

## Ancient View of the Cosmos

In the ancient Near East, people believed that there was a single disk-shaped continent. This continent had high mountains at the edges that both kept out the waters of the cosmic ocean and held up the sky. The heavens were understood to be made up of three superimposed disks with pavements of various materials. The sun moved through the sky during the day and then moved into the netherworld during the night, where it traversed under the earth to its place of rising for the next day. Flowing all around this cosmos were the cosmic waters that were held

out by the mountains, held back by the sky, and on which the earth floated. Similar views of the structure of the cosmos were common throughout the ancient world and persisted in popular perception until the Copernican revolution and the Enlightenment. The language of the Old Testament text reflects this view, and there is no revelation in the Bible that seeks to correct this view. Without revelation to the contrary, we must consider it likely that this is the view of the cosmos that Israelites would have held in common with their neighbors.



Artistic rendering of how the Israelites envisioned their world.

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