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# The Meaning of *Mîn*, ‘Kind’

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*In order to claim biblical support for their theories, both theistic evolutionists and creationists have distorted the meaning of the Hebrew word mîn, ‘kind.’ Although mîn can refer to modern taxonomic levels from phylum to species, ethno-biological studies indicate that the meaning of mîn depends in part on the type and size of animal being considered. With reference to insects and ‘fish’, mîn may correspond in rare cases with phylum or class, but more often with order, usually with family, sometimes with genus or species. For mammals and birds, and probably for reptiles and amphibians, biblical, historical and anthropological studies indicate that mîn although occasionally referring to order or family, usually refers to genus or species. These findings indicate that neither theistic evolution nor creationism can be closely correlated with the biblical text.*

**Key words:** Genesis, creationism, theistic evolution, ethno-biology, taxonomy.

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Both theistic evolutionists and creationists have made various attempts to reconcile their theories with the text of Genesis. These attempts have often involved forcing the interpretation of the biblical text into ways of thinking which are quite alien to those of the original writer. The difficulties of such attempts are well illustrated by considering the use of the Hebrew word *mîn*, translated ‘kind’ in English.

Some theistic evolutionists, wishing to make room for the fossil record, have suggested that in Genesis 1 *mîn* should be defined broadly as referring to *orders*, and sometimes even to *classes* and *phyla*.<sup>1</sup> Most creationists, on the other hand, have defined *mîn* as any group of animals that can interbreed and hence believe that *mîn* usually corresponds to *genus* or *family*, sometimes to *species*, and only rarely to *order*.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Mixer, R. L. (ed.) *Evolution and Christian Thought Today*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1959), pp. 183, 206. The influence of the fossil record seems to be seen also in definitions of *mîn* by scholars who may not explicitly be theistic evolutionists, such as in Kenneth Matthew’s statement that *mîn* is used for ‘broad categories of animals, birds, and fish . . .’ (p.26 of *The New American Commentary, Genesis 1–11:26*; NY: Broadman & Holman, 1996).

2 Marsh, F. L. ‘The Genesis kinds in the modern world’, In Lammerts, W. E. (ed.) *Scientific Studies in Special Creation*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed (1971), p. 148; Jones, A. J. ‘Boundaries of the *mîn*: an analysis of the Mosaic lists of clean and unclean animals’, *Creation Research Society Quarterly* (1972) 9:2, 114–123; Siegler, H. R. ‘A creationist’s taxonomy’, *Creation Research Society Quarterly* (1978) 15, 36–38; Gish, D. T. *Evolution: The Fossils Say No!* San Diego: ICR (1973), pp. 18–23; Nelson, B. C. *After Its Kind*, rev. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship (1967), pp. 156–173.

John Whitcomb and J. B. Payne defined *mîn* as at most referring to *family*, usually *genus* or *species*: Whitcomb, Jr., J. C. *The Early Earth*, rev. Grand Rapids: Baker (1986), pp. 96–7; Payne, J. B. ‘The concept of “kinds” in scripture’, *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* (1958) 10:2, 17–20.

In a lexicographical study, Walter Kaiser came to this same conclusion.<sup>3</sup>

The beauty of this latter definition for creationists is that the narrowness of the definition avoids an evolutionary account of origins, yet it is broad enough that there is no need for every *species* of animal to be on the ark—thus obviating the common objection that there was not enough room on the ark for every *species* of animal. Nelson, for example, says that lions, tigers, pumas, leopards, panthers, wildcats, ocelots, and other cats were all represented on the ark by a single pair of ‘cats.’ Similarly, dogs, wolves, coyotes, jackals, and dingoes needed only one pair of ‘dogs’ to represent them.<sup>4</sup>

The question for a biblical exegete is not what definition of *mîn* will harmonize with the fossil record, nor what definition will best support a creationist interpretation of the Flood, but what was the original author thinking when he wrote *mîn*. What did he and his first hearers or readers think when they first heard or read *mîn* in Genesis? *Mîn* means what it meant to those people at that time.

We can see from the OT that the word *mîn* is a strictly biological term. It is never used to speak of a ‘kind of basket’ or ‘kind of house’ or any other kind of inanimate object. It is used only with reference to living things: plants and animals, and most often of animals.<sup>5</sup> To define *mîn* more closely we must look at its original context. This involves a consideration of both biblical and ancient Near Eastern data, and recent studies in proto-scientific ethno-biology also throw light on this subject.

It is helpful to know that anthropologists have found that when it comes to classifying animals, proto-scientific peoples by and large begin with three basic life-forms at the top of their taxonomy: FISH, BIRD, and SNAKE. After that they may develop WUG (worm + bug) and MAMMAL.<sup>6</sup>

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3 Harris, R. L., Archer, Jr., G. L. and Waltke, B. K. (eds.) *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*. (1980) 1, Section 1191, pp. 153–4.

4 Nelson, B. C. *The Deluge Story in Stone*. Minneapolis: Augsburg (1931), p. 156; Similarly, Rehwinkel, A. C. *The Flood*. St. Louis: Concordia (1951), p. 70; Jones, A. J. ‘How many animals in the ark?’ *Creation Research Society Quarterly* (1973) 10:2, 102–108; Cf. Zimmerman, P. A. *Rock Strata and The Bible Record*. St. Louis: Concordia (1970), pp. 185–6; Morris, H. M. *The Genesis Record*. San Diego: Creation Life Publishers (1976), p. 185.

There is a fly in the ointment for the creationists, however, in that skeletons or artistic representations of both leopards and lions show up almost immediately after the Flood—no matter when you date it (*Cambridge Ancient History I*, pp. 253, 280, 309, 316, 371, 451–2, 494 and Mellaart, J. *The Neolithic of the Near East*. New York: Charles Scribners (1975), pp. 99, 108, 111, 152) so, the pair of ‘cats’ (and similarly the pair of ‘dogs’) would not only have to evolve into the various *species* after the Flood, but would have to evolve at a speed far faster than biological mechanisms would allow.

5 Interestingly, *mîn* more often refers to the vegetable kingdom in later rabbinic writings; but, I will concentrate on the animal kingdom.

6 Brown, C. H. ‘Folk zoological life-forms: their universality and growth’, *American Anthropologist* (1979) 81:4, 791. Confirming this finding is the fact that children c. 3 to 5 years of age recognize only the broad life-forms FISH and SNAKE. From c. 5 to 7 years of age, they add BIRD. Then, they add WUG and after that c. age 8, MAMMAL. (*Ibid.*, p. 810).

Some proto-scientific peoples do not develop all five forms, and others add still more; but , the four or five above life-forms are the most basic.

In the OT, beginning with Gen 1:26 (cf. I Kings 4:33 [Hebrew text (H) 5:13]; Ezek 38:20) it is evident that the animal taxonomy employed begins with FISH, BIRD, SNAKE (*remeš*), and MAMMAL (*bēhēmāh*).<sup>7</sup> In the Flood account FISH are not in view; so, the three remaining life-forms are mentioned: BIRD, SNAKE, and MAMMAL (Gen 6:7, 20; 7:8,14; 8:17, 19).

The FISH category apparently includes all water-dwelling creatures (Cf. Gen 1:21 'swarm' with Lev 11:10 'swarm'), including whales (Gen 1:21). The BIRD category has reference to 'flying creatures' (the cognate verb means 'to fly'); so that, as in a number of other proto-scientific societies, bats are included with birds.<sup>8</sup> The SNAKE category covers most reptiles and amphibians, and perhaps some small mammals. The MAMMAL category (*bēhēmāh*) in general as in Gen 1:26; Ex 12:12; 13:2; 22:19 [H 18]; Lev 7:26; I Kings 4:33 [H 5:13]; Prov 30:30) could be split into 'wild' and 'tame' with the word *bēhēmāh* sometimes referring to tame animals (Gen 1:24, 25; 2:20; Ex 22:10 [H 9]) and at other times to wild (Deut 28:26; 32:24; Mic 5:8 [H 7]).<sup>9</sup>

The question of the meaning of *mîn* relates directly to these four basic life-forms since the OT specifically speaks of every FISH 'according to their kind' (Gen 1:21), every BIRD 'according to its kind' (Gen 1:21) every SNAKE 'according to its kind' (Gen 1:25) and MAMMAL 'according to its kind' (Gen 1:25). Since these four life-forms each fundamentally equate with the modern category of *class*, *mîn* must usually be on the level of *order* or lower, although in a rare case such as say brachiopods, which belong to the FISH category, the 'kind' could possibly be as high as *phylum*. For all practical purposes, however, the basic question would be, How far down the modern taxonomic ladder does *mîn* go; down to *order*, *family*, *genus* or *species*?

To answer this question we note first of all that among proto-scientific peoples taxonomies are normally shallow. It is common to reach the terminal taxon just one or two steps below the basic life form.<sup>10</sup> A typical

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7 Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* (Routledge and Keegan Paul, London, 1966) spoke of 'the main animal categories' as being 'defined by their typical movement', but she meant 'main' from a social anthropological point of view, not ethno-biological. Socially, the swimming creatures were fish with fins and scales, but ethno-biologically anything living in the water was a FISH. Although she recognized that 'the prototype and model of the swarming things is the worm,' [SNAKE in ethno-biological studies], she saw the worm as belonging 'in the realm of the grave, with death and chaos.' This again is a social rather than an ethno-biological perspective.

8 Lev 11:19; So also, the Rofaifo and Ndumba of New Guinea, the African Rangi, the Hill Pandaram of India, and the Arab Bedouin. On the other hand, flying insects were probably not included under BIRDS, but in a covert WUG life-form.

9 It is common for proto-scientific peoples to distinguish between tame and wild animals. Cf. Brown, *op. cit.*, [6], p. 793.

10 Hunn, E. S. *Tzeltal Folk Zoology*. New York: Academic Press (1977), p. 37; Ellen, R. F. and Reason, D. (eds.) *Classifications in their Social Context*. New York: Academic Press (1979), pp. 43, 53; Berlin, B. *Ethnobiological Classification*. Princeton: Princeton U. Press (1992), p. 31.

folk taxonomy is simply BIRD-DUCK-WOOD DUCK. This does not preclude *order* or *family* from being the terminal taxon, but it points in general toward *genus* and *species*. At the same time, very few peoples are prepared to give names to every *species* of animal in their own environment much less to animals outside of their geographical area. In general most proto-scientific peoples will give names to c. 500 to 600 animals in their environment.<sup>11</sup> A few give names to more animals than that and some to less. But 500 to 600 is typical not only for most primitive tribal societies but all the way down into classical Greek times. By the nature of the case, therefore, most peoples, including in all probability the Hebrews, lump some *species* together under one name and thus at least for practical purposes, classify some 'kinds' of animals above the *species* level. Yet we must look at the five basic life-forms more closely.

Of the five most common basic life-forms, it is the WUG class that most frequently goes begging when it comes to discriminating between *species*. Not that some peoples do not classify a number of bugs in their environment down to the *species* level and even the sub-*species* level; but, in general because of their small size bugs are less easy to discriminate and because of that and other reasons are often largely lumped together. Thus, among some peoples, all spiders are just 'spiders.'<sup>12</sup> It is quite possible, perhaps we should say probable, therefore, that in the WUG class, *mîn* would often be at the level of *order* or *family*.

As to the other four life-forms it is also generally true that the smaller the FISH, BIRD, REPTILE, or MAMMAL, the less likely it is to be finely differentiated.<sup>13</sup> Also, the more difficult an animal is to observe because of being nocturnal or only being seen at a great distance, or living in the deeper parts of the water, the less likely it is to be closely differentiated. So *mîn* when used with reference to quite small animals may well correspond to *order* or *family*.

Conversely, the larger the animal the more likely it is to be identified at the *species* level. Even the most primitive societies have demonstrated a remarkable ability to distinguish between *species* of SNAKE, BIRD, and MAMMAL. Thus, among the Fore of New Guinea where modern biologists recognize 120 *species* of birds, the Fore recognize 110 kinds with 93 cases being a one-to-one correspondence with modern *species*.<sup>14</sup> Amongst the Papuans with whom E. Mayr worked, the natives differentiated 136 kinds

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11 Berlin, *op. cit.*, [10], p. 23.

12 Diamond, J. 'Zoological classification system of a primitive people,' *Science* (March, 1966) 151, 1104; Ellen and Reason, *op. cit.*, [10], p. 45; Cf. Fradkin, A. *Cherokee Folk Zoology*. New York: Garland (1990), p. 473.

13 Berlin, *op. cit.*, [10], p. 35; Ellen and Reason, *op. cit.*, [10], pp. 45, 123, 125; Bulmer, R. H. N. and Menzies, J. I. 'Karam classification of marsupials and rodents—Pt. 2', *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* (1973) 82:1, 88-92, 100.

14 Diamond, *op. cit.*, [12], p. 1103.

of birds where modern taxonomy differentiates 137 *species*.<sup>15</sup> Speaking of another New Guinea tribal people, one anthropologist wrote,

. . . as far as vertebrate animals are concerned the Kalam have a very good appreciation of natural *species*, in that, in the overwhelming majority of cases where they are dealing with creatures with which they are familiar, they recognize the distinctiveness of what modern scientific zoologists identify as '*species*.'<sup>16</sup>

Another anthropologist spoke of 'the oft-noted consistency between lower-order folk taxa and the *species* of the biologist.'<sup>17</sup>

In addition, when out of indifference smaller animals are lumped together under one name, even primitive peoples usually know they are different kinds. Thus one anthropologist wrote of the Kalam, 'But when they lump familiar zoological *species* they are in *general* well aware of what they are doing . . .'<sup>18</sup>

Another wrote of an Indian people,

Yet although the Hill Pandaram can describe in detail the numerous *species* of bats, and know a lot about their habits, they are categorized essentially into only two terminal taxa . . .<sup>19</sup>

This does not mean that the average tribal people are able to distinguish every single *species* among small animals, but it does mean they usually could if they had the interest. The same thing would apply if they could get a good look at nocturnal or distant animals. When it comes to insects, however, even if there were interest, it is unlikely they would be able to make distinctions between all the *species* of all the insects present in their environment. One would be lucky to have different *genera* discriminated.

## **Biblical Taxonomy**

Although the OT gives no evidence that the Hebrews overtly recognized a WUG life-form, there is evidence that they recognized a number of kinds of insects such as locusts (Joel 2), spiders (Isa 39:5), moths (Job 4:19), ants (Prov 6:6), etc., and they distinguished between bees (Judg 14:8) and wasps (Ex 23:28), flies (Eccl 10:1) and fleas (Isa 24:14). Bees and wasps are each a sub-order of the *order Hymenoptera*, so whatever 'kinds' may have been distinguished (and almost every people distinguish the *genus Apis*, honey

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15 Mayr, E. *Diversity of Life*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard U. Press. (1976), p. 517.

16 Ellen and Reason, *op. cit.*, [10], p. 61; Cf. p. 125 and Bulmer and Menzies, *op. cit.*, [13], p. 98.

17 Morren, G. B. *The Miyanmin*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research (1986), p. 123.

18 Bulmer, R. N. H. and Tyler, M. J. 'Karam Classification of Frogs', *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* (1968) 77:4, 335; Cf. Bulmer, R. 'Worms that croak and other mysteries of karam natural history', *Mankind* (1968) 6:12, 628.

19 Morris, B. 'Whither the savage mind? Notes on the natural taxonomies of a hunting and gathering people', *Man*, new series (1976) 11:4, 549; Cf. Hunn, E. 'The utilitarian factor in folk biological classification.' *American Anthropologist* (1982) 84:4.

bees, from the *genus Bombus*, bumble bees) would have to have been at least at the *family* level. Although there is only one Hebrew word in the OT for 'fly', the Hebrews like other tribal peoples probably readily distinguished between horse-flies and house-flies, two different sub-orders of the *order Diptera*. On the other hand, even if they had wanted to do so, could they have distinguished between all the hundreds of *species* of flies in Palestine? The question is even more acute with reference to the numerous *species* of fleas in Palestine. Given the minute differences between the different *species* of flies and fleas, I would say it is quite improbable that they could have distinguished all of the different *genera* much less the *species*.<sup>20</sup> *Mîn*, accordingly, although probably landing on the *genus* or even *species* level with some insects (cf. Lev.11:22) would probably usually have landed on the *family* level, although with reference to fleas maybe on the level of *order*.

As to FISH we have very little to go on. The OT obviously distinguishes between FISH with scales and fins and FISH without them (Lev 11:9–12). In addition, both fishermen (Jer 16:16; Ezek 47:10) and those who ate their catch must have recognized at least different *families* of fish, for example, differentiating between catfish and carp. On the basis of anthropological analogues, I would also think it safe to assume that at least some different *genera* and possibly some different *species* were distinguished.<sup>21</sup> Further, if they had need, the Hebrews probably could have distinguished even more *genera* and even more *species*. But, the smaller the FISH, the less likely that all the *species* would or even could be distinguished. Also, in the case of 'fish' without scales and fins, some 'kinds' may have been distinguished only at the level of *order*, maybe even *class* or *phylum*. But, as a general rule, *mîn* would land sometimes on the *family* level and at other times on the *genus* and even the *species* level.

The SNAKE life-form in the Bible (*remés*, 'creeper') includes most reptiles and amphibians. The variety of names for reptiles in the OT suggests differentiation, but the names are so uncertain in meaning that one can not make a clear case as to how the Hebrews classified them. Anthropological data suggest that except in the case of very small animals the distinctions would usually be made at the level of *species*, but sometimes of *genus*.<sup>22</sup>

As to the BIRD life-form we have more data in the OT, especially in Lev 11:13–19, than for any other life-form. Lev 11:14 and 16, regardless of exactly which kind of birds are being spoken of, refer to at least one *family*

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20 Cf. Ellen and Reason, *op. cit.*, [10], pp. 124–5; Fradkin, 451–2.

21 The Cherokee, for example, distinguished a number of different *genera* of fish and two different *species* of the *genus Ictalurus* (Fradkin, *op. cit.*, [12], p. 454).

22 The Kalam, for example, distinguished 6 modern *species* of skinks, combined two closely related *species* into one, and split one modern *species* into two. The Cherokee distinguished 5 modern *species* of lizards, and lumped two modern *species* into one. On amphibians, see Bulmer and Tyler, *op. cit.*, [18], pp. 333–383.

(possibly the same *family*) of the *order Falconiformes*.<sup>23</sup> The *mîn* in those verses is, therefore, lower than the *family* level and must, therefore, refer at least to *genera*. Further, if the reference in 11:14 is to the *Buteoninae*, there is a good chance that the *mîn* is a reference to the *species* level since true buzzards are all of the same *genus*, *Buteo*. Similarly, if it or 11:16 is a reference to the *Falconidae*, the *species* level may very well be in view since true falcons are all of the same *genus*, *Falco*.

Lev 11:19 speaks of the '*anāpāh* according to her kind. G. R. Driver identified the '*anāpāh* with the cormorant. If this is correct, the *mîn* would probably be a reference to *species*. Most scholars, however, identify the '*anāpāh* with the heron as a class, that is, with the *family Ardeidae*. The *mîn*, therefore, must be a reference to *genera* or lower.

Lev 11:15 mentions the '*orēb* according to his kind. All scholars identify the '*orēb* ('black') with the raven. Some scholars add crows. Driver adds the rook. Even if all three kinds of birds are included, only one *genus* is involved: *Corvus*. However, if the chough is also in view, a second *genus* would be present. In either case, the *mîn* would largely fall to the level of *species*.

Turning to anthropological studies, we find that although tribal peoples may discriminate some birds only at the level of *order* or *family*, they usually still know that differences exist, differences at what we would call the *genus* or *species* level.<sup>24</sup> In addition, it is with reference to birds that one often finds the most striking one-for-one equivalencies between folk names and modern *species*.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, we may conclude especially from the biblical, but also from the anthropological data, that *mîn* in the life-form BIRD may have reference on a rare occasion to the *family* level and at times to the *genus* level, but the reference will usually be to the *species* level.

As to MAMMALS, there is no real doubt as to what the author had in mind when he spoke of *kinds* of wild animals and *kinds* of domesticated animals in Gen 1:25. The terminology is similar to Lev 11:2 which leads us on implicitly to oxen, cows, sheep, goats and probably deer (v. 3) and explicitly to the camel (v. 4), the coney (v. 5), the hare (v. 6) and the pig (v.

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23 Various capable scholars have identified the '*ayyaḥ* of Lev 11:14 as a buzzard(s) or falcon(s) or kite(s) or a combination of buzzard(s) and falcon(s) or of falcon(s) and kite(s). Lev 11:16's *netz* has been identified as a falcon(s) or a kite(s) or a combination of the two. There is a nice chart of the various identifications in Bulmer, R. *The Unsolved Problems of the Birds of Leviticus*, U. of Auckland (1986), p. 55, to which should be added '*Mîn*' in Brown, F., Driver, S. R. and Briggs, C., (eds.) *Hebrew and English Lexicon* and Driver, G. R. 'Birds in the old testament' Part I, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (1955) 86, 5–20.

It is not unusual among proto-scientific peoples for the name of a particular bird to refer also to that class of bird. Cf. McElhanon, K. A. 'The identification of birds by the Selepet,' *Oceania* (1977) 48:1, 66; Hage, Per and Miller, W. R. "eagle" = "bird": a note on the structure and evolution of Shoshoni ethnological nomenclature,' *American Ethnologist* (1976) 3:3, 487. Note on Plutarch, *Moralia* 12, Loeb, p. 481.

24 Hunn, E. 'The Tenejapa Tzeltal version of the animal kingdom', *Anthropological Quarterly* (1975) 48:1, 18; Bulmer and Tyler, *op. cit.*, [18] pp. 334–5.

25 Notes 14 and 15.

7). In addition, it seems inconceivable that the author was not thinking of all the kinds of animals mentioned throughout ancient Near Eastern texts both biblical and extra-biblical such as the horse, ass, gazelle, ape, hippo, fox, dog, jackal and wolf. At the very least the *genus* level is in view.

Further, in the OT as in Egyptian literature, the dog (*Canis familiaris*; Ex 11:7) is differentiated from the jackal (*Canis aureus*; Isa 34:13); and in biblical literature so is the wolf (*Canis lupus*; Isa 11:6). Thus where more than one *species* of the same *genus* of a larger mammal were present in the environment, the *mîn* comes down to the *species* level. Similarly, as in other ancient Near Eastern literature, the OT distinguishes between the leopard (*Leo pardus*, Jer 13:23 et al) and the lion (*Leo leo*, Num. 23:24 et al). Thus again we see that *mîn* comes down to the *species* level.

Anthropological studies show that when it comes to mammals that are larger than say a rat, c. 80 to 90% of the folk genera equate to the modern *genus* level.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, most of these genera are monotypic; so, there is a question as to whether the modern *species* level is being recognized. Given the fact that we are talking about the larger animals, it seems to me that the *species* level is being recognized. This is confirmed by the fact that when two different *species* of the same *genus* (of larger animals) are present, they are usually distinguished.<sup>27</sup> Among the Hill Pandaram, 80% of the names of large animals are at the *species* level.<sup>28</sup> We conclude from the biblical and the anthropological data that when it comes to MAMMALS (except in the case of very small or nocturnal animals), *mîn* may have reference at times to *genera*, but usually to *species*.

We must add here that in the OT as Gen 6:19, 20 and 7: 2, 3, 14-16 (Cf. Gen 1:21, 25) show, *mîn* was a *kind* that reproduced itself. It should be noted, therefore, that when a culture lumps several *genera* or even *families* together under one name, it often does so out of indifference. The lack of differentiation does not preclude the probability that if you asked the people of that culture to gather the *reproducing kinds* of say even butterflies in a culture that had only one word for butterflies, they could and would differentiate down to the *genus* and even to some extent down to the *species* level. Very small, nocturnal, or otherwise very difficult to observe creatures would still not be differentiated as they are in modern

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26 Cf. Posey, Darrell A., et. al. (eds.) *Ethnobiology: Implications and Applications: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Ethnobiology*, Belem, Brazil: The Museum (1990), pp. 25-9; Berlin, *op. cit.*, [10], p. 34.

27 For example, among the Tzeltal *Canis familiaris* is distinguished from *C. latrans*. *Felis onca* is distinguished from *F. concolor* from *F. pardalis* from *F. wiedii* from *F. Cattus* and from *F. yagouaroundi*. (Hunn, *op. cit.*, [10], p. xxx). Similarly, among the Cherokee *Canis familiaris* is distinguished from *C. lupus*. *Felis concolor* is distinguished from *F. catus* as well as from the 'bobcat,' *Lynx rufus*. (Fradkin, *op. cit.*, [12], pp. 461-2). Among the Kalam (previously called the Karam), *Pseudocheirus cupreus* is distinguished from *P. corinnae* and from *P. forbersi*, although the latter may not be distinguished from *P. meyeri*. (Bulmer and Menzies, *op. cit.*, [13], p. 482).

28 Morris, *op. cit.*, [19], p. 550; Cf. Sillitoe, P. 'Confusions in the classifications', *Ethnos* (1980) 45:3-4, 137, 152-3; Notes 17, 18.

biology; but, as the size of the creature increased, the correlation with modern *species* would increase.<sup>29</sup>

We may summarize that only with reference to very small creatures like insects is the biblical writer likely to have defined *mîn* as referring more often to *orders* or *families* than to *genera* or *species*. With reference to water-dwelling creatures, the biblical writer may have thought in terms of *phylum* or *class* in rare instances and sometimes in terms of *orders*, especially for small creatures and 'fish' without scales or fins, but more often the writer was probably thinking in terms of *families* and *genera* and sometimes even in terms of *species*. As to reptiles and amphibia, *mîn* was probably occasionally defined at the level of *families* and sometimes at the level of *genera*, but most often at the level of *species*. With regard to birds and mammals larger than say a rat, *mîn* would be defined occasionally in terms of *families*, sometimes *genera*, but usually (in 80–90% of the cases) in terms of *species*.

## Conclusion

Although it is formally correct to define *mîn* as having reference in terms of modern biological taxonomy to the level of *phylum* on down to *species*, the larger and more observable the animal, the more likely that its 'kind' was defined at the *species* level. The attempt by some theistic evolutionists to define *mîn* in Genesis 1 as usually speaking of *order* or higher categories<sup>29</sup> is by and large just the opposite of the meaning it had in its original context. The idea of creationists that only two representative 'cats' etc. were on the ark<sup>30</sup> is also quite out of the question for animals as large as lions or even house cats were most probably defined as 'kinds' at the *species* level.

Both of the above distortions of the meaning of *mîn* arise from forcing the implications of modern scientific knowledge into the ancient biblical text.<sup>31</sup> To truly respect Scripture is to recognize and allow for the fact that the revelation of the one true God which was given in the OT was given originally to a proto-scientific people in their own proto-scientific terms. God spoke, as do modern missionaries, in terms of the people's culture.

It is not insignificant to point out in closing that when *mîn* is defined contextually, that is on the basis of biblical, ancient Near Eastern and

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29 In addition to the overall picture, the ancient Near Eastern background of Genesis 1 (note 4) and Gen 1:21, 'every winged bird according to its kind' (a phrase which ties it to Leviticus 11) show that the meaning of *mîn* in Gen 1 cannot be separated from its meaning in the rest of Scripture and must refer primarily to the *species* and *genus* level.

30 In addition to the overall picture, note 27 illustrates that proto-scientific peoples regularly distinguish the different *species* of 'cats' and 'dogs'; and, both the Church and the Jews have historically understood the 'kinds' of animals on the ark to be the same 'kinds' as were originally created; and, they saw those animals as the same 'kinds' that existed in their own day.

31 The implications respectively of the geological column with its fossils and the implications of a *global* earth. Cf. Seely, P. 'The geographical meaning of "earth" and "sea" in Gen 1:10', *Westminster Theological Journal* (Fall, 1996).

ethno-biological data, man is clearly a separate 'kind.' All peoples historically have recognized man as a unique 'kind.' But, if *mîn* is defined by either the theistic evolutionist or creationist definition, man must logically be considered the same 'kind' as a monkey.<sup>32</sup>

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32 See Awbrey, F. T. 'Defining "kinds"—do creationists apply a double standard?' *Creation/Evolution* (Summer, 1981) V, 1–6.

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