



The Seismic Breakthrough of the Hebrews

I had the privilege of recently being in the South of France, where we saw the prehistoric art of the Chauvet Cave. You probably remember when this magnificent discovery was made in the 1990s of cave drawings created some 30,000 years ago. Nothing prepared me for their power and beauty, their contemporary timelessness and the sense that we were witnessing what was holiest for a people who were crying out: “I was here. I matter. Look at our world and behold the beauty and wonder of it all.”

These early ancestors spoke to the same subject that so much of our Bible addresses, particularly the Hebrew Scriptures and the book of Genesis: who we are, where we come from, what is our purpose, and that we matter. The genius—and huge breakthrough—of those early Hebrews is that they tied their identity so closely to Spirit, God, the power they couldn’t see. But, like the wind, they could see Spirit, God’s, effects: “*And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*” (Gen. 1:2). They could hear the divine directives: “*Whoever is of God hears the words of God*” (John 8:47). And they could see the consequences of obedience and the disasters resulting from disobedience: “*Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God*” (Deut. 11:26–28).

Who knows what these early people of the Chauvet Caves believed about a Higher Power. Yet their desire to leave their mark and claim a space on the human continuum is as timeless and relevant today as it was 30 millennium ago.

One [video](#) describing the cave drawings uses a particularly revealing phrase. It explains that these early people “left traces of their consciousness.”

Isn’t this what the Bible writers have done for the centuries in which they recorded their stories, conquests, battles, victories and tragedies? They “left traces of consciousness” — not just about themselves, but themselves in relation to their Creator. They were trying to communicate with the Creator, understand Him, ask for their needs to be met, and celebrate God for giving them all the good in their lives. Their harvests and children and military victories—all, they knew, were caused by this Great and Only Power.

But the Hebrews weren’t content with simply knowing about God. They wanted to experience God, relate to God, and build their faith in God’s sovereignty over their lives, their country, their world. Whether the Hebrews called God The Great Elohim, Yahweh, Adonai, I AM THAT I AM, El Shaddai, or many of the other names in Scripture, their focus is continually on man’s inescapable relation with God.



Psalms 8: 3–5 captures this longing to connect with the unseen power that the Hebrews understood governed every aspect of their lives:

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,
What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
For You have made him a little lower than the angels,
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.*

So, whether breathtaking drawings sketched 30,000 years ago by torchlight on rock walls or whether pens applied to papyrus reeds or animal skins used for parchment 3,000 years ago or whether keystroking on a tablet or iPhone today, we do our best to understand, to connect, to acknowledge, to love, to celebrate, to give thanks. And isn't this what the Great Giver created us to do, regardless of the age in which we live?!