

BACKGROUND TO GENESIS (1969) (written 2023)

At the start of winter quarter, 1969, I realized I had completed all my required courses at Stanford for my honors political science major, including my honors thesis on the De Gaulle and the Algerian War, as well as all other required courses. I only needed three units to graduate. I had applied to law schools including a combined business/law program at Stanford. Everything seemed set and clear for the next phase of my life.

But that summer I had some challenging experiences. I was taking two classes, one on trial law and one on religious studies. In one I learned of Buber's I-Thou as a way to treat people in their wholeness and fullness and in the other I learned about the adversarial approach of law's I-It. Also over the summer I went to San Francisco to Glide Church, met Rev. Cecil Williams, and had some experiences which exposed me for the first time in my life to a poverty and unfairness that shocked me, making me face the privileged life I had been living. I had never before seen such living conditions.

Those experiences, plus breaking up with my girlfriend, made me start to question everything. How did I end up down the rabbit hole (for me) of studying about De Gaulle and the Algerian war? Did "I" really want to go to law school? Even the job I had been promoted to at the Stanford Daily—"Advertising Manager" selling ads to influence people to buy more consumer goods, products, and services - was that really a worthwhile direction? Was this who I wanted to be?

I remember in one of Graham Greene's book a person who realized he had been unthinkingly and unquestioningly living on a "railroad track of existence;" now, for me, the tracks were ending or coming apart and/or I just wanted to get off them for a while.

College was always a given, which I had never questioned. I was feeling like it was time to break out of the "womb" of Stanford and "birth" a new me. The first real choice on my own.

But where to go, what to do? I did not know. I found a professor to give me an independent study for three units. I still needed to graduate. My task was to read (for the first time) the first book of the Bible "Genesis" and taking notes on it while keeping a journal of my self-exploration of this new phase!

I packed all my belongings into my 1959 Ford, put my motorcycle on the back (Kerouac anyone?) and said my good-byes. Genesis is the "*independent study*" of the start of my journey, covering the first four weeks of what was to be the start of this new "adventure" leaving my beaten path. Here are the first couple pages of that writing.

בְּרֵאשִׁית

GENESIS

(Sefer Ma'aseh Verishit – The Book of Creation)

1. VENTURING FORTH

1/12/1969 Good-byes are said, and then with a cold numbness battering against my insides, I step in my car and begin the drive. The long lonely drive that heads into nothingness...kind of like I'm heading into a world that has just been created "now this earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Gen.1.2 I'm scared; I'm so scared I'm sick. Part of me doesn't want to be created; it wants the warmth and beauty of the university womb; it wants the gentle love and affection of the friends I have at Stanford. It pleads with me to remain.

Yet there is something, like the serpent, perhaps, inside me. Something that drives me to eat of the tree of knowledge. I have the feeling that God actually wanted Eve to eat from the tree "for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." Gen. 3.5 Something inside me says that humans must not remain in a state of innocence, but must venture forth and see, fully realizing the dangers and fears of that venture.

When God calls to Adam, saying "Where art Thou?" Gen. 3.9 I hear him saying to me, or this voice inside me saying, where are you, who are you, are you facing yourself, or are you, like Adam, going to answer, "I hid myself." Gen. 3.10

So I start out, and each mile I expect something to happen, my car to break down, the motorcycle to fall off the back; there is an aura of something very dreamlike

about my actions. Like I'm not really performing them; I feel almost like a machine, mechanically putting its foot on the accelerator, mechanically going through an act. I keep watching the odometer, somehow expecting a strange feeling to come upon me all of a sudden-like when I get x number of miles from Stanford, then I'll be free of the womb. But each mile brings no change...just sort of a dull confusion that I won't allow myself to face...

Johanna's Comment: *This is really good stuff--the existential/spiritual quest toward knowledge, and perhaps toward meaning. It acknowledges going forth in fear and trembling but the absolute necessity of going forth. You cannot hide yourself--or from yourself.*