
The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XV : GENESIS 2:5-7 – FIRST PARAGRAPH: CREATION OF MAN

“God’s creative work is highly anthropomorphic in this chapter. He is depicted as an artisan who sculpts the man and beasts (vv. 7-8, 19) and a builder who constructs the first woman (v. 22). Such personal attention and care in the making of the first human is comparable to the contemplation of God in 1:26, ‘Let us make man...’.” [Mathews, 1:196]

‘The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.’ (Job 33:4)

‘Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it.’ (Isa 42:5)

‘The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.’ (1 Cor 15:47)

Creation of Man:

⁵ before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; ⁶ but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. ⁷ And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.’ (Gen 2:5-7 NKJV)

‘HUMBLE US, O OUR GOD’ — These are humbling verses, proving yet again we do not have all the answers even after centuries of scholarship and studies. Some of the questions may divide between orthodoxy and error (e.g., ‘does chapter 2 contradict chapter 1?’) while others are simply those unanswered issues which always occur when we study texts that are over three millennia old (e.g., ‘was it a “mist” that arose from the earth or a “fresh-water spring”?’). **But through it all, we have an incredibly magnificent God that sits above all our unanswered questions.**

DOES 2:5-7 CONTRADICT 1:11-12? — Prior to seeing what our verses teach, it may be best to address the controversy contained therein. Verses 2:5-7 contains one of the supposed ‘contradictions’ those advocating for the Documentary Hypothesis use to ‘prove’ the creation story of 1:1-2:3 contradicts 2:4-3:24 (see lesson 14). What is the issue, and is there a Scriptural response?

WE CHOOSE WHAT WE WANT TO BELIEVE — As I studied the supposed contradiction, I noticed there is a valid response to their objection but it is not a solid, ‘how could you miss this?’ type of response. What it comes down to is this: ‘Does one wish to show the Word of God is in error and contradicts itself, searching for any and all areas which are hard to understand at first glance; or does one choose to believe the Word of God is the inspired, infallible words of a holy God and the supposed ‘contradictions’ has more to do with one’s understanding of a passage rather than a true error?’ I do believe there to be a strong response to their accusations (given below) but I am also not foolish enough to believe this explanation will stop all their protestations. **Unbelief is a moral issue, not an intellectual issue.**

WHY DO THEY SAY THERE IS A CONTRADICTION? — In the creation narrative of chapter one, it says the following (with the Hebrew words used):

‘Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass [deshe’], the herb [‘ēsey] that yields seed, and the fruit tree [‘ēts] that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass [deshe’], the herb [‘ēsey] that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree [‘ēts] that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.’ (Gen 1:11, 12 NKJV)

Then as we consider 2:5 we see the repetition of one of those words used in 1:11, 12:

‘This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant [sīach] of the field was in the earth and before any herb [‘ēsey] of the field had grown. For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.’ (Gen 2:4-7 NKJV)

So it goes,

“In the second creation story (distinct and quite different from the first creation story, as they are quick to point out) the man is created *‘before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown.’* So in the first, vegetation was formed on day three and man on day six, but in the second man was created before the vegetation (note especially the use of the same word in 1:11, 12 and 2:5).”

OUR RESPONSE TO THEIR ‘CONTRADICTION’ — There is no denying the same word is found in both creation accounts but it must be remembered all words in any language has a ‘circle of meaning’ and can mean different things in different contexts. This is true of all modern languages, how much more is this applicable in the ancient language of the book of Genesis? Rabbi Cassuto translates 2:5a literally as follows, and argues ***we are to keep it in the context of the story of Eden found in chapters 2, 3:***

‘now no thorns [sīach] of the field were yet in the earth and no grain [‘ēsey] of the field had yet sprung up’

*Thus when the verses in the second section declare that these plants were missing, the meaning is simply that ‘these kinds of plants were missing, but not necessarily “there was no vegetation”’ before man was created. **All the other vegetation that was formed on day three was present but some species of plants were not yet formed, either because the fall had not yet happened or because the Lord had not yet formed the garden of Eden.** If we wish to understand the significance of these kinds of vegetation in the context of our narrative, we must look at the end of the story.* After the fall of mankind the Lord said to Adam, *‘thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb [‘ēsey] of the field’* (3:18). The words *‘ēsey of the field* in 3:18 is identical to our expression in 2:5a, while *‘thorns and thistles’* in 3:18 are synonymous with the *sīach of the field* in 2:5. Rabbi Cassuto:

“These species did not exist, or were not found in the form known to us, until after Adam’s transgression, and it was in consequence of his fall that they came into the world or received their present form. Man, who was no longer able to enjoy the fruits of the

garden of Eden, was compelled to *'till the ground'* (3:23 – the same phrase as in our verse here) in order to *'eat bread;'* and the clause quoted above, *'and you shall eat the herb* (*'ēsey*) *of the field'* (3:18), corresponds to the words immediately following: *'In the sweat of your face YOU SHALL EAT BREAD'* (3:19). Thus the term *'grain* (*'ēsey*) *of the field'* comprises wheat and barley and the other kinds of grain from which bread is made; and it is obvious that fields of wheat and barley and the like did not exist in the world until man began *'to till the ground.'* In the areas, however, that were not tilled, the earth brought forth of its own accord, as a punishment to man, *'thorns and thistles'* – that *sîach* *'of the field'* that we see growing profusely to this day in the Land of Israel *'after the rains.'*" [Cassuto, 102]

Note the two reasons given in the verse (for the absence of thorns and grain) follow the same order as the two preceding clauses that they come to explain:

'no thorns of the field were yet in the earth, because the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth...'

'and the grain of the field had not yet sprung up, because there was no man to till the ground'

Observations from others who agree with Rabbi Cassuto:

"The purpose of v. 5 would be to show that the world as we know it did not yet exist when man was created. We will show, however, that 2:5, 6 is best related to the judgment oracles of 3:8-24, indicating what the world was like before and after sin.... The purpose of this tōlêdōt section is its depiction of human life before and after the garden sin; the condition of the 'land' after Adam's sin is contrasted with its state before the creation of the man. Genesis 2:5-7 is best understood in light of 3:8-24, which describes the consequences of sin.... Thus 2:5-6 does not speak to the creation of overall vegetation but to specific sorts of herbage in the world to follow. The language of cultivation, *'work the ground'* (2:5), anticipates the labor of Adam, first positively as the caretaker of Eden (2:15) but also negatively in 3:23, which describes the expulsion of the man and woman from the garden. God prepared a land for the man, but in the telling of his creation and the land in which he is placed, the text anticipates how the land will suffer from the effects of Adam's sin." [Mathews, 1:193ff]

"The creation of the plants is not alluded to here at all, but simply the planting of the garden in Eden. The growing of the shrubs and sprouting of the herbs is different from the creation or first production of the vegetable kingdom, and relates to the growing and sprouting of the plants and germs which were called into existence by the creation, the natural development of the plants as it had steadily proceeded ever since the creation. This was dependent upon rain and human culture; their creation was not. Moreover, *'the shrub and herb of the field'* do not embrace the whole of the vegetable productions of the earth." [Keil, 77]

Thus as we keep the verses within the context of the narrative of the creation and fall of man, there is no contradiction.

IF THIS WERE A CONTRADICTION, WHY WAS IT NOT CORRECTED? — There are some revisions in the book of Genesis which no one denies, even those who are the most committed to Moses being the original author / compiler (see below). ***If this were such an obvious contradiction, why was it not corrected by a later revisionist? "It would be premature to say that***

2:5 flatly contradicts 1:11-12. The latter two verses describe the creation of vegetation on the third day, three days before man is created. In 2:5-7 the reader is informed that when God created man there were no plants or shrubs. To begin with, if this is such a blatant inconsistency, why did the redactor do nothing to smooth it out?" [Hamilton, 1:154]

EVIDENCE OF REVISIONS AFTER MOSES — While the strongest believer in the inspiration of Scriptures would acknowledge the possibility of revisions in Genesis, those promoting the Documentary Hypothesis uses these as evidence of a later authorship. To admit to some ‘anachronisms’ (meaning ‘a thing belonging or appropriate to a period other than that in which it exists’) is not to suggest Moses was not the original author / compiler. Some examples of these anachronisms:

- the reference to Ur of the Chaldees in 15:7; but the ‘Chaldeans’ do not appear in Mesopotamia until long after the patriarchal period
- the reference to the kings of Israel in 36:31, as well as the Edomite kings since the Edomites did not settle in Transjordan before the 13th century BC
- the mention of the Philistines in Gen 21, 26 who supposedly did not come into Palestine until after the time of Moses. Furthermore, while in the time of the Judges and United Kingdom the Philistines had five great city-states, none of these are mentioned in Genesis. In this case however the error may be that while the Philistines in the time of the patriarchs were not mighty nations as they were in the time of the United Kingdom, that does not mean there were no Philistines in the infant stages of their kingdom. Indeed, in Gen 21:25 Abimelech, king of Gerar, is portrayed as being intimidated by Abraham.
- the mention of domesticated ‘camels,’ even though camels were not domesticated in Israel until the time of Solomon. But also note camels were domesticated in Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt as early as the patriarchal period.

Having discussed the supposed ‘contradictions’ between the first and second portion of the creation story, let us now look to the verses themselves.

THE STRUCTURE OF 2:5-7 — Rabbi Cassuto has arranged the text in such a form as to make its structure and parallelism of the verses clear. Three times consecutively (three for emphasis) does the word ‘adāmāh (‘ground, land, soil’) occur:

v. 5 – ‘Now no thorns of the field / were yet in the earth and no grain of the field / had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain / upon the earth, and there was no man / to till the ground;’ (‘adāmāh)

v. 6 – but the waters of the deep went up from the earth / and watered the whole face of the ground. (‘adāmāh)

v. 7 – Then the Lord God formed / man / of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; / and man became a living being.

There are also parallels between the verses: v^okōl / v^okāl, which Cassuto says is lit. ‘and all / and all’ and is rendered here ‘now no ... and no’:

v. 5 – ‘Now no’ (v^okōl) ***thorns of the field / were yet in the earth and no*** (v^okāl) ***grain of the field / had yet sprung up,***

Another parallel: chayyîm / chayyāh, ‘life / living’:

v. 7 – and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; / (chayyîm)

and man became a living being. (chayyāh)

v. 5 – ‘Now no thorns of the field were yet in the earth and no grain of the field had yet sprung up, — “The narrative begins with a description of the conditions existing prior to the creation of man.... The verse is an independent sentence and is not, as many have supposed, subordinate to what follows (viz ‘BEFORE there were any thorns of the field etc., then the LORD God created man’, or some similar construction).” [Cassuto, 100f] Cassuto continues to explain that if the sentences were connected, the word for ‘before, not yet, before that’ used twice in v. 5 would be a different Hebrew form. **The sense therefore is not ‘before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown,’ but rather ‘there was no “thorns, desert shrub, bush” of the field yet, and the “herb, grass, grain” of the field had not yet sprung up’** (for other translations rendering of Gen 2:5 with ‘not yet,’ see the appendix). Again, **this points to the narration in these chapters relates to the garden of Eden** (for more detail on the grammar, see Cassuto, 101).

‘thorns, desert shrub, wild plant, bush’ [sîach] **of the field** — This word is not found in the first section of the creation stories and is only used three more times in the OT: ‘*shrub of the field,*’ a desert shrub large enough to shield Hagar’s teenage son Ishmael (21:15); and again in the book of Job it describes a shrub growing in a place where the dejected and debilitated seek shelter and protection (Job 30:4, 7). Since sîach is best defined by its recurrence in the judgment oracle (Gen 3:18), sîach probably parallels Adam’s ‘*thorns and thistles,*’ which are the by-product of God’s curse on the ground (3:17-18). [Mathews, 1:194; Hamilton, 1:154]

‘grain, herb, grass, plant’ [‘ēsev] **of the field** — In the context of the Eden story, this word describes the diet of man which he eats only after the sweat of his labor (3:18-19) after his garden sin. These ‘*grains, plants*’ will require human cultivation to produce the grains necessary for edible food; it is by such cultivation that fallen man will eat his ‘*food*’ (3:19).

‘of the field’ — Relating to whether Moses is referring to Eden or the entire earth are the terms used for ‘*field,*’ ‘*earth,*’ and ‘*ground*’ in these verses:

‘before any plant of the field [sādeh] was in the earth [‘erets] and before any herb of the field [sādeh] had grown. For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth [‘erets], and there was no man to till the ground [‘adāmāh]’ (Gen 2:5 NKJV)

“There is a certain ambiguity in the passage whether it speaks of the entire earth or a portion, since the terms ‘field’ (sādeh), ‘earth / land’ (‘erets), and ‘ground’ (‘adāmāh) are interchangeable in Old Testament usage. ‘Field’ can refer to the open fields as a wilderness home for the beasts (2:19, 20; 3:1, 14; 25:29), pasture land (29:2; 30:16), or cultivated ground (37:7; 47:24). Hebrew *‘erets* may be rendered ‘earth’ in its universal sense or ‘land’ in the sense of a tract of land or country, as it commonly is in Genesis. **Here it is best taken as ‘land’ since the habitat of the first man is in view.** ‘Ground’ often has to do with the soil, which is cultivated by human enterprise, and it is the same material substance of which both man and beast are made (2:7, 19).” [Mathews, 1:194; see also Wenham, 1:58; Keil, 77] **While not definitive, these observations would align with those who consider the second section of the creation story to be emphasizing the actions within Eden and not the entire earth.**

‘for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground;’ — Also required for the spreading of such plant life was rainfall and man to cultivate the ground. “The primary reference of [2:5] is to man, not to the creation, and the purpose of chapter 2 is to manifest the goodness of God in giving to man a paradise for his earthly dwelling. *‘The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein’* (Ps. 24:1). ***Although the earth is the Lord’s and although he might cause man to dwell on it where he would, nevertheless he prepared a wondrous garden for his guest. To emphasize the beauty of the garden, but above all the goodness of God, a contrast is introduced. Man is to dwell as God’s guest not in a waterless waste, but in a planted garden. The waterless ground of Genesis 2:5 stands in contrast to the well-watered Paradise which is to be man’s earthly home. Two reasons are given why plants had not yet grown. On the one hand it had not rained, and on the other there was no man to till the ground.*** The garden cannot be planted until the ground has been watered, nor can it be tended until man is on hand. Both of these reasons, therefore, look forward to man’s home, the garden, and to the one who is to inhabit that garden. At this point, however, an exegetical question arises. ***Does Genesis 2:5 intend to state that the entire earth was barren, or is its purpose rather to show that in contrast to a waterless waste, the abode of man was to be a garden? Perhaps this question cannot be settled entirely, and it is the part of wisdom not be dogmatic, although the latter alternative has much to comment it.*** [Young, 61]

DID IT RAIN BEFORE THE FLOOD? — There are some who advocate that this verse teaches there was no rainfall upon the earth until after Noah’s flood, one of those being Henry Morris:

“The inhibition of true rainfall was probably ... accomplished by the great vapor canopy, *‘the waters above the firmament.’* Maintaining an approximately uniform temperature worldwide, no great air mass movements were possible under the canopy, and the necessary conditions for rainfall unsatisfied.” [Morris, 85]

While such an interpretation is not impossible, most of those I am reading believes this to be an unanswered question and that these verses cannot be pressed to teach there was no rain prior to Noah. “This does not mean necessarily, as some contend, that there was no rainfall until its first mention in Noah’s day, as we would not insist the first sunset happened only when it is cited in the patriarchal period (15:2).” [Mathews, 1:195] Even Answers in Genesis advocates for the possibility of rain prior to Noah:

“Some Christians claim that there was no rain before the Flood. Many of them make this statement quite dogmatically as if it were obvious from a reading of the biblical text. However, a close examination of Scripture does not bear this out.... ***While we cannot prove that there was rain before the Flood, to insist that there was not (and even to deride those who think otherwise) stretches Scripture beyond what it actually says.*** There are some arguments that Christians should avoid because of their absurdity and some we should avoid being dogmatic about because they are not truly supportable from Scripture. The ‘no-rain’ argument is in the latter category, and as such, it is an argument Christians should not use.” [Dr. Tommy Mitchell, <https://answersingenesis.org/creationism/arguments-to-avoid/was-there-no-rain-before-the-flood/>; July 30, 2024]

v. 6 – ‘but the waters of the deep went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.’ (translation by Rabbi Cassuto) – ***‘but a mist went up from the earth’*** (NKJV) — What we find in this verse is a problem that, as mentioned in the introductory sentences of this lesson, arises whenever we deal with texts that are over three millennia old. The unanswered question is this: *‘Was it a “mist” that arose from the earth or a “fresh-water spring”?’* This is

not an issue we can answer definitively and should not be something to cause division between believers. We will look at both sides and the readers are left to select which they believe to be the most accurate.

‘MIST’ OR ‘SPRING’? – THE PROBLEM IS THE OBSCURE WORD USED — The Hebrew word in question is *’ēd* which unfortunately is only used here and in Job 36:27 (which gives us no assistance since it is equally obscure, *‘which (they) distill (in) rain from His ’ēd’*). Note how the various translations handle this word in Gen 2:6:

‘mist’ (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, ESV, RSV, YLT, Amplified, Christian Standard Bible [CSB], Darby, Geneva)

‘stream’ (NRSV, Common English Bible [CEB], Legacy Standard Bible, New American Bible)

‘spring’ (Douay-Rheims 1899, NET, NIV, New Living Translation)

‘underground water’ (God’s Word Translation)

‘water’ (Good News Translation, Holman Christian Standard Bible)

‘underground stream’ (International Standard Version)

Therefore the gist may be either:

‘but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.’ (2:6 NKJV)

‘Springs would well up from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.’ (2:6 NET)

“THE WORD MEANS ‘MIST, VAPOR’” — Henry Morris: “As originally created, the earth’s daily water supply came primarily from local evaporation and condensation. There was also, as noted later, a system of spring-fed rivers. The change in temperature between daytime and nighttime apparently was adequate to energize daily evaporation from each local body of water and its condensation as dew and fog in the surrounding area each night.” [Morris, 84f]

“THE WORD MEANS ‘STREAM, SPRING’” — According to the usual rendering of the word, *vapour, mist*, the reference is to the water that vaporizes in the air and forms clouds. But there is the objection that this is not *‘from the earth’* as it says in 2:6 but clouds are formed by the water vapor as it rises in the atmosphere. Those advocating that the word means *‘stream, spring’* notes the Septuagint, the Vulgate and the Peshitta Syriac text all translate the word as *‘spring.’* In similar fashion, Aquila translates it as *‘fountain,’* i.e., water *gushing UP* from the ground. The etymology of the word is disputed and is attributed to different Semitic, Akkadian, or Sumerian origins; but most agree that the term refers to either *‘underground streams that comes to the surface’* or *‘a substantial river;’* although in our context *‘river’* would be an unlikely translation since rivers descend rather than rise. If our Hebrew word does find its derivation from an ancient pagan myth, any mythical overtones would of course be foreign to the text and *’ēd* would just be a great spring fed from the subterranean ocean or a subterranean freshwater stream. Rabbi Cassuto states it probably is in reference to multiple springs since it says, *‘and watered the WHOLE FACE OF THE GROUND.’* “Accordingly the word *’ēd* refers here to the waters of the deep generally and to all the springs issuing therefrom. This accords with the statement below (v. 10): *‘A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden,’* that is, the garden was watered by a river emanating from a spring, and not by rain. It is also in keeping with the general tenor of the section: at first the ground did not *‘absorb water from above,’* in other words, its fructification was not dependent on rain, which sometimes comes down in due time and sometimes is withheld, but it *‘drew water from*

below, that is, it was constantly irrigated by the waters of the deep.” [Cassuto, 104; see also Wenham, 1:58; Mathews, 1:193-5; Hamilton, 1:155; Kidner, 59f]

v. 7 – ‘Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground,’ — Per Cassuto, it is unacceptable to change the form of the word to a pluperfect, ‘Now the Lord God had already formed...’ in an attempt to harmonize it with the first creation story. If the context of these chapters are indeed Eden and not the entire earth, any harmonization would be unnecessary.

‘formed’ — or, ‘to fashion, to frame, to shape.’ The word is used of an artistic, inventive activity that requires skill and planning. Humanly it is used of a potter’s activity (Isa 29:16; Jer 18:4-6) and the making of wooden images (Isa 44:9, 10, 12; Hab 2:18). Usually the verb describes God’s work in creation: God has ‘shaped’ the animals (2:19), Leviathan (Ps 104:26), the natural world (Ps 95:5; Isa 45:18; Amos 4:13), Israel (Isa 27:11; 45:9, 11), the servants of the Lord (Isa 49:5; Jer 1:5), and the future course of history (Isa 22:11, Jer 33:2). Preeminently, God’s shaping skill is seen in the creation of man, whether it be from dust as here or in the womb (Isa 44:2, 24) or in shaping human character to fulfill a particular role (Isa 43:21; 44:21). Here it may well be that the image of a potter shaping his clay lies behind this description of man’s creation, even though ‘dust of the land’ is not the normal material with which a potter works. [Wenham, 1:59; Mathews, 1:196]

‘formed man ... from the ground’ — The Hebrew uses assonance here, something almost impossible to reproduce into English. “It is hard to capture this play on sounds in English, but it is something like ‘God formed earthling from the earth.’” [Hamilton, 1:156]

‘of dust’ — According to the ancient poetic traditions (both of the Hebrews and the neighboring ancient cultures) man was formed from ‘clay;’ for example,

‘how much more those who dwell in houses of clay’ (Job 4:19)

‘Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay’ (Job 10:9)

‘Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, “What are you making?”’ (Isa 45:9)

‘We are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand.’ (Isa 64:8; also see Jer 18:1-14)

But while the prophets and poets did not refrain from using the poetic expressions of their culture, the Torah is more cautious. “The latter declares only that the Lord God ‘formed’ man of the ‘dust’ from the ground, but it does not describe the details of the creation, nor does it mention the ‘hands’ of the Lord God, and in place of the word ‘clay,’ which is connected with the idea of the potter’s work on his wheel, it prefers the synonym ‘dust’ (this word is frequently found parallel to ‘clay’ in Job: 4:19; 10:9 [an expression borrowed from Gen 3:19]; 27:16; 30:19; so, too, ‘ashes’ occurs as a parallel to ‘clay,’ Job 13:12).” [Cassuto, 105] “‘Dust from the ground’ is the raw material from which the physical properties of the man and beast had their source. The term may refer to the loose surface dirt of the ground (Exod 8:16-17) or the powder of something pulverized (Deut 9:21).” [Mathews, 1:196]

PROVEN BY MODERN CHEMICAL ANALYSIS — “God used the ‘dust of the ground’ to make man’s body, a remarkable phrase conveying the thought that the smallest particles of which the earth was composed (in modern terminology, the basic chemical elements: nitrogen, oxygen, calcium, etc.) were also to be the basic physical elements of the human body. ‘The first man is of the earth, earthy.’ (1 Corinthians 15:47). This fact is not at all obvious to superficial examination

(rocks seem to all appearances to be composed of totally different substances than human flesh), but it has nevertheless been verified by modern science.” [Morris, 85]

FROM DUST TO DUST... — *“‘Dust’ as constitutive of human existence anticipates 3:19, where the penalty for the man’s sin is his return to ‘dust’ (e.g., Job 34:15). While ‘dust’ may also show that man is fragile physically (e.g., Job 10:8-9; Ps 103:14), the intent of the passage is the association of human life and the basic substance of our making.... Because of man’s sin, however, his origins also became his destiny (3:19; Eccl 3:20); nevertheless, the Bible offers a ground hope for the body (e.g., Job 19:25-27; Isa 26:19; Dan 12:1-4; 1 Cor 15:35-58; 1 Thess 4:16-17).”* [Mathews, 1:196] *“Dust is the womb from which man emerges and the receptacle to which one day he will return (3:19).”* [Hamilton, 1:158]

‘RAISED FROM DUST TO REIGN’ — *“The dust image appears sporadically throughout the OT and into the NT. Especially interesting for possible connections with Gen. 2:7 are those passages which speak of an exaltation from dust, with the dust representing pre-royal status (1 K. 16:2), poverty (1 Sam. 2:8; Ps. 113:7), and death (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). To ‘be raised from the dust’ means to be elevated to royal office, to rise above poverty, to find life. Here man is formed from dust to be in control of a garden. Thus, the emphasis on the dust in Gen. 2:7, far from disagreeing with ch. 1, affirms ch. 1’s view of man’s regality. He is raised from the dust to reign.”* [Hamilton, 1:158]

‘and breathed into his nostrils’ — *“This statement may seem at first to be ‘anthropomorphic,’ picturing God as puffing up His cheeks and blowing air into the inert figure He had just molded. Such a notion is quite inadequate, however. Man’s body had been completely formed, equipped with nostrils, lungs, and the entire breathing apparatus, as well as bones and organs and other appurtenances [meaning, those items belonging to the human body], but was lifeless. It must be energized. The breathing mechanism must be activated, the heart must start to pump and circulate the blood, and all the metabolic functions must begin their operations. But life can only come from life, and the living God is the only self-existent Being, so it must ultimately come from Him.”* [Morris, 85f]

‘breathed’ — The word used is not the usual word for ‘breath, wind.’ *“Instead of using rûach for ‘breath’ (a word appearing nearly 400 times in the OT), Gen. 2:7 uses *n°shāmāh* (25 times in the OT). Unlike rûach, which is applied to God, man, animals, and even false gods, *n°shāmāh* is applied only to Yahweh and to man. (The *n°shāmāh* of animals is not expressly mentioned except in the oblique reference in 7:22.) Thus 2:7 may employ the less popular word for breath because it is man, and man alone, who is the recipient of the divine breath. Now divinely formed and inspired, he is ‘a living person.’ Until God breathes into him, man is a lifeless corpse.”* [Hamilton, 1:159] *“The closest parallel is Ezek 37:9 where the prophet is told to blow on the recreated bodies to resuscitate them, and then, filled with wind / spirit, they stood alive. It is the divine inbreathing both here and in Ezek 37 that gives life.”* [Wenham, 1:60]

‘the breath of life;’ – THIS ‘BREATH OF LIFE’ IS NOT WHAT DISTINGUISHES MAN FROM ANIMAL — *“In the garden man and beast share in the same physical properties and are related to their environment (2:7, 19). Unlike the plant world, both animal and human are described as living, possessing the ‘breath of life’ (2:7; 7:22). Thus the animals are declared ‘living creatures’ (1:20-21, 24; 9:10), as man is described identically in the Hebrew of 2:7, ‘a living being.’ Human and animal share in creatureliness, yet a distinction between human and animal is sharply maintained in the narrative. The source of animal life is attributed to the*

*intermediary ‘ground’ (2:19) from which the animals came forth ‘in a moment.’ But the man was ‘gradually formed,’ and his fountain of life was the divine breath: God ‘breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.’ ... Although both animal (7:22) and human life share in this gift of life (2:7), human life enjoys a unique relationship with God. The correspondence between man and his Maker is expressed both by the language of ‘image’ (1:26-27) and by the metaphor of a shared ‘breath.’” [Mathews, 1:196f; see also Kidner, 60f] “Hence the nature of man consists of a material substance and an immaterial principle of life. ‘The breath of life,’ i.e., breath producing life, does not denote the spirit by which man is distinguished from the animals, or the soul of man from that of the beasts, but only the life-breath.” [Keil, 78] **“It is not man’s possession of ‘the breath of life’ or his status as a ‘living creature’ that differentiates him from the animals. Animals are described in exactly the same terms (1:24). Gen 1:26-28 affirms the uniqueness of man by stating that man alone is made in God’s image and by giving man authority over the animals.”** [Wenham, 1:60f]*

‘and man became a living being.’ — The two words used here for ‘living being, a living soul’ is exactly the same terms used to describe animals, the difference between man and animals is said that man was ‘created in God’s image,’ Gen 1:26-28. “After fashioning the inanimate figure, God enabled it to ‘breathe’ the air – a clear indication of ‘life’ – and thereby the lifeless body became a ‘living soul.’” [Cassuto, 106] **“Note that man neither ‘has’ a soul nor ‘has’ a body, although for convenience he may be analyzed into two or more constituents (e.g., 1 Thes. 5:23). The basic truth is here: he is a unity.”** [Kidner, 61]

APPENDIX — GENESIS 2:5 IN VARIOUS VERSIONS

‘And no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for Jehovah God had not caused it to rain upon the earth: and there was not a man to till the ground;’ (ASV)

‘Now no shrub of the field was yet on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.’ (NASB)

‘Now no shrub of the field had yet grown on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.’ (NET)

‘When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up — for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground,’ (ESV)

‘Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground,’ (NIV)

‘and no shrub of the field is yet in the earth, and no herb of the field yet sprouteth, for Jehovah God hath not rained upon the earth, and a man there is not to serve the ground,’ (Young’s Literal Translation, public domain)

‘when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up — for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground;’ (RSV)

‘when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no vegetation of the field had yet sprung up — for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground,’ (New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition, 2021)

‘When no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not [yet] caused it to rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the ground,’ (Amplified Bible Classic Edition, 1987)

‘no shrub or plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground,’ (Amplified Bible 2015)

‘no shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.’ (Christian Standard Bible 2017)

‘there was as yet no wild bush on the earth, and no wild plant had as yet sprung up; for Adonai, God, had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no one to cultivate the ground.’ (Complete Jewish Bible, 1998)

‘And every plant of the sadeh was not yet in ha’aretz, and every herb of the sadeh had not yet yitzmach (sprung up); for Hashem Elohim had not caused it to rain upon ha’aretz, and there was not an adam (man) la’avod (to till, to work) haadamah (the ground).’ (Orthodox Jewish Bible, 2011)

‘No bushes that grow in the field were yet on the earth, and no plants of the field had yet sprung up, since the Lord God had not yet caused it to rain on the earth. There was not yet a man to till the soil,’ (Evangelical Heritage Version, 2019)

‘Wild bushes and plants were not on the earth yet because the Lord God hadn’t sent rain on the earth. Also, there was no one to farm the land.’ (God’s Word Translation, 2020)

‘No shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.’ (Holman Christian Standard Bible, 2009)

‘no shrubs had yet grown in the meadows of the earth and no vegetation had sprouted, because the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there were no human beings to work the ground.’ (International Standard Version, 2014)

‘Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet grown, for Yahweh God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.’ (Legacy Standard Bible, 2021)

‘no shrub of the field was yet on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.’ (Modern English Version, 2014)

‘Wild bushes and plants were not on the earth yet because Yahweh Elohim hadn’t sent rain on the earth. Also, there was no one to farm the land.’ (Names of God Bible, 2011)

'there were not yet any plants of the field nor had any herbs sprouted in the field, for the Lord God had not yet made it rain upon the earth and there was no one to till the soil.' (New Catholic Bible, 2019)

'At that time, bushes had not yet appeared on the earth. Plants had not started to grow. The Lord God had not sent rain on the earth. And there was no one to farm the land.' (New International Reader's Version, 2014)

'Now no bush of the field was yet on the earth. And no plant of the field had started to grow. For the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth. And there was no man to work the ground.' (New Life Version, 2003)

'Now no shrub of the field was in the land yet, and no green plants of the field had sprouted yet. For Adonai Elohim had not caused it to rain upon the land, and there was no one to work the ground.' (Tree of Life Version, 2015)

'No plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for Yahweh God had not caused it to rain on the earth. There was not a man to till the ground,' (World English Bible, public domain)