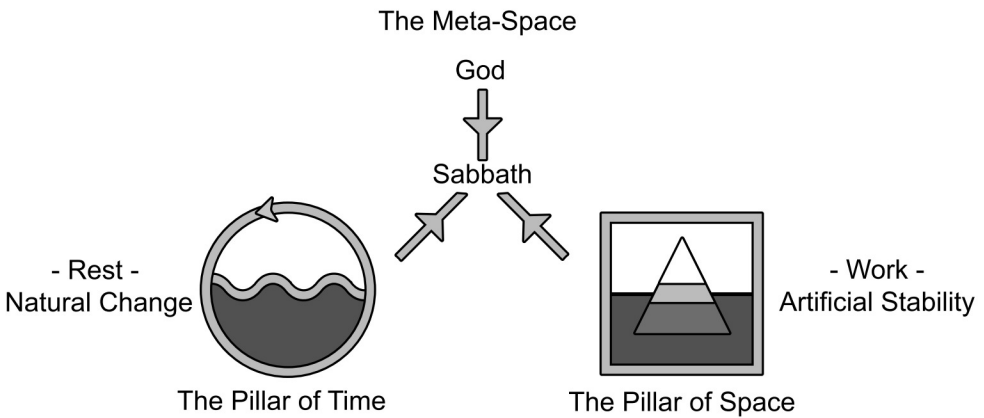


As illustrated above, the sabbatical rest does not completely return the land to its primitive state. Instead, celebrating the Sabbath requires the ability to balance the natural flow of cyclical time with the artificial stability of space. It makes natural rest and renewal possible without losing all the advantages of work.

For six days you shall do all your work, but the seventh day is Sabbath . . . in which you shall not work (Deuteronomy 5:12-13).

There are two sides to this cosmic agreement: 1) not to over-extend the influence of time into the domain of space, and 2) not to overextend the influence of space into the domain of time. The first guards against the destructive powers of the flood, and the second guards against any attempt to subsume nature into the square patterns of reason.

Beyond its defensive function, the Sabbath also plays a critical role for divine knowledge in creation. As illustrated below, the ultimate purpose of the Sabbath is to elevate spatial reality by the creation of a “meta-space.” This is similar to the notion introduced in chapter 14, in which divine knowledge was described as a form of “meta-knowledge.”

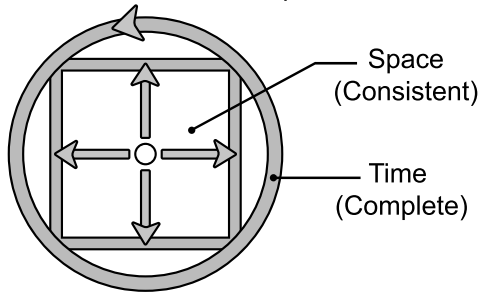


As the creator of both ‘heaven’ and ‘earth,’ God cannot be known through regular knowledge, but only by the transcendence of regular knowledge. For similar reasons, the creator of both ‘time’ and ‘space’ cannot be hosted by regular space, but only by the transcendence of regular space.¹

The concept of a meta-space is symbolized within creation by the balanced coexistence between the artificial forces of stability and the natural forces of transformation. By making peace between space and time in this manner, the Sabbath hosts the creator of all things within creation itself.

¹ Even though they are similar, the “pillars” of the meta-space should not be confused with the negative and positive pillars of regular space from chapter 47.

The Balance of Time and Space



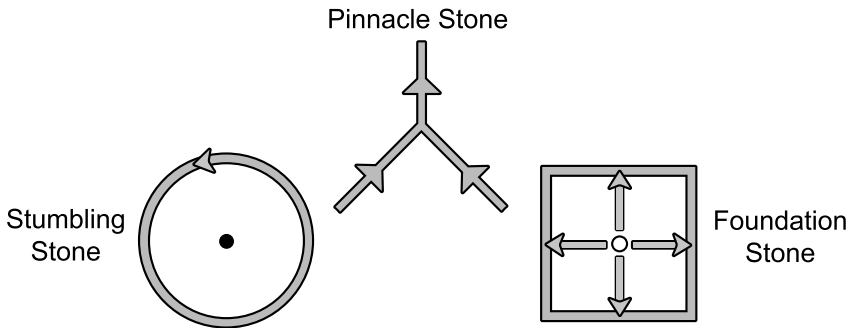
In general, the purpose of the sabbatical rest is the renewal of space. However, in the context of divine knowledge, this renewal also elevates regular space into a higher and more inclusive version of space. This sacred space can host the singular principle of time and space, cyclical and straight, foreign and familiar, irrational and rational, hidden and revealed, etc.

CHAPTER 50

SYMBOLS OF SPACE AND TIME: THE PINNACLE STONE

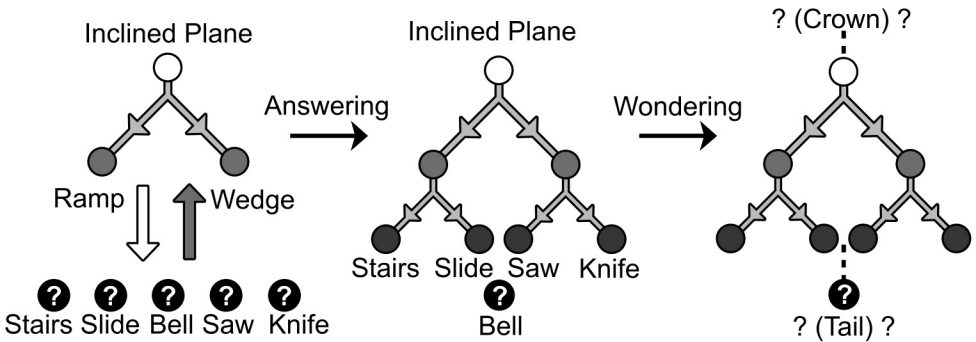
The stone rejected by the builders has become the pinnacle stone (Psalm of David 118:22).

The duality of the foundation stone and the stumbling stone (discussed in chapter 35) will ultimately resolve itself in the symbolism of the pinnacle stone. This symbolism is directly related to the idea of building a “meta-space,” as mentioned in the previous chapter.



According to the imagery of chapter 35, everything connected to the foundation stone is part of regular space while anything left-over is potentially a stumbling stone. Hence, whenever a ‘space’ reaches the limits of reasonable integration, there is an inevitable encounter with “the stone rejected by the builders.” Undoubtedly, this “stone” would produce inconsistencies if it were incorporated into the structure of regular space.

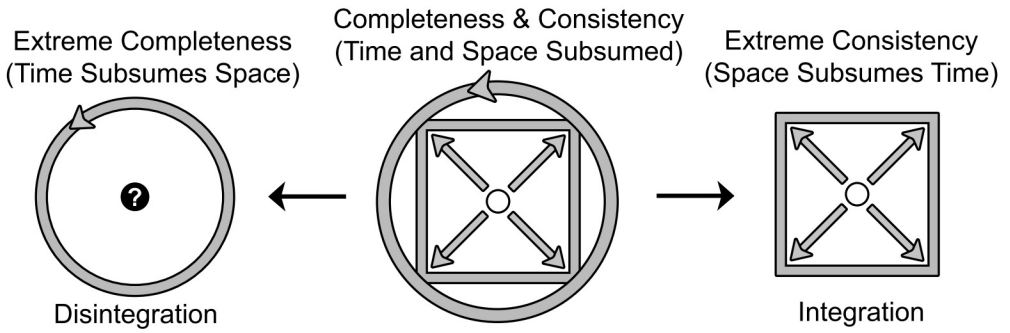
When this happens on a cosmic scale, the “builders of space” are left in a state of wonder and bewilderment. This stage of knowledge may be symbolized by a “crown” and a “tail” as shown in the following example. These loose-end connections represent the open questions raised by the inability to integrate a remainder.¹ Thus, encountering something completely alien forces the “builders of space” to acknowledge the possibility of a strange but secret higher identity.



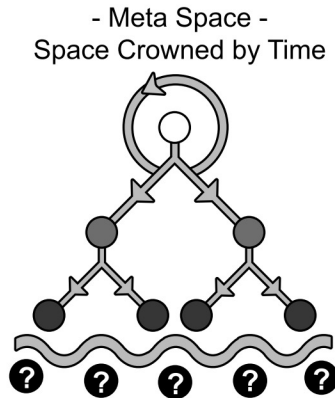
Once this limit has been reached, tensions arise between ‘space’ and ‘time,’ which take the form of a battle between consistency and completeness. On one end, there may be an attempt to resolve these tensions within space, which means preserving consistency at the cost of completeness. This usually requires forceful integration, which means “cutting off” the remainders entirely.² On the other end, there may be an attempt to resolve these tensions within time, which means preserving completeness at the cost of consistency. This leads to disintegration (death) when ‘space’ is flooded by foreign elements that dissolve the bonds holding everything together.

1 These “remainders” and “crowns” can become the tail and horns of the devil, taunting humanity with the notion that God cannot answer all the enigmas.

2 The word “crown” (בתר) means remain or surround and is a permutation of the verb “cutting off” (כרת). The word “crown” (זר) also means strange or foreign, and is a permutation of the words “secret” or “mysterious” (רז).



Finally, the problem can be resolved by the Creator of the world, which means subsuming both time and space to a higher identity. This is symbolized by the creation of a “meta-space” with a pinnacle stone as its foundational principle. This all-encompassing stone encapsulates both the stumbling stone and the foundation stone as the singular principle of all creation.



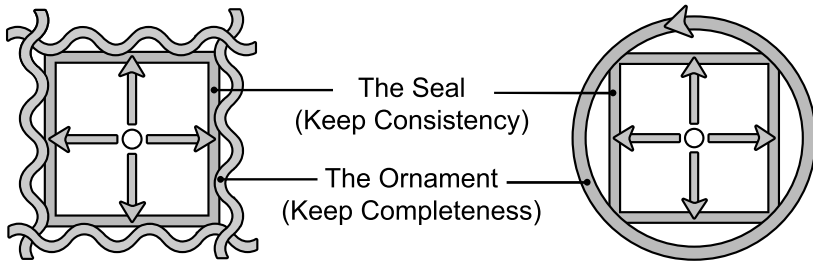
As illustrated above, the elevation and renewal of regular space into a meta-space may be symbolized by “crowning space with the mystery of time.” As will be discovered in the following chapter, this notion encapsulates the deeper meaning of ornamentation in ancient cosmology.

CHAPTER 51

SYMBOLS OF SPACE AND TIME: SEALS AND ORNAMENTS

On the seventh day, God completed his work and rested from all the work he had done.

As described in the verse above, the Sabbath is not just a period of rest and renewal, but the time in which God “completed his work.” At the human scale, this “final touch” is often symbolized by seals and ornaments.



To understand this symbolism, it is important to remember that the Sabbath is essentially a peace agreement between ‘space’ and ‘time.’ This covenant guards against the extreme powers of absurdity, confusion, and pointless change, and the extreme powers of reason, purity, and productive stability. As a seal, it keeps the floodwaters from leaking back into space. As an ornament, it prevents reason from forcefully integrating all that is pointless, fluid, or strange.

Like all symbols in biblical cosmology, these concepts may be discovered at different scales of reality. For instance, the Sabbath is a peace agreement between the land and the sea on the cosmic scale,

and between civilization and wilderness on a more human scale. The latter is often symbolized by a wall that protects from the wilderness on the inside but is covered with vines on the outside.

In accordance with these patterns, ancient traditional crafts such as carpentry and masonry always included ornamentation as a “final touch” to any construction. These usually consisted of loops and twists which often resembled wild vines reminiscent of flowing waters. Thus, at different scales of reality, ornamentation symbolizes the preservation of primitive nature at the margins of artificial space. Adding this “final touch of vanity” to complete any created work is a way to acknowledge the limits of reason and stability.¹

Beyond the symbolism of the Sabbath, some ornaments include expressions of vanity, irrationality, pointlessness, and even death. In general, all festivals marking the end of productive work are related to ornamentation in a broader sense. Thus, when the “work is finished,” another kind of reality comes into play: pointless distractions, merry-making, entertainment, games of chance, etc. Like the Sabbath, the purpose of these strange activities is to partake in cyclical renewal without completely overturning productive and familiar space.

The perfect balance of space and time is often symbolized by a periphery that ironically “seals itself off.” For example, a modern day incarnation of this idea can be found in the concept of the vaccine, which “seals off” disease through contact with manageable versions of that disease. Thus, in many ways, Sabbaths and Jubilees may be considered ancient forms of vaccines that sealed off the powers of pointless change, exile, flooding, and death through contact with manageable versions of these influences.²

1 Ornamentation often renders objects less permanent because it attaches them to certain periods which fade out of style. Thus, ornamental beauty is usually fickle and may easily transform into tackiness and gaudiness.

2 In traditional architecture, grotesques and chimera were hybrid monsters that, ironically, guarded familiar space against greater monsters. Thus, gargoyles also acted as gutters to channel the floodwaters away from buildings. Similarly, in the margins of ancient books, images of hybrids, dragons, inversions, and scatological humor could often be found surrounding the main box of the written word.

In general, the covenant between 'space' and 'time' acts as a mediator or margin that safeguards the "meta-space" against the excesses of either side. This notion could be symbolized by the following patterns: the strange saving the familiar; the impure saving the pure; the wild saving the tamed; the crooked saving the straight; the irrational saving the rational and vice versa.³ As will be demonstrated in the following section, this type of imagery is extremely important in the Bible. It expresses the possibility of knowing the creator of all things within creation itself.

³ The sheepdog is another example of the wild protecting the tamed. These dogs are manageable versions of wolves used to guard sheep against feral wolves.

CHAPTER 52

EXAMPLE: NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAMS IV

Whoever does not worship the image will be cast into a fiery furnace . . . What God shall deliver you?

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream from Daniel chapter 2, the king's empire was symbolized by a golden head on a body that eventually succumbs to foreign influences. Therefore, in Daniel chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar attempts to prevent this catastrophic outcome by erecting a statue made entirely of gold, from head to toe, and by forcing all people to bow before it in submission.

Nebuchadnezzar's Response to the Dream (from Daniel 3)

Nebuchadnezzar erected an image of gold with a height of sixty cubits and a breadth of six cubits. "Peoples, nations, and languages, at the sound of horns and all manner of music, you must fall and worship the image. Whoever refuses will be cast into a fiery furnace . . . What God shall deliver you?"

Daniel's three companions refused to bow before the image, so the king commanded to heat the furnace seven times more, and they were bound and cast into its flames . . .

Nebuchadnezzar was amazed and said, "Did we not cast three men into the fire? Behold, I see four men walking safely, and the fourth resembles a son of gods! . . . Therefore I make a decree. Every people, nation, and language that speaks against their God shall be cut in pieces and their houses turned into dung-heaps . . . because no other god can save like this!"

In this story, the statue erected by the king is a physical representation of the image in his dream. However, in defiance of the dream and to prevent the degradation it predicts, Nebuchadnezzar made the statue entirely of gold so that all parts would conform to the head.

Nebuchadnezzar erected an image of gold with a height of sixty cubits and a breadth of six cubits.

It is easy to interpret the measurements of this statue with the indications provided in chapter 44. In this context, the number six is related to work, measurement, and rationality. It also points to the six directions of space and the sides of a cube. This comes in contrast with the number seven, which refers to cyclical “rest” and irrationality.

At the sound of music, you must worship the image . . . Whoever refuses will be cast into a fiery furnace.

As mentioned in chapters 42 and 48, music is a representation of ‘time’ on the human scale. Hence, this is an attempt to forcefully resist the flow of change. In other words, when change/music is afoot, everyone must continue to conform to that space/statue. The consequence of refusing is to be “cut off” by the fires of extreme integration. On the whole, this is an attempt to subsume ‘time’ into ‘space.’

Daniel’s companions refused to bow before the image . . . so the furnace was heated seven times more.

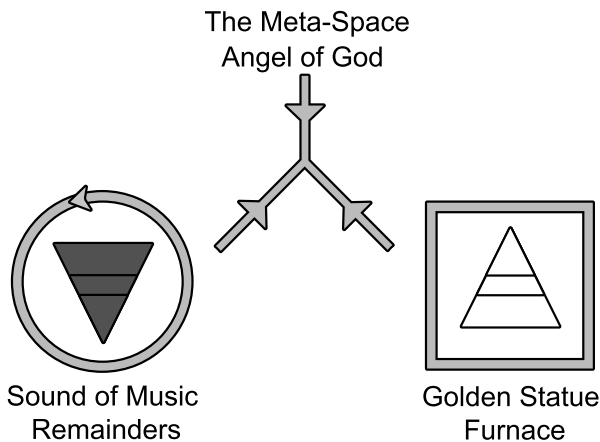
In this scenario, Daniel’s companions represent strangers as well as “remainders” to Nebuchadnezzar’s empire. As mentioned in chapter 36, that which is inherently alien or foreign constitutes an impurity or inconsistency. Therefore, failing to incorporate them undermines the integrity of ‘space’ and makes them an influence of disintegration and transformation. Again, the stranger is a representation of time on the human scale, as long as ‘time’ is understood as referring to the cause of transformative change.

The king commanded to heat the furnace seven times more, and they were bound and cast into its flames.

The order to “heat the furnace seven times more” refers to subsuming the irrationality of ‘time’ into the rational patterns of ‘space.’ This is ultimately impossible because there is always a remainder.

“Behold, I see four loose men walking safely in the furnace, and the fourth resembles a son of gods!”

As shown in the image below, the inability to forcefully integrate these societal remainders created a meta-space capable of hosting the highest of spiritual principles. This principle is described as an angel of God or “son of gods” in the midst of Daniel’s three companions.



What God shall deliver you? . . . No other god can save like this . . . Whoever speaks against their god shall be cut in pieces, and their houses turned into dung-heaps.

In the end, the realization that space can never fully integrate time created a “higher space” that revealed the creator of both time and regular space. Therefore, the statement quoted above is not just a threat, but the realization that whoever does not recognize this truth will eventually be overturned and disintegrated by the mystery of time.

PART V

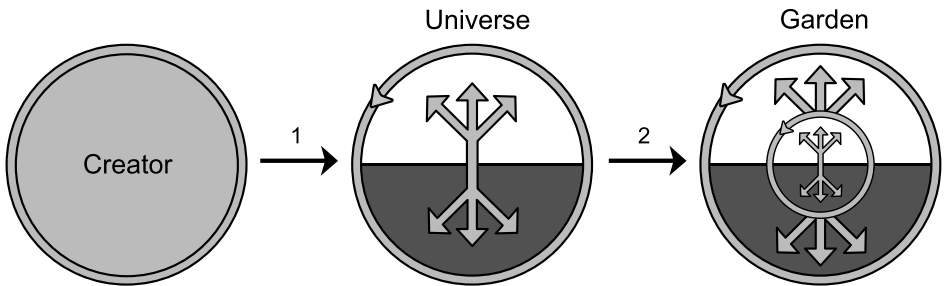
TIME AND SPACE
ON THE HUMAN SCALE

CHAPTER 53

HUMANITY AND THE GARDEN OF EDEN

God planted a garden eastward, in Eden, and there he put the human he had formed.

The Garden of Eden is meant to be interpreted as a miniature representation of the cosmos (a microcosm). In this analogy, the tree of life is a miniature version of the spatial pillar, and the serpent is a miniature version of the time cycle.



For humanity, the ultimate purpose of the Garden is to receive the full knowledge of God within creation. Therefore, it reflects the principles of creation on the human scale so that serpents and trees become “cosmic words” that embody metaphysical truth.

Cosmic Prototypes:

Universe
Heaven
Earth
Space
Time

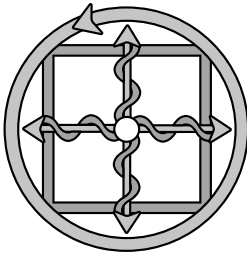
Garden Varieties:

Garden
Male
Female
Tree
Snake

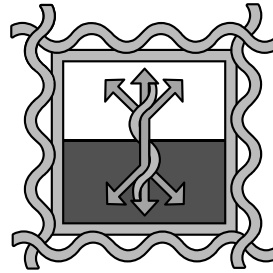
In ancient cosmology, the cosmic pillar is often symbolized by an enormous tree or mountain, and the waves of the ocean are often associated with a colossal sea serpent. Moreover, the time-cycle itself is depicted as a surrounding snake eating its own tail (a self-negating and self-renewing influence).

A river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it was parted and became four heads.

The Four Rivers



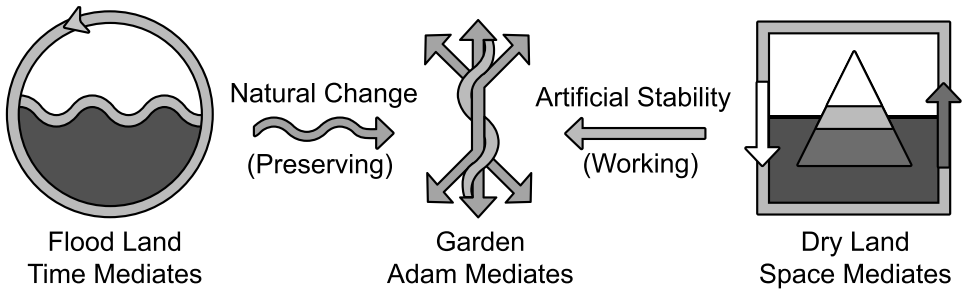
The Snake and Tree



As a microcosm of creation, the Garden of Eden embodies the balance between the cyclical currents of ‘time’ and the squareness of ‘space.’ In general, the notion of a garden embodies the concept of balancing natural change and artificial stability. In the diagram above, this harmony is symbolized by separating a river into four branches (cardinal directions), by a snake coiled around a tree, or by wild vines intertwined with a trellis or fence.

God took the human and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and preserve it.

As illustrated on the following page, Adam’s job in the Garden is to maintaining this equilibrium by “working and preserving it.” Failing to do so would unleash a cosmic struggle between the formative and transformative forces of the universe. Whenever this happens, the floodwaters begin to confuse, disintegrate, and overturn the land, and the spatial axis pushes back with extreme forces of reason, integration, and stability. At the human scale, this battle usually translates as a war between primitive laws of nature and artificial laws of civilization.



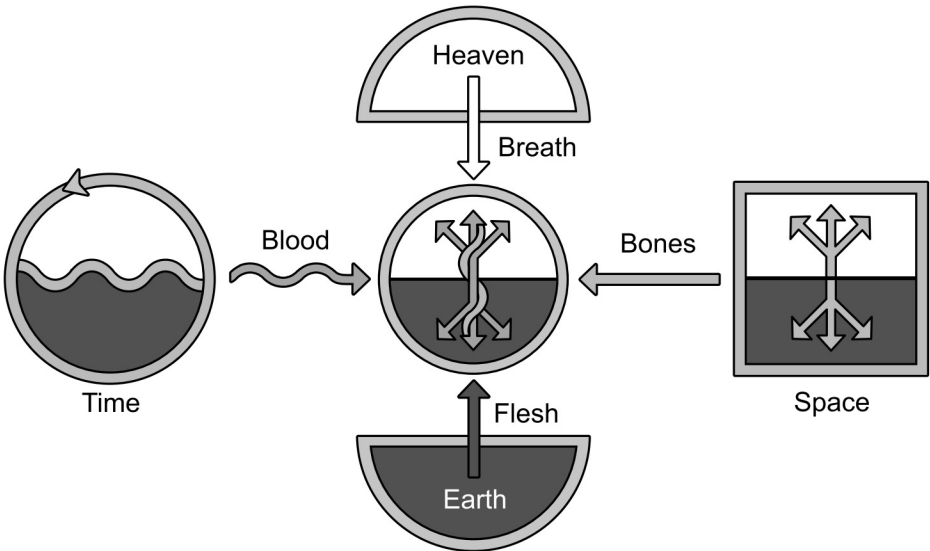
In the context of the Garden of Eden, no such struggle existed because God had bestowed upon humanity the perfect equilibrium of ‘time’ and ‘space.’ Therefore, to maintain this delicate balance, Adam was only required to “work and preserve the Garden.” A small amount of work would counterbalance the irrational excesses of nature, and a minimum of preservation would counterbalance the rational extremes of civilization. Maintaining this equilibrium in the Garden provided Adam with the knowledge of God as creator of heaven, earth, space, and time.

CHAPTER 54

ADAM AS MICROCOSM: THE BLOOD AND THE BONES

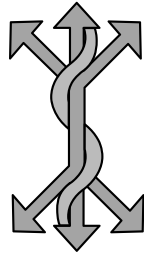
A mist went up from the earth and watered [time] the whole surface of the land. God formed [space] the human from the dust of the ground [earth] and blew into its nostrils the wind of life [heaven].

In chapter 15, Adam was described as a microcosm of creation, which means his breath and flesh are miniature representations of heaven and earth. In a similar analogy, the blood and the bones of the human body may be interpreted as microcosms of time and space.



According to these analogies, the blood of Adam is a miniature representation of 'time' on the scale of the human body. Like the floodwaters that renew the land, blood is a flowing liquid with restorative powers. So, even though the sight of blood is negative when it signals

an injury, it also initiates a healing process that returns the flesh to its initial conditions. Therefore, like water, the function of blood is to “wash” in the sense of refresh and renew. This contrasts with the dry bones, which are the pillars that stabilize and uphold the human body.

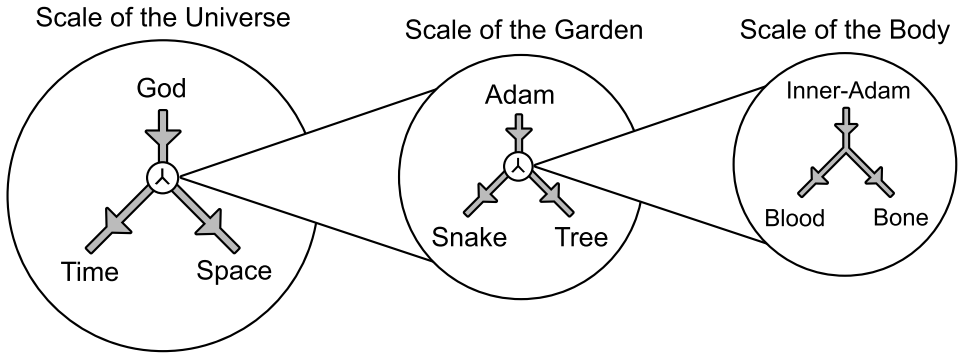


In this cosmology, a healthy individual is someone who achieves the perfect knowledge between the breath and the body (heaven and earth), and the perfect balance between the blood and the bones (time and space). Accordingly, one of the most universal symbols of medicine is the Rod of Asclepius, which is composed of a snake coiled around a staff. In the Bible, the snake called “Nehushtan” is a clear example of this symbolism (see Numbers 21:4-9). Similarly, the familiar image of the “barber’s pole” is composed of a red stripe (blood) coiled around a white pole (bone).¹ These symbols represent a healthy individual and the powers of ancient healers (bloodletting and bonesetting), which used both subtle and rational methods to recover the equilibrium of sick individuals.

These ancient medical practices are simply the internal versions of Adam’s jobs in the Garden of Eden, who was asked to “preserve and work” the garden to maintain its delicate balance. Of course, it is a mistake to interpret these ancient healing methods with modern medicine, which is based entirely on mechanical causality. Instead, ancient medicine was based on spiritual knowledge and the representation of cosmic influences on different scales. In this context, the powers that healed the individual could also be used to heal an entire community and even the cosmos itself.

1 It may also be interpreted as a white bandage around bloody flesh.

From the spiritual perspective, creation is perceived as a series of nested microcosms. This pattern implies a miniature version of the whole at the center of the universe. Such imagery is consistent with the notion that God created the universe for knowledge, and that he made a miniature image of himself (Adam) at the center of the world. Similarly, Adam’s purpose in the universe is to create a miniature image of himself (within his “heart”) to mediate between his mind and body.²



Because of these analogies, every concept in the language of creation simultaneously describes humanity’s outer and inner worlds. The “outer world” describes Adam as a mediator between heaven and earth, and the “inner world” describes Adam as a mediator between his own mind and body. These concentric worlds are interrelated in biblical cosmology, which means Adam’s actions within himself have implications in the Garden and eventually in the universe.³

2 This is certainly the principle behind the *homunculus* in traditional medicine and folklore.

3 Ancient forms of medicine are still practiced today, which sheds considerable doubt on the supremacy of modern medicine. Ironically, that which modern medicine always dismisses as “the placebo effect” is precisely the subtle influence which it is ill-equipped to handle. These are self-referential influences of renewal.

CHAPTER 55

THE TREE(S) OF THE GARDEN AS MEDIATOR(S) OF KNOWLEDGE

The tree of life was in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.

One of the most puzzling elements in the story of the Garden of Eden is probably the symbolism of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. At first glance, the narrative implies that these trees are opposites, but there are also suggestions that they are one and the same.

The Tree(s) of the Garden of Eden (from Genesis 2 and 3)

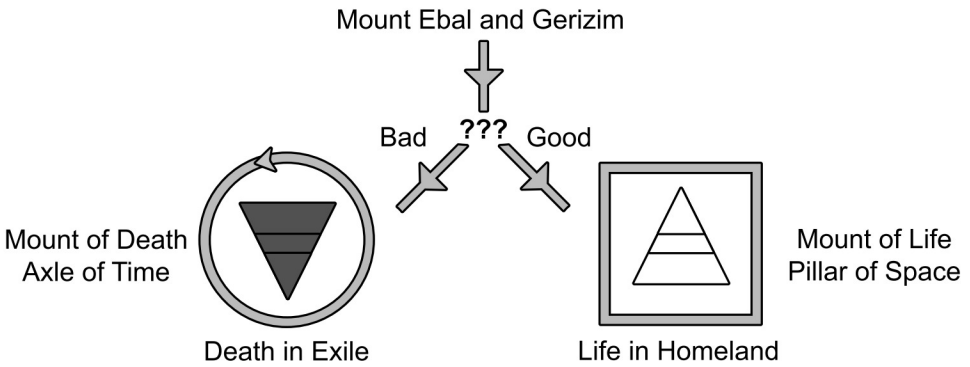
God said to Adam, "From all the tree of the garden you must eat, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat, lest you die . . ."

The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which God had made. It said to the woman, "You will not die for certain . . . God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and bad."

They ate its fruit, and their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked . . . So God exiled the human from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which it came.

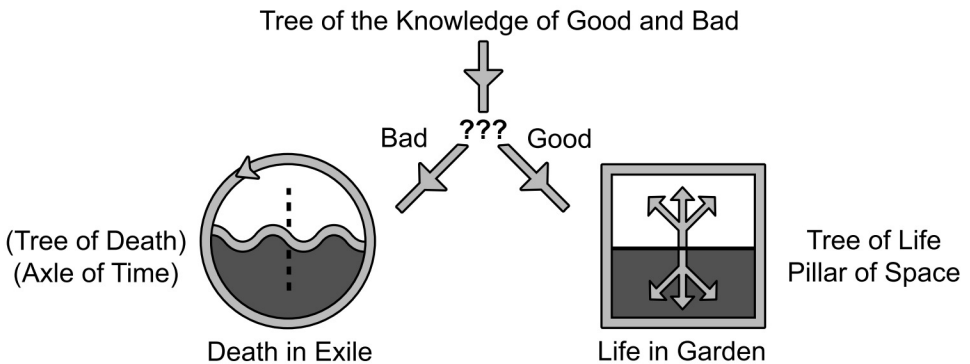
In order to understand the meaning of these trees, it will be useful to compare the tree of the knowledge of good and bad with the patterns of Mount Ebal and Gerizim from Deuteronomy 27-30 (see chapter 47).

As illustrated below, Mount Gerizim corresponds to the “good” mediator that leads to life in the homeland, and Mount Ebal corresponds to the “bad” mediator that leads to death in exile.



I have set before you today life and good, and death and bad . . . I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, and the blessing and the curse. Therefore, choose life, that you and your seed may live (Deut. 30:15-19).

As shown in the following diagram, the tree of the knowledge of good and bad is based on the same fundamental pattern as Mount Ebal and Gerizim. The only difference is that the axle of time, or “tree of death,” is not mentioned explicitly in the Garden story. Instead, death and exile are viewed as the natural consequences of losing the tree of life. In other words, the “tree of death” is merely the absence of the “tree of life” in that context. In general, the axle of time can be defined as the absence of a manifest connection between heaven and earth (see chapters 33 and 34).



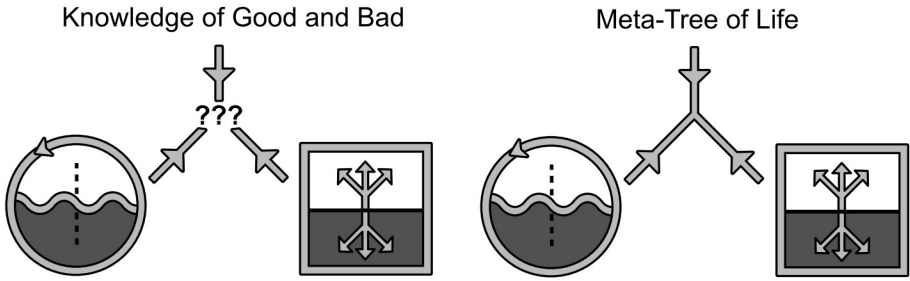
The reason why the axis of time is explicitly mentioned in the story of Mount Ebal and Gerizim is that Israel had just experienced death and exile in Egypt. Conversely, in the context of the Garden, Adam and Eve had not experienced “death” and were therefore unfamiliar with its mediation.¹ According to this picture, the tree of life may be interpreted as a “branch” of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. This notion is quite natural because trees are composed of smaller trees (micro-trees) in the sense that each branch is a miniature version of a tree (a self-similar structure). Such reiterated patterns often lead to seemingly paradoxical interpretations.

Importantly, the links between “space” and “good,” as well as “time” and “bad,” established in these narratives are not arbitrary. In fact, they clearly derive from the definitions of these concepts. The words “good” and “bad” refer to the presence or absence of an agreement between a fact and its appointed identity (or earth and heaven). A fact is called “good” or “right” when it meets the standards of its identity, and “bad” or “wrong” when it fails to meet them. These are the definitions of space and time as described in this commentary.

In biblical cosmology, humanity’s purpose in the universe is to know God as the perfect answer to the riddle of life and death. However, in the story of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were not fully prepared to deal with this paradox at greater scales. Therefore, they were strictly forbidden from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

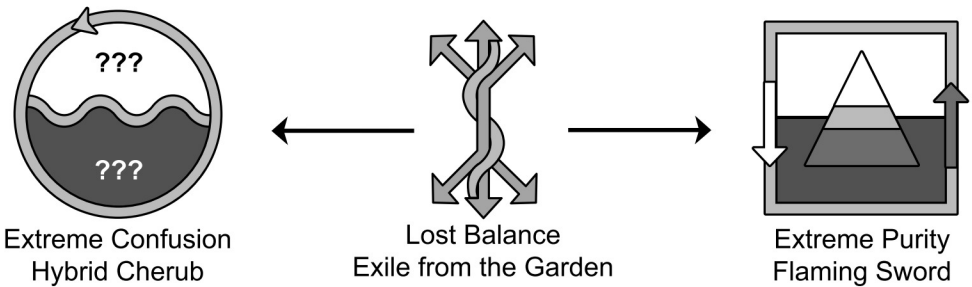
As shown in the following diagram, the tree of the knowledge of good and bad is itself an unresolved “tree of life.” In other words, the tree of knowledge poses the possibility of transcending “good” versus “bad” with a higher identity. The answer to the riddle is a higher form of Life that transcends regular life. In this case, the tree must no longer be referred to as the “tree of the knowledge of good and bad” because the bad has been transmuted into a higher good.

1 Although oral traditions of a “tree of death” can be discovered in certain circles, this concept has remained esoteric until today. But even without such traditions, the reality of this tree can be surmised by reading between the lines of the garden story and with parallels from the narrative of Mount Ebal and Gerizim.



Ultimately, all the stories in the Bible are about the problem of transmuting the “evil of change” into a higher good that can properly host the Creator of all things.² Unfortunately, this mysterious operation is risky, because eating from the tree of knowledge without the ability to answer this paradox causes “exile from the garden.”

God exiled the human, and he placed before the Garden of Eden the cherubim and the flaming sword, turning on itself, to keep the way to the tree of life.³



As a result of these self-similar patterns, the symbolism of the trees in the Garden may be interpreted in a variety of ways. In one sense, the trees are opposites; in another sense, they are part of each other; in yet another sense, they are the same. It all depends on one’s ability to answer the paradox of life and death.

² The stories of King David and Job provide clear examples of transforming the evil of cyclical change into a “strange good.”

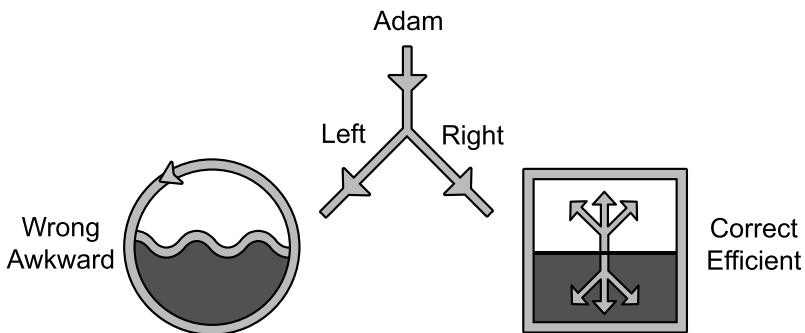
³ The “flaming sword turning on itself” describes how extreme space ultimately succumbs to cyclical time. This pattern is related to the symbolism of the ‘sun’ and can be found in the stories of Cain, Samson, and Saul (see chapter 73).

CHAPTER 56

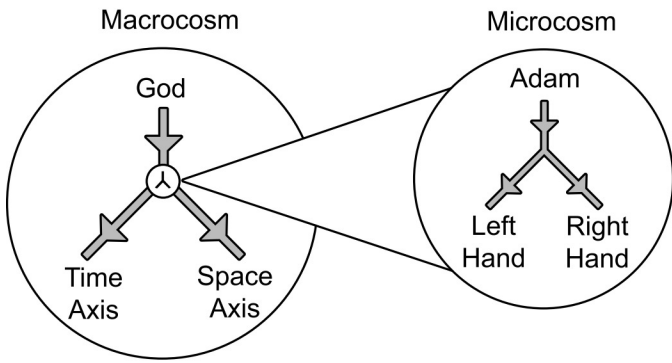
ADAM AS MICROCOSM: THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT

God took the human and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it [right] and preserve it [left].

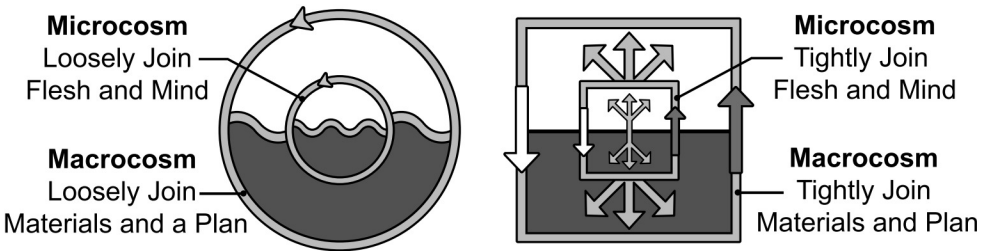
There is another important analogy by which Adam is a microcosm of Creation. It derives from the human tendency to privilege the right hand over the left hand in the performance of tasks. The result of this tendency is a marked difference between the left and the right hands in the performance of tasks for most humans. The right hand is usually capable of performing work with efficiency and precision, while the left hand struggles with accuracy. One hand is relatively true and productive while the other is clumsy and usually good for a laugh.



As illustrated above, Adam's left and right hands are miniature versions of the axes of time and space. More precisely, the flesh of the right hand correctly expresses the intentions of the mind, and the flesh of the left hand incorrectly expresses them. In other words, 'heaven' and 'earth' strongly agree on one hand and vaguely agree (or even disagree) on the other.



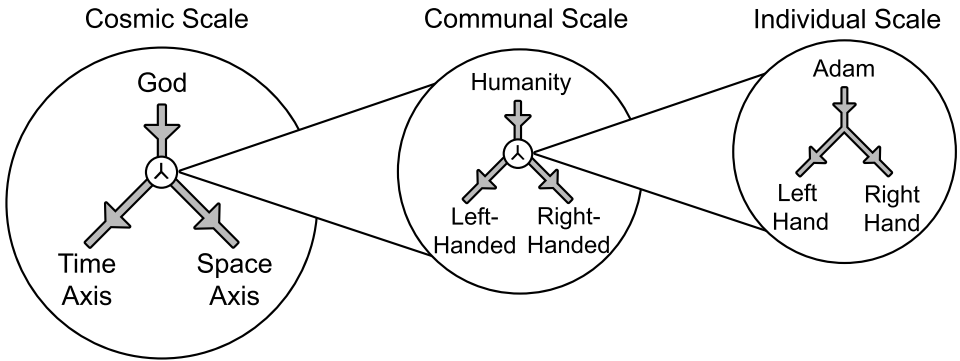
Since Adam is a cosmic mediator between heaven and earth, his inner and outer worlds are interconnected in the following manner. When performing a task in the world, Adam’s ability to coordinate ‘heavenly’ plans and ‘earthly’ materials derives from his inner ability to coordinate his own mind and body. Hence, using the left hand to perform tasks will produce a shoddy and unstable result in the outer world, while using the right hand will produce a true and stable result.



In general, Adam’s outer mediation between ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ will reflect his inner mediation between mind and flesh. This is an important notion within the spiritual worldview because it establishes a natural causality between the macrocosm and the microcosm.

As illustrated in the following diagram, the analogies between inner and outer worlds are also reflected at the communal level. When the normality of right-handedness is enforced within society, whoever fails to follow this rule will then be left-handed. In that case, the left-handedness of individuals is a sign of their loose connection to the rules of that society. As a result, left-handed people become symbols of

the axle of time for that community, making this subgroup analogous to Adam's left hand on a greater scale.¹ In practice, this could manifest itself as left-handed individuals with a tendency towards marginal, anti-establishment, recreational, and even revolutionary personalities, possibly becoming clowns, musicians, actors, spies, turn-coats, etc.



When dealing with different scales of analogies in this manner, it is often difficult to distinguish between simple correspondences and actual causality. This coincidence is often the difference between true symbolism and the kind that arbitrarily assigns meaning to objects.

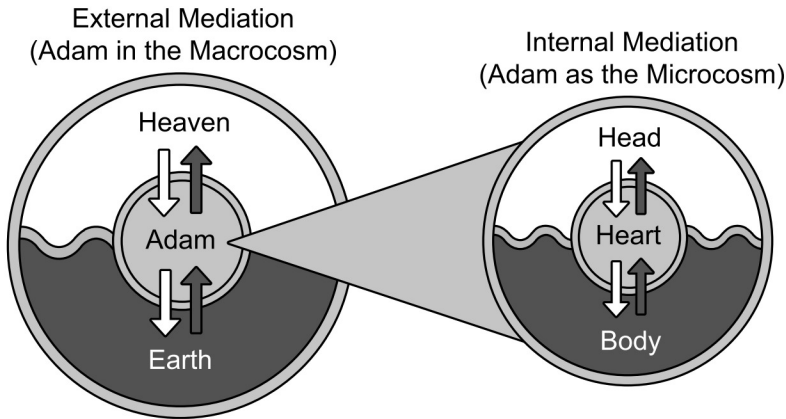
1 The political left and right are clearly manifestations of 'time' and 'space' at the communal level. Even though some characteristics of the left and right have evolved over time, they are still basically mediators of change and completeness on one side, and of stability and consistency on the other.

CHAPTER 57

THE DEFINITION OF SIN

From the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat lest you die.

The notion of sin can be defined from first principles in biblical cosmology because it is a fundamental concept. Simply stated, “sin” is the incorrect union of ‘heaven’ and ‘earth.’ However, like all words in the language of creation, this can be interpreted on many scales.



As illustrated above, it is especially useful to distinguish two levels of sin in relation to Adam’s external and internal mediation. In the macrocosm, sin is a failure to mediate between heaven and earth correctly. It implies incorrectly supporting spirit with facts and informing matter with meaning. In the microcosm, sin is a failure to mediate between one’s own mind and body. In both cases, sin is the inability to correctly “raise matter” and “lower meaning” for their union.

External sin includes cosmic errors such as improper offerings to God and failing to support God's breath below (i.e. inappropriately "hosting angels"). On the flipside, it also involves incorrectly "naming animals" as well as eating unsuitable food (see chapter 17). One type of sin is the result of Adam's failure to mediate with heaven, and the other is a failure to mediate with the earth. These are irrevocably linked in a cosmology based on knowledge, which means one type of sin always implies the other.

In the narrative of the Garden of Eden, the original sin involves disobeying a divine law (failing to support heaven's breath) which led to eating unsuitable food (failing to integrate earth's matter). Moreover, it is both a case of incorrectly eating food and incorrectly naming an animal, two actions that are closely related in this cosmology. Thus, Adam was incapable of answering the paradox of the snake (naming that animal) and was then unable to properly ingest the forbidden fruits (integrating food) as recommended by the snake.

Similarly, but on a smaller scale, internal sin is Adam's failure to properly connect his own mind and body and to reach an agreement between his spiritual and animal components. In other words, sin means inadequately hosting one's identity within one's flesh. At the individual level, internal sin means doing something that goes against personal convictions. Similarly, at the communal level, it involves the members of a group going against the laws of their leader.

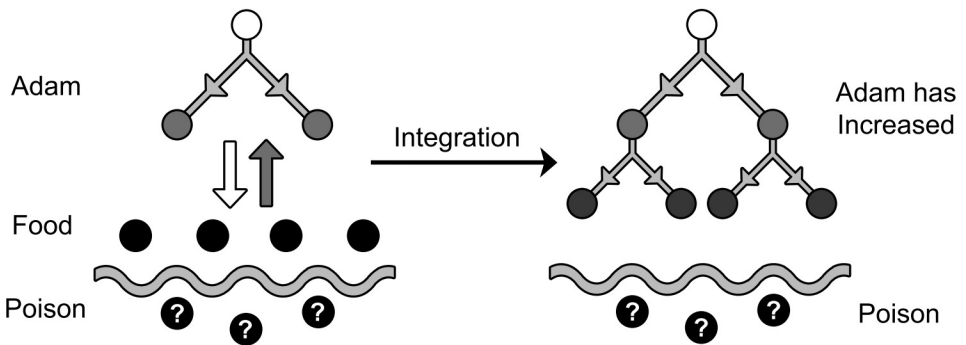
As discussed in the previous chapter, external sin is usually the result of internal sin and vice versa. Therefore, discrepancies between heaven and earth on the cosmic scale can translate into disagreements of meaning and matter on smaller scales. This includes discrepancies between law and practice, leader and population, male and female, mind and body, etc. In general, since Adam is a mediator between heaven and earth, his sins will have repercussions at all levels of reality.

CHAPTER 58

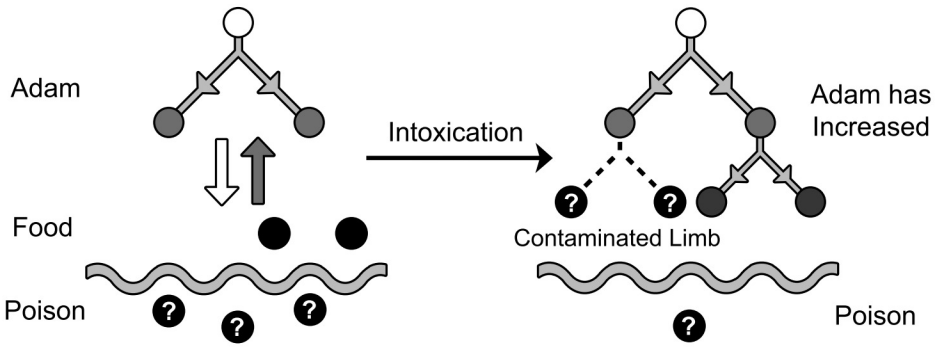
EATING FORBIDDEN FRUIT

From the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat lest you die.

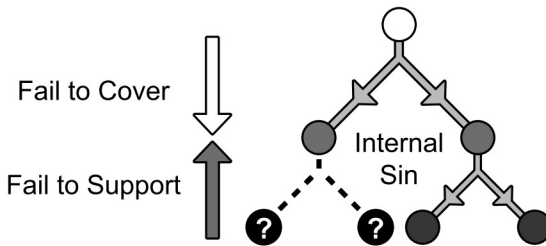
According to the story of the Garden of Eden, the original sin committed by humanity was to eat “bad food.” However, it is important to remember that the concept of eating is meant to be interpreted at many different scales within the spiritual worldview. In general, eating is a form of knowledge that involves the integration of matter by a head into its body.



At the individual and communal scales, Adam is not capable of eating everything because some substances are inherently “bad” for human consumption. Thus, attempting to incorporate foreign or toxic substances was the nature of the first sin in the Garden of Eden (see the diagram on the next page). It led to a general disagreement between spirit and body called “intoxication.” This happens when incompatible substances become faulty body members that are unwilling or unable to express the intentions of the head.



As illustrated below, external sin will naturally lead to internal sins because many of the interactions between the head and the body become inadequate once Adam has been contaminated. This comes as a result of certain body members failing to support the meaning of the head. Instead, these members might express a foreign spirit which has nothing to do with Adam’s spiritual identity.



Likewise, the head is unable to “cover” the strange needs of these new body members, often resulting in deeds that contradict the instructions of the head. These are the general symptoms of a sinful human: the inability to reach an agreement between mind and body.

These basic concepts fully explain the overwhelming presence of nutritional guidelines in the Bible. In that context, “kosher food” is food that can correctly be integrated by the nation of Israel, whereas “impure food” describes substances that lead to incompatibilities and inconsistencies. Moreover, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, these concepts may be interpreted on different scales of reality. Hence, there

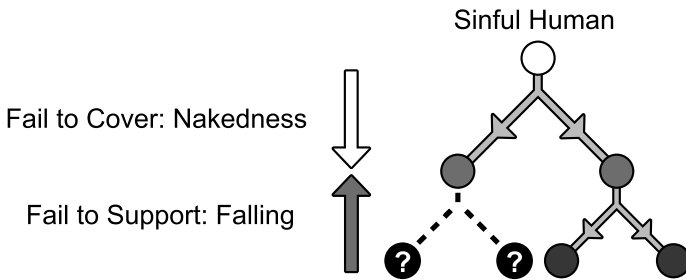
are important analogies between eating toxic food at the individual level and trying to assimilate incompatible members at the communal level. This is simply a translation of the individual concept of “eating kosher food” on the communal and intercommunal scales.

CHAPTER 59

ADAM AS MICROCOSM: NAKED OR DRESSED

They knew that they were naked, so they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves girdles.

According to the story of the fall, the sacred equilibrium of the Garden was lost when Adam ingested forbidden fruit. On the cosmic scale, this ultimately resulted in a tug-of-war between the natural dominion of 'time' and the artificial dominion of 'space.' On the human scale, this tug-of-war is usually symbolized by a battle between falling and standing and being naked or dressed.



As shown above, the natural consequences of sin are indeed nakedness and falling, which are the two sides of a single coin in this cosmology. On one end, shameful nakedness comes from a failure to adequately cover the flesh with meaning and purpose. On the other end, falling is the result of failing to support the hierarchy of the body. In biblical cosmology, the concepts of nakedness, falling, and dying are

intimately related. The shame of “nakedness” refers to the inability to cover the body with the spirit, and “dying” refers to the gradual estrangement of the spirit from the body.

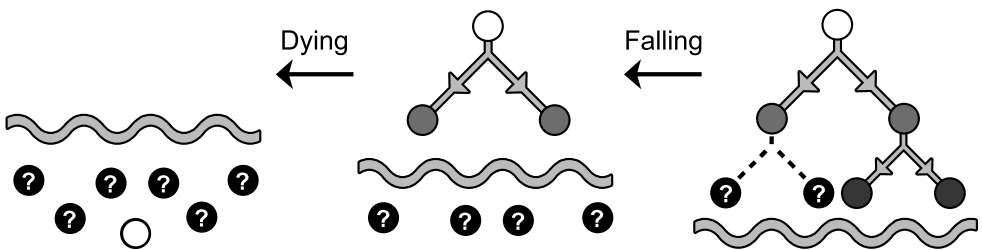
Nakedness, Falling, and Returning to Dust (from Genesis 3)

God said to the snake, “You are cursed more than any animal of the field. You shall go on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life.”

God said to Adam, “Cursed is the ground because of you. In toil, you will eat from it all the days of your life but thorns and thistles it shall produce for you . . . until you return to the ground. From dust you were taken, and to dust you shall return.”

As illustrated in the following diagram, Adam’s death is experienced as “returning to dust” from the human perspective and as “eating dust” from the snake’s perspective. Of course, in this context, the snake is also a symbol of ‘time.’ It is an influence that disintegrates and returns all things to primitive stages of creation, culminating in the triumph of nature over everything that stands.¹

God said to Adam, “From dust you were taken, and to dust you shall return.”

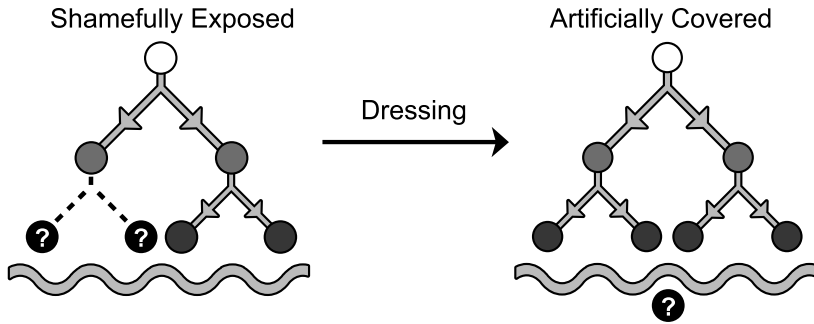


God said to the snake, “You shall go on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life.”

¹ Being “eaten by the snake” also includes the reality of the dead being “eaten by the worm.” These are all symbols of the devouring powers of ‘time.’

Because of sin and its consequences, Adam must resist the influences of death from within. He must work much harder to simply remain standing because he needs to rectify the “exposed flesh” of his body and fix its discrepancies with his mind.

They knew that they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves girdles.



In biblical cosmology, artificially “fixing the flesh” is symbolized by the concept of “dressing.” With the help of clothing, the uncooperative members of the body are rectified so that full authority can be given to the head. Thus, after the fall, a certain degree of decorum must be established when the raw desires of the flesh contradict the intentions of the head.²

Naked Like a Snake or Dressed Like a Tree (from Genesis 3)

The snake was more naked [subtle] than any animal of the field which God had made. It said to the woman, “Did God say you could not eat from all the tree of the garden?”

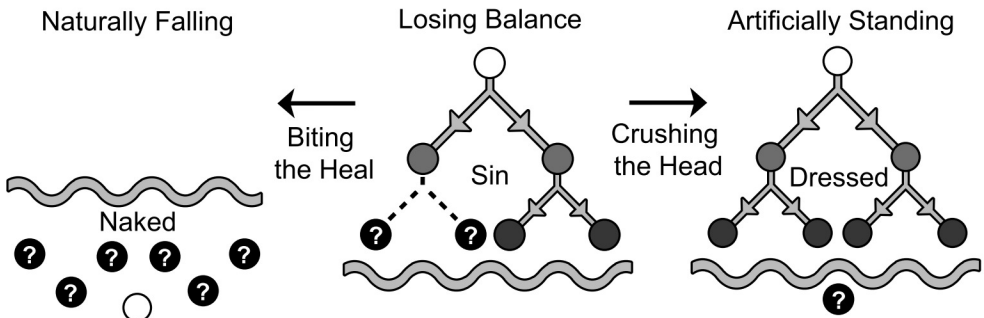
The woman said to the snake, “From the fruit of the tree of the garden we can eat, but from the tree in the center of the garden, God said, ‘you will neither eat it nor touch it lest you die.’”

2 There are remnants of this cosmology in the English language. The verb “to dress” clearly expresses the notion of straightening and erecting (i.e. standing). In French, “dressing” means taming, as in “dressing an animal.” The verb “to fix” is also interesting because it implies both correcting and stabilizing.

The snake answered, "You will not die for certain . . ." So they ate its fruit, and their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves girdles.

In the story of the Garden, nakedness symbolizes a return to natural conditions, and dressing represents the extra efforts to counter unwanted primitive desires. Thus, clothing is an artificial reinforcement of the body's hierarchical integrity. It forces the members of the body to publicly act in accordance with the principles of the head (the chief). Otherwise, nakedness would lead to falling and disintegration because it exposes the inconsistencies between the head and the body.

God said to the snake, "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will bite his heel."



In the story of the fall, the duality of 'time' and 'space' is described as a tug-of-war between the snake and the descendants of Adam. The snake bites the heel of humanity, and humanity crushes the head of the snake. In other words, sinful things must either be fixed through work or naturally recycled by death.

They were both naked, the man and his wife, but were not ashamed.

Before the advent of sin, there was no need for Adam and Eve to be artificially dressed because nakedness was not synonymous with falling and dying. In that pristine state, Adam was able to cover his flesh

with the 'light' of his spirit. In other words, his bodily desires naturally hosted and expressed the ideas of his mind. However, after eating the forbidden fruit, Adam began to struggle when answering the desires of his wild and foreign flesh. For that reason, he was forced to develop artificial means of "dressing the body." This technology (clothing) is a form of subjugation which imposes meaning and purpose from the head onto corporeal reality.

The most important difference between Adam's natural and artificial coverings is that maintaining the latter requires hard work. Forcefully restraining nature in this manner has its limits because all forms of work inevitably lead to exhaustion. Whenever this happens, corporeal reality ceases to be productive, and the body struggles to express the intentions of the head. This leads to periods of rest and recreation as physical reality returns to its primitive/natural conditions.

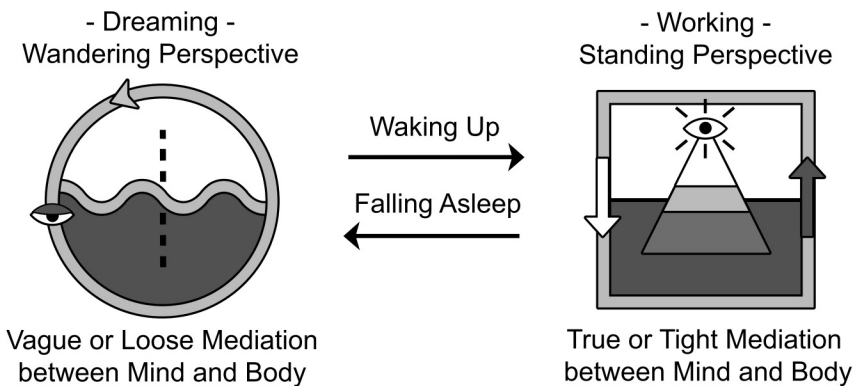
As discussed in the following chapter, this continual back and forth between "artificially dressing" and "naturally falling" is experienced as working and sleeping. This pattern is a human microcosm of the cosmic tug-of-war between 'space' and 'time.'

CHAPTER 60

ADAM AS MICROCOSM: SLEEPING OR WORKING

God made the human fall asleep and took one of its sides and then closed the flesh in its place.

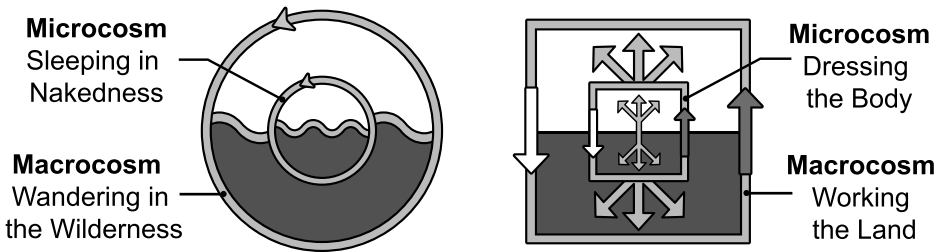
For a complete picture of Adam’s existence after the fall, it is important to consider the constant tug-of-war between two stages of consciousness: being asleep or being awake. As illustrated below, these are analogous to the two stages of creation described in the previous section: 1) the dominion of time called “flooded land,” and 2) the dominion of space called “dry land.” The first is characterized by rest and recreation, and the second is characterized by work and integration.



In the waking stage, Adam stands as a pillar with his head above as a source of language and meaning, and with his feet below as stable supports. This hierarchical mediation requires clear communication between mind and body. The head informs the body with meaning and purpose, and the body supports that purpose with power and deeds.

Conversely, when Adam needs to rest, he gradually loses the hierarchical relationship between the head and the body. The body is then unable to support the head, and the head loses its authority over the flesh. Eventually, the body lies powerless and unconscious on the ground, and a different mediation replaces the first. This “wandering consciousness” is psychologically experienced as dreaming. It involves a fluid or subtle mediation that makes everything unclear as fog and unstable as mire.

While the workaday world is characterized by productive work, accumulation, and the construction of a permanent reality, the dream world is characterized by vanity and inconsequentiality because it is self-contained and self-referential (like a snake eating its own tail). Even though consciousness turns aimlessly on itself during sleep, that level of existence still plays an important role of renewal and re-creation.



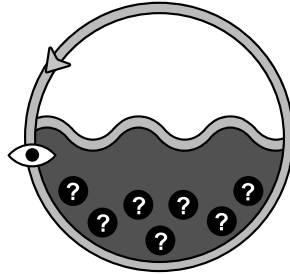
As illustrated here, the concepts of sleeping and working apply equally to the microcosm and macrocosm in biblical cosmology. Hence, the daily rituals of “dressing for work” and “undressing for sleep” also have a cosmic significance.

Cursed is the ground because of you . . . thorns and thistles it shall produce for you . . . until you return to the ground.

In the context of the macrocosm, externally “falling asleep” means gradually failing to mediate between heaven and earth and losing the support of the land. In practice, this means the soil no longer raises matter into food but begins to produce wild and often inedible

vegetation. This is the result of a natural regression as the land returns to its primitive or “naked” conditions. In these circumstances, Adam is forced to wander from place to place and consume whatever nature happens to provide. In the Bible, this dependence on cyclical time is called “wandering in the wilderness.” It is a macrocosmic version of falling asleep or dying.

Internal: Falling Asleep and Dreaming
External: Going into Exile and Wandering



According to biblical cosmology, sleeping/dying involves falling into the ‘earth’ and descending into *Sheol*. This means sinking into the darkness of corporeal reality and encountering the remainders below (the subterranean or subconscious realities). Importantly, this imagery applies internally as well as externally, which means dreaming is an internal exile, a journey into strange flesh, and exile is an external dream, a journey into strange lands.¹

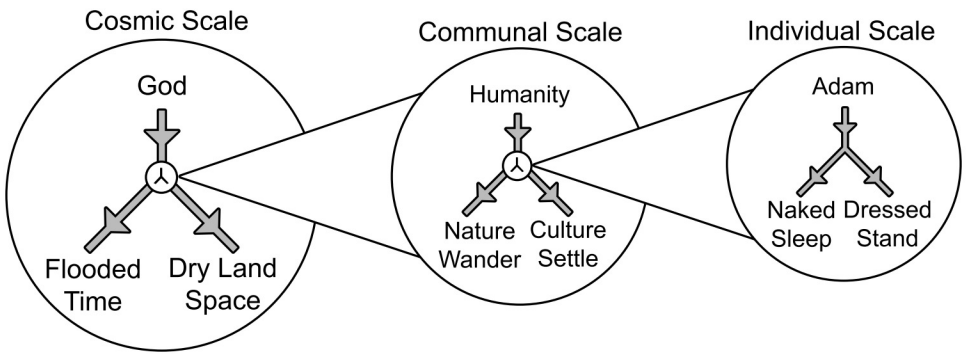
God exiled the human from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which it was taken.

Because of sin and death, Adam must rectify the land in order to produce enough food to “stand artificially.” Thus, agriculture involves “fixing” or “dressing” the land (plowing furrows) with technology. This forces the earth to host only certain seeds instead of wild vegetation.

1 These analogies can be discovered in the dream narratives of Joseph in the Egyptian exile and Daniel in the Babylonian exile. As discussed in chapter 29, voyaging south toward Egypt is considered a subterranean journey in Genesis. Hence, the Egyptian exile was associated with death and descending into *Sheol*. *Sheol* (שְׁאוֹל) means “question” or “enigma,” referring to the unanswerable puzzles of death and the remainders which populate this realm.

This is the external version of dressing the body and forcing the flesh to host only the intentions of the head instead of its own wild desires.

In general, “dressing” refers to the strict imposition of meaning upon matter, a concept which applies to all scales of interpretation. For example, it means imposing the laws of the head on the flesh at the individual level and imposing the laws of a leader on private citizens at the communal level. These are Adam’s artificial solutions to the natural consequences of sin. They fix the disparities between ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ by creating artificial barriers that stave off the destructive power of ‘time.’ These are symbolized by clothing at the individual level, by civilization and its walls at the communal level, and by the creation of “dry land” at the cosmic level.



Since Adam is a cosmic mediator, these nested levels are linked through causality. When Adam is awake, he can work constructively in the world. This allows humanity to build civilization and live a sedentary life (to artificially stand). On the other hand, when Adam indulges in dreams and recreation, he no longer maintains civilization and is eventually forced to wander. Thus, at different levels, resting produces a natural but transitory reality, and working produces a permanent but artificial reality.

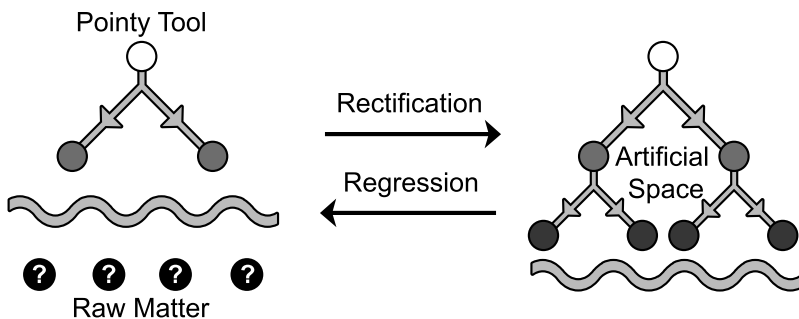
CHAPTER 61

THE SYMBOLISM OF WORK AND RECTIFICATION

They knew that they were naked, so they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves girdles.

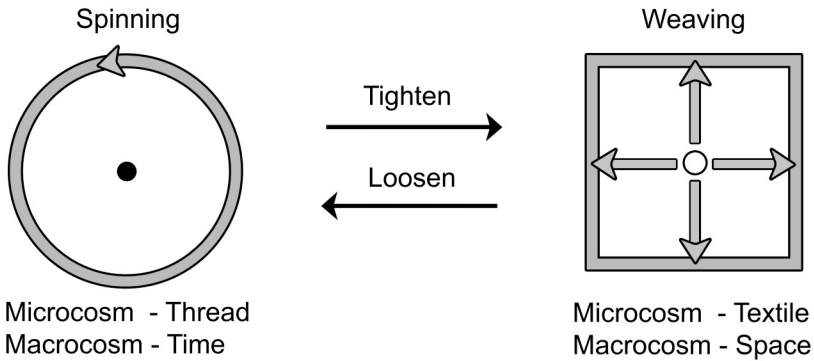
As mentioned in the previous section, the biblical concept of work refers to building reasonable and familiar space at different scales of reality. This implies rectifying the land on the cosmic level, a population on the communal level, and the body on the individual level. These layers of rectification are usually symbolized by dry land, civilization, and clothing respectively.

Since Adam is made in the image of God, Adam's work can be interpreted as a miniature version of building space on a cosmic level, and his tools can be seen as miniature versions of God's cosmic tool: the spatial axis.



On the individual scale, it is easy to interpret the diagram above in the context of creating clothing. In this case, the “pointy tool” is the needle, and the “raw matter” is the loose thread. This symbolism applies to both sewing and knitting in slightly different ways. In both cases, a loose thread is tightened and then bound into the fabric of

‘space’ by a miniature axis (a needle or pair of needles). In the case of knitting, the formation of knots symbolizes the distribution of a “point” into the thread, which stabilizes the fabric into a coherent whole. This process is just another symbol of “focusing power to distribute a point” (see chapter 42). Conversely, whenever these knots become undone, the point is lost and spatial stability unravels as the body returns to its primitive nakedness.¹



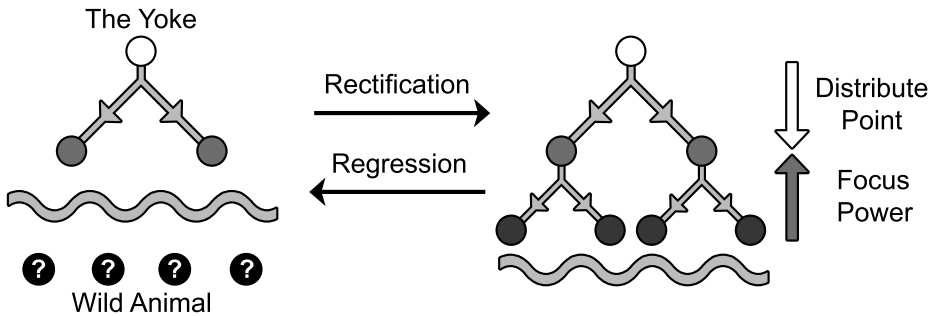
As illustrated above, making textile is an important microcosm of Creation. Spinning is analogous to the creation of cyclical time, and weaving is analogous to the formation of space. Moreover, the art of weaving is not only used to produce clothing but also baskets and other containers (spaces).

God exiled the human from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.

Because of analogies between different scales of reality, the previous diagrams can also be interpreted as “dressing the land.” In this analogy, creating furrows for agriculture is a macro version of weaving, and the hoe is a macro version of the needle. In both cases, the goal is to constrain raw matter to support a definite point (seed) instead of its own wild expressions.

1 Like many ancient symbols, knots have a dual nature. The loose entanglement of an accidental knot symbolizes confusion and the irrational riddles of nature. On the other hand, the ordered knots of textile symbolize reason and purpose (a point) preventing the threads from becoming entangled.

In the context of agriculture, the yoke is another important symbol of the spatial axis. It is a tool that constrains the animal below to focus power and distribute a point.



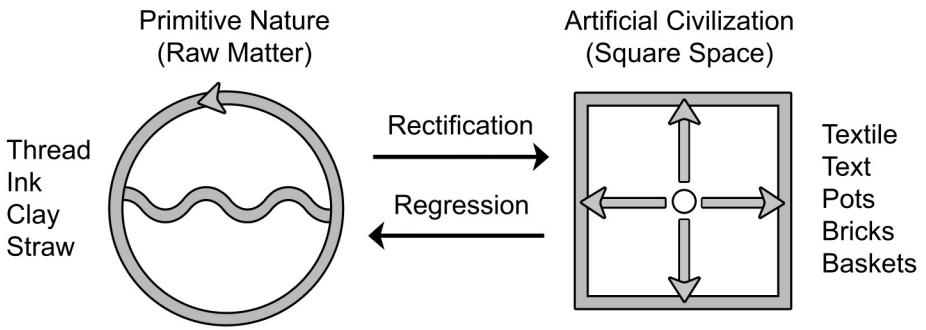
There are also important analogies between agriculture, weaving textile, and writing text. For example, guiding ink with a pen to form fixed letters is analogous to guiding a loose thread with a needle to form tight knots. These crafts may be interpreted as microcosms of civilization, where tools and technology constrain wild matter to host a purpose or “point” in a stable manner.

Pottery is another microcosm of constructing ‘space’ because it involves drying and hardening clay into waterproof containers (creating dry land). Also, the most ancient pot making technique (coiling) resembles the act of weaving. It involves making “snakes” from wet clay and binding them into a solid vessel. Another technique (turning) fixes the clay at the center of a wheel and gradually shapes it into a container.

In the context of architecture, the tools of rectification are the level, the square, the chisel, and the brick mold.² Finally, measuring instruments like the ruler and the scales are also important symbols of the spatial axis. These tools impose the rational patterns of space unto raw matter.³

2 The link between bricks, pots, and writing is made even more obvious when the text is written on clay tablets with a reed. In that case, these crafts become very clear representations of creating “dry land.”

3 The Masonic symbolism of the compass and square are clearly related, if not identical, to the symbolism of the axes of time and space.



In general, ancient crafts were not merely practical in nature. They were also expressions of higher spiritual truths. In addition to their technological advantages, these crafts also served a function comparable to that of books. For that reason, it is a mistake to interpret traditional crafts such as masonry, metalsmithing, weaving, and carpentry from a strictly materialistic perspective because it always fails to recognize them as repositories of spiritual knowledge.⁴

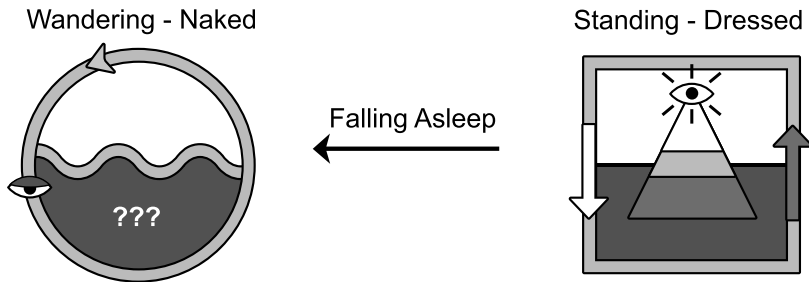
4 Alchemy is a clear example of the huge disconnect between ancient and modern forms of knowledge. There is really nothing in common between alchemy and its materialistic counterpart, chemistry. To think otherwise is to greatly underestimate traditional sciences and the people who practiced them.

CHAPTER 62

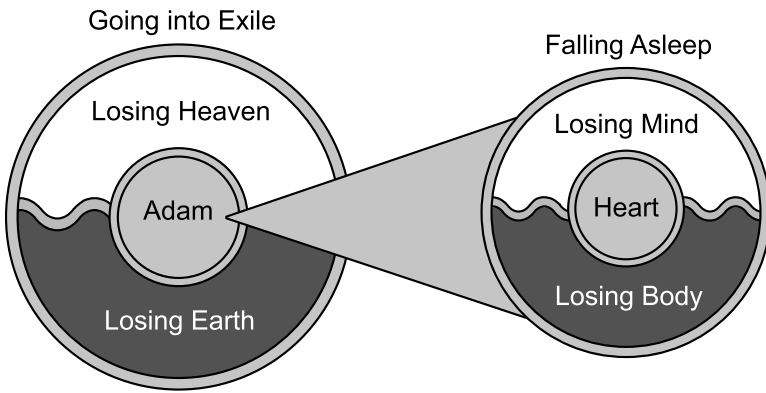
THE SYMBOLISM OF DREAMING AND WANDERING

God made the human fall asleep and took one of his sides and then closed the flesh in its place.

Because of analogies between Adam's external and internal worlds, the natural language of dreams is identical to the symbolism of exile in the Bible. In fact, dreaming is an internal version of exile, in which the conscious identity is plunged into the darkness of the flesh to be renewed.



During the waking state, the purpose of the conscious identity is to provide meaning and direction to the body. This narrative continues in the dream world as the identity loses control of the body and encounters the alienated desires of the flesh. In other words, typical dreams are not just a series of random images and feelings; they are a confused narrative of death and resurrection. Similarly, in the Bible, the narratives written during times of exile describe the experience of losing control of the homeland, encountering alien nations, and then returning to the homeland.



The typical exile/dream narrative involves losing the agreement or “covenant” between meaning and matter. This usually implies the following: 1) losing the guidance of heaven, and 2) losing the support of the earth. These are experienced internally as: 1) losing the authority of the mind, and 2) losing the power of the body. These essential patterns are the key to interpreting most dreams.

External:

- 1 - Losing the principles and guidance of heaven
- 2 - Losing the power and support of the earth

Internal:

- 1 - Losing the information and authority of the mind
- 2 - Losing the power and support of the body

Losing the Guidance and Authority of Heaven

Losing one’s sense of direction is a common theme in dreams. For example, the dreamer might be “pressed by time” while searching for some room, transportation, or street in unfamiliar territory. This means no longer benefiting from the guidance of higher principles that usually provide meaning, reason, and purpose to physical reality. In the biblical context of exile, this is usually symbolized by the loss of God’s Name or at least its proper pronunciation. It also involves losing God’s Law or failing to understand its deeper meaning.

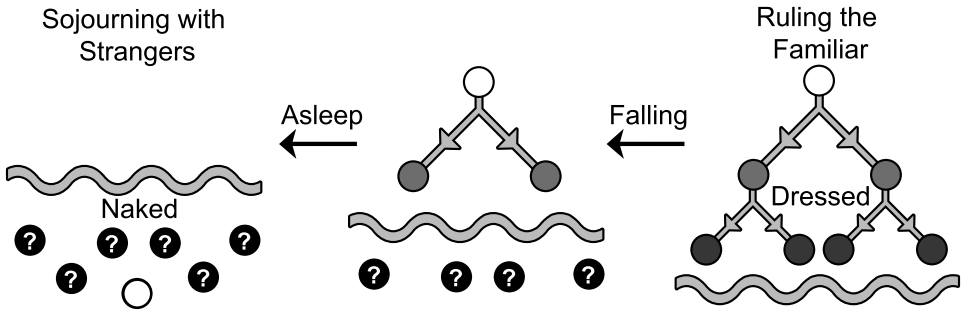
At the internal level, in the dream world, losing your voice or teeth are common representations of losing heaven/mind. They symbolize the inability to impose meaning from the head upon physical reality by commanding it or by eating it. This can manifest itself as the inability to yell or speak, loose or fragile teeth, or losing authority over others. These are all consequences of losing your conscious identity (your name and reputation) as well as the language that expresses it.

Losing the Support and Power of the Earth

One of the most common expressions of this phenomenon in dreams is sinking or falling through the ground as it fails to support you. For example, a modern version of this dream pattern is an elevator that suddenly malfunctions and falls into the darkness below. In the biblical context of exile, “losing the support of the earth” is usually symbolized by a famine that forces a journey into foreign lands to acquire food. At the internal level, “losing the land” translates as losing the power and support of your own body and its limbs. In the dream world, this may result in an inability to fight back or run from something menacing. It may simply involve a sudden lack of control over one’s body, even to the point of paralysis.

Losing Familiar Space and Encountering the Stranger

In the dream world, the loss of spatial integrity is often symbolized by a flooded landscape or building. This is usually experienced, on a smaller scale, by the realization of being naked. Indeed, as mentioned in previous chapters, clothing is a miniature version of space which “dresses” or “rectifies” the primitive desires of the body. Thus, becoming naked symbolizes a return to nature, which comes with feelings of vulnerability from a loss of control over material reality. Moreover, in a world of sin, nakedness creates feelings of shame as discrepancies between principles and facts are exposed, as the mind fails to cover the flesh with purpose, and as the primal desires of the flesh are laid bare.



Another important image is the “encounter with strangers” that the conscious identity experiences when it loses control over corporeal reality (see image above). When this happens, the dreamer plunges into the wild desires of flesh that is no longer controlled by reason, purpose, and meaning. This phenomenon can take many forms in the dreamworld, including encounters with foreign individuals, wild animals, swarming insects, or even alien creatures.

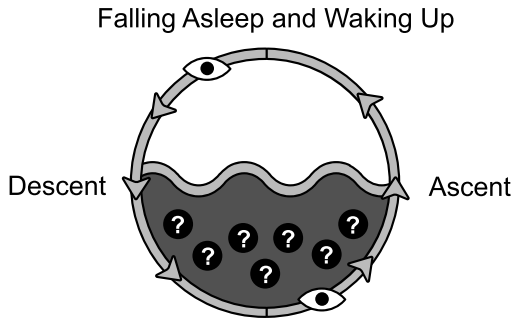
The alienated desires of the flesh also present themselves as death and decay. For example, they may resemble dancing zombies or wandering specters. These are manifestations of the “mindless flesh” and “fleshless mind” exposed by the discrepancies between spirit and body during sleep. The first represents uncovered flesh and the second represents unhosted spirit.

Ascending and Resurrecting

In biblical cosmology, the only difference between the concepts of death and sleep is the ability to reawaken and resurrect after the experience. When this happens, the influences of death and decay are magically transformed into influences of renewal and restoration.

As illustrated in the following diagram, there is a second half to the dream narrative: the ascent of the conscious identity as it returns to power and emerges from the darkness of the flesh. In the dream world, this phase is often symbolized externally by the ability to fly, float, or jump extremely high. Internally, this may also be symbolized

as a miraculous increase in strength, agility, and accuracy, or as an over exaggerated insight into the deeper meaning of things. These are signs that the mind is gradually recovering its authority over the body and material reality.



Proper dream interpretation requires a deep understanding of these concepts. This can only be gained by considering many examples of typical dreams. Unfortunately, this cannot be accomplished within the limits of this commentary. Nevertheless, these few examples reveal the basic patterns of dreams and their connection to the imagery of exile in the Bible.

CHAPTER 63

TREES AND SNAKES AS MEDIATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

The snake was more subtle [naked] than any beast of the field which God had made. It said to the woman, "Did God tell you not to eat from all the tree of the garden?"

Now that the notions of sleep and death have been examined in more detail, it will be useful to summarize the general symbolism of the tree and the snake in the Garden of Eden. The meaning of these symbols can be determined through their mutually divergent characteristics, as shown in the following table.

The Snake As Time:

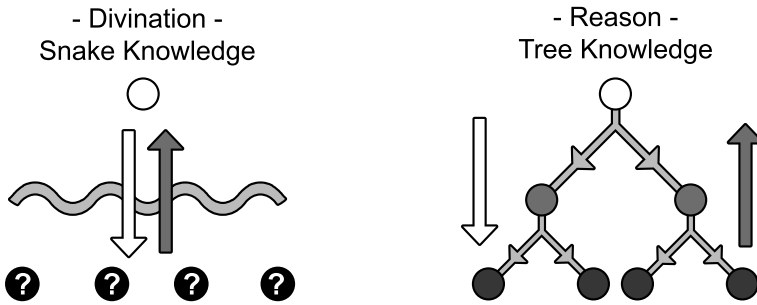
Subtle and Fleeing
Naked and Cyclical
Fluid and Continuous
Stealthy and Sneaky
Produces Strange Toxins

The Tree As Space:

Solid and Fixed
Dressed and Hierarchical
Rigid and Discrete
Evident and True
Produces Familiar Food

The rigidity of the tree is certainly meaningful in the story of the fall because the snake is inversely characterized as subtle. Similarly, the "nakedness" of the snake is important because the tree is "dressed," and the first clothing was fashioned from the leaves of a tree. Also, the snake is explicitly described as "lying on its belly," which is obviously contrasted with the erectness of the tree. Finally, the discrete splitting pattern of the tree is meant to be contrasted with the wavelike and fluid pattern of the snake.

When interpreting these symbols, a cosmology centered on knowledge as union of ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ should always be assumed. In this context, the snake and the tree symbolize two different types of mediators associated with ‘time’ and ‘space.’



The snake and tree represent two modes of knowledge used by humanity. The tree is a structure that expresses a principle (its seed) through its various implications (its branches). This corresponds to reason because every assertion must be derived from first principles. On the other hand, the snake corresponds to a circumstantial form of knowledge, often associated with divination, by which information is vaguely reflected on subtle and uncertain mediums.¹

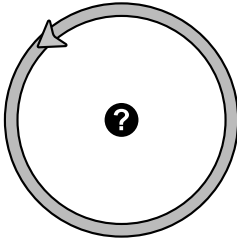
In the Bible, the clearest example of treelike knowledge is the Mosaic Law because it came from a direct revelation of God’s identity on Mount Horeb.² As discussed in chapters 22-24, this principle was made explicit when it revealed its ramifications to the nation of Israel. In this analogy, the laws are like the branches of a tree which grew unambiguously from a single seed. Therefore, this form of knowledge is certain and consistent because it grew from a self-evident tautological foundation (I am what I am).

Such laws have the stability to resist pointless change because their foundation is axiomatic and immutable. Accordingly, the Mosaic Law was written on square stone tablets to symbolize its directness, certainty, and stability.

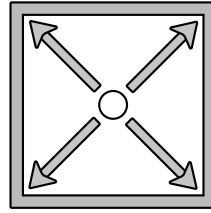
1 The Hebrew word for divination is related to the world for snake (nahash).

2 The name “Horeb” means “drying” as well as “sword” in reference to the power of the spatial axis that “spits the waters” and “dries the land.”

Wheel of Fortune



Tablets of the Law



On the other hand, divination or “guessing” is a more primitive form of knowledge that obtains information whether it is reasonable or not. In this type of revelation, the channels of communication between heaven and earth remain somewhat ambiguous.

In ancient times, this form of knowledge was used when critical questions were not “covered” by the law because they were too convoluted or too circumstantial. In any case, receiving an answer to these questions required the use of a “subtle medium” with enough fluidity to express all possible answers. Since divination is reasonless, it usually relies on chance by spinning a wheel, turning a top, rolling a die, or drawing lots. These methods of divination generally symbolize the transformation of square space into cyclical time.³

“Snake knowledge” is the opposite of “tree knowledge” in that it employs cyclical confusion and occultation to draw an answer without reason. As such, divination involves a return to primitive stages of creation, when cyclical time was dominant. It represents a primitive or “naked” form of knowledge that involves “guessing the future” by answering questions raw. Thus, practicing divination essentially means consulting the cyclical flow of time, or “consulting the snake.”⁴

There have been many forms of divination throughout human history, each expressing the symbolism of ‘time’ in its own way. For example, hydromancy interprets the flow and waves of water and uses its mirror-like properties to reflect subtle influences. Dreaming is also

3 See the first diagram of this chapter for the symbolism of drawing lots and the second diagram for the symbolism of turning the wheel, top, or die.

4 This primitive form of knowledge will always escape the scrutiny of scientific enquiry. First, because it comes from a cosmology based on meaning, and second, because it is grounded in the very confusion that science abhors.

a natural medium for divination, as should easily be understood with the symbolism of sleep from the previous chapter. For similar reasons, “death” is also a natural medium for a practice called “necromancy.” Another important form of divination uses games of chance.⁵ This is no coincidence because games and entertainment are deeply connected to cyclical time in traditional cosmology (see chapters 41 and 46).

Since Adam is a cosmic mediator between heaven and earth, practicing these forms of knowledge determines the shape of reality. Thus, when humanity gains knowledge from these mediators, it can either produce a world that is rigid and static or a world in a constant state of transformation. Hence, in the context of Mosaic Law, divination was considered risky business (like gambling or the stock market) because it implied subjecting yourself to the vicissitudes of time.

5 These games may have been created for distraction and recreation but were readily transformed into divinatory mediums. For example, the tarot is both a game of chance and a subtle medium for the practice of divination.

CHAPTER 64

EXAMPLE: THE MIRACLES OF MOSES I

Moses cast the staff to the earth, and it became a snake . . . He seized it by his hand, and it became a staff.

Some of the clearest examples of the symbolism of space and time are found in the miracles of Moses. In particular, Moses receives a miraculous staff from God to bring his people out of exile and into the homeland.

The Staff that Turns into a Snake (from Exodus 4)

Moses to God: "But they will not believe me nor listen to my voice. They will say that the Lord has not appeared to me."

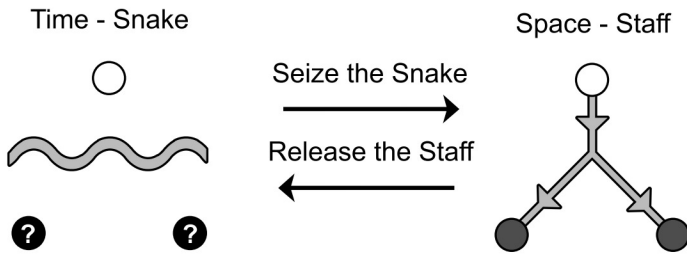
God: "What is that in your hand?" Moses: "A staff." God: "Cast it to the ground." He cast it to the ground, and it became a snake, and Moses fled from it.

God: "Put forth your hand, and seize it by the tail . . ." He put forth his hand and seized it, and it became a staff in his palm.

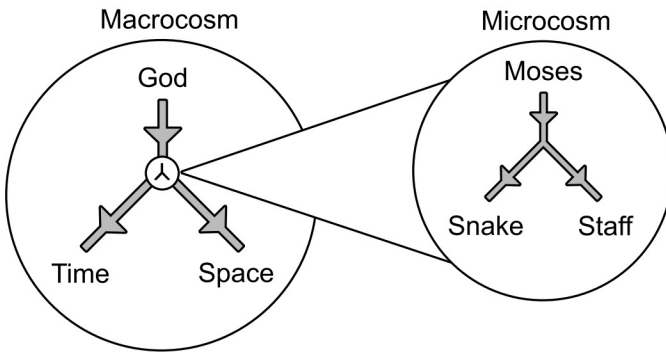
God: "Thus, they will believe that the God of their fathers . . . has appeared to you."

The miraculous staff of Moses is a particularly clear example of the symbolism introduced in this section. The staff turns into a snake when Moses releases it, and it solidifies back into a stick when he seizes it. In this scenario, the hand of Moses becomes a miniature version of the heavenly will of God. As such, it can either seize material reality to form dry land or let it loose to create flooded land (see chapter 33). This

miracle is a complete symbol of God as the creator of both space and time. It therefore acts as a sign that God’s “hand” cast Israel into exile (time) and will lead them back to their homeland (space).¹



As illustrated in the following diagram, the staff of Moses is a miniature version of the cosmic pillar. As a walking stick, it is a pillar designed to rectify (or “dress”) the body against the destructive influences of ‘time.’ It is a tool for individuals to “stand artificially” against stumbling, injury, and aging. In addition, the staff of Moses was imbued with all the powers of the spatial axis, including the ability to “split the waters” and create dry land.



Splitting Waters and Drying Land (from Exodus 14)

God to Moses: “Lift up your staff and stretch your hand over the sea and divide it, and the children of Israel will go in the middle of the sea on dry land . . .”

¹ The word “hand” is also the name of the Hebrew letter *yod* written as a single point (י). This “point” is really the fist (“poing” in French) which is a natural symbol of the seed as capable of expanding its ramifications (fingers) outwardly. Interestingly, the word *palm* in the same passage is the name of the following Hebrew letter *caph* which is a surrounding space (כ).

The pillar of cloud removed from before them and stood behind them. It came between the camps of Egypt and Israel. There was the cloud and the darkness, and it lit the night.

Moses stretched his hand over the sea, and God pushed it back with a wind all night. The waters were divided, and the sea became dry land. Israel went in the middle of the sea on dry land.

The pillar described in this story is one of the clearest manifestations of the spatial axis in the Bible. Moreover, based on the manner in which this narrative was composed, we are meant to understand that a type of causality exists between the staff of Moses and the pillar of God. The pillar moves from the front of the camp to the back in order to create a “wall” that separates Israel from Egypt. Then, a commandment from God (who is stationed in the pillar) is given to Moses to separate the waters of the Red Sea.

Returning Waters and Flooding Land (from Exodus 14)

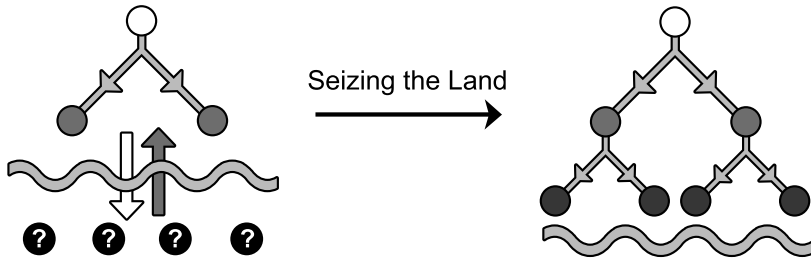
The Egyptians went after them in the sea with all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and riders. In the morning watch, God looked at the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and discomfited them. He took off the wheels of their chariots and made them drive heavily.²

God: “Stretch your hand over the sea for the waters to return on the Egyptians.” Moses stretched his hand over the sea, and it returned to its strength as the morning appeared. The Egyptians fled, but God overthrew them in the middle of the sea.

In the passage above, the waters return to their natural condition to flood the Egyptians. Here too, there is a causal link between God’s pillar and the staff of Moses because God commands Moses from within the pillar of fire and cloud.

2 The rider falling from his horse is a typical symbol of overturning a hierarchy. It means losing the agreement between heaven (the rider) and earth (the mount). The wheel falling from the chariot refers to losing the agreement between time and space (see chapter 40 for the symbolism of the chariot).

In general, the powers of the staff are miniature representations of the powers of the spatial axis. These are symbolized in the following ways in the context of the Bible: 1) as a tool that establishes space by removing waters or halting time, 2) as a guidepost or shepherd's staff that leads a group from exile to homestead, and 3) as a pillar or cane that supports space against time.³



- 1 - Establish Space = Remove Waters
- 2 - Lead Home = Bring Out of Exile
- 3 - Support Space = Resist Time

God went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light (Exodus 13:21).

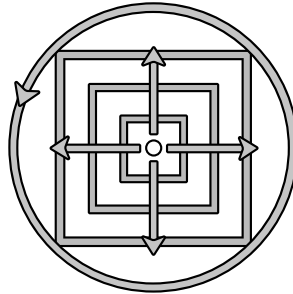
In the narrative of the exodus, the cosmic pillar builds a stable environment by balancing the highs and lows of cyclical change. An aspect of cloud counters the heat of the day, and an aspect of fire counters the cool of the night. This is an example of halting time, by which the natural cycle is artificially “fixed” by a pillar which keeps opposites balanced.

Whenever the cloud lifted from the tent, the children of Israel journeyed, and wherever the cloud settled, the children of Israel made camp (Numbers 9:17).

³ In the book of Joshua, the spatial axis is also symbolized by a spear during the conquest (seizing) of Canaan. In this case, Joshua defeats his enemies by “extending a spear,” after which they are “hung on the tree” (Joshua 8: 26-29). In another context, Joshua bids God to “halt time,” and then the enemy is again “hung on trees” (Joshua 10: 12-27).

As quoted in the previous passage, the pillar of God was the principle that guided Israel towards the homeland and established their camps in the wilderness. The camp comprised twelve tribes stationed around the pillar in four distinct subgroups, each facing a specific cardinal direction (see Numbers 2 and 3). This structure is a conspicuous example of establishing square space against cyclical time.⁴

Establishing Space



In general, these various symbols are expressions of the same cosmic truth at different scales of reality. By virtue of Moses receiving “the image of God,” his staff also became a miniature image of God’s cosmic staff: the spatial pillar.

4 The twelve tribes or “staves” also correspond to the twelve months which are cyclical in nature (according to the moon). However, in settling their camp, these twelve tribes were bound and fixed to the four directions of space to form a square.

CHAPTER 65

EXAMPLE: THE MIRACLES OF MOSES II

Moses took his hand out of his chest . . . and it was 'leprous' . . . He took it out again . . . and it was flesh.

The miracle paraphrased above immediately follows the first sign given to Moses by God (the staff that turned into a snake). As will be demonstrated here, the second sign comes in parallel with the first sign as a different manifestation of the same metaphysical truth.

The Hand that Turns into Sickness (Exodus 4:6-8)

God: "Now bring your hand into your chest."

He brought his hand into his chest, and when he took it out, it was 'leprous' like snow.

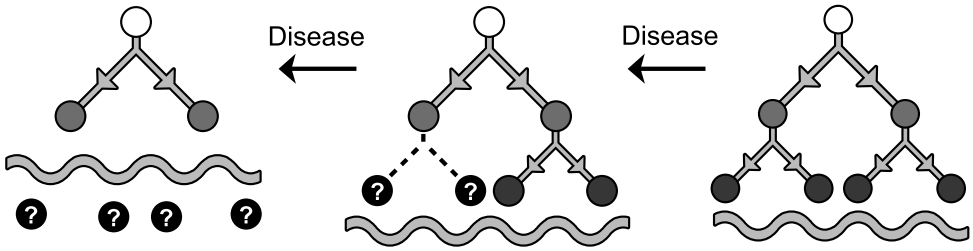
God: "Return your hand to your chest."

He returned his hand to his chest, and when he took it out, it had returned to flesh.

God: "If they do not believe the voice of the first sign, they will believe the voice of the second sign."

When interpreting the meaning of the second sign, it is important to look at it from a spiritual perspective rather than a materialistic one. The disease called "leprosy" (*tzaraath*) in the passage above does not refer to the bacterial infection referred to as "Hansen's disease" by modern medicine. In general, the definition of sickness and disease in

biblical cosmology is much wider than the scientific definition because it is based on meaning rather than mechanism.¹



As illustrated above, the concept of disease is synonymous with the concept of ‘time’ in biblical cosmology. It is a manifestation of change (transformation) when experienced at the human scale. It is the inability to maintain the body’s structural integrity as the identity gradually loses its grasp on the flesh of the body. This is often the result of “sin” through contamination from the outside, either by toxic food or exposure to foreign substances (see chapter 58). According to this interpretation, the symbolism of disease in the second sign is related to the symbolism of the snake in the first sign. They are both symbols of ‘time’ in the sense that they are influences of flooding and transformation. These analogies between disease and ‘time’ are made perfectly clear in the following descriptions of ‘leprosy’ (*tzaraath*) from Leviticus:

Death and Disease on Different Scales of Reality (Leviticus 13-14)

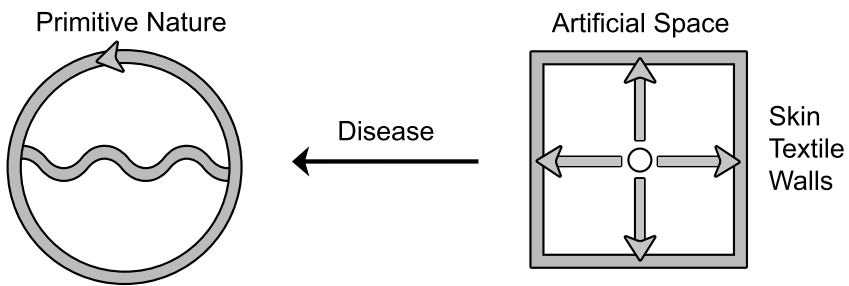
The priest shall look at the plague in the skin of the flesh. If the hair in the plague has turned white, and the appearance of the plague is deeper than the skin of the flesh, it is the plague of tzaraath . . .

When the plague of tzaraath is in a garment, whether it be a woolen or linen garment . . . or in anything made of leather . . . If the plague is greenish or reddish . . . it is tzaraath . . .

¹ The statement “listen to the voice of the sign” from the previous passage implies that miracles are the written words of a cosmic language. The “sign” is the mark, and the “voice of the sign” is the meaning hosted by the mark.

When I put the plague of tzaraath in a house . . . he [the priest] shall look at the plague. If the plague in the house's walls is sunken greenish or reddish and the appearance is deeper than the wall . . . then it is the plague of tzaraath . . .

As described in these laws, the disease called *tzaraath* is a manifestation of 'flooding' on three different scales of reality. It can potentially disintegrate the flesh of a body, the textile of a garment, and the walls of a house. In general, *tzaraath* represents the cyclical influences that unravel the fabric of 'space' and return it to its primitive nakedness.²



Miriam's Disease and Exile from the Camp (from Numbers 12)

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had taken, "Has the Lord spoken only with Moses? Has he not spoken with us as well?"

God: "If there is a prophet among you, I make myself known to him in a vision and speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is trusted in my entire house. With him, I speak mouth to mouth and clearly, not in riddles, and he sees the image of the Lord. Why were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

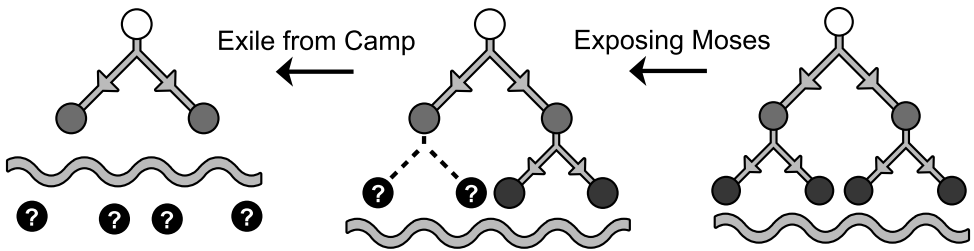
The anger of the Lord burned against them, and he departed. When the cloud turned from over the tent, behold, Miriam had tzaraath like snow.

² The symbolism of the "dancing plague" of 1518 is easy to understand from the spiritual perspective because dancing, disease, and death are all manifestations of the influence of cyclical time.

Aaron: "Please, do not lay sin upon us for that which is our foolishness and that which is our sin. Let her not be as a dead one, exiting its mother's womb with its flesh half eaten [in stillbirth]."

God: "She shall be confined for seven days outside the camp and afterward she may return."

The narrative of Miriam's exile is a translation of Moses's second sign on the communal scale. In this case, Miriam exposes the discrepancy that Moses married a foreign woman. In so doing, she undermines the hierarchy founded on Moses and demands that she be recognized, on her own merits, as a valid mediator between heaven and earth.



By exposing the discrepancies of her brother, Miriam ironically exposes herself as unsupportive and subversive to the divine hierarchy established through Moses. As a result, she is afflicted with the disease of *tzaraath* and must be exiled from the camp for seven days (a full cycle). In this context, Miriam herself represents the diseased flesh of this communal body which must now be cleansed naturally by a cycle of renewal.³

With Moses, I speak directly and clearly, not in riddles, and he sees the image of the Lord.

Importantly, the relationship between time, divination, and disease is quite explicit in this narrative. Moses is a direct mediator of revelation whereas Miriam is a medium of divination via obscure

³ One of the reasons why *tzaraath* is associated with "snow" is that snow readily melts into water. It symbolizes dry-land/flesh about to return to primitive fluidity.

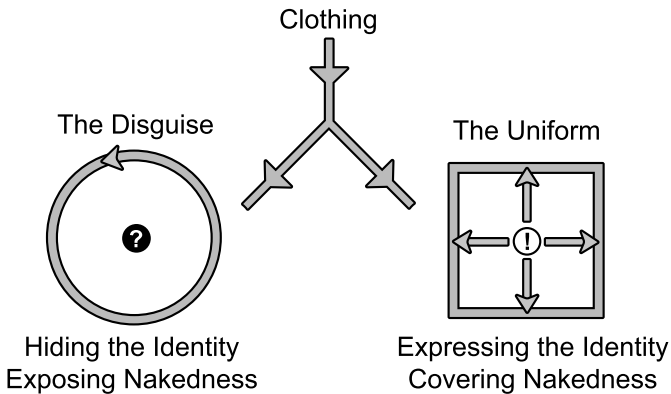
riddles and dreams. In the Bible, divination is only acceptable when it complements or completes direct revelation as a form of circumstantial knowledge. Otherwise, it is forbidden by Mosaic Law as an influence of flooding, exile, disease, and death.

CHAPTER 66

THE SYMBOLISM OF CLOTHING AND COSTUMES

God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and then he clothed them.

At its core, clothing symbolizes the artificial rectification of the natural world, making it a miniature version of ‘space.’ However, as will be discovered in this chapter, the basic concept of clothing can also be transcended to encompass the reality of ‘time,’ making it a complete microcosm of creation.



The purpose of regular clothing is to “cover nakedness” in order to clearly express the intentions of the head. This is fully realized in the uniform, which is a type of clothing that reveals the definite purpose of an individual, like a label on the side of a box. Thus, we may recognize the judge, soldier, priest, king, or anyone who has been appointed. In this sense, the uniform may be called “square” because it outwardly reveals the “point” of the person wearing it.

Like anything else, regular clothing can be subverted with the opposite intention. Hence, the disguise is a type of clothing meant to fool and deceive others. It does so by first “hiding the point” and then “exposing nakedness.” This usually happens in the playful context of the carnival for trickery, distraction, and recreation. In that case, the mask is a significant part of the disguise because it encapsulates the idea of hiding the identity.¹

The disguise also exists in the workaday world for the purpose of treachery, subversion, and revolution. For instance, this is the way of the spy who “exposes the nakedness of the land” (Genesis 42:12). Along with the turncoat, the status of the spy is eternally ambiguous, on all sides, because spies easily become double-agents by the nature of their occupation.

God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and then he clothed them.

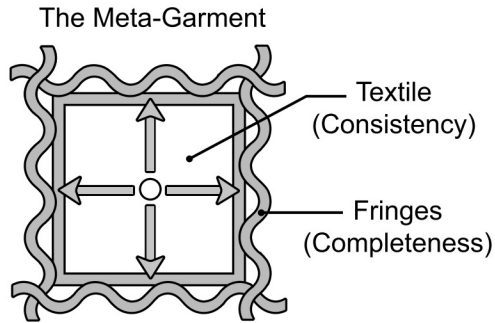
In the story of the fall, the double symbolism of clothing can be found in the animal skins that God gave to Adam and Eve. Wearing such garments can be interpreted on either side of the equation: 1) the artificial dominion over the animal, and 2) succumbing to animal instincts. Thus, humanity rectifies material reality with reason but also renews itself with primitive nature.

You shall make fringes on the four corners of the garments with which you clothe yourself (Deuteronomy 22:12).

As illustrated in the following diagram, the traditional garment, prescribed by Mosaic Law, included fringes called *tzitzit* at its edges. This type of clothing represents the sacred covenant between artificial space and the primitive flow of time. In accordance with the symbolism

1 In the context of Halloween, dressing in risqué or ironic versions of uniforms or disguising oneself as a monster, revenant, or zombie are all examples of hiding the identity to expose nakedness (see chapter 62). This notion is also found in the masquerade ball to indulge in decadence without social repercussions.

of the Sabbath, the fringes of the garment keep the textile from unraveling by allowing loose threads at the margins.²



The law that prescribes the fringes in the book of Deuteronomy comes right after a verse which forbids the mixture of fabrics called *shatnez* in regular garments: *You shall not wear a mixture of wool and linen together* (Deuteronomy 22:12). Importantly, the law that prescribes fringes is often interpreted as an exception to the previous rule, which means mixing is permitted and perhaps even encouraged at the margins of the textile. In general, such garments are representations of the Garden of Eden because they harmonize the artificial consistency of 'space' with the natural completeness of 'time.'

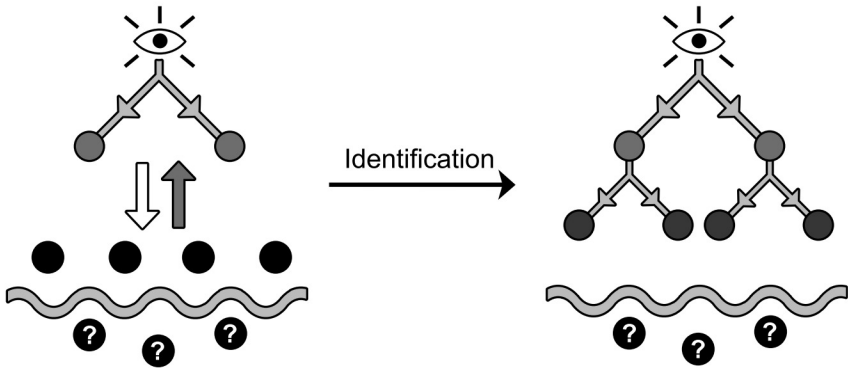
² In other ancient cultures, similar fringes were included on leather clothing to channel the waters away from the garment, very much like the gutters/gargoyles of a building (see chapter 51).

CHAPTER 67

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE EYES

The ‘eyes’ of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked . . .

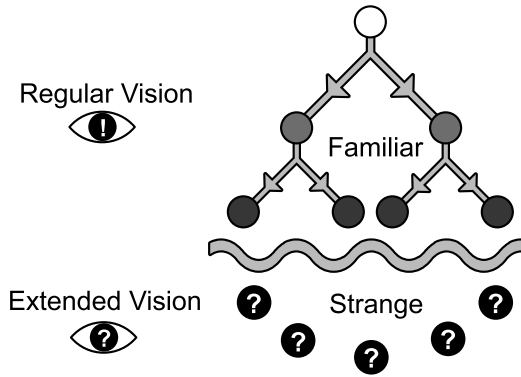
The eye is a symbol of knowledge in biblical cosmology because of its relationship with light. Of course, as mentioned in chapter 10, the ancient concept of light as “beams of meaning” has nothing to do with its materialistic counterpart as “beams of particles.” Thus, according to ancient emission theories of optics, the ‘eye’ emits its own ray of ‘light’ which pierces the ‘darkness’ to identify objects in the world.



This archaic understanding of vision parallels Adam’s ability to “name the animals” in the Garden of Eden. Hence, in the diagram above, the snake/water symbolizes the limits of Adam’s ability to categorize. Indeed, God asked Adam to name “the birds of the heavens and the animals of the field” but not the fish of the sea (Genesis 2:19). Accordingly, the snake is referred to as “the most subtle of the animals of the field,” which makes it an embodiment of the limits of dry land.

Both 'eyes' were opened, and they knew that they were naked . . .

With a proper understanding of the 'eye,' the verse above can be interpreted in two complementary ways. First, "opening the eyes" means extending one's field of vision beyond its regular scope (see the image below). Second, "opening *both* eyes" means awakening a type of vision that perceives newly discovered territory as strange, vague, and confused.

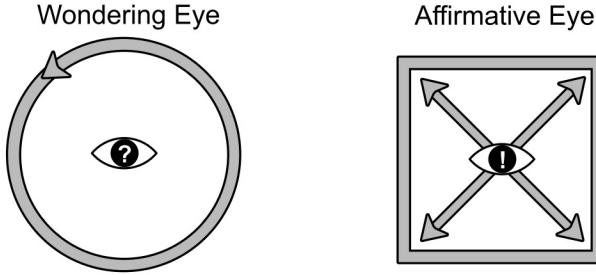


This comes in parallel with the notion that the snake tricked humanity into eating poisonous food, a foreign substance that cannot be integrated by the identity. This failure to identify exposes Adam's usual categories as incomplete and artificial. It awakens another type of vision that gives pre-eminence to the natural world. This also corresponds to hallucinatory visions induced by the consumption of toxic substances.

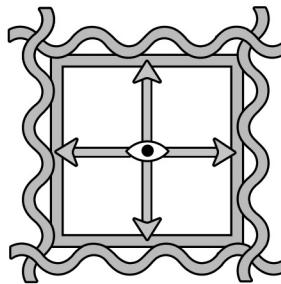
As shown in the following diagram, there is also an important polarity in the symbolism of the eye that closely parallels the duality of 'time' and 'space.' The "right eye" may be described as positive, affirmative, or imperative in the sense that it successfully imposes meaning upon reality. The "left eye" may be described as negative, wondering, or questioning in the sense that fails to identify some aspect of reality.

Regular sight, or "the right eye," is a conservative or traditional vision in the sense that it always builds on the principles of the past and what has already been established. Conversely, irregular sight, or "the left eye," interprets phenomena as strange and wondrous. It abstains

from assigning specific identities and describes the world in terms of strangeness, pre-rational confusion, hybridity, and shape-shifting.



The “left eye” also corresponds to the “creative eye” which questions tradition and the status quo of knowledge. It forces innovation and renewal by exposing discrepancies between meaning and fact, theory and practice, law and deed, etc. This second sight also includes the ability to “see into the future” to various degrees and is therefore related to divination. In the ancient world, the heightening of this perception was associated with the shutting down of regular sight. Indeed, the “dreaming eye” takes over as soon as the “workaday eye” falls asleep. To a greater degree, blindness was also associated with this second sight and the development of divinatory abilities.¹



As illustrated above, a psychologically healthy human balances these perspectives by maintaining a focused and purposeful vision along with a peripheral vision that appreciates the risks, rewards, and natural beauty that lie beyond familiar space.

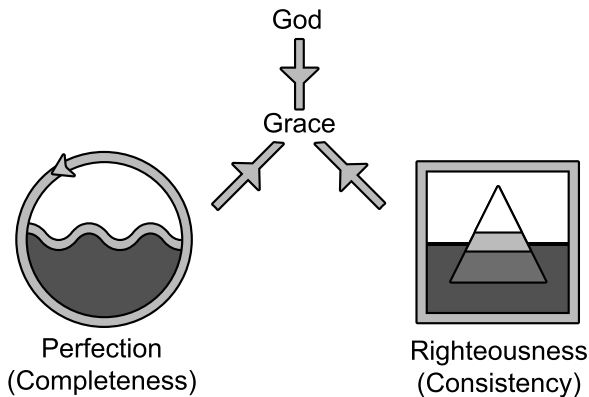
1 Even in a world ruled by science, encounters with UFOs and hybrid monsters continue to be reported. Like divination, this level of perception lies beyond the scope of scientific enquiry, not because it has yet to be discovered, but because it can never be clearly identified. UFOs always vanish as soon as they are identified.

CHAPTER 68

EXAMPLE: GRACE IN THE EYES OF GOD

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord . . . he was righteous and perfect in his generation.

In the cosmology of the Bible, the transcendence of ‘time’ and ‘space’ is symbolized by the perfect balance between consistency and completeness. This equilibrium is referred to as “grace” in the verse above and is defined in terms of righteousness and perfection. In this context, “righteousness” refers to integrity, usually at the expense of completeness, and “perfection” refers to completeness without untenable loss of integrity.



Noah Finds Grace in the Eyes of God (from Genesis 6)

God regretted making the human on the earth, and it grieved his heart, “I will blot out the human that I have created from the face of the earth . . . humans, beasts, creeping things, and the birds of the air . . .”

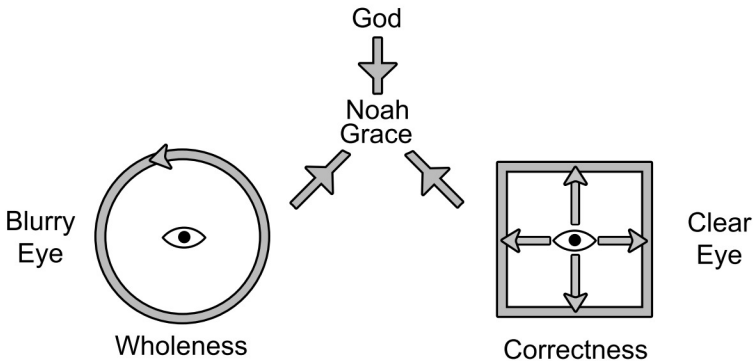
But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord . . . he was righteous and complete in his generation . . . he walked with God.

Behold, I bring the flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh from under heaven which has in it the breath of life. Everything in the earth shall perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will come into the ark . . .

By virtue of God’s “grace,” Noah was chosen to withstand the deluge and partake in the future restoration of dry-land. In fact, it is precisely because Noah embodied the balance of ‘space’ and ‘time’ that he was chosen to transcend that duality.¹

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord . . . he was righteous and complete in his generation.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the symbolism of the eyes is deeply connected with the archaic notions of ‘space’ and ‘time.’ One eye interprets reality with rigor, in terms of sharpness and correctness, and the other eye interprets reality with leniency, in terms of vagueness and wholeness. Hence, Noah is said to have “found grace in the eyes of God.”

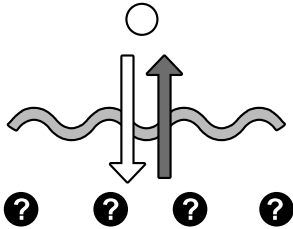


In the following passage, Noah sends two birds to act as his ‘eyes’ after the flood. They are both tasked with going back and forth until they return with signs of dry land. This is yet another variant of

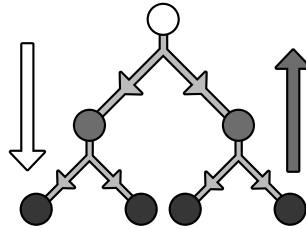
¹ The words “grace” and “Noah” are reverse anagrams of each other. In addition, the name “Noah” means rest or repose (see Genesis 5:29). This establishes a connection between Noah, the quality of grace, and the meaning of the Sabbath.

the basic pattern of knowledge discussed throughout this section. The raven never returns with a positive answer, but the dove returns with a sign of dry land: the leaf of a tree (i.e., part of the spatial axis).

The Raven: Completeness
(Indirect Knowledge)



The Dove: Righteousness
(Direct Knowledge)



The Raven and the Dove (from Genesis 7-8)

The flood was forty days upon the earth, and the waters prevailed until all the mountains were covered. Everything with the breath of life on dry land died . . . But God remembered Noah and the life in the ark. He made a breath cross over the earth until the waters decreased and the mountains were visible.

While the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat . . . Noah sent a raven and a dove which went to and fro until the waters had dried from the earth. The dove came back to him at evening [or “at the time of the raven”] with a freshly plucked olive leaf. Thus, Noah knew that the waters were abated from the earth.

These two birds are connected with divination and prophecy² (see chapter 63). On the one hand, the raven is connected to death and cyclical time because it is a ‘dark’ bird that feeds on the carcasses of animals. Moreover, the raven is not a kosher bird, so it is unsuitable for food and therefore represents “strange flesh.” On the other hand, the dove is a kosher bird, which means it is “familiar flesh.” This implies a capacity to host the breath of humanity. In addition, doves were anciently trained to carry written messages for humans, which makes them analogous to angels as vehicles of language and meaning.

² The pair of divination stones called “Urim and Thumim” (bright and complete) appear to be similar in meaning to the dove and the raven in this narrative.

On the whole, the concept of “grace” is the key to the story of the flood. It can be found in the attributes of Noah and in the combined efforts of the raven and the dove. Like the Sabbath, grace symbolizes a covenant between heaven and earth as well as the perfect balance of time and space.

CHAPTER 69

THE SYMBOLISM OF COOKING AND BLOOD

Noah built an altar to the Lord . . . and sent up offerings on the altar.

As mentioned in chapter 27, the purpose of the altar is to offer up material sustenance from the 'earth' in exchange for information and leadership from the 'heavens.' In other words, the altar is a tool for the construction of the spatial axis.

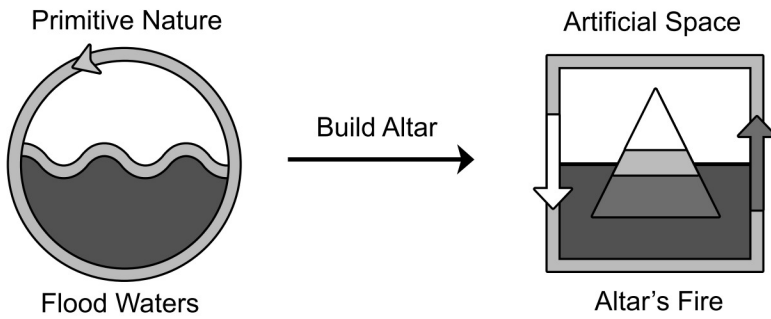
The Altar after the Flood (from Genesis 8)

Noah built an altar to God. He took of every clean beast and bird, and he offered them on the altar as burnt-offerings . . .

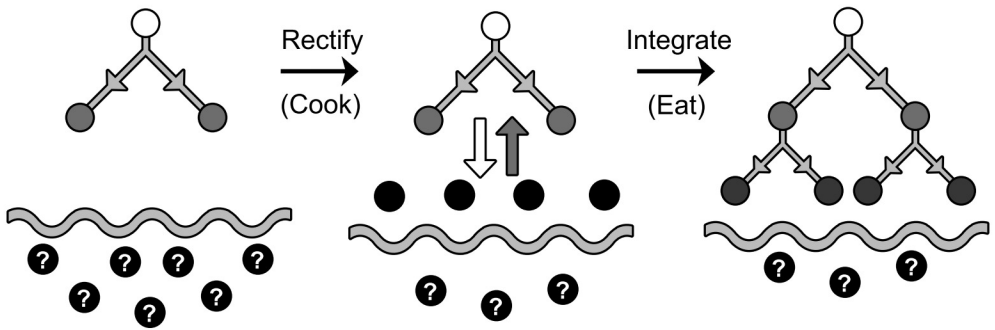
God smelled the aroma and said to himself, "I will no longer curse the ground for humanity because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I annihilate everything alive again. Until all the days of the earth have been completed, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night, they shall not be annihilated."

As described in the passage above, Noah built an altar after the deluge to safeguard the world from the destructive influences of the flood and cyclical time. To appreciate this symbolism, it is important to remember that 'fire' and 'water' were considered opposites in ancient cosmology. Water was seen as the most primitive and natural substance, and fire was seen as a technology that had to be artificially constructed.¹

1 Fire was deeply connected to the tree because wood was the tool that started it and the fuel that sustained it. Hence, ancient wooden fire-making tools (like the hand drill, fire plough, and fire saw) were symbolic of the axis of space.



Like all ancient symbols, the cosmic meaning of the altar was reiterated at different scales of reality. For instance, in the home of each family, the altar was represented by the hearth. At its most basic level, the hearth provided light and heat against the cold, humidity, and darkness of the night. In combination with shelter, the fire of the hearth created a stable environment against the vicissitudes of time. In this sense, it acted as a pillar that artificially “fixed” the natural environment against the weather and the wilderness (see chapter 64: the pillar of God). The fire was both a deterrent to the wild animals surrounding the camp and a tool for cooking the flesh of captured animals.²



As illustrated above, cooking meat is a process that artificially “fixes” raw flesh to properly integrate it into the body. As such, it is a microcosm of building space, where bloody meat is a miniature version of flooded land, and cooked meat is a miniature version of dry land. In general, the taboo against eating blood encapsulates the symbolism of “kosher food” and the need to rectify raw matter after the fall.

² The symbolism of hunting and fishing is easy to understand with the diagrams of chapter 61. The animal is captured by the spear or net and then cooked with fire.

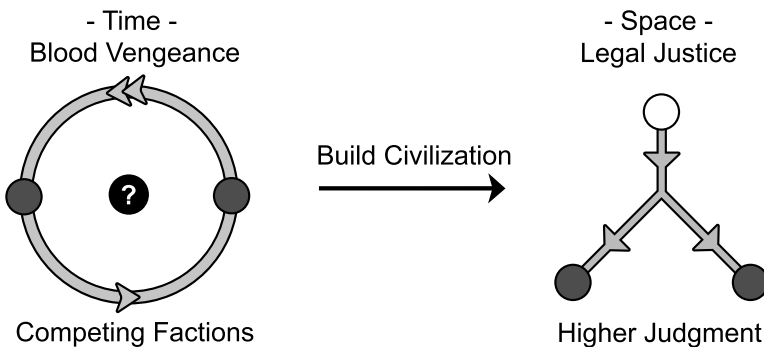
Every moving thing that lives will be food for you . . . But flesh with its own life in it—its blood—you shall not eat . . . (Genesis 9:3).

You shall not eat with the blood, neither shall you practice divination and soothsaying (Leviticus 19:26) (cf. chapter 63).³

Like all symbols in biblical cosmology, the process of cooking flesh can be interpreted at different scales of reality. At the communal level, this is symbolized by the process of replacing blood vengeance with legal justice.

But the blood of your own lives I will require at the hand of every beast or man, even his own brother. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall his blood be shed because Adam was made in the image of God (Genesis 9:5).

In this analogy, the concept of blood vengeance refers to a primitive type of justice that requires no artificial legislation because it occurs naturally from a sense of vengeance. On the other hand, legal justice is based on a fixed set of laws and a hierarchy of judges to decide between quarreling factions. The first is based on the survival instincts of individuals (its own life-blood) while the second must be artificially constructed as a pillar of civilization.

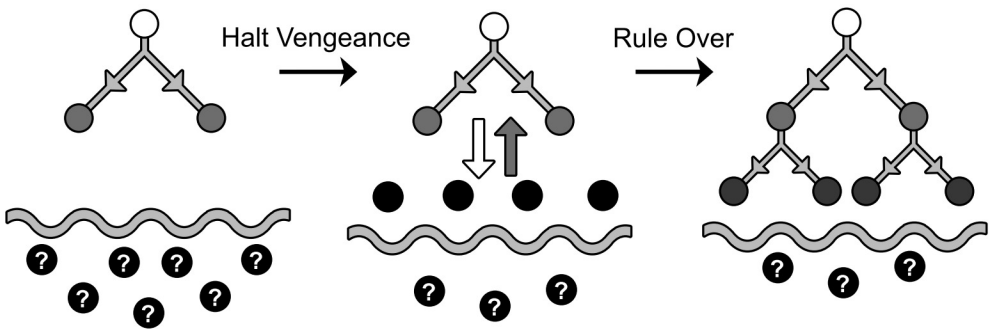


³ Another such taboo is, “Do not boil a kid in its mother’s milk” (Exodus 23:19). This law forbids the confusion of birth and death as a self-negating cycle.

Before the establishment of artificial legal systems, individuals were responsible for carrying out personal vendettas. This resulted in social instability because of the feedback loops of never-ending blood feuds. Indeed, whenever two parties of equal strength are competing, a tug-of-war emerges. One side always manages to get the upper hand, but only until the other side regains the advantage. This is analogous to ‘time’ in ancient cosmology: a series of equal principles ruling in succession for a limited time on the wheel.

In the process of building a civilized society, each individual has to relinquish this primitive form of justice (the instinct of vengeance) in favor of judgment and justice from a higher identity. As illustrated in the following diagram, the first step in this process is analogous to “removing the blood of the flesh,” and the second step is analogous to “eating the cooked flesh.”

But flesh with its own life in it—its blood—you shall not eat.



You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against your people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18).

Like all stories in the Bible, the narrative of the flood can be interpreted at multiple levels of reality. God replaces the flood with dry land at the individual, communal, and cosmic scales. This generally means establishing a fixed spatial hierarchy to replace the primitive laws of nature and cyclical return.

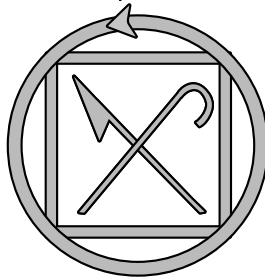
CHAPTER 70

ADAM'S DESCENDANTS IN RELATION TO SPACE AND TIME

Abel was a herder of flocks and Cain was a worker of the ground . . .

As mentioned in chapter 25, Cain and Abel are specializations of Adam's cosmic mediation. Cain "inherited the earth" whereas Abel "inherited the heavens." Hence, the interactions of Cain and Abel are analogous to the interactions between heaven and earth. This relationship is usually symbolized by a trade agreement in which Cain hosts and feeds Abel on his land, and Abel covers Cain with clothing from the wool of his flock.¹

Sedentary and Nomadic
Cooperation



The relationship between Cain and Abel can also be interpreted in terms of the balance of space and time. In that case, the peaceful cooperation of sedentary farmers and nomadic herdsman symbolizes the balance of 'space' and 'time.'

1 This also corresponds to a distinction between the nobility and the priesthood. In the Bible, the Levites did not inherit any land. However, a subset of the Levites (the priests who descended from Aaron) inherited the temple (the center of the land) which was built by kingly tribes.

Spilled Blood and Cursed Land (from Genesis 4)

Cain brought an offering to God from the fruits of the ground, and Abel brought an offering to God from the fat of the first-borns of his flock. God regarded Abel's offering but disregarded Cain's offering. Cain became extremely frustrated, and his countenance fell.

God said to Cain, "If you do right, will it not be lifted? However, if you do wrong, sin will be lying in the breach, and its desire will be for you. So you must rule [as king] over it."

Cain spoke to Abel when they were in the field. He then rose up against his brother and killed him. God: "Where is Abel your brother?" Cain: "I do not know . . . am I my brother's keeper?"

God: "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground . . . You are cursed from the ground that has opened her mouth to take your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, she will no longer give you her strength, and you shall be an exile and wanderer in the earth . . ."

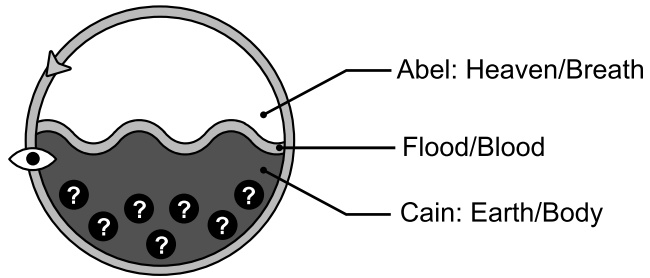
According to the passage above, Cain eventually rose up against his brother and killed him. In other words, he eventually "raised matter" in a way that was inhospitable and even adversarial to Abel's spiritual mediation. This level of disagreement goes far beyond a discrepancy between material and spiritual mediation. It involves losing the ability to even coexist.²

When you work the ground, she will no longer give you her strength, and you shall be an exile and wanderer in the earth.

As discussed in previous chapters, the natural consequences of sin are: 1) losing the guidance and authority of heaven, 2) losing the power and support of the earth, and 3) losing the integrity of familiar

² As always, these patterns can be interpreted on different scales of reality: as a war of the flesh against the spirit, of the nobility against the priesthood, of a materialistic nation against a spiritual one, etc.

space and then going into exile. In this context, losing the authority of ‘heaven’ is symbolized by Abel’s death, and losing the integrity of ‘space’ is symbolized by Abel’s blood on the ground. As mentioned in the previous chapter, flowing blood is a miniature representation of the flood, which is the natural consequence of a disagreement between heaven and earth.



Losing the Support and Power of the Earth
Falling into the Earth and Going into Exile

The Consequences of Sin: Wandering or Civilization (from Genesis 4)

Cain: “You have exiled me from the day and the surface of the ground. I will be hidden from your face, and I will be a wanderer and exile in the earth. All that befalls me shall kill me . . .”

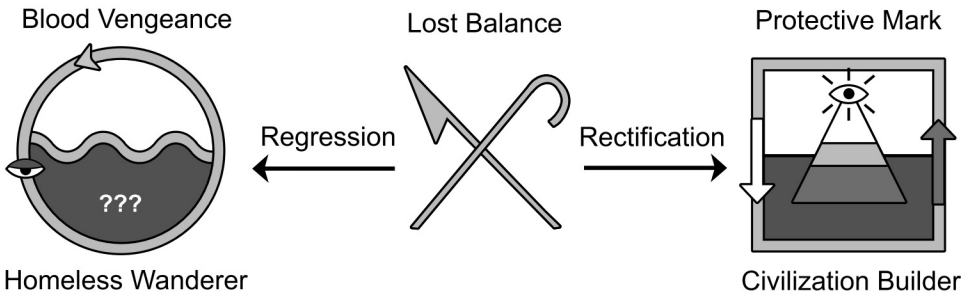
God: “Whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be wrought upon sevenfold.”

God set a mark [letter] for Cain lest anything finding him should kill him. Cain went from the face of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod . . . Cain knew his wife, and she bore Enoch, and he built a city and called its name after his son.³

As a consequence of Cain’s sin, the fragile balance between ‘time’ and ‘space’ that characterized the Garden was further lost. On the one hand, Cain became even more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of cyclical time and the influences of “death.” On the other hand, he was forced

³ It is not merely through a pun that sleeping and dreaming was attributed to the expression “Land of Nod.” It derives from the notion that sleeping is an internal version of exile and death (see chapters 60 and 62).

to work even harder and to build increasingly powerful technologies to “stand artificially.”⁴ As illustrated in the following diagram, on the left, God invokes a primitive form of justice (blood vengeance) to save Cain from being killed. According to this natural law of return, justice occurs from a sense of vengeance. Ironically, in this case, the law of blood vengeance simultaneously protects Cain from death and makes him a fugitive for the murder of Abel. This strange paradox symbolizes the pattern of time as a self-negating and self-renewing cycle.



On the other side of the equation, God establishes a “mark” for Cain, which may be interpreted as the invention of writing (see chapter 61). Writing becomes necessary once spiritual mediation has been lost and its wisdom can only be preserved in a fixed form. It protects the integrity of civilization and its laws against the forces of dissolution and pointless change. Together, blood vengeance and the mark represent the increasing polarity of ‘time’ and ‘space’ after the fall.⁵

4 In addition to meaning “nest,” the word “Cain” also means spear or shaft. It is basically the same as the word “cane,” which implies a tool, weapon, measuring instrument, and walking stick.

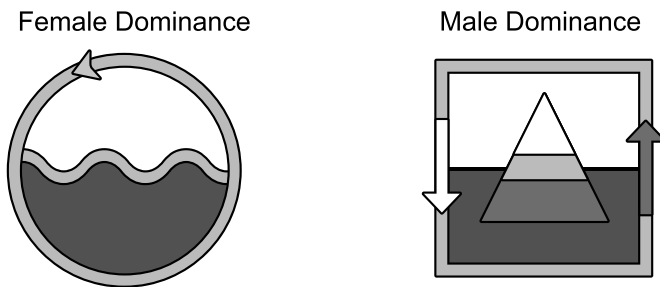
5 As mentioned in chapter 25, Seth represents a recovery of the union of heaven and earth. Similarly, in this context, Seth symbolizes the recovery of the equilibrium between space and time.

CHAPTER 71

SEXUALITY AS MICROCOSM: MALE AND FEMALE DOMINANCE

God made the human fall asleep and took one of his sides and then closed the flesh in its place . . . and built it into woman.

Procreation has already been discussed in chapter 19. In that context, the male and female were described as miniature versions of heaven and earth. They were interpreted as sources of matter (food) and meaning (seed) for reproduction. As will be discovered in this chapter, there is another aspect to the symbolism of gender that interprets space as male dominance and time as female dominance.

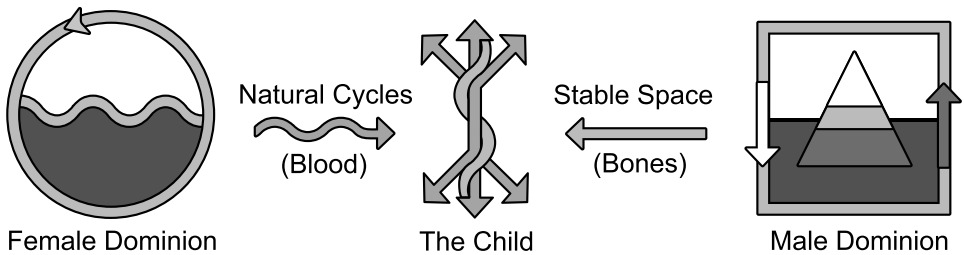


In this scenario, the masculine is associated with construction and formation, whereas the feminine is associated with renewal and transformation. Accordingly, in the narrative of the Garden of Eden, the imagery of falling, death, and renewal is connected to the female at the very moment of her creation, even before her dealings with the snake and the forbidden fruit.

God made the human fall asleep and took one of his sides and then closed the flesh in its place . . . and built it into a woman.

There is a profound reason (beyond surgical anesthesia) why Adam needed to “fall asleep” to create the female. Sleep represents the natural dominion of the female as a cyclical process of renewal and re-creation. This comes in contrast with the dominion of the male which is the imposition of reason and language upon material reality.

According to this symbolism, sexual intercourse between the male and the female is also a microcosm of the interactions between ‘space’ and ‘time.’ In this scenario, the white skeletal system of the child is derived from the seed of the male. This rigid structure upholds the integrity of the body like the pillars and beams of a building. On the other hand, the red blood of the child’s circulatory system comes from the menstruations of the female. This feminine fluidity allows the flesh to renew and re-create itself.¹



According to this symbolism, the virgin female represents the natural world, which is ruled by the tides and the seasons. Thus, the fertile woman experiences a periodic flow of menstrual blood that symbolizes the renewal of the land by cyclical time and flooding. Only the male can halt this cycle through sexual intercourse by artificially “fixing” the womb. This means modifying the nature of the womb from a re-creative cycle into a productive space, capable of supporting and protecting the growth of a seed. Thus, intercourse with a male is analogous to creating dry land and artificially rectifying a field through plowing. In all of these cases, the male uses his “tool” on the female

1 From the spiritual perspective, saying that the bones of the child “derive from the male” does not necessarily imply any form of mechanical causality. Instead, the analogy itself is an archaic type of causality.

to “distribute a point.” The earth/womb then becomes a stable and productive place capable of hosting a human being.

God said to the woman, “I will greatly multiply your labor. In pain, you will bring forth offspring, and your desire will be towards your man, and he will have dominion over you.”

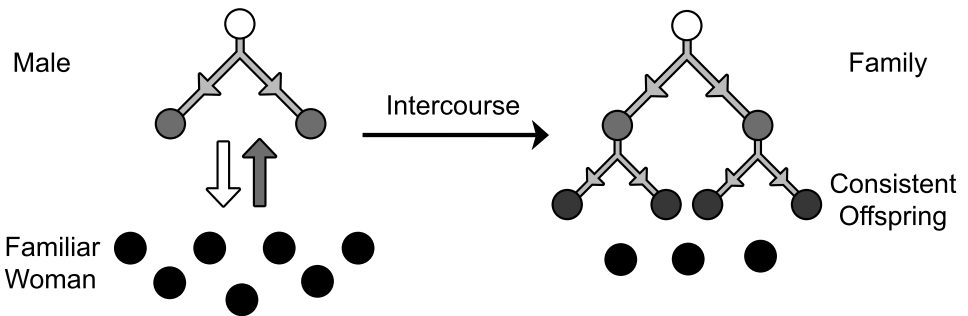
There are two important analogies between cosmic realities and sexuality. First, there is an analogy with the duality of heaven and earth, where the male represents heaven and the female represents earth. Second, there is an analogy with space and time, where the male imposes language on nature, and the female imposes death, renewal, and rebirth on civilization. Through a combination of these analogies, sexual symbolism produces many significant male-female interactions in the narratives of the Bible.

CHAPTER 72

SEXUALITY AS MICROCOSM: REPRODUCTION AND RECREATION

God made the human fall asleep and took one of its sides and then closed the flesh in its place . . . and built it into woman.

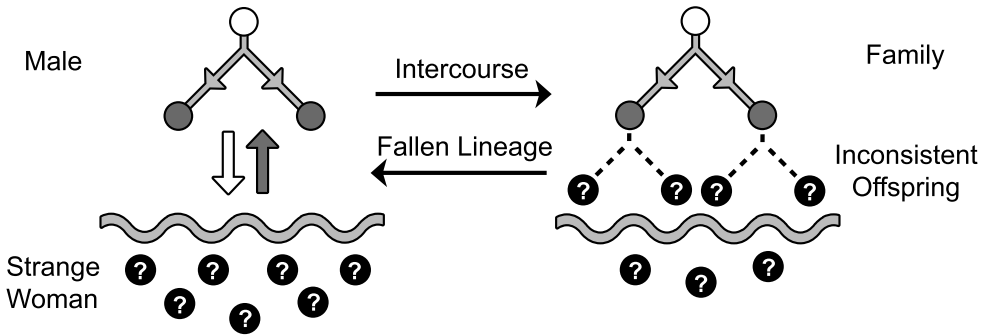
Since females are sources of food for the child, many analogies exist between nutrition and sexuality. For instance, the biblical duality of “kosher food” versus “forbidden food” is translated into “familiar woman” versus “strange woman” in the realm of sexuality. The first is a female who readily supports the seed of the male, while the second is a female who does not reproduce the male seed correctly.



Now, this is bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh [consistency]. She will be called “woman” because she was taken from man.

The diagram above illustrates the implications of intercourse with the “familiar woman.” In this case, the female reproduces the male identity/seed correctly, resulting in a consistent offspring which increases the size and power of the family. This requires a wife with the

same principles as her husband, including worshiping the same God and following the same laws (expressing the same spiritual identity). In practice, this usually corresponds to a woman from the same culture as opposed to a foreign or “exotic” woman.



The human called the name of his wife “Eve” [snake/living] because she was the mother of all living beings [completeness].

On the other hand, sexual intercourse with a “strange woman” potentially fails to express the male identity correctly. This has many implications depending on the stage in which the failure occurs. If it happens at early stages of conception, the male is unable to halt the cycle of re-creation. In other words, the seed will merely be flooded away by the menstruation.

Accordingly, the prototypical sexual taboo is sexual intercourse during menstruation: *You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is impure by her menstruation* (Leviticus 18:19). This comes in parallel with the prototypical nutritional taboo, which is eating flesh with its blood (see chapter 69). Both of these taboos are simply microcosms of the flood at smaller scales.

The lips of a strange woman drip honey, and her palate is smoother than oil . . . but her feet descend into death and Sheol . . . her paths wander and you cannot know them . . . (from Proverbs 5).

If the failure to host the seed happens at a later stage, then there is a visible abortion of a partially formed human. In this case, the seed was able to integrate some of the matter from the female but not enough to build a fully functional human. Finally, there is the possibility that the failure only reveals itself after the birth of the child. In this case, the child may be born with a spirit that disagrees with its body, often manifesting outwardly as deformity or disability. On the communal scale, a child may grow up to disregard the spirit of his forefathers by revolting against the principles and laws of his ancestors.

. . . Lest strangers be filled with your wealth and your work goes to an alien's house . . . You shall moan when your end comes and when your flesh and body are consumed (from Proverbs 5).¹

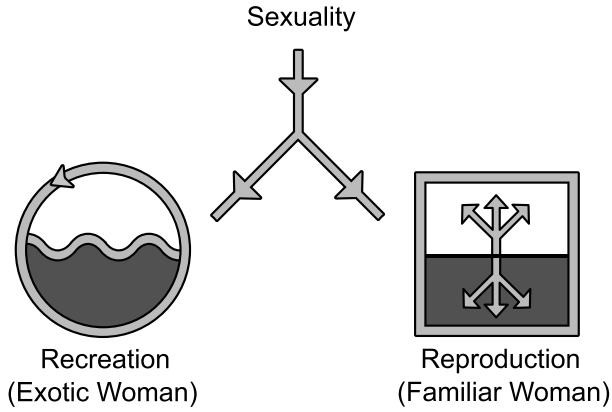
In summary, the following outcomes represent incorrect sexual reproduction: 1) unborn offspring, 2) aborted offspring, 3) deformed offspring, and 4) rebellious offspring. Such sexual discrepancies may eventually result in the disintegration of an entire lineage. Even in the case of a rebellious offspring, generations of accumulated resources could be wasted on some counterproductive goal.

To save you from a strange woman, from a foreigner who makes her words smooth . . . for her house sinks to death, and her paths lead to the dead . . . (from Proverbs 2).

In biblical cosmology, both kinds of women, the familiar and the strange, are sometimes necessary. The first is necessary to perpetuate the traditions of a nation, tribe, or family, and the second is necessary for renewal and re-creation. The first is usually symbolized by the safe, familiar, and dutiful wife, and the second is symbolized by forbidden, exotic, and potentially treacherous women. These are the two poles of womanhood in biblical cosmology, which means the perfect woman is a balance of these characteristics.

1 There are analogies between falling asleep and intercourse with the "strange woman." Hence, the word for "dreaming" (חלם) also implies "nocturnal emission."

In general, reproduction and recreation are the two poles of sexuality. The first brings power and authority to a family by producing consistent offspring, and the second is a source of recreation that potentially brings ruin and death but also renewal and resurrection. When sexuality is a perfect balance of reproduction and recreation, it becomes a microcosm of the Garden of Eden.



CHAPTER 73

CAIN'S DESCENDANTS IN RELATION TO SPACE AND TIME

Lemech took for himself two wives. The name of the first was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah.

Much like the narrative of Cain and Abel, the lineage of Cain symbolizes the tug-of-war between the natural laws of 'time' and the artificial laws of 'space.' From Cain's perspective, this means resisting the forces of pointless change through the expansion and maintenance of civilization.

The End of Space and the Return of Time (from Genesis 4)

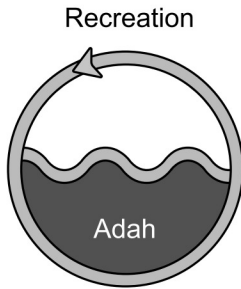
To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lemech who took two wives named Adah and Zillah.

Adah bore Jabal and Jubal. Jabal was the father of those who dwell in tents and have cattle. Jubal was the father of those who play the harp and pipe. Zillah bore Tubal-Cain and his sister Naamah. Tubal-Cain was a forger of brass and iron tools.

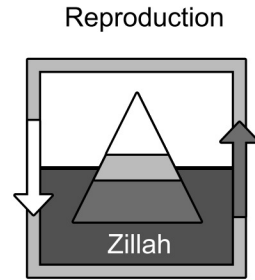
Lemech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice. I have slain a man for wounding me and a youth for bruising me. Cain is avenged sevenfold and Lemech seventy-sevenfold."

As shown in the following diagram, the wives of Lemech represent the two types of women in biblical cosmology. In this context, Zillah represents the "familiar woman" who correctly reproduces Cain's identity,

and Adah represents the “exotic woman” whose function is no longer to re-produce Cain’s identity, but to re-create it.

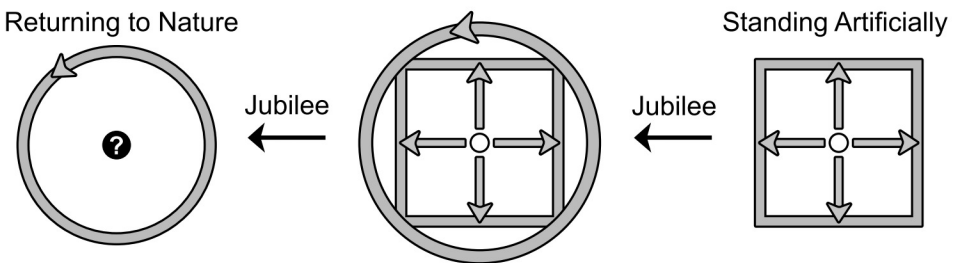


Jubal: Flute Player



Tubal-Cain: Tool Maker

The son of Zillah is named “Tubal-Cain” after Cain himself. He represents the limits of what Cain can correctly integrate into familiar space. Thus, he is a forger of metals who employs forceful technologies to rectify the lower limits of material reality. On the other hand, the sons of Adah are nomadic herdsman and musicians. These professions are signs of the time-cycle encroaching on Cain’s lineage. They are essentially manifestations of ‘flooding’ at the social scale, which is why Jubal and Jubal are named after the Jubilee itself.¹



The explicit mention that Lemech needed “two wives” in the seventh generation of Cain indicates a transition between dry land and flooded land. In other words, this lineage had finally reached the limits of ‘space’ and was about to enter the domain of ‘time.’ *For six days you shall do all your work, but the seventh day is Sabbath . . . in which you*

1 “Adah” means both “ornamentation” and “menstruation.”

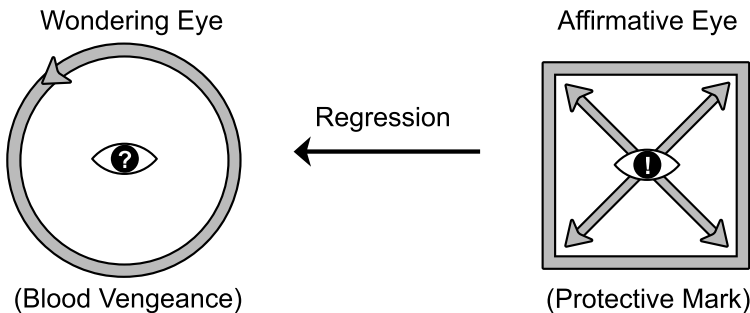
shall not work (Deuteronomy 5:12). This transition is symbolized by the shift from a sedentary lifestyle to a nomadic lifestyle, and from tool-making and productivity to entertainment, distraction, and recreation (see chapter 41-42).

Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice. I have slain a man for wounding me, and a youth for bruising me. Cain is avenged sevenfold and Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

The final verses that describe Cain's legacy are extremely sketchy. For whatever reason, the biblical text of this narrative does not give enough information to understand them. Lamech's odd final statements strongly suggest that some elements have been omitted from this narrative. Thankfully, there are enough traditional sources to fill in the gaps of this story.

I slew a man for wounding me and a youth for bruising me.

According to these traditions, the statement above hints at the simultaneous deaths of Cain (an old man) and his final descendant Tubal-Cain (a young man). As the story goes, Lamech was blind in his old age, and he needed to be guided by his son Tubal-Cain. One day, Lamech chanced upon his ancestor Cain on his hunt. Unfortunately, Tubal-Cain misidentified him, and they hunted him down. When Lamech finally realized he had murdered Cain, he accidentally killed Tubal-Cain in a moment of anguish and confusion.



This brief tradition contains a lot of information for those who understand the language of biblical cosmology. In this context, Tubal-Cain's mistake and the blindness of Lemech are signs that "regular sight" had been lost. In other words, they had lost the ability to identify phenomenon correctly (see chapter 67).

The fact that Cain was mistaken for a wild animal is significant in this context because "regular sight" corresponds to Adam's ability to "name the animals" and dominate nature. Importantly, this includes the ability to dominate his own animal instincts. Therefore, losing this sense of vision also implies succumbing to primitive animality or "regressing into an animal." This is also what Cain's lineage experiences at this crucial moment according to other traditions.

Cain is avenged sevenfold and Lemech seven-sevens-fold.

The final statement of Lemech is obscure. It may be interpreted in the following manner. When Cain originally murdered Abel, he fell under the protection of a primitive justice called "blood vengeance." This brand of justice is essentially a translation of the "law of time" and cyclical return at the human scale. In these types of scenarios, the duty of blood-vengeance would usually belong to the next of kin, which is ironically Cain himself in this case. Therefore, Cain found himself in the paradoxical position of being both the slayer and the blood avenger of his own brother. This self-referential irony explains why the lineage of Cain was destined to "avenge itself" or "turn on itself" in the seventh generation. This is another representation of the time-cycle eating its own tail.²

² The symbolism of self-cannibalism is even hinted at in these traditions. Cain was killed in the guise of a hunted animal. So the kill was presumably to eat the meat of this "animal." Moreover, a self-referential feedback loop is hinted at when Cain's original "seven" is reiterated into "seven-sevens." This number (7x7) is also related to the imagery of the Jubilee as described in chapter 48.

CHAPTER 74

EXAMPLE: NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM V

Cut down the tree . . . and scatter its fruit . . . let its heart be changed from man to beast . . .

The following example from Daniel chapter 4 comes right after the narrative of the golden statue and the fiery furnace, as discussed in chapter 52. This is the second dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, and it contains symbolism that comes in parallel with his first dream.

Nebuchadnezzar Turns into a Beast (from Daniel 4)

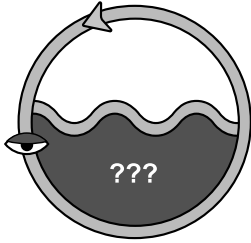
I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my palace and saw a dream which made me afraid. There was a great tree in the center of the earth which grew strong. It reached into heaven and was visible to the ends of the earth. The beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the birds of the heaven dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

Behold, a holy one descended from heaven and said, "Cut down the tree and its branches, shake off its leaves, scatter its fruit, and let the beasts and birds flee from it. But leave the stump and its roots in the earth . . . Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let its portion be with the beasts of the earth. Let its heart be changed from man to beast, and let seven times pass over it."

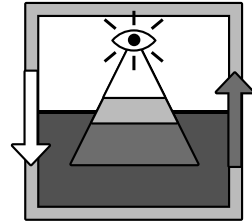
This narrative is a straightforward example of the basic patterns under consideration. Like Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, it expresses the symbolism of falling asleep. It describes the descent of the identity into the

darkness of material reality and its cyclical renewal. In this context, the identity is that of a king who stands at the top of a hierarchical empire.

The Wandering Beast



The Hierarchical Tree



Regression
←

Daniel's Interpretation: The Exile of a King (from Daniel 4)

Daniel: "The great tree that you saw is you, O king . . .

You shall be exiled from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field to eat grass as oxen. You shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you until you know that the Most High rules on the kingdom of men and gives it to whoever he pleases.

It was commanded to leave the stump of the tree because your kingdom shall be assured to you once you have acknowledged that heaven rules.

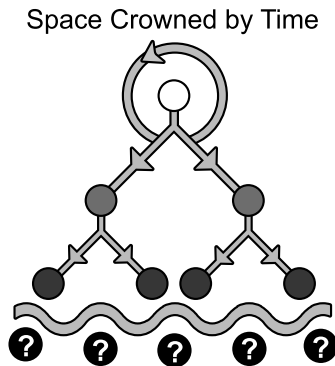
O king, accept my counsel. Break off your sins by righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Then, perhaps, your tranquility will endure."

As usual, this story is meant to be interpreted on various scales. On the individual level, Nebuchadnezzar falls asleep, which means he loses the hierarchical integrity of his body and wanders irrationally in the dream world. On the cosmic level, Nebuchadnezzar turns into a beast and is forced to wander irrationally in the wilderness. Finally, at the communal level, Nebuchadnezzar is the head of a social hierarchy that will eventually fail to support him, forcing him to mingle with the poorest of the poor.

Break off your sins by righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor . . .

At the communal level, the meaning of the Sabbath and ornamentation is often expressed as kindness to the remainders of civilized society, the poorest of the poor, the homeless wanderers, and the strangers. Indeed, Daniel did not advise Nebuchadnezzar to eradicate homelessness from his kingdom, or to assimilate these strangers, or even to give productive jobs to these paupers. These solutions are all attempts at subsuming 'time' into 'space' on the communal scale. They all fail to acknowledge the legitimacy of 'time' per se. In other words, charity is the only way to acknowledge the poor as poor, the wanderer as wanderer, and the stranger as stranger.¹

As discussed in chapters 49-52, the loose connection between productive space and its marginal remainders symbolizes the peace between space and time. It embodies the notion that God created all things, and that space and time can coexist in the knowledge of that higher principle. This metaphysical truth is what Nebuchadnezzar needed to acknowledge due to his pride and self-righteousness.



He raises the poor from the dust and the needy from the dung-hill. He makes them sit with princes and inherit the throne of glory . . . for the pillars of the earth belong to the Lord . . .” (1 Samuel 2:8).

¹ The law of gleaning requires farmers to leave the fringes of fields un-gathered for the poor and stranger (Leviticus 19:9-10). This macro version of *tzitzit* is important in the story of Ruth as an ancestor of King David.

CHAPTER 75

SEXUALITY AS MICROCOSM: TABOOS AND CYCLICAL TIME

No man shall come to uncover the nakedness from any of the rest of his own flesh (Leviticus 18:6).

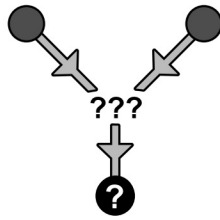
As mentioned in previous chapters, almost every Mosaic law is a translation of the “law of space” at various scales. These laws preserve “dry land” from the flood at the cosmic level and “life in the homeland” from exile at the human level. As a subset of these laws, sexual taboos preserve familiar space from the dominion of cyclical time.¹

You shall not sleep with your neighbor’s wife to pollute yourself with her (Leviticus 18:20).

Adultery is easy to understand given the definitions of “familiar woman” and “strange woman” from chapter 72. In this context, a man’s wife is the familiar woman, and the wife of another is the strange woman. According to these definitions, adulterous relationships are miniature versions of going into exile because the fruit of that union will belong to the family of another man. Therefore, intercourse with the strange woman is like descending into foreign lands for a man’s seed. Moreover, as illustrated in the following diagram, the child of such a union will have a false or ambiguous identity, depending on whether or not the adultery was exposed.

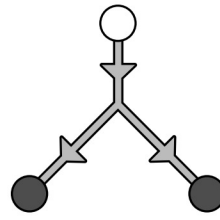
¹ It may be useful at this point to revisit chapter 47 and the story of Mount Ebal and Gerizim with a focus on the list of taboos in Deuteronomy 27 as well as the natural consequences of crossing those taboos.

Confused Paternity



Bastard Offspring

Definite Paternity



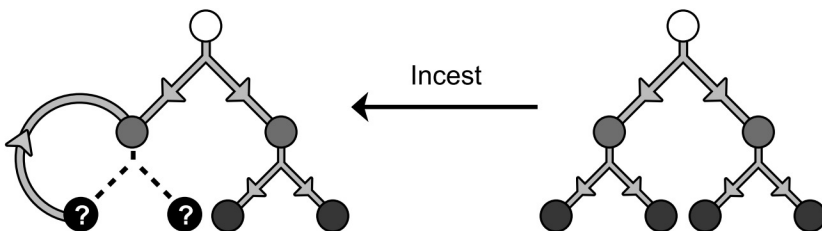
Established Offspring

In the Bible, the ultimate symbol of “the other woman” is the prostitute who never binds herself to a husband but sells intercourse for men’s recreation. As such, the harlot is a miniature representation of flooded land and the dominion of ‘time.’

You are unstable as water and shall not remain, for you have ascended upon your father’s bed and polluted it (Genesis 49:4).

In many ways, incestuous relationships may be interpreted as the polar opposite of adulterous relationships. Indeed, the taboo of adultery guards against that which is too exotic, and the taboo of incest guards against that which is too familiar. Nevertheless, because of the cyclical nature of time, these apparently opposite taboos ironically share a common symbolism. Both taboos undermine the hierarchical integrity of familiar space through contradiction and uncertainty. For these reasons, adultery and incest are both interpreted as irrational and pointless acts of sexual regression.

Cursed is he who lies with his father’s wife because he has uncovered the skirt [corners] of his father (Deuteronomy 27:20).



As illustrated in the previous diagram, incestuous relationships create self-referential feedback loops in the fabric of 'space.' In other words, incest undermines the integrity of familiar space. It does so by transforming the reproductive tree pattern into a self-negating and self-renewing cyclical pattern. In the Bible, incest, adultery, and all sexual taboos are considered acts of regression that unravel civilization into a primitive cyclical condition.²

² The story of Tamar is a clear example of this imagery (see Genesis 38). She embodies an acceptable version of lying, prostitution, incest (through levirate), death, and renewal. This is especially important for the lineage of David who embodies the natural renewal and return of the king.

CHAPTER 76

EXAMPLE: JUBILEE AND THE WALLS OF JERICHO II

Joshua secretly sent two spies to the city of Jericho . . . they slept in the house of a harlot named Rahab.

The events described in this example precede the destruction of Jericho discussed in chapter 48 of this commentary. In this narrative, a prostitute named Rahab becomes a symbol of the influence of ‘time’ at the margins of ‘space.’

Spying on the Fringes of Jericho (from Joshua 2)

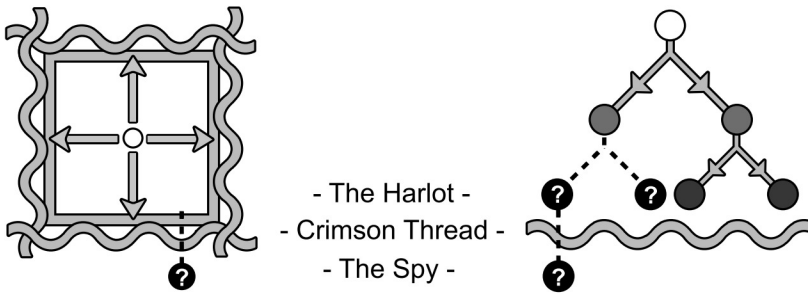
Joshua the son of Nun secretly sent two spies to view the land and the city of Jericho. They slept in the house of a harlot named Rahab. The king of Jericho sent to Rahab saying, “Bring forth the men that have entered your house for they came to search out all the land.”

Rahab took the two men and hid them, saying, “The men came to me, but I did not know where they came from and where they were going . . .”

The spies said to Rahab, “Our life for yours if you keep our business secret . . . and we will deal kindly and truly with you when the Lord gives us the land.”

She lowered them by a cord through the window of her house, which was in the wall of the city. The spies said to Rahab, “Tie this line of scarlet thread on the window . . . The blood of whoever is in this house shall be on our head if any harm comes upon them.”

This narrative contains three important symbols of time that have already been discussed in one form or another in this book: 1) the spy, 2) the prostitute, and 3) the crimson thread.



The symbolism of the spy was mentioned in chapter 66, in the context of disguise. In general, spies represent the influence of strangers as they attempt to “uncover the nakedness of the land” (Genesis 42:12). They are embodiments of secrecy, falsehood, and subversion, making them a complete representation of ‘time’ on the communal scale.¹

As shown in the previous diagram, the crimson thread in this narrative is the symbol of a secret mediation. Therefore, it represents the axle of time. It is also an example of the fringes (loose threads) that hang at the periphery of civilization. Accordingly, the crimson thread is used to secretly infiltrate the city and eventually unravel the entire fabric of space.²

In addition, the crimson thread is used to covertly signal the clandestine pact between the harlot and the invaders: *Tie this line of scarlet thread on the window . . . The blood of whoever is in this house shall be on our head if any harm comes upon them.* This pact promises that any harm inflicted upon that house will be returned on the spies

1 The word “spy” in Hebrew also means “foot,” a connection made evident in the diagrams of this chapter. In addition, the spymaster is “Joshua Ben Nun,” where “Nun” is a Hebrew letter meaning “fish.” This connection is easy to understand with the symbolism of ‘water’ in biblical cosmology and the diagrams on this page.

2 The crimson thread is also found in the story of Tamar who pretends to be a prostitute in order to renew the fallen lineage of Judah (see Genesis 38).

themselves. This primitive form of justice (blood vengeance) is based on the natural law of return, which is an important symbol of cyclical time (see chapters 69, 70, and 73).

In summary, the story of Jericho is about the subversion of space by the powers of time. It begins with the infiltration of spies through Rahab and ends with the destruction of Jericho by the horns of Jubilee and the revolutions around the city.

CHAPTER 77

EXAMPLE: GIANTS AND FALLEN ANGELS

Giants were in the earth in those days . . . when sons of God had children with the daughters of Adam.

Since Adam is a cosmic mediator between heaven and earth, his individual sin in the Garden gradually spreads to all levels of reality, finally culminating in the deluge. In fact, the flood itself is a “cosmic fall” in the Bible because it involves the downfall of heavenly angels or “sons of gods” through an illicit sexual union with “daughters of men.”¹



Fallen Angels as Harbingers of the Flood (from Genesis 6)

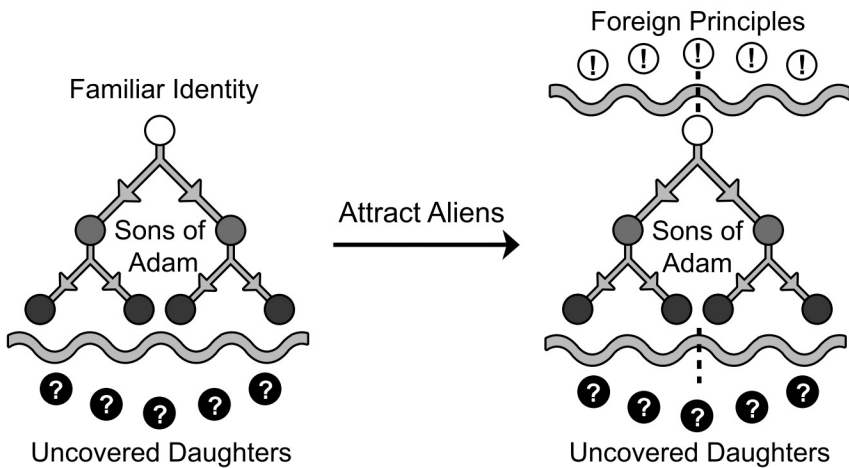
When humans began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them . . . the sons of God noticed that the daughters of men were beautiful, so they took themselves wives . . .

God: “My breath shall not stay in Adam forever because he is also flesh. Thus, his [remaining] days shall be 120 years.”

1 Another interpretation is that there was a union between Cain’s offspring and Seth’s offspring. These interpretations are not exclusive. Both involve the confusion of incompatible lineages on different scales of reality.

The giants [Nephilim] were in the earth in those days . . . when the sons of God had children with the daughters of Adam. These were the ancient mighty-men of legend.

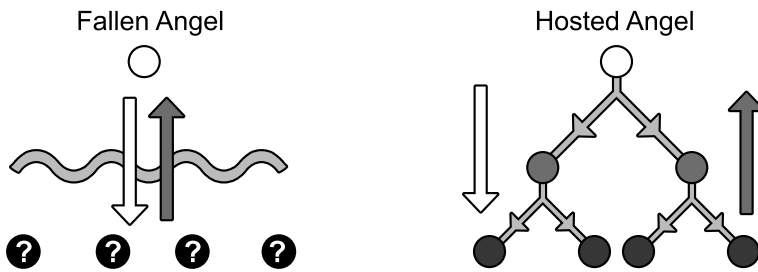
The passage above describes what happens when Adam’s identity (his breath) can no longer cover his descendants (his flesh). This problem may be symbolized by the multiplication of rebellious or “wild” daughters who no longer support and reproduce Adam’s identity. This type of remainder (uncovered flesh) tends to attract foreign principles which try to “cover” these unanswered questions (see chapter 50).



In biblical cosmology, there are two types of human interactions with angels: 1) humanity hosts the angels correctly, and 2) humanity fails to host the angels correctly. The first establishes suitable bridges between ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ but the second causes the angels to fall and give birth to “giants.”²

In the Bible, the offspring of improper unions between angels and humans are called “Nephilim,” a word that means “fallen” and “aborted” (see chapter 72). They refer to a failed union between heaven and earth on the cosmic scale and between male and female on the human scale.

² Examples of the first and second case can be found in Genesis 18 and Judges 13. In the first case, Abraham and Sarah properly hosted the angels and gave birth to Isaac (see chapter 18 of this commentary). In the second case, Manoah and his wife were denied as hosts and gave birth to Samson, a fallen mighty man of God.



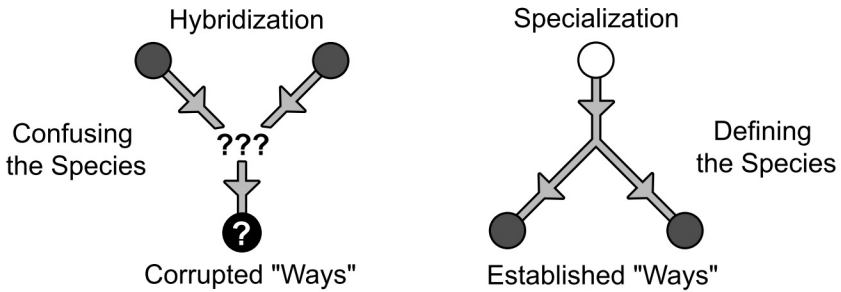
The Nephilim were in the earth in those days . . . these were the ancient mighty men of legend.

The Nephilim are called “giants” for many different reasons. For one, they are “too tall” compared to humanity, in the sense that they are the union of a “head” that is too high for humanity and a “body” that is too low for humanity (see image on previous page). In other words, they are the failed embodiment of an extremely lofty idea which cannot be properly hosted by humanity. Moreover, the Nephilim are also considered gigantic or gross because they symbolize a return to primitive creation, before its division into different species. Hence, they are often described as monstrous or grotesque because they are a gigantic confusion of many potential beings. For similar reasons, giants are said to possess great strength because they embody a raw or brute power that has not yet been separated into specific tasks.

Even though there is little information about these “giants” in Genesis, traditional interpreters have attributed a great deal to the Nephilim. Most notably, they are credited with teaching divination to humanity. This tradition is easy to understand with the diagram above and the contents of chapter 63. Indeed, the very nature of “fallen angels” is synonymous with divinatory knowledge on the cosmic scale.

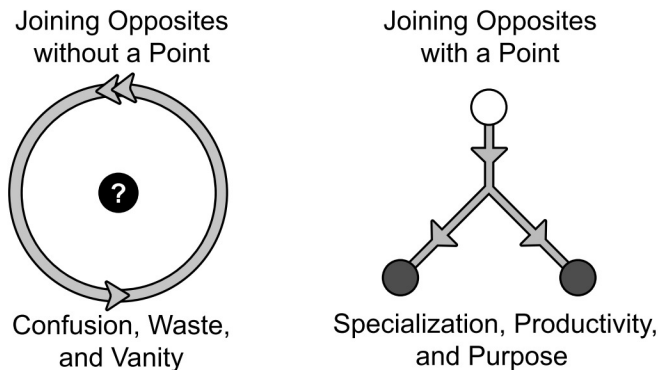
In tradition, the Nephilim are also credited with teaching all manner of confusion to humanity. For example, they are said to have practiced hybridization by interbreeding species. This can be interpreted as a desire to reverse the first work of Adam in the Garden of Eden,

where he identified and categorized the species.³ The ultimate consequence of this confusion is a return to primordial fluidity. In other words, hybridization summons the deluge (see chapter 37).



The earth was ruined because all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth . . . (Genesis 6:12).

Many of the characteristics attributed to the Nephilim represent cyclical time. Even their name suggests cyclical vanity because it identifies them as a miscarriage. Stillbirths are obvious symbols of the cycle because they join birth and death (the beginning and the end) in a single pointless incident.



For similar reasons, these primitive giants are often associated with cannibalism and boastfulness as a symbol of cyclical vanity. These are the paradoxical acts of eating yourself and naming yourself, which are closely related in this cosmology.

³ The Nephilim may also be credited with promoting bestiality (a subclass of hybridization). This is a reiteration of their sin at the human level and below.

In the ancient worldview, the appearance of “giants” signaled the replacement of productive space with the primitive dominion of cyclical time. Interestingly, this type of symbolism can still be found in traditional versions of the carnival. In this context, the encroaching of giants into familiar space is an omen that the world is entering a stage of recreation and renewal. They are signs of an imminent flood.

CHAPTER 78

EXAMPLE: ABRAHAM AS MEDIATOR II

Let a little water be fetched and wash your feet and then recline yourselves under the tree.

The story of Abraham hosting three angels has already been examined in chapter 18. Nevertheless, revisiting this narrative will serve as a contrast to the fallen angels of the previous chapter.

Washing Feet and Cooking Food (from Genesis 18)

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the Oaks of Mamre, and Abraham lifted his eyes and looked. Three men stood before him, and he ran to meet them and bowed down to the earth.

Abraham: "My lord, if I have found grace in your eyes, please do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be fetched and wash your feet, and recline yourselves under the tree. Please do not move on. I will fetch a morsel of bread . . ."

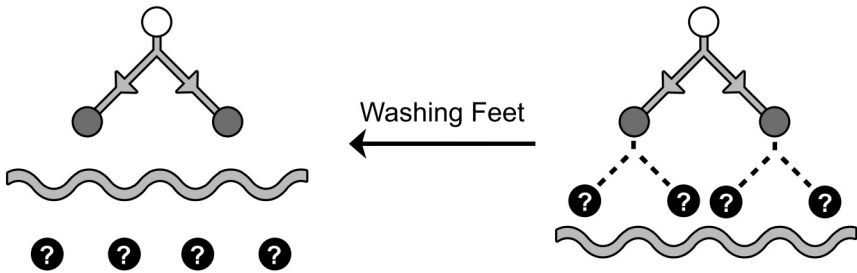
Abraham said to Sarah in the tent, "Take three measures of fine meal and knead it, and then make some cakes." Abraham went to the herd and chose a calf, and then he gave it to the youth who hurried to prepare it. He took cream and milk and the calf he prepared, and he offered it to them under the tree.

They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "Behold in the tent."

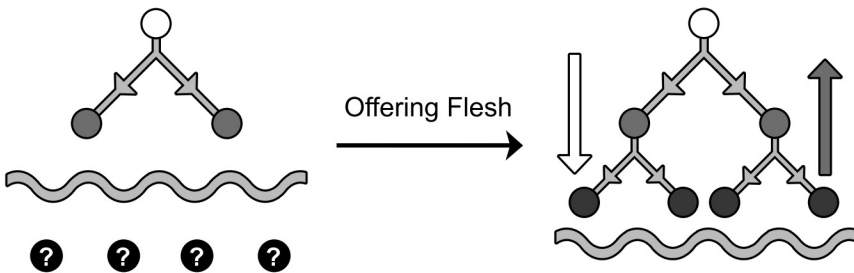
The Lord: "I will return to you at this time next year and Sarah your wife shall have a son."

If I have found grace in your eyes, please do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be fetched and wash your feet, and recline yourselves under the tree.

As discussed in chapter 68, the concept of “grace” refers to balancing the influences of ‘space’ and ‘time.’ In this narrative, that equilibrium is symbolized by a combination of “washing the feet” and “offering flesh under the tree.”

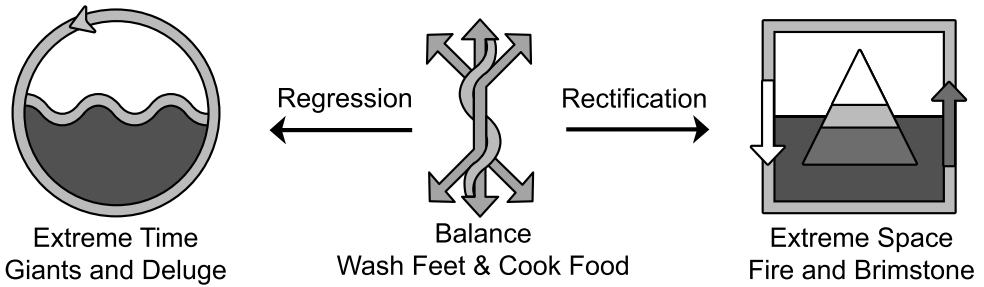


In this context, the act of washing the feet symbolizes a proper first encounter with the stranger. It represents a balanced influence of rest and renewal. In other words, it is a marginal influence of recreation that does not entail death, exile, and the flood. As illustrated in the following diagram, this is followed by cooking and offering flesh, which are influences of rectification.



Together, these actions symbolize “grace” as a combination of the influences of ‘time’ and ‘space.’ This balanced encounter contrasts with the following two extremes from the Bible: 1) the fallen angels that caused the floodwaters in Genesis 6, and 2) the angels sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah with fire in Genesis 19.

In the cosmology of the Bible, the world can either be destroyed by water or by fire. Extreme leniency would ultimately lead to the flood, and extreme rigor would ultimately destroy the world in judgment. The solution to these equally disastrous outcomes is to maintain the proper equilibrium (grace) between the dominions of time and space.



My Lord, if I have found grace in your eyes, please do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be fetched and wash your feet, and recline yourselves under the tree.

CHAPTER 79

THE RAINBOW AND OTHER COVENANTS

I have set my bow in the clouds as the sign of a covenant between me and the earth.

In the story of the flood, the rainbow symbolizes the covenant between heaven and earth that God communicated to Noah. In this narrative, the rainbow should be interpreted as a bridge between heaven and earth. It should also be seen as a bridge between flooded land and dry land because it appears in moments of transition between rainy and clear weather.

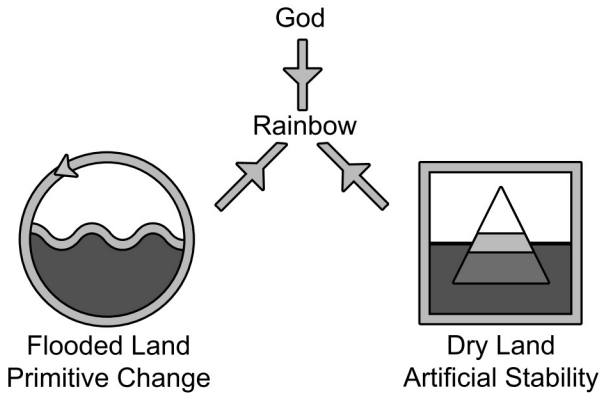
The Rainbow Covenant (from Genesis 9)

God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am placing between me and you and every living creature that is with you for everlasting generations."

"I have set my bow in the clouds as the sign of a covenant between me and the earth."

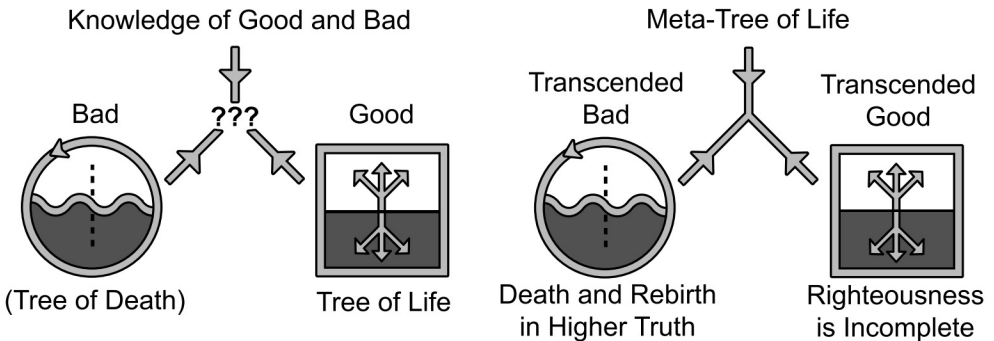
"Whenever I bring clouds over the earth, and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh."

Like the concepts of grace and the Sabbath (see chapters 68 and 49), the rainbow symbolizes the elevation of 'space' by the realization that God is the principle of time and space, straight and crooked, familiar and foreign, rational and irrational, revealed and hidden, true and false, good and bad, etc.



I will no longer curse the ground for humanity's sake, nor will I destroy everything alive again, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth (Genesis 8:21).

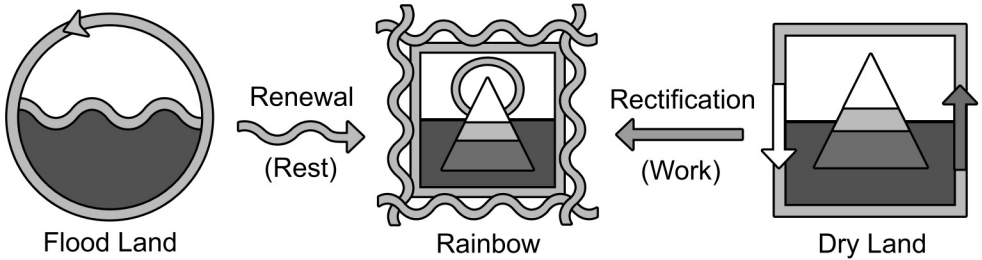
The realization quoted above implies that “evil” is inherently part of humanity, which means a certain degree of “wrong” must be acknowledged for its perfection. More precisely, there exists a higher reality, a meta-space, in which a certain degree of “lower evil” can be transmuted into a “higher good” for the knowledge of God. This is the spiritual truth that Adam and Eve were not equipped to handle in the Garden of Eden, which led to their death.



This “meta-truth” is also what the biblical story of Job reveals. In that context, Job’s excessive righteousness forced him to realize that God was ultimately the cause of his downfall and evil plight. *Shall we accept the good at the hand of God, but not the bad?* (Job 2:10). The story of Job concludes that righteousness is incomplete because God

legitimately created both “good” and “bad” as part of the human experience. In other words, some degree of exile and death is required for the perfection of Adam and the knowledge of God.

As illustrated in the following diagram, the covenant that leads to this higher knowledge involves two sides. On the one hand, there is a “covenant of rectification,” by which nature agrees to a certain level of artificial correction. In the Bible, this is symbolized by the covenant of circumcision, which artificially rectifies the male by removing a part of his flesh. On the other hand, there is a “covenant of renewal,” by which artificial space agrees to a certain level of natural re-creation. This side is symbolized by the covenant of the Sabbath, which returns the land to nature by halting all forms of work.



In biblical cosmology, the covenant of renewal is higher than the covenant of rectification because it encapsulates the final elevation of reality for the knowledge of God. In the flood narrative, the rainbow shares its meaning with the Sabbath as a covenant of renewal. Thus, in addition to being a bridge between heaven and earth, the rainbow is also a cyclical ornament and crown¹ that completes God’s work and elevates space with a touch of “vanity.”

1 Jewelry made with pearls or shells are particularly significant to this symbolism because these materials connect the concept of ornamentation with the waters of the sea.

CHAPTER 80

THE SYMBOLISM OF WINE AND FERMENTATION

Noah became a man of the soil and planted a vineyard. He got drunk on the wine and uncovered himself . . .

Wine represents the influence of cyclical time in the Bible, and drinking wine is the equivalent of subjecting yourself to the powers of the flood or the poison of a snake.

The Mystery of Wine (Proverbs 23:31-34)

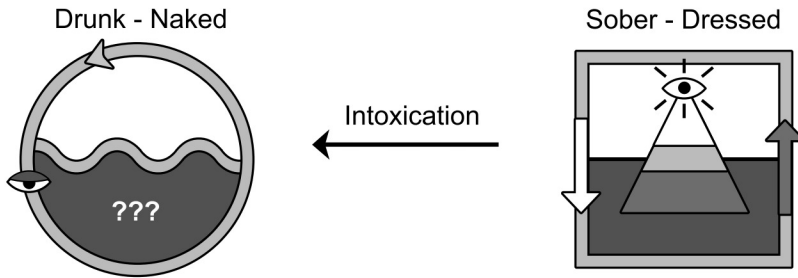
Do not look at wine when it is red, for when one first puts his eye on the cup, it goes straight in . . . Afterwards, it bites like a snake and stings like a serpent.

Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will speak inversions. You will be as one lying in the midst of the sea or lying at the top of a mast.

Drinking wine is an obvious example of ingesting foreign matter (see chapter 58) because alcohol is a poison and drunkenness is a form of intoxication. Accordingly, the effects of inebriation correspond to the symptoms of death, disease, exile, and flooding.

The symptoms of intoxication, on the individual scale, include blurred vision, slurred speech, memory loss, dizziness, and the inability to walk in a straight line. Also, inebriation causes a loss of inhibitions, which means expressing oneself with raw or “naked” emotions. These feelings often turn into contradictions as the drunk oscillates between exaggerated love and anger or happiness and sadness.

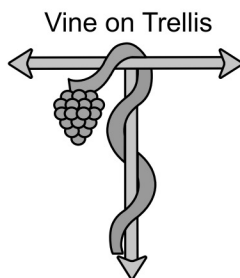
Finally, extreme drinking induces vomiting, the inability to stand, loss of consciousness, and even death. These symptoms are symbols of the influence of ‘time’ as discussed in previous chapters.¹



At the communal level, severe drunkenness results in losing familiar space, or “losing your shirt.” This includes impetuously committing regretful acts, losing the support of family and friends, losing your work and sources of income, and becoming a homeless wanderer. These are precisely the symptoms of exile and death when losing the agreement between heaven/mind and earth/body (see chapter 62).

That said, it is important to remember that wine is only a mild poison, and it was not created to bring total death to its drinker. Instead, humans willingly subject themselves to this benign form of “death” for distraction, rest, recreation, and renewal.

Rejoice and be glad . . . the cup will pass to you as well . . . you will get drunk and make yourself naked (Lamentations 4:21).

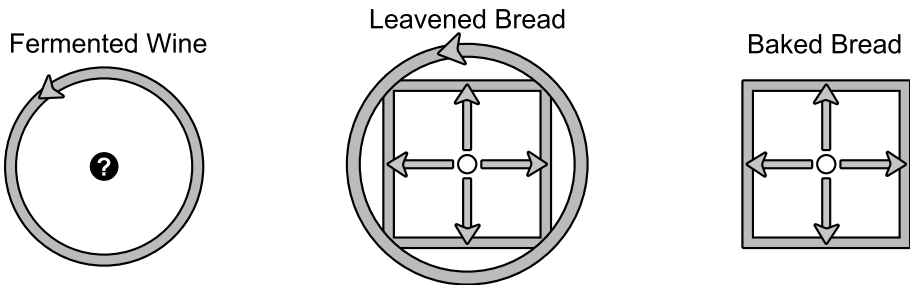


¹ Interestingly, the word “drinking” itself has come to imply intoxication in English. This is because drinking alcohol clearly expresses the symbolism of “refreshment” (death/renewal).

On the cosmic level, wine also represents ‘time’ because of the process of fermentation. This process is an important symbol of the transformative influences of death and decomposition. To understand these analogies, the modern chemical definition of fermentation is of little interest. Instead, fermentation may simply be interpreted as an influence that overturns and disintegrates everything.

As illustrated below, the symbolism of fermentation also applies to leavening bread. In this context, bread and wine are microcosms of ‘space’ and ‘time’ on the individual scale. Bread is a symbol of space or “dry land” because it requires work and must be artificially cooked with fire. Wine is a symbol of time because it is created by trampling grapes underfoot and fermenting their blood into a strange toxin.

Wine: I will put enmity between you [the snake] and the woman . . . [her seed] will crush your head, and you will bite his heel.



Bread: In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground.

In the case of bread making, the process of fermentation is also related to the flowing influences of time/water.² Submerging the flour into ‘water’ materializes it into dough and puts it under the strange influence of ‘time.’ In other words, leavening means adding the ingredient of time to the bread, which turns it into a “meta-space.” In this sense, the symbolism of adding leaven to bread is like the symbolism of adding *tzitzit* and ornamentation.

² Ancient bread making techniques did not artificially add yeast to leaven the dough. Instead, it was leavened with sourdough, which was an aged and fermented variety of dough.

CHAPTER 81

NOAH'S DESCENDANTS IN RELATION TO SPACE AND TIME

Noah became a man of the soil and planted a vineyard. He got drunk on the wine and uncovered himself. . .

The story of Noah and his sons is a microcosm of interactions between heaven, earth, and humanity. As will be discovered in this chapter, this narrative can also be interpreted as a miniature version of the influences of space and time.

Covering the Nakedness of Noah (from Genesis 9)

Noah became a man of the soil and planted a vineyard. He got drunk on the wine and uncovered himself within his tent.

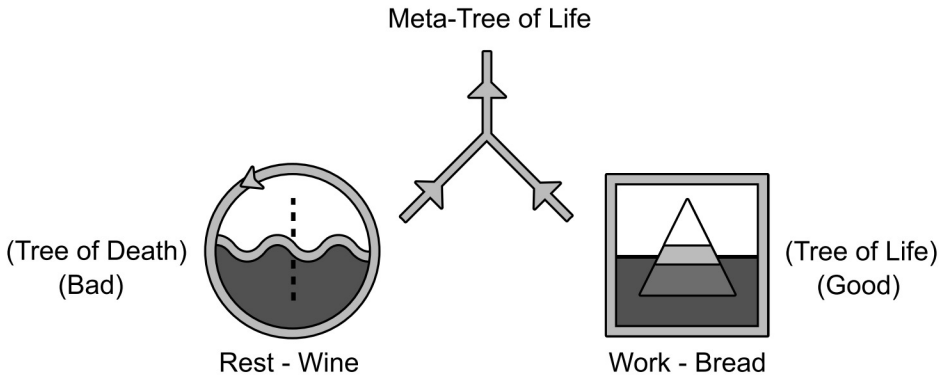
Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers.

Shem and Japheth carried a garment on both of their shoulders and covered the nakedness of their father. They were facing backward, so they did not see the nakedness of their father. Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him.

Noah: "Cursed is Canaan. A servant of servants shall he be to his brothers. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be their servant."

Noah: "May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be their servant."

With the invention of wine, Noah was attempting to resolve the duality of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. More specifically, he was trying to include the mystery of “death” by ingesting a tempered poison for the purpose of recreation and renewal.



He got drunk on wine and uncovered himself within his tent.

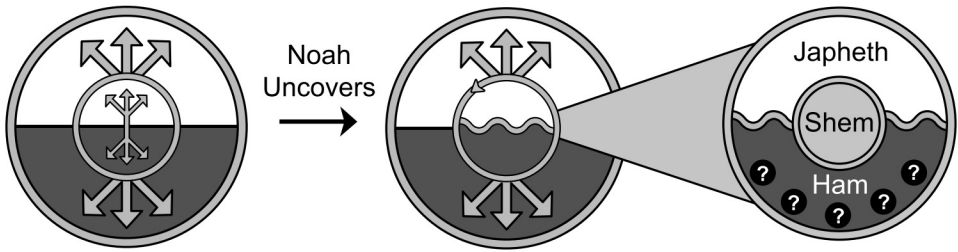
The fact that Noah uncovered himself “within his tent” suggests that he was secretly delving into these mysteries. He was attempting to positively experience the negative influences of ‘time’ and the flood to receive the knowledge of God as creator of all things.¹

Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers.

As illustrated in the following diagram, Ham is the person who witnesses the nakedness of Noah. This is consistent with the notion that the lineage of Ham represents earthly mediation.² The fact that Ham happened to witness the nakedness of his intoxicated father does not seem to be the problem in this narrative. Rather, the problem is that he failed to cover his nakedness and then publicly exposed it.

1 The mention of wine closely follows the laws against drinking blood (Genesis 9:4-6). Hence, wine may be seen as an acceptable substitute for drinking blood.

2 According to the topography surrounding Canaan, this translates geographically as Ham inheriting the southern lands and Shem and Japheth inheriting the middle and northern lands respectively (see chapter 29).



Shem and Japheth carried a garment on both of their shoulders and covered the nakedness of their father.

The fact that both Japheth and Shem covered the naked flesh of their father is consistent with the notion that they inherited heaven and the mid-level respectively. When discrepancies between heaven and earth (or theory and practice) were exposed because of Noah’s intoxication, they were artificially rectified, or “fixed,” by the combined efforts of Shem and Japheth.³

Cursed is Canaan. A servant of servants shall he be to his brothers. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be their servant.

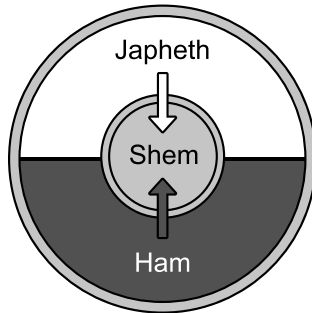
In this scenario, the “naked flesh” of Noah, which Ham failed to cover properly, also refers to the land of Canaan itself, which corresponds to the heart of the world in biblical cosmology. At first, this place will be inherited by Ham, but it will eventually be seized/dressed by the descendants of Shem. This represents a necessary transfer of ‘earth’ from Ham to Shem by which Shem becomes a proper mediator between heaven and earth.⁴

May God enlarge Japheth and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be their servant.

3 In “both of their shoulders,” the term “shoulder” is Shechem, which is the center of the land of Canaan where Mount Ebal and Gerizim are located. This might be a subtle way to hint at the similarity of this rectification and the one which turned Mount Ebal into a negative pillar of space (see chapter 47).

4 This is a macro version of the transfer which occurs between Esau and Jacob, where Jacob receives the upper portions of the inheritance of Esau.

As illustrated in the following diagram, this story is a microcosm of Creation. It represents the relationships between heaven, earth, and humanity. In this context, Shem is a miniature representation of humanity while his brothers are representations of earth and heaven. Shem will inherit a portion of the earth (the central land of Canaan) from his brother Ham and will eventually host his brother Japheth.



This story describes Noah's (failed?) attempt at transcending the duality of good and bad by transforming the "bad" side of the tree of knowledge into a beneficial influence of recreation and renewal (wine). In a sense, it is a recapitulation of the patterns in the story of the fall with Noah's three sons replacing Adam's three sons.

CHAPTER 82

EXAMPLE: BUILDING THE TEMPLE III

Behold! I want to build a house for the name of the Lord my God...

The story of King Solomon building the temple was chosen as a final example because it contains many of the notions discussed in this commentary. In particular, there is a clear spatial symbolism in the interactions of Solomon with the king of Tyre, from the north, and the queen of Sheba, from the south.

The Greatness of King Solomon (from I Kings 4-5)

Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt . . . Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree . . .

God gave Solomon much wisdom and understanding and largeness of heart like the sand on the sea-shore . . . He spoke of many trees, from the cedar tree in Lebanon to the hyssop growing on the wall. He also spoke of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fish.

There came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

The following statement encapsulates all of the fundamental patterns of biblical cosmology: *Judah [earth] and Israel [heaven] dwelt safely, every man under his vine [time] and under his fig tree [space]*. In this context, the fig tree represents the pillar of space, in accordance with

its connection to “dressing” from the narrative of the fall: *They sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves girdles*. The vine represents cyclical time, as explained in chapter 80.¹

God gave Solomon much wisdom and understanding and largeness of heart like the sand on the sea-shore.

As mentioned in previous chapters, the combination of wisdom and understanding builds space (the house) whereas the sea-shore is related to the natural flow of time at the margins of space.

He spoke of many trees, from the cedar tree in Lebanon to the hyssop growing on the wall.

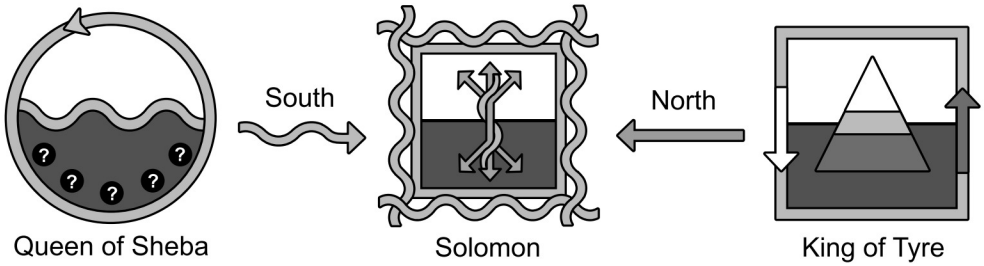
The same cosmic pattern is also expressed in the verse above. In this case, the cedar represents the central pillar of space and the hyssop represents the renewal of space at the margins (the walls). In the Bible, hyssop is used, along with the crimson thread (or crimson worm), to cleanse the spaces afflicted by *tzaraath* (see chapter 65 and Leviticus 14).

He spoke of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fish.

This is an obvious reference to Adam “naming the animals” in Eden. However, it also mentions that Solomon “spoke of fish” which extends beyond Adam’s original categorization in Eden. Adam was only asked to categorize “the birds of the heavens and the animals of the field.” Thus, Solomon completes Adam’s knowledge of “dry land” with some knowledge of “flooded land.”

There came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

1 The division of the nation of Israel into “tribes of Israel” and “tribes of Judah” is a miniature version of the separation of Adam into Adam and Eve (the male and female sides). Judah represents ‘earth’ and Israel (especially the tribes of Joseph) represents ‘heaven.’



In general, all of these preliminary descriptions express the idea of the “meta-space,” which is the completion of ‘space’ by ‘time.’ In the following passages, this pattern is presented on a larger scale through Solomon’s interactions with the king of Tyre and the queen of Sheba.

Solomon and the King of Tyre (from I Kings 5)

Solomon sent to Hiram, king of Tyre: “I intend to build a house for the name of the Lord my God . . . Command your workers to chop me cedar-trees out of Lebanon; and my workers will be with your workers, and I will pay for your laborers . . . for you know that none among us has the skill to hew timber like the Zidonians.”

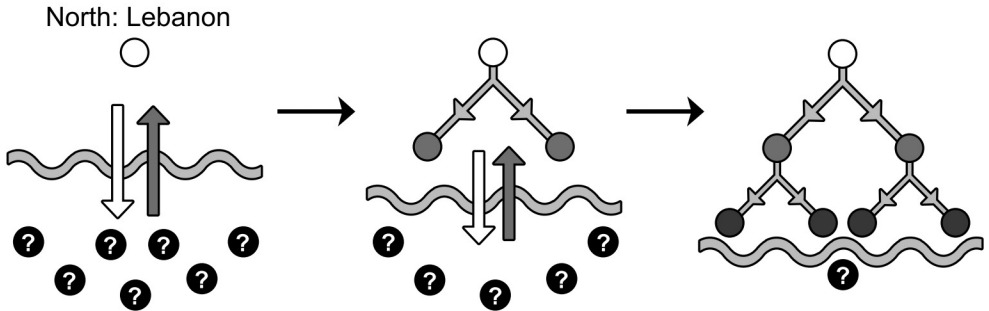
Hiram: “My workers will bring them [the trees] down from Lebanon unto the sea. I will make them into rafts to go by sea unto the place you appoint me, and I will cause them to be split there. You will receive them and accomplish my will, in giving food for my household.”

The Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised, and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and they cut a covenant together . . . The king commanded, and they quarried great stones, heavy stones, to lay the foundation of the house with a cut stone. Solomon and Hiram’s builders, and the Gebalites, prepared the timber and the stones to build the house.

The covenant between Hiram and Solomon is a miniature version of building space. In this scenario, Hiram assists Solomon in building the temple, which is a ‘space’ that hosts the heavenly name/identity of God. Hiram brings down cedar trees and foundation stones from the

northern mountains of Lebanon in exchange for food. This represents, on a smaller scale, the descent and materialization of the heavenly 'seed' as described in previous chapters.

I will make [the trees] into rafts to go by sea unto the place you appoint me, and I will cause them to be split there. You will receive them and accomplish my will, in giving food for my household.



Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (from I Kings 9-10)

Solomon offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings on the altar that he built for the Lord . . . Thus, he finished the house. King Solomon made a ship . . . on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. Hiram sent his own workers in ships, seafarers with knowledge of the sea, to go with Solomon's workers.

When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, due to the name of the Lord, she came to test him with riddles. She came to Jerusalem with a great retinue, with camels bearing spices, gold, and jewels. When she came to Solomon, she spoke with him of everything in her heart. Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king that he did not tell her. When the queen of Sheba had seen all of the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, and the food of his table . . . she was breathless . . .

Queen of Sheba: "It was a true report of your deeds and your wisdom that I heard in my land [my earth]. I did not believe the words until I saw it with my own eyes. Now I see that not even half of it was told to me. You have wisdom and goodness in

excess of what I heard . . .” King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba everything she asked . . . Then, she turned and went to her own land . . .

The encounter between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba represents the final completion of dry land (space) with ornamentation from the sea (time).

Thus, he finished the house. King Solomon made a ship . . . on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.

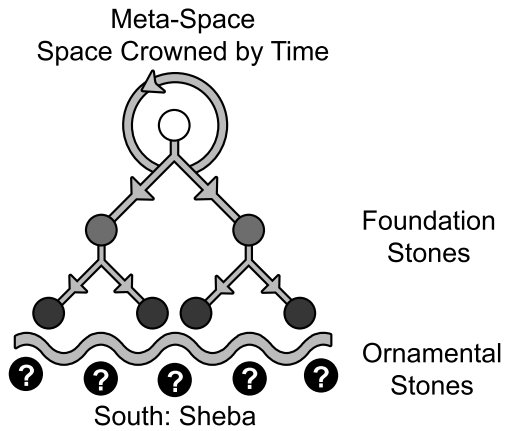
The spatial symbolism of this narrative is similar to the one mentioned in chapter 30. “Lebanon” means white, referring to its snowy peaks, and “Edom” means red, referring to its soil. These colors are clearly associated with highlands (white) and lowlands (red), which correspond to the north and the south in this region. The name “Red Sea” might also derive from such associations.

When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, due to the name of the Lord, she came to test him with riddles.

The queen of Sheba arrives from the south with many doubts and with riddles to confuse Solomon. In this sense, she is similar to the sphinx who poses riddles and then swallows the unworthy. She is also similar to the cherubim who support the highest spiritual principle when their mysteries are fully answered. This comes in contrast with the king of Tyre, who came from the north with the wisdom to “split the tree” and “build the house.”

She came to Jerusalem with . . . spices, gold, and precious stones.

The gifts brought by the queen of Sheba are all associated with ornamentation. Gold and gems are generally connected to crowns, rings, and jewelry. Moreover, the “precious stones” of the queen are meant to be compared to the “heavy stones” of the king of Tyre, which were used as foundation stones.



The concept of spice is also linked to the cosmic symbolism of ornamentation because the prototype of spice is salt from the sea. On the whole, the cooked meal is a miniature version of “familiar space” completed with a touch of “exotic spices.” In general, the symbolism of spice is similar to the symbolism of *tzitzit* and the Sabbath (see chapters 51 and 66). Indeed, most spices are enhancers of taste (ornaments) as well as agents of preservation (sealants).

Now I see that not even half of it was told to me. You have wisdom and goodness in excess of what I heard . . .

In this narrative, the role of the king of Tyre is analogous to the six days of work, and the role the queen of Sheba is analogous to the seventh day of rest, in which God “completed his work.”¹

*King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba everything she asked . . .
So she turned, and went to her own land . . .*

The queen of Sheba also represents the dangers of the “strange woman” (see chapter 72). Therefore, her departure from King Solomon hints at the future downfall of the king, when the balance of the “meta-space” will be lost, and Israel will separate into northern and southern kingdoms (see I Kings 11).

1 Coincidentally, the word “Sheba” (שבא) resembles the word “seven” (שבע).

PART VI

TRANSCENDING THE SCIENTIFIC WORLDVIEW

CHAPTER 83

A METACOGNITIVE MODEL OF THE UNIVERSE

With wisdom, the Lord founded the earth; with understanding, he established the heavens.

The spiritual perspective specializes in answering the questions, “What does it mean?” and, “What higher truth does it embody?” This worldview may be contrasted with the materialistic perspective, which answers the questions, “how does it work?” and, “what is it made of?”

Spiritual Perspective



What does it mean?
What truth does it embody?

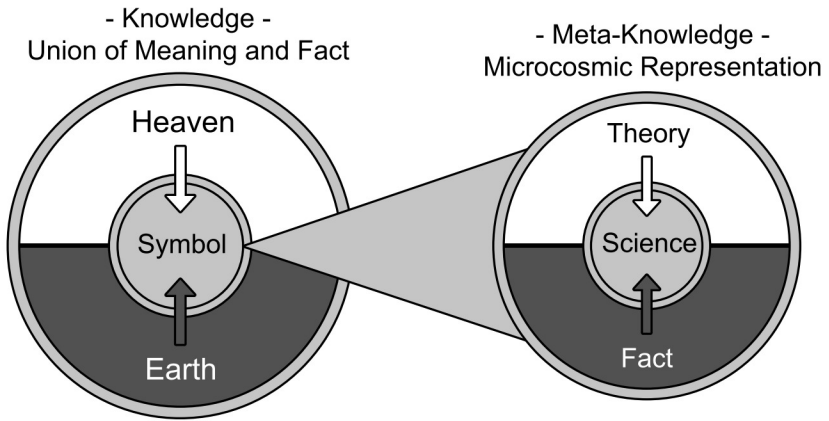
Material Perspective



How does it work?
What material is it made of?

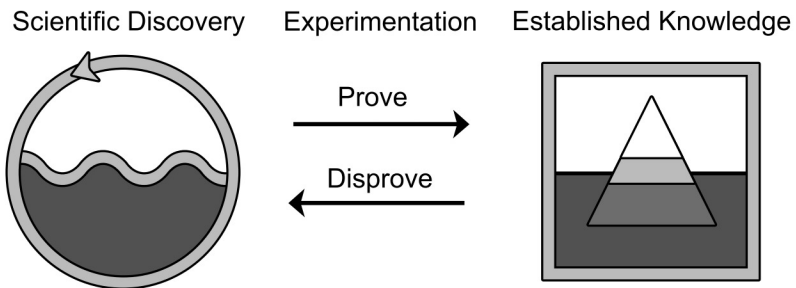
To answer the second set of questions, materialistic cosmologies describe phenomena in terms of energy, matter, space, and time. To answer the first set of questions, biblical cosmology describes reality in terms of ‘heaven,’ ‘earth,’ ‘space,’ and ‘time.’ The four foundational categories of the spiritual worldview correspond to the framework of knowledge itself, on which both cosmologies ultimately depend.

In the context of the spiritual worldview, a symbol is a fact that embodies higher meaning. Therefore, symbols have a metacognitive function in this cosmology because they are miniature representations of the entire cosmos. In other words, the symbolic worldview is not only concerned with describing factual reality, but also with perceiving the implicit framework of knowledge and its influence on reality.



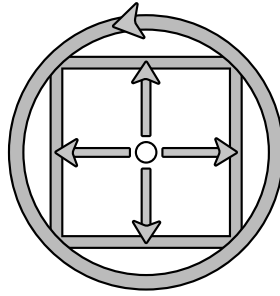
When trying to bridge the gaps between traditional knowledge and modern knowledge, it is a grave mistake to equate their models of the universe haphazardly. Traditional cosmology does not describe the natural world. Instead, it is a model in which consciousness mediates between spiritual and corporeal realities. In other words, the biblical worldview is not analogous to the scientific worldview but to the very process of scientific knowledge and discovery.

As illustrated in the diagram above, traditional cosmology is analogous to a meta-scientific model. In this case, the scientist occupies the place of Adam in the universe in an attempt to correctly join 'heaven' and 'earth' in knowledge. Thus, in parallel with the narrative of creation, scientific understanding begins with a stage of confusion and vague intuition. Then, through a process of experimentation, it oscillates between established knowledge and discoveries that could undermine the previous model.



In a meta-scientific model, the world still resembles the diagram below. At its center is a stable place composed of familiar reality, where all facts are connected to first principles. In this 'space,' each phenomenon is clearly defined and in its proper place, so there is no cause for pointless change. However, surrounding this 'space' is an indefinite periphery composed of alien entities that remain loosely connected to the principles in question. These "dark waters" are the strange realities that lie beyond our current investigation. Influx from this realm causes transformation to established scientific knowledge.

The Meta-Scientific Universe



From one side, rational space expands its frontiers by cutting through confusion and solving the enigmas of physical reality. From the other side, the waters of the unknown overturn and swallow familiar scientific models with confusion and unsolvable riddles.

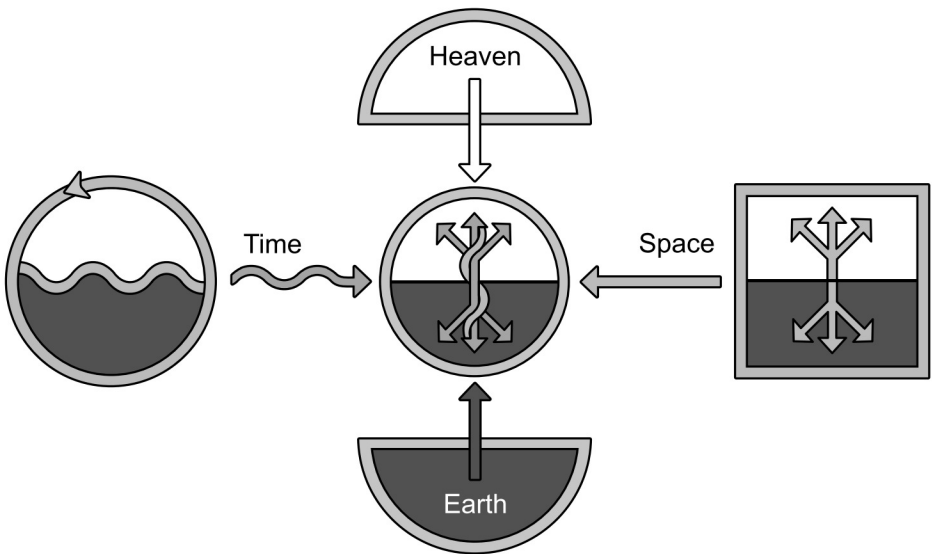
Given these analogies, trying to explain traditional cosmology through the lens of our current scientific worldview is an exercise in misrepresentation. In reality, reconciling symbolic and materialistic worldviews would require scientists to fully acknowledge their place in the universe. Among other things, this would mean including their abstract theories within their own models of the universe. Regardless of whether this ever happens, even the most skeptical of materialists should be able to appreciate the spiritual worldview on a different level by avoiding false equivalencies between ancient and current models of the universe.

CHAPTER 84

INTERPRETING THE BIBLE WITH THE LANGUAGE OF CREATION

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.

The interpretations provided in this commentary are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, they recognize the basic patterns of ancient cosmology in the early narratives of Genesis. Although the patterns of heaven, earth, time, and space are extremely simple in principle, they have a surprising range of implications.



In order to understand symbolism from a spiritual perspective, factual reality must always be interpreted as an expression of meta-physical truth. Accordingly, one should always be able to look beyond the dichotomy of literal versus figurative interpretations when reading the Bible.

As demonstrated throughout this commentary, an important step towards replacing a figurative interpretation with a symbolic one is to rediscover the vocabulary of an archaic “language of creation.” Otherwise, assuming a literal interpretation is simply naive because there is no one-to-one mapping between modern concepts and their ancient counterparts. For example, fundamental concepts such as space, time, matter, light, and water do not refer to the same realities as their material versions. Moreover, these discrepancies trickle down to every single concept in the Bible, so that any naive claim of literal interpretation should be treated with caution.

Given a proper understanding of ancient cosmological concepts, the duality of a figurative versus a literal interpretation usually resolves itself. For example, once the concept of time has been defined according to an archaic perspective, interpreting the snake in the story of the Garden as a symbol of time need no longer be considered an allegory or metaphor. Indeed, as the cause of transformation in that narrative, the snake is an instance of the influence of time within the limited confines of the Garden.

The most important aspect of the spiritual worldview is the ability to describe the universe as a series of embedded microcosms, where the same cosmic principles are expressed on different scales of reality. Because of these analogies, a story that describes events on one scale can be interpreted “symbolically” as pointing to events on other scales as well. This ability to simultaneously express universal truths at different levels is the main reason why biblical narratives transcend the duality of literal and figurative interpretations. This seems like a necessary step to salvage biblical cosmology from the scientific worldview. Hopefully, enough examples of true symbolism have been provided in this commentary for the reader to interpret any story, law, or ritual from the Bible with insights from the language of creation.