

## **Preparing to Explore the Book of Genesis**

Before you open the **Book of Genesis**, it is important for you to prepare to engage with this ancient *Temple Wisdom Scroll*.

- Imagine that it is 450 BCE and you are that the Temple in Jerusalem.
- You are with family members, neighbors, friends, strangers, rich people, poor people, highly educated people and uneducated people.
- Temple scribes are about to perform the first story in *Genesis*.

Scribes were craftsmen. In their dealings with texts, they applied the methods and techniques of their craft.<sup>1</sup> The members of the audience did not see the words, they only heard them. This is why we ask our students to explore these ancient words together and take turns reading and listening to words.

In the modern world we want to know **precise definitions** and be able to view **comprehensive legislation**. However, the cultures of the scribes of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, and the Israelites shared a “**way of thinking**” that is unknown to us. Their writings have “**lists of legal sayings**” that are “**aspective**.”

- They offer “**a wide variety of aspects pertaining to the topic of the list**.”
- **Audience members work together** to identify aspects on a list.
- This **accumulation of aspects** serves to **produce an understanding of the field**.
- By **combining accumulations of aspects** from many lists, **wisdom emerges**.

Lists are found in **the form of a list** like the **Ten Commandments**. There are many lists like it. However, **aspects are also found in narratives** – **stories**. They often contain **lists from multiple fields**. The first ten chapters of Genesis is the most important narratives in the Hebrew Scriptures -- **The Wisdom of the Beginnings and the Alliance of Elohim, the Creator of the Skies and the Earth**. These are stories about the following:

---

<sup>1</sup> *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* by Karel Van Der Toorn © 2007; Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA; p. 6.

### ***BHC Lives 1<sup>st</sup> Education Network***

- The Creation of the Skies and the Earth.
- The Creation of Elohim's Temple.
- The Establishment of Elohim's Kingdom.

The aspects listed in these stories combine to **produce an understanding of the operations of His Temple and His Kingdom**, beginning with **aspects related to maintaining order and establishing justice**.

- *In the creation stories of other nations, the gods measured wisdom by the ability of human kings to perceive order and establish it.<sup>2</sup>*
- *In creation story of Israel, Elohim measures families by their ability to establish order and maintain it on the Earth.*

Find a fellow explorer and let's Explore the Bible together.

Shalom,  
Jim Myers, President  
Biblical Heritage Center, Inc.

---

<sup>2</sup> *The Lost World of the Torah: Law as Covenant and Wisdom in Ancient Context* by John H. Walton & J. Harvey Walton © 2019; IVP Academic Press, Downers Grove, IL; pp. 32-33.