

Poisonwood Bible - Biblical References

Nathan - "Our Father"

Book I Genesis: "The Things We Carried" (through p. 82)
Genesis - "a coming into being"

"In the beginning, God said unto them...have dominion...over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28)

Nathan (like King Leopold) took these words literally.

First book of the Old Testament; some believe was entirely written by Moses, others say it was written by many (based on oral tradition).

Creation story; Adam & Eve; their sons, Cain, Abel, & Seth: Cain is a farmer and sacrifices his crops to God, while Abel, a herdsman, sacrifices his flocks. Cain kills Abel because God's more pleased with Abel's sacrifice. God exiles Cain from home, to wander in foreign land (Oedipus...). Seth is born and through Seth and Cain, the human race grows.

Noah - Ten generations pass and humans become more evil. God destroys humankind, except for Noah, his family, and pair of every kind of animal. Rain falls 40 days, earth flooded for over a year. God promises to never destroy the earth again and makes a rainbow.

One night Noah is drunk and naked in his tent. His son, Ham, tells his brothers Shem and Japheth about their dad. Shem and Japheth cover him without looking at him. When he awakes, Noah curses Ham's descendents, the Canaanites, because Ham looked at him nude and told others about it (Ruth May). Humankind becomes really evil again.

Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) - Before this point in the Bible, all the world had one language. And people had become skilled at construction. People of Babel built a city with a tower that would 'reach to heaven.' They wanted their city to stand out and they wanted their city to stay centered (around the tower). God didn't like this so he messed up their language so they started talking different languages and couldn't understand each other. He also scattered their people all over the earth.

Jesus was born 1600 years after the events at the end of Genesis.

Book II The Revelation: "The Things We Learned" (83-186)
Revelation - "an enlightenment or astonishing disclosure; when things become clear"

In Old Testament, also called The Apocalypse (translation: revealing).

Found in the New Testament; usually placed last in the Bible.

Author - John. Speaks of two visions, one being the end of the world (the other is about "one like unto the Son of man"). Involves the final rebellion of Satan at Armageddon (the final defeat of Satan by God). It ends with peace restored to the world.

Highly controversial part of the Bible. Some religious individuals think it was written by a mentally ill author (but perhaps it was an early science-fiction best-seller!)

Connection with the second coming of Christ.

Book III The Judges "The Things We Didn't Know" (187- 311)

Judges (biblical) - a book in the Old Testament that tells the history of Israel under the leaders known as Judges

Tribes of Israel try to cleanse the world of the Canaanites, but they wind up marrying them and otherwise intermingling with them. So God threatens to abandon Israel, but instead he chooses some judges, or rulers, to serve as temporary leaders for the people.

While the judges are in charge, Israel's people become really evil and worship Canaanite gods. Israelites are invaded by Moabs and the Midianites. Israel eventually stops idol worship; God selects a new judge, Jephthah, the son of a prostitute, who promises to God that he'll sacrifice to God the first thing that comes out of his house the day he returns from (victorious) battle. Unfortunately, his virgin daughter, is this unlucky one, who emerges dancing and happy, greeting him after battle. She dies in a sacrificial act. Israel continues to be oppressed and an angel of God comes to a childless Israelite couple, promising them a son who will deliver Israel from its misery. The son is Samson, a Nazirite (a person who proves his commitment to God by never cutting his hair). Samson is given great powers by God and one day he kills a lion with his bare hands! His parents don't want him to, but he marries a Philistine woman. During their wedding ceremony, he tells them a baffling riddle, which his wife gives away. He's angry and leaves without her; when he returns to retrieve her, she's gone. The Philistines gave her to another man.

Samson captures 300 foxes and ties torches to each of their tails, setting the Philistine crops on fire. Philistines come after him, Israelites turn him over, bound at the wrist. With God's power, he breaks his bindings and uses a donkey's jaw-bone to kill 1,000 Philistine men. Then he falls in love with another Philistine woman, Deliah. Philistine officials convince Deliah to find out the secret of his strength. 3x she asks him what is the source of his strength and he lies to her each time. But then he tells her the truth (his long hair is the source of his strength). While Samson's sleeping, Deliah cuts his hair and alerts the officials. They capture him, gouge out his eyes, and throw him in jail. While there, his hair grows out again and he's brought out of jail during a Philistine religious festival for entertainment. He cries out to God, knocks down temple's pillars, and kill the Philistine rulers.

Israel becomes more corrupt. One day a man and his concubine are confronted and a gang of tribesmen (of Benjamin) demand to have sex with the man - he offers his

concubine instead, so the men rape her repeatedly throughout the night until she dies. The man is angry, so he brings the concubine home, cuts her into 12 pieces, sending a piece to each of the 12 tribes of Israel as a symbol of Israel's corruption. All of Israel team up to conquer the tribes of Benjamin. God helps them kill over 25,000 Benjamites. Israel then grieves for these lost tribesmen and helps the Benjamites repopulate their land.

Book IV Bel and the Serpent "What We Lost" (313-375)

Bel - Babylonian god of the earth

Bible - Bel and the Dragon

Daniel was a friend of Cyrus the Persian, who lived with him. Cyrus worshipped the god Bel, the great Babylonian god who was supplied daily with "12 great measures of fine flour, and forty sheep, and six firkins of wine" (about 54 gallons). But Daniel worshipped his God. Cyrus was annoyed that Daniel didn't worship Bel - Cyrus believed that since he always ate this food and drank the wine, he was a living god. But Daniel called him a clay/brass false god. Cyrus got mad at that, thinking the priests must be deceiving him. So he called the 70 priests of Bel, threatened them with death if they couldn't explain where all the food and wine went. And Daniel would die if they proved that Bel consumed it. The priests had a trap door under the table of worship for Bel.

Daniel threw ashes on the floor. The priests consumed the goods, left footprints....Daniel, the great detective!

The Babylonians also worshipped a great dragon (that looked like a serpent). Daniel was asked to worship it, but instead slay it without weapons, proving it wasn't a god (Daniel gave him to eat a mixture of pitch, hair, and fat - it ate it and burst). The Babylonians aren't happy about the death of their god and threaten to kill both Daniel and the king. The king gives them Daniel, to be thrown into a den of lions, where he stays for 6 days. But the lions don't hurt him. Locked in the den, Daniel gets hungry, so an angel went to Palestine and got a prophet (Habakkuk) to get food to Daniel. On the 7th day in the den, the king gives glory to the God of Daniel and Daniel's released. Those who wanted to destroy Daniel are thrown into the den and devoured by the lions, with Daniel watching.

Book V Exodus "What We Carried Out" (377-506)

Exodus - "a journey by a large group to escape from a hostile environment"; originally means "names" (Hebrew). Old Testament discusses the different names God takes and the different ways God reveals himself to the Israelites.

Book of Exodus begins around 1445 BC; Israel had been in Egypt for about 215 years. Includes early life of Moses; 10 plagues on the land of Egypt; Exodus and journey to the Sinai (Mt. Sinai).

10 Plagues

The Pharaohs of Egypt didn't want to listen to such 'lowly' people as Moses (a kid found floating on a river as a baby). They worshipped idols instead of God. So they got the 10 plagues:

1. All the water in Egypt (ponds, canals, streams, the Nile River, even water in buckets and jars) turned to blood.
2. Frogs multiplied so much that they infested land and home.
3. Gnats swarmed people and animals.
4. Flies swarmed the land and spread disease.
5. Disease on the livestock (donkeys, horses, camels, cattle, sheep, goats), but not on people.
6. Festering boils grew on people and animals.
7. Horrible hail storms destroyed crops. The hail stones were so big they killed animals and people who were hit by them.
8. Locusts covering/devouring everything.
9. Darkness over the entire land for 3 days.
10. Death of the firstborn. The Passover. Pharaoh let the Israelites go. The Wilderness Journey began (the route of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites between the Exodus and their entry into the Promised Land). At Mt. Sinai, Moses received the 10 Commandments from God.

Book VI Song of the Three Children (507-533)

Song of the Three Holy Children - long passage after Daniel.

Book VII The Eyes in the Trees (535-543)