

Lecture 1

The Creation Of the World. Spirit, Word, Wisdom

The first book of the Bible is the Book of Genesis, which stands for the Hebrew בְּרֵאשִׁית <Bere'shit> – «In the Beginning». The earthly author of this book was Moses, מֹשֶׁה <Mo'she>. His name denotes «drawn out [from the water]» and points at Moses's wonderful salvation by the Egyptian princess (see chapter 1. The People Of God In Egypt. Spirit In the Enslavement Of Flesh.); another meaning is «retriever», «deliverer». However, the Heavenly Author is the Creator of the universe: Moses was writing inspired by the Holy Spirit. The interaction of the Holy Spirit and the spirit of man does not suggest that one loses their free will, but they obey God on their own accord, devoting all their ability, mind and talent to Him.

The Book of Genesis was written in the 14th century BCE. It was created after the exodus of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. The place of its appearance is the Sinai desert, which is situated between Egypt and the Holy Land. It was written under the following circumstances: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's descendants, who formed the Israeli people, had been in the Egyptian Pharaoh's slavery for a long time. Later they were miraculously redeemed and taken away from Egypt by hand of the

great prophet Moses. This way the promise given to forefather Abraham about the long-term slavery and further liberation by God came true. This promise had been given 430 years before the exodus from Egypt (Genesis 15, 13).

The Israelites wandered about the desert for 40 years, and it was in the desert that they were given the Torah – the holy book consisting of five parts – the Pentateuch. After God gave the Torah to the Israeli people and made the covenant with them on Mount Sinai, He has constantly driven the history of this people so that it could spread the knowledge of God among all other nations on the earth.

The people of Israel has always and everywhere been preserved by God; every time, even in the most severe conditions, was it rescued in order to repent of its former disloyalty to God and again proclaim to humanity His will the way it was fixed in the Torah. The Book of Genesis describes God's first revelation of His will to mankind.

The question that arises is whether Moses used preceding scriptures. It is common knowledge that at the time of Moses there existed the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system, the Mesopotamian cuneiform script, as well as other systems of writing. According to the

ancient tradition, antediluvian patriarchs wrote down historic events. For instance, the Book of Enoch, the patriarch who lived in the seventh generation from forefather Adam and was the first to leave a book narrating the starting days of humanity. Translated into Ge'ez, this book was discovered in Ethiopia in the 18th century, but its separate parts had also been known in different languages before. So, could Moses have used the earliest texts? Perhaps. He was «instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians», as the Bible says (Acts 7, 22); he lived at the Pharaoh's court; it is doubtless that he dealt with Egyptian worshippers and knew much about the ancient history of mankind. Naturally, he was familiar with his culture of origin, with Israeli legends. But it would be wrong to believe that the great prophet Moses created the Book of Genesis just retelling some earlier records: this book is directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, though Moses's immense intellectual capacity and knowledge from various sources were also used in its creation. Thus, sounds from the surrounding world find a harmonious place in the music written by an inspired composer.

We have already spoken of prophecy predicting future. Proclaiming future events, the prophet sees them

with his own eyes – he can project himself into the time and place these events are to happen. The Holy Spirit enables the prophet to see the present (e.g. read the mind of a person who is standing right in front of him), and the past as well. So, Moses sees the past when describing the creation of the world in the Book of Genesis – he sees it so vividly as though he himself was present at that moment.

Some Bible critics allege that the Book of Genesis was compiled of several sources and written much later than it is believed by the Synagogue and the Church tradition. It is not so. The Book of Genesis is the greatest poem, one of the most beautiful of all poems ever written; its plot and composition, its imagery and style are so consistent and so infused by the same spirit that no one could speak of the compilation from various sources but a person who has no ear for poetry at all. Earliest manuscripts dating back to the beginning of the Common Era, including those found in Qumran, prove the credibility of the extant text.

The Book of Genesis starts with the words: «In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth». The Hebrew version of this phrase is: «בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ» <Be-re'shit

ba'ra Elo'him et ha-sha'mayim ve-et ha-'arets> – “In the beginning/created/God/the heavens and the earth”. The word אלהים <Elo'him> meaning «God» is derived from אל <el> – «power». The corresponding word in one of the earliest Semitic languages – Akkadian, also Assyro-Babylonian – is pronounced as «'eelu» and it has a similar meaning of god or some higher rational being. אלהים is the plural form of the word אלה <e'loah> – «god». The plural form indicates the totality of all forces and energies in the world emanating from one and the same source – God. Why does this word stand in the third, but not the first, place in the beginning of the Book of Genesis? It does not say: «God created in the beginning ...», but «In the beginning/created/God...» Perhaps, the reason for that is the fact that man firstly asks the question: What was «in the beginning», how did it all begin? And the answer to this question starts with the same phrase: «In the beginning...» After that the second natural question arises: Who made it all in the beginning? Who «created» it? And only then, by means of contemplation about these two great problems – «What happened in the beginning» and «Who is the Creator» – does man come to the concept of God... This is why the words are in such a succession.

Materialists have always confirmed that the universe is ever-lasting, for the matter, which it is formed of, is eternal. For the past decades, however, the physical model of Big Bang has become widely spread. It suggests that the universe, which had not existed before, emerged from an originating point that held the potential of matter, energy, time and space. This model leads us up to the content of the Godly name אלהים that is being discussed.

So, according to the first verse of the book, there is a Higher Source of being, which precedes the universe and is external to it. Let us expand on this fact. First of all, God reveals Himself in the universal laws of creation, which act in star worlds and inside the atom, in a living organism and a human mind. These laws partially interpret the sense of the name אלהים: The Power of powers, the Essence of essences, the Higher Reason, whose sovereign plan for the universe and care for it are manifested in the overall interrelation of phenomena. The Book of Jeremiah describes the Creator as follows:

It is He Who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom, and by His

understanding stretched out the heavens. (Jeremiah 10:12)

“He Who made the earth by His power...” – this part of the verse shows that substance, or matter (“the earth”), exists due to the power, or energy, of the spirit, so, the physical world originates from the spiritual sphere. “... Who established the world by His wisdom...” – the words “established the world” mean that the Creator secures the inviolability of the universe, e.g. the law of gravitation “establishes” the universe because due to it star systems remain in existence. “...and by His understanding stretched out the heavens” – these words point at the wise harmony of the cosmos, all parts of which speak for the perfect reason of their Creator.

In the Proverbs of Solomon we read:

The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens. (Proverbs 3:19)

Thus, the wise patterns of the universe point to its Creator. The evolvement of life on the Earth speaks of Him, too. According to the Biblical facts as well as to scientific data, man is the latest being created on the

Earth; nevertheless, he is «the lord of creation», he is the being that comprehends its Creator. Could unreasonable, blind, deaf matter have created the thinking, contemplating, listening man? The Book of Isaiah says:

For thus says the Lord, Who created the heavens (He is God!), Who formed the earth and made it (He established it; He did not create it a chaos, He formed it to be inhabited!): I am the Lord, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:18)

God established the Earth «to be inhabited». This planet is located at the right distance from the Sun to allow protein life to exist. If the Earth were closer to the Sun, the living beings would be burnt, farther – they would be frozen; if its axis had some other tilt, there would not be a smooth change of seasons. The Earth is created exactly «to be inhabited». And God says: «I am the Lord, and there is no other». If there existed diverse gods, lords and creators, the laws of different parts of the universe would vary. But we see that the same powerful laws operate all around the universe – everything that man perceives or investigates with the help of technical devices, acts within

those laws. One of the psalms of David says that the Creator is perceived through the perfection of His creation:

Understand, O dullest of the people; fools, when will you be wise?

He Who planted the ear, does He not hear? He Who formed the eye, does He not see?

He Who disciplines the nations, He Who teaches knowledge to humankind, does He not chastise? (Psalms 94:8–10)

Human sight, hearing and sense are eloquent of the Creator's majesty. Intuition convinces us that the creator of the ear cannot be deaf; the creator of the eye cannot be blind; and the creator of human mind cannot be himself without reason.

It is common knowledge that the probability of an incidental emergence of one living regenerating cell is vanishingly small: it requires the convergence of so many factors and reasons that the time of the existence of the visible universe would not be enough. But we observe a whole living world in harmony on the Earth.

One scientist, having been asked about the probab-

ity of the incidental emergence of life on the Earth, answered that it could be compared to that of the multivolume Encyclopaedia Britannica due to a casual combination of letters after an accidental explosion in a printing house.

One more evidence of the Creator's existence is beauty. Even if we try our best, we could not imagine anything more splendid than nature. It is impossible to figure anything as gorgeous as the sunset, the sunrise, the forest, the sea. In addition, beauty has nothing to do with practical use, and it points to the sovereign plan of the creation. In the Book of Job (modern scientists who analyse its language are inclined to believe that it was written no later than the 9th century BCE) we read about God:

By His spirit He hath garnished the heavens... (Job 26:13) KJV

Indeed, the grandeur of the universe as well as its separate parts points out the wisdom of the Creator and the meaningfulness of His creation. We are like guests invited to God's gorgeous palace, so that we could behold its beauty, contemplating about His majesty.

One of the psalms goes like this:

One thing I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in His Temple. (Psalms 27:4)

God is invisible, but we can behold «the beauty of the Lord» looking at the universe that He has created, at the variety of vegetative and animal living forms, human beauty and the starry sky. When a man is in a certain spirit, he feels that the universe is «the house of the Lord»; in fact, the whole world is a house erected by God, a palace, and at the same time it is a Temple that man worships in, feeling that its beauty is something given personally to him. In the Book of Ecclesiastes (the Xth century BCE) written by King Solomon we can find words testifying of the beauty of creation and the incomprehensibility of its perfection:

He hath made every thing beautiful in his time:
also He hath set the world in their heart, so that no

man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) – KJV

No, we cannot fully comprehend the work of God, but we can admire that He «has made every thing beautiful in his time». This verse combines two ideas of the beauty of the universe and its appropriateness: every phenomenon is beautiful in its own time.

In his psalm David addresses God:

I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are Your works;
that I know very well. (Psalms 139:14)

David was perfectly aware of «the wonder» and wisdom of his own composition – spirit, soul and body: «I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made». It would be enough for us to take a narrow look at the organisation of the tiniest part of our body to figure how great God is, Who conceived and created us.

So, another psalm presents the universe as a choir of messengers, who proclaim the majesty of God:

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. (Psalms 19:1–4)

The heaven as well as the earth – the whole universe – announce the glory of God and narrate His handywork; they narrate exactly that «in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth».

The Book of Genesis starts in Hebrew with the letter ב <beit>, which through the Greek letter β <'beta> gave origin to the Russian letter “Б” and the English letter “B”.

It is not a coincidence that the whole Bible starts exactly with this letter, which, by the way, is enlarged.

בראשית

<Bere'shit> – «In the beginning». Legend has it that such form of the letter hints that it figuratively screens

off what is «higher», or what overflows the frame of human perception, what is «lower», or what does not reach human perception, and what was «before» the Creation. Therefore, the only thing that remains unconcealed from us is what is «written further» – in the Book and in the universe. That is why the letter is open only from one side. Besides, the word «beit», «bait» means «home», which is similar to the world as the tabernacle of God, whose name אלהים <Elo'him> starts with the silent letter «aleph», which precedes the letter «beit» in the alphabet. The fact that this letter is mute points at invisibility, utter spirituality. Whereas three lines of the letter «beit» picture the sky, the earth and the man – the creature, which is spiritual and material at the same time.

There are three main theological views of the creation of the world. The first theory, especially widely accepted in the Hellenistic period (at the beginning of the Common Era), states that God created the world out of existing matter or, at least, that he first created the material and then everything else out of this fundamental element. The second paradigm, mostly spread in the medieval Christian world, claims that God

created everything «out of nothing» – «ex nihilo». This view, as well as the former one, gave rise to many philosophic systems aimed at overcoming the dualism of «God and matter» or «God and «nothing»» and adjusting it to monism. And lastly, the third view, which throughout centuries has belonged to mystics, is the theory of emanation, or gradual «procession», «emission» of the universe from the essence of God. As the being gets father from the nature of God, Who is unconceivable for us, it gradually solidifies, until it takes a material shape.

The finest, initial emanation is related to the beings of the invisible, spiritual world, whereas the roughest – to the phenomena of the visible, material world. Apostle Paul says about the origin of the universe:

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. (Hebrews 11:3)

Some modern exegetes suggested even that «not visible» should be understood as energy, and «what is seen» as matter.

As far as the verb ברא <ba'ra> – «created» is concerned, it can also speak of emanation. One of its mean-

ings is «to cut off», «to notch out», as if the universe («the heaven and the earth») were cut from the essence of God, once having been part of it. The word בר <bar> – «clear», «light» – similar to this verb points that the universe emanated from God through light waves. A cognate verb ברה <ba'ra> – «to choose», «to select» – speaks to the fact that the model of our world was chosen from a range of other possible ones as the best. And one more word with a meaning related to the previous ones is בר <bar>, which in Arameic means «son». The world was born from God like a son parts from his mother's nature.

So, «In the beginning ... God created the heavens and the earth». «The heavens» denotes the higher spiritual world, which is invisible, as well as the limitless space of the visible world above the earth. The word שמיים <sha'mayim> is derived from the demonstrative pronoun «sham» – «there», or «distant», «remote» worlds.

We have to keep in mind that further narration of the Book of Genesis about the creation of the world only deals with the earth. Moses, who receives the revelation of creation mysteries from God, casts his spirit back to the beginning of times and sees the earth at the

moment of its appearance; so, he describes everything as if he were a witness. Here is what Moses writes about the First Day of creation:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:1,2) – KJV

The Old Hebrew collocation תהו ובהו <'tohu va-'vo-hu> translated as «without form, and void» means «disorder», «chaotic state», «lack of reasonable order». It is only related to the earth, Moses does not touch upon «the heavens» in this narration. The earth must have been «without form, and void» because of the very thick fume and mist which covered it and did not let through the light from the luminaries, for it was still hot; and only as it grew colder, could the light get through to it.

«...And darkness was upon the face of the deep...» The word «the deep», תהום <te'hom>, indicates the original waters, which covered the earth.

«And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the

waters». The Spirit of God, God's breath – רוח <'ruakh>. Unlike the matter described above – «the earth», «the deep» – God's Spirit is a creative, harmonious, guiding force, the will of God, Who forms the material world at His own discretion.

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (Genesis 1:3)

This verse has various dimensions. Firstly, it describes the origin of the universe through the emanation of light from the Almighty. Modern physics state that if we could observe the origin of the universe at the moment of «the Big Bang», we could see a tremendous dispersion of shining elements – everything would be suffused with their light. Of course, the light of these elements is just a shade and reflection of the invisible life-giving light emanating from the Creator (John 1: 4,5).

«Then God said, «Let there be...» God says; He creates by the *word*, and the word carries the thought and the will. God created man in His own image, which is why we also can partly «create by the word»: we can call something – and it will come to our inner view. But what is said by God, becomes real immediately, joins

existence because the whole universe is the inner world for God Himself, it is within Him and obeys His thought and His word just like our imagination obeys us. The representative of the Hellenistic Jewish philosophy Philo of Alexandria, who lived in the 1st century CE, already believed that the words «God said, «Let there be...» are related to the world, which was called «the world of forms» by Plato. Later this world was called by the Kabbalah teachers בריאה <Berī'ah> – from the word ברא <ba'ra>, or «the world of Creation». «And there was light» is the realization, implementation of God's thought in the world of phenomena.

And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. (Genesis 1:4,5)

The world of prototypes, the spiritual world («Then God said, «Let there be light»), and the visible world («and there was light») are inseparable, in man as well, for he simultaneously exists in the material world with his body, and in the invisible one with his spirit. The

Bible says that being resulted from the creation by means of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and God's Wisdom. All three names are like various sides of one and the same Higher Reality, similar to the way that the breath and the word issue from human lips at the same time. Moreover, the word contains some «wisdom» – a thought expressed, as well as the Creator brings worlds to being with His Word «warming them up» at the same time with His Spirit – His breath.

By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath of His mouth. (Psalms 33:6)

The Spirit and the Word act integrally and simultaneously. The Book of Proverbs of Solomon describes the creation in a somewhat different way than the Book of Genesis. The main part in this narration is played by the personified Wisdom of God – חכמה <khokh'ma>, which mediates between the Creator and His creation, and the narration flows from its person:

The Lord created me at the beginning of His work,
the first of His acts of long ago.

Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.

(Proverbs 8:22–24)

The word «depths» in plural may mean the outer space, whereas «springs abounding with water» – the originating matter, because hydrogen is the first, starting and the simplest element in the Periodic Table of the Elements (like «chemical number one»). In fact, many ancient philosophic systems compare matter with water.

The Second Epistle of Peter also says:

...by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water... (2 Peter 3:5)

Let us read the Book of Proverbs further:

when He had not yet made earth and fields, or the world's first bits of soil. (Proverbs 8:26)

King Solomon, the author of this book, is believed

to be the wisest of all men. As we can see, well ahead of Greek philosophers did he know about «the world's first bits of soil», i.e. atoms and elementary particles.

When He established the heavens, I was there,
when He drew a circle on the face of the deep...

(Proverbs 8:27)

The words «...a circle on the face of the deep ...» may be related to the orbits of the luminaries, the movement of stars and planets, as well as to the periodic recommencement of being, «circular movement».

When He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep... (Proverbs 8:28) – KJV

Galactic nebulae are known to resemble clouds. Whereas «establishing the fountains of the deep» could denote the establishing of great laws, which put space and matter into unity and proportion, e.g. the law of universal gravitation, which «establishes» the interconnection of heaven bodies.

when He assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress His command,
when He marked out the foundations of the earth...
(Proverbs 8:29)

Here, as well as in the Book of Genesis, we can see that the sea precedes the earth.

then I was beside Him, like a master worker;
and I was daily His delight... (Proverbs 8:30)

The Wisdom of God is indeed a master crafter, endowing the creation with proportion and beauty. It is obvious that the creation of such a wonderful world brought delight to the Creator.

So, the Wisdom, or the Word, or the Spirit, is a living, reasonable and eternal mediator between God and His creation, between the Creator and man.

However, naturally, besides the literal interpretation of the First Day of creation there are allegoric ones. These allegoric explanations root in antiquity, for instance, those used by the leaders of the Essene sect in Qumran. They commented on the first verses of the

book in the following way: God created the light, or the righteousness; separated it from the darkness, or mischief; called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night, in other words, he put the boundaries between them, for the righteous should not have spiritual communication with the wicked. «And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.» (Genesis 1:5) – after the evening and the night of wickedness, after the dark periods of human history, after the rule of spiritual darkness the morning of God's Day will arise, the morning of righteousness – the Kingdom of God will arrive on Earth. The Jewish commentary to the Book of Genesis dating back to the 3rd century CE «Bereshit Rabba» contains a different explanation of the words «And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.» God connects His name only to the light: «And God called the light...» It means that only the righteous – «the sons of Light» – are pleasing to Him.

Naturally, the understanding of «light and darkness» as righteousness vs wickedness, spiritual life vs beastliness does not contradict the literal meaning of the biblical words. The greatest spiritual commentary to the starting words of the Genesis can be found in the Gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being

in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1–5)

The Word of God being a mediator between the Creator and His creation is here named life and light. According to apostle John, God's first words «Let there be light» were the revelation and visitation of the Son of God, Who is spoken about in the whole Gospel.

The Bible contains some more descriptions of the creation, which elaborate or comment on the narration of the Genesis. For instance, the Book of Isaiah says:

It is He Who sits above the circle of the earth... Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in... (Isaiah 40:22)

Isaiah claims here that the Earth is a sphere, and calls the interstellar dust «a curtain», stating at the same time that higher spheres are inhabited as well.

The Book of Job describes the way that early prophets inspired by God figured the position of the Earth in the cosmic space:

He stretches out Zaphon over the void, and hangs the earth upon nothing. (Job 26:7)

The Earth «hangs» in space, and God hung it «upon nothing» at such a distance from the Sun that it could be inhabited, – early prophets knew it tens of centuries ago. Images of the «whales» and «elephants» holding the flat Earth in space originated in paganism. The Bible does not provide any ideas of the kind.

The text of the Bible also provides an answer to a rather «challenging» question popular in doubters' circles: «Who created God?» The thing is that the creation occurs in time by definition. But the first verse of the Book of Genesis states that time itself had a beginning: «In the beginning...» The same idea can be proved by the fifth verse: «And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.» Consequently, there had been

no days before. Apostle Paul claims that time was created:

...nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God... (Romans 8:38,39)

Here we can see that «height and depth», or space, as well as «things present and things to come», or time, are «creatures» – things which were created and which have a beginning. It is a common view for many modern physicists. But if time itself appeared «in the beginning», when «the heaven and the earth» were created, then the question «Who created God?» does not have any sense, for there is no creation outside time. Religious thinkers of all epochs positioned God not only above time, but also above eternity...

The Second Day of creation:

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so.

God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. (Genesis 1:6–8)

The word «dome» is an equivalent for the Hebrew word רַקִּיעַ <ra'kia> derived from the verb רָקַע <raka'>, meaning «to overspread», «to expand», which means space. A more precise translation would go:

And God made space, and separated the waters which were above the space from the waters which were under the space... (Genesis 1:7)

What «space» is referred to? A lot of data prove that in the beginning the Earth was surrounded by a water steam covering, like by «a shell», which maintained heat over the whole planet. The remnants of trees and grass growing nowadays only at the equator can be found even in permafrost regions. This «shell» did not let through harmful radiation, therefore not only plants and animals would live longer and grow to an enormous size, but also people used to stay alive unattain-

ably long (let us recall the lifespan of antediluvian patriarchs). «The shell» could be named «the waters which were above the space», unlike «the waters which were under the space» – the waters of the ocean, and these waters were divided by the atmosphere – «raki'a».

It should be mentioned that the Days of creation may differ from the modern day and night, for the luminaries became visible from the Earth only on the Fourth Day. The first three Days may stand for long epochs, «the days of God». The Bible says about «the Lord's days»:

...with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. (2 Peter 3:8)

– compare with Psalms 90:4.

This is what is said about the Third Day:

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. (Genesis 1:9)

From the history of our planet we know that the land came later than the water, that continents rose from the bottom of the ocean.

God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:10)

The biblical narration suggests that the original land was a whole continent. Tradition says that it was round and only later it divided into different parts. Indeed, the modern continents have maintained corresponding outlines, the «joints» of their division can be seen (e.g. the shores of Africa and South America facing each other are likely to fit each other, etc.) The center of this round continent was the Holy Land – the future Land of Israel. It was positioned in the middle due to the fact that it was originally meant for the declaration of the Word of God.

Each stage of creation is concluded with the words: «And God saw that it was good.» The Hebrew word טוב <tov>, «good» (the Slavic “dobro” is derived from the same root: tov/tob/dob) means harmony, perfection, usefulness and beneficial effect. The goodness («it was good») here means that the Earth was suited for future inhabitation.

Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so.

The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good.

And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. (Genesis 1:11–13)

These words refer to the age called the Third Day of creation, when plants were generated. It happened after the earth and the water were brought into harmony, which was necessary for the appearance of life.

The description contains three Hebrew words, which denote vegetation: firstly, אֶשֶׁב <'deshe> – «verdure», or hardly noticeable, just coming up, vegetating greenery. Infinitely small, primary forms of vegetation as well as its larger primitive forms may be meant here. The second word עֵשֶׂב <'esev> «grass», including probably primeval ferns, etc. And the third word is עֵץ <'ets> – «tree». The succession of creation is described by these three words – from primary elementary forms of vegetation to the most complicated ones. Due to a great amount of primeval plants the atmosphere of the Earth got saturated with oxygen, became clearer and lighter: it was now possible to see the Sun and the Moon and the stars from the surface of the Earth. That is why the

creation of plants precedes the appearance of luminaries in the sky in the biblical description. Besides, having created the flora, the Creator prepared the Earth for the origination of the animal life.

The Fourth Day of creation:

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. (Genesis 1:14–15)

This does not refer to the initial creation of luminaries, for they had already existed «in the dome of the sky» before the Earth. The Book of Job touches upon the subject. God asks Job:

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements – surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone
when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? (Job
38:4–7)

It is stated that stars existed before the Earth was created; and the angels, «the heavenly beings», who controlled them «shouted for joy» seeing that intelligent life was created on the Earth.

That is why the Book of Genesis does not state that the lights were created, but it focuses on the fact that they obtained the role of dividing day from night, which they began to play after becoming visible through the clear atmosphere. For the description of this «adjustment» the Hebrew verb עשה <a'sa> – «to make [from something]» – is used, but not the verb <ba'ra> – «to create originally», as we can see it in the first verse of the chapter. Consequently, the Creator «adjusted» the existing luminaries to the new role, «made» them suitable for it.

God set them in the dome of the sky to give light
upon the earth,

to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:17,18)

Indeed, the celestial bodies rule over many processes on the earth: the activity of living beings, sea tides, etc. The earthly life is brought into harmony due to them, that is why it is said that their effect is «good». So, the luminaries are set «for signs and for seasons and for days and years». Let us pay our attention to the fact that days, months and years are calculated according to the cycles of the both observable «great lights» – the Sun and the Moon. It is a direct reference to the type of the Biblical calendar: it is lunisolar (for further information see chapters The Exodus From the Land of Enslavement. The Passover As the Overcoming Of Death. and Love for the Stranger. Biblical Festivals As a Projection Of Eternity.). The word «signs» (Hebrew אִתּוֹת <o'tot>) denotes lunar and solar eclipses, and other extraordinary heavenly phenomena; and the word «seasons» (Hebrew מוֹעֲדִים <moa'dim>) stands for the Biblical festivals, whose dates are calculated by the Moon, but coincide with the seasons of the solar year (i.e. the system of adding an intercalary month, etc.).

And so, when the Earth became lighter, God started the creation of the animal life. The Fifth Day began:

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." (Genesis 1:20)

«Let the waters bring forth»: matter takes part in creation being led by the Holy Spirit.

So God created the great sea monsters... (Genesis 1:21)

The animal life originated in water. And the word used here and translated as «sea monsters» (Hebrew תנין <ta'nin>) denotes «a water monster», «a dragon». These great «monsters» may stand for gigantic prehistoric reptiles.

...and every living creature that moves... (Genesis 1:21)

Unlike plants, animals are gifted with a special «living» soul, in Hebrew נפש <'nefesh> – "something that

breathes". In the Bible this word also denotes any living creature. Then amphibians were created which could go out of the water; later land reptiles were created.

...and every winged bird of every kind... (Genesis 1:21)

(According to the paleontology data, the birds originated later than the reptiles.)

So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." (Genesis 1:21,22)

All birds, including waterfowl, still breed only on land. God's blessing consists of two words: פרו ורבו <pru u-rvu> – «be fruitful, and multiply». It is realized in the constant presence of the higher power, which sustains life in each species and prevents it from extinction. Bible exegetes of antiquity noticed that if

there was only one word in the blessing «be fruitful», each couple could produce only one offspring. For breeding of a species the second command is needed: «multiply».

Let us take into account that God created each being «after its kind». The word מין <min> denotes «unit», «variety», «sort». It is important to understand that the biblical term «min» is not necessarily the same as «species», «family» or «kind» in any modern biological classification. Animals of higher levels of the hierarchy possess the following feature that defines their «min»: an animal of one «min» is not capable of bringing forth fertile progeny with a representative of another «min». On the whole, the biblical description of the creation of animals agrees much more with the theory of Creationism, which states that the main features of every biological «genus» are constant, than with the theory of evolution, suggesting random variation of “genera”.

On the Sixth Day beasts of the earth were created and, at last, man.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and

wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. (Genesis 1:24)

Matter («the earth») again takes part in creation, being modified and guided by the Word and the Spirit of God.

God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:25)

«Good» here is probably related to the harmony of the biosphere of the Earth, to mutual adaptiveness of different forms of life.

Then God said, “Let Us make humankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:26)

Man is created in God’s image, after His likeness: צלם <‘tselem> – Hebrew «image», «picture», and דמות

<de'mut> – «likeness», «similarity». The latter word is derived from the verb דמה <da'ma> – «to be straight», «to be similar», «to be alike». The word <ada'm>, «man», itself is similar to a form of this verb אדם <ada'me> – «I shall liken», this hints at the intention to gradually develop and bring up man to be like God. It requires «straightening» (the same verb דמה <da'ma>) the roughness of his inner life. The literate meaning of the word «adam» is related to the reddish (אדם <e'dom>) color of «clay soil» (אדמה <ada'ma>), from which he is created, i.e. to the color of his blood, flesh, internal organs.

But why is it said «in Our image» – in the plural number? Some exegetes state that it concerns angels, who are created in God's image, too, and whom he informs of His intention to create man. Some claim that the grammatical form of the plural number is used in order to point at the majesty – «We» instead of «I», as God is constantly named in the Koran. And finally, there is an opinion that these words of God are addressed to man himself. «Let Us make» – together, Me and you: only in case you contribute to your own creation in the image of God, will it take place...

What is God's image then? Creative ability, mind, conception of harmony and quest for excellence – all

human features that are not completely conditioned by material needs and that go beyond them.

Whereas God's likeness is the spiritual and moral features appropriate to His essence, which man should imitate: love, mercy, forgiveness, compassion – all this likens us to the One Who is merciful and gracious.

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. (Genesis 1:27) – KJV

According to the literate meaning of these words, man and woman are equally precious in the eyes of God. The higher, spiritual essence of man prevails over his gender, social, national and any other background distinguishing the Divine prototype in each of us. On the other hand, each man as an undivided whole («created He him») is comprised of two main origins («created He them»): «the male» – spirit, intellect; and «the female» – soul, sense.

God blessed them, and God said to them, «Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the

birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:28)

These animals, which according to legend had obeyed man before the original sin, also symbolise various sides and aspirations of his own personality, which Adam, the spirit that exerts the will of his Creator, should «have dominion over».

Concerning the Six Days of creation, it was already early exegetes who spoke of six thousand years of human civilisation, for «with the Lord one day is like a thousand years» (2 Peter 3:8). After this period the seventh thousand of years will come – the joy of the Sabbath rest, the wholeness of love and knowledge, the Kingdom of God on the Earth. So, according to the traditional Jewish chronology «from Adam», the year 2001 is equal to the year 5761. The Book of Genesis speaks about the Seventh Day in the following way:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude.

And on the seventh day God finished the work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all the work that He had done.

So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that He had done in creation. (Genesis 2:1–3)

What can be meant by the words: «God rested»? The creation of the foundation of being, the establishment of its main parameters was finished; now the laws of nature were in action everywhere. And yet, the Bible claims that God renews each moment, gives life and attributes spirit to any existing being. He is not only the Original Creator, but also the Creator of every moment of being, «the Power of powers» and «the Essence of essences». Any human science deals with consequences; but the primary reasons for existence are concealed in God.

So, the Sabbath is not only the final of the Original Creation, but also a prototype of the Kingdom of God on the Earth, as well as of the spiritual being after death following the earthly life full of hard labour and trouble (Revelation 14:13). Besides, due to the biblical order to devote every seventh day of the week to God (Exodus 20:8–11) Sabbath is a wonderful social institute. Even in ancient times Sabbath gave opportunity for rest to anyone who worked hard, including slaves. The order to sanctify the Sabbath Day goes beyond physical rest

and suggests distracting oneself from the material world in favour of the spiritual one: the seventh day should be devoted to God, to studying His commandments and to acts of mercy (Isaiah 58:13,14; compare with Matthew 12:10–12). This great wholesome social institute passed on to all nations, Christian as well as Islamic; Christians just moved the festival to Sunday and Muslims – to Friday. The tradition says that Adam, who was created on the Sixth day (which today is Friday), celebrated Sabbath and commanded his posterity to do the same.

The future Sabbath as the coming of the Kingdom of God is described in the Book of Isaiah, where we can read about the creation of a new heaven and a new earth – home for the truth – and about God’s purification and renovation of the whole creation tainted by sin:

For as the new heavens and the new earth,
which I will make,
shall remain before Me, says the Lord;
so shall your descendants and your name remain.
From new moon to new moon,
and from sabbath to sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship before Me,
says the Lord. (Isaiah 66:22,23)

The great promise to create the new heaven and the new earth, to recreate the world in its original purity and beauty is based on the description of the Six Days of creation. And the immortality of man and mankind (« shall remain before Me ... so shall your descendants and your name remain») is connected to Sabbath – the constant spiritual ascension for worship before the Lord.