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There are 3 kinds of notes in the NET.

[TN] – translator notes: explain the rationale for the translation and give alternative, interpretive options, and other technical information

[SN] – study notes: explanatory notes that include comments about historical or cultural background, explanation of obscure phrases or brief discussions of context, discussions of the theological points

[TC] – text-critical notes: highlight alternative readings found in various Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts

GENESIS 1–2

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underscored by the similar sounds: בָּרַךְ (*barakh*) with בָּרָא (*bará*), and פָּרָה (*parah*) with רָבָה (*ravah*).

A TN There are three groups of land animals here: the cattle or livestock (mostly domesticated), things that creep or move close to the ground (such as reptiles or rodents), and the wild animals (all animals of the field). The three terms are general classifications without specific details.

B SN The plural form of the verb has been the subject of much discussion through the years, and not surprisingly several suggestions have been put forward. Many Christian theologians interpret it as an early hint of plurality within the Godhead, but this view imposes later trinitarian concepts on the ancient text. Some have suggested the plural verb indicates majesty, but the plural of majesty is not used with verbs. C. Westermann (*Genesis*, 1:145) argues for a plural of “deliberation” here, but his proposed examples of this use (2 Sam 24:14; Isa 6:8) do not actually support his theory. In 2 Sam 24:14 David uses the plural as representative of all Israel, and in Isa 6:8 the LORD speaks on behalf of his heavenly court. In its ancient Israelite context the plural is most naturally understood as referring to God and his heavenly court (see 1 Kgs 22:19–22; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6; Isa 6:1–8). (The most well-known members of this court are God’s messengers, or angels. In Gen 3:5 the serpent may refer to this group as “gods/divine beings.” See the note on the word “evil” in 3:5.) If this is the case, God invites the heavenly court to participate at the creation of humankind (perhaps in the role of offering praise, see Job 38:7), but he himself is the one who does the actual creative work (v. 27). Of course, this view does assume that the members of the heavenly court possess the divine “image” in some way. Since the image is closely associated with rulership, perhaps they share the divine image in that they, together with God and under his royal authority, are the executive authority over the world.

C TN The Hebrew word is אָדָם (*‘adam*), which can sometimes refer to man, as opposed to woman. The term refers here to humankind, comprised of male and female. The singular is clearly collective (see the plural verb, “[that] they may rule” in v. 26b) and the ref-

each according to its kind.”^A It was so.²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the cattle according to their kinds, and all the creatures that creep along the ground according to their kinds. God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make^B humankind^C in our image, after our likeness,^D so they may rule^E over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth,^F and over all the creatures that move^G on the earth.”

²⁷ God created humankind^H in his own image, in the image of God he created them,^I male and female he created them.^J

²⁸ God blessed^K them and said^L to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it!^M Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.”^N ²⁹ Then God said, “I now^O give you

(having both male and female physical characteristics) and afterward were separated. The mention of male and female prepares for the blessing to follow.

K TN As in v. 22 the verb “bless” here means “to endow with the capacity to reproduce and be fruitful,” as the following context indicates. As in v. 22, the statement directly precedes the command “be fruitful and

multiply.” The verb carries this same nuance in Gen 17:16 (where God’s blessing of Sarai imparts to her the capacity to bear a child); Gen 48:16 (where God’s blessing of Joseph’s sons is closely associated with their having numerous descendants); and Deut 7:13 (where God’s blessing is associated with fertility in general, including numerous descendants). See also Gen 49:25 (where Jacob uses the noun derivative in referring to “blessings of the breast and womb,” an obvious reference to fertility) and Gen 27:27 (where the verb is used of a field to which God has given the capacity to produce vegetation).

L TN Heb “and God said.” For stylistic reasons “God” has not been repeated here in the translation.

M TN Elsewhere the Hebrew verb translated “subdue” means “to enslave” (2 Chr 28:10; Neh 5:5; Jer 34:11, 16), “to conquer,” (Num 32:22, 29; Josh 18:1; 2 Sam 8:11; 1 Chr 22:18; Zech 9:13; and probably Mic 7:19), and “to assault sexually” (Esth 7:8). None of these nuances adequately meets the demands of this context, for humankind is not viewed as having an adversarial relationship with the world. The general meaning of the verb appears to be “to bring under one’s control for one’s advantage.” In Gen 1:28 one might paraphrase it as follows: “harness its potential and use its resources for your benefit.” In an ancient Israelite context this would suggest cultivating its fields, mining its mineral riches, using its trees for construction, and domesticating its animals.

5:3 they are reversed with the two words. The word צֶלֶם (*tselem*, “image”) is used frequently of statues, models, and images—replicas (see D. J. A. Clines, “The Etymology of Hebrew *selem*,” *JNSL* 3 [1974]: 19–25). The word דְּמוּת (*demut*, “likeness”) is an abstract noun; its verbal root means “to be like; to resemble.” In the Book of Genesis the two terms describe human beings who in some way reflect the form and the function of the creator. The form is more likely stressing the spiritual rather than the physical. The “image of God” would be the God-given mental and spiritual capacities that enable people to relate to God and to serve him by ruling over the created order as his earthly vice-regents.

SN In our image, after our likeness. Similar language is used in the instructions for building the tabernacle. Moses was told to make it “according to the pattern” he was shown on the mount (Exod 25:9, 10). Was he shown a form, a replica, of the spiritual sanctuary in the heavenly places? In any case, what was produced on earth functioned as the heavenly sanctuary does, but with limitations.

E TN Following the cohortative (“let us make”), the prefixed verb form with *vav* (ו) conjunctive indicates purpose/result (see Gen 19:20; 34:23; 2 Sam 3:21). God’s purpose in giving humankind his image is that they might rule the created order on behalf of the heavenly king and his royal court. So the divine image, however it is defined, gives humankind the capacity and/or authority to rule over creation.

translator notes

study notes

text-critical notes

Actual Size

A TN The Hebrew construction employs a cognate accusative, where the nominal object (“vegetation”) derives from the verbal root employed. It stresses the abundant productivity that God created.

SN *Vegetation.* The Hebrew word translated “vegetation” (אֲשֶׁר, *deshe*) normally means “grass,” but here it probably refers more generally to vegetation that includes many of the plants and trees. In the verse the plants and the trees are qualified as self-perpetuating with seeds, but not the word “vegetation,” indicating it is the general term and the other two terms are sub-categories of it. Moreover, in vv. 29 and 30 the word vegetation/grass does not appear. Smr adds an “and” before the fruit trees, indicating it saw the arrangement as bipartite (Smr tends to eliminate asyndetic constructions).

B TN The conjunction “and” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation to clarify the relationship of the clauses.

C SN *After their kinds.* The Hebrew word translated “kind” (מִיָּד, *min*) indicates again that God was concerned with defining and dividing time, space, and species. The point is that creation was with order, as opposed to chaos. And what God created and distinguished with boundaries was not to be confused (see Lev 19:19 and Deut 22:9–11).

D SN *Let there be lights.* Light itself was created before the light-bearers. The order would not seem strange to the ancient Hebrew mind that did not automatically link daylight with the sun (note that dawn and dusk appear to have light without the sun).

E TN The language describing the cosmos, which reflects a prescientific view of the world, must be interpreted as phenomenal, describing what appears to be the case. The sun and the moon are not *in* the sky (below the clouds), but from the viewpoint of a person standing on the earth, they appear that way. Even today we use similar phenomenological expressions, such as “the sun is rising” or “the stars in the sky.”

F TN The text has “for signs and for seasons and for days and years.” It seems likely from the meanings of the words involved that “signs” is the main idea, followed by two categories, “seasons” and “days and years.” This is the simplest explanation, and one that matches vv. 11–13. It could even be rendered “signs for the

¹¹ God said, “Let the land produce vegetation:^A plants yielding seeds and^B trees on the land bearing fruit with seed in it, according to their kinds.”^C It was so.¹² The land produced vegetation—plants yielding seeds according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. God saw that it was good. ¹³ There was evening, and there was morning, a third day.

¹⁴ God said, “Let there be lights^D in the expanse^E of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be signs^F to indicate seasons and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” It was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights^G—the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night. He made the stars also.^H ¹⁷ God placed the lights^I in the expanse of the sky to shine on the earth, ¹⁸ to preside over the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.^J God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ There was evening, and there was morning, a fourth day.

²⁰ God said, “Let the water swarm with swarms^K of living creatures and let birds fly^L above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” ²¹ God created the great sea creatures^M and every living and moving thing with which the water swarmed, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them^N and said, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”^O ²³ There was evening, and there was morning, a fifth day.

²⁴ God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals,

fixed seasons, that is [explicative *vav* (ו)] days and years.”

SN *Let them be for signs.* The point is that the sun and the moon were important to fix the days for the seasonal celebrations for the worshipping community.

G SN *Two great lights.* The text goes to great length to discuss the creation of these lights, suggesting that the subject was very important to the ancients. Since these “lights” were considered deities in the ancient world, the section serves as a strong polemic (see G. Hasel, “The Polemical Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *EvQ* 46 [1974]: 81–102). The Book of Genesis is affirming they are created entities, not deities. To underscore this the text does not even give them names. If used here, the usual names for the sun and moon [*Shemesh* and *Yarid*, respectively] might have carried pagan connotations, so they are simply described as greater and lesser lights. Moreover, they serve in the capacity that God gives them, which would not be the normal function the pagans ascribed to them. They merely divide, govern, and give light in God’s creation.

H TN Heb “and the stars.” Now the term “stars” is added as a third object of the verb “made.” Perhaps the language is phenomenological, meaning that the stars appeared in the sky from this time forward.

I TN Heb “them”; the referent (the lights mentioned in the preceding verses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

J SN In days one to three there is a naming by God; in days five and six there is a blessing by God. But on day four there is neither. It could be a mere stylistic

variation. But it could also be a deliberate design to avoid naming “sun” and “moon” or promoting them beyond what they are, things that God made to serve in his creation.

K TN The Hebrew text again uses a cognate construction (“swarm with swarms”) to emphasize the abundant fertility. The idea of the verb is one of swift movement back and forth, literally swarming. This verb is used in Exod 1:7 to describe the rapid growth of the Israelite population in bondage.

L TN The Hebrew text uses the Polel form of the verb instead of the simple Qal; it stresses a swarming flight again to underscore the abundant fruitfulness.

M TN For the first time in the narrative proper the verb “create” (בָּרָא, *bará*) appears. (It is used

in the summary statement of v. 1.) The author wishes to underscore that these creatures—even the great ones—are part of God’s perfect creation. The Hebrew term תַּנִּינִים (*tanninim*) is used for snakes (Exod 7:9), crocodiles (Ezek 29:3), or other powerful animals (Jer 51:34). In Isa 27:1 the word is used to describe a mythological sea creature that symbolizes God’s enemies.

N TN While the translation “blessed” has been retained here for the sake of simplicity, it would be most helpful to paraphrase it as “God endowed them with fruitfulness” or something similar, for here it refers to God’s giving the animals the capacity to reproduce. The expression “blessed” needs clarification in its different contexts, for it is one of the unifying themes of the Book of Genesis. The divine blessing occurs after works of creation and is intended to continue that work—the word of blessing guarantees success. The word means “to enrich; to endow,” and the most visible evidence of that enrichment is productivity or fruitfulness. See C. Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church* (OBT).

O SN The instruction God gives to creation is properly a fuller expression of the statement just made (“God blessed them”), that he enriched them with the ability to reproduce. It is not saying that these were rational creatures who heard and obeyed the word; rather, it stresses that fruitfulness in the animal world is a result of the divine decree and not of some pagan cultic ritual for fruitfulness. The repeated emphasis of “be fruitful—multiply—fill” adds to this abundance God has given to life. The meaning is