
The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON VII : GENESIS 1:2-5 – PARAGRAPH ONE: THE FIRST DAY

“It goes without saying that, unaided, Moses could not have made an investigation of the creation and come to the conclusion that the events which he related in Genesis one actually happened as they are there recorded. But does it follow that God himself could not have revealed to Moses those events, and that God’s Spirit could not have superintended the recording of those events so that the final written product was an accurate account of what had actually transpired? ... Granted that man, inasmuch as he is himself something created, could not have investigated the creation on his own, we may nevertheless assert that God revealed the account to Moses who wrote it down. The account, there, is historical.” [Young, 24f]

‘Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever! Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise! You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.’ (Neh 9:5b, 6)

IS THERE A GAP BETWEEN GEN 1:1 AND 1:2? — Prior to getting to our text, the popularity of what has become known as the ‘*Gap Theory*’ or the ‘*Restitution Theory*’ demands notice. Time forbids an in-depth look at this theory but it would be improper not to recognize its importance to our understanding of the creation story. *It is what one author calls ‘an exegesis of desperation.’* [Kelly, 119] Multiple commentaries discuss this theory but for a thorough discussion one is directed towards the work by Weston Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled: A Critique of the Gap Theory* [Master Books, Green Forest AR; 1976; second printing 2022].

WHY A GAP THEORY? — Because of the claims of science over the last couple centuries that promotes an earth that is millions or billions of years old, various theories as to how to deal with the book of Genesis have been formulated. Some outright reject the authority of Scripture while others relegate the creation story as an ancient myth or merely poetry which is not to be taken literally. But some in an attempt to form a *supposed* harmonization between the Scripture and what is considered by some to be the facts of science answer the question by providing those missing years between Genesis 1:1 and 2. The first to do this was an outstanding evangelical theologian of Scotland, Dr. Thomas Chalmers, who lectured on the ‘gap creationism’ in 1814. It garnered strength and recognition through two sources, The Scofield Reference Bible (1917) and Arthur C. Custance’s work ‘*Without Form and Void*’ (1970). Adherents to this theory are some of the most widely known evangelical writers of the last century: A. C. Gaebelein, James M. Gray (president, Moody Bible Institute), A. W. Pink, G. Campbell Morgan, Henry Thiessen, Donald Grey Barnhouse, and Clarence Larkin, among others.

THE GAP THEORY IN A NUTSHELL — While nuances exist between theories, essentially the gap theory states there was a perfect creation in Gen 1:1 that was ruined by judgment and destruction (almost without exception attributed to the fall of Satan), the effects of which we see in v. 2. What we then see in Gen 1:3 is a *re-creation* of the heavens and earth with a ‘gap’ of an unknown amount of time between vv. 1 and 2. This ‘gap’ therefore allows for the millions and billions of years that the secular scientists believe to be the age of the earth, while also allowing for a literal 6-day *re-creation* that we see in the rest of Genesis 1. In the minds of the ‘gap’ theory advocates, this brings the Scriptures back into accord with science.

REASONS TO REJECT THE GAP THEORY — Keeping this to as minimal explanation as possible, there are reasons to reject this gap theory.

- Their strongest proof-text for this theory is Isa 45:18, *‘For thus says the Lord, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain [tōhû; see comments below], Who formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is no other.’* Thus, “if Gen 1:2 says the earth was ‘tōhû and bōhû’ then this cannot be the original creation” (or so they say). But the statement in Isaiah is used in opposition to the following phrase, the sense therefore being *‘God did not create the earth for the purpose of being a wasteland, He did not form it for the purpose of being desolate and waste, but formed it for the purpose of being inhabited.’*
- According to Mathews, the major obstacle to this theory is the syntactical construction of v. 2. This involves much Hebrew grammar and while I would agree with their assessments, those who want to believe in the Gap Theory can bring forth grammarians they say support their view. Whether they can or not is beyond the understanding of we who are not Hebrew scholars, but understand there are those who teach the Hebrew grammar prohibits a gap.
- One of the arguments for the gap theory is that a *‘creation of a chaos’* is a contradiction of terms; but as we will see below, all v. 2 is teaching is that in the beginning the world was desolate and uninhabitable. ***“This does not affirm that it was a confused mass, in the sense of being disordered or jumbled, but simply that it was not habitable, not ready for man. The same condition was also present at the close of the first day, except that at that time light had also been brought into existence.”*** [Young, 13] Also note v. 2 continues to speak of darkness on the deep and the Holy Spirit ‘fluttering’ over the waters. ***“Is this a description of a chaotic condition, a condition in which everything is topsy-turvy as the result of a judgment? To ask that question is to answer it. Despite all that has been said to the contrary, we would affirm that verse two describes a condition of things in which all was under the control of the Spirit of God.”*** [Young, 13] True, man could not live upon the earth at that time but for that matter the earth was not ready for man until day six. ***Even though it was not in a habitable condition, the earth was as God desired it to be at that time.***
- Significant is the clear Bible teaching throughout both the OT and NT that death and disintegration of the entire cosmos came through Adam’s sin, not Lucifer. Although Lucifer fell before Adam, Lucifer’s fall did not bring death into the rest of the created order because Adam was the representative figure (or ‘covenant head’) of the whole creation.
- God pronounces His creation ‘good’ seven times in Genesis 1. If the earth bore the scars of a previous wreckage including layers and layers of judgmental sediment laced with dead fossils, how could He have pronounced it all ‘very good’ (v. 31)?
- Exodus 20:11 states *‘for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that in them is...’* indicating all things were created during this week of primeval work.
- The restitution theory requires the sun to have shone for millions of years to make earthly life possible before its creation on day four.
- But the *coup de grâce* in my opinion is the description of Satan prior to his fall in Ezek 28:11-15, especially, *‘You were in Eden, the garden of God’* (Ezek 28:13, which continues

to describe his beauty and splendor). *Satan (or at that time he would have been known as Lucifer, Isa 14:12) therefore could not have fallen prior to the creation of the garden of Eden which could not have been before day three of creation.* If Lucifer was not a fallen creature until after the creation of the garden of Eden, there could have been no ‘judgment and destruction’ which caused what they call the ‘chaos’ in Gen 1:2.

From all appearances the gap theory has declined in acceptability over the last forty years. A lesson we can learn from it however is the futility of reading into Scripture what is not there in order to force a hasty compromise with anti-theistic thought.

The First Day:

‘² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day’ (Gen 1:2-5 NKJV)

EACH DAY IN GENESIS 1 IS A PARAGRAPH — Rabbi Cassuto divides his chapters by paragraphs; in the instance of the story of creation, each day is one paragraph in the Hebrew Bible. Rabbi Cassuto’s translation:

v. 2 – *As for the earth, it was without form or life, / and darkness was upon the face of the Deep; but the Spirit of God / was hovering over the face of the waters.*

v. 3 – *And God said,*

“Let there be light”; / and there was light.

v. 4 – *And God saw / that the light was good; and God separated / the light from the darkness.*

v. 5 – *And God called the light Day, / and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, / one day.*

v. 2 – ‘As for the earth,’ – EMPHASIS GIVEN / SOMETHING NEW ABOUT THE SUBJECT — Rabbi Cassuto goes into the Hebrew grammar to explain the Bible is giving emphasis to the subject (here, the earth) and to tell us something new about it. After giving examples of that use of grammar, he writes: ***“Here, too, the meaning is: ‘As for the earth alluded to in the first verse, I must tell you that at the beginning of its creation, it was without form or life,’ etc.*** In v. 1 the heavens come first, because in referring to the two parts of the universe together, the more important part must be given precedence; but when the Bible proceeds to describe the work of creation in detail, the earth is mentioned first, whereas the heavens are dealt with in the second paragraph.” [Cassuto, 21]

THREE PARALLEL CLAUSES — There are three parallel circumstantial clauses in v. 2 to describe the condition of the earth at its beginning:

*‘The earth was formless and empty’
‘darkness was over the surface of the deep’
‘the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters’*

“In Semitic languages a circumstantial clause is descriptive of a particular condition, and is therefore to be distinguished from a narrative clause. The narrative clause contains a finite verb, whereas the circumstantial clause does not. ***Verse two contains three circumstantial clauses, thus describing a three-fold set of circumstances or conditions which were in existence at a particular time.***” [Young, 8] Edward Young then continues to connect v. 2 to the finite verb in v. 3, the sense being, ‘*At the time when God said, “Let there be light,” a three-fold condition was in existence, namely, ...*’. We are not told how long this three-fold condition described in v. 2 had been in existence before the Lord said, ‘*Let there be light,*’ but from the absolute creation described in Gen 1:1 we may assume this three-fold condition had been in existence from the very beginning until the Lord spoke light to His creation. ***Verse two then states the condition of the earth as it was when God created it and until God began to form from it the present world. Verse two is connected to verse three, not verse one.***

‘it was without form or life,’ — The two words by themselves have the basic meanings of ‘*wasteland, wilderness, desolation*’ (tōhû) and ‘*nothingness, emptiness*’ (bōhû). The use of these two words together are found elsewhere in the OT only in Jer 4:23 (‘*I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form [tōhû], and void [bōhû]; and the heavens, they had no light.*’; exact phrase) and Isa 34:11 (‘*And He shall stretch out over it the line of confusion [tōhû] and the stones of emptiness.*’ [bōhû]). But Rabbi Cassuto warns against merely looking at the etymology of the two component words and suggests, as in chemistry, ‘a compound may be found to possess qualities absent from its constituent elements.’ He also suggests the passages in Jeremiah and Isaiah ‘throws no light on the meaning since they are only allusions without further explanations to our own passage.’ The Rabbi believes the sense of the idiom can only be determined from the context:

“Just as the potter, when he wishes to fashion a beautiful vessel, takes first of all a lump of clay, and places it upon his wheel in order to mould it according to his wish, so the Creator first prepared for Himself the raw material of the universe with a view to giving it afterwards order and life. In this chaos of unformed matter, the heaviest materials were naturally at the bottom, and the waters, which were the lightest, floated on top. This apart, the whole material was an undifferentiated, unorganized, confused and lifeless agglomeration. It is this terrestrial state that is called tōhû and bōhû. *As for the earth, it was tōhû and bōhû*, that is to say, the unformed material from which the earth was to be formed was at the beginning of its creation in a state of tōhû and bōhû, to wit, water above and solid matter beneath, and the whole a chaotic mass, without order or life.” [Cassuto, 23]

Therefore originally the earth was tōhû and bōhû, meaning ‘a wasteland, wilderness, desolate’ and ‘empty.’ The first four days of creation corrected the earth from being tōhû by making the ‘uninhabitable’ productive; and days five and six corrected the earth from being bōhû by filling the ‘uninhabited’ earth.

‘and darkness’ — This is another evocative word in the Hebrew. “The physical universe, though created, was as yet neither formed nor energized, and light is a form of energy. The absence of physical light means darkness, just as the absence of form and inhabitants means a universe in elemental form, not yet completed. No evil is implied in either case, merely incompleteness.” [Morris, 50] ***In other ancient cosmologies the darkness was a primordial threat or a menacing evil, but here it is all part of creation with God demonstrating His authority over it.*** “But whereas darkness is opaque to man, it is transparent to God (Ps 139:12). Indeed God can veil himself in darkness at moments of great revelation (Deut 4:11; 5:23; Ps 18:12). There is therefore an ambiguity in this reference to darkness covering the deep. ***Prima facie, it is just another***

description of the terrible primeval waste, but it could hint at the hidden presence of God waiting to reveal himself.” [Wenham, 1:16]

‘was upon the face of the Deep;’ — ‘Face’ is primarily used as and translated ‘presence;’ e.g., ‘in the face of danger.’ Darkness was thus not on the ‘surface’ of the deep but ‘presence’ of the deep; i.e., **where the ‘deep’ was, there was also darkness.** Moses continues with ‘the deep’ as if the reader already knew that a ‘deep’ existed in the world, despite the fact that it had not been mentioned in our section. We may infer that the notion of the ‘deep’ was included, in the minds of the ancient Israelites, in that of the tōhû and bōhû just previously mentioned.

‘Deep’ is used 36 times in the OT. It can threaten life by drowning (Exod 15:8) or assure the continuance of life in the dry climate of the Near East (Gen 49:25; Deut 8:7). Later we will see the ‘deep’ is to be identified with the world-ocean and thus it was possible for the sentence to conclude with the words ‘upon the face of the waters’ although no mention had yet been made of the waters. The word occurs a number of times as a synonym for the sea; e.g., ‘Are You not the One who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep’ (Isa 51:10).

Since the darkness which was spread over everything was ‘upon the face of the deep,’ it follows that the water of the deep formed the uppermost layer and in direct contact with the surrounding darkness. This agrees with the statement in the Psalms, ‘You who laid the foundations of the earth, so that it should not be moved forever, You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.’ (Ps 104:5, 6).

ANOTHER INSTANCE OF POLEMIC WRITING — In the Pentateuch t^hôm [deep] denotes simply the primeval world-ocean, purely a physical concept. It is matter, without personality or autonomy. It was not eternal but was created by the will of God, ready to receive whatever form its Maker would be pleased to fashion it. Contrast that with the Akkadian *Tiamat*, goddess of the primeval world-ocean who had existed from time immemorial and was the mighty foe of the Creative God. [Cassuto, 23f] “Subtly but implicitly, the Genesis creation account serves as a polemic against the ancient Near Eastern myths. Whereas the forces of nature are often deities in the ancient Near Eastern creation myths, here all derive from and are subject to God’s word. Though creation is not part of God’s being, all creation is utterly dependent on God for its subsistence and sustenance (cf. Neh. 9:6; Acts 17:25, 28).” [Waltke, 60]

‘but the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.’ — Cassuto says this is written in an adversative sense: ‘Although the earth was without form or life, and all was steeped in darkness, yet above the unformed matter hovered the Spirit of God, the source of light and life...’. **The Spirit alone is moving, animated, while the elements of the lifeless earth remain static, passive, awaiting their command.**

‘the Spirit of God’ – rûach ’elōhîm — As with the NT word πνεῦμα (pneuma), rûach can denote *breath, wind, or spirit*; the meaning determined by its context. Rabbi Cassuto states the Talmud believes it to be an actual wind, moving air, created by the Lord on the first day. He states many commentators likewise understand the word to signify a powerful wind that came to separate the upper waters from the lower waters, or the lower waters from the dry land. This would therefore be a simple description of the primeval chaos, and some translations render this as ‘a mighty wind swept over the surface of the waters’ or ‘God’s wind, a wind from God.’ (cp. New English Bible [NEB], Common English Bible [CEB], New American Bible, Rev. Ed. [NABRE], New Revised Standard [NRSV]). But the majority of commentators and versions translate it as

‘*Spirit of God.*’ for the following reasons:

- Rabbi Cassuto: “The meaning of [rûach ’elōhîm] in our verse is the same as that of [rûach ’El, ‘*Spirit of God*’] in Job 33:4: ‘*The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*’” [Cassuto, 24]
- Others comment that had Moses desired to speak of a ‘mighty wind,’ he would have employed the common expression rûach g^dôlâh as found in ‘*and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness...*’ (Job 1:19), and ‘*But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea...*’ (Jonah 1:4).
- Another reason to reject ‘*a mighty wind*’ is that this reduces the word ’elōhîm to a superlative which, while not impossible, seems unlikely since in every other usage in this chapter it refer to God.
- In addition to that, the participle used is ‘*hovering, fluttering,*’ a term not used to describe a blowing wind.
- Lastly, the mention of a mighty wind at this point would be out of place. This verse describes an earth yet uninhabitable by man; what would be added by mentioning a mighty wind? On the other hand, the traditional translation ‘*Spirit of God*’ would show that while the earth was uninhabitable, it was all under the control of the Holy Spirit.

‘was hovering’ — The expression has the sense of ‘*to move, to hover, to fly to and fro, to flutter*’ and is used as such in Deut 32:11, ‘*As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings...*’. (Deut 32:11 NKJV; note ‘*that flutters over its young,*’ ESV). So in Deuteronomy, “that just as the young eaglets, which are not yet capable of fending for themselves, are unable by their own efforts to subsist and grow strong and become fully-grown eagles, and only the care of their parents, who hover over them, enables them to survive and develop, so, too, in the case of the earth, which was still an unformed, lifeless mass, the paternal care of the Divine Spirit, which hovered over it, assured its future [growth] and life.” [Cassuto, 25]

Henry Morris looks at this from an engineer’s perspective: “[T]he idea seems to be mainly that of a rapid back and forth motion. In modern scientific terminology, the best translation would probably be ‘vibrated.’ If the universe is to be energized, there must be an Energizer. If it is to be set in motion, there must be a Prime Mover.... Energy cannot create itself. It is most appropriate that the first impartation of energy to the universe is described as the ‘vibrating’ movement of the Spirit of God Himself.” [Morris, 52]

AGAIN, A POLEMIC EMPHASIS — Some would render this ‘brooding,’ as a bird brooding over its eggs. This is based on a root word from the Syriac. The Canaanite myths speak of the idea of a world-egg that has existed since the days of creation, power from on high ‘brooded’ over it, and from it the world was hatched. ***But the Hebrew word used here never has the sense of ‘brooding’ nor is there any implied reference to any ‘world-egg.’ Moses again could have various myths in mind as he wrote.***

‘over the face of the waters.’ — These waters covered everything. This phrase in the second half of the verse corresponds to the phrase in the first half, ‘*upon the face of the deep.*’ Hebrew poetry reflect the poetic tradition concerning the waters of the primordial deep:

'When He prepared the heavens, I was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep'
(Prov 8:27)

'He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness.' (Job 26:10)

v. 3 – 'And God said,' — This is the first of ten usages of the formula 'God said' (vv. 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29). ***That God speaks throughout the OT is not unusual but here it is a divine word of command that brings into existence what it expresses. His word is creative and effective.***

'Let there be light;' — ***This is the first record of God speaking in the Bible, and light is the first of the Creator's works. The Word of God brings light! The Father is the source of all things (v. 1), the Spirit is the energizer of all things (v. 2), and the Word the Revealer of all things (v. 3).*** This initial act in creation is picked up by our NT writers as a picture of salvation:

'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' (2 Cor 4:6)

Jesus Christ, the living Word of God (John 1:1, 14) is the *'light of the world'* (John 8:12) and *'in Him is no darkness at all'* (1 John 1:5).

Light symbolizes life and blessings of various sorts (cf. Ps 19:1-6; 27:1; 49:19; 97:11). Since the sun is not created until day 4, the emphasis here is that God is the ultimate source of light. The idea of light having existence independent of the sun is not unique to this passage (Rev 22:5).

'and there was light.' — The first of seven fulfillment formulas (vv. 3, 7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30). This formal repetition assumes its tersest form (fiat: *'let there be light;'* execution: *'and there was light'*) to show the precision and swiftness with which the injunction was carried out: ***as He commanded, and as soon as He commanded.***

THIS 'LIGHT' IS A MYSTERY — This source of this light is a mystery, something which the Lord has been pleased to keep hidden. There has been no consensus amongst any Rabbinical or Christian theologians throughout the centuries. *'The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.'* (Deut 29:29) But while the Lord has kept hidden the source and type of light spoken of in v. 3, there are things which we can know about it:

- ***It was not the light of the sun, moon nor stars*** since these are not created until day 4
- ***This light was unidirectional*** since the earth, even in its initial primordial state was apparently rotating, producing morning and evening (v. 5)
- ***That the Lord can produce light without the sun or moon is evident elsewhere in the Scriptures:*** *'The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.'* (Rev 21:23)
- ***The light was not God Himself*** because God was present before there was light.

Anything and everything else that may be said about this light is conjecture. "Therefore the Lord by the very order of creation, bears witness that he holds in his hand the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon." [Calvin, 76]

v. 4 – ‘And God saw that the light was good;’ — This optimistic formula that occurs seven times in the section (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). The light was very pleasant and delightful, useful and beneficial, of great service. All that God has made is good. God is the great Artist, here admiring His handiwork. **He is not just Creator and Landlord but also the Judge who evaluates the consequences of His creative word.** The light is declared good because it accomplishes its purpose of dispelling the darkness that had characterized the earth. **“Here God is introduced by Moses as surveying his work, that he might take pleasure in it. But he does it for our sake, to teach us that God has made nothing without a certain reason and design. And we ought not so to understand the words of Moses as if God did not know that his work was good, till it was finished. But the meaning of the passage is, that the work, such as we now see it, was approved by God. Therefore nothing remains for us, but to acquiesce in this judgment of God.”** [Calvin, 77]

MATTER IS NOT INHERENTLY EVIL — Note this entire chapter speaks against several errors such as paganism (primal matter was threatening), an ascetic lifestyle (predicated upon the notion of an evil body or material world), or the ancient Gnosticism (that taught the material world was inherently evil). But the Lord confirms all of His created order is ‘good,’ summing it up in 1:31 as being ‘very good.’ **There is no place in Hebrew thought for the material being evil in itself.**

IS DARKNESS ‘NOT GOOD’? — Not all the commentators agree but Rabbi Cassuto observes God specifically states it was the *light* that was good. “It is the light that God created; the darkness is only the absence of light, and therefore not good.” [Cassuto, 26; see also Wenham, 1:18] (Note someone might bring forth the word of Isaiah, ‘*I form the light and create darkness,*’ Isa 45:7, but Rabbi Cassuto states this is directed against the dualistic doctrine of the Persians.) Others argue the Lord declares all to be good in v. 31.

‘and God separated the light from the darkness.’ — “It was not the Creator’s intention that there should be perpetual light and no darkness at all, but that the light and the darkness should operate consecutively for given periods and in unchanging order. Consequently, God divided the one from the other, that is, He separated their respective spheres of activity.” [Cassuto, 26] “The creation of light, however, was no annihilation of darkness, no transformation of the dark material of the world into pure light, but a separation of the light from the primary matter, a separation which established and determined that interchange of light and darkness, which produces the distinction between day and night.” [Keil, 50] **Separation is one of the central ideas of this chapter. Three acts of separation are accomplished in creation: on day 1 light separates day and night (vv. 3, 4); on day 2 the ‘firmament’ separates the upper and lower waters (vv. 6, 7), and on day 3 the waters are collected into seas, thus separating the waters from dry land (vv. 9, 10).** Elsewhere separation almost becomes synonymous with divine election (Lev 20:24; Num 8:14; Deut 4:41; 10:8; 1 Kings 8:53).

v. 5 – ‘And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. — God names the heavens, the earth, the seas, and day and night. In the OT to name something is to assert sovereignty over it; cf. 2:20; 2 Kings 23:34; 24:17. Giving names also defines roles, and the naming of day and night is here an aspect of separating darkness and light. The Lord will later extend this divine prerogative to the first man, who names the animals and his companion ‘woman’ (2:19, 23; 3:20).

‘And there was evening and there was morning, one day.’ — Young’s Literal Translation: ‘*and there is an evening, and there is a morning — day one.*’ Derek Kidner: ‘*evening came and*

morning came — day one.’ This same phrase is repeated for all the days of creation, the only difference being the number of the day in question. When day-time had passed, the period allotted to darkness returned (and there was evening), and when night-time came to an end, the light held sway a second time (and there was morning), and this completed the first calendar day (one day), which had begun with the creation of light.

‘the first day’ — The literal rendering is ‘*one day*’ rather than ‘*the first day*’ (the use of cardinal instead of ordinal numbers, *cardinal* = a number denoting quantity; *ordinal* = relating to a thing’s position in a series). **‘First’ implies precedence over another in number or grading when more than one is in existence, and that is not the emphasis given here by Moses.** Thus many times throughout the OT the literal Hebrew is ‘*on one of the month*’ which we would render ‘*on the first of the month;*’ ‘*on one of the week*’ which we would render ‘*on the first day of the week;*’ and ‘*The name of the first [literally, one] is Pishon.*’ (Gen 2:11)

DOES ‘EVENING – MORNING’ ALWAYS DEFINE THE HEBREW DAY? — It is commonly understood the Hebrew day starts in the evening and continues until the next evening. But it should be noted there are Biblical exceptions to this generality, with the next day beginning with the sunrise:

‘And the people came to Bethel and sat there till evening before God ... And the next day the people rose early...’ (Judges 21:2, 4 ESV)

‘So they made their father drink wine that night... It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger...’. (Gen 19:33, 34)

‘If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.’ (1 Sam 19:11)

‘So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night.... tomorrow you and your sons will be with me.’ (1 Sam 28:8, 19)

Rabbi Cassuto also notes verses which relate to Israel’s ritual holy days as the evening being the day before the next day:

‘In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread...’ (Exod 12:18) The Jewish Passover begins on the 15th of the month Nisan, but Moses states the evening preceding the 15th day as the 14th day.

‘It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.’ (Lev 23:32) The same is true of the Day of Atonement which begins the 10th day of the month Tishrei, thus the evening before the tenth is called the ninth of the month.

Rabbi Cassuto continues to explain it was normal to consider a day starting at morning, especially in agrarian cultures where no work was typically done during the night. So for the civil life the new day started at sunrise but in regards to festivals and appointed holy times, the observance was to start on the evening of the preceding day. [Cassuto, 28ff]

PRACTICAL DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS — “The opening verses of the Bible are simply astounding! Such seemingly simple sentences, which we often take for granted, are loaded with grand biblical truths. These are plain statements that refute much of today’s false teaching. Firstly, **they deny atheism**, for the one God created everything. Secondly, **they deny pantheism** (the belief

that a god is in all things and all people), for God is transcendent, above and beyond creation. Thirdly, **they deny polytheism**, for only one God made the universe. Fourthly, **they deny humanism**, for God, and not man, is on the throne of the universe. Fifthly, **they deny evolution**, because man did not develop from the primordial soup, but he was specially created by the one true God. And, frankly, that is why there is meaning to life. That is why those who believe in God can say that our chief reason for existence is to glorify him and enjoy him for ever. If this God is the Creator, then we are to live for his glory! As the apostle John declares, *‘Worthy are you, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for you created all things, and because of your will they existed, and were created’* (Rev 4:11).” [Currid, 62]