

Why is the Biblical God So Violent?

Rob Barrett

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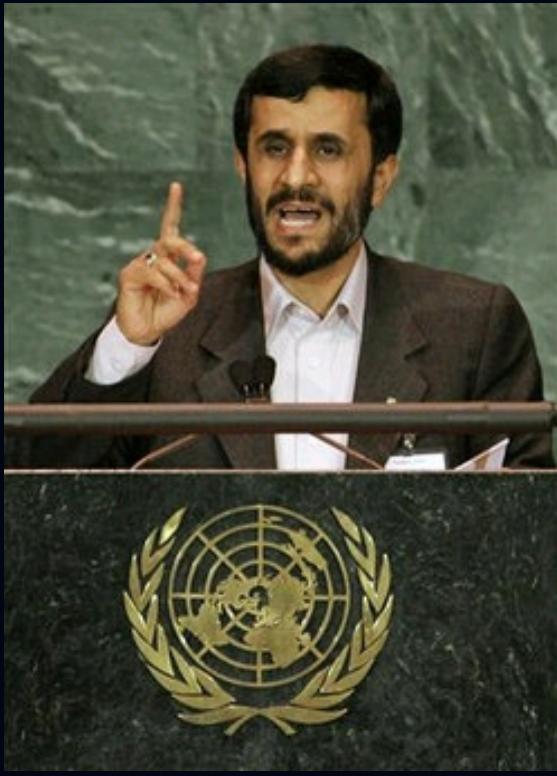
Why is the Biblical God So Violent?

Orientation

- Perspective
 - Christian
 - American
- Focus
 - Old Testament
- Topic
 - God's personal violence
 - Not human violence as depicted in the Bible

A Violent World

Iran: Nuclear Agenda



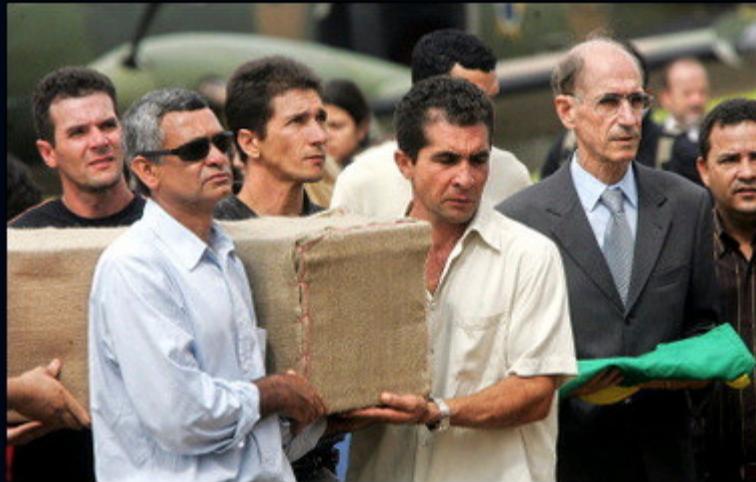
Iranian President
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

- “The occupying regime [Israel] must be wiped off the map”

October 2005



London: Jean Charles de Menezes



■ “90% of the Met, for instance, remains unarmed...At the same time, you want us to deal with terror, with murder, with kidnap, with rape.”

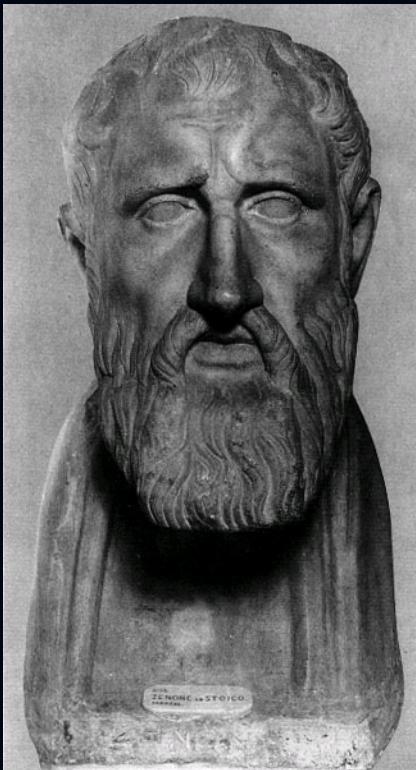
Sir Ian Blair, Met Commissioner
Dimbleby Lecture 2005

New Orleans: Hurricane Relief



Who is God?

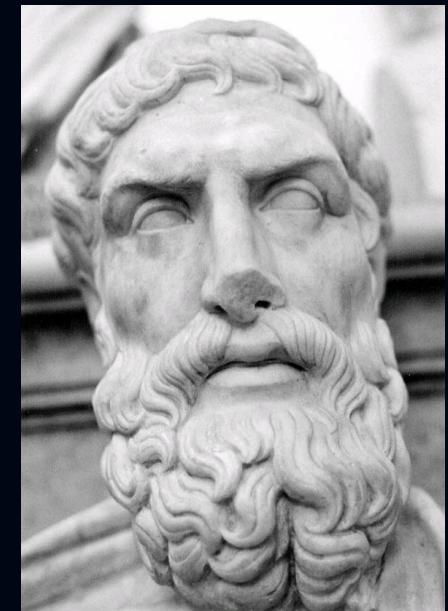
The Philosophical Gods



Zeno (d. 264 BC)

- Stoics (Zeno)
 - God not subject to anger
 - Altogether beneficent

- Epicureans
 - God takes no notice of us at all



Epicurus (d. 270 BC)

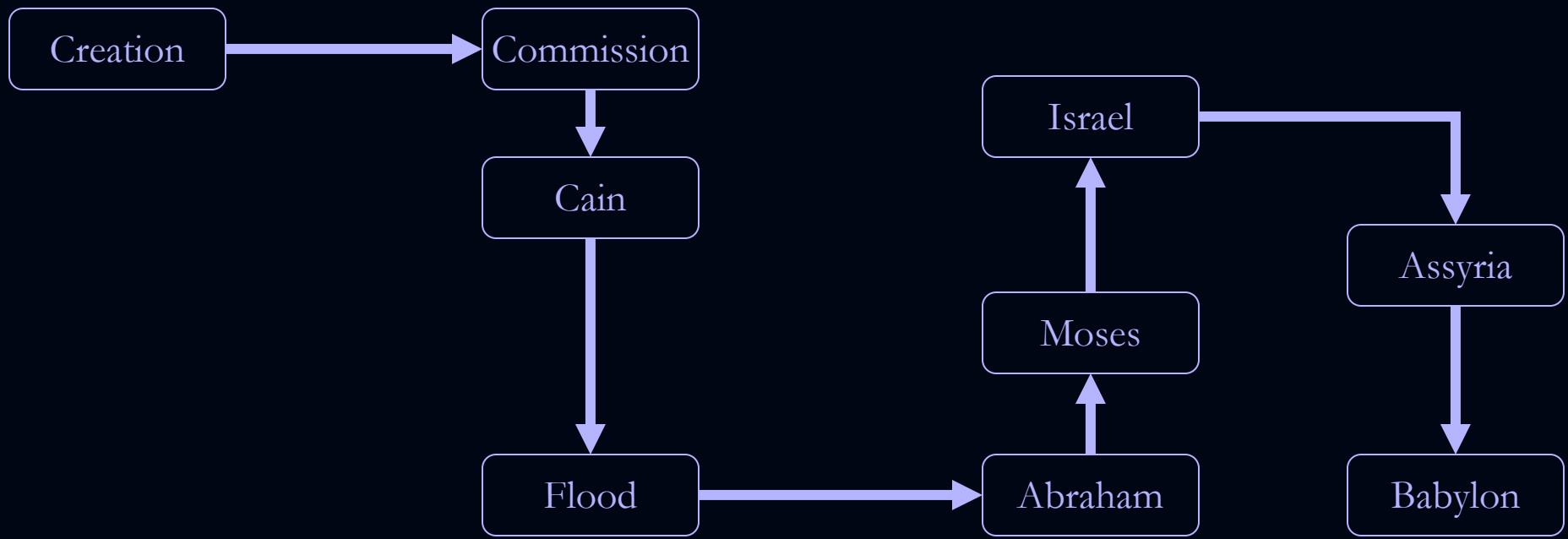
The Polytheistic Gods

- Humanity caught up in the gods' drama
- Babylonian stories
 - Creation
 - Humans relieve gods of work
 - Flood
 - Humans irritate gods with noise
 - Gods decide to destroy humanity
 - One god protects his favorite human
 - Gods get mad at each other

Biblical God

- Personal and Relational
- Passionately “Interested”
- Interactive with Humanity
- Monotheistic: Incomparable
 - So where does evil and conflict come from?

The Old Testament Story





Creation by Unchallenged, Powerful Word

Creation

Commission

“Let there be light”
and there was light

יְהִי אֹור וַיְהִי אֹור

Cain

Israel

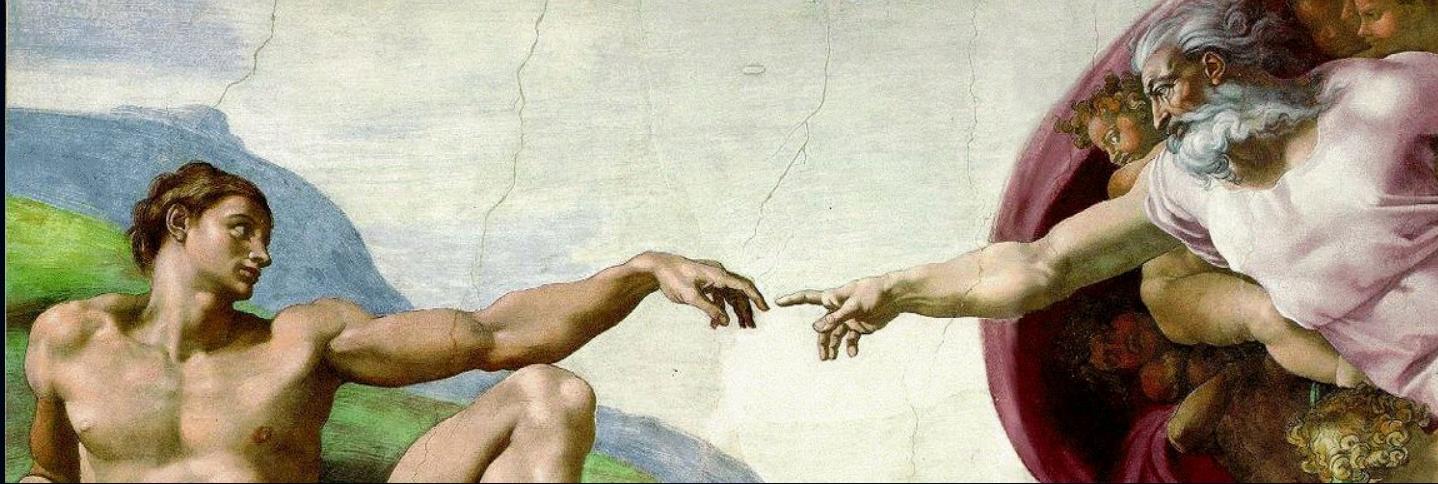
Flood

Moses

Assyria

Abraham

Babylon



Personal Commission of Humankind

Creation

Commission

“Let us make humankind
in our image,
according to our likeness;
and let them have
dominion...”

Cain

Flood

Israel

Moses

Abraham

Assyria

Babylon

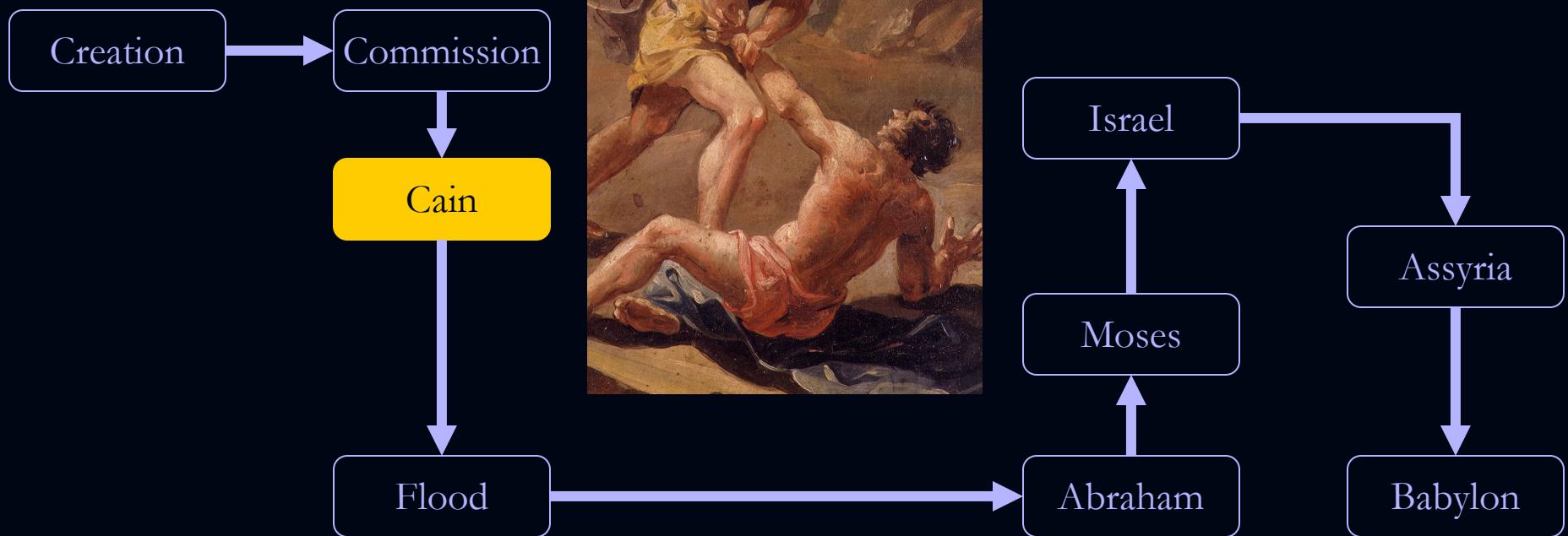


Cain Kills His Brother Abel

“Cain rose up
against his brother
Abel,
and killed him”

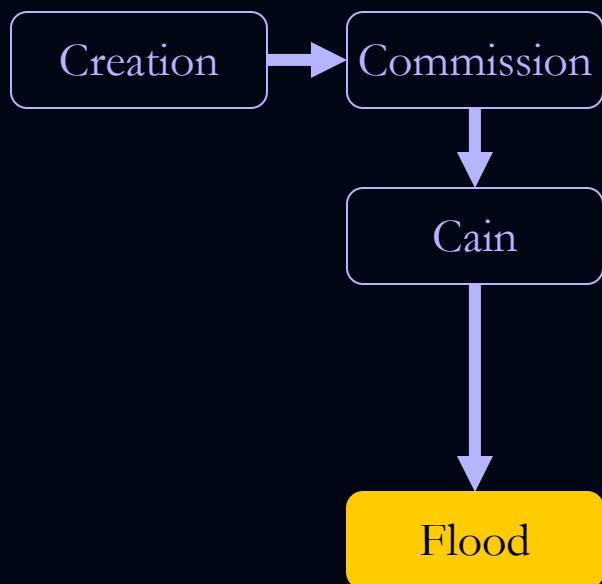


The LORD said to him,
“Whoever kills Cain will
suffer a sevenfold
vengeance”

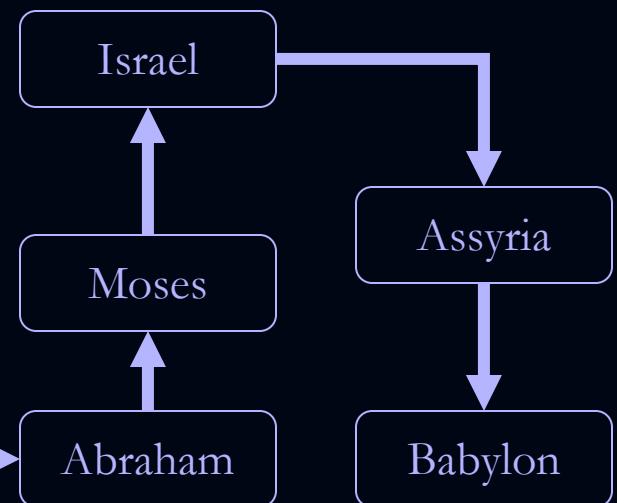




The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth

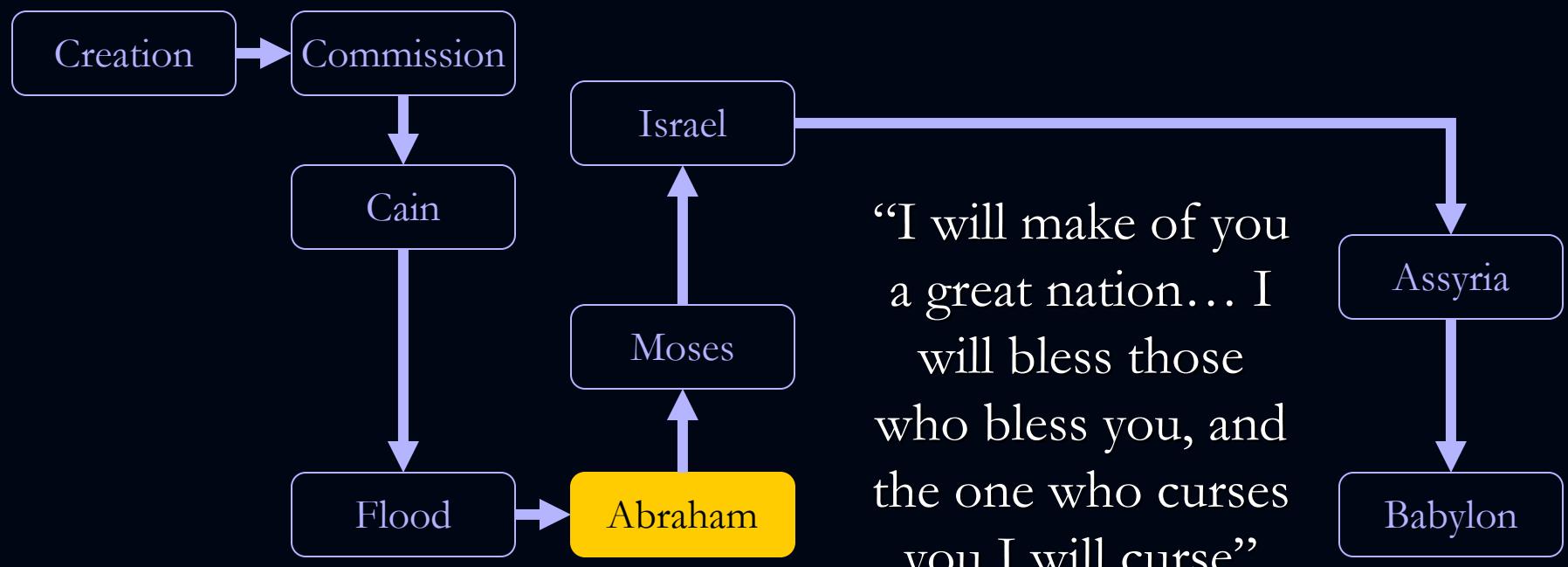


And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.
So the LORD said, “I will blot out...”



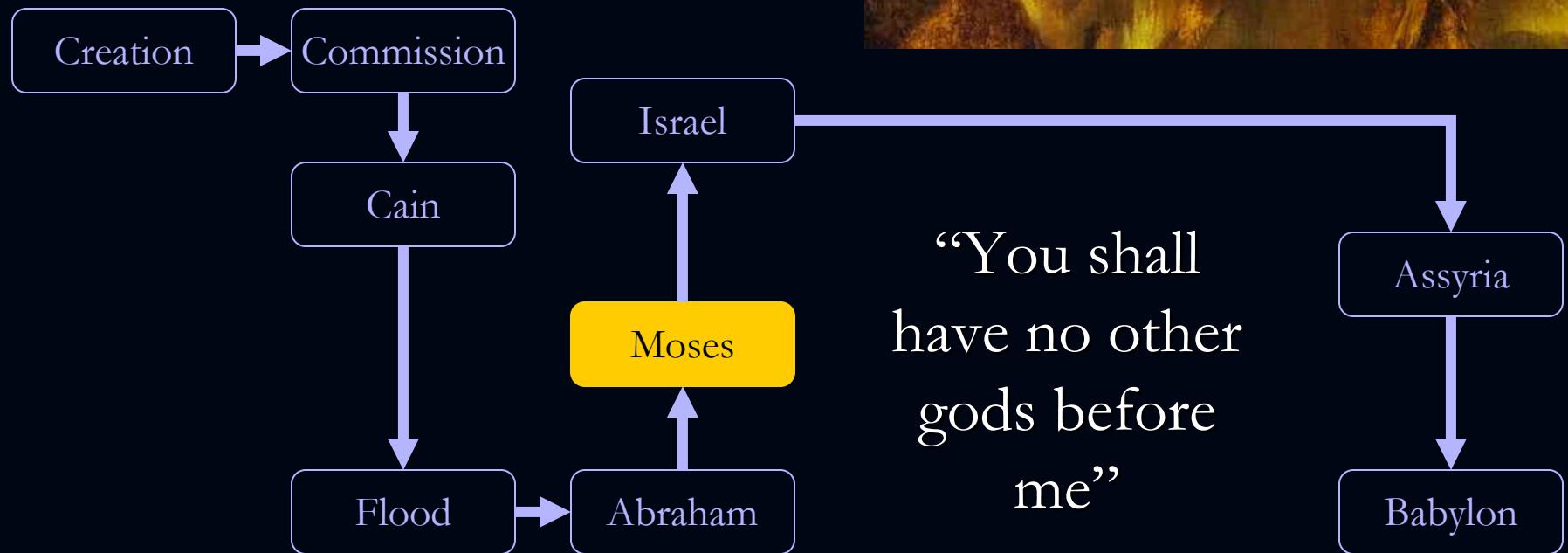
Covenant with Abraham

“Go ... to the land that I will show you”



A Nation Loyal to God

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery”



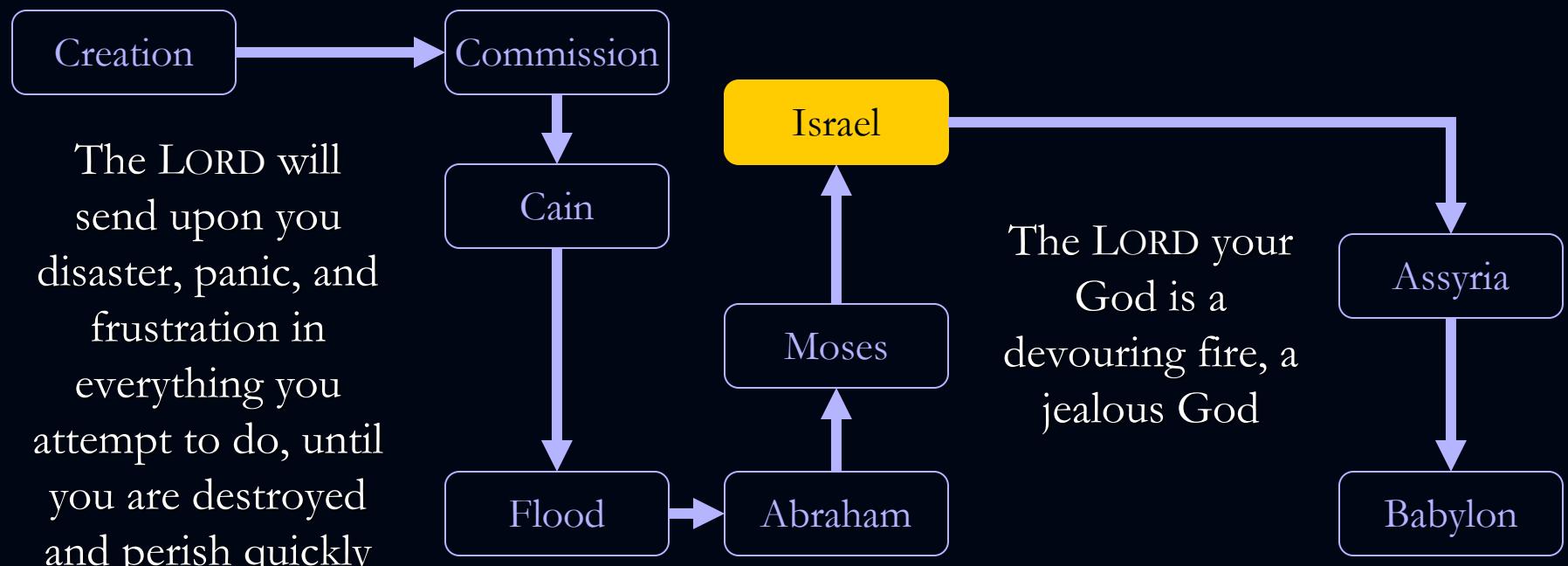


Blessing or Curse?



If you will only obey
the LORD your God

But if you will not obey the
LORD your God



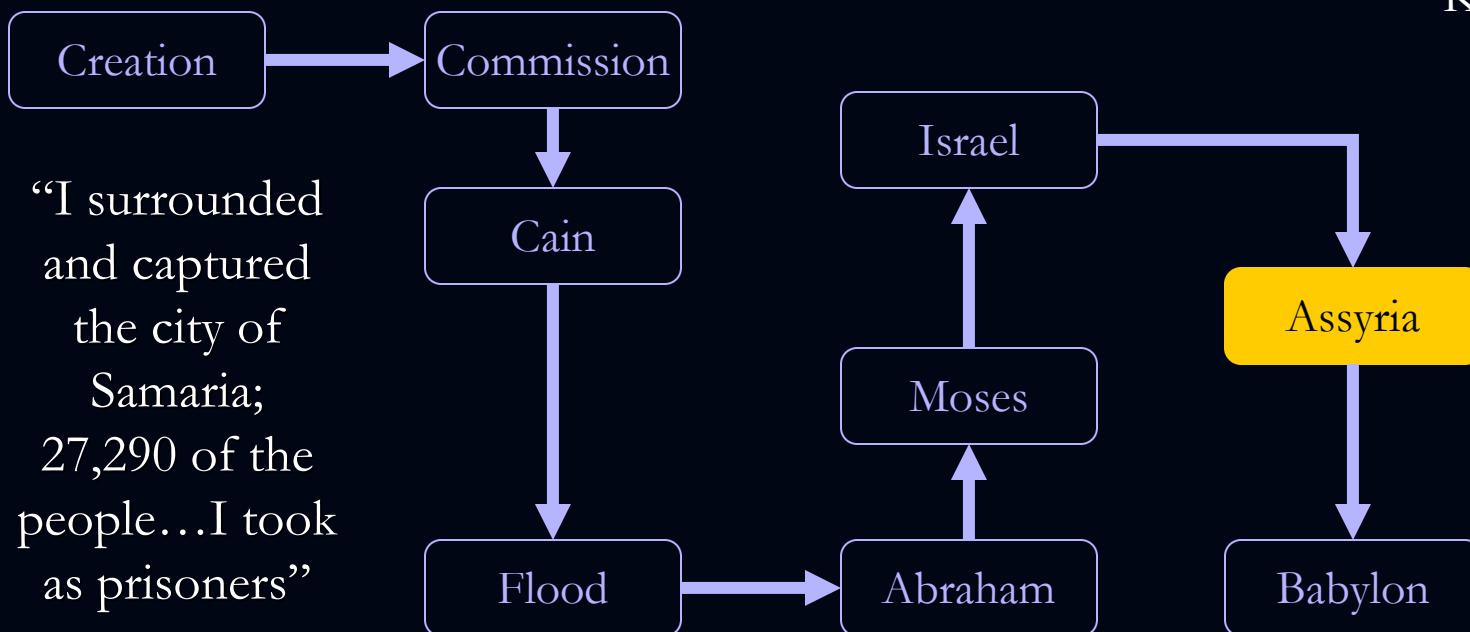


The Northern Kingdom of Israel Falls

721 BCE



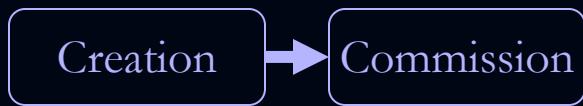
Sargon II
King of Assyria



“Assyria, the rod of my anger — the club in their hands is my fury!”

The Southern Kingdom of Judah Falls

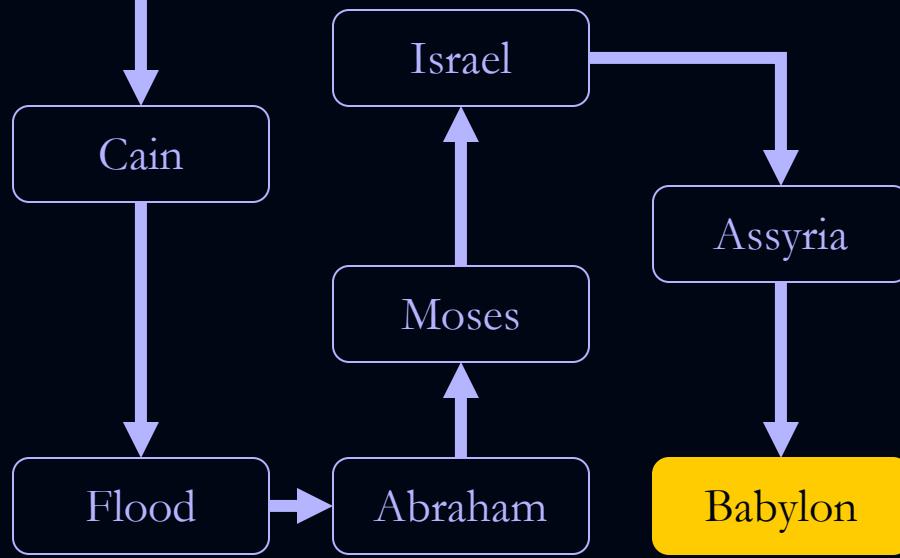
586 BCE



“The king of Akkad besieged the city of Judah...”



“The young and the old are lying on the ground in the streets ... in the day of your anger you have killed them, slaughtering without mercy”

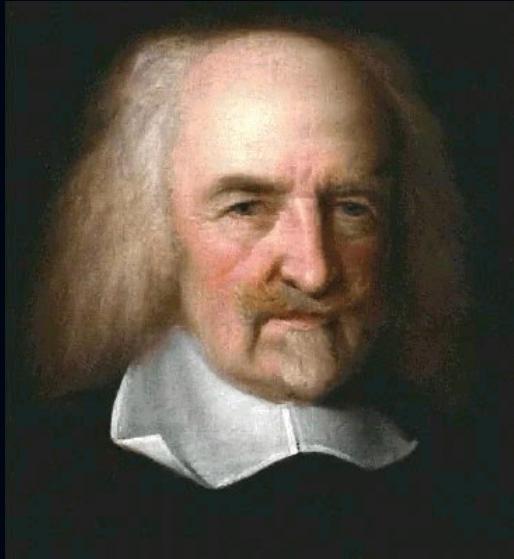


A Modern Perspective

The Issue: Who Shapes Society?

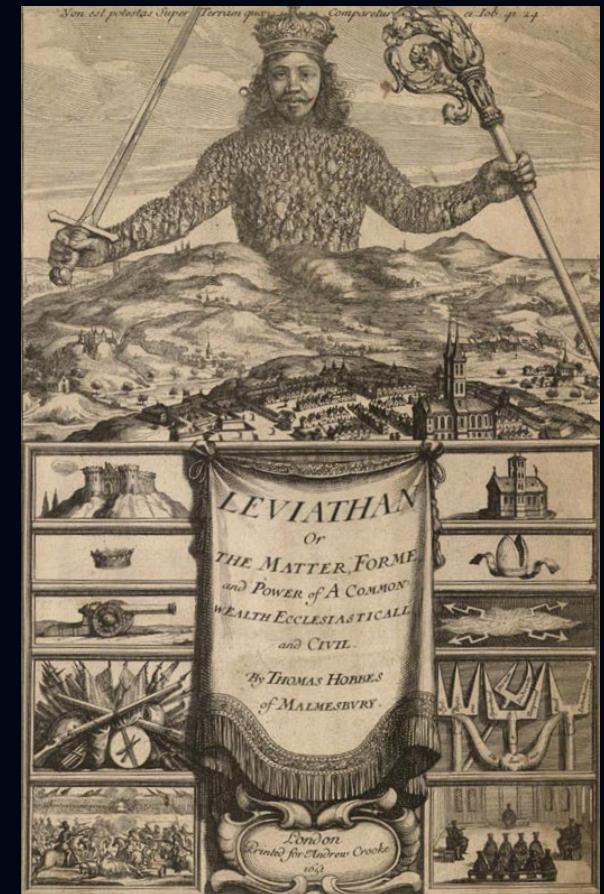
- When do Governments use Violent Force?
 - Internal Crime – Police
 - External Threats – Military
 - Internal Threats (Treason, Treachery, Espionage)
- God as Sovereign of His People
- How does the Modern World look upon Treason?

Thomas Hobbes on Treason

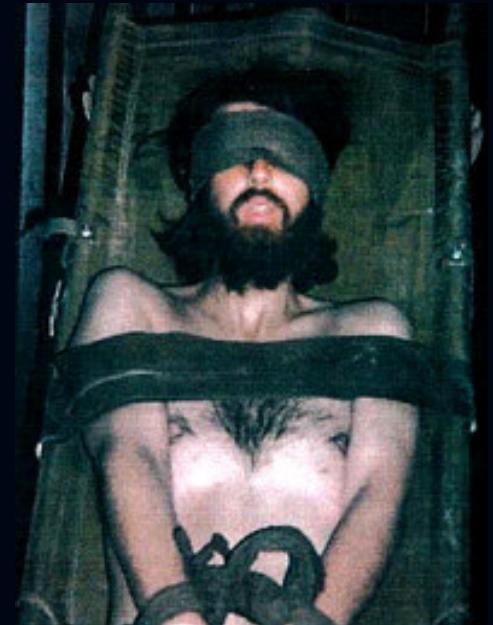


“That great LEVIATHAN,
... to which wee owe ...
our peace and defence.”

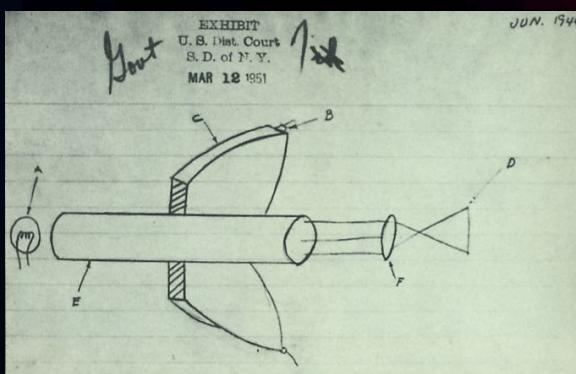
“The severest Punishments are to be inflicted for those Crimes, that are of most Danger to the Publique; such as are those which proceed from malice to the Government established....”



John Walker Lindh, “American Taliban”



Julius & Ethel Rosenberg, Nuclear Spies



Concluding Thoughts

