

1. The Land in Between

The Primary History: The Torah (Genesis–Deuteronomy) and the Former Prophets (Joshua–Kings) form a continuous 9-volume history of Israel, from Creation to Exile. The Land is of great significance in this.

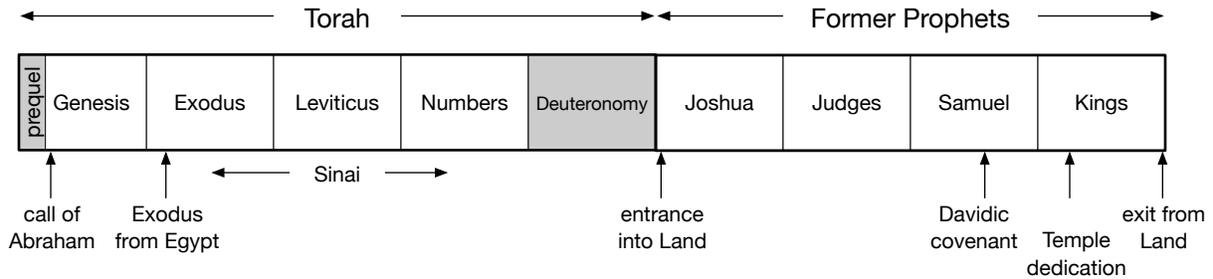
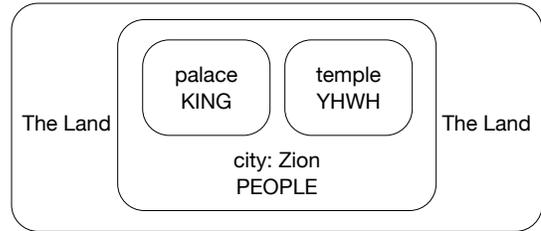


Fig. 1-1: The Primary History

At its peak (1 Kgs 4–8) Israel comprised Yhwh’s presence in the Temple, the king’s rule from the palace, surrounded by the people in the city, Jerusalem/Zion, all in the Land. All were set aside from the rest of the world as holy, in varying degrees. These elements have great significance in Israel today.



There is a prototype or archetype of this arrangement: The Garden of Eden.

I. The Prototype: The Garden of Eden

In the beginning there was no agriculture (Gen 2:5): no wild shrubs because there was no rain, and no arable grains because there was no human (*adam*) to work the ground (*adamah*). Instead a spring watered the land. God made a human (*adam*) from the ground (*adamah*), and planted a garden of fruiting trees, into which he placed the human to serve (Yhwh) and to keep (a commandment). God did all the work. Humanity disobeyed God, so he expelled them from the garden. Now the ground would produce thorns and thistles (suitable for grazing), but with enough toil from Adam it would yield arable grains.

II. Life East of Eden: Mesopotamia

Civilization developed east of Eden. The *Fertile Crescent* was the Cradle of Civilization, beginning with the Neolithic Revolution, the transition from a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle to settled agricultural communities. This is reflected in Genesis 4, which lists six innovators:

- Cain: farmer עֵבֶר אֲדָמָה (worker of the ground, 4:2)
- Abel: shepherd רֹעֵה צֹאן (shepherd of the flock, 4:2)
- Cain/Enoch: city-builder בִּנְיָה עִיר (4:17)
- Jabel: pastoral nomad יָשֵׁב אֹהֶל וּמִקְנֵה (tent-dweller with livestock 4:20)
- Jubal: musician תַּפְּשׁ כְּנֹר וְעֹבֵב (harp and lyre player 4:21)

- Tubal-cain: metalworker לְטַשׁ כָּל-חַרְשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת וּבְרָזָל (maker of all tools of bronze and iron 4:22).

The *Fertile Crescent* (term introduced by archaeologist James Breasted of U. of Chicago, 1906): The Levant in the west, Mesopotamia in the east.

- The Levant (Lat. *levans* (sun-)rising): the eastern end of the Mediterranean (modern Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan).
- Mesopotamia (modern Iraq, e. Syria): the land between the rivers (Gk. *mesos* between + *potamos* river):
 - *Euphrates* (עֻפְרָטִים *Eὐφράτης*), often in the Bible called simply הַנְּהַר הַגָּדוֹל “the great river” or הַנְּהַר “the River.” Rises in e. Turkey, close to Mt Ararat. Length: 2800 km, 1750 mi.
 - *Tigris* (תִּיגְרִיס *Τίγρις*). Also rises in e. Turkey. Length: 1850 km, 1150 mi.

They join to form Shatt-al-Arab or Arvand Rud (Arvand River) which flows 200 km to the Persian/Arabian Gulf.

A. Agriculture

Transition from hunter-gathering to settled life happened c. 10,000 BC.

- domestication of wild wheat and barley. Cain was a farmer עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה worker of the ground, Gen 4:2)
- domestication of animals: dog, goats, sheep, pig, cattle. Abel was a shepherd רֹעֵה צֹאן pasturer of flocks, 4:2)

B. Settlements

Mesopotamian rivers flood in the spring, not a convenient time for agriculture. So settlement was restricted to areas suitable for dry farming, where grain was dependent upon rain. These settlements were around the edge of the plains. Irrigation later allowed settlement of the alluvial plains.

Settlements were of packed mud, then of mud bricks, finally of fired clay bricks (cf. Gen 11:3).

Periodic destruction: new settlement built on top of the ruins, leading to growth of a mound: tel, Arabic *tell*, Turkish *höyük*. The first cities developed in Mesopotamia (see below).

C. Technology

Pottery: widespread by 7000 BC (earliest in Japan 10,000 BC). Pottery is evidence of settled life. A valuable dating tool.

Metal: The development of metal technology was so important that archeological periods are dated by it:

1. Neolithic Age 9000–4000 BC (new stone age)
 - a. Aceramic neolithic 8500–7000 BC.
 - b. Copper Age: Chalcolithic (χαλκός *copper* + λίθος *stone*).
2. Bronze Age 4000–1200: Copper alloys were harder, and easier to work:
 - a. copper + arsenic: (many Nahal Mishmar)
 - b. copper + tin = tin bronze.
3. Iron Age 1200–

Tubal-cain: metalworker לְטַשׁ כָּל-חַרְשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת וּבְרָזָל (maker of all tools of bronze and iron Gen 4:22).

D. Cities and Empires

An ancient city had two features: a wall and a ruler (city-state).

Urbanization started in Sumer (s. Mesopotamia) and later spread to Akkad (n. Mesopotamia).

- *Eridu*: earliest city in s. Mesopotamia, c. 5400 BC. Per Babylonian mythology, created by Marduk as the first city; “When kingship from heaven was lowered, the kingship was in Eridu” (Sumerian king list); the first of 5 pre-Flood cities.
- *Uruk* (now Warka), Biblical Erech (עֶרֶךְ Gen 10:10): the second post-Flood kingship city. 4th millennium BC; peaked c. 2900 at 50-60,000. Gilgamesh was the 5th king and built the wall.

Sargon took power (2334), moved his rule to Akkad, and established the first empire. A king rules over his own people and city; an empire swallows up other cities and peoples. Sargon is probably behind Nimrod (Gen 10:10-12).

Ziggurat: each city had at its center a ziggurat (Akk. *ziqqurat*, from vb “to build on a raised area”), cf. Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). The ziggurat is a tower, thought to give access to heaven. Babylon was called *bab-ilu*, “gate of god” because of its ziggurat, “The House of the Link between Heaven and Earth.” The narrator has to explain Mesopotamian building techniques for his Israelite audience.

E. Language

First written documents discovered at Uruk c. 3300; pictographic; not deciphered.

Writing developed in three forms of script:

1. Cuneiform c. 3000 BC; written with blunt reed stylus (Lat. *cuneus*, wedge) on clay tablets.
 - a. Sumerian: language of Uruk 3rd millennium.
 - b. Akkadian (a Semitic language) c. 2500. Later simplified to 5 wedge shapes.
2. Hieroglyphics: Egypt. Pictographic.
3. Alphabet. proto-Sinaitic > Phoenician > Hebrew, Greek, Latin. English uses the Roman alphabet and Arabic numerals.

Table 1-1: Development of the Alphabet

Hebrew name	Meaning of pictograph	Meaning of Heb letter	Paleo-Hebrew	Imperial Aramaic	Aramaic “square”	Modern Cursive	SBL transliterate	Greek	Greek name	Latin
'ālep	ox	ox	𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	א	'	A α	<i>alpha</i>	A a
bêt	house	house	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	ב	b	B β	<i>bēta</i>	Bb
gîmel	throwstick k	camel	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈	ג	g	Γ γ	<i>gamma</i>	Cc, Gg
dālet	door	door	𐤈	𐤉	𐤊	ד	d	Δ δ	<i>delta</i>	Dd
hē		window	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	ה	h	E ε	<i>epsilon</i>	Ee
wāw	hook	hook	𐤐	𐤑	𐤒	ו	w	F Ϝ Υ υ	<i>digamma/ upsilon</i>	Ff, Uu, Vv, Ww, Yy
zayin		weapon	𐤓	𐤔	𐤕	ז	z	Z ζ	<i>zeta</i>	Zz
hēt	fence	fence	𐤖	𐤗	𐤘	ח	ḥ	H η	<i>ēta</i>	Hh
tēt		wheel	𐤙	𐤚	𐤛	ט	ṭ	Θ θ	<i>theta</i>	
yōd	arm	arm	𐤜	𐤝	𐤞	י	y	I ι	<i>iota</i>	Ii, Jj
kāp	palm	palm	𐤟	𐤠	𐤡	כ	k	K κ	<i>kappa</i>	Kk
lāmed	goad	goad	𐤢	𐤣	𐤤	ל	l	Λ λ	<i>lambda</i>	Ll
mēm	water	water	𐤥	𐤦	𐤧	מ	m	M μ	<i>mu</i>	Mm
nûn	snake	fish	𐤨	𐤩	𐤪	נ	n	N ν	<i>nu</i>	Nn
sāmek		pillar	𐤬	𐤭	𐤮	ס	s	Ξ ξ	<i>xi</i>	Xx
'ayin	eye	eye	𐤰	𐤱	𐤲	ע	'	O ο	<i>omicron</i>	Oo

<i>pê</i>		mouth	פ	ק	פ ק	ק פ	<i>p</i>	Π π	<i>pī</i>	Pp
<i>ṣādē</i>		papyrus plant	ס	ז	ס ז	ז ס	<i>s</i>	Σ σ / Ξ ξ	<i>san, sampi</i>	
<i>qôp</i>		monkey	ק	פ	ק פ	פ ק	<i>q</i>	Ω ω	<i>qoppa</i>	Qq
<i>rêš</i>	head	head	ר	ש	ר ש	ש ר	<i>r</i>	Ρ ρ	<i>rhō</i>	Rr
<i>śîn/śîn</i>		tooth	ש	ס	ש ס	ס ש	<i>ś</i>	Σ σ	<i>sigma</i>	Ss
<i>tāw</i>	mark	mark	ת	ט	ת ט	ט ת	<i>t</i>	Τ τ	<i>tau</i>	Tt

III. A New Beginning

A. The Table of Nations (Gen 10)

The descendants of Shem, Ham, Japheth spread across the earth, each with four components: their own clans (מְשפּוּחֹת), language (לְשׁוֹן), land (אֲרָץ), and people (גּוֹי). They number 70. Israel is not one of them, but the 70 are described with non-existent Israel at center.

- Japheth: on the far horizon, beyond Israel’s interaction
- Ham: near-neighbors with whom Israel interacted, often with enmity
- Shem: Israel’s “cousins”

Later identification: Japheth = Europe, Ham = Africa, Shem = Asia.

B. The Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9)

Babylon is the human city, the city of humanity gathered together in autonomy from God. The antithesis of later Jerusalem, the city of God and his people. The Tower of Babel was the final straw. God scattered the people and confused their language. Babel is not the gate to heaven, but the place where human language was confused (*balal*).

C. The Call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3)

God called Abram to leave Ur and journey to a new land to start a new people in the midst of the 70 peoples. He journeyed to Canaan but three generations later his descendants moved to Egypt.

IV. Egypt

A. Geography

The major geographical feature is the Nile, the world’s longest river. Two sources, joining near Khartoum:

1. White Nile: rises in Rwanda.
2. Blue Nile: source in Ethiopia

The Nile provided two important things for Egypt: annual flooding, transport.

The Nile defined two regions:

1. The River: Upper Egypt
2. The Delta: Lower Egypt

B. History

1. Early Dynastic Period

D1-D2, c. 3000–2680 BC. Menes united Upper and Lower Egypt, founding the First Dynasty (D1).

The Two Lands (Heb. מִצְרַיִם *mitsrayim* is dual), and the Double Crown, the *Pschent*:

- Upper Egypt: the White Crown, the *Hedjet*. Headdress symbol: vulture for goddess Nekhbet.
- Lower Egypt: the Red Crown, the *Deshret*. Headdress symbol: rearing cobra (*ureaus*) for goddess Wadjet.

Upper Egypt



Deshret, red crown

Lower Egypt



Hedjet, white crown

The Two Lands



Pschent, double crown

Established capital at Memphis; built pyramids at Saqqara.

2. The Old Kingdom

D3-D6, c. 2680-2190 BC. The great pyramids were built at Giza: Cheops (Khufu), Chephren, Mycerinus.

3. The New Kingdom

D18-D20, c. 1550-1070.

Amenhopis (Amun is content) changed his name to Akhenaten (Beneficial to Aten). Worshiped Aten sun disk as sole god. New capital Akhetaten (now Amarna). His wife was Nefertiti. Their son Tutankhaten was forced to abandon Akhetaten, return to Memphis. Changed name to Tutankhamun (the living image of Amun).

The Exodus occurred sometime during the New Kingdom:

- early date: 1430
- late date: 1250

V. The Land In Between

The Land (of Israel) is the land between:

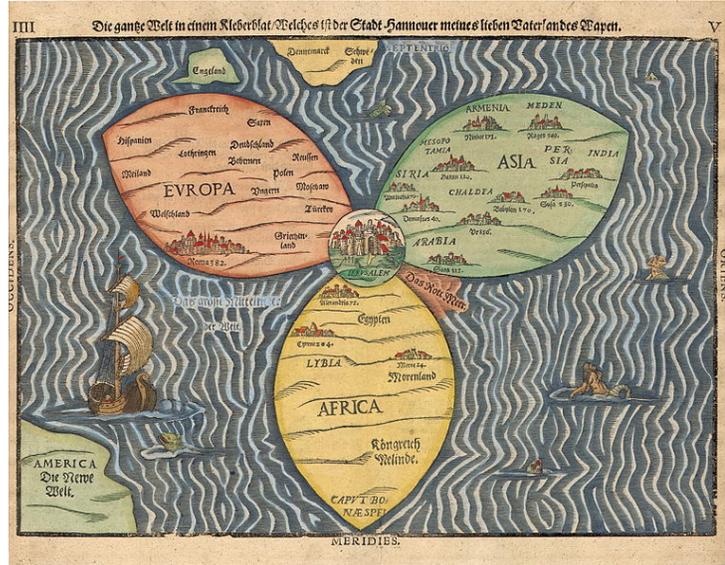
- between Mesopotamia & Egypt: God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia; he brought Israel up out of Egypt.
- between Asia, Africa and Europe.

Medieval cartographers' symbolic conception of world geography: *mappa mundi* (world map). T and O map: *orbis terrarum* (orb of the earth): three continents arranged as a T, surrounded by a circular ocean (O). Jerusalem at the center. Each continent associated with one of Noah's three sons.

- Asia: Shem. At the top (map oriented to the east). Location of Paradise. Separated from Europe by the Don River (aka Tanais), from Africa by the Nile.
- Europe: Japheth. Separated from Africa by the Mediterranean.
- Africa: Ham.



Simon Marmion, in *La Fleur des Histoires*
(author Jean Mansel, 1459-1463)



Heinrich Bünting, *Die ganze Welt in einem Kleberlat*
(The World in a Cloverleaf), 1581