

Genesis 1:1-2

The first two depictions of God are masculine—literally, “When beginning, he, God created”—(v. 1) and feminine—“The Spirit of God, she was brooding”—(v. 2), foreshadowing human creation in the divine image as male and female in 1:27. Most translations of the Bible obscure the gender of God’s Spirit, leaving readers with the erroneous impression that the Scriptures use only masculine language when describing God. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, God’s Spirit is feminine; in the Christian Scriptures, the Spirit is neuter.

— WG

it was good. ¹¹Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” ²¹So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which

the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make humankind^a in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,^b and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

²⁷ So God created humankind^a in his image, in the image of God he created them;^c male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” ²⁹God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ²And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

^aHeb *adam* ^bSyr: Heb *and over all the earth* ^cHeb *him*

Genesis 2

The biblical story of creation tells us that God created one couple who became the parents of all people on earth. In striking contrast to other creation stories in the ancient Near East, no kings, no thrones, no walled cities appear “in the beginning.” Not only do the first people bear no mark of ethnicity—the Bible affirms that all peoples come from a single origin—but they are without nationality. In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul will later declare that God has limited the times and boundaries of all nations (Acts 17:26); all rise and fall in history, and none is eternal. While the royal imagery of other ancient Near Eastern cultures depicted the gods in kingly regalia, seated enthroned and giving commands like monarchs, in Genesis the image of God is borne by two people who stand naked and defenseless in a garden. How fitting that a prominent Israeli human rights organization has chosen the name *B'tselem*—“in the image.”

— DB, NE

⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the LORD^a God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; ⁶but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— ⁷then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground,^b and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. ⁸And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

^aHeb YHWH, as in other places where “LORD” is spelled with capital letters (see also Exod 3.14–15 with notes).

^bOr *formed a man* (Heb *adam*) *of dust from the ground* (Heb *adamah*)

¹⁰ A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹²and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you

Genesis 2:8-10

The Hebrew geographic term *Eden* is a loanword from the ancient Mesopotamian culture of Sumer, signifying that the tradition of the “garden of God” owes much to that culture. That Eden was located in what was later called Mesopotamia is implied by the names of two rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, that flow the length of that once-fertile land (now Iraq). But another river, the Gihon, “flows around the whole land of Cush” (now Ethiopia), and contemporary archaeological discoveries and linguistic evidence point to eastern Africa as the point where our species began. Eden suddenly appears much larger than a “garden”! The man and woman placed in Eden bear generic names: *Adam* (the common Hebrew word for “human” and closely related to *adamah*, “earth,” from which he was molded) and *Chawwah* or Eve (a word meaning “living” or “mother of life”). Even though Western culture has long imaged them as white, European-looking people, the narrative in Genesis 2 clearly identifies them as the ancestors of all human beings.

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