

**1** *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

"That's a perfectly good answer, at a basic level, as to where everything came from without getting into numbers too big to imagine," Curious said tentatively.

But he did not pause to see whether he could get his head around it because he urgently needed to find out what the Bible meant by "God."

Curious knew that ancient peoples conceived of gods as having characteristics similar to humans, only exaggerated, and that they were empowered to manipulate nature for good and evil, and that it was necessary to curry their favor or risk being a victim of their anger. These gods were many, they had names, and there were fantastic stories about their origins. At least that was the impression that had stuck with him from his formal education. So now he was curious to see what the Bible said about the character of God.

**2** *The earth was formless and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep,*

*and the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters.*

"Good. This Hebrew God is formless himself—an immaterial spirit. That's reasonable and not mythological."

Curious tried to imagine primordial "earth" that yet was like deep water over which the Spirit of God brooded. As a further analogy he compared it to a blank slate, an empty blackboard before the professor begins to write.

"Who could argue with that?" he said. "It's a perfect beginning for a beginning!"

He had wanted to know where everything came from, and he found here a picture he could grasp. It was a curiosity killer! So far there was only this potential for something; it would depend entirely on what God would write on the slate. Curious was amazed: he didn't have the feeling of having gotten his head around it, yet somehow it subdued his curiosity.

Even when he tried to be a little critical, he realized it was the only possible answer to the question of where everything came from. And it had been hiding in plain sight on the first page of the Bible!

"How can scientists talk about a beginning without connecting it to this? God broods awhile—in his own time-frame, obviously—and when he finally says the word.... Boom! That becomes the trigger for everything—the big bang or whatever."

Yes, Curious' blackboard is a fanciful metaphor, but it was intuitively obvious to him that it had to be a Word from God that the void awaited; for whatever God said had to be true (if he is a true God), and if it is true, then it is real, and if it didn't exist before God declared it, then it *must* exist after he spoke of it.

**3** *And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

*And God saw the light, that it was good.*

Curious liked this very much. It was as though God had written on the blackboard the famous equations Maxwell discovered. "Who can disagree with that?" he said again. "The equations that describe light are good if they work, and light is good."

Curious' curiosity failed him somewhat at that point because he didn't ask *what the Bible meant* when it said that God saw that the light was good.

*God divided the light from the darkness.*

**5** *And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.*

*And there was evening and morning, one day.*

As much as he delighted in the satisfying simplicity of the beginning of beginnings, here was something Curious could not avoid being critical about.

"Here, in the first thing God did, there must have been a vast stroke of creation including the solar system and a rotating earth. How else could there be day and night?"

It seemed to be entirely out of order! After fundamental equations, the terrestrial twenty-four-hour day was being promoted as a foundational entity—as if that were the primary reason for creating light! And why did the day start with evening? That too seemed out of order.

“Well, maybe it was that important,” he said. “Hopefully I’ll find out why.”

But he was far from being convinced. It would mean that God let a terrestrial measure of time be the distance between milestones in the process of cosmic creation.

“Evidently in his brooding, God had formulated a complete plan, but it surprises the reader when ‘evening and morning’ appears out of nowhere,” he complained.

Here’s the thing, Curious: if God determines that something *is*, then it *is*, whether nature seems to support it or not. Think about it. If God determines an end in the beginning, then the end is a good thing, which is no contradiction from God’s point of view because he exists outside the time-sequence of his creation.

“There’s a principle worth remembering in that,” Curious admitted. “When God declares something, it must be so whether it makes sense to anyone else or not.”

Curious already knew this because it’s rather obvious, but isn’t it hard to imagine the raw creative power in a word from God?

“We humans have difficulty trying to make sure that whatever we do doesn’t conflict with or undo something else. Hopefully, God isn’t painting himself into a corner with this evening-and-morning thing,” said Curious.

Inserting the solar day at this point would seem to bring along with it many other things that even God would have to respect and work with. But let him do it his own way, Curious. Others will not be concerned about this. Learn what you can.

**6** *And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.”*

When “waters” was mentioned at the beginning of beginnings, before anything existed, Curious had assumed it was a figure of speech that meant shapelessness.

“Waters are now being used to introduce the principle of space—the principle which permits division into regions,” he noted.

Curious pictured God writing equations for both this and whatever infrastructure was needed to support the terrestrial day he had already determined.

“It’s astonishing that this ancient document fits right in with modern theories about information and mathematics undergirding all of Creation. And not only that, it frees God from working within the time-frame of his creating work while simultaneously presenting to the unscientific reader a meaningful account of the genesis of time and space.”

**7** *Thus God created the expanse and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse, and it was so. And God called the expanse heaven [sky].*

*And there was evening, and there was morning, a second day.*

“Okay, so this is the basic arrangement known as heaven and earth,” said Curious. “But exactly what are these waters?”

For agrarian people, reservoirs of moisture above are as important as bodies of water below. So Curious initially thought that these were the two waters, but considering the tone of what he had read so far, he suspected additional meaning in this second day. Since “waters” had apparently been used in a non-literal way at the beginning, the “waters above” could include stars and planets beyond earth’s atmospheric sky with the other being the earth below, which might have been covered by literal water at that stage. He imagined that a reader who thought little of astronomical distances might be distracted from essential things by learning that stars were worlds away from clouds. But if that were true, it was a curiosity that so much was put in a day’s work by implication and not really stated.

"All of this is human-oriented," Curious conceded. He was disappointed because not only was it cast in the time-frame of the terrestrial day, it seemed to be literally about the arrangement of literal waters near the surface of the earth.

Still, the word "expanse" made him think of the expanding universe.

"But if this day represents billions of terrestrial years of unfolding energy and matter, it seems to overload the second 'day' of creation even as a metaphor. ... I get it now," he concluded reluctantly, "the 'evening and morning' is a human-size marker used to impart to humans a sense of reality in creation, which would be indescribable within the time-frame of the Creator. But it seems odd to refer to each day as 'evening and morning' instead of the other way around."

(Curious' Bible-reading has gotten off to a good start as he patiently works his way out of his doubts. But what will he do when he encounters something that is truly inscrutable?)

**9** *And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together, and let the dry land appear," and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters he called Seas.*

*And God saw that it was good.*

"So it became a process of shifting of matter once the supporting equations were written," Curious theorized. "But I would expect there to be some actual making of things in this third day if it's to be on par with what was accomplished in the second day."

But there has been no definite word of anything being created beyond the earth and sky, Curious. I know you were expecting more, but it was only a supposition. However, the waters *above* the "heavens" have not been explained.

"I must conclude that since this document is essentially geocentric I have to let it speak for itself. So 'evening and morning' makes sense because the first day began in darkness before there was light."

**11** *And God said, "Let the earth sprout grass and plants yielding seed and fruit-trees bearing fruit containing seed to make more of its kind."*

"That's all well and good," said Curious, "but nothing has been said about powering the chemistry of this wonderful foliage. Is it just a showcase of the design that will now require sunlight when the time comes to actually have these plants grow?"

*And it was so:*

**12** *earth sprouted plants and trees, and God saw that it was good. And there was evening and morning, a third day.*

"Nope, it wasn't a preview," said Curious. "By the end of the third day, behold, there it was because God said he saw it. Apparently, the sun was included in the 'waters' that got created back in the second day."

Be careful, Curious. You should know by now that it's not going to work out when you assume what has not been stated.

**14** *And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to divide the day from the night. Let them be for signs, for seasons, and for days and years and to give light upon the earth.*

"And so I was wrong again," Curious said sadly. "The sun gets made after the trees are planted! What's going on? Is it like he's only talking about elements of the design in his own timeless realm?"

No, Curious, this is actual creation, not a review of the architecture.

*And it was so,*

**16** *for God made the two great lights: the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars as well. And God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.*

*And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.*

"This is really perplexing," Curious complained. "I can't believe this was written in such an illogical fashion apparently for no reason."

Curious wracked his brain trying to think of a solution. I give him credit for not relegating it all to mythology, which is what he had expected it to be in the first place. He tried to imagine a two-tiered process, like first making a model.

**"Sure, that's it," he said. "Spread out all the green things then hang a lamp over it."**

But on second thought, that didn't satisfy him either. Why would the lamp not be of benefit during the building of the model? So, regrettably, it didn't really make sense. Unless ....

**"Ah! I get it!" Curious exclaimed. "Algorithms—like in software! The physical laws that make the sun are relatively simple compared to the myriad of processes that must work together in living things. So the requirements of all the various plants had to be formulated and taken into account before the precise solar and lunar parameters could be set!"**

This insight went back to Curious' earlier idea that the first day was about formulating the equations for light; and that once having done so, the light inevitably came into being.

**"What is the universe, after all, if physical things depend on laws that are described by mathematics?" he asked himself. "Aren't the laws themselves the reality?"**

In computer software, as everyone knows, the words and instructions are what embody the logic and math that cause particular things to happen. This sounds exactly like God giving instructions for things to happen. Then is God a computer? Or is he the Programmer? What do you think, Curious? Do programmers write instructions in the same order in which they're acted upon?

**"Programs are not written as they are executed. Quite the contrary!"**

This satisfied Curious. And it was important that it do so, because it was more than a matter of curiosity: it was necessary that this first chapter make sense before he could accept the rest the Bible.

If he could not believe it, there would be no satisfaction in reading it. Instead of an adventure it would become a burdensome task foolishly taken on to fulfill a rash promise.

But fortunately, having embraced the software paradigm, it followed that the human author of Genesis had to be inspired by God: he must have put it down in the order in which God told it to him, for he would not have known how the words spoken in creation could be creating the information infrastructure of the universe, which was the creation, just as a computer program is the only creation in software: we see what it *does* in real time, but only the programmer sees what it *is* in the creator's time. If the programmer tries to describe his creation to a user of the software, he must do it abstractly if it is to make any sense to the one seeing its effects.

*20 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with living creatures;*

*and let birds fly in the open spaces of the sky."*

*And God created great sea monsters and every kind of living creature*

*wherewith the waters swarm, and every kind of winged bird.*

*And God saw that it was good.*

*God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply:*

*fill the seas, and let birds proliferate on earth."*

*And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.*

**"He must have had a lot of fun doing that!"**

Curious exclaimed as he remembered seeing fantastic variations of aquatic and avian creatures. **"Having finished programming the infrastructure for life, he got really creative with the parameters!"**

*24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle, all sorts of creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind."*

*And it was so.*

"I'm getting a feeling that God could have had help with this," said Curious. "It sounds like he gives orders to a divine Helper who then carries them out."

As you will see, his Son was involved.

**25** *God made the beasts of the earth after their kind:*

*the cattle after their kind, and every-thing that moves upon the ground after its kind.*

*And God saw that it was good.*

"Well, no, it says God made them, so it wasn't his Son unless ...."

Curious had heard the phrase "Son of God" in Christmas songs and knew that the Son was also God in some way. But it was only a hunch that both persons of God could be referred to here, so he didn't attach any importance to it.

Curious also briefly entertained the thought that, with the aquatic creatures being first, it was supporting the idea of natural evolution. But in the Bible's terms it was not evolution at all. However ....

**"If these creation activities were creating the information structures that constituted life, then who can put a limit on the time in which they unfold?"**

**26** *And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness—"*

**"Aha!"** cried Curious. **"My hunch was right: God speaks of himself in the plural."**

But Curious decided to set aside this matter of God seeming to be like two persons—or maybe more than two, for he had heard of the Trinity. No doubt there would be more about this later. What he was really curious about was man being made in the image of God. The implications of that started to rain down on him like a heavy hailstorm, and the questions piled up. Pagan mythology had gods in the image of man to reflect the conflicts and aspirations man found in himself. The Bible was saying the opposite: that man was made in the image of God. Obviously, a huge gap existed between the Creator of the universe and a man such as Curious.

"To start with, if God made everything, he wouldn't be curious about anything," Curious quipped, "So if I were his perfect image, I would not be Curious."

The Bible repeatedly said that when God made something it was good. On some days it appeared that his declaration of the day's work being good was after inspecting the product. So evidently God's purpose went beyond creating things that worked; there was a moral component in everything, which would include man. Such would be necessary, Curious realized, if God planned to stamp his image on man who would likewise demand that things be good. Curious knew that in his own heart the demand was there. So, at least to that extent, he could say he was made in God's image. But not everything was good. Obviously, something went wrong after Creation was finished.

Though Curious had asked what was meant, exactly, by the image of God being in mankind, the more pressing question was *why*. Why was creation arranged in such a way that this became possible?

*Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, and over cattle: dominion over every-thing that moves upon the earth.*

**"This couldn't be the reason,"** Curious surmised. **"Those creatures do as well or better without mankind's intervention."**

**27** *And God created man in his own image;*

*in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

*And God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."*

**"So God's purpose includes having mankind fill the earth,"** Curious observed. **"He doesn't seem to be concerned about overpopulation at all. He just wants a lot of people, for some reason."**

**29** *And God said, "I have given you every herb yielding seed in all the earth, and every tree bearing fruit with seed; these are yours for food. And for the animals and birds and everything that crawls upon the earth wherein there is life—every green herb is theirs for food."*

*And it was so. God saw everything he had made, and it was very good.*

*And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

"I see they're all vegetarians—even the lions and tigers, evidently. That's curious. Indeed, something has changed since then."

**2** *And the heavens and the earth were finished, the whole host of them. So on the seventh day, having completed his efforts for that which he made, God rested from working on what he had made.*

*And God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it because in it he ceased from all his work which God prepared for making.\**

"Now there it is again. The creation was the setup 'prepared for making' what we see."

Yet it's no surprise that Curious' conscience was nagging him: he needed to honestly get his head around the six days, if possible. He had rationalized what he read in each day, but he couldn't honestly say that it made perfect sense. The first day was logical and necessary, and the sixth day was a reasonable conclusion, but the four days in the middle were not ordered in a way that he would have expected, though in them God accomplished all that was needed.

So here's a suggestion, Curious. Make a list of everything that was revealed in those six days—things you learned. That will help you judge the value of Genesis Chapter One to you.

"What did I learn, after all? Well, let me see. God is spirit, yet he's personal and complex—uses the plural personal pronoun. He brooded over the void before creating everything, and then he spoke things into existence: he commanded and, behold, it was so.

Thus, his words are permanent and substantial. He called for Day and Night and assigned names for Heaven, Earth, and Seas. He evaluated each day's work: each part of creation was finished in a day and declared good; there was no time for evolution to have any part in it; everything that appeared was either created directly by God or through the procreation process (which he created as well). He created aquatic and avian swarms (there was no evolving of species). And the sea monster got special mention! He must have enjoyed making that one. He built the entire universe in six days, including the astronomical bodies which he gave geocentric purposes. He reserved the seventh day for rest and gifted the seven-day week to mankind. Most amazingly, he made Man in God's (plural) image: he created male and female and gave them dominion over his creation. There was no mention of death, so diets were vegetarian. He gave no moral laws, and government was unnecessary, for everything was good. There was but one command, multiply and fill the earth, which was really intrinsic. In summary, he said everything was very good. No one was opposing him, and evil had no part in it. But there remains a mystery: the waters above (above the heavens) were not explained."

Is that not a trove of treasure you have discovered, Curious?

"It's like treasure contained in a six-sided box. The bottom is the mathematical foundation that supports the contents; on or immediately below the top surface is the glory of mankind in God's image, and the four sides are designed to protect the whole from being eroded by age."

I like your treasure-box analogy, Curious, because it protects the creating words of God from being tampered with by men from the ages of sin when they fail to make its days agree with mechanistic theories about Creation.

"If Chapter One was an inside view of the Program from God's perspective, then what it yields in real time could be a *different story*," Curious remarked.

\* "which God prepared for making" is literal.

**4** *The Beginning of the Heavens and the Earth, when they were created,  
in the Day Yahweh God Made Earth and Heaven ...*

"Just as I thought. Now it appears that the six-day motif has been dropped. It was a bridge from divine terms of creation over to human history. But who is this Yahweh? One of God's names, I suppose—a more authentic variation of 'Jehovah.'"

In the beginning Curious wanted to know about the character of this God, so he was pleased to find another story of origins in which he expected that man would encounter God.

*When no plant of the field grew upon earth*

*and no herb of the field had yet sprung up,*

*for Yahweh God had not caused it to rain,*

*as there was no man to till the ground,*

*a mist went up from the earth  
which watered the whole face of the ground.*

"Good. Now we get to take the standpoint where we see just how things unfolded in real time."

In saying that, Curious sounded like he had emerged from a stretch of winding road and was seeing a straight highway ahead.

**8** *Yahweh God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; thus man became a living soul.*

*Then Yahweh God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed.*

"Well, the sequence seems a little rough here too," Curious grumbled, "—unless the man *did* get made before the garden was planted. I wonder.... Maybe it's more of a summary statement."

It turned out that Curious was more concerned about the elements of the process than the sequence in which they were introduced to the reader.

"Using dust to form the man is reasonable enough because in order to realize the plan of a living organism a number of minerals and microbes and other elements found in soil are required. But the "breath of life" is a new one."

It reminded Curious of the expression "spark of life," but what a difference one word makes!

"**'Spark'** explains nothing. God's own '**breath**' explains the miracle of life better than anything."

To Curious, life did seem like a miracle, so he had no objection to the Bible saying so. Indeed, he was getting along very well with the Word of God.

**9** *Out of the ground Yahweh God made grow every tree pleasing to the eye and good for food. The tree of life was in the middle of the garden, and also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

"This is a setup for something." Curious was suspicious. "It isn't simply describing a useful orchard."

What brought him to that conclusion? Perhaps it was that this was the first time the word *evil* had appeared in the Bible. God had declared that Creation was good, which Curious had not been curious enough about.

"It's clear that evil must have existed elsewhere: it couldn't be anywhere in Creation that was declared to be good, so apparently something had gone bad somewhere in other times and places."

Curious knew he should ponder the meaning of the two special trees in the middle of the garden for the benefit or contemplation or perhaps the testing of one man, but he expected to find more about them soon. Strangely, the next verse was unrelated, so he paused here to think about that before going on.

"That passage ahead looks like a forced break. It must mean 'stop and think.' ..." and he shuddered. "The man made in the image of God had potential knowledge of good and evil. There's nothing Yahweh could do about limiting that."

**10** *A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted to become the head of four rivers:*

*Pishon, which provides water to the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold (the gold of that land is good) and bdellium and onyx stone as well;*

*Gihon, which waters the whole land of Cush;*

*Tigris, which flows east of Assyria;*

*And the fourth is the Euphrates.*

Curious scratched his head.

"Was this interruption really necessary?—these geographical details."

It jarred him out of his mindset that was allowing him to appreciate the story without connecting it to history and geography. If the Bible wasn't going to allow itself to be read that way, he had to admit there was wisdom in this diversion appearing where it did. It had worked for him in two ways!

**15** *And Yahweh God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend it and keep it.*

"Oh, so the man must have lived outside the garden originally," Curious mused. "But where? I suppose near the future site of the garden—by one of the rivers maybe."

He had a point: it did not say there were no plants yet, just no crops.

"Maybe he ate fish. No, because God had specified greens and fruit, so he must have provided an interim source of food. Something just showed up like morning dew."

**16** *And Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree in the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you must not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die."*

"Here's the first rule to live by. I wonder how God explained what it means to die. It would be an academic knowledge of evil at that point, but the man must have imagined, or tried to imagine, not being able to move or breathe. Presumably, he enjoyed being alive and communicating directly with his Maker who had just finished making the universe."

**18** *And Yahweh God said,*

*"It is not good that the man should be alone;*

*I will make a helper for him."*

*So out of the ground Yahweh God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens*

*and brought them to the man for him to name,*

*and he named each bird and each beast;*

*but none of them became a helper that suited him.*

"Apparently a dog wasn't one of them," said Curious facetiously.

But seriously, he was thinking about the length of time during which this took place. Since he saw this not as being within the confines of the sixth day of Creation but as the outworking of it, the "every beast and bird" brought to his mind what he knew of the vast number and variety of birds and animals.

"It must have kept him occupied for a long while," said Curious. "He was too busy with this project to have time to mess with those trees in the middle of the garden."

That the man would have a mate was in the plan of the sixth day, but God had not made him one yet, for some reason.

"Yahweh seems to be expecting that the man will find satisfaction in being an animal husbandman—perhaps for a long, long while of perfect obedience before complicating his life with a woman."

Reading between the lines, Curious saw that this could be a test of obedience.

"Having given the man freedom to disobey him, God was taking time to build a strong relationship with the man."

Yes, for while God designed each creature, the man was made responsible to give it a significant name. This was an important revelation to our curious reader who had wanted to know more about God. He was seeing a difference between the God of the Bible and the deities of religions: it was the difference day and night.



But Curious was wondering about a deeper meaning. Was God proving that his free-willed creature could withstand temptation to disobey and leave the forbidden fruit untasted?

"I'll have to admit that if I were the one in the garden, I would be so curious about good and evil that I would probably sneak a quick taste and then hide the evidence."

You are far removed from the first man, Curious. He was freshly created and close to the holiness of God.

**"But it must have been an engrossing time he had, with all the odd and entertaining creatures."**

After he had named the last specimen, no doubt he had developed favorites.

**"It would be likely that not all of those that hung around were ones he liked as well as many that had gone away to establish dens and nests and begun their mandate to multiply."**

Thus Curious reasoned his way to believe how it was inevitable that man would demand a mate if not given one.

**21 Then Yahweh God put the man into a deep sleep, and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh; and from that rib he made a woman and brought her to the man.**

"There it is again," said Curious. "He 'brought her to him' from where? It's like God had a laboratory in which he made living things after taking a scoop of dust from the earth or in this case a hunk of bone out of a man. It's a bit mysterious, to say the least."

What's more significant, Curious, is that this woman was not made of dust, not directly anyway. Of all the creatures God made, she was unique in her origin.

**"What's significant about the rib is ... well, several things,"** said Curious. "I wouldn't say that 'man isn't complete without his better half' is a generous reference to his missing rib. But I would say that the reason woman is made of finer stuff than dust is due to man's contribution to her construction, and that if man doesn't like her more than himself, then he doesn't like himself."

**23 And the man said,**

***"Now this is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!***

***I name her woman because she was taken out of man."***

***Henceforth when a man leaves father and mother***

***and joins to his wife, they become as one flesh.***

***They were both naked, the man and his wife,***

***and they were not ashamed.***

Curious eagerly turned the page to chapter three, expecting to find how the woman liked her husband and to see if she was eager to get to know the man who thought she was his perfect mate.

**3 Now the serpent, who was more subtle than any beast of the field, came to the woman and said,**

***"Did God really say you may not eat of every tree in the garden?"***

***"I may eat the fruit of any tree except that one in the middle of the garden, for God did say we must not eat of it, neither dare we touch it, lest we die."***

Obviously, some time had elapsed in which nothing of significance happened—or it was not remembered.

**"So she had listened to the man and learned the rule from him,"** Curious said. **"But I don't remember that they were forbidden to touch the fruit. She must have added that detail herself, as if she knew her limits."**

**4 "Surely you will not die," said the serpent. "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."**

**6 The fruit was a delight to the eye and appeared to be good for food; and furthermore, she thought no one should reject knowledge. So she picked and ate some and gave some to her husband, which he ate.**

"I knew the serpent would get to her," said Curious. "The snake never tempted the man, but as soon as the woman appeared she got put to the evil test. There was a shrewd enemy opposing what God was doing!"

Yes, and then she put her husband to the test. What do you think about that, Curious?

(Most likely he did not hear me, for no reply came from Curious. Or did he stumble upon the suspicion that the man sacrificed himself to keep from losing her and was turning that over in his mind. But Curious continued reading.)

*7 And their eyes were opened, and they knew they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. They heard the voice of Yahweh God as he walked in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God among the trees of the garden.*

*9 And Yahweh God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"*

*And he said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself."*

*And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree whereof I commanded you not to eat of it?"*

*"The woman whom you gave to be with me—she gave to me of the tree, and I did eat."*

*And Yahweh God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"*

*And the woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."*

"I can't answer that question," Curious said at last. "But suppose the man let the woman die and stayed faithful to God himself. That simply wouldn't work because he would still need a mate, and the scene would likely be repeated."

So you don't think there's a woman who would withstand the temptation?

"Perhaps he would get a replacement, but the man had only so many ribs, and he needed a few himself. In fact, now that I think about it, the man had no choice in the matter if he was of one flesh with his wife."

(Curious had thought "one flesh" was irrelevant to the story back in the context where it appeared.)

*14 "Because you have done this," Yahweh God said to the serpent, "you are cursed more than any beast.*

*On your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life.*

*I will put enmity between you and the woman*

*and between your seed and her seed, such that he will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel."*

"How did they know that?" exclaimed Curious, being aware that paleontologists had dubbed the fossil remains of a snake that had legs the "biblical snake" but not having previously known that the Bible predicted that the legs would disappear; and furthermore he would never have guessed that the disappearance of the legs was by the direct command of God, not by natural selection.

As Curious pondered this curiosity, he decided he needed to give this story more respect; there was no virtue in the way he was withholding judgment. He had refrained from unleashing his curiosity because it seemed that parts of the story could not stand up to logic, let alone science. For example, snakes don't speak, so why should he try to make sense of that? Now Curious was inclined to let his curiosity free reign; just possibly he might get his head around something here.

"God doesn't speak audibly, does he? Maybe these first humans had the ability to communicate—even with animals—by some extra-sensory means," he theorized.

That's a reasonable question because there was no mention of language being taught or learned. When the man heard the voice of God in the garden, possibly his perception was not by means of sound waves. (If he literally heard the sound of God's voice, then to whom was God speaking? There's no record of the man saying, "I heard you calling for me." Rather, the Scripture says, "*they heard the voice of Yahweh God as he walked in the garden.*")

Enmity between women and snakes is common, and we might put it down as another prediction. But Curious disagreed:

**"It makes no sense that the woman's offspring would not kill snakes but merely bruise their heads. And the second part of the statement, *'you will bruise his heel,'* is even more curious: it seems like an inapt metaphor if it refers to a snake bite."**

We must admit that these words paint not a literal picture but an odd prophetic picture that looks like a continuing battle between men—not women—and snakes.

**"More likely it refers to a battle of spirits because here was a supposedly dumb beast speaking and being spoken to. Perhaps that communication was not vocal, but rather the spirit possessing the serpent was communicating in a subtler way."**

Okay, then the injured heel was symbolic of a vulnerability she would pass on to her "seed," and the bruised head indicated that her child in some generation would be victorious over the evil one.

**"Why hers only, not the man's?"** Curious wondered. If he persists and reads the entire Bible, he will encounter the answer.

Then Curious considered the origin of the deceiving spirit in the snake.

**"All creatures were good when created, so how did this evil presence arrive there?"**

Could it have been dumb playfulness on the part of the serpent? "No," Curious decided, for God would not speak to the snake as he did if it had no moral spirit.

These thoughts led Curious to inquire about the knowledge of good and evil that came about from eating the forbidden fruit.

**"The woman listened to the serpent prior to having that knowledge, but how, as an innocent, intelligent human, was she able to regard the advice of a snake over the advice of her husband and even her Maker? Should it not have been a hard-wired choice to respect her worthy councilors above a sneaky creature with a forked tongue?"**

Even if she debated the snake for days before being beguiled to the point of disobedience, there is no getting around the fact that she was susceptible to errors of discernment or judgment *before* she transgressed and took the bite out of that famous apple—or whatever kind of fruit it was.

So Curious wondered: **"Was she the snake's choice for this reason?"** But he had to clamp down on his curiosity again; it was leading him into territory that he had learned was off limits in his generation.

**16 God said to the woman,**

*"I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing;  
in pain you will bring forth children;  
and your desire will be for your husband,  
and he will rule over you."*

I know Curious felt sorry for the woman but otherwise had no desire to get his head around this—or maybe he didn't need to. At any rate, he went on without comment.

**17 And to Adam he said ...**

**"I wondered why Adam wasn't being called by his name,"** he remarked. **"Does it mean something? Oh, I see by the footnote that Adam actually means 'man.'"**

*"Because you listened to your wife  
and ate of the forbidden fruit,  
cursed is the ground on your account.  
By toil amid thorns and thistles,  
and by the sweat of your brow,  
you will eat herbs and bread  
until you return to the ground,  
for out of the ground you were taken:  
dust you are,  
and to dust you will return."*

**"Now you tell him!"** said Curious. **"Poor Adam had no choice! He had to listen to her—whatever her name was."**

"Eve," he presumed her name was, and he read on.

**20 The man named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all living.**

Curious saw in a footnote that “Eve” sounds like the Hebrew for “living.”

“If Hebrew was the language they spoke, when did they learn it? Certainly, some details were lost over the years, but regardless of the language they spoke, my theory about nonverbal communication is ruined, and I would not be surprised if they just knew, and Eve began talking immediately after her Maker set her down on the ground.”

**21** *And Yahweh God made Adam and his wife coats of skins and clothed them.*

“How did he do that?” asked the curious one. “Animal skins? Not grass skirts because they had already figured out how to use plants for clothing.”

The only thing Curious could think of was that God killed a couple of sheep or some other kind of animal. Then did he prepare the hides and cut and sew them in the usual manner?

“Presumably, the freshly-made humans were incapable producing suitable clothing, so Yahweh did it for them.”

He did it in their presence and not in his “laboratory,” so they would know how to make clothes for themselves.

“What did those animals do to deserve death?” Curious wondered.

Reason it out, Curious. From the sound of the command that forbade them to eat of the tree, death should have been Adam and Eve’s immediate penalty; instead, the animals had to die.

“It’s like the sacrifice of the animals was a substitute. It was necessary if they were to live long enough to have children and populate the earth. If God hadn’t done that for them, I wouldn’t be here! So in a way the animals died for me!”

That brief scene dismissed the idea Curious harbored in the back of his mind that God was able to appear only as an invisible spirit.

“Apparently, the Creator, by making man in his image, could appear as a man—like the author of a drama having a cameo part on the stage,” he remarked.

**22** *And Yahweh God said, “The man has become as one of us, knowing good and evil. Now lest he eat of the tree of life and live forever—”*

“The serpent wasn’t fooling!” Curious exclaimed. “Apparently, there’s another dimension in this God-likeness, and man has crossed into it.”

But it wasn’t apparent to Curious how “knowing good and evil” furthered the God-likeness. Eve experienced the evil of disobedience, but there could be nothing like that in God, for who was there for him to disobey? Adam tasted the consequence of disobedience in the displeasure of his Maker, but there could be nothing like that in God.

“Eve acted independently of the advice of her husband,” Curious noted. “Independent action sounds rather God-like, but is independence necessarily evil?”

Well, in this case it certainly was. But what gave her the ability to act independently? Maybe that’s the God-likeness that wasn’t realized until she disobeyed.

Curious thought about the animals that seemed to be programmed to behave according to their kind while humans carried within them the ability to write their own programs and follow their own scripts. “Maybe Eve was the first human to exercise this ability,” he theorized.

That’s unlikely, Curious. The ability to think is what makes humans stand above animals. But Adam did not know the danger inherent in it until he reasoned that sharing the fruit with his wife would keep him from experiencing loneliness again.

“It means independent thinking’s power to create both good evil,” Curious guessed.

But they must have had that power from the beginning, don’t you see?

“I really think Eve didn’t realize she actually had the ability to oppose her Maker,” said Curious. “She didn’t know there was something she could do that would be irreversible.”

Yes, and suddenly she knew; and with that enlightenment she stepped into divine territory. She discovered the responsibility for good and evil that comes with free will.

**"It strikes me as curious that God couldn't do anything to prevent this,"** Curious said.

Do you mean it's a flaw in the Creation which Yahweh said was good?

**"It seems like a flaw in Creation because it happened so soon."**

In other words, God shouldn't have made beings quite in his own image.

**"If he wanted beings he could communicate with, though because they would respond intelligently ... was that a bad idea?"**

Don't forget the other intelligent being in this drama, Curious. You have to consider all the facts if you want to get at the truth.

**"No, I think the bad idea was the serpent—or what the devil was in the snake."**

I remember your concluding that the devil existed before this universe was created.

**"It was too easy for the devil to do his mischief. God has to be more clever than a snake, yet thanks to the snake, Adam and Eve are going to die. They'll know evil."**

Could that be the knowledge of evil referred to—that they shared with God?

**"Now, if they choose to believe the devil from here on, how will God handle that?"**

That's what the Bible is about, Curious. You'll learn that God must die before they can live forever. That was the knowledge which only God had, and it will make them God-like.

**"Then there's that tree of life. That must be a significant fact too."**

*23 God expelled him from the garden of Eden, to a place where he must till the ground from whence he was taken. Then, having driven the man out, he placed Cherubim at the east side of the garden of Eden, equipping them with a sword of flame which went every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.*

**"So that's how it came out,"** said Curious. **"I wonder where and what that tree of life is today. It must be an important part of Creation."**

As he pondered this, his mind wandered. I think he got to thinking that the six-day creation account appealed to the intellect while the garden story was meant to appeal

to the heart; the abstract days of Creation had challenged his thinking and formed an underlying layer that offered him an insight, but the tangible account of the garden explored intangibles and left a nagging question:

**Why the serpent? If God saw to it that everything on earth was good, then what gave that evil spirit the right to be there?**

Curious, are you forgetting that no prohibition had been attached to the tree of life until after their act of disobedience?

**"The Garden scene feels like a myth, I'll have to admit, because of its fantastical elements: a rib becoming a woman, trees with enchanted fruit, a serpent winning an argument. ..."**

Is that a complaint? Would you have preferred that the Bible open with a systematic discourse exploring those issues?

**"Yet the Bible answers the most critical questions in just three charming chapters."**

Has anything been omitted? Is there more you would like to know about our origins?

**"I wouldn't trade it for a library of details. The four rivers were enough of that!"**

The Eden story made it clear that God had his hand in the outworking of Creation as well as being the Word of Creation.

**"The egg came first, not the chicken: the complete design of every creature was encoded in its seed; the hand of God was the seed's first womb and mother. He also partnered with living man, allowing Adam to be the originator of zoological words as names. Adam named Eve too. I like it that God participates in his own story!"**

The Bible had merely said, "Let us make man in our image," without giving a reason. But the garden story suggested a reason: allowing him meaningful face-to-face communication with one of his creatures. But to Curious' hyper-curious mind, that raised another question:

**"Was that God's desire for all of Adam's offspring after they would become fruitful and multiply? If not, then what other reason did God have for making man in his image?"**

I believe Curious had come to appreciate that God is a wonderfully kind person since he cared for his creatures' welfare even after they had disobeyed him and propted him to interrupt paradise on earth.

**"Frankly," he said, "the one thing I have against God is that he let that evil presence inhabit the serpent and corrupt the beings he had made in his image."**

Then answer this, Curious: Why didn't Adam eat fruit from the tree of life when it was available to him—and give some to Eve too—and then they would enjoy eternal life. I mean, wouldn't that have given them immunity to any attack of poor choosing?

**"The Tree of Life might eliminate fatal consequences of poor choices, but that would hardly teach them wisdom, and so they would be stuck with Murphy's law on steroids, making life endlessly miserable."**

Our curious reader should have gone further on that one, but he was into the story now, and he told himself to lighten up because better insight than he could come up with on his own might well be found straight ahead. I suspect Curious wants to know what purpose God had in mind when he made mankind with our amazing capacity for creativity (which is really discovering and making use of what God made possible by *his* Creation). Our progress in efficient living must be due to that, but has the shrinking of the world by high-speed travel and communication taken place for another purpose? Does the Bible predict a future as much under the direction of God as its beginning? Certainly Curious discovered that the beginning described in the Bible was for him a "big bang," answering his heart's need to know the very origin of everything. Though he failed to wrap his head around it, Genesis spoke to his curiosity better than the atheistic scientist's stubborn fascination with the first moment that God spoke—and neglecting to pursue the Big Picture. But readers of the Bible can miss the Big Picture too, so let's hope that Curious sees it and discovers his purpose.

**4** *And the man knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have created a man like Yahweh did!"*

**"The poor woman!"** said Curious. **"She thought that if God took her out of Adam, the little man coming out of her was a similar event."**

That's ludicrous, Curious. But you may be right. If you finish the Bible well, you can ask Eve someday what she meant.

**2** *And again she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel kept sheep while Cain tilled the ground. After some time, Cain made an offering to Yahweh out of his produce while Abel brought the firstborn of his flock and the fat thereof. Yahweh had respect for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no respect. Consequently, Cain became angry and his countenance fell. And Yahweh spoke to him: "Why are you angry? And why that long face? If you do well, will not your spirit be lifted up? But if you do not well, sin couches at the door and desires to get you. But overrule it!"*

**"What's the deal here?"** said Curious. **"Why was one offering better than the other?"**

It seems they understood what Yahweh preferred, yet Cain did his own thing.

**"Cain offered what he had. How is that wrong?"**

There was significance in the type of offering. Cain either didn't know about that or ignored it.

**"How old were these boys when this incident took place, and what kind of relationship did they have? I suspect it was competitive, and this was a manifestation of it."**

Yes, as sons of Eve, why wouldn't they be susceptible to any weaknesses that's common to man? And there's reason to believe that they had at least one sister.

**"Is it possible that they had a sister, though she's not mentioned? If so, and she spent most of her time with Abel and his sheep, jealousy could explain Cain's attempt to establish his own independent offering."**

**8** *And Cain spoke to Abel his brother, and when they came to the field together, Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him.*

"This is looking worse than what I could imagine until now," said Curious.

Indeed it's a very rough start. But was Yahweh surprised?

"But how could this happen when God had declared his creation to be very good?"

Sin crouches at the door, Yahweh said. Outside of Eden it must be resisted.

"Obviously some original purity was shattered ... so easily was it shattered."

One might hope that if Eve had been sufficiently warned, she would not have made that adventure.

"I see clearly that the image of God in us leans toward independence."

Yes, and the serpent just hurried it along. Another ingredient will be needed to make goodness endure.

**9** *And Yahweh said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" And he replied, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" And he said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. The ground opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand, and now it curses you: henceforth when you cultivate the ground it will not yield its strength to you, so you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on earth."*

"I like the way God speaks," Curious remarked.

Cain now gets to explore the fruit every impulse without restraint.

**13** *"My punishment is more than I can bear," said Cain. "You are driving me from the face of the ground, and from your face I will be hid. Moreover, whoever finds me will slay me." And Yahweh said to him, "If anyone slays Cain, vengeance will be taken on him seven fold."*

"Well, Cain should have known better. He was warned not to lose his temper. On the other hand, nothing was mentioned about a penalty for murder."

*And Yahweh put that on a sign for Cain to wear lest anyone find out what he had done and kill him.*

"So they were able to read and no doubt write. Yahweh must have taught them language arts. Or maybe they had superior intelligence and invented such things readily. They had fire too, of course. Now, Yahweh foresees a long life for Cain and a multitude of offspring, so Cain gets this guarantee, but it also marks him as a killer—what perfect irony. He will need a wife, and there's only one possibility: if they were to be fruitful and multiply, siblings had to marry. Cain must have taken his sister with him. Brave girl she was!"

And obedient if she loved Abel.

"My hat is off to the wife who loves out of obedience."

**16** *Then Cain left the presence of Yahweh and went to live in the land of Nod, in the east side of Eden.*

"Even if Cain wouldn't touch that tree of life, God wanted Cain's offspring to avoid it, so he stationed Cherubim over there—whatever they are; I thought they were chubby angels, but these are serious soldiers."

Do you mean God knew Cain would murder his brother, and he would have to send him away?

"Everyone in Adam's family inherits the ability to do what Cain pioneered."

You sound as if you know something about that, Curious.

"How are we an image of God if we can't choose independence?"

**17** *Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch who built a city he named after his son.*

"There's a lot between the lines that got left out here," said Curious. "It's impressive, though, that this much detail has been preserved."

Starting only with Cain and his wife, how was there a need for a city in one generation?

"They multiplied like rabbits. And it turned out Cain was meant to be a builder, not a farmer. Obviously they were very intelligent. Maybe their children played in caves."

**18** *To Enoch was born Irad. Irad begat Mehujael, Mehujael begat Methushael, and Methushael begat Lamech. Lamech took two wives: Adah and Zillah.*

*Adah had Jabal, whose tribe became nomads, and his brother Jubal whose family became musicians skilled on harp and pipe.*

*Zillah gave birth to Tubal-Cain who forged cutting instruments of brass and iron. The sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.*

*And Lamech said to his wives,  
“Adah and Zilla, hear my voice;  
you wives of Lamech, harken to my speech.*

*I have slain a man for wounding me,  
a young man for bruising me.*

*If Cain will be avenged seven fold,  
truly Lamech seventy-seven fold.*

“What an odd ditty to have been preserved among the foundational facts of the world,” said Curious. “The early development of crafts is impressive, but I wonder about these lyrics.”

Perhaps it’s the only surviving excerpt from some work of dramatic art.

“That snippet of history from the east side of Eden is curious, alright. But it does make some sense that instruments for cutting like knives and axes would be primary tools for building houses.”

Why assume that the tools they developed were primitive?

“With pristine intelligence they might have invented tools rather quickly and built houses and gathered food and also had time to invent musical instruments—and done all those things with ease.”

We’re not given a time span, but Lamech was of a fifth generation after Cain.

“Is this the first east-side murder? The justification Lamech gives makes it likely.”

Yes, and the fact that it’s uniquely preserved in history makes that likely.

“How long did those pioneers live?”

Without physical ills? A long time.

**25** *Adam knew his wife again, and she had a son she named Seth. “I name him Seth because God has appointed me another seed to replace Abel, the one Cain slew,” Eve said.*

“Now she understands about seeds,” said Curious. “But ‘Seth’ sounds like another pun. She seems to share Adam’s talent for making meaningful names.”

Being Adam’s rib, that’s not surprising.

**26** *And to Seth there was born a son whom he called Enosh. That was the time when men began to call on the name of Yahweh.*

“That’s when formal religion started,” Curious declared. “The spirit that possessed the serpent was fastening onto souls over there—east of Eden and away from the presence of Yahweh—and prompting them to invent a pantheon of gods with other names. When others became aware of that, practice of addressing prayer to Yahweh was begun. That’s my guess, anyway.”

Since everything Yahweh had made was good, his opposition must have originated as an invasion from another realm—is that the way you see it, Curious?

“There’s an untold story behind this—a rebellion in heaven or something. But why would Yahweh let that go on?”

If you find the answer to that, you will have the key to everything, Curious.

“I’ve often wondered about evil—whatever it is that drives some people to destruction—and if it’s more than a failing: if it’s actually an evil spirit that messes with creation which might have remained thoroughly good.”

I’m sure you’ve heard of the devil whose name is Satan.

“Just to say that Satan invaded the new creation doesn’t solve the problem. How did Satan get established in heaven—or wherever he came from?”

The answer is in our nature, Curious. Imagine yourself, as Eve was, examining the tree, but alone. I know you’ve already done the thought experiment. I think you found it possible, even likely, that your curiosity would break the commandment.



**5** *This is the book of the generations of Adam:*

*Adam was 130 years of age when Seth was born; he lived 800 years more and fathered other sons and daughters. Adam lived 930 years.*

*Seth was 105 [Adam 235] years old when Enosh was born; he lived 807 years more and fathered sons and daughters. Seth lived 912 years.*

*Enosh was 90 [Adam 325] years old when Cainan was born; he lived 815 years more and fathered sons and daughters. Enosh lived 905 years.*

*Cainan was 70 [Adam 395] years old when Mahalalel was born; he lived 840 years more and fathered sons and daughters. Cainan lived 910 years.*

*Mahalalel was 65 [Adam 460] years old when Jared was born; he lived 830 years more and fathered other sons and daughters. Mahalalel lived 895 years.*

*Jared was 162 [Adam 460] years old when Enoch was born; he lived 800 years more and fathered sons and daughters. Jared lived 962 years.*

*Enoch was 65 [Adam 525] years old when Methuselah was born; he lived 300 years more fathering sons and daughters and walking with God; then God took him and he was not. Enoch lived 365 years.*

*Methuselah was 187 [Adam 712] years old when Lamech was born; he lived 782 years more and fathered sons and daughters. Methuselah lived 969 years.*

*Lamech was 182 [Adam 894] years old when Noah was born; he lived 595 years more and fathered other sons and daughters. Lamech lived 777 years.*

*When Lamech named Noah he said, "This son will comfort us in our toil working the ground Yahweh has cursed."*

*Noah was [about] 500 years old when his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth were born.*

*"Noah was 36 years old when Adam died," Curious observed. "So Adam could have passed this information on to Noah."*

**6** *When men began to multiply and daughters were born to them, the sons of God looked upon the daughters of men, and seeing that they were fair, they took to themselves all the women they wanted.*

Here you go, Curious. A whole lot of evil is out there somewhere, eager and able to mess with Yahweh's new and very good creation.

**"That's a shock. Who are the 'sons of God'?"**

You can reason that out.

**"Obviously, they're god-like beings able to manifest in physical bodies. If Yahweh could appear in the garden, speak with humans, and skin animals to make clothing, then other spirits might as well appear in human form."**

What's certain is that Yahweh has a purpose for us that's being opposed by spirits of some divine order.

**"I've a suspicion that what went on there was not driven by lust but by an enemy effort to corrupt the human genome."**

In that case, what corruptions might they have carried out by other means?

**"Bats and snakes might have been weaponized, and who knows what perversions of 'nature' might have come out of their laboratory?"**

It's spiritual warfare using material weaponry.

**"How is Yahweh going to deal with his creation when it's been corrupted?"**

**3** *And Yahweh said, "I will not have my Spirit strive with man forever, for his flesh is corrupted. In the future his days will be limited to 120 years." The Nephilim were on earth in those days, and also after that: when the sons of God came into the daughters of men and they bore children, those became the mighty men of old, the men of renown.*

**"I was going to advance a theory that somehow the reckoning of years was different, and they really didn't live for almost a thousand solar years. Now that's in the trash bucket."**

Without a government to manage conflicts and punish crime, it's a wonder that they lived so long.

**"They must have been clever to live so long, but evil is born of boredom,"** said Curious.

How could life be boring with rogue beings from heaven and "mighty men" interrupting natural life?

**"I mean imagination fills the void, and without limits it runs wild experiments."**

I see what you mean. Voluntarily interacting with the "sons of God" would be an example of that.

**"The women likely did not resist."**

Yes, and it seems that everyone but the Enoch who walked with God had to endure the consequences of their lasciviousness.

**5** *When Yahweh saw the extreme wickedness of man, that his imagination and the thoughts of his heart were evil continually, he was sorry that he made man on the earth. It grieved him deeply. He said, "I will destroy the man I created from the face of the earth—every beast, creeping thing, and bird will perish too—for I am sorry I made them."*

Curious stopped and put the book down. This was very disturbing. To read about the good Creation being corrupted beyond Yahweh's ability or desire to repair it was too much like the world at present.

**"Yahweh lost the war with evil,"** Curious said sadly. **"Clearly there had to be a reset, but that was not Yahweh's desire."**

We love Yahweh for his solicitous treatment of Adam in the garden—until Eve came along and forfeited our innocence. The crippling curses he levied against our first parents were harsh, yet not so as to prevent the human family from flourishing. But it was under a dark foreboding when Cain killed his brother, for it seemed that the evil adversary would continue to win. Yahweh had provided for the beings still his image a way to survive. For Adam and Eve he made clothing; for Cain he provided statutory protection; Enoch he took to a better place. But now....

**"Now he purposes to wipe out the whole show!"** moaned Curious.

There was no suspense for our inquisitive reader at this point because he knew that mankind has multiplied abundantly. Evil has not consumed everyone yet, but once again the genome is being manipulated to violate God's design, this time by man's cleverness. Will this lead to the final wipe-out of life on earth? Curious knew a little of the Ark story already: God provided a way in that day for a chosen few to escape universal destruction.

**8** *But Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.*

**Is there a plan in place to rescue men and women who have found favor in the eyes of Yahweh today?**

**9** *This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. He walked with God, though the rest of the earth was corrupt before God and filled with violence.*

**13** *God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh must come, for through them the earth is filled with violence. I plan to destroy them all, so make for yourself an ark of gopher wood. Subdivide it with rooms, and seal it with pitch inside and out. Make it 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits deep. Make a roof with an opening of one cubit all around. Make a door in the side, and inside make lower, second, and third decks. Behold, I will flood the earth with water, which will destroy everything that breathes, but I will establish my covenant with you. You will go into the ark, you and your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives. And bring into the ark two of every sort of animal to preserve each kind, male and female. Of the birds after their kind, of the cattle after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every sort will come to thee, to you to keep them alive. Gather all kinds of food, and take it aboard for you and for them."*

**22** *And Noah did all that God commanded him to do.*

"At least by saving Noah and his family, the Creator's creative efforts (in which he had dared to make humans in his own image) had not been a total bust," said Curious.

**7** Then Yahweh said to Noah, "You will bring your family into the ark, for you alone have done right by me in this generation. Of every clean beast take seven pair, the male and his female. But of the unclean beasts take one male and his female. Of the birds of the heavens take seven and seven, male and female, to keep seed alive on the face of the earth. Seven days from today I will bring down rain; forty days and forty nights it will pour down upon the earth, and I will destroy every living thing I have made from off the face of the earth." And Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him to do.

**6** Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean beasts and beasts that are not clean, of birds, and of everything that creeps upon the ground, male and female, went to Noah and into the ark as God commanded. And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood came upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, the second month, and the seventeenth day of the month—on that very day—all the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

**13** On the day that Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons went into the ark, also the beasts of their kind, cattle of their kind, every kind of creeping thing that creeps upon the earth, and every kind of bird went to Noah and into the ark as well—they were two and two of all flesh wherein is the breath of life. So they went in, male and female of all flesh, as God had instructed him, and Yahweh shut them in.

**17** And the flooding continued forty days during which the waters increased and floated the ark: it was lifted up above the ground. And the waters continued and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated upon the face of the waters. And the waters rose exceedingly upon the earth and the ark floated upon the face of the waters, and the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered—by a depth of fifteen cubits over the mountains. And all flesh that moved upon the earth died: birds, cattle, beasts, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth, and every man—all that was on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life died. And every living thing was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground, man, cattle, creeping things, and birds of the heavens: they were destroyed from the earth, and only Noah and those who were with him in the ark were left. And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.

"What were the clean and unclean animals about?" Curious wondered.

Over the centuries many things must have taken place that are not included in this account. Rest assured, Curious, if this distinction between clean and unclean animals is an important matter, it will come up again.

"Perfect in his generations. ... That must mean that the genome Noah inherited was not one that had been corrupted by Yahweh's enemies. If he was the only human untainted by the mischievous "sons of God," how close we all were to missing our life on earth! Maybe Noah's wife was not so pure; nothing is said about that, which could explain why the Nephilim were still around after that."

Then, what was special about Noah's wife? How did she merit being saved?

"Mrs. Noah was fortunate to marry the one man who could save her."

Yes, but do you think she picked him because of that?

**"I doubt that she picked Noah. He was a middle-aged man, and I'll bet she was a lot younger."**

Was that all? There were a lot of young women to choose from.

**"She was very fortunate; that's all I can say. Well, she had to like animals."**

And manage animals too, wouldn't you say?

**"Oh, yes. And stand the smell. Maybe Noah chose her for that reason."**

Can you imagine what the smell must have been inside the ark?

**"But I can't imagine tolerating it. Maybe Yahweh caused the animals to hibernate."**

Then why did he mention the food supply?

**"But then, why did he bother to save the animals when he could have made a fresh start?"**

You tell me.

**"Evidently creation was a one-shot deal."**

Then everything that made that ark possible was in the original Creation?

**"Every necessity was included, of course. But Noah did need supernatural help rounding up just the right birds and beasts."**

Why? Couldn't the original Creation have made provision for that too?

**"Now if Noah were Adam, I think he could have just called them by name and they would have come."**

Adam had a life-long relationship with all the animals, is that what you think?

**"Whoever is leading me on needs to stop. I'm expected to figure this out from what the Bible says. But yes, that's likely. I see what you're getting at. Adam must have passed on his animal lore to his great-great-great-great-grandsons—or after civilization had gotten to the point where people had time to pursue the study of nature."**

Cain's descendant Jubal would have been about that generation because he had time to invent musical instruments and become proficient on them. No doubt, some of Adam's descendants took up the study of zoology.

**"Yes, I was getting to that. And Noah was probably a zoo keeper and already had just about every bird and beast he needed to fulfill the ark's passenger list."**

I hate to bring this up, but it said Yahweh shut them in. So besides prompting Noah with instructions, he did give him a physical hand with the operation.

**"Noah found everything he needed to build that massive ship, but when it came time to close the door he needed physical help from the Creator. I'll keep that in mind. I'll watch for that sort of thing, and now it won't be too surprising if he forces nature again."**

You do that. Now do you think the stated size of the ark would have contained two of every kind of air-breathing terrestrial creature that God had made?

**"Was the ark large enough? I was asking myself that, but it's a stupid question because God wasn't stupid. He could figure the size the ark had to be."**

Does that revise—

**"Which revises my estimate of how many names Adam had to come up with—not as many as I imagined. So the effort it took to name them (and remember all those names) was more realistic. God might have given him a whole day to observe and study each pair before naming them. So the project might have been completed in a hundred years."**

That would mean Adam was about a hundred years old when he lost his rib.

**"It's possible. Adam was 130 when Abel was born."**

Then he didn't get much time with Eve before she got beguiled by the serpent.

**"So Eve may have been a lot younger than Adam. From what I read, it sounded like the serpent got to Eve before she had a chance to even consider the Tree of Life."**

Apparently, Noah spent a lot of years with—

**"If Noah befriended his animals before he got a wife, just like Adam did, then he knew how to take care of them when the time came to move the zoo into the ship. Now I need to finish the story."**

**8** *God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark, and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters began to subside; the fountains of the deep as well as the windows of heaven were stopped, so the rain from heaven was restrained. The waters flowed off the earth continually, and after 150 days the waters had lowered such that on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark touched ground on a mountain of Ararat. The waters continued to decrease, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.*

"Speaking of forcing nature, that whole flood scene was pretty wild," Curious remarked. "The only thing I can figure is the land masses got higher and oceans got deeper as flood water drained out to sea. Unless it took place slowly, there would be a quaking mountain under the keel of the ark. If it happened slowly, Noah must have been terribly anxious, wondering if the lowlands would ever dry off—not that I would expect a detail like that to show up here."

**6** *After forty days had passed, Noah opened a window that he had made in the ark and sent out a raven. It flew to and fro until the waters had dried from off the earth. And he sent forth a dove to see if water had dried off the face of the ground, and when the dove found no dry ground on which to light, she returned to him in the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. He put forth his hand and took her and brought her in to him in the ark. He waited another seven days and sent the dove out of the ark again; and the dove came in to him at eventide with an olive leaf in her mouth which she had picked off. Thus Noah was reassured that the waters were abating from off the earth. He waited yet another seven days and sent the dove out again, and this time she did not return to him.*

"The raven found his own vessel, I presume," said Curious, "—landed on some isle of debris. He took a liking to dead floating

flesh for food. If I know ravens, they eat almost anything. You know, I like the realism of the details in this story. Presumably his mate found him eventually."

**13** *And it came to pass on the first day of the next year (he was then 601 years old) Noah removed a hatch cover and looked around, and, behold, there was dry ground. And by the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the land was dry. God then spoke to Noah: "Go forth from the ark, you and your wife and your sons and and your sons' wives with you. And bring forth with you every living thing, both birds and animals, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth, that they may breed abundantly in the earth and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth." And Noah went forth and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him; every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, whatever moves upon the earth, after their families, went forth out of the ark.*

"Ah! There it is!" said Curious. "'Families' of creatures were represented. So what God meant by multiplying abundantly obviously included diversification. It's making more and more sense all the time."

But what were the chances of survival? Wouldn't the lions eat the zebras? Would not a wolf feast on a deer if given a chance?

"They were herbivorous eaters when they were created," Curious recalled. But perhaps that didn't last very long after diversification set in."

**20** *And Noah built an altar to Yahweh and took some of every clean beast and of every clean bird and made burnt offerings on the altar. When Yahweh smelled the sweet savor, he said in his heart, "I will not curse the ground again on account of the evil in man, for the imagination of his heart is evil from his youth, and neither will I smite every living thing in this way. As long as the earth remains, planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night will not cease."*

**9** *And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Now, fear and dread of you will be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens; all wherewith the ground teems and all fish of the sea are delivered into your hand. Every moving thing that lives will be food for you—just as I had given you green herbs to eat. But flesh with its life—with its blood in it—you are not to eat. And surely your blood—the blood of your life—I will require of any beast that takes it; and at the hand of any man, even if it be his brother, I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God he made man. Now you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly and multiply on earth.”*

**8** *And God spoke to Noah and his sons: “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your seed after you and with every living creature that is with you—the birds, the cattle, and all beasts that have come out of the ark—every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never will all flesh die by waters of the flood; there will never be another flood to destroy the earth.” And God said, “This is the token of the covenant I am making, a perpetual covenant between me and you and every living creature with you, including all your future generations: I set my bow in the cloud as a token of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring a cloud over the earth, the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations; the waters will never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The bow will be in the cloud, and I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every kind of living creature upon the earth.” And God said to Noah, “This is the token of the covenant I have established between me and all flesh upon the earth.”*

“Did God repeat himself like that, or did the historian who put this together do it for emphasis?” Curious wondered. “By the way, what is the source of these stories; how did they get in the Bible?”

Evidently Noah kept a diary. Adam might have written a history of the world and then passed it on to someone like Lamech, Noah’s father, so it would have been in Noah’s possession.

“It seems unlikely that the abundance of numerical details would have been retained in an oral tradition, though not impossible. But putting that question down alongside the wonder of Noah’s accomplishment in designing and building the world’s first and only proven seagoing zoo, it seemed insignificant. Noah needed drawings and drawings need mathematics. Was that done by counting scratches on the wall of a cave?”

If mankind had developed metalworking and musical instruments, was not a written language inevitable?

“Their sudden appearance and their long lifespans speak to the soundness of this story being about the original race of humans. It follows that the creativity and reasoning power of their minds as well as the strength and dexterity of their bodies—being freshly made in the image of God—would surpass that of any later human flesh doomed to expire within 120 years.”

Because Curious liked the story he sought to get his head around its origin.

“It might well be more difficult to explain as a myth than as history. It feels like fragments of history, but there’s one problem: some of the things written about occurred before the appearance of mankind; the author must have invented those.”

Well, no, Curious. Put yourself in Adam’s place when it was only you and an incarnation of God (who happened to be your best friend before Eve appeared on the scene).

“But Adam might have learned everything from God when just the two of them were together in the Garden.”

**Adam:** "You made everything, didn't you?"

**God:** "Yes, my man."

**Adam:** "Did it take you a long time?"

**God:** "A long time? Well, yes and no. The design was worked out first. On the first day ...."

**Adam:** "What about before that? I mean how did you express the design if there was nothing to start with?"

**God:** "That's a very good question, my man. Let me just say there is this expanse of void. It isn't nothing, but it isn't what you perceive as anything. You might say it is emptiness, but to me it is where my Word lives. If you want a place for it in your imagination, you can say that in a beginning-before-the-beginning, I brooded over this void and implemented the plan in six days."

After that flight of imagination, Curious no longer thought much about the redundancy, and I don't know whether or not he ever settled on an explanation for why the Scripture repeats some things—other than the obvious possibility that those things are exceptionally import and worthy of being emphasized by every means.

He thought the historical sketches in the opening chapters of Genesis comprehended everything of importance at that time, yet the manner in which they were presented was not difficult for him to get his head around, which he liked better than anthropological stories which raised questions without answers. But when he found himself reading about human creatures being extravagantly capricious and making a ruin of their culture to such a degree that that the God who had created heaven and earth, and all of them as well, made the decision to drown them all—that he didn't like. At least I think this is the way he was taking it. I'm not sure.

But now there came this new beginning, and the fate of the world hung on Noah, the one man worth saving. It was a new dispensation under a new covenant.

**18** *The sons of Noah that went forth from the ark, were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.) From these three sons of Noah the whole earth was overspread.*

"Now why is Canaan of the next generation mentioned?" Curious wondered. "He or his tribe must turn out to be something special."

**20** *Noah began tilling the ground and planted a vineyard. He drank wine from the harvest, and he got drunk on it and was uncovered in his tent.*

Curious slammed the volume shut and tossed it to the floor. He was through. He was disgusted.

"'Couldn't you do better than that?' he yelled at the Bible's Creator. He stooped down, picked up the Book, and started to take it to the trash bin—but no, he couldn't do that because it belonged to a friend. He remembered his friend's smile when she handed it to him, and he dowsed his anger, sat back down, and doggedly continued his reading while determined not to forget that this God of the Bible had a terrible track record when it came to managing his creatures. Even the most worthy of them, the one God declared 'perfect in all his ways,' turned out to be a drunkard."

**22** *Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers. And Shem and Japheth laid a garment on their shoulders, and, walking backward, they covered the nakedness of their father—facing backward so as to not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him, and he said,*

*"Cursed be Canaan:*

*he will become a servant of servants to his brethren."*

**26** *And he added,*

*"Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be a servant of Shem.*

*May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant."*

*28 Noah lived after the flood 350 years; all the days of Noah were 950 years. And he died.*

**"There's more here than meets the eye,"** said Curious, **"but it seems worse than I thought—much worse."**

We might sympathize with Curious. He truly did not know what to make of this. The arbitrary unfairness smote his sense of justice far more than a moral failure on the part of the patriarch.

**"Was this episode fabricated to justify an oppression of Canaan that came later?"**

Admittedly that's what it looked like.

**"What had Canaan done? It was his father who had walked into Noah's tent at the wrong time."**

Remember, "God blessed Noah and his sons." Noah avoided contradicting that.

**"I was going to say this episode is ridiculous, but I still say Noah had no basis for predicting one clan would serve another, so this makes no sense."**

He wasn't simply predicting. He spoke as God might speak, projecting the future.

**"I'm wondering if any of this Book really makes sense. I've been giving it the benefit of the doubt, but I can't do that any longer!"**

What took you so long, Curious? Was it reasonable that God promoted Noah over everyone else?

**"What? Was Noah perfect? Well, I did swallow that too easily. I thought Noah was God's best shot at cleaning up the corruption in the human race—I mean physical corruption introduced by an enemy tampering with the original human design. But now, am I supposed believe that corruption propagated to different degrees in Noah's offspring?—making one line more worthy than the others?"**

Either that or back off from our interpretation of the Nephilim and let them be simply bad actors within the Adamic offspring and no unnatural activity was meant by "sons of God" impregnating "daughters of men" such that they bore children who became "mighty men of old" and "the men of renown."

**"I wish the 'sons of God' were not mentioned at all,"** Curious muttered.

Go ahead, strike it out. But what will you say about the serpent in the Garden?

**"Now the evil in the Garden troubled me, of course. All I could figure is that God has an adversary."**

What can be worse—

**"Yes, I know, nothing can be worse news than that. Yet it doesn't seem to bother God too much."**

You're accepting that God has an adversary capable of ruining his Creation?

**"But that's the root of all the trouble: the Flood and everything."**

You say it doesn't bother God too much. Why is that?

**"This is all new to me. I don't know why God didn't put an end to it in the beginning."**

Could it be that God is wiser than his adversary?

**"No doubt God is smarter than the devil, but if God created him too, how smart was that?"**

You won't find the answer anywhere else. And you're Curious, so you have to keep reading.

**"I never did like war stories. I don't know if I can stand to read about conflict all day long, if that's what it's going to be. Why has God tolerated the devil all this time?"**

What if God shares a secret with you along the way that gives you hope?

**"I hope there's a good answer for that. I know of some that aren't so good. And I don't know any good answers to the racial question."**

Curious allowed that the record regarding Ham and Canaan had to be incomplete. There were too many oddities for it to stand on its own; no mention was made of anyone else in his generation when Canaan's name suddenly popped up along with that of his father and uncles; the curse of servitude laid on Canaan by his grandfather had nothing to do with Canaan's actions, as far as the record revealed.



The best explanation Curious could think of was that Noah had gotten a sense, somehow, that Ham's offspring, and Canaan's in particular, was predisposed to disobeying God. Noah believed this would come about because he knew his son Ham and Ham's wife and recognized certain characteristics. The whole thing could be explained by Ham having made a poor choice in choosing a mate, no doubt going against his father's judgment. There is nothing to say that diabolical genetic engineering always results in mighty men of renown; the opposite may be more common, and Ham's wife may have carried hacked genes onto the ark.

But Curious failed to come up with an explanation for why Noah seemed eager to voice this discouraging prophecy about his grandson's future family—not that such behavior is unusual today. He could not let the issue go without trying to get his head around it, of course.

**"Perhaps Noah foresaw an unruly tendency that had best be suppressed," he mused. "I wonder what Yahweh thought about that. This seems to be Noah's independent response to the situation. Maybe God saw it differently."**

So the reason Curious was not comfortable with Noah trying to promote one son's progeny and deprecate another was that the diversity among his three sons could have a purpose that Noah did not appreciate. For was that diversity not part of the plan? Because they were all related, shouldn't Adam's family all be similar even after ten generations?—especially since Adam's wife was as close to him as his own rib!

No, if God had desired to plant human life on earth simply to watch it slowly develop, he would not have included a "back door" in the human design which made it possible for spirit (even himself) to appear in human flesh; and he would not have designed women so as to tempt the spirit! He would have let diversity unfold without promptings from heaven.

**"It looks more like a project than an experiment," said Curious. "God has some great purpose in mind for this Creation. Well, he would have to!"**

Yes, it does look like God had a purpose in that initial millennium of increasingly imperfect generations from which he selected one man and let that man select a wife and let his sons select wives—and then accepting them as the pioneer family.

**"Apparently, the historian who compiled the first nine chapters of Genesis was unaware of this plan. But it explains why God took everything in stride and expressed no surprise when he seemed to be responding with words of resignation."**

So he was not really angry and not actually frustrated, which is why he didn't start over from scratch when he "repented" of the good Creation in which he exalted mankind in his own image.

**"Really, that's the unspoken drama here," said Curious. "God has an adversary, yet he is not anxious or fearful about opposition. The enemy is obviously inferior to him, not being an original creator, and thus could be removed from the scene, but he's been tolerated even until today, for some reason."**

Curious frowned, as a dark thought crossed his mind.

**"God wouldn't have created evil in order to fulfill a purpose, would he?"**

That would ruin everything for Curious. He knew a little about the religious philosophy of dualism where the two sides balance one another and ultimately are a good/evil unity. Even that would be vastly superior to a God who purposely devised evil to achieve an end. The thought made Curious shudder, and he was thankful that there had been no evidence so far of either that or of dualism. Yet the question was left wide open: Why did God tolerate an enemy? The adversary was implicitly condemned, so why was this evil foe not disposed of and evil nullified?

That question troubled to Curious, who hated to have his curiosity left hanging.

What was his alternative? He could try to take this whole thing lightly and not let discrepancies bother him (scant chance of that succeeding!) but then where would he turn next to answer his question about origins that got him into this quest? As he reflected on this, he had to give the Bible credit for its realistic view of good and evil: the universe bore evidence of a designer who favored man, but corruption of mankind had set in and was being tolerated. He decided on that account that the Bible was worthy of his continued attention. (Strangely, Curious never asked himself why he instinctively understood the difference between good and evil and why he loved good and hated evil.)

However, we're learning that Curious was not thoroughly convinced that he should adopt all biblical narratives as his own belief. Yet when he thought about the naturalistic alternative with its vacant purpose, the only thing he saw going for it was that it was not *this*, which was its supreme advantage for most people. He could not respect such folks if they weren't curious, although Curious had nothing to do with being who he was!

"Someday, when I finish reading this Book and return it to her, I'll read what professional theologians say about things like the Tree of Life," he said. "That one seems like a fiction. ... No, come to think of it, those lifespans that seemed almost unlimited went with it, so there was a connection. ... Maybe. ... I don't know. Curiosity is only good up to a point."

Yes, Curious and stay clear of that point where your sanity becomes tenuous.

"Another thing is the rainbow seal on the covenant—as if there had never before been sun and rain together."

How much did it rain in the Flood?

"Maybe it hadn't rained at all prior to the grest flood when huge quantities of water must have poured down—and before that the sky was heavily overcast. I never would have considered that, had it not been for the novelty of the rainbow."

**10** *What follows is a record of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and all who were born after the Flood.*

**2** *The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. From these came nations according to the tongues of their families.*

**6** *The Sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The Sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. Cush begat Nimrod, a mighty one in the earth, a mighty hunter before Yahweh, hence the saying, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before Yahweh." (The beginnings of his kingdom were Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar. From there he went into Assyria and built Nineveh with its wide places, and Calah; also Resen between Nineveh and the "great city" Calah.) Mizraim begat Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines), and Caphtorim.*

**15** *Canaan begat Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth; also the Jebusite, the Amorite, the Girgashite, the Hivite, the Arkite, the Sinite, the Arvadite, the Zemarite the Hamathite. Later, the Canaanite families spread out; their border was from Sidon, as you go toward Gerar, to Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. These are the sons of Ham, by their families, their tongues, their lands, and their nations.*

**21** *Shem, the elder brother of Japheth, became the father of all the children of Eber. The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, Aram. The Sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. Arpachshad begat Shelah; Shelah begat Eber, and to Eber were born two sons: one was named Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. Joktan begat*

*Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. The dwelling of the sons of Joktan was from Mesha, as you go toward Sephar, the mountain of the east. These are the sons of Shem, by their families, their tongues, their lands, and their nations.*

**32** *And these are the families of the sons of Noah by their generations and their nations. Such were the nations dividing the earth after the flood.*

"That's a lot of information," said Curious. Indeed.

"Someone was motivated to compile and preserve this record. I wonder if he had to go around interviewing the various families."

It's the Word of God, Curious.

"It paid off. Being that it appears in the Bible, it's esteemed above all others."

And will be preserved forever.

"They were truly pioneers, but I suppose little is known about them—except where they fit into Noah's family tree. They don't come together very well in the trunk. It's like three trees growing out of the same root."

Are you surprised at that, Curious?

"Maybe I shouldn't be surprised about that. If the Bible purports to document beginnings, it would be incomplete if it didn't address the roots of diversity in the human race. But what about language? Nothing is said to explain why there are so many languages in the world. How did that happen?"

**11** *Now they all spoke one language. And journeying east, they came to the plain of Shinar, where they built dwellings, using thoroughly fired brick in place of stone and bitumen for mortar. "Let us build a city," they said, "with a tower reaching to heaven by which we will have established our name here, lest we become scattered over the earth." When Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower the sons of Adam were building, he said, "This is only the beginning. As one people held together by one language, nothing will be too difficult for them."*

"I would think that God would be aware of their every move. So this is puzzling. The implication is that Yahweh was distant from this effort and unaware of their building of a city," said Curious..

So it appeared to them. Take it as literary pastiche.

"One would think he would be delighted with their creativity."

They had moved out on their own, without Yahweh's permission, away from the mountainous area where the ark had landed and where Noah had established an altar of worship.

"But Yahweh was not urging them to go back and keep it rural."

No, but he was concerned about what would happen if they became dependent on a shared and centralized economy.

"I see four possible reasons why Yahweh did not see it as a good thing:

1) Since they were ignoring him and doing it without consulting his direction, there was a danger that one person or a small elite aligned with the adversary would develop the means of taking control of the area, confining everyone to it, and becoming their god.

2) Their survival depended on not being in constant close proximity because they had not developed immunity to diseases that could kill them all. (Curious thought it not unlikely that the devil who had sponsored the snake in the garden and sent the "sons of God" to corrupt the human genome had the ability to engineer dangerous organisms.)

3) The diversity inherent in Adam's genome would require the stimulation of environmental diversity in order to develop fully. By remaining close together in one region, that potential would eventually be lost.

4) Yahweh had created many wonderful lands on the earth which he wanted them to explore and enjoy. (The plain of Shinar was not one of them. It was simply the first level ground they came to.)

"Whatever the reason is, how is he going to do that without picking them up and transporting them?"

7 *“Come, let us go down and confound their language so they will not understand one another’s speech.”*

“Ah, that was clever, but how would he do that? ‘Let us go down’ sounds like an invasion of language professors.”

Do you mean they agreed to have tribal languages? I would never have seen it that way on my own, Curious.

“A private language would be more than a novelty; it would be a means of protecting one’s clan and gaining advantage by making secret plans. However that would foster distrust and splinter community and probably lead to wars.”

(We must credit Curious for having a creative imagination, at least.)

That sounds familiar. But who were those “language teachers,” Curious?

“Who were the teachers? They came along with God. ‘Let us go down,’ he said.”

Teachers like those “sons of God”?

“It doesn’t say who they were. For all I know God has a whole army of servants.”

Well, the simplest explanation is usually best. Recall how God speaks of himself.

8 *Thus Yahweh scattered them. They left off building the city and migrated all over the earth.*

“Here’s what I think,” said Curious. “I think those angels, or whatever they were, led them to places where they would find better pastures and be free from tyrants forcing them to make bricks for the building projects. Not only would they gain freedom and green pastures, they would find people there who spoke their new language. ...”

But there were no other people on earth at that time.

“When they got there, of course.”

But isn’t that deceptive? Does God trick people?

“He created them, and if the incentive was for their benefit, why not?”

9 *Therefore, it was called Babel: the place where Yahweh mixed the language for all the earth. From there Yahweh scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.*

“Babel? Where have I seen that word before?” Curious muttered.

He looked back and found this in the genealogy of Ham:

*Cush begat Nimrod, a mighty one in the earth, a mighty hunter before Yahweh. ... The beginnings of his kingdom were Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar. From there he went into Assyria and built Nineveh with its wide places, and Calah; also Resen between Nineveh and the “great city” Calah.*

“There’s the one!” exclaimed Curious. “Just the type that makes slaves of everyone.

That’s why Yahweh scattered them—to save them from Nimrod. ‘Mighty hunter before Yahweh’ must mean he had a habit of going out hunting for, not “before,” Yahweh to kill him.”

That’s outrageous, Curious.

“Yes, to fit an outrageous monster of a man. No doubt Nimrod knew Adam’s story and figured if Adam and Enoch had walked with God, Yahweh must be lurking somewhere in the area. So Nimrod made a mighty effort to hunt him down, organizing cities as he went, and as ruler over at least nine cities, he made up a tale that he had hunted down and killed Yahweh, and therefore he was the sovereign lord to be obeyed and worshiped.”

That’s good, Curious. Now what do you really think? You don’t mean that you’ve satisfied your curiosity by inventing a fable.

“Now I gave it my best shot, and I need practice. As a first-time reader I really don’t think Nimrod is worth spending more time on. What does everyone else think ‘mighty hunter before Yahweh’ means?”

Well ...

“That’s what I thought. Now let’s see what comes next.”

10 *These are the generations of Shem: Shem was 100 years of age when Arpachshad was born (two years after the flood), and he lived another 500 hundred years and fathered other sons and daughters.*

*12 Arpachshad was 35 years of age when Shelah was born, and he lived another 403 years and fathered other sons and daughters.*

*14 Shelah was 30 years of age when Eber was born, and he lived another 403 years and fathered other sons and daughters.*

*16 Eber was 34 years of age when Peleg was born, and he lived another 430 years and fathered other sons and daughters.*

*18 Peleg was 30 years of age when he begat Reu, and he lived another 209 years and fathered other sons and daughters.*

*20 Reu was 32 years of age when Serug was born, and he lived another 207 years and fathered other sons and daughters.*

*22 Serug was 30 years of age when Nahor was born, and he lived another 200 years and fathered other sons and daughters.*

*24 Nahor was 29 years of age when Terah was born, and he lived another 119 years and fathered other sons and daughters.*

*16 Terah lived 70 years before his sons Abram, Nahor, and Haran were born.*

Curious was fascinated by this genealogical chain that stretched some twenty generations back to Adam, specifically linked by numerations of years thereby ensuring that no generation was forgotten.

**"It must be significant that lifespans decreased from nearly a thousand years down to about two hundred years."**

Not until after the Flood.

**"Adam's vitality might have been diluted; but no, they did not suffer loss of longevity until after the flood."**

Apparently 900 years or so was God's initial design.

**"Could the numbers be overblown by a factor of ten?"**

No, that would imply a three-year-old father.

**"Yahweh had said he was going to reduce lifespans even further, down to 120 years as a way to curb evil. But there was no mention of how he would manage to bring it about."**

A large part of the reduction happened suddenly—Noah lived 950 years; his son Shem lived only 600 years.

**"Pre-flood they lived over 900 years with the exceptions of Mahalalel who died before his 900<sup>th</sup> birthday, Enoch who was translated to heaven, and Noah's father, Lamech, who died five years before the Flood."**

Curious guessed at the reason:

**"Suddenly the gene pool was severely limited to Noah, and the four women."**

It was a reasonable guess. The new environment (suggested by the rainbow) couldn't explain why the next 400-year lifespan reduction, from 600 down to 200, happened not immediately but over ten generations.

**"And it could be that Noah's wife was God's primary instrument for that."**

Is it not curious that Noah's sons were born when he was 500 years old?

**"Yes, it is curious,"** said Curious. **"I think Lamech hoped his first son would invent a better plow, so Noah worked on that in addition to maintaining the zoo, and that double occupation left no time for social life. When he decided he needed to raise a family, all the women his age were taken, so he married a girl who was in poor health."**

Curious had enjoyed feeding his curiosity, for the answers that came were satisfying within their context. He may have thought of his latte cup and pictured it running over, but now what was he going to do with it?

**"A taste is fine, but I'm not sure I really want to drink all this stuff in,"** he complained.

While Genesis had addressed big questions, the answers involved miracles. Even though the miracles made sense in their context, they were one-time events that had no modern counterparts. He started to list them, but he got no further than

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Curious had never been one to deny the fact of material existence, but after reading the biblical story of creation, "existence" for him had become ephemeral, a word without substance, the paper shell of his latte cup, a mere token people passed back and forth in place of real value. No longer could he speak of the universe existing: it was *Created*. That had become as clear to him as anything could be.

And he had to acknowledge that Yahweh himself was an interesting personality. Now, was God the source of the Creation story, or was he the hero of the story? Did Yahweh create the story or did the story create Yahweh?

**"I can't believe anyone could fabricate such a God,"** was Curious' answer. **"He continually surprises me in ways that demand respect. His condescension is like that. Honestly, I can't conceive of him being the product of primitive literature."**

Thinking back over the account of beginnings, Curious remembered certain other details that marked it as being unlikely mythology.

**"Information such as the precise dates of the flood are not typical of legend."**

The disappearance of Enoch (the second Enoch mentioned) was an unexplained event. If a fabrication, how did it fit the story?

**"What does Enoch's his 'walk with God' refer to? And how did it become a certainty that God took him? Did God appear to him in bodily form as he had to Adam and Eve and apparently Cain?"**

He maintained that answers to such questions would be given if the event had been part of a legendary story.

**"So Enoch was taken for a reason only known to God,"** Curious speculated.

But a feeble attempt to deny his curiosity its due process did not keep him from wondering about what provision had been included in the good Creation for

translating human flesh and blood to heaven—presumably heaven, for it did not specify Enoch's destination.

**"Where was he taken to? It couldn't be heaven, at least not the place distinct from this universe where the Maker of the universe dwells,"** said Curious. **"Earthly material outside the created universe makes no sense. Enoch might have been taken to another place on earth, though what purpose that would serve is hard to imagine."**

Why not to another place in time, Curious?

**"Conceivably he was translated in time to a later era,"** said Curious. **"But that would be a shock to everyone concerned, and for what purpose I can't imagine."**

(Curious was into it now and reluctant to let the issue drop.)

**"Suppose God un-made Enoch's body and took his spirit—reversing how he made Adam's body and adding his spirit into it,"** Curious theorized. **"If all the information that organizes a body were somehow suddenly extracted, there would be nothing but disorganized molecules left—dust and gas, that's all. But that information *would* be compatible with heaven because information is timeless. Then I suppose it could become the pattern for a 'body' in heaven. I can see Enoch as a representative of pre-flood humanity in some living museum in heaven!"**

Well, curiosity sometimes causes one to look where there is no reason to look, so we have to expect this sort of thing from Curious. Maybe I shouldn't be leading him on, but it's great fun to see what he does with any suggestion.

Overall, it seems that Curious is finding the Bible palatable in spite of his expressed hesitation about "drinking this stuff in." Certainly he likes being challenged and would much rather seek solutions to the questions it raises than to dismiss them as marks of nonsense without first probing for answers.

But something was seriously wrong; he was not going on. Could it be the geneal-

ogy staring up at him from the page? No, lists of names had not deterred him so far. What is your problem, Curious? Why do you look so troubled?

**"Genesis doesn't leave room for science; that's my problem. Within its own little universe it has things worked out pretty well, but it leaves no space for fossils that are millions of years old."**

Who told you that fossils are millions of years old?

**"The record is there in the strata of rocks and the dust of time."**

Has the dust of time spoken to you, O curious one?

**"Indirect though it may be, the evidence cannot be denied."**

What language do fossils speak?

**"It's a historical record put down by nature, and nature doesn't invent stories."**

For whom was that fossil record written?

**"The fact that scientists are able to read dates in the byproducts of the passage of time makes them worthy of honorary degrees in the language of the ages."**

For whom was that book in your hands written, Curious?

**"On the other hand, this Bible is a translation into modern English of material written in ancient languages—a translation of a translation, no doubt. Yes, someone wanted it to be read ... in fact, I know someone wanted it to be read by me."**

So the Bible speaks your language?

**"I'll have to admit that it seems like Genesis was written for me. It's pretty easy for me to understand."**

Do you get the sense that translation into your language has been a big leap?"

**"The translators had to study ancient languages like scientists study fossils, but the scientists have had a much more difficult task."**

Why is that?

**"Fossils don't speak a human language. I suppose their language could be misinterpreted by humans."**

So translation of language by scholars is a science while scientists reading fossil language are making up stories?

**"Yes, it does come down to translation being scientifically testable. But what of the authenticity of the original material?"**

Are you comparing the words of the Creator to the decayed residue of his creation?

**"I'm afraid I was being put off by something from a different realm altogether. It now seems to me that since fossil-daters aren't dealing with intelligence directly, they may be misunderstanding what they're looking at."**

Curious looked down at the verses immediately ahead and sighed. **"More genealogy,"** he muttered. **"But not too much."**

*27 Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. (Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his nativity, before Terah his father.) Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, daughter of Haran (who was father of both Milcah and Iscah). Sarai was barren; she had no child. Terah took his son Abram and grandson Lot (Haran's son) and Abram's wife Sarai (his daughter-in-law) and they went forth from Ur of the Chaldeans, intending to go to the land of Canaan. But they came to Haran, and dwelt there. Terah lived 205 years and died in Haran.*

**"If I'd been Abram, I'd be disappointed that we stopped short of the desirable land our father had promised us,"** said Curious.

Is it merely a coincidence that Terah stopped short of his destination in a place that had the same name as his son who died before his time?

**"Maybe Terah named his son after the city Haran because he had some liking for the place. And I wonder what happened to Nahor. Likely there was more to the story at one time."**

**12** Now Yahweh spoke to Abram: "Leave your country, your father's house, and your kindred; and go to the land I will show you. I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

"That's quite a statement," said Curious. "What great nation did Abram begin?"

From what nation came the book you hold in your hands?

"It doesn't fit anywhere in history as far as I know. Yet these are the direct words of Yahweh, and he should know!"

There's a clue in "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you."

"Certainly it could have been a factor in ancient conflicts, but as spoken the context was worldwide."

Further fulfillment will be explained. Keep reading and your question will be answered abundantly.

*4 Abram went and did according to Yahweh's instructions to him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he departed Haran. Abram took Sarai his wife, his nephew Lot, and all the substance they had gathered, including the souls they had gotten in Haran. And they went forth to go to the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. And Abram passed through the land to a place called Shechem, and to the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was in the land.*

"It sounds like Shechem was a prominent city in later times, at least," said Curious. "But the Canaanite presence wasn't strong enough to deter Abram at that time."

Shall we say rather they weren't strong enough to oppose Abraham. Remember Noah's prophecy.

"Maybe Moreh was a Canaanite guru who lived near the tree."

That's not a bad guess, Curious, but it's better not to know what they did there.

*7 And Yahweh appeared to Abram, saying, "I will give this land to your offspring." Abram built an altar to Yahweh, to mark the spot where he had appeared to him.*

"If the Canaanites knew nothing of Yahweh, this would have been interesting to them," said Curious. "Here comes a wealthy man serving a God who obviously had greatly blessed him already and promises to give their land to him. And he puts up the symbol of his God. Maybe that oak tree had to do with worshiping their gods—that would make sense."

If you were a Canaanite in Shechem, what would you have done, Curious?

"Even if I didn't know who Abram was, I think he would have impressed me as a man to be respected. I would find out all I could about him, of course. I'm not Curious for no reason!"

It's hard to imagine tht he would be welcomed.

*8 Abram went on from there to the mountain east of Bethel and pitched his tent on a mountain between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built an altar to Yahweh there and called upon the name of Yahweh.*

"I certainly would call on Yahweh," said Curious. "I would be thankful for the success of the journey so far, but I would also want to know if this is where Yahweh wanted me to settle, especially if the pasture was good."

*9 Abram journeyed on, going south into the Negev.*

"Apparently Yahweh told him to keep going."

It doesn't say that.

"But it doesn't say that, so maybe it was Adram's own idea."

*10 And it came about that there was a famine in the land.*

"I thought Abram was God's man and everything would go well for him," said Curious. "Apparently he kept going south without Yahweh's permission."

The dry spell likely affected the whole land, don't you think?



**"But it could be that the famine affected the whole land. Probably it wasn't just for Abram's benefit."**

*And Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was sore in the land.*

"It doesn't say that Abram built an altar and called on the name of Yahweh before he left for Egypt," Curious observed. "I can understand that. I would be feeling like I was on my own and the blessing I was promised had fizzled somehow, and now I had to make the best of it."

**11** *When they neared Egypt he said to Sarai his wife, "Now look, because you are a beautiful woman, when the Egyptians see you they'll say, 'This is his wife.' And they will kill me, but they'll take you alive. So I ask you to tell them you're my sister so it will be well with me because of you, and my life will be spared for your sake."*

Curious was astounded by what he just read. He felt like he had felt when Noah went ashore and got drunk.

**"Is this the best that can be gotten out of humanity?"** Curious grumbled as he thought back over the history. God had blessed his creation and pronounced it good. Adam did not treat Eve this way; he sacrificed his life to stay with her. **Now here comes this favored man whom Yahweh blessed with wealth, and he starts acting like the worst kind of coward, sacrificing his wife and saying in effect he will not miss her!** Curious wanted to shout back through the ages: **"Where is your faith, Abram?"**

Cool it, Curious. How much do you know about Abram's situation? Your assumptions allow you to believe his faith was lacking. But why not assume he had a plan that would get him back to Canaan with enough supplies as soon as possible?

(At least Curious was prepared for the worst. He kept reading to find out what would become of poor Sarai and what the Egyptians would do to Abram if he dared to object to someone taking Sarai and they found out he was lying to them.)

**14** *And it came to pass that when Abram came into Egypt the Egyptians noticed the woman and saw that she was very fair.*

"Okay, Abram. Now I'm suspicious," Curious grumbled. "Why did you have to show off your wife's beauty? Why didn't you keep her face covered? Wasn't that customary? You're up to something here."

**15** *Pharaoh's princes saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house; and he treated Abram well for her sake, giving him sheep and oxen and donkeys and servants and camels.*

Can you imagine the consternation Curious experienced at this point? The shrewdness of Abram came oozing out of the text, which only made him look worse. In effect, he had sold his wife. Did he want to get rid of her because she was barren? If so, he had compensated her with a life of luxury in the court of Pharaoh and greatly enriched himself.

**"So Abram knew how to get ahead in the world,"** Curious concluded. **"But I can't see Yahweh approving of what he did. I thought it was rash and unwise of Yahweh to make that promise to Abram—an unconditional blessing. But who am I to criticize God?"**

**17** *Yahweh struck Pharaoh and his house with terrible plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife, so Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me she was your wife? Why did you say she is my sister, allowing me to take her to be my wife? Now, behold your wife! Take her and go your way!" Pharaoh assigned men to take charge of him, and they sent him on his way, he, his wife, and all that he had.*

Curious' head was swimming. **"I don't want to believe that Yahweh had intended this as a means to bless Abram."**

Or was it Abram's folly, and Yahweh condescended to step in and turn it around to become a blessing for the sake of the promise?

**Or was it a means of preparing Abram with resources to withstand opposition in Canaan?**

About those Egyptians slaves that were given him: was it for their sake, so they would learn about the true God?

**"Now Abram will have Egyptian blood in his tribe. Maybe that was a good thing."**

Perhaps the whole thing was a swipe at the gods of Egypt in order to give the Egyptians reason to respect Abram's descendants in future encounters.

It occurred to us that these possibilities were not mutually exclusive. Could it be that Yahweh's intention was to accomplish them all simultaneously?

**"Could God be that clever?"** Curious said, and he laughed at his own question. **"Of course, and far more! Creation testifies to that."**

So it seemed that it would be revealing to look at it from Yahweh's point of view as a response to inevitable folly in mankind, starting back at Eve's foolish decision in the garden. It should have been obvious before, but we then realized that providence had to compensate for Abram's mistakes if the promise of wealth in his future were to take shape.

**"But then was it Abram's idea in the first place? I need to know that because it seems so."**

Perhaps Yahweh told Abram to protect himself by that means and no evil would come of it.

**"I don't believe it was Yahweh's command,"** said Curious. **"I would rather believe that he picked a stupid man to bless, than that he would counsel him to do a stupid thing. But what do I know?"**

Again, if Abram's gains in Egypt were within the will of Yahweh, how far back did it go? Is there planning in providence?

**"Several things come to mind if we're talking providence,"** said Curious. **"Did Abram marry a beautiful woman for this reason? Was she barren to protect her from an inconvenient pregnancy? Was the drought in Canaan designed to get him down there?"**

Suddenly Curious realized that Sarai held the answer.

**"If Sarai had objected to joining the harem of Pharaoh, there was no indication of it in the text. And apparently she had voiced no objection to Abram's plan that she represent herself as a single woman and dress to reveal her beauty. This could be explained in two ways: 1) she was extremely submissive and more afraid of her husband than of Pharaoh; 2) she was privy to the plan and either believed Yahweh would protect her or else she thought the riches to be gained justified the lie and the risk becoming an adulteress and a slave. If I knew more about Sarai, I could figure this out,"** said Curious.

He thought if Sarai was the submissive type or if the culture and her husband allowed her no freedom, then it was a sordid deal all around. But if she was a strong and outspoken woman with any element of respectability in her character, then it would have to be that she and her husband and God had the plan worked out in advance.

Curious fervently hoped it was the later case. But even then, what of the lie about her being Abram's sister?

The puzzle looked insoluble with the information Curious had acquired so far. But if he had to make a guess, he would have to say it was the former case because there had been no indication that Abram had called on Yahweh since Shechem.

**"But ... I'm not sure about that,"** Curious admitted. **"When he built altars, it was either for a witness to others or else he was assuring Yahweh of his devotion. When Yahweh had something to say to him, he just said it."**

And apparently Abram had no difficulty in determining that it was Yahweh speaking and not his own imagination.

That led Curious to wonder in what mode God spoke to those people. It was a question whose answer was long overdue, and he thought the reason was because he had been busy with relative trivia.

The Garden had its own answer where their Maker appeared to Adam and Eve in a bodily form not unlike their own. After that, Cain's conversation with God had a material result on his body. Then there was Enoch's walk with God which certainly involved communication and had a material result. God spoke to Noah on several occasions, and out of it came a great wooden ship that bridged the ages. There could have been no question about what any any of them heard and who it was who spoke to them.

**"Abram had no material evidence, yet he had no doubt that God had spoken to him. Did he hear a voice in his head? Was the means of the message a vision or a dream? The text did not mention the means, only that Abram did not wonder about it."**

All the evidence so far was that when God spoke—by whatever means—there was no doubt who had spoken and what had been said. If there were counterfeit seers about, they had not made it into the pages of Scripture.

**"Into the pages of Scripture. ... That's something that deserves consideration. Who decided what went into this book?"**

Curious had no knowledge of the history of the book he held in his hands. He had only his own reasoning by which to probe this question. The mere fact that it was a famous book told him that many people had judged it as being worthy of respect. It's antiquity counted for something too.

**"Since Yahweh is its focal point, no doubt Yahweh influenced the selection of writings that went into it."**

Curious grasped the import of this deduction; it closed the loop; the Bible gives voice to God, and God gives voice to the Bible. Therefore, it cannot be accepted in part; doing so would be to judge God. Unless it is fiction. But if the Bible is fiction, it claims undue respect for itself, making it a work of deception, and as a work of deception it would properly be a work of the devil.

**"To say that the Bible's reliability is in doubt is to make it a burden that we would be better off without. It would be like a dream that one had, but wishes one didn't have."**

Curious had not quite answered that question for himself, which may be part of the reason he's reading the next chapter.

**13** *Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had—taking Lot with him—into the Negev. (Abram was very rich now with much livestock as well as silver and gold.) From the South he journeyed on up to Bethel, to the place where he had camped earlier between Bethel and Ai and where he had built the altar. And there Abram called on the name of Yahweh. Lot, who went along with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents of his own. The land was not able to bear them dwelling together, for they possessed much, and conflict broke out between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Canaanites and Perizzites dwelt there too. So Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between us nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? I'm asking you to separate yourself from me. If you go left, then I will go right; if you go right, then I will go left. Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of Yahweh, like the land of Egypt as you come into Zoar. So Lot chose for himself all the Plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed east, and they separated themselves one from the other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now, the men of Sodom were wicked, sinning exceedingly against Yahweh.*

Curious again questioned Abram's conduct:

**"Yahweh had told Abram to go live in Canaan; so why did he jeopardize his obedience on the whim of his nephew?"**

The first answer Curious came up with was that Abram was tempted by the pastures on the Jordan Plain, and if Lot had chosen the right hand and wanted to stay in Canaan, then he would be justified in going there.

**"No, I think he knew which way Lot would choose,"** said Curious on second thought. **"And if greater blessings were to be had on the east side of Canaan, then Yahweh would have told him to go there."**

So Abram was not going to be responsible for sending Lot that way, is that what it amounts to, Curious?

**"No, I think Abram knew Lot wouldn't make good decisions on his own, so he must have felt he still had some responsibility for Lot's welfare."**

Oh, really? After the way he deliberately put his wife's welfare in jeopardy?

**"I still have to figure out what was in Abram's mind that led to that profitable sojourn in Egypt,"** mused Curious. **"Was Yahweh involved? That's the question."**

Why is that a question?

**"Well, of course Yahweh was involved. Obviously he was busy blessing Abram. But did Abram get some assurance about how it would turn out in Egypt? I'll know the answer to that as soon as I find out more about Sarai. But right now it looks like Yahweh *did* speak to Abram about what he was going to do to Pharaoh and what the outcome would be, otherwise I would have to say Abram cared only about getting rich and therefore he would take the best pastureland for himself."**

Curious might have doubted Lot's sensibility as soon as he saw where Lot pitched his tent. The next verse told him that trouble was inevitable, and if Abram truly cared for his nephew, he would have to step in and try to get him out of it.

*13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked and exceedingly sinful against Yahweh.*

Why Lot would want to live in Sodom is a curiosity. Do you think Lot had a plan to reform Sodom, Curious?

**"Nothing I've seen so far would make me think Lot had leadership qualities, but he might possibly have wanted to clean up the Jordan Plain to make it safe for his children."**

*14 After Lot had gone his way, Yahweh spoke to Abram: "Lift up your eyes and look to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west. All the land that you see, I will give to you and to your seed forever. And I will make your offspring be like the dust of the earth: if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your seed may also be numbered. Arise and walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it, for I will give it to you. Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and he built there an altar to Yahweh."*

**14** *And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel the king of Shinar, Arioch the king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and Tidal the king of Goiim, that they made war with Bera the king of Sodom, and with Birsha the king of Gomorrah, Shinab the king of Admah, and Shemeber the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is Zoar). All these joined together in the vally of Siddim (that is the Salt Sea). Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. Then in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and smote the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in their mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is Kadesh), and they smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who dwelt in Hazazon-tamar. And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is Zoar) came out and set the battle in array against them in the vally of Siddim, against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, and Amraphel king*

*of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against the five. Now the vally of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, and as the [armies of the] kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them while the remainder fled to the mountains. They [the victors] took all the goods out of Sodom and Gomorrah, including their entire food supply, and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.*

**"I suppose Lot pitched his tent in Sodom for protection in case of war. To Lot it was like being immersed in a world war as four kings battled against the forces of five kings."**

The immediate impact on Lot was that he lost everything, including his freedom.

**13** *There came one who had escaped, and he brought the news to Abram the Hebrew who was then dwelling near the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eschol and Aner, Abram's allies.*

**"Now there's a new word,"** said Curious facetiously. **"I was wondering when the Bible would call someone a Hebrew. So Abram was the first Hebrew."**

Then he saw a footnote saying "Hebrew" meant "son of Heber (or Eber)," one of the sons of Shem.

**"So Abram's line preserved the original language, or at least as far back as Eber, and maybe some form of Hebrew was the language Adam and Eve acquired from their Maker,"** Curious reasoned as he recalled the Hebrew-like names in Adam's family.

**14** *When Abram heard that [family off] his brother had been taken captive, he led forth his personal army of 318 trained men and pursued them as far as Dan. He divided his forces by night and struck and pursued them to Hobah, which is north of Damascus. He brought back all their booty, including Lot and his goods, the women, and other people.*

**17** *After his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and allied kings, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (known as the King's Valley).*

**"This episode is more significant than I thought it was,"** said Curious.

He had noticed the improbability of Abram's little private army overtaking and defeating Lot's captors after a long chase.

**"Because this is an example of Yahweh's promise to Abram in action."**

Yes, and what of the action??

**"Abram's army was tiny. He had to be counting on Yahweh blessing him and cursing those who opposed him."**

It also enlarged the concept Curious held of Abram's character and abilities. If Abram knew that Lot would get himself into an immoral environment and certain personal harm which would ultimately require a miracle to get him out, it cast a different light on his apparent unconcern about his wife's captivity in the house of Pharaoh in Egypt—which required a miracle to get her out.

**"I was accusing Abram of scheming to enrich himself in Egypt. Now what will be his material reward will be in this case?"**

**18** *And Melchizedek, priest of God Most High and king of Salem, brought bread and wine, and he blessed him and said,*

*"Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.*

*And blessed be God Most High who has delivered your enemies into your hand."*

*Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all.*

**"Who is this King Melchizedek who happens to be a priest of God Most High?"** Curious wondered. **"Abram knows about him and that he owes him a tenth of the booty!"**

**21** *The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons and take the goods yourself." Abram replied, "I have raised my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and promised I will not take a thread nor a shoestring nor anything that is yours, except that which my young men have eaten, lest you say, 'I have made Abram rich.' However, the portion due the men that went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre—let them have their portion."*

This evidence that Abram was not arranging his own blessings was eclipsed by the appearance of Melchizedek. And Curious might have noticed that Abram's snub of the king of Sodom fell in line with the godless reputation of his city.

"Very curious," said Curious. "Abram didn't mention the tenth he gave to Melchizedek. It's like they all respected the king of Salem and agreed that a tenth was due him. And it doesn't say that Melchizedek came with an army of soldiers or priests to demand their tithe. He came with a ceremonial service and a blessing for Abram."

As Curious pondered this strange episode, he decided that one thing was sure: Melchizedek was of like mind with Yahweh. That qualified him as a witness to Abram's special standing with God, but how did Melchizedek know all about Abram?

"He just shows up and has all this knowledge. He never was mentioned in the genealogies. Well, a book of this size can't contain a record of everything. So if what's in it is true, there's bound to be severed connections."

That observation satisfied Curious well enough to let him read on.

**15** *After these things, the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram; I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward." To that Abram replied, "O Lord Yahweh, what will you give me, seeing I go childless, and my heir is Eliezer of Damascus? To me you have given no seed; therefore, this one born in my house is my heir." And Behold, the word of Yahweh came to him saying, "That man will not be your heir, but he that comes out of yur own body will be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Now look toward heaven and count the stars if you can. So will your seed be." And he believed in Yahweh, and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your inheritance." And he said, "O Lord*

*Yahweh, how will I know that I will inherit it?" And he said to him, "Take me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a three-year-old ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon." And he took all these and divided them in the middle and laid each half opposite the other (only the birds he did not divide). And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.*

**12** *And as the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and lo a terror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said to Abram, "Know this for sure: your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and they will serve masters who will afflict them four hundred years. Then I will judge the nation they serve, and they will come out with great substance. You yourself will go to your fathers in peace and be buried here in a good old age; and in the fourth generation they will come here again, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full." And it came to pass when the sun had gone down and it was dark, he beheld a smoking fire pot, and a flaming torch passing between the pieces. In that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram: "Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates: the lands of the Kenite, the Kenizzite, the Kadmonite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Rephaim, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Girgashite, and the Jebusite.*

It is fascinating how Abram attained a blessed standing with Yahweh by cooperating in a "cutting of the covenant" ritual. Abram's part was simply believing Yahweh's promise and watching as God fulfilled the ritual for both of them. Though the divided carcasses represented obligations by each party, the only material sacrifice on Abram's part was the loss of those few animals, which was nothing to him. His part was to sacrifice his independence by believing the words of God and obeying his commands even when a formidable exception to the ways of nature was involved.

"But who is Yahweh, if not a formidable exception to the laws of nature?" said Curious. "For that matter, nature is an exception to nature if nature must explain itself!"

One may wonder, as Curious did, whether Abram reasoned it that way—that ...

"Yahweh by his being an exception to nature was able to work a miracle for him personally—or was he moved by the Spirit of God to maintain his own steadfast belief? The latter would be more reliable. It must be that Yahweh's Spirit miraculously held sway in him."

Hold on, Curious. Are you then saying that Abram did nothing?—that even his believing was by the grace of Yahweh?

"Okay, suppose it depended on Abram adhering to his own intellectual argument. Then if he gets some other idea, like that he misunderstood Yahweh, or if he slips and forgets to maintain his belief, then the whole plan falls apart!"

That's a good point, Curious. I actually agree with you. This was the whole point of the smoking fire pot alone passing for both.

**16** *Now Sarai, Abram's wife, who had born him no children, had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, "Seeing as Yahweh has kept me from bearing, I'm asking you to go in to my maid; it may be that I'll obtain children by her." And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.*

"There, you see what happens when belief gets challenged?" said Curious. "If it depended on Abram, the covenant would be toast."

That's true, Curious, but Yahweh didn't specify that Sarai would be the mother of nations. Her solution was not considered immoral in those days, so by what authority could Abram contradict her?

"I feel for the guy," was all Curious said.

**3** *This was after Abram had lived ten years in Canaan that Sarai gave Hagar the Egyptian to be his wife. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she knew that she had conceived, her mistress lost respect in her eyes.*

"Uh oh, now there's big trouble," said Curious. "And I think I'm about to have my question about Sarai answered."

**5** *Sarai complained to Abram, "I'm being wronged because of you: I gave you my maid for you to embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despicable in her eyes. Yahweh judge between me and you." But Abram replied, "Your maid is in your hands. Deal with her as you see fit." Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her face.*

**7** *The angel of Yahweh found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness—the fountain on the way to Shur—and spoke to her: "Hagar, Sarai's maid, from where have you come and where are you going?" And she said, "I'm fleeing from the face of my mistress, Sarai." And the angel of Yahweh said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hands." In addition he told her: "I will greatly multiply your seed such that your offspring will be too many to count. Listen, you will bare a son, and you will name him Ishmael because Yahweh has heard your affliction. He will be a wild ass among men, his hand being against every man and every man's hand being against him even as he dwells in the face of his brethren." She made up a name for Yahweh who spake to her: "You are a God who sees." For she said, "Have I actually seen him who sees me?" And thereafter the well was called Beer-lahai-roi. It is between Kadesh and Bered.*

**15** *And Hagar did bare Abram a son, and Abram called him Ishmael. He was 86 years old when Ishmael was born.*

"I rather doubt that Sarai was complacent during that side trip to Egypt," said Curious. "I think she had her eyes on clothing and jewelry and wanted the experience of being a queen. Rather curious it is that she got out of there without becoming pregnant but brought out with her one who would on her behalf. Really, they brought out of Egypt more than a few slaves: they acquired Egyptian blood for their family."

**17** When Abram was 99 years old, Yahweh appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty. Walk before me and you will fulfill your part; I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will multiply you exceedingly.” Abram fell on his face as God continued. “Remember what I told you: my covenant is with you, and you will be the father of many nations. Therefore, I’m naming you Abraham, the father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; kings will come out of you. I will establish my covenant between myself and you and your seed after you throughout your generations as an everlasting promise to be your God and also to your seed after you. I will give to you, and to your seed after you, the land of your sojourning (that is all the land of Canaan) for an everlasting possession. And I will be their God.

**9** “Now, your part in keeping my covenant, which you and your seed after you will keep, is this: every male among you shall be circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin as a token of the covenant between me and you. Throughout your generations every male when he is eight days old shall be circumcised—he who is born in your house, or bought with money from a foreigner and not of your seed—all must be circumcised. This permanent mark on your flesh is for an everlasting covenant. Any male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people because he has broken my covenant.

**15** “As for Sarai your wife, no longer call her Sarai, but Sarah her name shall be. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. Yes, she will be nations: kings of peoples will be of her.” Abraham, being still down on his face, laughed, and said in his heart, “Shall a child be born to him who is a hundred years old? And is Sarah, who is ninety years old, able to bear a child?” Then he said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!” God replied, “No, but Sarah will bear you a son, and you will name

him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him, an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. But as for Ishmael, I have heard you: behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly. Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I establish with Isaac whom Sarah will bear to you at this very time in the next year.”

**22** Saying that, he was finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on the very same day as God had instructed him. Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised, and Ishmael was thirteen years old. The same day Abraham got circumcised, so did Ishmael. And all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money of a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

“That’s about the most incredible thing I’ve read so far,” said Curious. “That Abraham accomplished that in one day without resistance boggles my mind. What a guy! Did they fear him that much? Even if they respected him, how did he talk them into it?”

As Curious pondered this, he knew he would never get his head around it. In fact, he reluctantly was putting it down as fiction when the answer dawned on him: it was not a new thing to them; it was not an unusual practice that none of them had heard of. But if it was not unique, then why did God choose it as a badge of his unique covenant?

“Maybe it was practiced from the beginning for health reasons and Abraham had been neglecting his duty in seeing that he and his men complied,” Curious theorized. “It might have made a difference in the overall fertility picture. The covenant as stated at this point was about fertility, after all, and even if circumcision was nothing more than a badge, it would be fitting that way—and one that the



poorest man could acquire. I think the only way Yahweh could make sure they would keep up this painful procedure was to make it a religious ritual with dire consequences for neglecting it."

Nice going, Curious, but I won't say that you got your head around it.

Curious shrugged and kept reading. Every page revealed more about Yahweh and about Abraham and Sarah as Yahweh dealt with them.

**18** *One day Yahweh appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre as he sat in the doorway of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood some distance in front of him. As soon as he saw them, he ran to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, saying: "My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, do not, I pray you, pass by your servant. Let me fetch a little water and wash your feet while you rest yourselves under the tree. I will fetch a morsel of bread for you to strengthen your heart with, and after that you may pass on. For you have come to your servant." And they replied, "Do as you have said."*

Curious saw things in that passage that he thought were odd. (Indeed we all did.)

"He acts like he's more certain of his guests' identity than they are of him," he grumbled. "How does he know these aren't just three Canaanites out for a walk? I guess he was expecting another visit from Yahweh regarding Sarah. But why three? Is this something like the Trinity of God?" Curious asked the Bible, for obviously it was very significant that Abraham saw three men but addressed them as one. He remembered God saying in chapter one, *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."*

"I thought he made man in the likeness of one of him, so when God appears as man he need only appear as the one. But here he appears as three, which apparently Abraham recognizes as one. I guess that's how he knows who he is. This is very curious."

Did you consider that two of them might

have been angel companions, Curious? Or perhaps they were all messengers of Yahweh and not God himself.

"It says Yahweh appeared, does it not? And Abraham spoke to them that way. If they were messengers then they came as three witnesses to establish that they spoke for God. Now I'm curious to find out if they ate food."

**6** *Abraham hastened into the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick, make ready three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes." Then he ran to the herd, selected a nice tender calf, and gave it to a servant who hastened to prepare it. Then he took butter, milk, and the prepared calf, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.*

"I'll say one thing," said Curious. "If they're divine, they show up the idols that never touch the food set before them. And another thing: though Abraham is remarkably nimble for a 99-plus-year-old, he's not an antediluvian, so he's thinking if he's going to have another son it will be by a special dispensation from Yahweh."

**9** *They asked him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" "She's in the tent."*

"That's odd," said Curious. "Wouldn't God know she was in there?"

Isn't there an implied question in their question, Curious?

"Okay, so they meant, 'Why haven't you introduced us to Sarah?'—like she was the one they had come to see, and Abraham knew it. Let me find out."

**14b** *And he said, "I will certainly return to you when the season for life comes round; and, lo, your wife Sarah will have a son."*

"Now just one of them speaks," Curious observed. "—like one was going to be returning without witnesses because no witness would be necessary. This is spooky."

*Sarah heard this through the door of the tent, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well stricken in age, and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. And Sarah*

*laughed within herself, saying, "After I have waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" And Yahweh said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I who am old surely bear a child?'"*

"There it is again!" said Curious. "It says 'Yahweh,' the name of God, not an angel. And he knows what Sarah was thinking! Therefore, one of them is an appearance of God, and the other two are angel witnesses."

*14 "Is anything too hard for Yahweh? At the set time that I return to you, when the season comes round, Sarah will have a son."*

"Just like Yahweh," said Curious. "So gracious when he doesn't need to be. But no doubt that cured Sarah's doubt."

*15 Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid.*

"Incredible!" exclaimed Curious. "She's calling Yahweh a liar."

Remember, Curious, the narrator of the story has told us this was Yahweh, and apparently Abraham knew, but how was Sarah to know?

"Maybe Sarah didn't know who was speaking," said Curious. "That makes sense because if she had, she would have been afraid to say anything. ... Well, knowing what Sarah has done so far, that's probably not true."

Let's look at this in the proper light, Curious. Yahweh is bound by his promise; he can't do anything but bless her.

"I think Yahweh is laughing within himself at this point," said Curious. "But he had to let Sarah know he knew she was lying." And he said, "No, you did laugh."

*16 After that the men stood up and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to show them the way. Yahweh reasoned, should I hide from Abraham what I intend to do, seeing that he will become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed in him? I have known him so that he may command his children and his house after him to keep the way of*

*Yahweh and do what is right and just, to the end that Yahweh may bring upon Abraham what he has promised him. So Yahweh said, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which has come to me; and if not, I will know."*

"Just like a good father," said Curious. "—modeling for Abraham what a just human overseer would do. What a project Yahweh has gotten himself into! I didn't realize he would have to work within the natural order of things to bring about what he promised Abraham. But why not? He created mankind and must know how things work."

*22 The men turned and went toward Sodom, but Abraham drew near to Yahweh, and said, "Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you not spare the place? That would be far from you, to slay the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous as if they were wicked; that would be far from you. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"*

Curious laughed. It was a perfect setup. "I think Abraham is about to get his lesson about righteous judgment," he predicted.

*26 Yahweh replied, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous, I will spare the whole city for their sake." Then Abraham ventured, "Behold, I who am but dust and ashes am daring to speak to the Lord! What if there lack five of the fifty righteous? Will you destroy the entire city for lack of five?" "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five." "What if there be forty found there?" "For the sake of forty I will not do it." "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: suppose thirty be found there." "I will not do it if I find thirty there." "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak to the Lord: suppose there shall be twenty found there." "I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake." "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: suppose ten shall be found there." "I will not destroy it for the ten's sake."*

*And Yahweh left off communing with Abraham and went his way, and Abraham returned to his place.*

**"Obviously, it made an impression on Abraham,"** Curious said, **"otherwise he would not have retold this conversation in in all its verbose glory, and I wouldn't be enduring it now. Well, it's good for me to know that too—I hope there are at least ten righteous people in this town. ... I wonder what it's like to have God for a friend and be able to have a real conversation with him like Abraham did."**

He continued reading not so much to see how the angels would fare in Sodom, but on account of his growing fascination with angelic appearances. They were supernatural humans with apparently human bodies yet without human origin. He saw that the difficulty of this being an after-thought of Creation was insurmountable precisely because it was impossible for him to fit it unto his understanding of animal physiology. Therefore the ability of heavenly beings to enter the natural realm had to be a prime design issue for Yahweh. **"That's obvious when you consider that he walked and talked with Adam in the garden before any human besides Adam existed,"** said Curious.

\*\*\*\*\* End of preliminary version