

THE FOURTH CREATIVE “DAY” of GENESIS

Answers to questions about the Sun, Moon, and Stars

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Those opposed to the Bible often point to an apparent conflict between the known natural history of the universe and the “making” of the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth creative “day” of Genesis. Opponents pursue this objection, even though a well-known Bible teacher (J. Vernon McGee) has pointed out that “*God didn’t create the sun and moon at this time. They were already up there. God just brought them around into position.*”¹ McGee’s explanation is not new; the Jewish commentator RASHI (1040 – 1105) offered the same explanation.

Careful readers of the KJV Bible were aware that the writer of Genesis did not consider the word “asah” to be equivalent to the word “bara” used for the creation in Genesis 1:1. The reason for this being known is that the writer of Genesis used both בָּרָא “bara” and עָשָׂה “asah” in Genesis 2:3. The KJV of this verse is shown below.

KJV Gen. 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made†. †*Heb. created to make.*
(bara) (asah) (*Margin note in the 1611 KJV*)

The Hebrew for the second line is shown below. (Hebrew reads from right to left.) The translation of בָּרָא “bara” as *had created* reflects the Hebrew meaning of completed action in a manner that cannot be confused.

לַעֲשׂוֹת אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֲשֶׁר מַלְאֲכָתּוֹ מִכֹּל שָׁבַת Start here.
“for making” God had created which his work from all he had ceased
or “to make” (bara)

The 1611 KJV margin note “*Heb. created to make.*” is a correct translation and explained that the Hebrew text differed in an important way from the KJV English translation printed on the page. Why the margin note? The KJV translators had been instructed to follow the 1568 Bishops’ Bible as much as they could, and the marginal notes were to be only those needed for clarifying the meanings of Hebrew and Greek terms.

When בָּרָא “bara” and עָשָׂה “asah” are recognized as having different meanings, the translation “and made” in ^{KJV}Genesis 2:3 conveys that God did two different actions. First God בָּרָא (bara) “created,” and subsequently God עָשָׂה (asah) “prepared/made.”

What does this mean for the fourth creative time?

The first part of the ^{KJV}Genesis 1:16 reads: “ And God **made** two great lights . . .” Because “asah” and “bara” have different meanings, the “*And God made*” does **not** indicate the creation of the sun and the moon. That first creation had already taken place as stated in Genesis 1:1. The word “asah” (translated “made”) affirms some additional (details not known to us) preparation of the sun “to rule the day” and the moon “to rule the night.” The words “*prepared,*” “*did,*” “*wrought,*” or “*brought-forth*” are much better representations of the meaning of עָשָׂה “asah” in Genesis 1:16. The word בָּרָא “bara” includes the concept of “newness,” a connotation עָשָׂה “asah” does not include.

The English word **made** is also not equivalent to create. How many times did someone “make the bed” at your residence this week? “Make the bed” would not normally be considered a command to create new bed.

The “When” of the Actions of Genesis 1:16-18: References to Past Actions

A number of commentators have rendered “asah” in Genesis 1:16 as **had made**. **Had made** is correct as to the placement of Genesis 1:16 in time and provides a second reason that Genesis 1:16 does not indicate the new creation of the sun and moon. An explanation for the correctness of **had made** (with the provision that the action “made” is subsequent to the “bara” creation and **not** a first creation of the sun and moon) will now be given.

The first step in identifying and explaining the “when” of the actions of Genesis 1:14-18 is to identify repeated statements and actions.

Why? Because each of the five Hebrew verses (Genesis 1:14-18) start with a verb that is prefixed by the Hebrew letter ׀ “waw” meaning “and.” These verbs are of the form that is normally used for telling of events that are sequential in time. That is **not** always true, and is **not** true for Genesis 1:16-18. The non-sequential pattern and

its identification was explained by S. R. Driver in 1874.² Driver described the Hebrew pattern of a writer first describing the whole of an event and then: “. . . *as though forgetting that he had anticipated, proceed to annex the particulars by the same means: . . .*” “By the same means” refers to continuing the story with another sentence beginning with a verb that is prefixed by the Hebrew letter ׀ “waw” meaning “and.” Driver further explains that when the writer partially repeats that which he has just written; “. . . *in neither of these cases is it implied that the event introduced by the ׀ is subsequent to that denoted by the previous verb: . . .*”

Genesis 1:14-15 relates the commands and then concludes with “**and it was so,**” stating that all the commands have been done. The “**and it was**” represents Driver’s “**previous verb,**” and acts as the previous verb for all of the next three verses (Genesis 1:16-18). Genesis 1:14-15 is printed below with two bolded and numbered statements.

^{KJV}Gen.1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven **to divide the day from the night (1);**
and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

^{KJV}Gen.1:15 And let them be for lights **in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth (2):**
and it was so.

Genesis 1:16-18, which follows, repeats the same commands! The writer has not forgotten. The purpose is to add retrospective information about the preparation of the “two great lights” and add the additional function of ruling. I have added the word “**had**” in Genesis 1:16 because the purpose of this section is to explain why “**had**” provides the correct time reference for the statements of Genesis 1:16-18 following the “**and it was so**” of Genesis 1:15.

^{KJV}Gen.1:16 And God **had** made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night:
he made the stars also.

^{KJV}Gen.1:17 And God set them **in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth (2),**

^{KJV}Gen.1:18 And to rule over the **day** and over the **night, and to divide the light from the darkness (1):**
and God saw that *it was good.*

“Light” and “darkness” are equivalent repeats of the words “day” and “night” of Genesis 1:14. Equivalency is verified by the way they are used here and by “light” and “darkness” being so named and so identified in the dividing and naming of Genesis 1:4-5.

Since Driver’s (1874) publication there has been continuing study of the verbal and chiasmic patterns of the Hebrew Old Testament. Current scholarship calls adding explanatory detail, signaled by partial repetition, a “temporal overlay.” Randall Buth addressed the identification of “temporal overlay” in the proceedings of a 1993 conference of scholars of Biblical Hebrew.³ His conclusion, supported by examples in Judges, was:

“As we look at examples of this phenomena, we will notice two different ways in which the temporal overlay can be signaled outside of the grammar. One method is through lexical reference and/or repetition; the other method is based on culturally natural semantic relationships with the previous sentence.”

Buth additionally states: “*Not every word need be repeated in order to provide a lexical signal to a grammatically unmarked temporal overlay.*”

In Genesis 1:14-15 the order of the numbered phrases is (1) followed by (2). In Genesis 1:16-18 the order is (2) followed by (1). This type of **chiasmic** patterning is common in the Bible and reveals that Genesis 1:14-18 has been constructed as a unit. In Genesis 1:1-31 there are four examples of verse sections that follow an “**and it was so**” and conclude with “**and God saw that *it was good.***” All four of the examples meet the criteria for temporal overlay, and as a group, these examples verify that Genesis 1:16-18 is a temporal overlay.

For Genesis 1:14-18 the text corresponding to Driver’s and Buth’s criteria for recognizing “temporal overlay” are:

1. Genesis 1:14-15 is the first telling of the whole of the event, the commands and their completion.
2. “**And it was**” is Driver’s “*previous verb.*” (“**And it was**” is the verb in the phrase “**and it was so.**”)
3. Genesis 1:16-18 repeats the numbered phrases of Genesis 1:14-15 and adds additional information. In accordance with Driver’s statement, Genesis 1:16 (the annexed particulars) is **not** subsequent to “**and it was so.**” Genesis 1:16-18 are all prior to the “**and it was so.**”

The translation “**had**” provides the shift back in time to before the “**and it was so**” of Genesis 1:15. Genesis 1:16 establishes that the sun and moon are not gods. The sun and moon are described as inanimate objects that perform functions and act as commanded by the God of Israel. Translated “prepared” the statement affirms some additional (details not known to us) “*asah*” preparation of the sun “to rule the day” and the moon “to rule the night.”

Summarizing, we have now determined four things relating to the meaning of Genesis 1:16-18

- (1) The Hebrew of Genesis 2:3 shows that the writer of Genesis did **not** consider “asah” and “bara” to be equivalent. As a consequence, the claim that Genesis 1:16 indicates the first creation of the sun and moon fails.
- (2) The claim that Genesis 1:16 indicates the first creation of the sun and moon would **not** be true even if “asah” were equivalent to “bara.” Claiming “asah” equivalent to “bara” makes “asah” a lexical reference to the “bara” creation of Genesis 1:1 and an indicator of “temporal overlay.”
- (3) Genesis 1:16-18 constitute a “temporal overlay” so that the first word of Genesis 1:16 is properly translated **and had prepared** or **and had made**. The **“had”** provides the shift back in time to before the “and it was so.” (Here **prepared** is used as an example for all the possible meanings of “asah” that differ from the KJV translation **made**, and **made** is not considered equivalent to create.)
- (4) As a consequence of the “temporal overlay” the translation of the three parts of Genesis 1:16 becomes:
 (A) And God **had** prepared/made two great lights; (B) the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; (C) *he had prepared/made* the stars also.

Some assert (incorrectly assuming “asah” means “bara”) that the stars are created during the fourth creative time. That assertion is contradicted by the creation text of Job 38:4-7 which speaks of the laying of the foundations of the earth. The laying of the foundations is described as taking place when:

^{KJV} **Job 38:7** *“When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”*

Job 38:7 indicates that the “stars of morning” were already there before Genesis 1:2, and voids the assertion that the sun and moon were created during the fourth creative time. The Hebrew that mentions the stars in Genesis 1:16 is literally “and the stars.” Translating “**and had made**” assumes that the **“and”** refers back to the verb “asah.”

Why is the creation of the sun and moon an issue?

Critics of the Bible continue to claim that the Bible teaches the creation of the sun and moon in Genesis 1:16, when planet earth already exists having land, seas, and plant life on the land. For the critic, this produces a desired conflict between the Bible and the sequence of events known to science, where the sun exists before planet earth has land, seas, and plant life on the land. This conflict is then used as evidence that the Bible contains error. As we have shown above, the critics’ claim of conflict vanishes.

Many advocates of an earth created about 6,000 years ago also justify their own claim for a 6,000 year old planet earth by claiming that “asah” is equivalent to “bara.” Having incorrectly claimed that “asah” is equivalent to “bara,” the advocates of the 6,000 year old earth are unable to counter the critics’ claim of conflict. Many of these advocates also claim the creation of the stars in the fourth creation time, adding more conflict between the Bible and known astronomy. The critics are handed an issue which they then use with great effect in colleges and universities.

The following (*annotated*) quote from C. S. Lewis is relevant to this issue.

“He (*the devil*) always sends errors into the world in pairs -pairs of opposites. And he always encourages us to spend a lot of time thinking which is the worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one. But do not let us be fooled. We have to keep our eyes on the goal and go straight through between both errors.” C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Readers interested in more information showing that the young earth creationist view is **not** in accordance with the biblical text can find such information in the booklet ***Genesis One and the Age of the Earth***.

Genesis One and the Age of the Earth is available as a **FREE** download at **www.creationingenesis.com**

11/23/2008

End Notes: _____

¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, Volume 1, page 15 (1981).

² S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and Some Other Syntactical Questions*, (Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1998) first pub. 1874, page 81, section 75.

³ Both, Randall, *Methodological collision between source criticism and discourse analysis: The problem of ‘unmarked temporal overlay and the pluperfect/nonsequential ‘wayyiqtol’*, In Robert D. Bergen (ed.), *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, pages 138-54, Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics. 1994 (ISBN 1556710070)