

Chapter 2

In the Beginning

Abstract The people of the ancient Middle East took for granted that before creation chaos and darkness ruled. Their story of creation is thus the story of putting order in the dimensions of space and time. As light was a condition for life it was first on the agenda, followed by further steps from putting order to the bodies of water, creating vegetation to ensure food for the world of life. Once observers were created, also the day and night came under order. Life commenced in the hydrosphere and atmosphere followed by the creation of life on land and *Homo sapiens* was the last to appear on the sixth day enabling the creator to rest on Sabbath.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Genesis 1: 1–2).

Albeit that these sentences and those which follow cannot be considered by a geologist as an answer to the question: “How did it all begin?”, still one must agree that these sentences were in the first place answers to the enquiring human mind. Secondly they show that this mind took it for granted that formlessness, disorder and darkness preceded form, order and light.

The logical human step to enable creation is to bring light to the surroundings and indeed this step follows: ***And God said, Let there be light: and there was light (ditto 1:3). A step which also brings order in the dimension of time: And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. (ditto 1:5).***

As will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter these ideas of cosmic order were asked and answered by the people of the ancient Middle East and most probably were first chanted and later written by the people of Sumer, located at the separate outlets, at that time, of the two rivers, namely the Euphrates and the Tigris (Hidekkel) to the Persian Gulf. The life of the Sumerians was dependent on the water of these rivers which they saw rising when the rains fell on the mountains to the east, and the sea stretched endlessly to the south. Their explanation for the existence of the various bodies of water was, from their point of view logical: ***And God made the firmament, and***

divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: And it was so. (ditto 1:6).

After order was achieved on the spatial vertical ('Z') coordinate, it was requested on the spatial coordinates ('X, Y') and indeed: ***God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas:*** (ditto 1: 9–10).

As the people composing these sentences were not living in the desert, then once there is land an explanation for its cover, i.e. the vegetation, has to follow. The creation of which must be prior to the creation of the living world, which will be fed by it. Thus: ***Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.*** (ditto 1:11).

The introduction of grasses, seeds, trees and fruits reminded the composers of the changes of seasons: the gloomy winter, with its short days bringing rains, and the change to the sunny, long day of summers with ripening cereals and fruits. The composers and chanters of the story of creation then go back to the creation of the heavens and tell us about the role of ***the lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:*** (ditto 1:15).

At this stage life can appear. Though not being acquainted with the science of evolution, the ancients give priority to the creation of life in the hydro-sphere and the atmosphere: ***Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven*** (ditto 1:20).

The intuition of the ancients regarding the appearance of creatures on the chronological tree of life continues. After giving priority on this tree to creation of life in the hydrosphere and atmosphere they allow life on land to appear. First come the creatures which enable human life, i.e. cattle, followed by other terrestrial creatures: ***Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.*** (ditto 1:24).

Now when all was prepared for the *Homo sapiens* to arrive he is created male first and female second ***Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth*** (ditto 1:26). Is the highlight put on *man in our image, after our likeness*, is a remnant from the period that the idols of gods were created in the image of men?

Then comes the seventh day, the Jewish Shabbat, the day was blessed and sanctified because it was day on which the Lord rested. The name of this day is connected to the number seven, in Hebrew *sheva*. (In other Semitic languages the number seven is pronounced in a similar way), and to the word *shavo't* namely 'to cease work'. A week in Hebrew is *shavooa*. Another similar word is: *shvooah* i.e. oath. Thus this number has an element of sanctified in its various

appearances, which I suggest is connected with the cult of the moon and had a religious meaning even before the time of the Hebrews.

In the forthcoming chapters I will return to this number. In conclusion the ancient Hebrews adopted the seventh day of every week as the holy day although detaching it from the lunar cult.

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