

## Chapter 7

### THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Just as there is controversy over the meaning of “in the beginning” and “created” (and of course “God”), so also there should be controversy over “the heavens and the earth”.

The expression is a *merism*, a figure of speech wherein a totality is referenced by its parts. As such heaven and earth might mean everything—all things—in context, of course. And if the context is cosmic then it means the universe. But the parts are not, as would be thought today, the heaven as the Universe and the Earth as the planet. Rather it is as one looks to the horizon and sees the world divided between sky and land. Those would be the parts of the merism in Genesis 1:1.

“In the beginning of [this account], God created everything [relevant to it].” It need not be talking about the creation of the entire universe as we understand it now. It need not be talking about the Big Bang.

But does the creation in Genesis 1:1 necessarily precede verse 2? Following Rashi (see chapter 4), many modern translations think not. NJPS, for example, translates the first 3 verses of Genesis,

When God began to create heaven and earth—<sup>2</sup>the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the waters—<sup>3</sup>God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Thus the commentary in *Etz Hayim*:<sup>1</sup> “The translation presented here looks to verse 3 for the completion of the sentence and takes verse 2 to

‘in the day that’ = ‘when’

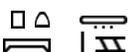
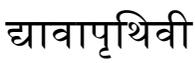
Genesis 2:4 These *are* the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created [בְּיִמֵי בְרֵאשִׁית], in the day that the LORD God made [בְּיוֹם שִׁשְׁתֵּי יָמֵי אֱלֹהִים] the earth and the heavens,

Genesis 5:1 This *is* the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created [בְּיוֹם בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים] man, in the likeness of God made he him;

be parenthetical, describing the state of things at the time when God first spoke. Support for understanding the text in this way comes from the second half of 2:4 and 5:1, both of which refer to Creation and begin (in our translations) with the word ‘when.’”

But according to Cassuto (1961), when the subject comes before the predicate, as in verse 2,<sup>2</sup> “the intention of the Bible is to give emphasis to the subject and to tell us something new about it” (pg. 21)—“It follows, therefore, that the first verse is an independent sentence that constitutes a formal introduction to the entire section...” (pg. 20).

#### HEAVEN & EARTH as *merism*

 šāmáyim wā’āreṣ Hebrew
 an.ki Sumerian
 pt.t3 Egyptian
 tiān tǔ Chinese
 dyāvā pṛthivī Sanskrit

<sup>1</sup> Lieber and Harlow (2001).

<sup>2</sup> וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תוֹהוּ וָבוֹהוּ wəhā’āreṣ hāyətā<sup>h</sup> tōhū wābōhū ‘and the earth was *tohu* and *bohu*’.

Here I think Cassuto is right, but must Genesis 1:1 then speak directly to the creation of the physical universe at some point in the past? Not necessarily. Rather God planned out everything before the six days began—as in the Midrash, for example: “‘In the beginning God created.’ Six things preceded the creation of the world. Some of them were created and some of them arose in thought to be created.”<sup>4</sup>

Also, according to May (1994), the idea that Genesis 1:1 supports *creatio ex nihilo* originated with Philo of Alexandria. Genesis doesn’t address the issue.

Heaven and earth preexisted the six days and they are the work of the six days. Before those days began it says (Gen 1:1), “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” And at their end it says (Gen 2:1), “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” And, as we saw in the last chapter (chapter 6), on the seventh day God rested from all his work which he “created to make”.<sup>5</sup> In Genesis 1:1 God *created* the heaven and the earth. Then later it says, “And God *made* the firmament...” (verse 7). The second account of creation opens with (Gen 2:4), “These *are* the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were **created**, in the day that the LORD God **made** the earth and the heavens...”

“I am creating,”<sup>6</sup> God says three times (Isaiah 65:17-18), “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people

**Proto-Semitic**  
\*šamāy- / \*šamā’ - ‘sky’<sup>3</sup>

singular	plural
Hebrew	
	שָׁמַיִם šāmāyim
Akkadian	
	𐎶𐎵𐎶𐎶 šamū (< šamā’ū), šamāmū
Ugaritic	
	𐎶𐎵𐎶 šmm
Aramaic	
	שָׁמַיָּא šamayyā
Arabic	
سَمَاءٌ samā’	سَمَاوَاتٍ samāwāt
Ethiopic	
ሰማይ samāy	ሰማያት samāyāt

<sup>3</sup> This word is mostly a masculine *plurale tantum* (Latin for ‘only plural’) noun—it has no singular form.

<sup>4</sup> Midrash Genesis Rabbah 1:4 (סדר בראשית פרשה א ד): “In the beginning God created.” Six things preceded the creation of the world. Some of them were created and some of them arose in thought to be created. The Torah and the throne of glory were created. Torah whence as is said (Prov 8:22), “Hashem possessed me the beginning of his way.” The throne of glory whence is written (Psalm 93:2), “Thy throne is established from old,” etc. The fathers and Israel and the Temple and the name of Messiah arose in thought to be created. The fathers whence is said (Hosea 9:10), “like grapes in the wilderness,” etc. Israel whence is said (Psalm 74:2), “Remember thy congregation thou purchased of old.” The Temple whence is said (Jeremiah 17:12), “A glorious high throne from the beginning,” etc. The name of Messiah whence is said (Psalm 72:17), “His name shall endure forever,” etc. Rabbi Ahabah in [the name of] rabbi Ze’ira said, “Also repentance as is said (Psalm 90:2), ‘Before the mountains were born,’ and that time (verse 3), ‘Thou turnest man to destruction,’ etc.”

בראשית ברא אלהים. שֵׁשֶׁה דְּבָרִים קָדְמוּ לְבְרִיאַת הָעוֹלָם יֵשׁ מֵהוּ שֶׁנִּבְרָאוּ וַיֵּשׁ מֵהוּ שֶׁעָלוּ בַּמַּחְשְׁבָה לְהִבְרָאוֹת. הַתּוֹרָה וְהַכֶּסֶף הַכְּבוֹד נִבְרָאוּ. תּוֹרָה מִנֵּין שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (משלי ח כב) ה' קִנְיֵי רֵאשִׁית דָּרְכוּ. כֶּסֶף הַכְּבוֹד מִנֵּין דְּכָתִיב (תהלים צג ב) נִכּוֹן כֶּסֶף מֵאֵז וְגו'. הָאֲבוֹת וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וּשְׁמוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה עָלוּ בַּמַּחְשְׁבָה לְהִבְרָאוֹת. הָאֲבוֹת מִנֵּין שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (הושע ט י) כַּעֲנָבִים בַּמִּדְבָּר וְגו'. יִשְׂרָאֵל מִנֵּין שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (תהלים עד ב) זָכַר עֲדַתְךָ קְנִיַת קֶדֶם. בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ מִנֵּין שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (ירמיה יז יב) כֶּסֶף כְּבוֹד מְרוֹם מְרֹאשׁוֹן וְגו'. שְׁמוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה מִנֵּין שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (תהלים עב יז) יְהִי שְׁמוֹ לְעוֹלָם וְגו'. רַבֵּי אֶהֱבֶה בְּרַבֵּי זְעִירָא אָמַר אִף הַתְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (תהלים צ ב) בְּטָרְם הָרִים יִלְדוּ וְאוֹתָהּ הַשְּׁעָה תִּשָּׁב אֲנוּשׁ עַד דְּכָא וְגו'.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 2:3, וַאֲשֶׁר-בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת, 'āšer-bārā' 'ēlōhīm la'āsôt 'which God created to make'.

<sup>6</sup> Both verbs are active participles: בּוֹרֵא *bōrē* 'creating' and עֹשֶׂה *ōšēh* 'making'.

a joy.” In the next chapter he says (Isaiah 66:22), “I am making”: “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.” During the course of these six millennia God is creating and making the heaven and the earth. What do these represent?

The six days that God is creating and making do not speak directly of the physical creation but rather to local events as played out in the Middle East which were symbolic of six future millennia. The physical creation was already there in verse 2 (the earth, the deep, the waters) before God said, “Let there be light!” The beginning in verse 1 might be interpreted as the planning stage—the preparation for the seven days.

In context the heaven was brought forth on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day (Gen 1:8), “And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.” And the earth was brought forth on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day (Gen 1:10-13), “And God called the dry *land* Earth ... And the evening and the morning were the third day.” Are we to believe that these (heaven and earth of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> days) are somehow different than those in verse 1? The heaven and the earth preexisted the six days but, as we have seen, they are the subject of the six days as we see at their conclusion (Gen 2:1): “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.”

God interprets in Isaiah 66:1, “Thus saith the LORD, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest?” The sky (heaven) symbolizes God’s throne over all nations, and the earth symbolizes the divine Presence in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple in Israel.

**Meaning of the Terms**

Heaven was made on the 2nd day—the description is in Genesis 1:6-8:

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

Here the description (dividing upper and lower waters) and the word “firmament” is the most difficult part of the creation account to explain. Before the telescope most peoples believed the sky to be a solid dome overhead, and this is said to be the picture here. The indigenous peoples that I have worked with along the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest of the United States did believe this—that the sky (*túx̄in* in their language) was a solid dome overhead.

רָקִיעַ *rāqíʾaʿ* ‘firmament’  
17 occurrences

Second Day Genesis 1:6, 7(3 times), 8
Fourth Day Genesis 1:14, 15, 17, 20
Place of God’s throne Ezekiel 1:22, 23, 25, 26; 10:1; Psalm 150:1
Synonym for Sky Psalm 19:1; Daniel 12:3

The Septuagint translates the Hebrew רָקִיעַ with στερέωμα ‘that which has been made firm’ (as in Col 2:5) and the Vulgate’s *firmamentum*

(related to *firmus* ‘firm’). The Hebrew רָקִיעַ *rāqíʾaʿ* is derived from רָקַע *rāqaʿ* ‘beat, stamp, beat out, spread out’—a verb that describes the beating or spreading out of gold or other metal. The implication is that Genesis assumes—like

Klickitat Text  
Jacobs 1929:176:5-7

<p>Áwiyapniya áswan Mistilyáy ku áqipna maaʔiwit kayáasu. Áwinana xʷimikan ikʷin túx̄inyaw. Áqapatana kayáasu. The boy Sapsucker went forth and shot the arrow out of sight. It went high up to that sky. The arrow stuck in it.</p>
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prescientific people in general—that the sky is a solid dome over our heads. Some, such as Seely (1989, 1991, 1992), argue that this shows that Genesis (and hence the Bible) was written by men in search of God. The Bible cannot be trusted in all its details.

David says of his enemies (2Sam 22:43), “I did stamp them [*ʔerqāšēm*] as the mire of the street,” and Elihu asks Job (Job 37:18), “Hast thou with him spread out [*tarqíaf*] the sky, *which is strong, and as a molten looking glass?*” God is also described as *rōqaf hāʔāreš* ‘spreading out the earth’ (Isaiah 42:5; 44:24; Psalm 136:6)—not quite the same imagery as on day three (Gen 1:9), “And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.” Derivations do not consistently preserve the meaning of their sources, however, and so *rāqíaf* might simply refer to an expansion as some have thought.

**רָקַע** *rāqaf*

‘beat, stamp, beat out, spread out’  
11 occurrence

<p><b>וַיִּרְקְעוּ אֶת-פְּתֵי הַזָּהָב</b> <i>wayəraqqəʕū 'et-pahē hazzāhāb</i> ‘and they beat out the sheets of gold’ Exodus 39:3</p> <p><b>וַיִּרְקְעוּם צִפּוּי לַמִּזְבֵּחַ</b> <i>wayəraqqəʕūm šippūy lammizbēaḥ</i> ‘and they beat out a covering for the altar’ Numbers 16:39</p> <p><b>וַיִּצְרֶף בַּזָּהָב יִרְקְעֵנּוּ</b> <i>wəšōrēp bazzāhāb yəraqqəʕənnū</i> ‘and a goldsmith spreads it out with gold’ Isaiah 40:19</p> <p><b>כֶּסֶף מְרֻקָּע</b> <i>késep məruqqāʕ</i> ‘silver spread into plates’ Jeremiah 10:9</p>
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Walton (2011) argues, based in part on Job 37:18, that it is not the *rāqíaf* that equates with the solid sky but rather the *šəḥāqím*.<sup>7</sup> The *rāqíaf*, he suggests, is the space between the waters below and the solid dome (*šəḥāqím*) above. If this be so then there is no mention of the solid dome in Genesis, and the “firmament” might simply equate with the atmosphere. The waters above might simply be the rain.

Hebrew was not a language devised by God; rather it was a language of men—of Canaan to be precise (Isaiah 19:18). God speaks to man in man’s languages. And though vocabulary may reflect the defective knowledge of an earlier age, this does not mean that in using that vocabulary, we or God necessarily agree with the etymological origin of that vocabulary. Physicists, for example, speak of the atom (from Greek *ἄτομος* ‘indivisible’), even though atoms are now described as complex entities. The atom has been split.

We encounter the *šəḥāqím* in the poetry of Proverbs 8—in verses 28-29: “When he established the clouds [*šəḥāqím*] above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth...” We see here another perspective on days two and three in Genesis. It speaks to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia. In the great flood of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium there was a mingling and unmingling of the waters below (“the fountains of the deep”) and of the waters above (“the windows of heaven”).<sup>8</sup>

- ✓ Genesis 7:11 In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew *šəḥāq*, plural *šəḥāqím*, variously translated as ‘dust, cloud, sky’, derives from *šəḥaq* ‘rub away, beat fine, pulverize’ (Exodus 30:36; 2Samuel 22:43; Psalm 18:42; Job 14:19).

<sup>8</sup> The expression *ʔrubbôt baššāmáyim* ‘windows in heaven’ is found also in 2Kings 7:2 & 19 and in Malachi 3:10; *ʔrubbôt mimmārôm* ‘windows from on high’ occurs in Isaiah 24:18.

- ✓ Genesis 8:2-3 The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained; And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.

The earth (אֶרֶץ 'éres) is not the planet but rather the dry land. It was there before the six days began (Gen 1:2), “And the land was *tohu* and *bohu*...” Again we note that it is also God’s work of the third day (Gen 1:9-13): “And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear: and it was so. And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that *it was* good. ... And the evening and the morning were the third day.”

יַבְבָּשָׁה *yabbāšā<sup>h</sup>*

‘dry land’

14 occurrences

THE THIRD DAY Genesis 1:9, 10
THE THIRD MILLENNIUM Exodus 4:9; 14:16, 22, 29; 14:19; Joshua 4:22
JONAH Jonah 1:13; 2:10; 4:22
ELSEWHERE Isaiah 44:3; Psalm 66:6; Nehemiah 9:11

The next place we find the word dry land (יַבְבָּשָׁה *yabbāšā<sup>h</sup>*) is in reference to the Exodus and crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land. The archetype “dry land” is that land. The word also occurs in the book of Jonah in contrast to the sea which is the province of the nations. Two other passages connect the Exodus:

- ✓ Psalm 66:6 He turned the sea into dry *land*: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.
- ✓ Nehemiah 9:11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.

God’s wife—the wife with whom he covenanted at Sinai—is pictured as a celestial Jerusalem (Isaiah 54:1-5; Jer 3:14; 31:32). There is also a sense in which she is the land (אֶרֶץ 'éres). Speaking of the future redemption, God says (Isaiah 62:4), “Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.” Speaking of a future resurrection God asks (Isaiah 66:8), “Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day?” Thus also Nachmanides on Genesis 1:26,<sup>9</sup>

Concerning Adam he said, “Let us make...” meaning, “I and the aforementioned land will make man.” For the earth brings forth the body from her foundations as she did with the cattle and the beast, as it is written, “And Hashem God formed the man of dust from the ground.”

### Different Perspectives

Those in the 19<sup>th</sup> century who abandoned a divine origin for the Torah saw instead a hodgepodge of oral traditions cobbled together by a redactor or redactors in Second Temple times. Great weight was placed on which name for God was used. The use of *Elohim* represented a northern (E) source, the Tetragrammaton a southern (J) source, etc. The rabbinical sages saw instead

<sup>9</sup> אָמַר בְּאָדָם נַעֲשֶׂה כְּלוֹמַר אֲנִי וְהָאָרֶץ הַנּוֹכַחַת נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם שְׂתוּצִיא הָאָרֶץ הַגּוֹי מִסּוּדֵיהָ בְּאִשֶׁר עָשְׂתָה בְּבִהְמָה וּבְחַיָּה כְּדָבָרֵינוּ וַיֵּצֵר ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם עֹפֵר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה

differing perspectives. Elohim signified judgment, as, for example, in Exodus 21:6, “Then his master shall bring him unto the judges...” Where the KJV has “unto the judges” the Hebrew has

## TWO PERSPECTIVES IN GENESIS

FIRST ACCOUNT	SECOND ACCOUNT
Genesis 1:1-2:2:3	Genesis 2:4-3:24
1 <i>Elohim</i> refers to God	1 <i>YHWH Elohim</i> refers to God
2 Everything is good	2 Not everything is good
3 God does the naming	3 Adam does the naming
4 Temporal organization	4 Geographical organization
5 Focus is heaven	5 Focus is earth
6 The waters are central	6 No mention of the waters
7 The Sabbath described	7 No mention of Sabbath

אל־הַיְהוָה “unto the Elohim” (the Septuagint had πρὸς τὸ κριτήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ ‘unto the judgment seat of God’). God’s four letter name is associated with ‘mercy’, as in its first independent use in the Bible (Gen 4:1), “I have acquired a man with YHWH.” Also this is seen when God proclaimed his name in

Exodus 34:6, “And YHWH passed by before him, and proclaimed, YHWH, YHWH God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth...” For more on this, see Rav-Noy and Weinreich (2010).

## NAMING

There is no mention of heaven in the second account of creation (Genesis 2-3)—other than in its first verse (Gen 2:4): “These *are* the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens...” Nor is there any mention of the sea or the waters or the deep (*təhom*). The second account of creation is written from the perspective of the land—the first account from the perspective of heaven.

FIRST ACCOUNT
Genesis 1:5 And God called the light <b>Day</b> , and the darkness he called <b>Night</b> . And the evening and the morning were the first day.
Genesis 1:8 And God called the firmament <b>Heaven</b> . And the evening and the morning were the second day.
Genesis 1:10-13 And God called the dry <b>land Earth</b> ; and the gathering together of the waters called he <b>Seas</b> ... And the evening and the morning were the third day.
SECOND ACCOUNT
Genesis 2:19-20 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought <i>them</i> unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that <i>was</i> the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

In the first account both heaven and the earth are brought forth from the waters. Thus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day (Gen 1:6), “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters,” and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day (verse 9), “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear...”

וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב

‘and God saw that it was good’

FIRST DAY Verse 4: “And God saw the light, that <i>it was</i> good...”
THIRD DAY Verse 10: “...and God saw that <i>it was</i> good.” Verse 12: “...and God saw that <i>it was</i> good.”
FOURTH DAY Verse 18: “...and God saw that <i>it was</i> good.”
FIFTH DAY Verse 21: “...and God saw that <i>it was</i> good.”
SIXTH DAY Verse 25: “...and God saw that <i>it was</i> good.” Verse 31: “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, <i>it was</i> very good.”

The first account is organized temporally in seven successive days. The second account is situated geographically. The second account begins with the ground from which Adam was formed—the sages say this was on the temple mount, as in the Midrash (*Bereshit Rabbah* 14:8): “Out of the place of his atonement was he created, even as it says (Ex 20:24), ‘An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me’”<sup>10</sup> So also the Rambam in *Mishne Torah*: “Adam was created from the place of his atonement”<sup>11</sup> Then it says (verse 8), “And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.”

The garden is given a very specific geographical setting—verses 10-14. The garden is called paradise (*παράδεισος*) in the Septuagint, and this plays into a metaphorical association in the New Testament (Luke 23:43; 2Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7).

<sup>10</sup> ממקום פְּכַרְתּוֹ נִבְרָא הַיָּד מֵה דָאֵת אֲמַר מִזְבֵּחַ אֲדָמָה תַעֲשֶׂה לִּי

<sup>11</sup> אָדָם מִמְּקוֹם פְּכַרְתּוֹ נִבְרָא

In the first account everything is pronounced good—except on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> days. This makes sense on the 7<sup>th</sup> day because on that day God created nothing. In the second account not all is good (Gen 2:18), “And the LORD God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone...*”

The second account includes chapter 3 as well, which is when, as it says (verse 22), “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil...” The Deity is referred to as *YHWH Elohim* throughout chapters 2 & 3—a total of 20 times. *Elohim* appears 35 times in the first account. *YHWH* occurs alone (10 times) in chapter 4 and *Elohim* once.

The spotlight is on God in the first account; it is on man in the second. In the first account God works six days—he alone speaks and he speaks 10 times. Then God ceases on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. In the second account God, the man, the woman, and the serpent all speak.

Let us now attempt to harmonize the first three days, for it was on these days that God brought forth the heaven and the earth. In the background verses the land is a desert—*tohu* and *bohu* in the first account and without rain in the second account—and there is no man to till the ground. The situation was similar to what Jeremiah foresaw for Jerusalem (Jeremiah 4):

23 I beheld the earth, and, lo, *it was* without form, and void [תהו ובהו] *tôhû wābôhû*; and the heavens, and they *had* no light. 24 I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. 25 I beheld, and, lo, *there was* no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.

The second account makes no mention of the 1<sup>st</sup> day—there is no mention of light or of the luminaries in chapters 2 & 3.

The heaven that is named on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day is not mentioned in the second account (other than in the intro in verse 4). Let me suggest, however, that there may be a parallel in Genesis 2:6, “But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.”

## HARMONIZING THE ACCOUNTS

FIRST ACCOUNT	SECOND ACCOUNT
1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.	4 These <i>are</i> the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,
BACKGROUND	
2 And the earth was without form, and void [תהו ובהו] <i>tôhû wābôhû</i> ; and darkness <i>was</i> upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.	5 And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and <i>there was</i> not a man to till the ground.
FIRST DAY	
3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that <i>it was</i> good: and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.	
SECOND DAY	
6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. 7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which <i>were</i> under the firmament from the waters which <i>were</i> above the firmament: and it was so. 8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.	6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.
THIRD DAY	
9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry <i>land</i> appear: and it was so. 10 And God called the dry <i>land</i> Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that <i>it was</i> good.	7 And the LORD God formed man <i>of</i> the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.
11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, <i>and</i> the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed <i>is</i> in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, <i>and</i> herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed <i>was</i> in itself, after his kind: and God saw that <i>it was</i> good. 13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.	8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.



had not caused it to rain upon the earth,” and prepares the ground for the forming of the man (verse 7), “And YHWH God formed man *of* the dust of the ground...” Thus also Rashi:<sup>13</sup>

“And an *’ed* ascended”: Concerning the creation of Adam, He brought up the deep and watered clouds to soak the dust, and man was created [Gen 2:7]; like this baker who supplies water and afterwards kneads the dough. Here too, “He watered,” and afterwards, “He formed”.

Modernist scholars, however, see multiple myths invoked to explain the physical creation, e.g., Dolansky (2015:18):

Like other ancient peoples, the Israelites told multiple creation stories. The Bible gives us three (and who knows how many others were recounted but not preserved?). Genesis 1 differs from Genesis 2-3, and both diverge from a third version alluded to elsewhere in the Bible, a myth of the primordial battle between God and the forces of chaos known as Leviathan (e.g., Psalm 74), Rahab (Psalm 89) or the dragon (Isaiah 27, 51).

But ancient myth didn’t so much speak of a physical creation as of the origin and exploits of the gods. And similar imagery in the Bible is not so much a creation account as it is prophecy, e.g., Gibson (1978:7, note 4):

These allusions occur in an apocalyptic rather than a primaeva context; in this regard the apocalyptic movement involved a kind of ‘rebirth of the images’, and it was in fact through it as intermediary that the old mythology of Canaan entered the thinking of Judaism and Christianity and ultimately exerted its influence on European poetry and thought...”

Early Jewish and Christian exegesis of Genesis spoke mostly of its esoteric meaning (as initiated by Philo Judaius), or as prophetic of seven millennial ages (see Brown [2014]). Among the first to interpret Genesis in regard to the physical creation was Basil in his Hexaemeron. And, interestingly, he didn’t see the heaven as solid—Homily III, On the Firmament.<sup>14</sup>

7. Therefore we read: “*Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.*” I have said what the word firmament in Scripture means. It is not in

## THE SEA MONSTER

<p>ים # י yām ‘Sea’ ים פִּי־אָמַר יָם ‘for Sea spoke...’ (Isaiah 23:4); etc.</p>
<p>תַּנִּינִן — † † † tannîn ‘dragon’ 27 times Genesis 1:21; Exodus 7:9, 10, 12; Deuteronomy 32:33; Isaiah 13:22; 27:1; 34:13; 35:7; 43:20; 51:9; Jeremiah 9:11; 10:22; 14:6; 49:33; 51:34, 37; Ezekiel 29:3; 32:2; Micah 1:8; Psalm 44:19; 74:13; 91:13; 148:7; Job 7:12; 30:29; Nehemiah 2:13</p>
<p>לְוִיָּתָן     — † † † Liwyātān ‘Leviathan’ 6 times Isaiah 27:1; Psalm 74:14; 104:26; Job 3:8; 41:1 (twice)</p>
<p>רָהַב Rāhab ‘Rahab’ 6 times Isaiah 30:7; 51:9; Psalm 87:4; 89:10; Job 9:13; 26:12</p>

<sup>13</sup> וְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל: לְעֵנָן בְּרִיאָתוֹ שֶׁל אֲדָם הֵעֲלָה אֶת הַתְּהוֹמוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם לְשֵׁרוֹת הַעֵפָר וּנְבָרָא אֲדָם כְּגַבְלֵי זֶה שְׁנוֹתָן מִיָּם וְאֶחָד כֶּדֶשׁ לְשֵׁן אֶת הַעֵיטוֹס אֶף כִּאֵן וְהַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶחָד כֶּדֶשׁ וְיִיֶּאֱרָ:

<sup>14</sup> Translation from Jackson (1894). <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf208.viii.iv.html>  
ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΥ: ΟΜΙΛΙΑ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΕΞΑΗΜΕΡΟΝ. Διὰ τοῦτο Γενηθήτω στερέωμα ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ ὕδατος, καὶ ἔστω διαχωρίζον ἀνά μέσον ὕδατος καὶ ὕδατος. Εἴρηται τί τὸ σημαίνουμενον παρὰ τῆ Γραφῆ τὸ τοῦ στερεώματος ὄνομα. Ὅτι οὐχὶ τὴν ἀντίτυπον καὶ στερέμνιον φύσιν, τὴν ἔχουσαν βάρους καὶ ἀντέρεισιν, οὐ ταύτην λέγει στερέωμα. Ἡ οὕτω ἂν κυριώτερον ἢ γῆ τῆς τοιαύτης κλήσεως ἠξιώθη. Ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν φύσιν τῶν ὑπερκειμένων λεπτῆν οὐσαν καὶ ἀραιὰν καὶ οὐδεμιᾶ αἰσθήσει καταληπτὴν, στερέωμα τοῦτο ὠνόμασε, συγκρίσει τῶν λεπτοτάτων καὶ τῆ αἰσθήσει ἀκαταλήπτων. Καὶ νόει μοι τόπον τινὰ διακριτικὸν τοῦ ὑγροῦ· τὸ μὲν λεπτὸν καὶ διηθούμενον ἐπὶ τὰ ἄνω διέντα, τὸ δὲ παχύτατον καὶ γεῶδες ἐναφιέντα τοῖς κάτω, ἴν' ἐξ ἀρχῆς μέχρι τέλους ἡ αὐτὴ εὐκρασία συντηρηθῆ, κατὰ μέρος τῆς ὑφαιρέσεως τῶν ὑγρῶν γινομένης.

reality a firm and solid substance which has weight and resistance; this name would otherwise have better suited the earth. But, as the substance of superincumbent bodies is light, without consistency, and cannot be grasped by any one of our senses, it is in comparison with these pure and imperceptible substances that the firmament has received its name. Imagine a place fit to divide the moisture, sending it, if pure and filtered, into higher regions, and making it fall, if it is dense and earthy; to the end that by the gradual withdrawal of the moist particles the same temperature may be preserved from the beginning to the end.

Others did see a solid sky, as one in the Midrash:<sup>15</sup> “‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters,’ a drop of the middle solidified and the lower heavens and the upper heavens were made.”

It is God who creates the great dragons, and from the perspective of the first account they are good (Gen 1:21), “And God created great [dragons], ...and God saw that *it was* good.” We see a similar perspective in the parallel Psalm (Psalm 104:26), “There go the ships: *there is* that leviathan, *whom* thou hast made to play therein.” But when these choose evil there is the perspective of prophecy (Ezekiel 29:3): “Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river *is* mine own, and I have made *it* for myself.”

Particularly close to a Canaanite text is the poetry in Isaiah 27:1: “In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that *is* in the sea.” The Hebrew *nḥš brḥ* ‘piercing serpent’ and *nḥš ‘qltwn* ‘crooked serpent’ mirror the Ugaritic *bṯn.brḥ* and *bṯn.‘qltn* in the myth of *Baal and Mot* (Gibson 1978:68):

- 1    𐤁𐤌𐤍𐤏𐤔.𐤋𐤏𐤍.𐤁𐤌𐤏𐤍.𐤁𐤏𐤏𐤍  
*ktmḥṣ.ltn.bṯn.brḥ*  
 ‘for all that you smote Leviathan the slippery serpent,’
- 2    𐤏𐤋𐤋.𐤁𐤌𐤏𐤍.‘𐤓𐤋𐤏𐤍  
*tkl.bṯn.‘qltn*  
 ‘made an end of the wriggling serpent’

The Ugaritic tablets date from about 1400 to 1350 BCE, and therefore predate the prophecy in Isaiah by a good five centuries. The Ugaritic 𐤁𐤌𐤏𐤍 *bṯn* ‘serpent’ is cognate with the Hebrew 𐤏𐤏𐤏 *péten* ‘cobra’ (Deut 32:33; Isaiah 11:8; Psalm 58:4; 91:13; Job 20:14, 16). Both languages share the more generic word for ‘serpent’—Hebrew 𐤏𐤏𐤏 *nāḥāš* and Ugaritic 𐤏𐤏𐤏 *nḥš*.

God’s battle with and rebuke of the sea is there in the poetic telling of the exodus (Psalm 74:13-15): “Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, *and* gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers.” And the past is prophecy in Isaiah 51:

9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. *Art* thou not it that hath cut Rahab, *and* wounded the dragon? 10 *Art* thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way

<sup>15</sup> Midrash Rabbah Genesis 4:2 (בראשית רבה ד ב)

הי רקיע בתוך המים. גלדה טפה האמצעית ונעשו השמים המתחננים ושמי השמים העליונים

for the ransomed to pass over? 11 Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy *shall be* upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; *and* sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

### The Sod or Mystery

If Genesis is giving us information about the nature of the physical universe, then why is it that whenever Genesis is referenced elsewhere it is always for the spiritual implications and never the scientific? This deeper or “spiritual” meaning the sages call the *sod* (סוד ‘secret’) and the Greek New Testament describes as the *mystery* (τό μυστήριον).

From the perspective of justice we have heaven which, as God says (Is 66:1), “Heaven is my throne...” But from the perspective of justice tempered with mercy we have the rain of which God says (Deut 32:2-3), “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.” The comparison is there in Isaiah 55:10-11:

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

#### THE SKY IS MY THRONE

<p>הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּסֵּאִי  <i>haššāmāyim kis'ī</i>          'the sky is my throne'          Isaiah 66:1</p>
<p>יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם כִּסֵּאוֹ  <i>YHWH baššāmāyim kis'ō</i>          'YHWH's throne is in the sky'          Psalm 11:4</p>
<p>הַלְלוּהוּ בִּרְקִיעַ עֲזוֹ:  <i>halēlūhū birqīa' 'uzzō</i>          'praise him in the firmament of his power'          Psalm 150:1</p>
<p>יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם הִכִּין כִּסְאוֹ          וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּכֹל מַשְׁלָה:  <i>YHWH baššāmāyim hēkîn kis'ō</i>  <i>ūmalākūtō bakkōl māšālā<sup>h</sup></i>          'YHWH set up his throne in the sky;          and his kingdom rules over all'          Psalm 103:19</p>

The symbolism is there too in a strangely prophetic tradition recorded in the Zohar (*Vayera* 32:445),<sup>16</sup>

And in the six hundredth year of the sixth millennium there will be opened the gates of the wisdom of above and the fountains of the wisdom below. And the world will be prepared to go up into the seventh millennium just as a man who prepares himself on the sixth day as the sun goes down to go up into the Sabbath. And your sign for this is (Genesis 7:11), “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, etc. all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, [and the windows of heaven were opened.]”

The archetype earth—אֶרֶץ *'éres* ‘land’—is the land of Canaan. It was the promise (Gen 12:1-3), even the promise of the first commandment with promise (Ex 20:12): “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” More specifically it is the footstool of God which is the ark of the Covenant of YHWH (1Chron 28:2). It is also the human heart. In Jesus’ parable the word of God is the seed (Mat 13:19) “...that which is sown in his heart.”

<sup>16</sup> Aramaic text:

ובשית מאה שניו לשיתתאה ותפתחון תרעי דחקמתא לעילא ומבועי דחקמתא לתתא ויתתקון עלמא לאעלא בשביעאה קבד נש דמתתקון ביומא שיתתאה מכי ערב שמשא לאעלא בשבתא אוף הכי נמי וסימניד בשנת שש מאות שנה לחיי נח וגוי נבקעו כל מעינת תהום רבה [וארבת השמים נפתחו].

It was on the third day that God brought forth the dry land and named it, and it was in the third millennium that God brought Israel through the sea on dry land and gave them the land promised their progenitor.

וְהָאֲרֶץ הָדָם רַגְלִי

‘and the earth is my footstool’

Isaiah 66:1 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest?  
 Psalm 99:5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; *for* he *is* holy.  
 Psalm 132:7 We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.  
 Lamentations 2:1 How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, *and* cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!  
 1Chronicles 28:2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: *As for me, I had* in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building:

The Israelites were the trees (Psalm 1:3), “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” It was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day that it says (Gen 1:12), “And the earth brought forth grass, *and* herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.” In the

הָדָם רַגְלִי

*hādōm raglāw*

‘his footstool’

Psalm 99:5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; *for* he *is* holy.  
 Psalm 132:7 We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.  
 Lamentations 2:1 How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, *and* cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!  
 1Chronicles 28:2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: *As for me, I had* in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building:

Septuagint the phrase “whose seed *was* in itself” is οὗ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, and this is repeated in 1John

דִּי־שְׁלִיט עֲלָאָה בְּמַלְכוּת אַנְשָׁא וְלִמְן־דִּי יִצְבֵּא יְהִנְנָה

‘that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will’

Daniel 4:17 This matter *is* by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.  
 Daniel 4:32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.  
 Daniel 4:25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.  
 Daniel 5:21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and *that* he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

3:9, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him [ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει]: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” In Jesus’ parable, remember, the seed is the word of God—the Torah.

The message that Daniel brought to Nebuchadnezzar was “that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will”. Daniel had already told the king about God (Dan 2:21), “...he removeth kings, and setteth up kings...” It is not that God *allowed* Nebuchadnezzar to acquire the throne—God set him up on that throne.

How was this?

It was by the covenant of the rainbow (Gen 9:1-2): “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth *upon* the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.”

God sets up kings from the seed of Noah over the nations—called ‘beasts’ in Scripture. God is king (Psalm 47:2), “For the LORD most high *is* terrible; *he is* a great King over all the earth.”

Whence was this kingship?

There is a special word for Noah’s flood—it is called מַבּוּל *mabbûl* 12 times in Genesis—and then the word occurs just once more (Psalm 29:10): “The LORD sitteth upon the flood [לְמַבּוּל *lammabbûl*]; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.”

God named the heaven on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day (Gen 1:8), “And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.” “The heaven *is* my throne,” God says in Isaiah 66:1; and it was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium that God set himself to rule in the kingdom of men and appoint over it whomever he will.

On a Monday and a Tuesday somewhere in the Near East God pictured his plan for “heaven and earth”—his throne and his footstool. This would play out in the flood of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and in Israel inheriting the land in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium. The language is not so much the language of the physical creation as of the spiritual. The subject is government, and heaven and earth refer to higher and lesser authority. Thus writes Isaac Newton in a chapter titled “Of the Prophetic Language”:<sup>17</sup>

For understanding the Prophecies, we are, in the first place, to acquaint our-selves with the figurative language of the Prophets. This language is taken from the analogy between the world natural, and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic.

Accordingly, the whole world natural consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic, consisting of thrones and people, or so much of it as is considered in the Prophecy: and the things in that world signify the analogous things in this. For the heavens, and the things therein, signify thrones and dignities, and those who enjoy them; and the earth, with the things thereon, the inferior people; and the lowest parts of the earth, called *Hades* or Hell, the lowest or most miserable part of them. Whence ascending towards heaven, and descending to the earth, are put for rising and falling in power and honour: rising out of the earth, or waters, and falling into them, for the rising up to any dignity or dominion, out of the inferior state of the people, or falling down from the same into that inferior state; descending into the lower parts of the earth, for descending to a very low and unhappy estate; speaking with a faint voice out of the dust, for being in a weak and low condition; moving from one place to another, for translation from one office, dignity, or dominion, to another; great earthquakes, and the shaking of heaven and earth, for the shaking of kingdoms, so as to distract or overthrow them; the creating a new heaven and earth, and the passing away of an old one, or the beginning and end of the world, for the rise and ruin of the body politic signified thereby.

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