

Preliminary Textual Work on Creation Themes

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Genesis 1.1

1:1 בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ

The Hebrew text can be rendered a number of different ways--all are literal translations:

- 1) When God started creating the heavens and the earth
- 2) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth
- 3a) With *reshit* God created the heavens and the earth
See Proverbs 8.22: "The LORD created me *reshit*

יהוה קנני ראשית דרכו קדם מפעליו מאז
Who is created to be *reshit* ?

Wisdom. . . on the basis of Proverbs 8.1:

הלא־חכמה תקרא ותבונה תתן קולה

- 3b) With Wisdom God created the heavens and the earth
- 4) Bereshit created gods with the heavens and the earth
- 5) Bereshit created gods alongside Heavens and Earth

These kinds of readings surface in various traditions: Greek, Targum, Rabbinic literature, "gnosticism".

A project for study: Biblically-based gnosticism is rooted in bible; works just like classical midrash.

Syriac: כִּבְרֵי בְרֵא אֱלֹהִים בְּרֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ Agrees with Hebrew exactly.

Alexandrinus, U₂ (PAmherst 003--contains Gen 1.1-5)

Old Greek: ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν In the beginning God made. . .

Aquila: ἐν κεφαλῶν ἐκτίσεν θεὸς οὐρανὸν καὶ τ[ῆ]ν γῆν In heading [playing on ראש ?] God created...
 translates Hebrew אֶת reserving ποιεω
 for עשה

Targums:

ONK 1:1 בקדמין ברא יוי ית שמיא וית ארעא

In ancient times the LORD created the heavens and the earth.

PSJ 1:1 מן אוולא ברא אלקים ית שמיא וית ארעא

From the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

NFT 1:1 מלקדמין בחכמה ברא דייי שכלל ית שמיא וית ארעא

From ancient times with wisdom the son of LORD perfected the heavens and the earth.

[** This is the result of a correction after erasure--vav before שכלל is still visible]

Perhaps:

בחוכמתא ברא ייי ושכלל

With Wisdom the LORD created and perfected. . .

[P Nfmg and VN lack "and perfected"]

Hebrew *reshit* = Son

Jerome *Hebr quaest.* Gen 1.1

4 Ezra = 2 Esdras 6:38, 43: In the beginning of creation you spoke the word . . . and your word perfected the work.

Psalm 104.24

מה־רבו מעשיך יהוה כלם בחכמה עשית מלאה הארץ קניינך

How many are your works, O LORD! With wisdom you made all of them; the earth is full of your creatures.

Aramaic: מה סגיעין הינון עובדך יהוה כולהון בחכמתא עבדתא מליא ארעא קניינך

Aramaic = Hebrew

Syriac: ܡܗ ܫܘܓܝܝܢ ܗܝܢܘܢ ܥܘܒܕܕܟ ܝܗܘܗ ܟܘܠܗܘܢ ܒܚܚܡܬܐ ܥܒܕܬܐ ܡܠܝܐ ܐܪܥܐ ܩܢܝܝܢܟ
ܐܝܬܐ ܟܢܝܝܢܟ

Syriac= Aramaic = Hebrew

Greek: ὡς ἐμεγαλύνθη τὰ ἔργα σου κύριε πάντα ἐν σοφίᾳ ἐποίησας ἐπληρώθη ἡ γῆ τῆς κτήσεώς σου

Greek=Syriac=Aramaic=Hebrew

Tosefta Sanhedrin 8:7: “Our rabbis taught: Adam was created on the eve of the Sabbath. Why? So that the sectarians could not say, ‘The Hold One, blessed be He, had a partner in His work of creation.’”

Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 12d: “The sectarians asked Rabbi Simlai, “How may gods created the world?” He said to them, “Are you asking me? Go and ask the first man, as it is written (Deuteronomy 4:32): ‘Ask now of the first days which were before you, since God created man upon the earth.’ It is not written here ‘they created’ but ‘he created.’” They said to him, “It is written, ‘In the beginning God created (Genesis 1:1).’ “Is it written, ‘(they) created?’ It is only written, ‘(he) created.’” Rabbi Simlai said, “In every passage where the sectarians go wrong, they have an answer close by.”

In different ways, both texts seem to testify to the popularity of traditions which claimed exalted status for Adam.

For more, see Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), especially 109–14, 124–27, 151.

Creation in Job

Job 38:2-7 When the Lord first speaks to Job from the whirlwind, Job is reprimanded for questioning his suffering :

Hebrew

Aramaic

Greek

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>2 מי זה מחשיך עצה במלין בלידעת</p> <p>Who is this who darkens counsel with words with no knowledge!</p> | <p>מין דין דמחשיך מלכתא מן במליא מדלית מנדעא</p> <p>[Same as Hebrew]</p> | <p>τίς οὗτος ὁ κρύπτων με βουλήν συνέχων δὲ ῥήματα ἐν καρδίᾳ ἐμὲ δὲ οἶεται κρύπτειν</p> <p>Who is this who <u>conceals</u> counsel from me, <u>encloses</u> words in his heart and <u>expects to conceal them from me!</u></p> |
| <p>3 אזרנא כגבר חלציך ואשאלך והודיעני</p> <p>Gird up your loins like a man; I will question you, and you will declare to me!</p> | <p>זרו כענ [כדון] היך גברא חרציך ואבענך ותהודענני</p> <p>[Same as Hebrew]</p> | <p>ζῶσαι ὥσπερ ἀνὴρ τὴν ὀσφύν σου ἐρωτήσω δέ σε σὺ δέ μοι ἀποκρίθητι</p> <p>Gird up your loins like a man; I will question you, and you will answer me!</p> |
| <p>4 איפה היית ביסדני ארץ הגד אסידעת בינה</p> <p>Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell!-- if you have understanding!</p> | <p>האן הויתא במשתתי ארעא חוי אין ידעתא ביונתא</p> <p>Where were you when I established the earth? Show!--if you have understanding!</p> | <p>ποῦ ἦς ἐν τῷ θεμελιῶν με τὴν γῆν ἀπάγγειλον δέ μοι εἰ ἐπίστη σύνεσιν</p> <p>Where were you when I founded the earth? Announce to me if you know understanding!</p> |
| <p>5 מישם ממדיה כי תדע או מינטה עליה קו</p> <p>Who set its measurements? If indeed you know! Who stretched out a measuring line upon it?</p> | <p>מן שוי משחתהא ארום תדע או מן מתח עלה מתקולתא:</p> <p>Who placed the measurements? Since you know! Who stretched out a measuring line upon it?</p> | <p>τίς ἔθετο τὰ μέτρα αὐτῆς εἰ οἶδας ἢ τίς ὁ ἐπαγαγὼν σπαρτίον ἐπ' αὐτῆς</p> <p>Who placed the measurements of it? If you know! Who drew a cord upon it?</p> |
| <p>6 עלמה אדניה הטבעו או מיירה אבן פנתה</p> <p>Upon what were its bases planted? Who cast its cornerstone</p> | <p>על מה סומכיהא [סמכיהא] אטמעו או מן שדא אבן זויתאה [זווייתה]</p> <p>[Same as Hebrew]</p> | <p>ἐπὶ τίνος οἱ κρίκοι αὐτῆς πεπήγασιν τίς δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ βαλὼν λίθον γωνιαῖον ἐπ' αὐτῆς</p> <p>Onto what were its rings fastened? Who cast the cornerstone upon it?</p> |
| <p>7 ברן יחד כוכבי בקר ויריעו כליבני אלהים</p> <p>while the morning stars sang together and all the divine beings shouted for joy?</p> | <p>בזמן דמשבחין כחדא כוכבי צפרא ומיבבין כל כתי מלאכיא</p> <p>in the time that the morning stars praised together and all the group of angels made a joyful noise?</p> | <p>ὅτε ἐγενήθησαν ἄστρα ἤνεσάν με φωνῇ μεγάλη πάντες ἄγγελοί μου</p> <p>When the stars came into being, all of my angels praised me in a great voice.</p> |

Syriac:

7: ܕܠܡܢ ܫܘܒܢܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ

Perhaps you were born the first man? Or before the hills you were conceived?

8: ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ [ܦܝܪܘܡ] ܡܝܘܢܐ

Have you listened in on the mystery of the Lord? And do you alone uncover wisdom?

9: ܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡܐ

What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that these do not?

[Note that the Syriac seems to have affinities with the Hebrew and the Aramaic.]

As in Job 38, the point here is that Job does not possess the requisite insight. Note though that the language of Eliphaz' rebuke--"Are you the first man that was born? Where you brought forth before the hills?--implies that the first human did. Because he was present at the creation of the world, the first man can declare the secrets which Job cannot.

Genesis 1.2

והארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על־פני תהום ורוח אלהים מרחפת על־פני המים

And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was on the face of the Deep, and a wind from God was hovering on the face of the water.

Syriac: Follows Hebrew exactly; *seyame* dots indicate plural forms: “faces” and “waters”.

Old Greek: ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος καὶ σκοτός ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο* ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος**

* E (Bodlianus): ἐπεφέρετω ** E (Bodlianus): ὕδατος

And the earth was invisible and unformed, and darkness was on the Abyss, and a wind of God was hovering on the water.

Aquila[jBrhbs-Hx]: ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν κένωμα καὶ [ο]υθεν [rest of line unattested a']; empty and nothingness

Theod [jC₂Brhbs-Hx]: θὲν καὶ ουθεν [neologism to echo Hebrew?]

Sym[c₂]: ἀργόν καὶ ἀδιακριτόν uncultivated and undifferentiated

Both **Aquila** and **Theod** render Hebrew על־פני literally with ἐπὶ πρόσωπον

Aramaic:

וּאֲרַעָא הוּת צְדִיא וְרוּקְנִיא וְחֲשׂוּכָא פְרִישׁ עַל־אֲפִי תְהוּמָא וְרוּחָא מִן־קְדָם יוּי [דִּיִּי] מְנַשְׁבָּא ^{ONK}1:2
[מתנשבא] על־אפי מִיא

And the earth was empty and barren, and the darkness was spread out on the face of the Deep, and a wind from before the LORD was blowing on the face of the water.

וּאֲרַעָא הוּת תְּהִיא וּבְהִיא צְדִיא מְבַנְיָנֵשׁ וְרוּקְנִיא מִן כָּל בְּעִיר וְחֲשׂוּכָא עַל אֲנְפִי תְהוּמָא וְרוּחָא רַחֲמִין מִן־קְדָם אֲלִקִּים מְנַתְבָּא עַל־אֲנְפִי מִיא ^{PSJ}1:2

And the earth was formless and chaotic, empty of people and barren of all creatures, and the darkness was on the face of the Deep, and a merciful wind from before God was blowing on the face of the water.

[Has the Aramaic simply translated the problematic *tohu* and *bohu*? So also NFT (immediately below)?]

וּאֲרַעָא הוּת תְּהִיא וּבְהִיא וְצְדִי [וְצְדִיָּה] מִן בְּרִנְשׁ וּמִן בְּעִיר וְרוּקְנָא מִן כָּל פְּלַחַן צְמַחִין וּמִן אֵילָנִין וְחֲשׂוּכָא פְרִישׁ עַל־אֲפִי תְהוּמָא וְרוּחָא רַחֲמִין מִן־קְדָם יוּי הוּהּ מְנַשְׁבָּא עַל־אֲפִי מִיא ^{NFT}1:2

And the earth was formless and chaotic and empty of people and creatures, and desolate of botanical cultivation and of trees, and the darkness was spread out on the face of the Deep, and a merciful wind from before the LORD was blowing on the face of the water.

Genesis 1.3

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי־אֹר

And God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light.

Syriac: Follows Hebrew exactly.

Greek: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός γενηθήτω φῶς καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς

[p] has τὸ φῶς ; [q] omits καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς

Aquila: καὶ [ε]ἶπεν ὁ θεὸς [γ]ε[ν]ηθήτω φῶς καὶ [ε]γέν[ε]το φῶς

Aramaic:

ואמר יי יהי נהורא והוה נהורא ^{ONK}1:3

And the LORD said, “ Let there be light.” And there was light.

ואמר אלקים יהי נהורא לאנהרא עלמא ומייד הוה נהורא ^{PSJ}1:3

And God said, “Let there be light for lighting up the world.” And immediately there was light.

ואמר ממרא דייה יהוי נהור והות נהור כגזירת ממריה ^{NFT}1:3

And the Memre of the LORD said “Let there be light.” And there was light, according to the decree of the Memre.