

“In the Beginning God Created...”

Thomas Robinson, *Beginning God's Great Unfolding 1*, June 21, 2019

Genesis 1 (Translation TR)

The Beginning: God Creates: All is Formless Potential – with God's Spirit.

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was without form and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the abyss, and the Spirit (*ruach*) of God was moving over the waters.

First Day: God's Word Brings forth Light. The Ordering of Time Begins – Evening and Morning. A

³ God said, “*Let there be light.*” And there was light! ⁴ God saw that the light was good and separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “*day*” and the darkness “*night.*”

There was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

Second Day: A Vault called “Heavens” Separates and Links Regions of Waters Above and Below. B

⁶ God said, “*Let there be a vault* (firmament, solidity) *in the midst of the waters and let it separate waters from waters.*” ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the waters under the vault from the waters above the vault. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault “*heavens*” (*shamayim*).

There was evening, and there was morning – a second day.

Third Day: Dry Earth is Separated from Seas under Heavens. Earth Sprouts Varied Vegetation. C

⁹ God said, “*Let the waters under the heavens be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear.*” It was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground “*earth*” (*eretz*, land) and called the gathered waters “*seas.*” God saw that it was good.

¹¹ God said, “*Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, and trees bearing fruit with seed according to their kinds on the earth.*” And it was so. ¹² The earth sprouted vegetation – plants yielding seeds according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seeds according to their kinds.

God saw that it was good. ¹³ There was evening, and there was morning – a third day.

Fourth Day: God Sets a Greater and a Lesser Lamp in the Vault for Light, Signs, & Marking Time. A'

¹⁴ God said, “*Let there be lamps in the vault of the heavens to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to indicate seasons and days and years,* ¹⁵ *and let them be lamps in the vault of the heavens to shine light on the earth.*” And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lamps – the greater lamp for the realm of the day and the lesser lamp for the realm of the night – with the stars. ¹⁷ God placed them in the vault of the heavens to shine light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule in the day and in the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.

God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ There was evening, and there was morning – a fourth day.

Fifth Day: Creatures that are Living Beings Swarm in the Waters and Fly Across the Heavens. B'

²⁰ God said, “*Let the waters swarm with a swarm of living beings* (*nephesh hayah*), *and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the vault of the heavens.*” ²¹ God created the gigantic sea creatures and every living moving being (*nephesh*) with which the water swarmed, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.

God saw that it was good. ²² **God blessed them** and said, “*Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase in number on the earth.*”

²³ There was evening, and there was morning – a fifth day.

Sixth Day: Living Beings Come Forth from Earth – Livestock and Varied Wild Animals. C'

²⁴ God said, “*Let the earth produce living beings according to their kinds: livestock, creeping things, and earth’s animals, each according to its kind.*” And it was so. ²⁵ God made the earth’s animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all that moves on the ground according to their kinds.

God saw that it was good.

God Creates the Human Being – Male and Female – in God’s Image to Be in Charge of Creation.

²⁶ Then God said, “*Let us make a human being (adham, Gk. anthropos) in our image, according to our likeness. And let them rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the livestock, and over all the earth, and over all that moves on the earth.*”

²⁷ **God created the human being (adham)** in his image, in the image of God he created the human. **Male and female he created them.**

²⁸ God blessed them! And God said to them, “*Be fruitful and increase in number! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and every living thing that moves on the earth.*”

God Gives the Plants as Food for all Living Beings – Both for Humans and for All Animals.

²⁹ Then God said, “*I’m giving you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They’ll be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all earth’s animals and to all birds of the heavens, and to all that moves on the earth – all that has living being (nephesh hayah) in it – I give every green plant for food.*” And it was so.

God Sees that the Completed Creation is Very Good.

³¹ God saw all that he had made– and it was very good!

There was evening, and there was morning – a sixth day.

Genesis 2

Seventh Day: With Creation Complete, God Rests and Makes the Day Holy

¹ And the heavens and the earth were completed and all their vast host.

² And God completed by the seventh day his work that he was doing. And he rested (*shabat*) on the seventh day from all his work that he was doing. ³ God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested (*shabat*) from all his work that God created and made.

Genesis 2:4-5

⁴ These are the Generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created– when YAHWEH God made earth and heavens. ⁵ Now no shrub of the field had yet come to be on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for YAHWEH God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no human to work the ground.

Genesis 5:1-2

^{5:1} This is the record of the generations of Human (Adham). When God created a human, he made the human in the likeness of God. ² Male and female he created them. He blessed them and named them “human” when he created them.

Genesis 12:1-3

¹ Now YAHWEH said to Abram, “Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father’s household to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse, and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name.”

Isaiah 40:25-28

²⁵ “To whom can you compare me? Whom do I resemble?” says the Holy One. ²⁶ Look up to the skies and see! Who created all these? He is the one who leads out their ranks; he calls them all by name. Because of his absolute power and awesome strength, not one of them is missing. ²⁷ Why do you say, Jacob, Why do you say, Israel, “YAHWEH is not aware of what is happening to me, My God is not concerned with my vindication”? ²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? YAHWEH is an eternal God, the creator of the whole earth. He does not get tired or weary; there is no limit to his wisdom.

Isaiah 42:5-6

⁵ Thus says God, YAHWEH, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶ “I am YAHWEH; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations.”

Proverbs 8:22-24, 27-28, 30-31 Wisdom speaks...

²² “YAHWEH possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. ²³ Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. ²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. ... ²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, ... ³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, ³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of Humanity (*Adham*).”

John 1:1-5

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² The Word was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and apart from him not even one thing came to be. ⁴ What has come to be in him was life, and the life was the light of human beings. ⁵ And the light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Colossians 1:15-17

¹⁵ He is the visible image of the God who is invisible, firstborn to all creation. ¹⁶ For in him were created all things, in the heavens and on the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or lordships or rules or authorities – all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he himself is before all things, and all things are united together in him.

Learning God, Humanity, and the World for the Great Story

The Bible is the great narrative of human greatness and brokenness, sin. But especially the actions of the God of the universe to give real freedom to these creatures and then to bring them into sharing God's own life. The Messiah comes within a long history.

The main story begins with Abraham, then Patriarchs, Moses-Exodus-Tabernacle, Promised Land, Disorder, David, Disorder, Destruction of Israel, Disorder in Judah, Exile in Babylon. How did we get here? Ancient traditions become written scripture focused on Israel's failures in faithfulness interwoven with God's faithfulness to his promises.

Who is this astonishing God? How does Israel's story fit within the fundamental problems of all humanity? How do God's promises to Abraham and Israel affect all humanity?

Genesis 1-11 introduces the great unfolding narrative and sets the stage within which the call of Abraham and all that follows unfolds. Yahweh is Creator, One God of all!

The Parable of the Human Situation

Gen 1-11 is not a science book or a history book. Neither would be useful. It is not God revealing secrets of physics: no mention of earth as a planet. It's not an old myth. The text sets itself apart: Long lives, two narratives of creation, cosmic catastrophes.

It's more a prophetic parable – from the time of Isaiah of the Exile. No references to Adam in the OT. It's complex with many parts. But like Jesus' parables, the parts use recognizable elements of human experience. Gen 1 uses the way the world looks to an ordinary person seeing it day and night. It weaves the elements into a narrative with twists that make you puzzle and recognize new things you hadn't seen before, especially about God and the profound brokenness and hope of the human situation.

To harmonize it with science or history is to miss it – like saying Jesus' parables aren't facts.

The Unfolding Starts From God's Very Good World.

There's going to be a lot about broken trust, sin, suffering, violence. But Gen 1 sets the contrast that clarifies the evil. From Gen 1 there is no hint of evil.

It starts from God. All else is created. The fundamental divide. God is complex and deep but self-existent. God is. Before and outside creation but pervading all. Heavens and earth are formless potential moved by God's Word and Spirit. God has no opposition. No battles. No dualism. This story is not just Israel's story but the whole world's story.

God turns potential into ordered goodness. There are boundaries and distinctions but not dividing good and bad. One interconnected order. Ordered time, days. A Vault, "Firmament." Dry earth, seas. All are united in creation. God's Spirit is a Wind. Heavens and Waters on both sides of the vault. The sequence is stylized not logical. Day, night, plants, before sun. The Sun and moon are not gods, but only called lamps in the vault. No astrology. No mention of movement. They are lights and markers of time.

The Human is especially created with God's image, to represent God's care for his creation. No hierarchy between male and female. No bloodshed. Very good. Rest.