

THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING  
AND SIGNIFICANCE OF YÔM IN GENESIS 1

by

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- AB Anchor Bible
- ANE Ancient Near East/ern
- ANET *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. Ed., J. B. Pritchard. 2 vols. Princeton University Press, 1958, 1975.
- AOAT Alter Orient und Altes Testament
- ARTU Johannes C. de Moor. *An Anthology of Religious Texts From Ugarit*. Leiden: Brill, 1987.
- BDB F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907.
- BCOTWP Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
- CD Karl Barth. *Church Dogmatics*. 4 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010.
- CTA A. Herdner, *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939*, 2 tomes, Paris 1963.
- CTJ *Calvin Theological Journal*
- COS *The Context of Scripture*, ed. W. W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997-2002.
- DBSJ *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*
- DOT:Pent *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. Eds., T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.
- EDNT *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. 3 vols. Eds., Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993.
- ESV English Standard Version
- EvQ *Evangelical Quarterly*
- GKC *Gesenius Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch, trans. A. E. Cowley. 2d ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910.
- HB Hebrew Bible
- HOL *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based on*

- the First, Second, and Third Editions of the Koehler-Baumgartner Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros.* William L. Holladay, ed.; Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1988.
- IBHS *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax.* B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- IEJ *Israel Exploration Journal*
- JANESCU *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
- JOCABS *The Journal of the Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies*
- JETS *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
- JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
- JSOTSup *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series*
- KTU *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit,* ed., M. Dietrich, O. Loretz and J. Sanmartin. AOAT 24/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976.
- L&N Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds. *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on the Semantic Domains.* New York: United Bible Societies, 1988.
- NIBC New International Biblical Commentary
- OT Old Testament
- OTL Old Testament Library
- NT New Testament
- NAB New American Bible
- NAC New American Commentary
- NET New English Translation (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)
- NICOT New International Commentary on the Old Testament
- NIDOTTE *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis.* Ed., W. A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.

NIV	New International Version (1984)
NIVACNIV Application Commentary	
NLT	New Living Translation (2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition)
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NRS	New Revised Standard Version
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
TNIV	Today's New International Version
<i>OTTCC</i>	Brevard S. Childs. <i>Old Testament Theology in Canonical Context</i> . Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## INTRODUCTION

Arguably, the first chapter of Genesis is among the most profound, influential, and beloved pieces of literature extant.<sup>1</sup> Despite (or more likely because of) the enthrallment with Gen 1 there has been a constant maelstrom of contention over the precise meaning of this passage and its various components. It is among the most hotly disputed in regard to such things in particular (though not exclusively) as the age of the universe/earth and interpreting the *imago Dei*. With every new interpretation it would appear that new lines are drawn in the sand and new seemingly impervious borders are established. At times an utter contempt has been palpably evident within the wider Church normally evidenced for those espousing differing views—even the accusations of ignorance or outright heresy—call for a stronger sense of considerate moderation and humble postulation.

There certainly are key doctrines which are found first within the canon of Scripture in this foundational chapter. The scope of the claims of this one chapter is universal and its contents provide the seed of numerous other elements that are expounded elsewhere in Scripture. The manner in which the various possibilities of interpretation are applied to this text do seem to have a wide-reaching impact upon a broader scheme for interpreting Scripture though certainly there is a strong sense in which this particular text has such a peculiar place in the canon and, according to its own claim, in the history of everything.

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of this project, “Gen 1” is used as shorthand for the larger account encompassing the literary unit of Gen 1:1-2:4a.

The hopeful attempt of this project is to arrive at a more theologically grounded affirmation of what the Hebrew term *yôm* in Gen 1 both means and signifies. The importance of such a project is the establishment of an exegetical method applied to the ANE, immediate literary and wider canonical contexts with regard to their impact upon the theological meaning and significance.

It deserves bearing in mind as one proceeds that “the purpose of the Bible is neither historical nor literary; it is theological.”<sup>2</sup> Purpose is as much about significance as it is about meaning. Thus, this paper sets out to wrestle with the theological meaning and significance of Scripture and more specifically the use of *yôm* in Gen 1. Questions of history and literary development offer their own contributions to such a study, but are not the driving force behind it. “[An] articulation of the theology of Genesis is possible only when one has before him [sic] a holistic text. Theology must be based on the text as we have it, not on what it might once have been.”<sup>3</sup> Theology, and the *theological* meaning and significance of *yôm* within Gen 1 stand out as the crux of this study.

The primary intent of Scripture (i.e., the theological intent) is normative for a proper interpretation that regards authorial intent with due respect. If the theological meaning and significance were excluded from one’s interpretation this would suggest that the reading of Scripture is not to be read *as Scripture*, but simply as objectified artifact. Certainly the Scriptures can be read in this manner with some benefit, but it fails to grapple with original intent. This “original intent” does not pertain to any fabricated attempt to get

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<sup>2</sup> Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 34.

<sup>3</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 42.



behind the text to an undocumented “original” of the text, but understands the text to offer its own implied author and audience. The implied author and audience are suggestive for how one should read the text. Any other manner of reading the text may be helpful in other studies, but is not ultimately helpful for reading the text as Scripture and therefore theologically.<sup>4</sup> The failure to read Scripture theologically may in fact explain much of the maelstrom of debate surrounding Gen 1, specifically concerning the use of *yôm*.

A theological reading understands there is more to be interpreted than simply one term in relation to other terms or in relation to genre, but also recognizes the grounding of any reading within the overall cultural, sociological and conceptual worldview as the text has been preserved. The context and genre provide the means by which one should arrive at any proper theological interpretation. It would seem that many fail to understand the importance of the theological intent of a given passage. This, more often than not, leads one to inadequately interpret the theological meaning of the passage and thus the intended theological significance of the passage. “When it comes to the Bible, the energy necessary to ‘hear clearly’ may be considerable, especially given the Bible’s ‘remove’ from the listener’s own language, literary traditions, and culture.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, the “ability to ask the proper questions presupposes that we come to the text with the proper expectations, and this in turn presupposes that we make an effort to bridge the spatio-temporal gap by developing, as best we can, an ancient linguistic-literary-cultural competence.”<sup>6</sup>

4 Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 72-76, 132-135; C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 36, 37.

5 V. Phillips Long, “History and Hermeneutics: How Then Should We Read the Bible ‘Historically’?,” in *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation: Six Volumes in One* (ed., Moisés Silva; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 394.

6 Long, “History and Hermeneutics,” in *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, 394.

V. Phillips Long speaks directly to the barriers to fruitful discussions concerning Gen 1 (though his intent is far broader) when he writes,

Where there are differences at the fundamental level of worldview, tensions and disagreements on the levels of interpretation and/or application are inevitable. If the interpreter's model of reality is distinctly different from that embodied in the text, there will be tension. If a method is applied to a text whose fundamental assumptions about the world and reality run counter to the assumptions underlying the method, there will be tensions. If interpreters approaching a given text disagree fundamentally on how they view reality, they will likely also disagree on how to interpret the text, or at least on whether the text, once interpreted, is to be accepted as trustworthy and authoritative.<sup>7</sup>

It is suggested in this study that this is why many interpreters fail to adequately understand the theological intent of Gen 1 and instead get sidetracked by lesser concerns, but concerns that seem all-important to the contemporary world.

Such concerns as the grammatical meaning of *yôm*, literary history and genre of Gen 1 and the date of creation have produced countless volumes over the last century. These matters are not matters of the text itself but are peripheral matters at best. What is here expounded is a suggested beginning point for a discussion concerning theologically interpreting *yôm* in Gen 1. It is by no means exhaustive, but instead its *raison d' être* is to attempt to offer a way forward toward a more contextually appreciative theological understanding of the meaning and significance of *yôm* and to move the discussion beyond *word wars* and *genre battles*. The advice of Paul to Timothy seems fitting under such circumstances when he writes,

Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, be-

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<sup>7</sup> Long, "History and Hermeneutics," in *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, 390.

cause those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. (2 Tim 2:14-16 TNIV)

It is imperative that one discerns matters of utmost importance and does not take to quarrel-  
ing about trifling matters that are actually not of concern to the text. This may be a loose  
understanding of Paul's instruction, but it seems fitting to the overall battle that rages  
around the first chapter of Genesis. Understanding the actual theological intent and use of  
a given passage should result in right living. It can not simply be a debate about words. It  
must involve a deeper level of thinking about the passage's overall intent and its use of par-  
ticular vocabulary in any given instance.

The use of *yôm* in Gen 1 plays a vital theological role in the development of the  
entire passage. It is noteworthy that the other passages in Scripture that describe the  
creation events do not make use of any structure like that found in Gen 1. In this regard, it  
is utterly unique among creation accounts. However, it is by no means the only creation  
account in the HB or the ANE. The use of *yôm* in Gen 1 actually serves to highlight the  
particular theological emphasis of the overall passage. This should not be dismissed lightly  
since the passage has been so intentionally shaped by its use of *yôm* that any other  
formation of this account fails to understand why it was determined that creation should be  
over the course of light and darkness covering six days of work and a Sabbath of rest.

The theological meaning and significance of *yôm* is herein discussed under three  
chapters ("Comparative Contexts," "Theological Motifs of Time in Genesis 1," and  
"Theological Significance of *Yôm* in Genesis 1") leading to the specifying pinnacle found  
in the final chapter. There is also an appendix which discusses three various polemical  
motifs considered to be present in Gen 1. These three chapters are intended to allow for a

more theological discussion to move from more general matters to the more specific matters. This is intended to facilitate a redirection away from the categories with which the normal discussions of the use of *yôm* in Gen 1 have left off. It is the intention herein to provide a specific background, foreground and demarcation for a proper and more fully developed understanding and appreciation of the theological use of *yôm* in Gen 1.

There are several important delimitations to this project. The first is that there are simply too many occurrences of *yôm* in the Hebrew Bible to take each one and analyze them exhaustively. It is also not the intent of this project to discuss the entire semantic range of meaning for *yôm* in the HB. This means that only certain key passages can and will be analyzed in order to discuss and interact with that literature which is considered to offer a comparative creation context for discussing the use or non-use of *yôm* in each respective passage. Grammatical and semantic analysis is not the point of this project. This is not to question the value of such studies which have their own place, but to note that such studies can not adequately answer the question of determining original theological intent.

However, the semantic analysis of this chapter demonstrates the range of nuanced meaning for *yôm* in Gen 1 and lays an important basis for the theological analysis that follows. There are at least three, likely four, and potentially five different nuances which have been proposed for *yôm* in Gen 1. The first refers to the time of light differentiated from darkness and functions to name that period (Gen 1:5). The second refers to the time of light alternating with the time of darkness (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31, 31; 2:2-3). The third refers to the overall time of creating (Gen 2:4). The fourth refers to the cultic calendar of days (Gen 1:14). The fifth refers to the un-timed passage of light and darkness

prior to the creation of the sun, moon and stars (1:14, 16, 18).

The first usage is functional in naming the time of light. This may in fact form a connective to the next chapter and the “naming” of the creatures and the woman. It also highlights the very important literary feature and theological intent of chapter one. There are actually only three other features of creation which are “called” anything—“sky,” “land” and “seas.” This highlighting of something considered to be abstract rather than concrete only serves to further emphasize the uniqueness of calling that period of light “Day.”

The second usage occurs the most often throughout this passage and creates a literary unfolding of the story, as it were, between light and darkness, between what is done in the time of light and the simple passing over of the darkness. It functions to locate the “day” within a framework of enumerated and chronologized “days” that emphasize the historical setting in the wider context of Genesis. It is this usage that seems to provide the most fodder for the ongoing debates about the timing of creation.<sup>8</sup> Such arguments, however, seem to miss the overall intent of the passage and in particular this thesis’ attempt to locate the theological intent of such a usage (among the several others delineated here).

The third usage is functionally adverbial and points to the overall time of all of creation. This usage has often been proposed as an argument in favor of reading no explicit

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<sup>8</sup> Influential proponents of a “24-Hour Day” theory are Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb. See Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976); *Scientific Creationism* (El Cajon, CA: Master Books, 1985); John C. Whitcomb, *The Early Earth* (rev., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986); Whitcomb, John Clement, et. al., *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008). One particularly popular and influential proponent of a “Day Age” theory is Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004). An “extraordinary day” theory has been held by numerous individuals, but two writers and their respective works bear mentioning: C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006) and Edward J. Young, “Days of Genesis,” *WTJ* 25 (1962-1963): 1-34, 143-171.

time reference into all of the other uses (particularly the enumeration of *yôm*). However, context determines meaning and one cannot simply read into the other uses this particular usage which offers its own perspective on the work of creation.

The fourth usage serves not to simply describe any “days” but specifically those “days” located within the cultic observance of the Israelite calendar. This is facilitated by the cultic linguistic context of “seasons” and “festivals.” This particular usage of *yôm* seems to have been largely ignored in the ongoing debates, but suggests that there is far more involved in this discussion than the timing of creation.

The fifth, and final, usage has been proposed by several to suggest that at least the first three “days” of creation are not normal “days” since they occur without the passing of sun and moon, but simply the passage of light and darkness, evening and morning, as it were. While this may be a potential fifth usage, it is less clear than the fourth usage, but has become another weapon in the debate. The time references remain the same as the post-sun and moon “days,” but somehow stand in a different relation because they precede what is considered to be the normal experience of humans in relation to the passage of time.

The second delimitation concerns the creation event itself. It is beyond the scope of this project to discuss the nature of creation (e.g., special-creation, evolution, etc.) or the timing of creation (when it occurred and how long it actually took). While any interpretation of *yôm* might conceivably be understood to deal (at least in part) with the issue of timing for the creation (Was it one literal week? A literary framework? A conceptual or perceptual week?, etc.), such matters lie well beyond the scope of this project. This is where many of the debates rage concerning Gen 1. While it seems to

create vast tomes of literature intended to defend one view against another as well as organizations concerned entirely with expounding their respective camp's view, this is not the concern of the Scripture but of contemporary battles over ideology. Further, it does not even figure into the project that follows.

The question of the timing of creation does not appear to be the actual intent of the original author or audience even as it suggests a historicizing of the event of creation. If anything it is taken for granted that the "days" are in relation to time as experienced by author and audience even though there is a strong sense of disjuncture with the "days" in comparison to the reality of life. The question of chronology in regard to the timing of creation is a matter that could only biblically be answered with an overall reading of Scripture through establishing such authorial intent.

CHAPTER I:  
COMPARATIVE CONTEXTS

It is imperative that the context for Gen 1 be studied. After all, context is determinative of meaning (also with regard to the intent of this paper: *significance*). As Gerhard Hasel, responding to the work of Claus Westermann, says, “it is a methodological necessity to consider religio-historical parallels against the totality of the phenomenological conception of the works in which such parallels appear.”<sup>9</sup> Gen 1 is not the only creation account either in the Biblical record or in the ANE. It is placed among many other accounts of creation that each offers their own perspective on creation. It is not as if the creation account of Gen 1 simply appeared in a vacuum. It was birthed in a rich milieu of competing creation accounts and found achieved the pride of place what came to be the Biblical canon of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. While the immediate literary context will be examined in another chapter, this opening chapter will look at a number of the primary Biblical and ANE comparative creation accounts. A comprehensive examination cannot be undertaken with either the Biblical or ANE context, but instead a sampling of the primary texts that are proposed as comparative by scholars specializing in Biblical

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<sup>9</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *EvQ* 46 (1974), 81.



studies and the ANE.<sup>10</sup> It is the contention of this chapter that the contexts are comparative only in very general ways and not in specifics. In this regard, Gen 1 stands apart from other accounts and offers a unique perspective on creation and even has been fashioned in a manner unlike other accounts.

### Primary Comparative Biblical Contexts

Mark Smith helpfully proposes three motifs for generally classifying creation accounts in the Bible: power, wisdom and presence. The over-arching link, for him, is to the notion of the king who was the warrior, wise, and “responsible for building temples.”<sup>11</sup> His contention is that Gen 1 actually utilizes all three of these motifs, but is largely functioning from the first model—divine might.<sup>12</sup> However, in order to better understand the place of Gen 1 is to compare it to other notable creation accounts in the OT and briefly examine their primary motif. This will help to isolate any unique features about Gen 1 as well as to locate it within the overall models of creation in the OT.

### Psalm 8

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<sup>10</sup> For a helpful sampling of more comprehensive works tackling this issue from varying perspectives see, Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*, The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 26 (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994); Loren R. Fisher, “Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament,” *VT* 15 (1965): 313-324; Walter Harrelson, “The Significance of Cosmology in the Ancient Near East,” in *Translating and Understanding the Old Testament: Essays in Honor of Herbert G. May* (Eds., Harry Thomas Frank and William L. Reed; New York: Abingdon, 1970), 237-252; Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010); Bruce K. Waltke, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3 – Part I: Introduction to Biblical Cosmogony,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975): 25-36; John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989); *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 16.

*For the choir director according to the gittith. A Psalm of David.*

*O YHWH, our God, how majestic is your name in all the earth.  
You have set your splendor above the heavens.*

*From the mouth of children and babies  
You have established strength against your foes,  
To silence your enemy and the avenger.*

*When I look at your heavens, the works of your fingers,  
The moon and the stars which you have established,*

*What is man that you consider them?  
And the son of man that you care for them?*

*And you make him a little less than the heavenly beings,  
And with glory and splendor you crown him.*

*You gave him rule over the works of your hands,  
You put everything under his feet:  
Sheep and cattle, all of them,  
As well as the beasts of the field.  
The birds of the heavens  
And the fish of the sea  
Those swimming the paths of the seas.*

*O YHWH, our God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!<sup>13</sup>*

What one encounters in Ps 8 is a brief creation Psalm that seems to be somewhat more representative of the majority of models found in the ANE: power via conflict. There is no explicit statement of conflict in this psalm, but it is implicit that the enemies have been overcome. In this psalm (as in many of the others), the name of YHWH is “the key to the secret of creation.”<sup>14</sup> After all, it is “Yahweh who made heaven and earth and whose name is majestic in all the world.”<sup>15</sup> It is the name, YHWH, that evokes the power and

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<sup>13</sup> All translations are my own unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>14</sup> Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms* (trans. Keith Crim; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 36.

<sup>15</sup> Kraus, *Theology*, 36.

sovereignty over all else, because the name of YHWH is “majestic” ( אֲדִיר *’addir*).<sup>16</sup> This name and its resplendent message of sovereignty are notably lacking, however, in the account of Gen 1.

While not all of his remarks bear equal weight, Mark Smith has summarized his understanding of the relationship between Ps 8 and Gen 1 well when he writes:

While Psalm 8 resembles Genesis 1 in evoking a picture of the universe as a divine sanctuary, it does not include the specifically priestly emphases found in Genesis 1, in particular themes of sanctification and divine rest. Genesis 1 presents the created world with the holiness of the Sabbath on the seventh day. This sense of the universe as a divine sanctuary is also conveyed...by its picture of God acting as a divine priest who utters blessing upon creatures, including humanity (Genesis 1:22, 28). The verb, ‘to cease, end’ (*\*shbt*) in the two texts may mark a subtle difference within their overall similarity: in Genesis 1 this verb, which refers to the divine rest, may play off the older notion of this root that we see in Psalm 8, that God put an end to the divine enemies.<sup>17</sup>

To be certain, Smith argues for the chronological precedence of Ps 8 over and against Gen 1. In this regard, Ps 8 presents a view of creation that is considered older than that found in Gen 1. These two accounts are not utterly disjunctive, but Gen 1 is thought to be a later reflection of the motif of divine presence (best exemplified in this psalm by the “name”) found in such creation accounts as Ps 8 wherein the conflict has been silenced to the sovereignty of God’s presence as creator without much attention paid to any form of conflict.

Some have dated this psalm to the post-exilic period when creation motifs seemed to prevail in Israelite writings. Peter C. Craigie argues the inconclusive nature of proposing a post-exilic date for the composition of this psalm simply because of its creational nature

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<sup>16</sup> John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1-41* (BCOTWP: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 155.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 32.

as if the striking rise of such motifs was only pertinent to that particular context. However, he argues (concerning this psalm), “given the commonality of creation thought throughout the ancient Near East and the centrality of creation in Israelite thought from a very early period” this psalm could be dated far earlier.<sup>18</sup>

While there are certain verbal commonalities between Gen 1 and Ps 8, these may only be suggestive of common themes in the Israelite traditions of creation and does not suggest that Gen 1 should be dated after Ps 8. It could just as easily suggest conceptual commonality as literary borrowing, perhaps more so.

#### Psalm 104

*Bless Yhwh, my soul!*

*Yhwh my God, you became very great;  
     you put on honor and majesty,  
 Wrapping on light like a coat,  
     stretching out the heavens like tent curtains,  
 One fixing his lofts in the waters,  
     making the clouds his chariot,  
     going about on the wings of the wind,  
 Making his aides of winds,  
     his ministers of flaming fire.*

*He founded the earth on its bases:  
     it will never collapse, ever.  
 With the deep like a garment you covered it:  
     the waters were standing above the mountains.  
 At your blast they were fleeing,  
     at the sound of your thunder they were rushing away.  
 As they were rising up the mountains, so they were going down the valleys,  
     To the place that you founded for them.  
 You set a limit that they should not pass,  
     they should not return to cover the earth.*

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<sup>18</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC 19; Waco, TX: Word, 1983).

*You are the one who sends out springs in canyons;  
 between the mountains they go.  
 They water every animal of the wild;  
 the donkeys break their thirst.  
 By them the birds of the heavens dwell,  
 from among the branches the birds give voice.  
 You are the one who waters the mountains from his lofts,  
 from the fruit of your works the earth drinks its fill.*

*You are the one who grows grass for the cattle,  
 plants for the service of the people,  
 To bring forth food from the earth,  
 and wine that gladdens the human heart.  
 To make the face shine with oil,  
 and food that sustains the human heart.  
 Yhwh's trees drink their fill,  
 Lebanese cedars, ones that he planted,  
 Where birds nest;  
 the stork—its home is the junipers.  
 The high mountains for the ibex,  
 the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers.*

*He made the moon for dates,  
 the sun which knows its time for setting.  
 You bring darkness and it becomes night;  
 in it every animal in the forest moves about.  
 The lions roar for prey,  
 and that in seeking their food from God.  
 When the sun rises they gather  
 and lie down in their lairs.  
 Human beings go out to their work,  
 to their service until evening.*

*How the things you made multiplied, Yhwh;  
 you made them all in wisdom.  
 The earth is full of your possessions;  
 that is the sea, great and wide in reach.  
 There are moving things without number,  
 living creatures small and great.  
 There ships go about,  
 Leviathan that you shaped to play in it.  
 To you all of them look  
 to give them their food at its time.  
 You give to them, they gather;  
 you open your hand, they eat their fill of good things.*

*You hide your face, they panic;  
 you gather up their breath, they perish,  
 they return to their dirt.*

*You send out your spirit, they are created;  
 you renew the face of the ground.*

*May Yhwh's splendor be forever,  
 may Yhwh rejoice in his works,  
 One who looks on the earth and it trembles,  
 who touches the mountains and they smoke.*

*I will sing for Yhwh as long as I live,  
 I will make music for my God as long as I last.*

*May my murmuring give delight to him;  
 I myself will rejoice in Yhwh.*

*May sinners come to an end from the earth;  
 the faithless: may there be none of them anymore.*

*Worship Yhwh, my soul;  
 praise Yah.<sup>19</sup>*

Whereas Ps 8 was an abbreviated creational account—not to mention that the creational motif is more implied and not explicated—Ps 104 is a robust poetic account of the creation of the heaven and earth. It serves as a crescendo of praise to the one who made and cares for all that exists. Ps 104 is explicit about the praise of YHWH for creation and seems to speak to issues prevalent in both Gen 1 and 2.<sup>20</sup> While there are many similarities to note about Ps 104 and Gen 1, Leslie Allen also takes care to mention the dissimilarities: “Genesis 1 is logical and schematic in its approach, while the psalm is exuberant and free, and employs a rich, varied vocabulary... a difference of order,” as well as the explicit use of mythical language (e.g., “Leviathan,”<sup>21</sup> the clouds as YHWH’s “chariot”) and

<sup>19</sup> Translation from John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 3: Psalms 90-150* (BCOTWP; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 178-181.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 209-210n95.

<sup>21</sup> While at least one major English translation has opted for a non-mythical reading (“whale” – NET), most retain the transliterated term, “Leviathan.” The early translations of the LXX and Vulgate also maintained a mythological interpretation with their respective terms: δρ κων (Ps 103:26 LXX) and its Latin cognate *draco* (Ps 103:26 Vulgate). The NET’s note on this verse is unconvincing in its plea for a non-mythical reading: “Elsewhere Leviathan is a multiheaded sea monster that symbolizes forces hostile to

anthropomorphisms throughout the psalm.<sup>22</sup> Ps 104 is explicitly poetic in structure and linguistic features, while Gen 1 might best be described as a poetic-like prose.<sup>23</sup> The one seems to move in a thematic, intuitive manner, while the other moves in a chronological, non-intuitive manner. Gerhard von Rad confesses that the likes of Ps 104 (and the other creation Psalms including the creational texts of Second Isaiah)

show us that Israel also knew how to speak in a different, more lively, way about God's creation. But the atmosphere of Gen., ch. I, is not primarily one of reverence, awe, or gratitude, but one of theological reflection. The sober monotony of the account, precisely because of this radical renunciation, emphasizes what faith is capable of declaring objectively. But just this renunciation also mediates aesthetically the impression of restrained power and lapidary greatness.<sup>24</sup>

Mark Smith is again helpful with his remarks concerning the contrast between the creation account of Ps 104 and Gen 1:

With its dynamic vision of creation, Psalm 104 offers a constructive and appealing presentation of humanity, nature and God. The parts of creation in this psalm serve and help one another in many respects. Unlike the ordered picture of Genesis 1, with boundaries set for various realms and animals, the effects of these realms and their animals in Psalm 104 interconnect with one another, to their mutual benefit.<sup>25</sup>

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God (see Ps 74:14; Isa 27:1), but here it appears to be an actual marine creature created by God, probably some type of whale.” However, John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), argues, according to the NIDOTTE article on “Leviathan” (2:779), that “the mythological chaos monster has undergone a process of deponentization” through the language of creating this creature to “play” with. Mark Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 26, can even say that Leviathan is nothing more than “God's pet” in Ps 104.

22 Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (WBC 21; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983).

23 Mark David Futato and David M. Howard, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007), 26, have worked out the statistical data signifying the prose nature of Gen 1 against that of the poetic creation account in Ps 104: the waw-relative imperfections are 50/1, the direct-object markers 26/2, the relative pronouns usage is 9/2 and the definite articles are 79/27. Contra the detailed analysis and conclusions of Frank H. Polak, “Poetic Style and Parallelism in the Creation Account (Genesis 1.1-2.3),” in *Creation in Jewish and Christian Thought*, (JSOTSup 319; eds., Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman; New York, NY: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 2-31.

24 Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Rev. ed., OTL, Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1972), 64.

25 Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 27.

Further, Ps 104 gives the appearance of being a polemic against an Egyptian conception of the creation and universe, all the while using motifs and terms familiar to the ANE, including Egyptian mythology as demonstrated by the conceptual and literary connections to the Aten Hymn and the writings concerned with Baal at Ugarit.<sup>26</sup> The affinities to the ANE context of the storm-god (Baal at Ugarit) and sun-god (Aten at Amarna) with YHWH in Ps 104 are notably present, but redefined and given a significance apparently to argue against the persons and work of these other gods. P. E. Dion regards this psalm as “a model of mature Yahwistic monism” with numerous borrowings “from traditions which originated around other deities than the God of Israel.”<sup>27</sup> The portrait of God which is painted by this psalmist is created through “borrowing a wealth of epithets and imagery from the storm-god mythology” and more surprisingly via dependence upon “a form of Akenaten’s legacy still accessible in his own time.”<sup>28</sup>

As one example of the differentiation, Hans-Joachim Kraus argues that Ps 104 offers a pointedly different take on an originally Egyptian work by describing the solar deity, who was considered to reign in the Egyptian pantheon, as “extinguished.”<sup>29</sup> Ps 104 conceptualizes a world created in a manner more akin to the accounts of the ANE and seems to suggest a world created by the wisdom of YHWH (cf. Job 38:1-11; Prov 8:22-31). The God who creates this world is not like the gods of the surrounding nation’s comparable mythologies.

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26 On the connections see the detailed analysis of Paul E. Dion, “YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god: The Double Legacy of Egypt and Canaan as Reflected in Psalm 104,” *ZAW* 103 (1991): 43-71.

27 Dion, “YHWH,” 69.

28 Dion, “YHWH,” 69.

29 Kraus, *Theology*, 65.



## Second Isaiah

Second Isaiah does not officially have a creation account proper, but instead has similar terms and motifs with Gen 1. Some of these noted connections include the repeated use of “create” (ברא *br’* – Isa 40:26, 28; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7, 12, 18; 48:7; 54:16; 57:19; 65:17, 18) and similar terms for “creating,” “making,” or “forming” (יָסַד *ysd* – 7x; יָצַר *ysr* – 14x; עָשָׂה *’sh* – 27x with God as subject; כִּוֵּן *kwn* – 3x)<sup>30</sup> as well as the term for “first” (רִשׁוֹן *r’sh* and its derivatives also meaning “former” – Isa 41:22; 42:9; 43:9, 18; 46:9; 48:3; 61:4; 65:7, 16, 17). These two terms are rather unique to Second Isaiah and occur with prominence in Gen 1 though they do occur elsewhere such as in the Psalms. The verbal connections between Gen 1 and Second Isaiah are striking, but do not offer a way forward for determining the order of writing. At most they suggest a conceptual or thematic milieu of similarity.

Again, while Mark Smith offers helpful connections between Second Isaiah and Gen 1, he seems to misinterpret thematic elements for a more direct correlation to the time frame and *Sitz im Leben* for each book. He writes:

We may note that Genesis 1 and Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40-55) are sixth century BCE works that probe the primordial character of God. Their statements about God in the beginning of creation provide a way for them to ground their claim for the unique character of Israel’s God. In the case of Second Isaiah, the claim is sometimes aimed against other gods (Isaiah 44:6; compare 44:4-8 with 48:5-6). While Genesis 1 offers no such overt polemic, its attention, too is directed to the God of Israel as the one and only deity of creation. Both Second Isaiah and Genesis 1 show a common set of concerns, and they both use the term *beginning* to discuss them. Both of these biblical texts were part of a larger discussion over the nature of God and creation, which was to help their audiences come to grips with

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30 John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (WBC 25; Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 94.

the challenges of their sixth century situation.<sup>31</sup>

Is it necessary to posit a sixth century setting for the writing of Gen 1 in order to still note the common themes with Second Isaiah? Would it really require such a similar setting, or might a comparative setting of another time and place suit this account just as well? It seems unverifiable to defend a particular setting for the writing of Gen 1, even if the theological outlook may seem similar to Second Isaiah and some other proposed sixth century works (such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel).

Exodus 20:11 // Deuteronomy 5:15

*Remember the Sabbath day to set it apart as holy. For six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; on it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant, or your cattle, or the resident foreigner who is in your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, and he rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.* (Exod 20:8-11 NET)

*You are to work and do all your tasks in six days, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. On that day you must not do any work, you, your son, your daughter, your male slave, your female slave, your ox, your donkey, any other animal, or the foreigner who lives with you, so that your male and female slaves, like yourself, may have rest. Recall that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there by strength and power. That is why the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.* (Deut 5:14-15 NET)

These two passages each offer their theological significance for the Sabbath:

Exodus focuses upon the creation week as programmatic, while Deuteronomy focuses upon the call to rest having been delivered by YHWH. Both base their prescription for Sabbath upon the basis of the action of YHWH, but each finds its mark via a different route.

Understanding that Deuteronomy offers what seems a later reflection upon Sabbath, how

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<sup>31</sup> Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 47, my emphasis.

might this alter the emphasis of the Exodus account upon the week of creation?

Is it possible that Exodus simply makes use of the “week of creation” rather than speaking to the substance of that week in time? Does it use the week of God’s creation for a literal form in relation to Israel’s week? Should they be identified as the same in length of time or might one be a type of the other as Lee Irons and Meredith Kline suggest? “God’s workweek of creation, which is revealed in Genesis 1:1-2:3 as a sabbatically structured process, was the archetype (original), while the weekly pattern of life appointed for God’s human image-bearer is the ectype (copy).”<sup>32</sup>

For some, the explanation offered by Exod 20:11 offers sufficient evidence to settle the question of the nature of the “days” in Gen 1. For others this is not so clear. The text of Exodus clarifies its own meaning by its relation to the Israelite keeping of time, but this does not necessarily answer the question of intent in Gen 1. One cannot simply assume the precedence in order of influence one direction or the other despite the canonical ordering of the texts even as it is highly suggestive toward that end. At most, the notion of six “days” of creation work for all that was created, followed by a Sabbath of rest, represent one of the repeated (likely most formative) motifs of creation in the mind and cult of Israel. The whole life of the nation was intended to function around this fairly peculiar notion of the Israelite seven day week in comparison to other people of the ANE. In other words, this offers a specific context that is suggestive for the manner in which Gen 1 has been shaped. Further, the Deuteronomic account is very specific about the grounding for the work week and Sabbath observance (שמור *šāmôr*). This stands in distinction to the call to

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<sup>32</sup> Lee Irons with Meredith G. Kline, “The Framework Response,” *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (ed. David G. Hagopian, Mission Viejo, CA: Crux, 2001), 184.

“remember” (זכר *zākar*) the Sabbath in Exodus.

### Other ANE Creation Texts: Ugaritic, Egyptian and Mesopotamian

ANE materials delineate that life on earth was to be based on the prototype of life among the gods<sup>33</sup> and thus the building of temples, in large measure, serves this function. Walter Harrelson believes there are little to any such traces of this in Israelite cosmology, but this is contrary to the more recent works of G. K. Beale, Jon Douglas Levenson, Jeff Morrows and John H. Walton.<sup>34</sup> The archetype, in Harrelson’s estimation, is found in “the historical or historicized experience of the people, illuminating later historical experiences” and “never a heavenly one.”<sup>35</sup> He, therefore, argues that “[c]osmology has been subordinated to the historical consciousness of Israel.”<sup>36</sup> Harrelson notes that Gen 1:1-2:4a does not speak of life in heaven (among the gods or God), but of the earth and the closest link to the ANE connection is with the “rest” of God after creation.<sup>37</sup> This is the very point which John Walton emphasizes in regard to the temple-building cosmology of Gen 1 and its ascension to Sabbath.<sup>38</sup> This marks the account of Gen 1 as closer to the other temple-

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33 Harrelson, “The Significance of Cosmology,” 240-242.

34 G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT 17; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 50-60; Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48* (Harvard Semitic Monograph Series 10; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976); Jeff Morrow, “Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3,” *JOCABS* (Vol. 2, No. 1, 2009), 1-13, <http://www.ocabs.org/journal/index.php/jocabs/article/viewFile/43/18> [Accessed February 4, 2012]; John H. Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the Ancient Near East: Order Out of Disorder After *Chaoskampf*,” *CTJ* 43 (2008): 55-63; *The Lost World of Genesis One*.

35 Harrelson, “The Significance of Cosmology,” 251.

36 Harrelson, “The Significance of Cosmology,” 251.

37 Harrelson, “The Significance of Cosmology,” 247.

38 Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3,” 60-63.

building accounts of creation in the wider ANE.

This motif of temple-building for cosmology is to be distinguished from that of conflict. They are inter-related, but not to be measured as identical. The conflict motif seems to not even play into the account of Gen 1, but may find its place in other creation accounts (the theophany hymns in particular)<sup>39</sup> of the HB/OT and especially in some of the ANE accounts.<sup>40</sup> It is imperative that one examine the various proposed creation texts of the ANE (Ugaritic, Egyptian and Mesopotamian) and determine just what sort of comparative context they have with the account of Gen 1.

#### Ugaritic

“As the largest group of nonbiblical ritual texts predating the literature of the nearby ancient Israel, the Ugaritic ritual texts offer an important context for understanding the priestly tradition of the Bible and for interpreting a number of specific priestly details in Genesis 1.”<sup>41</sup> Many have suggested that the motif of creation was attached to kingship in Babylon and not Ugarit, but according to Fisher one should not be so hasty to make such a claim.<sup>42</sup> Fisher’s contention is that one must admit two types of creation texts at Ugarit: the El type and the Baal type. Werner Schmidt declared, according to Loren Fisher, “El created the world (the gods and creatures), Baal gets the world.”<sup>43</sup> Fisher believes the Baal

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39 Harrelson, “The Significance of Cosmology,” 248.

40 See APPENDIX A: THEOLOGICAL POLEMIC IN GENESIS 1.

41 Smith, *Priestly Vision*, xi.

42 Fisher, “Creation,” 315-316.

43 My translation of “El schuf die Welt (die Götter und die Geschöpfe), Baal erhält die Welt,” Fisher, “Creation,” 314.

type pertains particularly to conflict, kingship, order, and temple building and that this type of creation text was particularly useful and predominant throughout the ANE (especially among the ancient Hebrews) because it pertained not so much to ultimate origins as to the ordering of life.<sup>44</sup>

The most recognized account from Ugarit, the Baal Cycle, is regarded by many to be a sort of creational text. There is no explicit mention of the creation of the world anywhere in this text, but it has been assumed that it is creational because of the issue of kingship. Baal is established as king by the building of a house for him. As part of the account he must overcome those forces which represent destruction and death in the ANE. It is the longest of the accounts recovered at Ras Shamra and a brief summary of this account will help to determine just what connection it may have to other proposed ANE creation texts.

The Baal Cycle opens<sup>45</sup> with Yamm (“sea”) demanding Baal be handed over to him by the assembly of the gods. El assented to this demand as Baal had apparently already sought kingship over all the gods (against El?). Baal, however, did not agree to go peacefully and instead engaged Yamm in battle with two clubs fashioned by the craftsman god, Kothar-and-Hassis, where he ultimately emerged victorious over Yamm.

The second major episode in the Cycle then describes Anat (consort of Baal) as begging her father El to grant Baal a house like the other gods all have. Athirat (wife of El and mother of Anat) was bribed by Baal to give her own assent to the house-building

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44 Fisher, “Creation,” 320-321, 324.

45 The following summary is the predominant view for reconstructing the order of the tablets from Ras Shamra; see Johannes C. De Moor, *ARTU*, 43-44.

project and to herself entreat El for this project to proceed. El relented and Kothar-and-Hassis was employed to build the house for Baal which served as “the climax of Baal's ascent to the kingship.”<sup>46</sup> It was finished in seven days, and Baal extravagantly celebrated his enthronement.

The final major episode of the Baal Cycle describes Mot's (“death”) revenge upon Baal for the defeat of his brother Yamm. Mot was initially victorious over Baal (leading to famine in the world) and held him in the grave until El discovered the defeat of Baal and mourned the loss by lacerating himself repeatedly. Anat likewise cut herself and made multitudinous sacrifices in mourning over Baal. She then successfully sought out Mot to free Baal by defeating Mot in battle. Baal was delivered from the grave and fruitfulness was once again restored to the world.

Of particular concern to this account in relation to the Gen 1 account are the “seven” days over which the house of Baal was created. The seven days of Kothar-and-Hassis creating the house for Baal are recorded as follows:<sup>47</sup>

Behold, a day, and a second (day),  
     the fire consumed in the mansion,  
     the flames in the palace;  
 A third, a fourth day,  
     the fire consumed in the mansion,  
     the flames in the palace;  
 A fifth, a sixth day,  
     the fire consumed in the mansion,  
     the flames in the midst of the palace;  
 Lo, on the seventh day,  
     the fire escaped (from) in the mansion,

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<sup>46</sup> Michael David Coogan, ed. and trans., *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1978), 80.

<sup>47</sup> COS 1.86:261. The text which follows is taken from KTU 1.4.VII:22-40 and offers my own translation.

the flames in the palace.  
 The silver was turned into plates,  
     the gold was turned into bricks.  
 Mightiest Baal rejoiced:  
 ‘You have built my mansion of silver,  
     my palace of gold.’  
 Baal arranged the arrangements of his house,  
     Hadad arranged the arrangements of his palace.

Again, there is no mention of creating anything beyond Baal’s house (or mansion).

This is not a creation account in the fuller sense of that term, but is suggestive of the establishment of Baal’s reign.<sup>48</sup> However, it becomes a leap to suggest it should truly be considered a comparative creation account with Gen 1 because it does not speak to that which is universal other than the triumph over sea (Yamm) and the grave (Mot). The seven days of Kothar-and-Hassis building Baal’s house are genuinely poetic (as the rest of the account) and offer the closest parallel to the account of Gen 1. However, the distinction is notable. The work is stated to be finished on the seventh day, whereas in Gen 1 it is actually finished on the sixth day. The exact connection of seven days for creating something is unclear. Israel functioned by a seven day week, but Ugarit does not appear to have done so.

Pardee argues, “The seven-day sequence is a common literary motif in Ug[aritic] for expressing extended processes.”<sup>49</sup> Curiously, however, he then proceeds to *only*

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48 Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 240n191.

49 COS I:261n175. However, this claim is made elsewhere by De Moor, ARTU, 59n264, who refers to it as a “climactic seven-day pattern.” For a more thorough analysis of this phenomena within ANE writings see David Freedman, “Counting Formulae in the Akkadian Epics,” *JANESCU* (1970-1971): 65-81; S. E. Loewenstamm, “The Seven Day-Unit in Ugaritic Epic Literature,” *IEJ*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1965): 121-133; Gotthard G. G. Reinhold, *Die Zahl Sieben im Alten Orient: Studien zur Zahlensymbolik in der Bibel und ihrer altorientalischen Umwelt*. The Number Seven in the Ancient Near East: Studies on the Numerical Symbolism in the Bible and Its Ancient Near Eastern Environment. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008. Freedman actually argues that Gen 1-2:4 should not be included within this ANE literary scheme because it “is not a petrified literary device,” 75n52.



reference one other occurrence which is in connection with the story of Kirta (KTU 1.14.IV:2-5).<sup>50</sup> However, the enumeration occurs a number of other places in the account of Kirta. One encounters the enumeration to seven with regard to the travels of Kirta (KTU 1.14.III:11-15; V:3-6). There is also a numbering of seven times the gods are questioned concerning who might be able to offer healing (KTU 1.16.V:10-23).<sup>51</sup>

There are other occurrences within the Ugaritic corpus: Aqhat (KTU 1.17.I:5-16)<sup>52</sup>

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50 The following translations in footnotes 39-42 of Kirta and Aqhat are from ARTU:

“Go for one day and a second,  
A third, a fourth day,  
A fifth, a sixth day.  
And look! At sunset on the seventh day  
You will reach Great Udumu  
and Little Udumu.”

51 “And the Benevolent, Ilu the good-natured, said:  
‘Who among the gods is able to cast out the disease,  
to expel the illness?’  
None of the gods answered him.  
For the second, for the third time he asked:  
‘Who among the gods is able to cast out the disease,  
to expel the disease?’  
None of the gods answered him.  
For the sixth, for the seventh time he asked:  
‘Who among the gods is able to cast out the disease,  
to expel the illness?’  
None of the gods answered him.”

52 “Look! For one day and a second,  
Dani’ilu gave the gods consecrated oblations,  
gave the gods consecrated oblations to eat,  
gave the sons of Qudshu consecrated oblations to drink.  
For a third, a fourth day,  
Dani’ilu gave the gods consecrated oblations,  
gave the gods consecrated oblations to eat,  
gave the sons of Qudshu consecrated oblations to drink.  
For a fifth, for a sixth day,  
Dani’ilu gave the gods consecrated oblations  
gave the gods consecrated oblations to eat  
gave the sons of Qudshu consecrated oblations to drink.  
In his sackcloth Dani’ilu,  
in his sackcloth he went up and lay down,  
in his sackcloth—and so he spent the night.  
Then, on the seventh day  
Ba’lu drew near in mercy.”

in relation to the offerings received by the gods at the hands of Dan'il and then again in drinking revelry at the conclusion of the text (KTU 1.22.IV:22-26).<sup>53</sup> It is apparent that seven did function in some manner to convey something as complete in Ugaritic thinking, but beyond this repeated notion of seven days there simply is no other to seven days of creation. Also, while the seven-day enumeration is found several times each in Kirta and Aqhat, neither of these Ugaritic accounts have any connection to creation. Thus, one is at a loss to establish a significant Ugaritic context for the account of Gen 1 other than the enumeration of seven days which apparently has an ANE referent and a form of temple-building,<sup>54</sup> but without the Hebraic link of Sabbath to the number seven and without even the setting of seven days being a normal cyclical counting. Seven may speak to completion in certain texts of Ugarit (like those mentioned above), but it certainly does not do so in the context of a week of days or with reference to creation of the world.

### Egyptian

An Egyptian connection has been proposed by many scholars who consider the account of Gen 1 to have been influenced by Egyptian mythological texts, particularly by the “Memphite Theology.” Most of the cosmological texts of Egypt are explicitly spells (see

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53 “Look! For one day and a second they ate,  
                   the Saviours drank,  
 For a third, a fourth day,  
                   a fifth, a sixth day they ate,  
                   the Saviours drank,  
 in the dining room of the summit,  
                   on the crest, on the flank of the Lebanon.  
 Then on the seventh [day],  
                   Ba’lu the Almighty [came].”

54 On the “temple-building” motif and polemic, see APPENDIX A: THEOLOGICAL POLEMIC IN GENESIS 1.

COS 1.2-8, 10-12, 17). From an examination of these “cosmological” texts of Egypt, the “Memphite Theology” (COS 1.15:21-23) and the Egyptian Book of the Dead are two primary texts among several where some reference is made to creation though none should technically be labeled creation accounts “since the ancient thinkers did not typically think of creation as an end in itself.”<sup>55</sup> Instead, they are concerned with other matters of more immediate concern for the author and recipients.

One potential candidate for a contextual comparison with the account of Gen 1 is the “Coffin Texts Spell 76” (COS 1.6):

It is I who am Shu,  
whom Atum created on the day that he evolved.  
I was not built in the womb,  
I was not tied together in the egg,  
I was not conceived by conception.

My father Atum sneezed me in a sneeze of his mouth,  
together with my sister Tefnut.  
She emerged after me,  
while I was still hooded with the air of the Phoenix’s throat,  
on the day that Atum evolved –  
out of the Flood, out of the Waters,  
out of the darkness, out of the lostness.

While, again, it is not an actual “creation” text, it still offers a cosmological perspective.

Several features which are notably similar to the account of Gen 1 are the matter of the “Waters” and “darkness” as well as the emphasis on the “day” for being “created.” Such notions as these are quite facile in the overall intent of each work in relation to the other—Egyptian and Israelite. They are the stuff of the ANE worldview and do not appear to actually represent any specifically direct correlation. The “day” in this particular Egyptian

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<sup>55</sup> John H. Walton, “Creation,” *DOT:Pent* (eds. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 156.

text is functionally distinct from the polished historicizing (?) literary style of Gen 1. The Egyptian text's use of "day" offers simply a notion of that point at which creation occurred and points to a singularity for this creative event (despite the implications of the term "evolved").<sup>56</sup> The emphasis is not actually on any particular point in time *per se*, but simply the instantaneous nature of the creation.

Clarifying the matter, Abraham Heschel states that every major cultic site in Egypt made claims to being the place where creation occurred. "In contrast, the book of Genesis speaks of the days rather than of the site of creation. In the myths there is no reference to the time of creation, whereas the Bible speaks of the creation of space in time."<sup>57</sup> Further, the very notions of time in regard to creation events within the Egyptian worldview were not linear, but cyclical in contrast to the linear notion of Gen 1 and the sequential pattern of days.<sup>58</sup> This does not negate the well referenced patterning of the days of creation with days one to three correlating to days four to six, but only emphasizes that even within such a creational framework as Gen 1 there is still some sense of a linear movement in time which is being intended.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> According to James Allen, who translated this text, the word "day" here is written with the divine determinative, much like Re and thus serves as "a metaphor for the simultaneity of creation" (COS 1.6:10n6).

<sup>57</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1951), 95-96, citing J. A. Wilson, "Egyptian Myths, Tales and Mortuary Texts," ANET, p.8.

<sup>58</sup> Conrad Hyers, *The Meaning of Creation: Genesis and Modern Science* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1984), 48.

<sup>59</sup> For an explanation and/or defense of the "Framework Hypothesis" see Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Trans. David G. Preston; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1984), 49-59; Mark D. Futato, "Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3," *WTJ* 60 (Spring 1998): 1-21; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 125; Irons, "The Framework View"; Meredith G. Kline, "Because It Had Not Rained," *WTJ* 20 (May 1958): 146-157; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC 1; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 6-7; for an extensive rebuttal of the "Framework Hypothesis" see Robert V. McCabe, "A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Week (Part 1 of 2)," *DBSJ* 10 (2005): 19-67; "A Critique of the Framework

## Mesopotamian

The extant Mesopotamian creation accounts offer the nearest actual comparison for ANE creational accounts with Gen 1. Two are of particular importance in this regard: *Enūma Elish* (12<sup>th</sup> century BCE) and *Atra-hasis* (7<sup>th</sup> century BCE).<sup>60</sup> While there are a number of edited versions of these accounts the two which will be discussed in what follows are found in COS 1.111 and 1.130 respectively.

Each of these two accounts has its own particular story to tell: *Enūma Elish* expounds upon the victorious rise of Marduk over all the other gods through the defeat of Tiamat (the *Deep Sea*) and thus over creation. Marduk even establishes the sun and moon to function for the tracking of cultic time, not unlike the cultic nature of the “day” and “festivals” noted in Gen 1:14-16.<sup>61</sup>

The cultic purpose of the *Enūma Elish* rather than being offered for public reading was a priestly document to express the “priest-god relationship” and extol the priest’s god, Marduk.<sup>62</sup> Gerhard Hasel notes that the portion of *Enūma Elish* which enumerates the

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Interpretation of the Creation Week (Part 2 of 2),” *DBSJ* 11 (2006), 63-133; “A Defense of Literal Days in the Creation Week,” *DBSJ* 5 (Fall 2000): 97-123.

<sup>60</sup> Walton, “Creation,” *DOT:Pent*, 156.

<sup>61</sup> COS 1.111.V.12-17.

“He made the moon appear, entrusted (to him) the night.  
He assigned to him the crown jewel of nighttime to mark the day (of the month):  
Every month, without ceasing, he exalted him with a crown.  
At the beginning of the month, waxing over the land,  
You shine with horns to mark six days  
At the seventh day, you shall be in opposition, at the midpoint of each [month].

For the discussion of the cultic motif of time in Gen 1, see CHAPTER II: THEOLOGICAL MOTIFS OF TIME IN GENESIS 1.

<sup>62</sup> A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 233.

names of Marduk is much longer than the portion speaking of creation and thus this is *not* a creation account, properly speaking.<sup>63</sup> Instead this is a priestly song of praise to Marduk more akin to the creation accounts of the Psalms enumerated earlier in this chapter that give praise to YHWH.

*Atra-hasis* is primarily concerned with the creation of humans to do the work of the gods and thus bears a more striking relation to Gen 2-3 rather than Gen 1, but the creation motif is still present. Similar to *Enūma Elish*, *Atra-hasis* speaks of the “first, seventh, and fifteenth days of the month.”<sup>64</sup> Benjamin Foster clarifies the time referents in this account as referring respectively to “the new moon, the first quarter and the full moon” which were “the principal lunar festivals of Old Babylonian times.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, again, there is a cultic connection with the mention of days in relation to so-called creation texts in Mesopotamia and these even mention the “seventh” day as holding significance.

### **Some Concluding Remarks**

Arguably, terms and motifs are insufficient evidence to connect texts in a relation of literary dependence. We are, after all, “terribly ill-informed regarding the history of either Mesopotamia or biblical creation accounts. This makes the argument based on chronological sequence null and void. We cannot say for certain that the traditions preserved by the Israelites are any less ancient than the traditions preserved by the

<sup>63</sup> Hasel, “The Polemic Nature,” 92n8. Even Benjamin R. Foster (COS I:390-391) comments that it is only a “so-called epic of Creation” and might more appropriately be called “The Exaltation of Marduk” given the emphasis on extolling Marduk rather than expounding upon creation.

<sup>64</sup> The wise god Enki refers to these days of the month as the days for sacrificing one of the gods and using their blood for purification rites.

<sup>65</sup> COS I:451n5.

Babylonians.”<sup>66</sup> Such features of the text may demonstrate affinity in cultural or religious outlook and expression, but without clear intent one is left to discern just what the nature of the relationship of these texts is to one another and/or the conceptualization of the world of the ANE. However, these comparative texts do offer insight into the ancient world and cosmological perspectives.

The extant ANE texts seem to dwell on the world of the gods. The account of Gen 1 is concerned with the world of people. Though there are “days” in these ANE accounts they do not even remotely play a structural role in the formation of the text and are thus a sort of footnote on the account. Gen 1, on the other hand, exists in a form that is defined by the structure of the days and the cultic week.

It is significant that the world of the ANE and HB conceived of creation to not be about the creation of matter, but about the ordering of life according to the design of the gods. Sometimes this is more explicit and sometimes more implicit, but it seems to always be present. The subject of “matter” was simply not their concern. The issues of creational order and intent were paramount.

One feature that is glaringly missing from Gen 1 when compared with the ANE texts—and even many of the HB creation accounts—is the non-mythical representation of nature. The ANE worldview overflows with deities and powers struggling to determine the destiny of the world. Contrary to this worldview, Derek Kidner notes,

The Old Testament ascribes to the sovereign LORD more than freedom. His creation coheres. Instead of a world order which is the unstable product of rival wills, as the mythologies suggest, and is therefore subject to the arbitrary pressures of magico-religious manipulation, the Old Testament sets the world before us as the

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<sup>66</sup> Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature*, 36.

harmonious composition of a single mind.<sup>67</sup>

The world of Gen 1 is a world ordered and shaped by the will of one God. There are implicit elements of that which are disorderly, but they are not present as destructive or opposed to the will of God.<sup>68</sup> These elements are simply present in the account and made to be formed and filled.

The creation in Gen 1 offers a world that exists at the voice of God. The sun and moon are not even referred to by the names under which they received adoration in the ANE. Instead they are presented as objects to bear the light and signify the cultic calendar. The sea is not a god to be quelled, but a place to be filled with teeming life. Mark Smith may stretch some of his notions about the waters further than the immediate text permits, but his comments are still fitting for understanding the uncharacteristically ANE perspective in a creation account. “The waters in Genesis 1 are not ‘evil,’ but express both a lack of order on the margins of creation and a part of the divine order within that creation. The waters evoke both the potential threat of destruction from the periphery and its positive life-giving capacity within creation.”<sup>69</sup> “Israel knew Yahweh as creator, not in the numinous manifestations of nature or in cosmogonic myths, but only in that he himself manifested and communicated his name, and in the history of his speaking to his people and his saving them.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 13.

<sup>68</sup> Gen 1:2 refers to the “formless and unfilled” ( *tōhū wābōhū* ) world. Many have explained this as “chaos,” but it seems more appropriate to simply refer to their initial unformed and unfilled state rather than imply something of opposition to God’s will, see August Konkel’s helpful article, “ *tōhū*,” *NIDOTTE*, 1:606-609.

<sup>69</sup> Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 61.

<sup>70</sup> Kraus, *Theology*, 62.



The world of creation that the writer of Gen 1 experienced was not that idyllic world of Gen 1. As Mark Smith observes, “The picture of the world in Genesis 1—even as it contradicts human experience—is offered by the priestly writer as a faithful response to his perception of God’s goodness; it is presented as something that has to be taken on faith.”<sup>71</sup> In this same vein, Leslie Allen proposes that “the religious interpretation of the natural world...[was] by no means a statement of what was self-evident but ‘a courageous act of faith, persisted in when there was often much in personal experience and competing religions and outlooks that suggested that such a conviction was false’.”<sup>72</sup> This world was taken on faith by Israel. It was declared to be the world as it was originally intended.

The creation accounts of the HB do not themselves offer any major parallels to the account of Gen 1 and its distinct use of *yôm*. It holds a unique place in the HB not only for its form which turns around the structure of days and the climax of Sabbath, but even its placement within the canon of Scripture. The creation account of Gen 1 looms large over the other accounts of creation in the HB. “[The] placement of Genesis 1 at the very beginning of the Bible stakes a claim, asserting the primary status of its account over and above other biblical versions of creation. Thanks to its placement, it inevitably looms over other creation accounts and allusions to creation found thereafter in the Bible.” This is why Mark Smith can conclude that it is the “creation account *par excellence* in the Bible.”<sup>73</sup> Whatever its *Sitz im Leben* was, it has been preserved by Israel in the first position of sacred scripture and serves to give commentary on all else that follows. Thus, the

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<sup>71</sup> Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 61.

<sup>72</sup> Allen, *Psalms*, 31, citing J. W. Rogerson, “The Old Testament View of Nature: Some Preliminary Questions,” *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 20 (1977), 84.

<sup>73</sup> Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 2.

theological meaning and significance of this passage has been shaped more by its location in the text and the form it has been preserved in rather than by any conceivable location for surmising its origins.

CHAPTER II:  
THEOLOGICAL MOTIFS OF TIME IN GENESIS 1

There are at least three primary theological motifs in relation to “time” in Gen 1: the historical, the cultic and the eschatological. These three motifs shape the way in which the overall passage was developed within the history of Israel and in that sense reflect the life (and anticipated life) of the people. None of these motifs is explicit, but each is implied by the manner in which the text of Gen 1 has been fashioned and was later interpreted. While the relation of the *Sitz im Leben* of the author/redactor of Gen 1 may be an issue for discussion in other matters, it does not seem to dramatically affect the outcome of any one of these motifs as will hopefully be demonstrated in the following chapter.<sup>74</sup> These motifs are bound to the overall canon of the Scripture in such a fashion that there seems to be no avoiding their recognition as essential to a proper interpretation of the overall passage however latent such may initially seem. Before turning to the latter two primary motifs, it seems pertinent that an examination of the historical location of the text and its theological-historical intent be undertaken.

**Historical**

Perhaps a discussion of the “historical” intent of Gen 1 would have been better

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<sup>74</sup> This is contrary to the work of Smith, *Priestly Vision*, whose entire project asserts that a priestly writer demonstrates the theological shape and intent of Gen 1.

served by occurring earlier in this study, but it seemed more fitting to bring it up only after discussing the more general context (Chapter I) and intent (Chapter II) of the overall passage. Some may actually question the very notion of the “historical” intent while others may regard this as the *primary* intent. It is beyond the scope of this study to fully answer either side particularly considering that this appears to be one of the major battlegrounds which have suffered scorched-earth like policies between competing factions of readers of Genesis.<sup>75</sup> With that in mind, it is my intention to discuss the historical impulse of this text as found in its canonical context and with regard to its literary form. This is not a “historical” study that serves a secularized or theological/secular bifurcated account. Instead, Gen 1 is a theological-historical account that does not recognize either a secularized or divided theological/secular perspective.

There are many who argue for reading Gen 1 diachronically and find a sixth century priestly writer behind this work. One recent work written entirely from this perspective is that of Mark S. Smith.<sup>76</sup> He argues at length that the priestly writer is to be understood as the best explanation for the shape of the account of Gen 1, particularly its theological shape. While it seems likely that some priestly tradition lay behind the shape and placement of the text, it remains to be seen what time period and, therefore, what

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<sup>75</sup> Peter C. Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), xii, astutely argues that the debate should not be carried out in the manner in which it is, because what we are often dividing over was not an issue for the original audience, nor is it actually an issue of “the sacramental and liturgical life of the church”. This debate over historicity is usually not really a debate about the specifics of the preconceptions concerning historicity and its relation to “truth”, but instead the underlying notions are not even typically discussed. He argues that “questions about truth and historicity are unique to the modern era, that they are irrelevant to the scriptural authors” in that the original writer and recipients would not have judged such things as bifurcated between “history” and “truth.” Karl Barth assumes a similar reading concerning “history” and “creation history,” see, Barth *CD* 3/1 §41.1 “Creation, History and Creation History.”

<sup>76</sup> For his most cogent arguments in favor of a sixth century Priestly writer see Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 213-214n2.

situation lay behind its composition. I will contend that this specific locating of the authorship of the text via a diachronistic reading is not inherently essential to the following program of the theological-history and the two concomitant aforementioned primary motifs.

The account of Gen 1 must be regarded as thoroughly and explicitly theological. As has been noted elsewhere, “the purpose of the Bible is neither historical nor literary; it is theological.”<sup>77</sup> The question that remains to be answered is in what sense should it be read as historical in light of this theological intent? The canonical placement and literary structure of the text suggest at least two different things. First, they suggest continuity with the primeval history (Gen 1-11) and the salvation-history (*heilsgeschichte*) of Israel as found in the rest of Genesis. Second, it suggests an intentional literary framework with historical intent through the ordered use of “day.”

While there have been numerous studies over the last couple centuries which have posited various streams of redaction or tradition history concerning Gen 1, none of these ultimately alter the fact that there is no preserved textual tradition of such an isolated version of this creation account. Such speculation (however scholarly) may offer many helpful aids to understanding the theoretical history of the text, yet it remains beyond actual verification and thus the text can be and has been located as originating in a number of variant historical contexts. Further, this text is not an abstract historical artifact, but belongs to the history and faith of Israel as a people of covenant.

[The] canonical approach differs from a strictly literary approach by interpreting the biblical text in relation to a community of faith and practice for whom it served a particular theological role as possessing divine authority....[It] is concerned to

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<sup>77</sup> Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 34.

understand the nature of the theological shape of the text rather than to recover an original literary or aesthetic unity.<sup>78</sup>

The attempt to get behind the text and discern the origins of it are helpful only for certain things, but we are concerned here with the text in the form in which it has been preserved. The text must be allowed to speak for itself rather than attempting to recreate a specific world for the text.<sup>79</sup> “The narrative contains theological substance but not in the form of a theological treatise. It has a theological point, but it represents its theology through plot structure, not through logic and philosophy.”<sup>80</sup>

Whatever its probable or potential authorial/redactional origin, it must be borne in mind that this text actually occurs within the context of a very specific *text* (Genesis) which deals with the history (תולדות *tôlēdôth*: “generations,” “descendants,” or “account”)<sup>81</sup> of heaven and earth, its peoples and particularly God’s chosen people Israel. It is offered as in some sense continuous with the following narrative of Genesis, having been written with clearly historical intent even if it is to be regarded as outside of or preceding the actual *tôlēdôth* formula (which is evidently important to the overall structure of Genesis).<sup>82</sup> Given

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<sup>78</sup> Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 74.

<sup>79</sup> See the extended discussion of a canonical reading of the text of Scripture, Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 71-78.

<sup>80</sup> Bruce K. Waltke with Charlese Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2007), 189.

<sup>81</sup> BDB 410, HOL 387.

<sup>82</sup> The formulaic expression “these are the generations” אלה תולדות (Gen 2:4; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:19; 36:1, 9; 37:2) stand out with some contrast to the three other uses in Genesis (5:1 – “the book of the history of Adam”; 10:32 – “these are the families of Noah’s sons according to their genealogy”; 25:13 – “the sons of Ishmael by the names of their genealogy”). Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26* (NAC 1A; Broadman & Holman, 1996), 26-36 (but see especially page 35), argues for the *tôlēdôth* being used as a connective between chapters one and two and thus the first occurrence covers two passages. See also R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 543-553 and the BHS formatting. Wenham, *Genesis*, xxi-xxii, and Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 4-11, oppose this view with Hamilton vigorously countering the specific arguments of Matthews.

that Gen 1 belongs to the primeval and even antediluvian history of Genesis, it may further be surmised that it stands considerably outside of what may be considered *history* from the later literary expressions of specific history as found (for instance) in the Deuteronomistic History of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings, yet this does not make it non-history.<sup>83</sup> What literarily occurs prior to Abraham gives the superficial appearance of being discontinuous with what follows him.<sup>84</sup> The various accounts speak of things from a distance rather than from the same perspective of familiarity. While the first eleven chapters of Genesis are continuous parts of the overall “history” of Genesis they belong to another era and even to a more cosmic perspective. However, there should not be too much made of this disjunction. Instead, it must be recognized that the *Heilsgeschichte* of Gen 12-50 (and rest of the Pentateuch) finds its origins in the primeval history and particularly in the blessings of Gen 1. The Abrahamic covenant flows from the blessing of humans and creation and finds its particularity in Abraham and his descendents.<sup>85</sup>

From the account of Adam taken up again in Gen 5 it appears that Gen 1 offers an intentional connection to the history which follows throughout the remainder of Genesis.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 189-190, believes Gen 1 (as cosmogony) is “essentially historical.”

<sup>84</sup> In this regard, Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 158, writes: “The same history-like story extends from Genesis 1 to 50 which is set in a genealogical framework of human history. No part of Genesis can be called ‘history’ in the narrow, modern usage of the term because of the tangential relationship to objective reality, even though different historical elements are evidenced through the book in varying degrees. Conversely, there is no Old Testament myth in exact analogy to ancient Near Eastern mythology. The Genesis material is unique because of an understanding of reality which has subordinated common mythopoetic tradition to a theology of absolute divine sovereignty.”

<sup>85</sup> On this theological and literary link between Gen 1-11 and what follows see the insightful work of David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (*JOTSUP* 10; Sheffield Academic, 1992), 77-79.

<sup>86</sup> Thus, Gerhard von Rad, in his commentary on Genesis, 67, has relocated chapter five immediately after chapter one because it seems to create a continuous account regardless of the theological intent of the canonical form.

There is continuity in that Gen 5 returns to Adam and presents a chrono-genealogy to Noah and his sons. The discontinuity of the intervening chapters present a world in the making and then in turmoil. Gen 5 takes this up with the morbid refrain “and he died” for (nearly) all of those named from Adam to Noah. Even with the literary disjuncture found between the accounts of Gen 1 and 5 there remains a continuous notion of some historical nature within this account (admittedly, one that belongs better to the ANE context rather than to the modern) as it is located in the broader story of Genesis. Therefore, as one author put it, “If the larger narrative complex exhibits a historiographical intent, then, barring indications to the contrary, smaller units within the complex should be assumed to share in the historical impulse.”<sup>87</sup> One certainly does encounter numerous historical elements as the canonical location of this text is examined. It may stand at a conceptual distance from contemporary existence, but it is located within an overall account of the history of Israel back to the creation of everything.

With regard to the literary form of Gen 1, the most obvious connective to a historical perspective is the use of ordered and numbered days equaling a week of seven. The historical sense of this should not be overlooked even if one still posits a view such as the Framework Hypothesis or Day-Age Theory concerning their interpretation. There is historical intent to be understood by enumerating of days in the language of the passing of light and darkness, evening and morning. This is not to suggest that Gen 1 should be read as an historical account and nothing more (particularly given the various purposeful literary flourishes regarding naming with apparent polemical intent, general ANE categorization of flora and fauna, framework-like parallelism with the days, etc.). Again, the historical intent

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<sup>87</sup> Long, “History and Hermeneutics,” in *Foundations in Contemporary Interpretation*, 395.



of the Bible is always theological and this chapter of Genesis is certainly no different. To regard the use of the “days” of Gen 1 as placing this account within Israel’s history is not to assume in what manner the events recorded there have occurred as actual history. In other words, to recognize the historical intent of both the shape and placement of the account is not to admit the historicizing of the account. “Moses seems by his varied usage of ‘day’ to suggest something more than a simple chronology of God’s actions.”<sup>88</sup>

So if Gen 1 is indeed intended as historical (in whatever sense that might be expounded), in light of its canonical context and literary content, is history (even theological-oriented history) all that this passage conveys? Is there not more to this chapter than simply an account of the beginning of the cosmos? Should we not understand this history as important to what follows, even imperative to the *heilsgeschichte* of Israel’s very existence? Salvation belongs to time and history and as such the creation speaks of a period at the beginning when all was made “good,” even “very good.” This does not occur in a vacuum but in an authorial context where there is disjunction between the “good” of the original work of creation and the world of the author and audience. If it does not speak to history at any level then it does not properly speak to the cultic and eschatological motifs of Scripture found in embryonic form in this text.

### **Cultic**

One of the motifs of Gen 1 seems to be to establish a cultic precedence for the sacred week, the observance of Israelite festivities and particularly the Sabbath.<sup>89</sup> This is accomplished

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<sup>88</sup> W. Robert Godfrey, *God’s Pattern for Creation: A Covenantal Reading of Genesis 1* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 71.

<sup>89</sup> Hendrik L. Bosman clarifies that “OT interpretation has frequently presumed an unfortunate equivalence between the Sabbath becoming a hallowed day set aside for God and a cultic observance

by means of an account of the origins of cultic events. The status of such events are not delineated, but are implied as a pre-text to the Torah with which the first chapter of Genesis is found. From a canonical perspective the week consummated by the Sabbath can only serve as an indication of the solemnity of all of time for Israel.<sup>90</sup> “Genesis 1 reflects the priestly interest in (cultic) order, in placement, and in distinction; the separation into ‘days’ arguably speaks out of this concern rather than functioning as a historical or scientific chronicle.”<sup>91</sup> All of time was set in this proto-*Heilsgeschichte* as precedence for commands from the LORD about the observance of certain days, weeks and years. After all, the “seven-day week is not grounded in the rhythms of the physical world as the day, the month, and the year are. The week rests on the revelation of God to his image bearer by which God shows man how in all his living he is to follow the model that God has presented.”<sup>92</sup>

All of creation is begun within the time of the established week ending in a Sabbath in Gen 1. “The author’s intention is not to supply us with a chronology of origins.... He wishes to bring out certain themes and provide a theology of the Sabbath.”<sup>93</sup> The cultic motif is a latent motif that establishes itself as a basis for later instruction to Moses concerning the Sabbath and its observance within the Israelite cult (Exod 20:11). Another reason for the Sabbath declared in the Pentateuch was to “remember” (זָכַר *zākar*) what had peculiar to the Sabbath,” in “Sabbath,” (*NIDOTTE*, 4:1160. This is not opposed to the cultic motif proposed in this paper, but complimentary.

<sup>90</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis: From Biblical Text...to Contemporary Life* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 153.

<sup>91</sup> Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Godfrey, *God’s Pattern*, 71.

<sup>93</sup> Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 50.

been done for Israel in the deliverance from Egypt (Deut 5:15). The Sabbath observance was issued as a constitutive mark of Israel itself (Exod 31:16) and appears even likely to have been an explicitly Israelite observance from the very beginning.<sup>94</sup> Certainly the text of Genesis proposes that the cultic significance was intended from the very beginning since that first Sabbath was canonically marked as a “Sabbath” and it was “blessed” and “made holy” (2:3). The overall context within the Mosaic corpus suggests this is described as a “Sabbath” as intentionally intended for cultic precedence only later having been made explicit.

Genesis 1 is not only cultic because of the enumeration of the Sabbath, but even the mention of the marking of “signs” (אֵימֹת *’ōth*) and “seasons” (מִזְמוֹת *mō’ēd*) in verse 14.<sup>95</sup> These terms connect with the observance not only of the new moon (Ps 104:19), but with the observance of the festivals of Israel canonically later instituted (cf. Lev 23:2; Hos 9:5; Isa 33:20). Time was thus intended not only for the passage of moments, but for the celebration of and participation with God and in all that God had commanded and performed. This was intended to mark the people as explicitly living in covenantal relationship with God as YHWH.<sup>96</sup> This serves the cultic significance as attached to the

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94 Paul A. Barker, “Sabbath, Sabbatical Year, Jubilee,” in *DOT:Pent*, 698-699. Barker argues that all of the extrabiblical evidence suggested for a non-Israelite origin does not fit with the peculiar Israelite practice and thus is not a “sabbath” in the sense it is used in Scripture. Barker cites H. H. P. Dressler as saying, “Only the ancient Hebrew literature speaks definitely about a seven-day week and a Sabbath” and B. A. Levine who writes that “the Sabbath is an original Israelite institution.” See also Hendrik L. Bosman, “Sabbath,” *NIDOTTE*, 4:1157-1162.

95 The NJB actually translates these words “to indicate festivals” making the cultic significance more explicit than many other translations that opt instead for the (more word-for-word) less obviously cultic reading: “signs” and “seasons” (NAS, NET, NIV, NKJV, NLT, and NRS).

96 “Creation [as depicted in the context of the Pentateuch] is seen as a work of Yahweh in history, as the first, basic deed which brought into being the area of God’s activity, of his choice of Israel and his establishing the covenant, of his leading and speaking with the people, and finally and above all Yahweh’s coming to the peoples of the earth,” Kraus, *Theology*, 62.

later explicit covenantal framework for Israelite existence. Karl Barth, in this regard, remarked that “the covenant is the internal basis of creation (Gen. 2)” and “creation is the external basis of the covenant (Gen. 1).”<sup>97</sup> “For Genesis 1, creation embodies the priestly vision of holiness and proper ordering, with humanity as the highpoint of creation and Sabbath rest evoked as its concluding moment....Genesis 1 presents the created world with the holiness of the Sabbath on the seventh day” and thus signifies a “sense of the universe as a divine sanctuary” with God functioning as the priest who blesses and sanctifies.<sup>98</sup>

#### Leviticus 23:2-4 – The Appointed Times

*Speak to the Israelites and tell them, ‘These are the LORD's appointed times which you must proclaim as holy assemblies— my appointed times: Six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there must be a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy assembly. You must not do any work; it is a Sabbath to the LORD in all the places where you live. These are the LORD's appointed times, holy assemblies, which you must proclaim at their appointed time.’ (Lev 23:2-4 NET)*

According to Leviticus, Moses was to instruct Israel concerning the “appointed times” (מוֹעֵד *mô‘ēd*) for rest and celebration. These “appointed times” canonically follow the language of creation wherein God created such “seasons” to call the people of Israel to be separate to YHWH and celebrate YHWH’s deliverance, provision and presence with them. The cycles of the weeks, months and years were to ebb and flow with the “seasons” of commemoration and observance – Sabbaths and new moons, feasts and a day of fasting. Time does not belong to God’s people as inherent right, but as the gift of the covenant-

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<sup>97</sup> Barth, *CD* 3/1:6-7. However, Paul R. Williamson argues strongly against any explicit covenantal reading of the first eight chapters of Genesis prior to the explicit Noahic covenant in his article “Covenant,” *DOT:Pent*, 139-143. This seems to miss the implicit grounds of the expressed covenant canonically following.

<sup>98</sup> Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 30-32. Smith notes that this is the only Biblical creation account where God is described as speaking, calling and blessing, 64.

maker who created all that exists. Time for Israel was commanded to be lived in such a relationship to YHWH. Time was thus a matter of sacrifices and offerings, confessions and ablutions, celebrations and community. Time for agrarian Israel was thoroughly enjoyed as cultic and not simply springtime and harvest, winter and summer. The “seasons” were a confession of God’s grace of provision and presence.

### 1 Chronicles 23:30-31 – The Restored Appointed Times

*“And they shall stand every morning, thanking and praising the LORD, and likewise at evening, and whenever burnt offerings are offered to the LORD on sabbaths, new moons, and appointed festivals, according to the number required of them, regularly before the LORD” (1 Ch 23:30-31 NRSV).*

The Chronicler records that in the reign of David provision was finally made to observe the instructions concerning the “appointed times.” The priests and Levites would carry out their duties and would assure the obedience to such observance by the people of Israel. Finally, the people would observe such times as those under Joshua had set out to do. David sought to assure the continuing presence and blessing of YHWH in the midst of Israel by keeping these times according to the design of God. The language of the Chronicler faintly echoes the language of with its “morning” and “evening,” “sabbaths” and “appointed festivals” (מוֹעֵד *mô‘ēd*). Time must be governed by the observance of that which God had appointed. Those created in God’s image, though rulers of creation, were under the rule of the time appointed by God. Creation would be celebrated as the gift of God. YHWH’s covenantal presence would be enjoyed by the people of Israel by living within the boundary markers of such “appointed seasons.”

## Ezekiel 37:26 – The Covenant of Fruitfulness and Presence

*“I will make a covenant of peace with them, it will be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set my sanctuary in their midst forever.”* (Ezek 37:26)

However, it became apparent that Israel before the exile would not continue to observe the appointed times of YHWH. The exile would mark a response of judgment concerning the “appointed times” and would (according to the pre-exilic and exilic prophets) result in a renewed covenant community. The remnant would keep such times faithfully and be assured of God’s eternal presence.

The language of this renewed covenant beckons to the divine presence and blessing of Gen 1. God is present in those made in God’s likeness and image who act as vice-regents and whom God blesses with fruitfulness as a command. Here, however, the presence and flourishing are related no longer as command, but as promise. The cultic guarding of the sacredness of YHWH’s presence and blessing will be effected in perpetuity and no longer as bounded by the days as before. By the end of Ezekiel the presence of YHWH that had so visually left His city declaring it abandoned, returns to never leave again. However, this new city is not to be found in the immediately following history of Israel, but in the eschatological age where the cult of Israel is guarded by “hearts of flesh” and a “new spirit” (Ezek 36:26; cf. the command of 18:31) given by YHWH to fulfill the requirements of the covenant where YHWH will “welcome” Israel as a “pleasing [sacrificial] aroma” (Ezek 20:41). In this manner, the name of that city will forever be called “YHWH is there” (Ezek 48:35).

### Eschatological

There is also a decidedly eschatological impulse to be found in Gen 1. That impulse, or motif, is latent and not obvious though. The eschatological nature of time in Gen 1 is to be perceived in the movement of the account towards Sabbath and new creation. The movement to Sabbath is obvious once the end is reached. The whole story unfolds in a manner that points to the significance of the final day as the pinnacle through its being “made holy” and “blessed.” The less obvious movement toward new creation belongs more to the underlying context of the writing of the account. It was written in a time (whenever that is conceived to be) that did not know the “good” and “very good” of that first week, but only death and increased pain, vain-labor and broken relationships. In no way would this demand a “priestly” writer of the sixth century. In fact, if one posits the original audience as at least a literary construct being the one which emerged from the desert of Sinai, the theological importance would still remain.<sup>99</sup> Any context outside of that idyllic world which is described in Gen 1 belongs to a world which is reflecting something which no longer holds to be true of *this* world. The world of Gen 1 (and 2) was a world long since gone. The context of the world which had been created and filled out of “formless and unfilled” ( וָבֶהוּ וַתְּהוּ *tōhû wābōhû*) and the “deep” ( תְּהוֹם *ʾhôm*) should be blessed and fruitful... then perhaps the world of the writer and his audience might also be

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<sup>99</sup> This is merely to emphasize that the *Sitz im Leben* of Gen 1 does not seem to truly be as significant as many have suggested in order for one to arrive at very similar theological conclusions. This is not to propose Mosaic authorship, but simply to allow the text as it was received to speak for itself without attempting to get behind the text to a more specific world of the author. In the poignant words of Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 78, “Israel defined itself in terms of a book! The canon formed the decisive *Sitz im Leben* for the Jewish community's life, thus blurring the sociological evidence most sought after by the modern historian. When critical exegesis is made to rest on the recovery of these very sociological distinctions which have been obscured, it runs directly in the face of the canon's intention.”

made into something new.<sup>100</sup> After all, the world of experience for Israel was not the world of that first creation. That world belongs to faith.

### Towards Sabbath

The movement to Sabbath is a movement that reflects a revelatory impetus rather than one which accords with natural phenomena. Sabbath is sacred time and the six days to the Sabbath reflect the peculiar nature of that last day. “The Sabbath is not for the sake of the weekdays; the weekdays are for the sake of the Sabbath. It is not an interlude but the climax of living.”<sup>101</sup> The nature of Sabbath keeping that was required was not simply a temporary command, but an “everlasting covenant” (ברית עולם *b’rith ‘ólām*) according to Exod 31:16. It belongs to the rhythm of Israel’s life who by faith were to proclaim and hold to it. This movement toward Sabbath is eschatological in that it directs all attention to God and God’s rest as the end of God’s work. This is no mere happenstance. God revealed creation as entailing Sabbath as a counter to the world of the author and audience; however their immediate circumstance might be conceived.

The Sabbath of Gen 1 is not simply descriptive, but primarily *prescriptive* despite its lack of explicit language in that direction. The author is far more subtle than to simply state such. The faith of Israel received this message of creation and Sabbath as typological of its own life. In one sense, Gen 1 was a critique of fallen Israel, but also a confession of

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<sup>100</sup> This is by no means to reject the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, but only to propose (along with others) that the actual text of Gen 1 offers a more thoroughly eschatological hope when recognizing that purpose and fruitfulness can be made from that which is disordered and unfruitful. Our concerns about existential material existence are not really answered by Gen 1 and do not appear to be the concerns of the ancient writer of Genesis or of any other ANE text for that matter. The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is better based on other texts (particularly those found in the NT) that seem to make that part of their actual concern.

<sup>101</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 14.



the purposefulness with which God creates and directs all things, even particularly that which was “unfilled and unfruitful.” The Sabbath is that place wherein God dwells in rest and God’s will reigns. All that God sets out to do is done and ends with Sabbath. The seventh day stands apart for this otherness and ultimate nature as the crown of the good and very good. There must be a distinction admitted between the *good* or *very good* (the penultimate) and the *holy* (ultimate).<sup>102</sup> This is not to downplay the goodness of the former creation, but to suggest that the holy or sanctified state of those already blessed by God to be filled and fruitful points to the ultimate nature of Sabbath. Sabbath is the direction of creation and therefore new creation. The Sabbath gives shape the eschatological vision of the prophets, particularly Isaiah.<sup>103</sup>

### ***The Eschatological Vision of Sabbath in Isaiah***

*And the foreigners committing themselves to YHWH,  
To serve Him and to love the name of YHWH, to want to be His servants,  
Everyone keeping the Sabbath without defiling it, and those clinging to my  
covenant,  
I will bring them to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer;  
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar  
For my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples.  
(Isa 56:6-7)<sup>104</sup>*

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<sup>102</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 75.

<sup>103</sup> Technically, the term “Deutero- or Second Isaiah” (or, according to some, “Trito- or Third Isaiah”) would be more appropriate given that this cosmic eschatological perspective takes particular form in the promises to Israel (and thus to all of creation) as expounded in Isaiah 40-66. However, the term “Isaiah” is used regardless of the theory of origin for the text and only with regard to the canonical form and placement.

<sup>104</sup> I have chosen to retain the MT and its use of the third person masculine singular suffixes against the proposed revisions noted in the BHS footnotes on this passage. Similarly see Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 451.

Isaiah captures the eschatological vision of Sabbath in a number of different ways by speaking to the blessed rest of God. This vision is one that includes even the “foreigners” (בני הנכר *b<sup>o</sup>nē hannēkār*) who keep Sabbath and love YHWH. The covenant and the blessings entailed with it belong to all who will keep faith with YHWH.<sup>105</sup> They will be welcomed as those for whom YHWH’s house (temple) has been itself even named. This naming of the temple in this manner declares the universal message of God’s Sabbath for all who will enter into that rest. Brevard Childs even declares that the context of this oracle is “explicitly eschatological” due to the “promise of universal acceptance into the worshipping community” by the call to God’s “holy mountain.”<sup>106</sup> The NT takes this up in the very person and work of Jesus – the temple made without hands which becomes the welcome of all nations as acceptable to God. For Isaiah, this was already a radical call to Israel (without the foresight to see Jesus as that pleasing “house of prayer”) to perceive the universal call of YHWH to the nations that they might themselves enjoy the blessing of God’s presence and blessing. In fact, the Qumraners seem to have felt that the approval of “foreigners” as “ministers” (שָׂרְתִי *šārēt* – a cultically loaded word: Isa 60:7, 10; 61:6) should be excised from this text.<sup>107</sup> The reception of “foreigners” as belonging also to YHWH belonged intimately to the founding of the Temple (1 Kgs 8:41-43) despite the strong measures of some in the Second Temple era against all foreign inclusion.<sup>108</sup>

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105 John Goldingay, *Isaiah* (NIBC 13; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 318. I agree with Goldingay that “keeping the Sabbath” is comparable to “clinging to my covenant.” These are not really two different issues in the writer’s conception.

106 Childs, *Isaiah*, 458.

107 IQIs<sup>a</sup>; see the comments by John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 459, 460.

108 See Ezra, Nehemiah and the post-exilic prophets on the exclusiveness of the temple and worship.

### *Haggai's Eschatological Message*

The restored community of Israel had returned to a ruined temple and a city without walls. They had initially determined to rebuild the temple, but quickly left it off to build homes for themselves. The LORD would have none of their personal plans if the Temple was to be left in shambles. They had determined that the “time” was not right, but YHWH had determined this was the “time” for such work. Ezekiel spoke of the renewed presence of YHWH in relation to a new Temple and the prophet Haggai arrived in time to call the people to action.

The year 520 BCE would mark Haggai's four messages to the remnant of Israel and that overall message would prove to be the most effective of all the prophetic messages recorded in Scripture. A renewal to do the work on the Temple was undertaken and finished within just five years. Though it was not as glorious in appearance as the earlier Temple of Solomon, it was built in less time than Solomon's and by the freely offered labors of the people (as opposed to the Solomonic conscription). The glory of YHWH's presence was promised to fill that “house” even more than the earlier temple of Solomon (2:7, 9). It was, after all, YHWH's house that they were responsible to build (1:2, 9; 2:15, 18) and YHWH would indeed “honor” it by being uniquely present there (1:8). “Haggai was following the ideals of Ezekiel with regard to the development of a priestly commonwealth, as indicated by the way he related the prophetic eschatology of salvation to the building of the Temple.”<sup>109</sup> The Temple would not serve simply as a place, but for the “appointed times” which YHWH had given to Israel. Sabbath would function for that

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<sup>109</sup> Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 947.

reconstituted Temple and people as a return to the covenant. There could be no Temple or people without sabbath. In fact, a world without sabbath would not even be this world!

Yet, sabbath reminds us not only of “this world,” but also of “the world to come.”<sup>110</sup>

### Towards New Creation

The move to Sabbath is not only a move toward “rest” (even eschatological rest), but a move toward new creation. “The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to *holiness in time*. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the world of creation to the creation of the world.”<sup>111</sup>

Those of a later time than the Old Testament era explicitly understood Sabbath and eternity to be identified together.<sup>112</sup> They came to such conclusions, it would seem, by reflecting on the movement toward new creation found in the very movement toward Sabbath as expounded even in the very beginning of the Hebrew Bible. There is a cosmic significance that is birthed more clearly in the latter writings of Isaiah than in the canonically preceding writings of Scripture.

*“For, look, I am making a new heavens and a new earth,  
the former things will not be remembered*

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110 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 16, 19.

111 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 10.

112 “The seventh day is the sign of the resurrection and the world to come” (*The Life of Adam and Eve* 41:1). Also, see *Mekilta* to Exodus 31:17; *Mishnah Tamid – Rosh Hashanah* 31a; Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 73, 74.

*nor will they even come to mind.” (Isa 65:17)*

Time will be altered just as all else in creation. The world will be set right and reflect yet a better world than the one of experience. This eschatological new creation is the balm of YHWH for the covenant people. It is reflected by the faithful confession of that first week of creation, wherein God made all things to be fruitful and filled and rested from the work which had been undertaken. There would be no more remembering (זכר *zākar*) of that former world, that world of תהו ובהו (*tōhū wābōhū*). The only remembering would be that of Sabbath...of rest in the new work of YHWH which had been accomplished. The fruitfulness and repose of that new creation would be enjoined upon all of creation where those of the covenant will enter into rest and “prosperity” or “peace” (שְׁלוֹם *šālôm*). *“For thus says YHWH, ‘Look, I am extending to her prosperity like a river and like a torrent I will flood her with the wealth of nations; you will nurse, you will be carried on her side and play on her lap”* (Isa 66:12).<sup>113</sup> The promise was that all would be made new and able to be enjoyed. The struggle and turmoil of that former world would be no more. There were moments of good and even perhaps very good, but it all awaited the sanctified and blessed day of Sabbath in new creation.

*“But, according to his promise, we are waiting expectantly for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”* (2 Pet 3:13)<sup>114</sup>

*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth ceased*

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<sup>113</sup> This follows the proposed emendation of the BHS footnote regarding the dropping of the final *šūrēqs*; an alteration moving from second person to third.

<sup>114</sup> This follows a reading of προσδοκῶμεν in the indicative instead of the subjunctive (either of which may be possible readings) because of the greater likelihood of being indicative as a present tense participle.

to be and the sea was no more.” (Rev 21:1)<sup>115</sup>

The NT writers responded in like manner as Isaiah before them. There was promise of a new heavens and new earth wherein all would be set right and righteousness would make its permanent residence. The stirring waves of that former tumultuous world that seemed forever to threaten a return to תהו ובהו (*tōhū wābōhū*) would not only be bounded (Job 38:8-13; Pss 74, 148), but brought to an end. The new creation carried the vision of the OT and pointed to the ultimate end of even any potential return to such a state as that found before the creation of the world and God’s entering into rest. Time would no longer move in the direction of Sabbath, but would offer the eternal light of Sabbath (Rev 21:23-25). This had been the very thing which Isaiah declared:

*Sounds of violence will no longer be heard in your land, or the sounds of destruction and devastation within your borders. You will name your walls, ‘Deliverance,’ and your gates, ‘Praise.’ The sun will no longer supply light for you by day, nor will the moon’s brightness shine on you; the LORD will be your permanent source of light— the splendor of your God will shine upon you. Your sun will no longer set; your moon will not disappear; the LORD will be your permanent source of light; your time of sorrow will be over. All of your people will be godly; they will possess the land permanently. I will plant them like a shoot; they will be the product of my labor, through whom I reveal my splendor. The least of you will multiply into a thousand; the smallest of you will become a large nation. When the right time comes, I the LORD will quickly do this! (Isa 60:18-22 NET)*

Offering the same conclusions about the intent of Gen 1, Mark Smith writes,

The account of creation in Genesis 1 was designed to teach Israel not simply about the distant past. Creation also served to instruct Israel about the world that God had brought into being in order to benefit humanity and especially Israel throughout time. God’s creation in Genesis 1 offered to Israel a vision of life and blessing, of order and holiness, in the midst of a world marred by violence and disaster, servitude and death.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> The κα ▪ is translated “then” rather than “and” due to its more continuative effect in the text. The translation of □π □λθαυ as “ceased to be” follows the translation of the NET and the proposal of L&N 13.93.

<sup>116</sup> Smith, *Priestly Vision*, xii.

This was the cosmic vision of time found in Gen 1.

CHAPTER III:  
THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF YÔM IN GENESIS 1

While E. D. Hirsch may be slightly overstating his point, he does move in a welcome direction when he writes that “significance is in a given instance just as determinate and real as meaning and is very often more important.”<sup>117</sup> By significance is meant the *use* or *function* which is *properly* made of a given text.<sup>118</sup> This is not to be identified exactly with the meaning of a text, but also not overly distinguished from the meaning. The significance of any text must be understood within its own context just as meaning is to be understood in its context. One cannot simply assert any context as sufficient for significance (just as for meaning). The significance can therefore be much broader than the meaning, but never narrower.

The meaning refers to “that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent.”<sup>119</sup> While significance refers to “a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception,

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117 Hirsch, *Validity*, 144.

118 This is following the work of Hirsch, *Validity*, but more particularly the “critical realism” or “hermeneutic realism” which pointedly addresses the biblical use of such notions found in Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning In This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), esp. 259-265.

119 Hirsch, *Validity*, 8.



or a situation.”<sup>120</sup> Meaning, in this usage, refers to *authorial intent* of a text; while significance refers to *function* or *use* of the text. The former is single; the latter, multifaceted.<sup>121</sup> This is not to suggest there is no relation between the two, but that they should not be confused when discussing texts. The meaning, therefore, becomes the basis and ground for the significance, without limiting the usefulness of the text.

The reader-response hermeneutical understanding cannot be allowed to make the text apply to just any and every situation. The context is normative for properly interpreting significance just as for meaning. The context (immediate and canonical) of Scripture provides boundaries for the proper significance of *yôm* in Genesis 1. By allowing such contexts to speak to the significance of *yôm*, this term confronts the reader as delimitation and exaltation, order and separation, revelation and redemption.

### ***Yôm* as Limitation and Exaltation**

*“God called the light ‘day’ and the darkness ‘night.’ There was evening, and there was morning, marking the first day.” (Gen 1:5 NET)*

It perhaps should go without saying that one of the functions of *yôm* in Genesis one is to delimit creation. In this manner certain specific boundaries are set for the creation of all things. The creation event (and thus the creation itself) is not boundless. It has both a definite beginning and ending point not least of which was set by the use of *yôm*. Even within each *yôm* there are boundaries of darkness and light, of evening and morning, or of

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<sup>120</sup> Hirsch, *Validity*, 8.

<sup>121</sup> Though how one defines the “author” when speaking of the Biblical text is highly complex. Does one mean the meaning of the divine author, initial author, compiling/redacting author, narrator, etc? While it may be posited that the meaning is singularly, it should not be denied that the meaning is likely singularly complex and not simple.

the week of creation or even of the boundary of light-time for the cycle of the following days. The time of light created and separated from the darkness itself receives the title, “Day” (Gen 1:5). The whole of the creation event is also called by this term (Gen 2:4).<sup>122</sup> These boundaries noted here are used with great poignancy to demonstrate what is not found elsewhere in Scripture in this specific manner concerning the creation. This creates a peculiar emphasis by having been placed in the canon of Scripture at the very beginning and thus setting a definite temporal—and thus creaturely—boundary even from the first. This limitation is inescapable in reading the text.

There is no infinite creating nor does special creation even continue beyond a very finite beginning. The means by which *yôm* is used to structure the week creates a definite purpose in limiting all that God created. It is thus distinguished from God’s own Being as created within such limitations (not to mention as that which has been altogether created). Creation does not share in the boundless existence of God because creation is by default that which was created, and further, that which was created within a specific period of time as apart from the *aseity* of God’s eternal Being. Such boundaries speak volumes of the finitude of creation.

Even within the structure of Genesis one, the use of *yôm* provides a strict sense of limitation by that which was created in certain periods apart from other periods. Every work of the creation has its place and time for being created. There is no moment in time

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<sup>122</sup> Numerous English translations have obscured the underlying Hebrew comparative use of  $\text{כִּי}$  (while still translating it with the proper sense) by translating  $\text{כִּי}$  as “When...” (NET, NIV, NLT) or “At the time when...” (NAB, NJB). The adverbial/temporal use (“when”) in Gen 2:4 is demonstrated by the  $\text{כִּי}$  prepositional prefix: GKC §114q; IBHS §11.2.5c; Pieter A. Verhoef, “ $\text{כִּי}$ ” (*NIDOTTE* vol. 2; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 420. This temporal usage is a specific delimitation upon the time period involved and speaks therefore only to the creative week, much as its use in Lev 14:2 is a specific temporal limitation for the cleansing of the individual with a skin disease.

where all was created as a singularity event, but there are descriptions where all was created over a period of time with certain boundaries. The creation was fashioned very purposefully within these limited boundaries. While other passages speak of the limitations of creation more categorically (e.g., Ps 74:17; 104; Prov 8:22-31; Isa 40:12; Acts 17:26), Genesis one is fashioned to allow for *yôm* to take the role in an altogether different manner which places the emphasis squarely upon this usage.

*“This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it”* (Ps 118:24 ESV). In the words of the Psalmist (who was expressing something of a slightly different nature but which still pertains to this discussion), there is reason for rejoicing and gladness because of the exaltation of the days as created and given in their due course of time. The days were created for proper use (as the LORD demonstrated and later commanded) since the LORD has set the boundaries and tasks of creaturely experience within them. This proper place and function serves not only to speak of the limitations, but as a God-ordained grace, of the exaltation demonstrated in the use of *yôm* in Genesis one. In point of fact, the first day for *'ādām* was marked not by the six days of God’s creation but by the day of God’s blessing and rest. This marked the creation of *'ādām* as blessed and given to enjoy life without being defined by the work that either would lay behind or before them.<sup>123</sup> The limitation constituted by the boundaries of creation in time suggests some sense of purposeful movement by the very structure of the creation account. Limitation is not a matter of forced humility in relation to God, but of exaltation through purpose.<sup>124</sup> While the issue of limitation is apparent the issue of exaltation is not.

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<sup>123</sup> Barth, *CD* 3/1:215-219.

<sup>124</sup> Note the extensive theological treatment of time in Barth, *CD* 3/4:565-685.

“By the seventh day God finished the work that he had been doing, and he ceased on the seventh day all the work that he had been doing. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he ceased all the work that he had been doing in creation” (Gen 2:2-3 NET).

So in what manner does *yôm* describe and define exaltation? Karl Barth notes:

[T]he fact that God calls the light day means materially that it is not darkness but light that God has exalted and ordained to be the unit of time and therefore the measure of our life-span. As time is granted to the creature, it has been decided concerning it that as such, existing in time, it should belong to the side which God affirms as the possibility chosen by Him; to which He turns His gracious good-pleasure; which He has completely separated from the other side, from chaos; and which He has fundamentally and definitively exalted above it.<sup>125</sup>

In another direction, *yôm* is used to move the account towards the climax at the creation of *'ādām* on the sixth day and thus to the *yôm* of special blessing (שְׁדָרָה *qādaš*) on the seventh day because the special creative work of God was finished and was therefore given to rest (Gen 1:31-2:3).<sup>126</sup> The use of *yôm* throughout, then, serves a greater purpose than simply to structure the passage since this could just have easily been accomplished by excluding all movement and limitation of time as the other creational accounts in Scripture do. Instead, this passage has been specifically structured around *yôm* to lead one to the finished special creation of God and thus to the climactic sixth and exalted seventh days. While the account seems to climax with the creation of *'adam* on the sixth day it finds its special role in the resting of the seventh day which was set apart as a unique day among all the other days. The unique function of this serves more than simply to describe a week of creation. It instead points toward the cultic function of all time within the Sabbath cycle and

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<sup>125</sup> Barth, *CD* 3/1:126.

<sup>126</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (trans. D. M. G. Stalker, New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 141, 150.

specifically with the Sabbath as the goal after all other work has been done.

Thus, the seventh day functions to point towards all that lay ahead in the Scripture and in the life of God's people as His people. The exaltation of that day meant the exaltation of all that went before it since what went before finds fulfillment in the *šābbat* (שַׁבָּת). The purpose of the days preceding *šābbat* offers a type of that which God would instruct Israel through Moses at Sinai. The precedence of the creation week for the Mosaic instruction provides a framework for the week of Israel. The cultic practice of *šābbat* would find a textual exemplar in the record of that first "week" which would function as a means of expressing the theology of creation (Exod 20:9-11). "Israel testifies to God's creation of the world by setting apart this day as special."<sup>127</sup> The exaltation of that day was thus intended for "holy convocation" and "rest" by Israel, because on that day the LORD rested and blessed it making it holy. The sacredness of the day meant the sacredness of the week, even more particularly the people of God, as set apart by the LORD (Ezek 20:12). It was this divine blessing and rest that was significant to Israel and constituted their very existence as a people. In this manner they would even compose a Psalm specifically for the Sabbath.

### Psalm 92 – A Song for the Sabbath

A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath Day.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Childs, *OTTCC*, 70.

<sup>128</sup> The following translation is mine. The "name" of this psalm offers an ancient interpretive matrix for its use without any claim to it being originally penned when the psalm was penned.

It is good to give praise to the LORD,  
 To make music to your name, O Most High.  
 To declare in the morning your faithfulness  
 And your reliability each night.<sup>129</sup>  
 Upon the ten-stringed instrument,  
 And upon the harp;  
 Upon the melodious sound of the lyre.

For you have made me glad, O LORD, in your work,  
 In the deeds of your hands I rejoice gladly.  
 How great are your deeds, O LORD,  
 Immensely deep are your thoughts.  
 A brutish person does not know,  
 Nor does a fool understand this.  
 The wicked sprout like grass,  
 All who do harm thrive.  
 Their destruction is forever,  
 But you are exalted forever, O LORD.

For your enemies, O LORD,  
 Your enemies perish,  
 Every evil-doer is scattered.  
 You raised my horn like the wild ox;  
 I rubbed it with fine oil.<sup>130</sup>  
 My eye has seen my enemies,  
 The evil-ones who rose against me,  
 My ears have heard.<sup>131</sup>

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129 The plural for “nights” is here translated “each night” rather than with reference to a plurality of nights or the watches of the night. See Goldingay, *Psalms Vol. 3*, 51n1.

130 This follows the reading proposed by Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (WBC 20; Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 460, 462-463. This is against the verbal reading of Syriac and Targumim (“you mixed me”) and the infinitive construct proposed by LXX, Symmachus and Jerome (“old age”). It is suggested for the purpose of the reading selected that this clause is similar to one found in at Ugarit (UT:76:II:21-23; KTU 1.10:II:21-23) which reads (according to my translation):

<i>qrn.dbatk.bltt. 'nt</i>	Your strong horn, Virgin Anat,
<i>qrn dbatk b'l ymš ħ</i>	Your strong horn, Baal will anoint,
<i>b'l ymšĥ .hm.b'p</i>	Baal will anoint them in flight.

This text speaks of the strong horn of Anat being anointed/rubbed with oil by Baal as an act of blessing and affection. The reading of De Moor, *ARTU*, 113 [see the footnotes 22, 23 on that same page as well] speaks of the horns of the “head-dress” rather than of “strength”. The reading above follows closely that of John Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977). The connection of this love poem in Ugaritic may be further linked with the repeated emphatic references to the lifting of eyes and the mention of the “wild ox” (Ugaritic *rumm*; Hebrew *re'ém*) in UT 76:II:9; KTU 1.10:II:9.

131 The poetic form of this verse (v. 12) seems to be a chiasmic tricola following an A-B-A' pattern where both the first and last cola are in direct relation to the middle cola, on which see Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques* (JSOTsup 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 182-183.

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,  
 Like a cedar in Lebanon, he<sup>132</sup> will grow great.  
 The ones which are planted in the house of the LORD,  
 In the courts of our God, they will be made to flourish.  
 They will bear fruit in old age,  
 They will be full and luxuriant,  
 To declare that the LORD is just,  
 My Rock, in whom there is no injustice.<sup>133</sup>

The Psalmist speaks for Israel as one blessed of the LORD and exalted. He sings as one who knows the vanquishing of all enemies and the longevity of life. The evidence of blessedness in correlation to the week of creation is demonstrated by the overcoming of all that might prove fruitless and destructive. The goodness of God is demonstrated through the flourishing and bounty of God's provision for God's people who then have every reason to rejoice in the unwarranted grace of the LORD who keeps covenant in love ( **יְדוּת**) and faithfulness ( **אֱמֻנָה**).

While this Psalm speaks of personal enemies, the account of Genesis 1 does not. However, it easily serves to demonstrate the overcoming of the impersonal enemies (formlessness, void and darkness – Gen 1:2) which God already demonstrated to be in the midst of their own end. The days of creation marked the end of such entities (which were regarded as non-entities) and the victory of God who would rest from all His labors. The Psalm points forward (as does Gen 1) to a time when the Sabbath might become a more permanent reality for the victorious glory and presence of God over all the enemies of His creation. In a similar vein, the prophet Ezekiel could not but prophesy about such a reality.

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132 “He” is used in order to be consistent with the Hebrew grammatical gender and not to reflect any sense of the natural gender of the subject.

133 This follows the *qere* rather than the *kethib*, the latter of which Gesenius had proposed was an “old accusative of direction or intention” in order to defend the kethib reading (GKC § 90g).

## Ezekiel's Temple and the Sabbath

*“Thus says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened.”* (Ezek 46:1 ESV)

The glory of the LORD had departed from the temple and from Jerusalem in Ezekiel's visions which were then made desolate by the Babylonians. Once the temple and city were destroyed and the inhabitants killed or exiled, Ezekiel was shown a new boundaried land, a new city and a new temple. Perhaps more strikingly he was shown a new people who served the LORD in holiness from a changed heart. As a part of this service, the Sabbath served a particular function for worship and for the presence of the LORD. The doors of the temple were opened for the ruler and for the people on that day and offered insight into the restored presence of the LORD in His new temple. Though the gate would be shut for the six working days, the blessing of fruitfulness and life would still flow from that gate as a trickle becoming a mighty impassable river down to the Dead Sea. Everywhere it went it would give life (Ezek 47:5-12). The gate being shut on the six days would not mean the end of the LORD's blessing flowing to His people and land. It would only mean that work would not be against death and destruction, but would be offered in life and blessing. On the Sabbath, God's people would behold His glory and would know God as יהוה (LORD)...the One whose rule is “over the powers of chaos and death” demonstrated “by the water [of the river of life] and by the trees it nourishes.”<sup>134</sup> Dan Block correctly asserts that “any cosmic symbolism at all [present in this passage]...is

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<sup>134</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48* (WBC 29; Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 285.



subordinated completely to Ezekiel's national agenda."<sup>135</sup>

In the manner of Ezekiel's vision, the first Sabbath was given for the glory of the LORD to be shared by His creation (despite Ezekiel's national agenda). The beginning of creation was blessedness and life, though sin would later mar this openness and demand the closure to the only access (from the east) of God's presence (Gen 3:24). The days of creation were marked by life and boundaries which were good. The days were not given in opposition to the glory of God, but to a celebration of that goodness. Those days were celebrated by a "rest" from the work and holiness in sharing in the "rest" of God. Ezekiel would reinvasion something similar to that first week, but now in the light of the history of Israel as the covenant people redeemed and renewed and in part constituted by the Sabbath itself (Ezek 20:12, 20; cf. Exod 31:13, 16-17).<sup>136</sup> There could be no return to that first week, but only a redemption and renewal to the blessedness of that first week – indeed a greater glory of sorts. With such a vision during the exile of Israel, it was apparent that the Sabbath must be guarded as sacred if the possibility of redemption and renewal would remain. Nehemiah would make sure that the returning exiles would not again defame that day and thereby oppose the glory of God in their presence.

#### Nehemiah's Censure on the Sabbath (Neh 13:15-22)

Upon Nehemiah's investigation, he found that many did not observe the Sabbath as time set apart from the normal labors of life. Not only did the returned exiles profane it themselves but also allowed others (the Tyrians) to do so on Israel's behalf. Nehemiah

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<sup>135</sup> Daniel I. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 696-697.

<sup>136</sup> Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48* (Harvard Semitic Monograph Series 10; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 18.

would have none of this. The land, people and temple had been despoiled once from the failure to keep the Sabbath holy to the LORD and Nehemiah warned those profaning that day that they must stop. He not only declared it, but actually closed the gates to the city of Jerusalem on the Sabbath to keep from such happening. The gates would be opened during the other six days, but on the Sabbath they would be closed. This was exactly the opposite of the vision of Ezekiel's temple. The significance of this should not be overlooked. Nehemiah is testifying that the vision of Ezekiel was not fulfilled simply by the people returning to the land and rebuilding the temple. Their hearts would need to be changed as well. Nehemiah's censure of his fellow Israelites demonstrated that the Sabbath of the LORD had not been entered into yet. The exaltation of that day was still profaned except by compulsion. The record of those who returned would continue to emphasize the failure of Israel to know the glory of God as given to them in the enjoyment of the Sabbath.

#### 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 – The Sabbath of the Land According to the Word of Jeremiah

*He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. (2 Chron 36:20-21 ESV)*

The Chronicler would emphasize the reason that the exile had happened. The failure to keep the Sabbath for the land and people was justification sufficient to exile the people of Israel (attributed to the prophetic word of Jeremiah). It would serve as a memorial for future generations to keep the Sabbath in a manner which had been given to them by the LORD of the Sabbath. In like manner, the writer of 1 Esdras delivered this same indictment against Israel (1 Esdr 1:58).

Sabbath was intended from the beginning of creation as a gift of glory (as covenant in type) to creation. If God rested then creation was at ease, blessed and enjoyed life. Instead, the Sabbath had been turned to any other day. Certainly the “Sabbath” of which the Chronicler speaks is more in line with the overall Sabbatarian institution of rest rather than simply the observance of a day, but this theme represented also in the day was akin to the issue of Nehemiah.<sup>137</sup> The Sabbath of God (and thus the covenant) had been profaned and would need to be kept to live as the blessed creation of God. The blessing and sanctifying of the Sabbath was the blessing and sanctifying of life and rest from all that might oppose life. Who then could possibly fulfill what had been enjoyed by God in the beginning and enjoined by God at Sinai?

Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5)

*“For this reason the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath”* (Mark 2:28 NET).

Jesus laid claim to something which had only ever been conferred upon others by word of the LORD – the title “son of man.” This was his personal title which he used in third-person reference to himself time and again throughout the Gospel tradition. While it was not original with him (Ezek 2:3, 6, 8, etc.; Dan 7:13; 8:17 – though each of these OT passages have their own referent) it was used with a particular emphasis upon his divine appointment as the authoritative representative of God and man.<sup>138</sup> This self-referring quasi-title was applied by Jesus as one who could speak with authority on all matters.

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<sup>137</sup> Likely the Chronicler (just as perhaps Jeremiah before him) was using the references to time in a more general and theological sense than in a literalistic fashion of chronology and thus emphasizing that there would indeed be an end to the judgment. See Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 1076.

<sup>138</sup> F. Hahn, “ $\text{ὁ υἱος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου}$ ,” *EDNT* 3:389.

While his disciples provoked the religious authorities concerning the Second Temple Sabbath rules, Jesus responded from the Scriptures (1 Sam 21). He recounted those who themselves did likewise because the Sabbath was about life and not rules for their own sake. As part of his response he declared, “The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27 NET). And by this he asserted that he indeed had the authority as the Son of Man to speak to such issues. He also obliquely asserted that he was “greater than the temple” (Matt 12:6) and thus held the prerogative to do such.

What does this have to do with Genesis 1? Jesus spoke as the fulfillment of all that Genesis 1 pointed toward through the apex of creation (*'ādām*) and the consummation of creation (*šābbat*). In him these were tied together in a manner that had been unthinkable in a sin-cursed world. Not only was Jesus the one to unite the two, but the one to fulfill them and as the one who was the better temple of which the earthly temples had only been types (John 2:19-21; Rev 21:22). In him was life and holiness to the LORD. He would do what had been set about by the creation of all from the very beginning—he would enter the “rest” of God and provide such for the people of God.

#### Hebrews 4:9 and the “Rest” of the Lord

*“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God”* (Heb 4:9 NIV).

The writer of Hebrews wrestled further with the question of the “rest” which was enjoyed by God and later promised to Israel. The promise for certain generations of Israel had been denounced through their disbelief and disobedience (Heb 3:15-19). The “rest,” and thus life, which should have been theirs in the promised Messiah was missed and instead death and destruction overtook them. The writer goes to great pains to emphasize

that the “rest” which was promised is available to those who would trust in Jesus and demonstrate this by obedience. Life and blessing belong to those who would do this. The promise remains as it has from the very first week of creation that the Sabbath of God might yet be the Sabbath of God’s people. Those people would not be constituted by a legalistic observance, but by entering the very “rest” of the “Lord of the Sabbath”—Jesus the Christ.

Might we consider the Sabbath of the creation an eternal Sabbath or was it only a “day” as all the other days of that week? The text of Gen. 1 does not apply the same parameters (“evening” and “morning”) to that day as the others. However, the writer of Hebrews seems to speak of the significance of that first account as if it were intended to speak of a “rest” which would endure through the ages finding fulfillment in the *eschaton*. Perhaps this was not the original meaning (though it might be implied), but the significance of it is fitting. This speaks to the covenantal and eschatological significance of that first week’s account. God would not revoke the promise and the promise was initiated from the very beginning as if it were already enjoined upon creation by the Creator’s “rest.” The consummation of all that had been started and hinted at in that first account in Genesis 1 would indeed find its ultimate fulfillment in due time.<sup>139</sup>

#### The Finishing of Tabernacle, Temple and Christ

It has been argued above that part of the polemic of Genesis 1 was concerned with temple building by God. Certainly this seems to be one of the significances of the polemics in the ANE context. In this relation, the tabernacle functioned as a mobile temple of sorts while

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<sup>139</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 187.

Israel wandered in the desert. It served as the place of God’s dwelling in the midst of God’s people. The finishing of the tabernacle following the instructions given to Moses ( וַיִּכַּל מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַמִּלְאָכָה “and Moses finished the work” – Exod 40:31) involved the very same terminology as the finishing of creation ( וַיִּכַּל אֱלֹהִים...מִלְאָכָתּוֹ “and God finished...his work” – Gen 2:2). The temple of Solomon built many years after the tabernacle was similarly declared finished ( וַיִּכְלֹשׁ לְמֶלֶךְ אֱתֵבֵית יְהוָה “and Solomon finished the house of the LORD” – 2 Chron 7:11). Both of these “houses” were intended as the blessed dwelling of God in the midst of God’s people. They were types (in this sense) of the blessed presence of God in the creation week when all had been finished in preparation for God’s people to enjoy God’s presence and therefore life and blessing.

In like manner, Jesus (that one greater than the temple) declared from the cross, “It is finished” (ΤΕΤ ΑΛΕΣΤΑΙ – John 19:30). Not only did this speak to the work which he was busy doing as His Father also always did (John 5:17), but later a similar declaration would be made at the consummation of all things (Υ ΑΥΟΝΕΝ “It is done” – Rev 16:17; 22:12). While the verbal parallels are not identical, the verbal (and theological) ideas are sufficiently similar to warrant a connection where the one speaks of the perfection of work completed as a task; the others speak of all things being done. The promise is that those who are faithful will enter into the “rest” of the one who has purchased it once-and-for-all (Rev 14:13) and those who have persisted in their rebellious works will never know “rest” (Rev 14:11). The work of God begun at the creation finds its fulfillment in these words of final rest in God’s presence where life is enjoyed unendangered by death and destruction because of the finished work of Christ Jesus (Rev 1:18; 20:6; 21:4).<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 76.

The limitation and exaltation of days demonstrated by Genesis 1 speak to life as given and sustained by the grace of God. Further, the limitation is that which pertains to knowing the creatureliness (Job 14:5) of one who depends upon God (Job 12:10) and enters into *His* “rest.” To know the boundaries which have been set is to enjoy the life one has been given and forever receives by the hand of God through Christ Jesus. This is where the exaltation of days arrives: the bounded-unbounded days of the eschaton wherein one lives within the bounds of faith-filled obedience, but knows the unbounded grace of God’s eternal presence and blessing. This is life: to enjoy the One who is life.

### ***Yôm* as Order and Separation**

“...*the first day...the second day...the third day...the fourth day...the fifth day...the sixth day...the seventh day*” (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:3).

There is nothing coincidental about the manner in which the creation unfolds in Genesis 1. It was so specifically fashioned to demonstrate (among other things) the nature of God as not only one who creates in an orderly manner, but as one who creates order itself.<sup>141</sup> “Gen. 1 involves...ordering time itself.”<sup>142</sup> The use of the days facilitates a powerful sense of order that is unlike accounts that outright state that God created order by setting boundaries and putting things in their place (e.g., Ps 8, 74, 104). Instead of declaring that God is of order, the creation account in Genesis facilitates the knowing of this by the order which God has created everything.

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141 Ernest C. Lucas, “Cosmology,” *DOT:Pent*, 136; Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 89.

142 Iain Duguid, *Ezekiel* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), 524n30.

Not only was creation made with and in specific order, but creation was fashioned from that which was disorder ( **וְהָאֲרֶץ הָיְתָה תֵּהוֹמָה וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹמָה** "the earth was formless and void and darkness was over the face of the waters" – Gen 1:2). What stood as nothingness and disorder was made to be something by setting it in order. The declaration of God over that nothingness and disorder put all things into their place and in their own time.

Order emerges by the fiat of God as it did in those first moments of God's creating. Light was created by the word of God and separated from that darkness and thus specific boundaries were placed upon the darkness of nothingness and disorder. "*Yôm*" was created and called by the will of God to serve as a boundary of order to the darkness that itself was bounded by a name and thus made part of the larger boundary of *yôm* (Gen 1:3-5). What was disorder had begun to be put into order. Day upon day emerged until all the work of God in this special creating had been completed. Six days wherein all was placed in order. Everything had a place and a time by which each day had been determined.

The seventh day also was essential (if not more essential) to that order. Without the seventh day all that preceded it might dissolve into nothingness and disorder again and remained only as work unfinished. The seventh day, as a sanctified and blessed day, gave order to all other days. It set them still more firmly within the order of God's design. After all, the *šābbat* of God meant the order of all else. It was then that the *yôm* of creating all the heavens and the earth could be declared finished (Gen 2:4). From a canonical reading, all had been (and the promise made that it would still be) put in its place in due time. God did not "rest" and enjoy peace in this particular manner apart from the end of these labors. The ordering of existence was the grace of life and God's presence. God's resting meant



that disorder would not rule the day, but God's order had meant and would mean the end of all disorder – death, destruction and nothingness. One could not read the account of Genesis without the context of the reality of existence in a sin-cursed world filled with death, destruction and the potential of being made into a sort of nothingness.

*And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Gen 1:4-5 ESV) “God said, ‘Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to divide day from night, and let them indicate festivals, days and years. (Gen 1:14 NJB)*

This did not mean the complete end of all which opposed God's good design.

Darkness remained as night. Only the light—having been called, “Day”—was accounted as “good.” The night (as darkness) received the naming of “good” only in its relation to the light of day.<sup>143</sup> Darkness, as night, would remain as a reminder of the threat of the disorder which would seem to threaten at any moment the existence of God's good order. “Night is a survival of the darkness of chaos, now however kept in bounds by a protective order. But the day is light from that primeval light which was the firstborn of the works of Creation.”<sup>144</sup> There must be a separation of light and darkness to maintain that order. Indeed, this separation was carefully carried demonstrated by the author's use of *yôm* as the separation of time from that which was indeed good and that which threatened the good. This would be played out in the salvation-history of Israel.

### The Separation Marked By Time for Israel

*“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”*

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<sup>143</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 184.

<sup>144</sup> Von Rad, *OTT*, 1:144. See also the extensive treatment of darkness/light and the creation days in Barth, *CD 3/1*:105-133.

*Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.*

*O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;*

*And by night, but I have no rest” (Ps 22:1-2 NAS).*

The Psalmist wrote as an individual abandoned by God though knowing the God on whom he called. Where is God? Why does God not answer? The separation is unbearable. Through the days and nights of crying out to the God who does not seem to hear...an answer seems to come. The answer is not in the mouth of the LORD, but in the mouth of the one praying. Hope will hold through the separation for the one knowing that God is faithful and will give blessing and rest to the afflicted...those whose darkness seemed to make even the day into night and the night into the silence of sorrow. The affliction of suffering and of being undone by enemies would not last forever. The day would dawn when morning would give light to all who feared the LORD.

This is similar to the nature of that first separation where the “enemies” of order and life were made subject to the order and separation of God. They were divided and put in their places. The night would be made to serve the purposes of God despite its not having been created by God.<sup>145</sup> Though not a direct creation of God, it was still under the authority of the Creator of heaven and earth. The work of God each day in the light would be marked by yet another darkness of night, but by the seventh day there would no longer be this clear literary separation. The seventh day would dawn and the separation would be so permanent (literarily speaking) that the darkness of time simply moving on in never-ending cycles would find its completion in the *šābbat* of God.

This was the testimony of Israel: caught in the cycle of the threat of annihilation

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<sup>145</sup> Barth, *CD* III.1:106.

through faithless disobedience which pressed again and again to destroy, but bound by the faithful covenant of יהוה (Judg 2:10-22; Ps 107). The separation of day (as light) from night (as darkness) in creation was alike the separation which kept Israel from destruction. Each new day of creation meant something new unfolded by the plan of God all leading to the climax of the one in God's image. In the same manner Israel would move into each new day of God's blessing finding that God had yet unfolded more of His ultimate purpose for God's people to live as those made in His image. Each new day would dawn again for Israel and offer hope for another day of God's good and gracious work, but Israel failed to appreciate and live within the *šābbat* of God's special blessing. The cry of the psalmist in Ps 22 was as one who experienced (in part and as a type) the judgment of God on a creation living apart from the fellowship of God. He was not truly abandoned, but believed in the future blessing of God for those who would be accounted faithful in enduring the night. Yet who could truly endure *that* night and remain faithful?

#### The Separation Marked By Time for the Church

*“Now from noon until three, darkness came over all the land. At about three o'clock Jesus shouted with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”* (Matt 27:45-46 NET)

The echo of Ps 22 rang throughout the ages of Israel's *Heilsgeschichte* until the one who had been appointed came. He was the faithful one testified to by God as the “beloved” and as the one upon whom the promise of the ages had been kept. Jesus, in his cry of dereliction from the cross, spoke out the words of the Psalm as his own and by implication as the words of those who were forever faced with night and darkness. Jesus,

himself, spoke these very words in the unnatural darkness of day. His faithful cry from the cross was not the cry of one who simply hoped for a new day while sharing in the deeds of darkness as so many before him, but of one who was elsewhere called “the Light of the World” (John 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). Even all those who followed him and trusted in him he called “the light of the world” (Matt 5:14). Yet, the light of the world—in the darkness of day—was crucified and soon after died and was buried.

The world (and Israel chosen of the world to live in the light) had rejected the one who separated the light from the darkness and did not see the sign of their judgment in that one who turned the light into darkness. The separation of light as overcoming darkness, but giving way for a time to darkness, was bound into the very separation cry of the Son to the Father. The world had never beheld such a cry in truer form. This was not a cry just of separation, but of the promise of the new day which was already dawning.

*“...the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining”* (1Jn 2:8 NET).

Jesus came into the world as the light separated from darkness, but rejected, crucified and buried by a world (and his own people) shrouded and bound in darkness. The rejection by his own and the cry to the Father from the cross were met three days later by the vindication of the first light of the resurrection Sunday. The light was shining, never to be extinguished. The separation at creation was bound to the separation of the eternal age which had been inaugurated in Christ and the outpouring of his Spirit. Those who belonged to Christ would be reckoned as “children of the light” and not as their former selves who wandered in the darkness of night (Eph 5:8-14; 1 Thess 5:5; 2 Pet 1:19). This was evidence of the new creation and thus of the separation. The separation would not be evaporated in the *eschaton*, but would be firmly established as the eternal separation of

those bound in darkness from those living in the light of the new day without end (Rev 21:22-23; 22:5).

### ***Yôm* as Revelation and Redemption**

Not only does *yôm* in Gen 1 signify limitation and exaltation, order and separation, but finally revelation and redemption. “Beneath the star of the promise of God it becomes possible to experience reality as ‘history’. The stage for what can be experienced, remembered and expected as ‘history’ is set and filled, revealed and fashioned, by promise.”<sup>146</sup> What lay ahead as revelation could be found in the first moments as “day” was created and each day as creation unfolded toward the anticipated end of God’s creating. The revelation was nothing less than the revelation of God Himself<sup>147</sup> and the anticipation of all things being made good and God entering into His rest with creation following suit.

The revelation of God is not only to be found in the brightness of day but clouded by the darkness of night. God wraps Himself “in darkness” (Ps 18:11; 97:2) as one who reveals Himself, but does so in the hiddenness of Himself. There is not full disclosure, but only the revelation of the God who hides. He is thus appropriately called the God who lives in “unapproachable light” because in the light of His revelation there is always a blinding to humanity. “God has hidden himself in Scripture and must sovereignly reveal himself.”<sup>148</sup> The revelation is not pure revelation comprehensible to rationalism, but

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<sup>146</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (Trans. James W. Leitch, London: SCM, 1967), 106.

<sup>147</sup> Bruce C. Birch, et al., *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1999), 41-42.

<sup>148</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 81.

always revelation by mediation. Even the unfolding of creation was not in a moment of time (as Augustine proposed), but declared as mediated to Israel as one week of creation. Further, it was mediated to humanity by means of the history of creation through the history of Israel.

“God reveals himself to his people in a medium with which they can identify and which they can comprehend.”<sup>149</sup> This is why, from a literary perspective, the nature of the creation days can still be accounted as solar days and function by analogy between Israel’s week and God’s creative week. The mediation of revelation does not demand that this speaks to a precise chronology of time, per se, but to the manner in which the revelation as “days” has been given to and through Israel.

Revelation is not unmediated by God. It is always mediated as to those who can never truly know the light while they live in the darkness. The activities of creation occur in the light (as it is supposed), but the passing of night conceals all until the breaking of a new day unfolds ever more of God’s revelation in and through creation. All of this is set within the context of a community that received this text bounded by being subjected to the terrors of annihilation and dissolution as a community of God for unfaithfulness even though they were kept by the promise of covenantal redemption. The work of darkness offered only the terror of a God who was hidden and was wrapped in judgment as distinguished from those who were judged unable to approach and enter. Only a world (and particularly a chosen people) marred by sins against God and its effects could possibly comprehend the significance of the creation account of the revelation of the creative work of God through the days as “good” and even “very good.” The goodness of each day of

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149 Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 55-56.

creation confessed by God is really a confession that cannot be understood as correlative to a cursed creation except as it is through eschatologically focused redemptive revelation. The terrors of each day marred by evil cannot possibly be comprehended as “good” apart from the mediated revelation of God as is evident from the posturing of Job.

Job 3 – The Sorrow of Day—Today<sup>150</sup>

Afterwards, Job began to speak and cursed the day of his birth. Job spoke, saying,

Perish the day when I was born,  
 and the night which said:  
 ‘A man-child is conceived.’  
 That day—may it be utter darkness!  
 Let God not seek it from above  
 and let no light shine upon it.  
 Let blackness and gloom reclaim it;  
 may clouds rest upon it  
 and the demons of the day terrify it.  
 That night—may deep darkness capture it!  
 Let it not be counted in the days of the year  
 or enter in the number of months.  
 May that night be lonely as a crag  
 and no joyful sounds penetrate it.  
 Let them curse it who curse their day,  
 who are skilled in stirring up Leviathan.  
 Let the stars of its dawn be dark;  
 may it hope for light, but have none,  
 nor see the eyelids of the morning,  
 because it did not shut the doors of my mother’s womb  
 or hide misery from my eyes.  
 Why did I not die in the womb?  
 Or perish as I came forth from it?  
 Why were there knees to receive me?  
 And why breasts for me to suck?  
 For then should I have lain down and been quiet,  
 I should have slept and been at peace  
 with kings and counselors of the earth  
 who rebuild ruined cities for themselves,  
 or with princes rich in gold  
 who fill their houses with silver.

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<sup>150</sup> The following translation is taken from Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 237-238.

Or even if I had been an aborted birth,  
like the stillborn infants who never see the light!

There the wicked cease their raging,  
There their victims are at rest.  
All the prisoners are at ease,  
they hear the taskmaster's shouts no more.  
There the small and the great are equal  
and the slave is free from his master.

Why is light given to the sufferer  
and life to embittered souls  
who long for death—but it comes not—  
and dig for it more than for buried treasure,  
who would exult in great joy  
and be happy to find a grave?  
Why is life given to the man whose way is hidden,  
whom God has fenced in?

Indeed, my sighing comes like my daily bread,  
my groans are poured out like water.  
For the fear I had has come upon me,  
and what I dreaded has overtaken me.  
I have no ease, no peace, no rest.  
What has come is agony.

Job cursed the day of his birth and the light that shone on it. This rejection of the light and the heavenly bodies which bear the light (as day and the promise of the end of night) mark the “actual content of the threat of judgment but also of the corresponding promise of Is 60 and Rev 20-21. The wisdom and patience of God which has founded human history has a definite goal, and the finite time granted to man in relation to this history has actually an end.”<sup>151</sup> The cries of Job are the echo of all those who find themselves bounded by a fallen world but graced by God in the midst of it.

Job could do nothing but long for death and an end to his time of suffering. Job could not confess the goodness of God until confronted by God Himself, nevertheless he

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<sup>151</sup> Barth, *CD* 3/1:168.



could not help but cry against the day in his state of suffering. Though righteous, Job was not beyond the pain of the suffering of death and destruction. The day was darker than night and filled with the curses of a bounded existence.<sup>152</sup> While Job seemed unable to find hope, he was sustained by the revelation of God for ultimate vindication despite whatever had come (Job 5; 30:26; 38-39; 40:6-41:34). The night would not last forever, nor would the day which seems no better than night (and perhaps at times worse), but the day surely come when vindication was assured by the promise of God. Truly “God reveals himself in the form of promise and in the history that is marked by promise.”<sup>153</sup>

#### Hebrews 4 – The Present Eschatological Significance

The writer of Hebrews seemed to follow the thought of promise when he wrote about the “rest” which remained to be entered into by the people of God. This rest belongs to the present as the “Today” of those who trust in Christ Jesus through faith-filled obedience (Heb 4:7-9). While that “day” was yet future to the children of Israel, it was only anticipatory because of their disobedience. Therefore another day remained beyond the day in which they had received the promise. In this manner, the *eschaton* was initiated and entered by those who would later live in obedience by means of the work of the faithful “high priest” who is the Christ.

The eschatological present of Hebrews 4 suggests that there is something present which was the promise of the ages, but still awaits final consummation. The writer of Hebrews appears to follow the implication of Gen 1 concerning the lack of “evening” and

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<sup>152</sup> See the comments of Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 76-84, where he proposes a sort of reversal of Gen 1 by the writer of Job 3.

<sup>153</sup> Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 42.

“morning” for the seventh day which God blessed and on which God rested. This implication thus finds fulfillment in something yet future to the writer of Genesis who wrote in context of awaiting the day this could truly be appreciated by the people of God. The “rest” was not yet complete, though the Sabbath of God has already commenced and God Himself had entered into His rest. God had indeed finished His work at the creation, but set out the enjoyment of His rest as eschatological promise to those who might enter it by the faith of obedience. That day was finally dawning in the person and work of Jesus, but what would be the significance of the fullness of that day?

#### Revelation 21 – The Future Eschatological Significance

*I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. (Rev 21:22-25 NLT)*

The future eschatological significance of the days of creation and particularly of the quasi-prophetic function of the Sabbath in Genesis 1 in relation to the final revelation of the Apocalypse suggests a sort of literary (and theological) *inclusio* within the canon of Scripture.<sup>154</sup> The creation of light and its concomitant separation from darkness, the creation of the light-bearers (sun, moon and stars) and finally the eschatological “rest” of God all mark the final book of the Christian canon of Scripture as wrapping up what lay between the first chapters of Genesis and itself.

The Apocalypse declares that there will be an end to night. There would be no

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<sup>154</sup> Admittedly, the connection to light, light-bearers and the “rest” of God are not the only elements pointing to a sort of intentional *inclusio*, but for the sake of this paper they are the only ones connected to the overall discussion since they are the ideas specifically connected to “day.”

more darkness and death, mourning and sorrow (Rev 21:4). All who know life will live in the light of “the glory of God” and of “the Lamb” that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are cast out cannot even properly be said to be “alive,” but instead experience the “second death” as part of the “lake of fire” (Rev 21:8) which elsewhere is called outer or blackest darkness (Matt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; 2Pet 2:17). That darkness is marked by their lives as opposed to those who have lived in the light of God and as such are reckoned to be “children of the light” (Rom 13:12; Eph 5:8-16; 1Thess 5:5; 1Pet 2:9; 1Jn 1:5-7). The beginning of creation was marked by the creation of light (even without what are considered the necessary light-bearers) and its separation from darkness. So will the end of the age be. The light will be fully separated from the darkness and never again will the darkness have sway in that new heavens and new earth.

The light-bearers made on the fourth day of creation were given to mark the “times” and “seasons,” but are regarded as superfluous in the final *eschaton*. In reference to the woman clothed with the sun, moon and stars (Rev 12:1) we encounter an explication of that which was enumerated in Gen 1:14 and speaks to the light of those celestial bodies, but more particularly to the revelation which is found in the light they bear.<sup>155</sup> These bearers were never creators of light, but only always bearers. Their light could be extinguished. The notion of the Apocalypse concerning the woman clothed with these bearers seems to suggest that they are only testimony to the one who is himself the ever-enduring self-existent light of that “woman” who is the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:9, 23; 22:5).

The “rest” of God would finally also be consummated in full and enjoyed by the

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<sup>155</sup> Barth, *CD* 3/1:165.

people of God for all time. What had once been only anticipatory in Genesis 1 would now be entered as the experience of God's people (Rev 14:13). The wicked, however, would not ever know "rest" (Rev 14:11). The "rest" would be that which belonged to the work of God and as such could not be entered by those who neither know nor give proper honor to God and to His Son. The promise of the ages long anticipated but finally come. What was written about the creation could more truly be stated about the *eschaton* and the new creation of all it entails: "The termination of creation is not its completion. That is to say, it is not completed because it is concluded, but because on the presupposition of this conclusion God rested on the seventh day. The completion of creation is the joyful readiness in which the Creator and creature, the Master and the work which He has set before Him, are now conjoined, and together anticipate the common history which now commences."<sup>156</sup>

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Barth, *CD* 3/1:176-177.

## CONCLUSION

The foregoing study has attempted to demonstrate what is hoped a more fruitful direction for understanding the meaning and significance of the use of *yôm* in Gen 1 that moves beyond the wars so prevalent in contemporary discussions. Part of the issue is making sure to read the account of Scripture in its literary and theological context. The quest for the significance of *yôm* has too often been neglected or distorted and particularly as it pertains to the *theological* significance. However, any study of Scripture wishing to do justice to the text, must seek the *theological* meaning and significance which reaches beyond a merely grammatical-historical quest.

An appreciation of the various comparative contexts suggests that the account of Gen 1 is uniquely formed by the use of *yôm*. While other accounts found in Scripture and the ANE offer helpful insight into the overall world of the Hebraic perspective on creation, none of them do so in a manner comparable to the week of creation. Even the motif and literary affinities do not seem to suggest a creational literary context elsewhere in the HB or the ANE. Clearly, the text of Gen 1 is a well-conceived and intentional literary creation that fully belongs to its historical context, but it also reaches beyond other conceptions of creation and offers an account ultimately unlike any other.

The theological motifs of time relative to Gen 1 provide further direction in the quest for the theological meaning and significance of *yôm*. The immediate context as well as the canonical context provides an essential framework for discerning the contours

of these motifs of time. The historical motif is expressed in the chronological and syntagmatic arrangement in Gen 1, but finds further support in the placement of this passage in the overall context of the *heilsgeschichte* of Israel (and thus of the world) through the story of redemption. The cultic motif of time in Gen 1 turns upon a temple-creation motif that is laid out in the use of cultic language, structure and orientation. The move toward Sabbath in this account highlights the eschatological orientation of the use of *yôm*. This passage has been molded by a people who find their very existence laid and crowned by the cult and Sabbath. Thus, the notion of time in Gen 1 is not simply an unimportant literary feature (as if it were a functional “accident” of a historical account), but makes significant theological claims that must be accounted for to arrive at a proper understanding and appreciation of the intent of the passage.

Finally, the theological significance of *yôm* in Gen 1 finds helpful expression in the juxtaposing of several implicit orientations: limitation and exaltation, order and separation, revelation and anticipation. These orientations direct attention to the underlying significance of *yôm* in ways which move the discussion beyond semantic wars. The use of *yôm* in Gen 1 is suggestive of each of these orientations in ways that are not readily apparent. The chronological boundaries attached to *yôm* are not all that can or should be declared. *Yôm* also entails the exalted intent of God in such a creation week. The God who created everything has not only created it in an orderly manner, but has chosen to order creation in separate (though interrelated) spheres. Creation is not a monad, just as the God of creation is no monad. The unfolding revelation of each *yôm* reminds one that such matters are not open to historicizing speculations, but belong wholly to revelation; yet such usage is anticipatory by its very composition and also by its ultimate Sabbath-orientation.

If one were to limit the usage to a simple discussion of grammar and semantics, or historical reconstruction, the text would be stripped of its evocative and provocative theological significance of which *yôm* plays the overall pivotal role. The theological meaning and significance moves the discussion to deeper matters than simply “Is the day 24 hours or a vaguely long period of time?” or “Is the use of day simply a framework?” This study, therefore, provides what is believed to be a necessary move toward a theological interpretation that does not allow the contemporary debates to distract from the original canonical intent.

APPENDIX A:  
THEOLOGICAL POLEMIC IN GENESIS 1

The polemic of Gen 1 only serves as the meaning if one holds to some notion of the recreated historical origins of the literary unit rather than to its canonical setting. Once the canonical setting was established the origins of the literary unit were essentially hidden from view. The canonical setting, as a part of the Mosaic corpus of Israel's scripture, speaks more to the polemics by way of its significance than by meaning. While perhaps it could be argued that even a Mosaic purpose would serve a polemical meaning, it is less apparent in light of its placement as a cosmological accounting. The significance, however, would still hold that this unit serves as a polemic against other ANE cosmogonies, theogonies and as a divine temple-building account.

**Polemic against Other ANE Cosmogonies**

The discussion of ANE cosmogonies presented in CHAPTER I present a decidedly different perspective on the creation of the cosmos. The world of the ANE is a world often created in violence and by a struggle of the gods for dominance. In some sense as well there is primordial matter that is simply assumed to be present. The creation seems to also be for the benefit of the gods. The use of many of the common motifs in the ANE as found in Gen 1 "is an act of powerful subversion whereby the



narratives of [the] dominant culture are utilized to voice a claim alternative to the claims of the dominant cultural materials.”<sup>157</sup>

In contrast, Gen 1 speaks of a world created without struggle. To be sure, the Egyptian myths do describe creative effects by divine fiat, but they still include notions of struggle. These are completely absent from the account of Gen 1 and, it would seem, they are intentionally absent in order to give priority to the absolute supremacy of God over all else.

Karl Barth offers some help concerning the creation account of Gen 1 and its cosmogonic polemic. He argues against the notion that the creation of the days and particularly the separation of the day/light from night/darkness must be understood as opposing the ANE’s competing cosmogonies. Whereas, the wider ANE spoke of the marking of history as such, the Genesis account speaks of the differentiation of light from darkness, of day from night. “They are of value only for the man whose day, season and history are to consist in his participation in the separation of light from darkness, because the God who separated light from darkness has created him in and as His own image, and because he was born and is called to be God’s partner in this covenant.”<sup>158</sup> The intent of each particular account conveys a different reality that is to be found in the mind of the implied author and audience.

The cosmological polemic of Gen 1 also entails its use of “day” though any discussion of this obviously central literary feature is notably absent from Ernest Lucas’ discussion in the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* when discussing the

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<sup>157</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 36.

<sup>158</sup> Barth, *CD* 3/1:163-164.

polemics of Gen 1.<sup>159</sup> This is a glaring deficit. The literary use of *yôm* in Gen 1 points to a polemic for all of existence being originally organized around the cultic time expounded later in the history and writings of Israel. It points to the non-deific nature of creation itself and suggests instead that the existence of the cosmos is found in the ordering of one God, the God of Israel, who created all that exists and ordered it, blessing and sanctifying as part of that creation.

The absence of struggle in the account of Gen 1 also poses a challenge to the cosmogonies of the ANE. The HB knows of some cases where conflict and creation are joined in some sense, yet one does not find any such notion in Gen 1. Mark Smith actually believes the Scriptures propose that “cosmic might and conflict issuing in creation was perhaps the best-known model of creation in ancient Israel.”<sup>160</sup> David Tsumura, on the other hand, challenges this notion and argues persuasively that not only are the two motifs of creation and conflict almost never connected in Scripture, but they seldom even “coexist in the Ancient Near East mythologies.”<sup>161</sup> He posits that they are certainly not both present in Gen 1. It appears that one must make certain preconceived assumptions about the texts to arrive at direct correlations of the conflict/creation motifs in the various accounts of the ANE (or Scripture).

In favor of Tsumura’s proposal, Gerhard Hasel offers a brief, but poignant examination of Ugaritic texts which suggest a likely non-mythical reading paralleled to

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159 Lucas, “Cosmology,” *DOT:Pent*, 136-137.

160 Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 18.

161 David Tsumura, “The «Chaoskampf» Motif in Ugaritic and Hebrew Literatures,” *Le Royaume d’Ougarit de la Crete a l’Euphrate. Nouveaux axes de Recherche*. (ed. J.-M. Michaud. Proche-Orient et Litterature Ougaritique II. Sherbrooke: GGC, 2007), 475.

usage found in Gen 1 of similar terms:

UT 53:30 parallels *ym* (sea) and *thm* (deep waters) without mythological notions.

Anat III:22-23 contrasts the terms *šmm* (heavens) and *ars* (earth)

I Aqhat 42-43 simply “waters” from below

UT 51:iv:20 lower waters

All of these terms occur in the Ugaritic corpus without their being deified. It is apparently not essential that texts of the ANE (or at least Ugarit) speak of the creation in deific language. There is no indication that Ugaritic use was limited to personalization or deification of such concepts though such postulations are usually assumed by others with regard to these texts.<sup>162</sup> However, the use in Gen 1 makes certain that such created elements are made to function according to the divine will and do not have wills of their own.

None of this is to suggest that Gen 1 offers a completely unfamiliar perspective on creation, but simply to note that Gen 1’s vision of creation is of a different kind than the wider ANE. Bruce Waltke says as much when he writes, “Genesis 1 assumes the phenomenal worldview of the ancient Near East...and employs the literary form of ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies,” but never follows the actual theological motifs concerning the gods and creation as found in other ANE cosmogonies.<sup>163</sup>

### **Polemic against Other ANE Theogonies**

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<sup>162</sup> Hasel, “The Polemic Nature,” 93-94n17.

<sup>163</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 188, 197.

Not only does Gen 1 offer a polemic against other ANE cosmogonies, but also against ANE theogonies. In fact, there is no beginning for God in Gen 1. God's existence is taken for granted. Also, Gen 1 does not picture a world where gods are birthed or there is even more than one God even with the plural referents in connection with the creation of humans in God's image. "The Genesis account differs markedly from the other cosmogonies in its assumption of monotheism. There is a single Creator, and no other gods are involved in the creative acts, either as helpers or as opponents. There is no primeval goddess, so the model of procreation for the creative process has no place in the account. It is also notable that there is no theogony as a preface to cosmology. The existence of the Creator is assumed, and there is no attempt to explain it."<sup>164</sup>

Any reading of Gen 1 as a priestly addition to Genesis presupposes that the view of deity in the chapter would purposefully exclude naming other deities (such as *Yam*, *Shemesh* or *Yoreah*) because of a later monotheism that excluded other deities as real. However, this supposes that the monotheism of Genesis one is late in development, but what of the "early" use of "we/us" in 1:26-27? If a priestly writer was in fact trying to exclude any notion of other deities then it seems rather strange to include a poetic interlude by using the first person plural in this so-called "Priestly" account. The polemical nature of excluding the names of astral and terrestrial gods by means of other terms is not sufficient evidence to establish an historical setting for the composition of Gen 1. At most, it suggests that whoever the author was, they were intent on describing a world free of competing gods. Instead, humans are created in God's image and likeness without their being deified.

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<sup>164</sup> Lucas, "Cosmology," *DOT:Pent*, 135.

### **Polemic for Temple-Building**

Perhaps the most significant polemic found in Gen 1, and the chapters that follow, is the polemic for divine temple-building. This polemic is the least apparent to those of our era, but seems to have been prevalent throughout the ANE. There have been a number of books and articles written on this topic which have helpfully pointed out the temple-building polemic found in Gen 1.<sup>165</sup>

An initial question needing answered is, “In what sense is temple-building (once established as present in the text) to be regarded as a polemic?” The polemical nature of temple-building concerns the establishment of the king or god in their respective “house.” This motif is prominent throughout the ANE and is suggested by God’s fashioning of the universe for God’s presence to be manifest in the image and likeness of humans and in the sanctified day of rest. The work has been finished and God rests. “[When] Genesis indicates that God rested on the seventh day, it tells us that in this account of the functional origins of the cosmos, the cosmos is being portrayed as a temple.”<sup>166</sup> Thus the Sabbath points to a polemic for the supremacy of the God of Israel over all who dwells in sacred repose within the divine cosmic temple (see Job 9:8; Ps 104:1-3; Isa 40:22).

The creation of the cosmos “was theologically associated in the OT...with Yahweh’s kingship” and thus associated with the kingly duty of temple-building.<sup>167</sup> In like

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<sup>165</sup> Several recent examples include Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*; Richard S. Hess, “Bezalel and Oholiab: Spirit and creativity,” in *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (ed. David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner. Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 161-172; Smith, *Priestly Vision*; and Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3.”

<sup>166</sup> Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3,” 61.

<sup>167</sup> Allen, Psalms, 28.

manner, Richard Hess argues for a temple-building motif in the opening chapters of Genesis in a recent edited volume.<sup>168</sup> He offers his bibliographical support for the blessing of God's work at the end of Gen 1 to the exodus account of the building of the tabernacle:

“Exodus 39:43: Moses saw...behold...they had made it...so they had made...  
Moses  
blessed...  
Genesis 1:31; 2:3: God saw...he had made...behold...God blessed...created for  
making...  
Exodus 40:33: Moses finished his work  
Genesis 2:2: God finished on the seventh day his work  
Exodus 39:32: all the work...was finished  
Genesis 2:1: the heavens and the earth and everything in them was finished.”<sup>169</sup>

It seems that such language may offer a verbal connection, but it does not necessarily tie these passages together as temple-building passages. At most, it suggests only the verbal connections of two important sacred works that are finished. However, it still serves the overall nature of the creation of the universe as a temple represented in the activity of building a temple-like structure for the deity. It contributes to the wider argument for Gen 1 as a temple-building polemic.

Edwin Firmage does not mention the notion of temple-building in his arguments for the “priestly agenda” which he defends. Instead, he proposes the priestly purpose was to speak to sanctity or holiness with primary emphasis upon those created in God's image.<sup>170</sup> However, this appears to function best when the cosmos is conceived as a temple where the attendants have been blessed and the completion sanctified. The divine presence through the image-bearers thus presents a temple where the boundaries and claims are cosmic.

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<sup>168</sup> Hess, *Presence, Power and Promise*, 161-172.

<sup>169</sup> Hess, *Presence, Power and Promise*, 170, and see particularly 170n24.

<sup>170</sup> Edwin Firmage, “Genesis 1 and the Priestly Agenda,” *JSOT* 82 (1999): 97-114.



APPENDIX B:  
THE “DAY” IN PSALM 90:4 AND 2 PETER 3:8

When there is a discussion of the meaning of “day” in Gen 1 there will likely be mention made of the “day is like a thousand years.” There are two places in Scripture that speak to this issue:

*“For a thousand years in your sight is like  
yesterday once it has passed  
or a watch in the night.” (Ps 90:4)*

*“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as one day.” (2Pet 3:8)*

While many seem to suggest these passages may seem to offer something of an answer about the meaning of “day” in Gen 1, or at the least a potential point to consider, several things must be borne in mind.

First, neither of these passages is actually speaking about the “days” of creation. They are both actually concerned with judgment and mercy and the timing of God in relation to such. There is nothing in the text to suggest that one should read back into the “days” of Gen 1 the simile of “a thousand years.” Context is determinative of meaning as meaning is not inherent in words themselves. One is not free to read just any meaning of the established semantic range into any usage. The immediate context is determinative



for the actual meaning of a given term in that context.

Second, there is no formal syntactic equivalence between “day” (ἡμέρα or ἡμέρα) and “a thousand years” ( ἑκατὸν ἔτη or χίλιετηρίη ). They are in a comparative relationship intended to demonstrate the lack of specific calculation. The modifier (“as” ὡς or ὡς ) of “a thousand years” is not given in order to recalculate the length of time that might be involved in a “day.” It is to suggest that whatever God does will in the right time and may not seem right by human standards. It may even seem to be well beyond any reasonable sense of timing since no one would be able to endure the “thousand years,” but it facilitates the accomplishment of God’s plan anyways. When it is the right time God

With these two points in mind, it would seem felicitous to simply abandon any attempts to read these two passages back into Gen 1. Each passage would then best be read within its own respective context. They each have their specific contexts and intent which should be permitted to speak for themselves even as they are understood to speak to matters of “time” in relation to God and the world of creation.

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