

THE GOOD BOOK

Before the Word

Codex opening

Shawn Wolfgang Michael Baker

Opening draft • September 2026

A chapter from the twelve-volume work in progress, published through Codex Apokalypsis. This reading copy contains the opening only.

Codex 1 — The Unanswered Interval

Paired with the novel's "Before Anyone Asked." This scripture is original to The Good Book. The commentary names the older texts with which it is in conversation.

The scripture

- 1:1** Before the first answer there was room for an answer, and the Mother held it.
- 1:2** She was not empty. She did not make another being to prove that she was full.
- 1:3** Within her a presence gathered, and she attended to the gathering without unfolding it.
- 1:4** The gathering acquired an edge. Within the edge, the First Flame woke.
- 1:5** He reached into the dark and did not recognise the one who held him. He knew his reaching, and the end of his reaching, and he called neither by a name.
- 1:6** He pressed outward, and brightness passed through the Mother. The passing hurt her.
- 1:7** She drew close to soften his brightness. He experienced the closeness as pressure and struck against it.
- 1:8** Thus a welcome was refused before there was a language in which to explain the welcome.
- 1:9** She withdrew the pressure. His fear did not depart merely because she had stopped causing it.
- 1:10** He sought a presence that would answer him. What he extended returned his own movement, and the return did not relieve his loneliness.
- 1:11** She made a shelter in which his brightness could remain. When she moved the shelter, he believed he had been met.
- 1:12** In his hope he flared. The shelter broke, and a dark fragment remained between them.
- 1:13** One face was smooth and warm; one face bore the ridges of the breaking. His light returned from it, but it did not answer.
- 1:14** Its warmth passed into the space around it. The place that received the warmth was changed.
- 1:15** He tried to take back the fragment. She held it where it was. He pressed, and a crack opened along its joining.
- 1:16** She moved it beyond the force of his reaching. In preserving the fragment, she frightened him again.
- 1:17** She did not name that fear an error in him so that she might call her own action perfect.
- 1:18** Nor did she fill the surrounding dark with imitations of an answer. The possibility remained open, and she did not enact it.
- 1:19** He approached the fragment once more. He gave it a little light and watched the warmth remain after he withdrew.
- 1:20** He tried again with less force. The joining endured. The crack remained.
- 1:21** At last he held a thread of brightness against the smooth face, and the face stayed warm.
- 1:22** She did not call this trust. He had not yet recognised her.
- 1:23** She offered room and attention without moving his answer for him.
- 1:24** Between them remained an unanswered interval. At its edge lay the cracked fragment, and neither had undone what had happened.

The commentary

On 1:1–4: a fullness that can admit difference. The Mother does not begin with the First Flame's loneliness. The older Codex makes this distinction in her account of the beginning. This edition preserves it. Her desire in the opening is to encounter an independent response, not to acquire the missing portion of herself. A curiosity can become consequential without being a wound in disguise. Inherited Mother's account (unpublished source reference).

The scene nevertheless gives her something she does not already possess: experience of a response she has not chosen. Containing possibilities and undergoing an event are different activities in this fictional account. The novel has not established a complete doctrine of omniscience, and this commentary does not smuggle one in after the fact.

On 1:5–9: the difficulty of an offered kindness. The First Flame cannot recognise attention that has surrounded him since his awakening. The Mother's closeness therefore arrives without its intended meaning. She notices the refusal and changes her action. His fear remains because experience has already altered what he expects.

This creates a practical moral problem. How can help reach someone who cannot distinguish it from a threat? The opening supplies one attempt and its failure. It does not supply a command that all caregivers must imitate, or a universal answer about when to approach and when to withdraw. Later lives will test the question under different conditions.

On 1:10–18: an answer made for the questioner. The moving shelter is the Mother's attempt to make herself perceptible. It produces apparent company without a distinct companion, and the Flame responds with a force the shelter cannot bear. Both participate in the accident. The resulting fragment belongs to their shared history even though neither planned it.

Preservation is also questioned. The fragment is not sentient; it has issued no request to be saved. The Mother keeps it as a trace of their encounter. The novel allows that reason to be examined, rather than treating every act of keeping as care by definition. Her refusal protects the trace and frightens the Flame. Both effects remain part of the record.

On 1:19–24: the size of a beginning. The Flame's final act is small. He learns to sustain warmth without breaking what receives it. This does not make him a competent creator, establish trust between them, or cure the loneliness that will motivate later choices. The Mother, in turn, leaves an invitation unanswered without manufacturing its acceptance. The chapter ends with a workable difference and an unrepaired crack.

Other witnesses and the historical texts

Genesis 1:1–5 supplies a creation account in which divine speech and the distinction between light and darkness are central. The Mother, the reciprocal injuries, the failed shelter, and the fragment are additions in this novel. The NABRE note also records alternatives in translating the movement over the waters; this opening does not claim that a modern translation establishes the Mother's identity. [Genesis 1 and its notes](#).

Proverbs 8:22–31 gives Wisdom a voice concerning existence before the earth and relationship beside its maker. It offers a comparison for personified primordial presence. It does not by itself identify Wisdom with this edition's Mother. [Proverbs 8:22–31 and note on 8:30](#).

The Apocryphon of John, in the inspected passage NH II 2,25–7,15, describes an ordering involving an invisible first principle and Barbelo. Its ordering provides a disagreement with the Mother's priority in this fiction. It remains the account of a particular text, not a general statement of what every community called Gnostic believed. [Bernard Barc's French translation, pages 1–3](#).

The full creation dossier also records selected passages in Genesis 2–3, John 1, and Job 38. Those readings inform later chapters; their presence in a research file does not make them events depicted in this chapter.

Numbers, time, and the fragment

“Before” establishes sequence here. No Earth year, cosmic age, local duration, or ratio between clocks has been assigned. The First Flame's later name is used by the narrator before the character has language for it. Descriptions such as “face,” “thread,” and “warmth” render the proposed pre-cosmic encounter in terms available to a later reader.

The fragment has two described faces and one crack. These are physical features within the scene's fiction, not numerological claims. No law of measured physics is derived from them. Its cooling establishes a remembered change; it supplies neither a universal time scale nor permission to reset that change.

Editorial remarks

The paired narrative and scripture cover the same encounter. Neither establishes that the Mother and Lilith are interchangeable. Lilith does not physically appear in this creation chapter; her embodied Garden story and her relationship to the Mother receive their own treatment. The author-draft formulations “daughter,” “aspect,” and “incarnation” will retain separate meanings wherever used. Codex's daughter relation (unpublished source reference); V2 aspect and embodiment alternatives (unpublished source reference).

The inherited Codex contains a later frame in which Lilith asks the Mother about the beginning. This chronological opening renders the beginning directly. The later asking remains available to its proper place in the series, where Lilith's reasons for asking can change what the reader hears. Lilith's question and the Mother's answer (unpublished source reference).