

RICHARD S. HESS**Genesis 1–2 and Recent Studies of Ancient Texts**

This essay surveys recent applications of ancient Near Eastern philology and literary study to the interpretation of the first two chapters of the Bible. It considers the significance of the seven days of creation and the reason for two accounts of creation. It examines a variety of expressions including: formless and empty, image of God, Sabbath, Adam and Eden. The results of recent comparative research provide a rationale for the structure and organisation of Genesis 1–2 as well as new significance to the meaning and antiquity of many of its key expressions. At the same time the study touches upon some of the wealth of ancient Near Eastern literature available for the interpretation of the Bible.

Keywords: Ancient Near East, Genesis 1–11, Genesis 1–2, Creation, Image of God, Sabbath, Adam, Eden, Enuma Elish.

123 years ago George Smith reported to the London Society of Biblical Archaeology that he had identified a story of the great Flood among the mythological texts belonging to the seventh century BC 'library' of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal.¹ In this way began the pursuit and study of Genesis in the light of comparative literature from the ancient Near East.² The purpose of this essay is to highlight some of the most significant recent comparisons. The criteria for 'most significant' are based upon those studies that enhance the reader's understanding of the Biblical text.

To begin, some general observations may be made. First, although there is only one Biblical text there are a variety of literary sources that have been used for purposes of comparison. The first Babylonian creation account discovered was named Enuma Elish after its opening words. Coming from Ashurbanipal's collection and dating from the seventh century BC, this was actually a late text in the reckoning of ancient Near Eastern history. As will become evident, many other texts from the ancient Near East have been discovered and applied to the interpretation of Genesis 1–2.³ Most of these

1 Smith, G. 'The Chaldean account of the deluge', *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* (1873–1874) 2, 213–234 (p. 213); reprinted in Dundes, A. (ed.) *The Flood Myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press (1988), pp. 29–48. Layard had excavated the clay tablets a few decades earlier.

2 Hess, R. S. 'One hundred and fifty years of comparative studies on Genesis 1–11: An overview', In Hess, R. S. and Tsumura, D. T. (ed.) *'I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood': Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns (1994), pp. 3–26. Hereafter this volume will be abbreviated as *I Studied Inscriptions*.

3 For a survey of the creation myths alone, see Castellino, G. 'Les origines de la civilisation selon les textes bibliques et les textes cuneiformes', In *Volume de congrès Strasbourg 1956*.

were written in Akkadian, the international language of the ancient Near East for two millennia. Babylonian and Assyrian are dialects of Akkadian. A second important language was Ugaritic. Texts were written in this language and discovered at the site of Ugarit on the Mediterranean Sea coast of modern Syria. They date from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BC. A third language in which some texts were written was Aramaic. Aramaic became popular in the first millennium BC. It was used by many of the Aramean city-states to the north of Israel.

All these languages, as well as Hebrew, are Semitic. Thus they share a broadly similar culture with Hebrew. For this reason comparisons of both general content and specific words and phrases enhance the interpretation of Genesis 1–2. It is not possible to survey every suggested comparison. This study will be limited to a selection, and will demonstrate the variety of applications the comparative approach has in assisting the reader to understand Genesis.

Second, this study will consider only the first two chapters of Genesis for purposes of comparison. Although Genesis 1–11 forms a natural unit, the first two chapters are significant in various ways. Theologically, they represent the teachings about creation basic to Judaism and to Christianity. From a literary perspective, chapters one and two form two related creation stories.

Third, there is the question of the literary type or genre of Genesis 1–2. Sometimes scholars refer to these texts as ‘myth.’ This term is used in so many different ways as to render it of little value.⁴ The term ‘report’ is useful since it does not commit to a modern understanding of the text (e.g. history, science, or other post-Aristotelean distinctions).⁵ In fact, a variety of terms can be used to describe the opening chapters of Genesis. Throughout Genesis there is a mixture of genres, something that already exists in the opening chapters.⁶

Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 4, Leiden: Brill (1957), pp. 116–137; translated into English and reprinted as ‘The origins of civilization according to biblical and cuneiform texts’, In *I Studied Inscriptions*, pp. 75–95. See also Lambert, W. G. ‘A new look at the Babylonian background of Genesis’, *Journal of Theological Studies* (1965) 16, 287–300; reprinted and updated, In *I Studied Inscriptions*, pp. 96–113.

4 Smith, M. S. ‘Mythology and myth-making in Ugaritic and Israelite literatures’, In Brooke, G. J., Curtis, A. H. W., and Healey, J. F. (eds.) *Ugarit and the Bible. Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ugarit and the Bible Manchester, September 1992*, Münster: Ugarit Verlag (1994), pp. 293–300, surveys the recent discussion of ‘myth’ in anthropological contexts and concludes with a definition of myths as ‘traditional narratives centering on divine beings, but without excluding narratives with only one deity such as Yahweh.’ (p. 299). However, the term remains heavily loaded with connotations about the truth value of a text described as ‘myth’.

5 Coats, G. W. *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1983).

6 Averbeck, R. E. ‘The Sumerian historiographic tradition and its implications for Genesis 1–11’, In Millard, A. R., Hoffmeier, J. K., and Baker, D. W. (eds.) *Faith, Tradition, and History. Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context*, Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns (1994), pp. 79–102; Moye, R. H. ‘In the beginning: Myth and history in Genesis and Exodus’, *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1990) 109, 577–598.

To accommodate this variety of types of comparison (semantic, linguistic, historical, etc.), the presentation of the evidence will follow the order of the text of Genesis.

1. Genesis 1:1–2

Older comparisons with *Enuma elish*, which begins ‘When on high . . . , then . . .’, led to the suggestion that Gen 1:1 should be translated as a relative clause, ‘When in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, then . . .’. However, the nature of the first verse suggests that it is simply a summary of what is to come, just as Genesis 2:4 also serves as a summary. The syntax allows for either translation.

The formless and empty earth (*tohu wabohu*) has led to much speculation about its meaning. The words are rare. Tsumura identified what he thought to be a similar expression in Ugaritic.⁷ In its context there, as in its usage in Genesis, the stress is on an unproductive, unfruitful and uninhabited world. The world was not in working order. This is a better translation than one that understands 1:2 to refer to chaos. As in Gen 2:5, the world was not yet fully what it should be. It awaited God’s word and work.

The reference to the deep in v. 2 has evoked much discussion. The Hebrew word is *t^ehom*. Some have taken this to be a hidden reference to Tiamat, the chaos deity whom Marduk fights in *Enuma Elish*. From her corpse the world is created by Marduk. Many scholars have followed Gunkel and argued that the Hebrews borrowed their word from the name of the Babylonian deity.⁸ Gen 1:2 would then reflect a myth in which the chief God battled Tiamat. Later editors in Old Testament times, who came to believe in one God, removed all references to other deities. When it came to Tiamat they simply ‘demythologised’ her, that is they transformed her into a common noun, identical to a word for the ‘sea’. Tsumura has demonstrated in full that Akkadian, Hebrew, and other Semitic languages all have a common noun with the three consonants, *thm*, meaning ‘sea’ or ‘ocean’.⁹ Linguistically, the form Tiamat is unlikely to have produced a Hebrew form *t^ehom*, losing its feminine ending *at* and requiring an *h* in the middle. Hebrew *t^ehom* is the natural form from the common Semitic base *thm*. Hebrew *t^ehom* comes from an earlier West Semitic word with the same meaning, ‘depths of the sea’. It does not come from Tiamat. Genesis 1 contains no evidence for mythical remnants of a fight between God and

7 Tsumura, D. T. *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2. A Linguistic Investigation*, Sheffield: JSOT Press (1989), pp. 17–43; reprinted, in *I Studied Inscriptions*, pp. 310–328. The caution of Lambert, W. G. ‘A Further note on *tōhū wābāphū*’, *Ugarit Forschungen* (1988) 20, 135, concerns one of the parallels from Ugarit. However, it does not take away the force of the argument that is based on the usage of these words elsewhere in Ugaritic and Hebrew.

8 Gunkel, H. *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (1895); relevant sections translated into English, in Anderson, B. W. (ed.) *Creation and the Old Testament*, Philadelphia: Fortress; London: SPCK (1984), pp. 25–52.

9 Tsumura, D. T., *op.cit.*, [7], pp. 45–56.

chaos as may be found in Babylonia. Nor is it likely that *t^ehom* must have been originally personified simply because it usually lacks a definite article. As Tsumura observes, *t^ehom* was originally a common noun that continued to appear in Hebrew and elsewhere as a common noun. Other common nouns in Genesis 1 such as 'darkness,' 'light,' 'day,' 'night,' 'firmament,' and 'heavens' can and do appear without definite articles.¹⁰

Gen 1:2 demonstrates the power of God over the sea. In contemporary cultures the sea was worshipped or venerated. In myths from both Ugarit and Babylon the chief deity did battle with the sea and conquered it. In Genesis the sea was under God's control from the beginning.¹¹

2. Genesis 1: 3–2: 4

A. Image and Likeness

In vv. 26–28 the text describes how men and women were created in the image and likeness of God. The meaning of the terms for image and likeness, *tselem* and *d^emût*, has been the cause of much discussion. The two words occur together only here and in Gen 5:3, where Adam's son Seth is so described. Why were these terms used together? Was it because *tselem* was more ambiguous and required a more specific and concrete word such as *d^emût*?¹² Perhaps *tselem* evolved in its meaning and came to refer to idols. So *d^emût* was added by a later editor to explain that idols were not intended.¹³ In 1979 a solution to the problem became available when a statue of a king was dug up at Tell Fakhariyeh in northeastern Syria. On the statue is an Assyrian text and beside it an Aramaic, both dating from the ninth century BC. The two texts are almost the same, the Aramaic being more or less a translation of the Assyrian. They describe the achievements of the king and they form a dedicatory inscription of his statue.¹⁴

Like ancient Hebrew, Aramaic was written only in consonants. In the Aramaic text the words *slm* and *dmwt* appeared. These words in Aramaic are identical to their Hebrew cognates, *tselem* and *d^emût*. From the text it

10 The attempt of Wyatt, N. 'Genesis 1 2', *Vetus Testamentum* (1993) 43, 543–554, to revive the mythological connection does not examine the arguments of Tsumura.

11 Malamat, A. 'Das Heilige Meer'. In Kottsieper, I., van Oorschot, J., Römheld, D., and Wahl, H. M. (eds.) 'Wer ist wie du, Herr, unter den Göttern?' *Studien zur Theologie und Religionsgeschichte Israels für Otto Kaiser zum 70. Geburtstag*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. (1994), pp. 65–74.

12 Barr, J. 'The image of God in the book of Genesis—A study of terminology', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* (1968–1969) 51, 24–25.

13 Sawyer, J. F. A. 'The meaning of *tselem* ('in the image of God') in Genesis i–xi', *Journal of Theological Studies* (1974) 25, 420–421.

14 Assaf, A. A. 'Die Statue des HDYS' Y, König von Guzana', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Orients-Gesellschaft* (1981) 113, 3–22; Assaf, A. A., Bordreuil, P., and Millard, A. R. *La statue de Tell Fekherye et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne*, Paris: ADPF (1982); Millard, A. R. and Bordreuil, P. 'A Statue from Syria with Assyrian and Aramaic Inscriptions', *Biblical Archaeologist* 45 (1982) 135–141; Kaufman, S. A. 'Reflections on the Assyrian-Aramaic Bilingual from Tell Fakhariyeh', *Maarav* (1982) 3, 137–175; Hess, R. S. 'Eden—A well-watered place', *Bible Review* (December 1991) 7/6, 28–33.

is clear that these words referred to the 'image' and 'likeness' of the king's statue. When the Assyrian text was compared, the Assyrian rendered *tselem* and *d^emût* with the same word, *šalmu*, 'statue'. Although Aramaic is not identical to Hebrew, the language is close enough to draw some important conclusions. The Tell Fakhariyah inscription is the only other place where *tselem* and *d^emût*, or their cognates, occur together. The fact that the Assyrian text only has *šalmu* at both places suggests that *tselem* and *d^emût* are stylistic variants that convey an identical message. Their appearance together in Gen 1:26 does not express two distinct ideas, but it rhetorically emphasises the single concept of creation in God's image. Like ancient kings who set up statues to represent their power and rule over a region, so humanity was intended to represent God's kingdom on earth.¹⁵ Thus the verbs 'subdue' and 'rule' in v. 28 have a royal context of a king exercising dominion over royal land.¹⁶

Humanity's creation in God's image forms the most significant difference between the Genesis account and Mesopotamian creation stories. In Mesopotamia, texts designate only the rare king or outstanding figure as created in a divine image. In such cases a god sires the person. Genesis 1 recognises the inherent value of each person because they bear God's image. In the Mesopotamian accounts human worth is identified with their service of the gods.¹⁷ These distinctions and others affirm that no clear basis can be maintained for direct or indirect borrowing of Biblical material from those Mesopotamian texts that are extant.¹⁸ However, there may be a common origin to some of the Biblical and Mesopotamian traditions.

B. Sabbath

The creation account of Genesis 1 points forward to the climax of God's rest on the seventh day. The Atrahasis epic is a creation account from the 18th century BC that preserves older traditions of Mesopotamian mythology than *Enuma elish*.¹⁹ It describes how the gods created people in order to serve them with food and drink. When they had finished creating their slaves, the gods could rest. Although a period of rest at the end of the labours of creation has a parallel with the first creation account in Genesis 1, there are

15 Wolff, H. W. *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, Philadelphia: Fortress (1974), p. 160. In the Bible compare Dan 3:1.

16 Simkins, R. A. *Creator and Creation. Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel*, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson (1994), pp. 201–202; and Clifford, R. J. Review of Rütterswörden, U. *Dominium Terrae: Studien zur Genese einer alttestamentlichen Vorstellung*, 1993, In *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1994) 113, 701–702.

17 For these and other distinctions, see Walton, J. *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan (1989), pp. 19–44.

18 Millard, A. R. 'A new Babylonian "Genesis" story', *Tyndale Bulletin* (1967) 18, 3–18; reprinted, In *I Studied Inscriptions*, pp. 114–128.

19 Lambert, W. G. and Millard, A. R. *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*, part 46, London: Trustees of the British Museum (1965); idem, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, Oxford: Clarendon (1969); *op.cit.* Lambert, W. G. [3]; Millard, A. R. [19].

important theological differences. In the Bible, God does not rest because he has someone else to work for him, but because he has finished all of his creative work. People are created as stewards of creation, not as slaves to satisfy needs of the gods.

From a philological perspective, the Hebrew word for Sabbath, *šabbāt*, resembles the Akkadian *šapattu*. The Akkadian word refers to the fifteenth day of the month. One Babylonian text describes it as a 'day of easing the heart'.²⁰ Although this day plays a special role in omen texts, there is no evidence that it was a day of rest. The Sabbath as one day of cessation from labour out of every seven days remains unique to Israel.

3. Genesis 2:4–25

A. A Second Creation Story?

Why are there two different creation narratives at the beginning of the Bible? Traditionally, source critics divided the creation accounts of Genesis 1:1–2:3 and 2:4–25 into two different sources, one for the first chapter (P) and another for the second (J). They argued that two different writers (or groups of writers) composed these at various times and that they reflected different concerns.²¹ More recently, literary studies of the Bible have suggested an alternative explanation for the accounts. Some accept the source theory but argue that the two accounts reflect techniques of literary artistry.²² For example, the first chapter recounts all of creation and focuses on the Sabbath; the second focuses on the man created and all creation is related to him. In a sense, the second chapter is an expansion of Gen 1: 26–30.²³ Kikawada has applied this study to other ancient Near Eastern creation accounts, particularly those of Atrahasis and of Enki and Ninmah.²⁴ Both of these relate creation in two parts. Just like Genesis 1–2, the first creation story is a general one. This is followed by a second more specific account. From the perspective of Genesis, this applies not only to Genesis 1–2, but also to the genealogies of chapters 10 and 11.²⁵ There as well the general description of all peoples of the world in chapter 10 is followed by a specific genealogy from Shem to Abram in chapter 11. In fact, this principle also works for the genealogies of Cain and Seth in Genesis 4 and 5. Like Genesis 1 and 2, these other groups of genealogies are called

20 u4-um nu-uhG *lib-bi* (Malku III 148) in Reiner, E. et al. (eds.) *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, Volume 17, Š Part I, Chicago: Oriental Institute; Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin (1989), p. 449.

21 Wellhausen, J. *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, Gloucester, Massachusetts: Gloucester (1973), pp. 297–308; Soggin, J. A. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, third edition, London: SCM (1989), pp. 94–96; Scharbert, J. 'Noch einmal zur Vorgeschichte der Paradieserzählung (Gen 2,4b–3,24)', *Biblische Notizen* (1993) 67, 53–53.

22 Alter, R. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, New York: Basic Books (1981), pp. 141–147.

23 Tsumura, D. T. 'Evangelical Biblical interpretation: Towards the establishment of its methodology', *Evangelical Theology* (1985) 17, 47–50, Japanese with English summary, pp. 169–171.

24 Kikawada, I. 'The double creation of mankind in Enki and Ninmah, Atrahasis I 1–351, and Genesis 1–2', *Iraq* (1983) 45, 43–45; reprinted, In *I Studied Inscriptions*, pp. 169–174.

25 Hess, R. S. 'Genesis 1–2 in its literary context', *Tyndale Bulletin* (1990), pp. 143–153.

tól^odóth, 'account' (NIV).²⁶ The literary presentation of a couplet, where the first element is general and the second element is specific, is found in ancient Near Eastern creation accounts, in Genesis 1–2 and in the genealogies of chapters 4–5 and 10–11. It thus forms a basic structuring device for Genesis 1–11.

B. Adam

The personal name, Adam, comes from the Hebrew word, 'ādām. As a common noun this word can mean (1) 'humanity'; and (2) 'man' as distinct from woman. The first usage occurs in Gen 1:26–28. There 'ādām occurs and is described as 'male and female'. In Genesis 2 and 3 'ādām often occurs with the second meaning, 'man'. Although some texts (e.g., Gen 2:20) may allow for a translation of the word as the personal name, Adam, the majority of occurrences require that 'ādām be translated as 'man'. This is because the definite article regularly appears before the word. In Hebrew, personal names do not occur with the definite article. Therefore, 'ādām is best translated as a common noun, 'the man', in chapters 2 and 3. Not until Gen 4:25 is it certain that the word is used as the personal name, Adam. Two points are of interest in understanding 'ādām: (1) the significance of a term such as 'the man' for understanding Adam's role in the Garden of Eden; and (2) the origin and usage of the personal name, Adam.

Gen 2:7 and 3:19 make clear that the choice of the term, 'ādām, to describe the first man is not accidental. There is a specific reason that 'ādām was used rather than the more common word for man, 'īš. It is based on a wordplay with a similar sounding word, 'ādāmā, 'ground'. The 'ādām was created from the 'ādāmā, and would return to the 'ādāmā. By using 'ādām with a definite article, 'the man', the designation of this figure becomes more than a means of differentiating him from the woman. It serves as a title designating his responsibility toward the Garden.²⁷ The use of the common Hebrew word for 'man', 'īš, is common in titles of other occupations, e.g., 'priest' (Lev 21:9), 'prince' (Exod 2:14) and 'warrior' (Joel 2:7). It also occurs in 2 Sam 10:6, 8 as 'īš tób, 'ruler of the land of Tob'.²⁸ The use of a word for 'man' followed by a place name is common in the ancient Near East of the second millennium BC as a means to describe the rulership of a town or other place. Thus the leader of the town of Kumidi is called 'man of Kumidi' in the fourteenth BC Amarna correspondence.²⁹ This comparative information provides a clue for the usage of 'the man' in Genesis 2–3. It is a description of Adam's role as the keeper of the Garden of Eden. God gave to Adam the responsibility of rule and dominion over the Garden and over all the 'ādāmā.

26 Gen 2:4; 5:1; 10:1; 11:10.

27 Hess, R. S. 'Splitting the Adam: The usage of 'ādām in Genesis i–v', In Emerton, J. A. (ed.) *Studies in the Pentateuch*, Leiden: Brill (1990), pp. 1–15.

28 Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., et al. (eds.) *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum alten Testament*, third edition, Leiden: Brill (1967), p. 42.

29 The text is, lú uru ku-mi-dī^{k1}. It is found in Amarna letter 198, lines 4–5 in Knudtzon, J. A. *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln mit Einleitung und Erläuterungen*, Leipzig (1915).

The name, Adam, occurs as a proper name in texts from the ancient Near East.³⁰ It is rare in the pre-Hellenistic cultures of the first millennium BC. By itself Adam does not appear at all. Compounded with other elements, there are one or two possible occurrences in Punic personal names, though even these may be questioned. Adam appears as the name of a god and as part of the name of a month the thirteenth century BC at Emar. It occurs in early second and late third millennium BC Amorite names from Mari, Manana, Chagar Bazar and Dilbat. From the mid-third millennium BC, at Ebla Adam appears as a personal name as well as the name of a god and of a month. In fact, the earlier one goes in time, the more attestations one finds of Adam as a proper name. This points to an early usage of this name among West Semitic cultures, a usage that died out in later periods.

C. Eden

Eden, the location of the garden of Genesis 2–3, has a variety of possible meanings. Millard rejected the suggestion that it is related to the Sumerian word, eden, meaning 'plain' or 'steppe'. On the basis of inscriptional evidence, he argued that the word is related to an Aramaic word spelled exactly the same way.³¹ This is 'dn, a word meaning 'rich', 'lush', 'abundant'. This word is found on the ninth century BC Tell Fakhariyeh inscription mentioned above. A participial form of 'dn appears in the Aramaic text. This is rendered in the Akkadian by a participle (muṭahhidu) which means, 'to make an abundant water supply'.³² The name, Eden, refers to a well watered land. Thus it should not be surprising that an important characteristic of the land is the presence of four rivers.

4. Conclusion

Both the application of texts discovered more than a century ago and the comparative studies from recently discovered texts have yielded rewarding insights for the interpretation of Genesis 1–2. Recent literary comparisons with the older creation stories have 'removed' Tiamat from Genesis, affirmed God's control over the sea and suggested the significance of the seven days in Genesis 1. The Atrahasis Epic and other creation accounts have confirmed the distinctive purpose of the Biblical Sabbath and helped to explain the two accounts of creation standing side by side in Genesis 1 and 2. Texts from thirteenth century BC Ugarit have provided help in interpreting 'formless and empty' (1:2), while a ninth century BC Aramaic inscription has given insights into 'image and likeness' (1:26) and Eden. Still other ancient Near Eastern texts have suggested a significance for the common noun, 'ādām, and have pointed toward the early origins of the personal name, Adam.

30 The evidence is collected in Hess, R. S. *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1–11*, Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener (1993), pp. 59–62.

31 Millard, A. R. 'The etymology of Eden', *Vetus Testamentum* (1984) 34, 103–105.

32 Tsumura, D. T. *op.cit.*, [7], pp. 128–129; Hess, R. S. *op.cit.*, [15], pp. 31–32.

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These recent discoveries neither support older theories about the division and evolution of the text of Genesis nor do they encourage one to find the origins of the Biblical accounts in Mesopotamian or Ugaritic stories. Although firmly situating Genesis 1–2 within the linguistic and cultural context of the ancient Near East, the discoveries demonstrate anew the literary creativity of the Biblical writers, providing fresh insights into old truths.

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