

INSPIRED

SLAYING GIANTS, WALKING ON WATER, AND LOVING THE BIBLE AGAIN

Rachel Held Evans

ORIGIN STORIES

Enlightening the Present by Recalling the Past

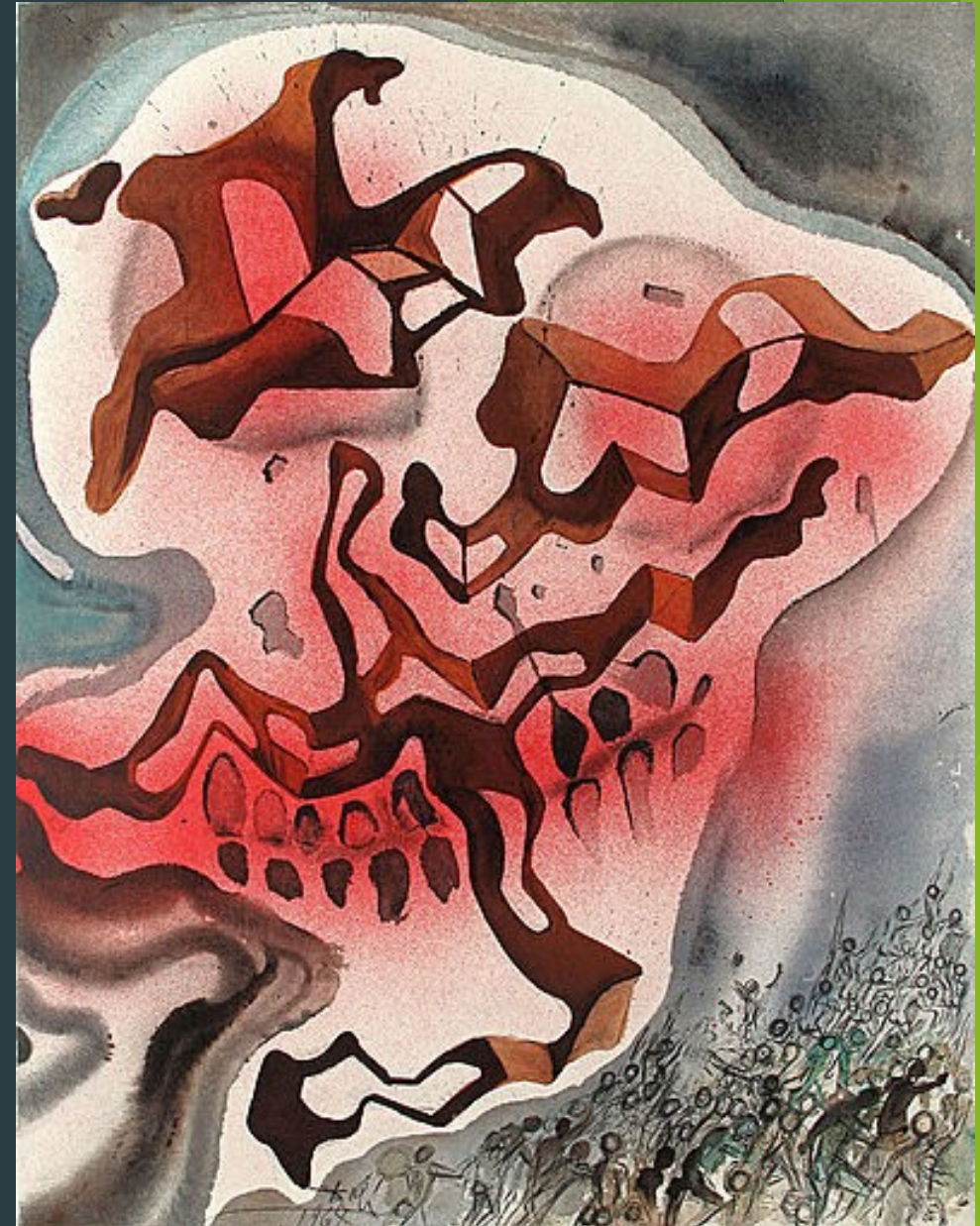
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Our Bible: Forged from a Crisis of Faith

- ▶ Scholars believe the writing and compilation of what we know as the Old Testament began during the reign of King David and became an imperative spiritual and cultural necessity during the Babylonian invasion and exile of the people of Israel.
- ▶ King Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the exiling of many created the crisis of faith.
- ▶ The Jews were God's chosen people how did this destruction come about?
- ▶ Did this loss come about because of their collective sins?
- ▶ Where they to be abandoned forever?
- ▶ Psalm 137:1-6
- ▶ Without the temple and altar, how would the children know of the rituals and sacrifices?
- ▶ If they had no land of their own, no king, no place to worship and no national identity, what did they have?

They had their stories...traditions and laws...the promise that God would remain present with them no matter what...God would be faithful...

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4)



"Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil". Salvador Dalí, 1968.

The Role of Origin Stories...Is to enlighten the present by recalling the past.

- ▶ What are our “origin stories”?
- ▶ Have they “morphed” over time?
- ▶ If so, why or how?
- ▶ Should they “morph”?



The origin stories are...”less a story about human origins and more a story of Israel’s origins, a symbolic representation of Israel’s pattern of habitation, disobedience, and exile...”

- ▶ The Bible is **an epic...in which we are not the central character**...the Jewish scribes were not concerned with today’s politics, science, textbooks...they were trying to preserve and reassure an oppressed and scattered people... loved by God.
- ▶ “TO DEMAND THAT THE BIBLE MEET **OUR DEMANDS** IS TO PUT OURSELVES AND OUR OWN INTERESTS AT THE CENTER OF THE STORY...WHICH IS ONE OF THE **TRAPS WE MUST LEARN TO AVOID** IF WE ARE TO ENGAGE THE BIBLE WITH INTEGRITY OR CARE.”

Origin stories...

- ▶ **Explain** how people and the Universe sprang from...
 - ▶ The lotus that arose from the navel of Vishnu (Hindu)
 - ▶ Out of the belly of the Rainbow Serpent (Aboriginal)
 - ▶ The Spider Woman guiding the lost to a new world (Hopi)
- ▶ **Protect** us from uncomfortable truths...
 - ▶ Remembering a nostalgic First Thanksgiving where the Pilgrims and Natives shared a meal and not the European mistreatment of the indigenous people...
- ▶ **Offer** hope and dignity to the suffering...
 - ▶ The deliverance of Israel from Egypt comforts the Jews through exile and diasporas
 - ▶ African Americans through slavery and the civil rights movement.
- ▶ **“The origin stories of Scripture remind us we belong to a very large and very old family that has been walking with God from the beginning. Even when we falter and fall, this God is in it for the long haul. We will not be abandoned.”**

“It is a fundamental misunderstanding of Genesis to expect it to answer questions generated by modern worldview, such as whether the days were literal or figurative, or whether the days of creation can be lined up with modern science, or whether the flood was local or universal. The question that Genesis is prepared to answer is whether Yahweh, the God of Israel, is worthy of worship.”

Peter Enns (Phd. Harvard University), Abram S. Clemens professor of Biblical Studies at Eastern University, St. Davids, PA.

God stoops...



Cristo crucificado. Diego Velázquez, 1632.

Genesis...God brings order to the cosmos and makes it a temple...

- ▶ The creation account (Genesis 1) is meant to “remind the people of Israel, and by extension us, that God needs no building of stone from which to reign, but dwells in every landscape and in the presence of the humble will make a home. Should all other identities or securities be thrown into tumult, should nations be fractured and temples torn down, this truth remains---**God is with us and God is for us. It’s a story as true now as it was then.**”

"The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12)



Aliyan, *The Rebirth of Israel*. Salvador Dalí, ca.1968.

Like us...God is more than what is written on paper...

- ▶ We are more than the words on our birth certificate...name, weight, length, date and place...
- ▶ Peter Enns reminds us that the Bible is weird and messy...our lives are weird and messy...[an understanding of Scripture will therefore be weird and messy...]
- ▶ Madeleine L'Engle (*A Stone for a Pillow*) wrote, we need “to start grappling [with the angel] to turn us aside from the questions which have easy answers to those which cause us to grow, no matter how painful that growth can be.”



Vision after the Sermon. Paul Gauguin, 1888.

- ▶ Evans writes, *“With Scripture, we’ve not been invited to an academic fraternity; we’ve been invited to a wrestling match. We’ve been invited to a dynamic, centuries-long conversation with God and God’s people that has been unfolding since creation, one story at a time. If we’re lucky, it will leave us with a limp.”*



WWE Full Match: John Cena vs Seth Rollins