

Extra-Biblical references about allotment, "sons of God" over the nations, etc.

Pagan

Plato's Critias

In the days of old the gods had the whole earth distributed among them by allotment. There was no quarrelling; for you cannot rightly suppose that the gods did not know what was proper for each of them to have, or, knowing this, that they would seek to procure for themselves by contention that which more properly belonged to others. They all of them by just apportionment obtained what they wanted, and peopled their own districts; and when they had peopled them they tended us, their nurselings and possessions, as shepherds tend their flocks, excepting only that they did not use blows or bodily force, as shepherds do, but governed us like pilots from the stern of the vessel, which is an easy way of guiding animals, holding our souls by the rudder of persuasion according to their own pleasure;-thus did they guide all mortal creatures. Now different gods had their allotments in different places which they set in order.

(<https://classics.mit.edu/Plato/critias.html>)

2nd Temple Judaism

Philo's Special Laws

III.

(13) Some persons have conceived that the sun, and the moon, and the other stars are independent gods, to whom they have attributed the causes of all things that exist. But Moses was well aware that the world was created, and was like a very large city, having rulers and subjects in it; the rulers being all the bodies which are in heaven, such as planets and fixed stars;

(14) and the subjects being all the natures beneath the moon, hovering in the air and adjacent to the earth. But that the rulers aforesaid are not independent and absolute, but are the viceroys of one supreme Being, the Father of all, in imitation of whom they administer with propriety and success the charge committed to their care, as he also presides over all created things in strict accordance with justice and with law. Others, on the contrary, who have not discovered the supreme Governor, who thus rules everything, have attributed the causes of the different things which exist in the world to the subordinate powers, as if they had brought them to pass by their own independent act. (15) But the most sacred lawgiver changes their ignorance into knowledge, speaking in the following manner: "Thou shalt not, when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and all the host of heaven, be led astray and fall down and worship

Them."{3}{#de 4:19.} With great felicity and propriety has he here called the reception of these bodies as gods, an error;

(16) for they who see that the different seasons of the year owe their existence to the advances and retreats of the sun, in which periods also the generation of animals, and plants, and fruits, are perfected according to well-defined times, and who see also that the moon is the servant and successor of the sun, taking that care and superintendence of the world by night which the sun takes by day; and also that the other stars, in accordance with their sympathy with things on earth, labour continually and do ten thousand things which contribute to the duration of the existing state of things, have been led into an inextricable error, imagining that these bodies are the only gods.

(17) But if they had taken pains to travel along the straight and true road, they would soon have known that just as the outward sense is the subordinate minister of the mind, so in the same manner all the objects of the outward senses are servants of that which is appreciable only by intellect, being well contented if they can attain to the second place in honour.

(18) But it is altogether ridiculous to imagine that the mind, which is the smallest thing in us, being in fact invisible, is the ruler of those organs which belong to the external senses, but that the greatest and most perfect ruler of the whole universe is not the King of kings; that the being who sees, is not the ruler of those who do not see.

(19) We must, therefore, look on all those bodies in the heaven, which the outward sense regards as gods, not as independent rulers, since they are assigned the work of lieutenants, being by their intrinsic nature responsible to a higher power, but by reason of their virtue not actually called to render in an account of their doings.

(20) So that, transcending all visible essence by means of our reason, let us press forward to the honour of that everlasting and invisible Being who can be comprehended and appreciated by the mind alone; who is not only the God of all gods, whether appreciable only by the intellect or visible to the outward senses, but is also the creator of them all. And if any one gives up the service due to the everlasting and uncreated God, transferring it to any more modern and created being, let him be set down as mad and as liable to the charge of the greatest impiety.

(<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book27.html>)

Jubilees 15:30-32

1. He chose Israel to be His people.
2. And He sanctified it, and gathered it from amongst all the children of men; for there are many nations and many peoples, and all are His, and over all hath He placed spirits in authority to lead them astray from Him.
3. But over Israel He did not appoint any angel or spirit, for He alone is their ruler, and He will preserve them and require them at the hand of His angels and His spirits, and at the

hand of all His powers in order that He may preserve them and bless them, and that they may be His and He may be theirs from henceforth for ever.

(<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/15.htm>)

11QMelchizedek (11q13)

11QMelch II... And concerning that which He said, In [this] year of Jubilee [each of you shall return to his property (Lev. xxv, 13); and likewise, And this is the manner of release:] every creditor shall release that which he has lent [to his neighbour. He shall not exact it of his neighbour and his brother], for God's release [has been proclaimed] (Deut. xv, 2). [And it will be proclaimed at] the end of days concerning the captives as [He said, To proclaim liberty to the captives (Isa. lxi, 1). Its interpretation is that He] will assign them to the Sons of Heaven and to the inheritance of Melchizedek; f[or He will cast] their [lot] amid the po[rtions of Melchize]dek, who will return them there and will proclaim to them liberty, forgiving them [the wrong-doings] of all their iniquities. And this thing will [occur] in the first week of the Jubilee that follows the nine Jubilees. And the Day of Atonement is the e[nd of the] tenth [Ju]bilee, when all the Sons of [Light] and the men of the lot of Mel[chi]zedek will be atoned for. [And] a statute concerns them [to prov]ide them with their rewards. For this is the moment of the Year of Grace for Melchizedek. [And h]e will, by his strength, judge the holy ones of God, executing judgement as it is written concerning him in the Songs of David, who said, ELOHIM has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgement (Psalms lxxii, 1). And it was concerning him that he said, (Let the assembly of the peoples) return to the height above them; EL (god) will judge the peoples (Psalms vii, 7-8). As for that which he s[aid, How long will you] judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah (Psalms lxxii, 2), its interpretation concerns Belial and the spirits of his lot [who] rebelled by turning away from the precepts of God to ... And Melchizedek will avenge the vengeance of the judgements of God... and he will drag [them from the hand of] Belial and from the hand of all the sp[irits of] his [lot]. And all the 'gods [of Justice'] will come to his aid [to] attend to the de[struction] of Belial. And the height is ... all the sons of God... this ... This is the day of [Peace/Salvation] concerning which [God] spoke [through Isa]iah the prophet, who said, [How] beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who proclaims peace, who brings good news, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion: Your ELOHIM [reigns] (Isa. lii, 7). Its interpretation; the mountains are the prophets... and the messenger is the Anointed one of the spirit, concerning whom Dan[iel] said, [Until an anointed one, a prince (Dan. ix, 25)] ... [And he who brings] good [news] , who proclaims [salvation]: it is concerning him that it is written... [To comfort all who mourn, to grant to those who mourn in Zion] (Isa. lxi, 2-3). To comfort [those who mourn: its interpretation], to make them understand all the ages of t[ime] ... In truth ... will turn away from Belial... by the judgement[s] of God, as it is written concerning him, [who says to Zion] ; your ELOHIM reigns. Zion is ..., those who uphold the Covenant, who turn from walking [in] the way of the people. And your ELOHIM is [Melchizedek, who will save them from] the hand of Belial. As for that which He said, Then you shall send abroad the trump[et in] all the land (Lev. xxv, 9) ...

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/11Q13>)

Rabbinic Judaism

Pesikta Rabbati 36:1

"The Holy One, blessed be he, contemplated the Messiah and his works before the world was created, and then hid away his Messiah under his throne of glory until the generation in which he will appear.

Satan said before the Holy One, 'Rav shel olam, for whom is the light which is put away under your throne of glory?' He replied, 'For him who will turn you back and put you to utter shame.' Satan said, 'Rav shel olam, show him to me.' He replied, 'Come and see him.'

And when he saw him, Satan shook, and he fell upon his face and said, 'Surely this is Messiah who will cause me AND ALL THE PRINCES OF THE NATIONS to be swallowed up in Gehenna, as it is said, He will swallow up death for ever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces'(Isa. 25.) ...

In that hour THE PRINCES OF THE NATIONS, [THE TUTELARY DEITIES] in agitation, will say to him, 'Rav shel olam, who is this through whose power we are to be swallowed up? What is his name? What kind of a being is he?'

The Holy One, blessed be he, will reply, 'He is the Messiah and his name is Ephraim Messiah Tsidqi, who will raise up himself and raise up his generation, and who will give light to the eyes of Israel and deliver his people. (Pesikta Rabbati 36.1 - <https://brightmorningstar.org/whose-son-is-messiah-ben-joseph/#:~:text=And%20when%20he%20saw%20him,25.8>).

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

Genesis 11

And the Lord said to the seventy angels which stand before Him, Come, we will descend and will there commingle their language, that a man shall not understand the speech of his neighbour. ([https://www.sefaria.org/Targum Jonathan on Genesis.11.7?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Targum_Jonathan_on_Genesis.11.7?lang=bi))

Deut 32

When the Most High made allotment of the world unto the nations which proceeded from the sons of Noach, in the separation of the writings and languages of the children of men at the time of the division, He cast the lot among the seventy angels, the princes of the nations with whom is the revelation to oversee the city, even at that time He established the limits of the nations according to the sum of the number of the seventy souls of Israel who went down into Mizraim. ([https://www.sefaria.org/Targum Jonathan on Deuteronomy.32.8?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Targum_Jonathan_on_Deuteronomy.32.8?lang=bi))

Hebrew Scriptures

Deuteronomy 32:8-9

When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the [sons of God (DSS)/angels of God (LXX)/sons of Israel(MT)]. (Deuteronomy 32:8)

Below are the notes from the NET Bible Full Notes.

Heb “the sons of Israel.” The idea, perhaps, is that Israel was central to Yahweh’s purposes and all other nations were arranged and distributed according to how they related to Israel. See S. R. Driver, Deuteronomy (ICC), 355-56. For the MT בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (bne yisra’el, “sons of Israel”) a Qumran fragment has “sons of God,” while the LXX reads ἀγγέλων θεοῦ (angelōn theou, “angels of God”), presupposing אֱלֹהִים (bne ’el) or אֱלִים (bene ’elim). “Sons of God” is undoubtedly the original reading; the MT and LXX have each interpreted it differently. MT assumes that the expression “sons of God” refers to Israel (cf. Hos. 1:10), while LXX has assumed that the phrase refers to the angelic heavenly assembly (Pss 29:1; 89:6; cf. as well Ps 82). The phrase is also attested in Ugaritic, where it refers to the high god El’s divine assembly. According to the latter view, which is reflected in the translation, the Lord delegated jurisdiction over the nations to his angelic host (cf. Dan. 10:13-21), while reserving for himself Israel, over whom he rules directly. For a defense of the view taken here, see M. S. Heiser, “Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God,” BSac 158 (2001): 52-74.

(<https://netbible.org/bible/Deuteronomy+32>)

Church Fathers (primarily, comments on Deuteronomy 32:8-9)

Let us then draw near to Him with holiness of spirit, lifting up pure and undefiled hands unto Him, loving our gracious and merciful Father, who has made us partakers in the blessings of His elect. For thus it is written, “When the Most High divided the nations, when He scattered the sons of Adam, He fixed the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God. His people Jacob became the portion of the Lord, and Israel the lot of His inheritance.” And in another place [the Scripture] saith, “Behold, the Lord taketh unto Himself a nation out of the midst of the nations, as a man takes the first-fruits of his threshing-floor; and from that nation shall come forth the Most Holy.” (Clement of Rome, Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 19 -

<https://www.catholiccrossreference.online/fathers/index.php/Deut%2032:9>)

“He set the boundaries of the nations according to the numbers of the children of Israel.” ... Having said this, I added: “The Seventy have translated it, ‘He set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the angels of God.’ ” (Justin Martyr, “Dialog with Trypho”, Ch. 131 - <https://www.logoslibrary.org/justin/trypho/131.html>.)

“He set the boundaries of the nations after the number of the angels of God.” However, the people who believe in God are not now under the power of angels, but under the Lord’s [rule]. “For His people Jacob were made the portion of the Lord.” (Irenaeus of Lyons, “Against Heresies”, III.12 - <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103312.htm>)

“Regiments of angels are distributed over the nations and cities.” (Clement of Alexandria, “The Stromata”, VI.17 - <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02106.htm>)

“By an ancient and divine order, the angels are distributed among the nations.” (Clement of Alexandria, “The Stromata”, VII.2 - <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02107.htm>)

“Moreover, other nations are called a part of the angels. This is because “when the Most High divided the nations and dispersed the sons of Adam, He fixed the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the angels of God.” (Origen of Alexandria, De Principiis, I.5.2 - <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04121.htm>)

“Our prophet of God and His genuine servant Moses, in his song in the Book of Deuteronomy, makes a statement regarding the portioning out of the earth in the following terms: “When the Most High divided the nations, when He dispersed the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the people according to the number of the angels of God. And the Lord’s portion was His people, Jacob.” (Origen, “Contra Celsum”, V.29 - <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm>)

All the people upon the earth are to be regarded as having originally used one divine language. As long as they lived harmoniously together, they were preserved in the use of this divine language. They remained without moving from the east, as long as they were imbued with the sentiments of the light.... [After the confusion of languages,] each one was handed over ... to angels of character more or less severe ... until the peoples had paid the penalty for their brash deeds. The angels imprinted on each his native language. And they were conducted by those angels to the different parts of the earth according to their deserts. For example, some were taken to a region of burning heat. Others, to a country that chastises its inhabitants by its cold. Again, others, to a land exceedingly difficult to cultivate.... Those who preserved their original language continued ... in possession of the east and of their eastern language. Take note that these people alone became the portion of the Lord. And His people were called Jacob and Israel.... These alone were governed by an [angelic] ruler who did not receive those who were placed under him for the purpose of punishment—as was the case with the others. Origen, “Contra Celsum”, V.30 - <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm>)

To every nation is sent an angel, as the Law says: “He determined them by the number of the angels of God,” until the number of the saints should be filled up. They do not overstep their boundaries, because in the end they shall come with the Antichrist. (Victorinus, “Commentary on Revelation”, <https://catenabible.com/com/574f83293c6effa740ddd783>)

9. Paul himself also—after that the Lord spoke to him out of heaven, and showed him that, in persecuting His disciples, he persecuted his own Lord, and sent Ananias to him that he might recover

his sight, and be baptized—"preached," it is said, "Jesus in the synagogues at Damascus, with all freedom of speech, that this is the Son of God, the Christ." This is the mystery which he says was made known to him by revelation, that He who suffered under Pontius Pilate, the same is Lord of all, and King, and God, and Judge, receiving power from Him who is the God of all, because He became "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And inasmuch as this is true, when preaching to the Athenians on the Areopagus—where, no Jews being present, he had it in his power to preach God with freedom of speech—he said to them: "God, who made the world, and all things therein, He, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is He touched by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; who hath made from one blood the whole race of men to dwell upon the face of the whole earth, predetermining the times according to the boundary of their habitation, to seek the Deity, if by any means they might be able to track Him out, or find Him, although He be not far from each of us. For in Him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain men of your own have said, For we are also His offspring. Inasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Deity is like unto gold or silver, or stone graven by art or man's device. Therefore God, winking at the times of ignorance, does now command all men everywhere to turn to Him with repentance; because He hath appointed a day, on which the world shall be judged in righteousness by the man Jesus; whereof He hath given assurance by raising Him from the dead." Now in this passage he does not only declare to them God as the Creator of the world, no Jews being present, but that He did also make one race of men to dwell upon all the earth; as also Moses declared: "When the Most High divided the nations, as He scattered the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the nations after the number of the angels of God;" but that people which believes in God is not now under the power of angels, but under the Lord's [rule]. "For His people Jacob was made the portion of the Lord, Israel the cord of His inheritance." (Irenaeus of Lyons, "Against Heresies", III.12.9 -

<https://www.catholiccrossreference.online/fathers/index.php/Deut%2032:9>)

"And it is not matter of surprise that in certain generations there have existed prophets who, in the reception of divine influence, surpassed, by means of their stronger and more powerful (religious) life, other prophets who were their contemporaries, and others also who lived before and after them. And so it is not at all wonderful that there should also have been a time when something of surpassing excellence took up its abode among the human race, and which was distinguished above all that preceded or even that followed. But there is an element of profound mystery in the account of these things, and one which is incapable of being received by the popular understanding. And in order that these difficulties should be made to disappear, and that the objections raised against the advent of Christ should be answered—viz., that, "after so long a period of time, then, did God now bethink himself of making men live righteous lives, but neglect to do so before?"—it is necessary to touch upon the narrative of the divisions (of the nations), and to make it evident why it was, that "when the Most High divided the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God, and the portion of the Lord was His people Jacob, Israel the cord of His inheritance;" and it will be necessary to state the reason why the birth of each man took place within each particular boundary, under him who obtained the boundary by lot, and how it rightly happened that "the portion of the Lord was His people Jacob, and Israel the cord of His inheritance," and why formerly the portion of the Lord was His people Jacob, and Israel

the cord of His inheritance. But with respect to those who come after, it is said to the Saviour by the Father, "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." For there are certain connected and related reasons, bearing upon the different treatment of human souls, which are difficult to state and to investigate." (Origen, "Contra Celsum", IV.8 - <https://www.catholiccrossreference.online/fathers/index.php/Deut%2032:9>)

"Angels knew only this, that "The Lord's portion was His people." And again it is said, "The Prince of Persia withstood me." So that it is nothing to be wondered at that they were ignorant of this; for if they were ignorant of the circumstances of the return from the Captivity, much more would they be of these things. For this is the gospel. "It is He that shall save," it saith, "His people." Not a word about the Gentiles. But what concerns the Gentiles the Spirit revealeth. That they were called indeed, the Angels knew, but that it was to the same privileges as Israel, yea, even to sit upon the throne of God, this, who would ever have expected? who would ever have believed?" (John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, Ephesians 3:8-11 - <https://www.catholiccrossreference.online/fathers/index.php/Deut%2032:9>)

"Whom He appointed," saith he, "heir of all." What is "whom He appointed heir of all"? He speaks here of the flesh [the human nature]. As He also says in the second Psalm, "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance." For no longer is "Jacob the portion of the Lord" nor "Israel His inheritance" but all men: that is to say, He hath made Him Lord of all: which Peter also said in the Acts, "God hath made Him both Lord and Christ." But he has used the name "Heir," declaring two things: His proper sonship and His indefeasible sovereignty. "Heir of all," that is, of all the world. (John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Epistle Hebrews - <https://www.catholiccrossreference.online/fathers/index.php/Deut%2032:9>)

"Those angels who occupy the lowest heaven, that, namely, which is visible to us, formed all the things which are in the world, and made allotments among themselves of the earth and of those nations which are upon it. The chief of them is he who is thought to be the God of the Jews; and inasmuch as he desired to render the other nations subject to his own people, that is, the Jews, all the other princes resisted and opposed him. Wherefore all other nations were at enmity with his nation." (Irenaeus, "Against Heresies", I.24.4 - <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103124.htm>)*

*Here, Irenaeus describes a version of this that is distorted by Gnostic heretics. One must evaluate Irenaeus's pushback by looking at the whole system of belief – not just this part. Some have used this to try to discredit the DCW, but consider the way all the other Fathers talk about this, and the nuances involved.