

The chapter by Miller outlines a rich approach to studying Genesis that ranges from considering the viewpoint of the writer, understanding a historical perspective, employing various modes of thought, imaging the whole book, considering the significance of structural units, looking at each character, and examining pertinent details for special study.

What notions are you bringing to the study of Genesis and how can Miller's approach allow you to validate, clarify, and/or dispel your notions so you too can wade through the 'things obscure' to discover the 'things important'?

Nancy, I echo the thanks of other; you are bold to be first!

I came to Genesis this week with a knowledge of all the stories it contains, but very little connection or timeline between them. I certainly did need to "image the whole"! With Miller's approach in mind, I took time to read through the entire book of Genesis. By reading from start to finish, I saw Genesis as the story of the development of God's relationship with his people. The first eleven chapters as a preamble to "The Early History of God's Covenant With His People."

So far in this discussion, we haven't looked at Genesis in the context of secular history and archaeology. It seems relevant, particularly to the first eleven chapters, to look at the entire region where our Judaeo-Christianity began. Relying on memory of scholarship past, here's what I know: Most other groups in the region worshipped an angry and/or punishing god or gods whose creation stories were violent. So the creation story of a God who created for his pleasure (and companionship of a sort) is quite unique. That alone is motive for the story teller of Genesis who continues in subsequent chapters telling about further development of the Creator/Creation relationship.

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Many refer to Isaac as Abraham's "only legitimate son." In what ways might you challenge this claim of exclusive legitimacy? How have you seen or heard this claim supported? Do you agree? What is at stake if Isaac is NOT the only legitimate son of Abraham?

In my mind, I've always had a scenario of Sarai talking to Abram, "You know it's been nearly 10 years since the Lord promised us your descendants would number like the stars, and still no child. I'm way past childbearing age, maybe God wants us to go about this differently. You know, my maid, Hagar, probably could bear a son for us. Maybe that's what God has in mind. Why don't we try it?" I don't find her approach so different that the host of infertility treatments and surrogate networks we have today. That would mean that Ishmael is also Abraham's true heir But it doesn't necessarily change the story. In tradition, he became the progenitor of Arab nations.

In reference to the Joseph story as a Diaspora narrative, do you see yourself as an "outsider" or "insider" in today's world? If you see yourself as an outsider or an insider, How has this affect your relationship in terms of your family, friends, community, or God? In resonating with the story of Joseph, How have you applied the story to your everyday life and faith journey?

My initial reaction to your question Gerry, was really guttural and negative. Here's why: Applying the words "outsider" and "insider" in today's world makes me cringe. "Outsider" just sounds too much like "other," as in other race, other birthplace, other religion, other economic status, other sexual orientation, even other sex. It is clearly a mindset I'm trying to unlearn in myself and discourage in my family, friends and associates. For years, I've worked among African refugees from several countries, and almost without fail, they were driven from their homes because they were "other." It's very

disheartening to see “othering” start to become acceptable, especially in American politics. So again, I really try to avoid seeing myself as an insider or an outsider.

I would really like to put this out for your comments. I would like to ask you to respond from your reading of this essay which daughter should be viewed more negatively and which daughter should be viewed more positively? I would also like each of you to respond to the differences in the wording of the Cave Story in reference to each daughter and the subsequent naming of their sons. I look forward to your responses.

Being the elder of two sisters, I could kind of put myself into this story, though my younger sister and I tend to take different leadership paths. In this case, it was Lot's older daughter who took leadership. It isn't emphasized, but they must have suffered unimaginable “shock and awe” as they ran from Sodom. That, too, may have influenced their responses to their situation in the cave. Reading the passage, I didn't quite get the meaning of “there is not a man on earth to consort with us...” as an assertion that these two girls assumed that their father was “the last man on earth” and they needed to find a way to keep the race alive. And once it was pointed out, their actions seemed completely logical. I would therefore, lean positively toward the older sister. She analyzed the perceived problem and quickly came up with a solution. At the same time I cannot view the younger sister negatively. It's a pretty creepy thing, particularly in our era, to consider having sexual relations with a parent. Never-the-less, she took the action they'd agreed upon.

It seems peculiar to me that this one Genesis story of sexuality, is the only one where there is not a family connection. Twice Abram/Abraham introduces his wife as his sister in order to protect himself. First, Abram feared Pharaoh would kill him and let Pharaoh take Sarai for his wife. Later as Abraham, he told Abimelech, the king of Gerar that Sarah was his sister. Lot's daughters slept with him and each bore a son, thinking they were preserving humankind. Tamar tricked her father-in-law into impregnating her.

Perhaps Joseph was too virtuous to yield to Potiphar's wife's seduction, perhaps not. Especially since the reading speculates that Potiphar himself may have been a eunuch. I tend to prefer the explanation that God led Joseph to resist her in order to set off the chain of events that brought him to Pharaoh's attention. As the reading explains, if Joseph had remained in Potiphar's service the rest of his life, he would *not* have come to the Pharaoh's attention, which then put him in a position to help his family in time of famine. It's consistent with his attitude when he comforted his brothers, telling them, “Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.”

Having reread all the posts on this subject, I'm feeling we're way too deep into parsing every word thus missing the forest. Can this portion of Lot's story just be a response to the question, “Where did the Moabites and the Ammonites come from?” They are descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew. How can that be, Lot had no sons. Well, yes he did, but not in the usual way. Again I repeat my former rector who cautioned that Bible stories are not necessarily about *how* God created, but *why*.

Based upon your reading of Hamilton, what are responsible appropriations of the biblical exodus in modern times? What are some examples of individuals' or organizations' use of this narrative that you feel are inaccurate or disingenuous? Explain.

When a friend first suggested I should seek ordination as a deacon, I compared my feelings to the old

comedy routine, Noah, by Bill Cosby, many times. In the Biblical story of the Great Flood, unlike the Cosby's dubious hero, Noah listens to God's commands and follows them, no questions asked. That same routine returned to mind when I read "Moses excuses," page 143. There was Moses saying, "You want me to do what; I don't know how; really, me; I don't speak well; and can't someone else do it?" Cosby is a well educated man (despite his criminal history); I wonder if he combined the two characters.

In chapters 1 and 2 of Exodus, it seems ironic that the twelve sons are all named, but of we are only told the names of three of the twelve daughters (midwives, Shiphrah and Puah and Moses' wife, Zipporah). Miriam, the prophetess who appears later in the exodus story, is usually accepted as the sister who watched over Moses in the bulrushes, she remains unnamed here. Yet each of them played a pivotal role in bringing Moses to lead the exodus. Why do you think the other 9 remained nameless?

Niang states that "colonialism forces the colonized to question their own existence and identity". How might the Jews have questioned their own existence and identity in the time before, during, and after the Exodus?

All the whining (or as Hamilton says, grumbling) the newly escaped people did indicates they were not certain of their identity as God's chosen. Each of the four incidents of doubt: the bitter water, lack of food; lack of any water at another camp; and attack from the Amalekites elicited complaints that Moses brought them into the desert to die and maybe they were better off as Egyptian slaves. Then there was the big identity crisis. Maybe this God Moses relies on isn't our God at all; let's identify with a god we can "see" by making a statue of it out of the gold we brought from Egypt.

In contrast to what many of us have already written about colonialism and adversity affecting the Israelites identity in a negative way, a voice in my head says, that's always true. Here's why: I work with Sudanese refugee immigrants. While their story occurred in the post colonial era, it certainly is a picture of a Christian community strengthened by adversity. The story of those from southern Sudan (since 2011, the independent nation of South Sudan) begins in the early 1980s when the Moslem dictator of Sudan declared Sharia law and Christians refused to cooperate. It led to mass murder of Christians and destruction of their villages. A land area the size of Alaska was laid to waste. It is estimated that in over two decades, two million Christians died, four million were displaced internally, and another million formed a Sudanese diaspora. Never-the-less, the number of Christians in South Sudan increased from 1.6 million in 1980 to 11 million in 2010.

In what ways do modern readers of the biblical text align with the ancient Israelites' understanding of holy? What adjustments have probably been made to account for contextual differences between those living in ancient Israel and those living in modern times? Does the Holiness Code still have merit?

As Christians, we understand that Jesus' death on the cross made many of the rule sets forth in Leviticus moot. The book begins with seven chapters about sacrifices of animals and grain, but Jesus was the "perfect sacrifice for the whole world." Hamilton concludes (page 239) "the sacrifices thus are concerned with the issue of how one can live in nearness to God." Christians live in nearness to God because of Jesus. So many of the rules in the Holiness Code are sensible responses to concerns we still