

# What Does *min* Mean?

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## ABSTRACT

*The Biblical use of the Hebrew word min ('kind') and also its usage in post-Biblical Hebrew suggest that the word min is most likely a word of biological origin. Words historically connected with min in other languages and the way min was translated in early Bible translations may also be used to understand its meaning.*

*The key question, however, that creationists need to consider is not just what min means, but whether when it is used the life-form that it follows is said to occur in one min or many. Whereas one would probably think from previous creationist research, such as that by Jones, that min is a word that denotes a constant taxonomic level, this view cannot yet be substantiated. Thus in using the term 'baramin' to represent the concept of 'created kind', baraminologists should not understand themselves to be making a statement about the meaning of the Hebrew word min.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew word translated 'kind' in the phrase 'after his kind' (for example, Genesis 1:11 KJV) is *min*. This word is also the second component of the modern term baramin ('created kind'). In investigating the criteria by which baramins are identified it is appropriate to begin with a Biblical and linguistic study of *min*, to see if such a study provides us with any information about the nature of baramins.

Previous investigation of the word *min* has been carried out by creationists<sup>13</sup> and non-creationists,<sup>4</sup> some of whom are writing within secular academia.<sup>5,6</sup> Payne<sup>7</sup> and Jones<sup>8</sup> investigated the derivation and meaning of the word *min* in the Bible. Jones<sup>9</sup> further sought to use the lists of clean and unclean animals in Leviticus and Deuteronomy to identify the *min*. A more recent approach by Seely<sup>10</sup> has attempted to elucidate the term *min* by an anthropological survey of how 'proto-scientific' peoples categorise life-forms. This is considered by Seely to be the most likely indicator of what was meant by the original author of Genesis. He concludes that *min* could mean anything from phylum to species. His approach is new, and though critical of creationism, may contain anthropological insights into classification in non-western cultures which can be used by creationists. Beauchamp<sup>11</sup> is particularly useful in discussing the usage of *min* in a linguistic way

Here a fresh analysis of *min* is made, considering its use in Old Testament and post-Old Testament Hebrew, its etymology, and the way it was translated by ancient versions of the Bible.

## OLD TESTAMENT USAGE AND SYNTAX

There are 31 occurrences of the word *min* in the Old Testament. Seventeen are in Genesis: ten are in chapter 1, three are in Genesis 6:20 where God instructs Noah to take animals into the Ark, and four are in Genesis 7:14, which describes the animals that went into the Ark. Nine more occurrences are in the list of clean and unclean animals in Leviticus 11, and four in a generally shorter version of that list in Deuteronomy 14. Only one example is outside the Mosaic corpus, namely in Ezekiel 47:10. In every Biblical occurrence *min* is a term of biological classification and appears in an expression of the form *le-min-suffix*. The first part *le-* is the preposition *lamedh*, here meaning 'according to', and the final part is a suffix meaning 'his', 'her', or 'their' depending on whether the life-form modified by the expression is masculine singular, feminine singular, or masculine plural in Hebrew. There are two forms of the masculine singular suffix, which seem to be used without any distinction in meaning.<sup>12</sup> In all but one case (Genesis 1:21a) *min* is in the singular. Genesis 1:21a probably has a plural written defectively.<sup>13,14</sup>

### Number

This brings us to the most important linguistic aspect of *min*, namely its number. This is an issue which does not seem to have been clearly understood by creationists, though they are not alone in lacking a clear conception of this issue. The question concerns how many types of life are envisaged when *le-min-suffix* occurs. We need to consider the types of meaning *min* could have. Two concepts need to be

introduced — collectivity and distributivity

### Collectivity

A noun which represents a number of individual entities is called a collective noun. A 'flock' of sheep, a 'pride' of lions and a 'shoal' of fish are all examples of collective nouns where the individual representatives of the categories are viewed without regard to any differences they have, *min* is a collective in that when *min* is used, a plurality of individuals at least must be denoted; however, according to Driver<sup>15</sup> *min* is a collective in a different sense. It refers to a plurality of life-types not a plurality of individuals, that is, it is a collective of collectives. A related but not identical view is that of Zorell who holds that *min* is a noun meaning 'a division of a thing into various forms or types'.<sup>16</sup> In either case a *min* is not the lowest taxonomic level of created category, and in Zorell's case a *min* is certainly not a created category. It is the 'types' loosely hidden behind the term which are the lowest level of created category. If this is the case, the created kind cannot be called a *min*.

### Distributivity

Others such as Beauchamp<sup>17</sup> have analysed the expression *le-min-suffix* differently. It must be understood that just because the word *min* is singular, it does not mean that when it is used after a type of life, the type of life only constitutes one single *min*. We must account for the linguistic phenomenon of distributivity. This may be understood by considering the meaning of three English sentences :-

- (a) 'The man wore a suit.'
- (b) 'The men wore suits.'
- (c) 'The men wore a suit.'

In all three cases it is clear to us (partly from our extratextual knowledge of social customs) that each person only wore one suit, that is, there was one suit per man. In case (c), however, even though there is a plural 'men', 'suit' is still in the singular. 'Suit' is here said to be a distributive singular since a plurality of individuals have suits, even though the noun is in the singular. Though (c) contains a singular noun its meaning is exactly the same as (b). However, consider alongside sentence (c) the following sentence:

- (d) 'The men rowed a boat.'

Again, partly from extratextual knowledge, the native speaker of English usually infers that there was only one boat (not one boat per man), even though the grammatical form of sentence (d) is so similar to that of sentence (c). Hebrew too, like English, may under certain circumstances have a distributive singular construction. Thus, though Hebrew usually has the plural rather than the singular in distributive expressions following the preposition *lamedh* 'according to', there are good reasons to believe that in at least some of the Biblical occurrences of *min* a distributive singular has been used to express a plurality of *mins* constituting the life-category mentioned prior to the *min* expression. Two reasons for this are the following:

- (1) Expressions with *min* grammatically in the singular are used referring to the largest-scale Biblical categories of life-forms, for example, 'winged fowl' (Genesis 1:21), or 'fish' (Ezekiel 47:10). It is unlikely that we are to equate these categories with a single *min*.
  - (2) The presence of the word 'all' or 'every'<sup>18</sup> in Genesis 1:21 (two times), Genesis 1:25, Genesis 6:20 and Genesis 7:14 (four times) demands a plurality of forms of that life-category. This is particularly interesting because we have the presence of 'all' or 'every' and the singular *min* in the phrase 'every raven after its kind' in Leviticus 11:15 and Deuteronomy 14:14. These verses, if *min* is not a collective of collectives, seem to envisage more than one *min* of raven. (I do not intend by using the traditional translation 'raven' to obscure the fact that the English word 'raven' may not have the same connotations as the Hebrew word '*oreb*.) We must therefore be careful that we are not led by the singularity of the word *min* to believe that there was only one *min*. This is not a danger to someone reading Genesis, since most readers automatically recognise that there was more than one kind of each of the large-scale Biblical life-categories. The danger rather comes in reading Leviticus and Deuteronomy where Bible translations are liable to give different impressions to their readers.<sup>19</sup> Assuming that *min* is not collective in the sense suggested by Driver, then if we are to relate the lists in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 to a study of baramins we must ask three basic questions, which may entail yet further questions:-
- (1) Are the term *min* and the phrase *le-min-suffix* constant in their meaning throughout Scripture? An important aspect of this question is to ask whether the meaning and use of *min* is the same in Genesis as in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. If *min* does mean the same, then we may be able to use the lists in Leviticus and Deuteronomy to gain Scriptural clues concerning the identification of baramins. The question is whether the term *min* denotes a constant taxonomic level, or whether it is used more loosely. We cannot simply presuppose that some Biblical words mean the same in every occurrence, when others patently do not, nor can we rule out the possibility that the term *min* is very fixed in meaning. Reasons must be advanced for whichever position is adopted. As to the related question of whether *le-min-suffix* has a constant meaning in Scripture, it is possible that it is a distributive in some cases and a non-distributive in others. Just as in sentences (a) and (c) above, there is no reason to expect a formal mark distinguishing distributive from non-distributive constructions. Put more simply, the expression *le-min-suffix* could theoretically denote many *mins* in Genesis 1, and only a single *min* in some occurrences in Leviticus 11.
  - (2) Does the addition of the phrase *le-min-suffix* after the names of animals in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14

distinguish those animals from animals in those lists without that qualification? There are nine theoretically possible significances for the presence or absence of *le-min-suffix* after different creatures in the list—

- (a) names with *le-min-suffix* constitute a single *min*; those without *le-min-suffix* constitute a single *min*.
- (b) names with *le-min-suffix* constitute a single *min*; those without *le-min-suffix* may have varied status as *mins*.
- (c) names with *le-min-suffix* constitute a single *min*; those without *le-min-suffix* constitute a plurality of *mins*.
- (d) names with *le-min-suffix* may have varied status as *mins*; those without *le-min-suffix* constitute a single *min*.
- (e) names with *le-min-suffix* may have varied status as *mins*; those without *le-min-suffix* may have varied status as *mins*.
- (f) names with *le-min-suffix* may have varied status as *mins*; those without *le-min-suffix* constitute a plurality of *mins*.
- (g) names with *le-min-suffix* constitute a plurality of *mins*; those without *le-min-suffix* constitute a single *min*.
- (h) names with *le-min-suffix* constitute a plurality of *mins*; those without *le-min-suffix* may have varied status as *mins*.
- (i) names with *le-min-suffix* constitute a plurality of *mins*; those without *le-min-suffix* constitute a plurality of *mins*.

Obviously it seems much more likely that something can be known about the status as *mins* of those names with *le-min-suffix*. There is no exegetical way of knowing the status as *mins* of names without this marker, and any such information could only be supplied by scientific research. At an initial stage it is therefore more important to ask only whether *le-min-suffix* marks the preceding name as belonging to a single *min*, a plurality of *mins*, or either of these two options on different occasions.

- (3) Does the use of 'all' or 'every' before the name of an animal in those lists distinguish that animal from animals in the lists without this modifier? There are three forms of names in the lists in Leviticus and Deuteronomy:-
  - (a) a name,
  - (b) a name followed by *le-min-suffix*, and
  - (c) a name preceded by 'all' or 'every' and followed by *le-min-suffix*.

This third category is only filled by the 'raven' in Leviticus 11:15 and Deuteronomy 14:14. If *le-min-suffix* is always a distributive singular expression, then 'all' makes little difference in meaning since, whether it is present or not, more than one *min* is envisaged. If *le-min-suffix* is generally a non-distributive singular expression, then the addition of 'all' in one case may

signal that in this particular case it is a distributive singular, that is, whereas in most cases only one *min* is involved, in this case more than one is. This question is closely related to the previous one. Since 'every' in English marks a distributive singular expression, it is also likely that 'every' in Leviticus 11:15 and Deuteronomy 14:14 does the same. The question then is whether Leviticus 11:15 means 'every raven according to the different *mins* of raven that exist', or 'every raven according to the single *min* to which all ravens belong'.

We should also consider thematic issues in the Bible. Arguably a major theme in Genesis 1 is separation. For instance, light and darkness are separated, as are the waters above and below. This theme of separation is prominent in the legislation of Leviticus (for example, Leviticus 19:19) and is certainly emphasised in the summary of the reason for the food laws in Leviticus 11:47. If such a thematic unity is maintained, then it is more likely that some identity between the use of *min* in Genesis and in Leviticus and Deuteronomy can be maintained.

### Summary

Either the collective or distributive meaning is suggested for some examples of the expression *le-min-suffix*. We will examine extra-Biblical sources to consider other evidence on this problem.<sup>20</sup>

## POST-OLD TESTAMENT USAGE

### Samaritan Pentateuch

The word *min* occurs in the Samaritan Pentateuch in the places where it occurs in the Masoretic Text, except in Leviticus 11:16 and Deuteronomy 14:15 where the Samaritan Pentateuch has *le-min-suffix* after the third bird in the verse, not the fourth. In Genesis 6:20 in the third occurrence of *le-min-suffix* in the verse the Samaritan Pentateuch has *min* and its suffix in the plural. The additional occurrence of the plural in the Samaritan Pentateuch concurs with the observation that *min* in the plural is more widely attested in later texts. It also coincides with the use of 'all' or 'every' on the third occurrence in that verse. If the singular is distributive rather than collective, then there is little change of meaning with the introduction of a plural.<sup>21</sup> Such a lack of semantic distinction may have facilitated the Samaritan Pentateuch's substitution of a plural for the Masoretic Text's singular. The plural may indicate that little semantic distinction was felt between singular and plural at the time of the development of the Samaritan text. This particular development probably took place in the last five centuries BC. If a plural could easily replace a singular, this argues for a distributive understanding and against a collective understanding as envisaged by Driver.

### Apocrypha

The earliest extra-Biblical occurrences of the word *min* occur in the Apocrypha in the book of Ecclesiasticus, sometimes called Ben-Sira or Sirach. This work, which dates from the early second century BC completely survives in Greek translation, but only two thirds of it survive in its Hebrew original. In the sections that survive in Hebrew we find four uses of *min*, three in chapter 13 and one in chapter 43.<sup>22</sup> The former passage is interesting in that it seems to continue the theme of separation found in the Bible. Ecclesiasticus 13:15-18 reads (following the Septuagint for the final two lines):-

'All flesh loves its kind [*min*], and every man the one who is like him. The kind [*min*] of all flesh is near him, and a man joins himself to his kind [*min*]. What does a wolf have in common with a lamb? No more has a sinner with the righteous. What peace is there between a hyena and a dog? And what peace between the rich and the poor?'

The occurrence in Ecclesiasticus 43:25 runs as follows:

In it [the sea] are amazing wonders of his work, kind [*min*] of every living thing, and great sea-monsters.'

We should notice that in Ecclesiasticus, as in the Old Testament, the word refers exclusively to biological categories, although chapter 13 suggests non-biological analogies to the *min*. However, in Ecclesiasticus we also find that all occurrences of *min* are without the prefixed *lamedh* ('according to') and the second and fourth without the suffix. It is highly likely that the word could appear without prefix or suffix in the Hebrew of the Biblical period, but simply does not occur in extant Hebrew because of the particular nature of the accounts in Genesis, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In addition, each of the four occurrences in Ecclesiasticus is singular. Despite this we should notice that examples like Ecclesiasticus 43:25 do not tolerate a singular meaning. When we read in the stilted translation above of 'kind of every living thing' in the sea in Ecclesiasticus 43:25 we must understand that *min* is either used as a collective 'variety', or as a distributive 'a kind of every living thing'.

### Dead Sea Scrolls

There are also occurrences of *min* in the Dead Sea Scrolls (all of which are before ca. AD 68). Because of their fragmentary nature it is impossible to state categorically the maximum number of occurrences that may exist, but in extra-Biblical texts there are at least three.<sup>23</sup> Two occur in the so-called Damascus Document, and one in the Rule of the Community, some manuscripts of which have been dated on the grounds of handwriting to the second century BC. The examples are given below.

(1) Damascus Document, column 4, lines 14-18:

'Its meaning is the three nets of Belial about which Levi the son of Jacob spoke, in which he traps Israel and presents them in the guise of three kinds [*mins*] of righteousness. The first is lust, the second wealth and

the third defiling the sanctuary'.<sup>24</sup>

In this case *min* is plural, and without a direct prefix, or suffix.

(2) Damascus Document, column 12, lines 14-15:

'And all locusts in their kinds [*mins*] shall enter into fire or water while they are still alive, for that is the ordinance of their creation'.<sup>25</sup>

Here *min* is in the plural, has a plural suffix, and is preceded by the preposition *beth*, meaning 'in'.

(3) Rule of the Community, column 3, lines 13-14:

'It is for the Teacher to instruct and teach all the sons of light concerning the generations of all the sons of man, as regards all the kinds [*mins*] of their spirits with their signs for their works in their generations.'

Here yet again *min* is plural. It is also without suffix. It is connected with the preposition *le-* which is prefixed to the word 'all' which precedes *min*.

When we consider the three occurrences we note that one is biological, while the other two represent the earliest surviving clear non-biological uses of the word. This may represent a semantic extension of *min* that occurred by the analogy of the biological and non-biological spheres. The use of the plural in all three cases indicates that in the Dead Sea Scrolls *min* is neither collective nor distributive. Further, locusts are considered as having a plurality of *mins*. The word for 'locust' here is *chagab*, a word also used in connection with the word *min* in Leviticus 11:22. Unless we suppose that this word is being used to represent all the 'locust' types of Leviticus 11:22, then we must admit that the Damascus Document testifies to a change of construction from the Biblical period. Linguistically, the transition from distributive singular to plural is considerably easier than the transition from collective to non-collective, and so this may be another pointer that the construction in the Biblical period was sometimes distributive, while in post-Biblical Hebrew this construction was replaced by a non-distributive usage.

### Mishnah

When the word *min* occurs in the Mishnah (the Jewish oral law, completed ca. AD 200) it bears a plurality of meanings. It has gained the meaning of 'heretic' or 'divisive one', but also retains its older biological meaning. We may see this in the way a rabbinic dispute might be held over how to define a *min* in Terumoth 2.6:-

'This is the general rule: if the two kinds of produce are Diverse Kinds [*kil'ayim*], Heave-offering may not be given from one instead of from the other, even from the better instead of from the worse; if they are not Diverse Kinds [*kil'ayim*], Heave-offering may be given from the better instead of from the worse... Cucumbers and muskmelons count as a single *min*. Rabbi Judah says: Two *mins*'.<sup>26</sup>

The interesting thing with this quotation is that it introduces the Hebrew word *kil'ayim* which, though not related to the word *min*, is used in Leviticus 19:19 (and comparably in

Deuteronomy 22:9) when the Israelites are told not to crossbreed their cattle, not to sow their fields with two types of seed, and not to wear a garment made of two materials. The rabbinic dispute links the concept of *min* clearly with this law, which seems to admit that certain types of mixing were able to, but ought not to occur. By the time of the Mishnah *min* is certainly not a collective of collectives, and its plural is well attested. Any distributive singular there once was is a thing of the past.

### Summary

It seems that increasingly with late date we find the plural form of *min* used. Further, the earliest definite occurrences of *min* used non-biologically are in the Dead Sea Scrolls, though the biological meaning is attested throughout. The non-biological meaning attested in the Rule of the Community 3:13-14 seems to be something similar to 'category' or 'type'. The non-biological meaning attested in the Mishnah is essentially related to dividing. This meaning could easily derive from an earlier exclusively biological meaning 'division of life', which then developed to mean 'division' generally or 'type' of anything.<sup>27</sup> With so few occurrences of the word we cannot rule out the possibility that non-biological meanings existed for the word even in the Biblical period. However, the fact that even the earliest post-Old Testament occurrences are biological in meaning suggests that the simplest hypothesis is to suppose that the earliest meaning in Hebrew was related to biology. The balance of evidence suggests that *min* was at first able to be used in a distributive construction.

## ETYMOLOGY

### Definition of Etymology

A word's etymology is its historical derivation. However, the term 'etymology' is used differently depending on the nature of the language being investigated. If one is studying Romance Languages such as Spanish or French, a statement of the etymology of a word may well be a reference to the Latin word from which the Spanish or French word derives. On the other hand, with Biblical Hebrew, since we are not in possession of records of a language from which Hebrew was derived, we are not studying directly the historical antecedents of a Hebrew word. In studying Hebrew etymology, we are studying words which seem to be related to that word in a linguistic genetic sense. These words are found either within Hebrew or in languages closely related to Hebrew. Etymology does not define meaning. For instance, the English word 'nice' comes from Latin *nescius* meaning 'ignorant'. However, sometimes etymology can give clues to the meaning of a word. For many of the etymologically related words considered below, the meaning of the word is an indication of the potential meaning of a common ancestor of both it and the Hebrew word *min*. The possibility is not precluded that Hebrew *min* retains almost unchanged the meaning of

its ancestor.

### Babel and Linguistic Families

Languages may be grouped into families according to consistent relationships that are found between them. Within this framework Hebrew is categorised as a north-west Semitic language along with languages such as Aramaic and Ugaritic, within the wider Semitic language family which includes Akkadian and Arabic. Semitic is usually considered to be part of an even larger family sometimes called Afroasiatic or Hamito-Semitic (an unfortunate label since the language group has nothing to do with Ham or Shem). However, the earliest Semitic documents are dated in conventional chronology several hundred years prior to a date which would be given for the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel, if it were assumed that no or few generations have been left unmentioned in the genealogy of Genesis 11. The present etymological discussion accepts the standard model of linguistic relationships, though it does not presuppose the dates assigned to documents in the standard model. It is possible that the process of language confusion at Babel was an acceleration of natural language diversification. If this hypothesis is combined with a model which considers many archaeological dates before 1000 BC as too high, then it is possible to accept the standard model of linguistic relationships basically unchanged in a short-time-frame creationist etymological discussion. The problem, however, with accepting the standard model is that the antediluvians have names which are from the north-west Semitic language group, which *ex hypothesi* is a derivative and not original language group. The 'acceleration' model of Babel would explain these as translations into north-west Semitic of names originally in the language which may be called 'Pre-Babelite'. In addition, there are Pre-Babel word-plays on names that work in Hebrew; for example, 'Adam' in Genesis 2:7, 'man' and 'woman' in Genesis 2:23, 'Eve' in Genesis 3:20, and possibly 'Noah' in Genesis 5:29. There is no reason why word-plays should not be preserved during a translation process, just as the English words 'man' and 'woman' still preserve a word-play similar to that in the Hebrew of Genesis 2:23. The word-play is especially likely to be preserved when translating from one language where names are active words with a meaning into another language where names are active words with a meaning. This need not mean that the names were translated from written sources. The confusion of languages at Babel would inevitably include the translation of the memories of the individuals alive at the time of the confusion from Pre-Babelite to their new languages. In remembering events or conversations from before the confusion each individual would think of them in their new Post-Babel language. If this had not been involved, it would have been possible for people to revert to Pre-Babelite as a common form of communication. Since the earliest written records from Mesopotamia show affinity of symbols to the Post-Babel

language Sumerian, it seems that the Babel event should be placed stratigraphically before the earliest written documents. Until shortly after the Flood humans probably did not write, because personal rather than written communication was preferable. Writing as an invention may have been necessitated by decreasing longevity, dispersion of population, and the fact that humans no longer all spoke a common language.

### Roots and Meaning

Semitic languages are largely made up of roots containing three consonants based around a semantic area. The most commonly given example of this is the root *mlk*, which is connected with the semantic area 'reign'. Around these consonants vowels and other consonants are placed to create words connected with that notion — for example, *melek* 'king', *malkah* 'queen', *himlik* 'he made king' and *mamlakah* 'kingdom'. The root itself never occurs alone, and is simply an abstraction from the forms found in the language. Hebrew *min* is composed of the three consonants *myn*. We here consider various words that have been connected with Hebrew *min*. These will be considered in the order of their linguistic proximity to Hebrew *min*.<sup>28</sup>

- (1) Hebrew *temunah* 'image' is held by most to be related to Hebrew *min*. Although the triconsonantal root of *temunah* is *mwn*, it is frequently found that Hebrew roots with 'y' as the middle consonant also occur in forms with 'w' as their middle consonant. This variation constitutes no material objection to a connection between the words. If *min* and *temunah* are related it is more difficult to discover the basic meaning of the root they share.<sup>29</sup>
- (2) Aramaic *mina* is a term used in Aramaic Bible translations<sup>30</sup> to translate Hebrew *min*. It is certainly related to *min*, and shows that a biological meaning was present in Aramaic. This may either be explained as due to the influence of Hebrew on Aramaic, since they were sociologically and linguistically close in the post-exilic period, or it may be supposed that *mina* existed in Aramaic even before the exile. The two explanations may not be mutually exclusive, and it is possible that Aramaic had a word *mina* before major contact with Hebrew speakers was made, and that thereafter bilingualism amongst Hebrews influenced the occurrence and meaning of *mina* in Aramaic to be similar to that of *min* in Hebrew.
- (3) *mina* in Christian Palestinian Aramaic (also called Palestinian Syriac) has the meaning of 'nation'. It is probable that this meaning developed by a zoological analogy between subdivisions among animals and subdivisions within humans.<sup>31</sup>
- (4) There is an occurrence of an Ugaritic term *mn* which, though uncertain, may bear a biological meaning referring to types of creatures.<sup>32</sup> This form is exactly what one would expect if it were equivalent to Hebrew *min*, but since Ugaritic texts are very poorly understood

and there are other words with the same form which have been suggested, this reference cannot be considered as certain. It does, however, seem to the author that a biological meaning is to be preferred. The reference would then be to types of creatures being carved onto a table. Ugaritic texts are assigned in conventional chronology to the third quarter of the second millennium BC. If this occurrence is correctly identified, then there is an attestation of a biological meaning for this root outside Hebrew long before any other extra-Biblical occurrence. The more linguistically widespread and early the attestations of any particular meaning are, the closer they are likely to be to the original meaning of a root.

- (5) The Arabic word *mana* meaning 'split' may plausibly be related to Hebrew *min*. The word *mana* exhibits some forms which attest that it comes from a root *myn* just like Hebrew *min*. The meaning 'split' could easily be connected with any term meaning 'division', and may thus testify to an element of meaning found in the early root. On the other hand, since Arabic texts are quite late, beginning only in the first millennium AD, we may suppose that *mana*, like the first millennium Mishnaic meaning of *min* as 'schismatic', was a later development from an original root meaning which applied exclusively to biological division. The Arabic and Mishnaic meanings would then be examples of convergent or parallel semantic development.
- (6) Occasionally Hebrew *min* is compared with the Coptic<sup>33</sup> word *mine*, which can also mean 'kind' or 'type'.<sup>34</sup> Since Coptic is outside the immediate linguistic family of Hebrew, though it is in Afroasiatic, the connection can best be maintained if it is supposed that the word was either lent from Semitic to Coptic (or its Egyptian precursor), or was borrowed the other way.

### Summary

Etymology alone cannot decide the meaning of a word. All the etymological information can be explained on the assumption that a meaning of 'biological division' was an early prominent part of the root meaning. This need not have been, but could have been the earliest meaning of the root. This is consistent with the observation above that biological meaning predominates in attestations from the earlier stages of the Hebrew language.

### TRANSLATION

Further insight is given into the meaning of a word by considering the way it was interpreted by early translations of the Bible into languages other than Hebrew. The most important of these are the translations into Greek, Aramaic and Latin.

### Greek

The Septuagint is the Greek Old Testament, the

Pentateuch of which was translated in the third century BC. The following features of the Septuagint's translation of *le-min*-suffix may be noted. In the first two occurrences in the Bible (Genesis 1:11 and Genesis 1:12a) it uses a lengthy translation: *kata genos kai kath 'homoioteta* 'according to kind and according to likeness'. The Septuagint does not represent the suffix 'his', and the word *genos* (though historically related via Latin to our word 'genus') is probably a collective, since it can mean both 'family' and 'race'. Unfortunately we do not know whether it is collective in the sense that Driver maintained, that is, denotes a number of separate types of life, or is collective in the sense of denoting a number of different individual creatures which constitute only one type of life. Later occurrences in Genesis use the simpler phrase *kata genos* 'according to kind',<sup>35</sup> except in Genesis 1:25c and Genesis 6:20c where we have *kata genos auton* 'according to their kind', and Genesis 1:21a where we have *kata gene auton* 'according to their kinds'. The word 'their' is used in three of the four occurrences in Genesis where 'all' or 'every' precedes. Leviticus and Deuteronomy are different in their translation from Genesis. In almost every instance we have the phrase *kai ta homoia auto(i)* 'and the things similar to it'.<sup>36</sup> The translation in Leviticus and Deuteronomy recognises clearly a plurality of life-types existing when *le-min*-suffix is used. If taken literally, however, the types are only 'similar to', not 'to be categorised with', the name of the creature in the preceding phrase.

The extremely literal translation of the Masoretic Text made by Aquila in the first half of the second century AD, though not preserved for much of Scripture, translates *min* by *genos* in Genesis 1:12.

### Aramaic

Aramaic is a unique language in having had so many Bible translations made into its various dialects by people competent in Hebrew. We will briefly consider just five. Targums<sup>37</sup> Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan use the word *zena*, which is of Persian origin, to represent *min*. The Samaritan Targum (with considerable variation in manuscripts)<sup>38</sup> uses the word *mina* as well as the word *gensa*, which is an Aramaic borrowing of *Greekgenos*. Targum Neophiti is the only Aramaic translation to use Aramaic *mina* consistently. In Leviticus 11:15 and Deuteronomy 14:14 Neophiti translates 'and every kind of raven according to its kind'. This involves a repetition of the word for *min* not found in the original. The translation, however, makes it clear that in the translator's opinion there was more than one *min* of raven. This favours a distributive understanding of *min*. The Syriac Peshitta generally uses *gensa*. It uses the plural in Genesis 6:20c, 7:14c; Leviticus 11:15, 11:16, 11:19; and Deuteronomy 14:14, 14:15. The Syriac could also use the singular in these latter texts as in Leviticus 11:22 (two times). It may be that the Peshitta's numerical variation between singular and plural betrays the awareness that the construction is distributive on occasion. The

Aramaic evidence, then, supports the notion of distributivity.

### Latin

The two main translations into Latin are known as the Old Latin and the Vulgate. The Old Latin, which is the earlier of the two, is now extant in manuscripts displaying considerable differences, representing a rather complex translational and revisional history. It was made by Christians before the time of Jerome and based on the Septuagint. On the whole it uses the Latin word *genus* for *min*, though some manuscripts testify to the word *species* being used on occasions. The word *genus* is hardly surprising for a Latin translation as a representation of Greek *genos*, since the words are closely cognate. The Latin Vulgate, which took the Old Latin translation into account, continued the use of the word *genus*, but also used the word *species* in Genesis. Leviticus and Deuteronomy generally have *genus*. In Genesis 1:21a, 1:24b and 1:25a the Vulgate has *species* in the plural. We need to consider all these terms in their meaning of the Latin of the time, without considering the technical meaning now assigned to words like *species* and *genus*. It seems that part of the variation between the terms may be explained as stylistic variation. This likewise may explain the variation between the singular and plural of *species*. This interchangeability teaches us two things:-

- (1) *species* 'form' and *genus* 'family' were not used to refer to different taxonomic levels.
- (2) As with the Aramaic translations, variation between the use of singular and plural may display an awareness of the distributive use of *min*. The singular is used, because the translator realises that *min* is singular. The plural is used because the translator realises that there are several life-types being envisaged on each occasion.

There is a striking translation by the Vulgate in Leviticus 11:15 where it reads *et omne corvini generis in similitudinem suam* 'and all of the raven kind according to its likeness'. The double translation of *min* by means of *genus* 'kind' and *similitudo* 'likeness' (compare Septuagint *kath 'homoioteta* and also Hebrew *temunah*) reminds one of the translation by Targum Neophiti though, in contrast to Neophiti, the Vulgate may regard the raven as only constituting one *min*.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper may have raised more questions than it answers, but if creationists recognise the questions they must ask this will accelerate the discovery of solutions. The following observations are important:

- (1) Evidence has accumulated that, whether we understand *min* as a collective of collectives, or *le-min-suffix* as a distributive singular, several types of life may be denoted when *le-min-suffix* is used.
- (2) More evidence seems to point to the distributive use of the phrase rather than its use as a collective of

collectives. It is possible, however, that the phrase is distributive sometimes, and non-distributive at other times.

- (3) *min* may well be a word of biological origin because its earliest occurrences have this meaning.
- (4) The basic meaning of 'division' which is suggested by etymology may support creationist views of biological taxonomy as involving major discontinuities.
- (5) Creationists need to work on several models. With our present lack of understanding of the Biblical material we may gain no easy clues from the pages of Scripture itself as to scientific criteria for the discovery of baramins. The task of classifying life-forms on purely scientific grounds must continue anyway. My study of verses about the 'raven' may suggest that there is more than one *min* of 'raven', and may thus warn against setting the taxonomic level of the *min* too high. On the other hand, baraminology now has its own terminology, which is helpful in developing a young-Earth taxonomic framework.<sup>39</sup> We must recognise that the meaning of the segment *min* in the word baramin may not correspond to the meaning of Hebrew *min*.
- (6) A theoretical linguistic study of the phenomenon of distributivity in languages, and in particular one on the Hebrew language, would be extremely desirable in resolving the present issue about the number of *min*.
- (7) Thematic studies of the Bible, and in particular of the Pentateuch, may uncover the reason for the contents, wording and position of the lists in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, and thereby give better insights into their relationship to Genesis.

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2. Jones, A. J., 1972. A general analysis of the Biblical 'kind' (*min*). **Creation Research Society Quarterly**, 9(1):53—57.
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5. Beauchamp, P., 1969. *Création et Séparation*, Bibliothèque de Sciences religieuses, Aubier Montaigne, Editions du Cerf, Paris, pp. 240-247.
6. Cazelles, H., 1964. *Myn* = espèce, race ou ressemblance? **Ecole des Langues Orientales de l'Institut catholique de Paris, Memorial du Centenaire**, pp. 105-108. I have been unable to see this paper.
7. Payne, Ref. 1.
8. Jones, Ref. 2.
9. Jones, Ref. 3.
10. Seely, Ref. 4.
11. Beauchamp, Ref. 5.
12. The feminine suffix, though identical consonantly in all its occurrences, is not identical in every occurrence according to the pointing of the Masoretes. The Masoretes, who flourished between AD 500 and 1000, did not, as usual, insert a dot inside the suffix in Ezekiel 47:10, although the reason for this is obscure.
13. The word 'defective' is unfortunate, since it carries the connotation of imperfection. It is, however, a standard Hebrew grammarians' term to denote a less usual short rather than a more usual long spelling of the suffix. Sixteen Hebrew manuscripts recorded in 1776 by Benjamin Kennicott, **Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum variis lectionibus**, Clarendon, Oxford, Vol. 1, p. 2, have the form written fully, as does the Samaritan Pentateuch (which has the habit of writing forms fully). The Septuagint attests that it understood this form as a plural by using the plural *gene* 'kinds' rather than, as elsewhere in Genesis, the singular. Jones, Ref. 2, p. 57, note 8, is incorrect in asserting that the consonantal form of this word is singular, unless the form is archaic. But the evidence for such an archaic form is quite slender, and does not easily accord with the fact that the preceding verb is plural.
14. The shorter forms are not rare. See: Barr, J., 1989. **The Variable Spellings of the Hebrew Bible**, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1986, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, pp. 131-137.
15. Driver, S. R., 1916. **The Book of Genesis**, 10th edition, Methuen and Co., London, p. 9.
16. This is my translation of '*rei in varias formas seu species divisio*', quoted from: Zorell, E., 1984. **Lexicon Hebraicum Veteris Testamenti**, Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, Rome, p. 432.
17. Beauchamp, Ref. 5.
18. The word for 'all' is the same as the word for 'every' in Hebrew.
19. The NIV seeks to represent the meaning here by using an expression signifying plurality (this does not necessarily mean the noun is in the plural), while the KJV seeks to represent the form precisely by using the singular. In Leviticus 11:15, where NIV and KJV have 'any kind of raven' and 'every raven after his kind' respectively, the reader recognises that there are a plurality of kinds of raven. In the next verse (Leviticus 11:16) where the same translations have 'any kind of hawk' and 'the hawk after his kind' respectively, the reader of the NIV immediately thinks of many kinds of 'hawk' while the reader of the KJV is more likely to consider that there is only one kind of 'hawk'. It is possible that the KJV translators did not want to preclude a distributive singular interpretation of Leviticus 11:16, but that their method of representing formally the number of a Hebrew suffix prevented them from making this understanding explicit to the reader. The KJV has avoided misinterpreting the text, but may be misunderstood by the reader. The NIV has avoided its English being misunderstood, but has already interpreted the text for the reader in a way which may be wrong or right.
20. In the following section the Samaritan Pentateuch is defined as post-Old Testament since the variations displayed in it are almost certainly secondary to the original Biblical text, and belong to a language stratum more closely related to the other witnesses classed as post-Old Testament.
21. Compare the lack of distinction in meaning between the example phrases 'the men wore suits' and 'the men wore a suit'.
22. For the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus see: Beentjes, P. C., 1997. **The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew**, E. J. Brill, Leiden, New York and Cologne.
23. For further possible occurrences see: Charlesworth, J. H., 1991. **Graphic Concordance to the Dead Sea Scrolls**, J. C. B. Mohr, Tubingen; Westminster, John Knox Press, Louisville, p. 395.
24. This translation is from: Davies, P. R., 1983. **The Damascus Covenant**, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 25, JSOT Press, Sheffield, p. 243.
25. This and the following quotation are my translation from the Hebrew

- text provided by:  
Lohse, E., 1964. **Die Texte aus Qumran**, Kosel-Verlag, Munich, p. 90 and p. 10 respectively.
26. I have modified the translation found in:  
Danby, H., 1933. **The Mishnah**, Oxford University Press, London, p. 54. A whole section of the Mishnah is entitled *kil'ayim*, and specifically deals with 'diverse kinds'. Creationists would benefit from studying this section.
  27. This explanation would support a distributive understanding of the Biblical phrase *le-min*-suffix, as opposed to understanding it as a collective of collectives.
  28. I believe that *min* is not in any direct way related to Hebrew *manah* 'distribute', as suggested by:  
Parkhurst, J., 1762. **An Hebrew and English Lexicon without points**, London, pp. 174-175,  
and repeated by Jones, Ref. 2.  
Parkhurst wrote before the systematic identification of language families, and basically connected any words which appeared similar. He therefore also connected with *min*: 'manna' (bread from heaven), and 'minah' (a weight), as well as the English words 'moon', 'mean', 'man' and many more. Clearly when Jones used this lexicon he was unaware of some of the limitations of a lexicon from that period. He cites it from its 1829 edition, which I have not seen.
  29. *temunah* can mean 'face'. We might therefore compare the Latin word *species* 'form' or 'face', which later became such a widespread term of biological division. Alternatively, one could suppose that a root meaning 'split' developed into a meaning such as 'devise' or 'discern', and thence came to refer to a 'devised image'.
  30. See the section on the Aramaic Bible translations. The final 'a' on *mina* is simply a regular Aramaic feature, called the emphatic state, *mina* is formally the exact Aramaic equivalent of Hebrew *min*.
  31. The view that this developed from 'subdivisions' would fit with the distributive view of *min*.
  32. Caquot, A., Szyner, M. and Herdner, A., 1974. **Textes Ougaritiques, Vol. 1**, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, p. 196.
  33. Coptic was a language used in Egypt, attested from the early first millennium AD.
  34. See Zorell, Ref. 16.
  35. Genesis 1:12b, 1:21b, 1:24 (two times), 1:25 (two times), 6:20 (two times), 7:14 (four times).
  36. Thus Leviticus 11:14, 11:15, 11:16 (two times — after the third and fourth names thus combining the occurrences in the Samaritan Pentateuch and Masoretic Text), Leviticus 11:19, 11:22 (three times), and Deuteronomy 14:13, 14:14, 14:18. Leviticus 11:22 on the third occurrence has the feminine *aute(i)* for masculine *auto(i)*, but with the same meaning. Leviticus 11:29 has no representation of *le-min*-suffix, nor has Deuteronomy 14:15, although by a textual complication it has 'and the things similar to it' in 14:17 instead. Ezekiel 47:10 is complex and has a fairly obscure representation of the phrase.
  37. Targums seem to contain elements dating from various times. Targum Onkelos and the Syriac Peshitta are the earliest translations mentioned, dating probably from before the end of the second century AD.
  38. The occurrence of a plural in Genesis 6:20c agrees with the Samaritan Pentateuch upon which the Samaritan Targum was based.
  39. For this see:  
Wise, K. P., 1990. Baraminology: a young-Earth creation biosystematic method. In: **Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Creationism**, R. E. Walsh and C. L. Brooks (eds), Creation Science Fellowship, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Vol. 2, pp. 345-360.

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