

“AND IT WAS GOOD!”

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Genesis 1-2 (Selections)**

Shortly thereafter God was in receipt of a notice to show cause why he shouldn't be cited for failure to file an environmental impact statement. He was granted a temporary planning permit for the project, but was stymied by a Cease and Desist Order for the earthly part.

At the hearing, God was asked why he began his earthly project in the first place. He replied that he just liked to be creative.

Then God said, "Let there be light."

Officials immediately demanded to know how the light would be made. Would it require strip mining? What about thermal pollution?

God explained that the light would come from a huge ball of fire, and provisional approval was granted with the proviso that no smoke would result.

The authorities demanded the issuance of a building permit, and (to conserve energy) required that the light be left off half the time. God agreed, saying he would call the light "Day" and the darkness "Night." Officials replied that they were only interested in protecting the environment, not in semantics.

God said, "Let the earth bring forth green herb and such as many seed."

The EPA agreed, so long as only native seed was used.

Then God said, "Let waters bring forth creeping creatures having life; and the fowl that may fly over the earth."

Officials pointed out this would require approval from the Department of Game coordinated with the Heavenly Wildlife Federation and the Audubongelic Society.

Everything went along smoothly until God declared that he intended to complete the project in six days.

Officials informed God it would take at least 200 days to review his many waiver applications and environmental impact statements. After that there would have to be a public hearing, and then there would be a 10-12 month probationary period before....

At this point, God created Hell.

O.k, let's get serious.

You do know that we humans occupy a very small space in this immensely vast Universe!

Traveling at the speed of light – 671 million miles per hour – it would take us 100,000 years to cross the Milky Way. But we still wouldn't have gone very far. By recent estimates, the Milky Way is just one of 2 trillion galaxies in the observable Universe, and the region of space that they occupy spans at least 90 billion light-years. If you imagine Earth shrunk down to the size of a single grain of sand, and you imagine the size of that grain of sand relative to the entirety of the Sahara Desert, you are still nowhere near to comprehending how infinitesimally small a position we occupy in space.

O.k. – Just setting the parameters.

From an ancient text – still vibrant; a human cries out into the vast expanse of this universe: (I imagine him standing out in the desert, in the dark – looking up at the heavens – the stars as multiple as the grains of sand he stands upon (no light pollution!):

[3] When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established;

[4] what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?

[5] Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor.

[6] Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet,

[7] all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

[8] the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea.

[9] O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth! (Psalm 8)

This “ancient” has focused his life, and the life of his family and civilization!

You know “we” have a view of life – of existence. This view, philosophy – is pregnant with possibilities, renewal, beauty and hope! It starts with...

“In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth...”

So begins the book of Western Civilization!

So begins the book of Judaism!

So begins the book of Christianity!

Where does a society begin its account of its beginnings, but at the beginning - although the people of Israel did not articulate this story of beginnings, until centuries after they became identified as a people, a nation.

In fact, the opening story of creation in Genesis 1 through Genesis 2:4a - is not the earliest creation story of the people of Israel. The earliest story of creation in the Bible begins at Genesis 2:4b (keep in mind the chapter and verse designations are artificial, they were placed in the text several hundreds of years later).

This creation story differs from the one that precedes it. But the people of Israel through their

shared human experiences - wove together various strands of their interpretations of God's handiwork.

Two beautiful creation stories woven together, with their shared concepts and their creative differences. In Genesis 1, the human is created on the 6th day - the apex of God's creation! (I know some today have trouble with giving the human that high regard, but they were the ones writing things down.)

Well, in the creation story of Genesis 2:4b and following, the human is created earlier and the plants and animals are created for his pleasure and enjoyment.

Two wonderful creation stories of our human beginnings, composed by a people searching for meaningful existence - within their world. They were interpreting their lives and world through experience and contemplation. They sensed God was at the foundation of their lives and their world.

As you can figure out - they were not so closed, so narrow as to demand only one way of interpreting their lives under God. No - they were moved and excited by various views of how God created this wondrous universe. And so they included 2 creation stories!

Other creation stories were also being shared in other parts of God's creation. Mesopotamian and Egyptian creation stories - talk of the world emerging from a primal, boundless sea - similar to Genesis 1 where God fashions the universe from a shapeless watery abyss ("and the earth was without form and void").

The flood story of Noah, where God returns the world to its original watery chaos, follows closely the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh epic. Too often we underestimate the ancient peoples and their quest for a meaningful existence.

Our Bible is a wondrous, challenging, inspiring book! It is our Christian Book! It has been written over a period of 1,000 years for the Hebrew Scriptures (O.T.), and 100 years for the New Testament.

It contains Israel's story and it contains the early developing Christian story.

We find God within its stories, and we often find ourselves! Notice! Remember! Memorize! God created, and it was Good! This is Foundational!

There have been and remain a plethora of creation stories – from ancient Sumer to Biological Determinism – Sumerian declaration that “An” the male sky god, and “Ki” the female earth, had a son “Enlil” who carried off his mother “Ki” – taking his father's place in the pantheon of gods.

Nammu (a sea god) is “the mother, who gave birth to heaven and earth.”

- The Norse gods created a world from severed limbs of other gods.

- Some of the Hindu believe creation took place thru one man (Purusha). He was totally alone/but was actually “everything”. He sacrifices himself to create existence. The result? Butter – which turned into all life forms, the universe, and other gods to rule existence.
- The Aztec Earth Spirit is torn to pieces by the gods and create a stable world.

The subtlety of accumulated beliefs, in conjunction with the scientism of today – wreak havoc on how we view our world, and our part in it. We need to educate ourselves.

The Judeo/Christian Creation story has formed much of what is good in our world today!

The Creation story in Genesis 1, and the first human characters - Adam and Eve are household cultural identifiers in the Western world. Of course, we are familiar with this story, and this couple. But, what does the story represent, as well as the couple? There is a powerful worldview in formation as Genesis begins its journey into human existence and our relationship with creation and each other! For millennia this worldview was enfolded, grasped in our Western consciousness.

The early Hebrew were confronted with the realities of life and death;

- with love and hate,
- with pain and pleasure,
- with comedy and tragedy,
- with the mediocre and the sublime
- with hopes fulfilled and hopes destroyed
- with choosing meaning or nothingness.

Was nature in conflict with society? Were humans singular creatures, or created for relationships?

And so they began their story.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Notice - God created!

Meaningful existence is decreed!

God the Creator,

God the giver of meaning and order - is present.

Even in the midst of chaos and confusion - God makes order.

God speaks and there is light!
Darkness is not to be the plight of humanity.
We are created for light, illumination!

This is a good creation! Over and over and over again and again and again – what God created was good. Values were present.

But -- there is darkness, there is death, there is pain and loss. How do we deal with all of this? First - we deny its sovereignty! We deny it is fated to us!

God created!
God forms meaning from our chaos.
God gives us light, God exposes the darkness.
Recall - John I, Jesus Christ - the Word of God - "shines in the darkness - and the darkness can never extinguish it."
The Faith Worldview continues into the New Testament.

The early Hebrews - recognizing all the pitfalls of life - refused the fates and declared that life has meaning. Yes, we are bewildered and perplexed but - God Created! And created us to be in relationships – not eternally warring with each other, but capable of love, friendship, and mutual governances.

Here's a wondrous worldview to life! "God created and it was good!"

So God is and God gives meaning - in a world so filled with confusion.

The early Hebrews said YES to life!
They embraced life.
This earth, this "Adamah" - was created by a God that takes chaos and creates order.
My friends, there are multiple worldviews – Leviathan has become a default position in the hearts and minds of millions. But there is another, more ancient and yet more vibrant way to see your world. Indeed this is a good universe, a finely tuned cosmos, by an ethical/loving God!

Genesis uplifts life! The Genesis story is an idea that brings life; hope and meaning! Be sure you understand the view that you have been living by.

Amen.