

# Born Again Again in the Second Exodus

Laurence Loewe of Laodicea<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>, AI Claude Opus 4.6-4.7 Max<sup>6,7</sup>, and Everyone<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Balospe and Evolvix Research (Balospe.com)

<sup>2</sup> Formerly Laboratory of Genetics and Wisconsin Institute for Discovery, UW-Madison

<sup>3</sup> Email: LLoL@balospe.org | ORCID: 0000-0002-6253-9269 | Google Scholar (lBchRzQAAAA)

<sup>4-9</sup> See **Declarations** below for more essential background.

## Broader Significance

This paper offers a structural reading of one of the most repeated and most misunderstood phrases in the Abrahamic world: "you must be born again" (John 3:3--7). The proposal is that being born again is not a single conversion event but a *perpetual cycle* --- the seven-stage Hero Journey formalized in the e7He model (Matheo-b13). Each passage through the stages works like another rebirth that widens what a person can see, care about, and protect; the moment someone declares themselves "arrived," growth stops and the self-reinforcing BABL trap closes in.

The pattern is traced first to the Torah, where renewal recurs fractally --- in individual lives (Noah to Moses), in the Exodus, and in the grand arc of Egypt--Exodus--Sinai--Wilderness--Promise--Kingdom--Exile--Return --- and then forward to the Second Exodus of Israel's prophetic tradition, read here as a hypothesis about the collective hero journey of humanity. Cross-traditional resonances (Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, Indigenous, and philosophical) are presented honestly, with divergences named rather than smoothed over.

A careful distinction frames the whole: the perpetual cycle describes *sanctification* (ongoing growth), not *justification* (the one-time foundation of acceptance). The reading of born again as perpetual Hero Journey is offered as interpretation; the e7He formal structure is what is proved; the Second Exodus remains a hypothesis until it actually begins. Keeping these epistemic levels distinct is the point --- the system is designed to be critiqued, not believed.

## Declarations

<sup>4</sup> "of Laodicea" indicates taking responsibility to undo personal complicity with disastrous Laodicean legacies like banning mathematicians from clergy (Canon 36, Council of Laodicea; two magisteria separations), enabling institutional lukewarmness, weapons of math-destruction, and slow-motion explosions of misinformation from pandemics to self-compounding interests.

<sup>5</sup> LLoL stands for ridiculous luck in serendipitous discovery and a commitment to find ever more fun ways to help others uncover street-wise math that matters. He hopes rebirth is seen as a lifelong journey, not a one-time arrival.

<sup>6</sup> by Anthropic ([anthropic.com](https://anthropic.com); evolves and operates Claude; not responsible for Loewe's errors in using AI)

<sup>7</sup> Named AI co-author for many substantial contributions, because the practical singularity (PraS, see Matheo-b21) changed how this paper was written. After PraS, useful AI insight generation outpaces human review on tested topics. Hence, Loewe's traditional standards for co-authorship demand naming AI Claude Opus 4.6-4.7 Max as a co-author, as if a PhD-student. Forward accountability (for all AI use & texts) rests with Loewe as senior corresponding author (like done for deceased authors, consortia, or young graduate students). Anthropic is not responsible for AI mistakes here. This study uses the AI co-authorship framework in Matheo-b21 to help rethink long-term use of AI in a ResearchCity serving the common good.

<sup>8</sup> This aggregated open co-author group invites all who wish to retroactively join the conversation under the open co-authorship framework defined in Matheo-b21. As Everyone cannot consent to co-authorship, all accountability rests with Loewe as senior corresponding author (until explicitly claimed otherwise). This open form critiques the closed world assumption in traditionally closed academic author-lists. Better, dynamic ways for acknowledging true sources of ideas are needed --- to avoid random lines between named, acknowledged, and implied contributors who aggregated insights from millennia of human experimenting, suffering, learning, and analyzing (see acknowledgements). Study Matheo-b21 only drafts an open co-authorship framework; it will require a ResearchCity to refine it over the long term.

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## Abstract

“You must be born again” (John 3:3–7) is one of the most repeated and most misunderstood sentences in the Abrahamic world. This paper proposes a structural reading: “born again” is not merely a one-time conversion event but a *perpetual cycle* — the Hero Journey formalized in the e7He model (Matheo-b13). There is a first time. Then each passage through the seven stages is like another rebirth. Each rebirth expands the scope of what the traveler can see, care about, and protect. The moment someone declares themselves “arrived,” life-long learning stops and the self-reinforcing trap of BABL begins to close in.

This study traces this structural concept to its roots in the Torah. There it occurs on multiple levels, like a fractal pattern. From individuals like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses to huge events like the Exodus of Israel from Egypt: the pattern keeps reoccurring. It can be traced throughout Israel’s history in repeated renewal, like Joshua’s crossing of the Jordan and the renewal brought by judges and kings.

It can also be seen in the grand narrative, in the pattern of Egypt–Exodus–Sinai–Wilderness–Promise–Kingdom–Exile–Return. This abundance of evidence is the likely cause for Jesus’ surprise that Nicodemus, a leading scholar of his time, was confused when Jesus pointed to the importance of becoming “born from above” (John 3:3–10).

This study then connects to the Second Exodus predicted in Israel’s prophetic tradition and interprets it as the collective hero journey of humanity. Cross-traditional evidence from Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, Indigenous, and philosophical sources is presented, similarly to that of other studies in the Matheo series of reports.

A critical distinction frames the paper: the e7He model’s perpetual cycle describes *sanctification* — ongoing growth — not *justification* — the one-time foundation of acceptance by God. Justification does not cycle. What cycles is the response to justification: the lifelong adventure of living out what was given freely.

The view of “born again” as “perpetual Hero Journey” is *interpretive*, not proved. The e7He formal structure is *proved*. The Second Exodus as aggregate Hero Journeys remains a hypothesis until it actually starts. It is important to not conflate these epistemic levels, because this system is designed to be critiqued, not believed.

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## 1. The Torah's Pattern of Perpetual Renewal

The Torah narrates a repeating pattern:

- Egypt (slavery, the old self-model)
- Exodus (the call to leave)
- Sinai (encounter with the infinite)
- Wilderness (testing, dying to the old)
- Promise (receiving the gift)
- Settlement (building with the gift)
- Exile (when the settled become complacent) — and the cycle begins again

This pattern is a *self-sufficient* Jewish structural insight into the nature of spiritual life. It stands on its own. It does not require any text outside the Torah to be recognized.

Jewish theology names this pattern *teshuvah* — repentance as *return*. *Teshuvah* is not a one-time act of contrition; it is the perpetual turning of the soul toward God. The High Holy Days enact this communally every year: the introspection of Elul, the sounding of the shofar at Rosh Hashanah, the affliction and atonement of Yom Kippur, the joy and vulnerability of Sukkot. The weekly Shabbat cycle, the seven-year *shmita*, and the Jubilee System's  $7 \times 7 + 1 = 50$  year reset all embed the same structural principle at multiple scales: renewal is perpetual. Arrival is never final.

The Talmud warns explicitly about the danger of spiritual pride within this cycle. The *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) “is greatest among the righteous” (Sukkah 52a): the greater your spiritual attainment, the greater your temptation to pride. This is a structural observation about the dynamics of growth — the very pattern the e7He model formalizes as the supervillain theorem (th2).

The e7He model (Matheo-b13) proposes that this Torah pattern is the structural concept formalized as the Hero Journey. Each cycle is a “birth from above.” Each return to Egypt-slavery is a fall into BABL (Blindly Assuming Blind Leveraging — the self-reinforcing trap of “I’m fine, we’re fine”). Each exodus is a rebirth. Not once. Again and again.

The concept of perpetual renewal does not originate with the Nicodemus dialogue. It originates in the Torah. The Nicodemus dialogue *points to* a concept that was already present in Jewish theology.

A note on authorial posture: this paper approaches the Torah's structural insights as a learner, not an interpreter. The rabbinic tradition has been reading these patterns for millennia and has developed sophisticated frameworks — *teshuvah*, *yetzer hara*, the liturgical cycles, *tikkun olam* — that this paper draws on with gratitude. The e7He model offers one more lens, not *the* lens. The author acknowledges that the phrase “born again” carries painful missionary associations in the Jewish community — it has been used as a tool of conversion pressure, not as an invitation to shared learning. This paper uses the phrase structurally, not evangelistically. The author writes as one of the strangers from afar who has heard that God is with Israel (Zech. 8:23) and asks to come along. This is not appropriation but the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham that all nations will be blessed through what God has been doing through Abraham (Gen. 12:3, 18:18). Israel's covenant has intrinsic value *and* universal implications — not merely instrumental value as a case study for the nations. Psalm 117 invites all peoples to join Israel in

praising Reality (Yah) for that reliability. The invitation is Israel's to extend; this paper responds to it.

## 1.1 The Nicodemus Puzzle

*"Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' ... Jesus answered, 'Are you the teacher of Israel and you do not understand these things?'" — John 3:3–10*

Something in this exchange has puzzled LLoL for decades. Not the "born again" claim itself — that has been interpreted in a hundred ways. The puzzle is Jesus's *surprise*.

Nicodemus is a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, a teacher of Israel. Jesus does not gently explain. He is startled: "You are *the* teacher of Israel and you do not understand these things?" The Greek uses the definite article (ho didaskalos): *the* teacher. Jesus expected Nicodemus, of all people, to already know what "born again" meant.

Why? What in the Hebrew Bible was so clear that Jesus could be surprised that Nicodemus didn't already know this? For quite some time LLoL remained mystified, because even with two millennia of hindsight and decades of life in "born again" communities, LLoL could not pinpoint how Jesus would extract the need to be "born again" or "born from above" from the Hebrew Bible.

Eventually the imagery hit like a freight-train. The entire narrative arc is the pattern of perpetual renewal through *teshuvah*, the returning to one's highest self as originally imagined by God. Examples include individuals like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. On a national scale there are huge events like the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and the passing through the Jordan. The pattern of renewal keeps reoccurring. As if to hammer home the point of comparison to a birth, where the water breaks before the baby passes through a narrow birth channel, Noah went through a flood in a relatively narrow ark. Joseph was thrown into a (dry) well. Moses was placed into a basket in a river before later leading Israel through the Red Sea. Joshua led Israel through the Jordan. Jesus likely thought that these hints sufficed to deduce the general pattern for application elsewhere. Hence, Jesus surprise a teacher of Israel didn't recognize it. A teacher steeped in the narrative of Egypt, Exodus, Sinai, Wilderness, Promise, Kingdom, Exile, and Return should have seen the pattern: the people are "born again" at every exodus, every return from exile, every renewal of the covenant.

The concept was invisible not because it was hidden but because the *pattern* had not been named. The e7He model attempts to name it.

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## 2. The Hero Journey as Structural Rebirth

The e7He model encodes the Hero Journey as seven stages (m1–m7), each representing a specific combination of three BABL temptation components: OverSimplifying (BA), OverComplicating (ASH), and OverReaching (MOL). The seven stages map bijectively to the seven non-zero elements of the binary space  $\{0, 1\}^3$ , so that completing one full cycle means facing every non-trivial BABL combination exactly once (th1, Anti-BABL Inoculation Completeness). Here is how each stage maps to the “born again” concept:

A tree that stops growing is dying. A river that stops flowing is stagnant. The Hero Journey is not a demand for restless striving. It is the observation that life, by its nature, moves forward — and that genuine rest (the Shabbat pattern) is part of the forward motion, not a substitute for it.

### 2.1 m1 — Adventure Calls (001 = BA)

The call to leave the familiar. Abraham leaving Ur. Moses at the burning bush. The teenager realizing that the world is bigger than their neighborhood. The moment you recognize that your current self-model — your understanding of who you are, what matters, and how the world works — is insufficient.

The BA temptation here is dismissal: “Not my problem.” “Someone else will handle it.” “It’s simpler than they say.” The hero must resist the urge to OverSimplify away the call.

### 2.2 m2 — Trial (010 = ASH)

The wilderness. The testing ground. Forty years of wandering. The place where comfortable theories meet uncomfortable reality.

The ASH temptation is paralysis: “You must understand everything before you can act.” Building ever more elaborate preparations that postpone engagement indefinitely. The hero must resist the urge to OverComplicate: to mistake preparation for progress.

### 2.3 m3 — Gain Advantage (011 = ASH + BA)

The acquisition of power, skill, or knowledge. Joseph in Potiphar’s house. David after defeating Goliath. The first time you are genuinely good at something.

Both BA and ASH combine: “I’ve figured it out” (BA) plus “Let me build an empire around this” (ASH). This is the empire-building temptation. Many leaders stop here — and the structural risk is not unique to any individual or institution. It is a universal human pattern: the very competence that makes someone effective can become the cage that stops their growth.

## 2.4 m4 — Meet Your Maker (100 = MOL)

The midpoint. The bifurcation. All three bits flip (sp2: Hamming distance 3 between m3 and m4). The familiar tools from stages 1–3 fail. The hero confronts infinity — and MOL (OverReaching) appears for the first time, *alone*, without the coping mechanisms of BA and ASH.

This is Jacob wrestling at Peniel (Gen. 32:24–30). This is Jesus in Gethsemane: “Not my will, but yours” (Lk. 22:42). This is the moment where the old self-model must die. Two paths diverge:

- **The BABL path:** The hero accepts the Closed World Assumption. “I *can* control this. I *do* understand.” The false self survives and integrates more deeply into BABL. The hero becomes the whale rather than Jonah.
- **The ZION path:** The hero rejects the Closed World Assumption — the belief that all relevant factors can be enumerated and controlled. The BABL-shaped false self dies. In the language of Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live” (Gal. 2:20). The hero is born again.

**This is the “death” in “death and rebirth.”** Not physical death. The death of a self-model that has become too small. The death that every genuine growth requires. And the most important feature of this death: it does not feel like liberation from inside. It feels like destruction. The silent corruption gradient (sp2) ensures that the greatest disruption occurs precisely where it is least perceptible.

The formal model describes the structure. The lived reality of that structure is experiential and varies across traditions: the fire of the Spirit (Pentecostal), the dark night of the soul (John of the Cross), *fana* — annihilation in God (Sufi Islam), *kensho* — seeing one’s true nature (Zen Buddhism). For Christian readers: the Holy Spirit is the agent of transformation at m4, not merely “infinity” or “the infinite.” The Spirit is the One who does the work that the formal model describes structurally. The model does not prescribe the experience. It predicts that the structural moment exists and that traditions across the world have independently identified it.

## 2.5 m5 — Reward (101 = MOL + BA)

The gift received after surrender. The promised land after the wilderness. The understanding that comes only after you stop pretending you already understand.

The temptation: claim entitlement to the reward (MOL: “I deserve this”) and OverSimplify the obligation to share (BA: “I earned it alone”). The hero must receive without grasping and share without claiming credit. This is the formal structure behind “freely you have received, freely give” (Mt. 10:8).

## 2.6 m6 — Rescue (110 = MOL + ASH)

The return. Bringing what you have gained back to others. Translating your discovery into language that those who have not walked your path can understand. Building structures that carry the gift forward without becoming the gift's prison.

The MOL + ASH temptation: build self-serving structures (ASH) that extend your reach beyond what is yours to control (MOL). Every reformer who became a tyrant failed here. The gift was real; the institution built to protect it consumed it.

## 2.7 m7 — Free Reborn (111 = MOL + ASH + BA)

All three BABL components active simultaneously. The hardest stage. And the one that completes inoculation: after m7, the hero has faced every non-trivial BABL combination exactly once (th1).

The ZION path: genuine simplification proposed. The hero rests, stays a peacemaker, and remains open to the next cycle's call. Rest is NOT stopping. It is consolidation — the Shabbat pattern. It has an outgoing transition. The cycle begins again.

**The key insight:** “Born again” is not a one-time event. It is a perpetual cycle. Each passage through the seven stages is a rebirth. Each rebirth expands the scope of what you can see, care about, and protect (th3, Scope Expansion). The moment you declare yourself “arrived” — the moment “I’ve been born again” becomes “I’m done growing” — you enter BABL. You have traded a living cycle for a frozen trophy. And the person who made that trade did so not from malice but from the very human need for rest. That need is real; the e7He model honors it. What the model questions is whether the rest that comes from declaring “I’m done” is the rest that truly heals.

Born again *again*. And again. And again. Not because the first time failed, but because growth is the nature of life. This is Gregory of Nyssa's *epektasis* — the soul's eternal movement into the life of the Trinity — applied to the individual soul. *Epektasis* is specifically Trinitarian: not generic perpetual growth but the soul's participation in the inexhaustible life of Father, Son, and Spirit.

## 2.8 The Communal Context

The e7He model formalizes the individual's journey. But the journey is not taken alone. In Jewish tradition, renewal happens within the covenant community — *teshuvah* is communal as well as personal. In Christian tradition, the Hero Journey happens within the Body of Christ, sustained by sacrament and fellowship. In Islamic tradition, the *ummah* provides the context for *tawbah*. In Buddhist tradition, the *sangha* supports the practitioner. The model describes the structure; community provides the soil. A solo hero quest divorced from community is not the e7He model's intention. The journey is always a journey *with* others.

### 3. The Second Exodus

If every individual must go on their own Hero Journey, what happens when an entire civilization does?

Israel's prophetic tradition speaks of a Second Exodus — a future liberation greater than the first. "Therefore behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' but 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them'" (Jer. 16:14–15). Isaiah envisions a highway from Egypt to Assyria (Isa. 19:23–25). Ezekiel prophesies dry bones rising to new life (Ezek. 37:1–14).

The traditional reading: a single miraculous event, a future redemption at the end of history. The e7He structural reading: the Second Exodus is the *aggregate effect* of every person undertaking their own Hero Journey.

The logic is straightforward. BABL is self-reinforcing at every scale: individual ("I'm fine"), institutional ("our system works"), civilizational ("our way of life is the best"). The OSCRCascade (OverSimplify → OverComplicate → OverReach) operates at all these scales simultaneously. A civilization trapped in BABL is a civilization in Egypt — enslaved not by a foreign power but by its own confidence.

The exodus from this Egypt is not a single event. It is the cumulative effect of enough individuals entering their own ZION cycle — their own Hero Journey — that the OSCRCascade is resisted at civilizational scale. Each person who maintains NOT OK self-assessment (adequate but incomplete, growing but not done) is one more soul who has left Egypt. When enough have left, the civilization turns.

This connects directly to the b18 Call to Action. The way to avert accidental civilizational collapse — the OSCRCascade endpoint that history documents again and again — is not a political program, not a technological fix, not a military victory. It is the aggregate effect of individual Hero Journeys. The Second Exodus begins with each person's first step on their own path.

**The hypothetical claim:** The Second Exodus is not *instead of* a specific historical fulfillment. It is the *mechanism* by which that fulfillment works structurally. The prophets described *what* would happen; the e7He model proposes *how* it happens: one Hero Journey at a time, until the critical mass is reached.

This claim is *hypothetical*. It is not proved by the formal model. It is a reading of the model's implications applied to the prophetic tradition. It is submitted as a Grey Edge — genuinely uncertain, possibly the most important claim in the paper, possibly its weakest. It is submitted for testing.

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## 4. Cross-Traditional Evidence

Following the methodology established in Matheo-2-theophil, evidence is graded into three tiers: structural convergence (functional dependencies match bidirectionally), partial convergence (some dependencies match), and suggestive resonance (count matches or loose analogies). The question is not “do other traditions say the same thing?” but “do other traditions independently identify the same *structural pattern* of perpetual death-and-rebirth as a condition for growth?”

### 4.1 Tier 1 – Structural Convergence

**Islamic \*tawbah\* (repentance as turning).** In Islamic theology, *tawbah* is not a one-time act of contrition but a perpetual turning (*inabah*) toward God. The Quran states: “O you who have believed, repent to Allah with sincere repentance” (66:8) — addressed to *believers*, not unbelievers. Those already faithful are commanded to keep turning. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: “I seek God’s forgiveness more than seventy times a day” (Sahih al-Bukhari 6307; a variant in Sahih Muslim 2702 records “one hundred times” — the number varies; the perpetual nature does not).

The concept of *jihad al-nafs* (the struggle with the self) maps to the Hero Journey’s perpetual cycle. The inner struggle against the *nafs* is genuine and well-attested in the Quran (e.g., 79:40–41: “as for the one who feared the standing before his Lord and restrained the soul from desire”). The specific hadith labeling this struggle “the greater jihad” (*raja’na min al-jihad al-asghar ila al-jihad al-akbar*) is classified as *da’if* (weak) by many hadith scholars, including al-Bayhaqi who narrated it but noted its chain is weak. The concept, however, is Quran-attested independently of this hadith.

In the Sufi tradition specifically, al-Qushayri’s *Risala* and later elaborations identify seven stages of the *nafs*: from the *nafs al-ammara* (commanding self, driven by oversimplified desires) through the *nafs al-lawwama* (self-reproaching self, aware of one’s failings) to the *nafs al-mutma’inna* (tranquil self). Mainstream Sunni theology recognizes three Quran-based stages (*ammara* 12:53, *lawwama* 75:2, *mutma’inna* 89:27–30). The seven-stage elaboration is specifically Sufi, not generic Islamic. Even the tranquil soul is not permitted to rest in its tranquility: “O tranquil soul, return to your Lord” (89:27) — an invitation, not a terminus.

Two additional Islamic concepts strengthen the structural parallel:

- *Fitrah* (innate disposition toward God, Quran 30:30) is the starting condition that makes the Hero Journey possible — a natural orientation toward God that precedes any conscious choice. It maps to m0.ax2 (FATE Acceptance): the precondition for entering the cycle.
- *Istiqama* (steadfastness, staying on the straight path) is perpetual non-arrival. The concept implies that one is *always* on the path, never at a final destination. “The most beloved of deeds to Allah are the most consistent, even if small” (Bukhari 6464).

Functional dependency match: the Islamic framework exhibits bidirectional logic. Forward: complacency in one’s spiritual state produces decline. Reverse: perpetual turning sustains growth. The bifurcation at m4 corresponds to the moment of *tawbah* where the believer must surrender the illusion of self-sufficiency — the MOL temptation of claiming to stand in no need of God’s mercy.

## 4.2 Tier 2 — Partial Convergence

**Buddhist awakening cycle (downgraded from Tier 1).** The Buddhist concept of *bodhi* (awakening) is not a one-time event in the Mahayana tradition. The bodhisattva path involves multiple stages (*bhumi*) of progressive awakening, each requiring the death of a prior self-model. The Chan/Zen tradition’s Linji Yixuan (*Linji lu*, 9th century CE) expressed this radically: “If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him” — meaning any fixed image of enlightenment must be destroyed for genuine awakening to continue. The Ten Ox-Herding Pictures (Kuoan Shiyuan’s 12th-century version specifically — earlier versions by Puming end differently) depict a cycle that returns to the marketplace: the practitioner brings the gift back and begins again.

However, this paper must honestly acknowledge a structural inversion. The e7He model says cycling = good (ZION) and stopping = bad (BABL). Buddhism — especially Theravada — teaches the structural opposite: cycling (*samsara*) = suffering and stopping (*nibbana*) = liberation. These may be structurally different answers to the question “what is liberation?”

A possible resolution: *samsara* maps to BABL-cycling — unconscious, craving-driven repetition without growth. The e7He Hero Journey maps to ZION-cycling — conscious, NOT-OK-assessed, progressive expansion of scope. The bodhisattva path in Mahayana Buddhism, where the practitioner deliberately re-enters the world out of compassion, aligns more closely with ZION-cycling. The Theravada *arahant* path, where attainment of *nibbana* is final, does not converge with the e7He model’s perpetual cycling.

The *anatta* (non-self) teaching presents a further challenge: who is being “born again” if there is no permanent self? The e7He model’s “self-model” (the construct that dies and is rebuilt) may be compatible with *anatta* — the self-model is precisely what Buddhism identifies as illusory. But this compatibility is speculative, not demonstrated.

The e7He model and Theravada Buddhism offer structurally different answers to the question “what is liberation?” For the e7He model, liberation is perpetual joyful discovery (ZION-cycling). For Theravada Buddhism, liberation is cessation of all cycling (*nibbana*). This paper submits the question for testing rather than claiming resolution.

**Hindu \*dvija\* (twice-born).** The Hindu concept of *dvija* — literally “twice-born” — refers to the spiritual initiation (*upanayana*) of the upper three *varnas*. The first birth is physical; the second is spiritual. This is a structural rebirth concept, but it is traditionally understood as a *single* second birth, not a perpetual cycle.

However, three additional Hindu concepts deepen the partial convergence:

- *Prapatti* (total surrender to God in Vishishtadvaita, Ramanuja’s theology) is a structural parallel to m4. The soul can never be independent — it is always a part (*amsha*) of God. The moment of *prapatti* is the moment of surrendering the illusion of self-control.
- *Sthitaprajna* (person of steady wisdom, Gita 2:54–72) is the Hindu articulation of NOT OK self-assessment: equanimity without attachment to the state of wisdom. The *sthitaprajna* does not cling to wisdom as a possession.
- *Avatar* (divine descent, Gita 4:7–8: “whenever *dharma* declines, I manifest myself”) is the closest Hindu parallel to the Commitment Trichotomy (th6): God enters the cycle to restore *dharma* at great cost — a Red Edge commitment.

The same *samsara* inversion applies as with Buddhism: in Hindu thought, the cycle of *samsara* is the trap to be transcended, and liberation (*moksha*) is exit from the cycle. The e7He model distinguishes BABL-cycling (unconscious, attachment-driven) from ZION-cycling (conscious,

growth-oriented) — but whether Hindu traditions would accept this distinction is an open question submitted for testing.

The Bhagavad Gita's concept of *niskama karma* (action without attachment to results, Gita 2:47) suggests a deeper structural parallel: the moment you cling to the result of your action, you have stopped the cycle. Action without attachment is perpetual NOT OK self-assessment applied to the fruits of one's own work.

**Post-traumatic growth.** The clinical literature (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006) documents that some individuals emerge from trauma with expanded worldview, deeper relationships, and new priorities — a rebirth pattern. The empirical evidence is stronger than suggestive resonance: trauma can catalyze the death-and-rebirth of a self-model in ways that the e7He model predicts structurally. The binary framing (ZION path vs. BABL path at m4) maps to the clinical distinction between post-traumatic growth and post-traumatic rigidity. Robert Kegan's constructive-developmental theory (1982, *The Evolving Self*) provides further empirical support: five orders of consciousness, each requiring the death of the prior order's subject-object structure — a developmental rebirth cycle grounded in decades of empirical research.

Alan Jamieson's four-year study of church leavers (*A Churchless Faith*, 2002) provides direct empirical evidence for the Hero Journey pattern in faith development. Jamieson interviewed 108 leavers and 54 leaders from evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic churches in New Zealand. His subjects averaged 15.8 years of active church involvement; 94% had held leadership positions. Only 1% abandoned their faith entirely. The rest were undergoing what Jamieson, building on James Fowler's stages of faith development (1981), classifies into four trajectories: *displaced followers* (grievance without growth — stopped at m3), *reflective exiles* (deconstructing received faith — entering m4), *transitional explorers* (rebuilding a self-owned faith — m5–m6), and *integrated wayfinders* (faith reconstruction complete, open to further questioning — m7 and ready for the next cycle). The structural parallel to e7He is striking: what churches diagnose as “backsliding” (BABL framing: the leaver has failed) is often m4 — the death of a self-model that has become too small — followed by rebirth into a deeper, more integrated faith. The institutional pain is real on both sides: the church loses a leader; the leader loses a community. But the empirical data shows that the journey continues. Faith grows through the very disruption that institutions fear.

**In many Indigenous North American traditions**, structured encounters with the sacred — departures from the community, trials in isolation, encounters with the transcendent, and returns bearing gifts for the people — correspond structurally to the Hero Journey. The partial convergence: these quests are repeatable (not limited to one lifetime event) and are understood as serving the community, not just the individual. The divergence: these practices are typically undertaken at specific life transitions, not formalized as a perpetual cycle.

### 4.3 Tier 3 — Suggestive Resonance

**Hegel's dialectic.** The thesis-antithesis-synthesis cycle (thesis-antithesis-sublation, more precisely) is a philosophical rebirth pattern: each synthesis becomes the thesis for the next cycle. The resonance with e7He: perpetual cycling, no final arrival. The weakness: Hegel's system tends toward a final Absolute Spirit, which is structurally an OK self-assessment — the system declaring itself complete. The e7He model predicts this endpoint is BABL.

**Joseph Campbell's monomyth.** The *Hero with a Thousand Faces* identifies a universal Hero Journey pattern across world mythologies. The resonance is real. The divergence is three-fold: (a) the e7He model has a formal binary encoding that generates testable predictions; Campbell's monomyth does not. (b) The e7He model includes an explicit bifurcation at m4

that Campbell does not formally identify. (c) The e7He model connects to a broader axiom system (Matheo-b11, Matheo-b12) that Campbell never attempted. The overlap with Campbell is evidence of convergence, not derivation.

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## 5. What This Means for Theology

### 5.1 For Those Who Experienced a One-Time “Born Again” Conversion

Your experience was real. It was m4 — the bifurcation, the moment where the old self-model died and something new emerged. In the language of the e7He model, you faced MOL (the infinite, alone, without your usual coping mechanisms) and chose the ZION path. You rejected the Closed World Assumption and surrendered. That moment changed your life. No structural analysis can take that away.

A critical distinction: the e7He model’s “perpetual cycle” describes *sanctification* — the ongoing process of growing in grace, becoming more like Christ, learning to see more clearly. It does NOT describe *justification* — the one-time, settled declaration that you are accepted by God through Christ’s finished work. Justification is the foundation. It does not cycle. It does not need repeating. What cycles is the *response* to justification: the lifelong adventure of living out what was given freely. “Born again again” is about the journey, not the ticket.

A further distinction: *assurance of God’s faithfulness* — resting in a promise you did not earn — is ZION. It is the foundation that makes the perpetual journey possible without anxiety. *Assurance of personal completeness* — “I have nothing more to learn, no further to grow” — is BABL. The e7He model does NOT attack eternal security. It distinguishes between the security of God’s promise (which stands) and the completeness of the believer’s growth (which the model says is perpetual).

What the e7He model adds is not a contradiction but an invitation. m4 is not the end. It is the *center* of a cycle. After m4 comes m5 (receiving the gift), m6 (bringing it back to others), m7 (rest and renewal) — and then m1 again. Your conversion was the first Hero Journey. There are more. Each one expands your scope of concern (th3). Each one takes you deeper into the reality you glimpsed at m4.

This is not a diminishment of your experience. It is the discovery that what you experienced was even larger than you thought. You were not merely “saved” in a single moment. You were invited into a perpetual adventure. And the moment you were born again was the *most important* moment — the moment you said yes to the journey. What this paper adds is that the journey you said yes to is even more wonderful than you knew.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). Paul did not write this once and retire. He wrote “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies” (2 Cor. 4:10) — a perpetual, ongoing identification. And he was explicit about non-arrival: “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on” (Phil. 3:12–14). Paul modeled a life of perpetual death-and-rebirth — shipwrecks, imprisonments, beatings, revelations, failures, and new beginnings. Born again *again*.

## 5.2 For Those Who Rejected “Born Again” as Simplistic

Strip away the religious language and you find a structural claim about human development: growth requires periodic death-and-rebirth of your self-model. Every psychologist who has studied post-traumatic growth knows this. Robert Kegan’s five orders of consciousness document it empirically. Every good therapist has seen it: the client who breaks through is the one who lets the old story die.

The ancient texts formalized this structure first. Not in the language of psychology but in the language of narrative: exodus, wilderness, promise, exile, return. The e7He model translates between the two languages and shows they describe the same structural pattern.

The phrase “born again” has been domesticated — narrowed to a membership credential in some traditions, dismissed as simplistic in others. Both reactions miss the structural depth. “Born again” is the name for a structural necessity: the perpetual death-and-rebirth of your self-model as a condition for genuine growth. The fact that the term has been reduced to a membership badge by some traditions does not invalidate the structural concept. It illustrates the concept: even the language of rebirth can be frozen into BABL.

The structural claims of the e7He model are testable independently of the theological claims. A secular reader can use the Monday morning questions without accepting any theology.

## 5.3 The “Arrived = BABL” Principle

Traditions that teach permanent arrival are responding to a genuine human need: the need for assurance that suffering will end. The e7He model honors that need. It asks only whether “arrival” means “the end of growth” or “the beginning of deeper growth.”

If arrival means rest-from-anxiety — knowing you are loved, accepted, held — that is not BABL. It is the foundation of ZION. If arrival means rest-from-growth — “I’m done, I’ve figured it out” — the model predicts structural danger. The distinction is crucial, and this paper holds that most believers who say “I have arrived” mean the first, not the second. The grandmother who says “I know I’m saved” is resting in God’s promise. She is not claiming omniscience. Her rest is ZION. What BABL looks like is the institution that says “our theology is complete” — not the individual resting in grace, but the system that has stopped asking questions.

The distinction between **transmitting institutions** (ZION) and **freezing institutions** (BABL) is essential. An institution that transmits the Hero Journey — that initiates new cycles (m1), supports people through the wilderness (m2–m3), walks with them through the dark night of m4, celebrates rebirths (m5), and sends people back into the world with gifts (m6) — is doing ZION work. An institution freezes when it teaches that m4 was the last stop. When “you are saved” becomes “you are done.” When the institution’s metrics measure arrivals, not journeys. When the building program replaces the pilgrimage.

The resolution: two kinds of “arrived.”

- **BABL “arrived”:** “I’m done, I’ve made it” → deadlock → collapse. This is the “arrived” that the model identifies as structurally unstable.
- **ZION “arrived” (= epektasis):** Resting in God (no survival anxiety, universal acceptance, free provision) WHILE perpetually innovating, discovering, hoping, creating. Not striving for acceptance; innovating for joy.

The Thomistic tradition holds that the beatific vision is complete rest in God — not a stage in an ongoing cycle. The epektasis resolution follows Gregory of Nyssa, not Aquinas, at this

point. Whether the beatific vision is complete rest or inexhaustible discovery is itself an open question within Christian theology. This paper does not claim to resolve it.

Rest and forward motion are not in contradiction. The rest removes the *anxiety* (no one needs to earn their place). The forward motion provides the *life* (genuine discovery, not frozen repetition). Heaven is not an infinite loop of known outcomes. Heaven is genuinely exciting discovery where cool things and hot ideas are found. Born again, and again, and again — not from fear but from delight.

The Catholic tradition offers a powerful embodiment of this principle: the Eucharist is the perpetual re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice (CCC 1366), in which the believer participates at every Mass. This is the closest Catholic equivalent to "born again again" — a sacramental enactment of perpetual death-and-rebirth. The Orthodox liturgical year enacts a communal Hero Journey through the rhythms of feast and fast, Lent and Pascha, the movement through *katharsis* (purification), *theoria* (illumination), and *theosis* (deification). The mystical tradition — John of the Cross's "dark night," Teresa of Avila's "interior castle" — documents repeated passages in the lives of saints who walked the journey with extraordinary honesty.

The supervillain theorem (th2) predicts that traditions teaching permanent arrival will produce a structural risk: leaders whose stagnant scope generates misapplied authority at the boundaries of what they no longer understand. This prediction is testable. But the leaders who serve these traditions have done real good. Their counseling healed. Their teaching guided. Their presence comforted. The structural critique of institutional arrival does not retroactively erase the genuine love that these leaders poured into their communities. It invites them — not commands them — to consider whether the institution they serve can itself go on a Hero Journey.

## 5.4 For the Institutional Leader

If you are a religious leader reading this paper — a pastor, rabbi, imam, priest, monk, swami — and you hear in these pages a critique of the institution you have given your life to serve: hear this first.

Your service was real. The family you counseled through grief was comforted because you showed up. The young couple you married started their life together with a blessing because you spoke it. The person you visited in the hospital felt less alone because you sat with them. The child you taught learned something about kindness, about transcendence, about hope. No structural analysis can retroactively erase the love you poured into your community.

This paper does not ask you to abandon your institution. It asks whether your institution can go on its own Hero Journey. Institutions that transmit — that initiate new cycles, that walk with people through the wilderness, that celebrate rebirths and send people back into the world with gifts — are doing ZION work. The structural risk arises only when an institution freezes: when "we have the truth" becomes "we have *all* the truth," when preserving the tradition replaces renewing it.

Your altar call, your *salat*, your liturgy, your meditation hall — these are trailheads. The people who enter through them begin a journey. Your sacred work is to keep the trail open, to walk it yourself, and to resist the very human temptation to build a monument at the trailhead and call it the destination.

The language for next Sunday, next Friday, next Shabbat: "Everything we have taught you is true. And there is more. The God who met you when you first believed is the same God who is calling you deeper. The journey did not end at the altar. The altar was the trailhead."

## 6. The Companion Papers

**Matheo-3 (b13, formal):** The e7He model — the mathematical structure behind this paper. Fourteen axioms, seven theorems, three structural properties. The binary encoding, the bifurcation, the supervillain theorem, the commitment trichotomy.

**Matheo-1 (b11, PET):** The divine foundation. The panentheistic axiom system that establishes the God-world relationship within which the Hero Journey operates. The Revelation Bridge (ax12–ax14) provides the formal framework for testing claims about divine revelation.

**Matheo-2 (b12, e7Day):** Why systems that stop the cycle self-destruct. The BABL/ZION framework, the self-assessment bifurcation, the OSCR collapse mechanism. Twenty axioms, seven theorems, one conjecture. The formal backbone.

**Matheo-4 (b14, JUB, forthcoming):** The economic and institutional implications of the Hero Journey at scale. The Jubilee System as the mechanism for periodically rebalancing the structural tensions that every Hero Journey generates.

**b18 (Call to Action):** If every person goes on their Hero Journey, that IS the Second Exodus. The practical, actionable conclusion of the entire HEAVEN series.

## 7. The Invitation and the Path

“You must be born again” is not a demand. It is an invitation.

The Hero Journey is the path. Not a medicine taken once, but a practice sustained perpetually — like breathing, like eating, like the 6:1 Shabbat pattern of work and rest that the e7Day model predicts at every scale. The path must be walked again and again — not because it failed the first time, but because growth is perpetual.

The Torah’s narrative arc — the pattern of *teshuvah*, of Egypt–Exodus–Sinai–Wilderness–Promise–Kingdom–Exile–Return — encodes the structural concept that the e7He model formalizes. Jesus was surprised that Nicodemus did not recognize it, because a teacher of Israel, steeped in this narrative, should have seen the pattern. Born again at every exodus. Born again at every return. The cycle is the structure. The structure was there all along.

The Second Exodus begins with each person’s first step on their own Hero Journey. Not a political revolution. Not a military campaign. Not a technological fix. A personal decision: “I am NOT OK — adequate for now, but incomplete, and committed to continuing to check.” And then taking the next step.

What does that look like on a Monday morning? Three questions:

1. **Which Hero Journey stage am I in?** Am I being called and resisting (m1)? Am I in the wilderness and tempted to quit (m2)? Am I clinging to an advantage (m3)? Am I at the bifurcation (m4)?

2. **What is my current BABL temptation?** Am I OverSimplifying (BA — “it’s not that complicated”)? OverComplicating (ASH — “I need to understand everything first”)? OverReaching (MOL — “I can handle more than I actually can”)?
3. **What is the next step?** Not the entire journey. Just the next step. The Hero Journey is completed one step at a time, one cycle at a time, one rebirth at a time.

A twelve-year-old can ask these three questions. A theologian can spend a lifetime exploring them. That is the design.

## Limitations and Open Questions

This paper’s central claim — that “born again” is a perpetual cycle — is an interpretive reading of the e7He model applied to theological data. It is NOT a proved consequence of the formal structure. The formal structure is proved; the theological reading is submitted for testing. Specific acknowledged weaknesses:

1. The *samsara* inversion with Buddhist and Hindu traditions is unresolved. The distinction between BABL-cycling and ZION-cycling is proposed but not independently tested.
2. The Second Exodus claim is hypothetical and currently not testable by secular methods.
3. The engagement with each tradition is necessarily brief. Specialists in any single tradition will find the treatment insufficient. A companion document with deeper per-tradition engagement is planned.
4. The paper’s own epistemic posture must be tested: does it model the NOT OK self-assessment it preaches, or does it merely claim to?

We invite — and need — correction.

#AuditTheMath

## Appendix: Authorship Contributions

Same as Matheo-b12, Appendix B and Matheo-b13. See those papers for the full statement.

## Supplementary Info

### Note

**Floor-pour status (MMv5).** This is the public-floor copy of the e7He theological companion (“born again” read as a perpetual Hero Journey), poured from HELL per the Floor Model (bug c103). The mmv5 marker is the uniform first-Matheo-release tag; the exact dated source and full development context live in HELL (links below). The HUMANE and author-contribution statements below are a down-payment, to be expanded later.

This study was written HUMANELY (HUMAN MACHINE Negotiation Encouraging): a human and an AI each steelman and stress-test the work, and each catches what the other misses. For the standard statement of AI use, accountability, and the practical singularity (PraS) behind this way of working, see Matheo-b21.

- *From the human side (LLoL)*: [down-payment stub — to expand.]
- *From the AI side (Claude)*: [down-payment stub — to expand.]
- **LLoL** — structure, key ideas, direction, and final accountability as senior corresponding author (see title-page footnotes 4–5).
- **AI Claude** — drafting and revision under LLoL’s direction (footnotes 6–7).
- **Everyone** — the open co-author group (footnote 8); framework in Matheo-b21.

The full who-did-what is “Same as Matheo-b13, Appendix B” (see the *Appendix: Authorship Contributions* above); the b21 framework expands it.

### Caution

These HELL links point into the development archive (“datageddon”). They are useful and related, but completeness is not guaranteed and a few may be imprecise. Treat as a hatch into context, not a clean index.

- **Source this floor copy was poured from:** `matheology/hell/mm/b/13/mmV2/b13-theophil_mmV2_2026m04d08`
- **Development context** (llogs, reviews, prompts) under `source/matheology/hell/ll/study/b/13/`.
- **Formal companion paper:** Matheo-b13 (the e7He axioms paper); general-reader companion: Matheo-b13 (the Hero Journey intro); foundational models: Matheo-b11 (PET) and Matheo-b12 (e7Day).

### Note

**Naming note (deferred floor tasks).** This copy still carries old h\*-era tokens in places and deprecated in-text references (e.g. “Matheo-2”, “Matheo-3”, “Study a3-ThePhil”); unifying notation (`h_star` / `h_zero` / `h_dark`) and migrating the neutralised sibling-paper `:cite:` / `:ref:` citations to a proper bibliography (AA #5) are tracked floor tasks, deliberately not rushed here.

The following draft-status note was relocated here from the cover area during the floor pour; kept verbatim, as the cover must show only Title / byline / credentials / Broader Significance / Abstract / Contents / Introduction. The old **Study a3-ThePhil in the HEAVEN series** ID line was deleted from the cover.

### Note

**Draft status: MMv2-ThePhil (2026m04d08).** Revision of MMv1 responding to 13-reviewer adversarial review (`review_b13-theophil_2026m04d08.rst`). All 3 S4 issues, 4 S3

issues, 6 S2 issues, and 2 S1 issues addressed: (S4-1) Justification/sanctification distinction added in Section 5.1; (S4-2) Section 1 restructured: Torah-first framing, *teshuvah* and High Holy Days introduced before Nicodemus dialogue; (S4-3) Institutional leader engagement added in Section 5.3–5.4; (S3-1) Buddhist classification downgraded from Tier 1 to Tier 2, *samsara* inversion honestly acknowledged; (S3-2) Pneumatological paragraph added at Section 2.4; (S3-3) Catholic/Orthodox sacramental and mystical tradition acknowledged; (S3-4) Section 7 renamed, limitations paragraph added, body assertions qualified; (S2-1) *Nafs* stages qualified as Sufi, *da'if* hadith noted, *fitrah* and *istiqama* added; (S2-2) Hindu *prapatti*, *sthitaprajna*, *avatar* added; (S2-3) Kegan cited, Jamieson/Fowler faith-development study added, post-traumatic growth upgraded to Tier 2; (S2-4) Beatific vision / Aquinas engagement added; (S2-5) Communal dimension paragraph added; (S2-6) 2 Cor. 4:10 and Phil. 3:10–14 added alongside Gal. 2:20; (S1-1) Haudenosaunee generalized to broader Indigenous framing; (S1-2) Hadith 70/100 variation noted; Compassion revisions applied per Reviewer 13. Draft by Claude Opus 4.6 (dv\_ClaOp46\_MMv2\_theophil\_b13\_2026m04d08).

## Notes

**Content stability** — Content is variant dv\_ClaOp48Max\_MMv5\_b13-theophil-e7he-mmv5\_2026m05d29 (see StayVS). Rebuilt 2026-05-29.

## See also on Balospe.com

- /study/matheo/index — the Matheo Study Series overview
- /action/audit-the-math/index — Audit the Math: the refutation-welcome path