

The “Kinds” of Genesis 1: What Is the Meaning of *Mîn*?

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Introduction

The pervading influence of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution tends to obscure the reasons for its acceptance and power today. Darwin was not initially opposed to the creation story in the Bible, but the evidence he acquired over many years seemed to be absolutely at odds with Genesis. However, upon closer examination of his growing uneasiness with creation, one finds that it was built upon an incorrect interpretation of the Bible. In Darwin’s day, fixity of species was considered a fact, supported by the phrase “after its kind” (*l’mînāh* [מִיָּנְהוּ] and with other suffixes) in Genesis, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. In other words, the species present today must have continued exactly as they were since God created them.¹ Not only that, but individuals of each species were thought to “increase in number . . . like the coinage of dimes, no variation.”²

Even though Darwin had some training for the clergy, he apparently accepted the interpretation of his day without looking at the original language to discover the meaning of *mîn* [מִן]. Darwin’s discovery of microevolution and his

¹ See Leona G. Running, “A Study of Hebrew Words in the Creation Record,” *The Ministry* (Sept 1964): 19; Frank L. Marsh, “Variation and Fixity Among Living Things: A New Biological Principle,” *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 15 (1978): 115. Even in 1930, fixity of species was thought to be true by many creationists. Byron C. Nelson wrote, at that time, “While the Bible allows that new varieties may have arisen since the creative days, it denies that any new species have arisen, using the term species to denote natural rather than systematic species”; *After Its Kind: The First and Last Word on Evolution* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1930), 21. (All dogs are one natural species to Nelson, while the fox-terrier would be a systematic species produced by man. Seemingly, the term species could refer to broader categories than today).

² Frank L. Marsh, “The Genesis Kinds in the Modern World,” in Walter E. Lammerts, ed. *Scientific Studies in Special Creation*, 136–155 (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 142.

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propagation of the idea of macroevolution—an idea he believed was implied by microevolution, though he had no proof of it—as well as the finding of multitudes of fossils from animals extinct today, completely undermined the then current “extreme interpretation of” the Biblical creation account.³ Eventually, Genesis and much of the Pentateuch came to be seen as mythical or simply theological in meaning. Although this issue has been discussed for many decades, the controversy continues. Many people today, including influential biblical commentators, still believe the Bible refers to fixity of species in the creation story and beyond. For example, a well-recognized Old Testament scholar recently wrote, concerning the meaning of Genesis 1, that “each type reproduces after its own kind, so . . . there is no possibility of creating new species through mutation.”⁴ Due to the large number of new species being found,⁵ this assumption increases skepticism regarding the historicity and authenticity of the Bible.

The interpretation of *mîn*—what is meant by a “kind”—is thus fundamental to a proper understanding of the relationship between science and religion. The chief purpose of this article will be to consider the word *mîn* in Genesis, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. My working assumptions include the unity of the Pentateuch under the authorship of Moses.⁶ Many others have attempted to solve the *mîn* problem only within Leviticus (or even within Genesis alone), but the later references in Leviticus and Deuteronomy refer to Genesis intertextually, and Genesis must first be examined for the clearest picture. Jiří Moskala links Genesis and Leviticus on numerous grounds, including key terminology, universal taxonomy, three habitats for living creatures, four categories of living creatures, and similar rules for reproduction.⁷

The steps of exegesis that are pertinent to the question at hand will be followed in dealing with Genesis 1:11–25. This initial study will attempt to elucidate whether *mîn* is tied to the reproduction of the animals or not. Does the phrase refer to God’s creation of a multiplicity of (“all kinds of”) animals, or does it set specific boundaries and limits to the “kinds” of animals so that their ability to vary is severely limited? If the latter, are these boundaries linked with the animals’ abilities to breed with each other? Further, if Genesis links the “kinds” with reproduction, is this linkage permanent, or only initially at God’s creation?

³ Marsh, “Variation and Fixity,” 116.

⁴ Robert R. Wilson, “Creation and New Creation: The Role of Creation Imagery in the Book of Daniel,” in William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride, Jr., eds, *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner*, 190–203 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 201.

⁵ Neil A. Campbell, *Biology*, Fourth edition (Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings, 1996), 438–450.

⁶ For evidence, see Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 99–126.

⁷ Jiří Moskala, *The Laws of Clean & Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, & Rationale* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2000), 199–211.

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Since Genesis discusses broad categories, it cannot alone be expected to define the boundaries of *mîn*, and thus the lists of clean and unclean animals in Leviticus and Deuteronomy must also be considered. Time and space do not permit an examination of each animal in these lists to find the category referred to: variety, species, genus, family, order, etc. Also, the meaning of many of the terms for the animals in these chapters is obscure and cannot be defined precisely. However, much work has been done in this area, and based on previous word studies and a review of the different animals found in Palestine today and in the past, several animals may be identified with a reasonable degree of certainty. From these identifications, the limits of *mîn* will be estimated. This paper cannot hope to be comprehensive, but I will undertake a broad overview of the term and its usages.

Another crucial working assumption of mine is that science and Scripture are in harmony with each other when interpreted correctly,⁸ and I will attempt to explore how the Bible and science can be unified when the terms and phrases of the Bible are studied in the original language and context. Since microevolution has been clearly demonstrated, it should be included—possibly even expected—in a discussion of the Biblical understanding of the reproduction and populations of animal types.

Definition and Current Application of *Mîn*

The word *mîn* is used 31 times in the Hebrew Bible, always with the same basic grammatical construction: *l^e* (לְ, particle preposition of specification) + *mîn* (מִן, defined here as “kind” or “variety”) + pronominal suffix. The usage of the phrase is always “in the sphere of what moderns would call the natural sciences, referring to groups of plants or animals united by common characteristics.”⁹ The *TDOT* even refers to the phrase as “a classification term.”¹⁰ J. Barton Payne calls *mîn* a “term for technical enumeration; and it is used in no other, more conversational, way in Scripture.”¹¹

But *mîn* always occurs in the singular,¹² even when the type of life referred to is plural, meaning that it must be translated “kinds,” as a collective noun.¹³

⁸ Others also see this harmony between theology and science. See Frank L. Marsh, *Evolution, Creation, and Science* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944), 267–271; Leonard Brand, *Faith, Reason, and Earth History* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1997), 90.

⁹ Mark D. Futato, “מִן,” in Willem A. Van Gemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:934.

¹⁰ P. Beauchamp, “מִן,” in G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 8:289.

¹¹ J. Barton Payne, “The Concept of ‘Kinds’ in Scripture,” *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 10 (1958): 19.

¹² However, a plural pronominal suffix ending occurs once (in Gen. 1:21), and the third masculine singular ending *l^emînû* [לְמִינֵוּ] occurs four times (Gen 1:11; Lev 11:5, 22; Deut 14:14), rather than the usual *l^emînêhû* [לְמִינֵהוּ] (occurs twelve times). Victor R. Hamilton sees the former as

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The *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* defines *mîn* as a “kind, species . . . of plant; usually of animal (beast, bird, fish, insect).”¹⁴

The etymology of *mîn* is generally considered to be unknown, although several hypotheses have been presented. The root may have arisen from the Arabic etymon *myn*, carrying connotations of creation, bearing fruit, and reproduction of species. The Akkadian roots *minu* or *minutu* are also possibilities, referring to portioning, numbering, and counting.¹⁵

There are two basic views regarding the best meaning of *mîn* in the Hebrew Bible. The first focuses on the “multiplicity” of kinds, where *mîn* has nothing to do with the “capacity of a living being to reproduce itself in a continuing sequence of generations.”¹⁶ The reasons for this view are varied. Some argue that if *mîn* had to do with reproduction, then it would be applicable to humans as well as animals.¹⁷

In support of this position, Leona Running’s crucial study has found that the preposition *l’* often “enumerate[s] classes and subdivisions of classes.”¹⁸ When this usage is intended, “by” is usually the translation, not “after” or “according to.” Running claims that “by kind” or “by variety” would actually mean “the kinds of” or “all sorts of.” She considers the uses in Leviticus and Deuteronomy as more important because they are more numerous, and in light of these occurrences does not link *mîn* to reproduction.¹⁹

The second view suggests that even though an initial reading of *mîn* would seem to refer to “all kinds of animals,” yet God blessed the animals with the gift of procreation. He even commanded them to “be fruitful and increase in number” (Gen. 1:22, NIV). This implies that *mîn* involves reproduction and limitations for each group of animals. These reproductive limits, if implied by *mîn*, do not necessarily involve any limitations to a specific biological category; they simply indicate the fact that there are limitations. An example of this view would be the concept held by Duane T. Gish, where a “basic animal . . . kind

“anomalous . . . representing an old accusative ending” (*The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 124).

¹³ Payne, “The Concept of ‘Kinds’ in Scripture,” 17–18. Another scholar sees *mîn* as either a collective or a distributive singular, with most usages being distributive singular, rather than the “collective of collectives” (Pete J. Williams, “What does *min* Mean?” *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal* 11 [1997]: 345–346). More study is needed on this phenomenon of distributive singular usage in Hebrew and with regards to *mîn*.

¹⁴ F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Fifth printing (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 568.

¹⁵ *TDOT*, 8:288. For other etymological suggestions, see Williams, 348–349.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8:290.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Running, 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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would include all animals or plants which were truly derived from a single stock . . . [and share] a common gene pool.”²⁰

A view mediating between these two basic views is that of Payne, suggesting that *mîn* refers to “subdivisions within the types of life described and not to the general quality of the types themselves.” He does not link *mîn* to reproduction, but also does not believe that “all kinds of” is the best translation, since creative units seem to be intended. Payne thinks Moses is referring to “every different type of bird ordinarily distinguished,” even though “scientific precision” was not used.²¹

The Term *Mîn* in Genesis 1–7

The views mentioned above are present already in scholarly discussions of Genesis 1–7. Running looks at the Flood account in Genesis 6 and 7 and suggests that the usual translation of “fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind . . . two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive” (Gen. 6:20, KJV) should be changed. According to her aforementioned hypothesis, the verse should read, “the various kinds of fowls, and the different sorts of cattle . . . will come to the ark in pairs.”²² She sees Gen. 1:21 in a similar light, arguing that the verse speaks of “how God caused the waters to bring [creatures] forth,” not of how procreation was to continue from then on.²³

Running correctly notes that the *earth* receives God’s command to “bring forth the living creatures” in Gen. 1:24. The animals themselves are not commanded [*wayyōmer* ^{lōhîm tôšē’} *hā’āreš nepeš hayyāh l’mînāh*; נָשָׂא תְּהִיָה לְמִינָהּ; [וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ]]. This seems to imply that the translation should be, “Let the earth bring forth the various kinds of living creatures.”²⁴

The word *mîn* does not occur within the blessing of the birds and fish in Gen. 1:22 that enables them to be fruitful and multiply.²⁵ These creatures were to continue to reproduce creatures similar to themselves, but “kind” (*mîn*) does not appear to be involved in this process.

In support of this same view, Kenneth Matthews points out that it is not the plants that are commanded to reproduce according to their kind (that is, with a fixity of species). Rather, the earth is commanded to produce plants according to their kinds. When the term *mîn* occurs in vs. 11 and 12, the word *tôšē’* (הוֹצֵא; “Let . . . bring forth”) refers to the earth’s bringing forth, not the plants’ bringing forth. What is to be brought forth according to their kinds is further defined as two major groups of vegetation: *‘ēšeb mazrîa’ zera’* (עֵשֶׂב מְזַרְיָע זֵרַע; “seed-bearing

²⁰ Duane T. Gish, *Evolution? The Fossils Say NO!* (San Diego: Creation-Life, 1978), 32. See also Marsh’s entire book, *Evolution, Creation, and Science*.

²¹ Payne, “The Concept of ‘Kinds’ in Scripture,” 19.

²² Running, 21.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 22.

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plants”) and עֵץ פְּרִי (עֵץ פְּרִי; “fruit trees”).²⁶ These categories are obviously broad, seemingly intended to cover all of the plants that God made. However, it is not reproduction that is involved with *mîn*, but the *original production*, although non-reproductive limitations on *mîn* seem to be implied.²⁷

In contrast to this first interpretation (“multiplicity” with no connection to reproduction), other scholars find that Gen 1:24 is talking about each animal reproducing “according to its kind,” and that *mîn* “designates classifiable biological beings that are capable of reproducing.”²⁸ The preceding evidence, however, shows that a direct linkage of *mîn* to reproduction is not present.

But this does not mean that *mîn* is without boundaries. The context of creation by separations and divisions still implies boundaries, just not reproductive ones. God created the world not as a “disorganized mass, but a well-ordered subdivided whole, each individual plant and animal fitting into its own ‘kind’ which in turn fits into a larger group.”²⁹ Moskala also calls creation a “process of separation, division, and distinction,” characterized by the Hebrew word *bdl* (בָּדַל; “to separate, divide”), which occurs eleven times in the creation account and the dietary laws.³⁰

Payne’s mediating view seems to fit this picture almost perfectly: *mîn* is not tied to reproduction, but limitations are inherent in the full understanding of this term. This view would allow for subdivisions to develop within the kinds of animals, but the boundaries of the kinds would never be broken. In other words, microevolution could occur, but not macroevolution.

In order to correlate with the fossil record, many theistic evolutionists arbitrarily define *mîn* boundaries in Genesis as referring to phyla and classes. Paul Seely, however, tries to examine what *mîn* would mean to the original author

²⁶ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, The New American Commentary (Broadman & Holman, 2001), 152. However, some see three categories of plants, including *deše’* (עֵשָׂב) as grasses. See Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 62.

Brown, Driver, and Briggs also seem to suggest this by defining *deše’* as grass (206). But the verb *dš’* (דָּשָׁן) means to “sprout, shoot, grow green,” which can refer to all plants, not just grass (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 205–206). Grasses produce seeds also, so the association by Morris of only “bushes and shrubs” with the seed-bearing category is not well-founded.

²⁷ Hamilton would disagree, however, since “God’s creative design is that both the plants and the trees will reproduce themselves by bearing seed ‘each according to its kind’” (126). The element of the seed does tempt one towards the linkage of *mîn* with reproduction, but all other cases in Genesis and Leviticus point to the reading as “all kinds of seed-bearing plants,” instead of the translation proposed by Hamilton.

²⁸ Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology: Three Volumes in One* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 2:40.

²⁹ Futato, *NIDOTTE*, 2:934. “Order, not chaos, is the hallmark of God’s activity,” and Genesis 1 is “[concerned] with definitions and divisions” (Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Bible Commentary [Waco, TX: Word, 1987], 21). “The great Architect of the universe does not permit the colors of his canvas to run together” (Matthews, 157).

³⁰ Moskala, 212.

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and audience within a proto-scientific culture. He studies various proto-scientific peoples today, finding that they often classify animals in four major groups: fish, bird, mammal, and reptile. The Old Testament groupings would basically fit these categories. According to Seely, “the larger and more observable the animal, the more likely that its ‘kind’ was defined at the species level.”³¹ Another plausible related hypothesis is that the Bible uses the “language of appearance” to group animals. This is not a scientific schema, because birds and flying insects are categorized together, for example,³² but would correlate with the view of Genesis being written by a nontechnical observer, not a scientist.³³ The classifications would correspond to the ways in which the Israelites understood and related to the various plants and animals.

The Term *Mîn* in Leviticus 11/Deuteronomy 14

All the kinds and subdivisions of animals were made by God. Even though *mîn* is not linked to reproduction in Genesis, order in the creation account seems to be implied. Genesis does not give very many clues as to what *mîn* refers to, especially since it is not dealing with fixity of species. On the other hand, Leviticus and Deuteronomy offer potential clues as to what *mîn* involves, since they include lists of animals, punctuated with *l'mînēhû* (לְמִינֵהוּ); or with other similar pronominal suffixes). If some of these animals can be properly identified, the range of boundaries of *mîn* can be deciphered.

Many of these names occur very few times in the Bible, making them hard to identify. Also, the common names for certain animals differ in various dialects, and this could be reflected in the confusion and multiple names for some birds.³⁴ Since the meaning of many of the animal names is quite uncertain, this paper will only consider the animals for which there is a majority consensus on the identification of the animal.³⁵ In addition, *mîn* is used only in connection with the birds, insects, and swarming things in Lev 11, and only with the birds in

³¹ Paul H. Seely, “The Meaning of *Min*, ‘Kind,’” *Science and Christian Belief* 9 (1997): 55. Other studies on proto-scientific peoples and their classification systems have been done. See George Morren, Jr., *The Miyanmin: Human Ecology of a Papua New Guinea Society* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), 113–130; Cecil H. Brown, “Folk Zoological Life-Forms: Their Universality and Growth,” *American Anthropologist* 81 (1979): 791–813. Some people groups were able to distinguish between most organisms considered separate species by biologists today. Jared M. Diamond, “Zoological Classification of a Primitive People,” *Science* 151 (1966): 1102–1104.

³² Futato, *NIDOTTE*, 2:934.

³³ This idea is hinted at by Richard Whitekettle (“Where the Wild Things are: Primary Level Taxa in Israelite Zoological Thought,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 93 [2001]: 17–37). See also William H. Shea, “Creation,” in Raoul Dederen, ed., *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 420.

³⁴ Ralph Bulmer, “The Uncleaness of the Birds of Leviticus and Deuteronomy,” *Man* n.s. 24 (1989): 306.

³⁵ In fact, most relevant authors have pages of reasons for their own identification, mostly very interesting, but there is not time and space to consider all of these. It is beyond the scope of this article to break new ground in the identification of the various animals.

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Deut 14. So the focus will be upon these animals, as they can perhaps elucidate the boundaries of *mîn*.

Although his research on the word *kol* (כָּל; “all,” “every”) is inconclusive due to the fact that not all the animals in Lev 11 can be identified, Pete Williams brings out an interesting point that I have found mentioned nowhere else. He compares the animals in Lev 11 that actually have the *mîn* phrase following them to those that are by themselves. He also considers the significance of the use of *kol* before certain animals. Although his research is inconclusive, he has found that most usages of *mîn* differentiate between the names followed by *mîn* and those that are alone.³⁶ The significance of these observations will become apparent in the discussion that follows.

According to Ralph Bulmer, it seems that the largest, most powerful birds, the vultures and eagles, come first (1 and 2) in the bird list of Leviticus 11. The next three are probably other diurnal raptors. The raven group is next, followed by three uncertain birds, and then the small hawks and a kind of owl. After four more uncertain ones, the Egyptian vulture, stork, herons, hoopoe, and the bat finish the bird list.³⁷ However, even those that seem undisputed to Bulmer are given different identifications by others.

The *nešer* (נֶשֶׁר; Lev 11:13; Deut 14:12) has often been identified as an eagle,³⁸ but the griffon-vulture of the desert seems to be a better choice, as it feeds on carrion and is bald-headed.³⁹ This term can also be “generic for large vultures and eagles” in a few verses.⁴⁰ The *mîn* phrase does not follow this single species.

Another bird “whose identification has never been questioned”⁴¹ is the *‘ōrēb* (עֹרֵב; Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14), translated as ravens and other corvids, “generic for the whole tribe of crows, ravens, rooks, jackdaws, and jays, all of

³⁶ Williams, 344–352.

³⁷ Bulmer, 318.

³⁸ Walter W. Ferguson, *Living Animals of the Bible* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, n.d.), 50. See also George Cansdale, *All the Animals of the Bible Lands* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 142–143.

³⁹ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 662. Several others agree with this position: Arthur Jones, “Boundaries of the Min: An Analysis of the Mosaic Lists of Clean and Unclean Animals,” *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 9 (1972): 115; David N. Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 188; G. R. Driver, “Birds in the Old Testament: Part I,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 86 (1955): 8–9. Much corroborating evidence for the identification with the griffon vulture is given in J. G. Wood, *Bible Animals* (Guelph, Ontario: J. W. Lyon, 1877), 404–416; H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible* (London: SPCK, 1880), 174–180; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 676.

⁴⁰ Bulmer, 307. See also Ferguson, 50; Edwin Firmage, “Zoology,” in David N. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:1155. Some find this term always ambiguous in reference to eagles or vultures. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 2:1.

⁴¹ Cansdale, 181.

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which occur in Israel.”⁴² The literal translation is “the black one,” and “all kinds of ravens and crows” are included here.⁴³ The name covers “large, black scavenging Passeres and their allies.”⁴⁴ G. R. Driver notes that this name is onomatopoeic, “based on the cry of the bird which they represent.”⁴⁵ The *mîn* phrase does follow this group of birds.

Dûkîpat (דוקיפת; Lev 11:19; Deut 14:18) is almost always translated as the hoopoe, another onomatopoeic name, sounding like the bird’s call, “bu-bu pou-pou.”⁴⁶ This bird “feeds on dunghills, has a filthy nest, and the smell of its flesh is rank.”⁴⁷ This bird is referring to a single species, not a group of birds,⁴⁸ and the *mîn* phrase does not follow this term.

The last term in the bird list is *ʿallēp* (עללעפ; Lev 11:19; Deut 14:18), almost universally translated as the bat.⁴⁹ This animal is actually a common mammal in Palestine, and there is no *mîn* phrase following this term.

The terms for insects are numerous, even within the Bible, and could perhaps refer to different stages in the life-cycles, such as larvae, caterpillar, etc.⁵⁰ However, a couple of terms are more readily identifiable. *ʿArbeh* (ארבה; Lev 11:22) apparently refers to the locust. Since these insects do so much harm to the land around them, the term’s translation is little debated.⁵¹ *Hāgāb* (חגב; Lev 11:22) is usually translated as a grasshopper, although early translations render it a small form of the locust, due to Num 8:31–33 and other such passages.⁵² The *mîn* phrase follows both of these terms, as it does the other two groups of insects

⁴² Ferguson, 62. See also *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1111. *ISBE* (4:48–49) sees this term as generic here, but states that it can refer to a single member of this group elsewhere in the Bible.

⁴³ Milgrom, 663. See also Wood, 509–519; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 788.

⁴⁴ Jones, “Boundaries of the Min,” 116.

⁴⁵ Driver, 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁷ Milgrom, 664. See also Wood, 460–463; Cansdale, 187–188; Tristram, 208–210; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 189; Firmage, *ABD*, 6:1155.

⁴⁸ See *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 604; Jones, “Boundaries of the Min,” 117; *ISBE*, 2:751.

⁴⁹ See Jones, “Boundaries of the Min,” 121; Bulmer, 307; Driver, 18; Wood, 43–50; Tristram, 45–46; Ferguson, 11; Cansdale, 135; Milgrom, 664; Firmage, *ABD*, 1155; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 742; *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 155; *ISBE*, 1:438.

⁵⁰ Ferguson, 74.

⁵¹ See Ferguson, 74; Wood, 672–682; Tristram, 308; Milgrom, 665; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 916; Firmage, *ABD*, 6:1155; *ISBE*, 3:149. Cansdale sees this as a particular species, the migratory locust (239). Others believe this term refers to the “desert locust.” *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 818; Jones, “Boundaries of the Min,” 117.

⁵² See Ferguson, 74; Wood, 676. Cansdale thinks this term refers to a “smaller kind [of grasshopper], perhaps a non-gregarious grasshopper, of which there are many species” (238). Milgrom also translates the term as a grasshopper (666), along with *ISBE* (3:149). Brown, Driver, and Briggs define this item as a locust and/or grasshopper (290), as do *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (527) and Jones (“Boundaries of the Min,” 118). One scholar defines it solely as a locust (Firmage, *ABD*, 6:1156).

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that are considered clean to eat. Deuteronomy appears to be an abbreviated list, however, because the insects and swarming creatures are not mentioned by name.⁵³

Scholars are much less certain of the identification of the swarming creatures, and not much agreement exists between translators. ‘*Akbār* (אֲכָבָר; Lev 11:29) is usually translated as a mouse, rat, or a general term for such small rodents occurring throughout Israel.⁵⁴ Milgrom calls it a collective term, but the *mîn* phrase does not follow it.⁵⁵

Hōled (חֹלֵד; Lev 11:29) is often translated weasel or polecat, but the root of *hōled* means to dig, and neither of these animals dig at all. There are no moles in Israel, so the mole-rat is now the “accepted translation.”⁵⁶ Others disagree, however, and define the mole-rat as being mentioned only in Isaiah 2:20.⁵⁷ The *mîn* phrase does not follow this term, either.

The above animals are the only ones whose identification is mostly agreed upon by scholars. However, *mîn* occurs in conjunction with several other uncertain identifications, and these must be separately mentioned as well.

At least twenty species of smaller birds that eat flesh and carrion exist in Palestine today. However, only four or five names are listed in the Hebrew Bible. One hypothesis for this discrepancy is that “these may have been the only names in common use, but the compilers had evidently observed the strikingly different birds in this group . . . [and] solved this difficulty by adding the phrase ‘after its kind’ to *ayyah* and *nets*.”⁵⁸ However, this does not solve all difficulties. Only certain birds were chosen to receive the *mîn* phrase. Since identifications are doubtful at best, there seems to be no certain reasons for the choices within this explanation.

After much consideration, I have tentatively concluded that the best hypothesis is that the chosen terms which precede *mîn* each represented many species or genera of birds, and it was simply easier to group them all together rather than list each one. This explanation also seems more plausible than the idea that

⁵³ See Kim-Kwong Chan, “You Shall Not Eat These Abominable Things: An Examination of Different Interpretations on Deuteronomy 14:3–20,” *East Asia Journal of Theology* 3 (1985): 93–94; W. L. Moran, “The Literary Connection Between Lv. 11:13–19 and Dt. 14:12–18,” *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 28(1966): 271–277.

⁵⁴ See Ferguson, 39; Wood, 131–136; Tristram, 122–124; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 747; *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 925; Firmage, *ABD*, 6:1154; *ISBE*, 3:428. Jones (“Boundaries of the Min,” 118) lists at least fifteen families of rodents that this term could refer to.

⁵⁵ Milgrom, 671.

⁵⁶ Ferguson, 38. See also *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1372–1373; Firmage, *ABD*, 6:1154. Some disagree with this interpretation, however, and call the weasel identification “widely thought” (Cansdale, 127). See also Tristram, 151; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 317. *ISBE* (4:1043) does not attempt to make a meaning certain, leaving several possibilities open. Milgrom defines this term as a rat (671).

⁵⁷ See Wood, 128; Cansdale, 135; Tristram, 120–122; Jones, “Boundaries of the Min,” 118.

⁵⁸ Alice Parmelee, *All the Birds of the Bible: Their Stories, Identification and Meaning* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 109.

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the *mîn* phrase was a summary after a certain number of birds, referring collectively to all the ones before it. If this were the case, the *mîn* phrase would occur at the end of the list, as a conclusion, but two birds occur after the last mention of *mîn* in the bird list, and five creeping animals after the last *mîn* in Lev 11:30. With the identifications for which we have a consensus, *mîn* does seem to correspond to groups, such as the diurnal raptors,⁵⁹ the smaller hawks,⁶⁰ the raven group,⁶¹ the heron group,⁶² and the locust group.⁶³ Even within Deuteronomy, the same birds are followed by the *mîn* phrase, except for the first, where *dayyâh* (דַּיִּיָּהּ) replaces *ʿayyâh* (עַיִּיָּהּ), although both are considered large diurnal raptors.

The insect identifications also match with this hypothesis, as each one mentioned has the *mîn* phrase after it, possibly referring to the great number of these kinds of insects in Palestine, even though not all are named or unclear.

Three possible exceptions to this interpretation of the placement of *mîn* exist. One would be the Hebrew word *ʿakbār* (עַכְבָּר). There is no *mîn* phrase following it, but it is almost universally translated as a generic term referring to small rodents. However, an attempt has been made to link this term to the Black Rat, which is a “specific [carrier] of dangerous diseases.”⁶⁴ So the term was probably often used in a broad sense, but here in Leviticus it might have a specific meaning.

Secondly, *mîn* also follows *ṣāb* (צָב) in Lev 11:29. However, this term is under much dispute and has been translated as a tortoise, the dhubb lizard, the large monitor lizards, and as a generic term for lizards.⁶⁵ Since the identification

⁵⁹ See Cansdale, 146; Tristram, 188; *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 454; *ISBE*, 2:635. Jones (“Boundaries of the Min,” 115) lists at least fifteen birds that could be referred to by this term *ʿāh* (עָה).

⁶⁰ See Ferguson, 53; Wood, 430–435; Cansdale, 146; Tristram, 189; *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 558; *ISBE*, 2:635. Jones (“Boundaries of the Min,” 116) lists eleven species of hawks present in Palestine today.

⁶¹ See Tristram, 198–201; *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1111. Jones (“Boundaries of the Min,” 116) lists eleven species of the raven order.

⁶² This translation is disputed by some, but seems to refer to the group of large, long-legged, long and sharp beaked, fish-eating water birds without webbed feet. See Cansdale, 174–178; *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 188. “As the expression ‘after her kind’ is added, the prohibition was evidently generic, extending to all birds of the Heron kind” (Tristram, 241). *ISBE* (2:699) has a similar statement and lists birds that might be included. Jones (“Boundaries of the Min,” 117) lists at least twenty-eight species likely referred to here, in addition to at least four other genera.

⁶³ *ISBE* (3:149) lists at least three species of locusts that live in Palestine today.

⁶⁴ Cansdale, 132–134.

⁶⁵ Tristram (256–257) identifies this as a tortoise, along with Ferguson (71). Wood (586) finds that it might be the dhubb lizard, agreeing with Cansdale (199). *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (818) does not attempt to define the term beyond some type of lizard. Brown, Driver, and Briggs (839) and *ISBE* (3:147) suggest the same idea. Jones (“Boundaries of the Min,” 119) insists on it being a generic term for lizard, since tortoises would have been included among the water swimmers. Milgrom finds that this term is “generic for a wide range of lizards and should not be identified with a particular one” (671).

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of this term is uncertain, it seems likely that it may be a generic term for lizards, as this would fit the pattern seen so far with *mîn*.

Lastly, the term for bat is not followed by the *mîn* phrase, yet there are many species of bats in Palestine.⁶⁶ However, George Cansdale has proposed an interesting explanation. “Only experts distinguish most of these species [of bats], especially in the field, and though bats would be known to the Hebrews, one would certainly not expect them to have more than one or two names.”⁶⁷ This could imply that perhaps all bats were as one kind to the Israelites, and they did not distinguish any as different from each other.

The usage of *mîn* in Leviticus and Deuteronomy is obviously referring to groups and subdivisions of animals. Based on the intertextuality between Genesis and Leviticus, as explored by Moskala, this order can be inferred in Genesis as well, even though the link to reproduction was not found convincing. Key terms, such as *mayim* (מים), *ḥayyâh* (חיה), *nepeš* (נפש), and *b^ehēmâh* (בהמה), to name a few, lend support to the interdependency of the two passages. Leviticus 11 is also built upon “the universal view of creation (Gen 1) . . . [and] in Lev 11 the Hebrew word כֹּל [*kōl*] ‘all,’ ‘everything,’ ‘everyone’ occurs thirty-six times.”⁶⁸ The three habitats of land, air, and water are found in both the creation account and Lev 11, in the same sequence. The four categories of creatures made to fill these habitats are also identical: animals, fish, birds, and swarmers. Although the exact terminology is not used, the structure remains constant.⁶⁹

So it seems that in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, when *mîn* is not used following an organism’s name, a biological species or close equivalent is intended. *Mîn* is usually used to delineate larger groups like genera or families, where several kinds are implicated. However, until each animal can be identified precisely, these limitations for *mîn* can only be regarded as a hypothesis.

Theological and Scientific Conclusions and Implications

I would agree with Payne in his mediating view of *mîn*. According to this proposal, *mîn* refers to a “multiplicity” of animals and denotes boundaries between basic kinds of animals, but is not linked directly to reproduction.

Again, this view is substantiated by the Hebrew syntax of Gen 1. There, *mîn* does not refer to reproduction at all (since *tôšē’* refers to the earth or sea producing, not the animals themselves). Also, God’s command to reproduce never mentions the word *mîn*. Therefore, *mîn* seems to be solely a classification term, based on what can be observed in animal behavior and morphology. However, if

⁶⁶ Jones (“Boundaries of the Min,” 121) lists thirty-six species of bats (within eight families and seventeen genera) present in Palestine today. Ferguson states that “all are lumped together under the single generic name” (11).

⁶⁷ Cansdale, 135.

⁶⁸ Moskala, 202.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 202–209.

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no boundaries are inherent in *mîn*, macroevolution seems to be permitted by the text.

Several theologians agree that *mîn* refers to “broad categories of animals, birds, and fish,” and that “any attempt to correlate ‘kind’ with a modern term, such as ‘species,’ is unwarranted.”⁷⁰

Others even claim that “systematization and classification” are not intended in Genesis, but that it is simply “a tentative attempt to divide the animals into their principal kinds.”⁷¹

However, intertextuality between Genesis and Leviticus lends the clue that Genesis is also referring to order and hierarchy created by God. So, although reproduction is not implicated, there remain limitations to each kind, as laid out in Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Genesis. The kind does seem to be larger than a species in most cases, if it is indeed referring only to the name directly preceding it in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Almost all of the other birds and creeping things (those not followed by *mîn*) are often identified as a single species. This would lead one to believe that the kind might well be located somewhere between the genera and the family, or between the family and the order. This would allow for much microevolution to take place, while prohibiting macroevolution.⁷²

Some young-earth creationists have come up with an alternative classification system that takes into consideration the limits of *mîn* as larger than species. “Phyletic discontinuities” (when two organisms appear to lack a common ancestor) are sought out.⁷³ To avoid confusion with the words “kind” and “species,” the “baramin” (based on Hebrew words meaning “created kind”) is the basic unit, and the “archaeobaramin” is the original kind that was created (mixing Greek and Hebrew).⁷⁴ This theory has much potential and needs to be worked out further, although one needs to be careful not to again read Scripture incorrectly and assume that the baramin is intimately associated with reproduction.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Matthews, 152. Also, “there is no evidence in these texts for taking *mîn* as a technical term corresponding with precision to family, genus, or species.” Futato, *NIDOTTE*, 2: 934.

⁷¹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 142.

⁷² This might also help to explain how all of the kinds of animals were taken onto the ark. The dimensions of the ark do not seem to allow for this, unless the kinds referred to larger groups like genera or families. For more information, see Arthur J. Jones, “How Many Animals in the Ark?” *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 10 (1973): 103–108.

⁷³ Kurt P. Wise, “Baraminology: A Young-Earth Creation Biosystematic Method,” in Robert E. Walsh, ed., *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Creationism*, 2:345–360 (Pittsburgh: Creation Science Fellowship, 1990), 2:346. Frank L. Marsh is the scientist who originally suggested the idea of the “baramin” (Marsh, *Evolution, Creation, and Science*, 162).

⁷⁴ Wise, 352.

⁷⁵ In the words of Frank Marsh, “there is no single category in modern taxonomy which is in all cases equivalent to the created kind . . . [because] plants and animals have been assigned to classification categories” by many different ways (Frank L. Marsh, “The Genesis Kinds,” 149). His fascination with the baramin and true fertilization, separating out “the man kind, the dog kind, the cow kind,” etc., is not sufficient, however. When considering those organisms mentioned, it works

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Interestingly, however, the baramin is often placed between the genera and family, or between the family and order, in similar positions to my proposal for *mîn*.⁷⁶

Biblical classification was naturally not as precise or scientific as is the modern categorization. It seems ludicrous to expect *mîn* to follow the same lines of today's species concept. Interestingly, though, the species concept of today is not as rigid as many scientists make it out to be. "It may not be exaggeration if I say that there are probably as many species concepts as there are thinking systematists and students of speciation."⁷⁷ All of these definitions work when looking at certain communities or groups of animals, but most fail when looking at others. The one often thought most correct is the biological species concept, which is defined as reproductive isolation from another species. However, this concept has been threatened by incidences of distinct species interbreeding.⁷⁸ For instance, many species of rodents thought to be reproductively isolated were actually only geographically isolated, and could interbreed when brought into proximity to each other.⁷⁹

Since the concept of species can be so broad, this can allow even more room for microevolution to be possible within the truth of the Bible. "Our modern taxonomic system . . . is merely a convenient device for indicating similar or dissimilar" organisms.⁸⁰ Creationists usually allow for variation and microevolution within broader categories, or kinds (defined by this paper as larger than the modern species), but deny the "evolutionary origin of basically different types of plants and animals from common ancestors."⁸¹

beautifully, but plants often interbreed and hybridize, even amongst themselves, without the help of a breeder. Also, a double standard must not be applied, where man is considered a separate kind from apes, even if hybridization might be possible (Frank T. Awbrey, "Defining 'Kinds'—Do Creationists Apply a Double Standard?" *Creation/Evolution* 5/2 [1981]: 1–6).

⁷⁶ Hilbert R. Siegler, "A Creationist's Taxonomy," *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 15 (1978): 38. Siegler states that "the position would vary with each plant and animal species" (38). Leviticus seems to indicate that it would always be above a species, however, and likely between species and genera. Genesis seems to divide only to families, "subdivisions of zoological orders" (J. Barton Payne, "Theistic Evolution and the Hebrew of Genesis 1–2," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 8 [1965]: 88).

⁷⁷ Marsh, *Evolution, Creation, and Science*, 156.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁷⁹ Campbell, 442–444. Different species within the same genus can often reproduce with each other to produce viable offspring (although not always, due to gametic isolation, etc.), but they would choose members of their own species first, if at all possible. This is often due to habitat isolation, temporal isolation, and/or behavioral isolation. Plants are also known to interbreed frequently between species, constantly combining genetic material to produce new species without geographic isolation. This speciation accounts for "25% to 50% of plant species" (Campbell, 440–444).

⁸⁰ Marsh, 152.

⁸¹ Gish, 34. However, some creationists claim that "the Bible does not require . . . that all the animals of one *mîn* are related by descent" (Jones, "Boundaries of the *Min*," 122).

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However, the limitations of microevolution have never been well established, and more work needs to be done on the scientific end of defining the boundaries of *mîn*. The “biological principle of Limitation of Variation” must be demonstrated, so that the meaning of *mîn* can be enhanced and verified.

A final theological implication results from the term *mîn* never being used in regards to humans, but only animals and plants. Indications are that humans are not capable of larger microevolution. We are God’s crowning creation, made in His image. The animals can change in small or even large ways to adapt to their surroundings, but humans were created as God’s perfect climax to all that had thus far been created.

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