

In the Beginning God Created: Genesis 1:1–2 (#1 of Genesis 1–11)

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

AUTHOR: Moses

OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENTS OF GENESIS:

Creation (1–2), Fall (3), Gentiles (4–11), Abe (12–25), Isaac (26), Jacob (27–36), Joseph (37–50)

DATE OF BOOK: During the wilderness wandering 1446–1406 BC (probably soon after 1444 BC)

(The following dates assume that the exodus occurred in 1446 BC)

The ten plagues: ca. 1446 BC (cf. Exodus 7:7) The exodus: ca. 1446 BC

Kadesh Barnea: ca. 1444 BC

Moses died at age 120: ca. 1406 BC (cf. Deuteronomy 34:7)

Exodus suggests that Moses may have preached the general contents of Genesis. Moses was to tell **the nation, the elders, & Pharaoh that the LORD—Jehovah (I AM)** sent him. [In NKJ & NAS, **LORD** = Jehovah, but **Lord** = another term]. Let us look at the instructions to Moses:

Exodus 3¹⁴ *And God said to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel,*

I AM has sent me to you.'

¹⁵ *Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel:*

The LORD [Jehovah] God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.'

¹⁶ *Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them,*

The LORD [Jehovah] God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, "I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt; ¹⁷ and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁸ Then they [the elders of Israel] will heed your _{sg} voice; and you _{sg} shall come, you _{sg} & the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; & you _{pl} shall say to him, The LORD [Jehovah] God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

Initial observation: Moses obeyed God, but the passage gives only a few details

Brief sketches of Moses telling the people and Pharaoh that Jehovah is Israel's God:

Sketch of Moses telling the people that Jehovah (I am) is Israel's God:

Exodus 4²⁹ *Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.* ³⁰ *And Aaron spoke all the words which the **LORD** had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people.* ³¹ *So the people believed; and when they heard that the **LORD** had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.*

Sketch of Moses Pharaoh that Jehovah is Israel's God:

Exodus 5¹ *Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the **LORD** God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'* " ² *And Pharaoh said, "Who is the **LORD**, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the **LORD**, nor will I let Israel go."* ³ *So they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the **LORD** our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."*

Does something seem puzzling? What is the big deal about the name of God? Moses tells us that people used the name Jehovah in Genesis, so what is the big deal in Exodus 3?

15⁷ *Then He said to him [Abram], "I am the **LORD** [**Jehovah**], who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."* ⁸ *And he said, " **LORD** [**Jehovah**], God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"*

Two wrong answers:

1. Many liberals have argued that this proves that the writer of Exodus 3 did not realize that it contradicts Genesis. They proposed a terrible theory called the Documentary Hypothesis. They denied that Moses wrote Genesis, but proposed that there were four editors: the Jehovist, the Elohist, the Deuteronomist, and the Priestly writers (JEDP) who supposedly wrote Genesis. The whole false theory relies upon their misunderstanding of Exodus 3.

2. Jehovah's Witnesses think that Exodus 3 is trying to say that one cannot be saved who does not know that God's name is Jehovah. If that were so, we would expect the Old Testament and the New Testament to make a big point about getting the name of God right. Interestingly, the New Testament never uses the term Jehovah. As a result, Jehovah's Witnesses have complicated arguments for acting as if the word were used in the New Testament (which it isn't).

The correct answer:

Jehovah is the OT title of God that speaks of His covenanted loyalty to His people, especially Israel. Remember that Moses was supposed to tell Israel and Pharaoh that Jehovah was Israel's God.

The time when Israel understood that Jehovah was their God:

Exodus 14²⁹ But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ³⁰ So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ **Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses.**

The time when Egypt (especially Pharaoh) understood that Jehovah was Israel's God:

Exodus 14¹³ *And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." ¹⁵ And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶ But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. ¹⁷ And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. ¹⁸ **Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.** ¹⁹ And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them.*

God's instruction to Moses to tell Israel that Jehovah was their God included telling Israel that the God who made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is faithful to keep those promises: He would deliver them from slavery in Egypt, as He promised Abraham in Genesis 15:13-14.

Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, & they will afflict them four hundred years. & also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions."

The reason for writing Genesis was not that the Israelites were completely ignorant of the events which Genesis discusses. Rather, in 400 years, they had adopted much Egyptian thinking and they did not understand that God is almighty and that He guarantees what He promises. He made promises to Abraham and will keep them. Moses taught the essentials of Genesis before the Exodus.

Where would God have Moses start teaching people who have forgotten their God?

Views of Genesis 1:1–2 and 1:3ff.

1. Some think that Genesis 1:1–3 are sequential. If so, God would have created a formless and void universe as step 1 (Genesis 1:1–2). Then He would have corrected this in 1:3ff.

Created w/o form: Stage 1 (1:1–2)	God gave the earth form: Stage 2 (1:3)
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Major problem: The grammar of verse 2 does not allow verses 1–2 to be a unit. The grammar treats them as two separate events, not one. The word that starts verse 2 is the problem: It should be translated *Now*, rather than *And*.

2. Others argue for a gap between verses 1 and 2.

Stage 1: Original creation (1:1)	Then the earth became formless & void (1:2)	Stage 2: Re-Creation: God fixed things (1:3ff.)
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Major problem: The grammar of verse 2 requires for that verse 2 happen before verse 1. The word that starts verse 2 is the problem: It should be translated *Now*, rather than *And*.

Note the similar grammar of Genesis 2:25 and 3:1a (3:1a has the same *Now* as 1:2):

²⁵ And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. ³ Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.

3. The best view (grammatically) is that verse 1 is a summary statement, with 1:3ff. giving details.

Stage 1: Original creation (Unmentioned in Genesis)	The earth became formless & void (1:2)	Stage 2: Re-Creation: God fixed things (1:1 and 1:3ff.)
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First, the initial problem

Now, the earth was formless

Now, my car wouldn't run

Second, the solution

God created universe (1:1)

Days 1–6

I fixed my car

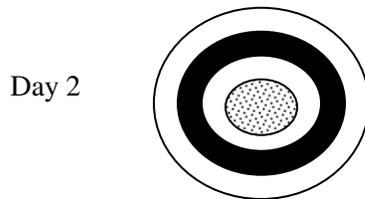
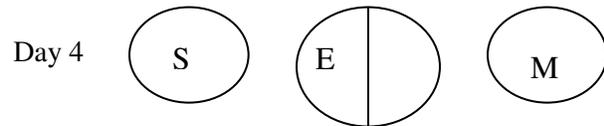
I carried out repair steps 1–6

Notice that I did not say that I manufactured my car

Genesis does not mention original creation (although God also is the one who did that).
Cf. John 1:3; Colossians 1:16–17; etc.

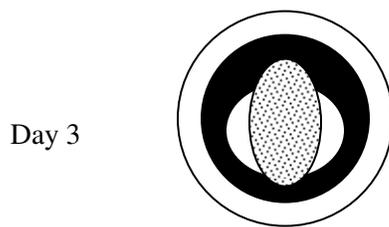
1:2 Explanation of *formless and void*:

Day	<i>Formless</i>	Day	<i>Void</i>
1	Created concept of light (1:3–5)	4	Fill heavens w/ lights—sun, moon, stars (1:14–19)
2	Create sky between H ₂ O & from H ₂ O below (1:6–8)	5	Fill firmament & H ₂ O below w/ birds & sea creatures (1:20–23)
3	Divide H ₂ O by raising dry land above H ₂ O (1:9–13)	6	Fill dry land w/ plants, animals, & people (1:24–31)



Day 5

birds and fishes



Day 6

plants, animals, people

CONCLUSION