

Canaanite Tradition

The ancestral traditions of Canaan are contained in Genesis 1-11. They consist of a series of origin stories, the oldest being replaced several times by something thought more appropriate. Over the centuries, the custodians of Canaanite tradition were trying to reach a workable idea of themselves.

(6) The Garden of Eden. This story of the origin of work is set in a garden that requires no labor. The theme in all these stories is the wish to be like God.

(7) Cain and Abel. Cain, a murderer, was later thought to be unsuitable as the ancestor of all mankind, and was replaced in that role by . . .

(8) Seth. He was briefly substituted for Cain as the ancestor of humankind, but was himself soon replaced . . .

(9) Noah's Ark. The first of these interwound stories is the common flood myth; the second adds the distinction between clean and unclean foods.

(10) The Creation. This story, with its cosmic account of the First Things, was quite logically placed before the older Canaanite traditions.

Such are the surviving pieces of Canaanite tradition. Next, in Gen 12-36, we will meet the first of the pastoral intruders who entered the Land – not from the south, as the Yahweh people would later do, but from Haran in the north. They receive a Promise, for Abram himself and for his descendants.