

Chapter 1 – Genesis

A “Very Good” Creation and a Disastrous Disobedience, with Divine Promises of a Project of Liberation and Universal Blessings

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J = Yahwist; E = Elohist; P = Priestly; → Deuteronomist, D

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Introduction. According to Genesis, the creator of the cosmos, starting with the covenants and promises made to the Israelite patriarchs and matriarchs (descendants, land, general welfare), has a universal project for human history that forms the basis of a hope, a paradigm for the reconstruction of the new post-exile Israelite community. However, the authors of Genesis incorporated ancient traditions which, during the monarchy (1030-586/7 B.C.) and afterward (exile, post-exile), were conserved, primarily in four sources (NJB, New Jerusalem Bible, Introduction, 5-12; HCSB, HarperCollins Study Bible, 3-4, 255-257; CBI, *Comentario Bíblico Internacional*, 1999:307-314; NDB, *Nuevo Diccionario Bíblico*, 1982/91:1070-77):

- **J** Jahwist or Yahwist (see the traditional mistaken form “Jehovah”), 900 B.C.
- **E** Elohist (referring to God, *Elohim* in Hebrew, not Yahweh), 800 B.C.
- **D** Deuteronomist (see Deuteronomy), 800-600 B.C.
- **P** Priestly (from the German “Priester”), exilic or post-exilic writing, 550-500 B.C.

Many of the Genesis narratives are typical of the stories which in other cultures originated with women and probably were conserved among them, especially by oral tradition, before being incorporated into the Yahwist or Elohist tradition:¹

- Single male finds wife next to a well (carrying water to the house was women’s work);
- Mothers of heroes often suffered sterility before miraculously conceiving;
- Many stories deal with problems and conflicts in the home and between relatives.

Due to their status as immigrants (socially weak), the patriarchs and the matriarchs (even more for being women) repeatedly resorted to deception and tricks to survive (see the deceptions to Isaac, 27:1-40; Rachel's deception of Laban, 31:35).

Obviously, the promises of *land* have a fundamental importance in Genesis, whether they are for the immigrant patriarchs and matriarchs in foreign lands or for the post-exilic readers seeking to return from Babylon and Egypt to Palestine and recover their lost land. Of equal importance were the divine promises of numerous *descendants* who could work the land and defend against enemies (Psalm 12:3-5).

However, as David Pleins shows, modern readers need to complement the Hebrew-Jewish reading with a Palestinian reading.² In her hermeneutics of suspicion, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza even concludes that we should place over *all* biblical texts a sign that warns against abuses using them:

Caution! Could be dangerous to your health and survival.³

As Palestinian theologian Naim Ateek points out, such is especially the case today of Palestinian Christians, faced with the modern state of Israel, where a fundamentalist minority maintains imperialist claims in reference to “the promised land” and exercises significant political-military influence.⁴ In the development of a liberation theology, beginning with Exodus 1–15, Latin American biblicists left open the door for oppression and violence against the Palestinians. David took shelter with a generous Philistine king (Palestinian), as the Genesis patriarchs and matriarchs had done (→ **1-2 Samuel**; cf. Genesis 12; 20; 26). Likewise, a liberationist reading

that begins with Exodus 1, with its tyrannical and violent pharaoh, easily forgets how different was the pharaoh that showed such kindness to Joseph and his family (Genesis 37–50). Obviously, in the Bible's theology we also find a strong dialectic between the nationalist/exclusive texts and the internationalist/inclusive ones (cf. the dialectic between militaristic and passive texts). As Ateek says: “The Bible is a record of the dynamic, sometimes severe, tension between nationalist and universalist conceptions of the deity. For the Palestinian Christians, this theme is one of the most fundamental theological issues.”⁵

Similarly, I. J. Mosala of South Africa cites the use of the Bible during the colonial epoch “to justify the colonial dispossession of blacks and whites.”⁶ Mosala concludes that for a critical use of the biblical text today we should recognize that, at the end of the long process of conservation and writing, the texts reflect hegemonic codes.⁷ However, we can allow the international and inclusive elements to subvert the hegemonic elements. According to David Pleins, the perspectives of feminist, Palestinian and African liberation theologies correct the simplistic and traditionally dominant tendencies in the liberation theologies, and they guide us toward a more sophisticated and adequate hermeneutic approach to the biblical text (→ **Exodus, Joshua**).⁸

Bibliography for a Palestinian / Canaanite reading of the Hebrew Bible

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1. The poor and oppressed. David Pleins points out that the many Hebrew words that designate the “poor” and “poverty”, so common in other books, rarely occur in the historic literature (Genesis through Kings plus Chronicles) and then only in poetic expressions. “Rarely, and then only in the poetic inserts, does the historical literature make use of the many Hebrew words for ‘poor’ and ‘poverty’ that are common in the rest of the Hebrew Bible....The poor...are not the object of the ethical wrestlings of the historical sections of the Hebrew Bible. This fact alone is astonishing and ought to at least force us to pause before we all too quickly apply this material...to modern projects aimed at liberating the poor.”⁹

However, the final writing of Genesis is addressed to the impoverished Jewish people, dominated by Babylon and Persia after the exile. In this historic context, the “poor and oppressed” do not represent a distinct class but the common condition of the entire nation. The teaching of Genesis – that the Creator of the cosmos has a universal historical project, beginning with the covenants and promises made to the Israelite patriarchs (descendants, land and overall wellbeing) – constitutes the basis for a hope, a paradigm for the reconstruction of the post-exilic Israelite community (538-500 b.C.).

1.1 The two creation narratives (Genesis 1 and 2) emphasize the *diversity* and *goodness* of the creation, including work, with plenty for all. After the disobedience of the first couple, work became laborious (Gen. 3:17-19; cf. Eden, a royal garden). Then, as Susan Niditch observes, “The God of Genesis...is partial to marginal people of both genders.”¹⁰ Following the narratives of the origins (Genesis 1-11), beginning with Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, the book focuses primarily on weak and marginalized people: immigrant patriarchs, sterile wives, slaves, concubines and younger sons like Jacob; also see Joseph, sold and jailed. Such weak persons experiment divine blessing (strengthen the community/empowerment) that commonly results in enrichment for the patriarchs and matriarchs (13:1-2; 20:14-16; 24:35; 25:5; 26:12-15; 30:25-43; 39; 47:27).¹¹ But such texts reflect divine blessing given to persons who escape famines, vulnerable immigrants, the defamed, the jailed, the liberated, etc.

In fact, the poverty/impoverishment in Genesis is expressed primarily in the concrete form of *great hunger* (*ra'ab*), which rich people also suffered (Abraham, 12:10; Isaac, 26:1; Pharaoh's dream about Egypt, 41:27-32; Joseph with Pharaoh in Egypt and Jacob in Palestine, 41:53-57 and 42:1-5; the seven years, 43:1; 47:4; cf. Hagar with Ishmael without water, 21:14-16). The repeated famines provoke emigrations and motivate long trips in search of food. Furthermore, even in Genesis, the expressions that indicate conditions of *oppression* (the principal cause of poverty) are much more common than the words for poor and poverty¹² (→ **Exodus** and the other historic literature):

- Sarah suffered “violence” (*khamas*) and then “oppressed” (*'anah*) Hagar (Gen. 16:5-6);
- An angel and God opt for the poor, Hagar and Ishmael (16:7-16; 21:17-21);
- Jacob suffers *oppression* under his uncle Laban;¹³
- Joseph, from slavery, exile, poverty, imprisonment, hunger.... (Genesis 37–50).

1.2 Joseph's administration (47:13-26, Yahwist). Reverse agrarian reform?

Facing seven years of famine that devastated Egypt and the neighboring nations, Joseph, as vizier, the second in authority after Pharaoh, imposed a centralization of economic power in the imperial state, which is not the ideal model for either capitalism or Marxism but something more “feudal”: “As for the people, he made slaves of them from one end of Egypt to the other,” 47:21 (NRSV; HCSB note 47:13-26; NJB note 47d).¹⁴

Joseph's severe measures turned out to be effective in the crisis and the structural economic changes were long-lasting (Genesis 41 and 47).¹⁵ Gordon Wenham recognizes that Joseph's administration, facing the crisis of famine, appears to the modern reader as a case of exploitation of the weak. However, he defends the drastic measures as evidence of Joseph's wisdom (42:36) and points out the parallels with the three stages of indebtedness and the provisions for the Year of Jubilee:¹⁶

- Dependents of the debtor are enslaved (Gen. 47:13-14; → Ex. 21:2-11; Deut. 15:1-18);
- Debtor's lands are sold (Gen. 47:20; → Lev. 25:25-34);
- The debtor him or herself is enslaved (Gen. 47:21; → Lev. 25:35-54).

Furthermore, as in Egypt under Joseph so also in Israel, the lands of the priests remained exempt of certain taxes (Gen. 47:22, 26; → Lev. 25:32-34). However, although in Egypt the land and the people belonged perpetually to Pharaoh (47:26), in Israel in the Year of Jubilee (→ **Leviticus** 25), every fifty years

- the slaves were freed,
- the land was returned to the original owner, and
- the land rested for a year and was left “fallow”.

Another evangelical commentator, however, classifies as “feudal” the economic system that Joseph imposed and (citing the sociologist Ronald De Vaux) points out that the prophet Samuel condemned the imminent implementation of these oppressive measures on the part of the Israelite kings for being unjust (citing 1 Sam. 8:13-16).¹⁷

Bibliography: Joseph and the economy

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2. Women. Genesis is the book of the Hebrew Bible which contains the most women – 32 named and 46 without names, **a total of 78**; → **1 Chronicles**, with 44 named and 15 unnamed, **a total of 59**; in both books the statistics are augmented by the quantity of genealogies.¹⁸ However, by being in patriarchal societies the women in Genesis are underdogs, in socially weak positions: victims of injustice and oppression, disabled (sterile). Consequently, they frequently resort to traps, subterfuge, and deception (see above introduction). The male patriarchs, since they are immigrants, also continually recur to subterfuge, deception and traps.

Genesis 1–11: Creation and order: diversity and unity.

2.1 Genesis 1:1–2:4a. The priestly account. Isaiah 51:9-11, following the Mesopotamian myth, *Enuma Elish*, speaks of the waters of the chaos as feminine, but such a characteristic of waters is not explicit in Genesis 1. On the sixth “day” of the priestly account of the creation, after having created terrestrial animals,

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” ²⁷So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (1:26-28).

This priestly account affirms that *both the female and the male were created in the image of God*, of equal status and dignity, with dominion over the animals. Such a high concept of woman appears very different from that of the priestly texts of Leviticus, where the processes of birth and menstruation leave the woman unclean and incapable of leadership and full participation in worship.¹⁹ Many later traditions failed to recognize the equality of women as being created in the image of God. They censured and “corrected” Gen. 1:26-28 in the light of the creation of Eve in Genesis 2 (see Eve in following subsection; → **1 Corinthians** 11:7-8).

2.2 Eve (Gen. 2:4b–4:26, Yahwist; see 1:26-28; 5:1-5, P). Eve, without doubt the most famous woman of the Hebrew Bible (→ Mary in **Luke** 1–2; **Matthew** 1) and prominent in Western theology, art and literature, appears only in Genesis 2–4; but cf. the New Testament: → **Romans** 5:12-21, only Adam is guilty; → **1 Corinthians** 11:2-16, only Adam was created in the image of God, 11:7; → **1 Timothy** 2:8-15, only Eve is guilty; cf. the Greek myth of Pandora, where only the woman is guilty.

As Carol Meyers points out, although it is common to interpret Genesis 3 as the history of “the fall” or “the fall of man,” such a concept is absent in the account. This interpretation represents a later application of the Platonic idea of a fall of heavenly beings to the earth (*Phaedrus*), which Christian tradition utilized to express the separation from Divine favor.²⁰ In Gen. 6:1-4 (see **3.3 Angels rape women**, below), we find something more similar to a “fall.” In this text certain angels (the “sons of God”) came down from heaven to have sexual relations with “the daughters of human beings,” producing “giants,” and the world then became so violent that Yahweh had to send the flood and destroy it (Gen. 6:5-8). A scientific exegesis, thus, invites us to read Genesis 2–3 simply as the account (Yahwist) of the first act of disobedience of the first couple – freeing us from all the later theological baggage. The only movement in this account is not vertical (a “fall” from a heavenly state) but horizontal (from a fertile garden to marginalized and desert land), and the serpent is the “most astute of all the animals” that Yahweh God had created (3:1), not “the devil” of the New Testament (Rev. 12:9; 20:2; Rom. 16:20). For a century and a half, successive feminist studies have unmasked various masculine prejudices in the interpretation:

- According to Genesis, Eve is not a gullible fool (cf. → **1 Timothy** 2:13-14) but is smarter than Adam, since she is (a) the first human being to demonstrate the capacity of conversation; (b) an astute observer of reality (she appreciates the esthetic and nutritional qualities of the forbidden fruit); (c) full of scientific curiosity that causes her to investigate and confirm a hypothesis (that the act of eating the fruit would enormously augment human knowledge); (d) active in looking for human development, while Adam remains passive and mute and receives the fruit from Eve's hand, like a child from his mother.
- On creating Eve, God does not assign her an inferior role as “ideal helper” (*‘ezer kenegdo*, 2:18, 20) but as an expert collaborator in a relationship of equality, without hierarchy. Given that *‘ezer* is used primarily in reference to God, when God comes to liberate Israel (Ex. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29; Psalms 20:2; 33:20; 115:9-11; 134:8; 146:5), we could even conclude that this implies Eve's superiority, one who liberates Adam not only from loneliness but also from ignorance.

- God's words to Eve after the couple's disobedience does not necessarily signify an increase of *pain* but an increase of labor (*'itsabon*, 3:16a) in childbirth, the same word that is used in 3:17 to describe Adam's multiplied hard labor; similarly *'etseb*, 3:16b.²¹
- The words in 3:16b concerning masculine dominion (*mashal*) do not necessarily mean a general dominion; they can mean a dominion limited to the pregnancies mentioned in the first half of the verse: “Women might resist repeated pregnancies because of the dangers of death in childbirth, but because of their sexual passion (‘desire,’ 3:16) they accede to their husbands’ sexuality.”²² Regardless, other texts make it clear that it is not divine intention to classify a woman as an inferior being or to indicate that she must always submit herself to the man (Gen. 1:26-28; Judges; → **Galatians** 3:28; **Romans** 16; the four **Gospels**; **Acts**; **Ephesians** 5:21).
- According to Gen. 4:1-2a, Adam “knew” Eve (sexually) and “she conceived and bore Cain (*qayin*), saying, ‘I have *created/produced* (*qanah*) a man with the help of Yahweh.’” The word for “create” is the same word that describes God's creative power (Gen. 14:19, 22; cf. the use with Woman Wisdom, *created/acquired* by God in → **Proverbs** 8:22). The Hebrew Bible usually refers to women as “giving birth” to children, not as “creating” them. On saying that Eve “created” a male with (the help of) Yahweh, the Yahwist juxtaposes feminine creative power with God's creative power.²³ Likewise, on naming her (Gen. 3:20), Adam reverently recognizes Eve's role as “the mother of all living” – a role that Paul also takes into consideration to qualify the idea that only the male was created in God's image (1 Cor. 11:7-12; cf. Gen. 1:27-28).

Genesis 12–36, 38 Matriarchal history (all sexual minorities except Rebekah; see 3. Sexual minorities and sexual sins, below).

2.3 Sarah (sterile) and Hagar with Abraham, polygamy – and Keturah, Genesis 12–25; and

2.4 Hagar (slave, concubine, divorcee), Abraham and Ishmael, Genesis 16 and 21. For the authors of the New Testament, Sarah had achieved the status of a saint, characterized by her exemplary submission to her husband (→ **1 Peter** 3:6), but she pioneered in the biological process of procreation (“depositing seed,” the role traditionally attributed to the male, → **Hebrews** 11:11), mother of the children of the divine promise (Rom. 9:9; Gal. 4:21-31) and justified by faith (jointly with Abraham, Rom. 4:9; anticipated in Is. 51:2). The Sarah of Genesis, however, is someone more human, complex, even sinful – and if “submissive”, also a pioneer in the development of the tactic of a “subversive submission” (see the slaves and the women in → **Colossians** and **Ephesians**).

Although Abraham's principal wife, Sarah also was his half-sister (Gen. 20:12), a prohibited incestuous relationship according to → **Leviticus** 18 and 20. Thanks to the subterfuge imposed by her immigrant husband, Sarah spent time in Pharaoh's harem, but she left with her reputation intact (Gen. 12:15); she later had a similar adventure with King Abimelech (20:1-18). Sarah (“princess”) was extraordinarily beautiful but was “sterile” and, in order to remedy the disastrous situation, pioneered “open marriages”: she took the initiative, giving her slave Hagar to Abraham as his concubine (Gen. 16:1-3). Almost as soon as she was pregnant, Hagar began to

mock Sarah for her infertility. Sarah interpreted the scorn and verbal attacks of her slave as a type of “violence” (*khamas*, 16:5) and responded with the first act of oppression indicated in the Bible: “Then Sarai *dealt harshly* (*’anah*) with her, and she ran away from her” (16:6).

Exemplifying an option for the poor, an angel of Yahweh appeared to Hagar in the desert and convinced her to return and submit herself to Sarah; when she had done this, she gave birth to Ishmael (16:7-16; → the option of angels for the poor in **Luke** 1–2 and 16).

Hagar's son Ishmael now a youth and Isaac, Sarah's son (born when she was 90 years old) now a small child, Sarah again was shocked when she saw Ishmael “playing” (sexually?) with Isaac (→ **Galatians** 4:29) and demanded that Abraham divorce Hagar. Abraham, after receiving marriage counseling from Yahweh, submitted to Sarah (!) and sent Hagar with Ishmael away, poorly provisioned, to die in the desert (child abuse?, Gen. 21:8-14; → **Galatians** 4:30). In this second marriage crisis, after having recommended divorce, God manifested an option in favor of the divorced concubine slave (now a single mother) and rescued Hagar and Ishmael, promising them a marvelous future: a lineage that would constitute a great nation (17:20; 16:10; 25:13-16, which are the Arabian tribes and the Arabic peoples; see NJB note 25:12b; HCSB note 25:12-18).

Undoubtedly exhausted after so much “submission” and so much assistance to “family values” (incest, twice a concubine of kings, bigamy, campaigns in favor of open marriage and then divorce), at 127 years of age Sarah died (Genesis 23). Abraham now was only 140 years old, was a widower, and was divorced from Hagar. Then he married Keturah and – without Viagra – fathered six more children with her (Gen. 25:1-2). Finally, at 175 years of age, Abraham also died and was buried by his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, in Machpelah, where Sarah's tomb was (Gen. 25:7-11).

2.5 Rebekah and Isaac: Jacob vs. Esau, Genesis 24–27; see Bathsheba and David: Solomon (→ 2 Samuel 11–12). According to tradition, Genesis tells us a “patriarchal” history, but a reading without prejudice makes clear that Rebekah is much more important than Isaac and that we should refer to the patri/matriarchal history of Abraham, Rebekah and Jacob.²⁴ After almost being sacrificed as a burnt offering by his father Abraham (Genesis 22), Isaac appears to be traumatized, timid and emotionally attached to his mother (24:67). Finally, with Isaac still an old bachelor at 40, Abraham decided to take the initiative: he sent a servant in search of a wife for Isaac among his relatives in his country of origin. Before going, the servant had to swear an oath to Abraham, putting his hand on the genitals of the patriarch (always the place of choice in the oaths taken in the Bible; Gen. 24:2, where “thigh” is a euphemism for genitals).

In Genesis 24, almost a *novel* in itself and characterized by God's guidance and providence, the servant is able to arrange the marriage of Isaac with Rebekah, a cousin. The relationship with Isaac, then, was incestuous (although not of the type later condemned by Leviticus 18 and 20), but was one of the few monogamous marriages in Genesis (see Adam and Eve, Genesis 1–5; Joseph and Asenath, Gen. 41:45). Obviously, the marriage between Rebekah and Isaac was not established by any kind of “pact” between the pair,²⁵ but through Abraham's arrangement with Laban and Bethuel, Rebekah's brother and father, with the servant acting as Abraham's representative. Rebekah is only permitted to determine the time of her departure to go and live with Isaac (24:50-51, 54-60), who learned to love her after cohabiting with her in the tent of his deceased and very mourned-for mother Sarah (24:67).

As Sarah before and Rachel later, Rebekah suffered “sterility” (for 20 years), but when Isaac reached 60, it occurred to him to pray for Rebekah, who immediately conceived the first twins in biblical history: Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:21, 26). The twins made Rebekah's pregnancy difficult because they fought continuously in the womb; finally Esau is born, but with Jacob grasping with a hand the heel of his brother. Jacob was hairless and domestic, Rebekah's favorite, while Esau was hairy (a “bear” type), an enthusiast of country life and Isaac's favorite. During the difficult pregnancy, Rebekah received an oracle from God, indicating that two nations would descend from the twins in her womb but that “the elder (Esau) shall serve the younger (Jacob).” Because they were in weaker social positions, Rebekah and Jacob had to resort to tricks in order to take away Esau's firstborn rights (Gen. 25:29-34) and the blessing of their father (26:34–27:40), but they thus managed to fulfill the oracle received by Rebekah (25:23).

Rebekah also collaborated with Isaac in the deception of King Abimelech (12:10-20 // 20:1-18), when they were immigrants and enjoyed Philistine hospitality (26:1-11 // 12:10-20 // 20:1-18), but God blessed the deception (26:12-16). After losing his father's blessing, Esau was so angry he wanted to kill his brother, but the ever astute Rebekah found out, took the initiative and sent Jacob to live safely with his uncle Laban in Haran (27:41–28:9). Thus, in this entire section the matriarch Rebekah, not Isaac, dominates and takes the necessary steps to fulfill the oracle and purpose that God had revealed to her during her pregnancy (→ **Romans** 9:10-13, where Paul cites the oracle to advance his argument concerning sovereign divine election). Rebekah “through clever manipulation, whereby Isaac is deceived...achieves her purpose and controls the family destiny.”²⁶ Consequently, Meyers suggests that the accounts concerning Rebekah were originally told and conserved by women. Even when present and visible, the famous patriarch Isaac appears more like part of the background. The only exception would be the brief account of the dispute concerning the wells, where Isaac, as a wise immigrant, continually “turns the other cheek” and cedes the lands demanded by the inhabitants of the land (Gen. 26:17-25).

2.6 Leah (unloved) and Rachel (sterile) + the polygamist Jacob's two concubines, Genesis 28–35. Although “not loved” by Jacob, who always prefers Rachel, it is Leah who gives birth to six children with Jacob, who are the ancestors of six of the twelve tribes of Israel. (Leah signifies “cow”, the symbol of fertility in Mesopotamia.) Jacob, Leah and Rachel are cousins, and although the Hebrew Bible does not condemn polygamous marriages even between cousins, Leviticus later prohibits a male from marrying sisters (→ **Leviticus** 18:18). Thanks to Laban's trick, Jacob celebrates his marriage to Rachel by having anonymous sex with Leah, the elder sister (Gen. 29:16-26). Reflecting a pre-scientific perspective, the account implies the effectiveness of the mandrake fruit as an aphrodisiac, and it is the only biblical text that attests to the purchase of sex (prostitution?) within a marriage (Gen. 30:14-20). In addition to polygamy, incest, anonymous sex, prostitution, the utilization of aphrodisiacs and the sexual use of concubine slaves to increase fertility, it is difficult to find other “family values” in the texts concerning Jacob, the honored father of the twelve tribes. Nonetheless, we should appreciate the diversity and flexibility of the norms and the wise adaptation to the needs of each person.

Jacob flees from the home of his father Isaac after collaborating with Rebekah's trick to take from Esau his privileges as firstborn and thus fulfill the divine oracle she received during her pregnancy. Laban makes a type of option in favor of his elder daughter, less attractive than Rachel and thus guarantees her immortality as the mother of six of the tribes of Israel. By fleeing with Jacob, Rachel achieves a type of revenge, stealing her father's idols and, to prevent

the discovery of the theft, she sits on them on her camel and pretends that she is menstruating (a trick undoubtedly greatly appreciated by the women who may originally have told and preserved the account (see introduction at beginning, following the outline).

2.7 Dinah (raped?, avenged – and left single), 30:21; 34:1-31; 46:15. After winning the competition for mothering sons, Leah finally gave birth to a daughter, Dinah (Gen. 30:21), who very soon got into more trouble than all of the twelve brothers together. Not content with staying at home as a respectable woman of that time and allowing her parents to arrange an appropriate marriage for her, Dinah went to “see” the women of the nearby large city. However, it was she who was “seen” and by Shechem, the city's prince, which also was called Shechem. What precisely happened later is not totally clear:²⁷

- Shechem “took/grabbed her (*laqakh*) and lay with her by force, and he humiliated/ oppressed/ raped her (*'anah*);
- then Shechem's soul/life (*nefesh*) became obsessed (*dabaq*) with her; he loved her (*'ahab*) and spoke to the girl's heart;
- Shechem then said to his father, “Get me this girl to be my wife” (again²⁸ the marriage was not an agreement between the couple);
- Jacob found out that Shechem had stained (*time'*, spotted, blemished, contaminated, profaned) his daughter (34:5, 13, 27);
- finally, Simeon and Levi concluded that Shechem had treated their sister “like a prostitute (*zonah*)” (34:31, which suggests mutual consent).

Lyn Bechtel questions whether Dinah was “raped” and points out that Shechem's expressions of love are very strong. He appears to be in love, not like someone who has committed an act of exploitation and rape: “Rapists feel hostility and hatred toward their victims, not closeness and tenderness.”²⁹ Perhaps it was something similar to modern cases of “date rape.” At any rate, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, decided to take revenge and they set a trap for Shechem's men: they demanded that all of them be circumcised before permitting the marriage between the prince and Dinah. Then, while all are incapacitated and recovering from the surgery (→ **Joshua 5**), Simeon and Levi, probably accompanied by their followers, surprised the Hivites and killed them.

Jacob disapproved (Gen. 34:30) and denounced (Gen. 49:5-7) this violent act of treason (see Shechem in Judges 9). Jacob and Dinah represent an opening to and acceptance of strangers, while Simeon and Levi represent a violent separatist tendency;³⁰ this dialectic became even stronger during the attempts to establish the norms of the post-exilic Jewish community (→ **Ezra, Nehemiah**). Susan Niditch points out how Dinah took the initiative at the beginning of the narrative, but she never speaks and totally disappears after having been brought home by her brothers (34:26). Niditch concludes that the narrative does not deal so much with her as with two groups of men who fight to control the women.³¹

2.8 Tamar (widow and “prostitute”) and Judah's three sons (Er, Onan and Shelah), 38:1-30. Another revealing Yahwist narrative shows how the “scandalous” Canaanite Tamar achieved entry in the genealogies of both David (Ruth 4:12-21 and 1 Chron. 2:3-4, which omits Onan's punishment!) and of Jesus (Matt. 1:3). One would think that one of the four women in

the genealogy of Jesus, to whom Genesis dedicates a long chapter, would be of maximum interest to all those who pride themselves in “taking the Bible seriously.” However, many works of traditional biblical erudition almost put Tamar on the list of “the disappeared”. Recently, several feminist biblicists have managed to rescue Tamar from oblivion and some even work to draw edifying lessons from her for respectable women and contemporary Christian families. Tamar appears to be grateful for the rescue but somewhat resistant to the sexual ideologies that endeavor to rectify her life instead of celebrating her status as another sexual minority accepted by God. Genesis 38 would leave most modern readers perplexed, but decades of feminist research have illuminated the majority of the mysteries.³²

Judah, one of Jacob's twelve sons and ancestor of the principal tribe of Israel, separates himself from his brothers and marries a Canaanite, who gives him the three sons of this narrative (Er, Onan and Shelah). Then Judah obtains Tamar (undoubtedly another Canaanite) as a wife for Er, his eldest son. Er suddenly dies, young and without children, which the narrator takes for granted is divine punishment for some unknown sin (38:7; see Uzzah in 2 Samuel 6). Following the *Levirate* custom, common in the Ancient East (→ **Deuteronomy** 25:5-10; **Ruth**; **Mark** 12:18-27), Judah then says to Onan, Er's younger brother:

“Go in to (*bo'*); “Lie with,” NIV) your brother’s wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her; raise up offspring for your brother” [*levir*, Latin for brother-in-law; see *levirate*]. But since Onan knew that the offspring would not be [legally considered] his, he spilled his semen on the ground whenever he *went in to (bo')* his brother’s wife, so that he would not give offspring to his brother. What he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord, who put him to death also (Gen. 38:8-10).

For “go in to (*bo'*)” as a euphemism for sexual relations, see the word play in the title of Psalm 51, with reference to David with Bathsheba. The text refers only to sexual relations (“go in to, penetrate”) and says nothing about marriage. The narrative concerning Tamar revolves around the responsibility of the *levirate*; → **Deuteronomy**, *levirate*), a common custom in the Ancient East and still practiced today among tribes in Africa and Asia (DHHBE notes 38:8, 10; NOAB note 38:8-10). Onan refused to impregnate Tamar to avoid losing the portion of his inheritance that the son born to Tamar would receive from Judah. Following the *levirate* custom, after Onan's death Judah should have sent Shelah, his third son, to have sexual relations with Tamar and procreate an heir, who would be recognized as the son of Er, the deceased brother. This is what Judah promised his daughter-in-law (38:11):

“Remain a widow in your father’s house until my son Shelah *grows up*” (NRSV).

However, perhaps for fear Tamar might have been the cause of Er's and Onan's deaths, Judah decided not to send his youngest son Shelah to this *femme fatale*, but left her as a widow in her father's house, even when his wife had died and Shelah had grown up. When Tamar found out that Judah was going to shear his sheep (a time of feasting, 1 Sam. 25:4, 8, 11, 36) and thus would pass nearby, she concocted a risky plan: covering her face with a veil, she sat by the roadside like a prostitute. When Judah passed by – undoubtedly very happy from the feast and the abundance of wine – he invited her to have sexual relations with him in exchange for a kid goat but then gave her as a guarantee his staff, his signet and his cord.

Although Judah had not fulfilled his promise of giving her his third son, Tamar had the responsibility with regard to her father-in-law of avoiding other sexual relationships. Thus, after three months, when Judah found out Tamar was pregnant, he exercised his patriarchal authority and ordered her to be burned (38:24):

As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, “It was the owner of these who made me pregnant.” And she said, “Take note, please, whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff.” Then Judah acknowledged them and said, “She is more just than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not lie with her again (Gen. 38:25-26, author's translation).

Tamar's “scandalous” conduct in reality was more “just” than that of Judah, since she acted with loyalty to and solidarity with her deceased husband, rescuing his name and his inheritance from oblivion. Furthermore, as Tikva Frymer-Kensky explains: “In-law incest rules are suspended for the purpose of the levirate.... Once she is pregnant, future sex with a late son’s wife would be incestuous.”³³ Genesis 38 thus describes a leviratic custom, which obligated the male to have sexual relations to produce a son (“Lie with”, NIV 38:8), but not to “marry” the widow (*pace* the Spanish NVI, 38:8, “cásate = marry her”, and many commentaries; → **Deuteronomy** 25:5-10).

Notably, the ancient custom of the *levirate* (which became law in Deut. 25:5-10) contradicts the prohibitions in Leviticus against incestuous relationships with the sister-in-law (Lev. 18:16; 20:21). As in the command to make Isaac a burnt offering (Genesis 22), the Bible thus presents us with a “teleological suspension” of ethical norms (Soren Kierkegaard). The hunger of David's troops also resulted in a suspension of the prohibition of eating consecrated bread (→ **1 Samuel** 21:1-6; **Mark** 2:23-28). In the custom and law of the *levirate*, the necessity of the widow to have a son results in the suspension of the prohibition against an incestuous relationship with the sister-in-law. That is, in general what is prohibited in Leviticus becomes a legal requirement in Deut. 25:5-10 (which reflects a later transformation of the old customs described in Genesis 38 and Ruth). Similarly, John Boswell concluded that what was prohibited for persons with the common heterosexual orientation (Lev. 18:21, 20:13 and → **Romans** 1:26-27 and references to Boswell) should be permitted for persons with a homosexual orientation. Regardless, the Bible makes it clear that wisdom and discernment are necessary in the interpretation and contemporary application of the commandments and norms.

The law of the *levirate* in Deut. 25:5-10 differs from the indicated customs in Genesis 38 and Ruth since it stipulates that:

- it deals with cases in which the brothers live together;
- the responsible person is only the deceased's brother, not just any relative (cf. Judah, Tamar's father-in-law, and Boaz, one of Naomi's relatives (Ruth 2:20);
- the brother is obligated to take the widow as his wife (polygamy in many cases), not only to have sexual relations with her in order to procreate a son.

Although Tamar has not had “good press” among traditional commentators, this long account full of suspense and humor probably was originally told and conserved among Israelite women

for whom Tamar was a heroine. She found herself in a weak position: a foreigner and twice widowed, with a father-in-law who refused to fulfill the requirements of the *levirate* to perpetuate the name of his son and to be able to distribute the part of the inheritance that belonged to his descendants. Acting astutely and with courage, Tamar risked her life, in solidarity with her deceased husband, and was vindicated as a “just” person (so recognized publicly by her father-in-law and implicitly by God; cf. the justification of the prostitute Rahab in → **James** 2:25-26).

Claus Westermann concludes: “It is characteristic of the patriarchal stories that revolt against the established order, where it is a question of injustice, is initiated by women only. And in each case the justice of such self-defense is recognized.”³⁴ (See Hagar, Rebekah, Leah, Rachel, Lot's daughters; also the midwives in → **Exodus** 1). The nineteenth century dean of evangelical commentators, Franz Delitzsch (1888), even concluded that Tamar is a “saint” of the Hebrew Bible, a conclusion that Westermann rejects because the narrative says nothing explicitly about God's actions or words³⁵. Perhaps a new concept of holiness is needed! (See **3.14 Onan** below).

Genesis 37, 39–50 The Joseph story

2.9 Women in the Joseph story – Genesis 39. The wife of the eunuch Potiphar tries to seduce Joseph. The text (Gen. 39:6b) stresses the fact that the young Joseph was “handsome” (*yefeh to'ar*, muscular) and “good-looking” (*yefeh mar'eh*; see Sarah, 12:11; Rebekah, 26:7; David, 1 Sam. 16:8), but he was also pious. It is not the intention of the writers of Genesis to make a contrast between the scandalous Tamar, who acted as a prostitute (Genesis 38, Yahwist), and the pious Joseph, who flees from the invitation to adultery (Genesis 39, Elohist). Both Tamar and Joseph are in situations of social weakness and suffer slander and oppression, and both take the initiative and achieve socio-economic vindication (suggesting to the reader that the hand of God is guiding them; Gen. 45:5; 50:19-21).

Biblicists usually refer to Genesis 39 as the narrative of Joseph's *temptation*. However, the word “temptation” implies a heterosexist presupposition that takes for granted that Joseph was heterosexual and felt inwardly an attraction and temptation because of Potiphar's wife's demand that he commit adultery with her. The text never says or suggests that Joseph felt “tempted” – it only affirms that the woman tried to seduce him. Incidentally, after Joseph's imprisonment, as part of his vindication, Pharaoh gives him Asenath as his wife (Gen. 41:45) and they had two sons (Manasseh and Ephraim, 41:50-52) and no more (46:20). But as we never read that Joseph felt “tempted” by Potiphar's wife, we also never read that he *wanted* to marry Asenath or that he loved her. Furthermore, Asenath was the daughter of the powerful priest of On, and such political marriages, very common among the royalty of antiquity, did not imply love or sexual attraction but the fulfillment of common social obligations. Quite similar is the narrative concerning Uriah, who did not want to sleep with his beautiful wife, the frustrated Bathsheba, who tempted David; → **1-2 Samuel** 11:2-13). Of course, the dominant heterosexist propaganda never sleeps and cannot leave such cases in doubt, and so the apocryphal book, *Joseph and Asenath*,³⁶ races to fill the void with erotic details of the relationship between Joseph and Asenath and her melodramatic conversion.

Although Potiphar's wife remains without a name in Genesis, it is she, with her violent effort to seduce the young and attractive Hebrew slave (Gen. 39:6), who triggers all the following important events: the imprisonment, Joseph's release and exaltation, the emigration of the Israelites to Egypt during the famine in Palestine and, finally, the most important event in the Hebrew Bible – the Exodus.³⁷ The account of the attempted seduction has many literary parallels, for example, Ishtar's effort to marry Gilgamesh, another hero known for his apparent homosexual orientation. (Concerning Gilgamesh and Enkidu, see David and Jonathan, → **1-2 Samuel**).

But, what about Potiphar himself, whom the Bible refers to as a “eunuch” (*saris*, Gen. 39:1; → **Deuteronomy, Esther**)?³⁸ Because of ignorance concerning eunuchs, many biblicists rush to conclude that Potiphar could not have been literally a eunuch since he was married (DHHBE, notes Gén. 37:36 and Jer. 29:1-2). However, although eunuchs could not procreate children, they could marry, since marriage is a social state and marriages for political and economical reasons were common in the Ancient East (→ **Esther; Matthew** 19:12). The recognition of Potiphar as a eunuch (literally) helps us to understand the deception and sexual desperation of his wife and her desire to seduce Joseph. For more details concerning Joseph as a sexual minority, see **3.16 Joseph**, below.

3. Sexual minorities and sexual sins

3.1 Abel, victim of heterosexual violence. Abel's older brother Cain was a farmer who married a sister (apparently) and became the prototype of the heterosexual “breeder” (Gen. 4:17-24 [J]; his creative descendants all died in the flood but the priestly source gives a parallel genealogy for Seth in Gen. 5:1-32 [P] that produces Noah's line; regarding the similar names, see notes in NOAB, NISB, HCSB, JSB; NJB). Abel, however, was unmarried and childless when Cain murdered him (Gen. 4:25; also a pastor of sheep, a humbler occupation, often characterized by homoerotic activity; see Joseph, Moses, David; → **1-2 Samuel**; the shepherds in → **Luke** 2:8-20), and thus qualifies as a sexual minority. Yahweh's preference for Abel's offering (of the first and best from his flock) and rejection of Cain's casual choice from his crops evidently provoked Cain to murderous jealousy (Gen. 4:3-5). Yahweh's consistent option for the socially disadvantaged younger brother is a major theme throughout Genesis (see Isaac, Genesis 21; Jacob, Genesis 27 and 31; and Joseph, Genesis 37). As the first sexual minority in the Bible, Abel is also the first victim of murderous violence, whose blood, crying from the soil for justice (Gen. 4:10) also anticipates the blood of countless sexual minority martyrs throughout human history. At this writing (Jan-Feb, 2011), memorial services are being held throughout the world for Ugandan Anglican David Kato, martyred secretary-leader of Integrity, the Anglican/Episcopal gay organization, who also brought the sexual minority ecumenical ministry of Other Sheep to his country (in the USA see Matthew Shepherd 1998).³⁹

3.2 Incest: Cain (presumably with a sister); Sarah with Abraham; Leah and Rachel with Jacob; cf. Rebekah, with her cousin Isaac; → **Exodus** 6:20, the parents of Moses. Although the later priestly literature of → **Leviticus** 18 and 20 includes detailed prohibitions of sexual relations which today we classify as “incestuous” (14 prohibitions in Leviticus 18 and

seven, with the death penalty, in Leviticus 20), such relations appear to be preferred in the Genesis narratives (especially in the matriarchal and patriarchal histories of Genesis 12–50):

- Cain, after killing Abel, his younger brother, apparently marries his sister, at least if we follow a literalist reading (**Gen. 4:17**, prohibited in → **Leviticus** 18:9 and 20:17);
- Sarah (“princess”), Abraham's half-sister through his father Terah (Gen. 20:12) and his first wife, a relationship prohibited in → **Leviticus** 18:9 and 20:17;
- Leah and Rachel, Laban's daughters and Jacob's wives, although marrying two sisters was prohibited in → **Leviticus** 18:18 (though not in Leviticus 20);
- Jochebed, mother of Moses, Aaron and Miriam (Num. 26:59); wife *and aunt* of Amram (Ex. 6:20), a relationship prohibited in → **Leviticus** 18:12 and 20:20.

Although Leviticus did not condemn marriage between cousins, note that Abraham sent his servant to obtain a family-related wife (Gen. 24:4; Rebekah, through her father Bethuel and his uncle Abraham, was Isaac's close cousin, once removed).

3.3 Lamech, Adah and Zillah – bigamy (4:18-24; → 1-2 Chronicles, 3.2 Polygamy in the Bible). See Abraham and Jacob above. Cf. the few cases of monogamy in Genesis, primarily:

- Eve and Adam,
- Rebekah and Isaac,
- Joseph and Asenath, daughter of Potiphara, pagan priest of On (Gen. 41:45), mother of Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 41:50-52; 46:20).

3.4 Angels rape women (6:1-4). Although the Neoplatonic tradition in Jewish and Christian theology deny that angels have bodies and sexual capability (→ **Hebrews** 1:14), other texts affirm the corporality of angels. At present, most biblicists recognize that Gen. 6:1-4 deals with the sexual union between angels and women and that the genre of the text is legendary in terms of the giants and mythological in terms of the fallen angels.⁴⁰ (See HCSB, Gen. 6:1-4, notes; NLTSB, note 6:1-2; NJB, Gen. 6:1-4, note 6a, and Jude 6-7, note h; → **Jude**.) In the Gospels (Mark 12:24-25 // Matt. 22:29-30 // Luke 20:34-36), Jesus denies that the angels “marry” but does not deny their sexual capability. Other texts of the Ancient East, the LXX (*ángeloi*), Jewish intertestamental literature and → **Jude** 6-7 confirm that the angels of Gen. 6:1-4 raped the women (they did not “marry” them in the modern consensual sense). The ideological block against the concept of angels with sexual capabilities has contributed to the error of reading the Sodom narrative as a condemnation of “sodomy” or “homosexuality”, instead of recognizing that it deals with the efforts of all the men of Sodom to rape and thus humiliate the two visiting angels (→ Genesis 19).

3.5 Ham and his father Noah: incestuous rape? (9:18-29). Traditionally commentators have taken literally the narrative concerning Noah, drunk and sleeping naked, and his son Ham, who entered the tent and “saw” the nakedness of his father. On waking up Noah knew what his

son *had done* to him and cursed, not Ham but Canaan, his son.⁴¹ However, most biblicists now recognize that the narrative, with euphemistic language, deals with a case of incestuous rape⁴² (HCSB Gen 9:22-24 note). In support of interpreting Ham's act of "seeing" as a euphemism for the act of *committing* incestuous rape, they point out that:

- The expressions "uncover the nakedness" and "see the nakedness" in such texts indicate sexual relations, especially incestuous (→ Lev. 18:6-18; 20:11, 17-21);
- If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and *sees her nakedness*, and she *sees his nakedness*, it is a disgrace.... (Lev. 20:17, NRSV; cf. NIV: "...and they have sexual relations....");
- The act of "seeing" the nakedness frequently precedes a rape (→ **Lamentations** 1:8-10; **Habakkuk** 2:15; **Nahum** 3:5). Especially notable is Gen. 6:2, where the angels "saw" the women before "taking wives" (rape), which forms a structural inclusion with Gen. 9:18-29. The flood narrative, provoked by human violence (Gen. 6:11, 13), is placed between the two rape narratives (see, and then rape);
- On awakening, Noah "knew what his youngest son *had done* to him" (9:24), which is an expression too strong to describe the mere act of "seeing", even if it were with hostile intentions or sexual desire;
- If we recognize that Ham not only "saw" his father's nakedness but actually raped him, we can understand the severity of Noah's curse (9:23-24) against Ham's son, Canaan (progenitor of the Canaanites). In racist circles, Noah's curse commonly has been misinterpreted as a sentence of people of color ("the Negro race") to perpetual slavery under "the White race." Perpetual slavery of all his descendants would be too much of a punishment for the sin of only "seeing" someone naked;
- Archaeologists have discovered texts of Mesopotamia and Egypt that describe rape as an effort by a man to humiliate a rival and establish power (see the Egyptian myth of Horus and Seth). Understood that way, Ham, as Noah's youngest son, attempted to usurp his father's authority and establish his control over his brothers. For this reason he left the tent with Noah's mantle as evidence and boasting of his act before his brothers (see Absalom when he took David's harem and Adonijah's effort to do the same with Abishag in order to defeat Solomon, → **2 Samuel** 16:20-22 and **1 Kings** 2:13-25).

Genesis 19 should be interpreted as attempted rape as an act of power, not as an expression of homoerotic desires (contrary to Gagnon, "*homosexual* incestuous rape"); but we should not suppose that Ham was of a homosexual orientation, since that would be anachronistic.

3.6 "Sterile" women: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel (Genesis 12....). The first thing Genesis affirms about Sarah is that she is sterile (*'aqarah*; 11:30), also a characteristic of the other two Genesis matriarchs, Rebekah (25:21) and Rachel (29:31). Sterility was the worst disgrace a woman could suffer (1 Samuel 1; Psalm 113:9; Is. 54:1). With this emphasis, the Yahwist narrator stresses the contrast with the divine promises of innumerable descendants, after they

were fulfilled with God's miraculous help. The texts thus exalt Yahweh's superiority over the Canaanite fertility gods (see Deut. 7:14, masculine!; Ex. 23:26; Judges 13:2-3).⁴³

3.7 Adultery: robbery of another male's sexual property (see the matriarch at risk, Gen. 12:10-20 // 20:3; 26:10); → Exodus 20 // Deuteronomy 5, #7 of the Ten Commandments. In patriarchal societies women were considered as sexual property of a male (father, then husband) and adultery consisted of the robbery of the sexual property of another male, not in any "unfaithfulness" to mutual vows made with a spouse.⁴⁴ In contrast, in modern non-patriarchal societies, it is incongruous to claim to be the owner of another person's genitals. In cases of *consensual sexual relations between adults in private*, few would want the state to invade the privacy of homes to investigate and condemn such relations, since an armed state with modern technology to carry out systematically such a task would be a great threat and would leave us without privacy. On the other hand, agencies that serve rape victims and abused children have demonstrated how common and tragic such cases are. Therefore, many propose that if we want to establish a basic commandment in the sexual sphere, such a commandment should condemn *adult rape and child abuse* and leave any prohibition of adultery as a topic of religious education and marital counseling (in the cases where a couple decides to exchange vows of permanent or temporary sexual exclusivity).

3.8 All of the men of Sodom seek to rape two angels (19:1-29); → Judges 19. After decades of controversy, biblicists now recognize that the Sodom narrative (Genesis 19) tells of the attempts by the men of the city to rape two visiting angels. God then condemns the city because the men seek to do violence instead of offering the required hospitality (exemplified by Abraham's conduct toward the two visiting angels in Genesis 18). *However*, although the text does not suggest any of this, Robert Gagnon plays his triumph card, "gender complementarity" (that God created two sexes that should always complement each other) and concludes that, *in addition to* the violence, God destroyed the city for not respecting this principle. Of course, Gagnon does not explain why Yahweh, if God's intention was to cure homosexuals of their vice, sent a pair of sexually attractive masculine angels to sleep together in Lot's house, instead of a pair that would reflect the diversity of the two sexes that complement each other. Neither does Gagnon refute the fact that the 48 texts in the Bible that refer to Sodom's condemnation avoid any reference to homoeroticism and speak of other sins (oppression, injustice, violence; → **Ezekiel** 16). Furthermore, Jesus not only avoids condemning homosexual relations, but he condemns Sodom for its lack of hospitality (Mat. 10:11-15; 11:23-24; Luke 10:8-10; 17:28-29). Also see the only reference to Sodom in Paul's writings, **Romans** 9:29, where we could expect an elaboration; see Excursus on Philip Esler.⁴⁵

Although in the Bible "Sodom" is simply a place, the medieval monk Peter Damian (1007-1072 BC) invented a sin with the name "sodomy", but left it without any clear and explicit definition. Since then for centuries, laws have been passed that named "sodomy" a crime, often punished by torture and the death penalty.⁴⁶ With the goal ("conservative") of limiting the power of the state to invade home and private life, the Napoleon Code (1810) eliminated the laws against "sodomy". Because of the influence of the French Empire's culture, this Code affected not only France but also the European continent and Latin America (exceptions were Prussia; England, not conquered by Napoleon; and the United States and Canada).⁴⁷ In the nineteenth century, influenced by the greater tolerance of the Enlightenment (except regarding masturbation, see below) and the scientific discovery of sexual orientations, which affect the various sexual

behaviors, even England and the United States eliminated the death penalty for the crime of “sodomy”.

In the final decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, the great majority of the states in the United States eliminated their anti-sodomy laws and in 2003 the U.S. Supreme Court declared all such laws unconstitutional. Exceptionally, in Latin America, after a 1997 decision by Ecuador's Supreme Court, laws against sodomy remained in force only in Chile (introduced by Adolfo Pinochet but eliminated in 1998) and in Nicaragua (introduced by Violeta Chamorro and eliminated in 2008; see www.iglhrc.org). **See below, Appendix 3, “Eight Myths in the Interpretation of Genesis 19:1-29 (Sodom); → Ezekiel, appendix concerning “Abomination”.**

3.9 Lot's daughters, incest with their father (see Moabites and Ammonites, 19:30-38). When all the men of Sodom tried to rape the two angels lodging with Lot, he offered them his two daughters as substitutes, virgins (19:8) but engaged (19:14), apparently a less shameful alternative than the rape of visiting men (angels).⁴⁸ After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, taking refuge in a cave and thinking that nobody else had remained alive in the region, the daughters planned a trap to assure their future welfare (and perhaps avenge themselves for the offer their father had previously made). They get their father drunk two consecutive nights, have sex with him and thus have two sons, ancestors of the Moabites and the Ammonites. The narrative was probably conserved in order to defame these two enemy nations (→ **Ruth**).

3.10 God and Abraham threaten to make a holocaust sacrifice with Isaac (22:9; → Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5.) (Cf. the killing of children in the flood and the destruction of Sodom.) Michael Carden comments:

“Whether it be Isaac, Bat [daughter of] Jephthah or Ishmael, these stories of sacrificed children call to mind the experience of many LGBT people dealing with parental / family homophobia and heterosexualism. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick recounts ‘I’ve heard of many people who claim they’d as soon their children were dead as gay....’ Whether it be through donning the straightjacket of the closet, or be following spurious ‘ex-gay’ and reparative therapy programmes, or through suicide, parents offer up their queer children on the altars of homophobia.”⁴⁹

3.11 Yahweh and Rebekah prefer Jacob (the hairless, effeminate son) over the “bear” Esau (26:34–28:9). Jacob, effeminate, flees from the family like a thrown-out gay youth; has his “ladder to heaven” dream; wrestles, in SM (sodomasochistic) style, with God/angel.⁵⁰

3.12 Leah, the “un-loved” wife in a polygamous marriage with Jacob (Gén. 29:15-30; → 2.6 Leah, above).

3.13 Dinah, raped virgin (Genesis 34; cf. laws in → Exodus and Deuteronomy; → 2.7 Dinah, above).

3.14 Tamar, widow, prostitute, Levirate (Genesis 38; → Deuteronomy 25:5-10; → 2.8 Tamar, above).

reproduction. Therefore, it was thought that the semen contained the entire human being, destroyed both in masculine masturbation and in the practice of *coitus interruptus*.

Although Onan's name was thus used for two centuries to designate masturbation, it is ironical that now one of the few points of consensus among biblicists of all stripes is that the very brief narrative in Genesis concerning Onan *has nothing to do* with masturbation (see **2.2.6 Tamar**).

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3.16 Potiphar, a married eunuch (39:1-23; → eunuchs in Deuteronomy 23:1; Esther; 1-2 Kings; Isaiah 56:3-7). Cf. the cupbearer and the baker, also "eunuchs" (40:2, *saris*).

3.17 Joseph ("the best little boy in the world"?) escapes adultery (Genesis 37–50). Joseph, 17 years old, Jacob's eleventh son and Rachel's first (Gen. 30:22-24; 35:24), was his father's favorite, a son so pampered that his ten older brothers were jealous. Jacob commanded that a very "special (*passim*; 37:3, 23, 32) tunic" (*ketonet*) be made for Joseph. Biblicists traditionally interpreted this obscure descriptive Hebrew word (*passim*) as "of many colors" (KJV). However, lately some writers and composers have suggested that Jacob recognized that Joseph was gay and wanted to celebrate it, dressing him with a tunic with the design and colors of the rainbow (→ **Revelation** 10:1). Perhaps that is why it is more common now to question the translation "of many colors" and prefer:

- "long robe with sleeves" (NRSV); "ornate robe" (NIV);
"elaborately embroidered coat" (The Message), "decorated tunic" (NJB)

Regardless, Joseph leaves the impression of being "the best little boy in the world" (to cite *The Best Little Boy in the World*, Andrew Tobias' classic gay autobiography). To the insult of having received a splendid tunic of royal style (2 Sam. 13:18-19), Joseph was in the habit of adding the insult of informing his father about his brothers' bad reputation. And to make things worse, he told everyone about his two dreams in which his parents and all his brothers bowed down before him (see the fulfillment in 42:6). Naturally, the majority of his brothers soon wanted to kill the spoiled kid. Only Reuben convinced the others that it would be better to sell him as a slave. By divine providence (the principal theological theme of the story, 45:5-7; 50:19-21), the young and handsome Joseph becomes the slave in Egypt of the eunuch Potiphar, another sexual minority.

Being a eunuch, Potiphar could not engender children (nor be circumcised, a very important Jewish rite), but he could marry, as did many eunuchs for social and economic motives (→ **Deuteronomy** 23:1; **Matthew** 19:12). The fact that Potiphar was a eunuch but married may explain why his wife felt so sexually deprived and why she was so desperate to seduce Joseph (→ **2.9 Women in the Joseph story**, above; cf. Uriah, → **1-2 Samuel** 18–19).

On refusing the demands of Potiphar's wife (“lie with me”), Joseph points out that such an act would betray the confidence that Potiphar had placed in him and concludes: “How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (39:8-9). The previous narrative texts concerning Sarah (12:10-20 // 20:3) and Rebekah (26:10) make it clear that adultery, as theft of the sexual property of another male, was prohibited; → **Exodus** 20). Thus, the prohibitions of adultery in the legal codes (Ex. 20:14, etc.) are not novel heavenly revelations but confirmations of the norms considered wise and necessary in order to maintain viable communities (see Cain in Genesis 4, the “do not kill” of the Decalogue, Rachel's theft of domestic gods, Gen. 31:19-55).

After being sold as a slave and incarcerated (two oppressive experiences), Joseph becomes the second in authority, under Pharaoh, over all of Egypt, the primary empire of the period. Even though liberated from slavery and jail, on the arrival of his brothers in search of grain, Joseph remained as a “brother in the closet” and only after many tricks does he leave the closet and reveal his identity as brother. His suffering, under divine providence, served to free his father and brothers from famine. When Judah also offers to suffer in place of his brother Benjamin, the brothers experience a profound reconciliation. The alienation that began in Genesis 3 thus finds resolution at the end of the book. However, at the same time, on leaving the parents of the twelve tribes in Egypt, Joseph's narrative prepares the way for the liberation of → **Exodus**.

Appendix 1

“God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve” – Are you sure? *Genesis 1:1–2:3 and 2:4–3:24 as sources for norms of modern conduct*

The popularity of the slogan “God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve” to justify the rejection of sexual minorities raises fundamental questions about the use of Genesis 1–3 as a source for norms of conduct in the modern world. Episcopal biblicist William Countryman has written an article that refutes the homophobic use of Genesis 1–3,⁵⁵ but the slogan (continually used on television by homophobic fundamentalists) has influenced the thinking of millions, while Countryman's erudite article has achieved very limited circulation. The principal considerations that help us in a correct interpretation of Genesis 1–3 are the following:

1. In theory, everyone recognizes the difficulty and complexity of deriving conduct norms (or “laws”) from biblical *narratives*. Many complain, for example, when a Pentecostal concludes from an account of glossolalia in Acts that “we should all speak in tongues” (which contradicts Paul's explicit teaching in 1 Corinthians 12–14).

2. Biblicists recognize that we find *two creation narratives* in the beginning of Genesis:

2:4b–3:24, from the Yahwist source, perhaps written ca. 1000-900 B.C., the period of King Solomon (uses the name Yahweh Elohim for God).

1:1–2:3, from the priestly source, written during the Babylonian exile, 587-539 B.C. (which uses only the name Elohim for God).

Genesis 2:4a (priestly) ends the 1:1–2:3 account (forming an inclusion with 1:1), but it also introduces the 2:4b–3:23 narrative and thus serves as an editorial bridge between 1:1–2:3 and 2:4b–3:24 (see notes HCSB 2:4, NISB 2:4, NOAB 2:4a, JSB 2:4, NLT Study Bible 2:4, NIV Study Bible 2:4). As in the case of the four Gospels, instead of “harmonizing” the narratives and teaching a single theology, we should respect the differences and remember that Genesis 1, the first narrative in the canonic order, is in fact of a much later, post-exilic date. Our first aim is to value the message of each narrative for the original listeners/ readers in the light of the historical context they reflect and not look for answers to our contemporary questions, which often are far from the perspective of the original context.

3. Now that both creation narratives form part of the Pentateuch and the Hebrew Bible, a **canonical approach** can reasonably ask about the relationship between Genesis 1:1–3:24 and the Laws of Moses in the Pentateuch (Exodus 20 to Deuteronomy, especially the Ten Commandments).

4. A **Christian approach**, in addition, may seek to relate the Genesis narratives with the teachings of Jesus and New Testament books.

5. However, it is important to proceed with caution, respecting everything the texts say and not proceed with the *selective literalism* typical of all stripes of fundamentalisms.

Genesis 2:4b–3:24 (from the Yahwist source, ca. 900 B.C.).

1. Although placed after Genesis 1:1–2:4a in canonical order, historically Genesis 2:4b–3:24 is the first and most primitive creation account, reflecting the scarcity of water in Palestine. This Yahwist account also gives much less evidence of a relationship with the Laws of Moses. While Genesis 1:1–2:3 ends with the paradigm of the Creator's rest (2:1-3), Genesis 2:4b-25 expresses concern *for man's work, not his rest*. God plants a garden and man is placed there “to till it and keep it” (2:15), but without any explicit instructions. Instead of speaking to the couple to instruct them about the urgency of procreating many children, Yahweh-Elohim speaks only to the man (before the woman's creation), first stressing a certain “vegetarian” freedom: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden.” Then Yahweh-Elohim adds only this prohibition, with a threat of punishment: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (2:17). At the end of the narrative the disobedient couple is exiled from the Garden of Eden, with the “tree of life” (= immortality) out of their reach forever. In this narrative the man must take care of the garden, but we do not read of any more explicit commandment, such as the “six days you shall labor” of the fourth commandment. With the couple expelled from the garden, there is no need for more prohibitions concerning the tree, since it remains out of human reach, guarded by cherubim with a flaming and turning sword (3:23-24). Genesis 2 thus appears to offer few possibilities (or temptations) for deriving norms for ethical absolutes.

Instead of attributing some “divine institution of patriarchal marriage” in Genesis 1–3, we do better to respect the text's limitations. Gen. 2:18-25 does not pretend to establish an institution, as if it were a “law” or ethical absolute. Rather, as *divine wisdom*, it seeks to *explain* the common attraction between man and woman, not as an absolute law that imposes universal heterosexuality with an obligation of maximum procreation, but as an example of an *etiological* narrative (an *etiology* explains how things came to be as they are):

Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maid (Prov. 30:18-19).

Thus Proverbs does not pretend to establish absolute commandments that eagles should never rest in a tree or that a snake cannot leave the rocks to touch ground (or to “eat dust,” Gen. 3:14?) or that human intimacy must be exclusively between a man and a woman (cf. Ruth and Naomi; David and Jonathan; Jesus and the Beloved Disciple). Genesis attributes heterosexual attraction and the potential resultant procreation to God the Creator's goodness and wisdom (remembering the urgency in antiquity to procreate, Gen. 1:26-28). Thus, like Proverbs, Gen. 2:24 (present tense verbs, NRSV, NJB, JSB) is based on *the observation of common human experience*:

“the way of a man with a maid” is explained by the goodness and wisdom of the Creator.

It is the good news of the Creator's goodness – but *not a “law”* to be applied to all without exception:

“heterosexual attraction, marriage, maximum procreation”: sometimes misinterpreted as a universal ethic (obligating everyone to marry and procreate as many children as possible).

Both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament show that human beings may please the Creator perfectly well without heterosexual relations and procreation (Jeremiah, Daniel, Nehemiah, Jesus, Paul).

2. From the fact that God created the male before the female (in Gen. 2:15-24, not in Gen. 1:26-28), Paul attempts to derive norms for the conduct of women in worship in the Corinthian church: they should not pray or prophesy in worship without having the head covered, since God created the male first (1 Cor. 11:7-10). In this very controversial text, Paul follows a Jewish tradition, affirming that God created only the male in God's image (although Gen. 1:27 teaches that the woman also was created in God's image; see below and Gal. 3:28). Paul's conclusions in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 do not appear to be very appropriate for our historical context today (very few women think they should attend church with their head covered).

3. Even more important, on dealing with divorce Jesus combines the Genesis 1 and 2 texts and thus derives normative elements, since he says:

“⁶But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female’ [Gen. 1:27]. ⁷For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh’ [Gen. 2:24]. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Mark 10:1-12, esp. 6-9).

Obviously, if churches want to derive an absolute ethic from Genesis 1–2 following Jesus, they must never accept divorced members or pastors. In fact, however, among the heterosexual majority in the churches neither the clear and explicit divine commandment to procreate to the maximum nor the prohibition of divorce is interpreted as an “ethical absolute” without flexibility in pastoral application. The teaching of Jesus and Paul about divorce permit exceptions in certain cases, and the Hebrew Bible also manifests much diversity of teaching concerning the topic (→ **Mark**, *Excursus* concerning divorce).

On citing two texts of Genesis 1–2, Jesus does not seek to find “laws” or an “ethical absolute” in the narratives to pound divorced persons or other sexual minorities. Rather, he uses the texts to defend persons oppressed by spouses who abandon them for selfish reasons. As Claus Westermann points out, a parallelism exists with the final judgment scene in Matthew, since in the entire Bible only in Matt. 25:31-46 and Genesis 3 does God emit a direct judgment against sin by judicial process and sentence.⁵⁶ But in neither case does God condemn sexual minorities (who, like cruelly abandoned women, suffer oppression). Like Jesus' parable concerning the final judgment – the separation of the goats and sheep – Genesis 1–3 offers us profound theological perceptions but without seeking to represent modern “history” or “science”.

Genesis 1:1–2:3 (from “P”, the priestly source, ca. 586-539 B.C. and reflecting the problem of the excess of water “by the rivers of Babylon,” Psalm 137:1). As in the case of the more

primitive Yahwist narrative (2:24b; also see the Babylonian narrative *Enuma Elish*), we should probably prefer a more Hebrew translation of 1:1–3:

When God began to create the heavens and the earth – the earth being a formless void with darkness covering the face of the deep and a mighty/divine wind sweeping over the face of the waters – then God said, “Let there be light” and there was light! (cf. JSB; NRSV; NJB note 1b; Biblia Latinoamericana).

The traditional translation (KJV), influenced by the versions (LXX, etc.), appears to reflect more the later Neoplatonic philosophy (a creation *ex nihilo*, 2 Maccabees 7:28, a dichotomy between spirit and matter), while Genesis 1 describes God dominating a stormy chaos of waters by establishing a heavenly dome, v. 6, and dry land, v. 9; (JSB note 1:1 and 2).

1. The text begins by affirming that God (Elohim) is the creator of *everything* (not only Adam and Eve!) and repeatedly insists in *the goodness of this entire creation* (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 25, 31). Thus, to affirm that God did not create “Steve” would be a heresy denying the first article of the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds (Ps. 139:13-16). This faith in God the Creator of *all* is repeatedly expressed in the Psalms (Ps. 24:1-2; 104:24), and the Apostle Paul utilizes the teaching of Psalm 24:1 to reaffirm the goodness of all things and deny traditional cultural distinctions between “unclean” and “clean” things (1 Cor. 10:26; see Rom. 14:1–15:6). Jesus also had taught that all foods are clean and that nothing that enters by the mouth can contaminate a human being (Mark 7:19; cf. // Matthew 15:1-20). When Rom. 1:24-27, then, refers to certain sexual practices among the Gentiles as “unclean”, Paul in effect redefines “uncleanness” in the sense of the greed and injustice that proceed from the heart and that are expressed in the oppression and violence that harm the neighbor (see Rom. 6:13, 19; 14:14, 20; 13:8-10; cf. Titus 1:15).

2. To human beings (“male and female,” both created in God's image), in Gen. 1:1–2:4a Elohim gives them **only one commandment**:

“Have many, many children; fill the world and govern it; dominate the fish and the birds, and creeping things that creep on the earth” (Gen. 1:28).

As Countryman pointed out, if we want to use the narratives of Genesis to create an “ethical absolute” (universal laws applicable to every human being in all times and places), we must insist that every person have sexual relations continually to produce as many children as possible.⁵⁷ In fact, many provisions in the Laws of Moses reflect such a norm, especially the “Levirate law” of Deut. 25:5-10, which requires that on the death of a brother without descendants, another brother must have sexual relations with the widow in order to assure descendants (with the inheritance) for the deceased brother. But divine approval of unmarried persons (Jeremiah, Jesus, Paul; see Matt. 19:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7) shows us that *the only explicit commandment in Genesis 1:1–2:3 does NOT constitute a basis for an “ethical absolute”* that requires marriage for everyone and abstention from all types of “family planning”. Therefore, if heterosexual married couples conclude that the only explicit commandment in Genesis 1:1–2:3 is NOT now normative for them and that they should limit the number of children that they desire, how can they take from these narratives an absolute condemnation of sexual minorities who do not marry or who form same-sex couples? The selective literalism

commonly practiced in fundamentalist circles may be comfortable for the majority but quite cruel (harming one's neighbor, prohibited in Romans 13:8-10) for sexual minorities.

3. From the creation of human beings in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27), later biblical tradition derives an important prohibition, since after the flood (which had again left the earth uninhabited), God commands Noah and his sons:

“Whoever sheds human blood, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in **[God's] own image God made humankind**. *And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound on the earth and multiply in it*” (Gen. 9:6-7).

Obviously, we can recognize in this text an anticipation of the sixth of the Ten Commandments, which prohibits murder (Ex. 20:13; // Deut. 5:17; cf. James 3:9). But neither does the “**you shall not murder**” constitute an “ethical absolute”, since Gen. 9:6-7 establishes the death penalty and the Hebrew Bible contains many commandments of killing in wars, etc. Many fundamentalists cite Gen. 9:6-7 to support the death penalty in modern nations, but, with their selective literalism, they never think of implementing everything the Bible commands (e.g., the death penalty for a young victim of sexual abuse by another man, Lev. 20:13; cf. Gen. 4:13-16, where God prohibits the death penalty in Cain's case).

4. Although not an explicit commandment, obviously Gen. 1:29-31, which limits food for all animals, including humans, to a **vegetarian diet**, is presented as a reflection of God's ideal will, which according to Isaiah 11:6-8 will again become the norm in the future. Only such a state, in which no human being or animal kills an animal for food, represents the state that God can approve as “very good” (Gen. 1:31). God adjusted this provision for the human diet after the flood (Gen. 9:1-3), but still with the limitation of not eating meat with blood (9:4). Perhaps the Gospel of Mark wants to remind us of God's original will and ideal when it describes Jesus in the desert, at peace with the animals (Mark 1:12-13). Paul describes a future where life triumphs over death, with the entire cosmos transformed (Rom. 8:31-39). Does Revelation also suggest a millennium with vegetarian lions (Revelation 20)? At any rate, Gen. 1:29-31 obligates us to recognize a certain flexibility in God's will: neither does the original vegetarian diet represent an “ethical absolute”.

5. Genesis 1:1–2:3 reaches its goal in the description of the Creator's “rest” on the seventh day (Gen. 2:1-3). In this narrative, God blesses and declares **the seventh day as sacred**, but does not give humans any related commandment. Later, human rest on the seventh day (Saturday) became the fourth of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:8-11 // Deut. 5:12-15; anticipated in Exodus 16). In exile, without the temple and with Jerusalem destroyed by Babylon, Saturday and circumcision came to have a fundamental importance in maintaining Jewish identity (see the institution of circumcision in Genesis 17, also from the priestly source). In the New Testament, however, the commandment to observe Saturday as a day of rest did not become a part of the norms for the non-Jewish Christians (Rom. 14:5-6; Col. 2:16-17). Little by little, churches began to observe Sunday as “the Lord's Day” (Rev. 1:10; consider Jesus' appearances to his disciples, always on Sunday; cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

Among Christian groups today, generally only the Seventh Day Adventists continue to insist on obeying the fourth of the Ten Commandments as an “ethical absolute”. Almost all other

Christians recognize in the fourth commandment a flexible and contextual element in the Bible. But, if we accept that the element that was the principal object of Genesis 1:1–2:4a and later was one of the Ten Commandments does not represent an “ethical absolute” for Christians today, how can we claim to get such an ethic from a detail in the narrative concerning the creation of Adam and Eve and seek to use it to condemn sexual minorities today? Again, we can observe how the selective literalism of fundamentalism leads us to misuse the Bible to harm our neighbor.

Thus, in terms of literary genre, it is common to recognize that Genesis 1–3 is “protohistory” and gives much evidence of its pre-scientific perspectives:

- Light existed three “days” before the creation of the sun, the moon and the stars (Gen. 1:3-5, 14-19);
- The sky consisted of a “dome” (Hebrew: *raqia`*), a hard substance, hammered out like metal (1:6-8);
- This firmament, like a heavenly dome, separated the waters above from the waters on the earth (1:6-8);
- It is presumed that the waters accumulated on earth constitute seas surrounded by land (1:9-10) and, in addition to fish, great sea monsters lived there (1:21; Is. 27:1; 51:9; Psalm 74:12-14);
- The perspective is geocentric and anthropocentric, since God placed the sun, the moon and the stars in the dome of the firmament in order to light the earth and to indicate the Israelites’ sacred feasts (1:14-19);
- The earth began to produce vegetation and trees before the creation of the sun (1:11-13), and not only the humans (nudists, 2:25) but also all the animals originally were vegetarians (1:29-31);
- God created the universe in six days (1:1-31) but also in just one day (2:4a, where “the day” at times is mistranslated “when”);
- When Yahweh Elohim created the human being, there was not yet any rain, but the land was irrigated by a spring that came from a subterranean sea (2:5-6; see 7:11-12);
- The symbolic character (not history) of Eden is expressed by the geography of “four rivers”, which include two in Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates) and one that encircles Cush (Ethiopia) of Africa (2:10-14; see, in the heavenly Jerusalem, the existence of the “tree of life” that finally comes down to earth again (Rev. 21:2; 22:2);
- The serpent in Gen. 1:21 is a simple creature that slithers, but in Genesis 3 it is more intelligent than the human beings: it talks, it understands divine discourse, it points out apparent inaccuracies in God's speech, originally it did not crawl; now it eats dust and is always the enemy of humans;
- On threatening the human beings with immediate death, God appears to err (literally “the day”, not “when”, 2:17; cf. 3:4 and 5:5, where Adam lives 930 years);
- God and the humans spoke only Hebrew (Gen. 2:23; 11:1-9);
- Cain easily finds a wife (Gen. 4:17) since God loves diversity in creation (Psalm 104:24-25) and had created many human beings in addition to the first couple: left-handed people, brown and blue-eyed, bisexuals, lesbians, gay men, etc.; consider the more than 1,500 animal species in which scientists have confirmed the existence of homoerotic acts and homosexual relations.⁵⁸

In summary, we see that Genesis 1:1–2:3, in the context of the biblical canon and interpreted in the light of modern science, may always be “useful” (2 Tim. 3:14-17) to instruct us with wisdom regarding divine justice:

- concerning the praxis, the will and the character of the sovereign Creator, the liberator of the exodus and of the exile, who invites us to share and reflect God's freedom (Gen. 1:27-29; Is. 45:12-13; Gal. 5:1);
- to *respect the sacred life* of other humans (women as much as men), since they are created in God's image (Gen. 5:1-2, 9:6; Gal. 3:28; **James 3:9**);
- for consenting adults to enjoy *sexual relations* with justice, responsibility, wisdom and love, as a gift from a God who “is love” (Gen. 1:28; 2:18, 22-25; see 1 John 4:8, 16);
- to *thank God for children*, as a blessing from the Creator (Psalm 127:3-5; 128:3-4; Mark 10:14);
- to be good administrators and *stewards of creation*, treating all animals with justice and mercy (a modern ecological concern; Gen. 1:28-31; Isaiah 11:1-9); and
- to recognize the necessity of *periodic rest* from our labors (Gen. 2:1-3; Matt. 11:28-30).

Careful attention to everything that a text says, respecting the wisdom of other biblical texts, protects us from the errors of fundamentalism, with its arbitrary selection of preferred texts, which are applied without taking into account the differences between the original context and the contexts of the modern world. Although in Genesis 1:1–2:3 some of the Ten Commandments are anticipated, there is nothing concerning the eighth commandment (“You shall not steal”), since God gives all to everyone in common: air, water, animals, land (there is no “private property” nor “patriarchal inheritance” of limited parcels of land; → Joshua 13–24). The early church in Jerusalem endeavored to reestablish this ideal paradigm (Acts 2 and 4), but apparently it did not become normative for the communities in other cities nor for succeeding generations.

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Note. The creation of man and woman in God's image (1:27; 5:1; 9:6; see Excursus, NISB, pp. 7-8).

When God speaks in plural (“Let us make humans in our own image and likeness...,” Gen. 1:26), we probably should understand the plural as addressing the celestial court of angels and divine beings (Gen. 1:16; 16:7; 1 Kings 22:19-22; Isaiah 6; Job 1:6-7; Jer. 23:18, 22; JSB note Gen. 1:26-28; NISB note 1:26; HCSB note 1:26-28; NOAB note 1:26). The Nueva Biblia de Jerusalén note on 1:26 says “This plural ended up being an open door for the interpretation of the Church Fathers, who saw implied here the mystery of the of the Trinity.” However, it would be quite anachronistic to attribute to the ancient Israelite author the much later Christian concept, as NLTSB note 1:26 recognizes (the Spanish NBJ note is omitted in the English NJB).

1. Traditionally, reflecting Neoplatonic philosophy, St. Augustine and many others have taught that the divine image refers to the rational soul placed in the human body and then again separated at death (a dichotomy between spirit and matter), ontological concepts alien to biblical theology.

2. In the twentieth century many biblicalists came to prefer a more functional concept: that humans reflect divine action in “exercising dominion” over creation (Gen. 1:26b, 28b), but as a stewardship responsibility, not as permission for ecological abuse.

3. Genesis refers to the first couple, both man and woman, as created in God’s image, thus assuring the equality of woman with man (BENVI note 1:26). However, the purpose is not to devalue or despise sexual minorities (“Steve”), since in the NT Jesus Christ *as individual, unmarried* (sexual minority) also is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; Rom. 8:29; cf. John 14:8-9; Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:6-7).

4. Liberation theologies, which advocate in favor of oppressed groups (poor, women, immigrants, and ethnic, racial and sexual minorities), have pointed out that God’s image is reflected in the entire human being (not just in the “soul”) and moreover, emphasize the divine image as guaranteeing the value, dignity and holiness of all humans (James 3:9; cf. 1 Cor. 11:7). Therefore, sexual minorities (like “Steve”) also may exclaim with the psalmist:

¹³For you created my inward parts [lit. kidneys];
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know full well (Psalm 139:13-14).

5. In addition, however, in the twenty-first century, studies on the body/corporality in biblical theology have emphasized: (1) that many Hebrew Bible texts appear to speak of God as having a body (see God “walking in his garden” in Gen. 3:8), (2) that the concept of God as “spirit” is only found in the New Testament (John 4:24) and (3) that therefore we ought not eliminate the physical-material dimension in interpreting the sense of “image” in Genesis⁵⁹ (see the following Excursus): “‘Image’ is a concrete term implying a physical resemblance like that between Adam and his son, 5:3” (NJB note m).

Excursus: “God is Spirit” (John 4:24). In the Johanne New Testament writing, we find three unique affirmations: that God is spirit (John 4:24), light (1 John 1:5), and love (1 John 4:16, 23). Jesus himself utters the first in his dialogue with the woman of Samaria, and for centuries commentators and theologians have interpreted his words in a Neoplatonic sense as assuming a dichotomy between spirit and matter/physical and indicating that God is not physical/material (thus still, Millard Erickson, “God is spirit; that is he is not composed of matter and does not possess a physical nature;”⁶⁰ similarly → **John**.⁶¹) However, in Biblical theology “spirit” is not negative but commonly has a *positive* sense indicating *power*, as classically in Isaiah 31:3:

The Egyptians are men and not God;
Their horses are flesh [weak] and not spirit [powerful].

Thus, Paul can speak of the powerful resurrection body as a “spiritual body” with no sense of contradiction, as though he were referring to a “round square” (1 Cor. 15). The resurrection body

is sown in *weakness*, it is raised in *power*.

It is sown a natural body, it is raised a *spiritual body* (→ **1 Corinthians** 15:43b-44).⁶²

Paul thus refers to the believers’ resurrection body as a body empowered by God’s Spirit, perhaps recalling Jesus’ capacity to eat material fish but also appear at any place and pass through a door. (See also the contrast between the weakness of the flesh and the power of the spirit in Romans 7–8.)⁶³ Thus in Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4), he refers to God as “spirit” to indicate God’s power to transcend any spatial or ethnic limitations and be worshipped in spirit by any people in any place. This contrast between the spirit as power in contrast with weakness was evident in the previous chapter in Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus when he referred to being born of water and the spirit:

Flesh gives birth to flesh [weakness]

but the spirit gives birth to spirit....

The wind blows wherever it pleases [power].

You hear its sound [invisible],

but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going (John 3:6, 8).

So in the Hebrew Bible, God’s powerful invisible presence may become manifest at any and all places (1 Kings 8), especially in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle/Temple and even in human form as in the theophanies (Gen. 3:8; Ex. 33:17-23). This phenomenon reaches its culmination in John’s affirmation of the incarnation of the Word (John 1:14), where we should not read into the passage a Neoplatonic “non-material/physical” concept of the preincarnate Word (John 1:1-2). Nowhere does the Bible suggest that God’s powerful invisible “wind-like” presence (*ruakh*) has the Neoplatonic negative connotation of being non-material or non-physical.⁶⁴ As Paul Jewett explains:

God...is not an Idea; he is personal Spirit (Jn 4:24). To be sure “spirit” (*pneuma*) translates the Hebrew (*ruakh*), which literally means “wind,” an impersonal manifestation of energy.

But it is clear that when Israel spoke this way of God, they spoke of him not as an impersonal force, but as the living Subject who, in his essential nature, is the invisible Power (Energy) behind all that is, the creative Breath that animates all living things.⁶⁵

Millard Erickson reminds us: “In our day, the Mormons maintain that not only God the Son, but also the Father has a physical body, although the Holy Spirit does not.”⁶⁶ A close reading of the Bible texts enables us to avoid both the negativism of traditional Neoplatonized theology, as well as the other extreme of Mormonism with its literalistic interpretation of certain Hebrew Bible texts describing divine theophanies.

Appendix 2

Eight *Myths* in the Interpretation of Genesis 19:1-29 (Sodom)

Myth #1 The story of Sodom’s destruction in Genesis 19:1-29 demonstrates that **homosexuality is a grave sin that God condemns**. Virtually all biblicists now recognize that the story in Genesis 19 does *not* condemn “homosexuality” (which refers to a sexual orientation of certain persons and includes lesbians) but rather describes *the intent by Sodom’s males to rape the two visiting angels*, instead of offering them hospitality as Abraham had done in Genesis 18, in accordance with fundamental ancient norms.⁶⁷ Thus even Richard Hays, who seeks to establish a biblical basis for condemning homosexuality, admits: “The notorious story of Sodom and Gomorrah – often cited in connection with homosexuality – is actually irrelevant to the topic.”⁶⁸ As in the case of → **Romans**, where interpreters traditionally have ignored the fact that the context concludes with a rhetorical trap in 2:1-16, in the case of Sodom, traditionally we begin with Genesis 19 and ignore the previous context that recounts Abraham’s hospitality (thus Genesis 18 + 19 constitutes a diptych like two twin paintings). Thus, we misinterpret Gen. 19:1-29 as a condemnation of “homosexuality” when actually it describes a refusal to offer hospitality and an attempt to rape the visitors.

Nevertheless, Robert Gagnon concludes that God destroyed Sodom not only for attempting to rape the visiting angels instead of offering them hospitality, but also for failure to respect the norm of “gender complementarity.”⁶⁹ Gagnon insists that in Genesis 1–2 God created two sexes that ought to always complement each other in sexual relations, a modern concept which Gagnon always uses to trump opposing arguments.⁷⁰ Of course, Gagnon never explains why, if Yahweh’s intention were to cure homosexuals of their vice, a couple of sexually attractive male angels were sent to sleep together in Lot’s tent, instead of a heterosexual couple who might reflect the complementary diversity of two sexes. Nor does Gagnon explain why Yahweh punishes all the women and children of Sodom for the sin of the city’s males, leaving the impression that God abuses women and children with the same ferocity that the males of Sodom sought to manifest against the two angel visitors.⁷¹

Myth #2 In addition to Genesis 19, Deuteronomy 23:17-18, the law condemning sodomites, makes clear that sodomy is a sin. However, older versions had *mistranslated qadesh* as “sodomite” (Deut. 23:17-18, KJV):

¹⁷There shall be no **whore** (*qedeshah*) of the daughters of Israel, nor a **sodomite** (*qadesh*) of the sons of Israel. ¹⁸Thou shalt not bring the hire of a **whore** (*zonah*), or the price of a **dog** (*keleb*), into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God.

This same translation error of *qadesh* as “sodomite” was repeated in **1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7 and Job 36:14** (cf. the feminine *qedeshah* in Hosea 4:14). Thus, for centuries, persons who read the older translations concluded that the Hebrew Scriptures contain six condemnations of “sodomites”, which were used to bolster their misinterpretation of Genesis 19. However, the Hebrew word *qadesh/ah* literally means “holy, consecrated, set aside for God”:

¹⁷None of the daughters of Israel shall be a **temple prostitute** (*qedeshah*); none of the sons of Israel shall be a **temple prostitute** (*qadesh*). ¹⁸You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute (*zonah*) or the wages of a male prostitute (*keleb*, literally “dog”) into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are abhorrent to the LORD your God (Deut. 23:17-18, NRSV; similarly NIV, ESV and NLT).

The NJB in its note “f” on Deut. 23:18 [19 in the NJB] explains: “‘Dog’ is an opprobrious term for male prostitute” – without importing the modern concept of sexual orientation (cf. “homosexual men” in NLT note 23:18). The Hebrew Scriptures often warn Israelite males to abstain from sexual relations with female prostitutes (→ **Proverbs**). However, no one is so perverse as to interpret such texts as a condemnation of “heterosexuality” – although this is precisely the error of those who seek to condemn “homosexuality” on the basis of the six texts that refer to (cultic?) prostitutes (mistranslated as “sodomites”). We can be grateful to God that virtually all modern translations correct this grave error and make clear that the texts speak specifically of prostitutes – not of “sodomites,” “homosexuals,” or “heterosexuals” (“temple prostitute,” NRSV, NIV, NLT; “cult prostitute,” ESV; “sacred prostitute,” NJB). Modern studies do frequently question whether the prostitution referred to was cultic or rather secular⁷² (→ **Joshua**, Rahab).

Myth #3 The 48 references to Sodom in the Bible emphasize the fact that God always condemns homosexuality (Hebrew Bible, 39 times; New Testament, 9 times). To the contrary, *all* 39 references condemning Sodom in the Hebrew Bible avoid any reference to same-sex activity but refer rather to other sins: oppression, injustice, violence; → **Ezekiel**. Scholars commonly point out that none of the 39 references to Sodom in the Hebrew Bible refer to any sexual sin, but the word “sexual” does not exist in the Bible, which refers to sexual matters with euphemisms and dimensions of other terms (“know, take, oppress, lie, bed,” etc.; see “rape” in English, expressed in Spanish simply as “violation”). The first person who interpreted the Sodom story in Genesis 19 as a condemnation of homoeroticism was the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (*ca* 20 B.C. – 50 A.D.).⁷³ Most debated of the Hebrew Bible references to Sodom is Ezekiel 16, that says of Jerusalem:

49 This was the guilt of your sister Sodom and her daughters [other villages in their region]:

- (1) *arrogance*
- (2) excess of food /gluttony
- (3) they were prosperous but apathetic,
- (4) did not aid the poor and the needy,

50 (5) were haughty, and
(6) did **abomination** [*to'eba*, singular] before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it.

51 Samaria has not committed half your sins; you have committed more **abominations** [*to'eboth*, plural] than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the **abominations** [*to'eboth*, plural] that you have committed.

Robert Gagnon, forgetting the primary hermeneutical rule of context (Ezekiel's!), leaped to the conclusion that “abomination” in Ezekiel refers to the male-male anal sex condemned as abomination in Leviticus 18 and 20 (which make no reference to Sodom).⁷⁴ However, as George

Edwards points out, “abomination” (*to’eba*) in Ezekiel refers mainly to *idolatry* and twice to the *heterosexual* sin of adultery⁷⁵ (→ **Ezekiel** 22:11; 33:26), but *never* to male-male (anal) sex (→ **Leviticus** 18:22; 20:13; see chart in Appendix 3 below).

Myth #4 Jesus’ references to Sodom show that he accepted the Hebrew Bible’s condemnation of homosexuality. On the contrary, Jesus not only avoided any condemnation of homoerotic relations but even corrected whatever homophobic misinterpretations of the Sodom story were current (Josephus?). On sending out his twelve disciples in mission, Jesus made clear that Sodom was condemned for its *refusal of hospitality*:

¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will **not welcome you** or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town.

¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of **Sodom and Gomorrah** on the day of judgment than for that town. (Matt. 10:11-15 // Luke 10:8-12 = Q).

Obviously, Jesus recognized that Sodom’s sin had not been “homosexuality” but the refusal of *hospitality*, and thus in effect he corrected the homophobic misinterpretation popularized by Philo of Alexandria. Another story preserved in the earliest source “Q” (material absent from Mark but common to Matthew and Luke), Jesus’ healing of the beloved slave of the Roman centurion (→ **Matthew** 8 and **Luke** 7), manifested the same attitude, as did also his own intimate relation with the Beloved Disciple (→ **John** 13–21).⁷⁶

Myth #5 In Jude 7 Jesus’ own brother makes clear that he shares the Bible’s condemnation of homosexuality as “unnatural lust.” As noted above, of the 48 references to Sodom in the Bible, none of the 39 Hebrew Bible texts interprets the sin as sexual and Jude 7 is the only one of the nine New Testament texts that does so. However, Jude 7, although recognizing a sexual element in Sodom’s sin, makes explicit that the sexual offense was that of *seeking to rape the two visiting angels* (“different/strange flesh” in the original Greek):

⁶And those angels who did not maintain their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, God has maintained in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great Day. ⁷Similarly, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which in the same manner as the angels, indulged in prostitution/sexual immorality (*’ekporneúsasai*;) and went in pursuit of **different/other/strange flesh** (*sarkós hetéras*) serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire (→ **Jude** 6-7).

However, in our modern versions Jude 7 almost always is mistranslated as a reference to “unnatural” lust/s/desire (NRSV; NJB; ESV) or “perversion” (NIV; NLT) to suggest/imply homosexuality (explicit in NLT Study Bible, note 7), instead of faithfully reflecting the reference in the Greek (*sarkós hetéras*, “flesh other”; see “heterosexual” in English!). More literally, older versions referred to pursuing the “other/strange flesh” of the two angels (KJV). ESV note (“Greek *other flesh*”) and NRSV note g (GK *went after other flesh*) make clear their misleading translation. Undoubtedly the homophobic translators recalled that Romans 1:26-27 speaks of sexual practices “against nature” (*pará phúsin*, which includes but is not limited to same-sex relations). Nevertheless, nothing in the Greek original supports such a translation of Jude 7.

Instead of appreciating how Jude follows his brother Jesus and avoids the homophobic interpretation of Genesis 19 (as a condemnation of homosexual males), the reader is obliged to fall precisely into the same error that Jesus and Jude avoided! Although not offering us our favorite/familiar theology (due to common ignorance of Jewish apocryphal literature), the original Greek of Jude is quite clear:

- **Jude 6** refers to the fallen angels of **Genesis 6:1-4**, who before the flood descended to earth, took women for themselves from among the daughters of men and procreated giants. As the NJB points out in its note g, “the subject is elaborated in the *Book of Enoch*.”
- Note h then explains the reference to the males of Sodom in **Jude 7**: “They lusted not after human beings, but after the strangers who were angels, **Gn 19:1-11**. The apocryphal *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, like Jude 6-7, also compares the sin of the angels with the sin of the Sodomites.”
- Jude continues with a third reference to angels in **v. 8** with his reference to the “glorious ones” and his citation of material about a dispute over Moses’ corpse from *1 Enoch* and the *Testament of Moses*, two pseudepigraphal Jewish works.

Obviously, in Jude 6-8 the author is concentrating on traditions regarding angels, not homosexuals, however strange his comments may appear to modern readers. According to Hebrews, angels are “spirits/winds” (Heb. 1:7, 14) and according to Jesus they do not marry (Mark 12:25), although he does not deny them a body capable of sexual relations. Jude, however, appears closer to certain traditions (mythological?) in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 6:1-4; 19:1-11) and Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books of the intertestamental period, where angels are portrayed as capable of sexual relations with humans.

Myth #6 Not only the Bible but also the Church throughout its history has always condemned the grave sin of “sodomy”. On the contrary, in the Bible “Sodom” is simply a place-name, a city, not a sin. After a millennium a medieval monk, Peter Damian (1007-1072 A.D.) invented the term “sodomy” to designate sexual sins considered “unmentionable” which thus were always left without clear and explicit definition.⁷⁷ Thereafter legal codes began to include prohibitions of ill-defined “sodomy” as a crime to be punished with tortures and the death penalty.⁷⁸

Myth #7 In the nineteenth century the Church committed a grave error when it abandoned the Bible-based term “sodomy” and substituted the new scientific term “homosexuality”. The Napoleonic Code (1810), with the conservative aim of limiting state power to invade the home and private life, eliminated the laws against “sodomy” (often applied even to non-procreative “unnatural” marital sex, anal or oral). Due to French imperial influence, the Code affected not only France but also continental Europe and Latin America (exceptions to this change were countries not conquered by Napoleon such as Prussia, England, the United States and Canada).⁷⁹ In the nineteenth century, affected by the greater tolerance of the Enlightenment (except regarding masturbation/“onanism”, → **Genesis 38**) and the scientific discovery of the sexual orientations that affect distinct sexual behaviors, even England and the United States eliminated the death penalty for the crime of “sodomy” (despite much fervent church opposition claiming Bible support from Lev. 20:13). In the last four decades of the

twentieth century, many states in the USA eliminated their laws against “sodomy”, and finally in 2003 the Supreme Court declared them all unconstitutional. In Latin America, after Ecuador’s Supreme Court decision in 1997, laws punishing sodomy remained only in Nicaragua (having been introduced in 1992 by Violeta Chamorro) and in Chile (introduced by Adolfo Pinochet but eliminated in 1998).

Myth #8 In Romans 1:27 (cf. 9:29) Paul alludes to the sin of sodomy and condemns it as “against nature.” When Paul refers to male-male anal sex acts (Rom. 1:27) he omits any reference to Sodom; his only reference to Sodom in his letters (Rom. 9:29) says nothing about same-sex acts. Thus for Paul (as for Jesus) the tradition of Sodom appears to have nothing to do with same-sex acts, even though homophobia had become common amongst Jews in the intertestamental period (see Philo). In fact, the references to Sodom and male-male anal sex seem to have been *intentionally separated* by a gap of eight chapters that protect readers from the temptation to confuse, relate, or equate them. Paul’s only reference to Sodom (Rom. 9:29) in a letter that promotes hospitality (15:1-13) follows the common pattern of the Hebrew Bible and says nothing about same-sex acts but simply cites Isaiah’s reference to Sodom (Isa. 1:9) as a paradigm of severe divine judgment.

Summary We have seen that the traditional interpretations of the biblical references to Sodom:

- **ignore the context** (Abraham’s elaborate hospitality to the angels in Genesis 18) and **misinterpret** Gen. 19:1-29 anachronistically as a reference to homosexuality instead of a refusal of hospitality coupled with an attempt to rape the two angel visitors;
- **mistranslate** *qadesh/im* in six texts in Deuteronomy, 1-2 Kings and Job as references to “sodomite/s” instead of “cultic prostitutes”;
- **ignore** the 39 references to Sodom in the Hebrew Bible itself as an example of divine judgment (against oppression and violence) and prefer the later homophobic interpretation invented by the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria;
- **ignore** Jesus’ reference to Sodom’s sin as a refusal of hospitality (Mateo 10:15 // Luke 10:12 = Q) or misinterpret the texts as a condemnation of homosexuality;
- **mistranslate** Jude 7 as a reference to “unnatural” lust/s/desire (NRSV; NJB; ESV) or “perversion” (NIV; NLT), suggesting homosexuality (NLT Study Bible, note 7), instead of faithfully reflecting the reference in the Greek original (*sarkós hetéras*, flesh other; see “heterosexual” in English!) to pursuing the “other/strange flesh” of the two angels (KJV; ESV note and NRSV note g make clear the misleading translation);
- **ignore** the reference to Sodom (as paradigmatic divine judgment) in Romans 9:29; and
- **misinterpret** Romans 1:18-27 as an allusion to Sodom in a letter aimed at encouraging hospitality (15:1-13).

Obviously, strong prejudices (homophobic, xenophobic, misogynous) have led translators and biblical scholars to seriously misguide the churches in the interpretation of the Sodom texts. Such prejudices, so blatant in the translations and interpretations of the Sodom texts, alert us to the danger that they may also affect the translation and interpretation of related texts where the evidence may be less obvious.

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Appendix 3 – “Sodom” in the Bible:
Hebrew Bible, 39 times; New Testament, 9 times; Total, 48 times in the Bible
 (* = general judgment, without specifying the sin; + = with “Gomorrah”)

Sodom in the Hebrew Bible (39 times; + = with Gomorrah, 19 times):

1	Genesis	10:19+ (J)	Table of the Nations, home of the Canaanite clans
2		13:10+ (J, Lot)	Prosperous region, like Eden
3		13:12 (P, Lot)	Put his tent near Sodom
4		13:13 (J)	People of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord
5-12		14:2+,8+,10+,11+,12,17,21,22	King of Sodom (Bera), 7 times; Lot lives in Sodom, v. 12
13-16 (J)		18:16,20+,22,26 (J)	Abraham's hospitality (vv.1-15), intercedes for Sodom (16-33); v. 21 “cry” (<i>za’aq</i>) against Sodom's <i>injustice</i>
17-18 (J)		19:1, 1	Two angels arrive at Sodom; Lot seated at Sodom’s gate
19 (J)		19:4	Sin: inhospitality, try to rape visiting angels
20-21 (J)		19:24+,28+	Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
*22	Deuteronomy	29:23+ (D)	Destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim (vv.16-18, idolatry)
*23		32:32+ (E)	Sodom and Israel's idolatry (vv. 15-21)
24-25	Isaiah	1:9+,10+	Jerusalem destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (oppression, 17-23)
*26		3:9	Jerusalem and Judah destroyed, display their oppression (vv.5,12) like Sodom
*27		13:19+	Babylon destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (arrogance, v. 19)
*28	Jeremiah	23:14+	Jerusalem destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (adultery = idolatry, v. 14)
*29		49:18+	Edom destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (arrogance, v. 16)
*30		50:40+	Babylon destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (oppression, v. 33)
*31	Lamentations	4: 6	Jerusalem destroyed like Sodom
32	Ezekiel	16:46	Sodom, younger sister of Jerusalem (abominations, v. 47)
33		16:48	Jerusalem more sinful than Sodom
34		16:49(-50)	This was the guilt of your sister Sodom and her daughters [other villages in their region]: (1) <i>arrogance</i> (2) excess of food (3) they were prosperous but apathetic, (4) did not aid the poor, (5) were haughty, and (6) did abomination [<i>to`eba</i> , singular] before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it. Cf. <i>to`eba</i> (“abomination”) in Ezek 16:2, 22, 25 (verb), 36 (idols), 50-51; 43 (+ <i>zimmah</i> , “infamy”); 47, 50 (singular); 51, 52 (verb); 58 (+ <i>zimmah</i>)
35		16:53	Sodom, Samaria and Jerusalem will be restored
36		16:55	Sodom, Samaria and Jerusalem will be restored
37		16:56	Jerusalem, in its day of arrogance, mocked Sodom
*38	Amos	4:11+	Israel destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (oppression, v. 1)
*39	Zephaniah	2:9+	Moab destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (arrogance, v. 10) (cf. *Hosea 11:8, other cities, Admah and Zeboiim, destroyed like Sodom, see Deut 29:23)

Note: In six texts of the King James Version and other older versions, *qedeshim* (“consecrated / male prostitutes”) is badly translated as “sodomites” (Deut. 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:22; 22:46; 1 Kings 13:7; Job 36:14).

Sodom in the New Testament (9 times; + = with Gomorrah, 4 times):

- 1 **Matthew** 10:15+ // Luke 10:12 = Q, lack of hospitality
- 2 11:23 Woes about the unrepentant cities, Sodom should have repented
- 3 11:24 On day of judgment more tolerable for Sodom than for Chorazin and Bethsaida
- 4 **Luke** 10:12 // Matthew 10:15 = Q, lack of hospitality
- *5 17:29 The day Lot left Sodom...destruction
- *6 **Romans** 9:29+ Cites Isaiah 1:9 – “...we would have fared like Sodom...Gomorrah” (total destruction)
- 7 **Jude** 7+ Sodom and Gomorrah: rape of angels (“other flesh”)
- *8 **2 Peter** 2: 6+ Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
- *9 **Revelation** 11: 8 “...of the great city [Jerusalem] that is prophetically called Sodom and Egypt”

Sodom in the Bible (48 times) – Conclusions:

1. In the Bible, Sodom is always and only *a place* (city), never a sin (“sodomy”).
2. The sin of “sodomy” was invented by a medieval monk, Pedro Damian (ca. 1050 A.D.), but it never received a clear definition (anal sex, anal sex between men, bestiality, any unapproved sexual practice).⁸⁰ Thus there has always been much confusion with laws against “sodomy”.
3. Usually the Bible refers to the destruction of Sodom simply as an example of divine justice against evil, without specifying the sin (= *; 12 times Hebrew Bible; 6 times New Testament).⁸¹
4. When the Hebrew Bible refers to the specific sins of Sodom, it never refers to sexual sins, but to arrogance, idolatry, oppression and violence (11 times; the only possible exception would be Ezekiel 16:49-50, where the emphasis is also on sins of pride and oppression). The “abomination” of Sodom in Ezekiel 16:50 probably refers to idolatry, according to the dominant use in Ezekiel.⁸²
5. In the NT, Sodom also mostly serves as a symbol of divine justice, without being related to any sexual sin (see divine justice in Romans 9:29, not associated with Romans 1:24-27).
6. Notably, the only text of Jesus that speaks of a sin of Sodom specifies the lack of hospitality, not a sexual sin (Luke 10 // Matt. 10, from the primitive source Q).
7. The only text in the Bible that explicitly relates Sodom with a sexual sin (Judas 7) says that the sexual sin concerned the attempt to rape “other flesh”, meaning, of angels.
8. The apocryphal and pseudo epigraphic literature (ca. 200 B.C. – 100 A.D.) reflects more the homophobic prejudices of the Judaic culture (against the dominant Greco-Roman cultures) and begins to relate Sodom with sexual sins, especially anal sexual relations between men.⁸³

Appendix 4 Genesis 19 and Judges 19

In its note on → **Judges 19** (“The Crime of Gibeah”) concerning the rape attack that killed the Levite's concubine, *La Biblia de Nuestro Pueblo* (L.A. Schökel), a Spanish translation of the Bible, points out:

Many people have wanted to find a condemnation of 'homosexuality' both in the story of Sodom [Genesis 19] and in this story [Judges 19]. We should avoid anachronisms when interpreting the Bible. The word 'homosexual' appeared recently in the nineteenth century. In these two narratives the true crime is **inhospitality, violence and phallic aggression** against foreigners. In both narratives the phallus serves as a weapon of aggression that establishes the relationship of domination and submission, practices frequently used in wars.

This note even corrects the homophobic note concerning Sodom (Gen. 19:1-11) in the same Spanish translation (although not the notes on Leviticus 18 and 20 and the New Testament texts)! But the BNP note on Judges 19 for the first time in Spanish initiates the struggle to educate and warn against homophobic prejudices in our Bible translations (good notes are increasingly common in English translations, as well as German and French). We would consider it outrageous to use the rape and murder of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19 as a basis for condemning “heterosexuality”. So why have we been so slow to recognize how outrageous it is to use the attempted rape of angels in Gen. 19:1-11 as a basis for condemning “homosexuality”? (*Note*: Many thanks to Esther Baruja y Kathryn Gries, formerly IFES staff in Paraguay and Chile, respectively, for calling my attention to this important note in the BNP.)

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Eight Myths (see Appendix 2 above)

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Joseph and the economy (see above at end of 1.2 Joseph's administration)

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