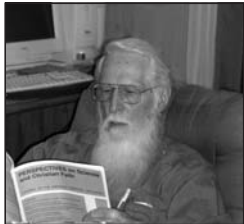


## Article

# Extended Humpty Dumpty Semantics and Genesis 1

David F. Siemens, Jr.



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*Humpty  
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*The Bible is often interpreted by making the language say what has been decided on subjective grounds, that is, by going beyond Humpty Dumpty’s view of language. The more popular interpretations of the opening passage of Scripture that are currently encountered are described and analyzed. Some, less likely because they are obsolete or uncommon, are also mentioned. Most are incompatible with the Hebrew text.*

**T**he interpretation of Scripture often falls under extended Humpty Dumpty semantics. Humpty Dumpty claimed, “When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”<sup>1</sup> The extended version changes one word: “When I encounter a word, it means just what I choose it to mean.” Unfortunately, adherents to this stronger claim seem generally unaware of their commitment. Still, it is evident in three common interpretations of Genesis 1,<sup>2</sup> and in others less common.

Genesis 1 presents the story of creation. Five major interpretations are found among American Protestants.<sup>3</sup> The most popular one among current American evangelicals understands events taking place in six normal days, 6–10,000 years ago. Indeed, some insist on the more recent date. This is young earth creationism (YEC).<sup>4</sup>

A second view has the list presenting the order of events that extend back billions of years: days represent sequential ages. This requires that the sequence agree with the history of the universe and, especially, the earth. This view, concordism or old earth creationism (OEC), commonly allows the ages to overlap.<sup>5</sup> Two variants published in *PSCF* cannot be discussed for lack of space.<sup>6</sup>

A third view, once popular, combines elements of the two main approaches. It holds that the universe is ancient, like OEC.

However, there was a cataclysmic destruction, so that life had to be re-created a few thousand years ago, like YEC. This gap theory was popularized in the Scofield Bible.<sup>7</sup>

A fourth view representing the six days of Genesis 1 as visions, is compatible with a series of creative acts, like OEC but without the constraints of sequence, and with theistic evolution, a divinely directed evolutionary development of creation, with perhaps a few creative interactions.<sup>8</sup>

The fifth view makes the passage strictly a literary product, a Hymn of Creation, a rewriting of ancient myths to reject polytheism and promote monotheism,<sup>9</sup> specifically the God of the Hebrews.<sup>10</sup> This approach is almost certainly connected to acceptance of organic evolution.

The question I raise is: How compatible is the explicit language of the text with each of these views? I am, in most cases, not discussing the claims of science<sup>11</sup> or technical matters relating to the derivation of the Hebrew terms and their meanings in the light of other ancient languages, though mention of some of these will necessarily be made. My question primarily concerns the language of the biblical texts.

## Verses 1 to 5

The first words in Genesis raise a question. Which are we to understand: “In the beginning God created ...” or “When God began to create ...”? Students of Hebrew say that the language is ambiguous. The notion of an absolute beginning, though generally adopted, cannot be proved from this passage. Ancients could have read it as no more

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than the shaping of something available. A phrase from a later period, held by Greek and Roman philosophers, is *ex nihilo nihil fit*, from nothing is nothing made, a flat denial of the very possibility of creation *ex nihilo*. The Hebrew verb, *bara'*,<sup>12</sup> does not necessarily refer to an absolute origin.<sup>13</sup> The former of the two translations is essentially required by both YEC and OEC. Either view fits gap theory, the visions view, or literary construction.

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*What God created or began to create were "the heavens and the earth." Is this a statement of origin or an introduction to the entire passage?*

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What God created or began to create were "the heavens<sup>14</sup> and the earth." Is this a statement of origin or an introduction to the entire passage? The common OEC view holds that this refers to the entire universe, including the solar system. As a consequence, the darkness (verse 2) was a local phenomenon. That is, dense clouds surrounding the primordial earth prevented the light of the sun, moon, and stars from reaching its surface. Consequently, the light that appeared on the first day (verse 3) was already there, merely becoming visible at the surface as the earth cooled and the heavy cloud cover thinned. Thus God did not have to establish a boundary (verse 4), for the sun was already lighting just one hemisphere of the rotating earth.<sup>15</sup> This does not fit the text. On the other hand, any of the other four views allow this verse either to be introductory, referring to all that follows, or to indicate the origin of the primordial earth without the extra baggage. However, Scofield takes the OEC view.

Gap theory tends to hold that the first verse presents the creation of all things in perfect form, not formless, void and dark, citing Isa. 45:18 (margin): "He created it not a waste."<sup>16</sup> However, some adherents believe that the earth developed to this excellent state. All hold that this primordial period represents most of the earth's existence. A consequence of either alternative is that "was" in verse 2 must be translated "became." The majority of scholars hold that the specific form of the verb refers to a condition that once existed, but no longer does, making "was" appropriate. Indeed, among thirty-five translations, from the Septuagint and Vulgate to more recent ones in various languages, only one suggests, in a footnote, "or possibly *became*."<sup>17</sup> So the required translation is marginal, but not excluded.<sup>18</sup> I believe that the interpretation was devised to reconcile the geological evidence for an ancient earth with the brief period allowed by the biblical genealogies. However, there is no geological evidence for a break in

the sequence of strata that would require such a total re-creation.

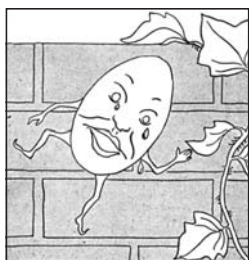
The YEC interpretation, that light was miraculously introduced into dark chaos, does not have the problem that concordism has with a sun before the fourth day. An empty earth was covered with water blown by the divine wind,<sup>19</sup> ruffling the surface. An omnipotent God certainly can produce light without the introduction of a sun. Such a miracle is compatible with the text, though not with anything derived from science.<sup>20</sup> Both the vision view and the literary view, since they do not involve direct causation, meet with no problems on this point.

The phrase, literally "and it was evening and it was morning, day first," (verse 5) is unusual, though a similar phrase is repeated with each of the days except the seventh.<sup>21</sup> The reverse of this evening-morning order is more common.<sup>22</sup> Is this evening-morning sequence used because it is the pattern of the Jewish day, which begins at sundown?<sup>23</sup> This common explanation runs counter to the common usage. A special contrasting hint comes in Dan. 8:14, 26, when it is the time of a vision. This supports the view that we have six visions of God's work rather than either a purely literary arrangement or the actual developmental sequence.

## The Firmament

An item noted by some and denied by others in the introductory verses is a connection between the Babylonian mythical monster, Tiamat, and the Hebrew term for "deep," *tehom* (8415). The words are said to be cognate. According to the Babylonian legend, the water monster, Tiamat, terrified all the deities until the hero, Marduk, disabled and killed her and then split her in two. Half became the seas and half became the vault of heaven.<sup>24</sup> This apparently parallels God's act in placing a firmament between the lower waters and the higher waters.<sup>25</sup> But Genesis lacks monsters, fleeing deities, and battles. One deity is in total control, may be the source of all that is, and certainly provides its order. This strongly suggests that the passage is apologetic.

What is the nature of this firmament? Can it be the atmosphere, with the upper waters being clouds? Can it refer to space? The original term for "firmament," *raqia'* (7549) is related to *raqa'* (7554), beaten out. The verb apparently came to be used for anything spread out<sup>26</sup> or stepped on,<sup>27</sup> but at all times it was used for something beaten out.<sup>28</sup> It apparently would not have occurred to the ancient Hebrews to have a spread out gas, let alone space. Every time the word is used, something fairly solid is involved. Almost certainly the only thing of a tenuous sort these ancient Semites recognized was air in motion, that is, the wind or breath. The less common term, *neshamah* (5397 and related words), indicates a puff of wind or breath.



[God placed]  
a firmament  
between the  
lower waters  
and the higher  
waters ...  
What is the  
nature of this  
firmament?  
Can it be the  
atmosphere,  
with the upper  
waters being  
clouds?  
Can it refer  
to space? ...  
The firmament  
cannot be  
either the  
atmosphere or  
space, and so  
cannot be  
understood in  
contemporary  
terms.

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The common one, most often translated "spirit," is *ruach* (7307), "wind" or "breath." It has a related verb, "to blow," "breathe," or "smell." It is no wonder that the most ancient translators used *stereōma*, primarily "a solid body," then "foundation" or "basis." The Latin translation is *firmamentum*, "support" or "prop," with the related *firmum* sometimes meaning "immovable."<sup>29</sup>

According to the text, the upper waters were above the firmament. The Hebrew text (v. 7) uses *ma'al*, a preposition, *mi* (4480), "from,"<sup>30</sup> plus *'al* (5921), "on," followed by the preposition *le*, "to," "for," or "of," attached to the following word, "firmament" (7549). This is the same construction as Ezek. 1:25: "And *above the firmament* that was over their heads ..." (Italics are mine. Strong here gives a number only to "firmament.") The upper waters are mentioned in Gen. 7:11 and 8:2, as well as in Ps. 148:4. These waters cannot be clouds, which clearly look to be in front of the blue dome, not above it.

Moving ahead, the heavenly bodies were placed "in," "by," "with," or "against" (*be*, the same preposition which begins the chapter, see note 29)<sup>31</sup> the firmament of the sky, *beraqia' hashamayim* (verses 14, 15, 17). To understand this, consider that one can occasionally see Venus during the day, when the blue sky is visible. During part of its monthly cycle, the moon is similarly visible. One cannot look directly at the sun and see it relative to the blue dome, but, as close as one can look, it, along with the moon and stars, appears to be in front of the blue dome. At night, the rising moon appears to be in front of the velvety black dome. The bodies clearly do not look to be farther away than the cerulean bowl. Clouds, of course, are in front of the sun, moon, stars, and blue sky, so they cannot possibly be the waters above the firmament.

Let me underscore this. Anything that looks sky blue, like turquoise, will be opaque or, at the extreme, translucent. Further, something like a transparent pale cobalt glass will make a white object behind it look blue. But the moon and most stars look white, except near the horizon, when they redden. Some, like Mars and Betelgeuse, are always red, a color absorbed by a blue filter. Any simple explanation based

on the text therefore has the celestial bodies in front of the dome, not seen through it.

Another mention of the firmament occurs in verse 20. Of that J. Barton Payne wrote:

The Mosaic account of creation uses *rāqia'* interchangeably for the "open expanse of the heavens" in which birds fly (Gen. 1:20 NASB), i.e. the atmosphere ... and that farther expanse of sky in which God placed "the lights ..." <sup>32</sup>

But, as noted above, the more plausible notion is that the sun, moon, and stars were placed against or by the solid firmament.

The ancients had no notion of indefinite space in which the heavenly bodies could exist. The Hebrew text says birds fly '*al he'ere'ts 'al paniye raqia' hashamayim* (5921, 776, 5921, 6440, 7549, 8064, plus two definite articles) "above the earth and in face of firmament of the heavens," that is, in front of or below the firmament. To understand this, we can look at the use in Genesis of *panim* (6440) with the prepositions. Only three prepositions and two combinations thereof are found with this noun. The first, *le* (basically "to," "for," or "of"), may mean "in front of" a person,<sup>33</sup> or "before" in either time or place.<sup>34</sup> With the name of a place, it means "east of,"<sup>35</sup> though it is not usually alone. The second, *mi*, generally indicates removal from someone's presence.<sup>36</sup> It may also indicate cause.<sup>37</sup> The third, '*al*, normally indicates that something is on a surface,<sup>38</sup> but may indicate presence,<sup>39</sup> direction toward<sup>40</sup> or, like the first, east of.<sup>41</sup> The second plus the first indicates destination toward<sup>42</sup> or away from,<sup>43</sup> as well as "east of."<sup>44</sup> The second plus the third may be translated "in front of,"<sup>45</sup> or "downward," or "away from,"<sup>46</sup> or removal.<sup>47</sup> Faced with these choices, it should be obvious that birds do not fly on the surface of the firmament. "In the presence of" or "east of" make no better sense. But they do fly toward the firmament. There is in the language no "open expanse," but there is the clear indication that birds fly between the earth and sky. Since birds fly below the *raqia'*, it cannot be the atmosphere as Payne claims and the NASB indicates implicitly.

Looking further, fish usually are "of the water (river, sea)"<sup>48</sup> and birds (fowl) are "of the heavens,"<sup>49</sup> never of the firmament.



The phrases use the distinctive Hebrew pattern.<sup>50</sup> Only twice are fish “in the river”<sup>51</sup> and birds “in the heavens.”<sup>52</sup> The preposition in these four instances is *be*.

When all these uses are put together,<sup>53</sup> the firmament cannot be either the atmosphere or space, and so cannot be understood in contemporary terms. This eliminates YEC, OEC, and gap theory interpretations. The firmament, which the ancients clearly saw, was not half the body of a monster which had terrified the gods, as the myths of nations to the east claimed. It was rather something that Elohim made with a command to separate two great masses of water.

The lower waters also needed to be controlled. Hence God gathered them together (verse 9) so that the dry land appeared. However, the deep continued to exist.<sup>54</sup> It was considered the source of springs.<sup>55</sup> The ancient view had the disk of land floating on the deep,<sup>56</sup> with the dome of the firmament above and the sea around it. All of this is totally incompatible with the earth orbiting the sun in a solar system located in an arm of the Milky Way, with space extending billions of light years in every direction.<sup>57</sup>

## The Sun: Time and Tense

As noted earlier, a characteristic interpretation by the day-age contingent has the sun becoming visible as the primordial dense clouds thinned. Verses 16–18 report that God made two great lights and the stars. The verb in Hebrew is *‘asah* (6213), “to make,”<sup>58</sup> in the Qal imperfect tense, the form used throughout the chapter.<sup>59</sup> This is the common narrative tense used to describe past action. However, the OEC interpretation requires the heavenly bodies to be in existence since verse 1. How can we get around this? The OEC answer lies in manipulating the few tenses available in Hebrew. These contrast to the many in English and the modern languages of Europe.<sup>60</sup> The Hebrew imperfect may be translated as the past tense or, if the occasion demands, as the past perfect (pluperfect). So they translate: “God had made two great lights,” and so on. Unfortunately, this does not meet the requirement imposed by the meaning of “firmament.” Still, it is a possible translation. But does it fit?

One of the characteristics of Hebrew narrative is *vav*-consecutive (also *waw*-consecutive), the syllable *va* attached to the first word of a sentence. It is the “and” that starts most sentences in Genesis 1 in the King James version. Modern versions commonly omit it, though occasionally, apparently arbitrarily, they insert it as “then.” *Va* occurs elsewhere, as in “formless *and* empty,” “*and* darkness” and “*and* spirit of,” all in verse 2, for it is the common coordinating conjunction as well. But its occurrence as the first word in every narrative sentence is special. An introduction to Hebrew says:

It is a stylistic device of biblical Hebrew when narrating a series of past events to begin the narration

with an affix form of the verb and to continue it with a series of verbs in the prefix form with *vav* conversive.<sup>61</sup>

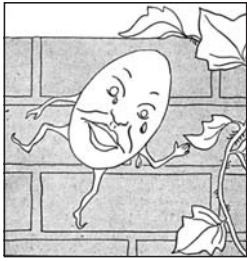
*Va* and a Qal imperfect, a prefix form, do not begin Genesis 1:1, 2, 15, 22; 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 24; 3:1, 3, 5, 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, either because the verse begins a new story or marks a shift from narrative to comment, or because a thought is split between the verse and its predecessor, or a different tense is used.<sup>62</sup> The usage is so consistent that one can almost put “next” where an initial *va* occurs. Since it occurs at the start of every verse from 14 through 19 except where a different form of a verb is used, and since it continues the pattern of both preceding and succeeding verses, there are no reasonable grounds for changing the tense of the verbs in the verses about celestial bodies from past to past perfect. Conformity to contemporary views about the universe is not a reasonable basis for revising the ancient text. The text clearly says that the making and placing of the sun, moon, and stars followed the growth of fruiting trees. Since verse 11 specifies that the seed is in the fruit, these cannot be mosses and ferns.

## The Patterns

This sequence fits a clear pattern that supports the notion that we have a literary arrangement in this passage. The two halves of the week are parallel. On the first day, there was light and darkness. On the fourth day, there were lights. On the second day, there was the separation of waters. On the fifth day, God created fish for the sea and birds for the space between the waters. On the third day, there was dry land and seed-bearing plants. On the sixth day, land animals and humankind were created, and fruit from the seed-bearing plants was assigned as their food.

In addition to the literary view, this pattern is compatible with YEC, for God can produce things in any order he pleases. However, the question then arises, why did an almighty God take six days to produce what he could produce instantaneously? This matches the view that Augustine of Hippo, the greatest of the Latin fathers, held, along with numerous others:<sup>63</sup> instantaneous creation of all things, with developmental unfolding of their potential over time.<sup>64</sup> It also fits in with a view he and other church fathers espoused, that the days cannot be literal because the markers were not there until they were made on the fourth day. But one must note that these interpretations are not implicit in the text.

The pattern is also compatible with the view that the six days represent six visions during which God gave the message that he is the source of all things and the one whose word is to be unconditionally obeyed. It is certain that God can arrange his message in a pattern that is satisfying as literature. Additionally, God can present his message within the cosmology of the time, one that has



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waters under the earth and above the dome of the sky. The one view which does not reasonably fit the pattern of the text is the concordism advocated by OEC.

What about the two minority views? Morton looks for meanings to make the biblical text as close as possible to being literally or historically true. Placing Eden in the dry Mediterranean Basin makes finding supportive or negative evidence difficult. However, this is not affected by the meaning of "firmament." This latter also holds for Fischer, since he attempts to give a "literal" reading of Genesis 1. There are, of course, additional problems.<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusions

What does all this mean for each of the five major views? First, YEC requires that the first words be understood as strictly meaning that "in the beginning God created ...," which is not necessarily the way the ancients would have understood them. It has no reason for the evening-morning sequence. It commonly requires a canopy to provide water for the Flood, but does not match the requirements of the text concerning the firmament. It may have a deep under the earth, but only until the chaos of the Flood demolishes it.<sup>66</sup> While it can be consistent with the production of light on the first day and can fit the order of the days, it produces a question about why an almighty God should have taken so long to produce a universe.<sup>67</sup> So there seem to be more problems than solutions, even without considering the scientific evidence that the universe is billions of years old.

Second, like the YEC view, OEC requires the same specific interpretation of the first words of the chapter. It demands that the universe contain a sun and stars at the time of the earth's creation, which runs counter to the need for light to be produced on the first day and the making and placement of lights on the fourth. It gives no proper reason for the less common evening-morning sequence for each of the six days, especially since there is hardly such a daily sequence applicable to ages, where one may speak of the dawn of a new age. The evening of an age is its ending, not its beginning. OEC cannot be made to agree with the biblical description of the firmament and the placement of the

heavenly bodies. It does not have a deep under the earth. In its normal interpretation, it does not fit the notion that fruiting plants existed before the celestial lights. But it requires stretching the translation, switching tenses, for the order of the days to come out right. If anything, there are more problems here than with YEC.

Third, gap theory has about half of the problems listed for OEC, plus the requirement that "was" be understood as "became" in verse 2. Beyond the biblical problems, there is the lack of a gap in the geologic record to match the posited destruction of all life on the earth. Indeed, events of the fourth day suggest that the destruction was universal, indicating that there was no earth to refurbish. Since this view adopts the timing of YEC for the re-creation, and the late fossils match current species, gap theory produces more problems than either view just noted.

Fourth, the view that Genesis 1 is a record of six visions allows either translation to the first words. Since it is not a causal description, there is no problem with the original production of light, with the making of the heavenly lights, or with the nature of the firmament. It counters the pagan mythology. It provides a basis for matching the half weeks, for the sequence of events, for the source of springs as viewed in antiquity. In sum, it matches every positive point of the fifth, literary, view. But it has one added advantage. It gives a clear reason for the evening-morning sequence. Neither view has any of the other problems noted in connection with YEC, OEC, or gap theory.

Will this analysis change any minds? Probably not, for the adoption of extended Humpty Dumpty semantics has deep roots. Notions absorbed in childhood and understood as determining one's eternal destiny are altered only with such extreme difficulty that change is unlikely. Only one holding the literary interpretation, which does not have threatening consequences, may easily accept the notion that it seems to be a series of visions. But the six visions may be viewed as part of the literary device. ■

## Acknowledgment

Comments from two reviewers and the editors improved the original version, for which I am grateful.

*The view  
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But it has  
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It gives  
a clear reason  
for the  
evening-  
morning  
sequence.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Lewis Carroll, "Humpty Dumpty," in *Through the Looking Glass* (Waterville, ME: Thorndike Press, n.d.), 108.

<sup>2</sup>Actually, this must be Gen. 1:1-2:3 or 2:4. Whether the first narrative (1) ends with verse 3, or (2) verse 4 is split, so that 4a goes with the earlier passage and 4b with what follows, or (3) all of verse 4 goes with the earlier passage, does not affect the discussion here.

<sup>3</sup>I refer to recent times. If one goes back several centuries, the most popular view was that God created chaos which, after a longer or shorter period, he formed as described in this chapter. By the eighteenth century most realized that the time frame required more than 6,000 years.

<sup>4</sup>While the several books by Henry Morris are probably best known, the notion goes back to George MacCready Price, who got the view from the Seventh Day Adventist founder, Ellen G. White. Two current sources are [www.icr.org](http://www.icr.org) and [www.answersingenesis.com](http://www.answersingenesis.com). Closely connected to this view is the insistence that there was a worldwide Flood a few millennia back, which produced most of the geological strata. This "flood geology" is associated with "creation science." The other views noted in this study hold that any flood had to be localized.

<sup>5</sup>There are a couple of major variants within this general view. One holds that all the individual species, genera or families were divinely created, thus varying the amount of evolution required. See [www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org) for an example. Another holds that new genetic material was introduced from time to time, with greater dependence on evolution. What is known as ID (intelligent design) is usually a variant of this general view.

<sup>6</sup>Glenn Morton, "The Mediterranean Flood," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* (PSCF hereafter) 49 (June 2001): 238-51; Dick Fischer, "In Search of the Historical Adam," PSCF 45 (December 1993): 241-51; 46 (March 1994): 47-57. John A. McIntyre, "The Historical Adam," PSCF 54 (September 2002):150-7.

<sup>7</sup>The *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909) was the *de facto* standard in fundamentalist circles for decades. Its view is not a return to the earlier view (see note 3), which began in chaos. This chaos follows ages of development.

<sup>8</sup>On this see David F. Siemens, Jr., "Life: An Analogy Between Views of its Creation and Eternal Life," PSCF 55 (2003): 232-8.

<sup>9</sup>Some scholars argue that henotheism rather than monotheism is supported. Arguments for and against this view are beyond the scope of this study. Some also discount the Babylonian connection.

<sup>10</sup>Depending on the date assigned to the composition of the text, some will change "Hebrews" to "Israelites" or "Jews." This does not affect the argument of this study.

<sup>11</sup>Analysis of ID falls mainly in this area, apart from some theological and philosophical problems that have been advanced.

<sup>12</sup>Transliteration of Hebrew words is simplified. Formal usage adds nothing for most of us, and scholars already know the precise spelling.

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, Gen. 1:21; Exod. 34:10; Num. 16:30; Pss. 51:10; 89:12, 47; 102:18; 104:30; Isa. 4:5; 41:20; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7; 48:7; 54:16; 57:19; 65:17f; Jer. 32:22; Ezek. 21:30; 28:13, 15; Amos 4:13; Mal. 2:10.

<sup>14</sup>*Shamayim*, 8064, is dual in form, though often translated as "heaven" rather than "heavens." Dual forms are used specifically to refer to two objects. For some reason, there are two heavens in both ancient Hebrew and the later Aramaic. It does not fit the notion of the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2). The numbers given with the Hebrew words are from Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, convenient for identification even without a grounding in Hebrew. However, Strong's unusual transliterations, which he intended to guide pronunciation, are not followed here, nor are the scholars' distinctions between the several vowels, which may alter with context.

<sup>15</sup>To be precise, dawning and twilight provide light before sunrise and after sunset. Thus there is some light beyond the edges of the hemisphere.

<sup>16</sup>Scofield also notes Jer. 4:23-26 and Isa. 24:1.

<sup>17</sup>New International Version. However, the Spanish equivalent, *Nueva Versión Internacional*, omits this note. It is not in the Authorized Version, to which Scofield's note was appended.

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# Article

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<sup>18</sup>The common claim is that *hayah* (1961) does not mean “became” unless the complement is prefixed with the particle *l-*. However, Paul Seely (personal communication) notes five passages where the obvious translation is “became” without the particle: Gen. 19:26; Exod. 8:17 (Hebrew, v. 13); 1 Sam. 16:21; 22:2; 2 Sam. 8:14 (contrasted with vv. 2 and 6 which have the prefix).

<sup>19</sup>*Ruach* (7307), the Hebrew term, is used for wind, for breath, and for spirit. In all of these usages, there is activity or effect. There appears to be no notion of air or gas except in motion.

<sup>20</sup>This involves a question about how “creation science” and “flood geology,” normal parts of YEC thought, can mesh with the invocation of miracles.

<sup>21</sup>See Gen. 1:8, 13, 19, 23, 31. That some have attempted to translate ‘*echad*. (259) as “one” rather than “first” is irrelevant. The word is used as both ordinal and cardinal. However, I have encountered some (not Hebrew scholars) who have made a point of this, apparently on the grounds that there could be no time before “day one.”

<sup>22</sup>Gen. 49:27; Exod. 18:13f; 29:39; Lev. 6:20; Num. 28:4; Deut. 28:67; 1 Kings 17:6; 2 Kings 16:15; 1 Chron. 16:40; 23:30; 2 Chron. 2:4; 13:11; 31:3; Ezra 33:3; Job 4:20; Pss. 65:8; 90:6; Eccles. 11:6.

<sup>23</sup>See Exod. 27:21; 29:41; Lev. 24:3; Ps. 55:17; Dan. 8:14, 26. Other passages with this order, but probably not bearing on the resolution of this problem, are: Exod. 16:8, 12f; Num. 9:15, 21; 28:8; Deut. 16:4; Esther 2:14; Ps. 30:5; Isa. 17:14; Ezek. 24:18; 33:22; Zeph. 3:3. Note the common usage of “day and night,” which runs counter to the notion that the start of the 24-hour period determines usage: Gen. 1:5, 14, 16, 18; 7:4, 12; 8:22; 31:39f; Exod. 10:13; 24:18; 34:28; Num. 11:32; Deut. 9:9, 11, 18, 25; 10:10; 1 Sam. 19:24; 28:20; 30:12; 1 Kings 19:18; Neh. 1:6; Job 2:13; 3:3; Ps. 19:2; 74:16; 77:2; 88:1; Prov. 7:9; Eccles. 8:16; Isa. 28:19; 38:12f; 62:6; Jer. 33:20; 36:30; Hosea 4:5; Jonah 1:17. The reverse order is found in 1 Sam. 25:16; 1 Kings 8:29; Neh. 4:22; Esther 4:16; Isa. 27:3. Morning, *boqer* (1242), is joined to night, *layil* (3915), in Exod. 10:13; Lev. 6:9; Judges 16:2; 19:25; Ruth 3:13; 1 Sam. 14:36; 1 Kings 19:35 Ps. 92:2; Isa. 21:12; Hosea 7:6.

<sup>24</sup>George A. Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, 7th ed. (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937), 287–9. This is from tablet IV of the Babylonian Creation Epic.

<sup>25</sup>Gen. 1:6f. A thorough discussion of the firmament is Paul H. Seely, “The Firmament and the Water Above,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991): 227–40; 54 (1992): 31–46.

<sup>26</sup>See Isa. 42:5; 44:24; Ps. 136:6.

<sup>27</sup>See Ezek. 6:11; 25:6; 2 Sam. 22:43.

<sup>28</sup>See Exod. 39:3; Num. 16:19; Isa. 46:19; Jer. 10:9.

<sup>29</sup>*Raqia'* occurs seventeen times in fifteen verses (Gen. 1:6, 7, 8, 14, 15, 17, 20; Pss. 19:1; 150:1; Ezek. 1:22, 23, 25, 26; 10:1; Dan. 12:3). Each occurrence is translated *stereōma* in LXX and *firmamentum* in the Vulgate except that LXX omits the word in Ezek. 1:26. There verses 25 and 26 read loosely, “And lo! A voice from above the firmament that was over their heads, which looked like a sapphire. On it was what looked like a throne, and above the throne was what looked like a man.”

<sup>30</sup>One must note that Strong does not normally assign numbers to common prepositions. These two have other functions, which accounts for their numbers. Genesis begins with *bereshit*, where *be* is a preposition, but the number 7225 is only for *reshit*, “beginning.” The term *mi* sometimes means “then.”

<sup>31</sup>The rest of the phrase is 7549, then the definite article plus 8064.

<sup>32</sup>*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 862.

<sup>33</sup>Gen. 6:11, 13 (first instance); 7:1; 13:9; 17:1, 18; 18:8, 22; 20:15; 23:12; 24:33, 51; 27:7; 30:33; 47:2, 7; 50:18.

<sup>34</sup>Gen. 10:9; 13:10; 24:7; 24:40; 27:7, 10; 29:26; 30:30; 32:4, 17, 18, 10, 21; 33:3, 14; 34:10; 35:31; 40:9, 43, 46; 43:9, 14, 15, 33; 44:14; 45:5, 7; 46:28; 47:6, 18; 48:15, 20.

<sup>35</sup>Gen. 23:17.

<sup>36</sup>Gen. 3:8; 4:14 (second instance); 16:6, 8; 31:35; 32:31; 35:1, 7; 36:6, 7; 43:34; 45:3.

<sup>37</sup>Gen. 27:46; 41:31; 47:13.

<sup>38</sup>Gen. 1:2, 29; 6:1; 7:3, 18, 23; 8:9; 11:4, 8, 9; 41:56.

<sup>39</sup>Gen. 11:28; 16:12; 17:3, 17.

<sup>40</sup>Gen. 18:16; 19:28.

<sup>41</sup>Gen. 23:19; 25:9, 18.

<sup>42</sup>Gen. 23:4, 8; 50:1, 13.

<sup>43</sup>Gen. 47:10.

<sup>44</sup>Gen. 49:30.

<sup>45</sup>Gen. 23:13.

<sup>46</sup>Gen. 4:14; 44:29.

<sup>47</sup>Gen. 6:7; 7:4; 8:8.

<sup>48</sup>Gen. 1:26, 28; Num. 11:22; Ps. 8:8; Ezek. 47:10.

<sup>49</sup>Gen. 1:26, 28, 30; 2:19, 20; 6:7; 7:3; 9:2; Deut. 28:26; 1 Sam. 17:44, 46; 2 Sam. 21:10; 1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; Job 12:7; 28:21; Ps. 8:8; Eccles. 10:20.

<sup>50</sup>Western European languages have special forms to indicate possession or use prepositions (the seas’ fish or the fish of the sea). Hebrew joins parts together something like the-fish-of-the-sea. The first term in the chain is a pregenitive or construct.

<sup>51</sup>Exod. 7:18, 21.

<sup>52</sup>Deut. 4:17; Prov. 30:19.

<sup>53</sup>Isa. 40:22 may be added. It likens the heavens to a veil or curtain (1852), which could have been thin or gauzy, and to a tent (168), which would have been made from a dark, heavy cloth woven from goat hair. The usual translations of Job 37:18 likens the skies to a cast mirror, which would have been made of bronze. However, the term used, *shechqim* (7834), usually refers to dust or clouds.

<sup>54</sup>Gen. 7:11; 8:2; 49:29; Pss. 71:20; 135:6.

<sup>55</sup>Ps. 78:15.

<sup>56</sup>Exod. 20:4; Deut. 5:8; Ps. 136:6. See also Deut. 33:13.

<sup>57</sup>There are some who, in biblical grounds, reject Copernicus. See [www.fixedearth.com](http://www.fixedearth.com).

<sup>58</sup>This is a common verb of action, more often translated “do.” It occurs 2,633 times. For a few of the various senses (not always well translated), note Gen. 1:7, God made the firmament; vv. 11f, trees make fruit; v. 31; 2:2–4, God made all his work; 12:5, Abraham made souls; 18:7f, a young man and Abraham made a calf.

<sup>59</sup>Exceptions are descriptive verbs, like “moved” (v. 2) and the several translated as imperatives.

<sup>60</sup>Ancient Greek had two simple past tenses (plus perfect tenses), imperfect and aorist, corresponding to the modern Spanish imperfect and preterite, or the French *imparfait* and *passé simple*. The former indicates action viewed as continuous; the second, punctiliar. English has only one simple past tense. All these modern languages have several perfect tenses as well as other compound tenses to express temporal relations. English, for example, includes it went, it has gone, it had gone, it was going, it would go, it would have gone, it has been going, it had been going, it would have been going.

<sup>61</sup>Bonnie Pedrotti Kittel, Vicki Hoffer and Rebecca Abts Wright, *Biblical Hebrew: A Text and Workbook* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 387. “Vav conversive” is their synonym for “vav consecutive.”

<sup>62</sup>Obviously, some of the verses listed have a similar indication of the continuity of the narrative.

<sup>63</sup>John H. Stek, “What Says the Scripture?” in Howard J. Van Till, et al., *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World’s Formation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 239, n. 51.

<sup>64</sup>He apparently had not adopted this view in his earliest interpretation of Genesis, *De Genesi contra Manicheos libri II*, written before his ordination. He had adopted it a few years later. See Roland J. Teske, trans., *St. Augustine on Genesis*, vol. 84 of *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 164f, 168, 170f, 173.

<sup>65</sup>See, for example, David F. Siemens, Jr., “Is Fisher’s Search Misdirected?” *PSCF* 46 (March 1994): 69.

<sup>66</sup>See Gen. 7:11.

<sup>67</sup>Augustine had already suggested that Genesis presented what human beings could understand, not the way God worked. See Teske, *St. Augustine on Genesis*, 175.