

# Social and Religious Reproduction in the Family: Social Reproductive Failures Exemplified through the Lineage of Ham and Shem

Justin Singleton, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor, God's Bible School and College, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.

## Abstract

Social and religious reproductive failures have existed from the beginning of time, and these are evident today within the church. This study will focus on presenting examples of the failure of Mizraim, son of Ham, and of Shem to reproduce their father's religious belief to their extending generations as evidenced historically and literarily through the Egyptian and Canaanite deities of Ptah and El. It is argued that the deities of Ptah and El are in fact the syncretized forms of Noah's own God, Yahweh of the Bible, and that the functional and syncretized changes from Noah's God to the later paganized forms occurred over only a few generations. The rather quick loss of theological belief in this setting should stand as a warning to believers today who may be disregarding their own duties to reproduce their religious beliefs to the next generation.

**Keywords:** social reproductive strategies, Semitic Deity, El Elyon, Egyptian Deity, Creator God

## Introduction

Times change. With the succession of time comes new generations with new styles and new ways of thinking. To the older generations, each succeeding younger generation is often considered to be somehow lesser in quality, principles, and pretty much everything else, societally creating their own language and customs that perplex their elders. Even in classical Greece, the younger generations were said to be bad mannered with disrespect for authority (Freeman 1922, 74), an indictment said of my generation and one that my generation has said of the ones that follow.

These changes that occur over time, from generation to generation, stem from cultural transformations within societies. The greater in size and population the society is, the more numerous the changes that occur, these being influenced by both external and internal factors (Tarasov, Belyaev, and Pogorelova 2019, 6), such as neighboring cultures or even subcultures within the society. However badly the elders of one generation may wish to reproduce their own societal norms, external modifiers will always influence the next generation.

## Social and Religious Reproduction and Their "Failures"

The cultural transformation that takes place in societies over time has long been a worry for societies bent on reproducing their own social principles, that is, Social Reproduction (cf. Weiss 2021, 1), and often outside influences have been discouraged altogether (cf. Vaporis 2012, 98–103) or allowed in limited and preapproved states (cf. Munro 2017, 260). This latter preapproved acceptance was more than likely the

standard pattern even when discouraging external influences, and this can be seen in ancient societies that continued indigenous traditions even in light of more advanced technologies (Singleton 2024, 71), as it is sometimes seen today, for the purposes of this study, particularly within the church and individual families.

## Cultural translation

These types of cultural translations occur in every society when one society interacts with another, sometimes influencing the other in ordinary, societally-approved ways that can be understood as a hybridization of the two cultures. Unfortunately, sometimes these cultural translations can be understood as a syncretization of what one society feels has a negative effect on itself from the other, creating fears of societal collapse or even religious pluralism. Ultimately, these two forms of Cultural Translation, Hybridization and Syncretism change the members of a society from whom they were before, neither positively nor negatively in the form of hybridization, but negatively from the standpoint of the society as a whole in the form of syncretism.

## Hybridization

It is important to understand the difference between the two principles, as hybridization is not only a normal aspect of cultural collision but an inevitable one (Kraidy 2002, 14), even if one culture does not wish for the process to occur. The concept of hybridization is understood as a process where disparate, or at least separate, entities or processes come together to create new entities or processes termed hybrids, these sharing aspects of

their originals but not necessarily existing as a pure composite (Sanchez-Stockhammer 2012, 136). When the idea is introduced on the cultural level, ideas, customs, or social behavior from one society become blended with those of another society creating new hybrid ideas, customs, or behaviors.

Within the context of a Hybridization vs. Syncretism scenario, hybridization can be understood as common and ordinary transfers of cultural phenomena, regardless of their origins (Hahn 2012, 27) and regardless of their ethical impact. Much like the 'common' in the differences between the Holy and the Common within Leviticus 10:10, hybridities within societies do not necessarily inspire negative customs and beliefs or inhibit social reproduction, at least they need not inhibit these.

Examples of common or ordinary cultural hybridities may be understood as the accepting of the use of new tools or materials, whether a change from flint to copper blades as is seen in some ancient societies or even the adaptation of the post-World War II simplified suit coats that became the standard business attire for men even today. Beyond material hybridities, linguistic hybrids can be identified throughout the ages, from the existence of loan-words to the assimilation of sounds (Sanchez-Stockhammer 2012, 136). Key in these examples is the fact that hybridization will occur, but it need not corrupt the society's ideals.

### **Syncretism**

On the contrary, within the religious world, syncretism is the cultural translation of negative ideals (DeMarinis 2009, 1769) from outside of a community into that community that both diminish and restrain the intentional social and religious reproduction of the elders of that community, very often associated with not just social but also economic principles concerning everyday life and the stability of that life. The concept was first introduced by Plutarch who described the coming together of Cretan factions to face a common enemy, but it was later broadened by Erasmus to include contrasting opinions. By the seventeenth century, the term was utilized in a negative fashion, describing the blurring together of undesirable Christian doctrines that threaten the true faith (Greenfield and Droogers 2001, 27–28). Syncretistic ideals are sometimes referenced in relation to the hellenization processes between the Greeks and Romans, the mixture of Jewish and Muslim thought during the Renaissance, or even the exchanges between the Roman Catholics and Protestants during the Reformation (Ackermann 2012, 7).

Syncretistic phenomena can be identified within the biblical text, particularly within the books of Kings, often in relation to the mixture of Yahwistic

worship with that of Ba'alistic features found within the socioeconomic climate of Late Bronze Age Canaan (Singleton 2015, 4–5) where Ba'alism had been the model for the agricultural lifestyle. This mixture of Yahwistic and Ba'alistic cultural ideals, referred to by this author as Jeroboamisms due to the repeated phrase found throughout the text referring to the sins of Jeroboam, became a prime reason for the downfall of both Israel and Judah at the hands of the Assyrians and then the Babylonians. Examples of this syncretism from Ba'alism are even seen outside of the biblical text and in archaeological contexts, for example the inscriptional evidence concerning "Yahweh and his Asherah" (Smith 1987, 333), implying a link between the Israelite deity and the Canaanite storm god, a link that correlates to the socioeconomic stability, or instability, of the land.

These types of syncretisms between two or more socioeconomic climates can then be understood not only within the biblical text but within modernity, such as the joining together of African deities with Roman Catholic saints on Haiti, creating the practice of voodoo (Ackermann 2012, 9), a narrative change that assuredly allowed the newly arrived African slaves to better understand the changes that they had gone through. More recently, socioeconomic religious syncretisms could be seen in U.S. Presidential races, such as those who appear to identify a favorite political candidate with a messiah-type figure.

### **Functional changes in solitary and primitive communities**

Of course, cultural translations between differing populations cannot exist when societies are devoid of all contact with other societies. In these instances, syncretism obviously has no effect on a community, but functional changes still occur. Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to point anthropologically to any original culture (Ackermann 2012, 6), solitary, primitive, or at least exclusionary societies do exist today. Within these solitary or primitive societies, external modifiers still influence the next generation, except that these external modifiers do not stem from external cultural influences. This is possible through a type of structural functionalism where a society lives by certain standards, but as is inevitable, dysfunctions arise. When the standards of a community cannot be met, a reconciliation process begins whereby the society must attempt to either correct the dysfunction or explain why it occurred within the known system.

Although the sociological theory of Structural Functionalism, based on the idea of isolated societies, is now considered a defunct theory, as most, if not all, societies exist[ed] within broader institutions and therefore inevitably came into contact with other

groups or families, the theory may be sound within solitary or primitive communities with no contact with the outside world (cf. Ritzer 2011, 252). For the purpose of this study, only two societies meet these characteristics, one beginning in the biblical Garden of Eden and then the other beginning at the biblical Ark in Noah's day after the global Flood. Although this second society was influenced by those societies before the deluge, these families can be perceived as societies containing standardized beliefs and practices functioning holistically for the benefit and survival of those families.

Thus, Noahitic society could be viewed as a complex system where all parts of the society worked together in order to promote solidarity and stability (cf. Macionis and Gerber 2011, 14). Unfortunately, as noted above, social dysfunctions will inevitably arise (Loyal and Malešević 2021, 25), these defects stemming from influences external to the standard, including anything from the death of a child to the loss of crops, or any number of non-standard modifiers, thus producing conflicts within the ideology of the people that must be controlled (Ritzer 2011, 246). In addition to normal life stressors in an ancient society, these may also possibly stem from external, non-standard ideas within the community, for example the arising of individualistic, self-centered beliefs (cf. Genesis 8:21) that may benefit some but not the others (Harrington 2005, 91). When these dysfunctions become apparent, society as a whole attempts to adapt to the dysfunctional component, perhaps creating new normalities to mitigate the issue but sometimes even recreating a new philosophical narrative in order to better explain the situation, such as in the form of creating myths expounding upon how a people have come to be (Debrah 2020, 2) and how to maintain a positive status (Friesen 2004, 286).

It is this author's belief that this type of adaptation first occurred within societies who had left the Ark, or perhaps the Tower of Babel, before ultimately interacting with other societies who then shared their own newly prescribed knowledge, beliefs, and practices in the form of the cultural translation noted above. It is further this author's belief that evidences of these changes can be observed in the literary and archaeological record, indicating that very few generations had passed before the Noahitic standards had become corrupted, these evidences being understood in the original positions of both the god Ptah and the god El within Hamitic (Mitzraimic) and Semitic perspectives, respectively.

### Noahitic Line

Although often discounted as myth within secular scholarship, within the evangelical movement, as

within historic biblical scholarship, a belief in the historicity of the Noahitic line is well accepted. This Noahitic line is described within the biblical text, specifically within the Table of Nations, that classification assigned to Genesis 10 which explores the descendants of Noah through his three children, Japheth, Shem, and Ham. Upon identifying the descendants of Noah, Genesis 11 then describes how and why the peoples were dispersed across the globe. Within the Table of Nations, the account given of the children of Noah includes the descendants of Japheth, but these will not be explicitly discussed here.

### Ham

Concerning the children of Ham, four children are named: Cush, Mitzraim, Put, and Canaan. From these four, further descendants are noted, identifying several key names of individuals whose posterity would eventually cross paths with the children of Israel. Additionally, key sites are remarked upon as founded through a descendant of Cush, these sites including Babel, Uruk, and Akkad.

Crucial for the purpose of this study are the sons of Ham cited as Mitzraim and Canaan, biblically identified as individuals but also known inherently as geographical locations (Knoppers 2003, 27). The first, Mitzraim, is well understood to be Egypt (Osborne 2002, 595), and the Hebrew word is even today used as such (Cooper 1990, 78). In fact, later Old Testament passages, for example, Psalms 78, 105, and 106, make reference to Egypt as a designee of Ham (Hutzli 2023, 592), and the Hebrew term itself is translated as Egypt in most, if not all, English translations of the Bible, appearing more than 500 times in the Masoretic Text (MT).

Canaan, too, is designated as a geographical location, and the text itself supplies the borders. Genesis 10:18–20 describes the descendants of Canaan as settling from Sidon in the north, later to be associated with the Phoenicians, to Gaza in the south. This same geographical location for Canaan is continued throughout the Old Testament, though a major change appears to have occurred within the population.

Of interest, the language of the Canaanites, of which Hebrew was a cognate, was a Semitic (Payne 1986, 199), or Shemite, language. The Semitic nature of the Canaanite language suggests a Semitic people, which at first glance appears to be a contradiction to the biblical text which impresses a Hamitic origin for the Canaanites. This differentiation is noted archaeologically when a break between cultural groups appears to have occurred along with the transition from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age, specifically noted as a shift in material culture

(Schoville 1998, 162), but also genetically, as DNA analyses suggest changes between Chalcolithic and Early Bronze cultures (Harney et al. 2018, 2), meaning that at this point Semitic peoples may have moved into the land where likely Hamitic peoples had already dwelt. One suggestion for this move is that the trade network between Egypt and Byblos at the time allowed Semites north of Sidon to move southward closer to Egypt for mercantile simplicity (Schoville 1998, 162–163). Additionally, cultural affinities with the Kura-Araxes tradition are seen in the land, suggesting a Caucasian (that is, from the Caucasus) presence as well (Agranat-Tamir et al. 2020, 1150). The likely outcome of the Hamitic Canaanites may be alluded to in Genesis 9, the later Semitic and Japhethite peoples enslaving the Hamitic Canaanites as per the Curse of Canaan but continuing the use of the place name. For this reason, the Hamitic Canaanites will be referred to as Canaan A, not to be confused with Canaan B as associated with later historical episodes.

### **Shem**

Just as the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 lists key individuals and sites descending from Ham, so the chapter also describes those descending from Shem, including Elam, Asshur, Aram, and others. From Aram, the proposed father of the Aramians (cf. Deuteronomy 26:5), comes Shelah, then Eber, and ultimately, as seen in Genesis 11 and beyond, Abraham and the Israelites.

Of particular interest, Canaan B falls under the lineage of Shem, rather than Ham. This is not to say that the biblical text was mistaken but rather, as noted above, a material culture shift can be found within the southern Levant at the beginning of the Bronze Age. This is further clarified in a genomic analysis of the southern Levant where modern-day Jewish and Arab Semitic peoples are directly linked to the Bronze Age Levantine migrant populations who moved into the Levant from the outside (Agranat-Tamir et al. 2020, 1147–1148). This especially links the Canaanites of Abraham's day, and those after, with Semitic peoples, the Hamitic peoples being slowly eroded away and possibly lost within the migrant populations.

### **Original Deities**

It is here suggested that the children of Noah, in particular Shem and Ham (but assuredly Japheth as well), continued the worship of the Noahitic deity, who had saved them from the global Flood, but over time and over generations, dysfunctions arose within the societies that encouraged functional changes to cultural and religious standards. While it is impossible to ascertain with any certainty

what exactly these dysfunctions may have been, it can be assumed that dysfunctions did occur as later generations within their descendancies worshipped deities other than the original Noahitic deity.

It is further here suggested that not only did the progeny of Noah functionally create new deities, but they also continued to worship the Noahitic deity, relegating that deity to a lesser position within the respective pantheons but not dismissing him altogether. Of course, this original deity also went through functional and syncretized changes of its own, retaining the core position of creator god and retaining other attributes, but otherwise existing as only one among many.

Even within these lowered positions, it is the belief of this author that the original Noahitic deity can be comprehended within the mythologies of both Egypt (Mitzraim) and Canaan B, though highly syncretized at the point that the mythologies were written. These deities are then identified as both Ptah, of Egypt, and El, of Canaan B.

### **Mitzraimite (Hamitic): Ptah**

Discussing the structure of the deities of any people can be difficult as the positions within a given pantheon (that is, all of the gods of a people group), or even the identity of the deities themselves, may change over time. In many instances, the characteristics of a deity can be supplemented by related qualities, and these related qualities may then shift the original functions of that deity (Janák 2011, 120) causing changes in cultic practice or even within the mythologies themselves. Thus, the structure of the Egyptian pantheon at any given moment is dependent upon the dynasty at rule and the related qualities being emphasized.

### **Ptah as Creator**

Still, certain aspects of the individual gods sometimes carry through the ages, including linguistic names, titles, and epithets, but also visual images, attributes, and insignia (Janák 2011, 120). In the case of Ptah, the imagery was established already in the First Dynasty (Hart 2005, 128), dating to ca. 3000 B.C. Ptah is always viewed in human form (Ranke 1950, 20), and in the case of a Dynasty I calcite bowl, the god is smooth-headed with a high-collar and tassel, holding a scepter (Hart 2005, 128).

Ptah appears to have been associated with Memphis throughout the history of Egypt, and the name of his temple, *Hwt-k3-Pth* (Temple of the *ka* of Ptah), ultimately became the name of the nation, *Hikuptah* being rendered as *Aigypotos* in Greek and then Egypt in English (van Dijk 2001, 74). This traditional Memphite deity was said to hold within himself the very essence of all other created gods

(Orlin 2010, 49) as described within the Memphite Theology where Ptah created by first thinking of what he would create and then speaking the created into existence (Wilkinson 2008, 5).

Strangely, the term “ptah” in early literature was not written with the hieroglyphic determinative for divinity, which had given rise to claims of foreign adaptation into Egypt (Hart 2005, 128), but within the Coffin Texts, the etymology of the name Ptah connects the proper noun with the verb *pth*, meaning to fashion; although the connection between the proper noun and the verb fits the character of the deity as a divine craftsman, it is possible that the verb stems from the proper noun rather than the proper noun from the verb (van Dijk 2001, 75). This is further understood in the wordplay found in that same Coffin Text spell (§647), where the spell invokes the name of Ptah by referring to him with adjectives that evoke his name, specifically *pth*, meaning creative, and *ph.tj*, meaning strong (Noegel 2021, 149).

Of course, Ptah is not the only creator god within Egyptian mythology. The *Hymn to Atum*, likely originating from Heliopolis in the Old Kingdom but the extant papyrus dating to ca. 400 B.C. at Thebes (Matthews and Benjamin 2006, 8), describes the deity Atum as creating. The god created the heavens and the earth, dry land and reptiles, sneezed out the wind, spat out the rain, and it was Atum who created all living things (columns 26:21–27:5 in Matthews and Benjamin 2006, 8).

Even though Atum created what could be described as the earth within the Heliopolis tradition, within the Memphite tradition, it was Ptah who created the primeval waters and transmitted his own life-force into them, and it was these primeval waters from which Atum had come (Orlin 2010, 49), in later Ptolemaic tradition Atum actually generating himself from the waters (Hart 2005, 129).

### Comparison of Ptah to the Noahitic God

If the Egyptian Ptah is compared to the Noahitic deity as understood within Genesis, quite a few comparisons can be made. First, both the Noahitic deity and Ptah are said to have created by speaking the created objects into existence. To the latter, Ptah is said to have thought, through his heart, and then spoken, with his tongue:

There came into being as the heart and there came into being as the tongue (something) in the form of Atum. The mighty Great One is Ptah, who transmitted [*life* to all gods], as well as (to) their *ka*'s, through this heart, by which Horus became Ptah, and through this tongue, by which Thoth became Ptah. [...] All the divine order really came into being through what the heart thought and the tongue commanded. (Wilson 2021, 1)

Similarly, throughout Genesis 1, the phrase is repeated, “God said . . .” Genesis 1 breaks down these sayings into six creative narratives separated by the days of creation, including the very first in which is stated, “God said, ‘Let there be light.’” The Noahitic deity then goes on to create through his words the sky, land, living things, etc.

Other similarities also exist between the creation through Ptah and the creation through the Noahitic deity, including Ptah’s satisfaction and rest after creation. Note that after Ptah had created the primeval materials from which the gods, what is termed the Ennead or the key Egyptian pantheon, had formed, “Ptah rested and was content with his work” (Matthews and Benjamin 2006, 34). This concept of resting from and being contented with the creation is echoed in Genesis 1:31 and 2:1–3, the Noahitic deity specifically calling his work “very good” and then “resting” on the seventh day.

Dissimilarities are also understood, and in fact it can be suggested that these dissimilarities are key to understanding the differences between the God of the Old Testament and Ptah of Egypt, namely that Ptah of Egypt became the primeval materials from which all creation was formed (Yoo 2012, 222), imbuing himself into those materials from which the Ennead and all that was created came into being (Wilson 2021, 2), whereas the Noahitic deity created the primeval waters and continued distinct from the Creation (Genesis 1:1). Additionally, within the Noahitic tradition, it was the Noahitic deity who in creating all things fashioned the objects that would later be construed as deities themselves, creating them as simple material and non-sentient entities, whereas within the Memphite tradition, Ptah merely created the *ka*-spirits within all created things (Orlin 2010, 175), the primeval materials, and then Atum created himself from those primeval materials before creating all else (Matthews and Benjamin 2006, 5). In a sense, all of the gods came into being in Ptah (Noegel 2021, 55), but it was Atum who utilized his hands and semen to actually create the gods (Matthews and Benjamin 2006, 5).

### Shemite (Semitic): El

Where Ptah appears possibly to have been the original Hamitic, or at least Mitzraimitic, creator god, so El, also, appears to have been the original Semitic (Shemite) creator deity, as per early textual evidence (Gray 1957, 120). Although the term *‘el* in the Ugaritic texts is used as an appellative of deity, that is *god* with a lowercase <g>, of the more than 500 uses, it is much more commonly used within those texts as the divine name of the specific deity (Robinson 2010, 27–28). Even in Pre-Sargonic Mesopotamia, the theophoric use of the name *Il* is

attested, suggesting the chief deity's position among Mesopotamian Semites (Cross 1997, 23).

In fact, the word *El* or *Il* used as a proper name is seen in the earliest forms of East, Northwest, and South Semitic languages, suggesting its beginnings in Proto-Sinaitic as the same (Cross 1997, 23), and in Old Akkadian, the word is used without case ending advocating its use as the divine name (Cross 1997, 13). Thus, from very early on, the term *el* appears to have been used not only as a general conception but as the name of the specific creator deity (Gray 1957, 119), and although it is difficult to speculate (Cross 1997, 23), it is this author's belief that the word *el* appears to have been a proper noun that eventually became a common noun, and not vice versa.

Interestingly, the biblical text helps to confirm the early Semitic position of this deity. As seen in Genesis 14:22, after Melchizedek offers a blessing upon Abraham by the name of El Most High (*Ēl 'Elyōn*), Abraham responds by raising his hand in a vow to Yahweh, El Most High (*Ēl 'Elyōn*), Creator of Heaven and Earth, equating El of the local population with Yahweh in the biblical text (cf. Smith 2002, 213). Interestingly, the phrase in Genesis 14:22 describing Yahweh, "Creator of Heaven and Earth," *w'rs šmym qnh*, is reminiscent of one used in the Phoenician Inscription of *Azita-wadd*, written much later and when the god Ba'al had been transplanted into the southern Levant, where the inscription describes "Baal of the Heavens and El Creator/(Owner) of the Earth," *b'l šmm w'l qn 'rs* (Gordon 1949, 111).

### El as Creator

The basis of Canaanite religion at the beginning of the Early Bronze Age was El-centered, as per theophoric evidences. In Ugaritic texts, El is the chief god (Gray 1957, 115) who is described as an aged, wise, and kindly creator god (Hess 2007, 97; Smith 2002, 2). He is the creator of all things, specifically all other deities and humanity (Robinson 2010, 28), but he stands apart from other deities in that El has no nature-centered symbolism, that is, storm, sea, death, etc. (cf. Yakubovich 2010, 390). Although some Ugaritic texts might allude to an older principal deity who existed before El, namely El-Eb, "El (god) the father" (Jordan 2004, 88), this may simply be an attributive phrase regarding El, particularly as myths concerning El's creating powers tend to view creation as theogony rather than cosmogony (Cross 1997, 43). El is understood through his role as the father of both the gods and of humanity (Robinson 2010, 28). In fact, within Ugaritic texts, El is much more clearly the father of humanity than the creator of the earth, and he is sometimes equated with Ea, the Mesopotamian creator of humanity (Yakubovich 2010, 394).

While the Ugaritic texts appear to limit the discussion of El's creative domains to that of his progenital lineage, other texts, such as the Phoenician inscription of *Azita-wadda* and a neo-Punic inscription from Leptis Magna, refer to the deity as the creator of the earth (Day 1986, 387), and even within Hurrian-Hittite texts, he is understood as the creator (Robinson 2010, 28). The title "El the Creator" is a well-attested epithet in Canaanite literature (Barney 2010, 28) as the Bronze Age supreme deity and creator of the earth and/or humanity, but no associations with heaven are attested at that time (Yakubovich 2010, 391).

### Comparison of El to the Noahitic God

As El is understood by some to be equated with the Noahitic deity of Genesis, comparisons can easily be made. Both El and the Noahitic deity are the creator of humanity and all living creatures. This is seen in the biblical text in Genesis 1 and 2 where the Noahitic deity creates in daily themes all that exists, including the different kinds of creatures (fish, birds, mammals, reptiles, etc.) and finally humanity. In Ugaritic texts, such as the Tale of Aqhat, El is also said to create humanity and all living creatures, specifically the phrases *bny bnwt*, "creator of creatures" (Aitken 1990, 29) and *'ab 'adm*, "father of humanity" (Gordon 1998, 251), likely a reference to his virility. In fact, these titles are seen throughout the Ugaritic texts in reference to El (Smith, 1994, 83).

The concept of El as a father is carried through in his other epithets, such as "El the merciful" (Belnap 2008, 95), "Bull El the Beneficent" (Smith 2009, 120), "benevolent/good-natured El" (Herrmann 1999, 314), and "El the Kindly One" (Smith 1994, 160). He is further portrayed as *qds*, "holy" (Herrmann 1999, 275), and these are all attributes that are readily given to the Noahitic deity throughout the biblical text.

Although not directly alluded to in the Ugaritic myths, El is also said to be the creator of the earth (Barney 2010, 28). In fact, the Hittite theonym *Elkunirsa*, the protagonist of a Canaanite-inspired myth, directly translates as El-Creator-of-Earth, *il qn arš* (Yakubovich 2010, 385). The difference between El and the Noahitic deity is that although El is given the epithet "creator," the creation within the El mythology is never explored. He is simply said to have created. On the contrary, the creation of the Noahitic deity is explained in great detail.

Also contrary to the Noahitic deity, El is said not only to be the father of mankind but also of the gods (Ullendorff 1963, 11), in particular the rather common formula is expressed as *...bn il: ab bn il*, "father of the gods" (Burns 2002, 218). While the biblical text does speak of an assembly of gods who are the children of the Noahitic deity in Psalm 82,

in a similar aspect to the pantheon of Canaan where El presides over an assembly (cf. *phr ilm*, “assembly of the gods” in Burns 2002, 260), Psalm 82 is very clearly a polemic against the Canaanite assembly of gods, particularly as seen in Psalm 82:7 where the assembly is said to die like mortals and fall like other rulers.

### Syncretized Reality

While it is merely conjecture that both Ptah and El stem from the original Noahitic deity, it is still quite possible, especially when comparisons are made. Of particular interest, one of the Serābit inscriptions, inscriptions from the Sinai that feature the earliest form of alphabetic writing (Parker 2023, 269), shows inscribed the words “El of Eternity,” *ʾl dʾlm* (Albright 1969, 24), a comparable epithet to Ptah’s *nb dt* or *nb nhh* translated as “lord of eternity” (Cross 1997, 19). Additionally, imagery concerning the two compare, such as the label “Bull El” in Ugarit and the Apis bull of Ptah at Memphis (Daviau 2020, 248), the specific animal imagery of Ptah (Ranke 1950, 5). Some have further suggested that the *ʾolam* epithet of El stems from the comparison of El to Ptah at the time of the Serābit inscriptions (Cross 1997, 20). Here, El took on attributes of Ptah at a site that contained a mix of Egyptian and Canaanite workmen, even suggesting the equivocation of a common consort (Cross 1997, 35) as seen in the form of Qedeshet/Asherah (Cornelius 2008, 3) or Qedeshet/Astarte (Cornelius 2008, 93).

It is suggested by this author that both Ptah and El began as the God of Noah, passed down through Noah’s descendants, and ultimately changed from the original Noahitic standard to the paganized form of which written myths had been shaped. This is, after all, how myths are made. A story is told, and then every time that story is retold it is changed to conform to the ideology of the teller, ultimately becoming standard only when an author attempts to correct any inconsistencies and record his or her version of the story (Thury and Devinney 2017, 23).

Often these changes occur when the collective mind attempts to create solutions to known problems in nature or life in general (Yakar 2018, 95). These dysfunctions that occur may stem from any source; in solitary societies, perhaps from dysfunctions within the community such as loss, civil strife, the struggle with nature, and beyond, but in societies existing within the framework of broader societies, both dysfunctions and solutions may come through cultural contact with outsiders, the society uncovering answers to questions that had developed along the way.

These types of syncretisms can be seen all throughout history. Many today mistakenly speak of the “borrowing” of Greek deities by the Romans; rather than a borrowing, it is clear that the Romans

simply adapted from the Greeks what they believed to be beneficial to them, as the Greeks adapted deities, sometimes creating new mythologies for preexisting deities, such as Zeus from Ba’al (López-Ruiz 2014, 2), or introducing new deities altogether, such as Aphrodite from Astarte (Wallensten 2014, 7). In fact, just as the Greeks adapted aspects of their own religion and mythology from the Canaanites, so the Canaanites adapted aspects of their religion and mythology through cultural contact with those around them, such as Ba’al from Marduk (López-Ruiz 2014, 2), Kothar-wa-Ḥasis from the lessened form of the craftsman Ptah in Egypt (Frayne and Stuckey 2021, 168) but also possibly in connection with Crete (Burns 2002, 130), and Astarte from the Mesopotamian Ishtar (Cornelius 2008, 82).

The Israelites, also, adapted religious belief from those around them, forming the Jeroboam-cult by mixing together elements from Yahwistic worship with that of Canaanite Ba’alism, utilizing the socioeconomic climate of regional Ba’alism in their worship for both political and economic/agricultural gain. This syncretistic mixture of religions is then seen throughout the books of Kings in both the northern and southern Israelite kingdoms, excepting for the Ahabite Parenthesis, where the Phoenician Jezebel introduced pure Ba’alism into the north to the detriment of Syncretized Yahwistic worship. Even in the New Testament, the fledgling religion of Christianity faced syncretistic desires in the form of both Pharisaical and Gnostic adaptations into the systematic theology of the day.

### Loss of pure faith in the first and second generations

It does not take long for generational changes in social customs or religious belief to occur. Examples of such generational dysfunctions within a society are abundant within the Scriptures, primarily, though not limited to, the lineage of dynastic rule in Israel. Perhaps the greatest example stems from the theological shift from David to Solomon, where David was said to be wholeheartedly devoted to his God, but Solomon was very specifically said not to be wholeheartedly devoted (1 Kings 11:4–6). The shift is evident within the text as Solomon both worshipped and created temples for non-Davidic deities.

Beyond the David/Solomon break, Asa, too, was said to have a heart completely devoted to Yahweh (1 Kings 15:14), and while his son, Jehoshaphat, followed his father’s God (1 Kings 22:43), his grandson, Jehoram, rejected Yahweh and encouraged others to do the same (2 Chronicles 21:10), identifying a religious reproductive failure within two generations. Likewise, Hezekiah was the third king said to have been wholeheartedly devoted to Yahweh (2 Kings

20:3), but his son, Manasseh, worshipped the gods of other nations, even building altars to Ba'al and his consort (2 Kings 21:2–3). Like the David/Solomon fracture, Hezekiah, even though wholeheartedly devoted, failed to reproduce his theological standards to the very next generation.

Unfortunately, many more examples can be given of a parent not adequately reproducing his religious standards to his children, and these may stem from within the biblical text as well as in modern society. Some modern examples may come from the likes of John Piper and his son, Abraham, who has made a name for himself by deconstructing his father's faith (Graham 2021), or Gregg Harris and his son, Joshua, who became an evangelical sensation before publicly giving up on his faith (Allen 2019). In fact, according to one study, 59% of Christian children in the United States disconnect from the church, either permanently or for an extended period, by the age of 15 (Barna Group 2011), meaning that the church in the United States appears to have a serious problem when it comes to social and religious reproduction.

### ***Presumed timespan before P'tah and El became blurred***

If the loss of faith is so readily seen in both biblical and modern family relationships, one may wonder how quickly the descendants of the sons of Noah had left the faith. No hints are given within the Table of Nations, but the Babel scenario in Genesis 11 surely at least encouraged change.

Depending upon the date that one assigns to the Flood, it would appear that very few generations had passed before all major societies had become pagan. To Shem was born Aššur, and although the Apocryphal Book of Jasher mentions the children of Aššur (Jasher 7:16), no legitimate sources can be found that list the names of his children. From historical sources, it is known that the god Aššur ruled over a city of the same name while an overseer interpreted the deity's demands (Michel 2017, 99). Later, the deity Aššur would be known as the "king of the gods," "king of heaven and earth," and "father of the deities," and he would be tied to the Sumerian Enlil (Frayne and Stuckey 2021, 34). It may be that at some point the man Aššur became deified, as seen in the Old Assyrian Period, dated 1950–1750 B.C. (Anderson 2017, 15).

Most of the information discovered about the city of Aššur during the Old Assyrian Period comes not from that city but from Kaniš in Anatolia, an exchange city where Assyrians who participated in trade also participated in a type of dual citizenship, adopting local customs, intermarrying and having children from these marriages, and engaging in partnerships with non-Assyrian individuals (Highcock 2018,

19). In short, the citizens participated in both hybridization and syncretism, both the common and negative aspects of cultural translation.

Shem also begat Arphaxad, and through a list of nine mediaries identified in Luke 3, eventually begat Abraham, giving a total of ten generations between Shem and Abraham, Abraham's father being well understood to have been a pagan. Interestingly, the city of Ur, from where Abraham had begun his travels, was the center of worship for the moon-god, Šin (Stol 1999, 783), and the city of Ḥaran was identified with the worship of the same god (Adali 2009, 224). In fact, there is a possible interrelation between Terah, the father of Abraham, and the deity, Šin, specifically the linguistic relationships between the family names Sarai, Milcah, Laban, and possibly even Terah himself, with the lunar deity (Chavalas 2002, 829). An example of this may be the name Sarah relating to the Babylonian Šarratu, wife of Šin (Becking 1999, 724).

Abraham, dating not too long before the Old Assyrian Period noted above, lived in a Semitic society whose rulership had collapsed, namely the Akkadian Empire (cf. Adamo and Al-Ansari 2020, 18), and he moved to another Semitic society, Ḥaran, but within these Semitic communities, El had already been demoted in favor of other deities. It was not until Abraham moved to the southern Levant that he entered into an El-dominated region, as evidenced by theophoric elements dating only around a century later than Abraham (Gray 1957, 119), and the deity is mentioned in the earliest of Old Akkadian references (Cross 1997, 13), dating as early as 2500 B.C., but even in the Levant at that time paganism existed (cf. Day 2002, 88).

Interestingly, Canaanite A cultic evidences support the existence of a goddess as the chief deity, and this goddess carried over into Early Bronze I (Miroschedji 2013, 16) when Canaan B first entered the land. This may be evidence of Hamitic influences upon the overall Semitic Canaanite B society. Although uncertain, it is possible that at this rather early stage, ca. 3300 B.C. (Mazar 1992, 30), the concept of Asherah was introduced into the Canaan B community, particularly as the earliest form of Asherah is believed to date to the Late Neolithic–Early Chalcolithic transition (Eshed and Avner 2018, 24). As noted above, dependent upon the date one assigns to the Deluge, this places at least early goddess worship shortly after the Flood and the earliest known introduction of a goddess to Semitic societies shortly thereafter.

Concerning Egypt, already at the beginning of dynastic civilization (ca. 3000 B.C.), iconography of Horus, the lord of the sky is identified (Hart 2005, 70), and although speculation, zoomorphic images on



early palettes dating to the Naqada I-III periods of Predynastic Egypt may relate religious undertones (Stevenson 2009, 4). By the end of the Naqada III period and the beginning of Dynasty I, several palettes contain what can be understood as nome, or district, gods, containing emblems that would later be associated with deities such as Min and Thoth (Hart 2005, 1). However long it had been between Ham and the extended family of Mitzraim along the Nile River, paganism had taken root.

### Social reproduction to our extending generations

The purpose of this paper is twofold, first, this is an attempt to relate the historical realities of early, post-Flood civilizations from within an academic perspective, and second, to impress upon evangelical scholars, pastors, and laymen the need to identify social reproductive failures within our own society. Although it can be easy to identify these failures in others within society, it is far more important to identify these within our own personal lives.

There is a reason that Moses, in Deuteronomy 6, prescribes to the Israelites the very pattern in which to follow when reproducing religious and theological ideals to the next generation, and that reason corroborates the thesis of this paper: it is very easy for the next generation to fall away from the faith. How did Moses expect the Israelites to reproduce desired beliefs? Deuteronomy 6:7–9 states: “you must teach them to your children and speak of them [A] as you sit in your house, [B] as you walk along the road, [C] as you lie down, and [D] as you get up. [1] You should tie them as a reminder on your forearm and [2] fasten them as symbols on your forehead. [3] Inscribe them on the doorframes of your houses and gates.” In essence, A–D prescribes that the reproductive strategies include discussion of the ideals throughout the daily activities of everyday life, and 1–2 prescribe that the very ideals taught should be worked through one’s deeds and kept in one’s thoughts, making one’s home (3) permeate those beliefs that the next generation should hold fast.

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