

H₂OPE

For Planet Earth



By David Knight

H₂OPE – For Planet Earth

Table of Contents

Awe-Inspiring World	4	Harvesting Fog	22
Praise Yahweh	5	Survival	22
Introducing Earth-maker	5	Grasslands and Agriculture	23
Genesis Symphony	5	Feast and Festival	24
Sky	6	Forests and Trees	24
Land and Sea	7	Biodiversity and Abundance	26
Tempestuous Sea	8	Habitat Under the Sea	27
Restraining the Force	9	Rhythms	28
Water Warehouse	10	Stewardship	29
Terra Firma	11	Tending the Garden	29
Rock-Solid	12	Conservation	30
Groundwater, Wells and Spring	13	Environmental Distress	31
Geysers	13	When You Hide Your Face	31
Rivers	14	Climate Change	31
Glimpse of Infinity	15	At the Scent of Water	32
Serving Those Downstream	16	Renewal	33
Rain, the Immeasurable Gift	17	New World Comin’	34
Evaporation	17	Ultimate River	35
The Outer Fringe of God’s Works	18	Conclusion	36
Tipping Point	19	Jubilation	36
Precipitation	20	Checklist for Action	37
Life-Giving Rain	20		
Rain & Equality	21	End-notes	38

Introduction – *Awe-inspiring World*

It is nothing short of a love song! In 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War, Louis Armstrong sang with his gravelly voice, “What a wonderful world!” Twenty years later, after it played in the movie *Good Morning, Vietnam* the song finally topped the charts in the USA.

Armstrong’s song endures and resonates because no matter how ugly the morning news and how difficult life becomes, there is still so much beauty in the world, from ‘trees of green and red roses too’ to sunsets and tropic fish, infant smiles and Hubble pictures of galaxies in formation, waterfalls, waving fields of barley and the capacity of the human body to heal. The list of breath-taking wonders of the world never ends.

Since time immemorial, artists and poets, children, lovers and scientists have stood speechless at the beauty of our elegant world. All the world’s holy books pay attention to the natural world as having something to tell us about what it means to be truly human.

The Hebrew Bible has many songs that celebrate the richness of creation, but one especially, Psalm 104, spans a panorama of the universe. Psalm 104 is a majestic creation praise song, a melodic retelling of the opening of Genesis. It revels in the richness, beauty and vibrancy of the world, and it also celebrates the activity of a wise and loving creator who remains active within his creation. In essence the song says, “we live in an awesome wonderful world and we have someone to thank for that.” The Hebrews named this Earth-maker ‘Yahweh’.

Psalm 104 is another kind of love song. It begins and ends with a joyous exclamation of the heart – “Praise Yahweh, O my soul.”

The lyrics of this song unfold in a similar sequence, more or less, to the great Creation hymn/story of Genesis Chapter 1, providing a framework for reflecting on many aspects of the wonderful world we are about to consider.

This booklet is about Water as one of the great creation gifts of God. It is inspired by the view St Francis expressed centuries ago, “Praise to you, Lord, through our Sister Water, who is very useful and humble, and precious and pure.”

This booklet is also about Hope. With famine, drought and excessive storms ravaging so many parts of the world, a billion of our fellow-humans without access to clean water and five thousand children dying every day of preventable water-related disease, it is vital that the rest of us go beyond awe and appreciation of the world we love.

We need to reflect on – and act on – our obligation to live as neighbors to those in need and as stewards of the world we have inherited. We must do this in order to pass the world on in better shape than we found it, both for the sake of our descendants and to honor the high privilege of calling this wonderful world our home.

Be inspired!

Praise Yahweh!

The opening line of Psalm 104 is the poet's prompt to himself (or herself) stirring his inner being to sing his song with full heart and soul. He doesn't just want to recite lines, he wants to truly worship God with reverence, jubilation and awe.

This is not only the veneration of God as a majestic Creator; it is a personal expression of devotion. Through the song, the singer alternates between referencing God as 'you' and as 'him'. It is a delightful blend of objective commentary and personal admiration, which is the essence of worship.

*Praise the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, you are very great;
you are clothed with splendor and
majesty. Psalm 104: 1*

Introducing Earth-maker

In the next stanza we see God as Earth-maker, robed in sunlight, setting up his palace in the vaulted blue sky with cloud chariots and wind couriers at the ready.

*He wraps himself in light as with a
garment;
He stretches out the heavens like a tent
and lays the beams of his upper
chambers on their waters.
He makes the clouds his chariot and
rides on the wings of the wind. v.2-4*

This pictures the soaring clouds as the foundation of God's palatial house, and the vast reaches of the sky as the wings of his tent. Even the radiance of the sun is taken up as an accessory. Where other cultures worshipped the sun, Yahweh wraps himself in its light as a shawl.

The Psalm goes on to describe the construction of earth with similar broad-brush strokes. Ocean depths below reflect the grandeur of sky above.

We see God first as a homebuilder, then as a tender mother, swaddling her new creation with a blanket of Ocean.

Water, after all, is where it all begins.

*He set the earth on its foundations;
it can never be moved.
You covered it with the deep
as with a garment;
The waters stood above the mountains.
v. 5-6*

Genesis Symphony

The great Creation Hymn in Genesis begins with everything covered in water. The opening chapter of the Bible is a fascinating seven-day symphony celebrating the emergence of life on our glorious planet earth. Fifteen times it speaks of water, first as a deep, dark empty abyss, but by the end, the home of "every living and moving thing with which the water teems" (Genesis 1:21).

In its opening stanza it uses two words 'formless' and 'empty' to describe the "soup of nothingness" (Genesis 1:2 MSG) out of which the material world emerged. God's Spirit moved like wind over this deep abyss which is called 'the waters' – *mayim* in Hebrew.