

Story of Creation

Tanakh

Bereishit 8 (Genesis 1)

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. **2** Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters. **3** And God said: 'Let there be light.' And there was light. **4** And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. **5** And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

6 And God said: 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.' **7** And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. **8** And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

9 And God said: 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. **10** And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas; and God saw that it was good. **11** And God said: 'Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth.' And it was so. **12** And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after its kind; and God saw that it was good. **13** And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

14 And God said: 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; **15** and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. **16** And God made the two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; and the stars. **17** And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, **18** and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. **19** And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

20 And God said: 'Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.' **21** And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that creeps, wherewith the waters swarmed, after its kind, and every winged fowl after its kind; and God saw that it was good. **22** And God blessed them, saying: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.' **23** And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

24 And God said: 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after its kind.' And it was so. **25** And God made the beast of the earth after its kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good. **26** And God said: 'Let us make man in our image,

after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' **27** And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. **28** And God blessed them; and God said unto them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creeps upon the earth.' **29** And God said: 'Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed--to you it shall be for food; **30** and to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is a living soul, [I have given] every green herb for food.' And it was so. **31** And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Bereishit 2 (Chapter 2)

1 And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. **2** And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. **3** And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which God in creating had made.

Akkadian

The 18th century BCE Akkadian epic of Atrahasis is named after its protagonist Atrahasis. Atrahasis, the wise man, is the survivor of the great flood according to Mesopotamian myth and was given a form of immortality by the great gods. An "Atrahasis" – known by his Sumerian name Ziusudra – appears on one of the Sumerian king lists as king of Shuruppak in the times before the flood.¹

It includes both a creation myth and a flood account. Atrahasis is one of three surviving Babylonian deluge stories. Clay tablets inscribed with the old Babylonian version of the myth can be dated to around 1700 BCE. Ipiq-Aya is presumed to be the compiler and arranger of Atrahasis but his personal contribution to the myth is unknown.¹

The Akkadian myth begins after the initial creation with the complaints of the lesser (Igigi) gods who are forced to do hard labor by the greater (Anunna) gods. Ea agreed that the labor of the Igigi was too much and he proposed to have Belet-ili (Mami), the midwife, create humans to perform the labor. Mami, the midwife of the gods, was called and asked if she would birth humans. Enki proposed that on the first, seventh, and fifteenth days of the month a god would be slaughtered and Nintu would mix the clay with the flesh and blood. From the flesh of the god who was to be slaughtered was to be slaughtered, the spirit would remain. Aw-ilu was slaughtered and the mixture of the clay, flesh, and blood was spat upon by the Igigi and the Anunna. Mami used the clay mixture and made mankind to do the forced labor that was originally meant for the Igigi.²

Babylonian

The Babylonian creation myth is told in the Enuma Elish – also known as the "Epic of Creation". The Mesopotamian Enuma Elish dates to the late second millennium B.C.E.

The Enuma Elish is more concerned with establishing a divine order to the origins of the gods and their hierarchy than it is concerned with cosmology. Specifically, the author is interested in placing Marduk (patron god of Babylon) as the supreme god rather than the Sumerian god Anu (Enlil). The older order of the gods became inadequate and power needed to be transferred to the younger, more powerful, Marduk according to the Enuma Elish.³

The story begins in primordial times with the gods Apsu and Ti'amat. The two gods mingled their waters and produce divine pairs of gods after which the traditional Sumerian gods were created. These Sumerian gods ruled over the universe but they disturbed Ti'amat which led to a battle between Apsu and Ti'amat and the other gods. Apsu was killed by Ea (Enki), the god of wisdom. Ea, in turn, sired a son named Marduk and the rejoicing over his birth again disturbed Ti'amat's rest. Ti'amat created eleven fierce monsters and won over some of the gods to her side. Anu and Ea were unable to defeat Ti'amat but Marduk stepped forward to answer the challenge. Marduk offered to fight Ti'amat on the condition that if he won, the gods would make him ruler over them all. Marduk defeated Ti'amat and used her body to create the heavens and the earth. Marduk had Quingu (Ti'amat's second husband) killed. Marduk mixed Quingu's blood with clay to form primeval humans to do the work of the gods. The gods were so pleased that they made Marduk their supreme god.⁴

The most often discussed creation story from Egypt comes from the story of Nu (Nun) and Ra (Amun-Ra). In the very beginning of creation, there only existed the primordial water called Nu/Nun. Out of this primordial water rose Ra who took the form of Khepri the scarab god. With the appearance of Ra, light came to be created. Everything that Ra spoke came into being – including other gods such as Shu (god of air) and Tefnut (goddess of moisture). The sun was the eye of Nu/Nun and was hidden. Shu and Tefnut brought this eye (sun) to Khepri. Upon seeing the sun, Khepri cried and out of his tears came mankind. A second eye was made later and it became the moon. Khepri went on to make the animals and plants. Shu and Tefnut gave birth to the sky-goddess Nut and the earth-god Geb. Geb and Nut married and gave birth to Osiris, Horus the Elder, Seth, Isis, and Nephthys.⁵

Persian

Zarathustra was a Persian prophet from the sixth century BCE who claimed to begin seeing visions of God – Ahura Mazda – declaring him to be the [creator](#) of all that is good. Ahura Mazda was the only being worthy of worship according to Zarathustra.⁶

Before creation there existed on eternal time and two eternal forces – Ahura Mazda (the force of good) and Ahriman (the force of evil). Ahura Mazda decided to begin creating by first making the sky of metal and then creating pure water. Third, he made the earth – flat and round with no

mountains and valleys. Next he made plants with no bark or thorns. Fifth, he created the animals then he created the first man – Gayomard. His last act of creation was fire which was distributed to the entire world to assist mankind.

Ahriman saw the creation and began a war to destroy Ahura Mazda and his creation. Ahriman created demons, witches, and monsters and set them loose on creation. Ahura Mazda created six Immortals to protect the creation. Ahriman attacked the pure water and made it bitter then he attacked the earth and formed mountains and valleys. He then attacked the plants and caused them to grow thorns. Ahriman and his demons brought sadness, pain, pollution, and death to creation.

When the first man – Gayomard – died, a rhubarb plant grew from his bones. After forty years, the first man and woman – Mashya and Mashyana – grew from the plant. From this first union, fifteen twins were born who scattered across the earth and became the various races of people.^{7,8}

Qur'an

Allah is the creator

Qur'an 11:7: He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days – and His throne was over the waters – that He might try you, which of you is best in conduct. But if thou wert to say to them, “Ye shall indeed be raised up after death”, the Unbelievers would be sure to say, “This is nothing but obvious sorcery!”⁹

Qur'an 21:30: Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before We clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?⁹

Creation of the earth and all that was on it took four days

Qur'an 41:9-10: Say: Is it that ye deny Him who created the earth in two days? And do ye join equals with Him? He is the Lord of (all) the worlds. He set on the (earth) mountains standing firm, high above it, and bestowed blessings on the earth, and measured therein all things to give them nourishment in due proportion, in four days, in accordance with (the needs of) those who seek (sustenance).⁹

Creation of the sky, sun, moon, and stars took two days

Qur'an 41:11-12: Moreover He comprehended in His design the sky, and it had been (as) smoke: He said to it and to the earth: “Come ye together, willingly or unwillingly.” They said: “We do come (together), in willing obedience.” So He completed them as seven firmaments in two days, and He assigned to each heaven its duty and command. And We adorned the lower heaven with lights, and (provided it) with guard. Such is the decree of (Him) the Exalted in Might, full of knowledge.⁹

Creation of mankind

Qur'an 2:30: Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? – Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not."⁹

Anthropology

Comparison studies have been crucial to the study of myth since the nineteenth century. It was during this time that evolution, diffusion (theories about the spread of culture), functionalism (theories about the mind/body problem), and structuralism (societal structure) generated narratives about human development. The focus was upon the similarities of worldwide myths while ignoring the differences. This focus became known as the "comparative method".¹⁰

Creation myths evolve over time. They may be altered by scientific discoveries and religious and psychological influences. At times, new concepts are added or melded together because these creation myths reflect the science of their times.¹¹

The Biblical creation story, according to one theory, incorporates two separate creation stories. The story we see in Bereishit (Genesis) is a compilation of the works of three separate authors who are identified as the Priestly, Yahwist, and Elohist. According to this theory, the stories come from separate time periods between 950 and 550 BCE.¹¹

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