



Why the Verb ברא Does Not Mean ‘to Create’ in Genesis 1.1–2.4a

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Abstract

The linguistic and textual examination of the seven usages of the verb ברא in Genesis 1 leads to the conclusion that the verb ברא in Genesis 1 does not mean ‘to create’ but ‘to separate’. This hypothesis is subsequently tested against external evidence from cognate literature in Mesopotamia. In these Mesopotamian accounts of creation, the opening lines often describe the (divine) acts of separation of heaven and earth. The Sumerian verb *bad* and the Akkadian verb *parāsu* employed in these texts designate clearly ‘to separate’. Textual evidence from the Hebrew Bible appears to support this hypothesis, too, for example, the fact that in the Hebrew Bible the noun ‘creator’ is never expressed with the participle of ברא, but always with the participle of other verbs. Thus, based on internal and external linguistic and textual evidence and on a controlled argumentation, it is highly plausible and very likely that the type of action expressed by the verb ברא in Genesis 1 is of a very concrete, spatial and physical character, and can be rendered by ‘to separate’. Finally, an analysis is made of the differences between הברא and ברא.

Keywords: *bara*’, creation, cosmology, Mesopotamian creation texts, Hebrew Bible

Creative Action in Genesis 1.1–2.4a

In Bible translations, Biblical Hebrew dictionaries and commentaries on the book of Genesis, as well as in detailed studies of Genesis 1, the verb **ברא** is always understood as designating ‘to create’ in the sense of ‘the act of bringing something new into existence’. In this study, I will investigate the type of action that the verb **ברא** expresses in Genesis 1, that is, Gen. 1.1–2.4a, and see whether an open-minded linguistic examination will indeed confirm or correct the conventional view.¹

A survey of the creative actions in Genesis 1 will be the starting point of this research. These actions can be summarized as follows:

- God’s activity in reference to *the heaven and the earth* is expressed in the opening verse of the story by the verb **ברא**.
- God’s *making of light* (vv. 3-4) is described in two processes: the first process consists of ‘letting be’ in combination with ‘speaking’, and is expressed by the verb **אמר** and the jussive of **היה** in direct discourse; and the second process consists of ‘separating’, and is expressed by the *hiphil* of the verb **ברל** (from now on referred to as **הבדיל**).
- God’s *making of heaven* (vv. 6-7) is described in the process of ‘letting be’ in combination with ‘speaking’, which is expressed by the verb **אמר** and twice by the jussive of the verb **היה** in direct discourse, and in two processes of ‘making’ and ‘separating’, expressed by the verbs **עשה** and **הבדיל**.
- *Heaven* itself and its *components* are ‘made’ in vv. 14-17 in their function as ‘separators’: the firmament is made to separate the waters, and the lights in the firmament are made to separate day and night. This is expressed by the verb **אמר** plus the jussive and two *w^eqatal* forms of the verb **היה** in direct discourse, and by the two processes of ‘making’ and ‘separating’, expressed by the verbs **עשה** and **הבדיל**.
- The *making of the earth* in vv. 9-10 is described as the result of God’s speaking and as the reason for the seawaters’ assembling into one place and the emerging of the land; it is expressed by the verb **אמר** followed by the jussive of **קרה** and the *w^eyiqtol* of **ראה** (*niphal*) in direct discourse.²
- The *making of the vegetation on earth* in vv. 11-12 is described as the result of God’s speaking and of the earth’s potential in bringing forth

1. The method of analysis is neither explained nor presented here. It can be characterized as a cognitive linguistic approach that aims at the lexical combinations and grammatical structures of a biblical text, which are understood and analyzed as the manifestations of ancient cognition and experience. It leads eventually to the (re)construction of the composite mental image that emerges from words and texts. For a description, see van Wolde 2009.

2. According to Baden (2008) the *w^eyiqtol* form is the highly marked morphology used to connote purpose or result, both in indicative and volitive contexts. The sequence of the volitive + *w^eyiqtol* always and explicitly connotes purpose or result. Gen. 1.9 should therefore be translated by ‘let the water below the heaven be gathered into one area, so that the dry land may appear’.

greenery; it is expressed by the verb אָמַר and the jussive of the verb דָּשָׂא (*hiphil*) in direct discourse, and by the verb יָצָא (*hiphil*).

- The *continuation of the vegetation on earth* is described as the result of the seeds' capacity to bring forth; the noun מִיִּן is used three times to designate the continuation of the plants and the fruits in their own distinct species.
- The *making of the sea and sky animals* is described in two stages. The sea animals are exhorted to swarm the seawaters, which is expressed by the verb אָמַר plus the jussive of the verb שָׂרַץ in direct discourse, while the sky animals are exhorted to fly over the earth, which is expressed by the verb אָמַר plus the jussive of the verb עָוַף in direct discourse. With regard to the third group of animals, the large *tanninim*, their origin is not described. Verse 21a presents God's action in relation to these three groups of animals and it contains the verb בָּרָא.
- The *continuation of the sea and sky animals* differs. The sea and sky animals are said to reproduce themselves according to their own species (twice מִיִּן). The sea animals are addressed three times in imperatives to be fruitful, multiply and fill the waters of the sea. The birds are exhorted by a jussive to fill (the sky of) the earth. However, the *tanninim* are not exhorted to be fruitful, multiply or fill the waters.
- The *making of the land animals* is the result of God's speaking and the earth's procreative potential. It is expressed by the verb אָמַר plus the jussive of the verb יָצָא (*hiphil*) in direct discourse, and God's act of making is expressed by the verb עָשָׂה. A distinction is made between three types of animals: cattle, creeping things and wild beasts.
- The *continuation of the land animals* depends on the three animal types. They are to reproduce themselves in distinct species (five times מִיִּן); yet, they are not exhorted to multiply and fill the earth.
- The *making of humankind* is the result of God's activity in v. 26 expressed by the verb עָשָׂה. In v. 27 the verb בָּרָא is used three times.
- In 2.2 the *overall process of making* is twice summed up by the verb עָשָׂה.
- Verse 2.3 concerns *the seventh day* in which a finite form of the verb בָּרָא is once used and the infinitive of the verb עָשָׂה once.
- The *concluding verse of the story*, v. 2.4a, summarizes the actions described previously by the noun *toledot* or 'begettings' of the heaven and earth and by the infinitive construct 'in their being (בָּרָא)'.

It thus appears that Genesis 1 does not employ the verb בָּרָא to express God's making of the light (in vv. 3-4), the making of heaven (in vv. 6-7), the making of the earth (in vv. 9-10), the making of the plants on earth (in vv. 11-12), or the making of the lights on heaven's firmament (in vv. 14-18). When the process of making something new is described in Genesis 1, it is indicated either by God's speaking followed by a direct discourse with a jussive verb form or by God's

action expressed by the verb עשה. Linguistically speaking, the valence structure of the verb עשה encompasses various elements. It includes God as the agent subject and one or more entities as the direct objects of God's action, while no other entities are involved—not as instrument, as material attribute or substrate, not as helper, adviser or in other functions. The object entities are not marked by a definite article and the text does not testify to their existence prior to the divine action marked by עשה. The operation itself includes a temporal process from an initial stage of non-existence to a final stage in which the object entities are brought into existence. In sum, the meaning of the verb עשה comes closest to our idea of creation.

The *hiphil* of the verb ברל expresses the divine action with respect to light and darkness and with respect to various gatherings of waters. The very same verb form is employed to describe the continuation of this activity performed by the heavenly firmament and the heavenly phenomena, which concerns the separation of the waters and the maintenance of the distinction between day and night, and between the set times, days and years on earth. Distinction or separation is thus conceived of as a divine action which took place at the beginning only and as an activity of the heaven-related entities which continues until the present day. Linguistically speaking, the valence structure of the verb הבריל in Genesis 1 includes an action with either God or heaven as the agent subject, two definite entities as the objects of the action and the twice repeated preposition בין preceding each of the objects; the verb הבריל itself designates the process of distinction or separation between two definite object entities.

Because the verb ברא is not used with reference to God's making of light, the firmament of heaven, the heavenly bodies on the firmament, the earth or the plants on earth, and because the verb ברא is not used with reference to God's distinction between day and night, the separation of waters, or the distinction of set times, days and years on earth, the question is: What is the meaning of the word ברא in the context of Gen. 1.1–2.4a? What is needed is an investigation of the seven usages of ברא in this text in order to answer this question.

The Verb ברא in Genesis 1.1

Two grammatical elements, the prepositional phrase בראשית, which is vocalized in the MT as if it were lacking the article, and the relationship between this phrase and the *qatal* form of the verb ברא, make the opening verse of Genesis 1 notoriously difficult. Recently, Holmstedt (2008) has presented a grammatically-sound explanation of this verse as an unmarked, restrictive relative clause. His argumentation is based on three features of relative clauses in the Hebrew Bible (Holmstedt 2008: 59–65). First, Biblical Hebrew relative clauses often omit an explicit relative word, which are traditionally labelled 'asyndetic' or 'bare' relative clauses. Compare, for example, Jer. 42.3 and Exod. 18.20; the two texts contain the same relative clauses, yet the former has the relative אשר

and the latter does not include any relative.³ Note, too, that in Exod. 18.20, like Gen. 1.1, the noun is adjacent to the verb, although the two are not in a subject–predicate relationship. Second, the noun preceding the verb is not in construct with the verb itself, but with the relative clause. See, for example, Lev. 13.46: ‘He shall be unclean all the days that the disease is in him’. Here, the noun כלי־מי is the head of the relative clause with the relative אשר. Similarly, in Gen. 1.1 the noun ראשית is the head of the unmarked, relative clause that runs from [ברא]⁴ to [את־הארץ]. Third, when in Biblical Hebrew the head of the relative clause is in the construct form, the relative clause is always restrictive. A clear example is Ps. 7.16, ‘he made a cistern, he dug it out, and fell into *the pit that he made*’.⁵ Consequently, according to Holmstedt, the construct form of בראשית in Gen. 1.1 indicates that the relative clause is restricted—that is to say, out of potentially multiple initial periods or initial stages, one specific initial time is identified as the head of the restrictive relative clause. In English, non-restrictive relative clauses are marked by a pause or comma (e.g. ‘The beginning, which was inspiring, was followed by a dull part’), whereas restrictive clauses are not marked by a pause or comma (e.g. ‘The beginning that he made was better than hers’ or ‘The beginning he made was better than hers’). Yet, in English ‘the beginning’ would not allow for a combination with a restrictive relative, and ‘In the beginning that God [ברא] the heaven and the earth’ would be ungrammatical. This explains why Holmstedt (2008: 65) chooses to translate Gen. 1.1 as ‘In the initial period that/in which God [ברא] the heaven and the earth’.⁶

Although impressed by the rigour of Holmstedt’s grammatical analysis, I am critical of his translation, which sounds rather artificial and is only marginally interpretable. Acknowledging his arguments that the clause [בראשית ברא אלהים] [את־השמים ואת־הארץ] is an unmarked restrictive relative clause and that the noun ראשית is the head of this relative clause, I would propose to translate this verse as ‘In the beginning in which/when God [ברא] the heaven and the earth’.⁷ In the relative clause, the *qatal* of the verb ברא conveys a unique and/or instantaneous

3. Cf. Jer. 42.3, ‘and let Y^{HWH} your God tell us the way that we should walk in (את־הדרך אשר נלך־בה)’, and Exod. 18.20, ‘and you shall make known to them the way they should walk in (את־הדרך לכו בה)’.

4. In this article, the square brackets indicate that reference is made to the words as language signs, as yet without meaning.

5. In Ps. 7.16, בור כרה ורפרהו ויפל בשחת יפעל, the head ‘pit’ has the article in English (‘the pit’), yet it is unmarked in Biblical Hebrew (‘he fell in *a* pit’). This unmarked noun is followed by a relative clause without the relative אשר. This relative clause serves to identify the ‘pit’ over against all pits. It is into the very pit he made, he fell.

6. Holmstedt does not discuss the meaning of the verb ברא and translates Gen. 1.1, therefore, as ‘In the initial period that/in which God created the heavens and the earth’.

7. Holmstedt (2008: 64) is critical about this translation because, in his view, in English the phrase ‘the beginning’ cannot easily reproduce a restrictive reading.

action in the past. The beginning of this action is marked by the head of the relative clause ‘in the beginning’, while the action itself is tracked through time as a process that has come to its conclusion, a process which includes God as the agent subject and the heaven and the earth as its equally valued direct objects.⁸ The consequences of this grammatical explanation are twofold. First, the sentence started in v. 1 is not yet concluded, but is continued in the next verse(s). Second, v. 1 does not mark the absolute beginning in time (*actio prima*), but the beginning of one specific action, namely, the divine action of ברא.

Some questions arise with regard to the semantic content of the divine action in this relative clause. If the verb ברא described the bringing into being of the heaven and the earth, God’s making of heaven in v. 6 and God’s exhortation in v. 9 to let the earth emerge from the waters would be repetitive: they would have been created twice. Or the narrator would have narrated this event twice. Another possibility is that v. 1 does not tell us at all about the bringing into being of heaven and earth. And still another possibility is that v. 1 is a caption or summary of what will subsequently be narrated. All we do know, at this moment, is that in v. 1 the verb ברא expresses a type of action that God performs with respect to two direct objects, the heaven and the earth. Grammatically, the two nouns with the definite article can reflect either a relation to a previously introduced noun or the common viewpoint of both writer and reader, insofar as they share knowledge of the referent. Here, it is the shared knowledge that makes the referent identifiable. Thus, the definite articles reflect the worldview that the universe consists of at least two components or levels, namely, the heaven and the earth. This opening verse is followed by vv. 2 and 3, which presuppose another level in the universe, namely, the *tehom*. This tripartite cosmic view of the heaven, the earth and the *tehom* serves as the backdrop to Genesis 1.⁹

8. In contrast, the prepositional phrase followed by an infinite verb form in Gen. 2.4, ביום עשות יהוה אלהים ארץ ושמים (‘on the day when Y_{HWH} God made the heaven and the earth’), expresses the divine making of earth and heaven as an atemporal compound configuration and not as a temporal process executed in the past (for a discussion of finite and infinite verb forms in Biblical Hebrew, see van Wolde 2009).

9. Many biblical texts testify to this very same tripartite cosmic view. The story of the flood in Gen. 7.11, and the almost identical Gen. 8.2, presents the wells as the waters of the great deep or *tehom* coming up from below and the rain waters as the waters from heaven coming down from above, both relative to the earth-in-between. In Gen. 49.25, Jacob blesses his sons and comprises in it (1) the blessing of the heaven above, (2) the blessing of the deep below (*tehom*), and (3) the blessings of the breast and the womb, which implicitly represent the blessings on earth. Deut. 33.13 makes reference to the text of Gen. 49.25, positioning the heaven above, the deep below and the earth’s position in between. In Exod. 20.4, the tripartite cosmic division is self-evident: ‘You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth’. Ps. 33.7 implies the existence of waters and their storage in the deep: ‘He (Y_{HWH}) heaps up the ocean waters like a mound, stores the *tehomot* in vaults’. Ps. 36.6-7 presupposes a tripartite cosmic view in its distinction of heaven or sky, the mountains (on earth) and the great deep below: ‘O Y_{HWH}, your faithfulness reaches to heaven;

The heaven, then, is made by God in vv. 6-7 as a firmament or vault of solid material in the vertically arranged masses of water.¹⁰ The effect of this operation is that two collections of watery masses, one above and one below the firmament, are kept at a distance from each other. Earth, then, is recorded in vv. 9-10 to be the result of the horizontal spatial movements of the waters into an outward direction.¹¹ This produces two spatial domains on the earth's disk, namely the seawaters

your steadfastness to the sky; your beneficence is like the high mountains, your justice like the great *tehom*'. Ps 135.6 summarizes the tripartite cosmic geography rather nicely: 'Whatever Y_{HWH} desires, he does in heaven and earth, in the seas and all the *tehomot*'. Prov. 8.22-31 presents an alternative creation poem with wisdom in the position of first person: 'Y_{HWH} created me at the beginning of his course, ... He had not yet made earth and fields, or the world's first clumps of clay. I was there when he set the heavens into place; when he fixed the horizon over the *tehom*; when he made the heavens above firm, and the fountains of the *tehom* gushed forth; when he assigned the sea its limits, so that its waters never transgress his command; when he fixed the foundations of the earth'. (The translations are JPS in this footnote, with the exception of the tetragrammaton, and the words *tehom* and *tehomot*.)

10. The conceptualization of heaven in Gen. 1 stands out against the prevalent ancient Near Eastern cosmic geography. Mesopotamian texts testify to two traditions concerning the composition of the heavens: in one tradition the heavens are made of water, in another the heavens are made of stone (Horowitz 1998: 262), and Gen. 1 appears to share and combine both traditions. Various biblical texts (such as Gen. 1; Isa. 42.5; 44.24; Ps. 136.6; Job 37.18) represent the view that heaven is made of solid material. The noun אָרַב and the related verb אָרַב function in the cognitive domain of metallurgy or craftsmanship. The noun designates an expanse made of solid material (cf. Ezek. 1.22, 23, 25, 26; 10.1 where an expanse above the cherubim is said to be made of stone or crystal). The verb designates the action of a goldsmith or silversmith who beats out metal or solid material or to designate the activity of someone who spreads out a plate or solid material (see Ezek. 39.3; Num. 17.4; Isa. 42.5; 44.24; Jer. 10.9). Based on a metaphorical structuring of this concept, God's making of the heaven is conceptualized in terms of the beating out of solid plates of the heavenly firmament or as the spreading out of an expanse (Ps. 19.2 nicely describes the heaven as 'God's handiwork'). Furthermore, Isa. 42.5; 44.24, and Ps. 136.6 also narrate that 'God spread out or hammered out (אָרַב) the earth'. In Gen. 1, however, the noun אָרַב is merely used in relation to heaven. It shows how the heavenly firmament is conceived as a huge solid plate in between the water masses that functions as a kind of watershed. The other Mesopotamian tradition according to which the heaven is made of water is in Gen. 1 represented in vv. 6-7.

11. The conceptualization of the earth in Gen. 1 stands out against the prevalent ancient Near Eastern cosmic geography. All of the Mesopotamian evidence demonstrates that the earth's surface was thought to be basically circular in shape (Horowitz 1998: 334). Maps in the ancient world, from the Babylonian map (British Museum 92687) to the Greek maps drawn by Anaximander and Herodotus, share a belief that the inhabited world was an earth disk surrounded by water (Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 275; Horowitz 1998: 61). *The Babylonian Map of the World and The Bilingual Creation of the World by Marduk* demonstrate that Babylonians, at least, believed that a cosmic ocean encircled the continental portion of the earth's surface (Horowitz 1998: 325). Wiggerman (1996: 208-209) discusses a still earlier drawing and text which testify to the very same notion of an ocean encircling the earth, namely the Early Dynastic IIIa Tablet from Fara with a map of the world and a roughly contemporaneous table from Abu Salabikh.

and the land, which are kept at a distance. From this we can conclude that the divine creation of the heaven and the earth as recorded in vv. 6–10 includes a spatial movement and an act of separation, which transform an initial situation of non-descript unity into a final situation of four distinct spatial realms. If the verb אָרַב expresses this transformation, it designates a process of spatial separation.

Cognate literature provides us with additional information.¹² Horowitz (1998: 135–42) presents a number of Sumerian, bilingual, and Akkadian literary texts and incantations which include accounts of the creation and the organization of the universe. Five of these, the prologues to *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld*; *The Song of the Hoe*; KAR 4; *Enki and Ninmah* and SpTU 3 67, preserve accounts of the separation of heaven and earth.¹³ The prologue to *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld* recounts the following events at the beginning:¹⁴

1. In those days, in those distant days, in those nights, in those remote nights, in those years, in those distant years;
8. When the heavens had been separated from the earth;
9. When the earth had been delimited from the heavens;
10. When the fame of mankind had been established;
11. When An had taken the heavens for himself;
12. When Enlil had taken the earth for himself;
13. When the nether world had been given to Ereškigala as a gift.

At the end of this passage, the universe consists of three regions: heaven, earth and underworld. The heavens belong to An, the earth belongs to Enlil, and the netherworld belongs to Ereškigala. In the passage, no god assigns these regions to the three gods. Instead, An and Enlil carry off their regions, while Ereškigala, the queen of the underworld, receives her region as a gift (Horowitz 1998: 135). This text does not explain which god(s) separated heaven from earth. An unpublished variant, however, explains that An and Enlil made heaven and earth distant from one another:¹⁵

11. [After A]nu made heaven distant,
12. [Enli] made earth distant.¹⁶

12. I wish to thank Professor Niek Veldhuis, Berkeley University (CAL), for his advice and information with regard to the Sumerian and Akkadian material.

13. Horowitz (1998: 135–42) uses the old names for these accounts, namely, *Gilgamesh and the Huluppu Tree*, *The Creation of the Pickaxe*, *Enki and Ninmah*, and KAR 4 and SpTU 3 67, respectively. He also uses ancient editions and translations of these texts. Instead, I will use the most recent editions of *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Texts* (ETCSL) and the names as they are provided in the ETCSL.

14. For translation and transliteration, see the ETCSL, available online at: <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>.

15. The translation follows the edition of Shaffer Sumerian Sources as cited by Horowitz (1998: 135).

16. It is probable that Apsu existed before the separation of heaven and earth, although the Apsu is not mentioned in the prologue to *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld* (Horowitz 1998: 135).

In the story called *The Song of the Hoe*, lines 3-5 preserve the tradition that Enlil separated heaven and earth in order to provide space between them for the human seed of the land to come forth.¹⁷

1. Not only did the lord make the world appear in its correct form
2. —the lord who never changes the destinies which he determines:
3. Enlil, who will make the human seed of the Land come forth from the earth—
4. and not only did he hasten to separate heaven from earth
5. and hasten to separate earth from heaven,
6. but, in order to make it possible for humans to grow in (*the name of a cosmic location*),
7. he first suspended the axis of the world at Dur-an-ki.

KAR 4, a Middle Assyrian tablet from Assur, preserves a bilingual account of the creation of humankind. The first event narrated in v. 1 is:¹⁸

1. After heaven was made distant and separated from the earth, (its) trusty companion.

In *Enki and Ninmah*, known from both Sumerian and bilingual editions, the first two lines preserve an incomplete account of the separation of heaven and earth.¹⁹ The restored lines 1–2 translate as

1. In ancient days when heaven and earth [were separated];
2. In ancient nights when heaven and earth [were separated].

SpTU 3 67, a late Uruk tablet, opens with a long address to the Sun-god Utu that preserves another account of the separation of heaven and earth and the events of the early days and nights of the universe.²⁰

1. Utu, in ancient days, in far-away ancient days,
3. Utu, in ancient nights, in far-away ancient nights,
5. Utu, in ancient years, in far-away ancient years,
7. Utu, in days that went by, nights that once were,
9. Utu, when the heavens were made distant from earth,
11. Utu, when day and night were assigned,
13. Utu, when the sea encircled the land.

17. See the ETCSL.

18. The translation follows Horowitz 1998: 136.

19. The translation follows Horowitz 1998: 137. According to Horowitz, the missing portions of lines 1-2 'can be restored on the basis of the UB/UP-signs at the end of the Akkadian version of EN 1-2 and parallels between EN 1-2, GHT 8-13, and Pickaxe 4-5' (EN stands for *Enuma Elish*, GHT for *Gilgamesh and the Huluppa Tree*, i.e., *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld*, Pickaxe for *The Creation of the Pickaxe*, i.e., *The Song of the Hoe*).

20. The translation is offered in Horowitz 1998: 141.

In these lines, heaven is separated from the earth and the earth's surface is then arranged with land and sea elements.

In addition to these five texts, the Pennsylvanian Sumerian Dictionary (PSD [1984], II, B: 36) mentions another two Sumerian texts, of which the first is OIP 99, 136 ii 7'-9':

7. to separate heaven from earth,
8. to separate earth from heaven,
9. to separate heaven from earth.

The second text is OIP 99, 136 iii 1'-3':

1. Enlil,
2. to separate heaven from earth,
3. to separate earth from heaven.

Still other Sumerian and Akkadian texts could be added to these.²¹

The Sumerian word for separation is *bad*. The Pennsylvanian Sumerian Dictionary describes the four meanings and usage events of this verb.²² In the first and largest collection of texts, the verb *bad* means 'to spread wide' (said of parts of the body). Thus, someone (a person, deity, or animal) who spreads his knees or legs moves swiftly, runs, or is galloping. A bird that is spreading its wings is flying (e.g. 'Eninnu, like the white Anzi-bird, has spread its talons over the mountain'). The verb *bad* is also employed for the opening of the eyes, the opening of the mouth, the spreading open of a woman's lap, and the spreading out of weapons. In a second group of Sumerian texts, the verb *bad* is used to designate the untying of a knot or the unravelling of a name, for example in 'I have long fingers which can untie all knots' and 'An, lord, I will unravel your name throughout the land like a thread'. In a third group of Sumerian texts, the verb *bad* is employed with reference to the heaven and the earth. In these texts which are presented above, *bad* designates that a god separates heaven and earth. And in the fourth group of texts, the verb *bad* describes a spatial movement, 'to remove', 'to make distant', 'to be far away', in the sense of traveling, to go or take away. It seems to me that in most of the Sumerian uses the action expressed by *bad* presupposes an initial situation of unity (one body, one place, a tied knot) which is consequently spread out, opened, untied, unrolled, separated into parts or moved away. In the *Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon* (MSL, XIII: 213 iii 10), the Akkadian verb *parāsu* ('to separate') is listed as an equivalent of Sumerian *bad* (Horowitz 1998: 137).

In sum, both the Sumerian, bilingual and Akkadian creation texts, and the Sumerian verb *bad* and the Akkadian verb *parāsu*, demonstrate that in ancient

21. See, among others, Sjöberg (2002) who presents a survey of the Sumerian texts on the beginning, and Gadotti (2005) who offers a detailed study and discussion of *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld* and the intertextual relation between this Akkadian text and Sumerian texts.

22. See PSD (1984), II, B, lemma *bad B* (pp. 33-39).

Mesopotamia the (divine) opening act is conceived in terms of the separation of heaven and earth. Undeniably, Gen. 1.1 fits into this pattern. It appears to express a similar spatial conceptualization of the beginning.

The Verb ברא in Genesis 1.21

The second usage of the verb ברא in Genesis 1 can be found in v. 21, where it is used with reference to the groups of animals that live in the sea and the sky. Conversely, this verb is not employed in relation to the land animals. What is the distinction between both groups of animals and God's attitude towards them?

In v. 21, three groups of animals are mentioned, even though only two groups have been introduced so far. The first are the *tanninim* who are not described in v. 20 as being brought forth by the waters of the sea and who are also not addressed in the imperative in v. 22, when God tells the animals to be fruitful and to multiply. They stand out as special. Grammatically, the *tanninim* is a noun in which the definite article reflects the shared knowledge of the referent by author and readers.²³ The *tehom* inhabitants according to this view were considered to exist prior to all other animals and to differ from these other animals in their origin and procreative abilities. The second group of animals, on the other hand, is brought forth by the waters; they are all those that swarm in the sea. The third group is that of the birds which fly over the earth across the sky; they are still related to the earth and to the aerial realm below the heavenly firmament. In other words, v. 21 describes an action with God as its agent subject with respect to the three groups of animate inhabitants, namely, those living in the *tehom*, the sea and the sky, and an activity in which the verb ברא is used to express this divine action. This verb cannot, therefore, mean to create in the sense of making something new, because the *tanninim* already existed. It must designate something else. Whereas the preceding v. 20 tells us about the last two groups' coming into being, the subsequent v. 22 narrates how they are told to multiply. In this picture we miss but one element, namely, the spatial separation of the three groups of animals who share the same liquid and aerial spheres. This condition then would be met in v. 21 if God's operation of [ברא] would designate separation, with the effect that the *tanninim* obtain their place in the water mass below the earth disk, the sea animals take their place in the sea waters on earth and the birds receive their place in the sky below the firmament. In separating them, God assigns each party to its

23. With regard to the *tannin* (Ezekiel *tannin*) and *tanninim*, the following biblical texts are illustrative: Isa. 51.9-10, 'It was you that hacked Rahab in pieces and that pierced the *tannin*. It was you that dried up the sea, the waters of the *tehom* that made the abysses of the sea'; Ps. 74.13-14: '(O God) it was you who drove back the sea with your might, who smashed the heads of the *tanninim* in the waters; it was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan'; and Ps. 148.7: 'Praise YHWH, O you who are on earth, all *tanninim* and all *tehomot*' (JPS translations used here, with the exception of the tetragrammaton, and the words *tannin*, *tehom*, *tanninim*, and *tehomot*).

own life sphere, which they have to fill with their own species of animate life, with the exclusion of the *tanninim* who are not reported as reproducing new life.

This explanation becomes even more likely when the contrast to the making of the land animals is taken into account. In God's creation of the land animals in vv. 24-25, three groups are also mentioned: creeping things, cattle and wild animals that are all closely linked to the earth. However, they are not [ברא]-ed. These animals are not conceived as deriving from one pre-existing group of animals, and then separated and placed in distant areas. Instead, they are considered to be living together in the same spatial sphere of the land on the earth. This might explain why the word ברא is not used in vv. 24-25.

The Verb ברא in Genesis 1.27

Three usages of ברא out of the total number of seven in Genesis 1 occur in v. 27 in the context of the creation of the human being(s). In v. 26, God expresses his intention: נעשה, 'let us make (a human being)'. However, in v. 27a, in the actual realization of this intention, another verb is used, 'and God [ברא] the human being in his image'. And then again in v. 27b the same verb is used: 'in his image God [ברא] him', and in v. 27c, 'male and female he [ברא] them'. Are עשה and ברא used as synonyms here or do the two verbs designate something different? A more detailed examination of vv. 26-27 is required.

Garr (2003) and Kee (2007) discuss the references of God's self-inclusive yet plural first-person speech נעשה in v. 26, in which both the grammar and phraseology include multiple members that, at least *en ensemble*, have a common divine identity.²⁴ The deities, in conglomeration, form a collective.²⁵ Kee (2007) examines the particular characteristics of the 'heavenly council' in the Mesopotamian, Ugaritic and ancient Israelite texts.²⁶ He makes it very likely that one should envisage the heavenly council as one in which 'the high god' is 'at the centre of the council, surrounded by its members' (Kee 2007: 263-64).²⁷

24. Garr (2003: 63) describes these gods alongside God as follows: 'these gods exist as nonindividuated, masculine, and nameless beings. They are, however, potentially countable, as Gen. 3.22 plainly states.'

25. The motif of the heavenly council is well attested in the Hebrew Bible. It is called, among other things, 'the assembly of holy beings' in Ps. 89.6, 'the council of holy beings' in Ps. 89.8, 'the council of Eloah' in Job 15.8, and 'the council of El' in Ps. 82.1.

26. Kee (2007) discusses the following major passages related to the assembly of the heavenly beings in the Hebrew Bible: 1 Kgs 22.19-23; Job 1-2; Ps. 82; Isa. 6; Zech. 3, and Dan. 7.9-14. He also examines the shorter passages: Gen. 1.26; 3.22; 11.7; Exod. 15.11; Deut. 4.19; 17.3; 32.8; 33.2-3; Judg. 5.20; Isa. 14.13; Jer. 8.2; 23.18, 22a; Amos 8.14; Zech. 14.5; Pss. 25.14; 29.1-2; 49.20; 58.1-2; 73.15; 89.6-9; 96.4-5; 148.2-3; Job 15.8; 38.7; and Neh. 9.6.

27. The most explicit description can be found in 1 Kgs 22.19, where the prophet Micaiah says: 'I saw YHWH sitting upon his throne, with all the heavenly host standing in attendance to the right and to the left of him'.

This scene employs common phrases, such as 'to sit down' and 'to stand'. Garr (2003) explains that, while most heavenly scenes are ascribed to J and E traditions, these biblical uses may also establish a wider context within which P's lone divine 'let us make' in Gen. 1.26 can be evaluated. As a cohortative, נעשה implies an activity in which the speaker God addresses the gods or members of the heavenly court to enlist their approval and cooperation in his proposal to make humankind (Garr 2003: 87-88). Though the addressee's response is not recorded in the text, the successful enactment of v. 26 presumes that the speaker and the addressee are in agreement.

When God proposes to create the human race, he appends a complement clause (v. 26c) in which he sets the norm of what the human being will be like (the image and likeness of gods) and the goal of human creation (their rule over the creatures on earth). Garr's analysis of the prepositions כ and ב and of the nouns צלם and דמות is instructive. He explains that the preposition כ expresses a similarity, likeness or approximation between otherwise *dissimilar* and *nonidentical* entities, that is to say, an approximation between semantically different and referentially distinct entities (Garr 2003: 98-99).²⁸ The preposition ב is a locative; it marks the location in or at a point, on a surface, within an area, and amid a domain. It implies the idea of being or moving within some definite region. And it also implies limitation, because it designates a specific spatial location ('in') or it restricts the locus of a particular area ('within') or entity (e.g. 'consisting of'). The locative preposition, then, indicates (restricted) localization. In Gen. 1.26b, the two terms בצלמנו and בדמותנו are simply juxtaposed. Further, they have a common referent—God and gods. God specifies two comparable characteristics or attributes of the human creature: one proximate ('image'), and the other distal ('likeness'). The latter, דמות ('likeness'), is a genealogical trait that connects humankind and divinity. The former, צלם ('image'), signifies a representation, copy or facsimile; the referent may be human or divine or cultic. Through its 'image' and its 'likeness', the human race will master (רדה) the world and exercise its mighty control over the earth and the many creatures that inhabit it (Garr 2003: 158). It is clear, therefore, that the two terms 'likeness' and 'image', although different in meaning, share a basic semantic content and imply a basic comparison between humanity and divinity. They both express multiple degrees of referential similitude, implying that humankind is theomorphic (Garr 2003: 166).

I am more reluctant in following Garr's assumption that vv. 26 and 27 can be brought into line and that the verbs עשה and ברא can be considered synonyms.

28. Garr (2003: 113) demonstrates convincingly that both Gen. 1.26 and Gen. 5.3 adopt the pattern of the two prepositional phrases in which the former of the two phrases is marked with the locative-proximate ב, while the latter is marked with the similative-separative כ. The coreferential phrase comes first; the non-coreferential comparison comes afterwards. Other texts (Num. 29.18; Judg. 20.39; Deut. 28.62; Ps. 102.4) reveal the same syntactic and grammatical pattern, too.

Although he notices the difference between the plural gods who are invited to make (עשה) the human beings in ‘our image’ and ‘our likeness’ in v. 26 and God’s twice-repeated action to [ברא] in his image in v. 27, Garr does not elaborate on these differences. However, when one pays closer attention to the differences between v. 26 and v. 27, the following elements come to the fore:

- In v. 26, עשה is combined with צלם and דמותה, whereas v. 27 combines ברא with צלם alone.
- In v. 27, ברא is combined with ב, not with כ, in which the preposition כ is a locative that marks the location (with-)in a domain and expresses proximity and coreferentiality.
- In v. 26, God’s and the gods’ making of the human being is expressed by עשה בצלמנו. The verb עשה designates their bringing into being of the human race, which they cause to be and which they cause to be in a certain form, so that they will have a certain quality or capacity in common with the gods, namely, the capacity to monitor the earth and its inhabitants.
- In v. 26, God’s and the gods’ making of the human being is expressed by עשה כדמותנו. The verb עשה designates their bringing into being of the human race, which they cause to be and which they cause to be like them. Yet, the shared feature (‘likeness’) is one that is shared by dissimilar entities: although similar to each other in their power over the earth, they are apparently different as well.
- Verse 26 is a directly reported speech, and although the addressee’s response is not recorded in the text, the successful enactment of v. 26 presumes that the speaker and the addressee are in agreement.
- Verse 27 is a direct narrator’s text. The narrator records God’s consequent action. The preposition ב (‘in’) and the image בצלמו (‘in his image’) express proximity and coreferentiality between the singular deity God and humankind.
- In v. 27a and v. 27b, the singular deity God and his action with respect to the human being are expressed by ברא בצלמו. Humankind contains the definite article because it has previously been introduced in v. 26 within the domain of gods. Here it is located for the second time, but this time uniquely in relation to God in the singular. The action expressed by the verb ברא starts, therefore, from the initial situation of inclusion in the set of God.
- In v. 27c, the very same verb ברא is used. The human being has already been made, the verb ברא describes God’s distinction of humankind in males and females. With this distinction the necessary conditions for procreation and the filling of the earth are fulfilled. The earth will become their territory.
- In v. 28a, God orders these differentiated human beings to fill the earth, and to be fruitful and multiply. It is possible that this capacity to reproduce is related to the divine image, that is, the image shared by God and the human beings.

- In v. 28b, God orders these human beings to exert power over the earth and its inhabitants. It is possible that this capacity to rule the world is related to the image and likeness shared by both God and gods, and the human beings.

Hence, two actions appear to be included in vv. 26-27. In v. 26, God and gods are involved in the process of making the human beings which did not as yet exist. This process portrays the new creatures in their being made in relation to the image and the likeness of gods. It is thus suggested that humankind includes an implicit relation to God and gods. To understand humankind means to acknowledge their relation to the divine beings whom they represent. This translates into human control over the earth and its inhabitants, which appears to emerge from their being made after gods' image and likeness.

In v. 27a and v. 27b, God is the term of comparison against which the human being is valued. The starting point of conceptualization is God; better still, it is that aspect of God which is qualified as his image. In reference to this unique divine point of reference, the human being is differentiated. In contrast to the other four instances of the verb ברא in Gen. 1.1-2.49 (1.1, 21; 2.3, 4a) that relate to two or three equally valued direct objects marked by הו, here in v. 27a and v. 27b the direct object is valued in its relation to the category norm that functions as the specification of the human being, which is expressed by the locative preposition ב. The verb ברא takes the initial situation of the human inclusion in the set labelled 'God' as its starting point and proceeds from this point onwards in that the human being is located relative to God's image. The subsequent distinction of the human race into male and female beings includes this very same notion of separation. The single human being is divided into two genders: male and female (v. 27c). The verb ברא expresses this separation from the unique unity, the human being, into males and females.

After the three processes of separation in v. 27 have been fulfilled—the twice mentioned spatial separation of the human being from God and the separation of human beings into males and females—the conditions are met to secure the continuing existence of humankind on earth. Consequently, in v. 28, God can command the human beings to fill the earth and to monitor it. Thus, the human race shares the capacity with the divine beings in general and with God in particular to exert dominion over the earth, and yet this God locates the human beings at a distance from him on earth.

In vv. 29-31, God gives the plants on earth as food to the human beings and to the animals. As a result, all recently made creatures on earth are related to each other as both distinct and dependent: the animals differ from each other and are separated from one another so that they live in their own spatial domains; they differ from the plants and the human beings, but at the same time they depend on the plants for food and on the human beings for monitoring. The plants on earth differ from one another as to their seed-bearing devices and their ability to keep apart and procreate into different species, but they also depend on the human beings who are their rulers. And the human beings are divided into two

sexes, attributed to two different spatial life spheres and able to procreate. They are also said to be dependent on the plants which provide their food and whose seeds guarantee an ongoing food production, although they are at the same time their stewards. A hierarchy of distinctions and dependencies characterizes, therefore, this life on earth. The members of the human race are at the top of the hierarchy on earth, and as such share with the deities in heaven their capacity as rulers. Yet in contrast to God, their spatial realm is not the heaven, but the earth.

The Verb ברא in Genesis 2.3

In the last section of the story, that is, Gen. 2.1-4a, God's previous activities are summarized and concluded. Verse 2a focuses on the finalization of all the work done and v. 2b on God's ceasing from doing any further work, whereas v. 3 relates to God's blessing of the seventh day. The two main clauses in v. 3, 'God blessed the seventh day' and 'he declared it holy', are followed by two subordinate clauses. The first subordinate clause opens with the conjunctive כִּי, 'because on it he ceased from all the work', the second with the relative אשר [אשר-ברא אלהים לעשות], in which the finite verb form ברא is followed by the infinitive construct לעשות. The question is whether this relative clause is connected with 'all his work', in a way similar to the relative clauses in v. 2a and v. 2b.²⁹ If so, the relative clause would be 'he ceased from all his work that God [ברא] by making'. Or, does it relate to 'the seventh day' and אָזוּ, 'it'? In that case, the clause should be rendered 'God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it he ceased from all his work, (the day) God [ברא] when he made it'. Two elements make the second option in my view the more plausible: first, the explicit reintroduction of the subject אלהים in the relative clause, which differs from the relative clauses אשר עשה in Gen. 1.31; 2.2a and 2.2b; second, the infinitive construct לעשות, which explains that God made this seventh day as he had made the previous six days and distinguishes it from the other days. In other words, in the main clauses of v. 3, God blesses the seventh day and declares it holy, that is, sets it apart.³⁰ In the causative subordinate clause, the reason for this setting apart is provided: because on it God ceased from all his work. In the subsequent relative clause, the character of this seventh day is explained: by making it a day unique of its kind, and by declaring it holy God sets it apart from the other six days. The blessing and declaration of holiness distinguishes the seventh day from the other days, and the usage of the verb ברא marks this separation or the setting apart of the seventh day from the entire set of days.

29. This is generally presupposed, for example, in JM §124o where Muraoka offers in n. 2 the following translation: 'He ceased from all his work which God had created by doing'.

30. On the notion of holiness and setting apart, see Milgrom 1991: 731-32 and Joosten 1996: 199-200.

The Verb ברא in Genesis 2.4a

The last usage of the verb ברא is found in the concluding verse, 2.4a, 'These are the begettings of the heaven and the earth in their being [ברא]'. This verse summarizes the events narrated previously by the noun *toledot*, 'the begettings of the heaven and earth', and by the infinitive construct *niphal* of the verb ברא with the pronominal suffix ׁ. The noun *toledot* encompasses three notions: someone who 'begets' or is the agent subject of the activity of bringing forth; the activity of bringing forth itself; and the phenomena that are brought forth. Yet the noun marks that this operation and its operator is conceived in a single homogeneous picture. Conversely, the infinitive construct resumes the events as a compound, that is to say, a complex configuration that is composed of various sequential stages. Thus, the various stages of the [ברא]-ing of the heaven and the earth are entailed in this grammatical construction. This verse clearly points back to the opening verse of the story and evaluates the activities of separation expressed by the verb ברא on the various occasions of the narrative presented previously.

Conclusion: The Meaning of the Verb ברא in Genesis 1.1–2.4a

The examination of the seven usages of the verb ברא in Gen. 1.1–2.4a demonstrates that its valence structure includes various elements: God as the subject of action, two or more direct objects and a temporal process in which God moves the objects along a path, at the beginning of which they are not distinguished and proximate, and at the end of which they are spatially distant and kept separate. In other words, the linguistic and textual information has led to the conclusion that the verb ברא in Genesis 1 does not mean 'to create' but 'to separate'. This hypothesis was further tested against external evidence from cognate literature in Mesopotamia. In these Mesopotamian accounts of creation, the opening lines often describe the (divine) acts of separation of heaven and earth, in which the Sumerian verb *bad* and the Akkadian verb *parāsu* designate the action of separation.

In addition, an inscription on a storage jar found in Jerusalem dated in the early seventh century BCE reconstructed by Avigad (1972) and Miller (1980) can be read as a confirmation of the hypothesis. It contains the text of אֵל קִנָּה אֶרֶץ, 'El, creator of (the) earth', and the noun that expresses 'creator' is from the root קנה and not from ברא. Avigad (1972: 195–196) links this text to the Phoenician text of Karatepe, 'Baäl Shamem and El, creator of the earth' (אֵל קִנָּה אֶרֶץ), and to Gen. 14.19, 'El Elyon creator of heaven and earth' (אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן קִנָּה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ). Notwithstanding some slight uncertainties in the reconstruction (see Miller 1980), the resemblance with Gen. 14.19 and its description of El Elyon as the creator of the earth is indisputable.

Other material to test the hypothesis of the meaning of ברא are the biblical usages of the verbs that describe God's creative action and of the nouns

that describe God as the creator. Apart from the above-mentioned verb קנה ('create'),³¹ the verb עשה is most often used to describe the divine act of making or creation.³² The verb יצר is used in reference to the making of the human being, the animal, light, and 'all'.³³ Still more obvious is the fact that in the Hebrew Bible the noun 'creator' is never expressed with the participle of ברא,³⁴ but always with the participle of עשה (in the majority of cases), יצר or פעל.³⁵

Thus, based on internal and external linguistic and textual evidence and on a controlled argumentation, it is highly plausible and very likely that the type of action expressed by the verb ברא in Genesis 1 does not mean 'to create', but that it can be rendered by 'to separate', designating an action of a very concrete, spatial and physical character.

The question, then, is: Is the meaning of the verb ברא synonymous with that of the verb הבריל? Apart from the fact that the verb ברא expresses the divine action of separation that took place at the beginning only, whereas the verb הבריל is conceived as both the divine action of separation at the beginning and the action executed by the heavenly phenomena until the present, a major difference is the grammatical collocations in which the two verbs function. The action designated by the verb הבריל always concerns two distinct elements and this is marked by the twice-repeated preposition בין preceding these distinct entities. Because of the exclusive usage of the verb הבריל with the preposition בין, this collocation seems to take the existence of two entities—day and night, waters and waters, light and darkness, respectively—as the starting point for conceptualization. Therefore, the process of separation which is expressed by the verb הבריל appears to start from a situation of non-unity. The verb ברא, on the other hand, initiates with some sort of unity: the elements that are not yet separated are conceived as belonging to the same set. This set or shared

31. It occurs in this meaning in Gen. 4.1(?); 14.19, 22; Deut. 32.6; Ps. 139.13, and Prov. 8.22.

32. The verb עשה is used to describe the creation of the heaven and the earth or 'all' in Gen. 2.4; 2 Kgs 19.15; Isa. 37.16; 44.24; 66.22; Jer. 32.17; Pss. 115.15; 121.2; 124.8; 134.3, and 146.6. It is used to express the creation of the stars in Pss. 104.19 and 136.7-9, the creation of the sea in Ps. 95.5 and the creation of the sea and the dry land in Jon. 1.9.

33. In Gen. 2.7, 19; Isa. 42.6; 43.7; 44.24; 45.7, 9, 18; Jer. 1.5; 33.2; Pss. 95.5 and 104.26.

34. Although García Martínez (2005: 53) acknowledges this fact, he still does not have any doubt of ברא's meaning, because he says: 'Of course, the use of the verb ברא to indicate God's creative action is overwhelming within the Hebrew Bible, and the derivation of the abstract substantive from it poses no particular problems... But it is a curious fact that in the Hebrew Bible the abstract word "creator" is never expressed with the participle of ברא but with the participle of other roots...'

35. The participle of עשה designating the 'creator' is used in Isa. 17.7; 22.11; 27.11; 44.2; 51.13; 54.5; Hos. 8.14; Amos 4.13; 5.8; Pss. 115.5; 121.2; 124.8; 134.3; 136.4; Job 4.17; 35.10; Prov. 14.31; 17.5; 22.1. The participle of יצר is used in Jer. 10.16; 51.19, and the participle of פעל in Job 36.3.

common ground is the point of reference for the action and the initial situation from which the process of separation starts.

The unity entailed at the beginning varies in the instances of ברא in Gen. 1.1–2.4a. In v. 27, the preposition ב in בצלמו ('in his image') includes proximity and coreferentiality between the singular deity God and the human beings. The process of spatial separation expressed by the verb ברא takes as its starting point the human inclusion within the set of God. From this point onwards, God moves the human beings along a path away from the vicinity of God towards the earth, that is to say, in a spatial environment distinct and remote from God. In v. 21, the animals are living in the same collection of sea-waters. From this initial point onwards, the process of separation of the three groups of animals proceeds until it concludes with their assignment to three distinct and separate life spheres. And this process is expressed by the verb ברא. In Gen. 2.3, the separation of the seventh day is sketched in reference to the complete set of days. Only with reference to the heaven and earth in Gen. 1.1 and Gen. 2.4, the initial situation that the verb ברא takes as its point of reference remains rather diffuse. In this non-descript situation, God separates the heaven and the earth as two distinct and distant cosmic spheres. In sum, both verbs ברא and הבדיל designate 'to separate', and yet they are different with respect to the starting point of the action. This difference in orientation is indicated by the collocations of the verbs with the accusative marker את and the preposition בין, respectively, and might be acknowledged in English by rendering ברא as 'to separate' and הבדיל 'to distinguish between':

Based on these insights, I would propose the following translations and explanations of the verses of Genesis 1 in which the verb ברא occurs:

- Gen 1.1: 'In the beginning in which/when God separated the heaven and the earth'. That is, this verse records the beginning of God's action that is evaluated or summarized as the process of separating the heaven and the earth. This type of action might entail various semantic notions, such as the idea that God separated the heaven and the earth in order to provide space between them for the light, the land, the plants, the animals, and the human beings to come forth, or the idea that God places the heaven and the earth in distant positions. Whatever concepts might have been presupposed in the concept of separation, the content of the relative clause functions as a summation of what will subsequently be narrated.
- Gen 1.21: 'God separated the large *tanninim*, all animals swarming in the sea according to their kind and the birds that fly according to their kind'. That is, God placed the animate inhabitants of the aerial and liquid parts of the earth in spatially distant positions and thus assigned each to its own spatial environment.
- Gen 1.27a: 'God separated the human being made in his image'. That is, God placed the human beings in a spatially distant position, namely, on earth.

- Gen 1.27b: ‘Made in the image of God, he separated it’. That is, God placed humankind in a spatially distant position, namely, on earth.
- Gen 1.27c: ‘God made a separation between male and female’. That is, God separates the human being into two sexes, each connected with its own life sphere.
- Gen 2.3: ‘God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it he ceased from all his work, (the day) God separated (set apart) by making it’. That is, God made the previous six days, and in his making of the seventh day he sets it apart from the other six days.
- Gen 2.4a: ‘These are the begettings of the heaven and the earth in their being separated’. That is, after God’s bringing forth of the heaven and the earth, he places them in spatially distant positions and thus constituted two distinct spatial environments. This statement resumes the story in Gen. 1.1–2.4a and forms an inclusion with Gen. 1.1.

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