

I M M E R S E

The Reading Bible™

An abstract watercolor illustration in shades of green and blue, with organic, layered shapes that resemble a cross-section of a tree trunk or a geological formation. The colors transition from light green and yellow on the left to deep forest green and dark blue on the right. The overall effect is textured and organic.

BEGINNINGS

*Almighty God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
grant, we pray,
that we might be grounded and settled
in your truth
by the coming of your Holy Spirit
into our hearts.*

*What we do not know,
reveal to us;
what is lacking within us,
make complete;
that which we do know,
confirm in us;
and keep us blameless in your service,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Amen.

I M M E R S E TM
— The Reading Bible —

BEGINNINGS



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

CREATED IN ALLIANCE WITH



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These first five books of the First Testament describe the origins of God's good creation, the beginnings of human rebellion, and the birth of the family of Israel—the people chosen and prepared by God to be a light to all people.

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—— Welcome to ——

I M M E R S E

The Bible Reading Experience

The Bible is a great gift. The Creator of all things entered into our human story and spoke to us. He inspired people over many centuries to shape words into books that reveal his mind, bringing wisdom into our lives and light to our paths. But God's biggest intention for the Bible is to invite us into its Story. What God wants for us, more than anything else, is that we make the Bible's great drama of restoration and new life the story of our lives, too.

The appropriate way to receive a gift like this is to come to know the Bible deeply, to lose ourselves in it precisely so that we can find ourselves in it. In other words, we need to immerse ourselves in it—to read God's words at length and without distraction, to read with deeper historical and literary perspective, and to read through the Bible with friends in a regular three-year rhythm. *Immerse: The Bible Reading Experience* has been specially designed for this purpose.

Immerse: The Reading Bible presents each book of the Bible without the distractions of chapter and verse markers, subject headers, or footnotes—all later historical additions to the text. The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, is presented in a single-column format with easy-to-read type. To provide meaningful perspective, book introductions give historical and literary context, and the books are often reordered chronologically or grouped with books that share similar ancient audiences. Every feature in this unique Bible enhances the opportunity for readers to engage with God's words in simple clarity.

A more complete explanation of this unique Bible presentation can be found in the articles that begin on page 329 at the back of this volume.

— Introduction to —

BEGINNINGS

THE BIBLE TELLS THE STORY of how our world that's gone wrong is being made right again. God's creation was intended to be beautiful and harmonious, but due to the deception of evil powers and human disobedience, the creation became broken and disordered—cursed. Yet ever since the Fall, God has been working patiently and carefully to restore humanity to his presence and the whole creation to its lost beauty and harmony.

The biblical narrative of restoration and renewal takes a significant step forward every time God establishes a covenant. These covenants are God-initiated sets of promises and obligations that establish a binding relationship between God and his people. In our day, we are more familiar with contracts: agreements enforceable by human law. But in the ancient world, people made covenants, which carried the expectation that God would bless them for keeping the covenant's terms or curse them for breaking them. And as a full participant in the covenants he makes, God actually puts himself under his own curse should he break the terms.

The goal of these God-initiated covenants is to gather people into communities that will live the life he intends for everyone. Through communities deeply connected to their Creator, this life will spread outward to other people as well. Starting with chosen individuals, then a family, and then a nation, God moves in the interest of winning back all things in heaven and on earth. The first five books of the Bible tell the story of the first three covenants God makes with Noah, Abraham, and Moses—who act as humanity's representatives.

The first nine books of the Bible, Genesis through Samuel–Kings, are actually one continuous narrative. Sometimes referred to as Israel's primary history, this saga covers the story from the birth of the world to the painful account of God's people being exiled from the Land of

Promise. The first five books have a special status of their own and in Christian tradition are known as the *Pentateuch* (meaning “five books” in Greek). But its ancient Hebrew name, *Torah*, reveals the purpose of these books more clearly.

Torah is probably best translated as “instruction.” As God’s covenant community follows these instructions, they not only receive God’s blessings but also are uniquely positioned to bring renewal and healing to the world, as implied in God’s promises to Abraham. God’s instructions to his people are the catalyst for their movement to show all peoples the true character and nature of God. The community of God’s people is being sent on a mission to renew the world, and these instructions are its marching orders.

This *Torah* is conveyed through a variety of literary genres, or kinds of writing. About two-thirds of these first five books consist of laws that instruct people on how to live the life that God intends. These laws appear both in general terms (“love your neighbor as yourself”) and in specific cases (“If you come upon your enemy’s ox or donkey that has strayed away, take it back to its owner”). These laws were given to govern the covenant relationship between God and his people. It is important to understand that these laws are for God’s people in a particular historical and cultural setting and in an early stage of God’s story with respect to the world. Many of the particular laws are not God’s final, timeless answers about how we should live. The entire Bible tells this ongoing story, and more light is shed as the story moves forward.

In addition to stories and laws, we find songs and poems that celebrate special events or anticipate the future. There are family trees (genealogies) listing people in relation to their ancestors and descendants, locating their historical place in the community that experienced God’s faithfulness generation after generation. Other kinds of lists appear as well, detailing kings, spies, stopping points along a journey, job assignments, and so forth. These books also contain elaborate blueprints for a place of worship and its furnishings, and even census reports for the population of Israel.

All of these different kinds of writing are woven together into a single work, whose overall purpose is to describe the formation of the covenant community. This community—the ancient nation of Israel—will constitute God’s people on earth for the first three-quarters of the Bible. Over the course of these first five books—*Beginnings*—we follow the community from its earliest ancestors to the moment it is poised to enter the land God promised them. There, the community can begin living a life that will lead the surrounding nations to exclaim, “How wise and prudent are the people of this great nation!”

IMMERSED IN GENESIS

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE BIBLE lays the foundation for the rest of the Bible's story. It reveals God as the world's sovereign Creator. It shows his intention to bring blessing to people—his image-bearers—and for all life to thrive by living in his presence. Genesis tells us about the entrance of evil into the world and the commencement of God's struggle against it, a theme that flows through the whole Bible. God created the world as his own temple, intending to live here among humanity for their well-being. But how will God achieve his goal in the face of rebellion and disobedience?

Genesis tells the story of God's dealings with humanity from the world's creation to the time when Abraham's descendants were beginning to grow into the nation of Israel. It does this by giving the "accounts" (the word that marks the major divisions of the book) of notable people. The most important figures are part of the covenant lineage and therefore advance the ongoing story. Others, described much more briefly, represent offshoots that will be drawn back in later as the reach of the covenant community spreads to all of humanity.

In the first four accounts, human disobedience leads to evil and violence that corrupt the created world. Seeing that everything people think or imagine is "consistently and totally evil," God is sorry he made them. He destroys wicked humanity in a great, cleansing flood but spares Noah and his family—the only righteous people left. After the Flood, Noah worships God, and God makes his first covenant. With Noah serving as their representative, humanity and all animals on earth receive God's promise: "Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures."

God then makes a second covenant, one that will ultimately transform humanity, starting with only a small group. God promises a man named Abram (later renamed Abraham) that "all the nations of the earth" will be blessed through him and his descendants. God tells him to leave his home and move to a new place: the land of Canaan. Abraham essentially becomes a wanderer in that land and eventually has a son named Isaac, who becomes the heir to all that God has promised. God renews his covenant with Isaac and then again with Isaac's son Jacob,

who then has twelve sons of his own. These twelve sons will become the ancestors of the tribes of Israel.

The book concludes by describing the life of Joseph, one of Jacob's sons. Joseph is betrayed and cast off by his jealous brothers, but he ultimately has a surprising role in preserving the family so that it can expand into a nation. Throughout Genesis, we see God relentlessly pursuing his plans to renew humanity and the rest of creation, blessing the covenant community in their obedience and overcoming their disobedience.

Genesis consists mostly of stories. But family trees, which connect the stories of people in different generations, also play a big role. Ancient Hebrew writers loved to tell stories using the literary form of *chiasm*, in which the first and last episodes/elements are paired, then the second and next-to-last episodes/elements are paired, and so forth. This literary structure lays out a series of situations that are resolved in the reverse order of their initial appearance. (The formatting of this edition of Genesis will single out the separate elements of the chiasms as they appear.) Here's a brief example from the account of the Flood:

- A Noah builds an ark.
- B God tells Noah to enter the ark.
- C The waters rise.
- D The waters flood the earth.
- C' The waters recede.
- B' God tells Noah to leave the ark.
- A' Noah builds an altar.

The overall story in Genesis has an artistic shape. Its eleven accounts, together with its prologue about creation, give it twelve parts, mirroring the twelve tribes Abraham's descendants would grow into.

The storytelling in Genesis is marvelous, and it's best to read continuously through the whole book. The stories are set in an ancient world very different from our own, so don't be surprised at the strangeness of some of what we encounter. But the characters in these stories are human and very much like us in crucial ways. God is wrestling with them to slowly bring his redemptive purposes into our world. The name Genesis means "beginnings." It is the perfect introduction to the entire Bible, giving us the framework for understanding everything that follows.

GENESIS



In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.” And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. God called the space “sky.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

Then God said, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.” And that is what happened. God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

So God created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

+ + +

This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

"At last!" the man exclaimed.

"This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called 'woman,'
because she was taken from 'man.'"

This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

“You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. Then the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

“Who told you that you were naked?” the LORD God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”

The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.”

Then the LORD God asked the woman, “What have you done?”

“The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are cursed
more than all animals, domestic and wild.

You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.

He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

Then he said to the woman,

“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.
And you will desire to control your husband,
but he will rule over you.”

And to the man he said,

“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree
whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,
the ground is cursed because of you.
All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.
It will grow thorns and thistles for you,
though you will eat of its grains.
By the sweat of your brow
will you have food to eat
until you return to the ground
from which you were made.
For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return.”

Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live. And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

Then the LORD God said, “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!” So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, “With the LORD’s help, I have produced a man!” Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

“Why are you so angry?” the LORD asked Cain. “Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let’s go out into the fields.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

Afterward the LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“I don’t know,” Cain responded. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

But the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother’s blood. No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

Cain replied to the LORD, “My punishment is too great for me to bear! You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!”

The LORD replied, “No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. So Cain left the LORD’s presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Cain had sexual relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain founded a city, which he named Enoch, after his son. Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad became the father of Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of Lamech.

Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was Zillah. Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the first of those who raise livestock and live in tents. His brother’s name was Jubal, the first of all who play the harp and flute. Lamech’s other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubal-cain. He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah. One day Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
listen to me, you wives of Lamech.
I have killed a man who attacked me,
a young man who wounded me.

If someone who kills Cain is punished seven times,
then the one who kills me will be punished seventy-seven times!”

Adam had sexual relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth, for she said, “God has granted me another son in place of Abel, whom Cain killed.” When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.

+ + +

This is the written account of the descendants of Adam. When God created human beings, he made them to be like himself. He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.”

When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just like him—in his very image. He named his son Seth. After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of Enosh. After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan. After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.

When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel. After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared. After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived another 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Enoch lived 365 years, walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.

When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son. Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, “May he bring us relief from our work and the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has

cursed.” After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.

After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them. The sons of God saw the beautiful women and took any they wanted as their wives. Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years.”

In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times.

The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. And the LORD said, “I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.” But Noah found favor with the LORD.

+ + +

This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. So God said to Noah, “I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!

“Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

“Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every

living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals.”

So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

When everything was ready, the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice, and take one pair of each of the others. Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life will survive on the earth after the flood. Seven days from now I will make the rains pour down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created.”

So Noah did everything as the LORD commanded him.

Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.

For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. As the waters rose higher and higher

above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, rising more than twenty-two feet above the highest peaks. All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat. And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days.

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede. The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped. So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days, exactly five months from the time the flood began, the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Two and a half months later, as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up. He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground. But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again. This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone. He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began, the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. Two more months went by, and at last the earth was dry!

Then God said to Noah, “Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth.”

So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.

“And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in his own image. Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth.”

Then God told Noah and his sons, “I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth. Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the earth.”

Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.” Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth.”

The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.) From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth.

After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became

drunk and lay naked inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

“May Canaan be cursed!
May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives.”

Then Noah said,

“May the LORD, the God of Shem, be blessed,
and may Canaan be his servant!
May God expand the territory of Japheth!
May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem,
and may Canaan be his servant.”

Noah lived another 350 years after the great flood. He lived 950 years, and then he died.

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This is the account of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the great flood.

The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.

Their descendants became the seafaring peoples that spread out to various lands, each identified by its own language, clan, and national identity.

The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was the first heroic warrior on earth. Since he was the greatest hunter in the world, his name became proverbial. People would say, “This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world.” He built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia, with the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh. From there he expanded his territory to Assyria, building the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and Resen (the great city located between Nineveh and Calah).