

BANNED

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE



The Rev. Dr. Carl Gregg

Mondays, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm,

March 3 – April 21

Housekeeping

- Slides: frederickuu.org/about/FCC
- **Attendance** for FCC
- Add to **email** list?
- **Other?**

Covenant

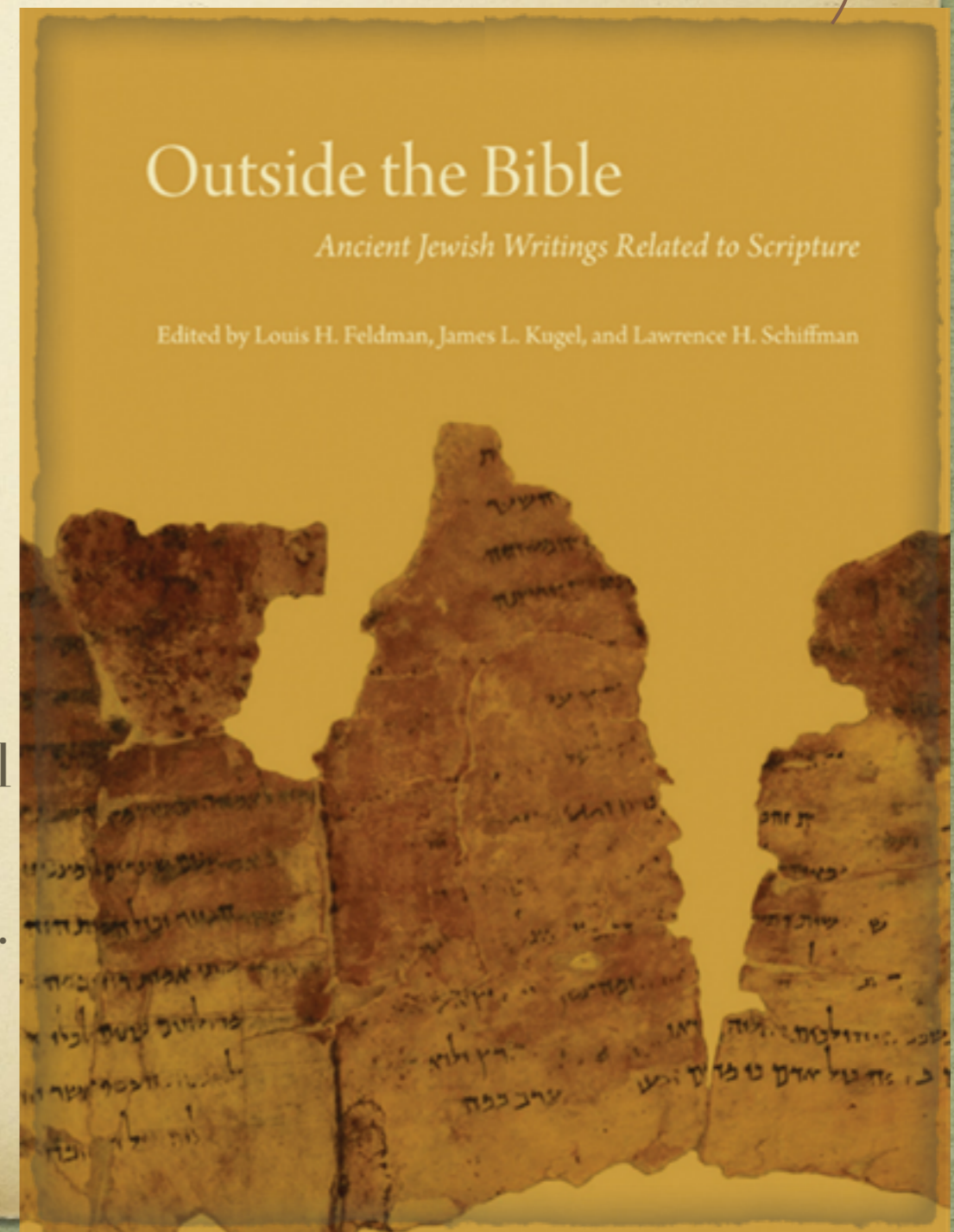
- Use **“I” statements**: *Speak from your own experience.*
- **Ask permission before sharing** other participants’ stories outside the group.
- **Step-up, step-back**: be conscious of the level of participation that you bring to the conversation. Allow everyone a chance to speak before you speak again.
- You always have **permission to “pass.”**



3-Volume Set (2013)

3302 pp (U of Nebraska P)

- The Hebrew Bible is only part of ancient Israel's writings.
- Other: apocalyptic visions and prophecies, folktales and legends, collections of wise sayings, laws and rules of conduct, commentaries on Scripture, ancient prayers, and much, much more.
- Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the biblical Apocrypha, and Pseudepigrapha, and the writings of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus. (All have a common Jewish background.)



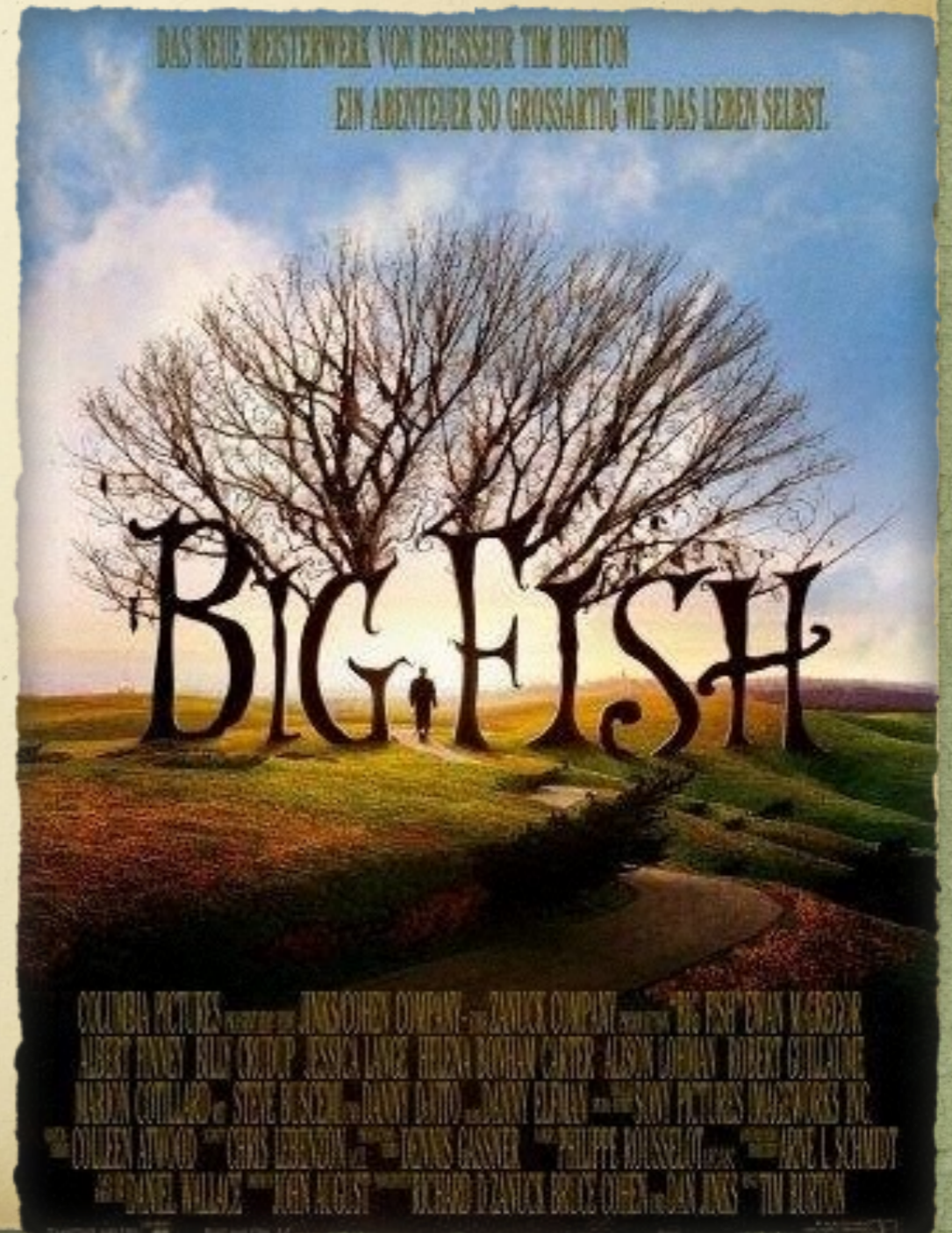
RLST 145: INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT (HEBREW BIBLE)

- Open Yale Courses
- Dr. Christine Hayes
- <http://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rlst-145>



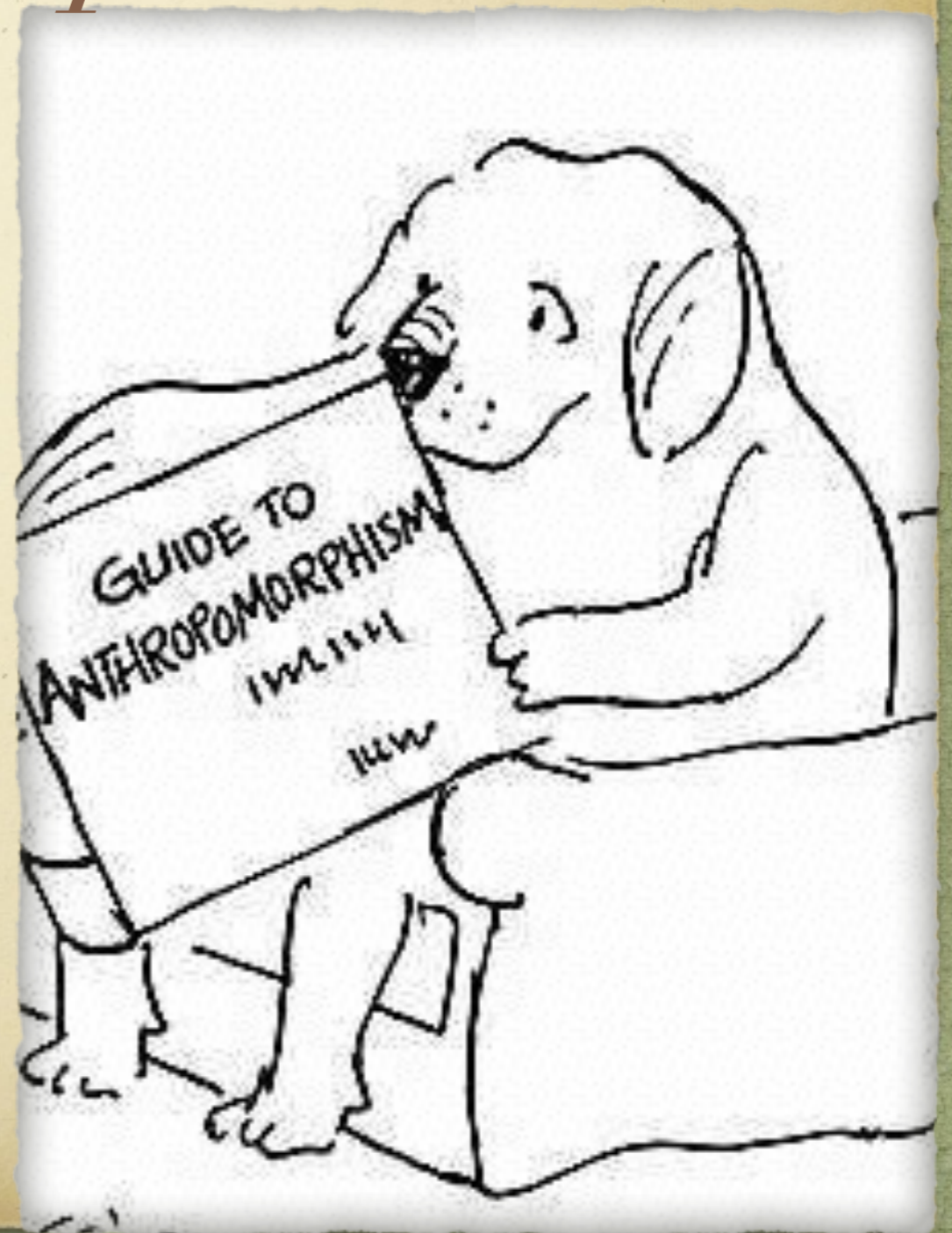
Fiction can be deeply true in a way beyond journalistic facts.

youtube.com/watch?v=hCbdX92hbbg



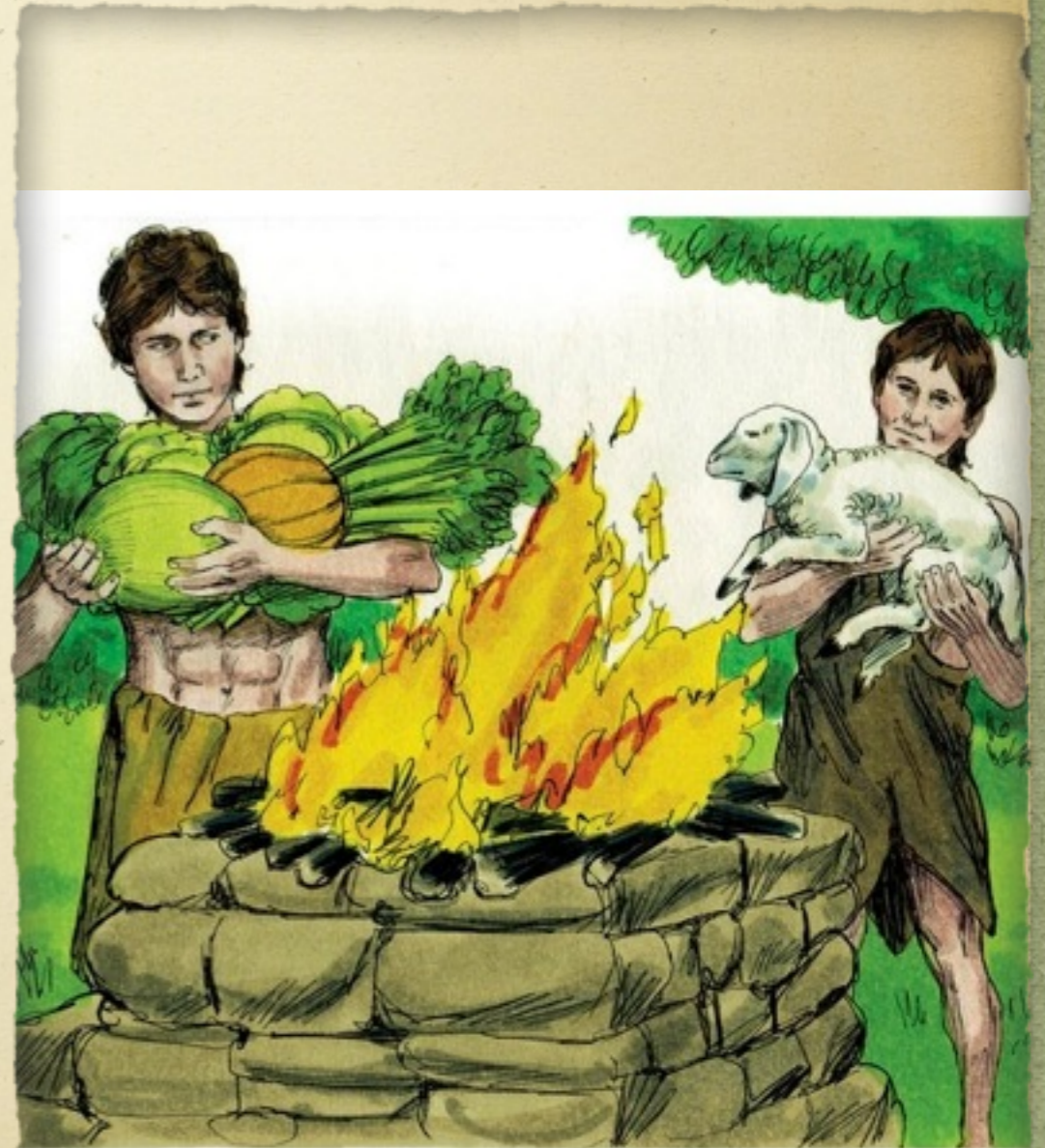
Support for Myth Genre: *Anthropomorphism*

➤ Genesis 3:8-9, “They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?””



Support for Myth Genre: *Cain & Abel*

- Gen 4:1-8: myth (*universal truth*) of farmer killing herder [*semi-nomadic*] and building city [*move to urban b/c can support tribe in one location...allows specialization*]
- “God” not so sure about whether this move is progress, just like Babel is *anti-urban* polemic.



Dear Preacher,
You seem so
cynical about
human nature.

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Don't you
believe in the
Brotherhood of
Man?

Idealist

Dear Idealist,
Sure, I believe in
Brotherhood...

MARLETTE 4-27

...but do the names
Cain and Abel mean
anything to you?

www.comicspage.com



Support for Myth Genre: *Nephilim*

➤ Gen 6:1-4, “1 When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. 3 Then the Lord said, “My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years.” 4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days — and also afterward — when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.”

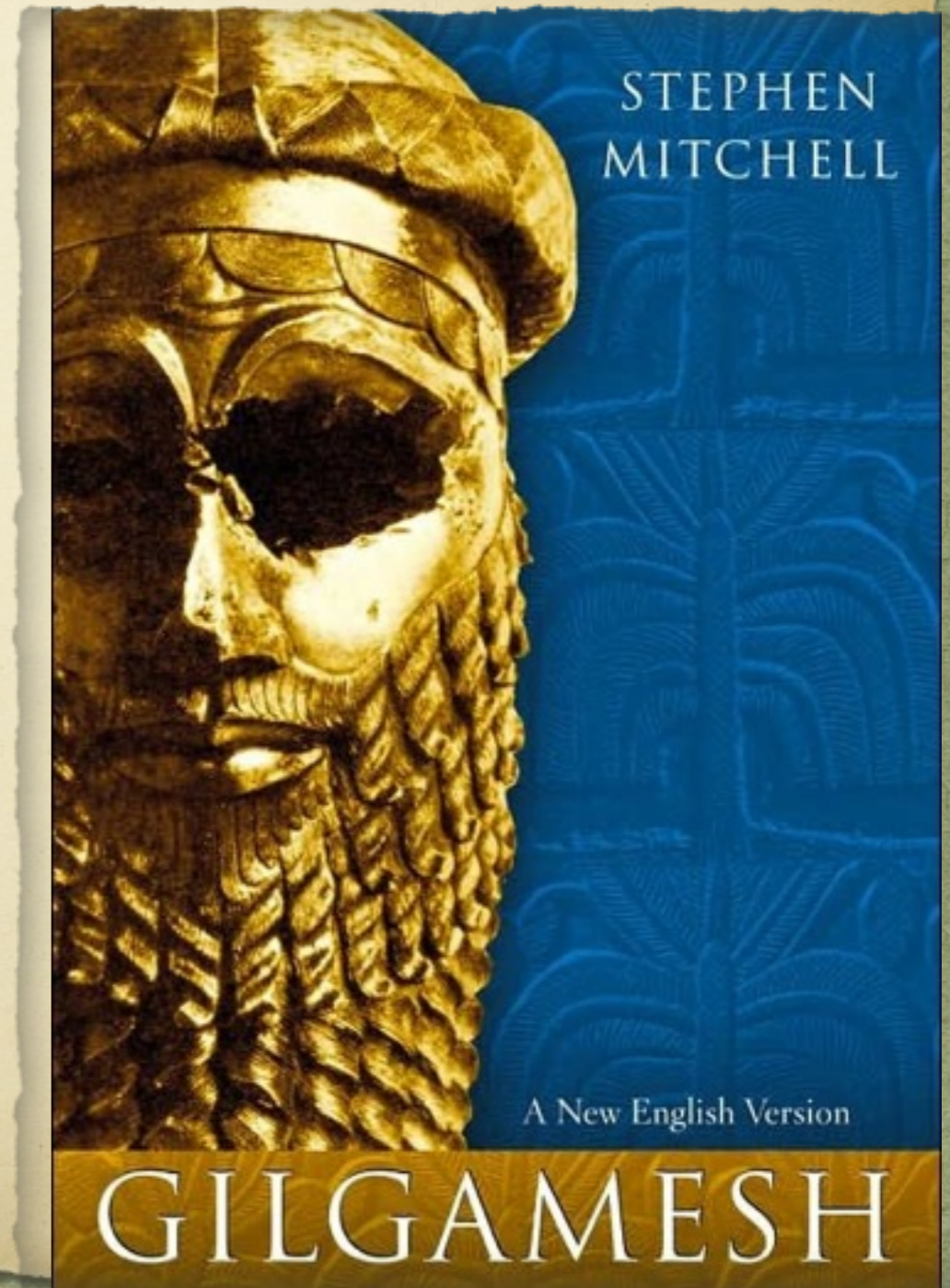
➤ Hebrew root NPL (“to fall”); literally, “fallen ones”

➤ Number 13:33, “There we saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”



Support for Myth Genre: *Epic of Gilgamesh*

- Babylonian epic about an ancient king;
- 11th tablet of this tale is parallel to the biblical story of Noah and the ark.
- May well pre-date the biblical account, and the biblical account may be derivative
- Name change to Noah // Islam changing Isaac to Ishmael



Support for Myth Genre:

Epic of Gilgamesh

➤ Tear down your house and build a boat, abandon possessions and look for life, despise worldly goods and save your soul alive. Tear down your house, I say, and build a boat. These are the measurements of the bark as you shall build her: let her beam equal her length, let her deck be roofed like the vault that covers the abyss; then take up into the board the seed of all living creatures.... On the seventh day the boat was completed.... For six days and six nights the winds blew, torrent and tempest and flood overwhelmed the world, tempest and flood raged together like warring hosts. When the seventh day dawned the storm from the south subsided, the sea grew calm, the flood was stilled.... On the mountain of Nisir the boat held fast.... When the seventh day dawned I loosed a dove and let her go. She flew away, but finding no resting-place returned. Then I loosed a swallow, and she flew away but finding no resting-place she returned. I loosed a raven, and she saw that the waters had retreated, she ate, she flew around, she cawed, and she did not come back. Then I threw everything open to the four winds. I made a sacrifice and poured out a libation on the mountain top.

RUSSELL CROWE

NOAH

THE END OF THE WORLD... IS JUST THE BEGINNING
COMING SOON

NoahMovie.co.uk [f/NoahMovie.UK](#) [t/Noah](#)

THE ARK BEFORE NOAH

DECODING *the* STORY
of the FLOOD

IRVING
FINKEL

2014



Support for Myth Genre: *Tower of Babel* (Gen 11)

- Wrestling with urbanization. (//: *Cain&Abel agrarianism*)
- Anti-Babylon polemic (//: *Gen 1 anti-Enuma Elish*). In ANE would've "heard" Babel story as about *ziggurat*: multi-storied sanctuary in many Mesopotamian cities.
- Hebrew "Babel" allusion to *Babylon*
- Subtext: Yahweh rejecting Babylonian way of life: cosmopolitan sophisticates are wrong. Keep less developed, de-centralized path of Israel: simple, but loyal to *Yahweh*, not Mesopotamian gods.
- Also: "Just so" story about "how did we get so many languages."



Ancestral Stories (*Gen 12-36*)

Genre: Legend

- Events in history, but *not* biographies of the ancestors
- **Historical kernel**, but imagination/experience expand, color, and embellish the event over time. Impossible to recover where “facts” stop and “embellishment” begins.
- Tend to be **brief**: characters are few and not fully developed
- Element of suspense is essential; **finely-crafted** stories.
- God is chief actor (*expressions of Israel's understandings/experiences about Yahweh*)

Genres & Life Expectancy

Myth

- Adam, 930 — Genesis 5:5, “Thus all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred thirty years; and he died.”
- Methuselah, 969 — Genesis 5:27, “Thus all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty-nine years; and he died.”

Legend

- Sarah, 120 — Genesis 23:1, “Sarah lived one hundred twenty-seven years; this was the length of Sarah's life.”
- Abraham, 175 — Genesis 25:7, “This is the length of Abraham's life, one hundred seventy-five years.”
- Jacob, 147 — Gen 47:28, “Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were one hundred forty-seven years.”

Novella

- Joseph, 110 — Genesis 50:22, “So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's household; and Joseph lived one hundred ten years.”

Genesis, 6:3, “Then the Lord said, ‘My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years.’”

The Greek's accepted their myths as true in the sense that they were not doubted, but they were not accepted in the way that everyday reality is....

A Greek conventionally put the gods "in heaven," but he would have been astounded to actually see them in the sky.

He would have been no less astounded if someone using time in its literal sense, told him that Hephaestus had just remarried or that Athena had aged a great deal lately.

PAUL VEYNE

DID THE
GREEKS
BELIEVE
IN THEIR
MYTHS?

An Essay on the
Constitutive Imagination

1988

Then he would have realized that in his own eyes mythic time had only a vague analogy with daily temporality; he would have thought that a kind of lethargy had always kept him from recognizing that difference.

They did and they did not believe in their myths since the coexistence of contradictory truths in the same mind is nonetheless a universal fact.

Consider that we know that the earth goes around the sun and not vice versa — but to what extent does this knowledge manage to shape our own perceptions? Do we not, despite what we “know,” actually experience sunrise as the sun rising over our stationary world? How many of us watch the dawn and think of what is happening in terms of the earth’s movement around the sun?

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Promises to Abraham

(Genesis 12:1-3)

- (1) Great nation, (2) Name great, (3) All the families of the earth shall be blessed
- “Abrahamic” Faiths: Judaism, Christianity, & Islam
- Genesis 16:10, “The angel of the Lord also said to her, ‘I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude.’” [*Hagar: Ishmael & Islam*]



Sodom & Gomorrah

Context: Abraham models hospitality

Genesis 18:1-8, "1 The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. 2 He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. 3 He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. 4 Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5 Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on — since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." 7 Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. 8 Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate."



Sodom & Gomorrah

Context: Abraham's Negotiation (Gen 18)

16 Then the men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way. 17 The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,... 9 No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by **doing righteousness and justice**; so that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." 20 Then the Lord said, "How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! 21 I must **go down and see** whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know." 22 So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while **Abraham remained standing before the Lord**. 23 Then Abraham came near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there are **fifty** righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" 26 And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake." ... [45...40...30...20...] "For the sake of **ten** I will not destroy it." 33 And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

➤ Focus: call to be **righteous**, resist the evil impulse, and follow the good impulse.

Sodom & Gomorrah

Context: Lot offers hospitality (Gen 19)

1 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. 2 He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night... 4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; 5 and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them." 6 Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, 7 and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. 8 Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men... 11 And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.

Sodom & Gomorrah

- Sexism over inhospitality? (*patriarchal narratives*)
- Parallel: Judges 19:1-30
- Modern Interpretation: about *homosexuality* (1886)
- Ancient Interpretation: about *inhospitality*
- Ezekiel, 16:49-50, “This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it.”
- Luke 10:10-12, “But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.”

Sodom & Gomorrah

- *Not* a text about consensual, adult, same-sex attraction.
- Same-sex rape is no more to be condoned than opposite-sex rape. Any form of rape is an abomination, and this instance of attempted same-sex rape does not address contemporary conceptions of homosexuality.
- Lesson from the ancient interpreters: Don't allow one's agenda about same-sex attraction to miss text's call to examine one's life and society for evidence of "pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease," and of failing to "aid the poor and needy."

Gen 22: Akedah (“Binding”)

- Why did God ask Abraham to sacrifice Isaac?
- Fideism: Kierkegaard’s “teleological suspension of the ethical” (*end justifies the means*)

The Death and
Resurrection of the Beloved Son



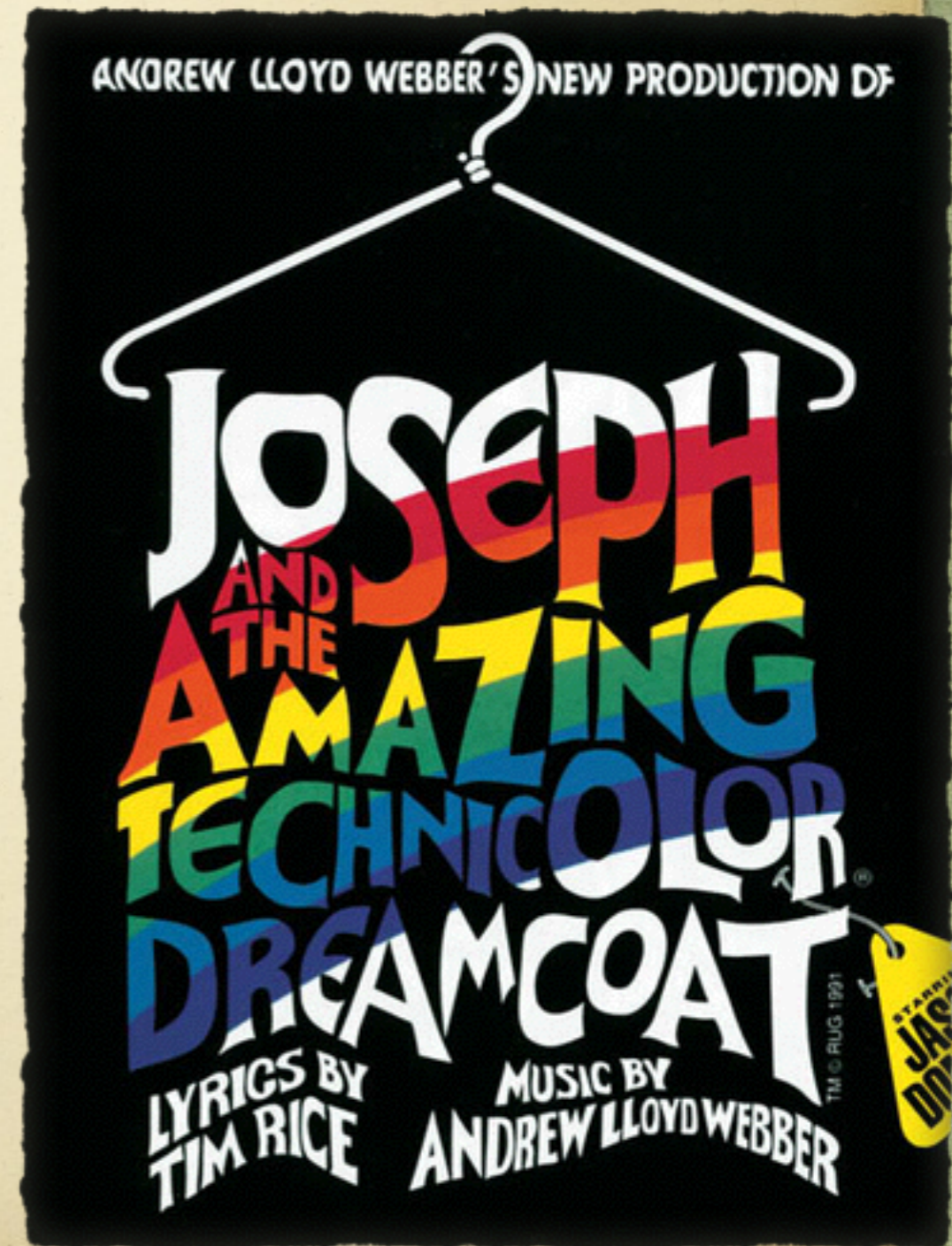
The Transformation of Child
Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity
Jon D. Levenson



Caravaggio, "Sacrifice of Isaac" (1603)

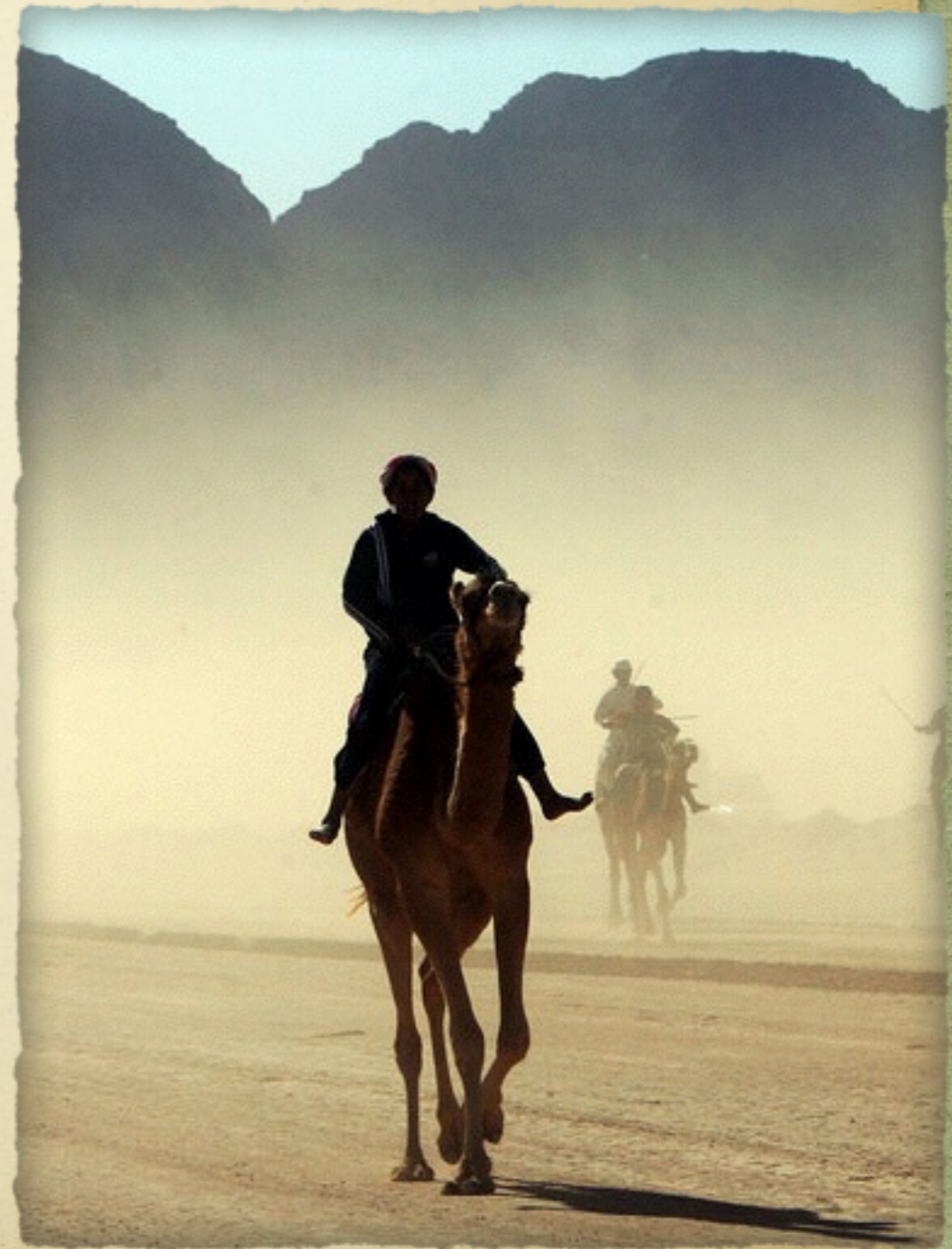
Joseph Cycle (Gen 37-50): *Novella*

- Gen 32:28, God renames Jacob as “Israel”; Gen 35:23-26: 12 sons = 12 tribes.
- Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun
- Rachel: Joseph & Benjamin. [*Gen 43:34, “Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs.”*] Full brothers
- Bilah (Rachel's maid): Dan, Naphalti
- Zilpah (Leah's maid): Gad and Asher



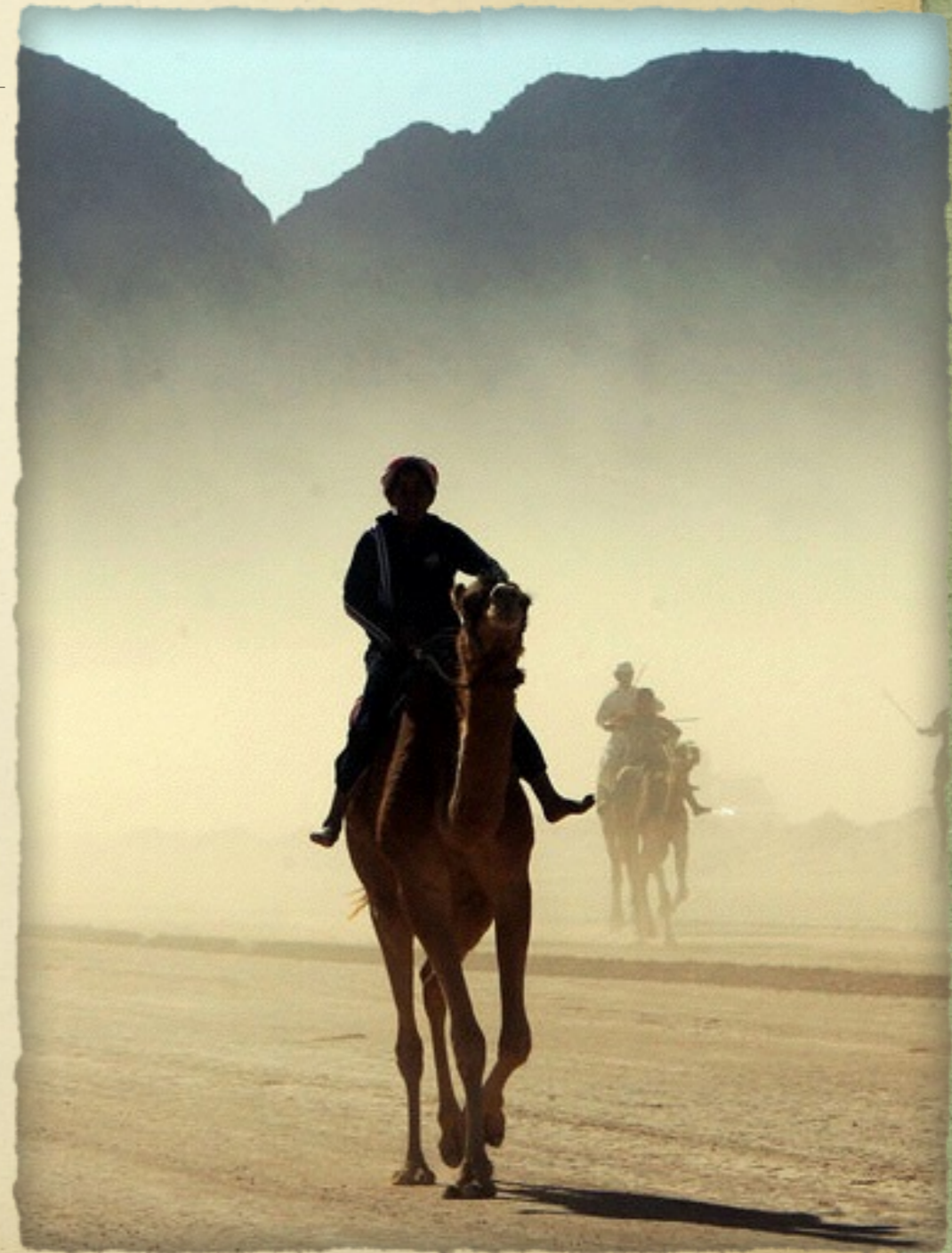
“Camels Had No Business in Genesis”

- “Archeological Criticism”
- Camels probably had little or no role in the lives of such early Hebrew patriarchs, yet stories about them mention these domesticated pack animals more than 20 times.
- Anachronisms are telling evidence that the Bible was written or edited long after the events it narrates (not memories)



“Camels Had No Business in Genesis”

- earliest known domesticated camels in Israel in the last third of the 10th century B.C.E. — centuries after the patriarchs lived and decades after the kingdom of David. Earlier used mules and donkeys
- Ancestral stories were reformulated in relatively late periods after camels had been integrated into the Near Eastern economic system. But traditions may still have “historical kernel” in other aspects.



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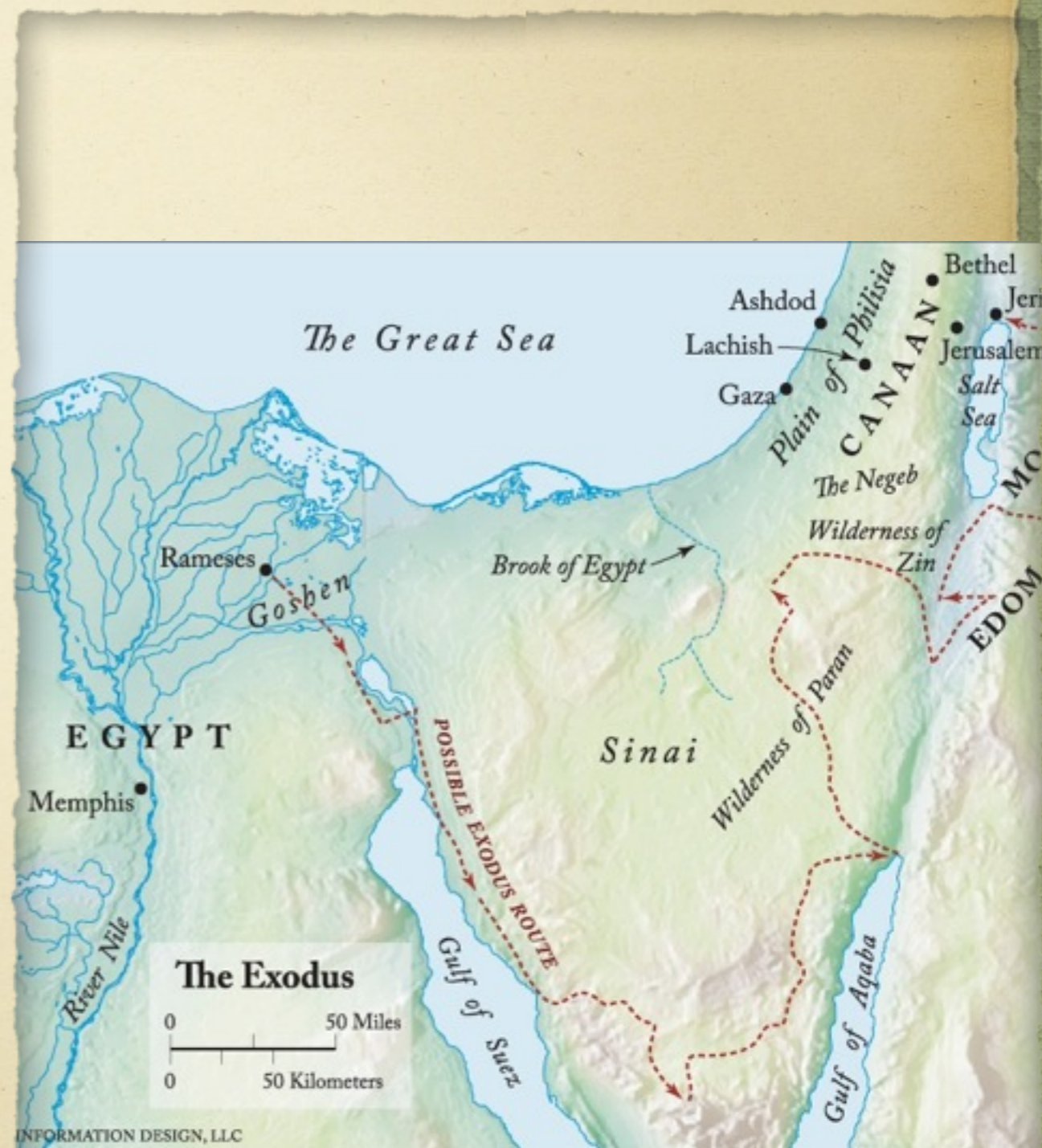


Exodus

➤ Genesis 50:26 “And Joseph died, being one hundred ten years old; he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in **Egypt.**” (*last word of book*)

➤ Exodus 1:1, “These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to **Egypt** with Jacob, each with his household” [*connects back to Genesis*]

➤ Hebrew title: “These are the names”



Overview

- Exodus begins when the Hebrews grow from a family into a *nation*
- ends on the first day of new year following the exodus from Egypt as the sanctuary is erected and the divine Presence takes up Its abode in the Israelites' midst.
- Chapters 1-18: Liberation from Egyptian slavery
- Chapters 19-40: Exodus to Covenant (from *for*, not merely *from*)

Significance of Exodus

- Arguably the most important book in the Bible since its themes have reverberated through all subsequent Jewish and Western History.
- Many early American settlers understood their flight from Europe and settlement in America as a *new exodus*. Later, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson recommended that the great seal of the United States depict Moses leading the Israelites across the parted sea as a symbol of the American experience.
- African-Americans in the U.S., hoping for freedom in the 19th century and fighting for civil rights in the 20th century, likewise saw themselves as reliving the Israelite experience.
- In the 1970s and 1980s, the mass departure of hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Soviet Union was known as “Operation Exodus.” (Jewish

Study Bible, p. 102-107)



What's your hermeneutic?!

Burning Bush (Exodus 3)

- How long had that bush been burning before Moses noticed?
- Elizabeth Barrett Browning: “Every Bush is a burning bush, / a few stand round transfixed, / the rest sit round and pick blackberries.”
- Moses hearing own voice? (Charlton Heston as *both* Moses *and* the voice of God in Cecil B. DeMille’s *Ten Commandments*)



The Divine Name (Exodus 3:14)

- YHWH
- *Ehyeh-asher-Ehyeh,*
- “To be” verb: “I was what I was / I am what I am / I will be what I will be”
- “My nature becomes evident by my actions.”
- James McClendon: “I will always be ahead of You.”



God Tries to Kill Moses?! (Exodus 4)

- Exodus 4, “24 On the way, at a place where they spent the night, the Lord met him and tried to kill him. 25 But Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin, and touched Moses' feet with it, and said, ‘Truly you are a bridegroom of blood to me!’ 26 So he let him alone. It was then she said, “A bridegroom of blood by circumcision.””
- Feet is a euphemism for genitals [*compare Is 6*]
- Pronouns are ambiguous: (1) If Moses is the *object* of Zipporah's action, then the story may represent an ancient understanding of circumcision as a rescue of the firstborn from the divine claim upon their lives, with Moses representing the firstborn.
- In the context of the book of the book of Exodus, the story prefigures the death of the Egyptian firstborn and power of the Passover blood to ward off the divine destroyer.



God Hardens Pharaoh's Heart?

(Plagues as *conflict between divinities*: Pharaoh vs. Yahweh)

Pharaoh Hardens

- **Ex 7:13** - Still Pharaoh's heart was **hardened**, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.
- **Ex 7:14** - Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is **hardened**; he refuses to let the people go.
- **Ex 7:22** - But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts; so Pharaoh's heart remained **hardened**, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.
- **Ex 8:15** - But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he **hardened** his heart, and would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.
- **Ex 8:19** - And the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God!" But Pharaoh's heart was **hardened**, and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.
- **Ex 8:32** - But Pharaoh **hardened** his heart this time also, and would not let the people go.
- **Ex 9:7** - Pharaoh inquired and found that not one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was **hardened**, and he would not let the people go.

God Hardens

- **Ex 9:12** But the **Lord hardened** the heart of Pharaoh, and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

Pharaoh Hardens

- **Ex 9:34** But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned once more and **hardened** his heart, he and his officials.
- **Ex 9:35** - So the heart of Pharaoh was **hardened**, and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses.

God Hardens

- **Ex 10:1** - Then the **Lord** said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh; for **I have hardened** his heart and the heart of his officials, in order that I may show these signs of mine among them,
- **Ex 10:20** -But the **Lord hardened** Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.
- **Ex 10:27** -But the **Lord hardened** Pharaoh's heart, and he was unwilling to let them go.
- **Ex 11:10** - Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; but the **Lord hardened** Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.
- **Ex 14:8** - The **Lord hardened** the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the Israelites, who were going out boldly.)

Parting of the Re(e)d Sea?

⇒ NISB Map 3



Which Ten Commandments?

- Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5?
- Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant version?



J: Jewish

R: Reformed

C: Catholic

O: Orthodox

L: Lutheran

I

J: I, the Lord, am your God Who led you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

O&R: You shall have no other gods before Me.

L: You are to have no other Gods.

C: I am the Lord your God; you shall have no strange Gods before me.

II

J: You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not carve for yourself an image.

O&R: You shall not make unto thee any graven image.

C&L: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

III

J: You shall not invoke the name of the Lord your god with malice.

O&R: You shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

L: You are to hallow the day of rest.

C: Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

IV

J, O, & R: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

C&L: Honor your father and your mother.

V

J, O, R: Honor your father and your mother.

C&L: You shall not kill.

J: Jewish

R: Reformed

C: Catholic

O: Orthodox

L: Lutheran

VI

J: You shall not murder.

O&R: You shall not kill.

C&L: You shall not commit adultery.

VII

J, O & R: You shall not commit adultery.

C&L: You shall not steal.

VIII

J, O & R: You shall not steal

C&L: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

IX

J, O & R: You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

L: You are not to covet your neighbor's house.

C: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

X

J, O & R: You shall not covet.

L: You are not to covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, cattle, or whatever is his.

C: You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Upcoming Classes

- Session 4: (finish Exodus), then Leviticus and Numbers
- Session 5: Deuteronomy and Joshua and Judges
- Session 6: Samuel and Kings
- *(Topics will be adjusted, depending on how far we get each session.)*
- Options for Fall 2014: (a) Pick-up wherever we stop, and continue through the Hebrew Scripture / Old Testament OR (b) Skip to New Testament and come back later to finish Hebrew Scripture.



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