
The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON IX : GENESIS 1:9-13 – PARAGRAPH THREE: THE THIRD DAY

“The narrative moves from the creation of light by which the works of God are seen, through heaven, the throne of God, to earth, the abode of man. With the establishment of land and sea the basic parameters of human existence in time and space are complete. But unlike the works of the first two days, the work of the third involved no new creation, but more an organization of existing material.” [Wehham, 1:20]

‘He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved. You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.’ (Ps 104:5-7 ESV)

‘For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water’ (2 Pet 3:5)

The Third Day:

‘⁹ Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. ¹⁰ And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. ¹² And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ So the evening and the morning were the third day.’ (Gen 1:9-13 NKJV)

Rabbi Cassuto’s translation:

v. 9 – And God said,

“Let the waters be gathered together / under the heavens into one place, / and let the dry land appear.”

And it was so.

v. 10 – And God called the dry land Earth, / and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas.

And God saw that it was good.

v. 11 – And God said,

“Let the earth put forth vegetation, / plants yielding seed, [and] fruit trees bearing fruit each according to its kind, / in which is their seed, upon the earth.”

And it was so.

v. 12 – And the earth brought forth vegetation, / plants yielding seed according to their own kinds,

and trees bearing fruit / in which is their seed, each according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good.

v. 13 – And there was evening and there was morning, / a third day.

v. 9 – ‘And God said, “Let the waters be gathered together under the heavens into one place, and let the dry land appear.”’ — The waters which were still covering everything under the heavens were to be concentrated in one place, and as a result, the solid matter hidden beneath them would be revealed in the remaining areas. ***This is the third act of separation: light / darkness, upper / lower waters, dry land / lower waters.***

‘into one place’ — That is, *one place* in contradistinction to *every place*, which the waters had previously occupied. Perhaps the Scripture writer intended a play on the word *māqôm* (‘*place*’ in v. 9) and *miq^vvēh* (‘*the gathering together, pool*’ in v. 10); that is, the *place* became a *pool*. While this may speak of a single world-ocean, it does not demand that interpretation; note in v. 10 there is the mention of ‘*seas*,’ plural (but see below).

‘And it was so.’ — As explained in the last lesson, the meaning is ‘*according to the word of God so it was, and so remains forever.*’ “***The magnitude of the work to be accomplished baffles the imagination and yet, in the simple words, ‘and it was so’, the accomplishment is recorded. Nothing is said about the means or method of accomplishment that we may concentrate in wonder and adoration upon him who alone can perform such a marvel.***” [Young, 91]

THE ANCIENT MYTHS — As we have seen in previous lessons, Moses’ (inspired) account of creation is a direct attack on the prevailing myths of his age. The peoples of the east told many stories about the battle waged by one of the gods against the deity of the sea. Among these myths are from Mesopotamia, the Canaanites and the Ugarites. ***There are even ancient poetic traditions among the Rabbinic literature of the Israelites, one telling of Rahab, the lord of the sea, who opposed the will of God and would not confine his waters within the given limits until the Lord subdued him and slew him. Remnants of these ancient poems may still be found scattered throughout Scripture:***

‘Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?’ (Isa 51:9, 10 ESV)

‘You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them. You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.’ (Psalm 89:9, 10 ESV)

‘God will not turn back his anger; beneath him bowed the helpers of Rahab.’ (Job 9:13 ESV)

‘He has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astounded at his rebuke. By his power he stilled the sea; by his understanding he shattered Rahab.’ (Job 26:10-12 ESV)

But while the poetic writers may have used ancient poetic traditions, note Moses avoided using such traditions. “[T]he Torah, which uses a simple prose style as the vehicle of its teachings, without undue embellishment of poetic metaphors and figures of speech, not only meticulously avoided making any use whatsoever of this legendary poetic material, which, if embodied in a book of prose, might have been understood literally by the reader, but it even voiced a kind of *protest* against these myths whose pagan origin was still discernible, and more particularly against the concepts of the heathens themselves.” [Cassuto, 39]

v. 10 – ‘And God called the dry land Earth,’ — Since the earth then received the form that it has retained to this day, it became entitled to the name by which it is still called today. *“Because God said that he gathered the waters ‘together unto one place,’ creation scientists believe that the land would also have been in one place. What I mean by this is the possibility that there was actually only one continent originally – one major land mass on the earth when it was first made.... If there was only one continent originally, then something has obviously happened to break up this one land mass to form all the various continents that exist today. This likely happened during the catastrophic event of Noah’s Flood.”* [Ham, 51f]

‘and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas.’ — The seas likewise acquired at that time the aspect with which we are familiar; hence God gave it the name appropriate to it. As touched upon above, the plural may or may not refer to a single world-ocean. Ken Ham (among others) believe this to be speaking of multiple seas (what we might call today ‘oceans’) but Rabbi Cassuto states ‘seas’ is a poetic plural since the waters were all gathered into one great sea (perhaps it is a play on words: mayim = ‘waters’, yammîm = ‘seas’). Whether it was multiple seas or one great world-ocean, they were, of course, not the same as our present seas since the antediluvian arrangement of continental and marine areas was completely changed at the time of the Flood. Note this is also the last time in the creation context that God will name anything. He continues to create, but he ceases to name. That responsibility will be delegated to man once he arrives on the scene. [Hamilton, 1:125]

‘And God saw that it was good’ — Now that the work of the water was completed and the world had assumed its proper tripartite form of heaven, earth and sea, it is possible to declare *‘that it was good.’*

v. 11 – ‘And God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, [and] fruit trees bearing fruit each according to its kind,”’ — On the selfsame day, as soon as the inanimate matter, which serves as a foundation for plant-life, had been set in order, there were created, without delay, the various kinds of vegetation. *For the first time, the earth becomes productive. Also for the first time God’s creative decree is indirect (also 1:20, 24). The land is commanded to produce vegetation; not that the land produces vegetation but God enables the land to do so by his creative word. “When it is stated that the earth ‘produced’ these plants, this does not mean that the power for this lay within the earth itself. It merely indicates that the divine will caused plants to sprout forth from the earth.”* [Kelly, 240; quoting Aalders, *Genesis vol 1*, 63]

LIFE COMES FROM GOD ALONE — “With his word God empowers the earth to bring forth plants, and with this fact a certain progress in the order of statement may be noted. Up to this point all had been produced by God’s creative word, and all that was produced was inorganic; light, firmament, gathering of waters, dry land. With God’s command to the earth, however, there comes into existence objects that are organic, and yet do not move about. *The language of verse eleven is closely guarded, for it precludes the idea that life can originate apart from God or that the earth of itself can produce life. The earth upon which man is to live is one that is hospitable to him, providing him with seed-bearing plants and fruit-bearing trees, but it is only the creative command of God which makes this possible.*” [Young, 91f]

ARE THERE TWO OR THREE CLASSIFICATIONS? – ‘put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, fruit trees — It is difficult to differentiate between the terms in this verse; several of those I am studying separate these into three categories:

	Carl Friedrich Keil	Henry M. Morris	B. H. Carroll
vegetation [deshe’]	<i>lit., ‘green’; the grass, the young tender green which shoots up after rain and covers the meadows and downs</i>	<i>includes all spreading ground-covering vegetation</i>	<i>simple organisms, all blade, and propagated by division of its part</i>
plants yielding seed [‘ēsey]	<i>herbs, plants; a generic term for all herbaceous plants, corn, vegetables, and other plants by which seed-pods are formed</i>	<i>‘herbs, plants,’ including all bushes and shrubs</i>	<i>complex, having a pithy stalk, and propagated by its seed</i>
fruit trees [‘ēts]	<i>not only fruit-trees but all trees and shrubs, bearing fruit in which there is a seed according to its kind, i.e., fruit with kernels</i>	<i>all large woody plants, including fruit-bearing trees</i>	<i>more complex, having a stem of wood, so being able to rise above the ground and bearing fruit which encloses the seed for propagation</i>

Note ‘fruit trees’ include shade-trees, for these also bear fruit although it is not edible.

Others (e.g., Cassuto, Wenham, Kelly, Currid, Hamilton, Ross) separate these into two types of vegetation with the first term being an over-all inclusive term. For example, Cassuto says this about the two-fold classification: deshe’ = grass, ‘ēsey = herbs, plants, and ‘ēts = trees. The noun deshe’ and the verb tadshē’ which is derived from it, refers to vegetation generally, and the clause [‘let the earth put forth vegetation’] means ‘Let the earth be covered with a fresh green mantle of verdure.’ Thereafter two categories of vegetation are distinguished: ‘ēsey (‘plants’) and ‘ēts (‘trees’), the distinction being whether the seed was inside a fruit or not. In support of his comments Cassuto notes that in vv. 29,30 only two categories, ‘plants’ and ‘trees,’ are mentioned.

Wenham also believes there to be only two types of vegetation, although his reasons are different than Cassuto. To Wenham, deshe’ typically refers to only ‘grass’ but here it appears to be a broader term that includes both ‘plants’ and ‘trees.’ In support of this, both ‘plants’ and ‘trees’ are qualified as self-propagating, ‘seed-bearing,’ ‘bearing fruit,’ whereas deshe’ (‘grass’) has no such qualification. He also notes ‘plants’ and ‘trees’ are mentioned in vv. 29, 30 but not ‘grass.’ I am no Hebraist nor would I consider myself fit to judge the scholarship of Gordon Wenham but Cassuto’s explanation makes more sense. Would his explanation infer ‘grass’ is not self-propagating? Grasses produce seeds; how does this fit within his explanation?

THE ‘APPEARANCE OF AGE’ — Also significant is that these plants were made not as seeds but as full-grown plants whose seed was in themselves. This speaks to what some call the ‘appearance of age.’ *“The concept of creation of apparent age does not, of course, suggest a divine deception, but is a necessary accompaniment of genuine creation. The processes operating in Creation Week were not the processes of the present era, but were processes of ‘creating and making,’ and are thus not commensurate with present processes at all. Adam was created as a full-grown man, the trees were created as full-grown trees, and the whole universe was made as a functioning entity, complete and fully developed, right from the beginning. The*

‘apparent age’ that might be calculated in terms of present processes would undoubtedly be vastly different from the ‘true age’ as revealed by the Creator.” [Morris, 63]

‘kind’ — The expression ‘kind’ [l^omînô] refers to the trees alone, but in v. 12 (where the form is l^omînêhû) it is applied to the plants as well. The phrase ‘after his kind’ occurs ten times in Genesis 1. Whatever the exact meaning of the Hebrew word, it does indicate the limitations of variation. The modern understanding of the complexities of DNA and the genetic code contained therein reinforce the Biblical teaching of the stability of kinds. While there may be a great deal of variation *within* a kind, it precludes the evolution of *new* kinds! ***“The word [mîn, ‘kind’] in verse eleven, whatever its etymology, is a general term and is not the equivalent of our ‘species’, as this word is technically employed. It does not rule out the production of freaks or the possibility of hybrids. It means merely that the producer will beget what is essentially the same as itself. Hence, the term clearly rules out the possibility of one ‘kind’ reproducing anything that is essentially different from itself.... The term would exclude the idea that man could have evolved from lower forms of life, from that which was not man. It would also exclude the idea that animal life came from plant life or that a fish might ever change into something essentially different from itself. Hence, caution must be exercised by those who classify animal and plant life.”*** [Young, 92] ***Note the term ‘kind’ is never used of humanity, showing that we are a unique order of creation. Furthermore, ethnic distinctions are incidental to the commonality of the human family.*** [Mathews, 1:153] ‘And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings’ (Acts 17:26) “The different species of plant and animal life again bear testimony to God’s creative plan. The implication, though not stated, is clear: what God has distinguished and created distinct, man ought not to confuse. Order, not chaos, is the hallmark of God’s activity.... Things are they way they are because God made it so, and man and women should accept his decree.” [Wenham, 1:21]

‘yielding seed ... in which is their seed’ — In the three verses (v. 11, 12, 29) the stem zera‘ (‘seed, to yield seed’) occurs no less than ten times. The Torah emphasizes and re-emphasizes, both here and in the next verse, and again in v. 29, the matter of the seed and the producing of seed, as though it wished to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that ***the plants that were created on the third day were capable of reproducing themselves after their likeness by means of the seed.***

CONTRA EVOLUTION — Several items here worth noting in contradistinction from the evolution hypothesis. Genesis states vegetation was formed before the creation of any animal life, but the evolution model has marine animals evolving hundreds of millions of years before fruit trees and other higher plants. Furthermore, many plants require pollination by insects but insects were not created until day 6, which argues against the ‘days’ being long ages rather than 24-hour days.

‘Upon the earth’ — to continue existing on the earth.

‘And it was so.’ — It was so instantly, in accordance with God’s fiat, and remains so unto this day. Thus were different species of plants perpetuated through the seed. This is a general statement; the details follow in the next verse.

v. 12 – ‘And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, according to its kind.’ — Here as before, the Divine command is repeated in terms similar to, but not identical with, those of the command itself. The changes between the Divine fiat (v. 11) and its execution (v. 12) are mostly outward form only; e.g., ‘*and trees*’ is substituted for ‘*trees.*’ But some of the differences are for clarification: the use of the word *vatôtsē* (‘*and [the earth] brought forth, produced*’) instead of *tadshē* (‘*let [the earth] be covered with verdure*’) indicates that the intention of the command was that the vegetation should be produced by germination from the ground. So, too, from the repetition of the word *l°mînēhû* (‘*after its kind*’), which is used to qualify ‘*herb*’ as well, we infer that it was the Divine intention that the latter should connote all kinds of plants.

PLANTS WITHOUT THE SUN — It must be stressed that the plants and trees did not have nor did they need the light of the sun. “*Calvin’s beautiful statement probably brings out the basic reason, ‘in order that we might learn to refer all things to him, he did not then make use of the sun or moon.’ That the earth constantly produces for the benefit of man is not to be ascribed to ‘nature’ but goes back to the creative Word of God.*” [Young, 93]

‘And God saw that it was good.’ — i.e., speaking of the vegetation. Two works were performed on the third day, the separation of the sea from the dry land and the creation of plants; hence the formula ‘*that it was good*’ is uttered twice on this day.

v. 13 – ‘And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.’ — Same formula as used on the previous days. “*Even though it may challenge our minds to visualize the lands and seas, and all plants, being formed in one literal day, that is exactly what the Bible says! We are not justified at all either in questioning God’s power to do this or His veracity in telling us that He did!*” [Morris, 64]