

USC Academic Bible Study: The second account of Creation

Time/location: Mondays 7p-8:30p/URC 106F

Contact: Jessica Harmon jlharmon@usc.edu

(Very tentative) plan:

9-11: Genesis 2:4-25

9-18: John 1:1-18

9-25: Other accounts of creation: Ps. 104, Job 38-41

Main questions:

Who wrote this and why?

What can we learn from this text in our own 21st century Los Angeles context?

Genesis 2:4b-25

- Documentary Hypothesis: 4 sources were compiled into the Torah. Gen.2:4b-25 comes from a different source (J) than Gen. 1:1-2:4a (P).
- J, the Yahwist, was writing during the monarchic period of Israel's history (10th cen. BCE)
- God is characterized not in contrast to Babylonian gods, but as a hands-on ruler/authority who is to be trusted (i.e. how a king should be).

Reconciling the two stories:

Genesis 2 as an **expansion** of the sixth day from Genesis 1: God created Adam, then the animals, then Eve, all on the 6th day of creation.

Jubilees has the naming of the animals story and the creation of the wife/helper take place in the second week. It explains that because Adam's rib was created in the first week, that is when the wife was created, but she was not revealed to Adam until the second week (which then becomes the rationale behind the different purification requirements for the birth of a son vs. a daughter).

Androgyne: Genesis Rabbah (midrash, collected 4th-6th cen. CE) 8:1: *“When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the first ‘adam, He created him with two faces, then split him and made him two backs – a back for each side.”*

- i.e., the human that was first created (in Gen 1) had basically two bodies, back to back
- This being was split in half (in Gen. 2) to create two beings, one male, one female.
- The phrase “one of his ribs” can refer to “one of his sides”, i.e. the entire back side

(Source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-was-the-androgyne-2076659>)



First Eve/Lilith: Alphabet of Ben Sirach (satirical, composed 8th-10th cen. CE): Lilith was Adam's first wife, created in Gen. 1. But Adam and Lilith fought about who should be in the dominant sexual position. So Lilith leaves Adam and then makes a deal with three angels sent to retrieve her that she will not harm newborn children if they wear amulets with the angels' names.

- Lillu/lilin: Sumerian/Mesopotamian female vampires/succubi
- Other legends name Lilith as the Queen of Demons

Another Account of the Creation

2:4b In the day that the LORD[a] God made the earth and the heavens, 5 when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; 6 but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— 7 then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground,[b] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. 8 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; 12 and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” 19 So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man[c] there was not found a helper as his partner. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,[d]
for out of Man[e] this one was taken.”

24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

- a. Genesis 2:4 Heb YHWH, as in other places where “LORD” is spelled with capital letters (see also Ex 3.14–15 with notes).
- b. Genesis 2:7 Or formed a man (Heb adam) of dust from the ground (Heb adamah)
- c. Genesis 2:20 Or for Adam
- d. Genesis 2:23 Heb ishshah
- e. Genesis 2:23 Heb ish