

The First Creation Story

Genesis 1:1–2:4a

Translation by John Lein and Everett Fox (Schocken Bible)

Within beginning Elohiym formed
the waters above and the earth below.
And the earth was wild and waste.
And darkness was over the face of the Deep.
And the Breath of Elohiym,
she trembled over the face of the waters.

Elohiym spoke:
“Light become!”
And light became.
Elohiym saw the light, that it was good.
Elohiym traced the divide between the light and the darkness.
Elohiym called to the light: “Be day!”
and to the darkness called: “Be night!”
Of evening and of morning there was: one day.

Elohiym spoke a great expanse amid the waters,
and it became a division
between waters and waters.
Elohiym stretched-out the expanse [into a dome]
and separated the waters that were below the expanse
from the waters that were above the dome
and it was thus.
Elohiym called the expanse: “Heaven!”
There was setting, there was dawning: second day.

Elohiym spoke:
“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered to one place,
and let the dry land be seen!”
and it was thus.
Elohiym called the dry land: “Earth!”
and the gathering of the waters he called: “Seas!”
Elohiym saw that it was good.
Elohiym spoke:
“Let the earth sprout forth with sprouting-growth,
plants that seed forth seeds after their kind,
trees that yield fruit, in which is their seed, after their kind.”
Elohiym saw that it was good.
There was setting, there was dawning: third day.

Elohiym spoke:
“Let there be lights in the dome of the heavens,
to separate the day from the night,
that they may be for signs—for set-times, for days and years,
and let them be for lights in the dome of the heavens,
to provide light upon the earth!”
and it was thus.
Elohiym made the two great lights,
the greater light for ruling the day,
and the smaller light for ruling the night,
and the stars.
Elohiym placed them in the dome of the heavens
to provide light upon the earth,
to rule the day and the night,
to separate the light from the darkness.
Elohiym saw that it was good.
There was setting, there was dawning: fourth day.

Elohiym spoke:

“Let the waters swarm with a swarm of living beings,
and let birds fly above the earth,
across the dome of the heavens!”

Elohiym created the great sea-serpents
and all living beings that crawl about,
with which the waters swarmed, after their kind.

Elohiym saw that it was good.

And Elohiym blessed them, saying:

“Bear fruit and be many and fill the waters in the seas,
and let the birds be many on earth!”

There was setting, there was dawning: fifth day.

Elohiym spoke:

“Let the earth bring forth living beings after their kind,
herd-animals, crawling things, and the wildlife of the earth
after their kind!”

It was thus.

Elohiym made the wildlife of the earth after their kind,
and the herd-animals after their kind,
and all crawling things of the soil after their kind.

Elohiym saw that it was good.

Elohiym spoke:

“Let us make humankind,
in our image,
according to our likeness!”

“Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the
heavens, animals, all the earth, and all the crawling things
that crawl about upon the earth!”

Elohiym created humankind in his image,
in the image of Elohiym did he create it,
male and female did he create them.

Elohiym blessed them.

And Elohiym spoke to them:

“Bear fruit and be many and fill the earth and subdue it!
Have dominion over the fish of the sea,
the birds of the heavens,
and all living things that crawl about upon the earth!”

Elohiym spoke:

“Here, I give you
all the plants that bear seeds upon the face of the earth,
and all trees in which there is fruit that bears seeds,
for you shall they be, for eating;
and also for all the living things of the earth,
for all the birds of the heavens,
for all that crawls about upon the earth in which there is life—
all green plants for eating.”
and it was thus.

Now Elohiym saw all that he had made and here:
it was exceedingly good!

There was setting, there was dawning: sixth day.

Thus were finished the heavens and the earth,
with all their array.

Elohiym had finished, on the seventh day,
his work that he had made,
and then he ceased, on the seventh day,
from all the work that he had made.

Elohiym gave the seventh day his blessing, and he hallowed it,
for on it he ceased from all his work,
that by creating, Elohiym had made.

These are the begettings of the heavens and the earth:
their being created.

The Second Creation Story

Genesis 2:4b-2:25

Translation by John Lein and Everett Fox (Shocken Bible)

At the time of Y_{HWH}, God's making of earth and heaven,
no shrub of the field was yet on earth,
no grasses of the field had yet sprouted,
for Y_{HWH}, God, had not made it rain upon earth
and there was no human (*adam*) to till the soil (*adama*)—
but a flow would well up from the earth and water
the whole surface of the soil;
and Y_{HWH}, God, formed the human from the dust from the soil,
he blew into its nostrils the breath of life,
and the human became a living being.

Y_{HWH}, God, planted a Garden of Pleasure (*gan-eden*) in the east,
and placed there the human whom he had formed.
Y_{HWH}, God, caused to spring up from the soil
every kind of tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for
food,
and the Tree of Life in the middle of the Garden,
and the Tree of the Knowing of Good and Evil.

. . .

Y_{HWH}, God, took the human and placed him
in the Garden of Pleasure,
to work it and to watch it.
Y_{HWH}, God, commanded the human, saying,
“From every tree of the Garden you may eat—yes, eat!
but from the Tree of the Knowing of Good and Evil
you must not eat
for on the day that you eat from it, you shall die—yes, die!”

Now Y_{HWH}, God, said,
“It is not good that the human is alone;
I will make a mighty-helper (*ezer*) corresponding to it.”

So Y_{HWH}, God, formed from the soil every living-thing of the field
and every bird of the heavens,
and brought each to the human, to see what he would call it;
whatever the human called each living creature
that became its name.
The human called out names for every herd-animal
and for the birds of the heavens
and for every living-thing of the field,
but for the human, there could be found none corresponding to it.

So Y_{HWH}, God, cast a deep sleep upon the human so that it slept,
he took one of it's sides (*tzela'*) and closed up the flesh there.
And Y_{HWH}, God, built up the side that he had taken from the
human into a woman;
and he brought her to the human.

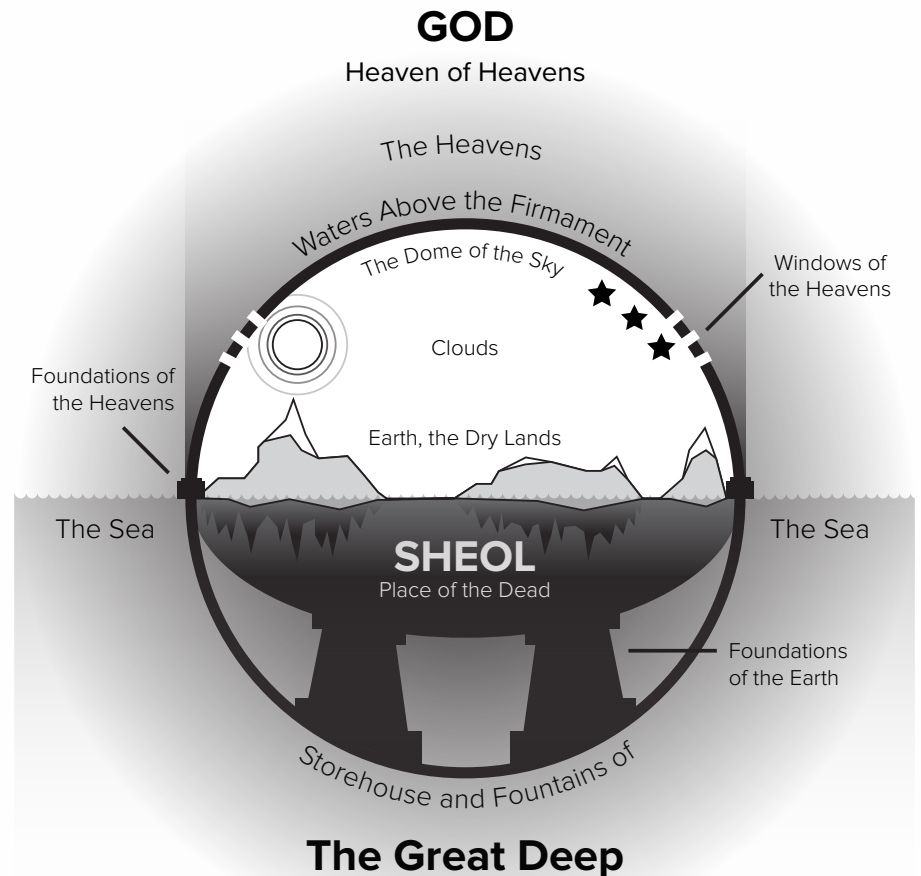
The human said,
“This one at last
Is bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh.
This one shall be called Woman (*isha*),
For from Man (*ish*) was she taken.”

Hence a husband leaves his father and mother
and clings to his wife,
so that they become one flesh.

	Genesis 1:2-2:3	Genesis 2:4-25
Duration of creation	Six days	One day implied
Primordial scenario	Dark, watery chaos	An oasis amid desert
Sequence of creation	Light Firmament Dry land Plants Lights in the sky Sea and sky creatures Land animals Humans (male and female)	Man (Adam) Garden with trees and river Land animals and birds as potential helpers to Adam Woman as the fitting helper to Adam
Method of creation	God speaks, separates, names, blesses	God forms, breathes, plants, puts to sleep, builds
Portrait of God	Transcendent Sovereign over creation Some anthropomorphism God is called Elohim	Immanent Actively involved in creation Lots of anthropomorphism God is called Yahweh Elohim
Portrait of humanity	Unspecified number of humans ('adam), males (zakar) and females (neqevah), created simultaneously Royals, created in divine image, given dominion over the earth	One male ('adam) from the ground ('adamah), then one woman ('ishah) from the man ('ish)— in two separate acts of creation Servants, made caretakers of the garden

Table 3.1 Comparison of the Two Creation Accounts

Enns, Peter. *The Evolution of Adam, What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Origins* (p. 51). Baker Publishing Group.



Babylonian Creation Story

In the beginning, neither heaven nor earth had names. Apsu, the god of fresh waters, and Tiamat, the goddess of the salt oceans, and Mummu, the god of the mist that rises from both of them, were still mingled as one. There were no mountains, there was no pasture land, and not even a reed-marsh could be found to break the surface of the waters.

It was then that Apsu and Tiamat parented two gods, and then two more who outgrew the first pair. These further parented gods, until Ea, who was the god of rivers and was Tiamat and Apsu's great-grandson, was born. Ea was the cleverest of the gods, and with his magic Ea became the most powerful of the gods, ruling even his forebears.

Apsu and Tiamat's descendants became an unruly crowd. Eventually Apsu, in his frustration and inability to sleep with the clamor, went to Tiamat, and he proposed to her that he slay their noisy offspring. Tiamat was furious at his suggestion to kill their clan, but after leaving her Apsu resolved to proceed with his murderous plan. When the young gods heard of his plot against them, they were silent and fearful, but soon Ea was hatching a scheme. He cast a spell on Apsu, pulled Apsu's crown from his head, and slew him. Ea then built his palace on Apsu's waters, and it was there that, with the goddess Damkina, he fathered Marduk, the four-eared, four-eyed giant who was god of the rains and storms.

The other gods, however, went to Tiamat and complained of how Ea had slain her husband. Aroused, she collected an army of dragons and monsters, and at its head she placed the god Kingu, whom she gave magical powers as well. Even Ea was at a loss how to combat such a host, until he finally called on his son Marduk. Marduk gladly agreed to take on his father's battle, on the condition that he, Marduk, would rule the gods after achieving this victory. The other gods agreed, and at a banquet they gave him his royal robes and scepter.

Marduk armed himself with a bow and arrows, a club, and lightning, and he went in search of Tiamat's monstrous army. Rolling his thunder and storms in front him, he attacked, and Kingu's battle plan soon disintegrated. Tiamat was left alone to fight Marduk,

and she howled as they closed for battle. They struggled as Marduk caught her in his nets. When she opened her mouth to devour him, he filled it with the evil wind that served him. She could not close her mouth with his gale blasting in it, and he shot an arrow down her throat. It split her heart, and she was slain.

After subduing the rest of her host, he took his club and split Tiamat's water-laden body in half like a clam shell. Half he put in the sky and made the heavens, and he posted guards there to make sure that Tiamat's salt waters could not escape. Across the heavens he made stations in the stars for the gods, and he made the moon and set it forth on its schedule across the heavens. From the other half of Tiamat's body he made the land, which he placed over Apsu's fresh waters, which now arise in wells and springs. From her eyes he made flow the Tigris and Euphrates. Across this land he made the grains and herbs, the pastures and fields, the rains and the seeds, the cows and ewes, and the forests and the orchards.

Marduk set the vanquished gods who had supported Tiamat to a variety of tasks, including work in the fields and canals. Soon they complained of their work, however, and they rebelled by burning their spades and baskets. Marduk saw a solution to their labors, though, and proposed it to Ea. He had Kingu, Tiamat's general, brought forward from the ranks of the defeated gods, and Kingu was slain. With Kingu's blood, with clay from the earth, and with spittle from the other gods, Ea and the birth-goddess Nintu created humans. On them Ea imposed the labor previously assigned to the gods. Thus the humans were set to maintain the canals and boundary ditches, to hoe and to carry, to irrigate the land and to raise crops, to raise animals and fill the granaries, and to worship the gods at their regular festivals.

Alexander Heidel, 1952, *The Babylonian Genesis* (2nd edn.): Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 153 p. (BS1236.H4 1963).

Tikva Fryer-Kensky, (trans), *Atrahasis*, in O'Brien, Joan, and Major, Wilfred, 1982, *In the Beginning: Creation Myths from Ancient Mesopotamia, Israel, and Greece*: Chico, CA, Scholars Press, 211 p. (BL226.027 1982)

<http://www.gly.uga.edu/railsback/CS/CSMarduk.html> (12/9/2017)

Biblical Scenes With Extrabiblical Texts

- A garden/ paradise of God/ the gods in the east
(*Enki and Ninhursag; Gilgamesh*)
- Humans created out of dust/ clay to cultivate the land
(*Enki and Ninmah [Sumerian]; Atrahasis; Gilgamesh*)
- Humans infused with the Breath of Life
(*Instructions of Merikare [Egyptian]*)
- Creation as inchoate, not fully developed
(*Gen. 2:5; Nippur tradition; Ewe and Wheat [Sumerian]*)
- Streams of water supply irrigation to the garden
(*Enki and Ninhursag*)
- Creation of humans as “trial and error”
(*Gen. 2: 18– 22; Atrahasis*)
- The female made from the male’s rib/ side
(*Enki and Ninhursag [referring to a goddess]*)

Comparison of Atrahasis and Genesis 2–3...

Atrahasis	Genesis 2– 8
Agriculture by irrigation	Eden watered by irrigation
Lesser gods (Igigi) as original laborers	Yahweh as original laborer (plants garden)
High gods (Anunnaki) enjoying privileges of divine rank	Yahweh’s private garden with magic trees of life and wisdom
Protohumans (<i>Lullû</i>) created as laborers to replace Igigi modeled from clay + rebel god’s blood implicitly immortal (no natural death)	Primeval human (<i>ha-’adam</i>) created to care for Yahweh’s garden modeled from clay + divine breath potentially immortal (tree of life)
Institution of marriage	Institution of marriage

Source: Enns *The Evolution of Adam*, 54–55

Notes for Readers

When reading ancient religious texts:

- Realize why these stories were told—not to describe a scientific account of origins, but to work through questions of human meaning and purpose.
- Compare—why did one group tell one story, and another change it or come up with something new?
- Recognize and appreciate that these texts came out of real human contexts. Timeframes, clashes of cultures, times of trauma and big questions.
- To what and whose purpose are things working?
- How do these stories support or deconstruct systems of oppression or theories of politics?
- How do theological beliefs (what theologian Paul Tillich called “our ultimate concerns”) shape our communal world and give us individual narratives of how we exist within it?