

Can A Christian Believe in Evolution -- 2

Randall W. Younker, PhD
SDA Theological Seminary
Andrews University

Four Problems

- Neo-evangelical generally have no problem using historical critical conclusions
- This paper focuses on four controversies in the Genesis Creation accounts—two are from classical liberal historical criticism (multi-authorship and contradictions and the firmament); and two are neo-evangelical accommodations—days of creation and global flood

**Problem 1--Genesis 1 and 2: Do
they contain Contradictory
Creation Accounts?**

Early Historical-critical Perspectives



- **Julius Wellhausen**
(1885:318,319) one of the first scholars to suggest an alternate authorship for the Bible—4 sources; JEDP
- He claimed Genesis 1 and 2 were written by P and J—and they contradict each other!

J and P Authorship of Genesis



- It questions the reliability of scripture
- denies the historicity of Genesis creation account

Close of the “First” Creation Story

- "First" account ends:
- "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. And there was evening and morning--the sixth day. Thus, the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array."
- "By the seventh day God had finished the work he has been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work," (NIV). **Suggests completed work.**

Beginning of “Second” Creation Story

- However, Gen 2:5 in the following chapter appears to lists four things that God had *not yet (terem)* created:
 - a. the shrub of the field
 - b. the plant of the field
 - c. a man to work the ground
 - d. and rain to water the earth.

Contradiction?

- Was the creation in Chapter 2 *not* completed?
- Is there a contradiction between these two chapters?

Four things that were *not yet*

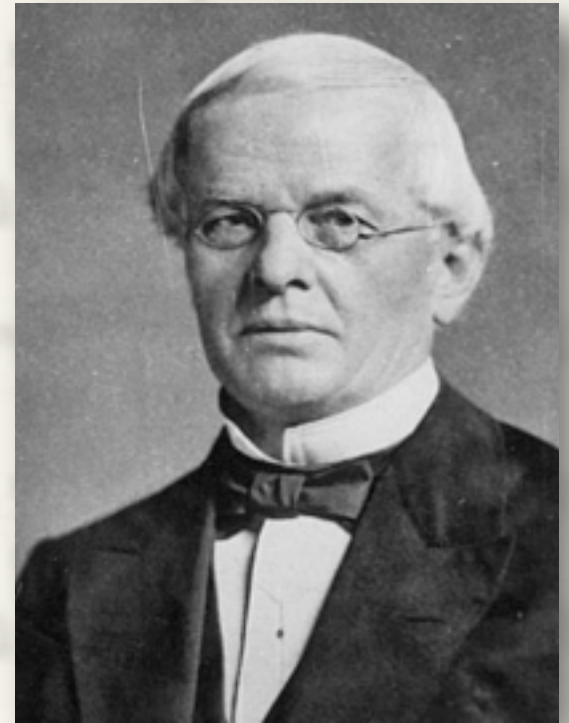
- Gen. 2 actually begins at 2:4b; introduces a specific theme--there are four things that God had not yet created after He created the earth and heaven
- Two of the four things not yet created are plants:
- "shrub of the field" *siah hassadhe*
- "plant of the field" *'esev hassadhe*

Different Plants!

- Doesn't this contradict Gen 1:11-12 which says that God created plants on third day? No--the plants created on the third day are *different* plants:
- *deshe* (vegetation): 'esev matsry' (seed-bearing plants) [according to its kind]
- and *tsr' `es pry asa pry* (seed-bearing fruit trees) according to its kind"

Different Plants!

- Do the botanical expressions *siah hassadhe* and *`esev hassadhe* which occur in Gen 2:5 mean the same thing as the expressions which occur in Gen 1:11, 12?
- Many commentators assume so-- e.g. August Dillmann in his commentary on Genesis thought so



Siah Hassadhe—thorny plant!



- However, U. Cassuto argues *no*:
 - a. *siah* (translated "shrub" in the NIV) is quite rare in Scripture, occurring only in Gen. 2:5, 21:15 and Job 30:4, 7; the context makes it clear it is a desert plant (xerophyte), a *spiny or thorny plant*
 - b. the full expression "*siah hassadhe* ("shrub of the field") is unique in Scripture appearing only in Gen 2:5

Canaan's hillsides were full of thorny plants



Esev Hassadhe—grain plants



- *`esev* (plant) is fairly common in the Hebrew text
- However, the full expression *`esev hassadhe* ("plant of the field") occurs only in Gen 2:5 and Gen 3:18. Cassuto astutely points out that in Gen 3:18 "plants of the field" are specifically designated as the *food Adam will have to eat as a result of his sin* and that they come about directly by man's "painful toil" and the "sweat of [his] brow."

“No man to work the Field”



- God never intended man to work the field
- Adam only has to work the field as the result of his fall--it is a curse! Gen 3:17
- Gen 2:5 is, therefore, *not* saying there were *no created men*; rather, there were *not yet sinful men*!

“No man to work the Field”

- Working the garden (*gan*) in chapter 1 is not the same thing as working the ground in chapter 2; *gans* were not labor intensive and were considered a great gift in antiquity (Ahab would kill for one!)—God gave a precious gift to Adam and Eve by giving them a *gan*!



“No rain”

No rain before sin; rain result of judgment of flood; rain a blessing, but also a curse; it brought water, but also floods, and was unpredictable! A reliable water source would be preferred.



“No Rain”

In the “good old days” before the Fall the earth was watered by **four** reliable **rivers** that God provided (plus mist)



What About Genesis 2:7?—the second creation of mankind

- Gen 2:7 starts a phase of the story which begins to explain how the four things "God had not yet made" came into existence; since it is man's action that is responsible for bringing about these four things God had not made, Gen 2:7 begins by *recapping* in more detail the creation of the man who would bring about the conditions that would result in the four things that sin would bring.

Genesis 2:7a *literary bridge*

Chapter 2 leads right into Gen 3 which describes the **Fall** and explains how things got the way they are now--the story actually continues right on to the flood account. Thus, Gen 1-3 (and indeed 1-11) is best understood as *one literary unit*, written by one author.

Conclusion

- There is *no* contradiction between Genesis 1 and 2—they are not written by different authors at different times, but by one author; the accounts present a unified story of the creation and fall

Problem 2

- Didn't the ancient Hebrews have naïve ideas such as the heaven (firmament) was made of an upside down metal bowl—ideas they borrowed from Mesopotamia?



Metal bowl idea from Babylon?

- Towards the end of the 19th century, many scholars generally assumed that the ancient Hebrews borrowed their concept of the cosmos from the Mesopotamians, probably while the Hebrews were in captivity in Babylon

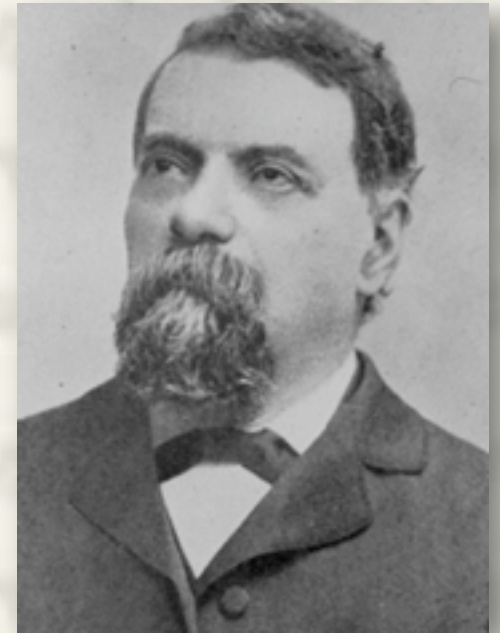
Herman Gunkel (1862-1932)— “Pan-Babylonial School”



- An example of Hebrew borrowing from Mesopotamia is found in the early work of Gunkel who pushed the idea of Pan-Babylonianism
- “The description of the solid vault of heavens is very widespread among primitive peoples.” (1895)

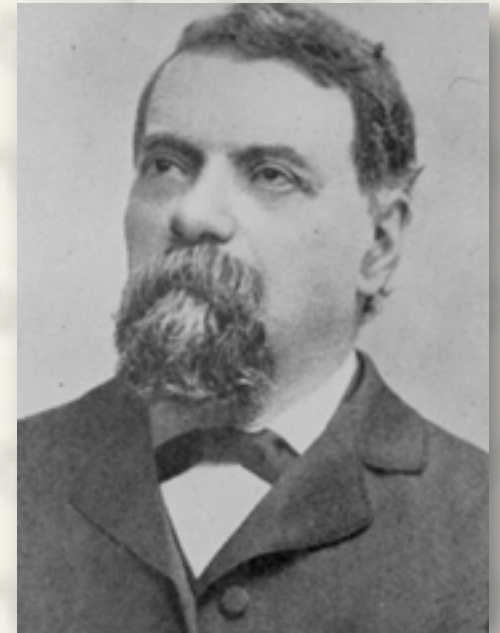
Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli 1835-1910

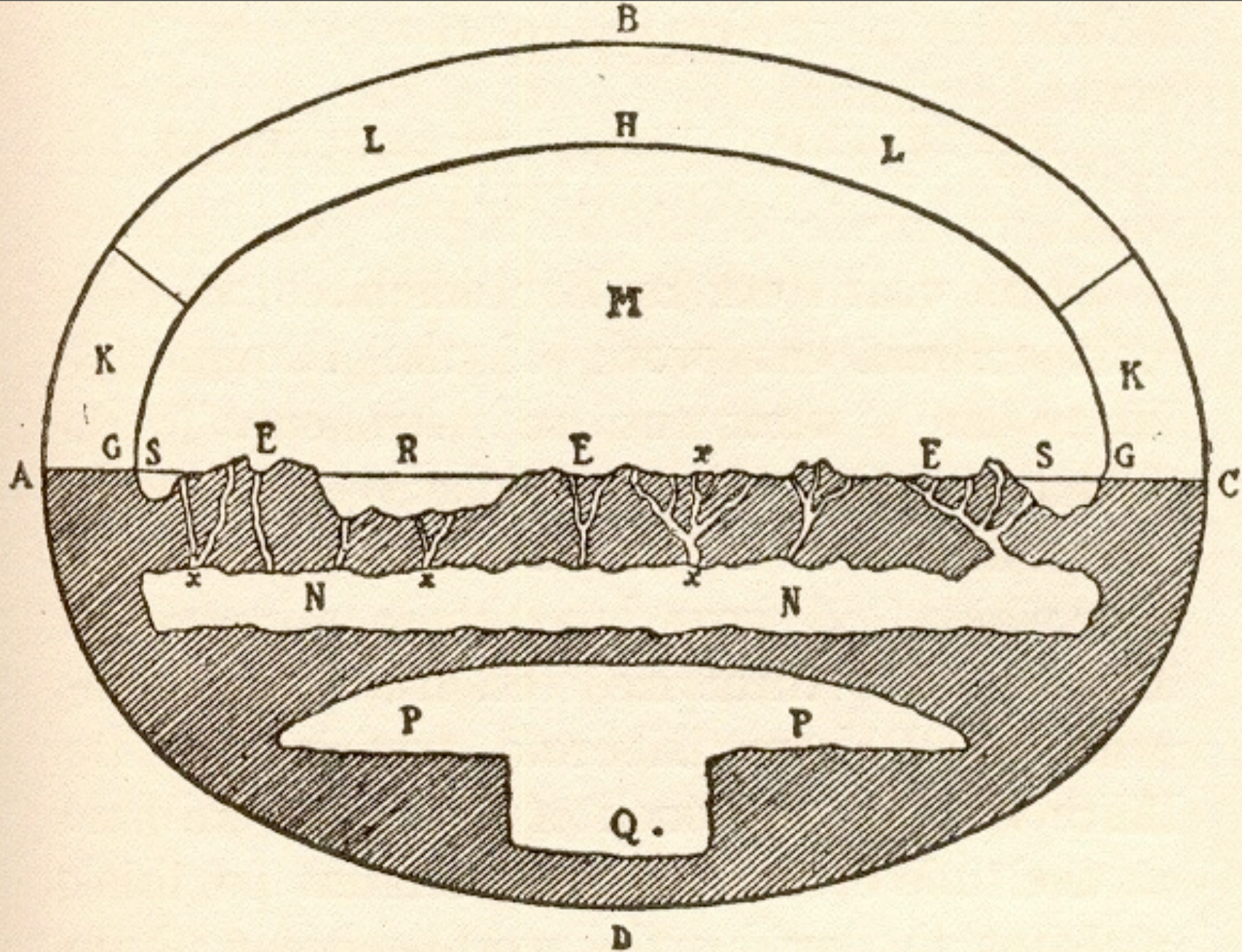
- Gioavanni Schiaparelli was an Italian astronomer
- In addition to his well-known studies of Mars, he is famous for his *Astronomy of the Old Testament* (1903/5) wherein he offered a reconstruction of the ancient Hebrew cosmos.



Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli 1835-1910

- Unfortunately, he treated many *metaphorical* passages in the Psalms etc. in a *literal* fashion and came up with the following reconstruction:

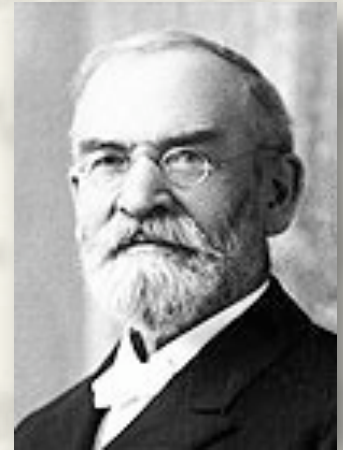




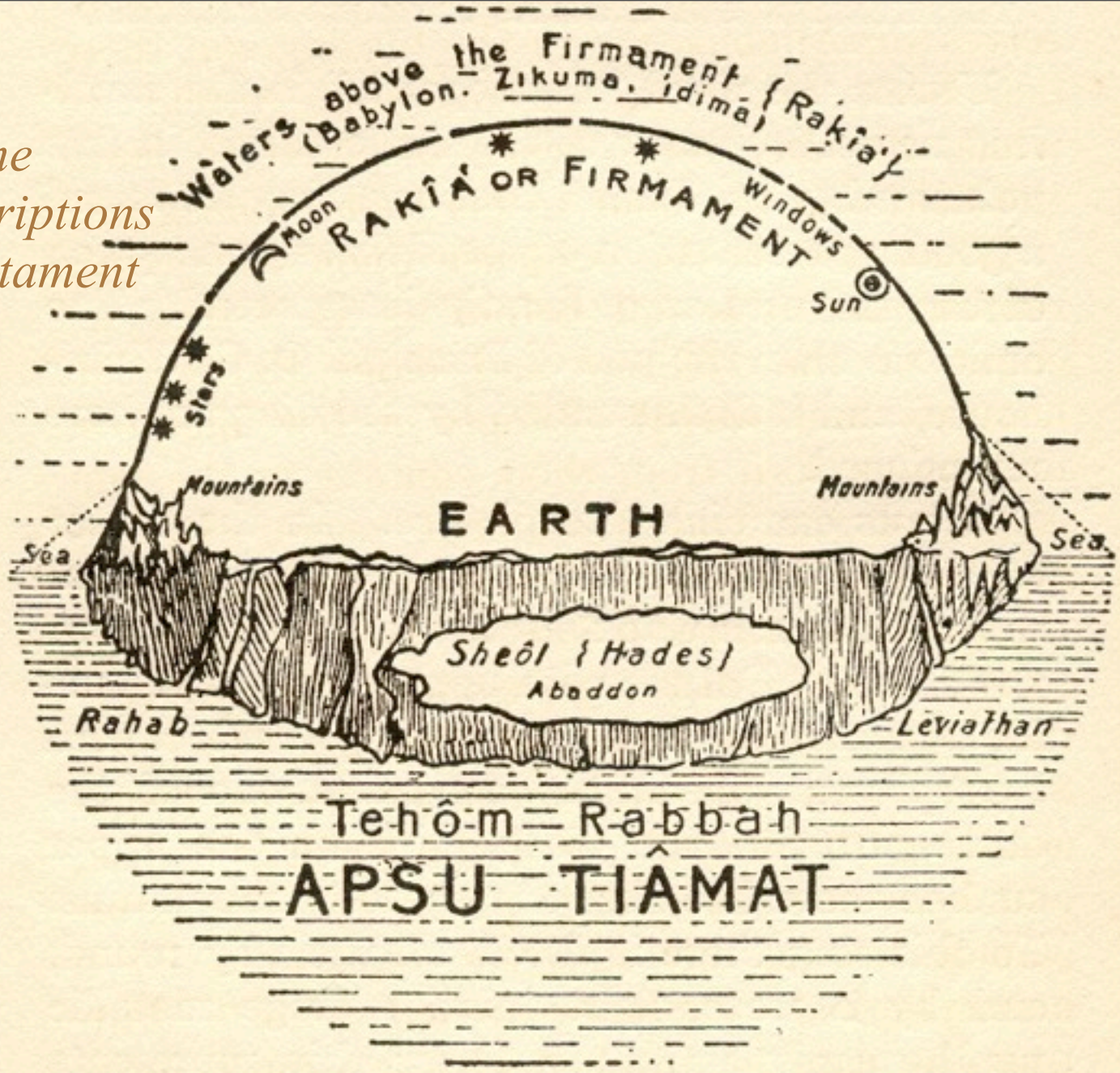
HEAVEN, THE EARTH, AND THE ABYSSES
 According to the writers of the Old Testament.—Schiaparelli

William Fairfield Warren

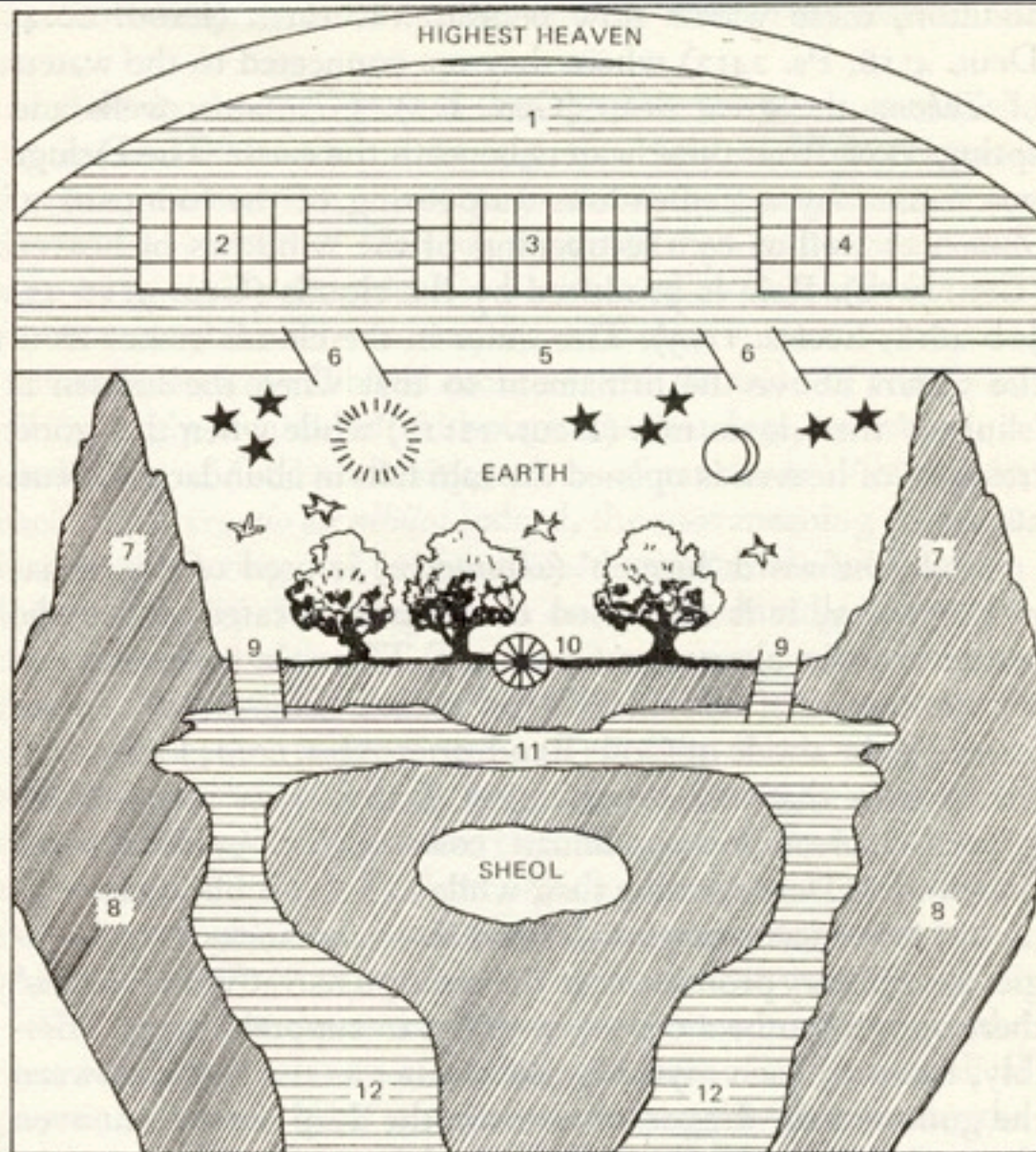
Although Schiaparelli's literalistic use of metaphorical texts for this reconstruction was severely criticized by great biblical scholars such as Dr Warren of Boston University, most scholars liked it and it became widely accepted



Owen Charles
Whitehouse--*The
Cuneiform Inscriptions
and the Old Testament*



THE UNIVERSE OF THE HEBREWS
According to Whitehouse



Biblical conception of the world: 1. waters above the firmament; 2. storehouses of snows; 3. storehouses for hail; 4. chambers of winds; 5. firmament; 6. sluice; 7. pillars of the sky; 8. pillars of the earth; 9. fountain of the deep; 10. navel of the earth; 11. waters under the earth; 12. rivers of the nether world.

5. Biblical conception of the world

(from N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York, 1966))

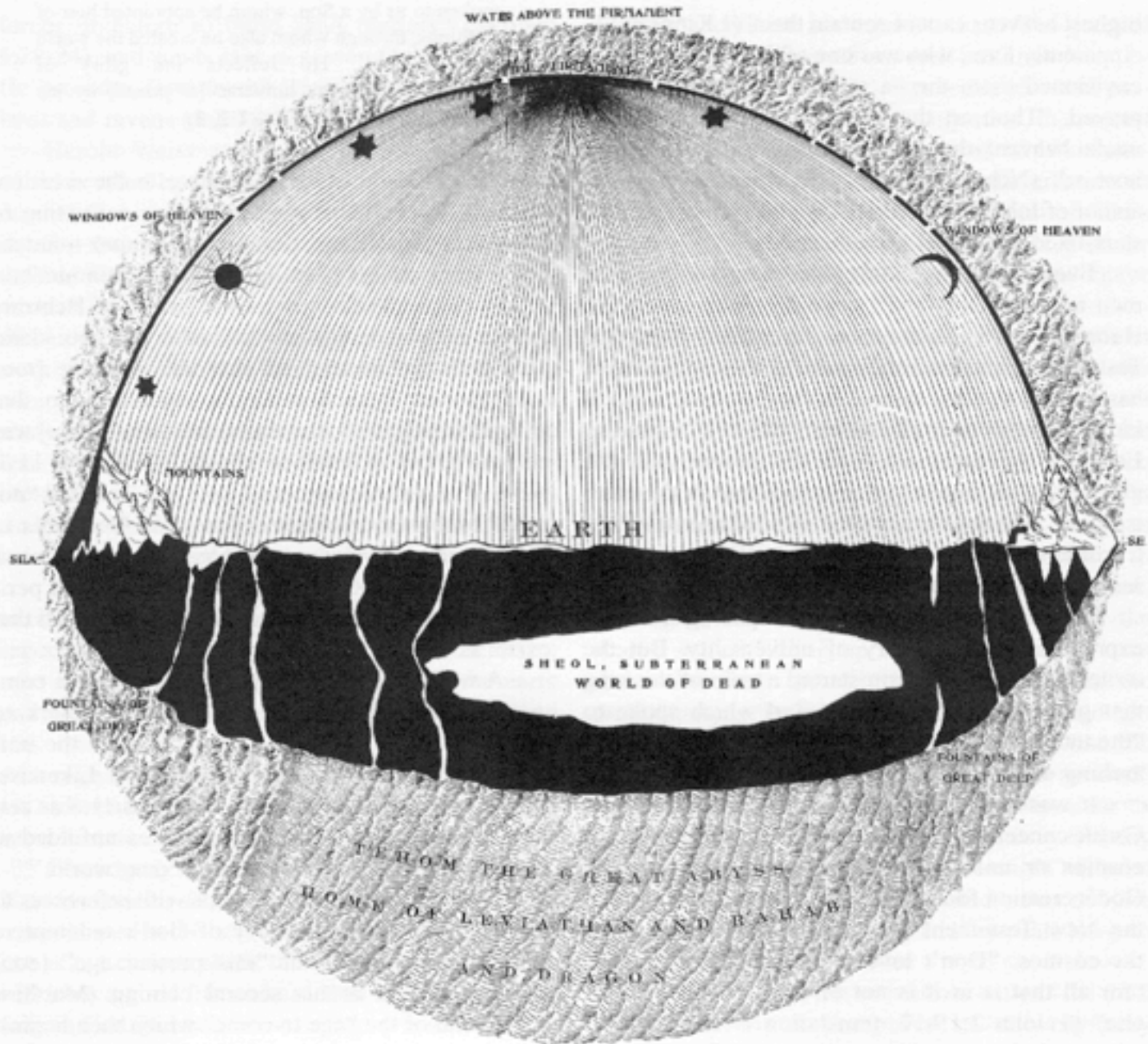
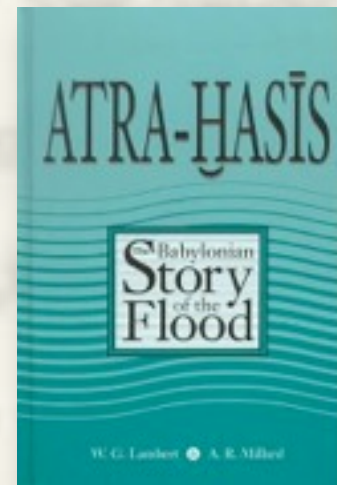


Figure 19-1. Early middle eastern conception of the earth and heavens.

Ancient Mesopotamian Cosmology

- In 1975, Assyriologist Wilfred G. Lambert investigated the idea that the ancient Mesopotamians believed that the sky or heavens was a metal dome



Wilfred G. Lambert

In conclusion, it may be well to indicate the lack of sound evidence for two ideas commonly attributed to the Babylonians and their forerunners. First, the allegation that the Babylonian universe was conceived as a kind of ziggurat going up to a peak, and secondly the idea that the sky was thought to be in the shape of a dome. The only surviving Babylonian world

Lambert (1975: 61-62) on Jensen

The idea of a vault of heaven is not based on any piece of evidence. P. Jensen, whose *Die Kosmologie der Babylonier* of 1890 was for its time an excellent work, simply translated the Babylonian word for 'heaven' in Enūma Eliš IV 145 by 'vault of heaven' (p. 288–9) and thereafter assumes that the point is proved. Further support has also been sought in the word

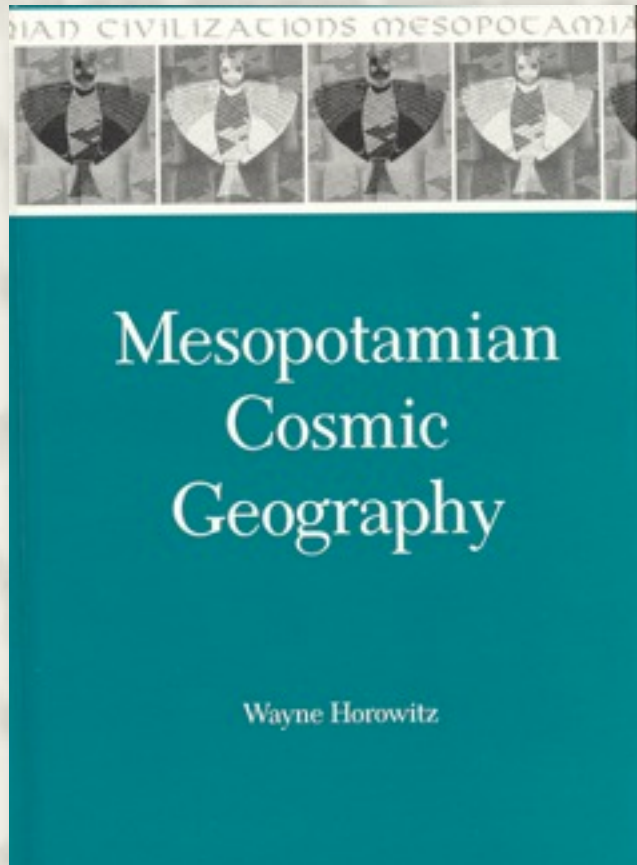
Peter Christian Albrecht Jensen

(1861-1936)

- Studied Assyriology under Schrader, taught at University of Marburg
- Wrote the *Cosmology of the Babylonians* in 1890.



Horowitz' study



- Ancient Mesopotamians actually believed in at least *three flat heavens* and *three flat earths* that were parallel to each other, separated by space, but held together by *cables*
- Word *vault* doesn't even appear

Six Levels of Mesopotamian cosmos

A View of The Mesopotamian Universe

Heaven of Anu

Middle Heavens

Sky

Earth's Surface

Apsu

Underworld

(stereæma)

- Why does the Greek (LXX/Septuagint) and Latin (Vulgate) translate the Hebrew (*raqia*) of Genesis 1:6 as *(stereæma)* and *firmamentum* respectively, suggesting that *raqia* means something solid like an inverted metal dome or vault?

Ptolemy II Philadelphus

- Ptolemy II requested 70 Jewish scholars come from Jerusalem to translate the Pentateuch into a Greek version to be placed into the Great Library collection. He died on January 29, 246 BC

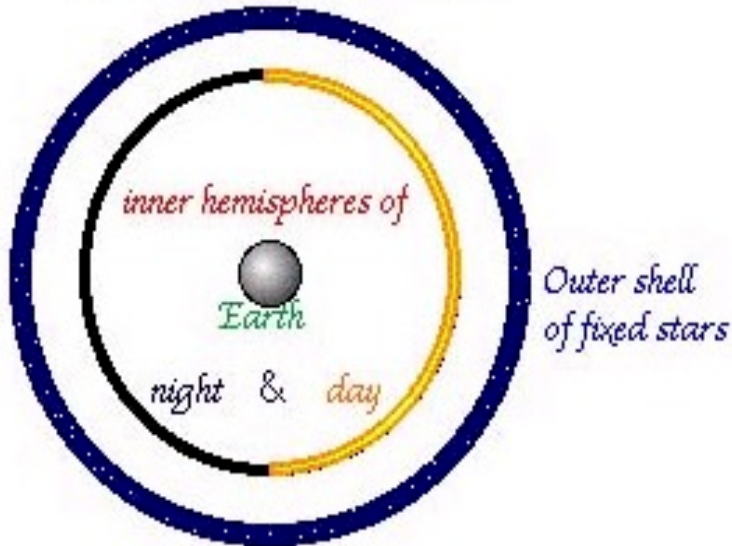


Empedocles of Acragas

495-435 BC



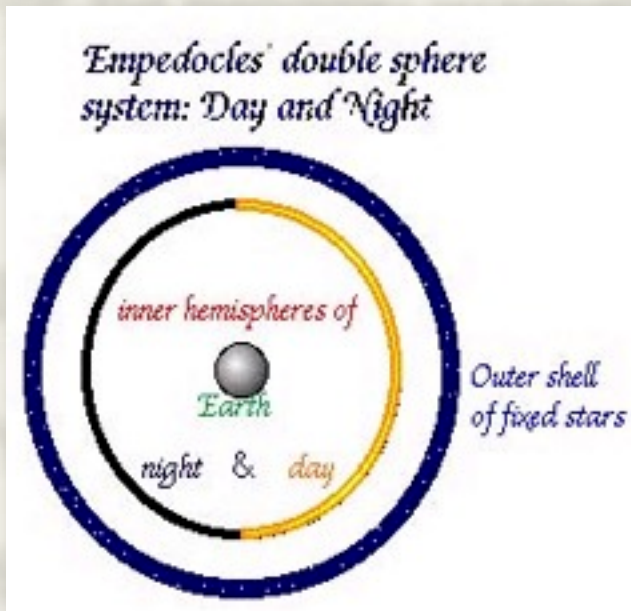
Empedocles' double sphere system: Day and Night



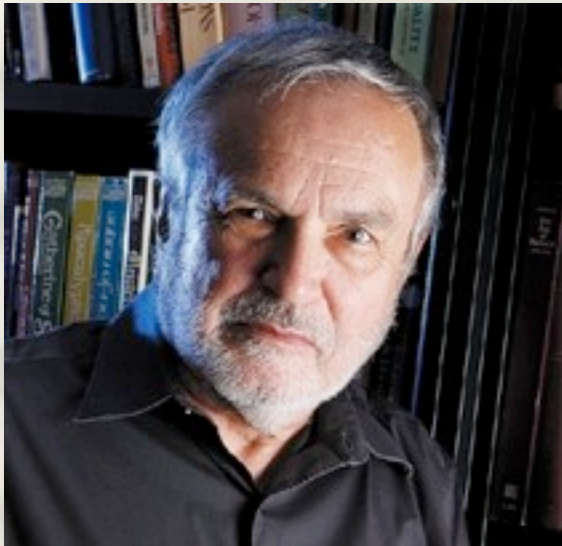
- Empedocles proposes an *outer, hard universal sphere* upon which the stars are fixed, and an inner sphere of double hemispheres, one of lighter fire for day, one of darker for night.

Hard Spheres were common in Alexandrian theories

- Thus, *at the time the Septuagint was translated from the Hebrew, the idea of a solid sphere was common in Alexandria and made its way into the Greek NT and Latin Vulgate*
- But this should not be confused with a dome over a flat earth!



Myth of the flat earth and dome



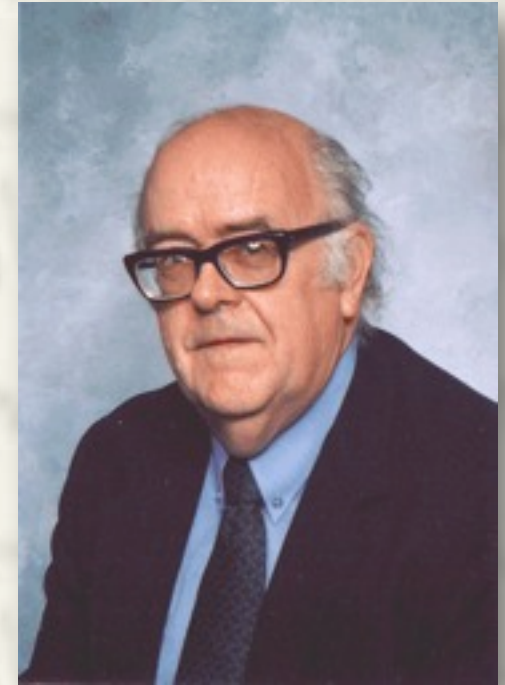
- Recent research by historian Jeff Russell shows that the idea that the medieval, early Christians believed in a flat earth and dome sky is not true; rather it was the invention of 19th century critics who wanted to discredit Christianity

Camille Flammarion's *L'Atmosphère: Météorologie Populaire*
(Paris, 1888, p. 163)



Robert C. Newman

- Published a book in 2000 in which he deals with the **linguistic** and **exegetical** issues and argues that *raqia* never referred to a vault or dome in Hebrew
- More recent research in supporting his conclusions

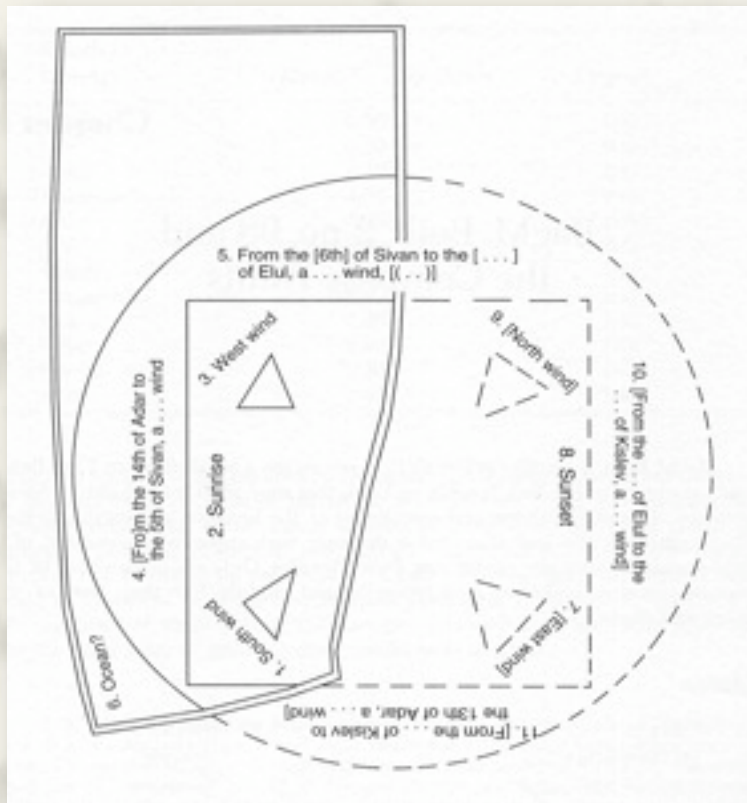


Conclusion: Hebrew *Raqia*= metal dome?

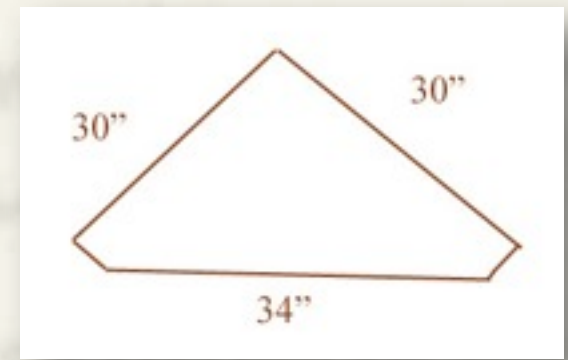
- In view of the mistranslation of the ancient Mesopotamian word for heavens and dome and the influence on the LXX translators of “metal spheres” in the heavens, there is **no reason** to believe that the ancient Hebrews thought the heavens were literally made of an upside down metal bowl
- The linguistic range of *raqia* as used in Scripture which includes its being equated with tent material and its ability to be stretched, preclude a dogmatic assertion that *raqia* was conceived as metal

Tablet *BagM. Beih 2 no. 98* “Four Corners of the Earth”

- The idea that the ancient Hebrews and Mesopotamians believed in a simplistic four-cornered earth has been disproven by the discovery of a Mesopotamian tablet that shows that the four “corners” actually refers to the four cardinal directions *within the circle* of the earth



Four Corners of Earth?



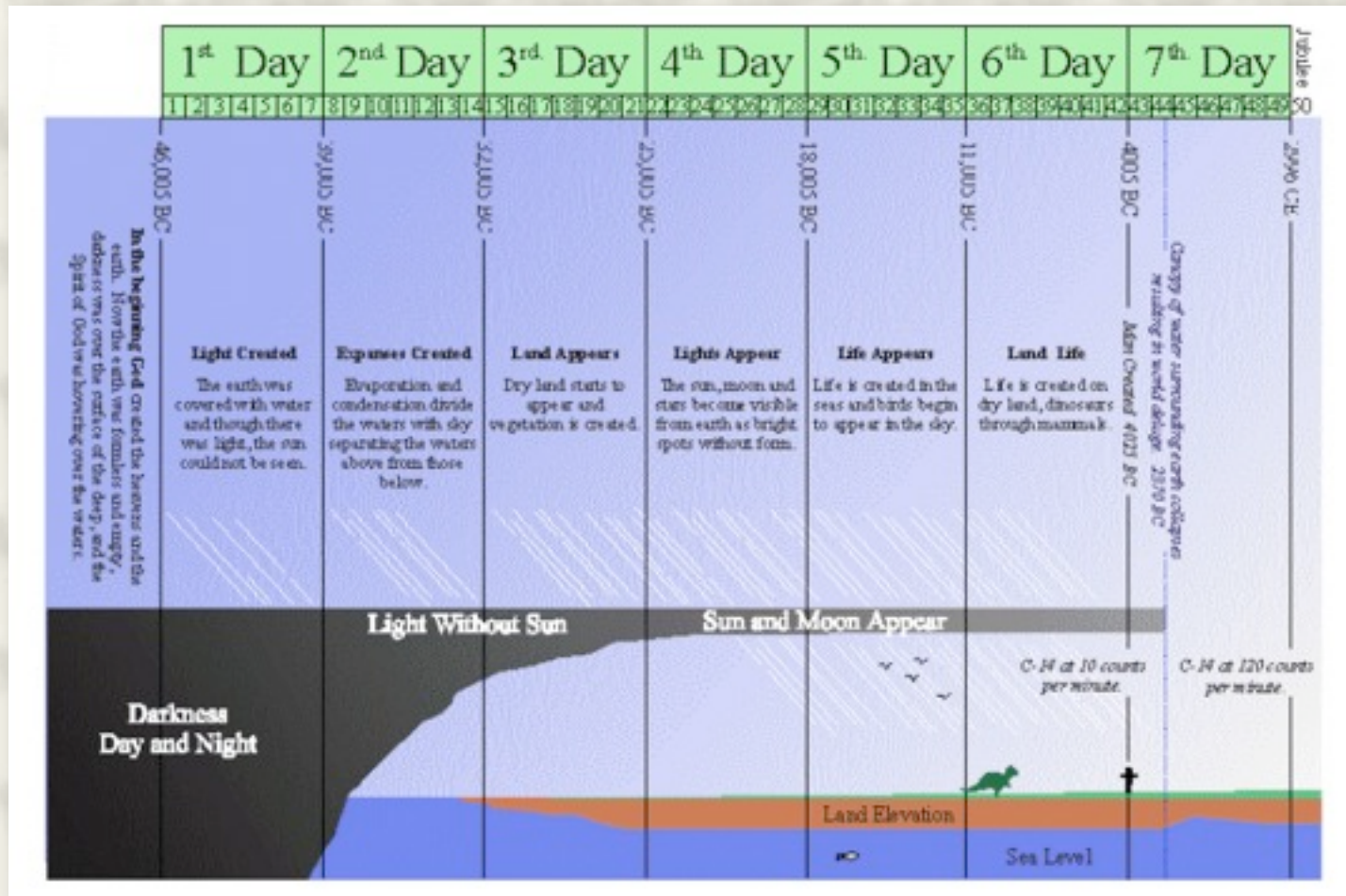
- Moreover, in Isa 11:12 and Eze 7:2 the two key Hebrew phrases are $tApn>K$; [B;r>a;me and $tApn>K$ t[;B;r>a; l|--that is, *arbah*, *kanephot*—literally “four wings.” It would be a mistake to assume that four literal 90-degree angled corners are intended. When the ancient Hebrews intended to describe an object with literal 90 degree angled corners such as the corner of a house, the corner of a street or the four corners of an altar, the common word that was employed was *pinnah* (“corner”).

Conclusion

- The misconceptions that many modern scholars have about the idea that the ancient Mesopotamians and Hebrews believed in a sky that was a metal dome or that the earth had four literal corners suggest that more careful work needs to be done in order to determine how people in the ancient Near East actually thought their cosmos was constructed.

Problem 3—Does the Bible really teach that the world was created in six days?

Were the Genesis days, literal 24 hour days?



YES!

- The movement away from a six day creation was motivated by the discovery of the geologic column and claims that the world was very old (millions of years); the sequence of fossils in the geologic strata seemed to contradict a recent 6 day creation—hence folks who wanted to still believe in the Bible opted for non literal interpretations of Genesis 1.

Six Days of Revelation

- This idea first gained attention due to the work of Scottish geologist Hugh Miller in the 19th century (Scriptural geologist), but has been more recently advocated by the late British scholar, P. J. Wiseman (1977).
- Part of the Neo-evangelical approach of accommodation

Day-Age Theory

- The days of creation are not to be taken as referring to literal, 24 hour days, but rather as six indefinite periods of time during which the earth was created or evolved (also accommodationists)
- These approaches depend upon interpreting the Hebrew word for day *yom* as meaning something other than the literal 24 hour day.

How Long Was a Creation Day in Hebrew?

- Each day is designated by **ordinal** numbers (“day one,” “day two” etc.)
- Each day is set off by expression “**evening and morning**”
- References in Ex 20:11 and 31:17 support the literal day understanding within the context of summarizing the creation week as a period of 6 days

Ellen White's views on 6 days (SG III:90)



- “I was then carried back to the creation and *was shown* (emphasis added) that the first week, in which God performed the work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, was just like every other week. The great God in His days of creation and day of rest, measured off the first cycle as a sample for successive weeks till the close of time . . . God gives us the productions of His work at the close of *each literal*

White—continued

- “But the infidel supposition, that the events of the first week required seven vast, indefinite periods for their accomplishment, strikes directly at the foundation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. It makes indefinite and obscure that which God has made very plain. It is the worst kind of infidelity; for with many who profess to believe the



White--continued



- It charges God with commanding men to observe the week of seven literal days in commemoration of seven indefinite periods, which is unlike his dealing with mortals, and is an impeachment of his wisdom.”

Geology and Scripture

- Geology has been thought to contradict the literal interpretation of the Mosaic record of creation. Millions of years, it is claimed, were required for the evolution of the earth from chaos; and in order to accommodate the Bible to this supposed revelation of science, the days of creation are assumed to have been vast, indefinite periods, covering thousands or even millions of years. Such a conclusion is wholly uncalled for (*Ed* 128-29.)



Problems with non-literal days

- “[The] figurative, non-literal meaning of the creation days are found wanting on the basis of genre investigation, literary considerations, grammatical study, syntactical usages, and semantic connections.” (Gerhard Hasel)

Factors in favor of 6 literal days

- “The combinations of the factors of articular usage, singular gender, semantic-syntactical constructions, time boundaries, and so on corroborated by the divine promulgations . . . in Exodus 20:8-11 and Exodus 31:12-17, suggest uniquely and consistently that the creation “day” is meant to be literal, sequential, and chronological in nature.” (Gerhard Hasel)



- Classical Historical Critical scholarship agrees that the days of Genesis are literal 24 hour day
- James Barr; Max Miller

2 Pet 3:6

- “But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.”

2 Pet 3:6

- Two key points:
- The appearance of *hos* (like) does not mean equal to—to say something is like something is not to say it is something
- Second, creation nor its days are at all being talked about in this verse—there is thus no internal textual indicator that allows us to draw the conclusion that creation days equal a thousand years; this verse can not override the indicators (like the use of ordinal numbers) in Genesis 1, etc., for literal days; the contextual indicators must have priority

Does the Bible really teach a Global Flood?

Local Mesopotamian inundation

- Flood waters fill the usually dry river-bed besides Tell al-Rimah in northern Mesopotamia
- Local inundations were common in antiquity—are these the source of the Great Flood?



Linguistic--Meaning of “earth”

- A common argument that is used to support the “local flood theory” is that the Hebrew word for earth, *'eretz*, does not always or even usually mean “earth” in the global or world-wide sense. It is actually a true statement.

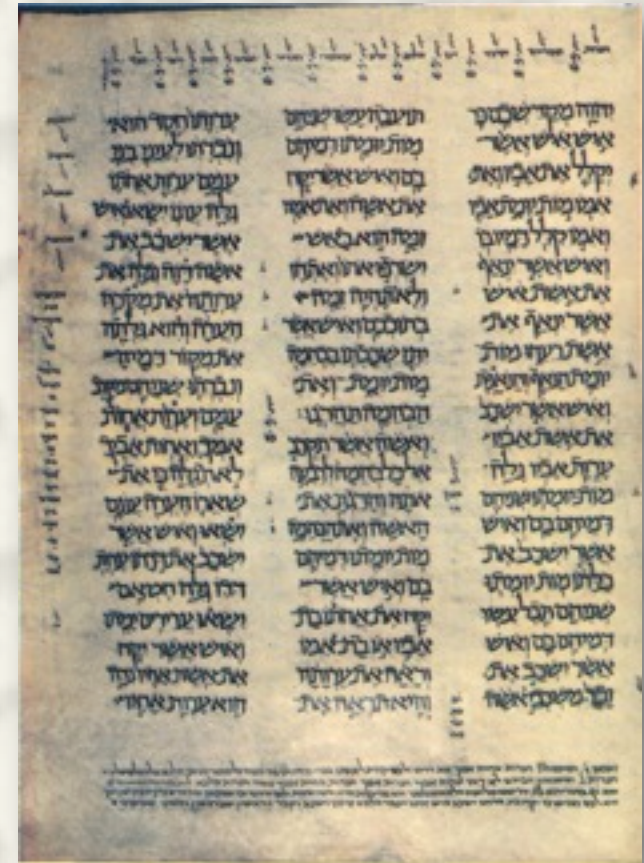
Meaning of “earth”

- The Hebrew word, *'eretz*, is, indeed, often translated “land” with geographical or political *limitations*.



Meaning of “earth”

- However, Frederick A. Filby (a scientist who is a local flood advocate) correctly argues, that the meaning of 'eretz must always be determined by the *context* of the passage.



Meaning of “earth”

- An examination of the *context* in Genesis 1-11 shows, that *'eretz* typically occurs in association with the word formula “heaven and earth” and alternately, “earth and heaven.” These latter terms, which occur respectively 41 and 6 times in the Old Testament, are the standard Hebrew expression for the *totality* of the world—essentially equivalent to the Greek word, *kosmos* (“cosmos” in English).

Heavens and earth="cosmos"

- That Jewish people in antiquity understood the expression "heavens and earth" as meaning the entire cosmos is supported by extra-biblical literature such as Wisdom 11:7 which paraphrases Genesis 1:1 as "In the beginning God created the 'cosmos'" (*kosmos*) substituting the latter word for the expression "heavens and earth."

Meaning of “earth”

- In each example in Genesis where *'eretz* has a non-universal application, it is followed by a *genitive*, a special modifying word that restricts the meaning of *'eretz* to a geographical or political area. So, it is rather easy to tell if a local or broader meaning is intended. The genitive modifier does *not* occur with the word “earth” (*'eretz*) in the context of Noah’s Flood. Thus, the broader, universal meaning of earth is to be preferred.

“All the earth”

- Another important phrase that is used in describing the extent of the Flood is “all the earth” (Heb *kol ha'aretz*). As with the word “earth,” there are occurrences in which the phrase “all the earth” is modified by context to a limited or local application.

“All the earth”

- However, in other contexts the phrase is clearly *universal* in scope. An example of the latter is Exodus 19:5, in which God makes His covenant with “all nations” since “all the earth” is His.
- God did not make His covenant with just some people

“All the earth”

- The meaning in Ex 19:5 is clearly *universal*—His covenant was intended for *all* humans, not just some—this text is also an implicit reference back to Genesis 1-11, in general, and Genesis 1 and 2 in particular, since God’s “right” to make the covenant is based on being the Creator.

“Face of all the Earth”

- Most important is the actual phrase used in the Flood story (Genesis 7:2 and 8:9) for describing the extent of the Flood waters, themselves. Here the claim is that the Flood will cover not simply the “earth,” or “all the earth” but **“the face of all the earth.”**

“Face of all the Earth”

- This latter phrase is identical to that used in the creation narrative (Gen. 1:29), the **context of which is clearly universal**; the last occurrence of this phrase in Genesis is in the Tower of Babel story (Gen. 11:4, 8, 9), an event that is also generally understood to be universal in nature (in the context of the Tables of Nations).

Uniqueness of *Mabbul*

- The word selected by the Hebrew writer for Flood in the Genesis Flood account is *mabbul*.
- There are other floods in the Bible, but *mabbul* is reserved exclusively for Noah's flood.
- It occurs only in Gen. 6-9 and Ps 29:10

Akkadian Etymology for *mabbul*

- Napalu (destruction) (maktu form) to Manpul to *mabbul* (n gets changed into double b)—Dr Leona Running
- Some scholars such as J. Begrich *deny* an Akkadian source; they argue it is derived from Heb---, to flow or to stream
- However, I believe the Akkadian origin makes more sense

Mabbul=destruction

- It is interesting that when *mabbul* is first introduced in Gen 6:17, the term is followed by a phrase that seems to *define* for the reader what a *mabbul* is—specifically, the text reads: “I am going to bring a *mabbul*—waters upon the earth—to **destroy** all flesh under the sky in which there is the breath of life”

A Well-known Event

- It is almost as if the writer was concerned that the reader might **not know** what a *mabbul* was and had to explain it
- Yet, in the Hebrew, *mabbul* almost always occurs with the **definite article** (suggesting that it was a **well-known** [and singular] event (Westermann 1994 [1974]: 422; Sarna 1989:53; Hamilton 1990: 283))

“Waters” a gloss?

- Some scholars have suggested that the phrase, “waters upon the earth” must be a “gloss” because, if *mabbul* means “flood,” why add “waters upon the earth?”--it is an unnecessary redundancy (see Hamilton 1990: 283)
- It is not a gloss, because *mabbul* does *not necessarily* mean flood—rather, it means cataclysm (as the LXX supports); in this case, *water* was the *medium* of the destruction

Not a gloss

- I would suggest that the expression is *not* a gloss; rather, it was included because, by itself, *mabbul* does *not* necessarily require water; rather, *mabbul*, like the Akkadian, has a much broader meaning of destruction
- —hence, it was necessary for the writer to explain that the *mabbul* cataclysm in this case *would* involve water—

Mabbul and *kataklysmos*

- The LXX (Septuagint) translates as *kataklysmos* (English—cataclysm) a Greek term that is reserved for Noah's Flood (see Mathews 1996: 366). It is the Bible's **ultimate destructive disaster**
- Jewish writings and the NT also refer to the Noachian Flood with this word (e.g. Matt 24:38-39; Luke 17:27; 2 Pet 2:5)

Meaning of *Mabbul*

- “*Mabbul* . . . is a technical term for a part of the world structure, namely the heavenly ocean . . . which empties downward through the latticed windows (von Rad).”



Meaning of *Mabbul*

- “We must understand the Flood, therefore, as a catastrophe involving the . . . destruction of the *entire cosmic system . . .*” (emphasis added).--
Gerhard von Rad



Theme of Genesis 1-11

- The universal nature of the Flood is also suggested by the overall context of Genesis 1-11 which is universal in nature
- Spread of Sin Theme (Von Rad)
- Creation—Uncreation—Re-creation Theme (D.J.A. Clines)

- It is very plain that the flood is represented not just as a punishment for the sin of the generation of the flood, but as a reversal of creation—“uncreation,” as Joseph Blenkinsopp has put it: “The world in which order first arose out of a primeval watery chaos is not reduced to the watery chaos out of which it arose—chaos-come again.”

- “. . .chaps. 3-6 are not simply the story of human sin matched by divine grace, but the story of the *undoing of creation*. The flood is only the final stage in a process of cosmic disintegration which began in Eden (emphasis added).”

Mankind “uncreated”

- “The destruction of mankind is significantly expressed in language reminiscent of creation: Yahweh determines that he will “blot out an whom I have created” (6:7), whereupon “all in whose nostril was the breath of the spirit of life died (7:22), an echo of *Yahweh Elohim’s* breathing into man’s nostrils the “breath of life” (2:7)

Flood as *Reversal* of Creation

- “ . . . significantly, the destruction [of the Flood] follows much the *same sequence as the creation*: earth, birds, cattle, wild animals, swarming creatures, man (7:21)” (emphasis added).

Flood was Universal

- Flood was global in extent
- It reversed creation—if creation was global, than the flood was global
- Harmonizes with other universal themes of Gen 1-11—creation, the Fall, plan of salvation (covenant)
- Flood explains geologic column; solves problem of apparent death before sin and preserves the significance of the cross

2 Pet 3:3-6

- “Know first of all that **in the last days**, mockers will come with their mocking following after their own lusts and saying, **“Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation”**”

2 Pet 3:3-6

- For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of the God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which **the world at that time was destroyed being flooded with water.**

2 Pet 3:3-6

- But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”

The Creation Process

- As God commences with the creative process on this earth, the planet is described as *tohu vabohu*, “without form and void”; “formless and empty”; “unformed and unfilled
- The six days of creation set out to change (or reverse) this condition of the earth

Conclusion

- Bible clearly teaches the the Flood was universal-global in extent