

A Diary of Assorted Expansions

Introduction

This text comes after I have completed a number of documents with regard to the Bible, all of which having the key word “expansion” in the title. Although I don’t know the precise time when this project got underway, I figure it’s somewhere in the vicinity of eight years. There was no planning involved. It just began more or less spontaneously. The same with regard to the word “expansion.” That generally means that the biblical text is opened up from within and allowed to stretch outward. In a way, it’s a kind of mythic approach, deliberately so, where attention is paid to the original words (Hebrew or Greek). As for myth, I like the Wikipedia definition: Myth is a genre of folklore or theology consisting primarily of narratives that play a fundamental role in a society, such as foundational tales. While the material at hand falls short of that, nevertheless the biblical texts and be broadened to include more that meets the eye.

Despite the numerous flaws and imperfections of this approach, in the respective Introductions of each document I took pains to note that they are written from the point of view of *lectio divina*, the slow, meditative reading associated with scripture. If that isn’t the goal, I caution the reader not to read further. Actually the texts are more along the lines of series of notations to accompany the reader doing *lectio*, not so much a commentary meant to be read as a book. ”

Throughout the years I’ve covered a substantial amount of books from both Testaments, all under the “expansion” label, if you will. While this project could continue, something said it’s time to stop, at least momentarily. In place of focusing upon one given book verse by verse, why not take a different approach, one that would encompass the whole shebang? The intent would remain the same, reading scripture as *lectio divina*.

However, this time I figure why not go through the Bible with the intent of picking out sections here and there which could be expanded? That’s why I chose the title with “diary” in it. A diary is a record of daily events that impact one’s life. While this document technically doesn’t fit that description, it’s an account of what stands out over the long haul. Even better, “dairy” gives the text a more homey, relaxed

¹ I recall somewhere an observation by (I believe) the monastic scholar Jean Leclercq with regard to St. Bernard of Clairvaux: “Il joue avec les mots.” I like the verb jouer, to play. Not only that, I believe jouer also means to speculate.

feel, if you will. And so what we have here starts where else, at the beginning, that is, the Book of Genesis and hopefully will continue into other books of the Bible. That goal, however, is secondary. What counts is taking pleasure in the project at hand.

Keep in mind that this enterprise consists in going over a fairly good amount of material that had been covered. That can give rise to a temptation, to glean material from existing documents, a kind of crutch initially helpful but in the long run, not so much. However, a fresh look at the same material has the potential of revealing something new and unanticipated. Even as I got into Genesis a bit before writing this Introduction I knew that some parts of the narrative would have to be omitted. If I gave into trying to cover it all, I would defeat the purpose of this text as a “diary.” Also the idea of setting a goal in the sense of completing a given task is an anathema. That would tack on a restriction with the result of hindering the free flow of observations. So what we have here is fresh off the press, if you will, where subsequent books will simply be labeled in accord with their proper name. Things might develop differently as time goes on, but this approach seems like the one to follow for now.

Please note that postings will be made on a regular basis until this document is completed.

Genesis

What struck me soon after getting into the text are the abundant references to the conjunctive *v-* usually translated as “and” but also rendered in other ways such as “now” or “so.” At first you might not notice it, but I’d say after about half way through the first chapter it cannot but help dawn on you. Virtually every verse begins with the *v-*. You see this reflected in the English **RSV** translation as well, but because we’re used to English, it might not strike us as much. The conjunctive has the unique ability to whisk the reader along which in and by itself would come across as rushing through the text. However, such is not the case. The conjunctive’s job is to connect or better, to harmonize the previous verse with the present one and the one after, let along all the others.

This connection doesn’t come across as a weird over-the-top way ancient peoples expressed themselves or in a word, primitive. In other words, we haven’t “outgrown it.” I was under that impression at first but then tried an experiment. I looked at a

given section of the Genesis text, brimming of course, with the conjunctive *v-* and mentally eliminated them all. What a change. Not only the text didn't look the same but at once came across as something almost alien, another language.

Jumping ahead a bit, I discovered that Chapter One and Chapter Fifteen are the only ones in the entire book of Genesis which don't begin with *v-*. Why, I wondered. It easy to understand with regard to Chapter One. If the first word were prefaced with *v-*, it'd read *vebere'shyth* or "and in the beginning." This, it seems poses that something existed before *re'shyth* thereby nullifying an account of the very act of creation. Given the magical-mystical nature of Hebrew, that would be worse than creation dissolving into nothingness.

As for Chapter Fifteen, it's when the Lord makes a covenant with Abram and runs as "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision." *Davar* or word-as-expression introduces the real Chapter One, if you will, the *re'shyth* where salvation history gets underway. Also *davar* is used for "things" in reference to the blessing of Abram by Melchizedek. So Chapter Fifteen requires nothing before it, if you will. While creation and the subsequent history afterwards obviously is vital, what we have here is more important. From it, the rest of the Bible hangs. So we could call Chapter Fifteen a larger-than-life conjunctive *v-*.

This talk about the role of such a tiny letter, barely visible and noticeable itself, allows us to situate the famous initial words of Genesis rendered as *bere'shyth* to begin the whole drama of creation. For a lack of a better way of putting it, is the preposition *b-* or "in" a pseudo or pre-conjunctive *v-*? The whole narrative had to get off the ground somewhere somehow, so *b-* is a good a solution as any. It situates us, albeit not as precisely as many of us would like it, somewhere so we can get going. At least the relative gruffness and suddenness of its pronunciation grabs our attention. If the text began with a softer letter, it tend to escape us more easily. The same applies to the very next word, *bara'* or to create. It seems better than the alternative, the common *hasah* or to make, to fashion. In the verse at hand, *bara'* represents a certain forcefulness essential to get the ball rolling. To prove it, if you will, simply pronounce the word compared with the softer *hasah*. Try as it might, *hasah* would never get the complexity of creation off the ground.

Next we have two instances of the particle '*eth* which seems to represent the accusative after the verb *bara'*: one after the just mentioned verb but with '*Elohyim* intervening and one before '*erets* or earth. Given its situation, another way of looking at it is that's comprised of the first and last letters of the alphabet. So right off the bat

we have all creation...the beginning and end...immediately before the emergence of heaven and earth, that is, the two most fundamental dimensions of up and down.

Heaven or *shamym* is already whole and entire, if you will, requiring no further tinkering. On the other hand, 'erets or land...often as country in the sense of be associated with a people...does require being worked upon. So the 'erets which is so identifiable as a place and nation comes off as *tohu* and *bohu*, the famous waste or emptiness and void, the two pretty much the same. So while 'erets was essentially put out there, it unfinished or unformed under the gaze of *shamym*. On top of this we have darkness or *choshek* on the face of the deep or *tehom* as to conceal its presence. Finally...and this is where the *bara'* comes into play...the *ruach* or wind of God was in the process of moving on this same face. *Rachaph* is the verb which is more akin to hovering, that is, not touching the surface but remaining a discreet distance above it so as to have an effect. The example of a large bird comes to mind as it descends to just being over its nest before settling down.

Thus far we could say no *bara'* or no creation, rather, a description of the fairly non-descript elements which God had to deal with before getting underway. All these elements were kept tied up in that beginning or *re'shyth* awaiting the time to be released so as to bring the world as we know it into existence.

So where did this description of creation come from since no one was present *bere'shyth*? Moses is attributed as being author of the first five books or Pentateuch. That means while he and the Lord were on Mount Sinai giving the Law or *Torah*, just as importantly the Lord was handing down these previous unrevealed words. Vs. 3 contains the very first word of the Lord, *yehy* or "let there be." Actually the is the first of eight instances where we have the spontaneous bringing into existence of various aspects of creation. Note that all come under the umbrella of *bara'* of vs. 1 with regards to the creation of the heavens and the earth or as noted above, up and down:

-Vs. 3: *yehy* with regard to light or 'or which at this juncture has no source, only its relationship as being separated from darkness, the already mentioned *choshek*, *badal* also as to separate. This implies that the already existing darkness contained light, it becoming manifest.

-Vs. 6: *yehy* with regard to the firmament or *raqyah*, that which is spread out.

-Vs. 9: *qavah* with regard to the gathering of waters under heaven.

-Vs. 11: *dasha'* with regard to putting forth vegetation.

-Vs. 14: *yehy* with regard to lights in the firmament to separate day from night.

- Vs. 15: *hayu* with regard to lights in the firmament to give light upon earth.
- Vs. 20: *sharats* with regard to swarms and birds.
- Vs. 24: *yatsa'* with regard to bringing forth living creatures.
- Vs. 26: *hasah* with regard to making man in the divine image.

As noted several times above, *bara'* is used with regard to the heavens and the earth. When it comes to the creation of man, *hasah* is used as in vs. 26. In brief, *bara'* usually pertains to shaping that in turn implies something that already exists. As for *hasah*, it also means to do and to do infers taking some active intervention. Applied to man or '*adam*, *hasah* implies more active involvement, of paying close attention to all the details whereas *bara'* is more sweeping by nature and seems to allow the heavens and the earth to be set up for the "let there be" action of the eight verbs just noted. While these are letted-out by the Lord (for lack of a better expression), they're endowed with the ability of being set in motion all their own.

Now the *hasah* of vs. 26 is done directly by the Lord. Like his previous acts of coming-into-existence, let-ness is involved but with a major difference. Compared with the eight references above, the one at hand is done only in the first person plural. Here the Lord is confronted with a real challenge regarding *hasah* or making a human being and upon completion, can't help but spontaneously erupt with joy at having succeeded in undertaking the project. It's akin to children when they begin to play. Some or all would say "Let us" do such and such. The result emerges on its own spontaneously and without pre-meditation. It's surprising that all the elements of the game (let's say cowboys and Indians) fall into place as well as each participant automatically assuming a role without rehearsal or the like. If summoned by parents to come in for supper, just as automatically the children cease their game, ever ready to resume if and when they wish later on. In fact, they commence at the precise spot where they had left off.

As for the *hasah* or let's say the doing at hand, it's with respect to the divine image or *tselem* which also means a shadow, the first person plural being assigned to it (i.e., 'our'). Right after this the Lord uses the first person plural in reference to the singular image, that is, with regard to having dominion over all creation. The verb here is *yarad*, fundamentally as to tread or to walk. No doubt about it, this verb does convey a sense of dominance. Such is the Lord's intent which is carried through in the next verse when he creates man as such. Here the verb is *bara'*, the *hasah* of vs. 26 being changed to a *bara'* in reference to male and female. Thus this accounts starts with one man ('*adam*) and evolves to male and female.

With regard to this first making of the first man, vs. 30 says as a sentence unto itself, “And it was so.” Then the adds that everything the Lord had made (*hasah*) as literally “excessively (*me’od*) good.” Uses of this adverb has a spontaneous air about it as well as a sense of rejoicing. Such is the completion of the six days of creation. It seems, then, that the activity associated with each day constitutes the day itself, not that it’s fitted into a day as a predetermined form.

In Chapter Two God finished his work, *kalah* having the idea of fulfilling with regard to *mela’kah*, usually work which has been prescribed and can tie in with the six days relative to creation. So when God rested, it doesn’t mean he was pooped out over all that work. Rather, he set it aside, *yashav* also as to sit down or to remain in a place. This God did on day seven. But before he could do that, he blessed as well as hallowed day seven, *barak* and *qadash*. The former is a kind of acknowledgment or recognition of this rest whereas the latter, its setting apart which obviously is different from the other six days. Such is what we’d expect from God, reserving one day all to himself. However, as things develop, day seven emerges into Shabbat.

When the Lord had fashioned the man, this time in accord with vs. 7, he recognized shortly afterwards that he had made a major mistake. He acknowledges this in vs. 18 by saying it isn’t good for him to be alone. Actually he’s saying this from close observation without the man not fully realizing this. Just watching him mope along in the garden, putting in half-hearted work, was enough to convince the Lord that something had to be done and done quickly. What can be passed over yet turns out to be so important is when the man says in vs. 23, “This at last,” *zoth hapaham*, the latter also as stroke or a tread which intimates suddenness. It must have been quite a sight, the man looking into the eyes of another human being similar to himself yet different. This delighted the Lord, for if he could do it over again, he would have fashioned a woman the same time as the man. When he did work the man’s rib into a woman he took care that nothing was lacking in her, she being an improvement or even correction, if you will, for his own mistake. However, despite being more advanced, she turns out to be more prone to the serpent’s suggestion than the more dim-witted man. Another mistake by the Lord.

Chapter Three introduces the serpent or *nachash* which also means an omen or enchantment as well as brass by reason of its color. It’s described as being *harum* translated as crafty but implies discreet as well as cautious. Also the serpent is the only creature labeled as “wild,” literally as “of the field” whereas no other creature during the time of creation is described as such. Indeed, the serpent is unique which makes you wonder what the Lord was thinking when he had made it. Also take into

consideration the flub-up with regard to the man being created alone and the woman being more subject to temptation. Actually this first verse of Chapter Three is the very beginning of something that comes across as not quite right with the Lord. The “defects” in his creation pertaining to the man and woman are embarrassing preludes, a tendency that comes to fuller light as things move on.

It seems the serpent acts as the Lord’s agent, for it makes a beeline for the woman and puts a rhetorical question in her head as to what God said about eating fruit from any tree in the garden. This approach, of course, is in accord with his sly nature, not knowing how this first encounter with a human being will turn out. However, the serpent sensed that he’s confronted with an easy push-over. The woman simply echoed God’s command not to eat of the tree in the center of the garden, for that had been drilled into her. Not just that, but she and the man are forbidden even to touch it. Note *betok* or “in the center,” *tok* also in the midst...ground zero, if you will. Enter the second trick the Lord has planted (literally). Deliberately he puts the tree in the most obvious place of them all, *tok* which intimates that the garden is laid out as a circle. Thus while the man and woman were in the garden, no matter where they went, invariably their attention was drawn toward this *tok*. It was simply unavoidable. So take this *tok* along with the serpent and you have a recipe for disaster.

The rest of what happened is familiar to everyone. As for knowing good and evil, something reserved only for God, that sounds like quite a gift but in reality, so what compared to knowing him. This, of course, revealed the woman’s naivete. The same could be applied when the eyes of the two were opened after having eaten the fruit, *paqach* implying seeing things that were already present but not revealed. Again, so what? Realizing that perhaps was the chief let-down experienced by the man and woman. It was better to let hidden things remain hidden but then again, the Lord doesn’t want it that way. Note that *paqach* pertains to the man and woman seeing themselves naked, something they had remained unnoticed since they came into existence. Another instance of so what, if you will.

Like most verses, vs. 8 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which here has special meaning insofar as both the man and woman heard the sound...*qol* also as voice...of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the evening, *ruah* suggestive of gentle coolish breezes after the heat of the day. The sound perhaps resulted in the Lord brushing up vegetation. While previously they could distinguish between *qol* associated with the Lord and *ruach* as the evening breezes, now the opening of their eyes...that inevitable but unwanted *paqach*...sent them scurrying for cover. Thus

something so gentle had become so terrifying. Vs. says that the Lord calls out for the man with his *qol*, a customary greeting before the onset of night, but received no response. This prompted him to go into emergency mode, crying out essentially where in the hell are you two.

From this point on the story devolves into what can be labeled as the world's first blame game, he said/she said. There's no turning back now from what had been set in motion. The Lord reveals his true colors, hitting the man and the woman with everything he can muster and then some. First of all he lays it on the serpent telling this beast that from now on it will crawl upon its belly. Implied is that to date the serpent was an upright creature. No small wonder it turned so violently against the Lord. Not being able to strike out against him, it did the next best thing by going after the descendants of the man and woman, a type of perpetual guerrilla warfare. Things developed quite nice for the serpent. Now that he's reduced to crawling on the ground and slithering among the vegetation, he's in an ideal position to make an attack and then steal away.

Next the Lord directs his wrath toward the woman followed by the man, all the details being very familiar to us. In other words, the Lord took a certain perverse enjoyment at tearing first into the serpent and then the man and woman. Memory of what he communicated to them not only stayed but stayed a long time. So much so that after they died, the memory of this divine lecture was passed on to their descendants. One of the worse things...no, the worse thing...that people of all ages detest is to be on the receiving end of a lecture. So these words directed at all three is the archetypal lecture from which all others come. Everyone despises it, perhaps the best way to cause humiliation, and the Lord is a master of delivering it.

Vs. 22 reveals a side of the Lord that reflects his inherent insecurity. He comes off with the excuse that the man has become like one of us, one of us immaterial beings perhaps in reference to angels. He therefore drives the man from the garden and like someone fearful of having his possessions snatched out of his hands, stations at the garden's entrance not just cherubim but a flaming sword which continuously revolves.

You have to wonder why all this effort where the Lord acts like he's in charge of a fiefdom. He's all powerful, eternal and unfortunately...and this would be really hard if not impossible for him to swallow...the world's biggest bully. As with all bullies, they are afraid of something and hide this fear by a projection of power and fear. The Lord started off all right swinging his might around with bringing creation into

existence. Then he makes man followed by woman and realizes that he has a creature which bears an uncanny resemblance to him. Though it isn't recorded, the Lord seems to have had second thoughts about this. However, too late. We could say from the banishment history as we know has begun, having made a painful transition from a mythical place and mythical time. Now all the Lord can do is sit back and watch the tragedy of his own making unfold. At the same time he, if called to give an account (which is what Job will do masterfully later), he would claim to be not just innocent but to suffer an affront and when you think of it, by creatures not on the same level as he is.