



Research article



THE BIBLICAL CREATION ACCOUNT IN THE LIGHT OF ANCIENT WEST ASIAN CREATION NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT



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Creation narratives can be found in every religion and in every territory. In Ancient West Asia, every nation had its own god(s) to govern them. The authority of such god(s) is attached to the story of the origin of the world and the formation of humankind. The biblical creation narrative has an important place in the history of Israelite people. It narrates the story of God's act of creation, which then leads to narrate the salvation history of the Israelites. Though there were so many creation stories already present in the surrounding nations, God gave the biblical creation account to Israelites with a specific purpose. This article elucidates the motif behind giving the biblical creation narrative amidst Ancient West Asian creation stories by bringing out the convergence and divergence.



Introduction

Cosmogony is a key topic both in scientific and interfaith dialogue. It redirects us to the point of origin of the world. Scientific creation narratives explain the origin of the universe based on various theories under scientific disciplines. On the other side, religious creation stories emphasise that there is/are supreme being(s) who is/are the creator. Religious creation narratives always rely on faith and divine revelation to explain the mysteries of creation. Creation myths were present in all the religions, and it varies from nation to nation. Some creation stories already existed in Ancient West Asia (AWA) before the Israelites could have their own in literary form through Moses. These narratives often involve a divine being creating the world out of chaos. Certainly, a question arises: Given that the creation narrative existed in the adjacent nations, why did Moses have to provide another creation narrative to the Israelites? Thus, the present study aims to assess the rationale behind the composition of the Biblical creation narrative by analysing its convergence and divergence with the AWA creation legends.

1. Creation Legends in AWA

West Asian nations had various narratives about the origin of the world, supreme beings behind the origin, and motives to create human beings. To begin with our studies, we will first study the various creation narratives found in the AWA world. Here are the different creation legends found in AWA nations.

a. Sumerian Legends

i. *Eridu Genesis*

Several versions of a Sumerian creation account from approximately 1600 B. C. have been preserved in fragmentary form. “*Eridu Genesis*” contains several parallels with the opening chapters of Genesis. It is interesting to find the similar structures of the stories of the creation of humankind, the institution of kingship, the first cities and a great flood.¹ The record mentions about early civilization and heroic representation of Ziusudra, king of Shuruppak, under the context of the great flood.²

ii. *Enki and Ninmah*

Enki and Ninmah is the Sumerian mythology. This myth begins by describing the structure of the world that resulted from the creation. The creation of the world had resulted in a great disparity between the major and the minor gods. On the minor gods falls the task of maintaining the earth, particularly the work of dredging the rivers and canals. This is hard, back-breaking work, so the gods begin to complain. Fearful to approach Enki, they bring their complaint to Namma, Enki’s mother and the mother who bore all the major gods. She

¹ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Reading from the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 13.

² John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), 40.



intercedes on behalf of the minor gods and requests that Enki relieve their burden. Enki considers the problem and comes across the idea of creating human for this work load. He, with his wisdom, requests Namma to create humans. Namma then gives birth to a human, Enki clothes it, and all the minor gods rejoice. Ninmah plays a minor role as a divine midwife in the first part of Enki and Ninmah, and in Babylonian mythology, she is identified with the birth goddess par excellence. The rest of the myth is about a contest between Enki and Ninmah over who can create the most useless human.³

iii. *Song of the Hoe/Pickaxe*

This song was collected from the extant copies from the Old Babylonian period, most excavated at Nippur. According to this song, Enlil used the tool named hoe/pickaxe in the work of creation. It says that heaven and earth were divided and humans were made to spring from the soil. Then people built the temples using hoes. The song lists various functions that make use of the hoe.⁴

iv. *Sumerian Creation*

The surviving manuscripts of this text originate from the Middle Assyrian era circa 1100 BC. It begins by discussing how heaven and earth were divided, how the world was created, and how the Tigris and Euphrates rivers were set forth. After this creation, the assembly of the gods decided to create humans to work in the fields. Therefore, two humans were being created. These were originally believed to be comparable with Adam and Eve, or the first human couple, however the text describes them as deities, not people.⁵

v. *The Gilgamesh Epic*

Though, *the Gilgamesh epic* is not a cosmological literature, but it is considered here because of the foremost correlation between it and biblical literature in the flood story. The epic is composed of twelve tablets documenting Gilgamesh's search for immortality. Gilgamesh and Enkidu initially fighting with each other, later become friends.⁶ The narration is about the rebel of Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, against death when he lost his friend Enkidu. In the eleventh tablet it is mentioned about Utnapishtim, who has been called the "Babylonian Noah."⁷ Gilgamesh hears how Utnapishtim gained immortality. Here the flood story is retold. Utnapishtim can be compared with Atrahasis and Ziusudra, who were spared from death in the flood.⁸ Utnapishtim tells about how he achieved immortality when he was forewarned of a divine plan to flood the world, which allowed him to survive the flood in a large reed boat accompanied by his family and pairs of all animals. However, in Gilgamesh's search for

³ Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation* (USA: Hendrickson Pub., 1994), 55-57.

⁴ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought...*, 41.

⁵ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought...*, 42.

⁶ John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Pub. House, 1989), 23.

⁷ Arnold and Beyer, *Reading from the Ancient Near East*, 66.

⁸ Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, 23.



immortality, he fails the tests by which he could receive the immortality. At the end he resigns himself to the inevitability of death and takes comfort in his achievements. This flood story in tablet eleven appears to be dependent on the “*Epic of Atrahasis*” and bears many similarities with the Genesis flood account.⁹

b. Babylonian Legends

i. *Epic of Atrahasis*

According to this narrative, there were upper deities in the heaven and lower deities on the earth. When lower deities became tired of their work, they rebel. Then gods’ solution comes forth as to create human being to do the work. When the populations flourished and became too noisy, gods sent plagues, famine and drought to control the population. Finally a flood was also sent. Atrahasis was told about the coming destruction and he builds a boat. In this boat he saves animals and birds; and also assumed that some people were saved along with Atrahasis. Due to the missing fragmentary elements, the detail is obscure.¹⁰

ii. *Enuma Elish*

The Babylonian creation story *Enuma Elish* was recited every year in the Babylonian festival of *Akitu*. It symbolizes seeking God’s favour for the renewal of the entire creation and all its creatures. Its motif was to enforce the peace and harmony among the creatures and creation as whole.¹¹ This epic was found in Akkadian cuneiform as it is an extinct Semitic language of the Mesopotamian region from the 3rd to the 1st millennium BC.

This epic of creation is better known by the Akkadian words that open the composition: *ENUMA ELISH* i.e. “When on high”. The story tells about the conflict between the leading deities. Tiamat was a chaos monster and referred as mother goddess personifying the primeval ocean. Fearing the evil power of Tiamat, deities elected the young god Marduk as their champion who attacked Tiamat and killed her. Ea, the god of earth, proposed that human kind should be formed from one of the gods who was responsible for chaos. Thus Marduk killed Kingu who made Tiamat to rebel.¹² Then Marduk creates the universe out of Tiamat’s body and humankind from the blood of her co-conspirator, Kingu. He created the humankind to do the hard labour to leave the deities free from work.¹³ In this way Human beings are created so that the gods will not have to do the work; and the story ends with the praises of Marduk.

⁹ Arnold and Beyer, *Reading from the Ancient Near East*, 66.

¹⁰ Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, 20-21.

¹¹ Kondasingu Jesurathnam, *Old Testament Theology: History, Issues, and Perspectives* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2016), 185.

¹² C.F. Whitley, *The Genius of Ancient Israel* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1969), 47.

¹³ Arnold and Beyer, *Reading from the Ancient Near East*, 31-32.



c. Egyptian Legends

In Egyptian accounts it has been said that the life was not possible for human settlement because of continuous flowing of water everywhere on the earth. Only about c.a. 3000 BC, human settlement was possible.¹⁴ Following are few Egyptian creation stories that gives certain idea of Egyptian beliefs.

i. *The Heliopolitan Cosmogony*

One early example of Egypt's creation mythology is known as the *Heliopolitan cosmogony* because it originated in the cult of Atum at Heliopolis (the biblical "On"). The creator-god Atum emerged on a hill from the primeval waters. Atum's first act of creation was spewing Shu, the god of air, and Tefenet, the goddess of moisture, out of his mouth. From them deities such as Geb (earth) and Nut (sky) were brought forth.¹⁵ They in turn gave birth to two sons, Osiris and Seth, and two daughters, Isis and Nephthys, thus completing the Ennead (family of nine gods). Finally, Osiris and Isis gave birth to Horus, who is identified with the king of Egypt.¹⁶

ii. *Hermopolis Creation Account*

This account of creation gives a great emphasis to the four pairs of gods, the Ogdoad. Amun is portrayed as the primary creator. At the first occasion, Amun comes to being as a self-generation. Thus, creation follows as an evolving process.¹⁷

iii. *Hymn to Ptah*

This creation mythology of Egypt focuses on the work of Ptah, the chief god of Memphis. The hymn celebrates Ptah as the supreme creator, by contrasting the way Ptah creates with the way Atum creates. When the hymn opens, the Ennead is ratifying the unification of northern and southern Egypt as a single state. Horus, the divine patron of northern Egypt, assumes the responsibilities of Seth, the divine patron of southern Egypt, and becomes the absolute ruler of Egypt. The hymn goes on to tell how Horus also assumes the responsibilities of Ptah to become the absolute ruler of the Ennead.¹⁸ In this Hymn to Ptah, he is considered as the self-created one, and is praised as the one who creates the world like a potter fashioning a vessel.¹⁹

“According to the thoughts of the heart of Ptah and words of the tongue of Ptah all crafts came forth, all trades were created. Ptah is the creator of all and the ruler of the Ennead. Ptah gave birth to the Ennead and from Ptah comes forth all things. Ptah is

¹⁴ S.G.F. Brandon, *Creation Legends of Ancient Near East* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), 15; Cited by Jesurathnam, *Old Testament Theology*, 185.

¹⁵ Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, 23-24.

¹⁶ Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 66.

¹⁷ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought...*, 44.

¹⁸ Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 3.

¹⁹ Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 66.



the ruler of the Ennead. Having done all these things, Ptah rested content with his work.”²⁰

Such dramatic quality of the Hymn to Ptah is comparable to the story of creation of the heavens and the earth in the book of Genesis (Gen. 1:1-2:4a).

iv. *Memphite Theology*

Memphite Theology combines elements from the previous two myths. According to this, Ptah is the creator of even Atum and the rest of the Heliopolitan Ennead, but the mode of creation has been abstracted from the concrete craftsman and birth metaphors to an intangible intellectual creative principle. The creation comes into being through Ptah’s effective word. The Ennead of Atum serves as the agent through which Ptah’s word is translated into material reality.²¹

v. *Egyptian Myths of Human Creation*

Egyptian myths have little to say about the creation of humans. However, short references to human creation can be collected from a variety of Egyptian texts.

In the *Instruction Addressed to King Merikare*, humans are compared (might be metaphorically) to god’s cattle. Although the process of human creation in this text is not explicitly detailed, the language suggests that humans are formed through procreation by the god.²²

*“Well tended is mankind – god’s cattle,
He made sky and earth for their sake,
He subdued the water monster,
He made breath for their noses to live.”*²³

The preeminent creator of humans in Egypt is Khnum. He is most characteristically portrayed as a potter who fashions both gods and humans on his potter’s wheel: “He has fashioned humankind on the wheel; he has engendered gods in order to people the land and the sphere of the Great Ocean.”²⁴

Another text, from the *Instruction of Amenemope*, compares humans to a building that god constructs.²⁵

²⁰ Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, 5.

²¹ Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 67-68.

²² Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 68.

²³ Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature Volume I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 106.

²⁴ Serge Sauneron and Jean Yoyotte, “La Naissance du Monde Selon L’Egypte Ancienne,” in *La Naissance du Monde* (Paris: Seuil, 1959), 73; Cited by, Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 70.

²⁵ Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature Volume II: The New Kingdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 160.

**d. Hittite Legend: *Illuyanka***

In this Hittite tale, Illuyanka is seen as a serpent who is bringing chaos. In the beginning of the tale, he defeats the storm god. Now, the storm god had a daughter by the name Inara. She marries Hupasiya, a mortal being. Inara and Hupasiya tries to trick Illuyanka during which the storm god overpowers and kills the serpent Illuyanka. This story served as a component of the obscure *Purulli* festival's celebration.²⁶

2. Creation Narrative in the Old Testament**a. Date and Authorship of the Source**

The creation account in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 1:1-2:3) serves as the prologue for the book of Genesis. It offers the history of the origin and unity of humankind to its reader. Time and again, the dating and authorship of this account are debated. In the ancient world, the majority of the population was illiterate. As a result, people used to communicate their history and knowledge orally. Until the Genesis was written in its final form, the knowledge revealed by God was passed on orally from one generation to another, along with their experiential history. The ancient author brought together the whole knowledge through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. According to Gordon Wenham, the earliest known version of Genesis dates it to around 1250 BCE, but not much later than 950 BCE.²⁷ Based on certain evidence, there is a possibility that the Pentateuch was not completely in its final form until the period of the Babylonian exile, with Ezra serving as the last compiler and editor.²⁸ Though Moses passed away long before any of the events in the Pentateuch were documented, he undoubtedly had a significant influence in the creation of several of its key sections.²⁹ Despite disagreements regarding who wrote Genesis and the Pentateuch, Jesus and the people up until the early church refer to it as "the book of Moses."³⁰ Hence, Moses can be considered the author to an extent or compiler for the Pentateuch and the book of Genesis.

b. Creation Narrative

The biblical creation narrative shows that God (YHWH) alone created the whole world. The possibility for the involvement of other gods is avoided by the affirmation that God created 'by his (sic.) word.' In the creation account of Genesis, God's command is introduced by the formula, 'let... bring forth...' and it was brought forth. Except in the case of Human beings all other members of creation are the result of the word of God. Bible clearly states that there was nobody who assisted Yahweh in the act of creating the world (Isa. 40:13-14). This aspect is unique for biblical account of creation. It is important to note that God is solely

²⁶ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought...*, 44.

²⁷ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis: Chapter 1-15*, vol. 1 of *Word Biblical Commentary*, edited by David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1987), xlii-xlv.

²⁸ William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 54-67.

²⁹ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 45-46.

³⁰ Richard F. Carlson and Tremper Longman III, *Science, Creation and the Bible: Reconciling Rival Theories of Origins* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 110-111.



responsible for creation and does not share the credit with anyone. Moreover, the whole of the created order belongs to God and God is sovereign over the whole creation.³¹

The book of Genesis gives two creation accounts (Gen. 1:1-2:4a and Gen. 2:4b- 3:24). The former is a Priestly account and the latter is the Yahwistic account. The Priestly account of cosmogony has been constructed based on AWA cosmic battle pattern, as observed by Herman Gunkel. The Yahwistic account of cosmogony is an “anthropogony” – origin of humanity.³²

i. *Priestly Account*

Priestly account of cosmogony depicts creation in six days. It is structured with an announcement, command, report, evaluation, and temporal framework and naming. The announcement indicates creation by speech – “and God said...” The command indicates God’s will – “Let there be...” The report indicates God’s omnipotence – “and so God made...” The evaluation indicates that God evaluates God’s own work according to God’s own standards and declares “it is good.” And naming indicates God’s dominion over the creation.³³ In AWA creation narratives, creation took place out of malevolence of gods but in Old Testament, creation is fundamentally a good work of a single God.

Traditional interpretation understands cosmos is ‘*creatio ex nihilo*’ (Latin for “creation out of nothing”). This understanding was first upheld by one of the church fathers - Theophilus of Antioch. He argues that if matter existed before creation, then it would mean that matter is in equivalence with God. Simply put, matter is eternal alongside God.³⁴ However, it should be noted that biblical writers did not explicitly mention that creation was out of nothing. Nevertheless, biblical writers understood that God is transcendent and God did not use any matter to create but by God’s own words God “made”.

ii. *Yahwistic Account*

Yahwistic account of cosmogony is actually an anthropogony, because it talks about creation of humanity. In this account God’s creative activity is explained in anthropomorphic terms. For example, the word יָצַר (yāšār) which means to “form” is used for those who make pottery. This implies that God is seen as personally involved in shaping and forming the humanity. After forming human being, God established relationships between human and the

³¹ Paulson Pulikottil, “God, Creation and Humankind: Old Testament Themes in Ecological Perspective,” in *Ecological Challenge and Christian Mission*, edited by Krickwin C. Marak and Atul Y. Aghamkar (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998), 43-44.

³² Robert A. Oden, Jr., “Cosmogony, Cosmology,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman (NY: Doubleday, 1992), 1165.

³³ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (USA: Zondervan, 2007), 183.

³⁴ Richard H. Overmann, *Evolution and Christian Doctrine of Creation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), 240.



cosmos, and among man and woman. God also authorized human being to be like a 'guardian' to the creation by the virtue of human being in the image of God.³⁵

c. Anthropogony

The Biblical creation theology is very much God-centred in its content, nature and relationship to other aspects of Israel's faith. As far as the Old Testament creation faith is concerned, there are no mythical personalities involved in a conflict in the creation of the world, nor the world as the result of a divine procreation. In the Biblical account of creation there is only one person involved, who performed the act of creation.³⁶ Thus, the concept of anthropogony differs from that of AWA writings. Human beings are not created out of chaos or to labour instead of gods; instead, they are created out of the abundance of God's love and are given the responsibility of stewardship for the cosmos.

The Old Testament concept of creation represents Yahweh as not only the creator, but as maintaining the physical universe and sustaining the creatures upon it.³⁷ The words *כָּבַשׁ* (*khābāš*) and *רָדָה* (*rādāh*) "subdue" and "rule", are often misunderstood to be oppressive and abusive. In Jewish and Christian traditions these terms refer to benevolent care for the creation. In that man's rule may be that of 'custodianship'.³⁸ Pulikottil rightly points that the role of human beings and their responsibility is that of a 'manager.' He puts forth that "the word *רָדָה* (*rādāh*) means 'apportioning of a task', an ongoing task which would be well translated by the more modern word 'manage.'" ³⁹ Erica Brown says that "Human beings, from their ancient and sacred beginnings, were to be custodians of the land that birthed them and sustained them."⁴⁰

d. Motif of Hebrew Creation Account

The Hebrew Creation Account, as included in the Bible (Genesis 1 and 2), was given to Israelites by Moses during the time of exile. It was re-narrated by Moses with a specific purpose. As seen above, there were many creation stories present in the neighboring nations. Israelites might have heard about some of such creation legends from the people they got acquainted with before coming out of exile. God wanted to remind the Israelites about their origin through ancestral history. The account of genealogy also helps people know about their origin. It intends to restrict people of God from believing in or following other creation stories, eventually breaking the Decalogue that Moses gives them later. The Biblical creation

³⁵ Pulikottil, "God, Creation and Humankind...", 49-50.

³⁶ Pulikottil, "God, Creation and Humankind...", 41-43.

³⁷ Whitley, *The Genius of Ancient Israel*, 49.

³⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 2004), 120.

³⁹ Pulikottil, "God, Creation and Humankind...", 50.

⁴⁰ Erica Brown, "In the Narrow Places,"

https://www.sefaria.org/In_the_Narrow_Places%3B_Daily_Inspiration_for_the_Three_Weeks%2C_%5BDay_Six%5D_22_Tammuz%3B_With_God_in_the_Garden.3?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en (Accessed on 13/08/2024).



narrative also opens the door for the story of salvation. Hence, Moses was told to narrate the creation story—beginning from the creation of the cosmos, covering the creation of human beings—to know who the creator God is, the origin of the chosen nation, and also to know how God is going to bring salvation.

3. Convergence and Divergence

Creation narratives can be found in every religion, culture, and region. These narratives will definitely have some similarities and differences. While comparing the Old Testament account of creation with AWA creation narratives, we come across some essential convergence and divergence. Firstly, we will look at the convergence of creation narratives.

a. Convergence

Hermann Gunkel was the first one to analyse the close similarities between the Biblical and the other AWA creation myths. He argues that the Israelite creation narrative is dependent on Babylonian mythology for its understanding of creation. He emphasized the similarities between the biblical creation narrative and the *Enuma Elish*.⁴¹ Extracts from *Enuma Elish* appear to point to certain analogies between it and Genesis 1. In both the narratives, there is the general conception of a primeval watery chaos. This is called *Tiamat* in the Babylonian account and *Tehom* in the Hebrew. Further parallel is the cleaving of the watery chaos into upper and lower divisions resulting in atmospheric spaces. The appearance of the earth, sea, dry land, luminaries and finally creation of man all points out towards the parallelism in both the creation accounts.⁴²

In Egyptian epics, the dramatic quality of the *Hymn to Ptah* is comparable to the stories of the creation of the heavens and the earth in the Book of Genesis (Gen. 1:1-2:4a). *Ptah* is said to be “the father of gods, who begot himself...” can be seen similar to God of Old Testament who has no beginning and no end, who created everything by God-self.

In Egyptian texts, *Khnum* was mentioned as creator god who fashioned human and everything like a potter. This can be seen similar to God forming human being from the dust of the ground. The Hittite legend – Illuyanka can be compared to the story of sin in the Garden of Eden. In both the stories snake is found as a destroyer and chaotic character.

From the text of Eridu Genesis several parallels with the opening chapters of Genesis are found. There are similar structures of the stories of the creation of humankind, the institution of kingship and a great flood. The flood story has lot of resemblance with the biblical flood narrative of Noah. Similarly, Atrahasis has the similar account of flood destruction and Atrahasis being saved by building a boat. Along with him, animals and few people were also got saved. Along with Eridu Genesis and Atrahasis, the Gilgamesh Epic also resembles more with flood narrative of the Old Testament. The eleventh tablet mentions about Utnapishtim,

⁴¹ Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 83.

⁴² Whitley, *The Genius of Ancient Israel*, 47.



who has been called the “Babylonian Noah.” His life being saved by divine call of making boat is similar to the call of Noah in Genesis 6.

b. Divergence

In the AWA creation narratives, there is a struggle between gods and it resulted into creation of the cosmos (eg. *Enki and Ninmah*, *Epic of Atrahasis*, *Enuma Elish*). There are stories mentioning the chaotic situations resulting into the creation. Even some stories talk about human beings as not the pleasure creation. Where God of Old Testament created human being out of pleasure, in God’s own image and loved them, gods and goddesses of AWA narratives created human being as a substitute, to work and toil instead of gods. God created everything in six days through word, except human being. The idea of creation through word is found unique and contrasting to the *Song of the Hoe/Pickaxe*.

The God, in Old Testament creation narrative, is seen as a God who loves the nature. In Gen. 2:8-15, narration tells that God planted a garden by God-self. God beautifully fashioned it and made rivers to flow through it which will water the garden. All the trees God planted were good and pleasant to the sight. And God appointed human being to dress it and to keep it. Here the words עָבַד (‘āvād) and שָׁמַר (šāmār) means to work or serve and to guard it. This marks the difference between Biblical creation narrative and AWA creation narratives.

The most important contrast with AWA creation narratives is that God is a single creator of the whole universe. In Sumerian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and also in Hittite legends, there are different gods involved in the creation narrative. Either by fighting with other gods or by taking help of other gods, they are showing their supremacy. But in the biblical creation narrative God (Triune) alone is responsible for the creation of the universe. This cultivates the reader in monotheistic faith in contrast with the polytheistic conceptions.

Evaluation and Conclusion

There are a number of points of contact between the Old Testament and AWA narratives. However, biblical creation narratives are theologically distinct. Similarities are found in the creation of the elements and the creation of human beings. But the motif behind the creation differs. Also, there are similarities and differences among the AWA creation narratives. The flood narrative can be found in several accounts. Thus it raises the question of whether there was only Noah saved by God or were there some other people from different territories also? It is worth pondering such questions to strengthen one’s faith.

The AWA narratives portray the idea of polytheism, but in the Old Testament, God alone is found as supreme. This encourages the monotheistic faith among the believers. There are many similarities and differences that can be drawn from the studies. The above discussion shows that the biblical creation account, though similar in many ways, is very distinct and unique theologically.



The creation of a human being is also found similar in all the narratives, but the motif behind their creation differs. In AWA creation narratives, human beings were created out of chaos to labour instead of gods, compared to gods' cattle, etc. But in the biblical creation account, God created human beings out of the dust of the ground and also created them in God's own image.

This compare and contrast method helps to understand the motif of biblical creation narrative among the presence of various AWA creation narratives. The biblical creation narrative helps to understand the nature of God, God's supremacy over the creation, the responsibility of human beings, and the importance of human beings in the creation of God. Thus, the creation narrative gives a motif to work on the land and to worship God by acknowledging God's authority.

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