

Genesis 1:4-10

22 December 2022

Reading from the New International Version, 2011

Learning objectives

- We shall know the timing of God’s creative acts.
- We shall affirm the origin of light.
- We shall be able to explain the ‘sky vault’.

To understand ancient literature & Scripture

We must enter the mind of the original readers.

- Not official church doctrines.
- Not modern preachers’ sermons and books.
- Not scientific hypotheses.
- Not personal impressions, dreams, or experiences.
- Not the 17th century European theologians.

Ancient Readers	Modern Readers
Spiritualist worldview	Rationalist worldview
Invisible—mixed—visible	Invisible(?)—(null)— visible
Theological mythology	Scientific mythology
Collectivist societies	Individualist societies
Shame—honour motives	Guilt—innocence motives
Traditional authority	Limited authority
Monoculturalism	Multiculturalism
High-context language	Low-context language

1:1 Thesis: Elohim creates sky and earth

- Elohim: living, intelligent, powerful Spirit. Plural in form with a singular verb.
- Create: bara’, to fashion anew from old material.
- Heavens and earth: a merism “referring to the entire ordered universe ... and everything in [it].”
- Interpretation: Thesis statement, elaborated in the following verses.

1:2 Initial conditions

- Chaos: tōhû, lack of order or shape
- Empty: bōhû, neither inhabited nor habitable.
- Darkness: Literal conditions, symbolic of chaos, danger, evil, and rebellion.
- Spirit: A great wind from God, as in Daniel 7:2 and mythology.
- Truth: Elohim was in charge, not chaos monsters

1:3-5 First creative day: day and night cycle

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning —the first day.

Did the author mean 24-hour days?

Or long, evolutionary ages?

Or was he just following tradition?

1:3 Elohim commands light into existence.

- Elohim is the first source of light, not the sun.
- Ancients did not conceive of light as emanating from the sun, or as reflected from the moon.
- No minor deity or nature god generates light.
- Light will become a symbol of God, truth, and good.

1:4 Elohim separates light and dark. Good

- Elohim regulates light and dark.
- No sacrifice is to be made to nature deities.
- Light becomes a symbol of deity, life, and good.
- Dark will become a symbol of evil and death.

1:5 Elohim names (and rules over) day and night

- Elohim rules over both day and night.

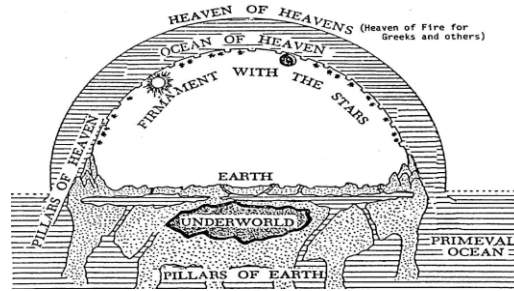
You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies [LXX: demon] by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.

Psalms 91:5-6 [Predictive of messiah's ministry of exorcism.]

1:6-8 Second creative day: the expanse

6 And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning —the second day.

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A modernist, reconstructionist model of Hebrew cosmology, invented in the early 20th century, that no ancient Hebrew ever imagined, but is taught in universities, to this day.

Was the 'vault' a solid dome that does not exist?

1. The Bible is wrong, for there is no vault in the sky.
2. The Bible is right, for there was a dome until it collapsed, causing the great flood.
3. The Bible is useful, for it is speaking in terms that its original writer and readers understood.
4. The Bible may be saying something else, for 'vault' is a mistaken translation.
5. The Bible is fiction, for it is relating ancient myths that we know to be pre-scientific imagination

1:6 Elohim commands separation between waters

- Meaning: There is no textual description of the 'vault' other than that common to sky: asters, clouds, birds, and an occasional fiery chariot.
- Function: A separation, not a material structure.
- Divide: Upper and lower.
- Purpose: Elohim would later collapse the waters, causing the great flood. See Genesis 7:11.

Hebrew raqîac, Greek stereôma, Latin firmamentum

- Hebrew root rqc: "To spread out." Used of beating gold sheets (Exo 39:3). Otherwise, a noun for beaten metal only in non-Hebrew languages.
- Context: Separation. Hence, 'expanse' (ESV).
- Synonym: Poetic parallel with 'sky', 'heavens'.

Hebrew worldview:

3. Invisible heaven – abode of the divine council
2. Visible sky – from ground level upwards, birds
1. Land and seas – where humans and beasts dwell
0. Underworld and Sheol – abode of the dead

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1:7 Vertical expanse between waters

- 'Make vault' = separate waters, a creative act.
- Water under: sea, lakes, rivers, deep, and wells.
- Water above: rain, snow, 'windows of heaven'.

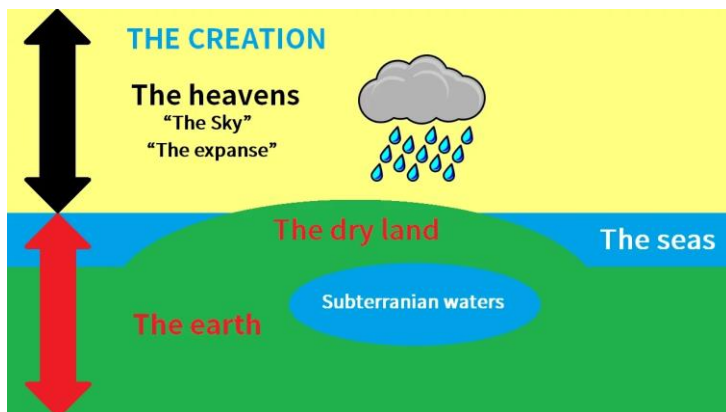
All the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. Gen 7:11-12

Hebrew raqîac, Greek stereôma, Latin firmamentum

- Greek: stereôma, "2 state or condition of firm commitment, firmness, steadfastness." BDAG
- Colossians 2:5 'I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm [stereôma] your faith in Christ is'.
- Thesis: The raqîac refers to a separation between waters above and those below, serving in poetry as a synonym for heavens or sky. It is not a physical structure, vault or dome, except in the imagination of skeptics and atheists.

1:8 'Vault' = sky

- Compare: light = day
dark = night
and = earth
waters = sea
vault = sky



What does this account mean for us?

- God created the world 'good' by design.
- God created all animal and vegetable life.
- God names and owns all that he created.
- God sets limits and regulates time.
- There is more to come...