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THE EARTH OF GENESIS 1:2 ABIOTIC OR CHAOTIC? PART III

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Introduction

As the third and final part of the study of Gen 1:2,[1] this article seeks to analyze the impact of the phrase *ruah ʿᵉlohim merahepet al pᵉne hammayim* on the question of the state of the earth as depicted in this verse. Gunkel, along with other scholars after him, assumed that *ruah ʿᵉlohim* refers to winds that Marduk sends against Tiamat.[2] Others have postulated that this phrase refers to divine creative activity. To reach my conclusion, I will analyze the phrase and its use in the Hebrew Bible and in languages cognate to Hebrew.

Etymology of ruah ʿᵉlohim

The Hebrew expression *ruah ʿᵉlohim* is commonly translated in English Bibles as "Spirit of God" (KJV, NASB, RSV, NIV). In the Greek LXX the phrase is translated as πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο. Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion use the same translation. The Vulgate coincides, translating *spiritus Dei ferebatur*.

The term *ruah* appears in the OT 378 times in Hebrew, generally in feminine, and eleven times in Aramaic (only in Daniel).[3] The basic meaning of *ruah* is "wind [something that is in motion and has the power to set other things in motion] and breath."[4]

According to BDB, *ruah ʿᵉlohim* means "spirit of God, energy of life." Holladay translates "spirit of God," whereas Klein allows for "breath, wind,

[1] See Roberto Ouro, "The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic or Chaotic?" *AUSS* 36 (Autumn 1998): 259-276; and *AUSS* 37 (Spring 1999): 39-53.

[2] H. Gunkel, *Schopfung and Chaos in Urzeit and Endzeit* (1895); see notes in first article of the series.

[3] E. Jenni and C. Westermann, *Diccionario Teologico Manual del Antiguo Testamento*, tras. R. Godoy (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1985), 2:915.

[4] Ibid., 2:917; see also *TWOT*, 2:836-837.

spirit."[5] KBS has "'Der Geist Gottes'; als Wiedergaben sind moglich: a) der Geist Gottes schwebte, b) der/ein machtiger Wind (= Sturm) wehte, c) der/ein Gotteswind (= Gottessturm) wehte; b) und c) sind dabei nicht streng zu scheiden." Schokel translates: "aliento, halito, aliento vital, respiracion, resuello, soplo, resoplido, . . . aliento de Dios."[6] It is evident that the word *ruah* can mean both spirit and wind.

Western Semitic languages contain words cognate to the Heb *ruah*: the Ugaritic *rh*, "wind, aroma"'; the Aramaic *rwh*, "wind, spirit"; and the Arabic *ruh*, "vital breath"; and *rih*, "wind." The word is absent in the Eastern Semitic; for instance, in Akkadian *saru* is used for "wind, breath."[8] Jastrow observes that in the Targumim, Talmudic, and Midrashic literature *ruah* is interpreted as "spirit, soul; the holy spirit, prophetic inspiration, intuition."[9]

Ruah ʿelohim in the OT

The phrase *ruah ʿelohim* appears sixteen times in Hebrew and five times in Aramaic.[10] Its natural meaning would be spirit or wind of *Elohim*.

The term *ʿelohim* is the usual Hebrew word for "God"; however, J.M.P. Smith has suggested that it may also function as a superlative meaning "strong," "powerful," "terrible," or "stormy."[11] However, as D. W. Thomas remarks, it is difficult or even impossible to find OT examples of the use of the divine name only as an epithet of intensity.[12]

[5] E. Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* (Jerusalem: The University of Haifa, 1987), 610.

[6] L. A. Schokel, *Diccionario Biblico Hebreo-Espanol* (Madrid: Trotta, 1994), 692.

[7] See C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (U7), Analecta Orientalia 38 (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1965), n. 2308.

[8] Jenni and Westermann, 2:914-915.

[9] M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Title, 1943), 2:1458.

[10] See A. Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1990), 1064-1066. The Hebrew texts are Gen 1:2; 41:38; Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10; 11:6; 16:15, 16, 23; 18:10; 19:20, 23; 2 Chron 15:1; 24:20; Ezek 11:24. The Aramaic texts are Dan 4:5, 6, 15; 5:11, 14.

[11] J M.P. Smith, "The Use of Divine Names as Superlatives," *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 45 (1928-29): 212-220; see also Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 107. In a similar vein, G. von Rad points out that *ruah ʿelohim* should be translated as "God's storm = a terrible storm," noting that the phrase is related to the description of the chaos and does not yet refer to creation (El *Libro del Genesis* [Salamanca: Sigueme, 1988], 58-59).

[12] D. W. Thomas, "A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew," *VT* 30 (1953): 209-224.

G. J. Wenham clearly affirms that reducing *‘elohim* to merely a superlative seems improbable since in other biblical texts the word always means "God." Moreover, there is no other example in the OT in which the expression *ruah ‘elohim* means "strong or powerful wind"; in fact, it always refers to God's Spirit or Wind."

Contemporary scholars are divided between two basic interpretations of *ruah ‘elohim*. One understanding is that *ruah ‘elohim* refers to the Creator of the Universe, to the Deity's presence and activity." The second holds that *ruah ‘elohim* refers to an element sent by God, as part of the description of the chaos.[15] In a similar vein, E. A. Speiser translates:

[13] G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1987),1:17. Cf. also A. P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 107; V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapics: Eerdmans, 1990), 111; and E. J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 37, n. 37. See, for instance, Gen 41:38; Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 24:2; Sam 10:10; 16:14, 16; 18:10; 19:20, 23; 1 Chron 24:20; Ezek 11:24.

[14] Scholars who favor this interpretation include: I. Blythin ("A Note on Genesis 1:2" *VT* 12 [1962]: 120-121); U. Cassuto (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah* trans. I. Abrahams [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978], 1:24); B. S. Childs (*Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, SBT 27 [London: SCM, 1960],33-36); R. Davidson (*Genesis 1-11*, CBC [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973],16); A. Dillman (*Genesis*, trans. W. B. Stevenson [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897], 1:59); S. R. Driver (*The Book of Genesis* [London: Methuen, 1905], 4; M. Gorg ("Religionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zur Rede vom `Geist Gottes,'" *Word and World* 43 [1980]:129-148); V. P. Hamilton, 111-112;D. Kidner (*Genesis* [Leicester: InterVarsity, 1967], 45); D. Lys (*‘Ruach' Le Souffle dans l’Ancien Testament* [Paris: Universitaires de France, 1962]: 176-182); R. Luyster ("Wind and Water: Cosmogonic Symbolism in the Old Testament," *ZAW* 93 [1981]: 1-10); K. A. Mathews (*Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary [Broadman & Holman,1996],131,135); W. H. McClellan ("The Meaning of Ruah Elohim in Genesis 1, 2," *Bib* 15 [1934]: 517-527); S. Moscati ("The Wind in Biblical and Phoenician Cosmogony," *JBL* 66 [1947]:305-3 10); J. P. Peters ("The Wind of God," *JBL* 30 [1911]:44-54 and *JBL* 33 [1914]:81-86); 0. Procksch (*Die Genesis, Kommentar zum Alten Testament* [Leipzig: Deichertsche, 1913], 426); N. H. Ridderbos ("Genesis i. 1 and 2," *Studies on the Book of Genesis, Old Testament Studies* 12 [Leiden: Brill, 1958]: 241-246); A. P. Ross, 107; N. M. Sarna (*Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 6-7))- J. L. Ska ("Separation des eaux et de la terre ferme dans le recit sacerdotal," *NRT* 103 [1981]: 528-530); J. Skinner (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930], 18); 0. H. Steck (Der Schopfungsbericht der Priesterschrii: Studien zur literarkritischen and uberlieferungsgeschichtlichen Problematik von Genesis 1,1-2,4a [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981; L. Waterman ("Cosmogonic Affinities in Genesis 1:2," *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 43 [1927]: 177-184); Wenham, 17.

[15] Scholars who support this position include E. Arbez and J. Weisengoff ("Exegetical Notes on Genesis 1:1-2," *CBQ* 10 [1948]:147-15C)); W. Eichrodt (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 01d Testament Library, trans. J. A. Baker [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967], 2:105); 0. Eissfeldt ("Das Chaos in der biblischen and in der phonizischen Kosmogonie," Kliene Schriften [Tubingen: Mohr, 1963] 2:258-262); K. Galling ("Der Charakter der Chaosschilderung in Gen 1,2," ZTK47 [1950]: 151-155); R. Kilian ("Gen 12 and die Urgotter von Hermopolis," VT 16 [1966]: 420-438); W. H. Schmidt (Die Schopfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift: Zur

"an awesome wind sweeping over the water."[16]

The suggestion that *ruah* should be interpreted in Gen 1:2 as "wind" appears already in the *Tg. Onq.*: "And the wind from the Lord was blowing over the surface of the waters." However, this translation is not found in the *Tg. Ps.-J.* and *Tg. Yer*. McClellan finds the translation "wind" supported by Rabbinic literature originally attributed to Rabbis Ibn Ezra and Saadiah.[17] However, Cassuto rejects this interpretation as inappropriate to the text.[18]

H. M. Orlinsky defends the translation "wind" in Gen 1:2c by affirming that the biblical version of the creation derives to a great extent from the Mesopotamian creation stories in which wind has an important role.[19] In the *Enuma elish*, Anu begets the four winds, which are associated with Tiamat and created earlier than the universe (I:105, 106). When Marduk resolves to destroy Tiamat, the four winds help him: "The south wind, the north wind, the east wind, (and) the west wind" (IV: 3). Then *Imhullu* is created: "the evil wind, the whirlwind, the hurricane" (lines IV: 45, 46).[20] Later Marduk sets the evil wind free and leads it to the mouth of Tiamat (IV: 96-99). The north wind, then, helps to carry the remains of Tiamat to "out-of-the-way places" (IV: 132). This account deals with a theme totally different from the one found in Gen 1:2; therefore, the mention of the winds in the *Enuma elish* does not truly support the translation "God's winds" in Gen 1:2.[21]

In the same article Orlinsky also appeals to Rabbi Judah (third century A.D.), who affirms that on the first day of Creation ten elements were created. Among these were *rwh wmym*, translated as "wind and water." As Young points out, if this translation is correct, it simply shows ancient Hebrew exegetical use.[22]

Uberlieferungsgeschichte von Genesis 1, 1-2,4a und 2,4b-3,24 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1973], 81-84); J.M.P. Smith ("The Syntax and Meaning of Genesis 1:1-3," *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 44 [1927/28]:108-115); P. J. Smith ("A Semotactical Approach to the Meaning of the Term *ruah 'elohim* in Genesis 1:2," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 8 [1980]: 99-104); L.I.J. Stadelmann (*The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philological and Literary Study* [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970], 14-15); B. Vawter (*On Genesis: A New Reading* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1977], 40-41); von Rad, 58-59; Westermann, 106-108.

[16] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 3, 5.

[17] McClellan, 518.

[18] Cassuto, 24.

[19] H. M. Orlinsky, "The Plain Meaning of RU^{A}H in Gen 1:2," *JQR* 48 (1957/58):174-182.

[20] A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963),22, 37, 38. Z1Young, 41.

[22] Ibid.; for an analysis of the inconsistency in Orlinsky's arguments, see Hamilton, 112-114.

Contrary to Orlinsky's proposal, 34 of the 35 times that *‘elohim* appears in the Gen 1 Creation account, it refers undoubtedly to the Deity.[23] Moreover, in Gen 1:1 and 1:3, which are the immediate context of 1:2, *‘elohim* clearly refer to the Creator.[24] It would be difficult to accept that Gen 1:2c does not refer to divinity, especially when the Hebrew has numerous other clear ways to describe a powerful wind or a heavy storm.[25] In addition, when *ruah* appears in the Hebrew genitive construction with ‘elohim (or YHWH) it always refers to some activity or aspect of the deity.[26] As Moscati indicates, *‘elohim* in Gen 1:2c has a personal meaning, and the attempt to exclude God from this important stage of the Creation fails completely.[27]

Recently DeRoche suggested that the use of *ruah*, "wind," in Gen 8:1 and Exod 14:21 "leads to the division within the bodies of water, and consequently, the appearance of dry land"; therefore, "the *ruah ‘elohim*, "wind or spirit of God" of Gen 1:2, "must also be a reference to the creative activity of the deity."[28] DeRoche concludes:

> The *ruah ‘elohim* of Gen 1:2c refers to the impending *creative activity of the deity*. It is neither part of the description of chaos, nor does it refer to a wind sent by Elohim, if by wind is meant the meteorological phenomenon of moving air. *It expresses Elohim's control over the cosmos* and his ability to impose his will upon it. As part of v. 2 it is part of the description of the way things were before Elohim executes any specific act of creation.[29]

Nicolas Wyatt, in a recent article about the darkness in Gen 1:2, concluded his exegetical study by pointing out that the logical structure of the verse implies the initial stages in the manifestation of the deity; it is an unusual account of a theophany. In this way, according to Wyatt, Gen 1:2 refers to God's invisibility in the context of a primeval cosmogony.[30]

[23] M. DeRoche, "The ruah ‘elohim in Gen 1:2c: Creation or Chaos?" in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie,* ed. L. Eslinger and G. Taylor, JSOTSS 67 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 307.

[24] Moscati, 307.

[25] Ibid.; cf. also Davidson, 16; Hamilton, 112. Whenever the biblical Hebrew refers to a "strong, powerful or stormy wind" it uses expressions with no ambiguity at all such as *ruah g‘dola* (1 Kgs 19:11; Job 1:19; Jonah 1:4; etc.); *ruah s‘ ‘ara* or *s‘ ‘arot* (Pss 107:25; 148:8; etc.); *ruah qadim* is the stormy wind that destroys the ships (Ps 47:7; Jer 18:17; etc.)

[25] See D. Lys, 176-185, 337-348; cf. T. C. Vriezen, "*Ruach Yahweh* (*Elohim*) in the Old Testament," in *Biblical Essays,* Proceedings of the Ninth Meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa, 1966.

[27] Moscati, 308.

[28] DeRoche, 314-315.

[29] Ibid, 318; emphasis added.

[30] N. Wyatt, "The Darkness of Genesis 1:2," *VT* 43 (1993): 546-552.

Finally, the concept "wind of God" becomes unsustainable when the rest of Gen 1 is considered. Sarna points out that "wind" has no function in the rest of the story." The uninhabited and empty earth is covered by vegetation, animals, and human life. Darkness is separated from light under the regulation of the luminaries. Throughout Gen 1 there is a clear development of the elements that appear in Gen 1:2.

M^{e}rahepet *in Gen 1:2*

Biblical Use of m^{e}rahepet

M^{e}rahepet is a Pi'el feminine singular participle of the verb *rahap*, "hover" (BDB); "hover, fly, flutter"[32]; "Zitternd schweben" (KBS). In addition, the Targumic, Talmudic, and Midrashic literature interpret mrhpt as "to move, hover, flutter."[33] This meaning is supported by the Ugaritic in which eagles are pictured as hovering over their prey, ready to dart down upon it.[34]

Deut 32:11 uses this verb, also in the Pi'el. Here the Lord is pictured as leading Israel, "like an eagle [Heb נשׁר / Ugaritic *nsr*] that stirs up its nest, that flutters [*rahap*] over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions" (RSV) The verb describes the actions of the mother eagle after the young are out of the nest or, when they are compelled to leave the nest. In this text *m^{e}rahepet* can only be construed as hovering or fluttering and cannot describe the action of a "mighty wind."[35] Following this analogy, *ruah ʿ^{e}lohim* in Gen 1:2 is described as a living being who hovers like a bird over the created earth.[36]

[31] Sarna, *Genesis*, 6.
[32] Klein, 614.
[33] Jastrow, 1468.
[34] Young, 36, n. 36.
[35] Ibid. Other scholars who agree with this interpretation are Hamilton, 115; McClellan, 526-527; Ross, 107; Wenham, 1:17; and Westermann, 107. T. Friedman points out that the interpretation of *ruah ʿ^{e}lohim* in Gen 1:2 as "strong wind" is inappropriate for this text because both in the biblical and Ugaritic texts the root **rhp* describes the actions of birds (living beings) and not the actions of the winds (inanimate phenomena); see his "*W^{e}ruah ʿ^{e}lohim m^{e}rahepet a1~pene hammayim* [Gen 1:2]," Beth Mikra 25 [1980]: 309-312.
[36] Young, 37.

Rhp *in Ugaritic Literature*

The Ugaritic term equivalent to the Heb *rahap* is the verb *rhp*.[37] In Ugaritic texts this verb is always associated with eagles.[38] While C. H. Gordon suggests the meaning "to soar" for the Ugaritic *rhp*,[39] Gibson prefers the verb "hover" in his translation of two sections of the *Epic of Aqhat*.

> [Above him] eagles shall hover, [a flock] of hawks look down.
>
> Among the eagles I myself will hover.[40]

Del Olmo Lete points out, just as Gibson does, that the Ugaritic *rhp* is a cognate of Heb *rahap*.[41]

In conclusion, the use of *rhp* in the Ugaritic literature agrees with the idea that this is an activity carried out by a living being. Thus the appropriate translation of Gen 1:2c is "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." To complete the analysis of the verse, its place within its context must be studied.

Gen 1:2 in the Context of Gen 1

The interpretation of Gen 1:2 perfectly fits the literary structure of the chapter. In v. 2 the author does not turn his attention to the "heavens," but to the earth, where his audience is, and presents "the earth"--the familiar earth with vegetation, animals, and human beings--as not yet existing. Therefore, both the third (vegetation) and the sixth (animal and human life) days of Creation are the climax of the literary structure of the Creation account, while its zenith is reached with the creation of human beings on the sixth day.[42]

37 It appears in the transliteration of the text 1 Aqht.I.32: *‘1 bt . abh. nsrm. tr* [*hpn*] (UT, 245); and 3 Aqht:20, 21, 3132:(20) *nsrm. trhpn. ybsr*. [*hbld*] (21) *iym. bn. nsrm. arhp. an* [*k ‘l*] (31) *trhpn. ybsr. hbl. diy*[*m bn*] (32) *nsrm trhp. ‘nt. ‘l* [*aqht*] (*UT*, 249). See also M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin, Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit (KTU), ALASP 8 (Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995). It is the transliteration of the text 1.18 IV 20, 21, 31, 32: (20) *nsrm. trhpn ybsr*. [*hbl. d*] (21) *iym. bn. nsrm. arhp. an* [*k.*] ‘*1*(31) *trhpn. ybsr. hbl. diy*[*m. bn*] (32) *nsrm trhp. 'nt. ‘l* [*.aqht*] (KTU, 55); and 1.19132: *‘l. bt. abh. nsrm. trbpn* (KTU, 56).

38 See Hamilton, 115.

39 UT 484. See also S. Segert, *A Basic Grammar of the Ugaritic Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 201.

40 Ugaritic text 18 IV 20, 21, 31, 32; 19132. J.C.L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), 112,113. Del O1mo Lete uses the Spanish "revolotear," to fly over, to flutter; *Mitos y leyendas de Canaan* (MLC) (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1981), 384-385.

41 Del Olmo Lete literally says: *rhp*: v.D., "*revolotear*" // *bsr* (hb. *rahep*) (MLC, 624); cf. Gibson, "hovered, soared" (CML, 158).

42 Wenham, 1:6; B. W. Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 187-191.

Gen 1:2 shows the earth as unproductive and uninhabited (*tohu wabohu*) within the literary structure of Gen 1.[43]

[DAY 1]	light and darkness	[DAY 4] "sun" and "moon"
[DAY 2]	two waters	[DAY 5] fish and birds
[DAY 3]	earth and seas	[DAY 6] animals and man
	vegetation	on the earth

The earth became productive when God said, *tadse' ha'ares dese'* ("let the land produce vegetation," v. 11) on the third day. The "empty" earth, i.e., "yet uninhabited" became inhabited when God said *watose' ha'ares nepes hayya* ("let the land produce living creatures," v. 24) and *na'aseh 'adam besalmenu kidmutenu* ("let us make man in our image, in our likeness," v. 26). Therefore, the "unproductive and empty/uninhabited" earth became productive, with vegetation, animals, and man created by God's fiat. The Gen 1 creation account affirms that God created human beings "in his image" and provided an inhabitable and productive earth for them.[44]

Conclusion

This analysis of the Heb of Gen 1:2 has sought to find answers to difficult questions. Does Gen 1:2 describe a watery chaos that existed before the Creation? Is there a direct relationship between Gen 1:2 and the mythology called *Chaoskampf*? Do *tobu wabohu, tehom* and *ruah 'elohim* in Gen 1:2 suggest a chaotic state or an abiotic state of the earth?

Our study of the OT and ANE literature has found that Gen 1:2 must be interpreted as the description of the earth as it was without vegetation and uninhabited by animals and humans. The concept that appears in Gen 1:2 is an abiotic concept of the earth, with vegetable, animal, and human life appearing in the following verses.

Additional support for the abiotic state of the earth is found in the parallel between Gen 1:2 and 2:5, which is generally admitted.[45]
Gen 1:2: "The earth was formless and empty" //
Gen 2:5: "No shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for ... there was no man to work the ground."

Gen 1:2 provides the background for the development of the narration,

[43] See I. M. Kikawada and A. Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: The Unity of Genesis 1-11* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 78; D. T. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2--A Linguistic Investigation*, JSOT Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield, ENG: JSOT Press, 1989), 42.

[44] Tsumura, 42-43.

[45] See, for example, W. H. Shea, "Literary Structural Parallels between Genesis 1 and 2," *Origins* 16 (1989): 49-68.

which shows the earth full of life and inhabitants (Gen 1:11-12, 20, 24, 26).[46] The earth is not described as being in a chaotic state after a previous destruction, but as being barren and not yet developed. In addition to showing the initial state of creation, the verse presents God as author of life, without whom there can be no life. Life is present only in God's Spirit; the elements of the earth are lifeless and awaiting the Spirit's command. Here God's Spirit is about to create life, to change an abiotic state to a biotic state of vegetable, animal, and human life through the divine *fiat*.

The objective of this research was to discover if Gen 1:2 contains evidence of the existence of a mythological battle (*Chaoskampf*) between the creator-god and the powers of the chaos, such as Gunkel and others have suggested. This is an important question, for if Gunkel's presuppositions are true, "it is also no longer allowable in principle to reject the possibility that the whole chapter might be a myth that has been transformed into narrative."[47] On the contrary, if there is no linguistic and biblical foundation for the assumption, it is more difficult to insist that the Genesis account is a myth such as those of ANE literature.

In conclusion, it is of utmost importance to reiterate the differences between the Hebrew cosmology and the Mesopotamian cosmogony. Sarna explains: "The Hebrew cosmology represents a revolutionary break with the contemporary world, a parting of the spiritual ways that involved the undermining of the entire prevailing mythological world-view. These new ideas of Israel transcended, by far, the range of the religious concepts of the ancient world."[48] Sarna found that "the supreme characteristic of the Mesopotamian cosmogony" was "that it is embedded in a mythological matrix. On the other hand, the outstanding peculiarity of the biblical account is the complete absence of mythology in the classical pagan sense of the term. ... Nowhere is this non-mythological outlook better illustrated than in the Genesis narrative. The Hebrew account is matchless in its solemn and majestic simplicity.... The clear line of demarcation between God and His creation was never violated. Nowhere is this brought out more forcefully than in the Hebrew Genesis account."[49]

[46] See D. L. Roth, "Genesis and the Real World," *Kerux* 9 (1994): 30-54.

[47] H. Gunkel, "Influence of Babylonian Mythology upon the Biblical Creation Story," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. B. W. Anderson, Issues in Religion and Theology, vol. 6 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984),26-27, emphasis added, first published in *Schopfungund Chaos in Urzeit and Endzeit* (1895), 3-120.

[48] N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1970), xxviii.

[49] Ibid., 9-11, emphasis added.

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