

Adam, High Priest and King

Genesis 1 says that God made the world in six days and on the seventh he rested. Then Gn 2 talks about how he planted a garden. These stories are different from each other, but both are talking about how God made a *temple*. The story of Israel building a portable temple ('tabernacle') in Exodus 25–40 has the same outline and many connections with Gn 1–2, and the story of Solomon building his temple in Jerusalem does as well (1 Kings 5–8). God built a temple-world, and Israel built a world-temple.

Now, every temple has to have a statue of its god, for to see the statue is to see the god. So the last thing God did in the six days was to make a statue for his temple: 'God said, "Let's make man in our *image*, according to our likeness". And God created man in his own *image*... male and female he created them' (Gn 1.26-27). The word for 'image' is *šélem*, which literally is a 'statue', the kind you find in a temple. God made his statue out of dirt (*adamáh*), which is red (*edóm*), like blood (*dam*), and the statue God made was *adám*, 'Blood-Red-Earth-Human'. He also made a wife for *Adám*, whom Adam called *Havváh*, 'Life-Mother'. They were to 'have dominion' (Gn 1.28), that is, be *kings*.

When your bible says that 'the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden' (Gn 2.15), it uses a special word—literally, he 'set' (*nûh*) him there, like setting up a statue. So God 'set up' his image, Blood-Red-Earth-Human, in his garden-temple. Now, one of the interesting things about God's temple and his religion is that God had breathed his own breath into his *šélem* so that it would *live*. In God's religion, *his image would also be his priest and king*.

Your bible probably says that God rested Adam in the garden 'to till and to keep it' (Gn 2.15). That makes him a farmer, not a priest! But the Hebrew literally says, 'to *serve* and to *keep*'. Now, you can 'serve' anybody and 'keep' anything, but in the Bible, these verbs appear *together* only to describe what *priests* do in the *temple* (cf, eg, Nm 3.7-8, 18.4,7). So Blood-Red-Earth-Human and the Life-Mother at his side weren't there just to 'serve and keep'— much less to 'dress and till'. They were there to *serve* (as in *liturgy*) and to *keep* (as in *commandments*). And that's why, right after 'setting' Adam and Eve in the garden, God gave them some *religious commandments* for the very first time: 'Of every tree of the garden— [even the Tree of Life!]
— you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for on the day you do eat of it, you shall surely die' (Gn 2.16-17).

But Genesis is about how Adam, God's *šélem* and High Priest, didn't 'serve and keep'. Instead, he ate the fruit of the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. He wanted God's *wisdom* without faithfulness. So God *exiled* him from his

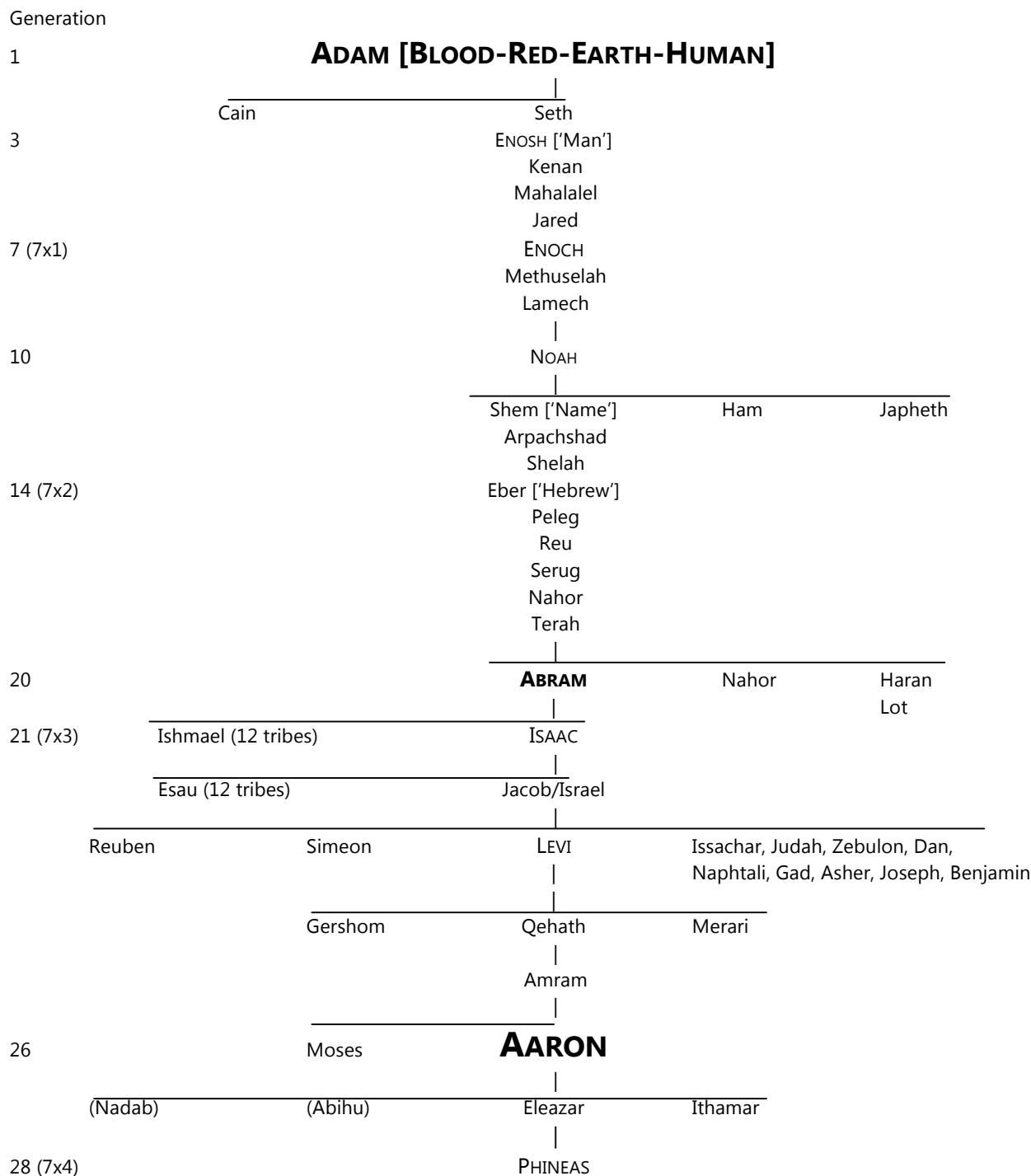
garden/temple, 'lest he take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever' (Gn 3.22). And the rest of the Old Testament tells how the *priest-kings* of *Israel* made *images* of *false gods* and relied on *false wisdom* to support greed, betrayal, and injustice. 'Like Adam they transgressed the covenant' (Ho 6.7)— they 'transgressed' (*'averu*), where they should have 'served' (*'avedu*). So (again!) God *exiled* them from Jerusalem and from his holy *Temple*. But the Bible also tells how God *restored* Israel— and Adam— through a new Adam-Priest-King-Israel, Jesus.

Genesis is famous for its genealogies. You'll find long lists of 'begats' in Gn 5 & 10, and shorter ones scattered up through Ex 6. If you put them all together, you find out they run from Adam down to Phineas, grandson of Aaron the first High Priest. But they don't give you a 'family tree' that shows you absolutely all your cousins. Instead, a single trunk focuses in each generation on one central line. At the *center* of the world is the *High Priest*, who is *Adam's direct heir*. As Adam's *son* and *image* (Gn 5.3), the High Priest manifests what *we* are. As *God's son* (Lk 3.38) and *image*, he manifests what *God* is. So do you want to know what a human being is? Ask the Bible: Every *Blood-Red-Earth-Human* and *Life-Mother = Priest*.

Both priest and image bring God into the world. But God made the only true and living Image of himself that can exist. The god-images we make don't bring God into the world; they lead to exile and death, not to wisdom and life. God's Image is his *Priest*, and as God's *šélem*-priest, our work is to *serve* God and to *keep* his commandments in his temple-world— to practice mercy and truth— and *God's* work is to supply life and wisdom!

The Bible nowhere says so directly, but Jewish and Christian tradition tell us that Adam and Eve were clothed in a *garment of light*. 'Light' is *ôr* (אור). When they fell, they 'saw they were naked', so 'the LORD God made garments of *skin* for them and vested them' (Gn 3.21). 'Skin' is *ôr* (עור). In a symbolic reversal, God told Moses to vest the priests in garments of white (light) when he ordained them (Ex 28.41, 29.8, 40.14; Lv 8.13). The same is done for us when we're baptized. We're stripped naked of the garment we inherited from Adam, and vested in the garment of light that we'll wear at the resurrection. We 'put off... the old Adam and... put on the new Adam, which is created according to God, in covenant faithfulness and true holiness' (Ep 4.22-24). Then, clothed as priests once more in the radiance of God's likeness, we're brought into the Temple, to eat once again from the Tree of Life— the Cross, whose fruit, the new High Priest, Israel's new King Adam who hung on it— has restored our Communion with God and brought us back to Paradise at last (Lk 23.43).

The Main Genealogies of Genesis and Exodus



A family *tree* or 'divergent' genealogy would show absolutely everybody descended from the first ancestor. But the genealogies of Genesis and Exodus form an 'invergent' genealogy where a linear *trunk* shows the main heir and ranks all other lineages around a central figure in every generation. Here, the focus is on the link between Adam and Aaron. In Israel's Temple, the *Son of Aaron* is the High Priest because Aaron = Adam. In other words, the High Priest sums up and represents all Humanity-as-the-Living-God's-Priestly-Image (*śélem*).