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Creation Time—What does Genesis Say?

Scientists, when they discuss the early chapters of Genesis, can be pushed into generalizations about their literary structure without adequate reference to linguistic opinion on the matter. Some relevant features of the Genesis text are here compared with other ancient Near East texts. It is proposed that the six days of Genesis could very well be days of revelation, rather than days of creational activity.

Key Words: Babylonian tablets, colophons, days of Genesis 1., early writing, literary structure, Sabbath.

The opening chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1–11) are important as introducing all the major themes of subsequent Scripture. They also give a unique account of events from Creation to the time of Abraham, who is generally dated to the Early/Middle Bronze Age (c. 1950 B.C.). That is, these few chapters cover a span traced by archaeologists in the ancient Middle East from at least 10,000 to 2000 B.C. At this time many cultural developments and technologies, including the advent of writing and literature (c. 3200 B.C.) are abundantly attested.¹ The rest of the Old Testament continues the history for only 1500 years.

In modern times equally sincere Christians have strongly disagreed over the range of possible interpretation of the initial chapters of Genesis, perceiving tension between Biblical and scientific data and thus advancing diverse views of terrestrial and cosmic history. This controversy between science and theology has focused in recent decades in the so-called 'creation-science' (or 'scientific creationism') debate around Genesis chapter 1.

The aim of this paper is to remind all, whose arguments must be based on the interpretation of the Biblical text itself, that recently expanding branches of knowledge, including archaeology, philology and theology have also much to contribute to the subject. This can best be shown in relation to Genesis 1. 'Scientific creationists' interpret this as stating that God carried out his creation in a series of twenty-four hour acts. Others, equally Christian and equally interpreting the Almighty God to be the Creator, take it that this Divine work took a longer period. On the basis of ancient Babylonian literary structures it is here advocated that the references to the 'six days' in Genesis 1 could well be to the time taken by God

1 J. D. Hawkins, 'The origin and Dissemination of Writing in Western Asia' in P. R. Moorey (ed.), *The Origins of Civilisation* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980), 127–166. There is some evidence of even earlier writing systems on more perishable materials, c.f. D. Schmand-Besserat, 'An archaic Recording System and the Origin of Writing', *Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 1/2 (Malibu, 1977), 1–36.

to reveal what he had already done in creation and not necessarily refer to the time God took to accomplish these mighty acts.

Colophons on Babylonian tablets

Ancient literary texts often included a colophon, an inscription placed at the end of a piece of writing which was the equivalent of the title page of a modern book. In the ancient Near East where this practice originated this was inscribed on the last column of the clay tablet, the principal writing material of the earliest times. A typical Babylonian colophon would include some or all of the following:²

i) A 'catch-line' indicating the first words of the next text of the series, which made up the whole text. Thus these same words appear at the end of one tablet and as the opening of the first line on the next.

ii) The title or name of the series which was usually the first words of the work ('incipit'). Anonymity of authorship pervades Babylonian literary works. The number of the text (tablet) in the series is given. For example, one Babylonian creation series begins 'when on high (the heavens) . . .' (the opening words or title, *enuma eliš*) followed by the part of the series (e.g. 1, 2 etc.) and sometimes the statement that the copy is 'complete' or 'not finished'. The total number of lines in the text is often given as 'counted'.

iii) the source of the copy is given. This is 'according to the original' or 'an abstract' or, more rarely, 'the original was not seen, this was copied according to oral tradition' which was considered less reliable since the oral and written normally existed side by side with the latter serving as a check on the former.³

iv) Checks were made with statements on the type and state of the original i.e. whether a clay tablet, writing board etc. The text from which the copy was made may be noted as 'complete' or 'broken'. The careful process of copying the text is noted as it was 'collated' (*barû*), 'checked' (*sanāqu*) and then a copy made (*epēšu*—'done').

v) The name of the person on whose behalf the copy was made.

vi) The name of the scribe with his profession.

vii) Dedication of a copy, usually to a deity, with a note of the purpose for which the copy was made e.g. 'for the listening of future people', 'for reading . . .' etc.

viii) Curses and Blessings were sometimes added with the aim of preserving the traditional text. Phrases—such as 'May the one who knows it reveal it to the one who knows, may the one who does not know not read it', or

² H. Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone* (Alter Orient and Altes Testament 2), (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1968); E. Leichty, 'The Colophon' in *Studies Presented to A. L. Oppenheim* (Chicago, 1964), 147–154.

³ J. Laessle, 'Literacy and Oral Tradition in Ancient Mesopotamia', in *Studia Orientalia Ioanni Pedersen* (Copenhagen, 1953), 205–218.

even 'don't take it out of the library!'—show the range of such notes. Similar colophonic notices are found in the Bible (e.g. Rev. 22:18).

ix) The date of the copy is found only in late colophons. Some colophons give instructions for the disposition of the copy (e.g. 'he placed it in the temple' as was done with the tablets of the Law (1 Ki. 8:9).

Similar colophons are also found in the Old Testament and evidence for this has been accumulated.⁴

Literary Structure in Genesis

Examples of catch-lines and headings are also to be found in the book of Genesis. One of these is the recurrent phrase, 'These are the genealogical histories of . . .' The Hebrew word *tol^ddōt* (often written as *Toledoth*) is variously translated 'these are the generations of . . .' (KJV, RSV), 'this is the account of . . .' (NIV), 'origins of . . .' (JB), 'story of . . .' (NEB, REB). The word refers to what is produced or brought into being by someone or to what follows therefrom. It relates to the 'order of appearance' and it has long been recognized that this phrase marks off distant elements of the ancient narrative. P. J. Wiseman⁵ developed this to show the distinctive parts of Genesis:

1. 1:1–2:4 The history (toledoth) of heaven and earth
2. 2:5–5:2 The history (toledoth) of Mankind (Adam)
3. 5:3–6:9a The history (toledoth) of Noah
4. 6:9b–10:1 The history (toledoth) of the sons of Noah
5. 10:2–11:10a The history (toledoth) of Shem
6. 11:10b–11:27a The history (toledoth) of Terah
- 7–8. 11:27b–25:19a The history (toledoth) of Ishmael and Isaac
- 9–10. 25:19b–37:2 The history (toledoth) of Esau and Jacob⁶

thus taking the history down to Abraham.

He argued cogently that it is noticeable that

a) Each section contains data which could have been known or accessible to the primary participant named. The information up to the insertion of this formula (*toledoth*) could have been recorded by him and thus transmitted to the next generation.

4 E.g., H. M. I. Geveryahu, 'Biblical Colophons', *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 28 (1975): 42–59; D. J. Wiseman, 'Some Archaeological Considerations', *Journal of Transactions of the Victorian Institute* 76 (1955), 14–25.

5 P. J. Wiseman, *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott, London, 1936); *Clues to Creation in Genesis* (MM&S, London 1977 (copies of this out of print work can still be obtained from the Inter-Varsity Press, Norton Street, Nottingham)); *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis* (Nelson, Nashville, 1985) and translations: *Die Entstehung der Genesis* (Brockhaus, Wuppertal, 1960 repr. 1984, 1990); *Ontdekkingen over Genesis* (Jan Haan, Groningen, 1960). The thesis of this book was adopted by R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1969), 545.

6 The two *toledoth* formulae for Esau (Gen. 36:1, 9) refer to distinct aspects of Esau as the individual and then as father of the nation of Edom.

b) The history in each section ceases before the death of the person named.

This raises the question whether the *toledoth* formula marks the end of one section (i.e. it is a subscript, 'conclusio') as proposed by Wiseman,⁷ or serves as the heading of a new section of the text. The former was already suggested by the Jewish exegete Rashi on Genesis 2:4.⁸ Thus 'the heavens and the earth' clearly ends a section and those who take the *toledoth* elsewhere to head sections of the text classify it as anomalous. Several scholars argue that the formula refers both to the preceding and following text sections. The latter could be argued since 'catchlines' on ancient texts served both to end one tablet and head the next (see above). A number of studies conclude that textually and contextually the *toledoth*-formula is ambiguous as regards its reference thus indicating that Wiseman's proposal is tenable.⁹

The suggestion that these distinctively marked *toledoth* sections of Genesis could have been transmitted by each named author/recipient/owner is also probable. There is abundant evidence among the many thousands of cuneiform literary texts of the practice of handing down literary and family records over several generations.¹⁰ One of the Babylonian texts, among the five extant differing Sumero-Babylonian accounts of creation is the *Epic of Atra-hasis* ('The very devout one') copied, according to its colophon, in 1645 B.C.¹¹ The contents, however, indicate an earlier origin since reference is made to a 'broken' original and to very early persons, places and incidents some centuries before, that is in fact about the time of Abraham. This text was passed on by scribal families for at least another 1500 years. In a similar way the family histories of Genesis from the time of Adam and his descendants could have been handed down to the great Semitic ancestors (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and have been added to and passed on to Moses and his successors and the compilers of the Genesis record.¹² More than 20,000 written texts from the time of Abraham have survived from Babylonia though none mention that lonely emigrant to Palestine. The accumulation of evidence for early literature underlines the value of Genesis as history.

7 P. J. Wiseman, *Clues*, op. cit., 40–43, 107.

8 M. Rosenbaum & A. M. Silbermann, *Pentateuch with Rashi's Commentary: Genesis* (1946), 27.

9 D. W. Baker, *The Toledoth formula in Genesis* (M.Phil. thesis School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London, 1979, unpublished); note that the Masoretes placed paragraph/section markings (*sid^erāh* indicators) before all *toledoth* formulae except Gen. 11:27, 36:9, 37:2; *Scribal Techniques in Ancient Israel with Semitic Parallels* (Univ. London, Ph.D thesis, 1981) cf. C. Westermann, *Genesis I* (Neukirchener, 1974), 18; G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Word, 1987), 6.

10 K. A. Kitchen, *The Bible in its World* (Paternoster, Exeter, 1977), 63–68.

11 W. G. Lambert & A. R. Millard, *Atra-hasis: the Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1969), 5–6, 23–24.

12 J. Stafford Wright, *How Moses Compiled Genesis. A Suggestion* (Church Book Room Press, 1946).

Genesis Chapter One

The above consideration of ancient literary structures is a necessary background to understanding the first chapter of the Bible and its account of creation. The recurrent phrase 'There was evening and morning day 1(2–6)' itself marks off the various acts of God and the whole account (Gen 1:1–2:4) ends with the *toledoth*-formula marking the end of the 'history of the heavens and earth'—a catchline 'heavens and earth' which also occurs in the title (v. 1). Wiseman has put forward the view¹³ that

i) These 'days' do not necessarily refer to the time taken by God in his acts of Creation. It is noteworthy that nowhere does Scripture state the date of God's acts such as the creation of the universe, earth, the flood or other such major events.¹⁴ Creation was God's work 'in the beginning' i.e. 'First of all . . .'.

ii) The six days refer to the time taken to reveal to mankind what was prior to his own creation. It was knowledge necessary for him to play his part in acting as God's agent in using his environment.

iii) That God rested ('ceased') on the seventh day was not because the creation process was done but for man's sake and because the process of 'revelation' of what God had done was now completed/finished.

iv) As was traditional in the earliest ancient Near Eastern accounts of creation the text was originally written in six separate divisions (clay tablets in Babylonian).¹⁵ The language is clear and simple and the Hebrew form is unique. Only seventy-five basic Hebrew words (roots) are employed and all are represented by their equivalents in the earliest known language (Sumerian) from the fourth millennium onwards.¹⁶ The Hebrew parallelism of the first, second and third day with the fourth, fifth and sixth days has long been noted. The matter between the colophonic catch-lines could be but a summary of various statements God made verbally as he made his revelation.

Other similarities between Genesis 1 and early Babylonian literary structures should be noted. The book begins with its title 'in the beginning'

13 P. J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days* (MM&S, 1948); reprinted in *Clues to Creation in Genesis* (MM&S, 1977), II, 109–207 (see note 5).

14 The genealogical lists contain gaps and overlapping data and are insufficient for dating purposes.

15 The seventh tablet of *Enuma eliš* was a later addition in praise of the God Marduk whose titles it lists.

16 These comprise verbal and nominal elements to describe God and his actions – create, do, say, saw, call, give, rule, govern, subdue, produce, separate, set apart, multiply, be fruitful, begin and complete, work and rest.

The population of creation – heaven, earth, dry ground, light/luminary, darkness, wind, water, deep stars, host, day and night, evening and morning, years.

The population of creation – man(kind), male and female, creatures, beasts, birds, fish, flying, hover, swarm, vegetation, green-growth, tree/wood, plant and seed.

Descriptive or aesthetic qualities – life, living, good, many, large, small, image, likeness, formless, empty/uninhabited, good, and counting numerals 1–7.

which is the short reference to the full first line of the text 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'. The 'heavens and the earth' recurs at the end of the colophon (2:1–4). The stress is on God as the author of creation while the name of 'God' is given (2:2) as the one who completed the revelation. 'In the day' (2:4; 5:1) may indicate the time of the authorship of the account. 'The heavens and the earth and all their array (*š^ebā*)' employs a word used 'to arrange and set in order'. Though later used of the ranks of the army or the ordered array of the heavenly bodies (Ps. 33:6, Isa. 40:26), as subservient to God and never to be worshipped (Dt. 4:19; 17:2–7), it would apply to an ordered range of items such as the series of entries concerning days 1–6. It could thus refer also to the range of what had been disclosed about the heavens and the earth over the six periods of evening and morning.¹⁷

The time of the revelation

'There was evening and there was morning' (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) is an unusual way in Hebrew for expressing a twenty-four hour period or day (usually *yôm*). It is the normal Semitic way of describing the time when a day's work ends at early eventide (*'ereb*) and is resumed at the first light of dawn (*boqer*) as in Ps. 104:23. Moreover, the way in which each evening and morning is numbered (*yôm 'ehād*) is not the usual method of expressing 'the first day'. 'Day one' is a striking form and used in lists. Thus 'the evening and the morning—day 1' could denote a series of happenings at these parts of a twenty-four hour day.

What was God doing in the six days?

Jewish tradition is that the secrets of early creation were shown to Enoch over seven days.¹⁸ He is said to 'have walked with God' (Gen. 5:24). The word used there (*miḥallek* from the verb *hālak* 'to go') means 'to walk to and fro'. It is also said of Adam and his wife as they had heard the voice of the LORD God as he was 'walking to and fro' in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day (3:8). They too could have been the recipients of a revelation in the evening or morning coolness which would be the ideal time for a series of six tutorial classes. It has been shown that this rare form of the verb (*miḥallek*) has its counterpart in Akkadian (*itaḥluku* from *alāku*, 'to go' is used not only of the physical act of walking up and down but also for giving ordered instruction in directing affairs as does a judge.) The form is similarly used in Gen. 13:17 of Abraham.¹⁹ God was making

17 Gen. 1 teaches that God is the God of order. The title LORD God of hosts (Sabaoth) refers also to the ordered array of heavens and was only much later applied to him as the Lord of earthly hosts i.e. armies. It is absent from the Pentateuch (R. Laird Harris ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, 1980), 750).

18 *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, ch. 33.

19 D. J. Wiseman in A. R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (ed.), *Essays on the Patriarchal Period* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 147, 155 n. 31; D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon* (British Academy, 1985), 21–24.

known to mankind knowledge otherwise unavailable to him and essential for the fulfilment of his rôle.

Babylonian accounts also retain the memory that the first record of creation became known by divine revelation. Berossus claimed in his *Babyloniaca* (c. 281 B.C.) that he was making available, to his Greek readers, books long preserved at Babylon containing 'the histories of heaven and earth, the sea and the first birth of man'.²⁰ This work alludes back to the Babylonian creation myth (*enuma eliš*) and to the time when according to this source 'in the first year (after creation) Oannes appeared from the Erythraean Sea (Persian Gulf) which borders on Babylonia . . . he had a human voice. He spent the days with mankind, but ate no food. He taught the knowledge of writing, sciences and crafts of all kinds. He also taught them to found cities, establish temples, introduce laws and work the land. He revealed to them the processes of seed-sowing and harvesting and in general gave man everything necessary to civilized life. Since then nothing further has been discovered. At sunset this being, Oannes, plunged back into the sea . . . Oannes wrote a book about creation and government'.²¹ Oannes is identified with the early Sumerian god Adapa²² and is said to have instructed the first pre-flood ruler (Alorus, Greek) 'the first man', (Akkadian Alulim) 'for six days and when the sun went down he withdrew until the next morning'.²³ This is in accord with the traditions about Adapa that the mysteries of heaven and earth were passed on from father to son on written tablets. A similar tradition is found in the Samaritan *Book of Secrets of Moses* which says that Adam possessed books by which knowledge was transmitted to Noah.²⁴

The concluding verse of the first creation account (Gen. 2:2) states that 'By the seventh day God had finished his business (*m^ela'ktô*) which he had been doing (*ašah*) and he rested on the seventh day from all his business which he had been doing.' The following verse describes how God blessed the seventh day and made it holy (lit. 'set it apart') for the reason that 'on it he had rested from all his business which God had created (*bara'*) with reference to doing (*la'ašô*). This makes a distinction between his unquestioned divine action and other activity ('doing'). This is not proof that what he was doing in the six days was creation. It has been argued by some that the important fourth commandment which likewise says that 'in six days the LORD *did* the heavens and the earth' (Ex. 20:8-11; c.f. Dt. 5:12-14) would not allow for the interpretation of the six days as days of revelation. But

20 S. M. Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus* (Sources for the Ancient Near East 1/5, Malibu, 1978), 148.

21 Burstein, *op. cit.*, 13-14.

22 Cf. W. W. Hallo, 'On the antiquity of Sumerian Literature', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83 (1963), 176.

23 Transmitted via 'the Book of wars which is the book of the generations of Adam'.

24 But it was essential to man if his life was to serve the Creator rather than the things created (Rom. 1:21-25) that he be told all about the environment he was to 'master', *kābaš* in Gen. 1:28-30; cf. 2:19-20 means to 'make it serve, if necessary by pressure'.

this commandment is a direct quotation from, or reference to, the creation account in Gen. 2:2 where it states that 'in six days God *did* the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.' The sabbath rest had already been observed, prior to this statement in the Decalogue, during the earlier collection of manna in the desert (Ex. 16:23). The same words are quoted later when the sabbath rest is given as part of the covenant renewal requirement (Ex. 31:17). In neither verse does it explain what God did during the six days which were the context in which the seventh day of rest is required.

Other researches on the creation narrative

i) Different Hebrew words are used to denote creation. One word (*bara'*)—'to create'—is used exclusively of the new acts of God, the Creator who is the subject of the verb. He creates physical entities, including historical events (Ex. 34:10; Isa. 48:7) and conditions. This term is used in Gen. 1:1, 21, 27; 2:3. When 'creation' involves materials out of which 'man' was 'fashioned, formed' (*yašar*; Gen. 2:7) or 'woman' was 'built up' (*bānāh*; Gen. 2:22) other words are used. When God acted to make a division of the waters (1:7) or heavenly bodies (1:16) the word 'do, did' ('*asá*, sometimes written as '*asah*') is used as in 1:7, 16, 25, 26, 31; 2:3.²⁵ Its frequent occurrence in Hebrew (more than 2500 times) shows it to be a general term to denote activity of any kind, physical, religious or moral, the action being taken being defined or discernible from the context.²⁶ The parallel akkadian word (*epēšu*) is employed in the same way. What God was 'doing' here could well be an act of revelation.²⁷

ii) The Genesis account is not mythological. Detailed comparison with Sumerian, Babylonian and Egyptian accounts of creation have been made and the only proven points of similarity with Genesis are²⁸ a) The mention of *primaeval* water and 'the deep' (Gen. 1:2 *tēhóm*), which cannot be identified philologically or conceptually, with the Babylonian monster deity Tiamat whose body was split into heaven and earth according to one story. b) The six-fold division of the creation account written on six tablets in the *Enuma Eliš*. This may well reflect the Genesis tradition of the partial telling of the creation in six lessons. c) Divine rest occurs only in the *Atrahasis* epic where the purpose is different, for there man was created to ease the toil of the gods by service (worship) though they soon rebelled by

25 For an excellent recent study of the terms for creation see John H. Stok, 'What says the Scriptures?' in Howard J. Van Til (et. al. eds.), *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation* (Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1990), 207–221.

26 Note also the use of all the different word for creation activity together in Isa. 43:7; 45:7, 18.

27 Some reviewers of Wiseman criticized his rendering of '*asah*' as 'shewed' (e.g. F. F. Bruce in *The Evangelical Quarterly* XX.4. (1948), 302). In a letter to me (10 August 1988) Professor Bruce wrote 'this remark should not be taken too seriously' as it does not vitiate the overall argument.

28 W. G. Lambert, 'A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis', *Journal of Theological Studies* 16.2 (1965), 287–300.

striking against this. d) Some Egyptian creation stories place emphasis on the part played by the divine word (*logos*). The absence of polytheistic references and poetic forms and imagery²⁹ in Genesis is so marked that several scholars have argued that the purpose of Genesis is demythological.³⁰

iii) The hypothesis that Genesis tells of a recreation following a disaster (the 'gap theory' between verses 1:1 and 1:2) finds little support today.

The expression 'formless and empty' (Gen 1:2 *tōhū wābōhū*) has nothing to do with chaos. It denotes a desert-like bare state, unproductive and uninhabited, the refurbishing of which was the subject of the subsequent creative acts.³¹ The idea that there was an original chaos with struggling deities pacifying the seas derives solely from ancient Middle Eastern myths.

iv) The Genesis account is not visionary. Ancient narratives which involve visions always indicate this³² as in Jeremiah's view of heaven and earth, 'I looked at the earth and it was formless and empty . . . I saw . . . I looked . . .' (4:23–26; c.f. Rev. 21:1).

v) The literary structure of Genesis has been carefully examined and the view that Genesis one is a dramatic, but not chronological account,³³ is subjective and not subject to proof. Nor is it, as suggested by some, a parable. In ancient literature a parable treats of one subject or episode and is always closely followed by an explanation and linked to a larger context. Nor is Genesis an artificial literary composition by priestly sources to support sabbath observance, though it obviously supports a high view of such an institution.³⁴

vi) The creation of man involves an expression—'the breath of life' (*nēšamah*, Gen. 2:7) which T. Mitchell has shown to be unique to man and linked with the divine inbreathing which gave him distinctive god-like qualities (probably including mature thought, moral choice and spiritual experience) which other forms of creation do not possess. Mitchell shows

29 Poetry being designated not informative but aesthetic! The first Hebrew poem occurs in Gen. 4:23–24.

30 I.e. as a protest against all and every kind of sun-worship and astrology (e.g. K. Barth, *Dogmatics* III, 1.130; W. Von Rad *Genesis* 49, 53).

31 D. S. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2*, (*Journal for Old Testament Studies*, Supplement 83 (1989), 63; contra G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Word, 1987), 15 ('total chaos').

32 Cf. A. L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia, 1956).

33 D. F. Payne, *Genesis One Reconsidered* (Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1984), 17, an idea earlier favoured by S. H. Hooke, *In the Beginning* (Oxford, 1947), 33–36.

34 E.g. I. M. Kikawada & A. Quin, *Before Abraham Was: (The Unity of Genesis 1–11)* (Abingdon, Nashville, 1985). The older documentary hypothesis for the structure of Genesis is now largely ignored in recent academic writing.

that while mankind shares the 'spirit (soul, *nepeš*) of life' with animals this word *n^ešāmāh* is only used of mankind.³⁵

Conclusion

Any discussion of the Divine creation process needs to take into consideration other views such as that proposed here. The 'days' of Genesis may well refer to the time God took to reveal his great acts of creation. This, if accepted, removes the tension between science and theology. It allows a valid difference of interpretation of Genesis chapter one in that it neither demands nor denies the twenty-four hour or longer period interpretation of the time which God took to act.

35 T. C. Mitchell, 'The Old Testament Usage of *S^ešāmā*' in *Vetus Testamentum* 11 (1961), 177-187.

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