



Creation

By Jacques B. Doukhan

1. Why does the Bible begin with the Creation story?

“God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

“Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1).

Creation is the first “article of faith” in the *Ani ma amin* Jewish creed, written by Maimonides: “I believe with a firm and perfect faith that God is the Creator of all things.”

2. What is the first lesson of Creation?

“Come, let us bow down and worship Him. Let us fall on our knees in front of the Lord our Maker” (Psalm 95:6; cf. Revelation 14:7).

“Aleinu lesabeiah le Adon ha-kol. Lateit gdulah leyotser bereisheet. It is our duty to praise the Lord of all, to proclaim the greatness of the Creator of the universe” (*Aleinu* prayer).

3. What is the most compelling evidence of God’s existence?

“The heavens tell about the glory of God. The skies show that His hands created them” (Psalm 19:1; cf. Genesis 1:1)

Upon observing the syntax of the first verse (Genesis 1:1), the Midrash concludes that the creation (*bara*) leads to the encounter with God (*Elohim*). See Yalkut R. Samuel ISP 184: *“I exist, therefore God exists.”*

4. How did God create the world?

“He spoke, and the world came into being. He commanded, and it stood firm” (Psalm 33:9; cf. Genesis 1:3).

“God created the world by a word, instantaneously, without toil and pains” (*Bereshit Rabbah* 3, 2). *“The world was created by ten divine words . . . for the first act was enough for all the creation”* (*m. Pirkey Abot* 5.1).

5. How long did God take to create our universe?

“In six days I made the heavens and the earth. I made the oceans and everything in them. But I rested on the seventh day. So I blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exodus 20:11).

6. How does the Bible describe each work of creation?

“God said, ‘Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place. Let dry ground appear.’ And that’s exactly what happened. God called the dry ground land. He called the waters that were gathered together oceans. And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:9-10; cf. vss. 12-31).

“Everything that God fashioned was perfect, as all His dealings with men are just and right. It is not for men to imagine improvements in His creation” (*Sifre Deuteronomy*, per. 397).

7. What kind of days are the days of the Creation week?

“God called the light day. He called the darkness night. There was evening, and there was morning. It was day one” (Genesis 1:5; cf. vss. 8, 13ff.).

See Rashi (in *Miqraoth Gdoloth*): *“The symmetry of the text would have required first day, like for the following days, second, third, fourth. Why was it written ‘one’? Because God was one.”*

8. How did God proceed to mark days and seasons?

“God made two great lights. He made the larger light to rule over the day. He made the smaller light to rule over the night. He also made the stars” (Genesis 1:16; cf. vss. 4, 5).

9. What lessons about God can we learn from the Creation story?

“God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth”

(Genesis 1:1).

“At that time, bushes had not appeared on the earth. Plants had not come up in the fields. The Lord God (YHWH) had not sent rain on the earth. And there wasn’t any man to work the ground” (Genesis 2:5).

“Elohim is the name of God when He exercises justice . . . YHWH is the name of God when He exercises mercy” (see Rashi, *Miqraoth Gdoloth*).

10. What was God’s purpose in creating the world?

“God saw everything He had made. And it was very good. There was evening, and there was morning. It was day six” (Genesis 1:31).

“Rabbi Aibo said of God: ‘It is like a king who has filled His palace with enjoyments; if he has no visitors, what pleasure does he derive from them? Thus when the angels objected to the creation of man, God replied: And of what use are all the good things I have created, unless men are there to enjoy them?’” (*Beresbit Rabbah* 8, 5).

11. What should be the human response to the fact that God created the world?

“You love your wife. So enjoy life with her. Do it all the days of this meaningless life God has given you on earth. That’s what He made you for. That’s what you get for all your hard work on earth” (*Ecclesiastes* 9:9). – Enjoy life!

“God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. He rested on it. After he had created everything, He rested from all of the work He had done” (Genesis 2:3; cf. *Exodus* 20:10-11). – Keep the Sabbath!

12. How did the Marcionite rejection of the God of Creation affect the Jewish-Christian separation?

“There were, in Marcion’s view, two gods. The one, creator of the world and all that is in it, was the god of the Jewish Bible. The other, the redeemer deity, was radically different: a god of mercy rather than justice, of love and compassion, utterly separate from the creator god and wholly unknown until revealed by Jesus” (Steven G. Wilson, *Related Strangers*, p. 211).

“The separation of law and gospel is the primary and principal exploit of Marcion” (*Marc.* 1.19).

13. How is faith in Creation implied in the biblical hope?

“I will create new heavens and a new earth. The things that have happened before will not be remembered. They will not even enter your minds. So be glad and full of joy forever because of what I will create. I will cause others to take delight in Jerusalem. They will be filled with joy when they see its people” (*Isaiah* 65:17-18).

14. What is the Jewish or the New Testament ritual that points to the biblical event of Creation?

“Jesus answered, ‘What I’m about to tell you is true. No one can enter God’s kingdom without being born through water and the Holy Spirit’” (*John* 3:5; *Romans* 6:1-4), *Tevilah*: *Yevamot* 46b; *Keritot* 9a.

In both traditions the total immersion of the person is required for the proselyte before he or she joins. In both traditions the act of immersion symbolizes recreation and new commitment to God and the Torah (see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Issuaray Biah* 13:5 and *Colossians* 2:12).

15 What lesson is suggested through the way the Bible begins and ends?

“God created the heavens and the earth” (*Genesis* 1:1).

“Cyrus, the king of Persia, says, ‘The Lord is the God of heaven. He has given me all of the kingdoms on the earth. He has appointed me to build a temple for Him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any one of His people among you can go up to Jerusalem’” (*2 Chronicles* 36:23).

“I will send you the prophet Elijah. He will come before the day of the Lord arrives. It will be a great and terrifying day. Elijah will teach parents how to love their children. He will also teach children how to honor their parents. If that does not happen, I will come. And I will put a curse on the land” (*Malachi* 4:5-6).

“In the beginning, the Word was already there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God” (*John* 1:1).

“He who gives witness to witness to these things says, ‘Yes. I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (*Revelation* 22:20).