

The Concept of "Kind" (Hebrew Word "*min*")

What is a "Kind"?

The word "kind" (Hebrew, *min*) represents the *boundaries* within which a group of organisms can reproduce. The Genesis account of creation tells us that God created living organisms to reproduce "after their kind." This allows for a great amount of variation among the organisms, yet provides limits or boundaries to that variation. Organisms have never varied *outside* the boundaries of their "kinds," and they never will in the future.

Mocking liars (2 Peter 3:1-7) may claim that variation *does* exist outside the boundaries of a "kind," and may paste pictures on a poster ("photoshopping" them as necessary),^[1] to supposedly "prove" it. But it *hasn't* happened (as the absence of transitional forms in the fossil record testifies) and it *can't* happen (as God testifies).

Nevertheless, there *is* variation – and a great deal of it – *within* a "kind."

The way the word "kind" is used in the lists of creatures given in Leviticus 11 suggests that the word typically represents groups that are *larger* than the modern-day concepts of "genus" or "species," but probably *smaller* than the modern-day concept of "family." Perhaps we could describe a "kind" as representing "a group of *genetically related* species." But if so, we must emphasize that the genetic relationship is *genuine*, in contrast to the fictional relationships that have been invented by those who deny what Scripture teaches.

How Much Variation Is There in a Kind?

How broad might this variation within a "kind" be? Based on the criterion of reproduction (mentioned in Genesis 1), we could say that a "kind" (at least as it was originally created) would include *all* existing organisms that could reproduce offspring together. This would be a much larger group than some might think, but much smaller than others would like to dream.

To illustrate the broadness, yet also the limits, of a "kind," we can look at the "dog kind." This would include not only the wide variety of domesticated dogs (Collies, Great Danes, Poodles, Terriers, Bulldogs, etc.), but also wolves, dingoes, coyotes, jackals, foxes, and similar species (including any which may now be extinct).^[2] On the other hand, it would not include (and could *never* turn into) cats, elephants, birds, fruit flies, pterodactyls, or any other species that belongs to a distinctly different "kind."

At the Flood, two of each "kind" (or in some cases, seven) came onto the ark – directed by God (perhaps through an instinctive sense of impending danger). In this way, each "kind" would survive.^[3] This does not mean that the whole range of genetic diversity that was originally present at creation would survive. (More likely, the "gene pool" would be reduced, perhaps significantly.) This also does not mean that all "kinds" that survived the Flood continued to survive the centuries *after* the Flood. (Many probably had difficulties adapting to the new environment and died out. *To this day*, species are dying out at an alarming rate, as changing environmental conditions make survival more difficult.)

After the Flood, the various creatures began to spread out across the surface of the earth.^[4] This would have a “diluting” effect on the genetic variety within any locality. Small groups of a “kind,” living together, would interbreed. Having a much smaller genetic diversity, they would begin to develop common traits that would become the features of modern-day species.

Is There Value in Understanding This Concept of "Kind"?

Based on these facts, is it possible to “work back” from the modern-day species, to determine the original boundaries of a “kind” (or at least the boundaries present when the animals left the ark)? Maybe to some degree; but there are factors which may limit our success in doing so. The “specialization” within the “kind” that has occurred *after* the Flood may have made reproduction between the isolated groups (“species”) less viable. (For instance, horses and donkeys can reproduce mules, but the mules normally lose their ability to reproduce.) Also, the fact that many “species” are now extinct probably means that part of the original “gene pool” is now gone. Even so, by examining the evidence that we *do* have, including the actual fossil record,^[5] we can develop a basic (though incomplete) understanding of what a distinct “kind” is.

To whatever degree we *can* understand what a “kind” is, there is practical value in it. If we can understand (at least in part) the range of variation that may be possible, we may be able to anticipate *further* variations that could be developed through selective breeding. With an understanding of “kinds,” we could focus our efforts on scientific *realities*, and how we can work with them and further develop them. We would not waste our efforts on pretensions – such as supposed changes from one “kind” to another (something which has never happened in the past and will never happen in the future).

Knowing that the basic unit of existence is the “kind,” rather than the “species,” has economic value as well. Rather than spending billions of dollars in a futile attempt to “save” some nearly extinct “species,” we could save the genetic material at much less cost, by simply “reuniting” it with other “species” within the same “kind”! Even though that specific “species” within the “kind” might die out; the genetic material itself would not be lost. In the end, new “species” could result from a recombination of the genetic material, as offspring were selectively bred, either as the creatures were adapting to the new environment (natural selection) or by human activity.

The Use of the word “Kind” in the Bible

Old Testament

The Hebrew word *min* occurs in several passages. In Genesis 1, it is used in reference to plant life, sea creatures, flying creatures, and land animals. In each case, the emphasis is the fact that the life form mentioned will reproduce *after its "kind"*. This is the *only* way they will be able to reproduce.

Genesis 1

Vegetation

Gen 1:11-12 - God said, "Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit *after their kind*, with its seed in it, on the earth;" and it was so. The earth brought forth grass, herbs yielding seed *after their kind*, and trees bearing fruit, with its seed in it, *after their kind*; and God saw that it was good.

Sea Creatures and Flying Creatures

Gen 1:21 - God created the large sea creatures, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed, *after their kind*, and every winged bird *after its kind*. God saw that it was good.

Land Creatures

Gen 1:24-25 - God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures *after their kind*, livestock, creeping things, and animals of the earth *after their kind*;" and it was so. God made the animals of the earth *after their kind*, and the livestock *after their kind*, and everything that creeps on the ground *after its kind*. God saw that it was good.

Note how often God *emphasizes* the fact that the creatures he made would reproduce "after their kinds"!

In Genesis 6 and 7, a reference is made to various "kinds" of creatures that are to be on the ark. Only two (or in some cases seven) of each of these "kinds" will be needed - a *much smaller number* than if the modern-day definition of "species" were used.

Genesis 6 and 7

Gen 6:20 - Of the birds *after their kind*, of the livestock *after their kind*, of every creeping thing of the ground *after its kind*, two of every sort shall come to you, to keep them alive.

Gen 7:14 - [Noah and his family entered the ark] ... they, and every animal *after its kind*, all the livestock *after their kind*, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth *after its kind*, and every bird *after its kind*, every bird of every sort.

In the Genesis passages, the references are to various "kinds" within various larger categories of plants and animals. In Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, the focus is on specific types of animals, often associated with the word "kind." These passages are quite helpful in developing a "taxonomy" of some of the creatures that existed at that time, in that area of the world. (The animals listed are placed within the various larger categories given in Genesis.)

These passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy contain lists of animals that could be eaten (or not eaten) under the Old Covenant regulations. (The Deuteronomy account is an abridgment or summary of the information given in Leviticus.) The use of the word "kind" in reference to some of the groups of animals helps us understand the broadness (and limits) of the concept. (Example - the word "raven" was used for a range of birds described as "kind" - the modern-day equivalent being probably being a group of several "species"; but it would *not* contain the various other birds that are named separately in the list.)

Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14

"Kinds" of Flying Creatures (Four of the names on the list are described as "kinds.")

Lev 11:13-19 - ... the eagle, and the vulture, and the black vulture, and the red kite, *any kind* of black kite, *any kind* of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, and the gull, *any kind* of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, *any kind* of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat.

Deu 14:12-18 - ... the eagle, and the vulture, and the osprey, and the red kite, and the falcon, and the kite *after its kind*, and every raven *after its kind*, and the ostrich, and the owl, and the seagull, and the hawk *after its kind*, the little owl, and the great owl, and the horned owl, and the pelican, and the vulture, and the cormorant, and the stork, and the heron *after its kind*, and the hoopoe, and the bat.

Winged "Creeping Things" (Insects) that Hop

Lev 11:22 - ... *any kind* of locust, *any kind* of katydid, *any kind* of cricket, and *any kind* of grasshopper.

"Creeping Things" (Small Land Animals) (One of the names on the list is described as a "kind.")

Lev 11:29-30 - ... the weasel, the rat, *any kind* of great lizard, the gecko, and the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink, and the chameleon.

Finally, Ezekiel describes some of the conditions that will occur in the future, when the throne of God is located on earth. In the account, he tells us that the Dead Sea will become a fresh-water lake (at least compared to its present condition), and that the various "kinds" of fish present will be comparable to those found in the Mediterranean Sea.

Ezekiel 47

Eze 47:9-10 - ... the waters of the [Dead Sea] shall be healed, ... fishermen shall stand by it... their fish shall be *after their kinds*, as the fish of the great [Mediterranean] sea, exceeding many.

New Testament

Obviously, the New Testament was written in Greek, rather than Hebrew; so the word *min* is not found there. However, the word *phusis* (often translated as "nature") seems to be used in a way that is similar to *min*, in James 3:7. In this verse, James refers to various "kinds" that exist within each of four main groups of "living creatures" - land animals, birds, creeping things, and sea creatures - and says that such "kinds" have been tamed by the human "kind."

James 3:7

Jas 3:7 For every *kind* of animal, bird, creeping thing, and thing in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by *mankind*.

Other passages that use this word *phusis* or a related word, *phusikos*, have a greater emphasis on the fact that the "nature" or "instinctive nature" of something (whether animal, human, deity, etc.) influences its conduct. Things that exist "do as they do" or "are what they are" because it is their *nature* to be that way. What they are, or what they do, is just what you would expect from them (unless they are acting *contrary to their nature*).

Notes

1. "Photoshopping" (or equivalent) is more common than one would *want* to believe. Text books have often contained drawings or sketches that supposedly "proved" such things – but were later shown to be strongly influenced by what the person *wanted to prove*. Some pictures (such as supposed "intermediates" between species) have even been shown to be *faked*, when evidence was totally lacking. (The Bible calls this "bearing false witness.")
2. Some interesting articles on this issue may be found at: Answers in Genesis (<http://www.answersingenesis.org/>) , by searching their website (using search words such as "kind"). A few randomly-selected links include: *Is your dog some kind of degenerate mutant?* (<http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v4/i1/dog.asp>), *Fixity of Species* (<http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2009/03/16/fixity-of-species>), and *Zonkeys, Ligers, and Wolphins, Oh My!* (<http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/aid/v3/n1/zonkeys-ligers-wholphins>).
3. Two (or seven) of each "*kind*" needed to be on the ark, rather than two (or seven) of each "*species*." This *greatly reduces* the total number of animals that would have needed to be on the ark.
4. Some of the mechanisms that would allow for species to spread out across the earth are:
 - Huge masses of tangled, floating vegetation, still present after the Flood, would allow animals to "float" from one area to another.
 - Lower ocean levels (with much of the water trapped in ice at the poles and in the "ice age" glaciers) would result in "land bridges" in many areas.
 - Some of the land masses may have still been moving (as conditions after the Flood were still stabilizing), and some areas now submerged may have still been dry land.
5. "Actual," as opposed to a "fictitious" fossil record. There is a major distinction between actual fossils, and the creative "artist's renditions" that many invent, using broken, often distorted, bone fragments – and often brought together from multiple locations and pieced together, based on the preconceived notions that the person wants to promote. Often the *same* crushed, deformed bone fragments can be used to design radically different pictures, if the artist chooses to begin with a different set of assumptions.