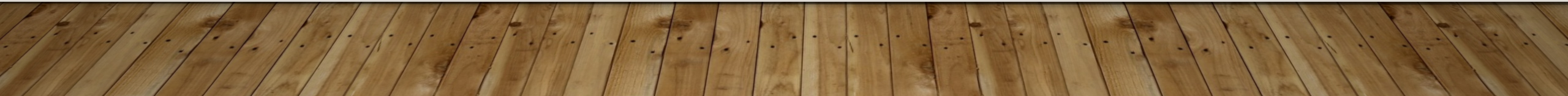


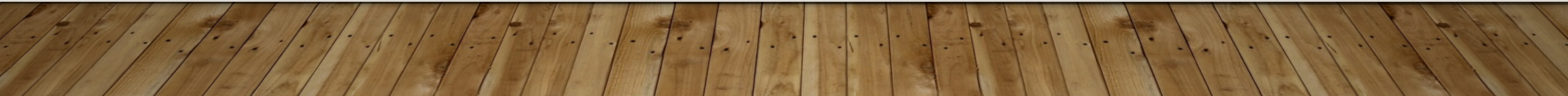
GENESIS

A DEEP DIVE

HEAVEN AND EARTH



GENESIS IN ITS ANCIENT CONTEXT

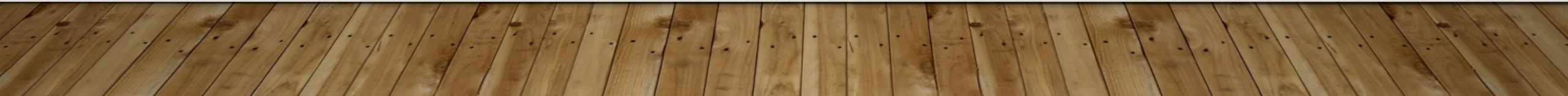


BEGINNING QUESTION

- What does the word “earth” mean in the biblical text?
- What is the “raqia” and what does it do?

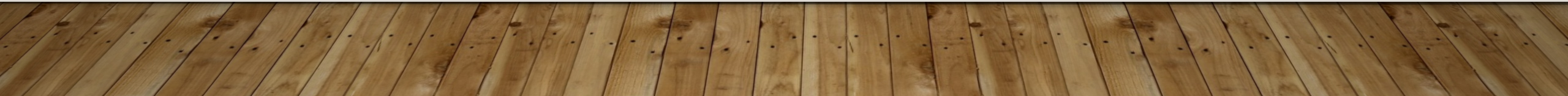
“EARTH” IN GENESIS 1:1-2

- Hebrew ‘erets does not mean “globe-earth.” That depends on the concept of the planet as a sphere which was not available to the biblical authors at the time.
- There are no uses of ‘erets in the Hebrew Bible that describe the land as a sphere. Rather, the word’s meaning describes the land that is below the skies and the clouds.



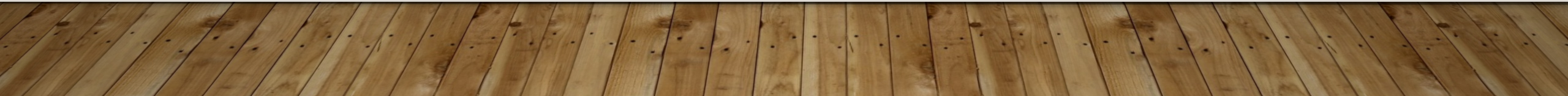
SOME EXAMPLES IN SCRIPTURE FOR “EARTH”

- Psalm 102:19 – For God **looked down** from his holy height; **from heaven** the Lord gazed upon the **‘erets**
- Psalm 103:11 – For as **high as the heavens are above the ‘erets**, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.
- A more appropriate word for translating ‘erets would be “land.”



“FIRMAMENT/ EXPANSE/ VAULT/ DOME” IN GENESIS 1: 6-8

- Hebrew: “raqia” refers to a solid blue dome above the land, above which are presumed to be waters, based on its other uses.



The noun *raqia'*

GEN 1:6-8
DAY TWO

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a **raqia'** in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ God made the **raqia'**, and separated the waters which were below the **raqia'** from the waters which were above the **raqia'**; and it was so.
⁸ God called the **raqia'** "heavens." And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

GEN 1:20

And God said, "...and let birds fly over the land against the surface of **the raqia'**

EZEK 1:22, 26

And there was something like **a raqia'** over the heads of the living creatures, like the appearance of ice, stretched out over their heads above... and above **the raqia'** that was over their heads something like blue sapphire, the appearance of a throne...

The verb *raqa*’ “to hammer out, smooth, spread out”

EXOD 39:3

*And they [the craftsmen] **raqa**’d smooth sheets of gold, and they cut them into cords to be woven together with blue and purple and scarlet...”*

NUM 16:39

*So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers which the men who were burned had offered, and they **raqa**’d them out as a plating for the altar,*

ISAIAH 40:19

*As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, a goldsmith **raqa**’s it with gold,*

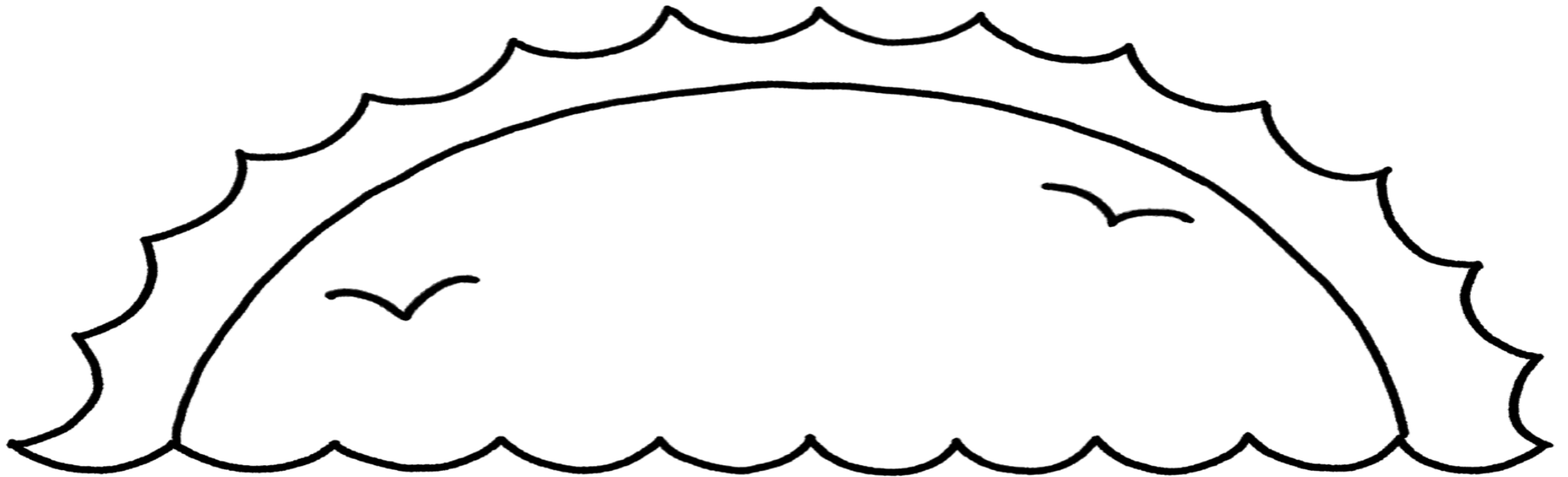
ISAIAH 42:5

*Thus says God the Lord,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who **raqa**’d the land and what springs up from it,
Who gives breath to the people on it
And spirit to those who walk in it*

The *raqia'* is a solid blue dome above, which has the cosmic waters above, which are released through windows!

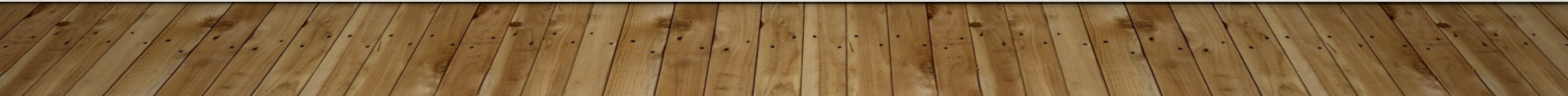
GEN 7:11

*In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and **the windows of the skies** were opened.*



QUOTE

- You're seeing an important theological claim being made through this cosmology picture: The world is a place where life can flourish, but it's a dangerous place; and the only thing keeping this whole thing from collapsing in on itself is something, or someone beyond it.

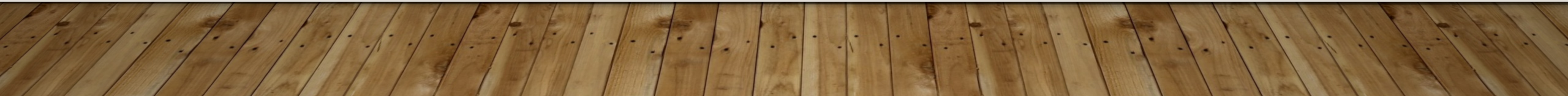


THE PURPOSE OF LIGHT ON DAY 1

- In Genesis 1:3-5, “light” is created.
- What is the light named?
- Is the account of the creation of light about material being created (like photons) or the purpose of light? Explain what you think.

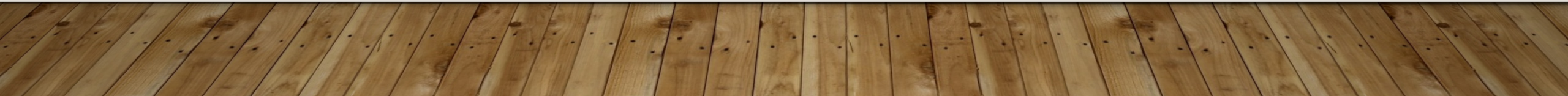
“LIGHT” IN GENESIS 1:3-5

- Genesis 1:3 “Let there be *light*” (יהי אור)
- What is actually “created” on day 1?
- In modern cosmologies, light consists of photons, tiny packets of energy that behave like a wave and a particle. This is not what light means in Genesis 1.



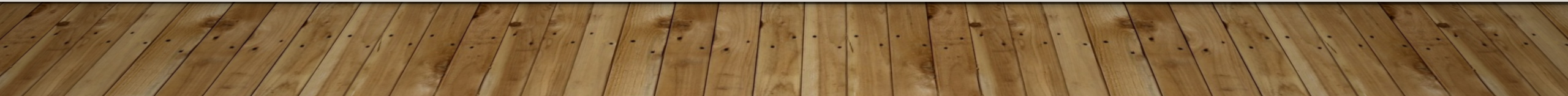
“LIGHT” IN GENESIS 1:3-5

- In Genesis 1:5 we are told what is being created: the light is called “day” and the darkness is called
- “night.” These are not material entities, but *periods of time*. “Light” here is not a “thing” that is brought
- into existence at a specific moment in time. Rather, on day 1 the “order of time” is being named into
- meaningful and functional existence.



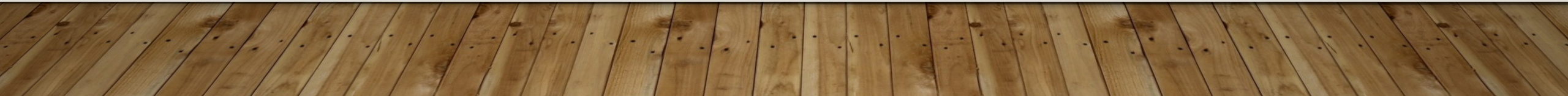
“LIGHT” IN GENESIS 1:3-5

- The light, moreover, emanates from God himself, since the sun and moon and stars are not on the scene yet.
- This reading of Genesis 1:5 is made clear by later biblical authors who understood that the light of Genesis 1 is God’s glorious being, emanating into the darkness to bring order (see Psalm 36:5-9, or Isaiah 60:19-20, or Revelation 22:5).



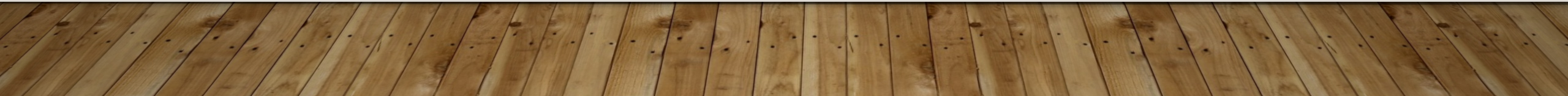
PSALM 36:5-9

- Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O LORD, you preserve both man and beast. How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; **in your light we see light.**



ISAIAH 60:19-20

- The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; **the LORD will be your everlasting light**, and your days of sorrow will end.



REVELATION 22:5

- There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for **the Lord God will give them light.** And they will reign for ever and ever.

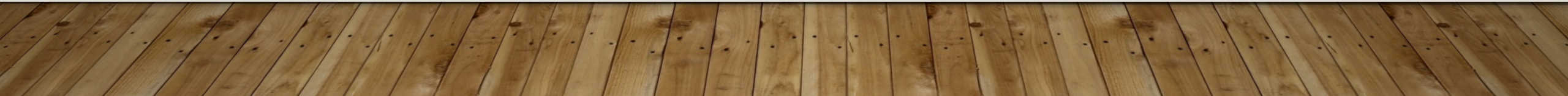
A THESIS ON THE MEANING OF GENESIS 1

- The early chapters of Genesis accurately present accounts of cosmic and human origins in the language and conceptual categories of the ancient Israelite authors of the Bible. These texts should not be removed from their ancient context and read as if they describe cosmic or human origins in 21st century scientific terms. They speak in terms of an ancient Near Eastern perception of the world, and should be interpreted within that setting.

A THESIS ON THE MEANING OF GENESIS

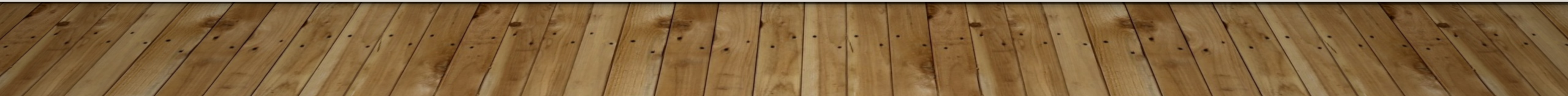
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- When we discern the meaning of the texts in their ancient context, we find that they constitute a worldview statement about God and his relationship to the world, and about humans and their relation to God and the world. This basic worldview statement transcends its ancient cultural setting, and commands the attention of God's people in all places and all times.
 - Adapted from Richard Carlson and Tremper Longman, Science, Creation, and the Bible. Reconciling Rival Theories of World Origins (Intervarsity Press, 2010)



WORLDVIEW

- **Worldview – A comprehensive and cosmic story, through which a cultural group orders and makes sense of their life experience. Worldviews answer the basic questions of human existence.**
- **Who are we? Where are we? What is the problem?**
- **What is the solution? Where are we located in the story?**



GENESIS 1 IS DESIGNED TO ANSWER CORE WORLDVIEW QUESTIONS

- Where are we? – The world picture of Genesis 1: Cosmology
- Who are we? – Humanity in Genesis 1: Anthropology
- Where are we located in the story? – Time in Genesis 1:
Eschatology

GENESIS WORLDVIEW BACKGROUND

- Genesis is not a worldview in a vacuum.
- The cultures around the Hebrews also had worldview stories.
- Some of the way the Genesis story is told is to compare and contrast with those other stories.

ANCIENT COSMOLOGY

- How do you make sense of Israel's creation story having similarities to other Near Eastern creation stories?
- It is a shared cultural environment. The biblical authors are making worldview claims about the God of Israel through the medium of their concepts of creation and cosmology.

GENESIS 1:1-2

Genesis 1:1-2

*In the beginning, God **created** the skies and the land
Now, the land was wild and waste (תהו ובהו tohu va-vohu)
and darkness was over the face of the deep abyss (תהום tehom)
but the breath of Elohim was hovering over the face of the waters (המים hamayim)*

KEY POINT: BIBLE CREATION NARRATIVE

- The Bible does not use the language of modern science but does use the language of ancient culture's creation cosmologies.
- Using that language, Genesis 1-3 shows many similarities with other Ancient Near Eastern cosmologies, but also many key differences.

WHAT IS AN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN COSMOLOGY?

- “Cosmology” – An account of the origins of the universe as humans experience it
- The purpose of ancient cosmology narratives is to address the nature and purpose of the world, who we are, where we are, and who are the gods?

EGYPTIAN COSMOLOGY

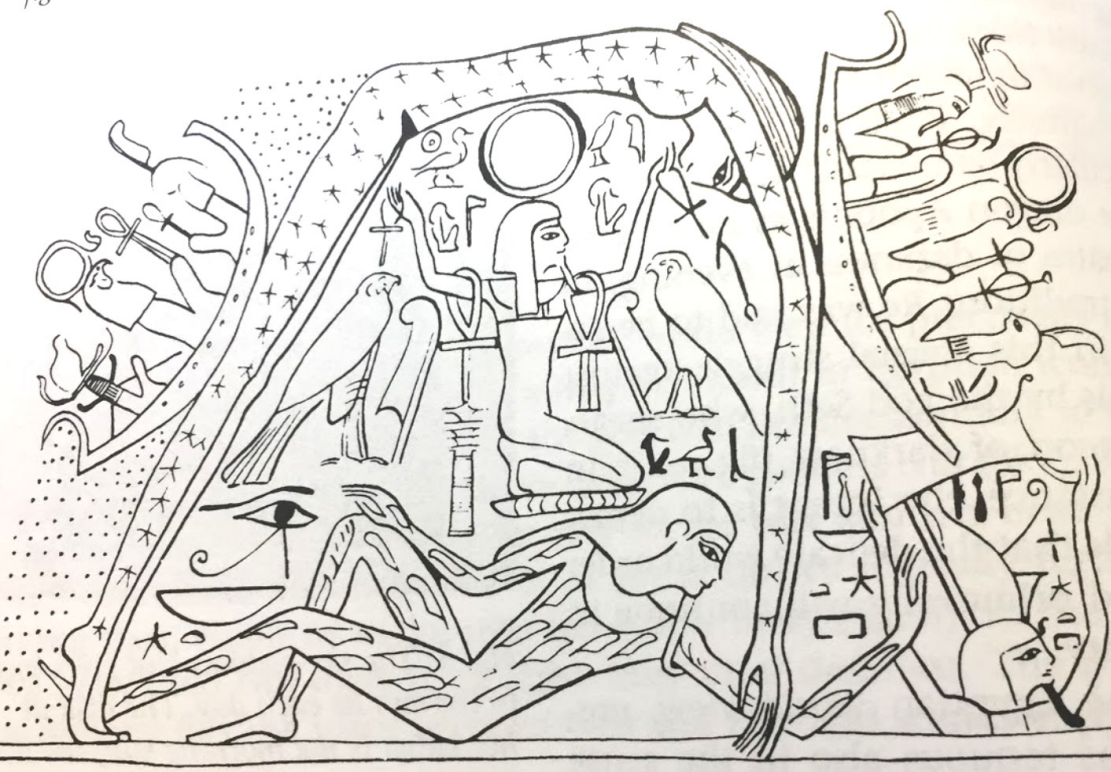
- Modern Egyptology began after Napoleon's overtaking of Egypt in the early 1800s, making it open to European colonial powers. The first famous Egyptologist Jean-Francois Champollion deciphered the Rosetta stone and unlocked the Egyptian Hieroglyphic system.
- Key texts containing Egyptian cosmologies are:
 - The Pyramids texts (Old Kingdom, 2600-2100 B.C.)
 - The Coffin texts (1900-1600 B.C.)
 - The Book of the Dead (1500-1000 B.C.)

EGYPTIAN COSMOLOGY SUMMARIZED

- The primeval creator is call “Atum” who is equated with “Nun” the unordered watery substance from which all things emerged. This “non-creation” was a chaotic watery condition devoid of elements or structures necessary for life, but it processed the potential for development.
- Atum began to evolve and differentiate himself from his watery incubation onto a primaeval mound of dirt, which is symbolized as the prototypical pyramid, and from there he began the process of self development or “creation.”

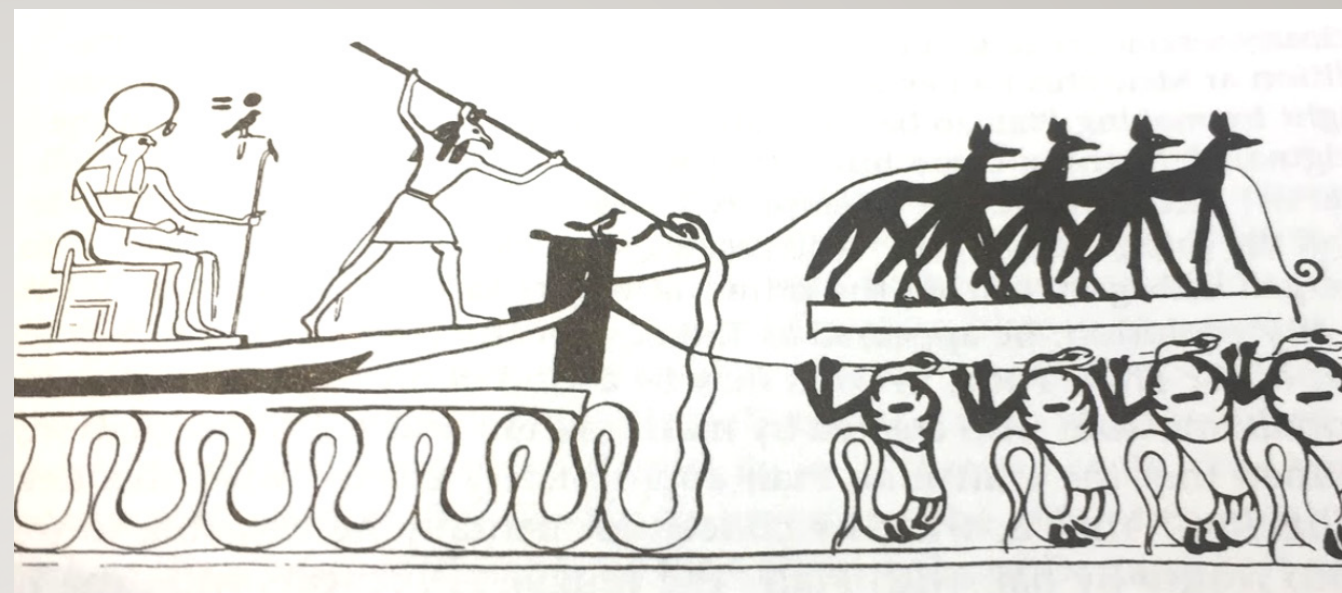
EGYPTIAN COSMOLOGY SUMMARIZED

- He generated the rest of the “Ennea” (a cluster of 8 other deities) by self-impregnation: he swallows his own reproductive fluids and generates Shu (goddess of air) and Tefnut (goddess of moisture), from whom come Nut (goddess of sky) and Geb (god of earth).
- Atum took his role as the “eye” of all creation, as the sun-god Re, and they all worked together in a form of “order” called “ma”at – the eternal divine order that undergirds all creation.



Nut is the sky-goddess, who is the sky-dome full of stars. Geb is the land-deity, and Shu the god of air kneels on Geb and supports Nut. The sun-god Re travels in the waters above the Nut, riding his boat across the sky (upper left) and descending into the realm of darkness and death to the waters under the land.

From Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, p. 36 fig. 32.



The sun-god Re is pulled through the underworld sea at night. The god Seth spears and defeats the death-god Apophis (a snake), while the boat is pulled by subjugated night demons (jackals and snakes). From Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, p. 55, fig. 55.

ANCIENT BABYLONIAN COSMOLOGY

- Enuma-Elish – Babylonian Genesis or “the Combat myth”
- This ancient cuneiform tablet adopted the Egyptian and Sumerian traditions of the primeval waters generating the pantheon of old deities, which are going to be taken over by a young upstart god named Marduk, patron god of Babylon. It begins with the uncreated state:

ENUMA-ELISH TABLET

- (1) When on high no name was given to heaven, nor below was the netherworld called by name, Primal Apsu (deep Abyss) was their progenitor, and creator Tiamat (salty ocean) was she who bore them all.
- (5) They were mingling their waters together, when no gods at all had been brought forth, none called by names, none destinies ordained, then were the gods formed within these two...

ENUMA-ELISH TABLET SUMMARY CONT.

- Eventually the gods all develop with Ea and his son Marduk at the head of the pantheon. Tiamat threatens to take over with her chaos waters, and she becomes a giant sea dragon. Marduk battles and destroys her, using half her body to make the waters above and the waters below.

KEY QUESTION

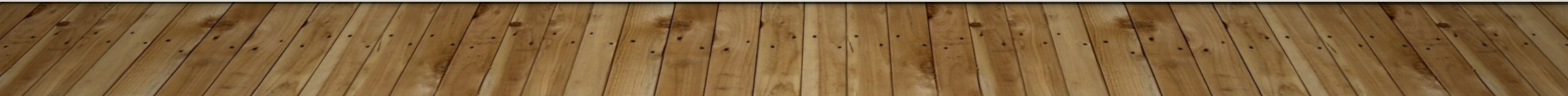
- Where is there common ground between ancient Babylonian cosmological accounts and that of the Hebrew Bible?

QUOTE

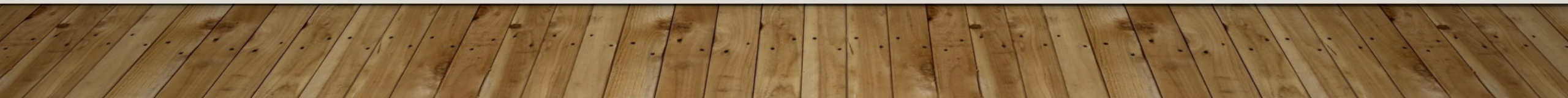
- When we want to describe the pre-creation state, we use three images that are the most potent images of desolation, uninhabitable: the wilderness, darkness, and the deep abyss. In what we consider literal terms, those are mutually exclusive— how can a desert be a deep sea? But on their metaphysical meaning, they're all referring to the same thing: the realm of non-life and non-order.

GENESIS 1 AS ANCIENT COSMOLOGY

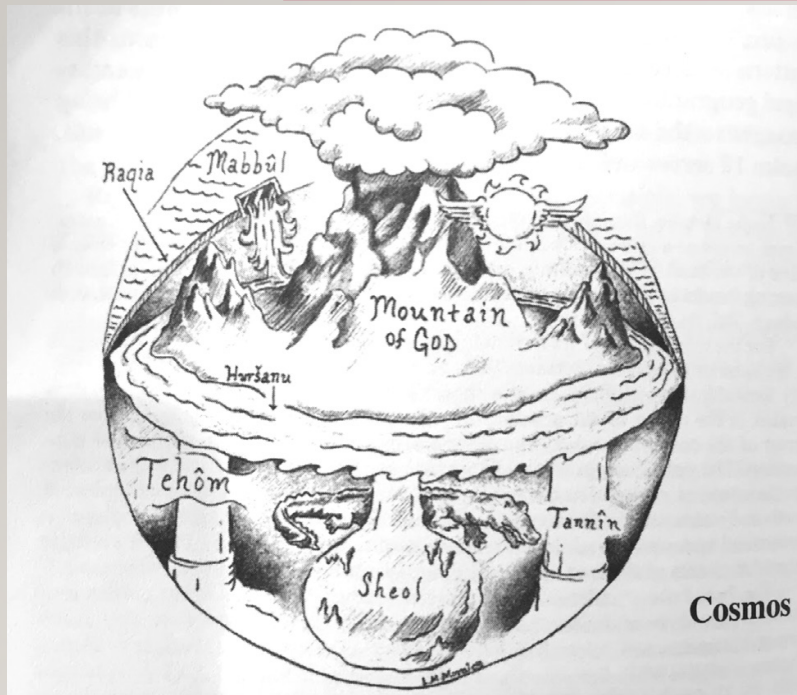
- Reading Genesis 1 as cosmology requires knowing how the people viewed themselves in comparison to the people around them.
- This has prompted questions as to whether the biblical authors borrowed from the stories of their cultural neighbors.
- There seems to be a nuanced answer to that question with Genesis providing its own distinct worldview using the language and concepts of the culture.



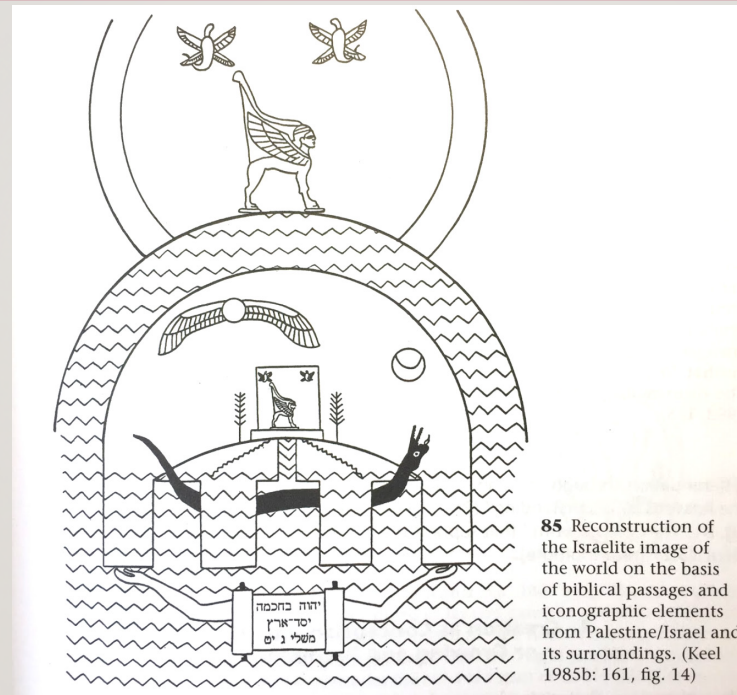
EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE
The Biblical text ignores a dominant ANE tradition	<i>Theogony</i> : creation as “birthed” by God)
The Biblical text shows familiarity with a tradition but rejects it	Creation as the result of rival gods
The Biblical text shares one part of a traditional idea but rejects other parts by giving an alternative perspective	Humans made of clay [shared], and created to be slaves of the gods [rejected]
The Biblical text shows awareness of a tradition and adapts/transforms it in light of biblical monotheism	Creation as the result of a battle with the chaos monster; the water-dragon is not a true rival to Yahweh, but a rebel creature
The Biblical text shares and subconsciously reflects a traditional conception with their neighbors	Example: creation is a macro-temple



VISUALIZATIONS OF THE BIBLICAL COSMOS



Who Shall Ascend the Hill of the Lord?
Michael Morales



The Symbolism of the Biblical World
Othmar Keel



The Old Testament Today
John Walton

THE BEGINNING AND NOTHINGNESS

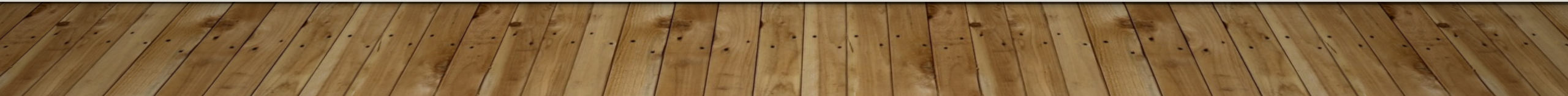
- Genesis 1:1-2 The introduction and the pre-creation state:

Gen 1:1 “In the beginning God created the skies and the land”

- “beginning” (Heb. reshīt / ראשית) refers not to a first point in time, but to a preliminary period of time”

EXAMPLES OF “RESHIT”

- Job 8:6-7 If you are pure and upright, surely then [God] will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation. Even though your **reshit** was insignificant, your end will be very great.
- Here the entire period of Job’s life before his suffering is called the reshith, the beginning period.



EXAMPLES OF “RESHIT”

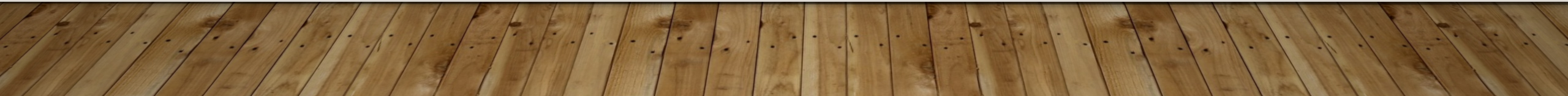
- Jeremiah 27:1 - In the **reshit** of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Joash, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying...
- Jeremiah 28:1 – Now in the same year, in the **reshit** of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, in the fifth month...
- Notice how the reshith of the reign of Zedekiah extends even four years.

QUOTE

- *“In Genesis, the ‘beginning’ (re’shīt) refers to a preliminary period of time rather than a first point in time... This leads us conclude that the ‘beginning’ is a way of labeling the seven-day period of creation described in the remainder of Genesis 1 rather than a point in time prior to the seven days... It provides a literary introduction to the period of creativity that then flows into the...rest of the book.” — JOHN WALTON, GENESIS ONE AS ANCIENT COSMOLOGY, 126-127.*

GENESIS 1:2 AS THE PRE-CREATION STATE: WATERS, DARKNESS, WILDERNESS

Now the land was wild and waste... (Hebrew. Tohu vavohu)
...and darkness was over the face of the deep abyss (Hebrew.
Tehom)



Deuteronomy 32:9–10 (NASB95)

⁹*"For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.*

¹⁰*"He found him in a desert land, And in the howling **tohu** of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him,
He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.*

Isaiah 24:10-12

¹⁰*The city of **tohu** is broken down; Every house is shut up so that none may enter.*

¹¹*There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine; All joy turns to gloom. The gaiety of the earth is banished.*

¹²*Desolation is left in the city And the gate is battered to ruins.*

Isaiah 45:18 (NIV)

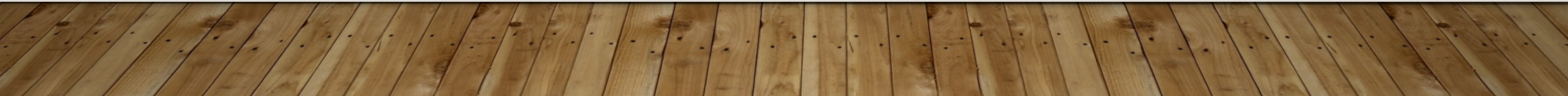
¹⁸*For this is what the Lord says— he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be **tohu**, but formed it to be inhabited— he says: "I am the Lord, and there is no other.*

Psalms 107:40 (= Job 12:21, 24)

*[Yahweh] pours contempt upon nobles,
And he makes them wander in **tohu** that has no road.*

EXAMPLES OF DEEP ABYSS “TEHOM”

- Job 38:16-17 – Have you entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the **tehom**? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?
- Jonah 2:5-6 – Water encompassed me to the point of death. The **tehom** engulfed me. Weeds were wrapped around my head. I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but you have brought up my life from the pit, o Lord my God.



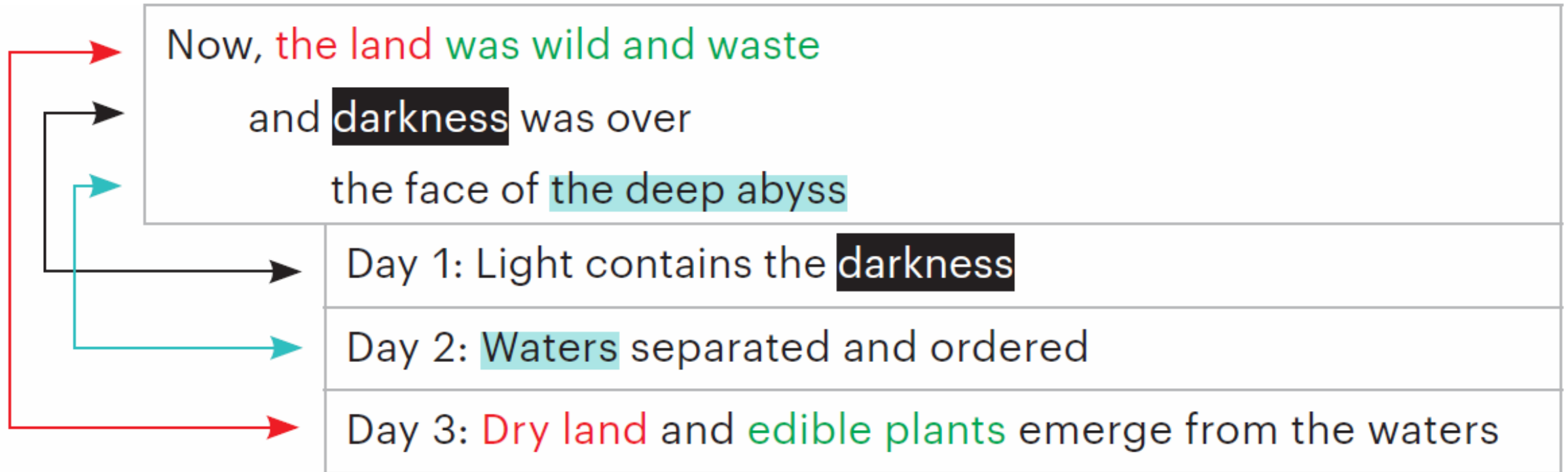
REFLECTION

- While in modern cosmologies, water is “something,” in ancient near eastern cosmology, the “cosmic sea” belongs to the pre-creation state, a neutral, functionless state of non-organization and lifelessness.

THE PRE-CREATION STATE AND BIBLICAL ONTOLOGY - QUOTE

- “Genesis 1:2...describes the pre-cosmic condition as it was understood in Israelite thought. As in the rest of the ancient world [the pre-creation state] is not absent of matter, as the primordial waters are already present...They are the functionless cosmic waters...where order has not yet been imposed, the desert and cosmic waters above and below.” – John Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 180-181

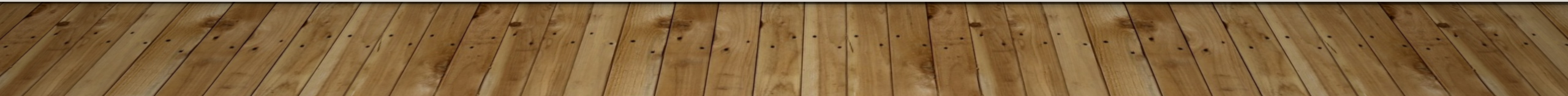
Three Elements of Disorder in Genesis 1



Notice that the three elements of “disorder” in Genesis 1:2 all find parallels in ancient Near Eastern cosmology, and each one is separately addressed in Days 1-3 of Genesis one.

GENESIS 1 IMAGERY: JEREMIAH 4

- How is Jeremiah 4 using ideas and words from Genesis 1?
- Does the use of *tohu vavohu* (wild and waste) in particular help us understand what is meant in Genesis 1?
- The “wild and waste,” the “darkness,” and the “deep abyss” are all ancient Near Eastern, ancient Israelite, biblical images for “nothing” – non existence – a “pre-creation” state.



GENESIS 1 IMAGERY: PSALM 104

- What does the word “create” mean in Psalm 104? What might this mean for Genesis 1 “God created the heavens and the earth?”
- When the ruakh of Elohim is present, the abysmal disorder is neutralized and can become a vehicle for life.”

